

Design and Access Statement

UCL Day Nursery
55-56 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury
for UCL



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Job No. 190775

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Section a: Design & Access Statement

1.00 Introduction

This Design & Access Statement is to support and be read in conjunction with the following drawings for the proposed refurbishment scheme at Nos 55 & 56 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury, London, WC1H 0NT. The application is to be read with the following drawings prepared by Kendall Kingscott:

190775 1150 Site Plan
190775 1151 Site Logistics Plan
190775 1200 Existing GF Plan
190775 1210 Demolition & Alterations Plan
190775 1410 Proposed GA Plan
190775 2200 Proposed Fire Strategy Plan
190775 2210 Proposed Below Ground Drainage Plan
190775 2400 Proposed Ceiling and Finishes Plan
190775 5200 Proposed Internal Door Schedule
190775 5300 Existing & Proposed External Door
190775 5400 Section and Details

The existing UCL Day Nursery, which the proposed work seeks to extend, is located on Gordon Square in Bloomsbury, London. The site is located within a predominantly commercial area, although residential dwellings also exist nearby.

The site area is approximately 821sqm inclusive of external areas. Access to the existing nursery is via the main entrance off Woburn Square, whereas access to the rear is available from the side access road behind the terrace.

Nos 55 & 56 Gordon Square is situated within a row of five 6No. storey (inc basement and loft conversion) townhouses that are currently leased by UCL and serve as office space, educational facilities and previously, student accommodation, though the latter has recently been vacated. All properties along this terrace comprise brick and stucco early 19th century construction with basements.

The proposal is to utilise the recently vacated student residence at basement level in Nos 55 & 56 Gordon Square to increase the existing day nursery capacity thus accommodating the forecasted capacity increase.

All properties situated on this terrace, i.e. Nos 55-59 Gordon Square are Grade II Listed and lie within the London Borough of Camden.

2.00 Analysis of Existing Site

The existing day nursery facility is located within the basements of Nos 57-59 Gordon Square WC1H 0PN; a product of several developments providing access between the adjoining properties at basement level.

The existing facility makes use of small light wells to the rear, where each space currently occupied by the Nursery has been developed as play areas for use by the children and staff, all of which are accessed from basement level or via the rear side access gate.

The current occupancy stands at 67No pupils, but this number is expected to rise to 80No. following completion of the proposed refurbishment scheme. It is understood that there are approximately 200No. applicants on the Nursery waiting list, meaning that the increased floor space will be a welcome addition to the facility to combat the ongoing pressures on pupil numbers.

3.00 Design Proposal

The proposal will address the need for increased space as noted in section 2.00 through a light touch refurbishment of No.55 & 56's basement. The area in question was previously used as student residence but has been vacant since the tenants left in Spring 2019.

The refurbishment therefore seeks to provide the following functions within the confines of the building:

- 1No. designated kitchen for the storage and preparation of meals;
- 1No. laundry room;
- 1No. designated Children's WC;
- 1No. designated Staff WC;
- 2No. play rooms;
- 1No. office space for staff;
- 1No. hot desk area (inc storage)
- A means of connecting the existing Nursery with the new facility;
- External play area.

Every effort has been made to reduce the impact of this minor development on the building's fabric because of the listed status. There has been frequent and ongoing consultation with the Local Authority, including Pre Application Advice and an on site inspection with John Diver, Planning Officer (LB Camden) and Antonia Powell, Conservation Officer (LB Camden) together with the Design Team to assist in the development and address design concerns prior to the submission of this application.

4.00 Use

The facility is open between 08.30-17.30 for children associated to staff and students of UCL. The Day Nursery will be managed by the same staff throughout the different age groups therefore the new facility must be accessible internally from the existing. This will be provided via the only means available; forming a new opening in the party wall. Although a destructive solution, the approach will provide full access between the basements of 55-59 Gordon Square, which is vital for the overall function of the Nursery.

