

West Area Planning Committee

12th August 2012

Application Nos. i) 12/01737/LBC
ii) 12/01736/FUL

Decision Due by: 30th August 2012

Proposal: (i): 12/01737/LBC External alterations to provide new access point and internal alterations to provide librarian space, draught lobby and access and security controls to Radcliffe Camera

(ii): 12/01736/FUL Construction of new pedestrian access path steps and doorway to Radcliffe Camera and including new partitions on the first floor of the Old Bodleian

Site Address: Bodleian Library
Radcliffe Square
Oxford

Ward: CARFAX - Carfax Ward

Agent: Purcell

Applicant: Oxford University Estates Directorate

Recommendation: APPLICATIONS BE APPROVED

For the following reasons:

1. The Council considers that the proposal accords with the policies of the development plan and Government advice on the management of the historic environment as summarised below. It has taken into consideration all other material matters, including matters raised in response to consultation and publicity. Any harm to the heritage assets that the works would otherwise give rise to can be justified and mitigated by detailed design, which the conditions imposed would control.
2. The proposals have evolved through informed analysis of the architectural and historic interest of the buildings and through pre-application discussions with officers and English Heritage and in consultation with local groups. Whilst there will be some impacts on the heritage assets it is considered that these impacts have been minimised by design. Overall the benefits that will be delivered, ensuring the buildings remain suitable for continued storage of these important collections allowing improved access for the whole community and encouraging the public's understanding and enjoyment of the heritage assets, justify granting planning permission and listed building consent.

subject to the following conditions, which have been imposed for the reasons stated:-

a) 12/01737/LBC

- 1 Commencement of works LB/CAC consent
- 2 LB/CAC consent - approved plans
- 3 7 days notice to LPA
4. LB notice of completion
5. Further works - fabric of LB - fire regs

- 6 Repair of damage after works
- 7 Materials - samples
- 8 Internal features
- 9 Further Details
- 10 Gate details, security devices, colour and finish, fixing, dimensions etc

b) 12/01736/FUL

- 1 Development begun within time limit
- 2 Develop in accordance with approved plns
- 3 Samples in Conservation Area
- 4 amended plans
- 5 further details
- 6 Gate details, security devices, colour and finish, fixing, dimensions etc

Main Local Plan Policies:

Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016

CP1 - Development Proposals

CP8 - Design Developmt to Relate to its Context

HE3 - Listed Buildings and Their Setting

HE7 - Conservation Areas

CP13 - Accessibility

Core Strategy

CS19 - Urban design townscape char & hist env

Other Material Considerations: This application is in or affecting the Central Conservation Area. The development is affecting a Grade I Listed Building.

Public Consultation

Note: At the time of writing this report the consultation period for representations to be received had not expired. The time limit will have expired by the time the Committee considers this proposal and officers will provide an update of any additional comments at the committee meeting. Comments received will be posted on the Council's web site and members and the public will have the opportunity to see any additional comments received before the meeting.

Statutory and Other Bodies:

English Heritage – have raised no objections to the works

Private Individuals:-

Main comments raised:

- questions the need for the new entrance
- consider access via the new lift from the book stacks for wheelchair users adequate
- Camera is a listed building which should retain its character
- Wheelchair user numbers have not been established
- Wheelchair access to upper floors still not possible
- Consider the upheaval do not justify major changes to the listed building
- Consider the security changes will put the collections are greater risk

Relevant Site History:

10/01109/LBC - Listed Building Consent,

a) Internal alterations to Old Bodleian Library involving removal of lift and lift grilles, modern partitions , book conveyor, installation of new lift, WC's and kitchenette .

b) Internal alterations to Radcliffe Camera involving removal of modern stairs, insertion of

new lift and stairs. Temporary removal of window and grille to allow contractors access.
c) Internal alterations to underground book store involving removal of static shelving, installation of rolling stacks, carrels, lifts and provision of reading/ study areas.

