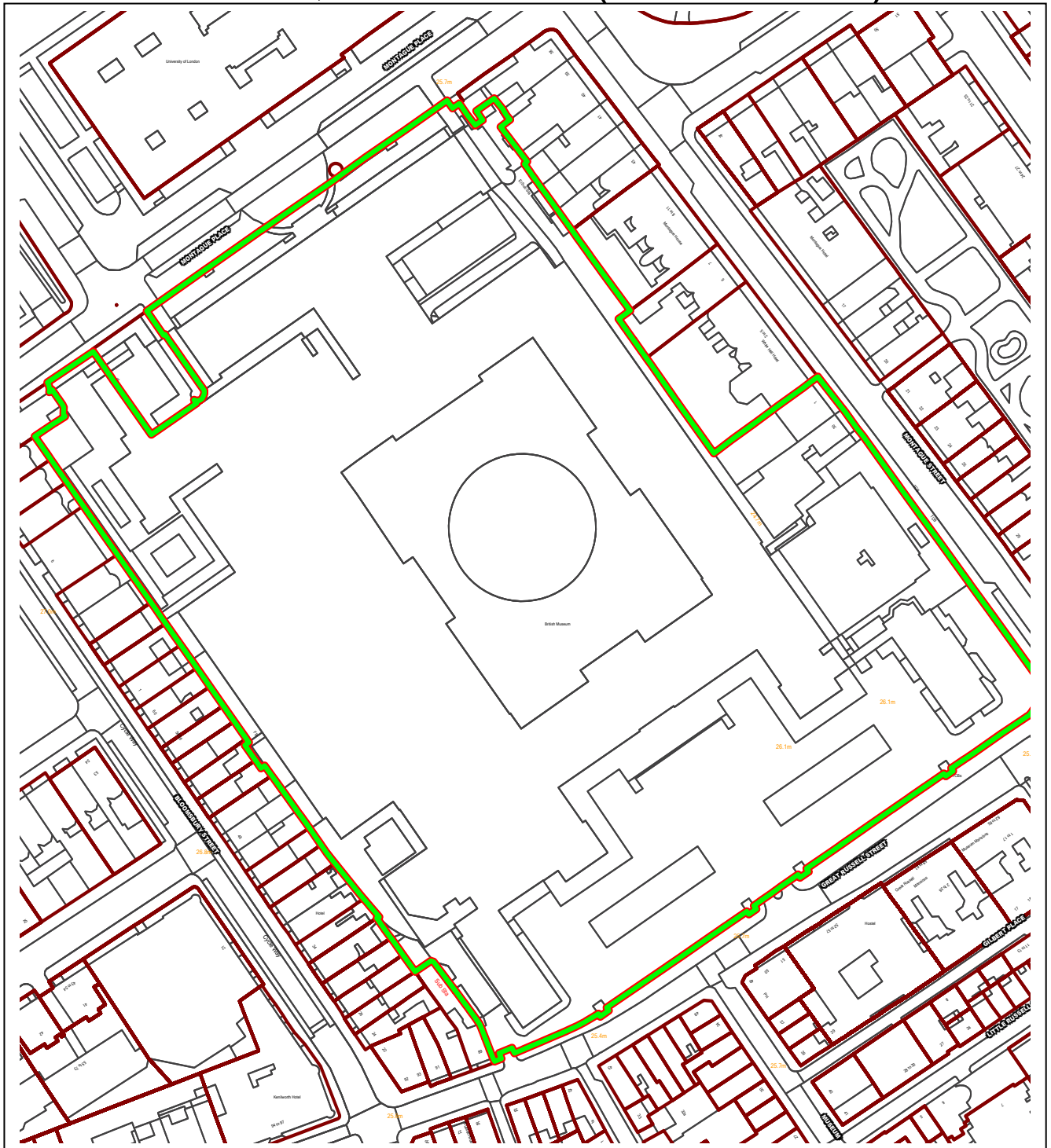


British Museum, Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3DG (2022/3159/P)



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SITE PHOTOS

British Museum, Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3DG (2022/3159/P)



Photo 1 (above): View of security structure within the south courtyard looking west



Photo 2 (above): View of security structure in the south courtyard from Great Russell Street



Photo 2 (above): View of security structure and associated railings within the south courtyard from inside the Museum.



