



**Design and Access Report for the upgrading of Miranda House  
58 Grafton Way, London W1T 5DL**

September 2012

*prepared by Studio Downie Architects LLP*

# CONTENTS

section	page
1.0 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF PROPOSALS	3
2.0 THE SITE CONTEXT AND BUILDING'S HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE	6
3.0 PREVIOUS WORKS AND INVESTIGATIONS	12
4.0 PROJECT JUSTIFICATION AND MINIMISING IMPACT	20
5.0 DESIGN APPROACH	22

# SECTION 1.0

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF PROPOSALS

- 1.0** Miranda House is one important part of a collection of buildings on Grafton Way which form an existing Venezuelan and Latin American cultural centre. This includes the Bolivar Hall where an interesting and varied programme of events is organised by the cultural section of the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the UK as listed at [www.cultura.embavenez-uk.org](http://www.cultura.embavenez-uk.org).

Within South American history Miranda House holds a particular importance as the original London residence of General Francisco de Miranda (1750-1810), who lived in this house between 1803 and 1810, (born in Caracas, Venezuela). He was the forerunner of the independence of the republics of Latin America and here he met in 1810, the liberator, Simon Bolivar.

For Venezuela and the wider Latin American community it is the birthplace of their democracy and for many years the museum has been an important destination for scholars and visitors. To ensure the long term well being of the facility the client wishes to upgrade the building to meet current and future needs creating a quality of facility to match similar venues in London.

The funds being made available by the client are both to improve and enhance the continued use of an existing cultural destination within Camden and also through careful repairs and maintenance work, provide a valuable opportunity to ensure the protection and conservation of the historic fabric.

- 1.1** Through a detailed Feasibility Study a design team considered several options with the client before agreeing on the preferred brief and approach. The principals of this approach is a lighter touch for the existing building maintaining its historical ambience with a simple and separate small glass enclosure containing a new lift to the rear area concealed behind the house. The principles of the brief for Miranda House are:

- a) To retain the spirit of the heritage and protect the historic fabric while enhancing the setting and ambience.
- b) To create a welcoming fully accessible facility reflecting inclusiveness and raising public awareness within the local and wider community of the facilities and programme of events.
- c) To complement the existing venue of Bolivar Hall as a place to promote Venezuelan culture and hub for all Latin America countries including relocating Miranda's statue from Fitzroy Square to the house's façade
- d) To develop the educational value as a destination for schools, and special interest groups
- e) To continue its remit of offering the use of its facilities to the cultural organisations of the local and wider London community. Currently free use of the Hall is offered to local groups.

- 1.2** The existing use of the building will be maintained as an important visitor destination with upgraded museum, office and meeting facilities. The limited requirements of the facilities are such that the ambience of the rooms will be maintained.
- The proposed spatial arrangement will provide an easily accessible ground floor with new display and interpretation galleries set within the original rooms and the rear extension .
- The Embassy's library will be relocated to the lower ground floor to create an appropriate setting for further reading and research within the historic fabric.

New ancillary areas, such as toilets, cloakrooms, stores will be located in the lower ground floor of the existing two storey rear extension with a new passenger lift adjacent to the rear facade of the house providing valuable and essential additional access throughout.



Grafton Way elevation



View to rear from lower ground courtyard

The first and second floor will accommodate group meeting rooms to host seminars, talks and events which will link to other events organised by the Embassy and linked closely to Venezuelan culture.

The third floor will accommodate staff and staff related areas for preparing events and displays to minimise the need for partial closure of publicly accessed spaces.

- 1.3 The principles of the design approach are a 'light touch' to the existing building to ensure any upgrade to meet the client's need for practical operational requirements and disabled access is sensitively integrated within the existing room layouts allowing the retention of the original ambience and character of Miranda House. The proposals for the interior are to retain, clean up or repair all the existing features in each room e.g. fire places and cornices, doors and mouldings and indeed remove inappropriate items added at various times.

Works to the primary Grafton Way facade of the house, which forms part of a fine terrace within the public domain, will only involve repairs and decoration to the existing fabric and installation of an access platform lift located within the existing front lightwell providing access to the lower ground floor of the house and through to the main lift to the rear. To accommodate this, the existing metal stair will be removed and a new stair will be installed with a revised layout.

To the concealed rear area behind the house the proposed works involve a new separate lightweight glass enclosure for a lift ( providing important access to all floors) which has been carefully positioned within the rear courtyard adjacent to a less sensitive two storey extension which was rebuilt in the 1950's following bomb damage.

This placement allows a separation from the existing facade, maintaining the individuality of the house, avoiding invasive insertions within the limited floor plates and major adjustments of the structure. To retain openness around the lift, a section of the existing courtyard is retained to the east boundary. This sense of space is extended internally with a new two storey glass wall to the extensions new facade allowing views into the courtyard and a light weight bridge linking the lift and the rear ground floor space (G 07, G08) of the museum.

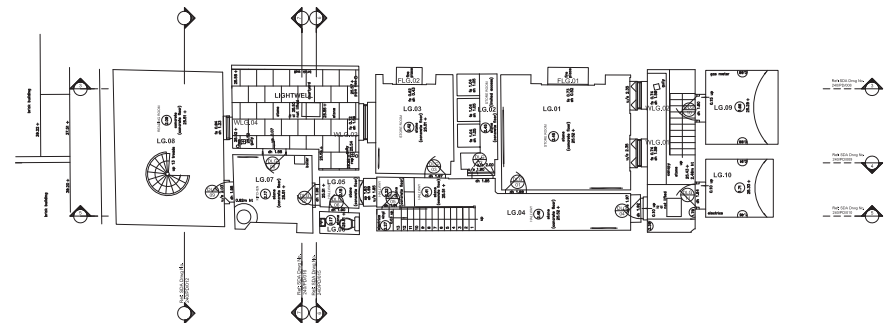
- 1.4 A further purpose of this application is to obtain approval for the essential repairs, maintenance and upgrade that are required for the building. These essential works include:

- Opening up the house by providing suitable and inclusive access for all to all floors of the house including new visitor facilities such as toilets and cloakrooms.
- Strengthening of the existing timber floors to prevent further extensive movement damage
- Repairs to all internal wall and ceiling plaster including cornices
- Re-placing areas of the existing roof slates, investigating the roof timbers and upgrading the insulation
- Decorations and repairs to the front and rear facades
- Replacement of all existing services
- Establishing a long term maintenance and repair programme.

