

Bedford Court Mansions Design & Access Statement for Proposed Porter's Lodge and enhanced access



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Introduction

BPR Architects have been appointed to prepare a proposal for a Porter's Lodge and enhanced entrance arrangements to Bedford Court Mansions, in order to improve access and security to common areas.

This statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application submission in order to provide background information and an introduction to the project.

The proposal follows significant consultation with the residents of Bedford Court Mansions, members of their management committee. In addition, consultation has taken place with building control regarding access and fire strategy. This submission follows an earlier successful application made in 2006 (reference 2006/4496/P). The design considerations identified during the consultation period of that application have been reviewed and accommodated into the proposals that form part of this planning application.

The photographs used in this statement were taken in July 2012. Please also refer to BPR Architects drawings ref 1120-01-01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 08, 09 and 1124-01-sch06 heritage statement whilst reading this statement.



1. View of Bedford Court Mansions from Adeline Place



2. Current access to communal courtyard including Porter's Lodge



3. Bedford Avenue



4. Existing Porter's Lodge located at basement level

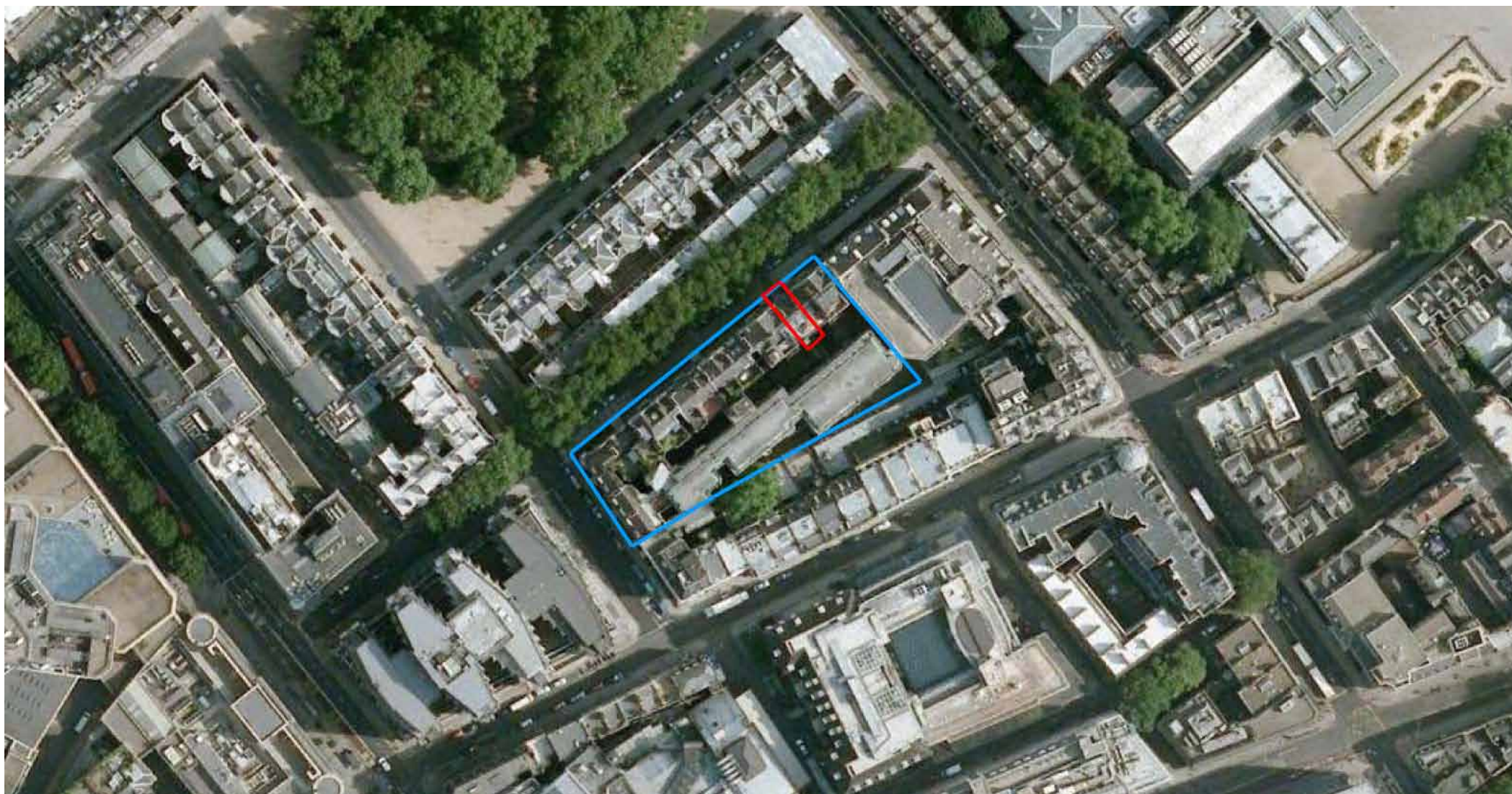
Existing Context

1.0 Existing Context

1.1 Site Location

Bedford Court Mansions is a mansion block which fronts Bedford Avenue and Adeline Place. The majority of the block is owned by Bedford Court Mansions Ltd, a resident owned company that acquired the freehold in 1987.

