

Heritage Statement

2 NEW SQUARE, LINCOLN'S INN, LONDON WC2A 3RS

The information in this heritage statement comes from the historic records of the Inn and from the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy.

The design for the refurbishment of 2 New Square has evolved in consultation from the outset with Camden Conservation Officers and English Heritage. Their inputs into the design process have been much appreciated and have assisted in evaluating options and in 'front-loading' the final scheme that is now submitted for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent. The application submitted is based on minimum interventions or changes to the existing historic fabric. Those that are proposed are all included for good reasons and after careful consideration and consultation with the Council, with English Heritage and with prospective barrister occupiers.

It is necessary to refurbish elements of the existing structure to ensure the integrity of the building for the future whilst renewing facilities and providing improved accessibility in order to:

- i) meet appropriate current standards;
- ii) make the building sustainable for the future; and
- iii) make the building attractive and suitable for barrister occupation.

It has been possible to meet these requirements without making any material intervention or change to the historic features that would compromise the character or special historic interest of the building.

Brief History of the building

2 New Square was constructed in 1693 along with the other development built around three sides of the Square between 1693 and 1697 (also then known as Serle's Court). It was initially built as a double fronted building with basement, ground, first and second floors. During the 18th century individual buildings around the square were extended upwards and new roofs were constructed on a piecemeal basis. No. 2 was not so extended.

In 1849 2 New Square was substantially destroyed by fire leaving very little of the original late 17th and 18th Century fabric. The building was rebuilt to a similar layout on basement and ground to second floors but with the addition of a third floor to tie in with the adjoining buildings. The new building has a central brick spine wall running parallel to the front and rear elevations.

As part of the mid 19th Century re-build, cast-iron beams were introduced to support the floors and spanning between the elevations and the central spine wall. This differs from the other buildings in the Square where floors were supported on timber bresssummers, many of which have since required works to strengthen them or to provide additional support.

The cast-iron beams in No 2 support primary timber joists that span between the beams with secondary joists notched into the primary timber and floorboards laid on the secondary joists. There is a layer of infill material known as pugging (for sound insulation) laid under the floorboards, between the secondary joists. This is a mix of brittle fill materials which is not considered to be of any historical significance but which adds dead load to the structure.

Prior to the 1849 fire the building from ground floor upwards had a timber staircase. This was replaced with a stone staircase in the re-built structure. The basement was separately accessed and there was no staircase between basement and ground floors in either the original or in the re-built building. In the 1950s a single-storey block of lavatories was built in the rear yard accessed from the basement. A new concrete staircase was also built at this time linking the ground floor common parts with the basement and thereby giving access for the whole building to internal lavatories.

Historic significance of 2 New Square

As part of the terraces of Nos. 1-11 New Square that enclose three sides of New Square, the building and attached railings were listed Grade II* on 24 October 1951. The listing particulars describe:

The Square as a whole:

"...Brown brick with red dressings, basements now stuccoed. Slated roofs behind parapets. Exterior: 4 storeys and basements, the top storey being added in C18. Stone, architraved doorcases with pulvinated frieze, console-bracketed cornice and curved, broken pediment with ball in centre, with the exception of No.10 with a triangular pediment and No.11 without a ball."

"Subsidiary features: attached cast-iron railings to areas with urn finials."

"Historical Note: New Square is important as a very well preserved and early example of a set of early legal chambers, remarkably spacious and with good panelled interiors not seen. It is also one of the most complete surviving C17 set pieces in London."

No. 2 New Square (text extracted):

“No.2: red brick band at 2nd floor level. 9 windows. Gauged red brick segmental arches to slightly recessed sash windows. Ground floor and 5 windows of 1st floor with shutters. Interior: with some panelling. Round iron balusters to stone stairs. RCHM (West London) suggests that No.2 was rebuilt during the C18 and C19.”

As a group, the buildings in New Square mainly date from the late 17th Century and are important to the overall setting of Lincoln's Inn. Although refurbished at different times, many retain some original internal features from that period.

