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Swiss Cottage Library

Heritage Impact Statement

Camden Borough Council

October 2021

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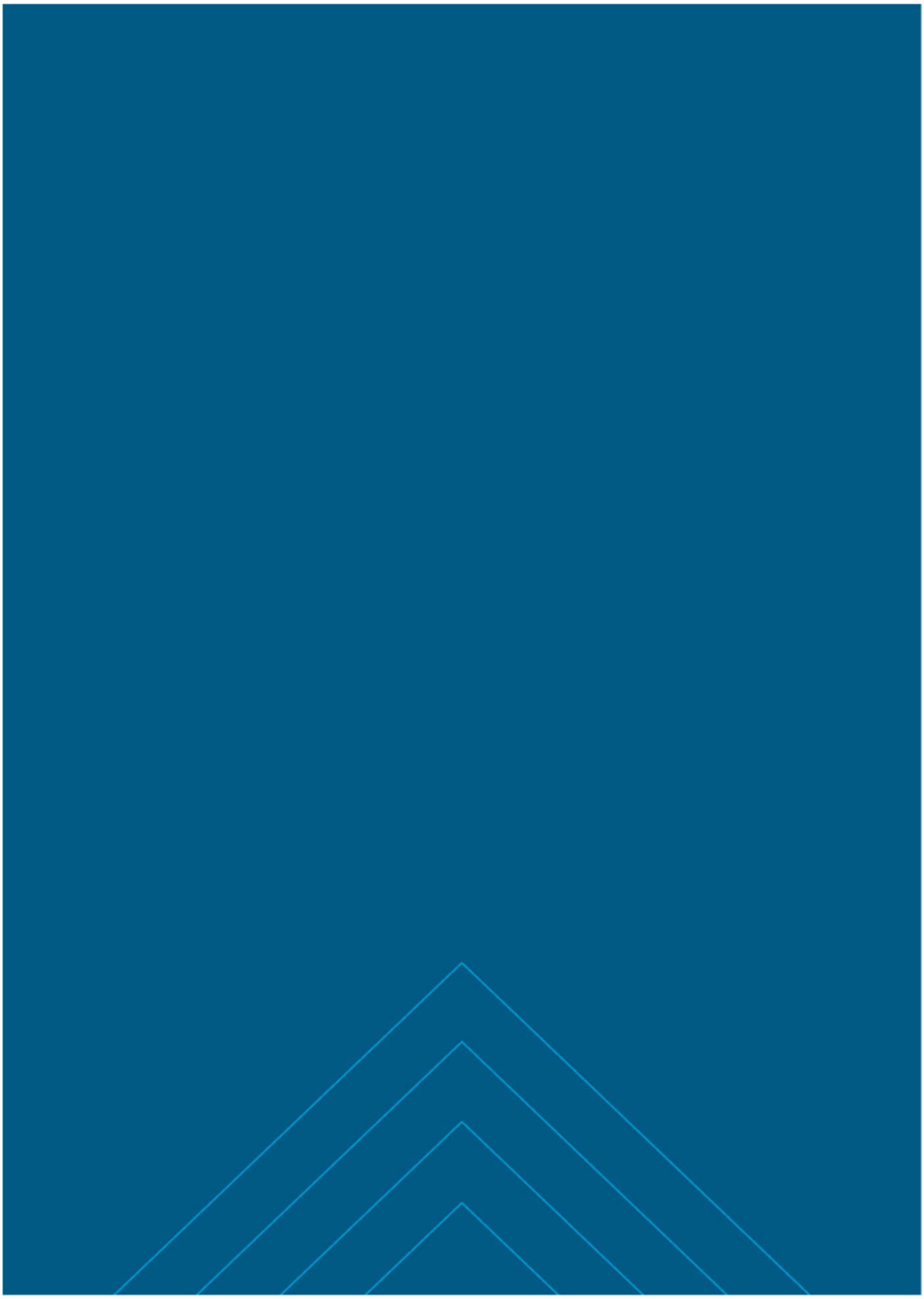
Contents



Executive Summary

The report considers the heritage impact of proposals to refurbish building elements and MEP services on the Swiss Cottage library that will continue to be utilised as a reading room and reference library for the local and wider community.

The proposals form part of Camden Borough Council's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and meet "net zero" carbon targets by 2030. The proposals seek to improve the thermal performance of both the single glazed metal windows and flat roof covering. The proposals also seek to replace end-of-life mechanical plant with renewable alternatives. Areas of change to internal areas include the replacement of existing insulation in the cavity space behind the bookcases and minor changes to the luminaires and, or bulbs.

The heritage elements affected by the proposals include both external and internal historic fabric and C20 and C21 fabric that has been introduced during subsequent refurbishment and maintenance projects. The changes to the rooftop plant and introduction of rooftop insulation are not considered to have an impact on existing rooftop views.

The focus of this report is to examine the impacts on the special architectural and historic interest of the areas that are immediately adjacent to the proposed areas of change and assess their impact.

The assessment was carried out by Richard Jessup MRICS, RICS Conservation Accredited, MSc Building Conservation, Atkins.

1. Introduction

Swiss Cottage Library is a public building built in 1963-4 for the borough of Hampstead by Sir Basil Spence (Coventry Cathedral). The cigar shaped building plan is orientated on an approximate north - south axis that is adjacent to Avenue Road.

The original scheme included an adjacent public swimming baths, now demolished, and was intended to be part of a new civic centre for Hampstead that was later abandoned because of local authority reorganisation in 1965

The public library consists of a reinforced concrete frame with first and second floors clad in pre-cast black basalt concrete spandrel panels finished in Portland stone aggregate, between projecting and finely-finished concrete fins set at 2'6" intervals, set above a smooth ground floor of Portland stone and concrete.

In 2000 the building underwent a significant refurbishment by specialist modernist restoration architects John McAslan and Partners. Part of the refurbishment included changes to the original internal layout that had resulted in poor wayfinding within the library. McAslan & Partners moved the information desk to the top of the central staircase from the entrance and introduced colour-coding via the use of spot colours on walls and floors; new building elements were also introduced that included varying sections of wood and glass intended to articulate the central passage; and the use of transparent glass throughout the first floor to enable one end of the library to be seen from the other and at various sections throughout the library

The building main entrance is located at the northern end of the site and consists of a basement, ground, first and second floor. Plant services are located in the basement and latterly on the roof. The roof also includes a series of north facing raised rooflights that were intended to introduce borrowed light into the building.

The Swiss Cottage Library was listed Grade II in 1997 and is bounded by five conservation areas; Belsize, Elsworthy, Fitzjohns-Netherhall, South Hampstead, St. John's Wood (Camden) and St. John's Wood (Westminster).