Photo 3 (above): Western side elevation of the security structure in the south courtyard



Photo 4 (above): View of security structure at the northern entrance on Montague Place



Photo 5 (above): View of the security structure at the northern entrance on Montague Place

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:		20/09/2022	
(Members Briefing)		N/A / attached		Consultation Expiry Date:		28/08/2022	
Officer				Application Number(s)			
Elaine Quigley				2022/3159/P			
Application Address				Drawing Numbers			
British Museum Great Russell Street London WC1B 3DG				See draft decision notice			
PO 3/4		Area Team Signature		C&UD		Authorised Officer Signature	
Proposal(s)							
Continued use of single storey structures in the south and north entrances to provide an external search facility to the museum for a temporary period for 2 years							
Recommendation(s):		Grant conditional temporary planning permission					
Application Type:		Full Planning Permission					

Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:	Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:						
Consultations						
Adjoining Occupiers:	No. notified	00	No. of responses	01	No. of objections	01
Summary of consultation responses:	<p>Site notices were displayed fronting Great Russell Street (main entrance) and Montague Place (northern entrance) on 03/08/2022 that expired 27/08/2022 and a press notice was advertised on 04/08/2022 that expired on 28/08/2022.</p> <p>1 letter received from local resident at 46 Great Russell Street raising the following concerns:</p> <p>An objection was made to the original application - which was made retrospectively - on the basis that without clear indication by the British Museum that permanent arrangements were being planned, these so-called temporary structures would become permanent.</p> <p>The 'tent' at the front of the grade 1 listed building is an eyesore and deserves rather better. If this 'temporary' application is approved, Camden should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Limit the extension of permission for this 'temporary' building to two years. Make it clear that there will be no further extension of permission. Request a detailed plan from the British Museum for long term provision within the curtilage of the building. <p>Officer response: See Section 4.0 “Need for security structures’ and 5.0 “Design” section</p>					
BLOOMSBURY CAAC:	<p><u>Bloomsbury CAAC: - objects</u></p> <p>The structures are clearly inappropriate in their conflict with the significance of the listed building and their place within the setting of the important building. The courtyard is designed as a grand open space, providing a vista for views of the building’s principal elevation and an area for public circulation and socialisation. The physical presence of the buildings not only harms the significance of the listed building through their location and excessively poor design, but the use of the courtyard space entrance for queuing and its incidental equipment such as portable steel railings is totally inappropriate for a heritage asset of this importance, especially when considered within its wider setting of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.</p> <p>The initial application was granted for a limited period in urgent circumstances in the interests of public safety. The time elapsed since then has been more than sufficient for the museum to find alternative arrangements for queuing and searching. This building has by far the largest floorplate in Bloomsbury, and is one of the largest and most well-resourced museums in the world. There is no lack of resource or space to find alternative arrangements for searching if deemed necessary.</p> <p>The proposed continuation of these structures for a hotel of four years is wholly inappropriate. Alternative arrangements simply must be found.</p> <p>This museum is one of many dozens of attractions in London and not one has such inappropriate and excessive searching requirements for its visitors.</p>					

	<p>There is very little objective justification in the application as to why such stringent controls are necessary.</p> <p>If the Council is minded to grant the application, please have the description of development altered so that only a term of six months be granted. This would allow the museum sufficient time to organise alternative arrangements.</p> <p><i>Officer response: See Section 4.0 “Need for security structures’ and 5.0 “Design” section</i></p>
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Historic England

Historic England (HE): Comment

When the buildings were granted temporary permission in 2020 (2016/2524/P and 2016/4219/P) HE raised concerns about the proposals and considered them to cause a high degree of harm to the setting of the Grade I listed Museum and the surrounding Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

We did however, acknowledge that the Museum has a proven need to provide security screening to museum visitors and accepted that such screening could be perceived as a public benefit. In coming to a decision on the previous applications, your authority weighed this harm against the public benefits arising from the proposals and granted planning permission for a maximum of 2 years.

We understood that 2 years would allow adequate time for the Museum to establish its security requirements and to formulate a permanent solution. However, this has not been possible, and we acknowledge that the museum requires more time to formulate a permanent solution. We therefore recommend that if your authority is minded to grant planning permission, that this be for a further time-limited period.

In respect to a permanent solution, we would encourage the Museum to work with ourselves and your authority to bring forward proposals as soon as possible. We also suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation advisors, as relevant.

Site Description

The application site lies to the north of Great Russell Street, to the west side of Montague Street, to the east of Bloomsbury Street and Bedford Square and to the south of Montague Place and is the home of the British Museum. The Museum is a Grade I listed building which accommodates the national collection of historical artefacts from across the world. It is one of the top visitor attractions in the UK.

