

The Heritage Practice

2016/3128/L: Proposed Relocation of Listed Lampposts, Tottenham Court Road, London:

Response to the Charlotte Street Association Objection and Supplementary Information

Introduction:

- 1 The proposed scheme involves the relocation of 8. no grade II listed lampposts from their current positions within the road surface of Tottenham Court Road to a pavement edge position. As set out in the main application, the proposed relocation of the lampposts is necessitated by the West End Project – a far reaching scheme of road and traffic improvements that will see Tottenham Court Road with wider pavements, two-way traffic and general streetscape enhancements. As noted in the application documentation, the proposals offer significant public benefits for Tottenham Court Road and its periphery.
- 2 The relocation of the listed lampposts was proposed and set out in public consultation for the West End Project as a whole prior to the submission of this listed building consent application. Within online consultation documentation, it was clearly set out that the relocation of the lampposts formed part of the overall project¹ with a list of proposals for Tottenham Court Road including: ‘Relocate the historic street lights from the middle of Tottenham Court Road to the pavements next to Whitfield Gardens. The other lights on Tottenham Court Road will be improved.’
- 3 No objections were made to the proposed relocation of the lampposts at the time of public consultation (from 2014). Only Historic England (then English Heritage) noted the proposed relocation of the lampposts would need listed building consent and that a full assessment of significance would be required (letter dated 19 August 2014).
- 4 A number of consultees, including the Charlotte Street Association, were consulted as part of the West End Project in 2014. All responses were acknowledged and addressed as far as possible during the development of the project. This is set out in the Cabinet Report for the West End Project dated 21 January 2015. The Council noted here that in response to Historic England’s advice in relation to the lampposts that ‘Should the project be approved a full assessment of the impact would be undertaken’ (appendix C to the report).
- 5 An assessment of the impact has been undertaken as part of the above application for listed building consent. This was discussed with statutory consultees (including Historic England,

¹ (<http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/transport-and-streets/transport-strategies/west-end-project.en?page=3#section-3>)

the Ancient Monument Society, the Council for British Archaeology (principally LAMAS), and the Victorian Society). All consultees at pre-application stage confirmed that they had no objection to the proposed relocation of the lampposts having fully taken into account the public benefits of the proposals (responses attached at appendix A). Historic England and the Ancient Monuments Society have since responded to the council with no objection as part of the formal consultation process. The Council's Conservation Officer has similarly raised no objection to the proposed relocation of the lampposts.

- 6 The Charlotte Street Association has responded with an objection (on a number of counts) to the proposed works although the issues noted have not been raised previously. This addendum to the main application appraisal seeks to address those issues and concerns.

Objections raised by the Charlotte Street Association

- 7 The following paragraphs deal with the objections raised by the Charlotte Street Association (CSA) in the order in which each is raised in the response dated 12 July 2016. The CSA begins by welcoming the retention and repair of the lampposts. The relocation and repair of the lampposts cannot of course be seen in isolation and there are numerous other benefits that would flow from the relocation of the lampposts which are noted in the application and which would certainly merit consideration in forming a balanced judgement of the application. These include:

- Tottenham Court Road will be two-way for buses and cyclists only during the day for most of the week (Monday to Saturday);
- Wider pavements with trees and safer pedestrian crossings;
- New diagonal crossings at the junction of Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street;
- New public space between Percy Street and Windmill Street with trees and seats;
- Traffic calming methods;
- Improvements to Whitfield Gardens with improved seating and planting and restoration of the associated mural;
- Resurfacing of pavement traditional, contextual materials such as York stone and granite. This would have the benefit of also reinforcing and enhancing the historic environment of Tottenham Court Road.

- 8 At point (2) the CSA writes that *'But, we wish to object to their being relocated from their centre-of-street positions to positions each side of the street, as well as being concentrated in such a short length of Tottenham Court Road, for the various reasons set out below. With the proposed 2-way traffic system, we do not understand why these lampposts cannot be retained in the centre of the street. Their tall and robust design are designed for centre-of-the street location. By being moved to edge of pavement and closer to the buildings, their scale (and harsh lighting of the facades) will be out of character in relation to the buildings and streetscape.'*

