

42 Bedford Square: The Courtyard Arbour

Design and Access Statement

November 2015

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1 Introduction

1.1 OVERVIEW

The Grade I listed 42 Bedford Square (Main House) and 13 Bedford Avenue (Mews) is to be substantially refurbished and adapted, representing a significant capital investment to return the property to residential use and to secure the long term, viable use of the historic property.

Planning and listed building consent has been granted for the internal and, limited, external adaptations necessary to re-establish the historic residential use. This further application relates to proposals for the external courtyard, located between the Main House and Mews, to create usable internal and external space that consists of an elevated landscape; a unique garden experience, bespoke to this particular property, its re-established residential use and the current owner's interests in combining art, landscape and bio diversity.

The existing courtyard; overshadowed and enclosed by the Main House, Mews and boundary walls, benefiting from limited sunlight, with access from the house limited to the lower ground floor level, and of restricted size, provides limited opportunities for use, external recreation and quiet enjoyment. The aspect from a number of the principal rooms within the Main House and accommodation with the Mews are also not enhanced by the poor, utilitarian quality of this space.

Whilst the courtyard may have been wholly suited to the historic use and function of a 16th century Georgian town house, the external courtyard now provides little benefit to the re-established residential use of the house and the expectations of 21st century domestic use of external space.

Utilising precedents drawn from Georgian houses and gardens, together with later classical influences; arbours, loggias and planted glass houses, the proposals illustrate a structural framework to support an elevated landscape and a range of habitats and to promote bio diversity within this urban context.

Designed by Martha Schwartz, the internationally recognised Landscape Architects, the planting, materials, lighting and structural framework are all composed to create an elevated landscape of exceptional quality – a 'floating cloud' of indeterminate edges - within the courtyard. This framework also draws on recent explorations in modular framed structures (Sou Fujimoto's Summer Pavilion at the Serpentine Gallery and recent installations at the University of the Arts, London) to create an overall elevated landscape and art installation commensurate with the Grade I listed designation of the property and to be appreciated from both within the principal rooms of the property and the courtyard.

The selection of habitats and planting has been developed in conjunction with leading habitat specialist Ben Kite of 'Ecological Planning and Research Ltd' to ensure these are appropriate to central London and this particular urban context, levels of sunlight, etc, and to create as broad a range of opportunities as feasible to promote bio diversity; plants, insects, birds and, to a lesser extent, small mammals.

This elevated landscape also provides significantly enhanced views from rooms enclosing the courtyard, and establishes a level of privacy between rooms with the Main House and Mews facing one another. Access to the courtyard at lower ground floor will be retained and enhanced to provide opportunities to experience the elevated landscape and habitats from within the courtyard and the enclosure below.

Elevating the landscape above the floor level of the courtyard enables the retention and conservation of the existing walls and Yorkstone paving, and provides a counterpoint to the new, contemporary design of the arbour. Elevating the planters and planting, removing these softer elements from the floor level of the courtyard also ensures the simple, utilitarian character of the courtyard is conserved. The elevated structure is also designed to be disconnected from the existing walls and to be fully reversible, allowing the structure to be removed at some time in the future and the current courtyard space to be reinstated.

Utilising recent explorations in modular framed designs the elevated structure comprises a simple module which is built up to provide a primary frame of 'walls' and 'roof' to support the main level of planting and enclosure. Further modules are added above and below the 'roof', and outside and inside the 'walls' to create a 3-dimensional framework of indeterminate profiles and edges. Subsequently planted, partially glazed and faced with solid and mirrored panels the elevated landscape will assume a floating, partially transparent quality to in part fill, but not obscure, the views in, out and across the courtyard.

Whilst provided with basic heating to maintain an internal environment to promote plant growth during the winter months, the enclosure below and within the elevated structure will also utilise natural ventilation to regulate humidity and condensation.

Plant health and growth will be maintained with a plant irrigation system, delivering water to individual planters, whilst the structure is designed to accommodate access for maintaining plants, planters and general fabric.





2 Existing Courtyard

2.1 Site Location

The building is located on the south side of Bedford Square, a prominent Georgian square in Bloomsbury, one of the most central and culturally significant areas of London. Gower Street/Bloomsbury Street and Tottenham Court Road enclose it to the east and west and Bedford Avenue to the south - see Figure 1.

