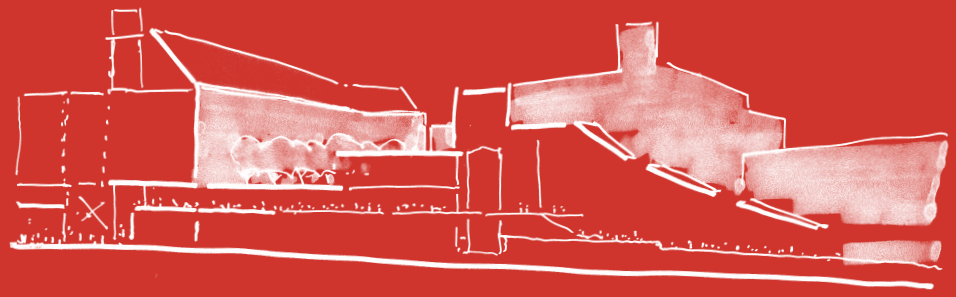
The British Library Extension
January 2022

Environmental Statement - Non Technical Summary



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Introduction

The British Library and SMBL Developments Ltd have applied to the London Borough of Camden for full planning permission for an extension to the northern part of the British Library, located next to the Francis Crick Institute and St Pancras International Railway Station.

The planning application (and associated application for listed building consent) includes alterations to the existing British Library, including the demolition and reprovision of the existing British Library Centre for Conservation and the British Library Sound Archive and the construction of a new building of up to 12 above ground storeys, and one basement level. Infrastructure to support the anticipated Crossrail 2 Euston St Pancras Station will also be provided. This is collectively referred to as the Proposed Development.

This Non-Technical Summary summarises the environmental assessments undertaken as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process and describes any significant effects that may arise because of the Proposed Development.

The Site context is presented in the aerial photograph (dated 2020) The site lies adjacent to the existing British Library building, occupying the space between it and the Francis Crick Institute to the north.

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The Proposed Development

The Proposed Development will include library accommodation, , provision of internal and external public spaces, landscape and a community garden, the Alan Turing Institute, space for the reprovision of the British Library Centre for Conservation, commercial space designed to cater for knowledge quarter uses (including life sciences, cultural scientific and heritage collections and data sciences) and retail space. Additionally, the Proposed Development will provide structural elements for the anticipated Euston St Pancras Station for Crossrail 2, which will run beneath the Site.

In order to facilitate the construction of the Proposed Development, the British Library Centre for Conservation will be relocated. Its functions are integral to the operations of the British Library and will be temporarily accommodated within the existing Library until the relocated British Library Centre for Conservation facility is completed. Existing fuel and water storage tanks for the British Library building will also be replaced and relocated as part of the Proposed Development. There will be adaptations to existing operational areas, including the loading bay to the north of the existing Library.

The Story Garden, a temporary urban food growing garden built on the Site for and by the local community, will be closed and a new, permanent community garden will be provided close to the Ossulston Street entrance to the new extension building. It has been designed to suit the needs of the users of the local neighbourhood and connect to the wider community gardens and green spaces in Somers Town. Since there will be a slight delay between the closure of the Story Garden and completion of the new Community Garden, discussions are ongoing to provide a continuation of the community service, by identifying projects within the local area that could be undertaken during the construction period.

The Proposed Development also includes fully electric heat generation with air source pumps provided on the roof. Cycle parking will be available on-site for the future users. The Proposed Development will be ‘car lite’ with five wheelchair-accessible car parking spaces, four operational spaces for maintenance vehicles and a single minibus bay, representing a reduction from the current provision of 26 car parking spaces. Car parking spaces will be fitted with rapid electric vehicle charging facilities.

The Proposed Development has been subject to extensive pre-application consultation with local residents, statutory consultees and other third parties.

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Evolution of the design

The British Library was designed in the 1970s as an academics-only institution with relatively few visitors. Over the years, a move to open public access to the Library has led to a huge increase in visitor numbers, with 1.6 million on-site visits each year. The original masterplan planned to build on the Site but financial constraints at the time led to revisions to the plans and a smaller British Library. Plans from the 1970s show the Site marked for future extension.

Multiple options were explored in the consideration of the Site setting - the listed building that is the British Library, other nearby listed buildings and other designated heritage assets, visual amenity and the inherent constraints generated by features such as the existing Library and the need for its continuous operation.

