

# LUARD CONSERVATION Ltd.

CARVINGS DECORATIVE WOOD LIME PLASTER

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The Elms, Fitzroy Park, Highgate, London

Proposed Protocol for the Repair of the Timber Windows  
at Present in Storage at Fitzroy Park

In order to move forward with the restoration, repair, and potential re-installation of the visible external joinery of the windows after planning permission and listed building consent has been obtained it will be necessary to agree with the Council a protocol which sets out the process by which the Council will approve the final details of the work to be done and to identify who should be involved, when, and to what level. We are basing this proposed protocol on Paul Velluet's report 'A Supplementary Report On The Scope To Recover And Reinstate Displaced Window Joinery' dated February 2014<sup>1</sup>.

While we feel that this document should restrict itself to the physical repair and restoration of the woodwork it will by its very nature touch briefly on the subject of the extent of the re-installation. However restoration is a flexible beast and as the work progresses we will all come to understand the particular problems and issues relative to this project; it may transpire that more is possible than was at first thought, and by the same token less may be achieved.

## Key Aspects

To my mind there are four key aspects involved in this situation.

1. Who is involved in the process
2. Choice of window to work on
3. Elimination of windows as being unsuitable for repair and re-installation
4. Philosophy of treatment of the windows

### 1. Who is involved

- a) I feel that the ideal situation would be one where these decisions are made from a position of trust between LBC and the restorers. It is unreasonable to expect that this will be in place from the start. From my experience there need to be a small number of site meetings with the woodwork in view before the process can hopefully proceed to an exchange of emails with annotated photographs. While restoration joiners prefer to get on with the work they are also quite happy to explain what they are doing and why some things are practical in certain situations while not in others.
- b) I would suggest that when the works begin a site meeting is arranged so that we can explain what we are proposing to do and why. I would further suggest that this meeting be attended by the LBC Case Officer, the Enforcement Officer (should they wish to attend) and other interested parties at the suggestion of LBC. We would have assessed in detail the window to be used as an example and would have forwarded to LBC our detailed proposals for the work to be undertaken. LBC, having seen the windows to be worked on could then comment on our proposals.

### 2. Choice of windows to work on

- a) Most of these criteria are interlinked but the starting point should be Paul Velluet's report and recommendations. It does seem sensible that windows without a high

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<sup>1</sup> See 'A Supplementary Report On The Scope To Recover And Reinstate Displaced Window Joinery To Be Read In Conjunction With The Report Of August, 2013, Providing Assessment Of The Potential Effects Of The Works Described In The Enforcement Notice Proposed For Retention And The Potential Effects Of The Further Proposed Works On The Particular Architectural And Historic Interest And Significance Of The Property, Submitted In Support Of Applications For Listed Building Consent And Planning Permission'

proportion of usable original material should come low on the list of priorities. It may be possible to utilize sound timber that retains surface profiles as replacement sections for other windows if the profiles are the same.

- b) Condition - At our recent site meeting it seemed to me that LBC were quite surprised that the windows were in such bad condition, and that this reflected their condition when they were removed from the building and was not as a result of having been stored for over seven years. Some of the windows and associated joinery are obviously in better condition than others. This may be the result of their placement in a particular aspect of the building, or the result of greater structural integrity of the fabric, or merely the lucky chance that maintenance was undertaken at a fortuitous time which negated the natural deprecations of the weather. High moisture content is responsible for about 95% of all timber associated problems and human intervention, or lack of it, is responsible for about 95% of the rest.
- c) Detailing - The detailing of the woodwork may also play a part in the decisions to be made. The known history of the building indicates that parts were likely to have been designed and constructed during Basevi's lifetime, while other facts indicate that some areas may have little to do with Basevi at all. There are a group of windows on the west side of the building that have a higher level of quality in their detailing (these include the Library windows). It seems to me that there is little merit in putting back a plain window lacking in any detail. We have one of these though just the frame. We are not sure where it came from and though it is in reasonable condition no mouldings survive, in fact it is unlikely that it had any detailing originally. I would suggest that the more elaborate and possible older windows be the ones that are concentrated on, especially as they are the ones that may have a greater connection with Basevi.

### 3. Elimination of windows as being suitable for repair and re-installation

- a) Some of the windows are in such bad condition that there is no realistic hope of using any of the elements in any re-installation program. These should be identified, and sections retaining detailing useful in ascertaining the design and profile of other windows should be kept until the restoration program is finished.
- b) Other windows are very obviously new or relatively new, and of no historical interest. These items should be disposed with the agreement of LBC. These would include, but not be exclusive to, two modern complete box sash windows (with frames) that would appear to be samples brought to site early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is also a vertical four pane ferrous window for which we cannot identify any likely position. In addition there are some post WWII, low quality, replacement windows – very plain with no attempt made to match any detailing. To put these back in would detract from the visual impact of the building.
- c) There are a few windows that are in relatively reasonable condition but have been altered in the past such as the installation of a casement window into the side panel of a sash window. These windows need to be considered carefully before any decisions are made.

### 4. Philosophy of treatment the windows

- a) It will be necessary for LBC and the restorers to meet and/or communicate to work out what type of repairs are suitable in this situation. There will be methods and treatments available that would be suitable in a museum environment but which would not be realistic to use in a domestic functional building.
- b) We will all need recognize that there is little point in using a repair technique so as to include a section of original timber that will likely result in further repairs being carried out in a relatively short space of time. The external envelope of the building will have to be functional in assisting the protection of the whole.

## 5. Conclusions

- a) A group of people should be identified to take this project forward.
- b) A realistic set of criteria should be put in place to lead the choice of what is to be reinstated.
- c) Items that are definitely not to be reinstated should be identified and disposed of, or kept for reference purposes.
- d) Agreement on the philosophy of the treatment needs to be agreed before we can move forward.



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