Following completion of the Feasibility Study design development proceeded (Stage C/D) including sub-



Existing: Section 3-3



Existing: Lower Ground Floor plan

mission of a pre-planning application (ref. CA\2011\ENQ\06644) followed by several meetings on site with the Planning/ Conservation Officer Tina Garratt (and more recently Victoria Pound) and Richard Parish and Alessandra Perrone from English Heritage. The development of the design directly evolved through working closely with the Planning Officer and English Heritage, responding to the pre-application response and discussions on site. As part of these discussions a Schedule of Enabling Works was agreed with the Planning Authority and English Heritage to allow initial investigations of the fabric to inform the design development and planning application. These works were completed at the end of March 2012 and were viewed by Richard Parish and are listed in section 3.5 of this report.

Following submission of Full Planning and Listed Building Consent applications, further meetings and discussions were held with newly allocated officers Richard Black (Planning Officer), Hanna Walker (Conservation Officer), Richard Parish and later with Bethany Arbery (Area Manager) during which concerns were raised and a decision was taken to withdraw the applications. The concerns were reviewed and responded to resulting in these new proposals. The main changes were:

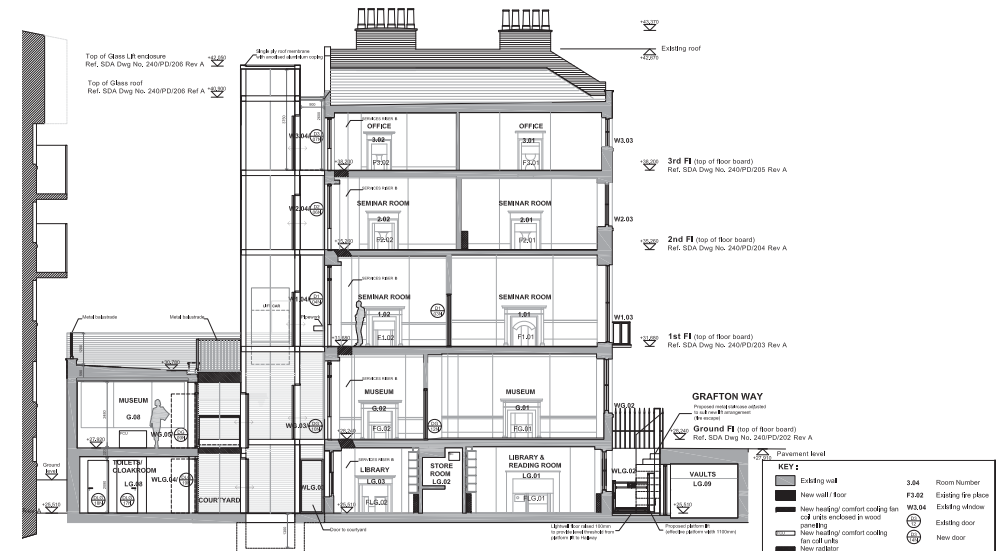
- Placing the new lift closer to the existing house
- Repositioning the service riser
- Considerably reducing the bulk of the new lift enclosure
- Removing the proposed roof terrace with very limited access for maintenance only.
- Proposing a visually lightweight glass enclosure for the lift
- Changing the front step lift for a light well lift. Add into D+ A report
- We have incorporated the changes requested by Richard Parish e-mail of 2.10.12. including to the rear rooms retaining the sense of a 6 over 6 sash in the upper section of the window openings with panels below.

The drawings for the project ( plans, elevations, sections ) included with this application consist of:

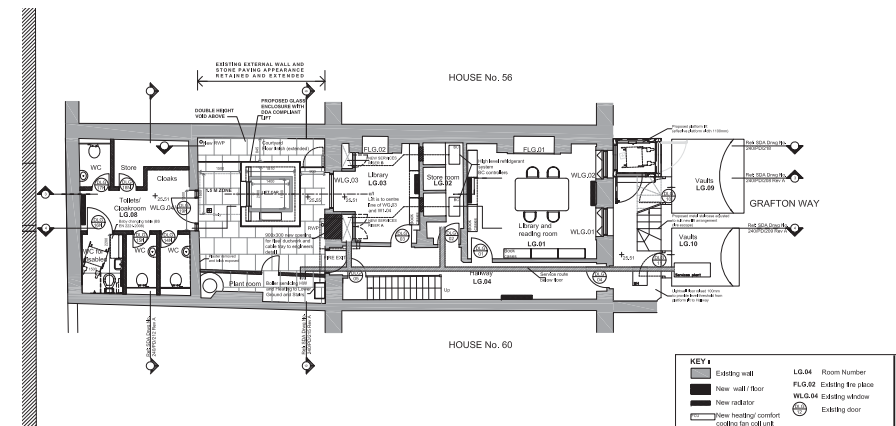
- The existing measured survey of the building
- The proposed alterations/demolitions listed as a schedule of works
- The proposed scheme.

Reports included with this application (the scope of which were agreed with the Planning Officer) and to be read with the drawings consist of:

- The Architect's/SDA Design and Access Statement and covering letter 08.10.12
- The Structural Engineer/Conisbee Structural Investigations and Proposals Report reviewing the condition of the existing building and the proposed works
- The Services Engineer's/PDA Energy and Sustainability Report for the proposed services strategy
- Emtec Noise Level and Control Report for the proposed roof plant
- The GVA Daylight and Sunlight Report with addendum letter as agreed
- The ACD Access & Inclusivity Statement.



Proposed: Section 3-3



Proposed: Lower Ground Floor plan



## SECTION 2.0

### THE SITE CONTEXT AND BUILDING'S HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

**2.0 The building's significance and context, a Heritage Statement setting out architectural and historical interest, fabric and structural character and records of previous works.**

**2.1** No.58 Grafton Way is more commonly referred to as Miranda House. It was built c.1792 and forms part of a fine terrace of houses.

