

# Swiss Cottage Library Refurbishment

Design & Access Statement

Camden Borough Council

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This design and access statement  
forms part of a planning application for  
the refurbishment of Swiss Cottage  
Public Library



## Executive Summary

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.

Swiss Cottage Library is a public building that was 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 and was designed in the Modernist style. The building was listed Grade II in 1997 and is considered to be "one of Spence's most accomplished civic buildings" (HE list entry)

The proposed changes are considered to be a "light touch" and have been developed to ensure that the **building's** special architectural and **historic** interest is not harmed.

The Design and Access Statement should be read in conjunction with the heritage impact assessment, drawing pack and supporting information.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The application

This Design and Access Statement has been written to support an application for Planning Permission for refurbishment of the listed Swiss Cottage Library

Atkins are acting as the Agent on behalf of Camden Borough Council and in accordance with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for England, of their application for planning permission to 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, to introduce insulation in concealed areas behind the concrete clad façade, 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.

## 1.2. Site location and description

### 1.2.1. Site address

Swiss Cottage Library 88 Avenue Road, London NW3 3HA

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

The list number is 1272259.



Figure 1 - Site location

### 1.2.2. Site description

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. The cigar shaped building plan is orientated on an approximate north - south axis that is adjacent to Avenue Road.

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.

### 1.2.3. Physical context of the proposed scheme

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

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 building 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).

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 Swiss Cottage library is built in the Modernist style that emerged in the early part of the C20 in a response to large scale changes in both technology and society. 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.





Figure 5 - General view\_North elevation



Figure 5 - General view\_South elevation



Figure 7 - General view\_West elevation



Figure 7 - General view\_East elevation

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

#### 1.2.4. Social context of the proposed scheme

The Swiss Cottage Library is considered to be a landmark building that adds considerable value to the civic pride of the local area. The building 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 and horizontal design elements' contrasts with the adjacent buildings



and be easily understood as a Modernist building from the second half of the C20.

The conservation led refurbishment of the library in 2000 carried out sensitive alterations that relocated the original reception area from the ground floor to the first floor and improved wayfinding across the building.

### 1.2.5. Economic context of the proposed scheme

The Swiss Cottage Library continues to be used for its intended purpose and has been adapted to include data connectivity and refreshment areas. The library is considered to have significant communal value as a public amenity serving the local and wider community.

## 2. Planning policy context of the proposed scheme

### 2.1. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2019)

The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied<sup>1</sup>. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development that meets economic objectives, social objectives and environmental objectives.

Section 6 sets out that, in building a strong, competitive economy *“Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, considering both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future”*

Paragraph 83 indicates that planning policies and decisions should enable:

- 1) *“sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and*
- 2) *“the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship”*

Section 8 promotes healthy and safe communities where planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

- 1) *“promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;*
- 2) *are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas; and*
- 3) *enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling”*

### 2.2. Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990

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.”

### 2.3. Local planning policies

The Council has a statutory duty to prepare, monitor and review a Development Plan for the district. This document is Camden's Local Plan that was adopted in 2017. The document sets out the Council's planning policies and replaces the Core Strategy and Development Policies planning documents (adopted in 2010). It ensures that Camden continues to have robust, effective and upto-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. The Local Plan will cover the period from 2016-2031

### 2.3.1. Local Plan

Within the Local Plan (adopted 2017) key challenges and issues have been addressed in the context of the social, economic, environmental changes faced by the area. The Plan seeks to support sustainable communities that will improve the health, wellbeing and inequality issues of the community and safeguard the attractive and historic neighborhoods of the wider borough. These ambitions form part of the Strategic Objectives of the Local Plan.

### 2.3.2. Strategic Policy C3

Strategic Policy C3 identifies that the council will seek to protect and retain existing cultural and leisure facilities, as well as consider whether the scheme would be detrimental to health and well-being through the loss of facilities which provide meeting spaces for the community.

