

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:	03/02/2017
		N/A		Consultation Expiry Date:	24/2/17
Officer			Application Number(s)		
Tania Skelli-Yaoz			(1) 2016/6789/P (2) 2017/0253/L		
Application Address			Drawing Numbers		
Wilkins Building Gower Street London WC1E 6HJ			See decision notices		
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature		
Proposal(s)					
<p>(1) External lighting improvement works to the Wilkins portico and roof and associated lighting cable infrastructure internally within the building.</p> <p>(2) External lighting improvement works to the Wilkins portico and roof and associated lighting cable infrastructure internally within the building.</p>					
Recommendation(s):		Refuse planning application Refuse listed building consent			
Application Type:		Full Planning Permission Listed Building Consent			

Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:	Refer to Draft Decision Notices					
Informatives:						
Consultations						
Adjoining Occupiers:	No. notified	00	No. of responses	00	No. of objections	00
Summary of consultation responses:	<p>A Press Notice was advertised on 2/2/17 and a site notice was displayed on 3/2/17.</p> <p>No responses were received from the public.</p>					
CAAC/Local groups comments:	<p><u>Historic England:</u> Objection.</p> <p>These proposals are for the installation of lighting and associated cabling to the central portico including the dome of the Grade I listed Wilkins Building in Bloomsbury.</p> <p>We have no concerns with the principle of a new lighting strategy for the portico which seeks to celebrate the centrepiece of the Grade I listed complex. We also welcome the removal of the existing floor-mounted floor lanterns which should improve the appearance of the portico. It also appears that most of the cabling would be discretely located within ancillary parts of the building.</p> <p>However, the work would include flush-fitted 'in-ground' luminaires to the portico flagstones and downlights mounted within the coffered soffit. Although this would present a tidier finish than the existing lighting scheme, the work would involve the removal of potentially significant fabric and reduce its architectural integrity in our opinion.</p> <p>From the information provided on your Council's website, it does not appear that a heritage statement has been provided with this application. It is important that the significance of the fabric to be altered is fully understood in accordance with Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).</p> <p>The Wilkins Building suffered significant loss of fabric following WWII bomb damage, and so it is possible that the fabric subject to alteration is not historic. If it is concluded that the fabric post-war, the permanent installation of built-in lighting to the flagstones and coffers would still reduce the architectural integrity of the portico in our opinion.</p> <p>We would therefore conclude that a small degree of harm would be caused to the aesthetic value of the Wilkins Building. In accordance with Paragraph 134 of the NPPF, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme in the determination of the application.</p> <p><u>Georgian Group:</u> Raise concerns</p> <p>The Group has no objection, in principle, for the creation of a new lighting strategy for the portico of the new Grade I-listed Wilkins Building. However, the installation of flush-fitting luminaires within the portico flagstones and the</p>					

downlights within the coffered soffit would result in the loss of potentially-significant historic fabric.

In its present form the application lacks a heritage statement, outlining the date and significance of the fabric which would be affected by the proposals, which makes it difficult to assess the full impact on the significance of the listed building, though it clearly constitutes some degree of harm. In determining the application, your authority should be satisfied that this harm is adequately weighed against the public benefits of the scheme, in accordance with paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Bloomsbury CAAC: Objection

The committee has looked at the proposed changes to the external lighting and objects to the proposed lighting scheme. The committee believes that an important listed facade of this stature should not be lit with LED strips attached to the facade itself as this introduces 'hotspots' and completely unbalances the intended reading of the architectural features of the building (apart from adding yet further to the damage of the facade with fixings, wiring etc.). We feel the building should simply be lit by the ambient light of the courtyard lamp-standards as would have been the case for the first hundred and fifty years of the building's life. I.e. direct lighting of this type is felt to be inappropriate and slightly tacky and would harm the conservation area.

Site Description

The Wilkins Building is a Grade I Listed Building which forms part of the University College London. The site is located between Gower Street, Gower Place and Gordon Street and is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Relevant History

None directly relevant to this lighting proposal.

Other:

Lower Refectory, Donaldson Wing of the Wilkins Building, University College London (UCL) main campus-

2014/0329/P Planning permission GRANTED subject to S106 legal agreement on 14/08/2014 for the erection of single storey extension and refurbishment of lower ground floor refectory with associated alterations to openings to Wilkins building following works of demolition to existing refectory.

Relevant policies

NPPF 2012

Paragraphs 126-141

London Plan 2016

Policy 7.4 Local character

Policy 7.6 Architecture

Policy 7.8 Heritage assets and archaeology

Camden Local Plan 2017

Policy A1 Managing the impact of development

Policy D1 Design

Policy D2 Heritage

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (April 2011)

Assessment

Proposal

Permission is sought for the installation of a lighting scheme to illuminate the Wilkins Portico. This would involve the following:

- 2 nos. existing floor mounted globe lanterns to be retained , cleaned and re-lamped
- 2 nos. existing floor mounted globe lanterns to be removed
- 4 nos. existing uprights to be retained, serviced, cleaned and re-lamped
- 24 nos. adjustable X1 in-ground luminaires to be aimed inwards towards columns
- Other small repairs and adjustments to existing in-ground lighting fixtures and cabling from below the Portico
- Aluminium L-section masking plate with linear X2 uplight to pediment
- Existing floodlights wall mounted under ceiling to be removed.
- 2 nos. X7 beam led floodlights to replace metal existing floodlights on adjacent wings' roofs.
- 2 nos. X3 medium beam floodlights to be aimed at dome
- 1 no. X4 narrow beam floodlight to be aimed at crown of dome
- 8 nos. X5 wall washers to be surface mounted at back of each coffer detail and aimed at back wall
- 5 nos. X6 medium beam downlights surface mounted in coffered detail of ceiling for ambient light
- Row of existing former gas lamps to be retained
- Stonework to be given light clean
- Existing stone chases to be reused as wireways

The main considerations with this proposal are design, conservation and amenity.

