



EAST GATE BETWEEN 13 & 14 GRAY'S INN ROAD
LONDON WC1R 5JP

Proposal: Replacement of traffic barrier to Gray's Inn Square vehicular exit with gates.

Application for planning permission: 2021/1310/P

Application for listed building consent: 2021/0516/L

16 May 2021

The Bloomsbury Association objects to these applications and wishes to make the following comments.

1. A traffic light controlled traffic barrier was erected at the east gate as a temporary measure in 2017 during construction works affecting the entry to Gray's Inn from High Holborn. No listed building consent was sought, which was drawn to the Council's attention under enforcement case reference EN18/0541. Although construction works ceased a long time ago and the High Holborn entry reopened, the unauthorised traffic barrier on the east gatehouse has remained. These applications are seeking to make the arrangement permanent.
2. The proposed gate extends over the facades of both buildings on either side. It is not set politely within the gateway, as gates should be, nor is it freestanding, set a distance away from the gatehouse. This proposal, by reason of its design, siting, size and prominence, would be detrimental to the appearance and character of Gray's Inn Square and to the character of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It would also be damaging to the setting and architectural integrity of the host buildings, the terrace of Grade II* listed, late 17th Century buildings at 10-14 Gray's Inn Square, the gatehouse and adjacent Grade II listed Chapel. This is contrary to policy D1 (Design) and D2 (Heritage) of the Camden Local Plan and paragraph 113 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.
3. The proposed gate, like its unauthorised equivalent, makes no provision for reinstating pedestrian access, which is completely blocked. The temporary arrangement, providing access for vehicles only, is made permanent. While this is not a public right of way, the Honourable Society grants permissive access for pedestrians through Gray's Inn along an attractive network of pedestrian only routes and courts linking Bloomsbury and Holborn to Farringdon Station. This important east-west pedestrian route is facilitated by an existing pedestrian crossing outside the East Gate, over Gray's Inn Road to Baldwin's Gardens, Leather Lane, Greville Street and over the borough boundary to Farringdon and the City, and is acknowledged in the Council's Holborn Vision and Strategy.
4. Permanently closing this access for pedestrians, giving priority to vehicles, ignores the priority given in Camden's Transport Strategy to walking, cycling and public transport in preference to the private car. This is in breach of Policy T1 of the Camden Local Plan. The Policy states "In order to promote walking in the borough and improve the pedestrian environment, we will seek to ensure that developments:
 - a Improve the pedestrian environment by supporting high quality public realm improvement works;
 - b make improvements to the pedestrian environment including the provision of high quality safe road crossings where needed, seating, signage and landscaping;
 - c are easy and safe to walk through ('permeable')..."

Indeed, paragraph 10.10 of the Policy states: "The Council will continue to... deliver improved pedestrian accessibility and way finding within Camden and into neighbouring boroughs." This proposal impairs pedestrian accessibility and permeability. It may also present a risk to the safety of pedestrians, particularly those with visual impairment.

The Association supports good quality design that will enhance Bloomsbury's streetscape, which this does not. This proposal wrongly promotes the vehicle in a sensitive pedestrian environment. Moreover it does not meet the high standard required by Policies D1, D2 and T1 and, with such a demonstrable breach of the Council's planning policy and of its supplementary planning guidance, we look to the Council to refuse these applications.

We would be grateful if you would let us know of any further modification to the applications; the decision, if it is to be decided under delegated powers, or the meeting date if it is to be decided by Committee.

Stephen Heath
On behalf of the Bloomsbury Association

Copies to:
Councillor Rishi Madlani, London Borough of Camden
Sofie Fieldsend, London Borough of Camden
Jacqueline Saunders, London Borough of Camden
Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee
Chair, Bloomsbury Association



Gray's Inn: pedestrian permeability