Officers Assessment:

History of development

1. The Bodleian Library complex includes the Clarendon Building, the Schools Quadrangle with the attached Divinity School and Convocation House, Duke Humphrey Library, Arts and Selden Ends. To the south is the Radcliffe Camera and underneath part of Radcliffe Square is the Underground Bookstore (UBS). To the north is the new Bodleian. A tunnel links the Camera, UBS, Old Bodleian and New Bodleian. Appendix 1.
2. The Radcliffe Camera was built between 1737 and 1749 to designs by James Gibbs and is one of Oxford's most recognised buildings. Originally, the ground floor of the building was an open arcade, with the access on the south side of the building, but was later enclosed in 1863 to provide additional library space. Below is a time line of key dates

1737-49	Radcliffe Camera built, designed by James Gibbs
1824	Radcliffe Square lawns put in and iron railings erected
1860-61	Radcliffe Camera given to the Bodleian Library as a new Reading Room
1861	Acland proposes a covered walkway between the Camera and Old Bodleian, which is not carried out
1863	The open ground floor of the Radcliffe Camera enclosed and refurbished to become a bookstore. Windows glazed and new north stepped entrance added.
1888	Trial of movable shelving in the Radcliffe Camera which were draw forward by handles and run in grooves cut into the floor
1936	Railings around Radcliffe Square removed
1940	Lower Reading Room in Radcliffe Camera created when books stored there were moved into the New Bodleian bookstack. Opened to readers May 1941
1959	Seven steel windows in the lower arches of the Radcliffe Camera replaced by Godfrey Allen with new frames in aluminium. Wrought iron grilles in lower arches repainted and tips gilded
1993	Railings put in again around Radcliffe Camera and additional paving installed
2010	Insertion of new lift and stairs into Bay 1 of the Radcliffe Camera

3. The ground floor is rusticated and there are eight arched and pedimented bays with eight intermediate bays. The upper floor has coupled Corinthian columns with the bays alternating between a niche and a window over two tiers. The large windows are pedimented. Above is a balustrade and finial parapet and then the drum and dome, the drum pierced with sash windows.

4. Internally the spaces comprise the Lower Camera, Upper Camera and Staircase. The Lower Camera, originally open, has a shallow central stone dome supported on 8 pendentives and around which lies an ambulatory, consisting of a series of groin vaults and small domes. The original floor was in stone laid in a radiating pattern. This was covered with a wooden floor in 1863, when the space was enclosed and a new stepped access provided on the north side.
5. The Upper Camera is a double height space with ambulatory and gallery enclosing it. Piers with Ionic pilasters support the drum and dome (constructed in timber with a decorative plastered finish). Portland and Bremen stone were used for the floor, though it is now covered with several layers of more modern flooring. There is a modern raised floor within the ambulatory and one of the bays has been adapted for library office and administration use.
6. The stairwell with spiral staircase rises from the ground floor to gallery level, interrupted by the 1863 inserted doorway and invigilators platform.

Heritage Significance

7. The Radcliffe Camera is one of Oxford's best known buildings and contributes to the historic skyline. It is a focal point within the group of listed buildings in Radcliffe Square, and with the other library buildings represents the core to the University of Oxford and one of the most visited sites. The Bodleian library is considered to be the first major public library in Britain founded to serve the University of Oxford and "the republic of the learned" (Sir Thomas Bodley). It has national and international significance and status as a library of legal deposit and has a collection accumulated over four centuries placing it in the first rank of international libraries. Its buildings are by architects of national significance and it is highly valued by the academic community, resident community, visitor and business community.
8. The Camera is grade I listed and has high architectural, aesthetic and historical significance. It was built to designs of the prominent 18th Century architect James Gibbs between 1737 and 1749. The rotunda design is said to be the earliest example in England of a circular library and an exemplar of baroque architecture. The entrance was originally on the south side, the new stepped access being added on the north side in 1863 when the building was loaned to the Bodleian, perhaps attempting to provide a stronger visual link with the library. The Camera is not on axis with the Bodleian, offset slightly to the right, curtailing what otherwise would have been a sightline from the steps through the schools quad and Clarendon building to the George VI entrance on the corner of the New Bodleian.
9. There is no doubting the Camera's architectural and aesthetic significance, internally and externally, and its historical interest and association with the Bodleian. Its continued use for the purpose for which it was originally designed, as a reading room, also has significance and is rare. The building is not as originally designed and its continuous adaptation to meet the needs of the academic community and growing storage needs of the Bodleian is an important part of its interest. This change has continued right through to modern times, the Lower Camera only adopting its current function in the 1940s.
10. The setting of the Camera has also changed with railings first being introduced around a lawn in 1824. These were removed in 1936, to open up the space and then reinstated in 1993.

Policy Framework

11. Conservation principles, policy and practice seek to preserve and enhance the value of heritage assets. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) explains the government's aim that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.

In relation to development affecting a designated heritage asset (e.g. a listed building) 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. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification'.

