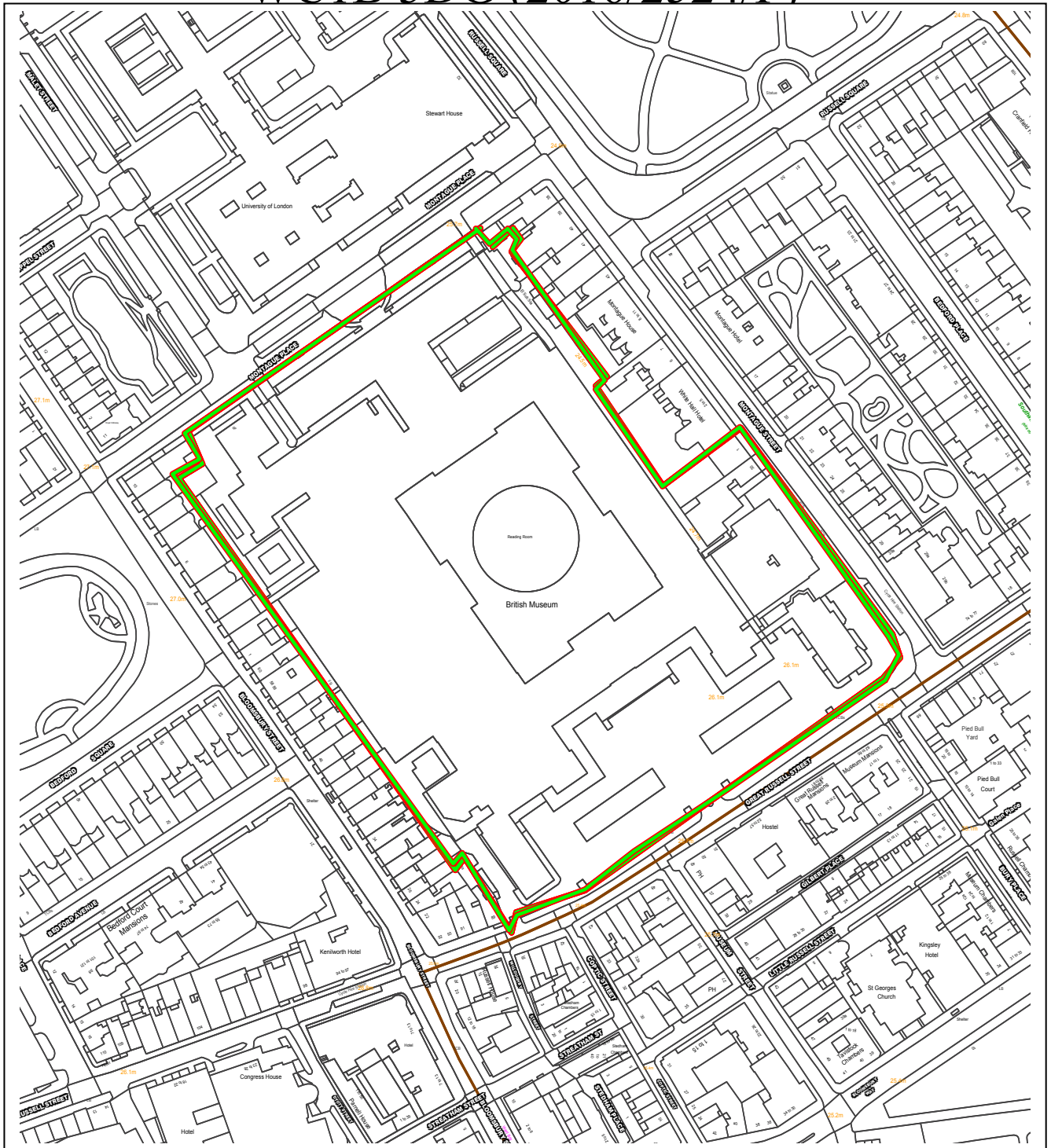


British Museum, Great Russell Street, WC1B 3DG (2016/2524/P)