There are very minor changes proposed to the external fenestration that seeks to introduce double glazed powder coated aluminium windows that match the existing design details that are considered original. Changes to the roof areas include a renewal of the roof covering and introduction of cut-to-falls insulation that have a negligible impact on upstand details in isolated areas. There are also changes proposed to the centrally located lantern rooflights where glazed louvred lights will be changed to solid insulated louvres. Internal changes consist of a "light touch" where small changes take place to replace existing cavity insulation behind the bookcases and to the mechanical and electrical distribution system where new carbon reduction or renewable technology is proposed.

This document defines the special architectural and historic interest of both the building and its setting, which was originally part of the ancient parish of Hampstead and has seen considerable urban development of residential housing and road networks that have served Greater London.

The purpose of this document is to help preserve and enhance the character of the Swiss Cottage Library, and to provide a basis for making sustainable decisions about its future. It aims to identify the historic setting and character of the affected rooms and spaces to determine whether the context, architecture, fixtures and fittings are noteworthy, and the level of significance attached to them. Thereafter, it will be possible to determine the likely level of impact that the proposed minor works would have on the site and setting

A summary of the significance includes;

- The Swiss Cottage Library continues to be used for its original purpose as a place of learning and lending.
- The Swiss Cottage Library is a landmark 1960's building in Swiss Cottage, Borough of Camden
- The library is built in the Modernist style by Sir Basil Spence (Coventry Cathedral.
- The building is located adjacent to Avenue Road and near Finchley that were significant roads in the urban development of the area.
- The exterior form is based on rigid lines, finely finished projecting concrete fins and elements arranged at 90-degrees to each other that emphasise both horizontal and vertical lines.
- The design of the interior spaces reinforces the strong vertical and horizontal themes and also includes two double height spiral staircases.
- The interior design still retains significant original fabric and retains the design intent of a place of illumination by both learning and abundant daylight.

1.1. Objectives

This report sets out a considered analysis of the impact of the proposed work upon the historic significance of the heritage assets affected, and carefully considers whether the proposed works would cause significant harm to the character of the listed building and its setting.

This assessment examines relevant information required to understand the building and setting with historical analysis covering the immediate location. This assessment includes a description; an assessment of relevant statutory legislation and the use of the building. This information provides a sound basis to carry out the assessment of significance. This allows a heritage impact statement and conclusion to be drawn as to the level of impact that the proposed adaptations and changes will have on the public library.

Consequently, both the Significance Assessment and Impact Statement assist in satisfying the provisions of Sections16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) where the impact of development on a heritage asset or its setting is being considered (Chapter 16: Paragraphs 184-202).

1.2. Methodology: Understanding significance

The approach used to understand the heritage site and its setting is set out in three main sections. These are:

- Understanding the site: history, development and the site today
- Significance
- Heritage Impact Statement

The methodology used for understanding the significance follows the systematic approach as set out within the English Heritage (now Historic England) document *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*

This assessment takes place against four main heritage values that are:

- Evidential value: the extent to which the physical fabric tells how and when your historic asset was made, how it was used and how it has changed over time. There may be buried or obscured elements associated with your historic asset which may also be an important potential source of evidence.

- Historical value: your historic asset may illustrate a particular past way of life or be associated with a specific person or event; there may be physical evidence for these connections which it could be important to retain
- Aesthetic value: the design, construction and craftsmanship of your historic asset. This can also include setting and views to and from the historic asset, which may have changed through time.19
- Communal value: your historic asset may have particular significance to people for its commemorative, symbolic or spiritual value, or for the part it has played in local cultural or public life. This will be particularly important in the case of buildings in public use or sites where public access must be maintained or improved

1.3. Limitations

This assessment is based upon documentary research of the site using relevant information from several sources, survey information and discussions with Camden County Council planning department. The conclusions of the report are supported by sufficient information to clarify the results of the desk-based study.

1.4. Gaps in knowledge

Despite the archival research, only a limited number of original 1960's photographs have been discovered of the Swiss Cottage Library. It should be noted that in common with many historic buildings and sites, it is not always possible to provide a truly comprehensive analysis of the historic development of a building. The research and analysis set out in this report is as thorough as possible given the type and number of archival resources available.

This desk-based and archival research has been combined with a visual assessment and appraisal of the existing building.

Information gathering has been based on, but not limited to the following:

- Archive records held at Camden County Council, RIBA archive
- Record information held by Historic England on Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Historic Landscapes, Historic Landscape Character Areas
- Historic map regression exercises.
- Aerial photography and satellite imagery.

1.5. Relationship to previous assessments undertaken

Our assessment has no relationship with other desk-based assessments of the buildings at this stage.

2. National policies and guidance

2.1. Statutory legislation, policy and guidance

The primary legislation relating to Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Section 66(1) reads: "In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."

In relation to Conservation Areas, Section72(1) reads: "Special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area."

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2012, amended 2019.The over-arching aim of the policy, expressed in the Ministerial foreword, is that "our historic environments... can better be cherished if their spirit of place thrives, rather than withers."

The NPPF directs local planning authorities to require an applicant to "describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting" and the level of detailed assessment should be "proportionate to the assets' importance" (Paragraph 189).

This gives rise to the need for a Significance Assessment which identifies and then sets out the relative nature and value of affected heritage assets. It also stresses the importance of proportionality both in the extent to which assessments are carried out and in the recognising the relative merits of the assets. Planning Authorities should then "take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal" (Paragraph 190). This paragraph results in the need for an analysis of the impact of a proposed development on the asset's relative significance, in the form of a Heritage Impact Assessment.

Paragraph 192 of the NPPF states that "In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that "When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting."

In relation to harmful impacts or the loss of significance resulting from a development proposal, Paragraph 195 states the following:

"Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, 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:

- The nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- No viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- Conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use."
- It is also possible for proposals, where suitably designed, to result in no harm to the significance of heritage assets, and for them to be beneficial in effect.

Paragraph 196 states that '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.

In the case of non-designated heritage assets, Paragraph 135 requires a Local Planning Authority to make a "balanced judgement" having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Paragraph 200 of the NPPF advises local planning authorities to 'look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably'.

The NPPF therefore recognises the need to clearly identify relative significance at an early stage and then to judge the impact of development proposals in that context.

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was published in 2014 as a companion to the NPPF, replacing a large number of foregoing circulars and other supplementary guidance.

In respect of heritage decision-making, the NPPG stresses the importance of determining applications based on significance and explains how the tests of harm and impact within the NPPF are to be interpreted.

In particular, the NPPG notes the following in relation to the evaluation of harm: "In determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest." (Ref ID: 18a-017-20140306)

This guidance therefore provides assistance in defining where levels of harm should be set, tending to emphasise substantial harm as a "high test".