The site is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and its complex includes the Grade II listed buildings along Montague Street and Bloomsbury Street and Bedford Square.

Relevant History

There have been a significant number of planning permissions and listed building consents for works relating to the main Museum building and the perimeter properties along Montague Street. The most relevant permissions to this application are detailed below.

Planning permission (ref 2016/2524/P) was **granted** on 17/08/2020 for the erection of a single storey structure in the front forecourt to provide an external search facility to the museum for a temporary period of 2 years (RETROSPECTIVE)

Planning permission (ref 2016/4219/P) was **granted** on 17/08/2020 for erection of a single storey structure including ramp and handrail outside the KEB building north entrance to provide an external search facility to the museum for a temporary period of 2 years (RETROSPECTIVE).

Relevant policies

NPPF (2021)

The London Plan (2021)

Camden Local Plan (2017)

C3 Cultural and leisure facilities

C5 Safety and security

A1 Managing the impact of development

D1 Design

D2 Heritage

T1 Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport

CPG Guidance (2021)

Amenity CPG

Community uses, leisure and pubs CPG

Design CPG

Supplementary guidance

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (CAAMS) 2011

Assessment

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The British Museum attracts approximately 6 million visitors a year from all over the world. Due to its popularity the venue is considered to be a higher risk to terrorism by the MET police and the Museum's Head of Security and Visitor Services and was the subject of a terrorist threat in 2017. The Museum entrance when originally built was to accommodate a significantly smaller number of visitors. Before the middle of March 2020 (pre-COVID-19) the Museum was seeing approximately 17,000 visitors a day with busiest days reaching over 20,000. The level of bag checks at the entry to the building has increased over the years. As a free entry publicly accessible building the Museum will continue to attract large numbers of visitors on a daily basis.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 Permission is sought for the continued use of the single storey structures in the south forecourt and outside the northern entrance onto Montague Place to provide external search facilities to the museum (retrospective) for a further period of two years.

South forecourt security structure

2.2 The security structure in the south courtyard comprises a single storey building which measures 12m (length) by 6.1m (width) with a footprint of approximately 113 sq. m. It measures 3m to the eaves and 4.65m in height to the ridge of the roof of the structure. The structure is constructed using a metal frame with a vinyl sheet flooring. The elevations are covered in a ridge wall panel system and the roof covering is made of a soft vinyl sheet. The structure is designed to provide level access with ramps outside the entrance and exit. There are tensa barriers on the front forecourt that direct visitors from the entrance gates on Great Russell Street to the security structure. The structure lies between the West Residence and the West Lawn within the southern front courtyard (see context photos below).



Figure 1 (above): Annotated photo of the external elevations of the structure in the south forecourt

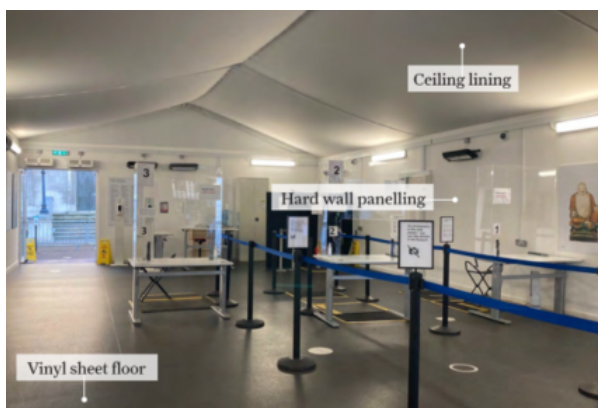


Figure 2 (above): Annotated photo of the internal elevations of the structure in the south forecourt

North entrance security structure

2.3 The security structure outside the north entrance measures 7.7m (length) by 3.7m (width) with a footprint of approximately 28.3 sq. m. It measures 3m in height to the eaves and 3.9m to the ridge of the roof.



Figure 3 (above): Annotated photo of the external elevations of the structure outside the northern entrance

2.4 The purpose of the structures are to provide security screening to visitors entering the museum as an additional security measure to the existing security screening within the main entrance of the Museum itself. They have been in place for 6 years since August 2016. Permission was granted in 2020 for the structures for a temporary 2 year period (see planning history above for details). The permissions expired in August 2022 however the application for the continued use of the structures for a further temporary period were submitted and registered on 26th July 2022 prior to the expiry dates. Listed building consent is not required for these works as the security structures are not attached to the listed building but are independent structures that require planning permission only.