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BRITISH MUSUEM (REF 2016/2524/P) – SECURITY STRUCTURE IN FRONT FORECOURT

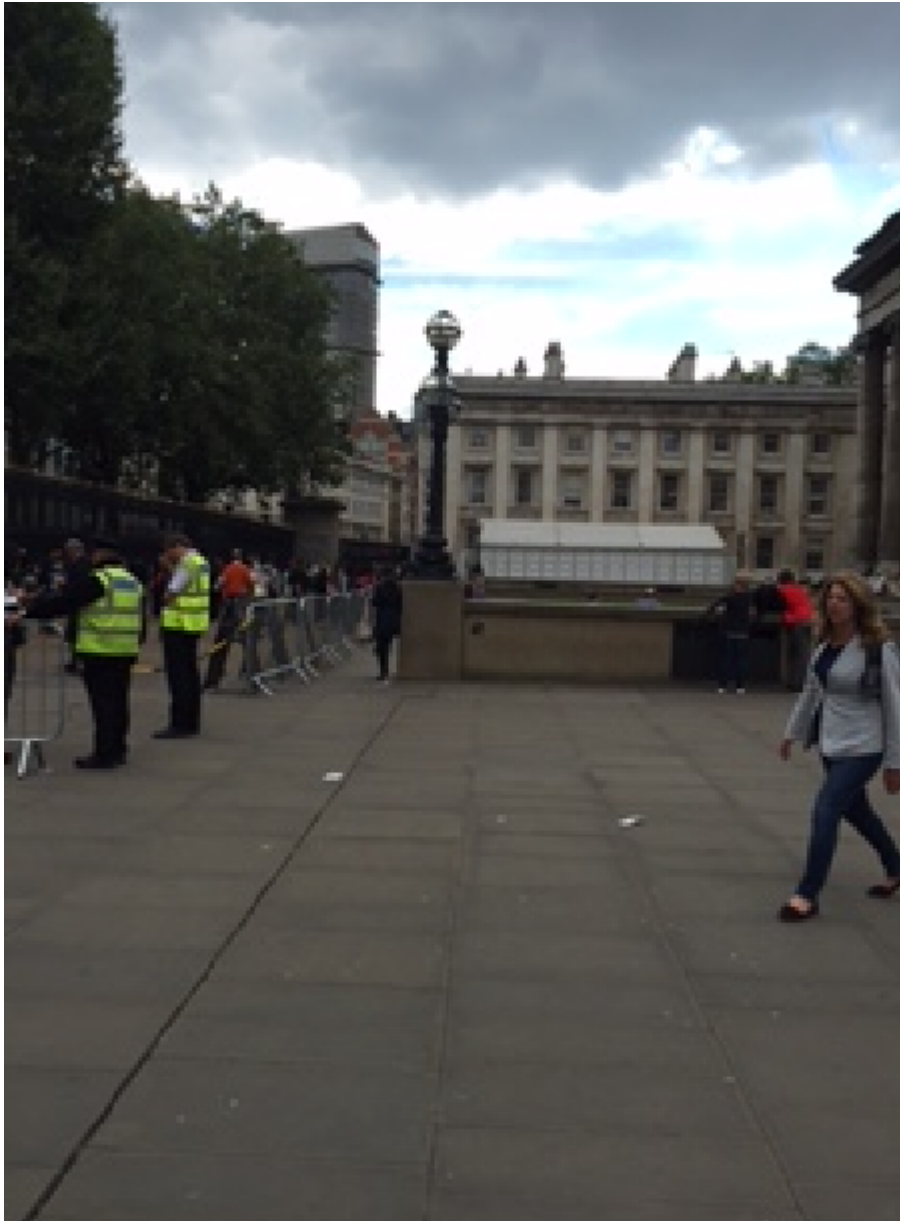


Photo 1: View of the security structure from the eastern side of the front forecourt