No.58, and the attached railings, are listed Grade II\* (see the listing citation included). The adjacent buildings Nos. 52-56(also owned by the applicant) and 60-62 and the attached railings are listed Grade II.

The building is a fine example of Georgian architecture, but it is the historical associations with General Francisco de Miranda which mark this building as being of international significance, specifically to Latin American countries. For these cultures it is the birthplace of their democracy and important destination for scholars and visitors.

No.58 is located on the north side of Grafton Way, to the west of Tottenham Court Road and is located within the Fitzroy Square Conservation Area.

The building consists of 4 storeys (ground and 1st/2nd/3rd floors) plus a lower ground floor. There is a lightwell to the front and vaults under the pavement with external access from Grafton Way down to the basement. To the rear of the house the ground floor and lower ground floor include an extension set around an external courtyard, the roof of which is visible from the 1st floor.

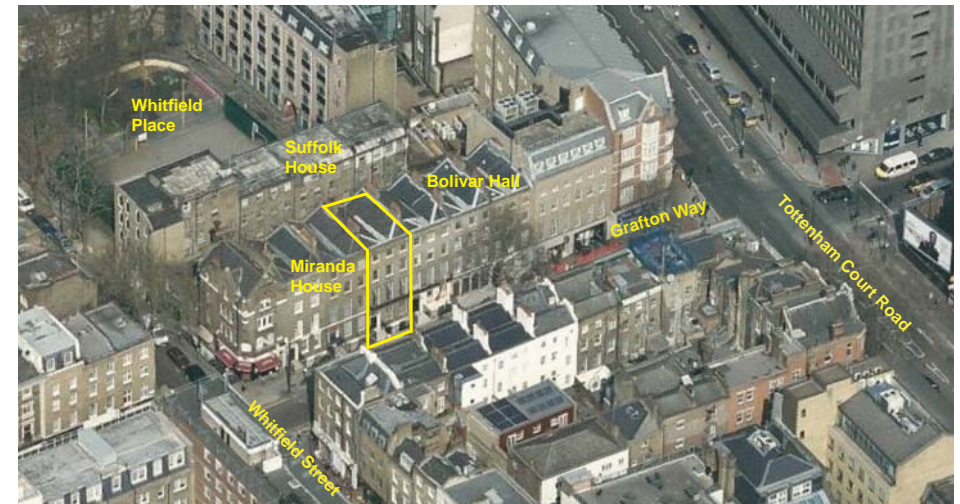
The adjacent buildings to the East, Nos. 56, 54, 52 ,are owned and operated by the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the UK. At the rear of Nos. 52-56 there is a two storey extension completed in mid 1980's which accommodates the Bolivar Hall with large external plant mounted on the roof serving the auditorium which is entered from No.54. To the rear of the site is Suffolk House which overlooks Whitfield Place to the north and which has consent for conversion to residences. The house to the West at no 60 is owned by the housing association Circle 33.

Externally, the elegantly proportioned Georgian elevation to Grafton Way consists of yellow stock brick, coloured with the patina of age and pollution with a series of finely scaled windows. At the first floor level there is an intricate metal railing to a balcony and below a fine entrance door with decorative fanlight set within columns and entablature above. A similar attractive metal railing is also present on the balcony to number 56. The roof of the main house is valley construction behind a parapet. All chimney pots appear to be in place. The roof of the extension is a simple flat roof. The primary construction is solid brick walls and timber joists and floor boards with interior finishes of plaster finish to the walls and ceilings, wood panelled doors and wood shuttered windows. Wood panelling to the walls only remains in the entrance hallway.

Internally, the original stair appears largely intact with the panelling to the entrance hallway. The ground floor and upper floors are arranged with mainly one fine room (on the ground and first floor with their taller ceilings) to the front and a smaller room to the back of lesser presence. The fine rooms have a pleasing simplicity and elegance of scale with the suitably proportioned windows allowing good levels of daylight. Other features complement the setting are the fire places and stone hearths and a variety of attractive cornices .



Location map

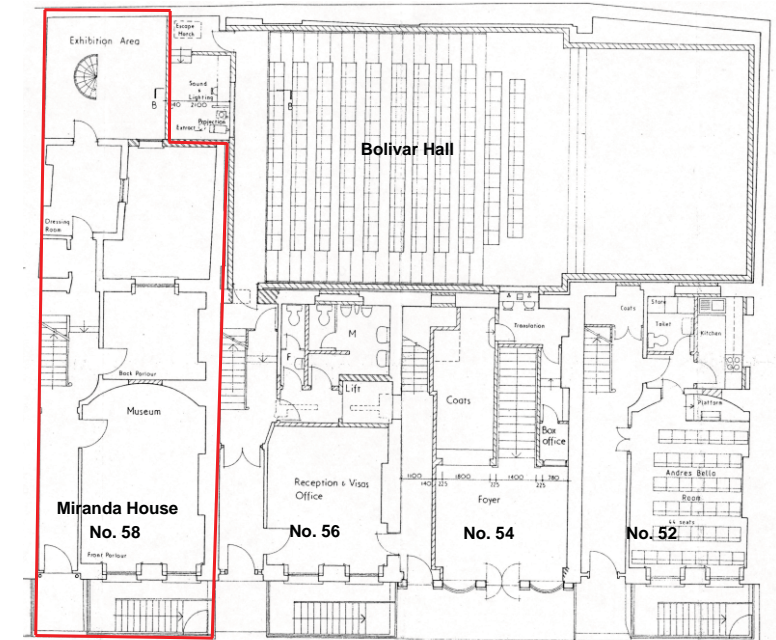


Overhead view of existing context (centred on Grafton Way - facing the north east)

The upper floor rooms have timber floorboards with a stone floor to the basement where two stoves are located, one in the rear extension and one as part of the hearth in the front room. The house has only one small toilet located in the basement where there is also a small central wine cellar and two arched vaults under the road where incoming services are located. Metal stairs from Grafton Way provide access down to this area and into the basement. The house contains an existing air handling system which provides tempered air via small diameter ducts in the chimney flues. The fans and equipment for this system are located in a third floor plant room in No.56 where the duct work passes through the wall into No.58. Otherwise all existing electrical data and phone systems require complete replacement.