2.5. Following the permission in 2020 discussions have been ongoing with the Museum during regular quarterly meetings with representatives of the Council and Historic England about the timescales that the structures would need to be in place. The Museum are seeking temporary permission to retain the security structures for a further 2 years (2022-2024) to allow the Museum to progress masterplan activity and to undertake design, consultation process and construction of a longer term permanent proposal of high architectural quality. The masterplan activity would look at security as a whole, as well as visitor flows and wayfinding within the museum itself.

Revisions

2.6 Following discussions with the applicant, the time period to retain the security structures has been reduced from 4 years to 2 years. Additional information relating to alternative options for security measures to be provided within the main Museum building have been submitted.

3.0 ASSESSMENT

3.1 The main material considerations associated with the proposal include:

- Need for the security structures
- Design (including impact on the character, appearance and setting of the Museum and the conservation area)
- Amenity

4.0 NEED FOR THE SECURITY STRUCTURES

4.1 Concerns have been raised by local residents about the need for the security structures and the

benefit of bag searches. Since the installation of the security structures the Museum have been able to confiscate a significant number of dangerous weapons from being brought into the Museum as a result of bag searches.

4.2 The need for the security structures to be constructed outside the main Museum building are 2 fold:

1. To reduce the risk to the public, it was essential to relocate bag searching outside of the Museum building in order to try to reduce the potential for any terrorist threat entering the Museum building itself. It can therefore be dealt with away from the main building and the majority of visitors and emergency services can access more easily
2. It also provides the following operational management benefits:
 - Multiple search lanes allow high volume of visitor flows from the entrance into the grounds and eases congestion into the entrance hall of the Museum as the flow of visitors is undertaken in a more controlled way.
 - Provides adequate protection from weather conditions
 - Provides adequate lighting and heating for safe working

4.3 Local residents have queried if the structures can be relocated within the Museum building itself. Following discussions with the Museum, various options have been explored to try to identify suitable areas within the Museum to undertake similar security searches that are performed within the security structures. It was advised that the housing of the search facility is better to impose security outside of the main museum building, so that in the event or discovery of an incident the matter can be dealt with outside of the main building away from crowds and the Grade I listed building. It is also easier for emergency services to access the northern and southern forecourts rather than accessing the main building. Furthermore the historic main entrance to the building is too narrow for crowd control and there would be insufficient areas within the entrance halls. The Great Court in terms of capacity and other functions such as circulation space, information, tour and other group congregations is not large enough to accommodate a search facility. Also, once inside the building in terms of the visitor journey, visitors would have to double back to access the cloakroom after security, which would be extremely difficult to facilitate.

5.0 DESIGN

5.1 The single storey structure in the south courtyard measures 12m (length) by 6.1m (width). It is set back 10m from the front boundary metal railings and set away from the eastern elevation of the West Residence by 5.6m. It has metal panelled walls with a tented roof structure that measures 4.65m at the apex. Its internal finishes include ceiling linings and a barrier carpet on a level floor deck with ramped access.

5.2 The security structure at the northern entrance measures 7.7m (length) by 3.7m (width) and 3.9m to the ridge of the roof. The structure is set back 3.6m from Montague Place and is within 15m on the northern entrance doors. It is similar in appearance to the security structure in the south court and includes similar ramped access.

5.3 The Council acknowledges that the proposed security structures are prominent features within the direct foreground setting of the Museum. In terms of the main entrance, the symmetrical design of the Smirke Museum buildings, their arrangement around the Southern Forecourt and associated boundary treatments all work together to create the appearance of a grand palace composition that reinforces the status of the Museum as a Grade I listed building. The Southern Forecourt is integral to the setting of the Museum and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. In terms of the Montague Place entrance, the northern entrance is integral to the character and appearance of the building and the wider Bloomsbury Conservation Area. As such, it is considered that the security structures do cause a degree of harm to the setting of the building and the wider Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The harm to the setting of the building is due to the position of the structures outside the Grade I listed building. The harm would be considered less than substantial to the designated heritage asset (i.e. the Grade I listed building) as it is not affecting the designated heritage asset itself rather the issue is the harm to its setting. The proposed structures are out of character in the conservation area due to