5.00 Scale

The building provides sufficient space to create a suitable sized facility to meet future requirements whilst sitting comfortably within the constraints of the site.

The proposed Nursery facility has been designed to sit sympathetically within the existing building. Only minor modifications to the external spaces to the rear to form a play area will be visible from a public road, but the garden includes a boundary with high masonry walls and cast iron railings which restricts line of sight.

6.00 Layout & Scope

The application drawings show the layout of the proposals within the building, detailing the extent of refurbishment work required (including the proposed demolition / alteration elements agreed with the Local Authority). To summarise the proposals in text, the existing residential flat will be developed to incorporate an independently functional nursery space (though part of the existing facility) within the confines of the building. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- Forming a new opening in the party wall;
- Replacement of the existing kitchen with a hard wearing robust counterpart;
- Demolition of non-original stud work walls to increase space in the children's WC, whilst reducing the size of the kitchen;
- Installation of new fittings, including sanitaryware and kitchen provisions;
- Replacement external doors to increase security and improve access outside;
- Renewal of finishes throughout;
- Externally, the hardstanding will have a bespoke combination of EPDM Rubber Safety Flooring and Artificial Leisure Grass to provide a safe play area for the children.

It is important to note that all proposals have been carefully considered to reduce the impact on building to retain the character wherever possible, though we note that previous refurbishment schemes appear to have removed numerous features of the original building without the required consent.

7.00 Appearance

The development aims to use materials which promote a minimal maintenance approach and, wherever possible, the appearance internally will complement the surrounding themes.

The replacement external doors to the rear, although not original, have been designed to mimic the appearance of the existing doorset whilst ensuring they meet minimum security requirements and current Building Regulations. An indicative design has been issued as part of this planning application.

Externally, the proposed soft surfaces will have colours carefully selected to ensure the environment remains aesthetically pleasing, though we would note that these areas are not visible from public roads.

Additional cast iron railings to match the existing fence are due for installation on the boundary wall where currently missing. UCL currently plan to implement climbing plants across the boundary to improve aesthetics and provide a bright, fresh and enjoyable environment for the children.

8.00 Ecology

The initial survey identified the presence of a fig tree in the rear garden, situated within the paved hardstanding. The tree must be pruned to clear space at low level before the facility goes live, therefore an Arboricultural Report has been commissioned and issued to UCL to assess the condition and safety aspects of the Fig Tree, and detail the implications on the proposed development including the change of use.

The report summarises that the Tree is likely circa 30 years old and healthy, though improvements could be made to increase water consumption by removing the paved slab perimeter and cobbles, exposing the soil immediately around the bole. The design included within this planning application captures all requirements made by the Tree Specialist.

UCL Nursery also plan to implement a light netting system under the canopy to catch falling objects such as branches and the fruit. This system is already in place across the existing external areas and works adequately.

9.00 Access

The new facility will be accessed from two locations; the main entrance on Woburn Square and the side access road to the rear. Refer to the Proposed Plan for more information.

Due to the basement location and adjacent road levels, neither entrance incorporates level access, nor does the building include lift provisions. It is therefore not possible to implement level access without significant alterations and costs, so the decision has been taken to maintain current working methods of access to and from the building, i.e. managed locally by staff on an ad-hoc basis.

Section b: Transport Statement

Site Context

The existing nursery is located in University College London's (UCL) Bloomsbury Campus within the London Borough of Camden. The current nursery occupancy is 67 pupils, which is expected to increase by 13 children as a result of the proposals.

The nursery falls with a wider 'Green Travel Plan UCL' released in February 2015. The Travel Plan encompassing the total Bloomsbury Campus.

It is noted that the nursery will only be accessible to UCL staff and students. Very limited car parking spaces are provided for the Bloomsbury Campus and there are limited other options to park for an extended period of time nearby.