The building has a central courtyard at base-ment level, accessed directly from a passage off Bedford Avenue.



Site Location Plan

Existing Context

1.2 Site Location Plan

Bedford Court Mansions is divided into four Blocks with a central courtyard at basement level, which contains a single storey boiler room and porter's accommodation. Block B Front, Block C and Block D are accessed at raised ground floor level directly from Bedford Avenue. Block B Rear is accessed under the archway in Block B Front and via a covered walkway over the boiler room.

The proposed works affect the external area under the archway and its access points from Bedford Avenue and the basement courtyard. Internally, the works affect the lobby of Block B Front.



Site Location Plan

Existing Context

1.3 Adjacent Buildings

Bedford Court Mansions occupy about a third of the block situated between Bedford Avenue and Great Russel Street, which rises up to seven storeys from street level. The 1890s facade is consistent across Bedford avenue, wrapping round to Adeline Place and Bloomsbury Street on either side.

On the opposite side of Bedford Avenue is a low rise Victorian block behind a row of mature sycamore trees.

There is on-street parking on Bedford Avenue and the surrounding streets. The remainder of the block is occupied by commercial, residential and hospitality uses and architecturally shows a variety of scales, styles and materials.



5. Bedford Avenue



6. Courtyard behind Block B Rear



7. View from Dyott Street to Great Russell Street (Bedford Court Mansions visible above yellow building)



8. Commercial premises east of Block B Front

Existing Context

1.4 Existing Buildings

The archway from Bedford Avenue has existing iron gates which can be locked. This area is used for contractor parking, and is the route for pedestrian access to Block B Rear.

On the courtyard side of the archway residents can go up some steps to the covered walkway to access Block B Rear, or down a steep flight of stairs to the Porter's Lodge and basement courtyard. There is also access to a rear door to Block B Front located up a small flight of steps.

The facade facing the courtyard comprises cream coloured glazed bricks with sash windows. There are a large number of visible service routes, particularly at low level. The courtyard receives limited sunlight due its small area and height of the buildings, and at basement level most of the available space is occupied by the boiler room and porter's accommodation.

Each Block has a communal lobby. The interior styles are not uniform, and Block B front in particular is due for upgrade.

1.5 Pre-application Advice

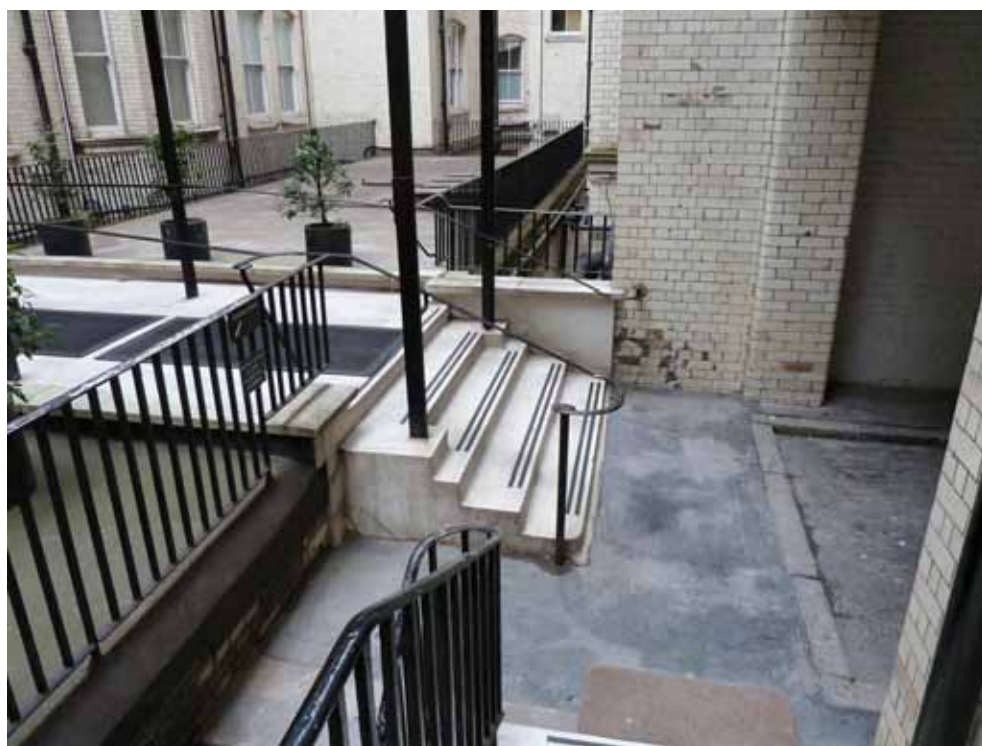
Pre-application advice has not been formally been sought. However, comments following the previous application (ref reference 2006/4496/P) have been considered as part of this application.



9. Block B Front Lobby



10. View towards Bedford Avenue from covered walkway



11. Access from archway to covered walkway



12. Archway from Bedford Avenue

Proposal

2.0 Proposal

2.1 The Problem

There are several issues regarding access and security which the residents' board are concerned about. The rationale of the proposed development is to improve the access and security arrangements of the communal areas for the benefit of all residents.

