

19 JUL 2011

BRIEF HERITAGE STATEMENT FOR
VICTORIA HOUSE, 37 – 63 SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, WC1

19th July 2011

This statement is to be read in conjunction with the listed building consent application dated May 2011 made to the London Borough of Camden. Which itself has been made in respect of the proposal to carry out cleaning, repair and redecoration of the external elevations of the building.

Listed Building

Victoria House, 37 – 63 Southampton Row, London, WC1B 4ET, also facing Vernon Place, Bloomsbury Square and Bloomsbury Place

- Grade of Listing is II.
- Listing Reference No: London Borough of Camden/798/1/1481100. LBS No: 478142. Date of listing 4 December 1990.

Description of Building

- Commercial building with ground floor shops on east side. Built circa 1926 – 1932.
- Architect : Charles William Long for the Liverpool Victoria Insurance Company as their headquarters building.
- Stone Sculptures by Herbert William Palliser.
- Ornamental Brass-work: Bromsgrove Guild.
- Structural steel frame clad with Portland stone,, bronze coloured infill panels and copperlite glazing surrounds. Green slate mansard roof with dormers.

Exterior:-

8 storeys, sub basement and basement on a rectangular island site with facades to Bloomsbury Square, Bloomsbury Place, Vernon Place and Southampton Row.

Long sides, 15- window bays; returns 5- window bays. West façade to Bloomsbury Square with tall channelled ground floor, central distyle-in-antis Ionic (Erechtheion). Portico through 1st – 4th floors (attic). Attached columns as far as projecting end bays with paired pilasters. Ground floor to 3rd floor windows tripartite with small panes; 2nd floor with relief pediments. Attic windows with small panes in rectangular recesses, grouped in trios in the frieze (corresponding to window beneath).

Tympanum with sculpture of central relief figure with arms outstretched flanked by other figures expressing the beauty of the natural world. To either side, cornice surmounted by parapet with panels of open ornamental brasswork set behind which a further attic storey with trios of windows slightly offset from parapet openings. Mansard dormers slightly offset again all echoing shape of triangular pediment. Central 2 storey roof top feature above mansard. East façade similar but with shops at ground floor level (originally recessed but now with projecting 20th century) shop fronts. Tympanum sculpture on the theme of navigation and new forms of industry.

The returns similar in style with diestyle-in-antis centres paired palasters and no tympana.

Entrance doors on all sides of panelled bronze.

Interiors –

Virtually unaltered. Entrance lobbies on all 4 sides faced in Subiaco marble with Greek style decoration and much decorative brass-work. Central ground floor public area, open through 3 floors to elaborate coffered suspended ceiling. Basement meeting/dance hall with coloured glass light fittings, door furniture and surrounds in polished steel and radiator grills embossed with V H monogram. Extensive mahogany panelling to 3rd floor offices. Some rooms with 18th century fireplaces from houses previously on the site.

Proposed Works to Be Carried Out in 2011

It is proposed to carry out an external clean, repair and redecoration to the exterior of the building on all four elevations. This is the first major work to be carried out to the building since an extensive refurbishment in 2003.

The works proposed are contained within a specification of works compiled by Jones Lang LaSalle dated May 2011.

(1) External stone cleaning –

It is proposed to lightly clean the external Portland stone, granite and marble elevations with a light nebulous spray. This technique will see fine water sprayed on the buildings stone-work for a time of less than 15 minutes followed by a wash down with a medium pressure water lance. Stubborn algae or dirt on the horizontal surfaces or upper parapets will if necessary be additionally cleaned by using a hot water lance wash.

At ground pedestrian pavement level in locations where paint, spray paint and marker pens have placed graffiti on the building specialist cleaners will be used to remove the marks or specialist poultices used to draw the staining out of the stonework.

(2) Anti Graffiti Protective Coat

The specification includes for an anti graffiti coating to be applied to all stone work on the Southampton Row and Vernon Place elevations below 2 metres in height. This anti graffiti product is Grafficoat 1 as manufactured by Tensid. This product is a sacrificial non visible coating which can easily be removed by washing off at post any graffiti application. It is understood that this product is well known and accepted to conservation specialists and English Heritage etc. A product data sheet is enclosed.

(3) Stone Repairs –

Subject to further inspection, (once scaffolding access is available) it is envisaged that the stone repairs will be limited to the local repair of the central figures robe on the Bloomsbury Square elevation in the tympanum and local re-pointing of stonework joints on all elevations where required. All new stone, stone repair materials or re-pointing materials will match the existing.

At 9th floor level 2 plain Portland stone parapet facings will be renewed due to their local decay.

The soffit of the entrance features at 4th Floor level on the Southampton Row and Bloomsbury Square consist of plain flat Travertine marble slabs. Some of these are loose or missing and provision has been made to re-fix the existing soffit stones, replacing missing ones with matching new stone slabs and re-pointing all of same.

(4) Lead Covered Dormer Windows Within Mansard Slope:-

There are 30 lead covered dormer windows in the mansard roof slope of which only 2 have been previously restored with new lead coverings. The rest of the dormers are now in need of overhaul as many have seen very extensive repair over the years and all exhibit signs of stress cracking and decay of the lead coverings which is beginning to prejudice the condition of the timber structure beneath.

With this in mind a survey will be carried out on the 28 remaining dormers and it is estimated that 18 will be stripped and recovered with new lead. This new milled lead covering will be fixed to meet current lead sheet association guidelines and will approximately follow the style of the 2 previously renewed dormers. The style of recovering will match as far as possible (taking in to account modern lead working practices) the original style and design of the original cast lead dormer coverings.

(5) Parapet Gutter Water Proofing:-

There are extensive parapet gutters at 6 & 7th floor whose waterproof asphalt coverings require repair or local renewal.

(6) Tiling & Other Lead Work:-

All green Westmoreland slate tiling to the mansard roof and lead flashings, soakers and cornice coverings will be checked, repaired as necessary or locally renewed in matching materials.

(7) Redecorations

The Crittall Copperlite windows, metal railings and all previously painted metal work will be repainted in a Dulux gloss brown colour to match that applied in 2003 (as existing on the building at today's date).

(8) Bronzework Doors, Lighting & Other Features

The bronze doors, lighting columns and other features will be cleaned and revived upon completion of all other works as per the maintenance standards currently in operation at the building.

The contract administrator will be Nigel Halliday, Jones Lang LaSalle.
Telephone: 020 7852 4630.

The main contractor will be Commercial Stone Ltd, Unit 108, Cannon Workshops, Hertsmere Road, London, E14 4AS, Mark Smith – 020 7515 8080.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nigel Halliday". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Nigel Halliday
Building Surveyor
Project & Development Services