An early option included the retention of the BLCC building in its current location. However, this would have pushed much of the Proposed Development to the perimeter of the Site, resulting in an increased perception of the scale of development for the residents on Ossulston Street and harm to heritage views, as well as compromising the residual lighting levels for the BLCC itself.

Subsequently, a design was developed that included three distinct buildings, as shown below.

Earlier design with three distinct buildings

The revised proposal presents a pair of linked linear buildings, separated by a glazed atrium that forms the roof and provides daylight to the new library foyer, illustrated below. The Proposed Development generally follows this form. However, to reduce impacts on residents along Ossulston Street, the western end of the building was shifted 18 metres to the east.

Revised design with linked linear buildings

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The Environmental Impact Assessment findings

The design development and Environmental Impact Assessment process have sought to avoid or reduce negative environmental effects as well as identify and promote the benefits of the Proposed Development. The assessment has considered the following environmental aspects:

- Air quality
- Archaeology
- Built heritage, townscape, and visual impacts
- Climate change
- Daylight, sunlight, overshadowing, solar glare and obtrusive lighting
- Electronic interference
- Environmental wind
- Noise and vibration
- Socio-economics

Air quality

Effects on air quality during construction and operation of the Proposed Development were considered.

Regarding construction, the effect on air quality resulting from construction dust has been scoped out on the basis that mitigation measures for a 'high-risk' site, as defined in Greater London Authority guidance, will be implemented, such that the residual effect will be not significant. These mitigation measures are defined within the Construction Management Plan for the Proposed Development.

Emissions are noted to arise from construction and operational traffic associated with the Proposed Development. However, computer modelling has demonstrated that effects on local air quality from these will be not significant.

Impacts of the proposed combustion plant to be used during operation of the building have been scoped out. The backup generators would operate only in emergencies or for testing, and the effects would therefore be not significant.

Archaeology

A review of published information and previous archaeological investigations in the vicinity of the Proposed Development boundary was conducted to understand the potential for encountering archaeological remains on the Site. Although there is uncertainty regarding what specific archaeological remains may lie beneath the Site, it is considered that there is sufficient information available to make a robust assessment. The Proposed Development could potentially impact on late post-medieval and modern remains in localised areas of the Site. This would most likely be the industrial remains of the late 19th century Somers Town Goods Yard.

A programme of mitigation, to be reviewed and agreed by Camden Council and the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (part of Historic England), will be put in place to mitigate any effects.

It is therefore anticipated that the effect of the Proposed Development on buried archaeology would be not significant.

Built heritage, townscape, and visual impacts

Demolition and construction effects arising from the construction of the new blocks, equipment, cranes, lighting and hoarding of the Proposed Development would have no significant effects on built heritage. It would, however, have significant effects on townscape character and local views close to the Site, which would be adverse in nature. All effects associated with demolition and construction would be temporary and would last until the Proposed Development has been completed.

The visual assessment demonstrates that there would be localised significant beneficial effects close to the Site, including along Ossulston Street and Midland Road, as a result of the high quality design of the completed Proposed Development. There would also be significant beneficial effects for views towards St Paul's Cathedral from Parliament Hill, Kenwood, Primrose Hill and Blackheath. There would be no effects on significant local views of King's Cross and St Pancras International Stations from King's Cross Square and the eastern end of Euston Road.

The completed development will result in permanent significant beneficial effects on the listed British Library through the extension, landscaping and changes to its setting. There will not be any significant effects on the setting of any built heritage assets outside the Site.

The proposed new public realm would reinvigorate the existing area which, together with the high-quality architectural design of the building, would result in significant beneficial effects on the immediate townscape character and quality.

Climate change

Greenhouse gas emissions associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development were calculated using computer software. The Proposed Development will result in an overall net increase in Greenhouse Gas emissions of 154,027 tonnes of carbon dioxide (equivalent) over its 60-year design life. 37% of the net increase in emissions will be related to the construction phase, including emissions associated with the manufacture and supply of materials, and the remaining 63% related to the operational phase, which includes building energy use and operational transport. The Proposed Development will therefore result in a significant adverse effect in relation to greenhouse gas emissions.

It should be noted that the net increase in emissions is a result of the more intensive use of the Site. The design of the Proposed Development includes measures to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions beyond what is required by legislation and policy.