- 9 The existing lamp posts were designed to cast as much light as possible to junctions on Tottenham Court Road and the associated side streets. The height of the lamps was obviously key to achieving appropriate light levels in the relevant directions. The lights were actually designed for a ‘centre of junction’ location but they have since been relocated and their design altered (during the 1930s). This presumably followed the provision of additional lighting to side streets and with the swan neck light fittings that were added during the 1930s gave improved lighting to Tottenham Court Road (the original fitting perhaps deemed insufficient for street lighting purposes).
- 10 The proposed lights would be moved to edge of pavement locations – the pavements are of course being widened (approximately from 4.6m and 5.3m to 7.0m). The pavements are therefore far more generous in width and would give a distinct separation between the proposed lamppost locations and nearby buildings. We would not consider the presence of pavement lighting in this way to be out of character in relation to the buildings and streetscape – while it is accepted that the lampposts were not designed to be at the edge of pavements, such a location for tall lamp columns is now usually the norm (as it is on Tottenham Court Road). In one example (see photographic schedule), one lamppost is already almost on the edge of the pavement where that pavement has been widened (outside the Heal’s building).
- 11 The proposed widening of the pavements and their recovering in traditional streetscape materials (e.g. granite setts and slabs) together with the two way traffic would not accommodate the lampposts and associated islands as shown in the submitted existing and proposed section drawings. The islands and current positions of the listed lampposts cannot be retained as the full existing carriageway width is required to widen the footways and allow the proposed 2-way traffic movements on Tottenham Court Road. This is key to the project and it cannot progress with the islands with listed lampposts in their current locations.
- 12 Point (3) of CSA’s objections note the following: *‘We are surprised and disappointed that, in the “Design and Access Statement & Heritage Appraisal”, there is no design or visual assessment in context:*
(a). Their relocation and consequent impact have not been assessed in urban streetscape terms, both in terms of scale and design.
(b). The relation of the lampposts to the buildings in the street, and their relationship in their re-located positions as being much nearer to the buildings is not assessed. The (cross-section) drawings do not show the buildings or the (tall) scale of the lampposts related to the buildings.’
(c). The relocated lampposts’ relationship to, and affect on, the setting of the listed building in this part of the street, namely the Heal’s Building, is not assessed; again, the (cross-section) drawings do not show how the relocated lampposts will relate to this Listed building in terms of scale and setting of each other (both listed).’
- 13 Given the proposed distance from the buildings with the widened pavements, scale of the buildings generally and an element of open space on the west side of Tottenham Court Road

the relocation of the lamps is not considered to have an adverse effect in townscape terms. The lamps would be positioned 22m apart which is a generous distance and would not result in the lampposts being overbearing or prominent in the townscape. The proposed locations of the lampposts are not arbitrary but the result of careful consideration. Although the proposals have evolved since first conceived it was ultimately agreed through a consideration of context and the characteristics of Tottenham Court Road that it would be beneficial to create and emphasise an improved and 'special' space at Whitfield Gardens partly through the relocation of the lampposts. The lampposts would frame the area aligned with the building perimeter of Heal's, creating a positive and attractive space. The proposed 22m spacing of the lights would be appropriate in an aesthetic and technical sense.

- 14 Therefore, the lampposts on the west side of Tottenham Court Road would help to reinforce an area of open public space rather than being in too close proximity to an established building line. In terms of the effect of the proposals on Heal's as a listed building, the latter is an incredibly robust and prominent building of four storeys with a basement and attic. It extends the full length of the block along Tottenham Court Road from Alfred Mews to Torrington Place. The existing building itself is the result of 20th century growth, expansion and extension from the original Edwardian building of 1914-1917 (with later phases of development including Maufe's addition of 1936-1938 and Fitzroy Robinson and Partners extension of 1961-1962).
- 15 The existing setting of the listed building includes the open treed space of Whitfield Gardens and a varied townscape which includes principally post-WWII development to the north and a more eclectic historic townscape to the south. The current street surfaces largely consist of concrete pavements and there is a variety of bollards, loading bays and other street furniture outside Heal's. The proposals for this area involve enhancing the street scene as much as possible through the rationalisation of street furniture, the use of traditional hard surface materials such as granite paving slabs and kerbing and general improvements to and definition of Whitfield Gardens and Heal's to create a place with a reinforced sense of history and quality.
- 16 The generosity of the proposed pavement widths together with the scale and robust architectural character of the listed building would be complemented by the listed lampposts – certainly the building would not be overwhelmed by the relocation of the lampposts or its significance harmed. Overall it is considered that the proposals for Tottenham Court Road as a whole would enhance the setting of the listed building.
- 17 Point 4 of the objection sets out that *'We wish to object to their being concentrated in a short length of the street. In our opinion, this proposed concentration of the 8 lampposts (4 each side of the street) in such a short street of Tottenham Court Road will create the look of a Disney-type theme park of historic lampposts, instead of being part of the streetscape design. The tall scale and robustness of design is appropriate for their central location in the street; which we do not think is appropriate in streetscape terms being closer to the buildings. Although the Statement & Appraisal shows, in Figure 11, pavement lamps outside the former Maple building (i.e. lampposts closer to the buildings), we do not think this is an*

appropriate precedent because the scale and design of these lampposts is considerable smaller (half the height) of the existing historic lampposts.'