After being largely unoccupied after World War 2, No.58 was purchased in 1978 by the Embassy of Venezuela and in mid 1980's. Nos. 52-58 were subject to extensive extension, refurbishment and remodeling including forming the Bolivar Hall. These works included internal refurbishment (some extensive) and upgrading and repair of the façade to Miranda House of which only site photographs of the works exist and are enclosed.

Following this refurbishment, Miranda House was used as a museum for scholars and visitors with associated offices and meeting spaces. For about 10-years until the present time its use as a museum has continued but restricted by the limited facilities, worsening conditions including severe structural movement and the office staff gradually moved out. The Library of the Embassy of Venezuela is located in book stacks on the ground and lower ground floors of the rear extension and empty bookshelves have also been retained on the third floor, which is understood to be the historical location for Miranda's private library.



Grafton Way  
Ground Floor

to Tottenham Court Road

## Listed building details

**Location:** (North side) No.58 and attached railings  
**Street:** Grafton Way  
**Grade:** II\*  
**Reference No:** 798-1-62093  
**Date of listing:** Nov 19 1970 12:00AM



[View a full sized photograph](#)

### Description:

Terraced house. c1792. Built by C Mead. For W and J Adam. Yellow stock brick. 4 storeys and basement. 3 windows. Round-arched doorway with Roman Doric columns carrying enriched entablature-head, patterned radial fanlight and panelled door. Continuous cast-iron balcony at 1st floor level. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sashes. Parapet. INTERIOR: retains original stair with panelled hall and some panelled rooms. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with urn finials to area. HISTORICAL NOTE: this was the home of Francisco de Miranda. A stone plaque between the ground floor windows reads "Francisco de Miranda\1750-1816\lived in this house\between 1803 & 1810\Born in Caracas, Venezuela. He was\the forerunner of the independence\of the republics of Latin America.\ Here he met in 1810 the Liberator\Simon Bolivar."

Listed Building Citation



View towards Tottenham Court road



View towards Fitzroy Square



## Photographs of the existing house

The following pages show views of the existing interior spaces and general external views



Grafton Way elevation



View of rear elevation



Repair required to existing roof including creating access hatch through existing rooflight



View of rear elevation



View to rear looking east to roof of Bolivar hall



Two storey extension constructed following Second World War bomb damage

**Front**

**Rear**

**Roof**





The rear courtyard



Room LG.01



Room LG.04  
View through to existing extension



The rear courtyard



Room LG.07



Room LG.08

## Lower Ground Floor



Room G.07



Room G.03



Room G.01



Room G.08



Room 2.03



Room G.02

## Ground Floor





Room 1.01



Room 2.01



Room 3.01



Room 1.02



Room 2.02



Room 3.02

## First Floor

## Second Floor

## Third Floor



## SECTION 3.0

### PREVIOUS WORKS AND INVESTIGATIONS

**3.0** It is important to be aware of the variety and scope of works that have been carried out on the house and through which the extent of original and new features, materials and layouts have been established.

#### **3.1** The rear two storey extension

Our client informed us that this section of the house is not original having been rebuilt following bomb damage during the second world war. Discussions with the Planning Authority and English Heritage clarified there was less concern for proposals to this part of the house.

#### **3.2** The mid 1980's works

Nos. 52-58 Grafton Way were subject to extensive refurbishment and remodelling including a new two storey extension along the rear of nos 52-56 to form the Bolivar Hall which is entered from the foyer at no. 54. These works included re-building of sections of the rear wall, internal refurbishment, some extensive, to Miranda House of which site photographs of the works and architect's general layout plans exist but no specifications or construction drawings. It appears that a large areas of the original wall internal plaster were replaced.



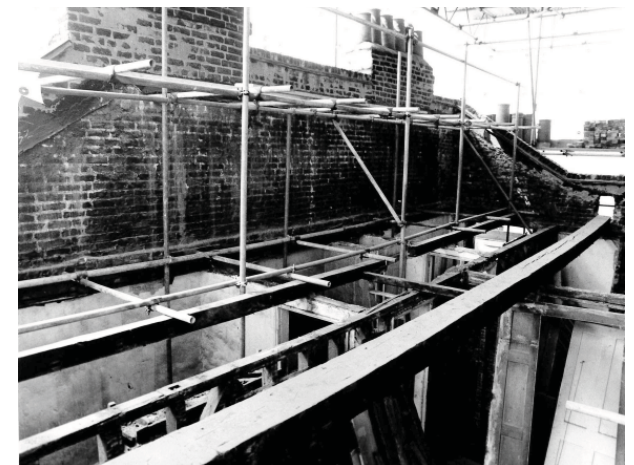
Two storey extension constructed following Second World War bomb damage



Grafton Way elevation



View to rear



Main roof works

## The mid 1980's works - exterior





## Mid 1980's works - interiors

### 3.3 The 2005 structural survey

This was carried out by the structural engineers Conisbee who have been retained by the client for this project and with their developed knowledge of the building are preparing the method statements, logistics and detailing for the structural works. The findings from this and later Enabling Works form the basis for their proposals set out in the Structural Report.

### 3.4 The 2010 Feasibility Study

The aim of the Feasibility Study was to establish a preliminary brief and masterplan – a 'good fit' for the aspirations of an operationally practical and sensitive brief within the existing heritage building based on:

- a) Conservation, repair and maintenance
- b) Upgrade and refurbishment
- c) Improvements and new elements and facilities

The study involved various surveys; measured survey, structural condition investigation and survey of existing mechanical and electrical installations, desktop utility search, asbestos survey and a condition survey with a schedule of repair which is summarised below:

- a) Lath & Plaster is in poor condition in areas including distortion by settlement
- b) Floorboards require overhaul, including being stripped and re-sealed, any gaps filled and secured
- c) The balcony to Grafton Way is in need of refurbishment. It does not comply with current heights and discussion will need to review conservation and potential adaptation if used
- d) The rear wall possible strengthening
- e) New slate is required to the roof. There is an opportunity to install insulation to improve thermal performance and minimise energy use. The existing parapets and copings need fixing back and the lead work needs repair
- f) The fireplaces need repair
- g) The windows generally require to be overhauled. There are some missing elements, holes and mechanisms which require replacement and making good
- h) The doors and windows require a general overhaul. This will need review with the requirement for fire door protection with smoke seals and door closers
- j) Generally, the brickwork elevations are vertical, no damp or rot has been identified.