Areas of Concern:

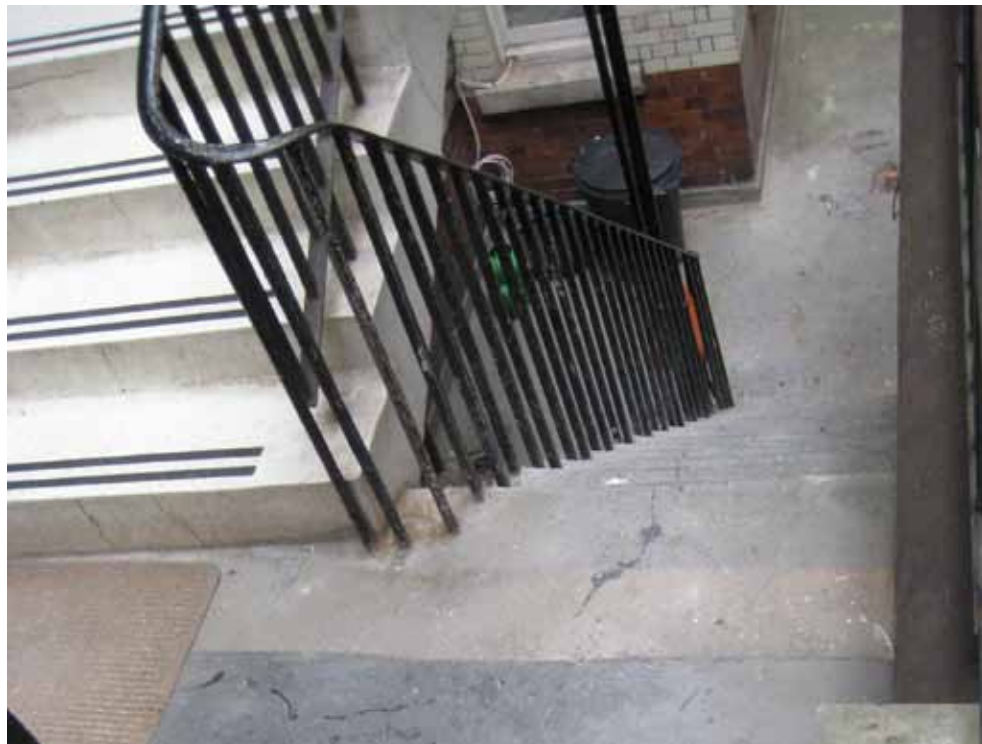
1.0 The Porter's Lodge is located at basement level. It is not visible from the street which means it is not a visible deterrent.

2.0 It is accessed down a steep flight of steps which is not convenient for residents, and access is not clear to visitors.

3.0 The archway is used for parking by various contractors. This can restrict access to Block B Rear and the Porter's Lodge.

4.0 The iron gates are the only way of locking the courtyard from the street. They usually remain open as this is the main access route to Block B Rear, which means the courtyard can generally be accessed by non residents.

5.0 There is no wheelchair access to any of the blocks from Bedford Avenue, as all the main entrances involve a set of steps.



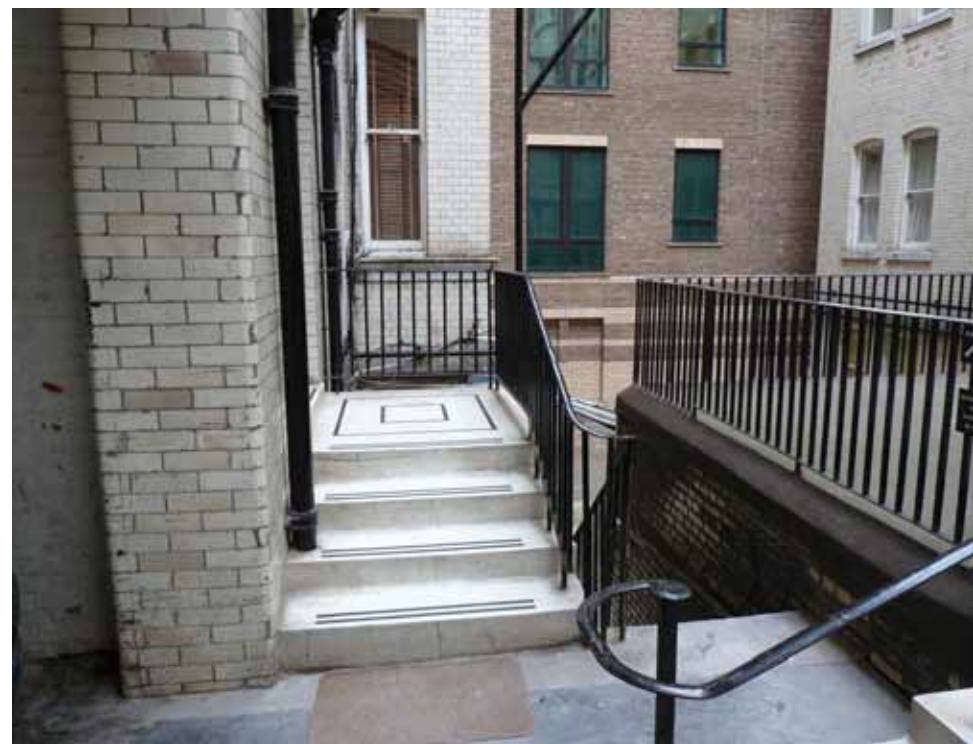
13. Stairs up to Block B Front and down to Porter's Lodge



14. Existing Porter's Lodge and steep stair



15. Archway used for parking, restricting access to Block B Rear



16. Stair up to Block B Front from courtyard

Proposal

2.2 Landscaping, Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

The site currently has vehicle access from Bedford Avenue to the back of the archway. There is no through route and the space is sometimes used for contractor parking, which can restrict access to Block B Rear. In this proposal the dropped kerb will be removed and the pavement will be reinstated along Bedford Avenue in order to restore and improve the pedestrian environment. This will remove vehicle access under the archway and maintain a visual link from Block B Rear to the road.

