

**TWENTIETH  
CENTURY  
SOCIETY**



Laura Dorbeck  
London Borough of Camden  
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**Sent by email:** Laura.Dorbeck@camden.gov.uk

12 January 2022

Dear Laura Dorbeck

**2021/6242/L (& 2021/6235/P) – INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, 20 BEDFORD WAY, LONDON, WC1H 0AL**

The Twentieth Century Society has been notified of the above application to reconfigure the entrances and interiors of the Grade II\* Institute of Education. In full, the application is for the 'Refurbishment and reconfiguration of selected areas comprising: a new extended entrance at Bedford Way, a reconfigured entrance at Thornhaugh Mews; insertion of a new platform lift at Level 3 and a platform lift serving Level 3 and 4; refurbishment of the foyers at Levels 1, 3 and 4 including the installation of fixed furniture and security gates; replacement of doors to the IALS building at Levels 4-9; and other associated works.' The Society objects to the application due to the harm that would be caused to a designated Grade II\* heritage asset.

**Background**

The Institute of Education was built to designs by Sir Denys Lasdun (1914-2001) who had been appointed in the 1960s to draw up plans to expand the central institutions for London University (in light of a masterplan by Leslie Martin). The Institute of Education was built in 1970-76 and was extended in 1980-93, again by Lasdun. As noted by Elaine Harwood and James O. Davies in *England's Post-War Listed Buildings* (2015), 'Its long elevations demonstrate Lasdun's mature language of horizontal strata and towers, their concrete contrasted with bronze anodized aluminium'.

**Policy**

The Institute of Education was Grade II\* listed in 2000, placing it in the top 8% of listed buildings in England (and one of few post-war buildings listed at this high grade). As a building of more than special interest, great weight should be given to its conservation. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) defines 'conservation' as 'the process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance' (p.66).

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Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Listed Buildings Act) states that “In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a Listed Building or its setting, the local planning authority [...] 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”. 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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be)” (para 199) and that “Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset [...] should require clear and convincing justification” (para 200).

### **Comments**

The Twentieth Century Society was consulted at pre-application stage and attended a site visit to discuss the proposed work to the Institute of Education. The case was reviewed and discussed by the Society’s advisory Casework Committee at a meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020. It appears that the proposals for the entrance on Bedford Way have not changed since pre-app and therefore our advice is unchanged from those pre-app discussions.

The Bedford Way elevation is currently accessed by either the original entrance at street level which leads to the main atrium and stair and is set within recessed curtain glazing or via a stair and entrance to a reception area which was added by Lasdun in 1993.

The Society appreciates that the existing double entrance arrangement is confusing and problematic in terms of access. We support efforts to facilitate level access to the building and to reinstate the original entrance sequence and grandeur of the main foyer and ceremonial staircase. The Society also has no objections to the proposed removal of the 1990s stair and entrance. However, the committee is not convinced by the work proposed to improve the legibility of the existing entrance. The applicant proposes to build a new entrance pavilion which will extend beyond, and enclose one of, the concrete columns. The committee accepted that work needs to be done here to improve access and that some signage and wayfinding may be needed to make the entrance more legible, but felt that the entrance pavilion proposed is too large an intervention and is not sympathetic to the character of the listed building. The removal of the later 1990s stair presents an opportunity to restore the original appearance of the Bedford Way elevation, which was characterised by curtain glazing set back behind a clear line of columns interrupted only by block-like concrete stairs. The committee believes that the entrance should not project beyond the colonnade to be more in keeping with the original design.

### **Summary**

The Society takes the view that the proposed entrance pavilion would result in harm to the special interest of a Grade II\* heritage asset. We believe it would be possible to improve legibility and access without this level of intervention. The Society considers that the application does not meet the requirements of paragraphs 199 and 200 in the NPPF and therefore advises the local authority to refuse listed building consent and planning permission. We encourage the applicant to revise the design in line with our comments and would be happy to be re-consulted on any new proposals.

I trust that these comments are of use to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,



**Coco Whittaker**

Caseworker

Twentieth Century Society

**Remit:** The Twentieth Century Society was founded in 1979 and is the national amenity society concerned with the protection, appreciation, and study of post-1914 architecture, townscape and design. The Society is acknowledged in national planning guidance as the key organisation concerned with the modern period and is a constituent member of the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies. Under the procedures set out in *ODPM Circular 09/2005*, all English local planning authorities must inform the Twentieth Century Society when an application for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition is received, and they must notify us of the decisions taken on these applications.

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