Daylight, sunlight, overshadowing, solar glare and obtrusive lighting

Computer modelling with and without the Proposed Development in place was undertaken to assess the effects on daylight, sunlight and obtrusive lighting at nearby residences, overshadowing of nearby open spaces, and solar glare to nearby roads and railways. Daylight modelling used information on actual room layouts where available. Where this was not available, reasonable assumptions were made.

At Hadstock House and Levita House on Ossulston Street, effects on daylight levels would be largely not significant. However, there would be a significant adverse effect at some units in both buildings. Effects on all other buildings would be not significant.

The impacts of obtrusive lighting, also known as light pollution, on nearby properties and solar glare to nearby roads and railways were also shown to be not significant.

Electronic interference

Effects on transmission paths of emergency service telecommunications has been considered for the Proposed Development.

Computer modelling has shown that large temporary structures used during construction such as cranes and the completed physical presence of the Proposed Development have the potential to interfere with telecommunications by obstructing transmission paths. Agreement on appropriate measures with Airwaves Solutions, the communications provider for emergency service telecommunications, will mitigate or avoid these impacts.

Therefore, following mitigation measures, the effect of the Proposed Development on electronic interference will not be significant.

Environmental wind

Wind tunnel testing analysis was carried out to quantify the effect of the Proposed Development on pedestrian level wind conditions.

Measures including placing sensitive areas such as café spaces on the more sheltered eastern side of the Proposed Development have been embedded into the design. As a result, the assessment concluded that there will be no significant effects on the wind environment as a result of the Proposed Development.

Noise and vibration

Noise and vibration impacts associated with construction and operational activities were examined at the commercial and residential properties close to the Site.

A Construction Management Plan setting out standard good practice mitigation measures, such as the use of noise barriers, restricted working hours and quiet methods of working, will be implemented to control the noise and vibration impacts on the sensitive properties near the Site. However, it is expected following mitigation, construction noise will have a significant effect on the nearby residential accommodation on Ossulston Street and on St Pancras Hotel, to the east of the Site. This would only occur during certain stages of construction and when activities are taking place close to receptors. The assessment was also based on worst case assumptions in the absence of detailed construction plans.

Construction vibration effects have been considered for nearby receptors. Vibration effects at all locations, including the Francis Crick Institute, will be not significant.

There will be limited parking provided on-site, and traffic associated with deliveries and servicing for the Proposed Development during its construction and operation will be insufficient to give rise to significant noise effects.

Socio-economics

The impacts resulting from the operation of the Proposed Development have been considered.

There is flexibility about the end use of the commercial space to be provided as part of the Proposed Development. If the end use is typical office space, the increase in direct employment for residents living nearby would be not significant. However, if both office and laboratory uses are included then there will be a significant beneficial effect. These jobs will contribute to wider economic benefits due to the value they provide the Knowledge Quarter.

Wider socio-economic impacts on residents nearby arising from the Proposed Development will be beneficial, but not of a degree that is considered significant.

Cumulative effects

Cumulative effects can arise from the combination of the Proposed Development and other nearby developments that are not yet fully constructed, acting together to generate altered levels of effects.

The air quality and climate change assessments inherently take account for other developments in terms of their background emissions. The assessment results presented therefore include cumulative effects.

None of the developments identified were considered relevant to the assessment of daylight, sunlight, overshadowing, solar glare and obtrusive lighting due to their relative scale and their distance from the Site and sensitive receptors.

Archaeological remains are generally site-specific, and the Proposed Development and all other planned developments would be required to implement a programme of mitigation reviewed and agreed by Camden Council (or the relevant local planning authority for developments in other boroughs) and its archaeological advisors. Cumulative effects are therefore not likely to occur.

There are no nearby developments located within the emergency services radio transmission paths; they would therefore not interfere with telecommunications and cumulative effects would not occur.

The environmental wind assessment included wind tunnel testing analysis of the effects with other developments in addition to the Proposed Development. No significant cumulative effects were identified.

Of the identified developments, only the Central Somers Town (Brill Place) development is close enough to the Proposed Development for construction noise to potentially affect nearby receptors cumulatively. It is possible that if construction of that development proceeds concurrently with the Proposed Development, the magnitude of impact could increase.

Cumulative vibration effects are unlikely to occur. This is because impacts are usually very localised, within 10-20 metres of a construction site. No receptors exist that are within this proximity of any relevant sites.