Historic England (formerly English Heritage) sets out in 'Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance' 2008. a logical approach to making decisions and offering guidance about all aspects of England's historic environment, including changes affecting significant places. It advises that the contribution made by setting and context should be considered when assessing heritage significance. Paragraph 76 explains as follows:

"'Setting' is an established concept that relates to the surroundings in which a place is experienced, its local context, embracing present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape. Definition of the setting of a significant place will normally be guided by the extent to which material change within it could affect (enhance or diminish) the place's significance" (page 39).

The Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (March 2015) document presents guidance on managing change within the settings of heritage assets, including archaeological remains and historic buildings, sites, areas and landscapes.

Page 6, entitled: 'A staged approach to proportionate decision taking' provides detailed advice on assessing the implications of development proposals and recommends the following broad approach to assessment, undertaken as a series of steps that apply equally to complex or more straightforward cases:

Step 1 - identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;

Step 2 - assess whether, how and to what degree these settings contribute to the significance of the heritage asset(s).

Step 3 - assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance.

Step 4 - explore the way maximizing enhancement and avoiding or minimizing harm.

Step 5 - make and document the decision and monitor outcomes."

2.2. Local planning policies

The Camden Local Plan sets out the Council's planning policies for the period from 2016-2031 and replaced the Core Strategy and Development Policies planning documents that was adopted in 2010. It ensures that Camden "continues to have robust, effective and up-to-date planning policies that respond to changing circumstances and the borough's unique characteristics and contribute to delivering the Camden Plan and other local priorities." (Introduction) The Local Plan is a key document along with additional action plans and supplementary planning guidance to achieve the stated aims and objectives to promote a high quality, safe and sustainable environment that preserves and enhances the unique character of Camden and the distinctiveness of its conservation areas, historic buildings, spaces and places.

Policy D1 identifies good design to be an essential element that:

a) Respects the local context and character
b) Preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets
c) Is sustainable in design and construction
d) creating places, buildings, or spaces that work well for everyone, look good, last well and will adapt to the needs of future generations

Paragraph 7.2 requires changes to heritage assets to consider the character, setting, context, form and scale, the impact on the existing uniformities of the townscape and its contribution to the public realm.

Paragraph 7.7 requires that developments affecting heritage assets should also be consistent with policies relating to sustainability and durability.

Policy D2 identifies the Council's intention to preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and settings. It states that the Council will not permit the loss of or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, and will only permit less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset where the public benefits of the proposal convincingly outweigh that harm

Paragraph 7.56 identifies that historic buildings can be sensitively adapted to meet the needs of climate change and energy saving where the special architectural interest is preserved and its long-term survival can be ensured.

3. Heritage Impact Assessment

The following Heritage Impact Assessment is a structured process that follows guidelines developed by Historic England outlined above to ensure that the significance of the site has been understood and considered during the design development stages. The purpose of the assessment is to establish the degree and appropriateness of the change to the historic setting and identify the most appropriate design that will maintain and enhance the special significance of

4. Understanding the site: history, development & the site today

4.1. Background & setting

Swiss Cottage is located 3.25 miles north-northwest of Charing Cross. Adjoining neighbourhoods include Hampstead Village to the northeast, Chalk Farm and Camden Town to the southeast, Belsize Park to the east, St John's Wood to the south and West Hampstead to the west. Regent's Park is within walking distance of Swiss Cottage.

It is bounded by five conservation areas; Belsize, Elsworthy, Fitzjohns-Netherhall, South Hampstead, St. John's Wood (Camden) and St. John's Wood (Westminster).

Swiss Cottage Central Library was built between 1963-4 to the designs of Sir Basil Spence. The centre originally was intended to provide a new Civic Centre for what was then the Metropolitan Borough of Hampstead; however, with the reorganisation of the government in 1964, only the library and the adjoining swimming pool were built. The original swimming pool has been subsequently demolished to make way for a new leisure centre complex that remains today.

Historical maps dating from 1871 to 1935 show that the site of the library and swimming pool adjacent to Avenue Road and Winchester Road was formally on the site of a congregational church and adjacent residential housing.

The style of the library by Spence is an important example of architectural modernism in the post-war years that was symptomatic of the age's spirit of renewal and a decisive move away from revivalist architectural styles into new contemporary designs that incorporated new techniques and approaches to style and structure.

During the 1960's new public libraries reflected an age of optimism and modernization that was intended to be "libraries of light" in both the open-plan, decluttered, Scandinavian-inspired designs that also served as a metaphor for the public library's role as a beacon of social egalitarianism and cultural universalism (Black, A.)

The district of Swiss Cottage originally formed part of the ancient parish of Hampstead. It developed following the Finchley Road Act 1826, which authorised construction of the adjacent Finchley New Road and Avenue Road. The origin of the name is considered to have derived from The Swiss Tavern that was built at the junction of the new roads within the immediate proximity of the library. The neighbourhood around Finchley Road and Avenue Road was redeveloped in 1937 and 1938 with the opening of an Odeon cinema and the Regency Lodge flats. After World War II, local authority housing was constructed by the London County Council in the area and includes the five-tower Chalcots Estate built in the 1960s along Avenue Road.

4.2. Exterior – Swiss Cottage Library

The Swiss Cottage Library is based on a cigar-shaped plan and consists of a reinforced concrete frame set out on a 10' (3m) grid that is clad on the first and second floors with pre-cast black basalt concrete spandrel panels between projecting and finely-finished concrete fins finished with Portland stone aggregate. The projecting fins of Portland stone aggregate at 2'6" intervals are the dominant feature of the building and extend above the flat roof area to form an open fronted perimeter balustrade. The fins also strongly contrast with the black basalt spandrel panels and aluminium framed windows above. The strong vertical emphasis of the projecting fins and window treatments contrasts with the smooth finished surfaces of the ground floor that is set back and includes a ribbon window design with a strong horizontal emphasis. The main entrance area is located at the northern end and is accessible via ramps and steps; this area has been set back and creates an arcade area supported by plain columns.

The roof area consists of a felt covered flat roof, considered to be originally covered with asphalt, that was set below an open balustraded parapet of the projecting concrete fins. The roof area included a series of centrally located roof lanterns that were orientated North and would allow “borrowed light” to enter the library spaces below. The roof top area also includes later date plant equipment and more recently photovoltaic solar arrays that were introduced in 2016.

The Library was re-modelled in 2003 as part of a significant complex which included the Hampstead Theatre and Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre development. However, the principal changes have been to the interior of the building.

Consequently, the architectural details of the external elements that were intended to represent the clean simplicity of modernist architecture of functionality and lightness are still easily understood.

4.3. Interior – Swiss Cottage Library

The original plan of the interior spaces included a children’s library, lending and reference libraries, music library, front of house and back office areas. The ground floor and basement areas were intended for use as offices, service areas and bookstack storage areas.

