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**HERITAGE STATEMENT: GARTH HOTEL, NO. 69 GOWER STREET, LONDON WC1E 6HJ
APPLICATION FOR WINDOWS, ROOFING, EXTERNAL FIXTURES AND FINISHES AND FAÇADE CLEANING**

Savills Heritage and Townscape have been commissioned by Garth Hotel Limited (hereafter 'the client') to provide heritage consultancy services in relation to a listed building consent application for works to the Garth Hotel at No. 69 Gower Street, London, WC1E 6HJ (hereafter 'the Site'). This application includes: Repairs to historic windows; replacement of non-historic windows, external façade cleaning; replacement of the roof covering and associated repairs; the reinstatement of cast-iron window sill railings; and the replacement of tiling to the front step with a new mosaic design, with the proposals discussed in full below. Given the nature of the works, the proposals have been guided by Historic England's *Advice Note 18: Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency* (July 2024).

Prior to the submission of this application, on the 27th June 2024 planning permission and listed building consent were granted for a single storey rear extension and general refurbishment of the property, under Camden Council's planning references 2024/1264/P and 2024/1614/L. A full Heritage Statement was included with that application, and this addendum provides a proportional summary of history and significance, and an assessment of impact of the proposed additional works.

The Site forms a part of the Grade II listed building, Nos. 41-85 Gower Street (NHLE: 1322177), first listed in March 1969, and originally built as a terrace of 18 houses by the Bedford Estate in 1786-7. The Site is situated in Sub Area 5 of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The proposals include both internal and external works, therefore the two heritage considerations are the impact on the Grade II listed building, and the possible impact on the conservation area.

Historic background of the Site and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area:

The development of Bloomsbury began when Thomas Wriothesley, 4th Earl of Southampton built his London house on the north side of what is now Bloomsbury Square, in 1660. The piazza and terraces of houses that formed the square were built from 1661. The estate passed by marriage to the Russell family (later the Dukes of Bedford), who

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owned neighbouring land. The 4th Duke married, in 1737, Gertrude Leveson-Gower, daughter of the 1st Earl Gower, hence the name of Gower Street. After her husband's death in 1771, Gertrude, Duchess of Bedford, oversaw the development of Bloomsbury on behalf of her young grandson. Bedford Square was built from 1776-80 and set the template of symmetrical terraces. It is possible that the terrace of which the Site forms part, was originally intended to be a symmetrical terrace of sixteen houses, with the central pair emphasised by a slight projection, and having a higher cornice. The houses bookending the terrace appear also have the raised cornice, however the terrace appears to have been completed with an additional two houses at the north end, possibly because these houses were previously intended to face Torrington Place, or the position of that road was only decided as the terrace was being laid out. When originally built, the terrace had a range of mews houses forming a row facing what is now Ridgmount Gardens, but these have all been subsequently demolished.

The pace of development in the area quickened after 1800, with the large Russell Square laid out with landscaping by Humphry Repton. From the 1820s, the master builder Thomas Cubitt was engaged by the Bedford Estate to build the streets and squares to the north. The north end of Gower Street belonged to the Capper Mortimer Estate and it was there in 1825 that University College London was built to the designs of William Wilkins. The development of Bloomsbury was 'complete' in 1860 when Gordon Square was finished. At around this time, the Bedford Estate remodelled some of the older houses that had been built in the austere taste of the 1780s, and each house in the terrace, including the Site, was remodelled with the addition of a stucco aedicule around the front door, and a closet wing to the rear. The horned sash windows with eight large panes, and iron window box railings (extant on all the houses in the terrace except No. 69, where they have been removed at some stage) were probably also added at this time. The ornate plaster cornice and encaustic tiles floor in the entrance hall of the house is also part of the Victorian renovation.

Between 1871 and 1894, Ridgmount Gardens was rebuilt with tall mansion blocks, and the mews to the rear of Gower Street were demolished to make way for gardens. From the late-nineteenth century, the area did not attract many families, so hotels and boarding houses proliferated due to the proximity to railway stations. The Site is thought to have been a hotel at least since 1925. In the intervening years, the house has been extensively altered, with partitions and bathrooms installed. Meanwhile, the conservation area has undergone changes in the twentieth century, notably the demolition of hundreds of houses to make way for expansions to the British Museum and the University of London, and parts of Gower Street have been rebuilt as the Biological Sciences building and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts.

