



Historic England

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Ms Elaine Quigley
London Borough of Camden
Development Control Planning Services
Town Hall
Argyle Street
London
WC1H 8ND

Direct Dial: 0207 973 3777

Our ref: P00527130

27 September 2016

Dear Ms Quigley

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015 &
T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
THE BRITISH MUSEUM, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON, WC1B 3DG
Application No 2016/4219/P**

Thank you for your letter of 13 September 2016 notifying us of the application for planning permission relating to the above site.

Historic England Advice

Significance

The British Museum is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and is a highly significant building designed to accommodate the national collection of historical artefacts from across the world. The proposals affect the north entrance to the Museum and the associated raised pavement areas, which are located on Montague Place. The north entrance is located centrally to the King Edward VII Gallery, which dates from 1914 and was designed by Sir John Burnet in a monumental Beaux Arts style with a grand symmetrical classical order. The King Edward VII Gallery is considered to be of high significance in its own right (separately listed at I). It was designed by a leading architect of the time and is designed in a manner that reflects the high status of the museum. The affected area of raised paving is over the basement vaults and could be deemed to be part of the King Edward VII Gallery. This area of paving is considered to make an important contribution to the setting of the facade of the King Edward VII Gallery and the character of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Impact

The proposals are for the erection of a single storey temporary structure on the west side of the north entrance to the Museum, on the raised pavement area over the basement vaults. The structure would provide security screening to visitors entering



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the museum. Temporary railing panels and a ramp are proposed to the area outside the north entrance in order to filter screened visitors into the Museum. It is noted that these structures have already been erected on site and the pavilion has metal panelled walls with a tented roof structure over, all coloured white. The current application seeks to secure retrospective planning permission for these structure and for the overcladding of the pavilion in a coloured sheet material in order to reduce its visual impact.

Policy

Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) set out the obligation on local planning authorities to pay special regard to safeguarding the special interest of listed buildings and their settings, and preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies for decision making on development proposals. At the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of 'sustainable development'. Conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance forms one of the 12 core principles that define sustainable development.

Paragraph 131 advises local authorities to take account of the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 132 gives great weight to conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, noting that significance can be harmed by development within the setting of a heritage asset.

Paragraphs 133 and 134 advise on cases where proposals would lead to substantial or less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset. In both cases, harm needs to be weighed against public benefits, although the tests in 133 for substantial harm are necessarily more rigorous.

Paragraph 137 states that local authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance.

Position of Historic England

The existing temporary structure is located in a highly prominent location and is considered to cause harm to the setting of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the setting of the Museum. The temporary structures partly screen the King Edward VII Gallery and are seen to unbalance the symmetrical arrangement of the King Edward VII Gallery in views along Montague Place. Whilst the proposals to clad over the pavilion in a coloured sheet material could reduce the extent of this harm, this would have a minor impact and the proposals are still considered to cause a significant amount of harm.



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Historic England acknowledges the need to provide security screening to Museum visitors and accepts that security screening could be perceived as a public benefit in terms of weighing up the proposals in accordance with the NPPF. Whilst the consideration of harm weighed against public benefits lies with your authority, we would recommend that if you are minded to grant planning permission that this be for a maximum of 2 years. This would allow adequate time for the Museum to establish its security requirements and to formulate a permanent solution. In respect to a permanent solution, we would encourage the Museum to work with ourselves and your authority to bring forward proposals as soon as possible.

Recommendation

We would urge you to address the above issues, and recommend that the application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice. It is not necessary for us to be consulted again. However, if you would like further advice, please contact us to explain your request.

Please note that this response relates to historic building and historic area matters only. If there are any archaeological implications to the proposals it is recommended that you contact the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service for further advice (Tel: 020 7973 3712).

Yours sincerely

Claire Brady

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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