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Planning and Development
Camden Council
Camden Town Hall
London
WC1H 8ND

Our ref: LEO/SNE/PIR/U0016281
PP Ref: PP-11433376

28 July 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended)
South Wing Basement Lightwell, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT
Applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent

On behalf of our client, University College London, we write to submit an application for planning permission and listed building consent for installation of a new condenser at South Wing Basement Lightwell, Gower Street, London, WC1E 9EP (here known as 'the Site').

Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent is sought for the following:

“Removal of two condensers contained within lightwell, and replacement with a single condenser, and associated works.”

Background

The South Wing forms part of the main UCL campus quadrangle and adjoins the Chadwick Building to the west and the Wilkins Building to east. The quadrangle is listed as a single entry '*University College (University of London) and attached railings to north and south wing*' and is Grade I Listed. A separate listing exists for the two observatories in the central courtyard, which are Grade II Listed.

The Site is located within Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Surrounding buildings are predominantly educational and form part of the wider UCL campus, including the Grade II Listed Cruciform building, located on the adjacent side of Gower Street. There are also some clusters of residential uses.

The Site has a PTAL rating of 6b owing to its proximity to Euston Square underground station. Russell Square and Euston underground, overground and railway stations are also within a short walking distance. There are also a number of bus routes serving the area.

Planning history

From a review of the Council's online planning register, there are no application which specifically relate to development within the lightwell, however there are a number of planning applications relating to the wider South Wing Building.

On 17 January 2020 Listed Building Consent (ref. 2019/6085/L) was granted for the following 'Installation of 2 x new AC units and 1 x replacement AC unit at roof level; and internal works associated with the creation of 2 new data and network cupboards (retrospective).'

On the 17 January 2020 Planning Permission (ref. 2019/5987/P) was granted for the 'Installation of 2 x new AC units and 1 x replacement AC unit at roof level (retrospective)

On the 2 July 2019 Listed Building Consent (2019/3141/L) was granted 'Internal refurbishment works to improve the existing condition of roof G02 in the South Wing of the Wilkins Building'

On the 17 January 2019, Listed Building Consent (ref. 2019/0271L) was granted for the 'Refurbishment of rooms on Level 2 of South Wing and the refurbishment of an office and adjacent store on Level 1. Work includes alteration to an internal wall, and the removal of 2 no. 20th century suspended ceilings to reveal high level windows. New A/C to the teaching laboratories and mezzanine offices. External addition of a condenser unit, with the existing plant to the south-west rear corner of the building and associated services.'

On the 17 January 2019, Planning Permission (2018/6366/P) was granted for the 'Installation of new A/C plant and condenser units and associated services to serve refurbished teaching laboratories and mezzanine offices of university building (D1)'

On the 9 July 2012, Planning Permission (2012/3313/P) was granted for the 'Use of an existing ancillary shop manager's office located on the lower ground floor level as an ancillary bank branch (Class A2)'

On the 1 February 2002, Listed Building Consent (ref LSX0104122) was granted for the 'Removal of proprietary partition to 13A to make room for new mezzanine MG13'

On the 23 November 2001, Listed Building Consent (LSX0004950) was granted for the 'Addition of five new mezzanines within existing ground floor area.'

Development proposals

UCL are currently in the process of refurbishing part of the South Wing basement to provide an updated student shop. The existing space utilises a refrigerant based heating and cooling system; however, the existing system is not fit for purpose and requires upgrading.

Therefore, in order to support the function of the shop, a new freestanding modern and efficient condenser unit is proposed within the lightwell. In order to minimise the impact on the historic fabric, the associated cabling and pipework is proposed to follow existing routes, with existing brackets and high-level tray reused for their support. The pipework would enter the building at high level through an existing opening and therefore there would be no fixing or interference with the historic fabric.

Two redundant condensers and their associated cabling are proposed to be removed and consolidated.

Local Development Framework

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications and applications for listed building consent to be determined in accordance with the statutory Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The London Borough of Camden's Local Development Framework comprises The London Plan (2021), and the Camden Local Plan (2017).

Camden also has a number of adopted Planning Guidance Documents, which would be a material consideration.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) is also a material consideration.

Legislative Framework

Statute regarding the heritage environment is relevant to this application. Both the site's historic fabric and the surrounding environment have been carefully considered in the development of the proposals having regard for the statutory legislation set out below.

Section 16 of Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant listed building consent, special regard shall be paid to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out that local planning authorities should pay special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of historic or architectural interest which it possesses when considering applications.

Section 72 of the same Act states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

National Planning Policy Framework

Under paragraph 194 of the NPPF, in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including the contribution made by their setting. Paragraph 197 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 viability; and
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The Framework goes on to state under paragraph 202 that where a development proposal will lead to a 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.

Planning Assessment

Design and Heritage

Policy D1 (Design) states that the Council will seek high quality design in development that, amongst other things, respects local context and character and preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets.

Policy D2 (Heritage) states that the Council will preserve, and where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings. The policy goes on to state that the Council will not permit development that results in less than substantial harm unless the public benefits of the proposal convincingly outweigh the harm.

The South Wing is Grade I Listed and forms part of a single listing which includes all the buildings around the Main Quad. Whilst the lightwell isn't referred to specifically in the official list entry, the entry is detailed and all-encompassing and the lightwell evidently contributes to the significance of the building.