Significance of Grade II listed building No. 69 Gower Street:

The house was built as part of a terrace of eighteen houses in 1786-7 in an austere Neo-Classical style. It was then renovated, along with all the houses in the terrace, by the landowner in around the 1860s. A hotel or boarding house was established in the late-nineteenth or early-twentieth century. The building's significance is primarily associated with its architectural interest, which derives from the consistency of the whole terrace. The terrace is an exemplar of the austere style of Neo-Classical Bloomsbury, incorporating the evidence of the more ornate mid-Victorian remodelling, which includes replacement of the smaller paned Georgian windows with larger paned sashes on the

principal elevation. Particular architectural features of interest include the iron railings to the street, the regular window openings with rubbed brick flat window arches, the stucco door surround and plat band, the dentil cornice, and the slate-covered gambrel roof with dormers, behind a brick parapet. The building also retains much of its tuck pointing to the brickwork. The subdivision of the rooms for hotel use has reduced the architectural interest of the interior. The absence of the cast iron sill brackets on the house detracts from the rhythm of the terrace.

The evidence of unified development and wholesale remodelling of the whole terrace is of archaeological interest, which is complemented by the regular street plan of Bloomsbury. There is a limited level of artistic interest in decorative features such as the plasterwork and encaustic tiles in the entrance hall which, while mass-produced items of the era, reflect the changing tastes of the time. Finally, there are no known associations between the hotel and any noted historical figures, but the building is of some historic interest for its broader links to the development of Bloomsbury by the Russell family.

Significance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area

Bloomsbury was a planned suburb that was influential on later town planning. It is chiefly of architectural interest for its consistent architectural style, which reflects the hegemony of Italian influences in English architecture from the nearby Inigo Jones's Covent Garden in the 1630s, up to the completion of Gordon Square in 1860. Meanwhile, there are a number of landmark buildings that contrast with the Bedford Estate style in their scale and materials, such as the British Museum, the Senate House, and the UCL building which add to the architectural interest. Artistic interest derives from the architectural ornament, in stucco and Coade stone, and items of sculpture throughout the area. The evidence of planned urban development from the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century is of archaeological interest. Historic interest in the conservation area is wide-ranging, from the associations with the Russell and Wriothesley families, to the founding of the British Museum, the artistic and literary Bloomsbury Group, and all of the notable figures who attended the University of London.

Summary of proposed works:

The proposals comprise:

- Repair and refurbishment of existing historic windows;
- Replacement of poor quality modern windows;
- Replacement of the roof covering and associated structural repairs to dormer windows;
- Removal of modern steel balustrade from rear parapet walls;
- Cleaning of elevations;
- Alterations to rainwater goods to accommodate extension and MEP installation;
- Reinstatement of previously removed cast-iron window box brackets;
- Replacement of modern black and white tiling on front steps.

Assessment of potential impacts:

Repair and refurbishment of existing historic windows

A window survey carried out by Claire Brown, a Chartered Building Surveyor and specialist in traditional buildings, is provided as an attached document to this application. The survey has shown that while most of the timber sash windows on the building are historic, the eight-paned sashes on the principal elevation are likely to date to the 1860s programme of alterations, and four windows are possibly original to the 1780s. Several others are twentieth-century replacements. The proposal is to retain and repair all pre-1950s sashes, and to repair, repaint, and reweight them to ensure smooth operation. Most sashes will require removal from their frames to enable replacement of damaged joinery and cracked glass. All undamaged historic glass will be retained and reused, and where modern float glass is present in historic sashes, this will be replaced with handmade glass (cylinder or drawn) to suit the age of the window in question. Discreet safety stoppers will be installed to prevent full opening for safe use and all windows will be fitted with brush seals to improve acoustic and thermal performance. Brush seals will be installed using small steel panels pins and adhesive to ensure that the intervention is fully reversible.



1780s sash window on lower ground floor



1860s sash window on principal elevation

Removal of existing aluminium framed secondary glazing will enable repair and reinstatement of internal shutters to allow for active use to improve acoustic and thermal performance. Some carefully matched joinery repairs and replacement of broken hinges is expected to be required to return the shutters to use as all have been painted and filled shut.

All of the pre-1950s windows and glass (including all the 8-paned sashes on the street front) will be retained as single glazed sashes. The intention is to improve acoustic and thermal performance by installed an unobtrusive push-fit secondary glazing system supplied by Gecko Glazing. This intervention is fully reversible and requires no mechanical fixings.