Stairs from the ground floor entrance area lead to a double-height central foyer at first-floor level; to the north and south of the central foyer two pairs of double height balconied spiral stairs allow access to the lending and reference libraries.

The original detailing throughout most of the public interiors included the extensive use of glazed screens divided by vertical aluminium sections.

This verticality is repeated in the slender steel balustrades to the reference and lending libraries' balcony fronts and internal stairs. White perforated aluminium ceilings with recessed fluorescent light fittings a necessary complement to the extensive use of diffused, borrowed light through the building. The internal architectural treatments correspond with the Modernist principles of components positioned at 90-degrees to each other and an emphasis on horizontal and vertical lines.

The interior spaces still retain original bookcases, window surrounds and fixed furniture, the latter notably in reference area. There is also some original signage survives on ground and first floors. McAslan & Partners who were specialists in modernist renovation. The original library was considered to have less-than-clear wayfinding and as a consequence the reception area information desk was moved from its original ground floor location to the top of the central staircase. Colour-coding certain sections via use of spot colours on walls and floor was introduced and a particularly transparent glass used throughout the first floor to enable one end of the library to be seen from the other.

The statutory list entry has identified the library as “one of Spence's most accomplished civic buildings”.

4.4. Views – Swiss Cottage Library

The Swiss Cottage Library is directly adjacent to Avenue Road and within sight of “Ye Olde Swiss Cottage”, the public house that the area is named after. The library is also near to Finchley Road that, together with Avenue Road can be understood as important elements in the urban development of the area.

The library forms an important landmark that can be seen from the dominant principal roads serving both the local and wider area and the adjacent medium rise buildings that were built in the second half of the C20.

The overall articulation of the vertical elements’ contrasts with the adjacent buildings that contributes to its status as a landmark building.

4.5. Use – Swiss Cottage Library

The Swiss Cottage Library continues to be used for its intended purpose. The significant refurbishment in 2000 has introduced elements that included data connectivity and services that have made the library a viable and important public asset for the ongoing use of the local and wider community. The redevelopment also included a development strategy to create a new tailored space for children within the Library that has also resulted in a Modernist public space that is relevant today.

The sensitive introduction of photovoltaic arrays on the roof have also enabled the building to remain economically viable.

5. Significance

5.1. Assessment of Swiss Cottage Library

Significance can be defined as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest, it is unique to a place and it is vital to identify this, as the aim of conservation is to sensitively manage change to a place to ensure that its significance is protected, revealed, reinforced and enhanced at every possible opportunity.

This includes its relationship with people, now and in the past; its visual aspects and the features, materials and spaces associated with its history that includes the original design logic, as well as subsequent losses and additions. Added together, these elements become the collective history of the building(s) and form the basis of understanding their relationship with the historic area and landscape.

In assessing the significance of the Swiss Cottage Library we have looked at the whole site and setting of the asset and focused on the areas that will be affected by the proposals.

5.1.1. Evidential value: ‘the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity’

Prior to the local government reorganisation in 1964 the Swiss Cottage Central Library was located within the Metropolitan Borough of Hampstead that can trace its origins back to early Saxon records that identifies grants made by King Ethelred the Unready to the monastery of St. Peter's at Westminster (AD 986). The area is referred to in the Domesday Book as being in the Middlesex hundred of Ossulstone. Within the Anglo-Saxon period there is evidence from both the historical records and the archaeological finds, suggesting that there was a settlement within the Borough, in particular towards the south of Camden with utilisation of the Heath to the north.

The Archaeological Priorities Area Appraisal (2018) does not record any Tier 1, 2 or 3 sites within the vicinity of the library. The proposed development does not seek make any below ground changes to the site or setting.

Historical maps show that the Swiss Cottage Library is located on a former congregational church that was demolished to make way for the 1964 civic development.

Figure 5-1 - 1871 and 1935 historical map (insert) showing the former church on the site of the 1964 Swiss Cottage Library and swimming pool development

5.1.2. Historical value: 'the ways in which people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a pl ace to the present' (illustrative or associative)

Sir Basil Urwin Spence, OM OBE RA (1907 – 1976) was a Scottish architect, most notably associated with Coventry Cathedral (1956-62) in England and the Beehive parliament building in New Zealand.

By 1958 Spence was the newly elected President of the RIBA, he was knighted in 1960 and was awarded the Order of Merit by the Queen in 1962.

The Swiss Cottage Central Library is considered to be "one of Spence's most accomplished civic buildings" (HE list entry) that exhibits a thoroughly coherent British Modernist design that extends from the exterior vertical-stripped shell through to all the door handles on all the doors lining up that was intended to give a sub-conscious sense of coherence and rigour.

Spence's design of the Swiss Cottage Library included incorporated the over-arching Modernist principles of both "form following function" and a design that has a simple clarity where the visual structure is visible and not hidden. The design also incorporated components positioned at 90-degrees to each other and an emphasis on horizontal and vertical lines, a lack of ornament and open plan floors.

Swiss Cottage Library viewed from the south

Spence was also responsible for numerous other buildings in the Modernist and Brutalist style that met with both controversy and protest against what was happening to London and its skyline during a period when provincial cities across Britain were also tearing their historic cores apart to make way for a Modernist vision of the future. These buildings included the sixteen-storey Thorn office building (1956) in St Martin's Lane that towers above the surrounding buildings in Covent Garden and the thirty storey Knightsbridge Barracks tower that extends upwards for ninety-five metres and oversees Hyde Park. Sir Freddie Gibbert (English architect, town planner and landscape designer) politely described the Knightsbridge Tower as an “architectural gain and a townscape loss”.

Photo montage of original external 1960’s images - Swiss Cottage Library archive

Modernist architecture, referred to as modernism encompasses many different variations, including Futurism, Constructivism, Brutalism, De Stijl, and Bauhaus. It is a style that emerged in the C20 in response to large-scale changes in both technology and society. The overarching principle of this architectural style are based on the function of buildings where “form follows function”, this approach is based on an analytical viewpoint with a rational use of materials that dispenses with ornament and decoration, with the intention of creating simplicity and openness to the main structural elements. In practice, this meant that buildings should be designed so that the essential structure dictated the form from the inside outwards.

Modernism is not only associated with the built form; it also developed across all artistic fields as a means of accommodating and responding to the new technologies of machines, automation and urban design. The industrial revolution played a major role in the development of this form of architecture with the development of materials such as concrete, glass and steel.

The ideals of Modernist architecture can be easily understood in Spence’s Swiss Cottage Library. Internally the architectural design has been based on openness and light, which is itself a metaphor for the libraries principal purpose of enlightenment.

The exterior form is based on rigid lines, harsh concrete forms and elements arranged at 90-degrees to each other that emphasise both horizontal and vertical lines.

