

Colette Hatton
London Borough of Camden
Development Management Team
5 Pancras Square
London
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9 March 2023

Dear Colette,

Camden Town Hall | Application for Listed Building Consent for ventilation and fire improvement works in by Stair C

Introduction

Enclosed is an application for listed building consent, made on behalf of Lendlease, acting as Project Managers on behalf of the London Borough of Camden (LBC), for ventilation and fire improvement works by Stair C in the Grade II listed Town Hall, Judd Street, London, WC1H 9JE.

This application follows a site visit on 28th September 2022 and an email exchange with Conservation Officer, Colette Hatton, who advised that works should be limited to the glazing of the existing window and a listed building consent should be submitted to formalise the works.

Application content

This application for listed building consent has been submitted via the Planning Portal (ref: PP-12001197). The following make up the application and supporting documents:

- Application form
- Location Plan at scale 1:1250
- Existing Site Plan at scale 1:200
- Existing and proposed floorplans, sections, elevations and details of the proposed brass grille
- Design and heritage statement by Purcell

We would be grateful if the contents of this letter could also be taken into consideration. Applications for listed building consent are exempt from application fees.

Site

Camden Town Hall (CTH), formerly St Pancras Town Hall, was built between 1934-37 to designs by A.J. Thomas. It is a Grade II listed building, bounded by Judd Street, Euston Road, Tonbridge Walk and Bidborough Street. It is located within the King's Cross Conservation Area, and on the boundary of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It has been the primary public building and focus of the civic and democratic functions of the London Borough of Camden. The former Assembly Room, previously known as the Camden Centre, lies at the east end of the building with its foyer currently accessed from Bidborough Street.

The site is bounded to the north by Euston Road, a major road with fast flowing traffic, bus and cycle routes. Directly to the north of the site is St Pancras Station and Chambers and the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel. Adjacent to this, on either side, are the Grade I listed British Library and King's Cross Station.

To the west of the site, on Judd Street, are office buildings and student accommodation. The offices of the Royal National Institute for the Blind are located to the south west of the site. Directly south of the site, the character is more residential with the Queen Alexandra Manson Block, a 5-7 storey residential block, located behind the town hall. The streets beyond are formed of terraced houses and mansion blocks and form the northern fringes of Bloomsbury. At the end of Bidborough Street is the Argyle Primary School. At the corner of Bidborough Street and Tonbridge Street, at the south east corner of the site, is the Victorian-era Dolphin Pub.

On the western side of Judd Street, opposite the site is another Victorian pub, the Euston Road Tavern. Directly to the east of the site, on Tonbridge Walk, is the former Town Hall Annex; this was sold by the Council and has been converted into a hotel by a private developer. There was until recently a bridge linking the Annex to the Town Hall at second floor level. This was removed as part of the Annex conversion and the developer is responsible for making good the exposed Town Hall elevation.

Background

Applications for full planning and listed building consent application (ref: 2019/2238/P and 2019/2257/L) for refurbishment of the Town Hall were submitted in April 2019 and approved at Committee in August 2019, subject to the Section 106 agreement. The proposals will deliver essential building work to upgrade the whole building including the Council Chamber, whilst protecting its historic significance and civic function. The project will create a partnership with new commercial organisations, which will enhance the local economy and provide employment opportunities, while generating a long-term income stream to support the initial investment made by LBC.

The proposals retain the key public functions within the historic CTH at ground and first floor. This includes democratic services, which will operate out of the original Council Chamber and Committee Rooms and the Registry Services which will operate out of the remodelled ground floor of CTH. This will not only ensure that part of the historic use is retained in the building but that CTH will remain open to the public to visit as necessary and enjoy the building.

Since the grant of consent, further investigations have taken place which have resulted in the need for some non-material amendments. These amendments will further enhance the functionality of the refurbished and repurposed Town Hall, particularly the public facing uses resulting in significant conservation, economic and social benefits to the borough.

An NMA and listed building consent application ref: 2020/1992/L and 2020/1990/P approved some minor changes in November 2020. These include the installation of a new slimline draft lobby to improve thermal conditions within the lobby on Judd Street; like-for-like rebuilding of the main entrance steps; rebuilding of 1940s roof extension to improve structural stability including insertion of structural steels through the North West and South West lightwells; revised layout of rooftop plant to accommodate larger air source heat pumps and retention of existing lift over run and re-purpose as pump room.

Another NMA and listed building consent application was also approved in November 2020 sought further minor amendments which included changes to the lobby door and lifts on the Bidborough Street elevation (ref: 2020/3862/P and 2020/3849/L). Further changes were granted in 2022 for a new changing places and community space on the ground floor (ref:2022/3554/P and 2022/5038/L).

The area impacted by this application is the split level between the ground and first floors of Stair C in the Southeast end of Town Hall, the room (referred to as the Mezzanine Room) was previously used by the Council as a storeroom. Through inadequate ventilation and heating, the room has become damp and has developed large amounts of mould particularly in the small storage cupboard located behind a separate door.

