



PURCELL

# BRITISH MUSEUM

## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT & HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE TEMPORARY TICKETING AND AUDIO-GUIDE DESKS SEPT 2018

### Rodin and the art of ancient Greece

26 April – 29 July 2018  
Members free

Sponsored by  
**Bank of America  
Merrill Lynch**



### I am Ashurbanipal king of the world, king of Assyria

The BP exhibition

8 November 2018 –  
24 February 2019  
Members free

Supported by BP

Sponsored by  
**LAG Cargo**

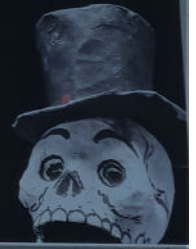


The Citi exhibition

### I object Ian Hislop's search for dissent

6 September 2018 –  
20 January 2019  
Members free

Sponsored by  
**citi**



### Membership

Membership queries

Free unlimited entry  
to special exhibitions  
for Members

Individual Member	£24	£14
Joint Membership	£34	£14
Family Membership	£50	£20

Age 18+\*

Additional terms and conditions

apply

£20

£20

£20

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### Tickets

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Family Member	£24	£14
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Joint Membership	£34	£14
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# BRITISH MUSEUM

## DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT AND HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE TEMPORARY TICKETING & AUDIO-GUIDE DESKS

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# SUMMARY OF BUSINESS NEEDS

## INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access statement supports the Listed Building Consent application for the temporary retention (for 5 years) 2 x ticket and audio-guide desks within the Grade I listed, Great Court at The British Museum.

The British Museum is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area of LB Camden. The Great Court sits at the heart of the site and is critical to visitor's orientation and circulation, supporting the daily functioning of the Museum and helping it to maintain its status as the UK's no.1 visitor attraction.

The retention of the ticket desks proposed as part of this application therefore play a vital role in operations.

## THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Founded in 1753, the British Museum was the first national public museum in the world.

From the outset, it was a museum of the world, for the world, and this idea still lies at the heart of its mission today. The collection of over 8 million objects tells the stories of cultures across the world, from the dawn of human history, over two million years ago, to the present. Objects range from the earliest tools made by humans and treasures from the ancient world to more recent acquisitions from all over the world, as well as the national collections of prints and drawings, and coins and medals.

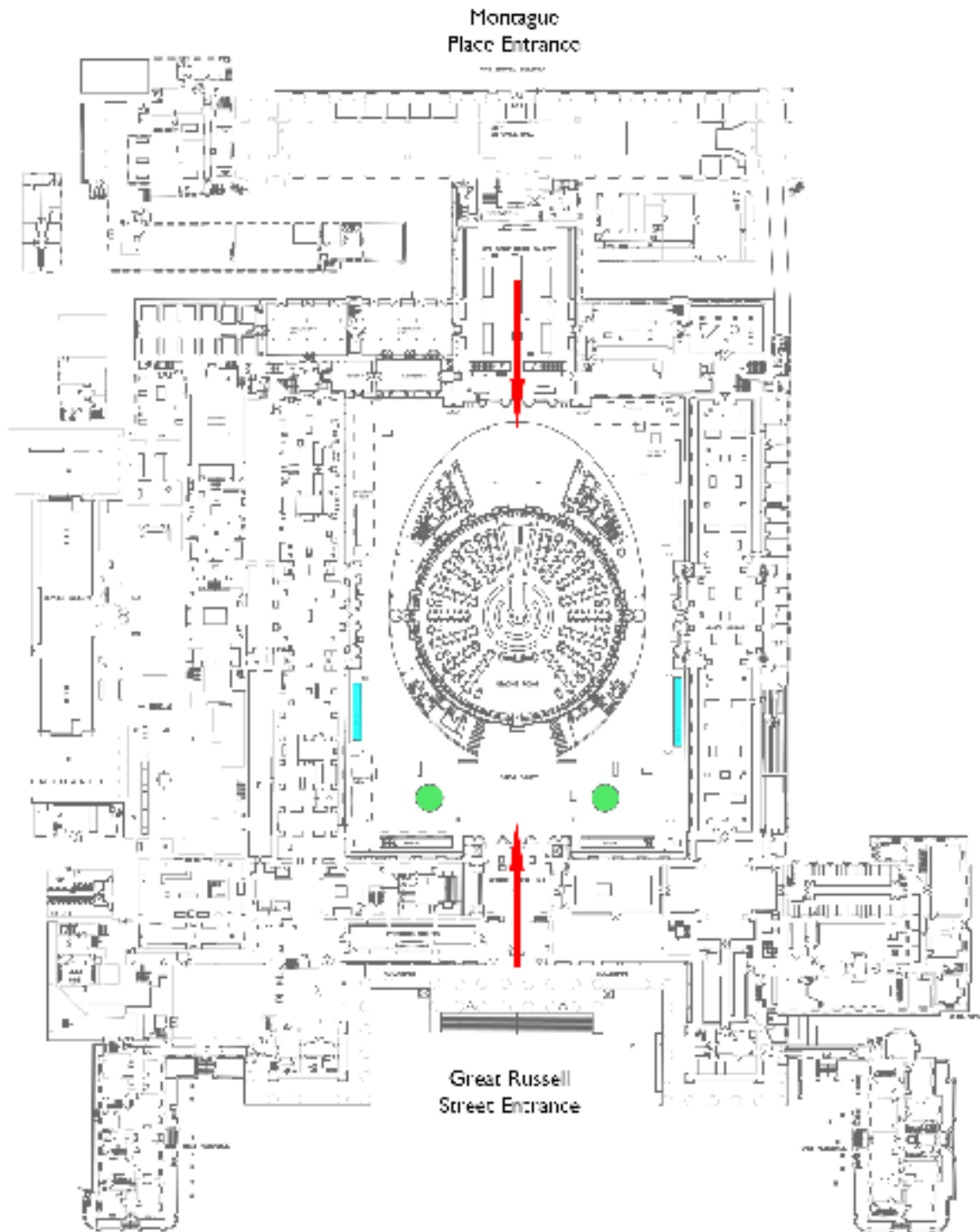
The presentation of the Museum's global collection relies on both permanent displays and special exhibitions – the latter of which provides the Museum with the opportunity to present collection not permanently on display, as well as contextualising its collection alongside loans from around the world. This programme of special exhibitions supports the Museum's mission to engage with new, international and varied audiences, and is also a critical part of the Museum's business.