A travel survey for UCL students and staff was undertaken in 2012. It was found that car journeys were made by staff members living outside Greater London as part of a staged journey including transport on overland train into central London. Car journeys amounted to 2.5% of students and 8% of staff.

Consequently, it is not expected that any users will drive to the site.

Policy

Camden Planning Guidance Transport, adopted in March 2019, states the following:

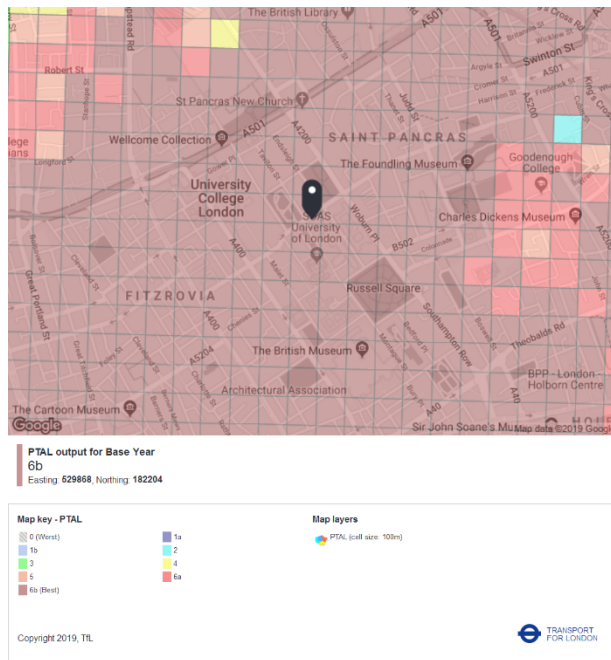
'In line with Local Plan Policy A1, the Council will expect a travel plan to be prepared for any planning application that will significantly increase travel demand or would have a significant impact on travel or the transport system.'

The development proposal entails an increase of circa 13 children, this would not be considered to significantly increase travel demand. Furthermore, given that there is an existing wider Travel Plan, a further document is not expected to be required.

Accessibility

A key element of national, regional and local policy is to ensure that developments are located in areas where alternative methods of travel are available. Developments should be located close to complementary land uses. This supports the aims of integrating planning and transport, providing more sustainable transport choices reducing overall travel and car use.

Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) is a rating system based upon the proximity of the site to public transport services within the area. The image below displays the PTAL rating for the site.



The site receives the highest possible rating of 6b, indicating that the site is within an extremely accessible area by public transport.

Initiatives

Green Travel Plan ICL identifies key commitments to encourage sustainable modes of travel.

The following actions are presented to encourage walking:

- *‘Enhance wayfinding on campus and between UCL buildings to promote walking between sites and key destinations, in accordance with the UCL Public Realm Strategy. Provide walking distance and time maps on the Green UCL web-site.*
- *Improve the provision of showers, lockers and drying facilities through on-going refurbishment works*
- *Explore the use of on-line Personal Travel Planning to provide accurate travel information to promote mode choice to staff and students.*
- *Explore providing mileage for walking for business travel over a certain distance.’*

The document also states that public transport will be encouraged through the provision of:

- *‘Interest free loans to staff for the purchase of public transport annual season tickets;*
- *Use of electronic personal travel planning tools such as ‘MyPTP’ to optimise commutes by public transport and facilitate mode choice.*
- *Negotiating travel discounts with TfL through UCL Departmental Oyster Cards for use by staff and students for business or research related travel in London.’*

In addition, UCL has committed to:

- *‘Engage with TfL to explore opportunities to discount the cost of public transport use for staff and students for business or research related travel.*
- *Explore the use of on-line personal travel planning to provide accurate travel information to promote mode choice to staff and students.*
- *Potential changes to the expenses system will be investigated to allow first class train travel for long journeys (similar to the current system for long flights).*
- *Provide travel times for major cities in the UK, where flights may be likely, on the expenses system.’*