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649-DJA-SH-A-00002-Schedule of Repairs
Staircase 3

1.0 INTRODUCTION

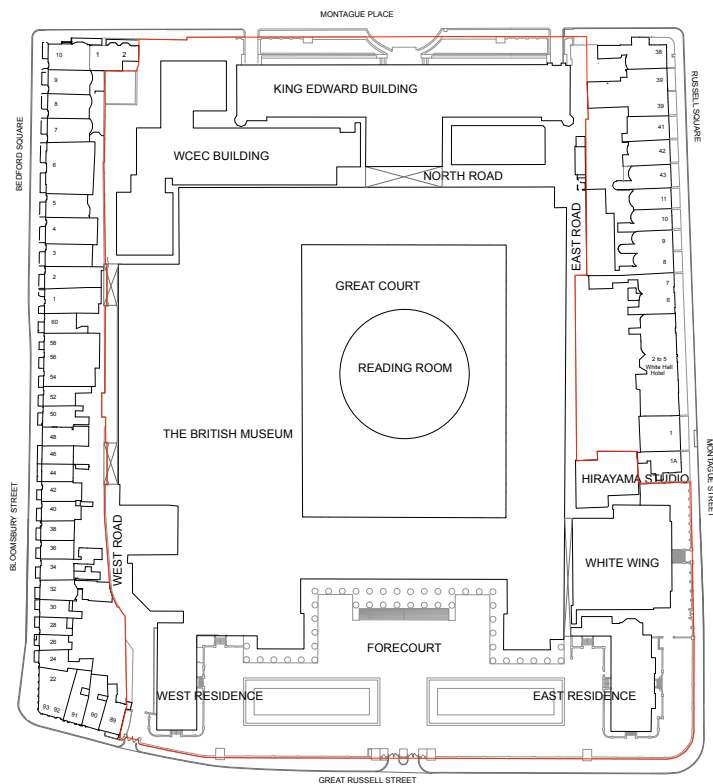
1.1 BUILDING AND USE: THE BRITISH MUSEUM

The British Museum was founded in 1753, and is located in Bloomsbury, London. The Museum holds one of the world's greatest anthropology collections of human history, culture, and art with approximately 8 million objects in the permanent collection. The Museum is the United Kingdom's most visited cultural attraction with circa 6 million visitors per year.

The 100,000 square-meter site in Bloomsbury houses the Museum's key activities of curating, displaying and caring for the collection: work spanning many different periods over 250 years. The Museum is constantly adapting, and since its inception, building work in the form of alterations, extension, reordering the collection and fabric repairs have been undertaken on an almost continuous basis.

The British Museum Bloomsbury site occupies a site bounded by Montague Place to the North, Montague Street to the East, Great Russell Street to the South and Bloomsbury Street to the West. The main entrance to the site is from Great Russell Street.

The Museum building is Grade I listed and embedded within the Bloomsbury Conservation area in a very busy area of Central London.



Plan of the British Museum

1.2 BACKGROUND AND NEED

The British Museum are proposing to carry out urgent repair, conservation and maintenance works to nine external staircases at the West and East Residences. All of the staircases are in view of the public from within the entrance court to the Museum.

Eight of the nine staircases (Stairs 01, 02, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09) have been referred to in a recent Listed Building Application 2023/0680/L. This report has been written in relation to staircase 3 only.

Staircase 3 is suffering from ongoing and in some cases severe damage to both masonry and ironwork caused by weather exposure and this is causing safety issues with steps. Exploratory work has been carried out to determine the condition of the stone steps by removing parts of the failing cementitious coatings. These works were carried out through an exchange of letters with the planning department. The EoL was submitted on 20 April 2023 and LBC confirmed the works could proceed without the need for listed building consent in an email on the 12th May 2023.

This design and access statement incorporating heritage statement has been prepared by Dannatt Johnson Architects on behalf of the British Museum to support an application for Listed Building Consent for this essential work. The application will be submitted by the Planning Lab, with Dannatt Johnson Architects acting as the British Museum's agents for architecture and historic building conservation. Proposals have been prepared by Dannatt Johnson Architects and Alan Baxter Associates structural engineers.

The 2007 Conservation Plan (CMP), produced by Purcell Architects, Final Revision 2019 has been used a primary source of reference in preparing this statement.