The British Museum is a global museum and is the UK's leading visitor attraction. Visitor numbers to the Bloomsbury site have grown from around 5,000 a year in the eighteenth century to nearly 6 million today.

Below: Entrance to Museum

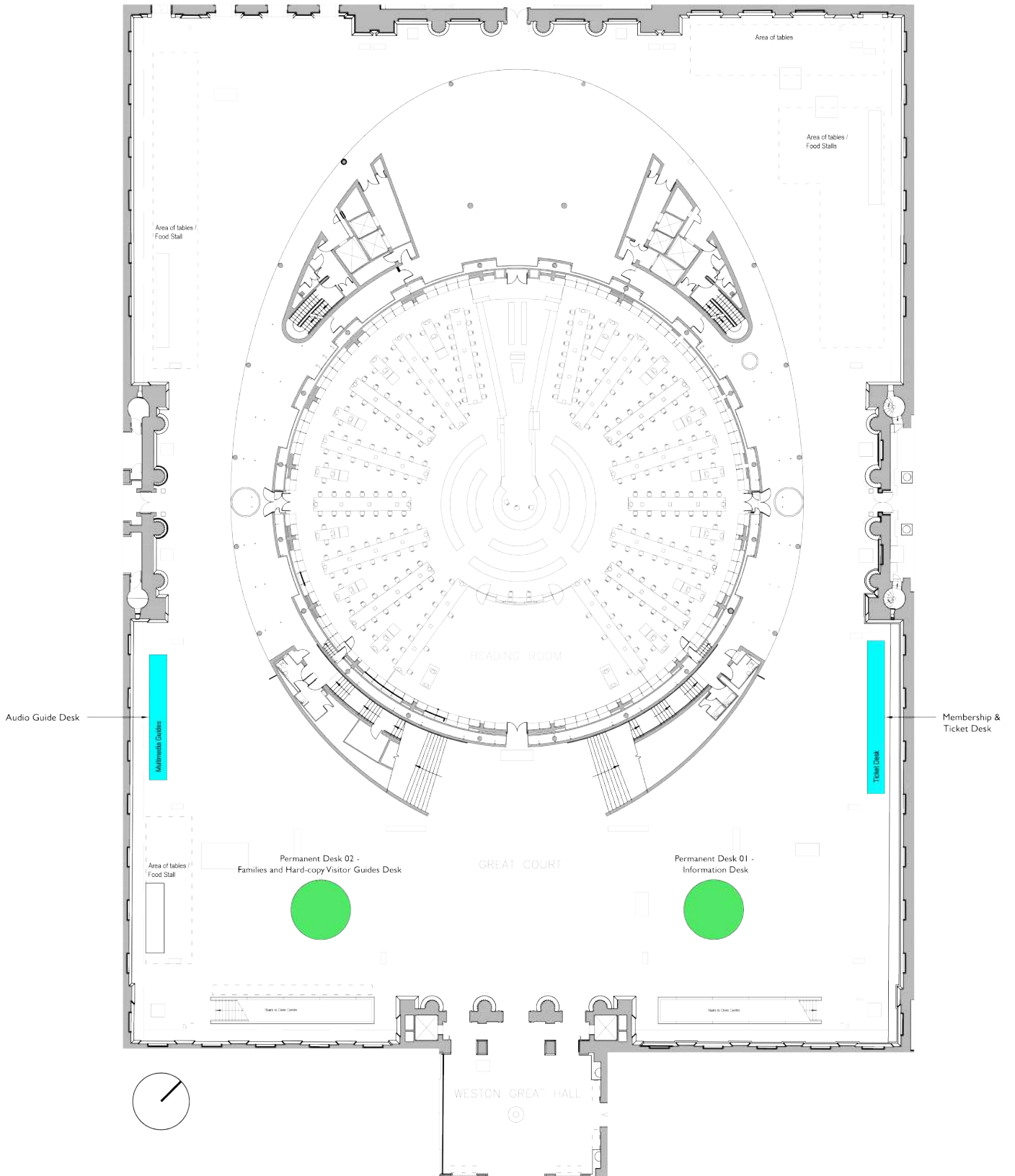


# DESKS LOCATION PLAN



-  Temporary Desk Locations
-  Permanent Desk Locations

## DESKS WITHIN THE GREAT COURT



## VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND EVOLVING VISITOR REQUIREMENTS AND NEEDS

Presently, 70% of the circa 6 million visitors enter the Museum via Russell Street and into the Great Court. The remaining 30% of visitor use the Montague Place entrance before making their way to the Great Court. On arrival, all visitors expect to be able to access information and services in relation to their visit. These visitor requirements include:

- seeking information regarding their visit;
- picking up a families guide;
- purchasing a hard-copy visitor guides;
- purchasing tickets to any current special exhibitions, or buying advance tickets for future special exhibitions;
- purchasing membership; or;
- hiring a multimedia audio guide.

