



Design & Access Statement

COUNTY HOTEL

Upper Woburn Place London WC1

1 INTRODUCTION

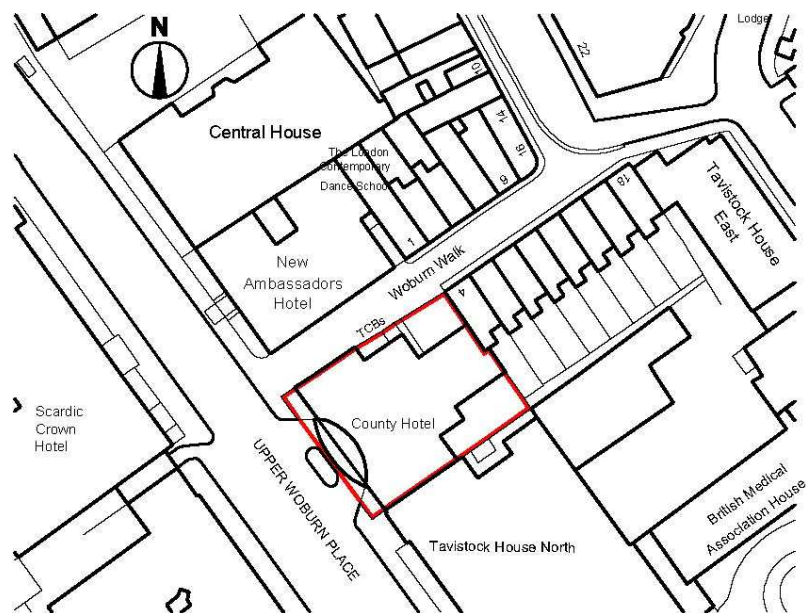
1.1 This Design and Access statement has been prepared to accompany a planning application for proposals to create a new entrance to the ground floor of the hotel from Woburn Walk together with consequential alterations to existing basement and ground floor service areas.

1.2 This report has been set out under the following headings:

- **Section 2** provides a description of the existing site and the surrounding area;
- **Section 3** provides an outline of the proposals;
- **Section 4** scale design and operation of the proposals;
- **Section 5** public access to the proposed facilities;
- **Section 6** conclusions in respect of the proposals.

2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The County Hotel is situated on the corner with Upper Woburn Place and the pedestrianized Woburn Walk. The hotel is in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.



Woburn Place is a busy north south through road with high traffic volumes and equally high pedestrian footfall. Woburn Walk in contrast is a quiet pedestrian street running east from Upper Woburn Place through to Duke's Road. At its west end Woburn Walk is bounded by tall buildings, The County Hotel and The Ambassadors Hotel which face Upper Woburn Place and present a tunnel like effect to Woburn Walk. Towards its east end the scale of Woburn Walk is much more 'user friendly' with small local shops opening on to a pleasant pedestrian mews type environment with trees and benches.



Woburn Walk view East



Woburn Walk view West

The Hotel is a 1930's building exhibiting a mix of semi neo-classical façade with art-deco references in its detailing and is of some architectural merit. The facade to Upper Woburn Place is a combination of traditional red brick and banded render.



View along Upper Woburn Place



View along Woburn Walk

The rear and return facades seen from Woburn Walk are yellow London stock brick, painted at ground and basement level and fair faced to the upper levels with steel crittall windows to the ground floor and timber sash windows to the upper floors and basement. At street level it presents an intimidating façade to Woburn Walk as a largely impenetrable brick wall topped with razor wire. There is currently no public access to the hotel from Woburn Walk the only access being for staff, deliveries and fire exit from the conference room and hotel rooms.

The hotel's upper seven floors accommodate 175 guest rooms with a variable arrangement of shared bathroom facilities. The rooms are served at ground level by a reception, public bar and an underutilised conference room. The hotel kitchen, back of house, guest dining and public toilets are accommodated at basement level.

Due to the limitations of the existing bathroom arrangements, the hotel is considered a budget offering with the majority of guests reaching the hotel on foot from Euston and Kings Cross St Pancras stations.

The ground floor conference room extends the width of the rear wing of the hotel overlooking the hotel service yard area to the north behind the 8ft razor-wired painted brick boundary wall which runs between the hotel service yard and Woburn Walk. Over the years the service yard has become a disarray of light-wells, lean-to roofs and temporary structures.