Photo 2: View of the security structure from Great Russell Street looking north

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet	Expiry Date:	18/10/2016
(Members Briefing)		N/A / attached	Consultation Expiry Date:	22/09/2016
Officer			Application Number(s)	
Elaine Quigley			2016/2524/P	
Application Address			Drawing Numbers	
British Museum Great Russell Street London WC1B 3DG			See draft decision notice	
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature	
Proposal(s)				
Erection of a single storey structure in the front forecourt to provide an external search facility to the museum for a temporary period of 2 years (retrospective)				
Recommendation(s):		Grant conditional temporary planning permission		
Application Type:		Full Planning Permission		

Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:	Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:						
Consultations						
Adjoining Occupiers:	No. notified	00	No. of responses	06	No. of objections	05
Summary of consultation responses:	<p>A site notice was displayed on 31/08/2016 (expired 21/09/2016) and a press notice was advertised on 01/09/2016 (expired on 22/09/2016). Additional consultation in the form of site notices was undertaken due to the time that passed since the first site notices were displayed. Site notices were displayed from 15/07/2020 to 08/08/2020.</p> <p>Original consultation (2016) 6 letters received from local residents at 1st, 2nd and 3rd floor, 45 Great Russell Street (2 different occupiers); 46 Great Russell Street, 47 Great Russell Street; Flat 2, 34 Museum Street; and 1 local resident who did not provide a postal address raising the following concerns:</p> <p><u>Security issues and need</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to understand how the security search facility will reduce terrorism when terrorists are likely to perpetrate acts in the forecourt outside the security search facility <p><i>Officer response: See Section 4.0 "Need for security structures" for response</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternatives should be vigilant gate and forecourt staff with the appropriate technology to offer more realistic ways to reduce the impact of a terrorist act. Not clear how searching handbags will do anything to prevent any terrorist acts – search facility didn't stop demonstrators climbing the Museum columns recently <p><i>Officer response: See Section 4.0 "Need for security structures" for response</i></p> <p><u>Design/ views</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views of the Museum front façade are now obscured by large plastic structure totally out of place in the forecourt of the listed building • Unbalances the symmetrical arrangement of the Museum and the Southern Forecourt in views from Great Russell Street and within the Southern Forecourt • Unattractive in appearance • Completely out of character with the main building and all other buildings in eye sight on Great Russell Street • Aluminium crowd control barriers corralling visitors to the eyesore of the temporary pavilion have been erected without planning permission • Access to the Museum is now altered and the view of the historic façade is spoilt • Search facility marquee gives impression of a private party or an area for hire rather than looking like the entrance to London's most popular museum • Allowing buildings in the garden forecourt is a big retrograde step in preservation and caring for our heritage <p><i>Officer response: See Section 5.0 "Design" section</i></p> <p><u>Temporary permission</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the search facility is called temporary they do have a habit of becoming permanent. The Museum should urgently review its options for security and find a solution that does not detract from the asset of the 					

	<p>building façade.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The original entrance used to house a shop and ticket office which have now moved to the glazed courtyard. Could the search facility be housed there instead? <p><i>Officer response: See Section 5 “Design” and Section 4 “Need for the security structures” for responses</i></p> <p><u>General</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question the fact that there is no listed building application <p><i>Officer response: See Section 2 “Proposal” for response</i></p> <p>One comment from 46 Great Russell Street;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No notification of the planning application to neighbours <p><i>Officer response: 2 site notices were displayed outside the front entrance to the site. Since July 2016 the Council no longer sends individual consultation letters notifying local residents about planning applications</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objection providing permission is given for a very limited period so that a more permanent solution is found. Do not want it to become permanent. <p><i>Officer response: See Section 5 “Design” for response</i></p> <p>Additional consultation (2020) No consultation responses were received following the display of the site notices.</p>
<p>CAAC/Local groups comments:</p>	<p>None received</p> <p>Original consultation 2016</p> <p>Historic England: The existing temporary structure is located in a highly prominent location within the Southern Forecourt and is considered to cause harm to the setting of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the setting of the Museum. The temporary structure is highly distracting in views and is seen to unbalance the symmetrical arrangement of the Museum and the Southern Forecourt in views from Great Russell Street and within the Southern Forecourt. The temporary structure also directly obscures views towards the West Residence and towards the main colonnaded façade of the Museum.</p> <p>HE 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 benefit lies with the local 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.</p> <p>Additional consultation 2020</p> <p>Historic England: Following a second round of consultations in July 2020 Historic England confirmed that their advice from their previous consultation response still applies recommending that the permission be for a temporary period of 2 years.</p>