### 2.3.3. Strategic Policy D1

Strategic Policy D4 seeks to secure high quality design in development. The Council will require that development:

- a) Respects local context and character
- b) Preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2 Heritage
- c) Is sustainable in design and construction, incorporating best practice in resource management and climate change mitigation and adaptation
- d) Is of sustainable and durable construction and adaptable to different activities and land uses
- e) Comprises details and materials that are of high quality and complement the local character
- f) Integrates well with the surrounding streets and open spaces, improving movement through the site and wider area with direct, accessible and easily recognisable routes and contributes positively to the street frontage
1. Preserves strategic and local views
- o) Carefully integrates building services equipment.

Clause 7.34 requires that building services equipment, such as air cooling, heating, ventilation and extraction systems, lift and mechanical equipment, as well as fire escapes, ancillary plant and ducting should be contained within the envelope of a building or be located in a visually inconspicuous position.

### 2.3.4. Policy D2

Policy D1 states that the Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings and will not permit the loss of or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, including conservation areas and Listed Buildings

Clause 7.56 identifies that sustainable development and retrofitting in historic buildings can be sensitively adapted to meet the needs of climate change and energy saving while preserving their special interest and ensuring their long-term survival. In assessing applications for retrofitting sustainability measures to historic buildings the Council will take into consideration the public benefits gained from the improved energy efficiency of these buildings. These considerations will be weighed up against the degree to which proposals will change the appearance of the building.

Clause 7.62 provides guidance on introducing sustainability measures in listed buildings that reduce the energy consumption of listed buildings will be welcomed provided that they do not cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the building.

### 2.3.5. Policy CC1

Policy CC1 identifies the Council's commitment to minimize the effects of climate change and has identified an energy hierarchy that aims to:

1. Be lean – use less energy
2. Be clean – supply energy efficiently
3. Be green – use renewable energy

Clause 8.15 recognises the significant contribution existing buildings make to Camden's CO2 emissions and provides guidance on how the Council will support the retrofitting of existing buildings that seek to sensitively improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings

## 3. Consultation, evaluation and design –

### 3.1. Consultation

Consultation with Camden Borough Council planning department officer Alan Wilto took place during the design development stages in August / September to discuss the proposed conservation based refurbishment and introduction of low energy and renewable energy installations.

The planning officer confirmed that the proposed changes would require an application for Listed Building Consent and planning permission.

It was confirmed that the replacement of the roof finishes and the introduction of insulation were acceptable based on the life expectancy of the existing and the availability of funding. Changes to this element would need to demonstrate that the significance of the building was not affected, nor important roofscape views. The minor changes in the height of the rooftop plant did not present issues where the impact on the historic significance is minimized and where the plant meets the required acoustic limits.

The replacement window proposals were also acceptable where the impact is fully understood and replacements are sensitive to the original design.

### 3.2. Evaluation

The development of the design has taken account of the heritage status of the building and the historic context of the immediate site; consultation with key stakeholders has taken place including Camden Borough Council planning department and Taylor Project Services LLP who carried out the initial energy report.

Consequently, the proposed scheme has been based on the following principles;

#### 3.2.1. Heritage fabric

The scheme has identified the significance of the site and setting and proposes to make changes that that have negligible or no impact on the heritage asset

#### 3.2.2. Heritage structures

The scheme does not propose any changes to the structural characteristics of the existing building.

#### 3.2.3. Building obsolescence and future use:

The proposed changes intend to significantly improve the thermal performance of the library, this will have a positive impact on the economic viability of the building and demonstrate the Council's commitment to tackling Climate Change.



### 3.3. Design

The design development of the proposed scheme has been based on site visit survey information, record drawings, historical records and energy appraisal reports.