These measures for improvements to the windows have been designed to return the windows to a good and usable condition whilst improving the thermal and acoustic performance of the windows without any loss or substantial harm being caused of significant historic fabric. The proposal retains the historic appearance of the street frontage, in

particular the texture of the historic glass, which is a contributor to the listed building's significance. These measures will also preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.

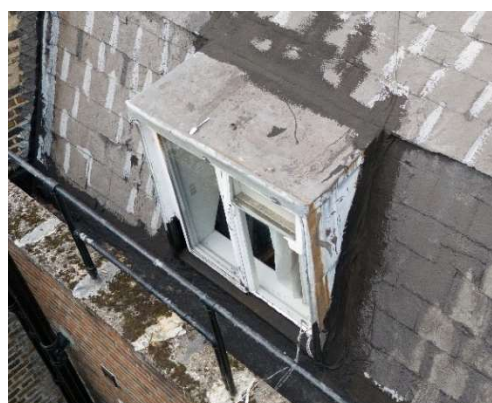
Replacement of Post-1950s windows

The window survey identified a number of modern replacement windows in the building, all were of low quality and poorly matched to the historic fabric. For example, two of the window openings had casement windows where we would have expected to see sashes (windows R2.1 and R3.1 – see drawing A-075-111). Several of these modern replacement windows are in very poor condition, with bottom rails rotted out. It is proposed that these windows are replaced with modern hardwood sashes, designed with joinery profiles to match windows elsewhere on the building. All new window joinery would be constructed in either sustainably-sourced hardwood or Accoya, fitted with rebated brush seals and glazed with a high-performance low U-value 8mm vacuum-sealed unit such as Fineo Acoustic Heritage or Landvac Heritage to maximise acoustic and thermal performance. Sashes would be weighted with traditional lead weights, reusing existing weights and pulley wheels where salvageable with attached lead penny washers to adjust to required weight to balance the heavier glazing.

Given that only the windows visible from street level on the principal façade were of the Victorian design, it is proposed that windows in the mansard dormers should be replaced with sashes matched to the remaining Georgian sashes on the lower ground floor, in a 3-over-3 format to match the single remaining original Georgian sash identified on the rear elevation (the lower sash of window R3.2 – see Drawing No A-075-113). Where sash boxes are present, these will be retained and reused and new sashes will be installed. It is anticipated that window R3.1 will require full rebuilding of the sash boxes and surrounding joinery mouldings as these have been lost.



Lower sash of R3.2, assessed to be original fabric



Example of low quality 20th Century casement

The central opening on window R2.1 appears to have been replaced by four side-hung casements and its design now jars against the 2-over-2 sash window on the floor below (R1.1). Even though the condition of this window was assessed to be repairable, this proposal seeks to replace the central part of the window with a new 4-over-4 sash to relate better to the window below.

The intention with the replacement of the post-1950s windows is to return the conformation of the windows to something closer to what we believe the building would have looked like in the early part of the 20th Century, making use of modern materials to provide enhanced acoustic and thermal performance.

Replacement of roof coverings and associated structural repairs to dormer windows

Both roofs are currently in very poor condition and there is evidence of numerous leaks particularly around the dormer windows and at party wall abutments. The original slate roof covering on the main roof has been 'Turnerised' with a bitumen coating, and then also with subsequent liquid-applied patch repairs. There is no scope to reuse any of the original slates from the main roof, but slates on the rear extension will be reused where they are in good condition.

Parapet valley gutters will be rebuilt with improved falls and depth and the existing bitumen coating will be replaced with a liquid-applied waterproof membrane such as Sikalastic.



Main roof covering in very poor condition

The proposed will require a full strip back of the roof covering to enable improvement of ventilation to skelings voids and upright sections of the mansard structures, and installation of high-performance breathable insulation to skelings and dormer cheeks. It is expected that some damage to structural roof timbers may be revealed on opening up, and we intend to carry out sympathetic strengthening to these as required. Sarking boards will be retained and roof covering would be replaced using softwood battens (and counter-battens as required for ventilation over skelings) and UK-sourced slate (Welsh or Cornish) sized to match the original slates being removed and colour matched to the slates being retained on the rear closet extension roof. Ridges and hips will be of Code 6 rolled lead broom-handle type to match existing, with bossed lead vents on each side to improve ventilation of the roof voids. Repairs to the brick party wall will be carried out. Where replacement bricks are required, these will be carefully matched to the existing fabric and constructed in non-hydraulic lime mortar matched to existing. Flashing and soaker details at the party wall abutments will be reformed in Code 6 rolled lead in accordance with standard details from the Rolled Lead Sheet Manual.

