

WRIGHT & WRIGHT ARCHITECTS

The Paul Mellon Centre

15 & 16 Bedford Square

Heritage Statement

Lantern Replacement

June 2025



The Site

Site Description

The two buildings are D1 use class and are located on the northwest side of Bedford Square. They are Grade I listed for their group value.

The buildings are located within the Sub Area 5 of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Founded in 1970 by the art collector and philanthropist Paul Mellon, the Paul Mellon Centre is an educational charity that promotes new ways of understanding British art history and culture.

Based in central London, it publishes, teaches and carries out research in its Bloomsbury headquarters as well as through its online platforms. The Centre is part of Yale University and a partner to the Yale Center for British Art.

Statement of Need

16 and 15 Bedford Square are occupied by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art.

The Centre wishes to replace a life-expired roof lantern at the rear of No. 16 Bedford Square.

The lantern is located in an infill extension to the main property, providing light to an office located at basement level.

The lantern is in poor condition and is in need of regular maintenance. Water damage is visible to the internal finishes adjacent to the lantern.

The lantern is single-glazed and offers poor thermal performance. Due to this, secondary glazing has been installed for the comfort of users below.

Proposals

A new lantern is proposed to provide appropriate thermal comfort to the office below, reducing The Centre's energy consumption

The new lantern will also improve the security of staff and visitors. The existing lantern is potentially vulnerable due to being located on a ground-level flat roof.

Internal secondary glazing will be removed from underneath the lantern as it will no longer be required. The removal of secondary glazing will also improve daylight within the office.

Listing

Listing Description

List Entry Number: 1244546

Grade: I

Date first listed: 24th October 1951

Date of most recent amendment: 11th January 1999

The Historic England List Entry defines the importance of Nos.15 & 16 as being within the context of the north east side of Bedford Square (Nos. 12-27 and the associated railings).

Listing Extract:

The following extract from the Listing Description gives an overview of the terrace as a whole.

The relevant references that directly relate to nos. 15 & 16 have been extracted and are included here for ease of reference:

Overview

Symmetrical terrace of 16 houses forming the north side of a square. 1776-1781. Mostly built by W Scott and R Grews; probably designed by either Thomas Leverton or Robert Palmer; for the Bedford Estate.

Yellow stock brick with evidence on most of the houses of tuck pointing. Plain stucco band at 1st floor level.

The 2 centre houses, Nos 18 & 19, are stuccoed. Slate mansard roofs with dormers and tall slab chimney-stacks.

Exterior

- 3 storeys, attics and basements. 3 windows each.
- Recessed round-arched entrances with Coade stone vermiculated intermittent voussoirs and bands; mask keystones.
- Enriched impost bands and cornice-heads to doors.
- Side lights to panelled doors, some 2-leaf
- Fanlights, mostly radial patterned.
- Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sashes, most with glazing bars.
- The following have blind boxes: Nos 16-19, No.20 to 1st floor only, Nos 21 and 25.
- The following have cast-iron balconies to 1st floor windows: Nos 12-15, 18-21, 23-25.
- No.12 has a good early C19 cast-iron balcony with round-arched trellis and tented canopy
- Cornice and parapets, Nos 12 & 27 have balustraded parapets.

Interiors not inspected but noted to contain original stone stairs with cast and wrought-iron balusters of various scroll designs, decoration and features; special features as mentioned:

Subsidiary Features attached cast-iron railings to areas with urn or torch-flambe finials. No.17 with a wrought-iron lamp bracket and snuffer. Most houses with good wrought-iron foot scrapers.

Historical Notes

- The houses in Bedford Square form a most important and complete example of C18 town planning. Built as a speculation, it is not clear who designed all the houses.
- Leverton was a country house architect and may have been involved with only the grander houses; he lived at No.13.
- Palmer was the Bedford Estate surveyor and may be responsible for the vagaries of the square. - The majority of the plots leased by the estate were taken by Robert Grews, a carpenter, and William Scott, a brick maker. No.22 was the residence of Sir J Forbes Robertson, actor (plaque).
- (Byrne A: Bedford Square, An architectural study: London:-1990)."