2.0 DESIGN PROPOSALS SUMMARY AND SCOPE

2.1 SCOPE OF WORKS

The proposals for this staircase have been drawn up after a full and detailed visual inspection both externally from above and internally from below. The findings are captured in the Schedule of Repair Works appended to this document.

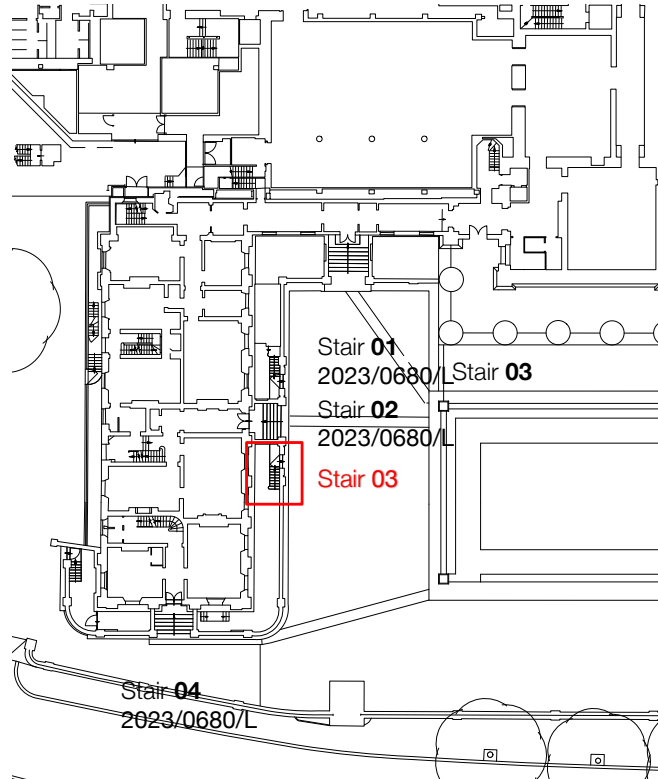
Staircase 3 is a secondary stair giving access down into basement level lightwells either side of the principal entrance stairs to the West residence. It is the only secondary stair remaining with its original stone construction. The stone steps and landing have been topped in recent decades with a cementitious mortar/render material which is now failing and uneven. A cementitious render has also been applied to the soffit of the stair landing. This is well to the stone and shows no sign of failure.

The wrought iron handrail is becoming detached from the stone landing and treads and the feet of several of the railings are proud of the surface and severely corroded, leaving it unsafe. There are also concerns about the safety of the cantilevered stone landing which has degraded, cracked and is in poor condition. Conservation repair work is being planned for this stair in order to conserve and retain as much of the original stone material as possible.

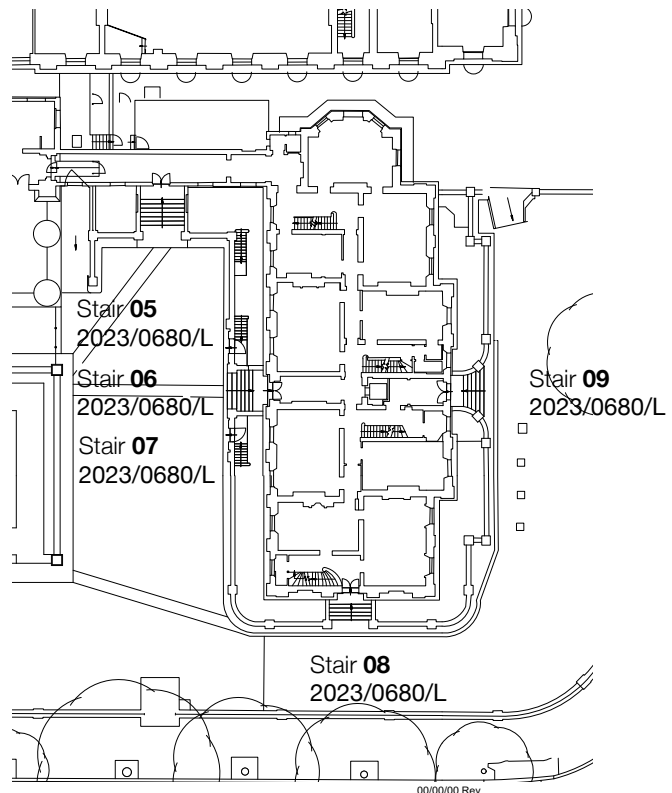
Exploration works have been carried out to understand the full extent of existing stone and it has been established that it will be possible to retain.