12. Relevant Local Plan policies include those that seek to sustain the historic environment (HE.3 and HE.7) and CP.13, which encourages making provision for access by all members of the community. Core Strategy policy CS19 explains the need to preserve and enhance the historic environment and to deliver a high quality public realm.

Brief description of proposals:

13. The proposals involve the provision of level access to the camera by forming a new entrance to the south side of the building, on axis with the existing north stepped access. This involves a ramped access, including new gate and piers in the boundary railing, new external door and internal lobby.

Further Internal alterations are proposed to reconfigure librarian space, access and security controls and furniture layout in the Camera and Old Bodleian. The new entrance will provide a serviced reception and enquiry point for readers and will allow the removal of the invigilator's metal platform in the staircase and removal of existing modern partitions and furniture.

Assessment of Impact

14. Works have recently taken place to expand reader space into the underground book store and to improve access with the provision of new stairs and a lift for wheelchair users and ambulant disabled to access to and exit from the Gladstone link. However, to meet fire safety requirements people with restricted mobility can only use the Lower Camera as an emergency exit route and not for study.
15. These proposals to provide level access have been brought forward to coincide with the transfer of the lending collections and subject support services of the History Faculty Library so that they can join other provision for History already situated in the Camera and Old Bodleian.
16. Book security remains an issue and this proposal seeks to provide a more integrated and discreet security system that will allow existing sensors to be removed. The use of book sensors is necessary, but are visually intrusive. These proposals offer the opportunity to provide a single point of access that allows a reduction in the number of sensors and for those that are needed, for them to be more effectively integrated as part of the fittings and furniture.

17. The provision of an inclusive access is an important priority as is the need to ensure that the Camera can continue to function as part of a modern working library. As with many historic buildings this presents a number of challenges, to ensure the heritage significance of the place is not diminished. Improving access to the building improves access to and enjoyment of our historic environment and the learning environment and resources the building holds. The building has a history of adaptation and alteration illustrating its capacity to meet changing needs. This proposal represents another stage that involves change to elements of the building's fabric that have already undergone alteration, or are 'new' elements.
18. The proposed entry point reinvents the original access into the building and will allow readers and visitors to experience access via the stairs to the upper levels as originally intended and allows wheelchair users to use the Lower Camera. This involves closing the existing stepped access as a primary entrance changing the arrangement that has been in place since 1863. To meet the fire safety requirements and allow use of the Lower Camera by wheelchair users the new access is required to be at the southern end. Re-opening the original access point and maintaining the north south axis as proposed responds to the history of the place and the original design intent and are changes that are considered acceptable to facilitate provision of an inclusive access..
19. Internally the changes will be beneficial allowing the removal of modern intrusive elements and rationalising the library staff accommodation. Disturbance to readers from noise is a concern of the University and the provision of partitions as proposed to provide discrete librarian accommodation in Bay 1 will help resolve these issues. Bay 1 is already used as a librarian work station and storage area. Modern bookcases in this bay obscure the window at the back of the bay and there is a counter to the front. The proposal replaces these modern and intrusive interventions with glass partitions and new bookcases that will better respect the qualities of the space, balancing the architectural qualities of the building with the user needs.
20. These proposals are part of a long programme of changes to the Bodleian Library accommodation including the works to the New Bodleian, currently in progress, the provision of a new lift in the Old Bodleian and changes to the underground bookstore. The changes are part of the delivery of the University's Library Strategy and have evolved following detailed analysis of the heritage significance and vulnerability of the historic building stock and the library collections.

Conclusion:

The stepped access is a significant physical constraint to the provision of an inclusive access and this proposal, which seeks to minimise the impacts and secure heritage benefits represents a balanced solution. Approval is recommended

Human Rights Act 1998

Officers have considered the Human Rights Act 1998 in reaching a recommendation to grant listed building consent and planning permission, subject to conditions. Officers have considered the potential interference with the rights of the owners/occupiers of surrounding properties under Article 8 and/or Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Act and consider that it is proportionate.

Officers have also considered the interference with the human rights of the applicant under Article 8 and/or Article 1 of the First Protocol caused by imposing conditions. Officers consider that the conditions are necessary to protect the rights and freedoms of others and to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest. The interference is

therefore justifiable and proportionate.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Officers have considered, with due regard, the likely effect of the proposal on the need to reduce crime and disorder as part of the determination of this application, in accordance with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In reaching a recommendation to approve, officers consider that the proposal will not undermine crime prevention or the promotion of community safety.