However, 2 New Square is a Victorian re-build. The façade and interior was re-built from the ground floor up. A contemporary engraving from the Illustrated London News of January 1850 depicts the building in flames and shows the extent of the damage and confirms that the previous building was one storey lower than the neighbouring No.3. Whilst the re-built interior is of interest, it does not contain any 17th or 18th Century fabric. The re-built façade echoes the townscape of the adjoining original facades within the predominantly 17th Century Square.

The Conservation Area document states, in respect of Lincoln's Inn, that:

“The high quality of public realm is reinforced by numerous elements of historic interest including York stone paving, decorative railings and gates, 19th century lamp-posts and other items of street furniture”.

Thus the original exterior elevations are highly significant for their townscape value and the reconstructed façade of No.2 contributes to that townscape value. There are no proposals to alter or affect that façade or its contribution to the townscape value.

The listing particulars do not refer to the eastern elevation; to the roof or to the basement front access passage way. This is unsurprising.

The eastern (rear) elevation reflects the front elevation but without the front door and without the colour or any contribution to the townscape value of New Square. There are 1950s additions at basement level which have no historical interest or contribution to setting. The only works proposed are at basement level and will not introduce any adverse impact to the building or its setting.

The roof is made up of two slated pitched roofs running north south with valley and parapet gutters. The gutters drain through external rainwater pipes with hopper heads. The roof is enclosed within parapet walls with tall chimney stacks on the north and south sides. The north-east part of the roof has been re-built during the 19th Century as a flat roof, behind parapet walls and has been renovated more recently with the provision of new rooflights. The proposed air conditioning plant is to be located upon this area of flat roof which has no historical significance and where it would have no effect on the setting of the building or upon the townscape of New Square.

Context

In order to establish the historical context of the interior of the building within New Square it is relevant to compare No.2 with the other buildings. As a result of the fire, the value of the interior of No.2 is as 19th Century and not as 17th or 18th Century barristers chambers. There is no original 17th or 18th Century fabric. It all dates from the 19th Century. Furthermore, within the building and even across the floors, the detailing is not uniform. This suggests that there have been a number of changes to the interior content since the rebuild in c.1850. The detailing is fairly simple Victorian or relatively modern.

That is not to belittle the significance of the historical importance of such later work, merely to place it in a comparative framework.

Consequently, any intervention in the 19th Century fabric or alterations to the layout have been kept to a minimum commensurate with ensuring that the building will be fit for its original purpose for the foreseeable future. Where the application involves planned intervention, this is identified on the plans and a photograph of the detailing is provided in the photographic survey, so that any effect may be assessed. All such works have been identified and discussed with the relevant conservation officers.

Step-free Access

The front access passage way at basement level runs the length of the terrace. It is accessed by steps down from the Square and into No.2 by two doors into the basement level. It is currently under-utilised. Planning permission and listed building consent was obtained for a wheelchair lift to give access from the Square to the passage and thereby to provide step-free access to all of the buildings accessible from that passage. That permission was not implemented. The current application includes such a lift. It is relocated to a more central position in the terrace and away from the existing steps. It will provide convenient level access from the Square to an existing door in the basement of No.2. It will also provide access to Nos. 1 and 3 should those buildings require it. It is the policy of the Inn's EA (formerly DDA) Committee to provide such access provision on the major

refurbishment of any building accessed by steps, in such a way that the new lift is capable of serving not only the refurbished building but also any adjoining buildings which are not then being refurbished. The only impact upon the townscape will be the introduction of a recess in the line of the existing railings. The details show that it would have no harmful visual effect on the Square and that it is likely to be the least intrusive way of introducing step-free access to the whole of the eastern terrace of the Square.

Proposed Works

The plan of this development is to refurbish the accommodation to keep the premises attractive for their traditional role as Chambers for Barristers and to allow them to continue to evolve and to fulfil that use. Continued use for the original intended purpose will help conserve the 19th Century historic character of the interior layout and fabric of the building. Continued use for its original purposes will also ensure that its contribution to the townscape value of the Square will remain unaltered.

The Planning Statement details and gives justification for the individual proposed works of refurbishment.

Langley-Taylor
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