The majority of the Museum's audience are first-time visitors. The services available centrally within the Great Court play an essential role in helping people orientate during their first 5-10 minutes at the Museum, to decide how to structure their visit and to select the interpretive tools that they need for their museum visit.

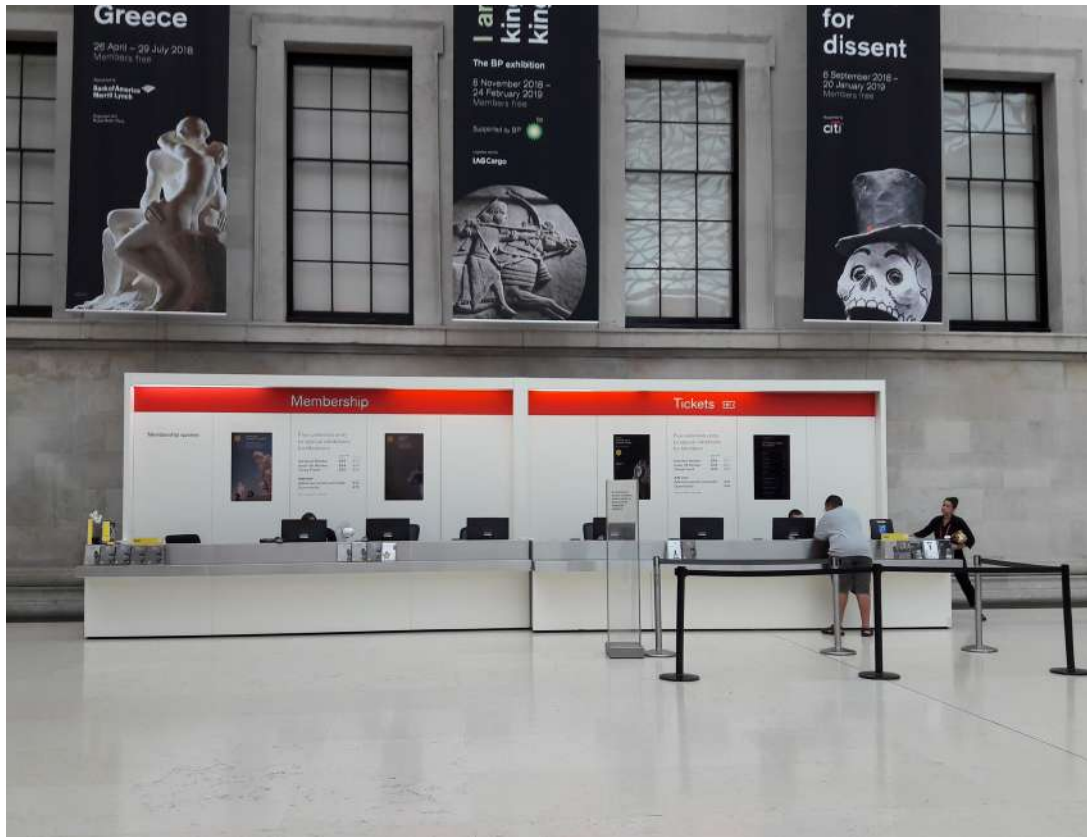
The number of visitors to the Museum has grown significantly in the fifteen years since the Great Court was refurbished as a new central space for the Museum. In the time since the commencement of large-scale special exhibition programmes, visitation has grown from 4,485,200 (in 2005-2006) to consistently more than 6 million. The demand for services – information, access to family packs, hard-copy visitor guides, tickets for special exhibitions, membership services, and the various multimedia audio guides – has grown in proportion to these increased visitor numbers. All of this is also in parallel to an expanding special exhibitions programme, i.e. the number of ticketed events has also increased significantly with several different exhibitions running at any one time.