The projecting and finely finished concrete fins set over the smooth ground floor could be viewed as deviating from the true principles of Modernism where all ornament was viewed as inefficient and wasteful.

Photo montage of original 1960’s internal images - Swiss Cottage Library archive

5.1.3. Aesthetic value: 'the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place'

Modernism became synonymous with a rejection of the ideals of the past and a unified view of the world; this was a deliberate break with the past that initially followed the horrors of the First World War, and later the Second World War.

The emergence of Modernism during the 1920's is closely associated with two European architects. One of these was Walter Gropius, the leader of the Bauhaus in Germany. Gropius taught architects to reject historical orthodoxies and adopt the innovative new ideologies of modern industry.

The other was Le Corbusier, who took inspiration for his buildings and urban designs from modern engineering developments such as passenger jets, cruise liners, automobiles, grain silos, and smooth planar finishes. In his most famous book, 'Towards a New Architecture', he argued that 'a house is a machine for living in'.

Le Corbusier sought to develop a coherent philosophy of architecture that would isolate what he called type forms, or universal elements of design that he considered to be present in architecture and engineering. These ideas are not new and can be associated with those of Plato's Ideal Forms that were valued by the ancient Greeks.

Le Corbusier's system demanded pilotis (slender columns) to raise the building off the ground and allow air to circulate beneath; roof terraces, to bring nature into an urban setting; a free plan that allowed interior space to be distributed at will; a free façade whose smooth plane could be used for formal experimentation; and ribbon windows, which let in light but also reinforced the planarity of the wall.

Many of these Modernist elements can be seen in Spences interior and exterior articulation of the Swiss Cottage Library and it offers an opportunity to form connections with the origins and development of the style from its origins in the 1920's.

5.1.4. Communal value: 'the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory'

The Swiss Cottage Library continues to be used for its original purpose as a place of learning and lending. The sensitive restoration and adaptation that took place in 2000. The building remains the only structure that was to be part of bigger civic centre that would serve the area.

The new library building, like other public buildings built in the late 1950's and 60's reflected an age of optimism and intended modernization. These developments took place alongside the welfare and national health service when hopes for technological and economic renewal informed the zeitgeist of the day.

The interior of the library was planned to create an informal atmosphere with glazed screens instead of solid walls used where possible to assist the impression of a continuous space. The central atrium is the heart of the building, conceived as an exhibition foyer extending through two floors. At either end of the two floors are large lending and reference libraries. The overall impression of the interior is one of abundant daylight. The central atrium forms the visual and social heart of the building.

The exterior form of the library is highly distinctive landmark building that adds considerable value to the civic pride of the local area. The interior is characterised by a fine long staircase leading to the middle of the building, with curved spaces at either end featuring elegant, curved staircases.

The library is considered to have highly significant communal value that has been successfully adapted and includes a cafe, reading rooms, galleries and reference sections that continues to be used by a wide cross-section of visitors.

6. The value of the changes

The proposed changes are intended to significantly reduce carbon emissions and create a sustainable working environment that will promote excellent working practices and wellbeing and to ensure the continued use of the buildings now and into the future.
These changes are based on the *Energy and Performance Report 2020* by Taylor Project Services LLP that was commissioned by Camden Borough Council.
The proposed refurbishment schemes seeks to introduce a new insulated flat roof covering above the existing concrete deck, to replace the aluminium framed single glazed windows on the first and second floor with like-for-like double glazed equivalents, replace existing polystyrene insulation that is a known fire risk in cavity areas behind the original bookcases, to replace end-of-life roof plant with energy efficient renewable plant and make minor interventions to relamp existing light fittings with LED equivalents and introduced motorised rooflight openers.

6.1.1. Design approach

The design development was based on a logical process to understand the heritage asset and conservation principles that identify the impact of the proposals. Achieving the right balance involved a systematic 'whole building' approach that was been based on the following hierarchy:

1. Understanding the significance of the site and setting
2. Do nothing
3. Minimal levels of intervention based on option appraisals
4. Conservation of fuel and power – now and in the future
5. Mitigating visual impacts caused by introducing insulation materials
6. Current and future habitation and use

Conservation guidance found in the Historic England publication Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating Flat Roofs identifies that "altering the thermal performance of older buildings is not without risks. The most significant risk is that of creating condensation which can be on the surface of a building component or between layers of the building fabric, which is referred to as 'interstitial condensation'."
The guidance information provides advice on interventions that improve energy performance in historic flat roof types; the guidance note comments that *"plastic-based extruded foams and foamed glass are rigid and resistant to compressive loads, and capable of being installed in a warm deck system above a roof deck*" (p.14), the guidance note also identifies that vapour control membranes must be completely airtight to work properly and requires the highest level of installation skill to achieve this.
The proposed design does not introduce insulation sheet materials in or around existing heritage fabric; the proposed design places the insulation sheet materials above the existing concrete deck. This approach effectively deals with thermal bridging risks and it is considered that there is no risk of interstitial condensation forming around heritage elements and components due to the design.

6.2. Evaluating options

Conservation of historic places does not seek to prevent all change and preserve a place as if frozen in time, nor does it seek to restore or return a place to how it once was at one period. Implicit in the term conservation is the acceptance that appropriate change is a requirement for buildings or places as they change over the years.

By understanding the level of significance, design proposals can be assessed and the level of impact understood. Out of this process the preferred option emerges that safeguards both the heritage value of the site and its setting, as well as meeting the scheme objectives.

The preferred option has been based on iterative design options that have sought to retain as much important heritage fabric and features as possible and to minimise the impact caused by new mechanical plant installations.

7. Proposed changes – options appraisal

7.1. External areas

7.1.1. Warm roof

The proposals seek to significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the building through improvements to the thermal performance of this element. During the design stages the appraisal process considered the impact on the building that included:

1. The impact on existing roofscape views from adjacent buildings.
2. The impact on the concrete fin parapet wall.
3. Increased roof height of vapour open / closed options and impact on existing zinc covered rooflights.
4. Increased roof height of vapour open / closed options and impact on existing zinc covered rooflights and concrete fin open parapet wall.

The design stage appraisal process also assessed the risk of interstitial moisture because of the changes; consequently, two insulation types were considered

1. Vapour open wood fibre board
2. Vapour closed rigid foam boards.

7.1.1.1. Existing considerations to inform options

The original roof design consisted of a flat roof covering and centrally located zinc covered rooflights. The original roof covering is considered to have been asphalt laid above a 50mm aerated screed layer on top of the concrete structural deck.
The roof area has been adapted over time to accommodate the changing mechanical and electrical plant installations that have included ventilation, air conditioning, associated ductwork and photovoltaic arrays. The existing roof covering consists of bitumen felt membranes.

