**The British Museum**

**Proposed Visitor Search Facilities at The North Entrance**

**Design and Access Statement** 29/07/2016

1. **Background Information**
	1. **Context and Risk**

The British Museum is the UK’s leading visitor attraction, welcoming 6.9 million visitors a year to the Bloomsbury site. The total attendance each day varies by season but reaches close to 40,000 on its busiest days. The venue is considered by police and security advisors to be a higher risk terrorism target when considered as one of London’s most crowded spaces along with its global iconic status as a Museum and London tourist hot spot.

With the increase of the national security threat level to severe the Museum has substantially increased the level of bag checking at the entry to the building. The level of checks has been made more essential since the major terrorist action in Europe, attacks on other museums and the recent raising of the Irish Terrorism threat level in the UK. Other international museums of similar size, visitor numbers and iconic locations have installed similar security measures to protect the public, notably The Louvre in Paris and Musee Des Beaux Arts in Brussels.

To support greater protection of visitors and the public, those high levels of bag search will remain in place. To reduce risk to visitors and provide for increased public safety within the main entrance halls, it is essential to relocate bag searching outside of the Museum building. This has been completed at the front entrance (now moved onto the Forecourt) and the Museum now needs to also move searching onto its exterior spaces outside the Montague Place entrance.

We recently erected a temporary search structure on the South West forecourt. This became operational in early May 2016 and has proved a success with both visitors and our Security and Visitor Services staff. The visitor flow is much improved from moving the search facility outside the South Entrance Hall and we have had positive feedback from visitors that this is providing them with reassurance that their safety is one of our major priorities for their visit.

1. **Proposed Changes to the Site**
	1. **Outline Proposals**

Our current proposal is to erect a temporary external structure on the North West podium, to allow us time to develop a permanent solution aligned with a long term site plan incorporating permanent visitor reception and search facilities.

The proposed temporary facility will provide space for queuing visitors and for searching their bags. The installation of this ‘immediate’ structure will allow us time to evaluate the search operation.

The need for this facility has been identified by our Head of Security and Visitor Services. The Museum needs improved means of screening visitors and their bags, whilst maintaining a welcoming approach as they arrive on site. Security staff plan to screen all visitors arriving on site and wish to carry out this process without long delays to admitting them to the Museum.

* 1. **Location**

Currently the search operation is located within the main north entrance hall. This is inappropriate to the perceived threat level and our immediate operational need is to move the facility outside of the building and provide suitable supporting conditions to successfully deliver an improved daily bag search and security resilience should the need for searching have to be scaled up in the light of any further raising of the national security level. This will also enable the Museum to better manage the high levels of anticipated visitors over the summer months.

The proposed location for the facility is on the north west podium as indicated on the site plan included with the Planning/ Listed Building Application. The structure will be designed to allow for a more appropriate visitor welcome to a National Heritage site and provide a more visible security presence and deterrent.

LB Camden and Historic England have been consulted on the preliminary proposals and have commented that we keep the extent of the temporary pedestrian barriers adjacent to the entrance to a minimum.

* 1. **Proposed Structure**

We are proposing an 8 x 4m metal framed temporary structure with floor panels for ballast. The internal finishes include ceiling linings and a barrier carpet on a level floor deck with ramped access. The height of the side walls is 3m and the height to the apex of the structure will be 3.9m. The roof will be soft grey vinyl and the side panels will be rigid. Due to our urgent requirement to operate a search facility outside the building we plan to erect an off the shelf structure, which we will later clad with decorative panels as indicated on the proposed elevations accompanying the Planning Application.

We request that this proposal be considered with reference to our plan to install Hostile Vehicle Mitigation along our North boundary. This will be the subject of a separate application for consent but we ask that LB Camden and Historic England note that we plan to install temporary vehicle barriers week commencing 8th August whilst preparing details for a permanent solution which we intend to submit for consideration 12th August.