

THE BRITISH MUSEUM

WORKS

TO

NORTH EAST ENTRANCE AREA

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
TO SUPPORT
PLANNING APPLICATION

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1.00 DESIGN STATEMENT

1.01 Historical background previous relevant application and significance:

The proposals are within The British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG. This building is Listed as Grade 1 and as such is of great architectural and social importance not only within the Bloomsbury Conservation area but also nationally and internationally. Grade 1 Buildings form only 2% of the total of Listed Buildings within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area audit and this therefore highlights the architectural significance of the area.

The current building that sits on the site is principally from the designs of Robert Smirke, which were constructed around the 1820's and 1850's with further additions after that date.

The proposal within this application relates to the North East entrance which is used for vehicular traffic entering the Museum. This entrance is within the footprint of the King Edward VII Building and from the security control via vehicle barriers at the north and south ends of the "tunnel" formed by the building, this is one of the original cartways with the integral circular turret and spiral stair access the Gallery areas above. The barriers were the subject of a separate application and made in 2015.

The recent introduction of the barrier on the south side has limited the pedestrian (staff) access through route from the King Edward VII Building onto the service roads around the Bloomsbury site which are frequently used around the clock. When the barriers are down, the staff route is effectively blocked off.

The King Edward VII Building was built to the designs of John Burnett from 1906 – 1914 and opened in 1920 – 21. The painted and glazed brickwork together with the vaulted concrete ceiling, stone and concrete loading platforms and entrance doors are original, as most probably is the security hut (reference the Museums Conservation Management Plan 2007).

With regard to significance, the Conservation Plan makes the following comments:

"The spaces at Level 2 do not have the same significance as the Galleries at Level 3. However, the form and finishes of the north east entrance are all largely as originally designed and constructed. The interior finishes are utilitarian but of good quality, the glazed brickwork and granite dressings being characteristic of the King Edward VII Building."

The Conservation Guidance within the plan states:

"Alterations in the east and west entrances should, if possible, not disrupt the external form of the wing and should be reversible."

1.02 The current proposals:

As stated above, the introduction of the new security barriers restricts the staff access.

To allow continuous pedestrian access for staff members and to maintain the fire escape route from the King Edward VII Building, the Museum would like to form a permanent opening through the east side wall of the "tunnel" (cartway) area the east wall of which forms and continues as the external wall to the King Edward VII Building.

Drawing AL1/1 shows the location of the area concerned and is the site location plan.

Drawing SK1/1 shows the existing plan, section and elevations to the cartway tunnel and east elevation of the King Edward VII Building.

Drawing SK1/2 shows the proposed opening through the east side wall with an integral hardwood panelled door.

The opening is located adjacent to the door access to the staircase turret. The new panelled hardwood door will reflect the size and profile of the existing door to the turret. The wall at this point is painted brickwork on the inner side and faced brickwork on the outer side. The proposal does not affect the glazed brickwork or the granite dressings. All making good to the wall will be in matching yellow stock brickwork to match the existing waling and will be painted on the inner side.

A new concrete slab will be formed at ground floor level with the loading platform on the inner side. The levels each side of the wall differ slightly and this will introduce a new single step at the continuation slab externally.

There is a metal framed utilitarian canopy on the east side of the wall which is recent.

An underground service duct is present to the east side of the wall with a metal access hatch. The duct cover / slab is continuous along the east wall. The proposal is to relocate the access hatch to allow uninterrupted access through the new doorway.

The proposal does not alter the basic form of the building at this point and could be reversed if necessary at a later date.

Drawing SK1/3 shows the opening through the wall but without the new panelled hardwood door. This is an option that the Museum may wish to take up as it provides even easier access for staff. It would be helpful if the application can be determined with the possibility of this alternative being used.

The proposal shown on drawing SK1/2 has been discussed with Camden's Conservation Officer during a recent monthly liaison meeting and no objections were raised at that time.

2.00 ACCESS STATEMENT

The provision of this new opening will allow and maintain access from the King Edward VII Building to the rest of the Museum site for staff at all times but particularly when the security barriers are down at the southern end of the cartway. The egress from the building is currently via a single door with steps down to the macadam cartway. This doorway is a fire escape, so there is a need to make sure that people can remove themselves far from the building in case of emergency.

The new single step is less than the 2 step arrangement from loading bay to cartway. There therefore seems little point in providing a ramp on the east side to the new opening for disabled use when the facility is not available at present (and would be difficult to achieve in the future without significantly compromising the cartway)

3.00 PHOTOGRAPHS



South side showing recent barrier in open position – note barrier rest on right hand side restricting access



Inner wall to cartway loading bay and outer wall on east side where new opening proposed