2.2 LOCATION, SITE AND CONTEXT

Please refer to Location Plan drawing number **649-DJA-DR-A-01001** showing the location of staircase 3 in relation to the wider BM site. The following two images show the location of staircase 3 in relation to the other staircases referenced in the previous application 2023/0680/L.



Stairs 01-04, West Residences



Stairs 05-09, East Residences

2.3 PHOTOGRAPHS

The following photographs illustrate some of the issues with Staircase 3 described in Section 2.1.



Stair 03: Original stone stair faced with failing cementitious render, very thin original cantilevered landing



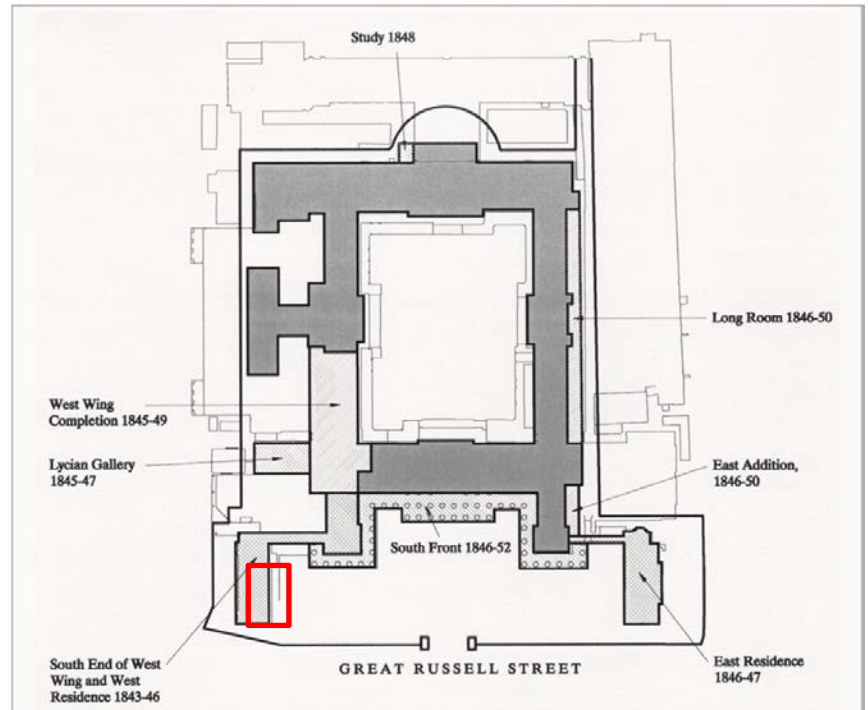
Stair 03: Railing uprights corroded and standing proud of landing slab surface (Left); Failing topping to landing slab and corroding handrail bases (Top). Failing topping to stair treads and corroding railings (Below).



