

MARTIN O'ROURKE

CONSERVATION - REGENERATION

[martin.orourke.consult@gmail.com](mailto:martin.orourke.consult@gmail.com)

tel: 0044(0)7895063839

157A Mill Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 3AA

# ARTEMIDE SHOWROOM & OFFICE 106 GREAT RUSSELL STREET BLOOMSBURY WC1B 3NA

*A Heritage Appraisal of the Building and the  
Possible Impact of the Proposals.*



SEPTEMBER 2014

# 1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.01 This report aims to describe the heritage significance of No. 106 Great Russell Street, London Borough of Camden. The buildings special interest and history will be examined, both internally and externally.
- 1.02 The proposed works will be described and their possible impact on the heritage significance of the building will be assessed.

# 2 THE BUILDING & DESIGNATIONS

- 2.01 No. 106 Great Russell Street is a late 17<sup>th</sup> century terrace house, much altered in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is composed of 3 stories over a basement and has a slated roof storey behind a parapet. It is two sash windows wide. The ground floor has an early 19<sup>th</sup> century shop front of a fine quality neo-classical design with a shop entrance to the left and a domestic front door on the right.
- 2.02 The first and second floor front elevation is built of stock brick, each floor having two glazing-barred sash windows of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century type. This elevation appears to have been rebuilt from the middle of the first storey up to the parapet in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

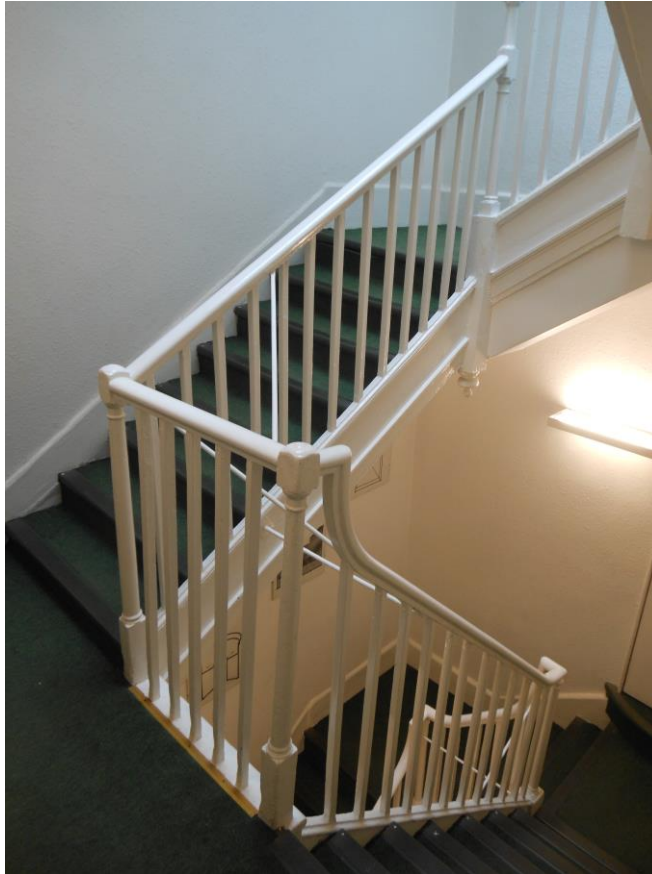
2.03 Between the first floor windows on the front elevation is a Kupron bronze plaque designed by the Bedford Estate surveyor, C Fitzroy Doll (from a model by the French sculptor and antiquarian associate of Augustus W.N. Pugin, Charles Langlois), commemorating the residence of father and son architects Augustus Charles Pugin and Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin and their family in this house.



2.04 Interior examination indicates that the shop front, front elevation and front room depth were all rebuilt in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus the front elevation has an even width of brick piers between the windows. The windows are not off set to allow for the great depth of a 17<sup>th</sup> century chimney breast as is the case on the rear elevation.

2.05 The interior plan has a central cross-axial staircase in the 17<sup>th</sup> century manner. The carriage of the

staircase, including the strings and lower section of newel posts are all 17<sup>th</sup> century, but the balustrade, upper newel sections and the handrail are all early 19<sup>th</sup> century.



2.06 Apart from the domestic entrance hall and the staircase, nothing of the pre-20<sup>th</sup> century finishes remain within the shop. Several of the rooms on the first and second floors have 18<sup>th</sup> century panelling and plaster cornices. The 19<sup>th</sup> century roof storey front room retains a principal rafter of the earlier 18<sup>th</sup> century structure, running underneath the raised roof.

2.07 The rear elevation is now rendered, but is essentially a 17<sup>th</sup> century façade with raised bands at each

storey floor height. There are garden steps down to basement level, where there is a casement window with a transom light. Either side of this, at ground floor level are single storey 19<sup>th</sup> century service building extensions. To the left is a brick privy with garden access across the flat roofed coal store. To the right is a lean to store building constructed against the boundary wall. The basement interior has lost its original finishes and fittings and is now two rooms finished in modern plasterwork.