75% of the Museum's audience also comes from overseas, with the majority of these expressing a preference for interpretation in a language other than English. The multimedia audio guides therefore play an essential role in providing engaging information to our overseas audience by offering them interpretation in the ten most commonly spoken languages. The multimedia guide offer has also expanded: a standard guide is available to all visitors (in multiple languages) but there are also special guides available for children and, importantly, guides for visitors with disabilities. A guide is available for use by visually impaired visitors and a similar guide is available for visitors who need visual signing rather than a multimedia audio guide. All the guides are a very important part of the Museum's offer to the visitor.



Above: Wide range of daily visitors

## MEMBERSHIP & TICKET DESK LOCATION

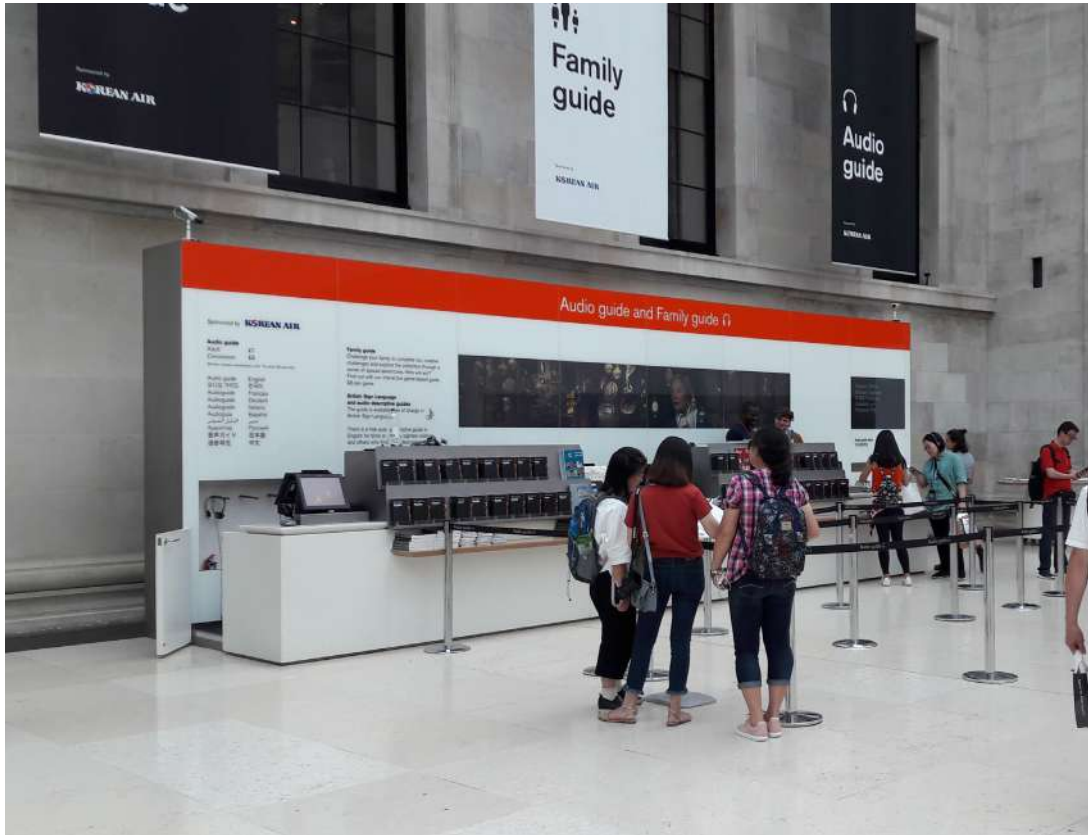


Above: The Membership & Ticket desk on the North East Side of the Great Court

Left: Image shows the desk is set off well clear of the stone internal wall.



## MULTIMEDIA & AUDIO GUIDE DESK LOCATION



Above: The Audio Guide desk on the South West Side of the Great Court



Left: Image shows the desk is set off well clear of the stone internal wall.

PERMANENT DESKS - INFORMATION & FAMILIES AND HARD-COPY VISITOR GUIDES



Above: Permanent Desk 02 -  
Families and Hard-copy Visitors  
Guide Desk

Left: Permanent Desk 01 -  
Information Desk

## HISTORY OF CONSENTS AND THE PRESENT POSITION

The British Museum originally sought listed building consent for two temporary desks (one ticket desk and one retail desk located within the Great Court) in 2007. In August of the same year, consent was granted for these two desks for a period of a year (application reference **2007/2934/L**). The desks were permitted in association with a listed building consent to use the former Reading Room as a temporary exhibition space. The temporary exhibition space created in the Reading Room provided a much-needed interim solution for the Museum's growing special exhibitions programme.