History of the Site

Timeline

1775 - Construction of Bedford Square begins. All of the houses are built by individual builders, each of whom had an individual contract with Bedford Estate.

1782 - John Utterton, a plasterer, signed No. 16's original 99 year lease.

1784 - Utterton sold the lease to Joseph Shrimpton.

1785 - Shrimpton then sold the lease to Thomas Wildman, a solicitor, who then lived at No. 16 for 10 years.

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1960s - No. 16's original fanlight replaced with modern alternative.

1996 - Paul Mellon Centre moved into No. 16 in June. The property was refurbished by Bedford Estates over a 6 month period without any major structural work needed.

2014 - Paul Mellon Centre acquired the leasehold of no. 15.

2015 - Refurbishment works were completed on No.15 and 16 Bedford Square. Lateral connections were introduced between the two buildings and archive storage rooms were introduced at basement level to house the Centre's collection.



Right
Historic photograph of the entrance to No.15
'Plate 80: No. 15, Bedford Square, entrance doorway', in *Survey of London: Volume 5, St Giles-in-The-Fields, Pt II*, ed. W Edward Riley, Laurence Gomme (London, 1914), *British History Online* <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol5/pt2/plate-80> [accessed 22 October 2024].

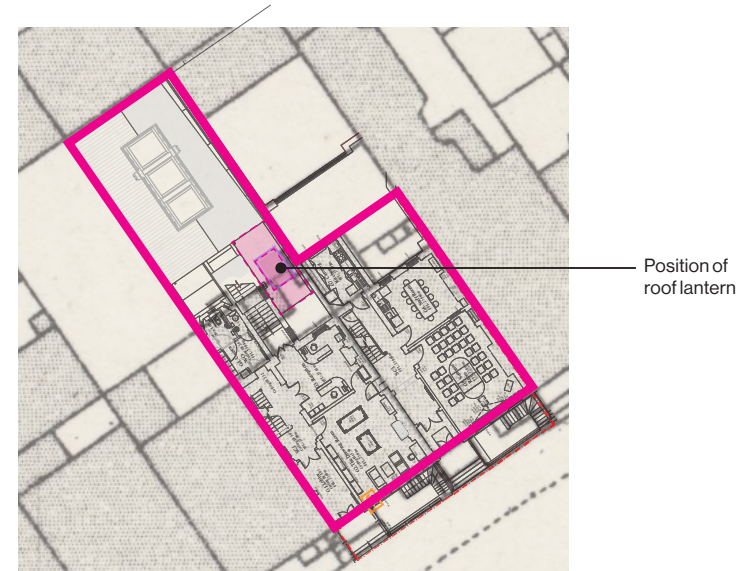
Roof Lantern - Basement/Ground Floor



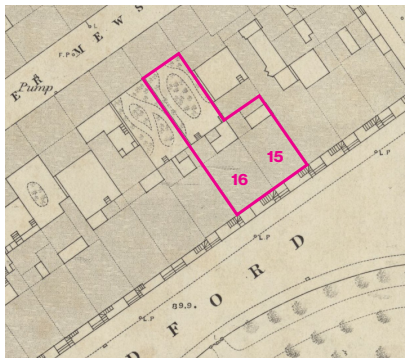
Age of the lantern

The rear extensions to the original 1770s house at No. 16 appear to have been built in the 20th century, likely in the 1920s.

The overlay to the right shows the position of the existing plans of the building (lantern highlighted pink), on the 1911 plan of the site. This indicates that the lantern was not present at this time and was built at a later date. This is supported by the construction of the lantern: the frame is constructed from steel sections which encase single glazed panes. The sloping panes on the lantern's pitch are constructed from mis-matched wired glass, which has replaced the original glazing. The secondary glazing below appears to have been added after the construction of the lantern, likely to mitigate heat loss in the room below.