### 3.5 The 2012 Enabling Works

Prior to this submission of this application, after discussions with the Planning Authority and English Heritage a Schedule of Enabling Works was agreed to allow initial works and further investigations of the fabric. Importantly prior to the main works commencing this included :

- a) To avoid further damage/settlement the stabilisation of the existing plaster ceilings and cornices prior to any works being carried out to the floor boards above for both repairs and the installation of services
- b) The protection of items such as the fireplaces and the main stair balustrade to avoid damage during the main works.
- c) Additional opening up of the internal structure and some trial pits for proposed foundations within the rear courtyard.

### 3.6 Schedule of Work and pictures

Item

**Miranda House, 28 Grafton Way, London W1T 5DL**

**Proposed Enabling soft strip scope of works V2**

Updated 19.01.12

#### **SCHEDULE OF WORKS**

Includes cross references to Method Statements

The main contractor/consultants method statements provided for each item of work before they commence that specific item - indicated as **MS** below  
Location of any openings to be formed for investigation to be recorded with photographs both before work commences and when complete.

*Items omitted indicated in italics*

**All details of general repairs including repointing and cleaning of brickwork to be included to ensure a conservation based approach is adopted.  
All repairs to follow the guidance set out in the relevant BSI Standard: BS 7913:1998 'Guide to the principles of the conservation of historic buildings'**

#### **SCAFFOLDING**

A *omitted*

B *omitted*

add Erect hoarding to front elevation **MS**

#### **ARCHITECTURAL WORKS -**

##### **1.0 Demolition and Alterations**

A Remove existing spiral staircase and dispose off site; temporary covering placed over remaining opening. **MS**

B Strip out existing sanitary ware and dispose off site

D Carefully remove all internal doors including ironmongery (bagged and attached to door) and store for possible reuse. **All doors to be photographed, labeled and cross referenced with floor plans prior to removal and storage. MS**  
coffin type boxes to store

F *general repairs to roof finishes - omitted*

H *front facade general repairs - omitted*

J Overhaul existing front facade windows including replacing sash cords and stripping down- **MS**

K Allowance for overhauling and repairing stair core windows- **MS**

L	Overhaul existing window shutters including stripping down and replacing ironmongery as required (front façade only) <b>MS</b>
M	Strip out all paint from existing timber elements and prepare for redecoration - <b>MS</b>
P	Make good existing balcony structure to front façade, general repairs to structure, strip and make good railings- <b>MS</b>
Q	<p><b><i>All floorboards to be photographed, labeled and cross referenced with floor plans prior to removal and storage to ensure they can be re-laid in the same locations as they were removed from.- omitted</i></b></p> <p><i>Take up and store for re-use existing floor boards to floors as directed by the structural engineer, provide temporary flooring -see Structural Engineers MS 20.01.12 P1 issued 6.01.12 with drawings S102-P1 and S103- P1 and C+D MS 06.01.12 issued 19.01.12.- omitted</i></p> <p>coffin type boxes to store</p>
R	Strip wall paper to 2nd floor front room . <b>MS</b>
add	Carefully remove light fitting to ground level arrival hall and store for future use
S	<b>Allowance for investigation and determination of necessary remedial works required to remedy damp to corner of rear rooms to floors where required: remedial works will be agreed prior to the works being undertaken .    MS</b>
T	Protection to full height timber panelling of Entrance Hall walls, stair steps and handrail, glass window over front door.
U	Protection to Fireplaces (11nr)
	<b>STRUCTURAL WORKS</b>
1.1	Trial Pits
A	Excavate 3Nr trial pits as directed by the Engineer in Yard (rear extension) to check foundation details including backfilling and making good - see Structural Engineers MS 20.01.12 P1 issued 6.01.12 with drawings S102-P1 and S103- P1
1.2	Opening up to Floors
A	Take up existing floor boards at floor levels in locations as directed by the Structural Engineer -see item 1Q above
1.3	Opening Up Ceilings
A	Open up ceiling at third floor in 4Nr locations as directed by the Structural Engineer to inspect roof structure (including build up) including making good -see Structural Engineers MS 20.01.12 P1 issued 6.01.12 1.3 <b>Details of the location and size of the openings to be provided. MS</b>
B	<i>Open up ground floor ceiling in 6Nr locations as directed by the Structural Engineer - omitted</i>
add	Brick work to rear façade
	English Heritage requirement. to expose internal face of masonry at level 1 to check if full depth of wall was previously re-constructed see Structural Engineers MS 20.01.12 P1 issued 6.01.12 with drawings S102-P1 and S103- P1
	<b>M&amp;E WORKS</b>
	Services to be removed
	The following services are to be removed throughout the contract which includes the following services:-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electrical services including power and lighting (except principal 100A sub main)</li> <li>• Gas mains</li> <li>• Water mains</li> <li>• Telecommunication services</li> <li>• HWS &amp; CWS distribution</li> <li>• LPHW heating</li> <li>• Electric heating system</li> <li>• Above ground soil and waste drainage</li> </ul>
	Ventilation
	The existing ventilation serving the upper level rooms in No 58 are fed from an old AHU located in the roof top boiler room of No 56. It is believed that ducts run through chimney's and via a false chimney breast. The following investigation works are to
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carefully expose the routes of the ductwork in agreed location to enable a detailed inspection by the Engineer.</li> </ul>

- 3.8 Consideration was given to the Archaeological priority of the site and During the enabling works the findings in one of the trial pits lead to notification being given to the Planning Authority and English Heritage which were reviewed, found not to be of any significance and confirmation that a watching brief would not be required during the main works.