7.1.1.2. Option appraisal design summary – warm roof

During the design process wood fibre board insulation was considered but discounted for the following reasons:

- The impact of increased roof heights on the zinc covered rooflights and parapet wall.
- The location of the insulation material above the existing concrete deck resulted in no interstitial moisture risk.
- Effective use of vapour control layers would inhibit dew point formation by resisting moisture movement from inside the building to outside the building.
- The risk of interstitial moisture caused by poor detailing of the vapour control layers is considered to be negligible where the concrete deck and internal plastered soffits also act as barriers to moisture movement.

As stated in the Historic England guidance note “more research is needed to help us fully understand the passage of moisture through buildings and how certain forms of construction and materials can mitigate these risks”, consequently, the monitoring and inspection of the replacement roof covering will be undertaken regularly to ensure moisture risks are eliminated.

7.1.1.3. Preferred option

An insulated warm roof option utilising vapour closed rigid foam boards with very high thermal resistance values (U-values) was selected due to the minimal impact to existing elements and the significantly enhanced performance.

7.1.2. Windows

The proposals intend to replace the existing single glazed aluminium framed windows on the first and second floors with powder coated double glazed aluminium framed equivalents that match the original style.
The “do nothing” option was discounted during the design development stage due to the risks of increased condensation where partial insulation of the building would take place.
The “do nothing” option was also discounted due to the large overall surface area of the window elements in the building that has a significant impact on the energy use of the building.
The option appraisal process also considered the changes in metal frame dimensions and the replacement of some opening lights with fixed opening lights.

Detail view showing Spence’s arrangement of windows corresponding with adjacent vertical and horizontal elements

7.1.2.1. Existing considerations to inform options

The existing windows on the first and second floors are considered to consist of the original single glazed aluminium framed windows that form a highly significant element in both the external appearance of the building and to allow natural daylighting of the internal library spaces.

The existing ground floor windows consist of original aluminium metal framed windows and later date double glazed windows and doors. The original ribbon window design is also a highly significant element of Spence’s design.

General view of showing the natural daylighting of the internal library space

7.1.2.2. Option appraisal design summary

During the design development process, the “do nothing” principle was discounted for the following reasons:

- The proposals seek to replace the original aluminium windows with modern double glazed powder coated aluminium window that match the original design. The minor increase in the frame sizes of the new windows is not considered be discernible to either the appearance or daylighting levels.
- Increased risk of internal condensation forming around single glazed windows causing fabric decay to adjacent original timber surrounds
- The significant improvement in thermal performance achieved with double glazed like-for-like equivalents

7.1.2.3. Preferred option

The replacement of the original single glazed aluminium framed windows with double glazed equivalents is the preferred option. The proposed replacements match the materiality and style of the original windows and are considered to result in a minor change in appearance. The change from opening lights to fixed lights in some areas is also not considered to affect the significance of this element. The replacement window option will result in a significant improvement in thermal performance.

7.1.3. Rooftop mechanical, electrical and plant

The rooftop plant consists of two air cooled chillers, three air handling units, associated ventilation supply and extract ductwork and one hundred and eighty-five photovoltaic solar panels.

7.1.3.1. Existing considerations to inform options

The proposals seek to replace end-of-life mechanical plant with renewable air source heat pumps and heat recovery units. The scheme also intends to rationalise the space by removing redundant plant.

The proposals intend to remove and reinstate the existing photovoltaic array to enable the replacement of the roof covering.

The design development of this element of the works was based on the following criteria:

- Maintaining or reducing the existing footprint of the rooftop plant
- Maintaining the roofscape views from adjacent buildings through plant selection criteria
- Load spreading frames with the lowest ground clearance were also selected to minimise any height impacts.

7.1.3.2. Option appraisal design summary

The change of use from carbon based energy sources to renewable energy sources has been designed to utilise the existing footprint that will result in minor dimensional changes, the existing chiller is 5000x12100mm and the proposed air source heat pump is 3450x1800mm. The replacement plant is located 4000mm from the concrete fin open parapet wall, consequently, it is considered that the dimensional changes will have a minimal impact on the roofscape views from adjacent buildings and will result in no change at the street level.

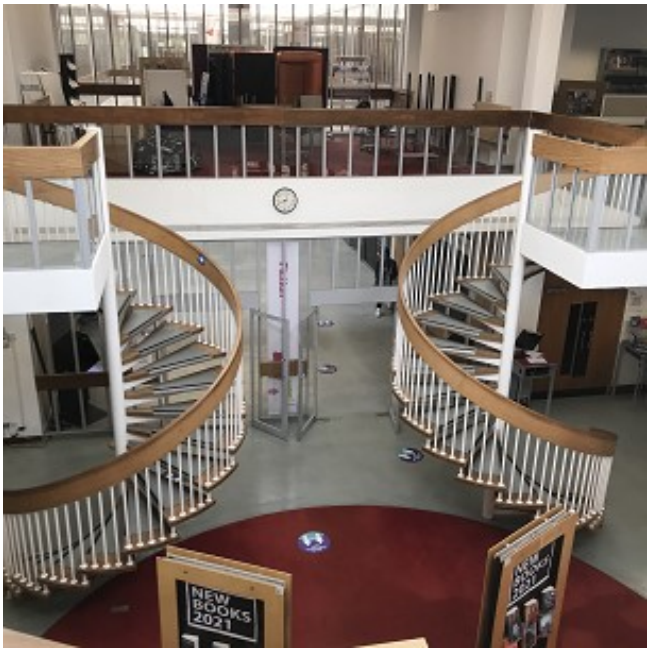
7.1.3.3. Preferred option

The replacement of redundant plant and end-of-life plant with renewable heat pump equipment is the preferred option. The minor changes to the associated with this option do not include an increase in the existing footprint of roof top plant.

7.2. Internal areas

The overall objective of the changes is to make improvements to the thermal performance of the building that will ensure the occupancy and use of the building now and in the future. The proposals seek to make minimal interventions that include replacing insulation behind existing bookcases that is considered a fire risk and re-lamping existing luminaires with LED equivalents. Design development has been based on understanding the significant service spaces, subservient areas and how best to utilise existing service routes and risers. The purpose of this approach is to ensure the following:

- That heritage fabric is protected.
- That there is no discernible change in the existing appearance, or conditions.
- That interventions are minimised and result in no or low impact.



General view of original first floor spiral staircase

The interior of the Swiss Cottage Library is characterised by a main entrance area with straight flighted staircase leading into the middle of the public space where the reception is now located. The double height atrium space was designed to create a naturally lit environment with two curved staircases at either end that provide access to the learning and lending areas

7.2.1. Bookcases

The Modernist principle that form follows function can clearly be seen in Spence's design, particularly in the arrangement of the bookcases.