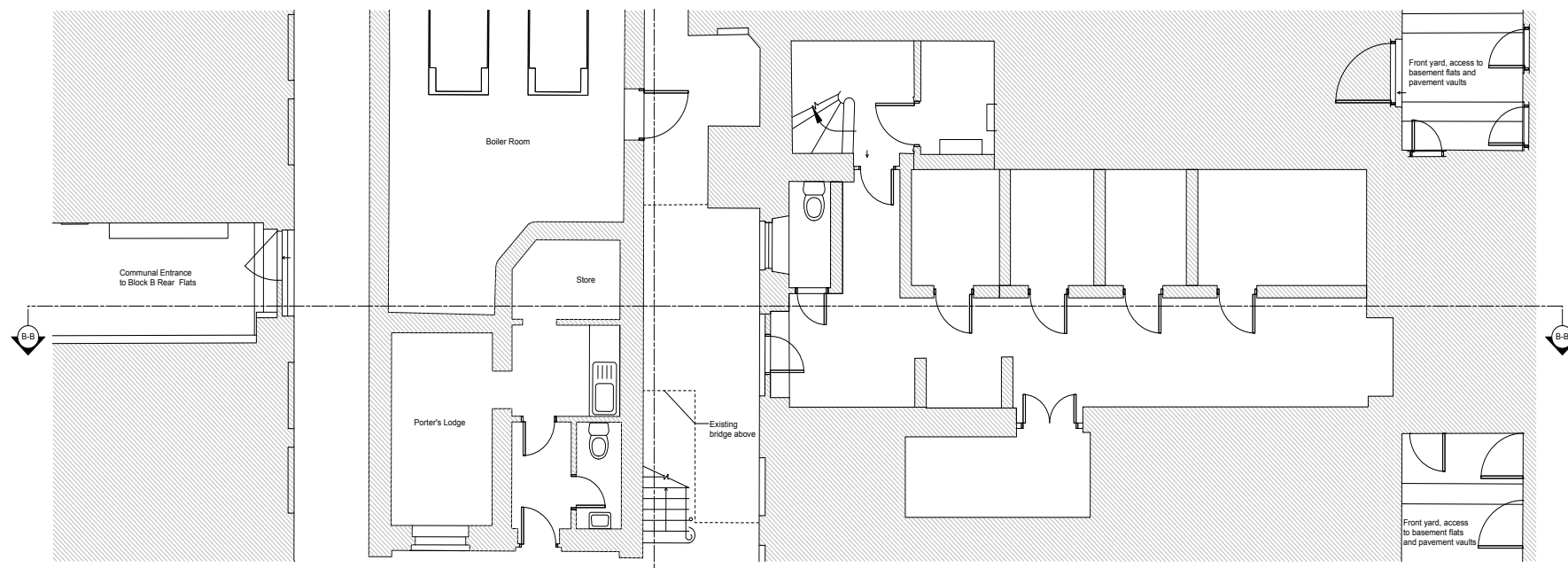
2.3 Waste storage and collection

This proposal does not alter Bedford Court Mansions' waste storage and collection system.