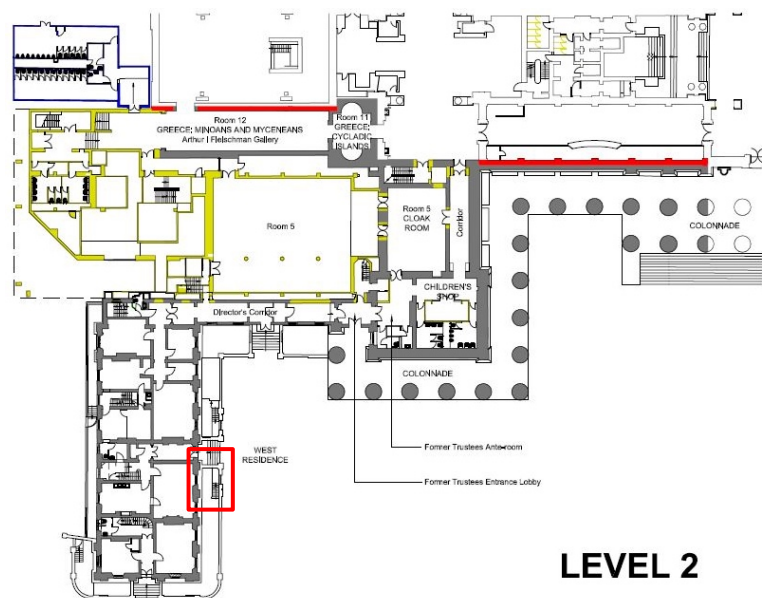
3.0 HISTORICAL STATEMENT

3.1 AGE OF FABRIC AND SIGNIFICANCE

The West and East Residences were constructed in the 1840's to the designs of Robert Smirke but superintended over by Sydney Smirke after Robert Smirke's retirement in 1846.



West and East Residences



LEVEL 2

Extract from 2007 CMP – West Residence

In terms of significance, the 2007 CMP includes the following commentary:

- 'The West Residence was built concurrently with the south end of the West Wing between 1843 and 1846 '
- 'The East and West Residences are an integral element in the design of the Museum's south front composition and as such are highly significant, both historically and architecturally.'
- 'In common with Smirke's construction of the Museum the Residences are built to a very high standard of design, incorporating the latest constructional techniques such as cast iron beams and fireproof floors.'
- 'The exterior elevations are a restrained, almost severe, essay in Greek classical temple form with a giant order of shallow pilasters supporting a cornice and a low pediment facing Great Russell Street. These elevations provide an appropriately restrained counterpoint to the deeply modelled form of the main south front. '

The two external approach stairs to the West residence (Stairs 02 and 04) leading up to the principal entrances are therefore significant in terms of the overall composition and in the fact that they are the 'front doors' of the individual houses within the Residence.

The two secondary stairs (Stairs 01 and 03) are also carefully and symmetrically disposed elements within the overall composition of the principal elevations, lending architectural weight and importance to the central approach stairs which they flank on either side.

Further conservation guidance notes:

- Retain as far as possible all surviving finishes and features dating from the original construction of the Residence. Hence the preference to retain and conserve the original stone material at Stair 03.
- Respect and retain where possible the early features relating to the area vaults such as doorways, windows, coal holes, and inter-connecting openings which each contribute to the surviving archaeology of the way in which the houses originally functioned.

3.2 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

A further exchange of letters was submitted by The Planning Lab in early January 2023 in relation to the proposed works of staircases 1-9 and LB Camden responded by requesting that a Listed Building Consent Application be submitted covering all of the proposed works.

At a site meeting on 9th February 2023, Stair 03 was shown to representatives of London Borough of Camden and Historic England and the request was made by LBC that the BM submit proposals for Stair 03 under a separate listed building consent application after further investigative works have been carried out.

An exchange of letters was prepared and submitted to LB Camden on the 20th April 2023. LBC confirmed the works could proceed without the need for listed building consent in an email on the 12th May 2023, with early investigative works to staircase 3 which have since been carried out. These investigative works and reports have then helped form the proposed structural repairs prepared by Alan Baxter Associates and help inform the conservation approach to repairs by Dannatt Johnson Architects.

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF WORKS

Please refer to the following drawings and documents:

Dannatt Johnson Architects

649-DJA-DR-A-01001-E and W Residences Staircase Repairs Location Plan_P03
649-DJA-DR-A-01002-E and W Residences Staircase Repairs Block Plan_P03

649-DJA-DR-A-10103-Basement Level Plan Staircases 1-3 as Existing_P02

649-DJA-DR-A-50100-Staircase 03 Basement Plan as Existing_P02
649-DJA-DR-A-50101-Staircase 03 GF Plan as Existing_P02
649-DJA-DR-A-50301-Staircase 03 Elevations as Existing_P02
649-DJA-DR-A-50302-Staircase 03 Elevations as Existing_P02
649-DJA-DR-A-50303-Staircase 03 Strip Out Elevations_P02
649-DJA-DR-A-50304-Staircase 03 Strip Out Elevations & Details_P02

649-DJA-DR-A-50307-Staircase 03 Detail A as Existing_P01
649-DJA-DR-A-50308-Staircase 03 Detail B as Existing_P01
649-DJA-DR-A-50309-Staircase 03 Detail C as Existing_P01
649-DJA-DR-A-50310-Staircase 03 Detail D as Existing_P01
649-DJA-DR-A-50311-Staircase 03 Detail E as Existing_P01
649-DJA-DR-A-50312-Staircase 03 Detail F as Existing_P01

