

2.0 Building History

2.1 Original Design

The existing building was constructed in 1929. Faced in Portland Stone, it is thought that the 'neo Egyptian' carved details to the main façade were completed by Henry Poole. The back of the building, which is predominantly a fair faced brick façade with independent window openings, is of a far more utilitarian design.

The building comprises of basement, ground and 5 upper floors, it has a gross external area of 2307.3m². The plan is a simple "U" shape with a light well on the northern boundary. Simply constructed of a steel framework of perimeter and centrally located stanchions, the space was clearly intended to be capable of subdivision to suit the occupant's requirements.

2.2 Listing

No. 233 Shaftesbury Avenue is a Grade II Listed Building, listed on February the 13th 1989, it lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The listing description refers to the building's façade only. A copy of the listing taken from the Camden Council website follows:-

'Office block. c1929. By Leo Sylvester Sullivan; carved details probably by Henry Poole. Steel-frame faced in Portland stone. Neo Egyptian style. 6 storeys; 6-bay range. Bay to right has vertically set slit lights, grouped in threes, to full height stairwell; Pharaoh's head carved (Figure 9) above fluted coved cornice with winged disc (symbol of god Horus) over square-headed doorway with moulded architrave. To left is 3-bay entrance front with cushion capitals to columns (Figure 10), set in slightly projecting portico with winged disc feature set in coved palm-leaf cornice; square-head glazed entrance. Upper floors have metal framed windows and metal spandrel panels (Figure 11), with palm-leaf and Classical detailing, recessed between a giant order of piers continued to flattened palm-leaf capitals set beneath plain frieze with central winged disc feature and attic storey with square-headed

windows; palm-leaf carving to boldly projecting cornice. Interior: not inspected.'

2.3 Planning History and Current Building

Extensive alterations have occurred to the interior of the building over the years; these included quite substantial changes prior to listing. A Conservation Assessment has been undertaken by Anthony Walker. This concludes that other than the building's exterior, only the general layout of the cores are of special interest architecturally. Both staircases appear to be original (Figure 12). Externally the building remains as previously annotated.

Internally the modern fit out includes suspended metal tile and plasterboard ceilings with recessed PL and LV spotlights and suspended fluorescent lighting. Wall surfaces are generally plastered and painted. Floor coverings are typically carpet, however other floor finishes include a parquet floor, ceramic tiles and exposed concrete.

The Conservation Assessment submitted with this application provides more detail regarding the building and the site.

In total there have been 9 planning applications and 2 listed building consent applications made since 1966, 2 of these planning applications have been made since the building was listed in 1989. Typically the older submissions relate to changes of use and alterations at ground floor. Key applications include the change in use to residential of the fifth floor in 1983; and enlargement of the plant enclosure at roof, installation of four air handling units with internal and external alterations and refurbishment, involving new suspended ceilings, demountable partitions, façade repair and cleaning in 2001.



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

Figures

- 9. Carved Neo Egyptian detail, likely by Henry Poole*
- 10. Portland stone Neo Egyptian facade - 3 bay entrance front*
- 11. Portland stone Neo Egyptian facade - Upper floors with metal framed windows*
- 12. Handrail to primary staircase, thought to be original*