Site Description

The application site lies to the north of Great Russell Street, to the west side of Montague Street, to the east of Bloomsbury Street and Bedford Square and to the south of Montague Place and is the home of the British Museum. The Museum is a Grade I listed building which accommodates the national collection of historical artefacts from across the world. It is one of the top visitor attractions in the UK.

The site is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and its complex includes the Grade II listed buildings along Montague Street and Bloomsbury Street and Bedford Square.

Relevant History

A planning application (ref 2016/4219/P) has been submitted for the erection of a temporary structure including ramp and handrail, fencing and vehicle barrier outside the KEB building north entrance to provide an external search facility to the museum. This application is pending consideration. As there are no objections to the northern security structure it can be determined under the Council's delegated powers.

A planning application (ref 2018/5342/P) has been submitted for the installation of security blocks outside the northern entrance on Montague Place in association with the Museum for a temporary period of 5 years. The application has been resolved to grant subject to signing of the s106 legal agreement.

Relevant policies

NPPF (2019)

The London Plan (2016)

The London Plan Intend to Publish (2019)

Camden Local Plan (2017)

C3 Cultural and leisure facilities

C5 Safety and security

A1 Managing the impact of development

D1 Design

D2 Heritage

T1 Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport

CPG Guidance

Amenity CPG (2018)

Community uses, leisure and pubs CPG (2018)

Design CPG (2019)

Conservation area appraisal

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (CAAMS) 2011

Assessment

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The British Museum attracts approximately 6 million visitors a year from all over the world. Due to its popularity the venue is considered to be a higher risk to terrorism by the MET police, the Museum's Head of Security and Visitor Services and was the subject of a terrorist threat in 2017. The Museum entrance when originally built was to accommodate a significantly smaller number of visitors. Before the middle of March this year (pre-COVID-19) the Museum was seeing approximately 10,000 visitors a day. The level of bag checks at the entry to the building has increased over the years. As a free entry publicly accessible building the Museum will continue to attract large numbers of visitors on a daily basis.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 Permission is sought for the erection of a temporary structure in the south forecourt to provide an external search facility to the museum for 2 years (retrospective). The security structure comprises a single storey building with a footprint of approximately 100 sq. m that lies between the West Residence and the West Lawn within the southern front courtyard. The structure's purpose is to provide security screening to visitors entering the museum as an additional security measure to the existing security screening within the main entrance of the Museum itself. There are tensa barriers on the front forecourt that direct visitors from the main entrance gates to the security structure. There is a second security structure on the northern forecourt fronting onto Montague Place that was installed at the same time as the structure in the southern forecourt (see planning history for further details). As no objections have been received to the planning application for the northern security structure it can be determined under delegated powers and does not need to be presented at Member's Briefing. The structures have been in place since August 2016 and planning permission is being sought retrospectively. Listed building consent is not required for these works as the security structures are not attached to the listed building but are independent structures that require planning permission only.