The "First Emperor" exhibition of the terracotta warriors was staged in the Reading Room in 2007-08. This proved an enormous success with visitors to the Museum with some 800,000 people having the chance to see these extraordinary figures. So great was the success that in 2008 the Museum decided to apply for an extension of the temporary listed building consent to use the Reading Room for special exhibitions. An extension was granted for a further temporary period (on 22 July 2008, application reference **2008/1376/L**), which also allowed the retention of the temporary ticket and retail desks until July 2012.

Another extension of the temporary consent was granted on 04 April 2011 (application reference **2011/0605/P**) to allow the former Reading Room to be used as a temporary special exhibition space until a purpose-built special exhibitions gallery in the World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre (WCEC) was ready for use, i.e. in Autumn 2014.

The new special exhibition space in the WCEC (now called the Sainsbury Exhibition Gallery) fulfils the Museum's requirements for a large, flexible and permanent space for temporary exhibitions. The temporary work in the former Reading Room, forming the raised floor and surrounding fabric, has now been stripped out and the space reinstated to its former 2006 appearance.

However, the temporary ticket and retail desks in the Great Court, originally granted in association with the Reading Room exhibition space, had become critically important function of the museums operations and business, far beyond their original intended purpose (see further information below on the need and function). This was acknowledged in the most recent application in 2015 (permission granted 03 July 2015, application reference **2015/1094/L**), which granted a further three-year extension on the temporary desks through to 03 July 2018.

## THE REASONS FOR SEEKING THE NEW PERMISSION

Currently, there are four desk fixtures in the Great Court, which itself is, critically, at the physical heart of the Museum. Of the four desks, two are permanent and two temporary. Each desk provides separate, distinct servicing to the Museum's visitor. (Note that the food and beverage fixtures are not considered 'desks' in the context of this document.) These also serve a separate and essential visitor function.

The details of the four desks currently in situ are provided below:

### **Existing Permanent desk no. 01, Information Desk:**

This permanent fixture was included as part of the Foster and Partners' Great Court Project, approved as part of application reference no. L9600015R2 in 1998.

The Information Desk plays an essential role in welcoming visitors and establishing the trajectory for the rest of their visit. It also provides access provision, assistance with lost children and lost property, and is the volunteers check-in and general enquiries point. Furthermore, the Information Desk is the main reception point in the Museum.

### **Existing Permanent desk no. 02, Families and Hard-copy Visitor Guides Desk:**

This permanent fixture was included as part of the Foster and Partners' Great Court Project.

This desk is critical for the distribution of family activity packs and the hard-copy Museum guides, the latter of which are available in a range of formats and languages.

### **Existing / Proposed Temporary desk no. 01, Ticketing and Membership:**

This piece of furniture to the south eastern edge for the Great Court was given temporary consent, and subsequently installed in 2007.

This is the single piece of furniture within the Museum equipped to sell tickets for special exhibitions, events, films and lectures. It is also used as a ticket collection and filming permit collection point. Equally, the desk is critical for sales of membership and engagement with the Museum's 77,000 Members.

## Existing / Proposed Temporary desk no. 02, Multimedia Audio Guides Desk:

This piece of furniture to the south western edge for the Great Court was given temporary consent, and subsequently installed in 2007.

This is vital for multimedia audio guide sales and distribution.

Initially conceived to primarily serve the special exhibitions programme, over the past eleven years the importance of the two temporary desks in the Great Court has grown in parallel with increased visitation, larger special exhibition programme, and broader multimedia audio guide offer. The Museum has also come to rely on them heavily for supporting orientation and dissemination of information to visitors, despite their primary function being associated with ticket, membership and multimedia audio guide sales.

The temporary desks are now, therefore, an essential part of the smooth functioning of the overall visitor experience as well as supporting revenue generating activities that are pivotal to operating the Museum. The temporary desks are used heavily, and regularly have queues of people, even with four desks in operation. The position would be exacerbated with the removal of the two temporary desks. Increased congestion would block circulation and would be a visitor safety concern.

At present, with current space pressures on the estate and the desks

being positioned centrally within the Museum, the Museum needs to keep these desks if the service to visitors is to be maintained and the Museum is to retain its number one status in the UK in terms of numbers and quality, as well as ensuring congestion around the entrances can be managed. The Great Court is the central location where people expect to be able to obtain these services and the present desks are only just adequate for the service they are providing. The two original desks are fully used for information distribution – in terms of general information, family visits, and hard-copy Museum guides.