The timber bookcases reinforce the linear arrangement of the building that includes the handrails, floor sections, suspended metal perforated ceilings and lighting. This is contrasted with the strong vertical elements that include the balustrades, exposed metal columns and window mullions.

Detail view of original bookcase

The bookcases, timber skirting boards and timber window reveals form part a continuous link around the perimeter of the building, that creates a sense of coherence and informal warmth.

7.2.1.1. Existing considerations to inform options

The original design of the bookcases included the addition of polystyrene insulation in the cavity area behind the bookcase between the interior and the exterior. The replacement proposal is based on the known fire risk of polystyrene and the requirement to improvements in thermal performance. The images below show the original arrangement of the bookcase with insulated cavity space behind. Survey inspections have found that there was no or minimal evidence of interstitial moisture build-up due to the insulation.

Detail view showing bookcase surround and integrated window board

Detail view showing original insulation in the cavity area behind the bookcase

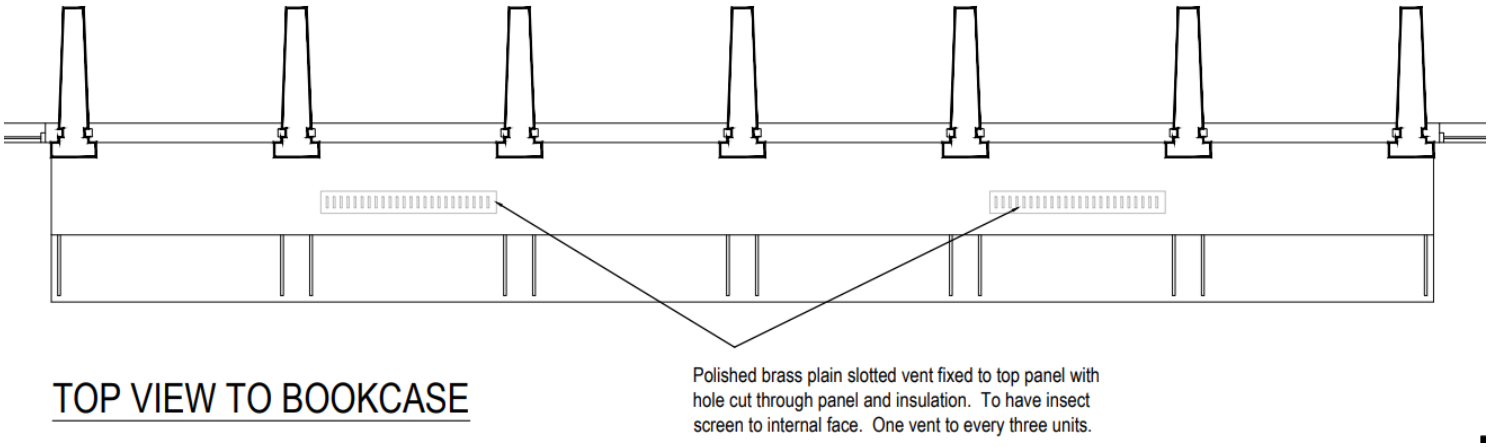
7.2.1.2. Option appraisal design summary

During the design process wood fibre board insulation was also considered for the internal areas but was discounted for the following reasons:

- Survey inspections found that the existing arrangement using vapour closed insulation had not resulted in material defects associated with interstitial moisture.

7.2.1.3. Preferred option

The preferred option seeks to replace the existing vapour closed insulation with modern equivalents that have a significantly improved U-value.
The proposals also seek to make minor changes to the existing bookcases that includes the introduction of brass ventilation grilles at the sides and top. The minor alterations (see below) are intended to further mitigate any moisture risks.



Detail view of drawing 50206133-ATK-SCL-S-DE-A-4203 showing the arrangement and design details of the proposed ventilation grilles

7.2.2. Lighting

The existing lighting provision within the library consists of strip lights, recessed lights and surface mounted lights. The luminaires contain a mixture of fluorescent lamps and LED lamps.

The first and second floor lighting to the library areas consists of fluorescent lighting that is integrated within a perforated metal tile suspended ceiling system. The long section metal ceiling tiles are considered original and add significantly to Spence's vertical and horizontal design logic.

Ground floor and basement areas include recessed and surface mounted light fittings attached to suspended plasterboard ceilings and plain concrete soffits.

General view of the atrium space showing Spence's incorporation of building elements that have strong horizontal and vertical emphasis

7.2.2.1. Existing considerations to inform options

Based upon the visual survey of the incoming electrical supply it is considered that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed changes to the building and as such upgrading and replacement is not considered to be a requirement. Consequently, only final distribution components have been included in the proposed design that include:

- Changes to existing luminaires
- Changes to control switches
- Changes to overhead door heaters

General view of perforated metal suspended ceiling with integrated lighting

7.2.2.2. Option appraisal design summary

Both options are considered a light touch that will result in no discernible change to the interior spaces and will utilise existing routes and risers that result in no requirement for new service penetrations.

Retrofitting LED Lamps into the existing light fittings will significantly reduce the current energy usage; upgrading localised controls will also minimise wasted energy use in unused spaces.

Minor changes are also proposed where two over door heaters are to be removed and replaced with low energy 14kW electric units

There are no changes proposed to the existing distribution boards located within the risers on each floor and will be retained and reused; the existing sub-main cabling supplying the existing distribution boards will be also be retained and re-used.

Two options were considered for the lighting changes, these were:

Option A

- The removal and replacement of existing luminaires with low energy LED equivalents.
- The installation of new controls cabling and emergency lighting in accordance with current building regulations

Option B

- The removal and replacement of existing lamps within the luminaires with low energy LED equivalents.
- Retain and use existing cable containment.

7.2.2.3. Preferred option

As a result of the options appraisal the preferred option is Option B. This option results in no discernible change.

7.2.3. Basement plant areas, service routes and risers

The original design of the building included provision for mechanical and electrical plant in the basement area that was distributed via routes and risers in order to serve the building needs.

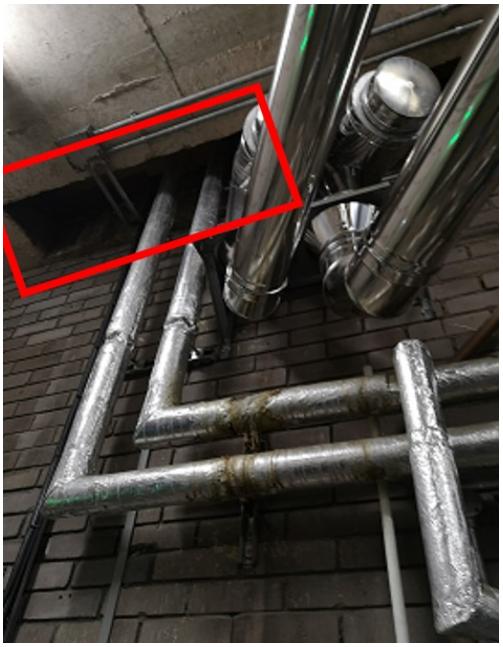
7.2.3.1. Existing considerations to inform options

The existing mechanical and plant installations utilise the existing routes and risers that are considered original. New service risers in the roof are considered to have occurred where new installations have taken place.