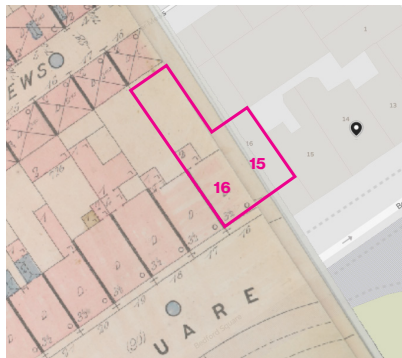


1911



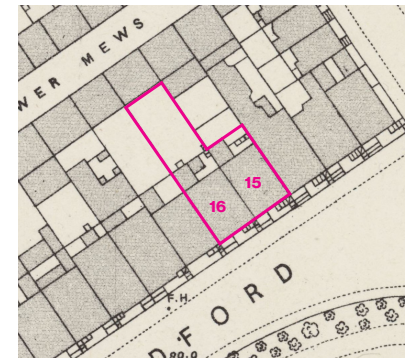
1871

The 1871 survey shows a landscaped garden to the rear of No.16 Bedford Square



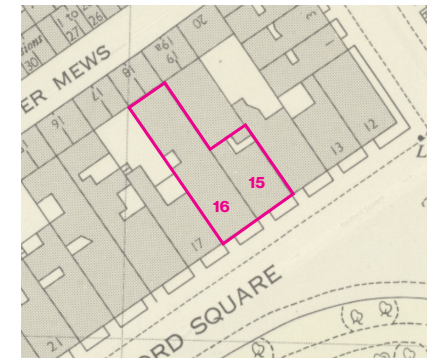
1887

Goad's insurance map only shows No.16 Bedford Square. The plan form appears largely unchanged since 1871



1911

The building form of Nos.15 & 16 Bedford Square remain largely consistent with the 1871 survey in 1911