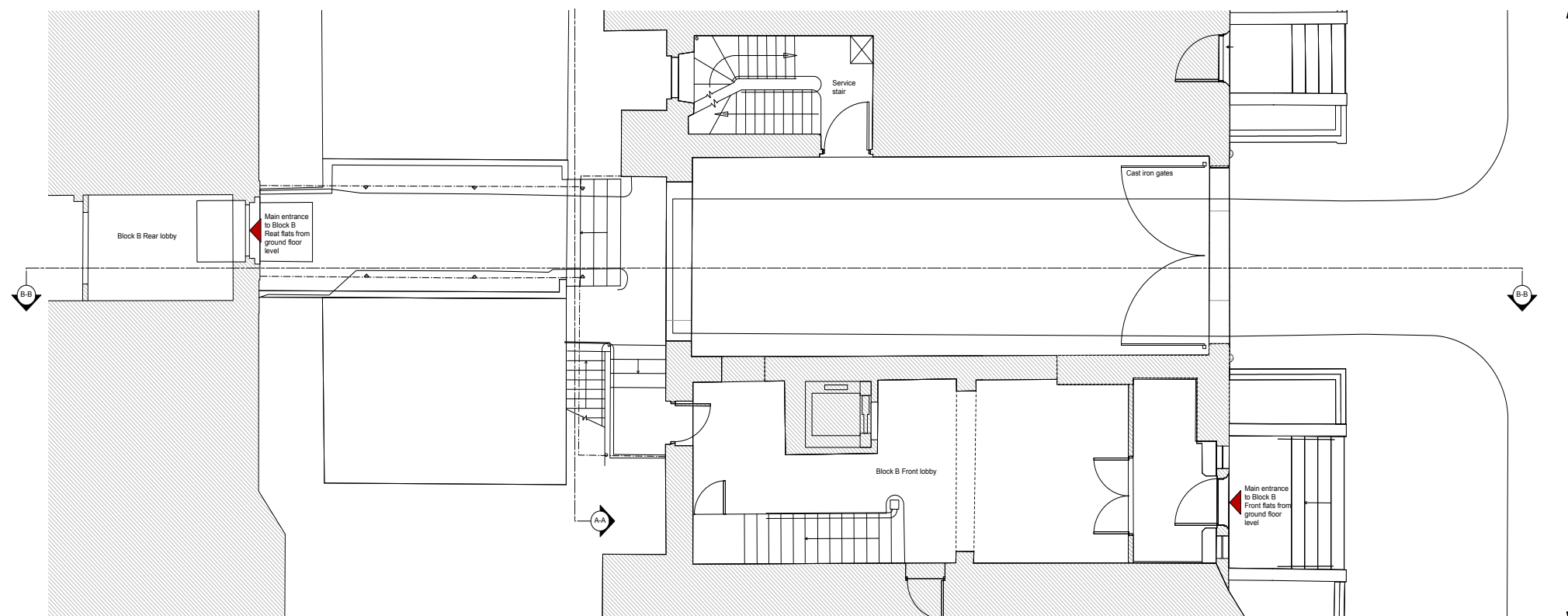
2.4 Proposed Demolition

The design raises the floor level under the archway in order to facilitate level access from street level to Block B Rear. For this reason the existing concrete stair from the archway to basement and the bridge link from the archway to the covered walkway need to be demolished and reinstated to suit the new levels.

This presents an opportunity to improve basement access. The existing stair is narrow and steep and will be replaced with a stair compliant with the building regulations. The new bridge link at higher level will improve the head height underneath at basement level.



Existing Basement Plan



Existing Ground Floor Plan

Proposal

2.5 Proposed layout

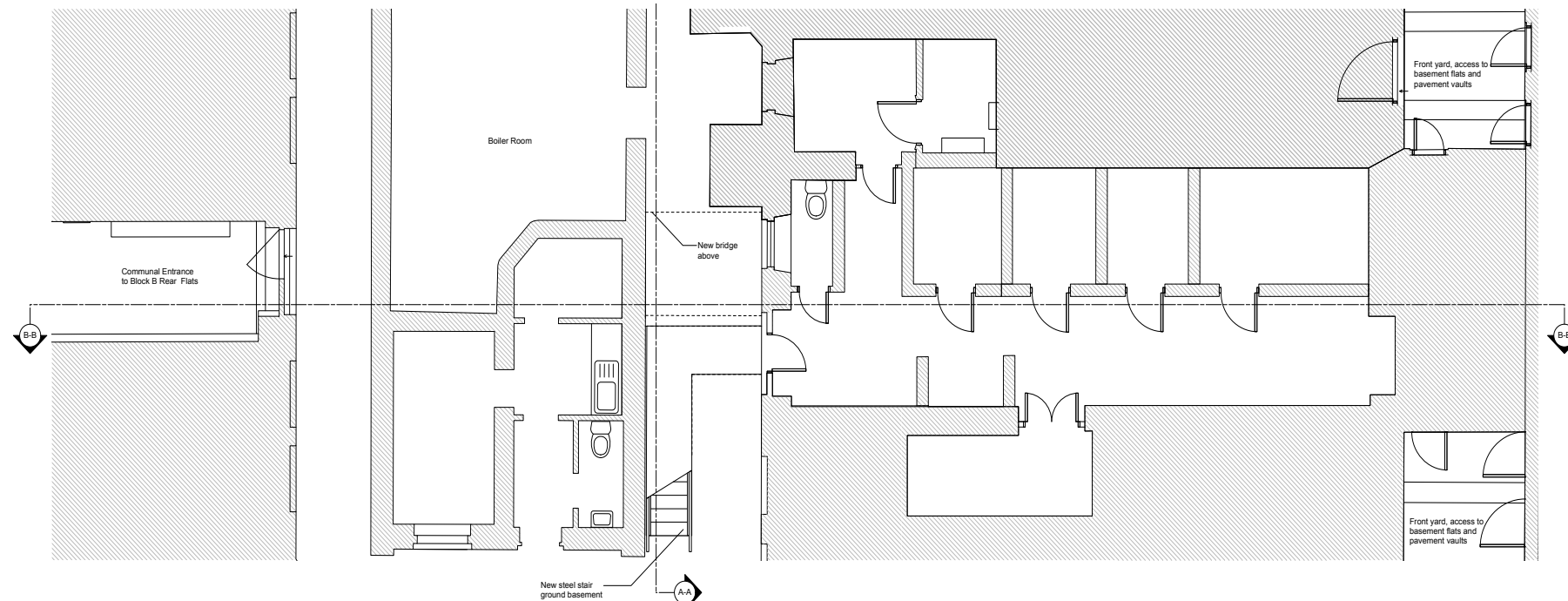
The building works are designed to provide level and secure access to Block B Rear, Block B Front and to a new Porter's Lodge.