2.2 Although temporary in nature the Museum is repairing and cleaning the security structures to address wear and tear and maintain their appearance. It has been confirmed that the works will be planned and carried out on a like-for-like basis with an external deep clean and repairs including re-levelling the main structure, replacement of the external apron at low level, remedial work to cladding to ensure water tightness, replacement of entry / exit ramps and internal fit out. The structure has been in place for nearly 4 years. During this time discussions have been ongoing with the Museum during regular quarterly meetings which include Historic England regarding the timescales that the structures would need to be in place and how they could be treated to minimise any visual harm. Discussions around a permanent solution to address the security issues will be undertaken as part of a future masterplan which will include the Council, Historic England as well as other stakeholders and local groups.

3.0 ASSESSMENT

3.1 The main material considerations associated with the proposal include:

- Need for the security structures
- Design (including impact on the character and appearance of the Museum and the conservation area)
- Amenity
- Other issues

4.0 NEED FOR THE SECURITY STRUCTURES

4.1 Concerns have been raised by local residents about the need for the security structures and the benefit of bag searches. Since the installation of the security structures the Museum have been able to confiscate a significant number of dangerous weapons from being brought into the Museum as a result of bag searches. It is agreed that the search facility did not stop demonstrators climbing the Museum column however this sort of public demonstration would not require the same response as a terrorist attack which is what the security structures are there to try to prevent.

4.2 The need for the security structures outside the main Museum building are 2 fold:

1. To reduce the risk to the public, it was essential to relocate bag searching outside of the Museum building in order to try to reduce the potential for any terrorist threat entering the Museum building itself. It can therefore be dealt with away from the main building and the majority of visitors and emergency services can access more easily
2. It also provides the following operational management benefits:
 - Multiple search lanes allow high volume of visitor flows from the entrance into the grounds and eases congestion into the entrance hall of the Museum as the flow of visitors is undertaken in a more controlled way.
 - Provides adequate protection from weather conditions

- Provides adequate lighting and heating for safe working

4.3 Local residents have queried if the structures can be relocated within the Museum building itself. Following discussions with the Museum it was advised that the housing of the search facility is better to impose security outside of the main museum building, so that in the event or discovery of an incident the matter can be dealt with outside of the main building away from crowds. It is also easier for emergency services to access the northern and southern forecourts rather than accessing the main building. Furthermore the historic main entrance to the building is too narrow for crowd control and there would be insufficient floorspace within the entrance halls. The Great Court in terms of capacity and other functions such as circulation space, information, tour and other group congregations is not large enough to accommodate a search facility. Also, once inside the building in terms of the visitor journey, visitors would have to double back to access the cloakroom after security, which would be extremely difficult to facilitate.

4.4 The Councils Designing Out Crime officer has reviewed the information along with the Met Police Security Adviser and has confirmed that there are no objections to the application.

5.0 DESIGN

5.1 The single storey structure measures 8m by 15m. It is set back 10m from the front boundary metal railings and set away from the eastern elevation of the West Residence by 5.6m. It has metal panelled walls with a tented roof structure that measures 4.65m at the apex. Its internal finishes include ceiling linings and a barrier carpet on a level floor deck with ramped access.

5.2 The Council acknowledges that the proposed security structure would be a prominent feature within the direct foreground setting of the Museum. The symmetrical design of the Smirke Museum buildings, their arrangement around the Southern Forecourt and associated boundary treatments all work together to create the appearance of a grand palace composition that reinforces the status of the Museum as a Grade I listed building. The Southern Forecourt is integral to the setting of the Museum and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. As such, it is considered that the security structure does cause a degree of harm to the setting of that building and the wider Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The harm to the setting of the building is due to the position of the structure outside the Grade I listed building. The harm would be considered less than substantial to the designated heritage asset (i.e. the Grade I listed building) as it is not affecting the designated heritage asset itself rather the issue is the harm to its setting. The proposed structure would be out of character in the conservation area due to its size, scale, bulk, footprint, form and appearance. However the harm is identified as less than substantial harm as the impact has to be considered in relation to the setting of the conservation area as a whole and the proposal affects only to a small area of the Bloomsbury conservation area. The issues of harm have to be weighed against the public benefits that the proposal provides. Considerable importance and weight has been attached to the harm caused in this instance, nevertheless the security structure would be in place for a temporary period of time until a permanent solution is identified through the future masterplan for the estate and the security screening improvements provided by the structure are considered a significant public benefit which would outweigh the less than substantial harm caused. It is accepted that the approach taken is an appropriate temporary solution to address the existing security issues and that the works have been carefully conceived to cause the least harm to the listed building in line with paragraph 196 of the NPPF. Historic England were notified about the application and recommended that it should be determined in accordance with Camden's local plan guidance. The Council and Historic England attend regular meetings with the Museum to discuss estate matters which includes the status of current and outstanding planning matters. Historic England have confirmed that the advice and recommendations that they provided in relation to the application remains unchanged.