1951

By 1951, the rear of the site has been infilled with the Ballroom at No.16

Roof Lantern - Basement/Ground Floor

Condition of the lantern

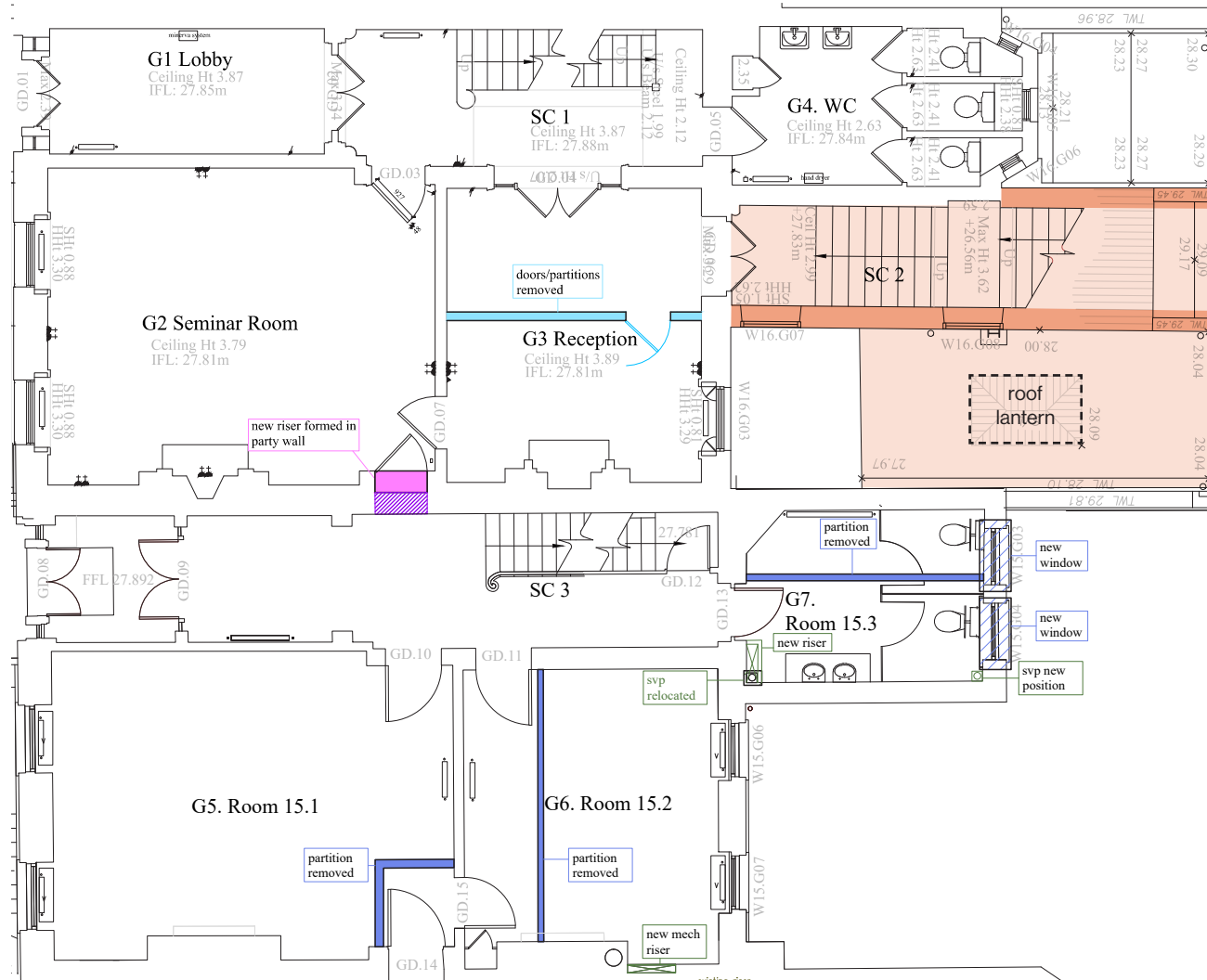
The lantern is in poor condition. Much of the glazing has been replaced with wired glass, which is cracked in places and causes a risk to those working beneath. The lantern is not airtight, with large gaps into the space below as a result of its construction. Water ingress has resulted in damage to the timber structure supporting the lantern, both internally and externally.

Refurbishment would likely result in disintegration of the existing fabric, and would not provide the required thermal properties.



History of Changes: Ground Floor

Original 18th Century fabric is of high significance. A summary of later alterations is shown on the adjacent plan and listed to the right.



- 20th Century extensions
- 16 Bedford Square**
Recent Planning + LBC Applications
1977 / HB1757
Erection of partitions in basement and second floor.
- 1986 / 8670262
Works of alteration involving removal of recent partition wall and reconstruction of former wall on ground floor, the creation of a new lobby on the second floor, and the removal of recent partitions on the first, second and third floors and in the basement.
- 1995 / 9500211
External alterations to the rear extension.
- 1995 / 9570032
Internal alterations and external alterations including the demolition of part of the rear extension and installation of replacement windows and rebuilding of remaining rear extension.
- 1996/L9600047
Approval of details of joinery for all new windows and brick sample for rear extension and one fanlight.
- 15 Bedford Square**
Recent Planning + LBC Applications
2001 / PSX0104645
Demolition of existing two storey buildings to rear of 13, 14, and 15 Bedford Square, erection of 3 storey extension to rear of 13, 14, 15 Bedford Square. Erection of Mansard roof extension to 20 Gower Mews and associated internal and external alterations.
- 2013 / 8303L
2014 / 3038L
Internal and external alterations, including addition of internal doors, new services, repositioning of plant, new rain outlet & overflow pipe to gutter, suspended ceiling at basement floor level, and new door entry system to No.15.
- 2014
Internal alterations