- 18 The rationale and necessity for the relocation of the lampposts to the locations proposed is set out in preceding paragraphs. The wider improvements cannot proceed without the relocation of the lampposts and after careful consideration and assessment it was considered that the proposed locations would have benefits both in terms of Heal's and Whitfield Gardens.
- 19 Point 5 of the objection notes that '(5). We also wish to object to the proposed use of clear globes (in the refurbished lampposts instead of translucent/opaque globes. We are surprised that with the concentration of the lampposts in their new locations that clear globes are required. At night time (i.e. when very dark after dusk), the use of current white, LED-type lighting produces a very stark quality of light environment in the street, which is emphasized by the use of clear globes. Recently, such lighting has been introduced into the traditional lamp standards in Torrington Place, and including the use of clear globes. The clear globes means that the globes are so bright that you cannot look at them (it is painful to look at them due to their sheer brightness), and thus cannot appreciate the design of the head of the lampposts. This type of light source also produce a very harsh, cold (i.e. not warm) industrial feel and atmosphere to the street.'
- 20 The refurbished lampposts must have clear globes in order to allow the correct lighting levels if they are to be used as functioning road and footway lights. Opaque globes can only be used for decorative purposes as they will not give off the suitable lighting levels. It is understood that Historic England are generally fully behind and are backing the use of clear globes on historic/listed street lighting.
- 21 If once the lights are operational and glare does prove a problem with either glare to drivers or light distribution entering surrounding buildings then there are ways to alleviate this. For example, it may be possible to implement an internal shade within the globe to angle the light distribution downwards, a method which has been previously successfully used. The clear globes will allow the listed lampposts to be fully usable.
- 22 Point 6 of the objection sets out that '*With these similar clear globes in the traditional lampposts in Torrington Place, there has been the practical issue of guards having had to be fitted because of the severe light pollution to the nearby flats. There will be a similar issue for some of the lampposts in Tottenham Court Road being outside residential: (a). flats at no. 79 Tottenham Court Road, with nearby re-located lamppost;*
- (b). new hotel rooms (in process of conversion) in Brook House/Heal's Building on Tottenham Court Road frontage, with re-located lamppost nearby.*
- But, added light "guards" (to prevent light pollution into nearby residential rooms, especially bedrooms) would not be appropriate in design terms to this listed lampposts.'*
- 23 We would consider that our response to point (5) at paragraphs 20 and 21 addresses this comment.

Conclusions

- 24 As noted in the application and above, there are numerous generous public benefits offered by the proposed relocation of the listed lampposts. The application material does not attempt to disguise the fact that the relocation of the lampposts would have a bearing on their significance but it provides a full and robust justification for their relocation and sets out numerous public benefits, which according to national policy, would outweigh any perceived harm caused to their significance. The lampposts would be brought back into full working order and this too would substantially enhance their significance overall.
- 25 The proposals have been consulted on widely in 2014 and now in 2016 and the relevant statutory consultees have raised no objection to the proposals. Indeed, Historic England notes in its response that 'Historic England was pleased to be consulted on these proposals at pre application stage. We certainly welcome the proposed restoration and reuse of the columns for lighting purposes and the associated landscaping works to Tottenham Court Road and recognise that these are clear heritage benefits.'
- 26 While we acknowledge the points made by the CSA, we consider that the proposed scheme would be beneficial to Tottenham Court Road and surrounding areas and that overall, the significance of the listed lampposts would be enhanced together with that of other listed buildings within their setting.

1 August 2016
The Heritage Practice

Appendix A

Pre-application consultation responses:

Ancient Monuments Society

LAMAS

Victorian Society

From: ["Office at Ancient Monuments Society;" <office@ancientmonumentsociety.org.uk>](mailto:office@ancientmonumentsociety.org.uk)
To: ["Kate Graham" <kate.graham@theheritagepractice.com>](mailto:kate.graham@theheritagepractice.com)
Date: 5/23/2016 5:30:15 AM
Subject: RE: Tottenham Court Road Listed Lampposts - Initial Query rePre-application advice

Dear Kate

Thanks for this additional information.

The scheme presents clear public benefits and for this reason, we have no objection.

Best regards

Lucie

Lucie Carayon
Casework Secretary
Ancient Monuments Society
Registered Charity no. 209605

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From: ["Vicki Fox" <vickifox2011@hotmail.co.uk>](mailto:vickifox2011@hotmail.co.uk)
To: ["kate.graham@theheritagepractice.com;" <kate.graham@theheritagepractice.com>](mailto:kate.graham@theheritagepractice.com)
Date: 5/31/2016 6:59:36 AM
Subject: RE: Listed Lampposts Tottenham Court Road



**Historic
Buildings**

London and Middlesex Archaeological Society

Dear Kate,

After much discussion at our meeting held on Tuesday, 26 May, 2016 the Committee concluded that the transfer to the pavement was unobjectionable.

If we can be of any further help please let me know.

Kind regards.

Vicki Fox (Hon. Secretary)
LAMAS - Historic Buildings & Conservation Committee

From: "Alex Bowring" <alex@victoriansociety.org.uk>
To: "Kate Graham" <kate.graham@theheritagepractice.com>
Date: 5/24/2016 4:36:58 AM
Subject: RE: Listed lampposts - Tottenham Court Road

Hi Kate

I didn't take it to our committee but I did have a quick discussion about it with colleagues.

We have no concerns about the proposals, many thanks for consulting us.

Best wishes,

Alex Bowring
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