5.3 As already stated above, this type of development is something that the Council would not normally support due to the impact of the proposal on the conservation area. Given the longer time period required to design and plan for a permanent solution as part of a future masterplan document the permission would be for a temporary period of 2 years and would then be required to be removed and the area made good. This would be secured by condition.

6.0 AMENITY

6.1 Due to the location and nature of the single storey security structure away from neighbouring residential properties the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers in terms of loss of privacy, outlook or daylight and sunlight and would be considered acceptable.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Grant conditional planning permission for a temporary period of 2 years.

The decision to refer an application to Planning Committee lies with the Director of Regeneration and Planning. Following the Members Briefing panel on Monday 17th August 2020, nominated members will advise whether they consider this application should be reported to the Planning Committee. For further information, please go to www.camden.gov.uk and search for 'Members Briefing'.

Application ref: 2016/2524/P
Contact: Elaine Quigley
Tel: 020 7974 5101
Email: Elaine.Quigley@camden.gov.uk
Date: 9 July 2020

Development Management
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WC1H 9JE

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Kelly Rider
The Planning Lab,
South Wing, Somerset House,
Strand
London
WC2R 1LA

DRAFT

Dear Sir/Madam

DECISION

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

Full Planning Permission Granted

Address:

British Museum
Great Russell Street
London
WC1B 3DG

DECISION

Proposal:

Erection of a single storey structure in the front forecourt to provide an external search facility to the museum for a temporary period of 2 years (RETROSPECTIVE)

Drawing Nos: EW-BG-PP-01; EW-BG-PP-02 rev B; EW-BG-PP-03; EW-BG-PP-04 rev A;
EW-BG-PP-05 rev A; EW-BG-PP-06; Letter from the British Museum dated 06/03/2020.

The Council has considered your application and decided to grant permission subject to the following condition(s):

Condition(s) and Reason(s):

- 1 The proposed single storey security structure in the south forecourt hereby permitted is for a temporary period only and shall be removed from the site and the site made good by no more than 2 years from the date of this permission (21/08/2022).

Reason: The type of structure is not such as the local planning authority is prepared to approve, other than for a limited period, in view of its appearance. The permanent retention of the structure would be contrary to the requirements of policy D1 and D2 of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

EW-BG-PP-01; EW-BG-PP-02 rev B; EW-BG-PP-03; EW-BG-PP-04 rev A; EW-BG-PP-05 rev A; EW-BG-PP-06; Letter from the British Museum dated 06/03/2020.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning.

Informative(s):

- 1 Your proposals may be subject to control under the Building Regulations and/or the London Buildings Acts that cover aspects including fire and emergency escape, access and facilities for people with disabilities and sound insulation between dwellings. You are advised to consult the Council's Building Control Service, Camden Town Hall, Judd St, Kings Cross, London NW1 2QS (tel: 020-7974 6941).

In dealing with the application, the Council has sought to work with the applicant in a positive and proactive way in accordance with paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

You can find advice about your rights of appeal at:

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/appeals/guidance/guidancecontent>

Yours faithfully

Director of Economy, Regeneration and Investment