The principal design methodology included:

- Removing end-of-life rooftop plant and replacing with low energy and renewable energy plant.
- Removing and replacing the existing poorly insulated flat roof covering
- Removing and replacing the single glazed aluminum framed windows with double glazed equivalents that match the materiality and style of the original.
- The upgrading of existing cavity insulation behind original bookcases
- The replacement of energy intensive components including fluorescent bulbs and over-door heaters with low energy equivalents
- Techniques and materials which have been demonstrated to be appropriate to the fabric. This includes matching the materiality and style of the original materials.
- Interventions that will maximise the life expectancy of significant building fabric and maintain its significance.
- All works to be adequately recorded and the records made available for others.

The necessary repairs have been based on survey information and a good understanding of how the building works and why its materials are failing.

Option appraisals and alternatives have been considered during the design process. Details of these are located in the submitted heritage impact statement.

The 'Do Nothing' option was also considered but discounted as it would result in a significant risk of amount of fabric necessary

### 3.4. Ecology

The proposed changes are not considered to have any impact on the ecology of the site or setting.

## 4. Proposals – Swiss Cottage Library

### 4.1. Proposed Works

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, to introduce insulation in concealed areas behind the concrete clad façade, 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.

### 4.2. Proposed use

The existing building continues to be used for its intended purpose as a public library.

### 4.3. Proposed amount

The proposed scheme seeks to upgrade the existing insulated flat roof, replace the single glazed aluminium windows with double glazed powder coated aluminium equivalents, remove end-of-life rooftop plant and replace it with renewable air source heat pumps, replace existing cavity wall insulation in areas behind existing bookcases, replace fluorescent lamps with LED equivalents.

The scheme will not affect the existing use of adjacent buildings or circulation routes.

### 4.4. Proposed layout

There are no changes proposed that will alter or affect the existing layout.

### 4.5. Proposed scale and massing

The design development stages and evaluation have resulted in material fabric and plant choices that have a negligible or nil impact on the building.

The proposed refurbishment scheme seeks to introduce new rooftop insulation that will raise the height of this element by <50mm. The replacement of redundant chillers with air source heat pumps results in a change of height from 1200mm to 1800mm.

The proposed replacement windows will result in a minor increase in frame dimensions from 30mm to 50mm.

These changes have been assessed from the roofscape, street level and the interior.

Consequently, it is considered that there is no discernible change to the existing conditions.

## 4.6. Proposed landscaping

There is no landscaping associated with the refurbishment project.

## 4.7. Proposed appearance

The proposed scheme has been based on a conservation approach that seeks to significantly improve the thermal performance of the library and significantly reduce its current carbon emissions. Careful consideration of design options and material selection has resulted in a preferred scheme that is considered to have a negligible, or nil impact on the external and internal appearance of the building. Minor modifications are required to the rooftop north lights to ensure the building is protected from water ingress and safeguarded into the future.

## 4.8. Carbon Reduction – renewable energy

Two air source heat pumps are intended to provide space heating and hot water. The proposed external condensers will be located on the roof and will replace two existing chillers.

The proposed Daikin unit EWYT115B-XRA1+OP204

(2 number) dimensions are 1345mmx900mmx320mm (h x w x d) with a sound pressure value of 62.8dBA measured at 1 metre.

Noise levels generated by the Building Services to the external environment will be in accordance with the requirements of the Local Building Control/Environmental Health Officer. A noise impact assessment shall be carried out and forwarded.

# 5. Access

Access to the existing public will not be affected by the proposals. No additional changes are proposed that will affect the existing internal layout.

## 5.1. Scheme design

### 5.1.1. Parking

There are no changes proposed to the existing car parking provision.

### 5.1.2. External circulation and pedestrianised areas

There are no changes proposed to the existing access routes to the library

## 6. 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 proposed works will maintain the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and its setting. The historic fabric and features are to be retained, and both the appearance and layout of the public library will remain legible and appreciable.

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 consultation process has identified that the proposals can be supported subject to an understanding of the building's significance. Consequently, 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.

This approach has resulted in a preferred option that is considered to have a negligible or nil impact on the significance of the site and setting.

As such, it is considered that the proposed scheme complies with both the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and the NPPF.

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