Contact Officer: Sarah Billam/Nick Worledge

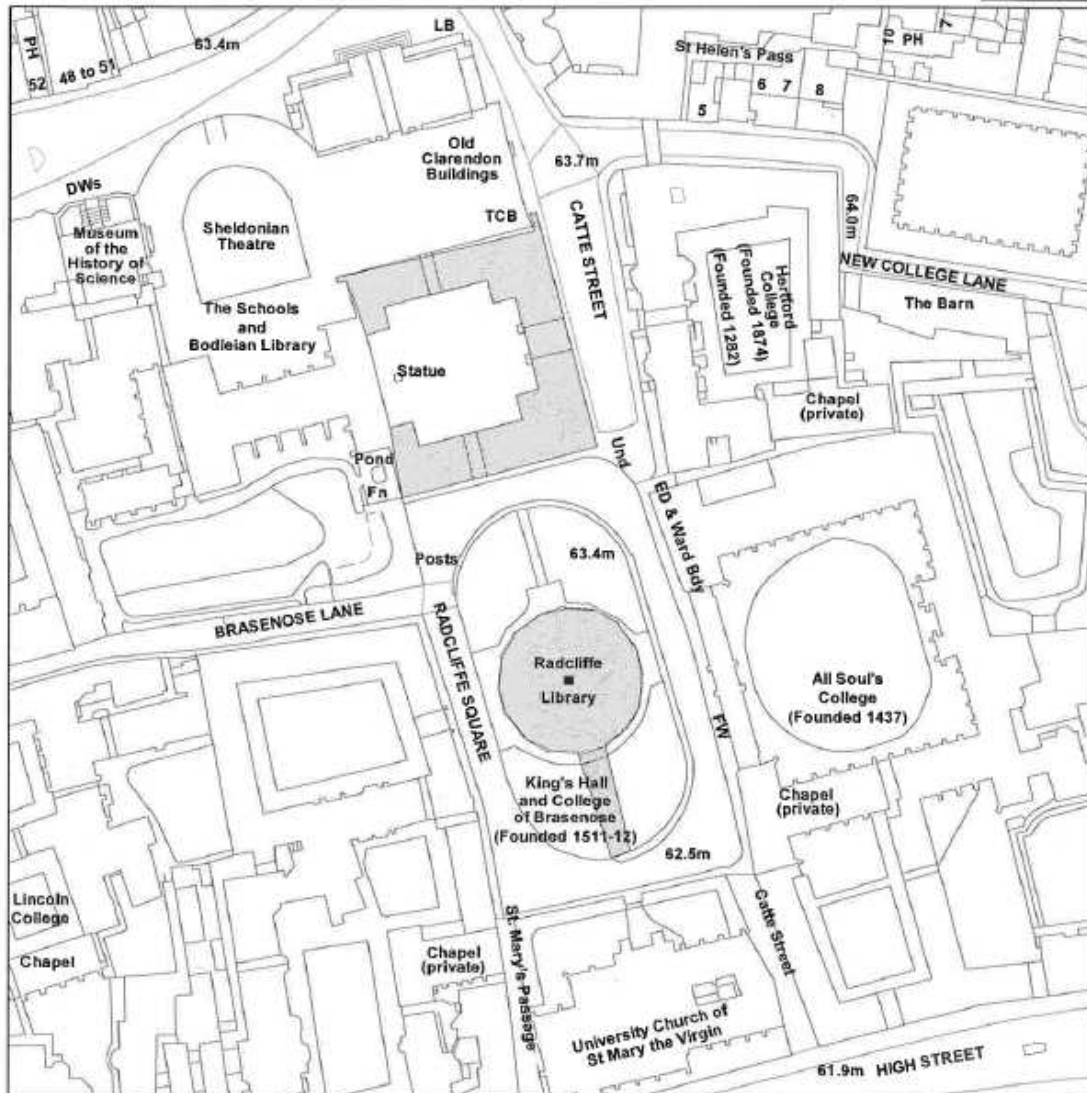
Extension: 2640/2147

Date: 2nd August 2012

Appendix 1

12/01737/LBC & 12/01736/FUL - APPENDIX 1

Radcliffe Cameral, Radcliffe Square



Scale : 1:1250



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Ordnance Survey 100019348.

Organisation	Oxford City Council
Department	Planning
Comments	
Date	02 August 2012
SLA Number	100019348