2.08 The ground floor elevation has two recessed early 19<sup>th</sup> century sash windows and there are three 19<sup>th</sup> century casement windows to the first floor. The second floor retains the off-set 17<sup>th</sup> century window arrangement with original semi-flush window frames containing early 19<sup>th</sup> century sashes.



2.09 The rear garden has a deeply recessed basement area with a terrace. The garden is reached via basement stone steps.



2.10 No. 106 Great Russell Street is a Grade II Listed building. The listing description states;

*Terraced house. Late C17, altered, with late C18 front. Yellow brick under a slated roof with 3-light dormer. Parapet with stucco band. 3 Stories and attic. 2 windows. Early C19 wood shop front with pilasters carrying entablature with egg and dart cornice and slightly projecting shop window having small panes. Square headed house and shop doorways with fanlights. House door panelled, shop door partly glazed. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sashes. Kupron bronze plaque on 1<sup>st</sup> floor designed by C. Fitzroy Doll, Bedford Estate surveyor, form a model by C. Langlois, commemorating the residence of Augustus Charles Pugin and Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin.*

*INTERIOR: not inspected*

2.11 No.106 Great Russell Street is situated within the designated Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

## 3 HISTORY

- 3.01 This house has its origins and much of its surviving fabric dating from the later 17<sup>th</sup> century and therefore part of the initial development of the Duke of Bedford's Estate. The plan form of a central cross-axial staircase is 17<sup>th</sup> century and much of the rear half of the house and the rear elevation is of this date.
- 3.02 The house has, however had major changes throughout its life. The front room depth and front elevation were rebuilt in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century. Panelling and cornices of varying 18<sup>th</sup> century dates occur throughout the house, and the windows, both front and rear are partly 17<sup>th</sup> century, 18<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The roof storey, with its central three-light sashes is 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.03 Through the 18<sup>th</sup> century and into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Great Russell Street was the home of many print sellers, book shops and publishers. At this time, the present 106 was numbered 105, and at nearby No. 106, John Williams, architectural book publisher went bankrupt in 1839. By 1851, the premises were

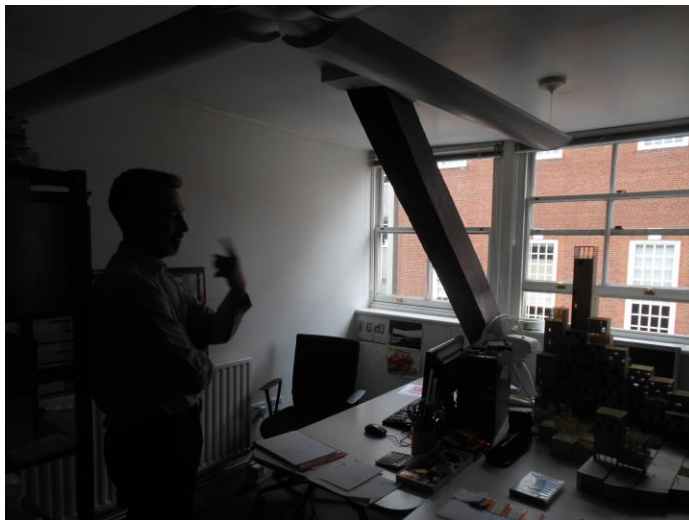
occupied by Atchley & Co, publishers. These publishing businesses were typical of the area's life.

- 3.04 This cultural milieu would have suited Augustus Charles Pugin (1785-1832), an émigré from revolutionary France, who settled in London and became an architectural draughtsman after some training at the Royal Academy. Charles worked for a time in the office of John Nash before deciding to become a commercial artist, producing high quality architectural views for the publisher Ackerman.
- 3.05 The Pugin family survived without becoming prosperous. They lived in a terraced house in Keppel Street (long since demolished), in an area described by Anthony Trollope as "*Keppel Street cannot be called fashionable and Russell Square is not much affected by the nobility.*" Augustus Charles started a drawing school to augment the family income. As well as train aspiring architects, his son, Augustus Welby learned his draughtsman's skills at his father's knee. Other pupils included James Pennethorne, who became a successful architect, Benjamin Ferry, an architect who later was Pugin's biographer. The Pugin drawing academy was culturally significant with many pupils going on to work in architect's offices or becoming artists in their own right.
- 3.06 The plaque on No. 106 is correct in making a connection between the house and both Augustus Charles Pugin and Augustus Welby Pugin. The family moved to the house in 1823, for a rent of £50 a year. A larger house than Keppel Street, there was more family space and room for a bigger drawing school.



