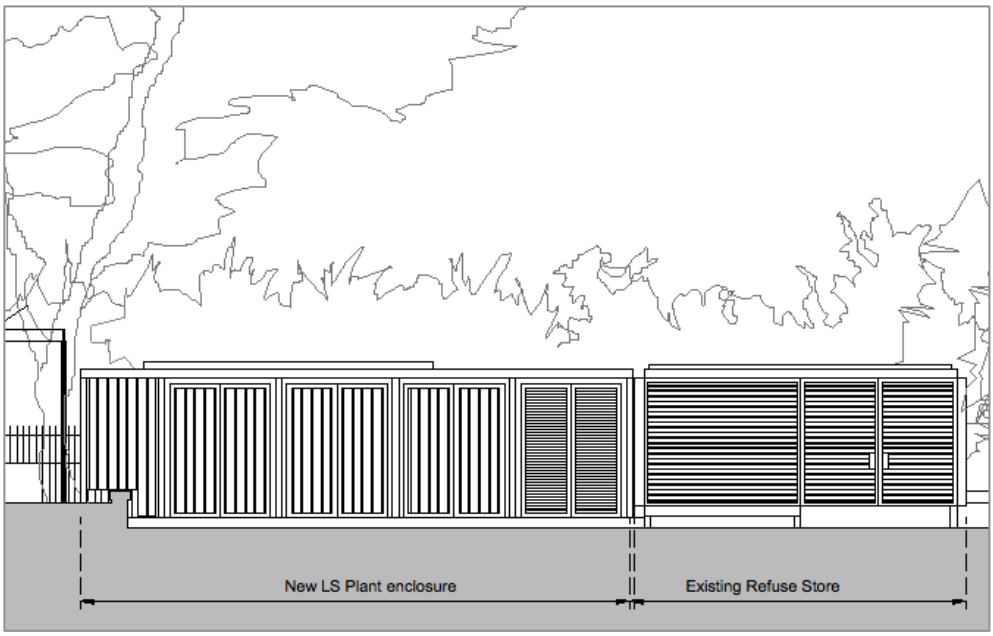
THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN LONDON

LOWER SCHOOL PLANT PROJECT

DESIGN + ACCESS STATEMENT

PLANNING APPLICATION STAGE



South elevation of proposed enclosure facing playground – refer to planning drawings for details

12 January 2021

Contents:

- **Introduction**
- **Operational need**
- **Planning**
- **Background**
- **Assessment of existing**
- **Design**
- **Landscaping & trees**
- **Materials**
- **Amount**
- **Amenity**
- **Flood risk**
- **Sustainability**
- **Traffic, transport, parking**
- **Programme & Construction Management**
- **Conclusions**
- **Photographs of existing site**

Introduction outline of proposals

- The American School in London [ASL] is submitting a planning application to provide new ventilation plant for the Lower School basement areas. The plant is proposed to be located in an open enclosure at ground level next to the existing refuse store, with new mechanical plant equipment and ducts concealed by screen walls and landscaping.

Operational Need

- The American School in London [ASL] has a need to refurbish and renew the mechanical air ventilation plant and ductwork for the Lower School basement / below-ground teaching and ancillary areas. The existing ventilation system is using plant nearing the end of its life cycle and requiring replacement, combined with a very limited amount of natural ventilation. The works will be essential for the long term use of the Lower School basement areas to current environmental standards.

Planning

- Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires planning applications to be undertaken in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This proposal is in accordance with development plan policy, and in addition, there are a number of material considerations which support the grant of planning permission.

- The principle of the proposals accords with the current planning policy including the London Plan and adopted Westminster City Plan. The principle of the proposals is consistent with the objectives of planning policy and is in accordance with the Government's overarching aims for sustainable development.

Background

- The American School in London [ASL] is an international school that provides an American education for mixed students aged from 4 up to 18 years old. Established in 1951 by educator Stephen Eckard, it is the oldest American school in the city and the only non-profit American school in England.

- Today ASL is a co-educational independent day school with up to 1350 students, employing approximately 308 full-time staff and 29 part-time staff, with 16 contract catering staff.

- It has been located on its main campus at 1, Waverley Place, London NW8 0NP in St.John's Wood London since 1971.

- A 2012 Ofsted inspection report found that ASL was outstanding in all fields.

Assessment of existing ASL building in this area

- The School site is located within the City of Westminster borough and within the St. John's Wood Conservation Area.

- The area of this proposed new plant enclosure is in the west forecourt off Waverley Place at the junction with Finchley Place. The site is on the west side of the existing refuse store building, close to the north perimeter wall and fence, on the boundary with Aspley House apartments. To the south are School amenity and play areas for Lower School pupils.