Sent: 31 January 2012 15:52

*Further to my site visit today with your colleague, Chris, I said I would check to see if the property is in an archaeological priority area. I can confirm that the property is not in an archaeological priority area therefore a watching brief will not be necessary for the bore holes.*

*I look forward to receiving further information regarding the soft stripping as discussed today.*

*Best wishes*

*Tina Garratt Msc, BSc (Hons), IHBC  
Conservation and Urban Design Officer  
Planning and Public Protection  
Culture and Environment  
London Borough of Camden*

Archaeological letter

**From:** STABLER, Kim [Kim.Stabler@english-heritage.org.uk]  
**Sent:** 21 March 2012 14:40  
**To:** Garratt, Tina  
**Cc:** Craig Downie; PARISH, Richard  
**Subject:** 58 Grafton Way - internal trial pits  
**Attachments:** miranda house 059.JPG; miranda house 060.JPG; miranda house 058.JPG; S102\_P1 - (646323).pdf

Dear Tina

I had a long chat with Craig Downie yesterday about the recent test pits they've excavated at 58 Grafton Way, and have also had the chance to look at some mapping, etc.

I think that that the circular brick feature they've uncovered in test pit 2 likely relates to the earlier phases of the house, and although the diameter is on the large side, it may represent a well or soak away or some similar construction. Rear extensions on the eastern side of the property were built sometime between 1820 - 1880 according to the maps I have to hand. The stoneware bottle removed from the fill dates to around 1880, and would mark whenever the pit went out of use and was backfilled.

I understand that there are no further ground works necessary in this area, and that the works in the courtyard are limited, and are essentially in areas where the ground has been previously disturbed.

I don't think, therefore, that there needs to be any archaeological response connected to a planning consent for the site, but am happy to look at the plans and repond formally as and when.

Best wishes

Kim

Kim Stabler | Archaeology Advisor  
Direct line: 020 7973 3215

English Heritage | 1 Waterhouse Square  
138-142 Holborn | London EC1N 2ST







Room G.03  
Protection of stair, wall panelling and front door



Room LG.01



Room 2.02  
Protection of fireplace



Room 1.01  
Supporting cracked ceiling and cornices



Room 2.01B  
1980's windows being overhauled



Room 3.02  
Showing 1980's plaster ceiling

## Enabling works

### 3.7 Miranda House today

The information collected from the above works and investigations has allowed the review and clarification of many aspects of the buildings construction including the extent of original features and has informed the proposals. The key points that have been identified are:

- a) All the timber windows were previously replaced (1985) with a fair percentage of the original glass retained. These windows however retain thin and refined glazing bars associated with the period of the house.
- b) A new stone floor was installed to the basement which will be retained.
- c) A large section of the rear façade was rebuilt.
- d) A new ceiling was installed to the third floor and other localised areas throughout the house contain new plaster.
- e) Large areas of existing wall plaster were replaced.

The proposed Schedule of Works for the house is listed on the demolition drawings included with the application.

#### 4.0 Proposed Works

Key requirements of our client's brief for the long term well being of Miranda House are to improve the value and viability of the house, improving access and integrating new services within the historic fabric. The proposed new lift will allow the important access for all throughout all areas of the building providing a quality of experience that is expected and is available in similar destinations in both Camden and throughout London.

The existing building has significant issues to be addressed which affect not just its current condition but also any possible future use. These include:

a) Structural settlement over time resulting in sloping floors and requirement to increase the current domestic loading capacity of the timber flooring to meet the use of the building.

The Structural Engineer has commented: the cracking and movement to 58 only occurs to the internal timber structure. There is no evidence of a problem with the external walls or foundations. Settlement has occurred in the middle of the house centred on the intersection of the internal walls. However there is no evidence of movement at basement level, only slight movement at ground floor, and increasing amounts of movement above, up to the head of the third floor walls. Above here the roof structure appears to have resisted the down ward movement such that the third floor walls have come apart from the roof structure at ceiling level. There is evidence of a large amount of historic movement – up to 150mm in places, but the cracking indicates there has been a significant amount of movement since the 1980's refurbishment. My initial opinion is the recent movement could be entirely due to shrinkage as the building has dried out since the refurbishment, however I cannot rule out the possibility of there being defects in the timber structure at second and third floors which weren't addressed during the 1980's refurbishment and this needs to be investigated, particularly as the future use of the building will be for public access. We also need to check the general capacity of the floor structure to support exhibition and public access loadings. The proposal is to retain all the existing beams and add new beams to increase stability.

b) Out of date and inadequate building services for heating, ventilation, power and data.

c) Inadequate access for less-able visitors.

d) Poor state of internal decorative repair.

e) External weathering and failing weather protection at the end of their material life.

- 4.1 As part of the local and wider community and a valuable resource together with its huge historic significance the proposals very closely reflect the ambition and guidelines of the National Planning Policy Framework. Our proposals respond to section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework for conserving and enhancing the historic environment as well as our discussions with the Planning Authority conservation and planning officer and English Heritage. They are also guided by the respected reputation we have for our approach and experience with other historic buildings.

The proposals seek to work with the existing building and reflect its historic layout and appearance. Importantly the main alterations to the existing fabric have been limited to the rear 1950's extension.

The primary approach is a 'light touch' to the existing building where any upgrade to meet the client's need for practical operational requirements and disabled access is sensitively integrated within the existing room layouts allowing the retention of the original ambience and character of Miranda House. Consequently new proposals for the room layouts have been limited to the unimposing forming of doorways rather than clear openings between rooms in two locations (to improve disabled access) which will not



compromise their setting and have been discussed with English Heritage. The proposals for the interior are to retain all the existing features in each room e.g. fire places and cornices, doors and mouldings and indeed remove inappropriate items added at various times.

- 4.2** Works to the primary Grafton Way facade of the house, which forms part of a fine terrace within the public domain, will only involve repairs and decoration to the existing fabric and installation of an access platform lift located within the existing front lightwell providing access to the lower ground floor of the house and through to the main lift to the rear. To accommodate this, the existing metal stair will be removed and a new stair will be installed with a revised layout.