Design & conservation

The replacement and upgrade of the lighting scheme for the front elevation of the Wilkins Building (Grade I) is acceptable in principle. The main concerns relate to the location and fixing of the cables/service runs and the lighting equipment.

The D&A statement refers back to the comprehensive, detailed and previously approved Conservation Strategy by Alan Baxter and Associates dated 2014 (ref: planning permission 2014/0329/P). In the Alan Baxter document the Portico section of the Wilkins Building was classified as 'highly significant'; stating that "the main Wilkins façade (together with the dome behind) is clearly of the highest importance for its architectural interest, its historic interest in the founding of UCL and its group value in the quadrangle".

It is understood that the historic fabric of the main portico is part of the original construction which withstood the WW2 bombing and which was so destructive to much of the Wilkins Building. The survival of the portico in its original form ensures that this particular part of the building represents the most valuable remaining historic architectural element and historic fabric.

The lighting fixings, cables etc in locations 1-2 and 4-6 of the drawing on page 8 of the D&A statement have been carefully considered in terms of impact on the historic fabric. In these locations there would be a modest amount of invasive work however this has been considered to be reversible and areas well out of sight and normally inaccessible. The removal of the two later 20th century floor mounted globe lanterns, the repair and refurbishment of two 20th century floor mounted globe lanterns, along with the repair of the historic railing is welcome. In general the fixings and cable which are to be located on 20th century gantries, existing internal risers and in areas of low significance are all considered acceptable.

With regards to cable running and wiring through the flagstones; the applicants have stated that the stones are in a very poor condition and that the proposed wiring would result in the repair and installation of more sympathetic grouting into the damaged areas. Whilst it is acknowledged that some damage is present this is historic wear and tear and signifies the age and character of the listed grade I building. The flagstones do not appear badly damaged neither do they appear to be a danger to the users.

The proposed fixing to the dressed stone of the front elevation is by far the most sensitive part of the proposals. The front steps and the stone paving of the front portico have been modified historically and in areas where the stone has later repairs the installation of cable is considered acceptable. The cutting of holes to accommodate the 24x up lighters, flush within the stone floor of the portico along with the associated cables clipped to the stone work are the most damaging aspects of the proposal and are considered unacceptable. This is considered irreversible damage. In terms of the NPPF paragraph 132 the proposed development would fail to conserve this highly significant part of the Grade I Wilkins Building. This part of the scheme is considered to be substantial harm and under paragraph 132 substantial harm is required to be wholly exceptional.

The substantial harm, caused by cutting the historic stone slabs to form holes to accommodate the 24 uplighters, as detailed in NPPF paragraph 133, does not meet the tests for public benefit. The public benefits of the lighting scheme do not outweigh the harm to the historic fabric and are not therefore justified in terms of the NPPF. .

During the course of the application, alternative solutions were discussed and assessed including the introduction of lighting boxes placed on the portico steps in lieu of the in-ground proposal fitting but was concluded as not a satisfactory design solution (this included a helpful mock-up which confirmed the inappropriate appearance and negative visual impact this would have).

Public benefit considerations

The applicants state that the lighting scheme as proposed will create a visitor destination at night and during the dark winter months, create a useable public space at night, allow better appreciation of the buildings' architecture which currently has poor utilitarian lighting, create a safe and inviting route through the campus and create a landmark for local residents and visitors.

The Council considers that indeed a new lighting scheme can enhance the campus as a visitor destination particularly at dusk and after dark, however, this should be possible without the particular damaging aspect of the lighting scheme. Most of the proposal is acceptable and is supported however the cutting of the stone steps is permanent and damaging. The original scheme for the Wilkins portico would not have been designed with a bright lighting scheme, indeed there are photographs of the earliest floodlighting which show a very dramatic low level of lighting to great effect. In addition, it is considered that the main entrance/portico of the Wilkins Building is a well-known landmark already and therefore, it is considered that public benefit, as highlighted in the NPPF, can be achieved by other lighting designs.

Amenity

There are no amenity implications from this proposal apart from those discussed above, which relate to safe access in the event of new lighting creating obstacles for pedestrians and lighting as a tool for better illumination at night. These have been discussed above and do not raise concerns.

In summary, the lighting of the Portico is supported however, the permanent removal of the stone cores is considered to harm the significance of the Grade I frontage of the Wilkins Building and is this not considered to be outweighed by the public benefit which can be achieved by other lighting solutions. It is considered that a lighting scheme can be achieved without the damaging removal of historic fabric. It is considered that public benefit can be achieved through an alternative design which UCL are urged to seek. As such, the proposal is contrary to policies D1 and D2 of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

Special regard has been attached to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Considerable importance and weight has been attached to the harm and special attention has been paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area, under s.66 and s.72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act (ERR) 2013.

Recommendation: Refuse planning permission and listed building consent.

Reasons for refusal:

(PP)

The proposed development, by reason of its damage to the Portico's historic fabric, is considered detrimental to the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and to the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. As such it is contrary to policies D1 (Design) and D2 (Heritage) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

(LBC)

The proposed development, by reason of its damage to the Portico's historic fabric, is considered detrimental to the special architectural and historic interest of the grade I listed building. As such it is contrary to policy D2 (Heritage) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.