its size, scale, bulk, footprint, form and appearance. However the harm is identified as less than substantial harm as the impact has to be considered in relation to the setting of the conservation area as a whole and the proposal affects only a small area of the Bloomsbury conservation area. The issues of harm have to be weighed against the public benefits that the proposal provides. Considerable importance and weight has been attached to the harm caused in this instance, nevertheless the security structures would continue to be in place for a temporary period of time until a permanent solution is identified through the future masterplan for the estate and the security screening improvements provided by the structure are considered a significant public benefit which would outweigh the less than substantial harm caused. It is accepted that the approach taken is an appropriate temporary solution to address the existing security issues and that the works have been carefully conceived to cause the least harm to the listed building in line with paragraph 196 of the NPPF. Historic England were notified about the application and recommended that any permissions be granted for a further time-limited period of 2 years. The Council and Historic England attend regular meetings with the Museum to discuss estate matters which includes the status of current and outstanding planning matters. Historic England have confirmed that the advice and recommendations that they provided in relation to the application remains unchanged.

5.4 As already stated above, this type of development is something that the Council would not normally support due to the impact of the proposal on the conservation area. Given the longer time period required to design and plan for a permanent solution as part of a future masterplan document the permission would be for a temporary period of 2 years. The structures would then be required to be removed and the area made good. This would be secured by condition.

6.0 AMENITY

6.1 Due to the location and nature of the single storey security structure away from neighbouring residential properties the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers in terms of loss of privacy, outlook or daylight and sunlight and would be considered acceptable.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Grant conditional planning permission for a temporary period of 2 years.

The decision to refer an application to Planning Committee lies with the Director of Regeneration and Planning. Following the Members Briefing panel on Monday 27th February 2023, nominated members will advise whether they consider this application should be reported to the Planning Committee. For further information, please go to www.camden.gov.uk and search for 'Members Briefing'.

Application ref: 2022/3159/P
Contact: Elaine Quigley
Tel: 020 7974 5101
Email: Elaine.Quigley@camden.gov.uk
Date: 21 February 2023

Development Management
Regeneration and Planning
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Judd Street
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WC1H 9JE

Phone: 020 7974 4444

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www.camden.gov.uk

The Planning Lab
Somerset House
South Wing
London
WC2R 1LA

DRAFT

Dear Sir/Madam

DECISION

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

Full Planning Permission Granted

Address:

The British Museum
Great Russell Street
London
WC1B 3DG

DECISION

Proposal:

Continued use of single storey structures in the south and north entrances to provide an external search facility to the museum for a temporary period for 2 years

Drawing Nos: 001 rev A; 002; 100 rev A; 110 rev A; 111; 130 rev A; 200 rev A; 210 rev A; 211 rev A; 220 rev A; 230 rev B; Design and Access Statement prepared by Wright & Wright Architects dated July 2022; Plan showing existing uses of the south forecourt; Plan showing constraints of locating security within Weston Hall; Plan showing required fire engine access to principal elevations; Plans visitor circulation through the main entrance.

The Council has considered your application and decided to grant permission subject to the following condition(s):

Condition(s) and Reason(s):

- 1 The proposed single storey security structures in the south and north forecourt hereby permitted are for a temporary period only and shall be removed from the site and the site made good by no more than 2 years from the date of this permission (01/03/2025).

Reason: The type of structures are not such as the local planning authority is prepared to approve, other than for a limited period, in view of its appearance. The permanent retention of the structures would be contrary to the requirements of policy D1 and D2 of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
001 rev A; 002; 100 rev A; 110 rev A; 111; 130 rev A; 200 rev A; 210 rev A; 211 rev A; 220 rev A; 230 rev B; Design and Access Statement prepared by Wright & Wright Architects dated July 2022; Plan showing existing uses of the south forecourt; Plan showing constraints of locating security within Weston Hall; Plan showing required fire engine access to principal elevations; Plans visitor circulation through the main entrance.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning.

Informative(s):

- 1 Your proposals may be subject to control under the Building Regulations and/or the London Buildings Acts that cover aspects including fire and emergency escape, access and facilities for people with disabilities and sound insulation between dwellings. You are advised to consult the Council's Building Control Service, Camden Town Hall, Judd St, Kings Cross, London NW1 2QS (tel: 020-7974 6941).

In dealing with the application, the Council has sought to work with the applicant in a positive and proactive way in accordance with paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

You can find advice about your rights of appeal at:

<https://www.gov.uk/appeal-planning-decision>.

Yours faithfully

Chief Planning Officer