This work item will result in a beneficial repair to the building with no adverse change to its historic character.

Removal of modern steel balustrade from rear parapet walls

There is a modern steel balustrade fixed to the rear parapet wall. This does not provide adequate protection from falls from height due to the wide spacing of the rails and balusters. It is proposed that this protection rail is removed, and an alternative fall restraint system is installed to protect individuals working on the roof. Removal of the balustrade will require replacement of the concrete coping stones on the parapet wall. We intend to use a standard concrete coping stone which projects slightly further from the brickwork to provide a better rain-shedding detail to protect the historic brickwork below.



Existing steel parapet handrail to be removed

This work item will result in an aesthetic improvement to the building and improved safety for future maintenance with no adverse change to its historic character.

Cleaning of elevations

The façade of the building is heavily begrimed. This dirt is obscuring brickwork details such as the rubbed brick arches and tuck pointing. It is proposed that careful cleaning using a gentle highly controllable steam cleaning system such as Doff or Thermatec could take back a degree of the darkness on the pointing to reveal these architectural details, without removing all of the dark patina on the brickwork and making the house stand out unduly from others in the row. The cleaning method would be trialled on a small test area on the rear elevation on the area of the building that is to be enclosed by the new extension. This would allow the potential impact on the appearance of the brick to be assessed before the whole façade is cleaned. This work item would not be carried out if the perceived change in appearance is deemed to be too striking.

Whilst the proposed work item will not cause any harm to the fabric of the building if carefully applied, there is a risk that over-cleaning would disrupt the continuity of the appearance of the façade of the terrace. This is not an outcome that we are seeking. We would, therefore, expect that approval of the patch test on brickwork on the rear of the building to be included as a pre-commencement condition for this work item.

Reinstatement of previously removed cast-iron window box brackets

No. 69 has lost the window box brackets and rails that are present on most other houses in the Gower Street terrace at ground and first floor level. Replacement brackets will be cast in iron from moulds taken from an adjacent building to ensure facsimile reproduction. Cement fill to original holes in sills will be carefully drilled out using a non-percussive diamond drill; replacement brackets will be set in molten lead. Excess lead can be removed after it has cooled using a chisel and hammered to provide a well-defined joint.



Window box brackets missing on 69 Gower St



Window box brackets present on 57 Gower St

Reinstatement of this feature will restore a lost element of the Victorian remodelling of the house and will contribute positively to restoring this element of unity of the terrace and will enhance the significance of the listed building and the conservation area.



Style of bracket to be replicated (71 Gower St)

Replacement of modern black and white tiling on front steps.

The tiles covering the external steps leading to the front door are twentieth-century in date. There are several examples of front door steps along the terrace, and more widely in the conservation area, that were adorned with more decorative encaustic tiles or mosaics in the nineteenth century or later. In an area where the external appearance of the houses was kept very consistent by the landowner, these front door steps appear to be one of the few opportunities that Victorian occupiers had to express some individuality. It is therefore considered to be an in-keeping and appropriate intervention to create a new mosaic design for the front step of the Garth Hotel. The design will be an enhancement to both the listed building and the conservation area.

Conclusion:

It is the conclusion of this Heritage Statement that the proposed works will result in no adverse impact to the listed building and conservation area. The proposals have been carefully devised to be sympathetic to the character and fabric of the listed building. The works to the roof will remedy decades of patched repairs, the historic windows will be retained while also being made more energy efficient and acoustically effective. Historic England's *Advice Note 18* has been particularly considered, and the works proposed are acceptable given the nature of the significance of the listed building; in addition the proposals offer the public benefits of conserving a heritage asset in a viable use, and reducing energy consumption and thereby contributing to the Net-Zero target. The installation of iron window box railings will restore a lost Victorian feature and enhance the terrace's consistency of appearance. This Heritage Statement is in accordance with Historic England Guidance, meets the requirements of the NPPF and provides sufficient information in regards to the heritage considerations relating to the proposals, as currently known.

References:

- *Historic England, Advice Note 18: Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency (2024)*
- *Heritage Statement submitted with application 2024/1264/P (Savills, March 2024)*
- *Historic England, 2023. Search the List: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>*
- *Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (2011), London Borough of Camden*

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