A more contemporary approach has been restricted to the concealed rear area behind the house. As is common in these areas this is a mixed bag of elements, some particularly unattractive and the proposals are seen as an opportunity to enhance the setting with a quality appropriate to the historic fabric. The proposed works involve a new separate lightweight glass enclosure for a lift (providing important access to all floors) which has been carefully positioned within the rear courtyard adjacent to a less sensitive two storey extension which was rebuilt in the 1950's following bomb damage. This placement allows a separation from the existing facade, maintaining the individuality of the house, avoiding invasive insertions within the limited floor plates and major adjustments of the structure. This positioning also responds to the neighbours on the north and east boundaries where the enclosure is well set back from the adjacent buildings and boundaries.

The new main lift, concealed to the rear and the platform lift within the front lightwell will provide a huge and much needed improvement to the use of the building both as a museum and as a space that is available to local groups. The catalyst for the upgrade works is to create a higher profiled and operationally successful destination providing an inclusive and welcoming environment of a quality that is expected when visiting a museum of international significance. The proposals for the museum will ensure the long term well being of the building while increasing its value to the local and wider London community and the lifts are a vital part of this allowing the access that is necessary between all of the upgraded spaces. Currently access is badly restricted from the street and to all the internal spaces and importantly these improvements will be achieved while maintaining the setting, ambience and floor plate of the existing rooms and with minimal effect to the rear external setting with its limited visibility. The benefits to the daily use of the museum will be huge allowing full access to all the essentially interrelated spaces; the toilets and cloakroom, administration and meeting, research library, exhibition display and seminar rooms spread over the five floors of the building.

- 4.3** The new services will be concealed within the floors/ceilings and limited to easily integrated small bore pipe work and electrical conduit avoiding large duct work based systems that would impact upon the existing structure. To reach each floor the services will rise between the existing joists within new ducts placed on each side of the existing window to the rear rooms. These will be concealed and integrated by forming a new wall and moving the existing cornice forward. An existing air supply system already integrated within the fabric (chimney and fire places) will be retained and coordinated within the proposed new services systems again to minimise potential impact. A further consideration has been to avoid any roof plant on the new lift enclosure by locating it on the lower roof of the existing Bolivar Hall where the existing plant is located.

If the existing structure was in good condition there may be a position that as a historic structure some relaxation of the Building Regulations was justified, however its poor condition and insufficient capacity suggest it should be upgraded to a condition closer to current standards, particularly for floor loadings. To upgrade the internal structure for both the long term protection of the building and the current proposals will generally require strengthening work to the many of the floors and internal load bearing structure and as this completed work will be concealed the finished appearance of the interiors will be maintained.

**4.4** In summary the proposals are in accordance section12/part 134 and will lead to less than substantial harm to the heritage asset bringing public benefits through a sensitive, viable and sustainable use of the building, preserving and enhancing the heritage and its setting, bringing it back to life as a positive contributor and revealing its assets to the community.

In line with the Local Plan and neighbourhood requirements the proposal will conserve a heritage asset in a manner appropriate to its significance and for its long term well being.

The proposals do not involve a change of use of the building but continue at an enhanced level the museum facilities that have existed in the community for many years as part of the areas local vitality and variety. This will maintain an appropriate and sensitive use of Miranda House and the wider social and cultural benefits this brings as a sustainable proposal within a healthy and thriving neighbourhood. Accordingly it will continue to be served by the extensive local public transport infrastructure.

The proposals will through the local plans meet the strategic priorities and aspirations of providing cultural facilities through positive conservation and recognise that small scale projects can provide a valuable contribution to reducing green gas emissions. The servicing strategy reflects this and is set out in the accompanying Energy and Sustainability Report

## SECTION 5.0 DESIGN APPROACH

### 5.0 Space planning & Design Brief:

The principals of our approach is a lighter touch for the existing building maintaining its historical ambience with a separate lightweight glass lift enclosure to the rear.

From various options a preferred approach was identified where the proposed spatial planning will breathe life into fine original rooms of Miranda House.

- a) to open up the house and create a welcoming and inclusive public facility.
- b) to enhance and celebrate the historic fabric with the careful use of space and integration of contemporary elements such as lighting and furniture.

The existing use of the building will be maintained as an important visitor destination with upgraded museum, office and meeting facilities. The limited requirements of the facilities are such that the ambience of the rooms will be maintained.

The proposed spatial arrangement will provide an easily accessible ground floor with new display and interpretation galleries set within the original rooms and the rear extension with a small area of items celebrating Venezuelan culture. New installations for lighting, display and furnishings will be sensitive to the original rooms.

The Embassy's library will be relocated to the lower ground floor to create an appropriate setting for further reading and research within the historic fabric.

New ancillary areas, such as toilets, cloakrooms, stores will be located in the lower ground floor of the existing rear extension with a new passenger lift providing valuable and essential additional access to the entire house.

The first and second floor will accommodate group meeting rooms to host seminars, talks and events which will link to other events organised by the Embassy and linked closely to Venezuelan culture.

The third floor will accommodate staff and staff related areas for preparing events and displays to minimise the need for partial closure of publicly accessed spaces.

The proportions, settings and wall layouts of all rooms will be maintained with works limited to the forming of two doorways at the ground and first floor to link the front and rear rooms in accordance with general and disabled access where new doors, rather than an open passage will be formed to maintain the setting of the rooms

### 5.1 The Grafton Way facade

As the primary facade proposals will be restricted to maintain the existing setting and limited to:

- installing an access platform lift located within the existing front lightwell concealed behind the existing railings providing access to the lower ground floor of the house and through to the main lift to the rear. To accomodate this, the existing metal stair will be removed and a new stair will be installed with a revised layout.

Otherwise the facade will be retained as existing with the repair and decoration of items such as the railings, windows and doors.



Proposed: South East Elevation to Grafton Way



## 5.2 The rear facade of the building

The space to the rear running along the length of the terrace of houses is currently of limited merit with many unattractive elements. The new enclosure is being approached as an opportunity to both reflect the quality of the existing heritage of Miranda House and enhance the existing setting. This will be complemented by the proposed works to upgrade Suffolk House.

