

52-57 Viridian Helen Graham House Hostel

Optivo

Great Russell Street

London

WC1B 3BA

## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Installation of mechanical equipment to rear courtyard



PREPARED BY

Change the Use

## **INTRODUCTION**

This planning statement has been prepared by Change the Use in support of an application for Full Planning Permission for the installation of mechanical equipment within the rear courtyard of 52-57 Viridian Helen Graham House Hostel.

## **SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA**

The application site is Helen Graham House, a hostel providing student accommodation to London University students. The hostel includes several meeting rooms and office spaces for students to study from. Due to the age of the building, being of 19th century build, the site does not contain air conditioning to all rooms within the building. As such, air conditioning is required to ensure the hostel can continue to function and compete with other 21st century student accommodation.

The application site is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, specifically within the Museum Street/Great Russell Street sub area and is recognised as a 'Positive Building' within this area. The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy provides the following description for the area encompassing the application site:

"To the east of Museum Street is a group of five storey late 19th century mansion blocks constructed in brick with decorative elements; Museum Mansions has yellow stock brick with classically-influenced stucco detailing including horizontal banding, whereas Nos 50-61 (consec) continue the banding but are constructed in red brick with contrasting stone decoration. This group has a strong vertical emphasis defined by the projecting gabled bays, and is expressed at street level by arched openings. Nos 52-58 (consec) have decorative cast-iron boundary railings."

## **PLANNING HISTORY**

From information made publicly available, the below highlights relevant planning history:

Reference	Description	Decision
2018/2885/P	Replacement of all windows by new timber and aluminium windows on all elevations	Approval

## **THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

The purpose of the proposed application is to provide mechanical equipment in the form of several air conditioning units at ground floor level located above an existing bike storage area. These units are to provide cooling to several rooms within the hostel – an office space, meeting and reception area (no habitable rooms).

The chosen Sigillius (Intarcon) air conditioning units benefits from external noise cancellation features resulting in the units generating significantly less noise when compared to similar units of other manufacturers. This is through a triple noise insulation measures as detailed in the following extract provided on the brochure included in the application:

*“Sigilus units feature triple noise insulation:*

- Noise insulated compressor compartment, separated from the airflow.*
- Hermetic reciprocating compressor with insulation cover (three-phase models) and discharge muffler.*
- Low-noise and low-speed fan on shock absorbing structure.”*

The proposed units are expected to cause minimal impact on neighbouring amenity or onto the conservation area through noise or visual pollution, and are proposed to enhance the vitality and viability of the site as a functioning hostel.

The documents included in the application provide particulars of the proposed location and detailing of the units function, size and potential noise generation.

#### SCALE

The dimensions of the proposed refrigeration units are as follows:  
1080mm x 830mm x 415mm

#### LAYOUT

The units are to be installed at ground floor level within the rear courtyard on the eastern side of the premises. They will be positioned directly on top of the existing bike storage area with the site chosen for optimal operation, accessibility and safety.

#### ACCESS

The units are positioned with adequate allowance for accessibility to the rear of the units to ensure safe maintenance, repair and operation.

#### APPEARANCE

Details of the units appearance are included in the application documents and shown in the included application documents.

#### LANDSCAPING

There are no proposed changes to landscaping required from the installation or operation of the machinery.

### **NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

#### National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into effect on 19 February 2019. The document effectively condenses previous planning policy guidance into one document (with the exception of certain Planning Policy Statements).

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development as stated in Section 2's Achieving sustainable Development. Paragraph 7 states:

*'The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'*

The NPPF explains in paragraph 8 that achieving sustainable development is possible through three overarching objectives:

- *'An economic objective - to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy*
- *A social objective - to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities*
- *An environmental objective - to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment'*

Section 12 on achieving well-designed places states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should ensure that developments:

- *'will function well and add to the overall quality of the area*
- *are sympathetic to local character and history*
- *establish or maintain a strong sense of place*
- *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development*
- *create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users'*

#### Local Planning Policies

The Camden Local Plan (2017) sets out the local planning authority's policies regarding planning and building developments.

The following relevant policy applies to the proposed development:

#### Policy A4 Noise and vibration

The Council will seek to ensure that noise and vibration is controlled and managed.

Development should have regard to Camden's Noise and Vibration Thresholds (Appendix 3). We will not grant planning permission for:

- a) development likely to generate unacceptable noise and vibration impacts;  
or
- b) development sensitive to noise in locations which experience high levels of noise, unless appropriate attenuation measures can be provided and will not harm the continued operation of existing uses.

We will only grant permission for noise generating development, including any plant and machinery, if it can be operated without causing harm to amenity. We will also seek to minimise the impact on local amenity from deliveries and from the demolition and construction phases of development.

## **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

The NPPF emphasises that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be at the heart of plan-making and decision-taking which means that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole.

The proposed development is seen to enhance the vitality and viability of a popular student accommodation within a historic building in central London through the provision of temperature control units. The modernisation of the building will allow the site to compete with alternative newer built student accommodation which include air conditioning. The development is seen as a positive addition and should be viewed in the same light from the local authority.

The impacts of noise and vibration from the proposed mechanical equipment is seen to be minimal with the units chosen featuring specific mechanisms to reduce the impact of external noise generation. The proposed development is therefore seen to bring no harm to neighbouring amenity or the Bloomsbury Conservation area.

## **CONCLUSION**

With the above & accompanying information, it is respectfully requested that this application for the installation of mechanical equipment within the rear courtyard of 52-57 Viridian Helen Graham House Hostel, be approved.

The application is proposed to enhance the central London student accommodation through the provision of appropriately controlled air temperature allowing students to continue to work during periods of high air temperatures. The proposed air conditioning units pose no detrimental impact on the building structurally or on neighbouring amenity due to noise cancelling features.

For the reasons set out, we consider that this application should be approved.