7.2.3.2. Option appraisal design summary

The current scheme seeks to utilise existing risers and containment where the replacement of life expired plant takes place. Consequently, it is considered that there will be no discernible change.

General view of mechanical, electrical and plant installation in basement areas



General view of existing service riser with spare capacity visible

8. Impact assessment

8.1.1. Assessing impact

The Heritage Impact Statement identifies each of the 'significant' building elements throughout the site and uses four categories to assess the significance of any given element. The categories are shown below:

- High significance – Must be retained.
- Significant – Alterations will require substantial justification.
- Low Significance – Alterations will require justification.
- Negligible / No Significance – Alterations are acceptable

When the value of the site and setting has been assessed and understood, the next stage is to determine the scale of the impact brought about by the development proposals. This impact could be a direct physical impact on the assets or an impact on the wider setting, or both. The levels of impact can be considered as beneficial or adverse and are shown below:

Scale of impact	Criteria descriptions
Very high	Beneficial: The proposals would remove or successfully mitigate existing and significant damaging and discordant impacts on assets; allow for the substantial restoration or enhancement of characteristic features. Adverse: Impacts will destroy cultural heritage assets resulting in their total loss or almost complete destruction.
High	Beneficial: The proposals would remove or successfully mitigate existing and significant damaging and discordant impacts on assets; allow for the substantial

	restoration or enhancement of characteristic features. Allow the substantial re-establishment of the integrity, understanding and setting for an area or group of features, halt rapid degradation and/or erosion of heritage resource, safeguarding substantial elements of the heritage resource. Adverse: Impacts will damage the cultural heritage assets; result in the loss of the asset's quality and integrity; cause severe damage to key characteristic features or elements; almost complete loss of setting and/or context of the asset. The assets integrity or setting is almost wholly destroyed or is severely compromised, such that the resource can no longer be appreciated or understood
Medium	Beneficial: Benefit to, or partial restoration of, key characteristics, features or elements; improvement of asset quality; degradation of the asset would be halted; the setting and / or context of the asset would be enhanced and understanding and appreciation is substantially improved; the asset would be bought into community use Adverse: Moderate impact on the asset, but only partially affecting the integrity; partial loss of, or damage to, key characteristics, features or elements; substantially intrusive into the setting and / or would adversely impact upon the context of the asset for community appreciation. The assets integrity or setting is damaged but not destroyed so understanding and appreciation is compromised.
Low	Beneficial: Minor benefit to, or partial restoration of. One (maybe more) key characteristic features or elements; some beneficial impact on asset or a stabilisation of negative impacts; slight improvements to the context or setting of the site; community use or understanding and appreciation would be enhanced. Adverse: Some measurable change in assets quality or vulnerability; minor loss or alteration to one (or maybe more) key characteristics, features or elements; change to the setting would not be overly intrusive or overly diminish the context; community use or understanding would be reduced. The assets integrity or setting is damaged but understanding and appreciation would only be diminished not compromised.
Negligible	Barely discernible change in baseline conditions
Nil	No discernible change in baseline conditions

9. The proposed scheme and its effect

9.1. The proposed scheme and its effect on heritage significance

The introduction of a new cut-to-falls insulated flat roof covering will result in an increase in the existing roof height <50mm; the overall impact on the roofscape from adjacent buildings and the street is considered to be no discernible difference. The impact of increased upstands on the north lights from 50mm to 150mm is considered to be low with no discernible difference to their appearance. The minor loss of fabric is considered to be justified by ensuring that effective weathertight details are installed that protect the building from water ingress.

The like for like replacement of original aluminium framed single glazed windows with powder coated aluminium framed double glazed equivalents is considered to have a negligible impact. There is a minor increase in the window frame dimensions from 30mm to 50mm that is unlikely to be discernible. The proposed changes are not considered to have an impact on the natural daylighting of the library.

The changes to the rooftop plant have been designed to match or reduce the existing footprint with a slight increase in height where the redundant chiller unit is replaced with the air source heat pump; the increase in height is not discernible from the street and it is considered that there will be no discernible difference from the adjacent buildings.

The proposed internal changes that include replacement insulation in wall cavity spaces behind the bookcases and relamping existing lights with LED low energy bulbs will have no impact on the significance of the interior spaces.

The distribution of new mechanical and electrical installations has been designed to utilise existing routes and risers or is confined to the final outlets. New ductwork, pipework and cables will either replace existing, or will be located adjacent to existing; consequently, the impact is considered be negligible, or none.

9.2. The public benefit

The proposed scheme is considered to have a high public benefit value where the proposed changes will ensure that continued use of the space and include interventions that will stimulate and engender civic pride in Camden Borough Council's commitment to the necessary reduction in greenhouse gases.

10. Summary and Conclusion

The proposed scheme aims to address the current concerns of severe climate change by reducing the energy demand where possible and form part of Camden Borough Council's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and meet "net zero" carbon targets by 2030.

The Swiss Cottage Library is a landmark building based on British Modernist designs of the 1960's that is considered to be one of Sir Basil Spence's most accomplished civic buildings (HE list entry). The building design elements still retain the important Modernist principles of "form follows function" where light and learning are both literal and metaphoric.

The proposals seek improve the thermal performance of both the single glazed metal windows and flat roof covering. Areas of change to internal areas include minor adaptations and adjustments to the original timber window surrounds and minor changes to the luminaires and, or bulbs.

Mechanical, electrical and plant changes are based on the replacement of end-of-life equipment with low energy and renewable energy equivalents.

The principle of the design approach has been to meet the requirements of the client, with a design that is based on an understanding of the heritage building. This process has identified high value

spaces or views that are vulnerable to harm and subservient areas that can accommodate adaptation and change.

Consequently, the development of design options has resulted in a preferred option that has the least impact on the significance of the site and setting.

It is considered that the proposed scheme, including external changes and service installations has a negligible impact on the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and does not lead to substantial harm of the listed building.

As such, it is considered that it complies with both the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and the NPPF, particularly Paragraph 134 that states “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”.

11. Sources

Belsize conservation area appraisal and management plan

Camden Town conservation area appraisal and management plan

Ellsworthy conservation area appraisal and management plan

Elsworthy CA 1871 map

Elsworthy CA 1935 map

English Heritage (Historic England) *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment*

Historic England - Archaeology Priority Appraisal Camden

Historic England List Entry - 1272259

Appendices

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