In this instance, the proposal involves the removal of two condensers. The units proposed to be removed are positioned at an elevated level and sit on a metal shelf affixed to the wall of the lightwell. As agreed during the site visit on the 28 June 2022, whilst the shelf itself is proposed to be removed, the vertical struts attached to the wall are to be retained in situ, in order to limit any further disturbance to the historic fabric. The removal of the shelf, together with the removal of the two condenser units and their associated pipework and cabling, would result in a rationalisation of the existing plant and decluttering of the lightwell.

Whilst the proposal also involves the installation of a new condenser unit, unlike those identified for removal, the new unit would be floor mounted which would involve no fixing to the historic fabric. Furthermore, the pipework and cabling serving the new unit is proposed to follow an already established route, utilise existing brackets and containment tray, and enter the building at high level via an existing opening. In this respect the installation of the proposed condenser unit would not involve any further disruption to the historic fabric. There is also the potential to reuse the retained vertical struts to affix cabling, which would then be directed into, and contained, within the existing containment route.

Furthermore, the location of the proposed unit, at low level, would ensure that it has more limited visibility than the units which it seeks to replace. In this respect, its discreet siting is considered to be sympathetic, and would assist in benefitting the special architectural and historic interest of the Listed Building, particularly when considered in conjunction with the loss of the two elevated condenser units. The works would also preserve the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The proposed works are therefore considered to be in full accordance with the Local Plan Policy D1 and D2, as well as relevant national policy. Furthermore, the works would meet the statutory test of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Amenity

Policy A1 (Managing the Impacts of Development) seeks to ensure that the amenity of communities, occupiers and neighbours is protected from new development. Policy A4 (Noise and Vibration) specifically requires that noise and vibration from plant or machinery is controlled and managed to minimise harm to amenity.

The application is accompanied by a noise assessment produced by Buro Happold. The assessment outlines that the proposed condenser unit would increase the cumulative sound level of the lightwell area by no

more than 1 dB, which would be imperceptible to most people and therefore would not affect the amenity of neighbouring users. Furthermore, any additional noise generated would be inaudible from the nearest noise sensitive residential receptor which is located 80m from the siting of the new condenser. The proposed condenser would therefore not exceed the threshold noise levels as specified in Appendix 3 of the Local Plan.

The development therefore complies with Policy A1 of the Local Plan.

Overheating

Policy CC2 (Adapting to climate change) requires all development to adopt appropriate climate change adaptation measures such as measures to 'reduce the impact of urban and dwelling overheating, including the application of the cooling hierarchy.' Furthermore, the Energy Efficiency and Adaptation CCG (2021) states that 'Active cooling will only be permitted where its need is demonstrated and steps in the cooling hierarchy are followed.'

The application is accompanied by an Overheating Assessment produced by Fowler Martin. As discussed, the condenser is associated with the new UCL Shop which comprises a number of chiller cabinets.

The existing space has historically utilised a refrigerant based heating and cooling system; however, the existing system is not fit for purpose and requires upgrading. The principle of the new services design has therefore been to develop on a 'like for like' replacement basis with the refrigerant-based system retained, but requiring the installation of a new modern, condenser unit.

Whilst due consideration has been given to the cooling hierarchy in the development of the proposals and, whilst alternative means of removing heat from the shop using mechanical ventilation have been considered and explored, given the high volume of air changes necessary, significant interventions would be required to both the glazed roof and the glazed elevations of the shop, as well as the introduction of a substantial additional mechanical ventilation unit and associated routes.

On balance, given the existing system, and importantly the listed status of the building, it is considered more appropriate in this instance to continue to use the existing heating and cooling methodology. This involves replacing the existing inefficient condensing units with a single, modern, efficient equivalent, as part of what is largely a maintenance focused project. Therefore, given the circumstances of this case, the development is considered to comply with Policy CC2 of the Local Plan.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed development complies with relevant policies of the Camden Local Plan, namely Policies D1, D2, A1 and CC2. Furthermore, the works would accord with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Section 16 of the NPPF.

The removal of the existing condenser units, and the installation of the proposed single condenser unit, would be sensitive to the heritage asset and would not involve any disturbance or further interventions to the listed fabric so to undermine its significance. The proposal would also preserve the character or appearance of the wider Conservation Area. Whilst acknowledging the cooling hierarchy, the installation of the proposed condenser is acceptable when having regard to the existing situation, and the physical interventions that would be required in order to introduce a more favourable cooling method. Finally, the submitted noise assessment demonstrates that any increased noise generated from the new condenser

would be imperceptible, and therefore its installation would not result in any undue noise disturbance to any sensitive receptors.

Therefore, we consider that the proposal is accords with the Development Plan and should be determined positive without delay.

Application enclosures

As part of the submission on the Planning Portal, we enclose the following documents:

- Cover letter, prepared by Gerald Eve;
- Application form; prepared by Gerald Eve;
- Existing/Proposed Drawing and Elevation;
- Existing/Proposed Photo montage;
- Noise Assessment; prepared by Buro Happold
- Overheating Assessment; prepared by Fowler Martin.

The application fee of £494.20 (including £32.20 Planning Portal fee) has been paid concurrent to the submission of this application.

In the meantime, should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Sam Neal (0203 486 3312) or Paige Ireland (0207 333 6277) of this office.

Yours faithfully,



Gerald Eve LLP

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