- The perimeter is heavily planted with trees and shrubs, such that the site is very largely concealed from the public highway.

- Existing materials are brown clay facing brick typical for the whole School, with a aluminium metal coping. There are existing louvres of copper framing and blades. The refuse store is constructed with white painted metal exposed structure and stained cedar horizontal louvres.

Design of new proposals, scale, appearance

- Due to the lack of any available plant space at basement level and the need for open air intake and extract, the proposal is to locate the new plant in an external screened enclosure, on the west side of the existing refuse store on the north site boundary.

- Existing boundary planting and landscaping will be maintained or replaced if impacted, to maintain screening from the adjacent apartment block to the north. The planting effectively screens the area from Aspley House. On the north side of the boundary wall is the vehicular ramp access for the apartments, leading up to the gates where their bins are located.

- On the site as existing is a low level concrete slab over upstand walls, which allow some natural ventilation to below through louvres in the walls, of a very limited nature. The proposal is to demolish the upstand walls and slab and form the enclosure on the same site, slightly extended.

- A new ground slab will be formed which retains the existing air duct locations in the main roof slab below. The enclosure will be open above with no roof, and with screen walls comprising galvanized finish steel framing and natural timber boarding and louvre panels. The appearance and character of the screening is designed to match the existing new Cycle Shelter just to the south, which also forms a part of the Early Years play areas adjacent.

- The height of the screening will be the same as the adjacent refuse store.

- On the south side, facing the path and cycle stand area, the elevation will comprise openable double doors for servicing access, which is required to the whole south side of the plant equipment.

- The elevations of the enclosure screens are composed on a regular even module, with panels of timber between the galvanized steel frame members.

Landscaping and trees

- Existing trees on the site will not be affected, as the enclosure is being constructed on top of the existing original building rc concrete basement roof structure, which is

directly below and only just below the ground level. The large conifer trees provide natural screening of views from the public realm, while shrubs and planting below will be reinforced. Existing trees and their roots will be protected during construction.

Materials

- The basis of materials selection is to match closely the existing new Cycle Shelter adjacent to the south.

Photo of existing cycle shelter to the south

- The frame will comprise galvanized steel members, the infill panels will be matching stained timber vertical boards and horizontal louvres where air ventilation is required. The ground slab will have black waterproofing finishes.

Amount

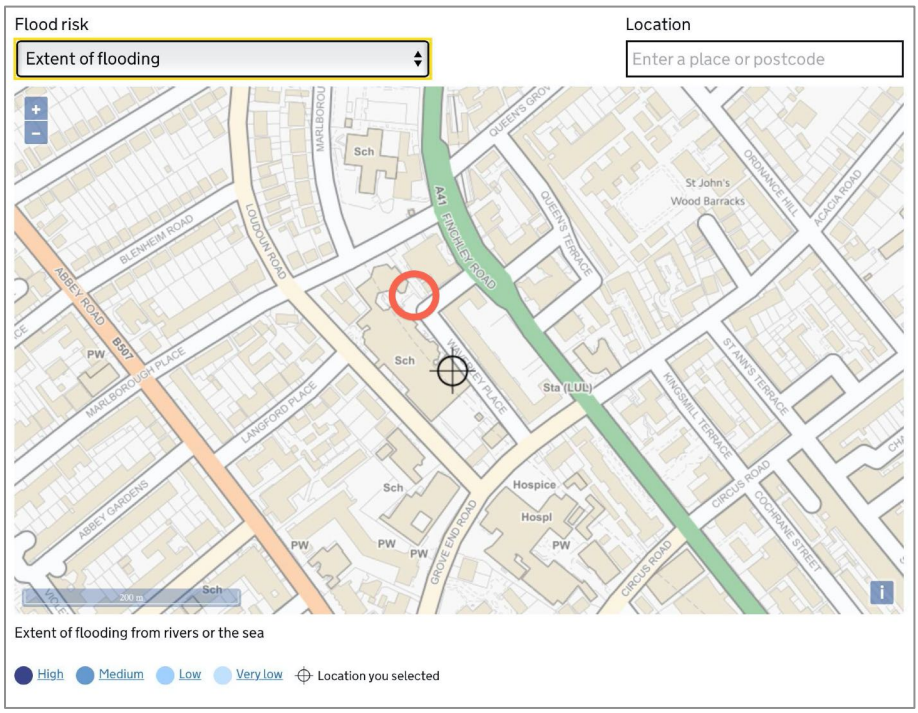
- No additional gross internal floor area is added as a result of these proposals, as the proposed plant area is open external plant.