Conference Room



Service yard

To the front of the hotel the existing hotel bar is directly accessible from Woburn Place. There is no demand for conference facilities in the hotel. The conference room is therefore seldom used. The existing bar is used occasionally by hotel guests but remains a significantly underused resource.

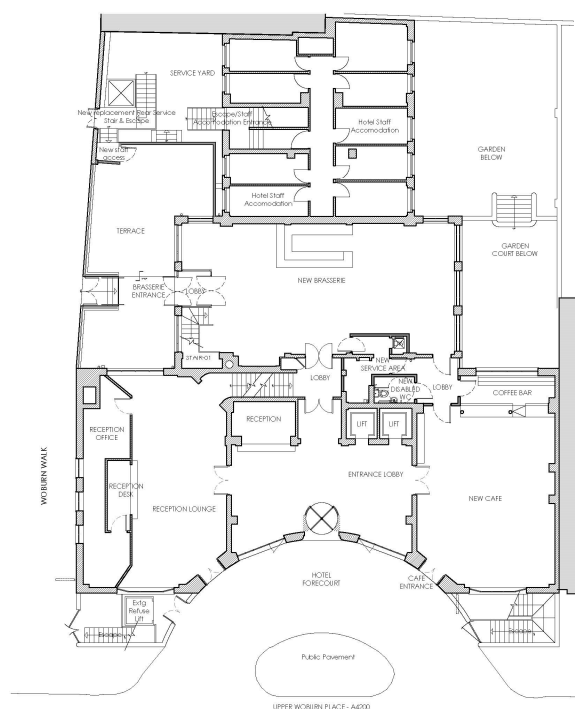
3 PROPOSALS

The proposals for which planning permission is sought comprise:

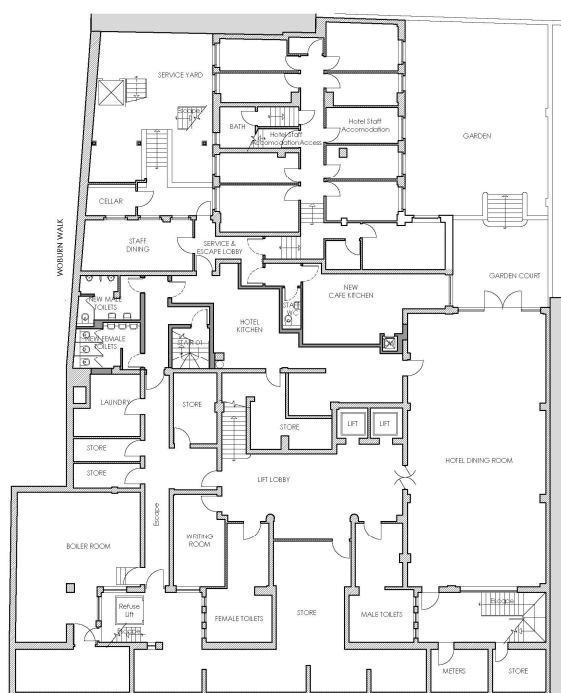
- Partial demolition of the existing razor wire topped brick wall to Woburn Walk and its replacement with decorative wrought iron balustrades.
- The formation of a new entrance to the ground floor hotel public areas with new DDA compliant stepped access off Woburn Walk via a terrace constructed over the basement service areas.
- Erection of an acoustically treated timber screen to the east of the proposed terrace
- The installation of retractable awnings and signage to the new entrance. It is noted the retractable awning project over the terrace only and not over the public highway.

Concurrently with the proposals outlined above alterations to the interior of the hotel will be carried out. These alterations which do not require planning consent comprise:

- Conversion of the existing ground floor hotel bar to a café.
- Conversion of the existing hotel conference room to a brasserie.
- Improvements to existing toilet facilities in the hotel including the provision of a DDA compliant toilet at ground floor level.
- Alterations and improvements to existing basement kitchen and service areas.



Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Proposed Basement Floor Plan

4 SCALE, DESIGN AND OPERATION.

The proposals which are the subject of this application are designed to bring under-used facilities within an existing hotel back into use, encourage public access and enhance the general appearance of the building.