The new glass lift enclosure will provide an elegant, lightweight and unimposing presence adjacent to the existing heritage. Detailing will be simple and minimal with glass panels proportioned to reflect the scale of the existing floors and windows. Preferred images of materials to illustrate this are shown and we would wish to complete the final detailing with a sample details.

To retain an openness around the lift a section of the existing courtyard is retained to the east boundary. This sense of space is extended with a new two storey glass elevation and lightweight bridges between the lift and existing extension.

At the first floor access from the lift enclosure will be provided to the existing roof for maintenance with a metal balustrade to the existing parapet for Health and Safety.



View to rear looking east showing minimal glass cladding system wrapped around the internal steel support for the lift. See page 26 for images of installations showing the intended quality of detailing and appearance.

### 5.3 Interiors

The project provides an opportunity to enhance the interiors.

All the original interior features are being retained e.g. the main stair, wall panels, doors, fire places, the floorboards, existing plaster and cornices and sensitively repaired as necessary. Previously added elements such as bulkheads located to the sides of the chimney breasts on the second floor will also be removed to bring the house back to its original setting.

Discussions with English Heritage have agreed to researching the interior colours and fittings for a house of this period including choosing a suitable ironmongery. The interior design approach will consider:

- a) Removing the brass ironmongery for the more appropriate cast iron painted black
- b) Painted doors with the mouldings matching. This will also apply to the windows
- c) Paint shades which tended to be darker colours such as greens and browns. Wall paper was also popular.
- d) The wide floorboards will be repaired and retained and on the upper floors carpeted to complement their use as meeting and office spaces and improve impact noise and acoustics generally.
- e) For new lighting avoiding the overly bright washed out ambience that creates characterless interiors but retaining the inherent mood of a house of this period. Lighting will be wall lights or hung chandelier types.
- f) New fan coil units to each room will be encased in wood panelling to reflect the proportions of the existing wall mouldings. These have been positioned on the least prominent walls allowing views, as you enter, to the principal walls with the fire places to remain as existing and avoiding any units below the windows, particularly important in the fine front rooms to the ground and first floor.

### 5.4 Access Review

The initial study of circulation, journeys through the building and user's accessibility have identified a number of measures that need to be undertaken to provide a modern, fully accessible facility. Within the restrictions of an existing and listed building a balanced approach is being taken to satisfy both conservation and preservation with full access. A report has been prepared by the Access Consultant with wide experience working on listed buildings in the borough and with local accessibility forums and the local authority access officer.

### 5.5 Consultation

Meetings have been held on site with the adjoining owners of no. 60 Grafton Way to the west (Circle 33 Housing Association) and Suffolk House to the north (Derwent London) to discuss the proposals with no objections to the proposals raised at this initial introduction. Information was also issued to the Charlotte Street Association and the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association and initial telephone discussions held with both explaining the principles of the proposals and the parameters agreed after consultation with both the Planning Officer and English Heritage and their support for the proposals. The project was to be reviewed 25.05.12 by the committee of the Charlotte Street Association but did not make the agenda and we will hold further discussions to obtain feedback. Discussions have also been held with the Bloomsbury CAAC.



View to rear looking west from the roof of the Bolivar Hall

## 5.6 Building Control

Initial discussions have been held with the inspector responsible for this area, Peter Connell, regarding items that may have an impact upon the listed building, in particular means of escape/stairs and fire separation standards that will be required. Mr Connell confirmed that in view of the building's listing and with good client management a flexible and sensible approach would be taken with clarification that the existing escape routes/stair and door provision and a half hour fire rating would meet the requirements of the proposed scheme with reference to the sensitive upgrade of existing doors retained with the addition of intumescent edge strips. Further discussions will be required regarding the front lightwell stair.

## 5.7 Audience Profile

The upgraded Miranda House will continue to complement the remit of the Bolivar Hall as a place to promote Venezuelan and related Latin American culture including offering the free use of the Hall to local community groups. It will welcome school children, writers, poets, scholars and other interest groups such as military historians and will promote small historical and art exhibitions. Visitors to the museum over the past few years have been limited partly due to the buildings condition and its lack of facilities. Discussions with the client who will continue to manage the upgraded facility have predicted this could increase to approximately 10-15 visitors a day with a good percentage of these by appointment including the use of the reading room. With these numbers the client will have one staff member who will manage the general public visitors between the hours of 12.30 to 6pm.

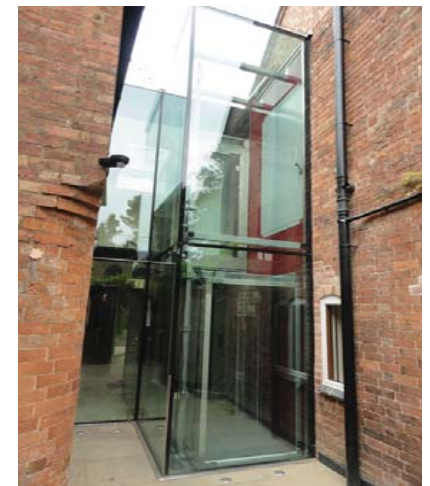
## 5.8 In conclusion the enhanced Miranda House will provide

The project proposals respond to the requirements of the local development framework to create a sustainable facility that will benefit future generations while maintaining the historic setting and creating a vitality to thrive within the local community – bringing the building back to life.

Minimal alterations are proposed to the historic fabric of the house and its primary façade on Grafton Way while the rear façade continues to be read as a separate element. All historical details will be preserved with alterations primarily within the 1950 concealed rear extension where a new high quality enclosure will provide enhancement to the setting :

A spiritual home for the Latin American residents and visitors to London and will develop its international profile as the birthplace of democracy for South America.

A valuable asset to the rich cultural mix of Fitzrovia and will provide an important cultural focus amongst the many and varied local cafes and specialist shops.



Images of lifts illustrating the minimal glass detailing proposed with the supporting steel structure located behind the glass cladding.