Proposed Works

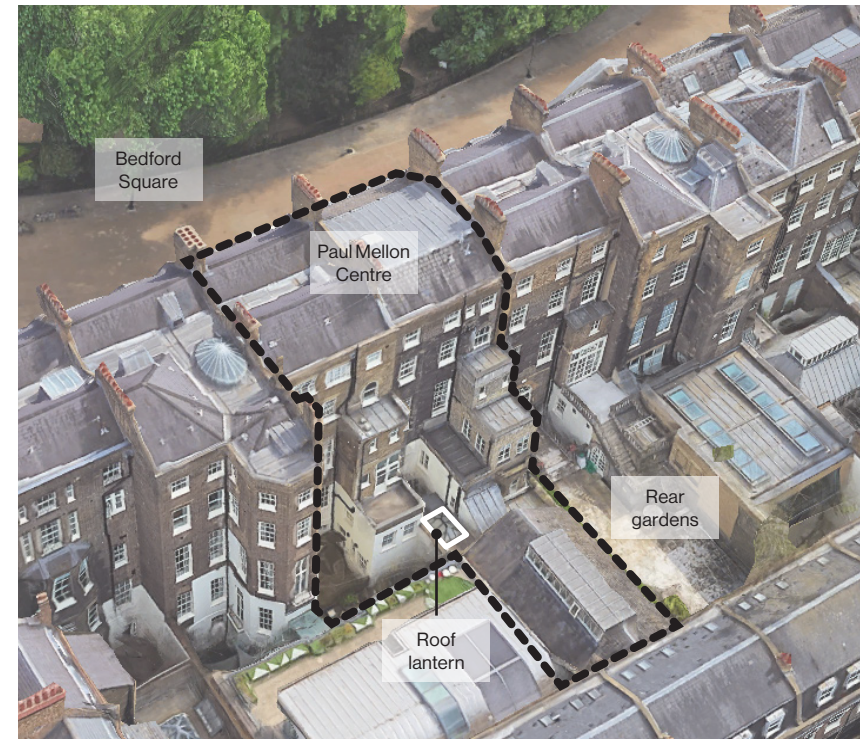
Overview

Replacement of a roof lantern at the rear of No.16 Bedford Square. The lantern is located at basement/ ground level and currently provides light to a single storey infill extension that was possibly erected in the 1920s.

These works are outlined in more detail in the accompanying Design Statement

Pre-Application Advice

Pre-application advice was sought from Rose Todd, who visited site on 21.10.24 (2024/3945/PRE). A formal response was received on 22.10.24, which is appended to this document.



Heritage Impact Assessment

Location of proposed change	Description of location	Significance	Proposed Works	Possible Impact	Justification or Mitigation
Roof of lower ground floor office	Painted plastered room with plaster cornice. Librarian's office. Office is located within an extension built in the 20th century.	Moderate	Removal of existing failing 20th century lantern light and secondary glazing beneath, to be replaced with modern, double glazed, powder coated aluminium alternative.	Low impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Existing lantern poses health and safety risk due to falling debris to those working below. Requires replacement to remove this riskExisting lantern has poor thermal qualities and new double glazed alternative will help the Paul Mellon Centre to reduce energy consumption from heating the spaceNew lantern to match existing in shape. Frame sections to match existing as far as possible. Frame to be coloured black externally and white/cream internally to match existing.

Summary of Impact

Overall the works will have a limited impact on the heritage significance of the buildings and a limited degree of harm to historic fabric. The fabric in question is from the 20th century.

The proposal to replace the existing failing roof lantern on the lower ground floor provides necessary fabric upgrades and limits the existing health and safety risk of falling debris from the existing lantern. The introduction of a double glazed lantern will greatly improve the thermal comfort of the Librarian's office, helping to reduce the Centre's overall energy consumption, and will also improve security to the lower ground floor.