The new porter's accommodation is approx 15sqm occupying the existing building footprint and retaining pedestrian access under the arch and lobby space in Block B Front. It will be equipped to provide communal services to all residents, and contribute to making the space under the archway safe, secure and well-used. The proposal includes a secure store in the existing service staircore for use by the porter at ground floor level.

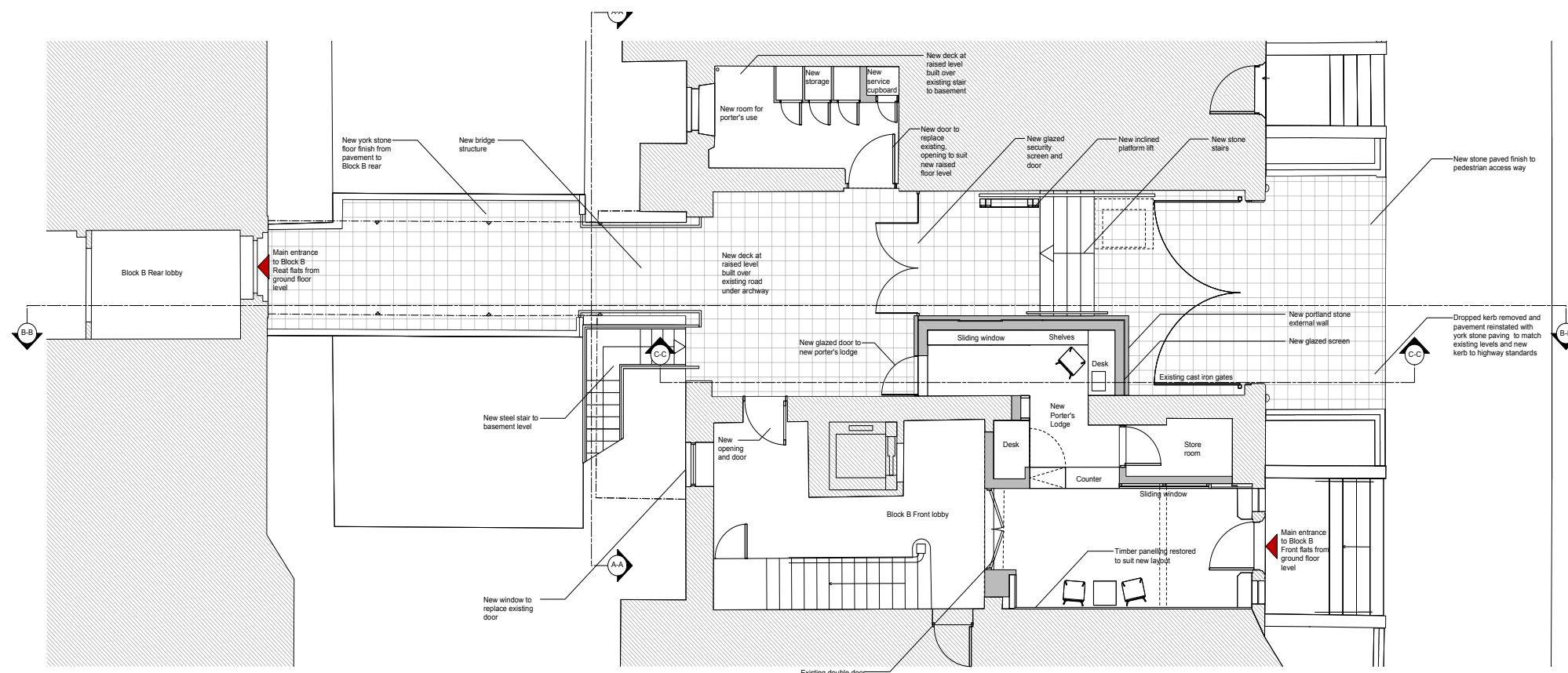
There will be a new compliant stair to the basement from the archway, and new wheelchair access from Bedford Avenue to Block B Front and Block B Rear, by introducing an inclined platform lift and level floor finishes. The layout will include a screen and door under the archway, to allow secure access to the courtyard.

2.6 Scale

The new Porter's Lodge is located centrally within the length of the archway, set back from Bedford Avenue. It occupies approximately a third of the width and the full height (single storey). It is partially located in the interior lobby of Block B Front and will therefore have a minimal impact on the existing facade and surrounding properties.



Proposed Basement Plan



Proposed Ground Floor Plan

Proposal

2.7 Appearance

The proposals have been designed to provide a high quality environment with new elevations facing onto the street, under the arch and into the courtyard. The new lodge provides a crisp and minimal intervention to the existing brick elevations, and the upgrade of the external floor finishes enhance the character of the late Victorian mansion block.

