



Historic England

LONDON OFFICE

Mr Raymond Yeung
London Borough of Camden
Development Management
Town Hall
Judd Street
London
WC1H 9JE

Direct Dial: 020 7973 3785

Our ref: P00678572

5 January 2018

Dear Mr Yeung

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015 & T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
25 OLD GLOUCESTER STREET LONDON WC1N 3AF
Application No 2017/3997/P**

Thank you for your letter of 10 October 2017 notifying Historic England of the above application.

Historic England Advice

Yesterday (4 Jan 2018) I had the opportunity to meet on site with you, the conservation officer, the architects and their planning consultant. This was the first opportunity we have had to meet and discuss the proposals fully and I am grateful for the chance to do so.

On behalf of Historic England my interest in this case concerns the historic environment in and around the site, which includes the Grade II listed boys' school, the adjacent Grade II* listed church of St George the Martyr, and the surrounding Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The Significance of the Historic Environment

The school itself was completed 1877-8 to the designs of J and S Flint Clarkson. The boys' school was praised at the time of its construction for its stylistic sympathy with the earlier school for girls located nearby and designed by S.S. Teulon (also Grade II listed). Teulon is an especially important figure in the 19th century gothic revival, and is remembered for his 'rogue gothic' designs that broke with tradition. He was also the architect of a radical reordering of St George's church, and so ties together the three buildings to form a related group.

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area is one of the finest in London. Development in the area began in the late seventeenth century and is an example of the very first planned and speculative developments in the capital.



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The proposals and their impact

The proposals are for the redevelopment of the (currently redundant) site, converting the historic building at street front into accommodation, and partially reconstructing the twentieth-century extension to the rear. Across the site at ground and basement levels community uses will be introduced. At the rear of the site is a Victorian hall with a pitched roof, expressed trusses, and five lancet windows; this will be demolished.

Relevant Legislation, and Policy

Legislation and Policy place a great weight on the conservation of the significance of this site, both as a listed building and as a positive contributor to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Of particular relevance are Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (especially paragraphs 128, 132, 134, and 137).

Historic England's Position

The site itself is clearly in very poor condition at present, with water penetrating throughout the building and rot and failing plaster evident in several locations. As such we welcome the opportunity for a new use to be introduced to the building and we are broadly encouraged by the proposals that have been put forward.

There are two areas of concern for us resulting from harm that could be caused to the significance of the site.

The first is the loss of the small Victorian hall at the rear of the site. While the original main school hall is likely to have been demolished, this small hall has survived relatively well and clearly relates to the building's original function. Its loss will cause some harm to the significance of the site, particularly as it is not at present very well understood. If the Local Authority is content that its demolition is justified we would recommend a high level of building recording to be carried out so that the evidence of its form and function can be accessed in future.

The second area is the architectural effect of the reconstructed and enlarged extension. The height and massing of the extension are not problematic, in my view. However, the overall coherence of the design does raise some concern. It is designed to sit alongside the existing 1878 school building, and on top of the twentieth-century ground floor hall both of which are in different architectural styles. The new building is then divided into balconies, stair-well, domestic accommodation with projecting windows, and a roof extension. Each of these is expressed fully and subject to a different material or finish.

If the effect of the extension is to create a building which appears fragmentary or incoherent my concern is that it will harm the architectural significance of the listed building, and the design quality of the conservation area.



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This not a fundamental objection, but is an encouragement to go slightly further in modifying the design to find opportunities that will introduce greater coherence with, or subservience to, the listed school building. This could include a careful brick match to complement that used in the school and the existing extension; and the replacement of the 'oriel' windows with more conventional fenestration in order to maintain the existing building line.

Recommendation

We urge you to consider the advice set out above and to seek opportunities for the further enhancement of the proposals. Should the scheme receive amendment we would welcome the opportunity of advising further. If, notwithstanding our advice, you propose to approve the scheme in its present form, please advise us of the date of the committee and send us a copy of your report at the earliest opportunity.

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

Matthew Cooper

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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cc.

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