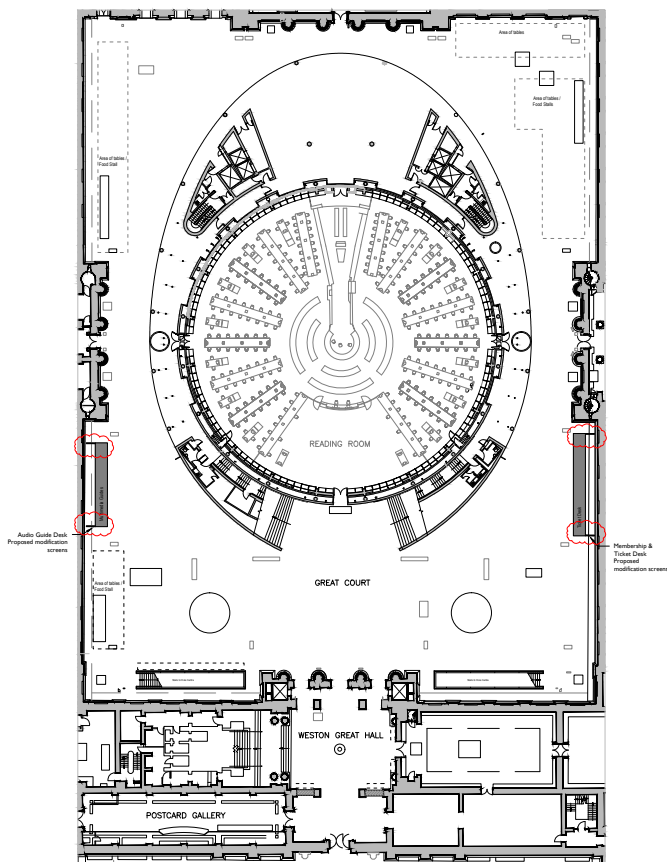
The Museum is aware of the need to look into a permanent solution to respond to the challenges outlined above, but the solution is likely to require longer time-scales: both the medium-term and the long-term realisation of a Museum masterplan. It is to be noted that the British Museum is committed to reassessing and reviewing the Great Court and the furniture and fixtures within the space. Indeed, Purcell has been commissioned to provide the Museum with an audit of the Great Court, which while separate from this application, will aid in the future management of the space.

For these reasons, the Museum seeks a further five-year extension to the temporary listed building consent. This is felt to be the minimum period necessary for the Museum to be able to reassess the operations within the Great Court.

Below: Ticketing & Membership Desk



# PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO DESKS



The proposals include some modification to the existing x2 temporary desks in situ to include openable screening at the rear corners of both desks. This is to allow temporary concealed storage associated with the desk use.

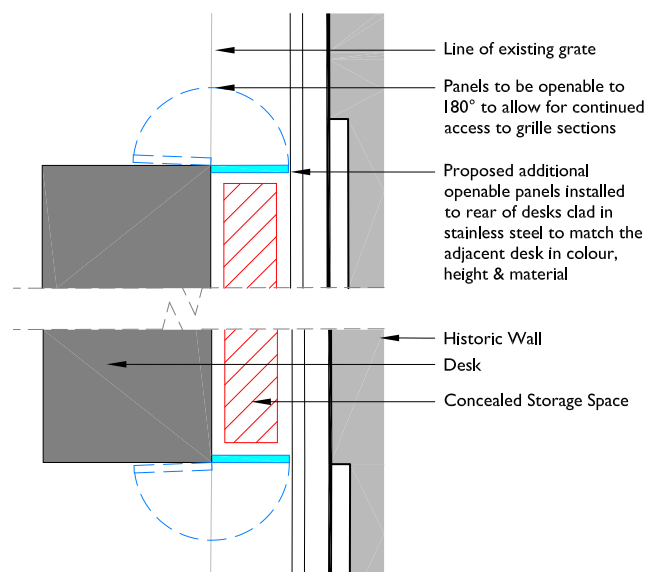
The British Museum must deal with a fluctuating number of visitors daily. Dependent on the quantity of visitors arriving at any one time, the management strategy for each of the desks needs to be flexible. There are various items required during peak periods, including extra tensile barriers, printed paraphernalia, mobile signage and multimedia guides. The concealed storage area offers a location for additional charging points for the guides to the rear of the multimedia guide-desk.

There are currently no points close by for storage within the Great Court and therefore the space behind the desks are used. The Museum is proposing installing discreet hinged screens at the back of the desks to provide a visual barrier. To ensure uniformity these will be equal in colour, materiality & height, and only extend enough to provide a barrier whilst maintaining a gap to the historic fabric with no fixings to the historic fabric required.

The rear of the desks will only be for key items which will be carefully monitored and controlled as part of a management strategy by the individual teams operating each desk.