The potential for socio-economic related cumulative effects on employment was considered. It was concluded that there is potential for significant cumulative effects in relation to employment generation and wider economic benefits.

The visual assessment has demonstrated that there will be no cumulative effects with other developments on the setting of the listed British Library.

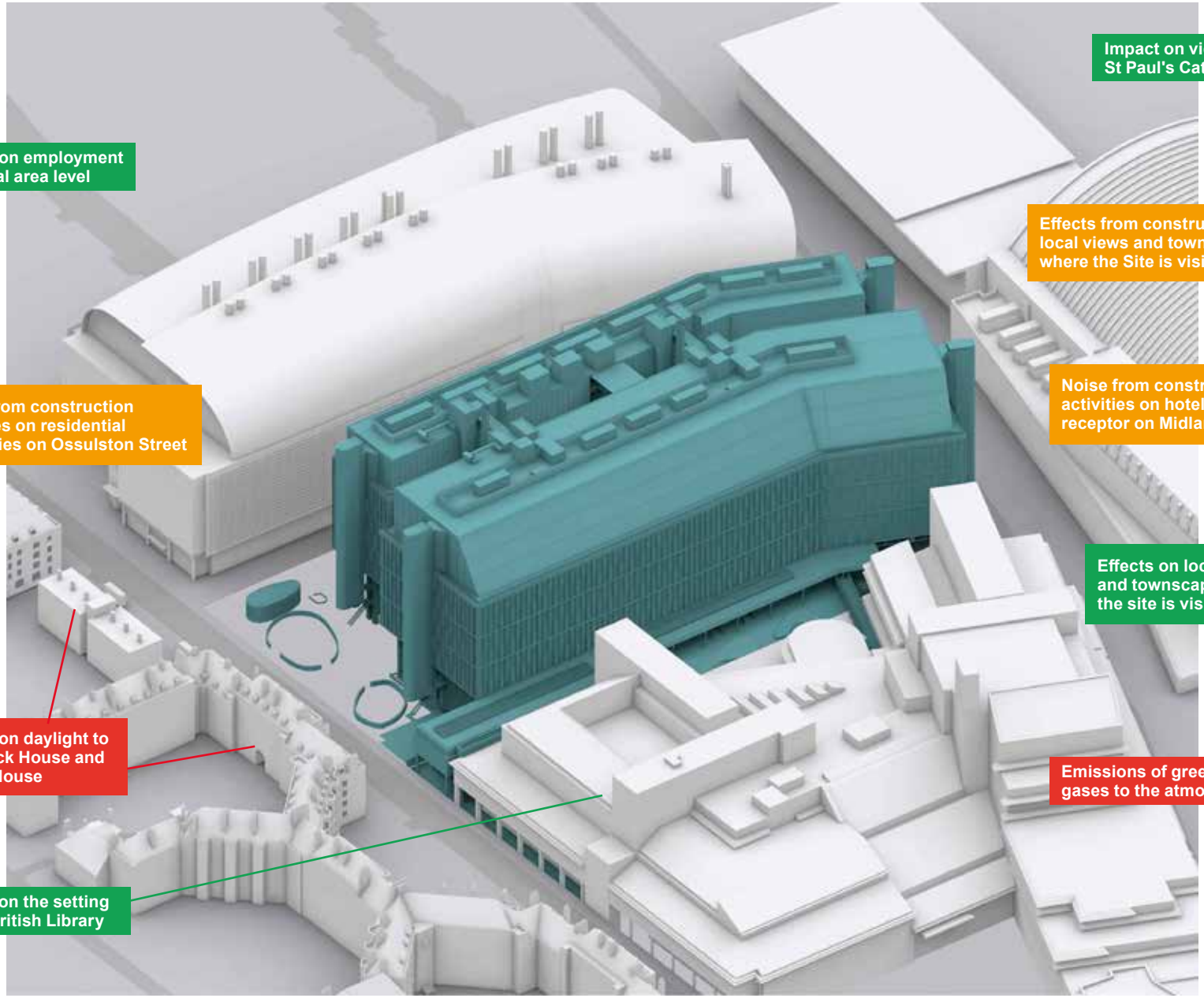
There will be no significant cumulative effects in relation to townscape or nearby built heritage assets. This is due to the physical distance of the identified developments from the Site.

