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60 DOUGHTY STREET
LONDON, WC1N 2JT
Listed Building Application

1. INTRODUCTION

This application seeks Listed Building Consent for a small addition to the front entrance steps: the instalment of one line of cast iron railings to the existing stone plinth.

The purpose of the proposed alteration is to regain the symmetry of the railings centred on the main entrance door-case.

Extensive refurbishment works of the whole house have just been completed in connection with its approved change of use from offices to a single dwelling.

Please note: Listed Building consent has already been granted for all other internal and external alterations and all conditions attached were cleared.

2. THE APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

This application comprises:-

- The Design and Access Statement.
- The Application Form together with Certificate A.
- Copies of drawings :-
 - 6203/09 – Location Plan
 - 6203/390 – Existing and proposed elevations
 - 6203/390.2 – Existing and proposed plans
- Appendix 1 – further illustrations of the proposals

3. THE PROPOSALS

The proposal is to re-instate the line of cast iron railings on the right hand side of the doorway. The railings will exactly match those on the left-hand side and fix into the stone plinth. The aesthetic advantage of having a symmetrical approach is clear from the accompanying images.

It is not known what happened to the original right-hand side railings but it seems reasonable to suppose that in the piece-meal development of the street (1794-1820 according to the Survey of London) a double line of railings occurred at this point – the entrance into n.60 and the end of the basement area to n.61.

Numbers 57 to 60 are a group of four houses of a similar design, but n.61 is an individual design with a different door case and a lower ground floor level.

With a double line of railings it would have been temptingly simple and inexpensive to remove a damaged or rusting line of railings rather than repair it, and that may have been what happened here. This hypothesis is surely more likely than the other two possible explanations:

- 1) That the original right-hand railings were re-fixed further way and lower down. For what possible purpose?
- 2) That the right-hand railings never existed. Inconceivable because Georgian architecture is all about presenting a classical, decorous face to the street – as demonstrated by the uniformity achieved by numerous independent developers in Doughty Street during 26 years of development.

With the re-instatement of the right-hand railings the elements which comprise the entrance to n.60 will be completed. The entrance will match those of its sister houses, numbers 57, 58, 59, and just about every Georgian house in England.

As an aside, it should be noted that in the application (2008) made for a new entrance to 61 Doughty St. it was said that a plinth for railings on the entrance slab (the bridge across the basement area) was not the original detail and the railings should fix directly into the stone slab. It was suggested that the plinths of the side of the entrance slabs and steps were later repairs made to match made to match the plinth which separate the public pavement from basement areas.

It is true that some entrance slabs do not have plinths, but equally some do, and they are clearly the original intended design. This is demonstrated by original drawings, which show plinths, and 18th and early 19th century illustrations of urban scenes, which also show them.

On the east side of Doughty Street only two houses do not have railing plinths: n.50 and n.61. Railing plinths are the norm on this street elevation.

4. HISTORIC BUILDING IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The property is a Grade II Listed building in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area (Sub Area 10 – Great James St/Bedford Row).

The historic fabric of the building will hardly be affected by the proposals. The new railings will only be fixed to the original brickwork of the front elevation in one point as any railings, with minimal disruption. Each single rail will be imbedded in the new stone plinth, introduced in the latest phase of works in place of the modern tile and concrete kerb (in accordance with Listed Building Consent 2013/0438/L), therefore no historic material will be damaged

However, the introduction of the proposed line of railings will have a positive but immaterial impact on the historic building as the front elevation will regain the symmetry and balance which was clearly originally intended.

5. ACCESS STATEMENT

The building does not comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and an attempt to upgrade it to meet the obligations of reasonableness would irreversibly harm its nature and character. The proposal does not worsen nor improve the current situation in terms of disabled access.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Despite the subtle variation in the detailing of the terraces along Doughty St. the overall perception is one of homogeneity; the strong uniformity in appearance is due to the consistency of material and the repeated rhythm of windows, door opening and railings along each terrace (as highlighted in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy). The proposal aims to reinstate the regular rhythm and the classical architecture principle of symmetry, which currently appears interrupted by absence of the railings on the right plinth.

APPENDIX 1



1. n. 60 Doughty St. in 2014 after completion of the refurbishment works. Railings on the right plinth are missing



2. n. 60 Doughty St. as proposed with this application (photomontage)



3. n.60 Doughty St. in 2013, before completion of the refurbishment works. Railings on the right kerb were already missing



4. n.59 Doughty St., part of the "twins set" from 57 to 60



5. n.58 Doughty St., part of the "twins set" from 57 to 60



6. n.57 Doughty St., part of the "twins set" from 57 to 60