Left: Location & extent of screening

Below: Area behind screens to be accessible



# HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

## INTRODUCTION

This outline heritage statement has been prepared to accompany the Listed Building Consent application to retain for a further five year period the two ticket and audio guide desks in the Great Court of the British Museum. Permission was given for these desks in August 2007 (Application Reference 2007/2934/L). This application was in conjunction with the temporary permission to install a false floor in the Reading Room to allow this to be used as a temporary exhibition gallery. The permission given was temporary and was extended in July 2008 (Application Reference 2008/1376/L) and again in April 2011 (Application Reference 2011/0605/L) and in July 2015 (Application Reference 2015/1094/L).

This statement is an addition to the Design & Access Statement which shows the locations of the desks, includes photographs of them and sets out the reasons why they are needed for a further period of time. The desks are located in a public area of the British Museum and can be seen at any time during the normal opening hours of 0900 – 1800.

## HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The British Museum is a Grade I listed building on Great Russell Street in the Bloomsbury area of London. The Great Court is a recent contribution to the Museum. Designed by Sir Norman Foster and completed for the millennium the Great Court opened in 2000 and is now the principal circulation space of the Museum. The centrepiece of the newly created space is the Reading Room which is located at the heart of the Museum. The British Museum was, when built composed of the Museum and Library until its separation over 40 years ago. The core of the original building designed by Robert Smirke accommodated both the Museum and the Library itself. The building as originally designed had an open courtyard. The central quadrangle was built in stages between 1823 and 49; the building continued to be added to up to the present day. The North, West and East elevations onto the the Great Court are largely as originally designed by Robert Smirke with some changes to windows and the entrance affected over the years. The Library collection rapidly outgrew the available storage and has now become a separate institution "The British Library". In 1852 it was agreed that the open courtyard at the centre of the building be filled in to form the Reading Room at the centre, surrounded by book stacks. This was proposed by Anthony Panizzi the Principal Librarian and his original idea was refined by Sydney Smirke (Robert's brother, Robert having retired from the practice). Work on the Reading Room and the surrounding book stacks was started in 1854 and completed in 1857. The stacks were altered on several occasions to create more storage space and the masonry of Smirke's original elevations was disturbed accordingly. This was particularly the case in the north wing where mezzanine floors were added to create more space.

Below: The Great Court & Reading Room



## IMPACT ON THE HISTORIC FABRIC & WIDER SETTING

The Reading Room served as the centre of the British Library until the late 20th century when the British Library was moved to the new purpose built building at St Pancras designed by the architect St John Wilson.

Norman Foster and Partners won an international design competition in 1994 that proposed the removal of outer bookstacks from the perimeter of the Reading Room, and a new glass and steel roof over the Great Court. This project was carried out between 1998 and 2000. The Reading Room itself was refaced in a new Portland stone skin and sweeping stairs to the east and west sides lead up to the first floor level. New spaces have been created on the north side of the Reading Room which house a shop at the main floor level and a restaurant at first floor level and a temporary exhibition space at the mezzanine level.

The Great Court has, since it opened in 2000, become the principal circulation space through the Museum. When the British Library occupied part of the building the circulation was convoluted. There was no complete circuit of the Museum at the ground floor level and the route from the principal entrance to the northern galleries required the visitor to go up to the first floor. The Great Court has transformed the way that the visitor experiences the Museum. It is the primary space that visitors use for orientation and it contains the majority of the visitor facilities, lavatories, shop and cafeteria, as well as a place to sit down. The Great Court is also the only way to traverse east to west on the ground level without doubling back to the entrance hall. The Great Court is listed at Grade I by virtue of its location in the centre of the Museum, and contains the highly significant Reading Room. The roof is entirely new as is the floor. The original courtyard was below the present level with steps up to the principal floor level. The decision was made when the Foster scheme was implemented to bring the courtyard up to the principal floor level to avoid the difficulty that would be created by steps at this point.

The two desks for which a new temporary application is being made have been in place in the Great Court since 2008. These two desks including the proposal for additional screening are freestanding on the stone floor and do not touch the walls. The only physical connection with the building is the electrical and data cabling. The desks are quite large, as is necessary to serve the purpose for ticket sales (East side) and the hiring of audio-guides (West side). However, the desks are small in the scale of the general space of the Great Court and are comparable in scale to the information desks which have stood in the space since it was first opened and is similar in scale to the exhibits in this area.

The reasons for the application for the continuing use of the desks in this space are described in full in the Design & Access Statement. The desks have become an essential part of the service to visitors and it is difficult to see how this service (ticketing and audio guides) could conveniently be provided to visitors anywhere else in the building. The Great Court has become the start of practically every visitor's experience of the Museum and this is the place where, at present, the ticketing and distribution of audio-guides needs to take place.

The temporary installations were first consented on 08 August 2007 Reference 2007/2934/L, renewed on 22 July 2008 Reference 2008/1376/L and Varied on 04 April 2011 Reference 2011/0605/P, and renewed again in July 2015 Reference 2015/1049/L. This application simply seeks to renew this expired consent.