The County Hotel is a building of some architectural quality however over the years unsympathetic alterations and security considerations have resulted in it presenting an unfriendly and uninviting aspect to Woburn Walk. The current boundary along Woburn Walk is an 8ft high painted brick wall capped with razor wire and is an intimidating presence in what is otherwise a pleasant urban environment.

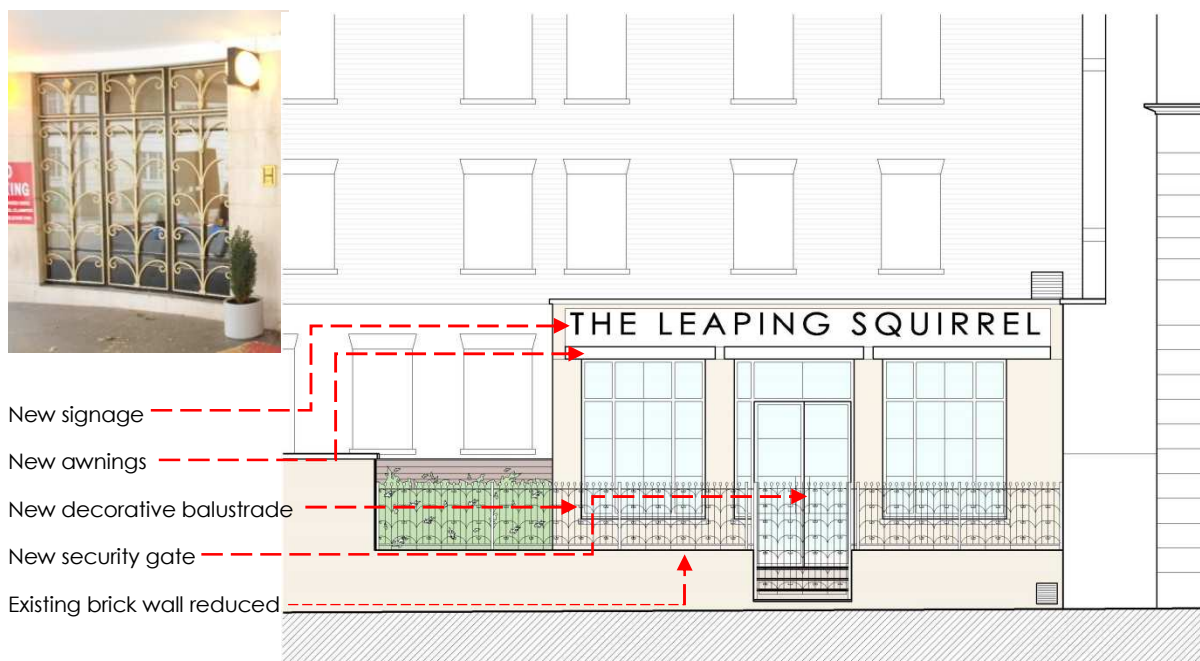


Boundary wall to Woburn Walk



Boundary wall to Woburn Walk and service yard

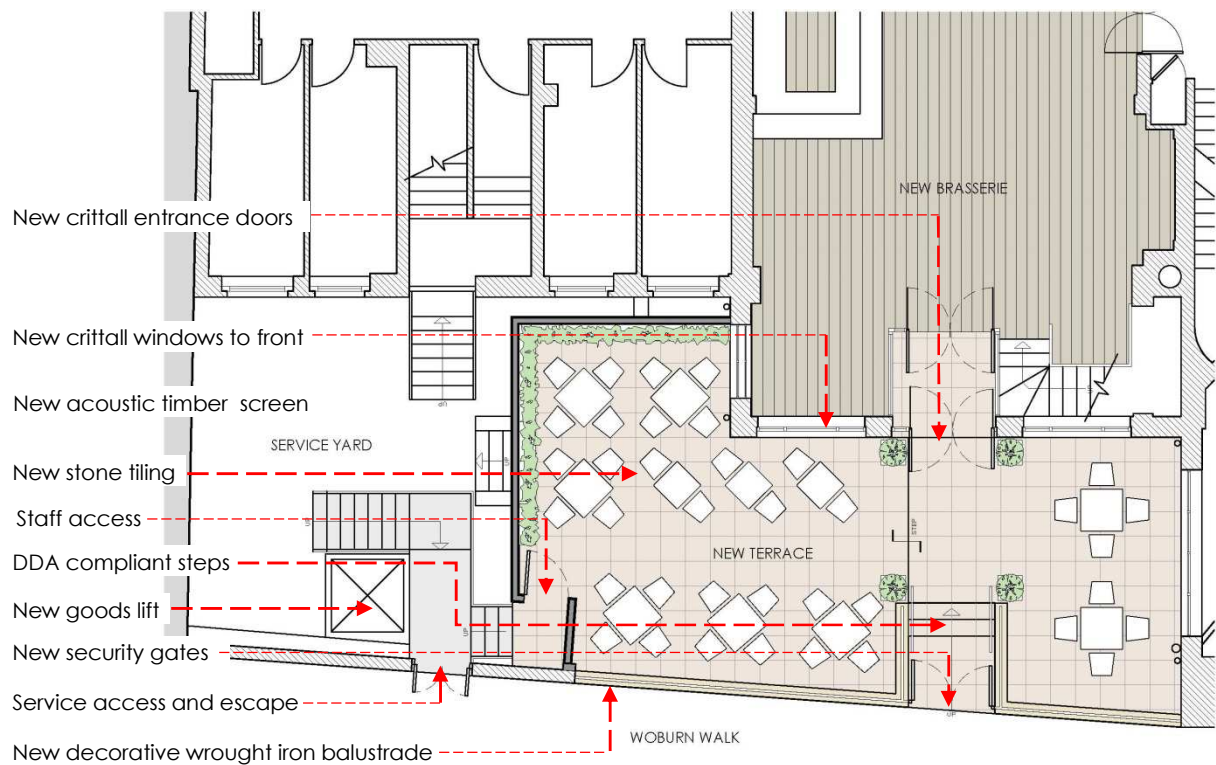
The proposal will remove the greater part of the wall and replace it with a low decorative metal balustrade and create a new public access to the hotel terrace from Woburn Walk.



Proposed Woburn Walk Elevation

The design of the balustrade echoes the existing decorative metalwork on the hotel forecourt.

The proposed terrace is limited in scale and being within the boundaries of the hotel will not cause any interruption to pedestrians flow on Woburn Walk. The terrace is located away from the residential upper parts to the east of Woburn Walk and an acoustically treated timber screen will minimise any noise breakout. Security gates between the terrace and Woburn Walk will be locked during the night so that access to the hotel is only through the existing main entrance.



The proposed works will open up the hotel facilities to the public and significantly enhance the general public experience in Woburn Walk. The new terrace will be open between the hours of 11:00am and 09:00pm and will be closely monitored by brasserie staff. There will be no music on the terrace. The proposed hours of the Leaping Squirrel are 11:00am to 11:00pm (last orders) and closed at 11:30pm. The brasserie will serve hot and cold food between these hours as well as wine, spirits, larger and real ale.

The hotel has 24 hour porter/security which will also cover the brasserie. 24 hour security CCTV will be in operation on the premises. The brasserie will ensure that a considerable dispersion policy is in place.

To prevent any adverse impact on the local area there will be no deliveries before 09:00am in the morning for the brasserie and refuse collection will be included within the existing arrangement at the hotel.

5 PUBLIC ACCESS

The main entrance to the hotel will remain as existing off Woburn Place. This entrance has DDA compliant wheelchair access ramps.

New public access to the hotel will be provided via the external terrace from Woburn Walk. The entrance steps will be DDA compliant.

In addition to the existing toilet facilities at basement level, additional new public toilet facilities will be provided and a new DDA compliant disabled toilet installed at ground level.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The proposals seek to enhance the public/guest experience at the hotel and bring under used facilities within the hotel back into use. Hotel guests and the public will benefit from the improved facilities within the hotel and its presence on the street, particularly Woburn Walk.

The proposals will enhance the Conservation Area by improving the setting of the County Hotel on Woburn Walk and significantly improving the environment of Woburn walk itself by removing the intimidating razor-wire topped brick wall and replacing with a low wall and decorative wrought iron balustrades.