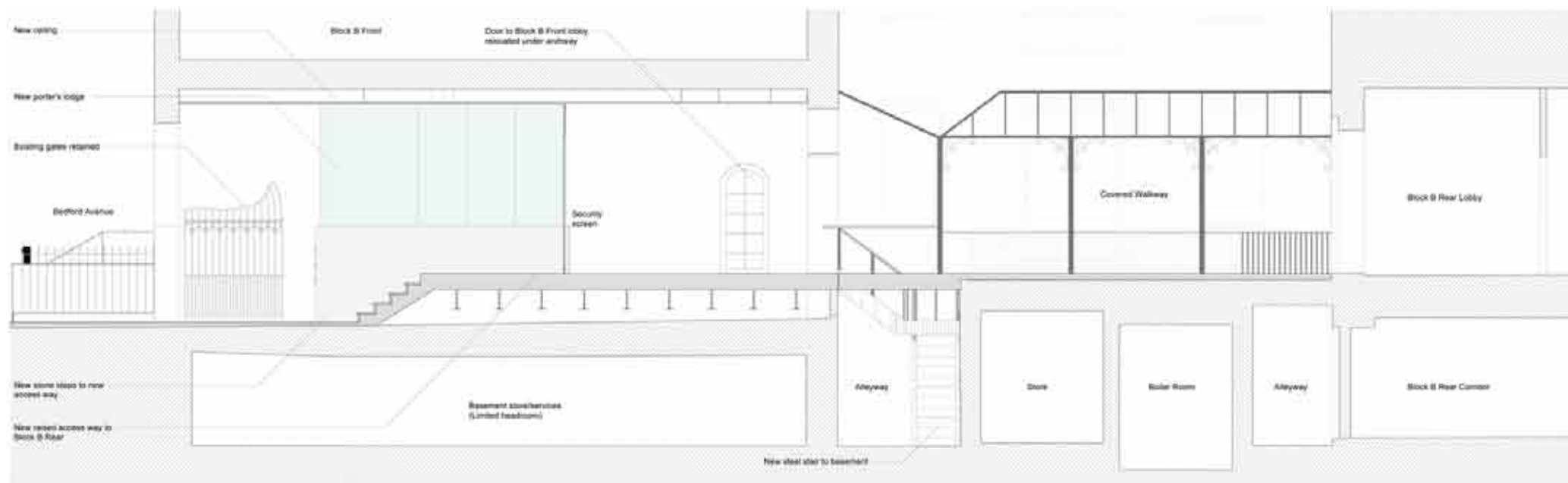
2.8 Materials and Colour

Walls: The existing walls under the archway are white painted bricks, and will be retained. The new walls are to be portland stone or similar up to mid level and glazed from mid level to full height. The security screen will be fully glazed.

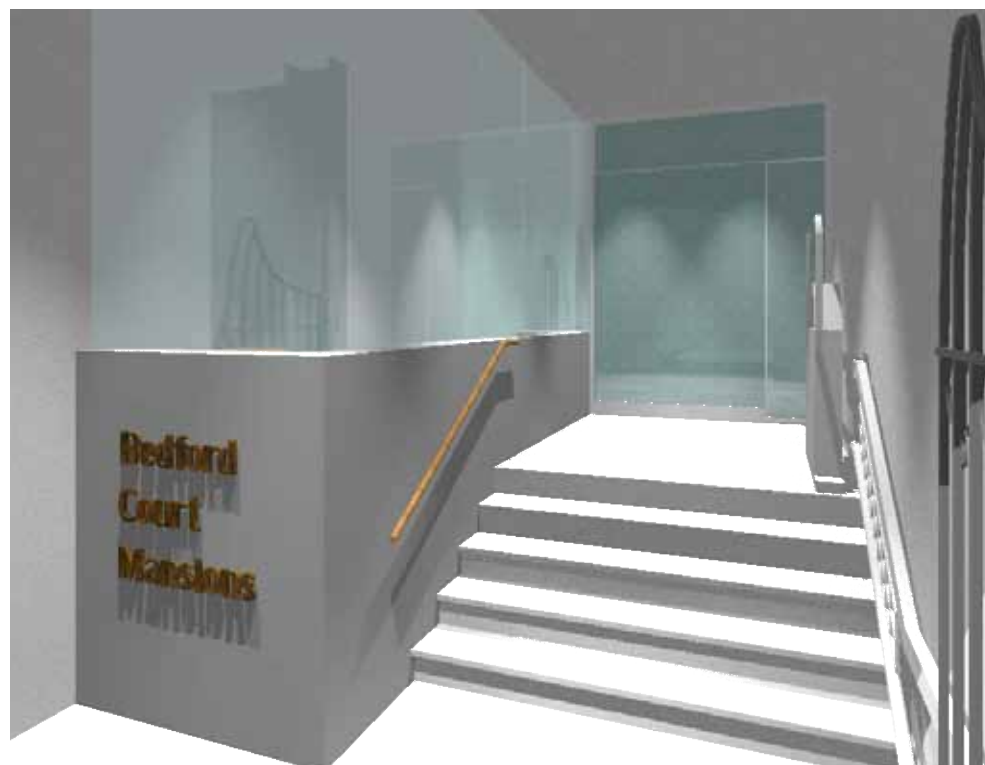
Doors: The existing door to the service stair is painted white timber with a fanlight, and will be replaced with a similar door and finish to suit the new floor level. The new security screen door will be fully glazed with stainless steel ironmongery.

Lighting: The existing pendants do not provide sufficient light under the archway. New recessed downlighting will be concealed within a new dropped ceiling spanning above the head the arches and extending into the new porter's lodge.

Floor: York stone is the intended finish for under the existing canopy, archway and steps. This will replace the existing tarmac road to delineate the new pedestrian realm. The pavement will be made good in york stone to match existing.