Amenity

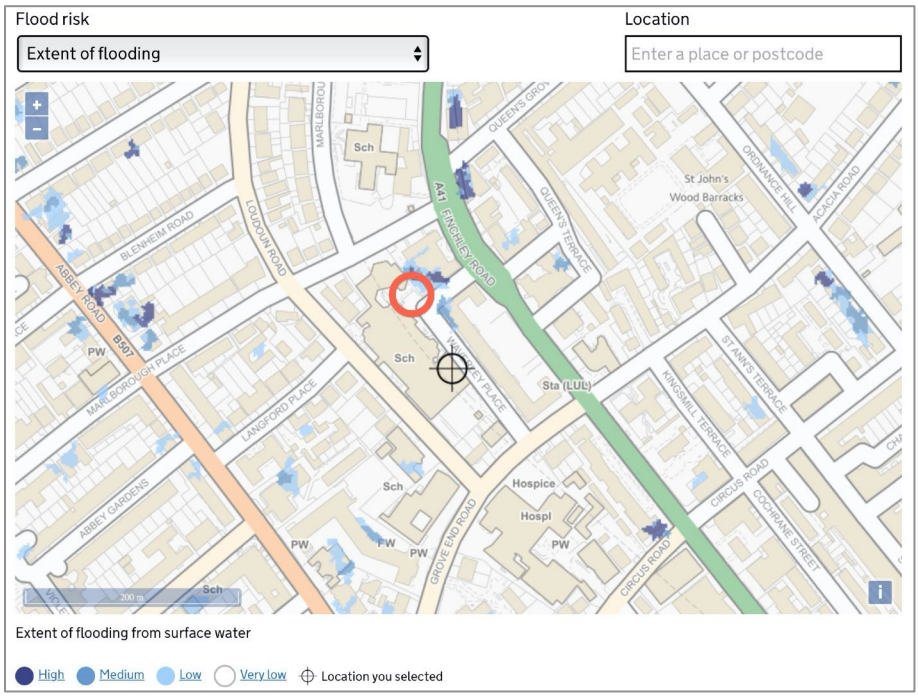
- The proposal does not alter the overall character of this area of the site.
- There will be no daylight / sunlight impact on neighbours.
- A Noise Impact Assessment Report by an acoustic consultant is attached with this application as a separate document to demonstrate that the proposals will comply with Westminster Council's requirements.
- The acoustic report notes that the plant equipment and ducts will meet requirements by having their own acoustic attenuation, so the screen walls are not required to have acoustic attenuation characteristics, and the enclosure is open above.

Flood risk

- Referring to the Government's flood risk assessment for the site, it is recoded as being "very low risk" for rivers and surface water. The area at risk of surface water flooding to the north is in the adjacent property, where there is a vehicle ramp down to basement parking.



Flood risk map for rivers



Flood risk map for surface water

Sustainability

- By improving the long term ease of maintenance, these proposals will serve the useful life of the building and contribute in a small way to sustainability.
- By allowing the existing old and outdated equipment to be replaced with new equipment of a much greater efficiency and lower energy use, there is a significant benefit to sustainability.
- The new hardwood timber for the screens will be from a sustainable source.

Traffic, transport and parking

- There are no changes in pupil numbers as a result of these proposals, and no impact on vehicle travel or parking.
- The existing cycle stands in this area will be moved to the south side of the path in order to allow access to the enclosure for maintenance and servicing. No cycle park numbers are therefore lost as a result of the proposals.

Programme & Construction Management

- Following a successful planning application approval, the School wishes to implement the project commencing in 2021.
- Once the new rc concrete slab is formed, the screen wall frame, doors and panels will be mainly prefabricated and simply erected and fitted together on site, with minimal disturbance or disruption.

Conclusions

- These proposals will provide improved interior environmental conditions, easier maintenance and sustainability benefits.
- The location is well screened from public or neighbour views by walls, railings, trees and planting, and will be adjacent to an existing refuse store which is also a serviced facility.
- The screen appearance will be consistent with adjacent structures and finishes, effectively concealing the plant equipment. .
- There will be no detrimental impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

Photographs of existing site

View of site from Waverley Place, with Refuse Store on right, proposed plant to be concealed behind

View of site from Waverley Place, with Refuse Store on right, proposed plant area left of Refuse Store

View of site from within grounds, with Refuse Store on right, proposed plant site to the left

View of site from Finchley Place, plant to be concealed behind site boundary fencing, perimeter trees and landscaping

Detail of existing upstand vent, with wall and rc concrete slab

View of site from Finchley Place, plant to be concealed behind site boundary fencing, perimeter trees and landscaping