The alterations to the 17<sup>th</sup> century house may have been carried out by Thomas Cubitt, who developed much of the Bedford Estate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

3.07 As was common at the time, the life of draughtsman pupils was gruelling. Work started at 6.30 a.m. with a breakfast break at 8.30 a.m. 12 hour days were the norm. As the only child of the Pugin family, Augustus Welby Pugin had something of a charmed life and he was allowed to take over and transform the roof storey to design and create stage sets for Covent Garden. He obtained these commissions early in his life and was successful as a theatre designer.



3.08 With the death of his father in 1832 and the end of the drawing academy, Augustus Welby Pugin decided to become an architect and to be the champion of Gothic architecture. He published “Contrasts “in 1836, a blast against what he saw as the falseness of Georgian classical architecture and the truth of Gothic. He followed this with “The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture”, a treatise on the virtues of Gothic.

3.09 He was the leading pioneer of the Gothic Revival in England. In partnership with Sir Charles Barry in the 1840s, he designed all the Gothic finishes for the rebuilt Palace of Westminster, from Big Ben (originally the Elizabeth Tower) down to inkwells and umbrella stands. This marked the acceptance of the Gothic Revival in England, but took a great toll on the architect, leading to Pugin's early death in 1852 at the age of 40 from overwork.

## 4 HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

4.01 No. 106 Great Russell Street has heritage significance both as part of the wider historic environment, (the Bloomsbury Conservation Area) and intrinsically as a terrace house containing features from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century.

4.02 The house is also of historic interest as it dates from the earliest period of development on the Bedford Estate. It is uniquely of historic importance as the childhood home of Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852), a crucial figure in the development of Gothic Revival architecture.

4.03 All of these reasons are recognised in the Grade II statutory listing of the house.

# 5 POLICY CONTEXT

5.01 The London Borough of Camden UDP Policy NN31 states;

*In pursuing the preservation or enhancement of heritage assets, the council will require applicants to provide sufficient information to properly fully describe the proposal.*

5.02 The council have produced SPG in the form of “Bloomsbury C.A. Appraisal and Management Strategy” This document underscores in detail the council’s commitment to conserving the special character of the area and preserving heritage assets and their features.

5.03 English Heritage has published guidance in “London Terrace Houses 1660-1860”;

*Page 12*

*“.....The balance between preservation and change may not always be easy to strike. The aim should be to minimise the impact on the building while helping the owner to adapt the property to suit reasonable needs.”*

5.04 Whilst English Heritage advises that extensions should generally utilise traditional forms and materials;

*“However, there may be some occasions where a more modern design approach may be acceptable.”*

5.05 The Mayor of London's Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London supports the proper management and recognition of heritage assets in London.

5.06 The policy guidance from Government is provided in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In Section 12 "Conserving and enhancing the historic environment", it states in paragraph 126 that local planning authorities should take account of;

*-the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*

-the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation can bring;

-the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness;  
and

-opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of place.

## 6 THE PROPOSALS

6.01 The main proposal involves a basement level rear extension, to enlarge and improve the showroom space for Artemide, the buildings occupants who are

a leading international supplier of sophisticated high quality light fittings. The extension would be confined to the basement level and would not affect the ground floor rear elevation windows. The proposed structure would occupy the existing outside area, already altered by poor quality service buildings as well as a low level basement area.

- 6.02 The existing garden and the flanking high boundary brick walls would not be affected.
- 6.03 The design of the proposal is frankly modern. It is a “C” shape in section and would be made of finely finished concrete and fronted by full height glazing. The ground floor access to the garden would be retained by removing the existing modern door from the rear elevation and fitting a simple glazed door leading to a path access flanked by a glass balustrade.
- 6.04 The proposed extension would sit very low in the ground and with the tall boundary walls (which conceal substantial extensions to the neighbouring properties) the proposed structure would have virtually no impact on the character of the conservation area.
- 6.05 The design of the proposed extension is reticent and deferential in scale, replacing minor service buildings of little merit. The sophisticated simplicity of the modern design solution is a highly sensitive and intelligent response to the design brief, which should produce a contextual building of some distinction.

This is a case where a modern counterpoint design approach achieves a building that enhances and does not interfere with the listed building.

6.06 The internal proposals within the listed building amount to welcome repair and refurbishment. It is important that these works are carried out to a high standard to protect the special interest of the building.

## 7 CONCLUSION

7.01 The policy guidance from NPPF and English Heritage (see section 5 of this report) both indicate that with a sensitive judgement and careful attention to scale and context, sophisticated modern design can be welcomed in the historic environment. The current proposals for this new showroom have been sensitively considered to produce the right building in the right place. There is a fortuitous synergy between the creative drawing academy of Augustus Charles Pugin and the creative lighting design of Artemide, the current occupiers of the building, giving almost 200 years of a continuous design-based use of this historic building.