Section through archway and boiler room



Porter's Lodge from archway



Porter's Lodge from Block B Front

Proposal

2.9 Vehicle Parking

As discussed in paragraph 2.2, there is currently informal parking space under the archway. The new proposal will remove vehicle access to this area to improve the environment for residents and visually from Bedford Avenue.

2.10 Foul Sewage

No sewage fould sewage disposal is required in this application.

2.11 Assessment of Flood Risk

The site is not in a flood risk area and does not present a change to the existing surface area for run off into the existing watercourse.

2.12 Biodiversity + Geological Conservation

The proposal is located within the existing building area, and does not affect the biodiversity or geological conservation of the area.

2.13 Trees and Hedges

There are a row of mature sycamore trees on the opposite side of Bedford Avenue, but no trees or hedges on the site. As the proposal occupies the footprint of the existing building it does not have any affect on the trees.



Proposed Section



Proposed Elevation



17. Bedford Court Mansions from Adeline Place

2.14 Access

The design provides level access to Block B Front and Block B Rear, as they are currently inaccessible to wheelchair users.

An inclined platform lift is proposed to run along the new steps under the archway. This will be designed to discretely integrate into the overall proposal, and when not in use will be stationed at the top of the stair to reduce visibility from the street. The new stone stair will have contrasting nosing strips. The higher level gives access to the porter's lodge for visitors and residents, and from here the route to Block B Rear is level and unobstructed. A new door is proposed for level access to Block B Front from the archway. The lobbies in each block have a resident lift for step-free access to the other floors.

2.15 Security

The proposal provides a secure line between Bedford Avenue and the internal courtyard.

This is in the form of a glazed screen and door behind the Porter's Lodge with entry control for residents only. The Porter's Lodge would also be fully lockable, and the existing gates would be retained for use if required.

The screen's location allows a degree of public space to be retained under the archway, and the position of the new lodge allows visibility from the street as well as the rear accommodation.

Conclusions

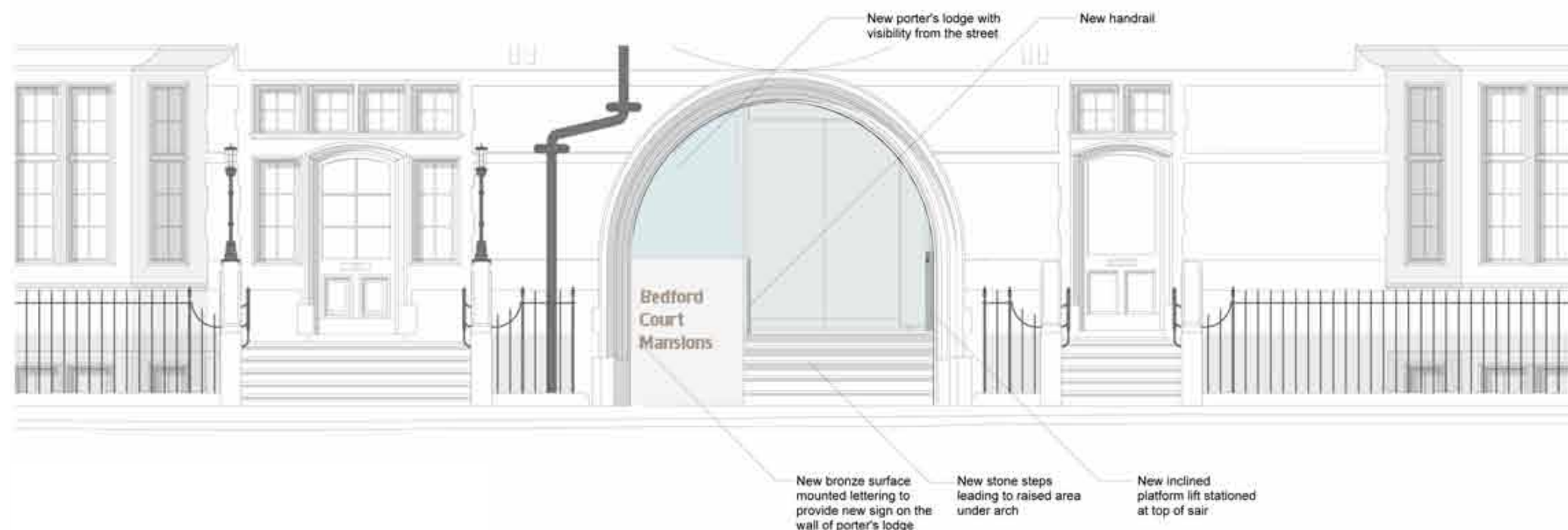
3.0 Conclusions

The proposed new Porter's Lodge and access arrangements to Bedford Court Mansions will provide high quality new accommodation and improved facility for the benefit residents across all four of the blocks.

The new layout will provide level access to the Porter's Lodge, Block B Front and Block B Rear, none of which are currently accessible to wheel-chair users. The proposed works beneath the archway will resolve the existing security problem faced by residents, by providing an access controlled entrance, well located to be monitored by the Porter.

Subsequent building works to accommodate the new levels, namely the new external staircase and new floor in service stairwell will have minimal impact on the existing building, and will not be visible from the public realm.

The proposal will not significantly impact the neighbouring properties, and has been designed to enhance the fine quality and historical character of the area.



Bedford Avenue elevation