There will be no effect of any kind on the historic fabric of the Great Court. The desks do have some impact on the appearance of the space – but this is minimal in terms of the scale of the desks and the overall scale of the space.

The desks are located at the East & West edge of the Great Court and are relatively slim in profile therefore do not impede the flow of visitors and circulation within the British Museum. Their size and position do block the view of a small section of the Great Court wall, however this is a small area in relation to the overall size of the Great Court and they do not obstruct any specific architectural detailing therefore they are considered low impact. The public benefits of having the desks are deemed to outweigh the small impact the desk have on the overall space of the Great Court.

# HERITAGE ASSETS AND PLANNING POLICY

## INTRODUCTION

Due to the special significance and the Grade I listed status of the British Museum and its location within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area the following planning legislation and policy must be considered:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990)
- National Planning Policy Framework – specifically Section 16  
*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*
- The London Plan: The Spatial Development Strategy for London – in particular Policy 7.8
- Camden Local Plan – specifically policy D2

## PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS ACT) 1990

Listed buildings are designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for their special architectural or historic interest. Listing gives them protection as alterations, additions or demolitions are controlled by Listed Building Consent, which is required by local planning authorities when change is proposed.

### National and Local Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (revised July 2018) is the overarching planning policy document for England and provides guidance about how to implement the legislation which covers the historic environment, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Within Section 16 of the NPPF 'Conservation and enhancing the historic environment' are the government's policies for the protection of heritage.

The policies advise a holistic approach to planning and development, where all significant elements that make up the historic environment are termed heritage assets. These consist of designated assets, such as listed buildings or conservation areas, non-designated assets, such as locally listed buildings, or those features which are of heritage value. The policies within the document emphasise the need for assessing the significance of heritage assets and their setting in order to fully understand the historic environment and inform suitable design proposals for change to significant buildings. The document also requires that the impact of development proposals which affect heritage assets is assessed.

Of particular relevance is paragraphs 196:

*196. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.*

## THE LONDON PLAN

The London Plan is the overall strategic plan for London, and it sets out a fully integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of the capital over the next 20–25 years. First published in 2011, the most recent version dates from 2016 and forms part of the development plan for Greater London. London boroughs' local plans need to be in general conformity with the London Plan, and its policies guide decisions on planning applications by councils and the Mayor. The key policy of relevance to this report is 7.8 and is reproduced below.

### Policy 7.8 – Heritage Assets and Archaeology

#### Strategic

*A London's heritage assets and historic environment, including listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and other natural and historic landscapes, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields, scheduled monuments, archaeological remains and memorials should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be taken into account.*

*B Development should incorporate measures that identify, record, interpret, protect and, where appropriate, present the site's archaeology.*

#### Planning decisions

*C Development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.*

*D Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.*

*E New development should make provision for the protection of archaeological resources, landscapes and significant memorials. The physical assets should, where possible, be made available to the public on-site. Where the archaeological asset or memorial cannot be preserved or managed on-site, provision must be made for the investigation, understanding, recording, dissemination and archiving of that asset.*



## CAMDEN LOCAL PLAN

The Camden Local Plan, adopted in 2017, sets out the Council's planning policies, providing a robust and effective framework within which development can take place. The policies in the Plan respond to the borough's unique characteristics and contribute to delivering the Camden Plan and other local priorities. The Local Plan will cover the period from 2016–2031. The principal policy of relevance to this assessment is D2 – Heritage, which is reproduced below.

### Policy D2 Heritage

*The Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens and locally listed heritage assets.*

### Designated Heritage Assets

*Designed heritage assets include conservation areas and listed buildings. The Council will not permit the loss of or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, including conservation areas and Listed Buildings, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:*

*A the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site;*

*B no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation;*

*C conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*

*D the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

*The Council will not permit development that results in harm that is less than substantial to the significance of a designated heritage asset unless the public benefits of the proposal convincingly outweigh that harm.*

### Conservation areas

*Conservation areas are designated heritage assets and this section should be read in conjunction with the section above headed 'designated heritage assets'. In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management strategies when assessing applications within conservation areas.*

*The Council will:*

*A require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area;*

*B resist the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area;*

*C resist development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character or appearance of that conservation area; and*

*D preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character and appearance of a conservation area or which provide a setting for Camden's Architectural Heritage*

### Listed Buildings

*Listed buildings are designated heritage assets and this section should be read in conjunction with the section above headed 'designated heritage assets'. To preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will:*

*A resist the total or substantial demolition of a listed building;*

*B resist proposals for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where this would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the building; and*

*C resist development that would cause harm to significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting.*

### Archaeology

*The Council will protect remains of archaeological importance by ensuring acceptable measures are taken proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset to preserve them and their setting, including physical preservation, where appropriate.*

*Other heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets*

*The Council will seek to protect other heritage assets including non-designated heritage assets (including those on and off the local list), Registered Parks and Gardens and London Squares.*

*The effect of a proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, balancing the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*