Assessment of significance | CTH was designed and built as a Town Hall by St Pancras Borough Council between 1935 and 1937. The design is a result of an architectural competition won by Albert J Thomas, who worked closely with Lutyens. The original building included the Assembly Hall (now known as the Camden Centre). CTH was listed Grade II in 1996, it is located in the King's Cross Conservation Area. The building's significance is derived from its use as a Town Hall as well as its physical fabric. Further details on the significance of the CTH can be found in the Heritage Statement that was approved as part of the original permission. The area affected by this application are of low significance as noted in the heritage impact assessment by Purcell.

Planning Policy Context

The key primary legislation relevant to the planning process is as set out in the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Listed Building Act). S.16 and s.66 of the Listed Building Act impose a statutory duty on planning authorities consider the impact of proposals upon listed buildings and their settings.

The policies within The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) including the Planning Practice Guidance 2021 (PPG) form a material consideration in the determination of this application. The Development Plan is formed of the GLA's London Plan 2021, and the Camden Local Plan is comprised of: The Camden Local Plan July 2017; the Site Allocations Plan September 2013; and the Policies Map (updated version) January 2019. These documents are supported by Camden's Planning Guidance Note on Design and the Kings Cross /St Pancras Conservation Area Appraisal 2011.

The primary planning policy consideration for the proposed works is the design impact of the works on heritage significance, namely the special architectural and historic character of the Grade II listed building. The key policy consideration are as follows:

- Section 16 of the NPPF sets out how the historic environment should be conserved and enhanced. It requires heritage assets to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- London Plan Policy 7.8 states that development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate. Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.
- London Plan Policy 7.9 states that, wherever possible, heritage assets (including buildings at risk) should be repaired, restored and put to a suitable and viable use that is consistent with their conservation and the establishment and maintenance of sustainable communities and economic vitality.
- Policy D1 of Camden's Local Plan requires that development preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2.
- Policy D2 states that the Council will resist proposals for alterations and extensions to a listed building where this would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the building.

Proposal and assessment of work

The proposals will improve ventilation in this area to prevent further deterioration from growing mould. There is currently a window in the between the storeroom and the stair core and it does not open as a result it suffers from poor ventilation. The proposal also aims to provide fire compartmentation to the stairs. This would need to be supplemented by an intumescent grille fitted into a new fire rated lining behind which would seal during a fire. This would follow a similar principle with other grilles in the building i.e. an intumescent grille fitted to the existing masonry with a brass cover plate onto the stairs.

The proposed works include:

- Removal of the existing non-original door to the storage cupboard to allow air flow and restrict risk of further mould growth.
- Removal of 6no. existing wired glass panes from the Mezzanine Room side. Stop beads to be carefully dismantled for reinstatement. All other timber frame elements to be retained in situ
- Installation of 6no. new patinated decorative brass grilles in place of glass to ventilate room. Existing stop beads to be reinstated from Mezzanine Room side.
- New fire-rated partition to be installed to provide fire compartmentation to the protected staircase. There will be an opening in new partition to create an airflow path from the new brass grilles into the store room. The opening is to be located below sill level so as not to be visible through the decorative grilles. The cavity facing side of the new partition is to be painted black to limit visibility through the decorative grilles.
- New fire-rated motorised smoke and fire damper to be installed in new partition to complete fire compartmentation line on detection of a fire.

The existing storeroom has no formal ventilation. It has developed a large amount of mould and it is in need of upgrades to comply with fire safety guidelines. The proposed works will prevent further damage to the space. The design team has considered different options, but the proposed works are considered the most appropriate and sensitive approach. Given the position of the window in a stair core, all new elements will need to be appropriately fire-rated. The proposal will improve the condition of the storeroom and bring it back to a usable space. The installation of the 6no. brass grilles will also help ventilate this space. The geometric pattern design of the grilles references existing decorative timber panels found elsewhere within the CTH so the proposed works have been designed to be sympathetic to the Grade II listed building.

Purcell has assessed the significance of the heritage asset and considers that the current condition of the room shows signs of neglect and is highly unsafe to use. The significance of the window is derived from its location, being within the Stair C stair core. The proposal will not affect the overall language of the window and the works are reversible if the window is to be reinstated in the future. The pattern and materiality of the grilles can be read in multiple locations throughout the building and therefore the character and appearance of the listed building will not be impacted. All the works are internal so it will not affect the appearance and character of the conservation area.

Overall, the proposals will result in sensitive improvements to the heritage asset and no harm to the heritage asset will arise, rather the proposal will upgrade of the ventilation in the store room and improve the fire safety and the overall operations of a public building. The works will have no adverse impact on the special architectural and historic character of the Grade II listed building nor the surrounding

Conservation Area. The works fully meet the objectives of the NPPF (section 16), London Plan policies 7.8 and 7.9, as well as Camden Local Plan policies D1 and D2.

Summary

CTH is an important building in Camden and the proposed works will ensure that appropriate repair works are undertaken to the stair and storeroom to futureproof it, whilst preserving its heritage and ensuring the long-term longevity of the building.

The proposals are not considered to cause harm in accordance with NPPF terminology and are fully justified in the context of the works. They will fully respect the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building. Overall, the proposals will support the LBC's function and mission and will continue to enhance the building's important status and significance.

If you have any questions, please contact melanie@theplanninglab.com (0207 257 9363).

Yours sincerely,
The Planning Lab