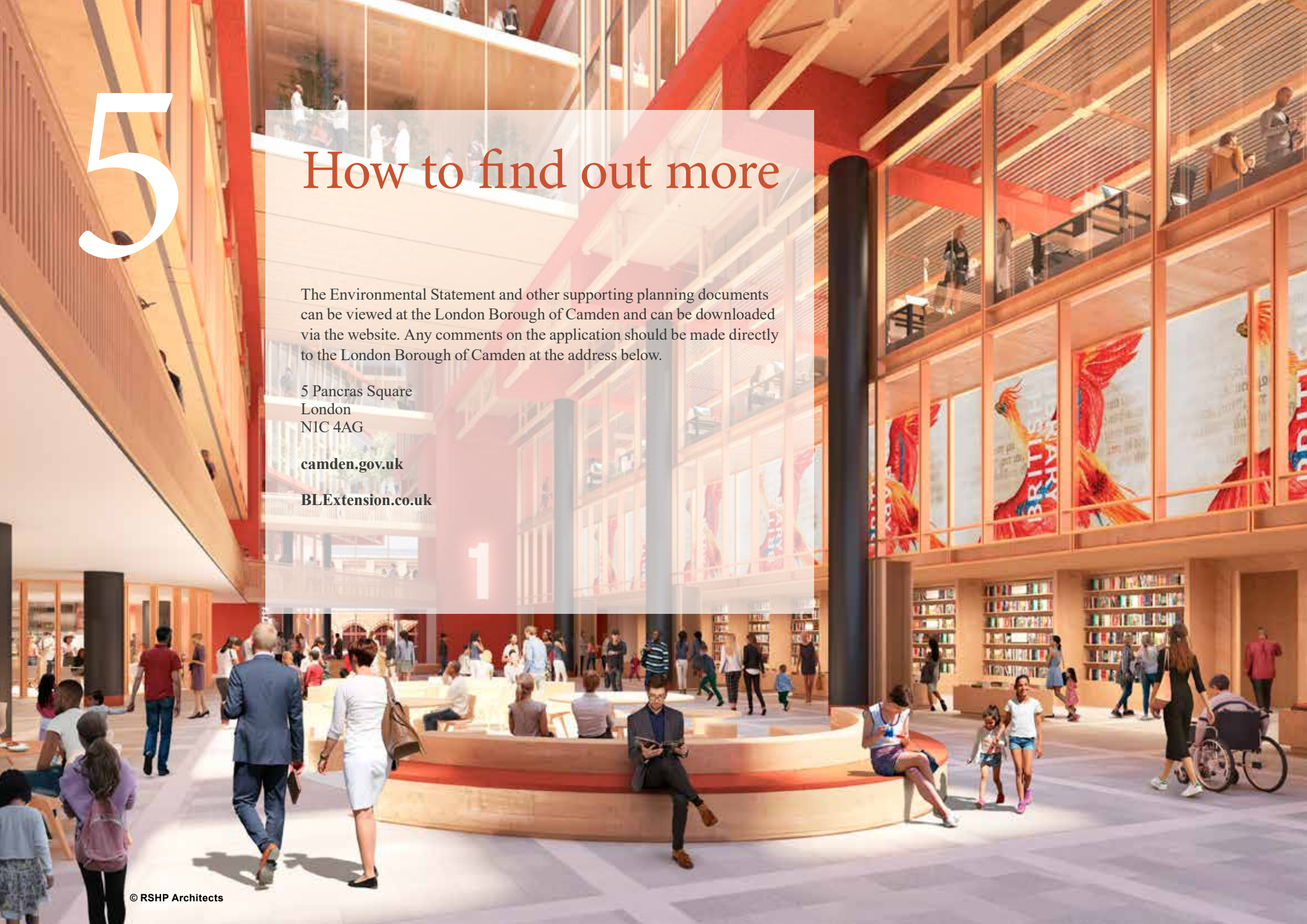
With regard to views, the scale of effect will be increased in distant views due to wider changes to the London skyline. In local views, the effects would not change in comparison to the Proposed Development considered in isolation.

Summary of significant effects

Key

- Permanent significant beneficial effect
- Temporary significant adverse effect
- Permanent significant adverse effect





5 How to find out more

The Environmental Statement and other supporting planning documents can be viewed at the London Borough of Camden and can be downloaded via the website. Any comments on the application should be made directly to the London Borough of Camden at the address below.

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