649-DJA-DR-A-51100-Staircase 03 Basement Plan as Proposed_P02
649-DJA-DR-A-51101-Staircase 03 GF Plan as Proposed_P02
649-DJA-DR-A-51301-Staircase 03 Elevations as Proposed_P02
649-DJA-DR-A-51302-Staircase 03 Elevations as Proposed_P02
649-DJA-DR-A-51303-Staircase 03 Elevations as Proposed_P02
649-DJA-DR-A-60101-Staircase 03 Detail A as Proposed_P02
649-DJA-DR-A-60102-Staircase 03 Detail B as Proposed_P02
649-DJA-DR-A-60103-Staircase 03 Detail E as Proposed_P02
649-DJA-DR-A-60104-Staircase 03 Detail F as Proposed_P02

649-DJA-SH-A-00002-Schedule of Repairs Staircase 3

Alan Baxter Associates

1910-20-11 – Repairs to Stair 3 Option B

4.1 PROPOSED WORKS, AMOUNT AND LAYOUT

- a) The proposed works to staircase 3 is as follows.

The proposals have been drawn up after a full and detailed visual inspection of staircase 3. Following the exploratory works the findings are captured in the Schedule of Repair Works appended to this document.

Staircase 3 is a secondary stair giving access down into basement level lightwells, accessed to the side of the principal entrance stair 2 to the West residences.

It is proposed that the existing York stone treads and landings are kept, with new York stone veneers tiled to the top and bedded on a lime mortar base. In order to regularise the different risk heights. The stone tile thicknesses will vary between 30mm and 40mm. The treads will be completed in a single unit while the landing, due to its size, will be tied in 4 rows.

The wrought iron handrail will be carefully removed and caulking drilled out carefully in order to minimise damage to both the balustrade and stone pockets into which it is set. The balustrade will be taken away as a single unit, cleaned and repaired. The swan neck bases to the balustrade will be repaired or replaced with new sections to the same profile. The end of each balustrade will be extended with new rods between 10mm and 15mm to ensure its bedding into the original stones will be the same as the original and allow for the losses of stone surface. The original pockets in the stone landing and treads will be deepened to accommodate the handrail, which once treated with a rust inhibitor and decorated, will be resin fixed back into place.

In addition to the tops of the treads, stone indent repairs will be made to the base tread along with careful removal of the cementitious mortar.

Additional support will be provided to the landing stone by three precast concrete lintels supported on brick piers built up under the landing slab either side of the existing doorway. Alan Baxter Associates have provided proposals to the structural integrity of the stair, attached to this report.

4.2 HERITAGE IMPACT

The CMP identifies the front composition of the residences as highly significance – this will include the stairs that form part of the frontages. Where possible, the CMP recommends surviving features should be retained and conserved. It is understood that Stair 3 is the only front stair with its original stone construction and will therefore hold some significance.

Therefore the approach to the staircase 3 work has been to ensure as much surviving original construction is retained and conserved as possible. Works propose to retain as much of the existing stone fabric as possible. Original ironwork railings and gates will also be retained, repaired and redecorated.

The three new concrete lintels at stair 03 have been proposed for structural stability and safety. The lintels will generally not be visible from the Forecourt of the Museum or the street frontage, as it is located underneath the stair landing and facing onto the back of the Level 1 lightwell. The concrete is being offered up from below to support the existing stone landing and this installation is substantially reversible without significant damage to adjacent construction.

In order to maintain the integrity of the original brickwork, the new brick piers supporting the lintels are tied to the original structure through resin ties in the brick joint positions. The installation is also fully reversible.

The works will affect high significance areas of the BM but we do not consider that the works will cause harm to these areas. The work is primarily conservation repair and treatment to the existing fabric and to retain original fabric wherever possible with the aim to ensure the continuity of existing appearance together with increasing longevity and safety of the existing structure and fabric.

5.0 ACCESS

5.1 ACCESS STATEMENT

The proposals to do not entail any change to the existing access arrangements.

6.0 APPENDICES

649-DJA-SH-A-00002-Schedule of Repairs Staircase 3