The Courtyard Space is situated between the Main House (42 Bedford Square) and the Mews House (13 Bedford Avenue.)

2.2 Access

The main entrance to the historic house is facing the square, via a short flight of four steps. The Mews House faces Bedford Avenue at the rear and has an entrance door directly off the pavement. The Courtyard itself is currently accessed via the link building that connects the Main House with the Mews.

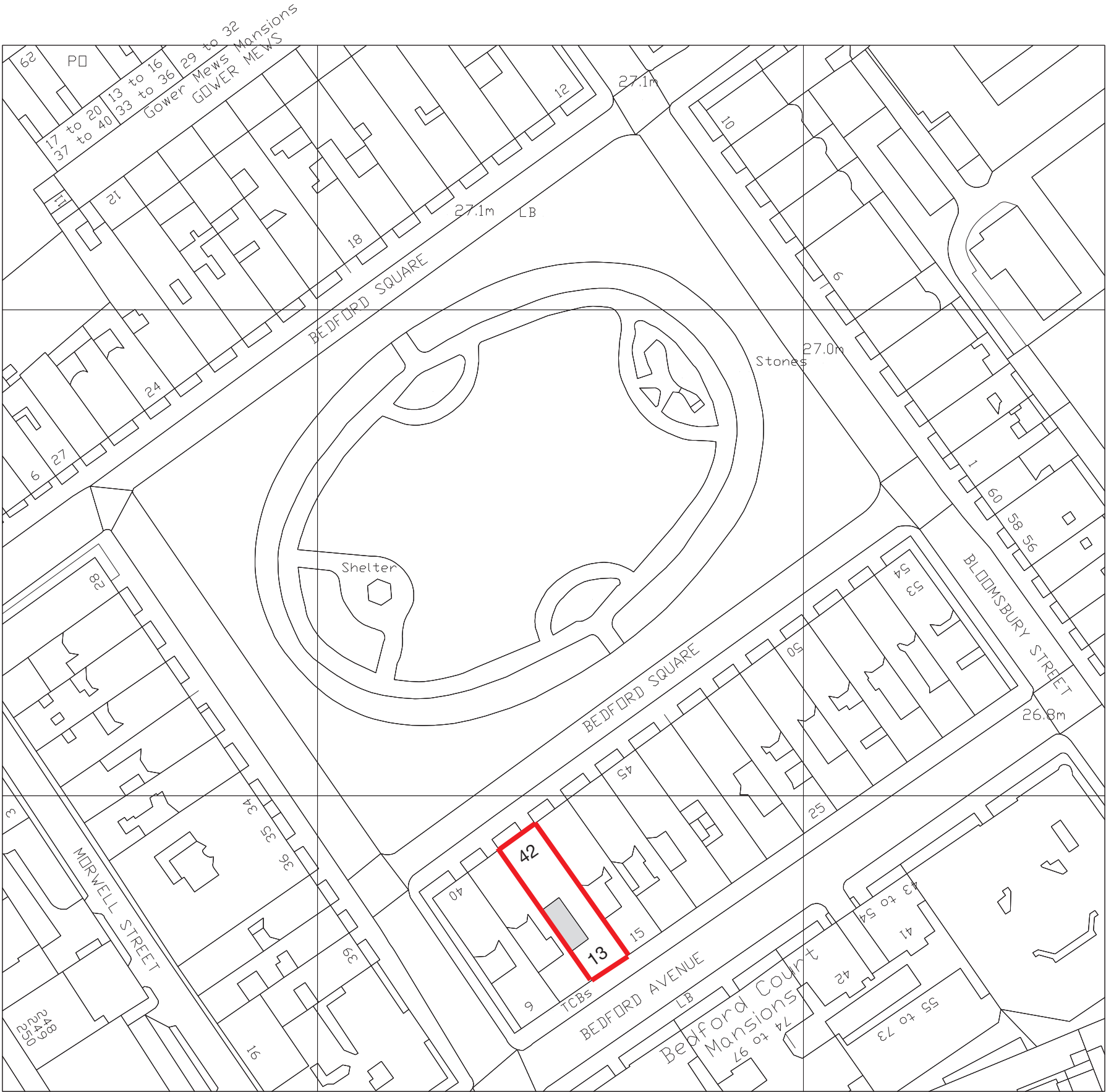


Figure 1 - Site Plan

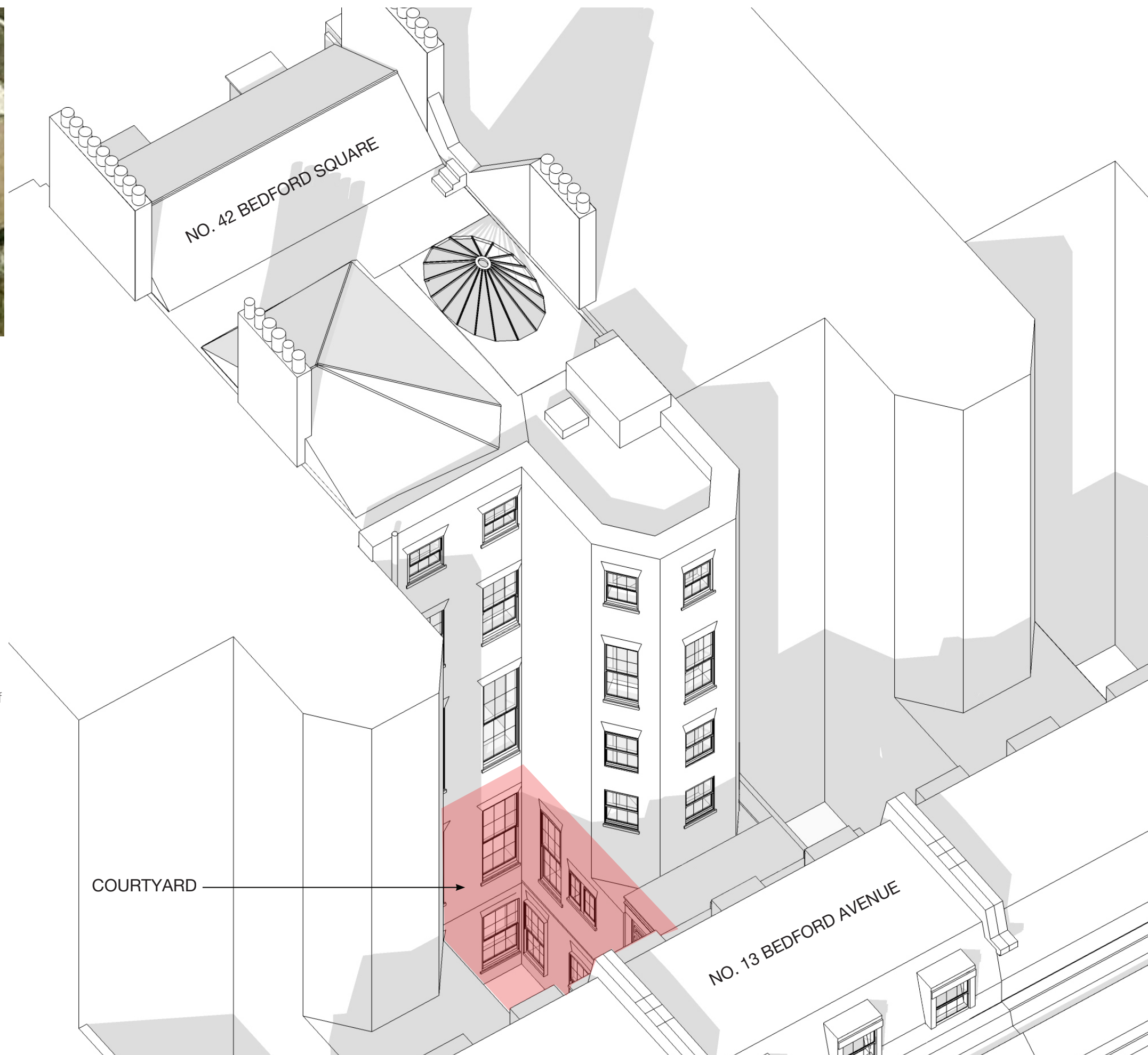


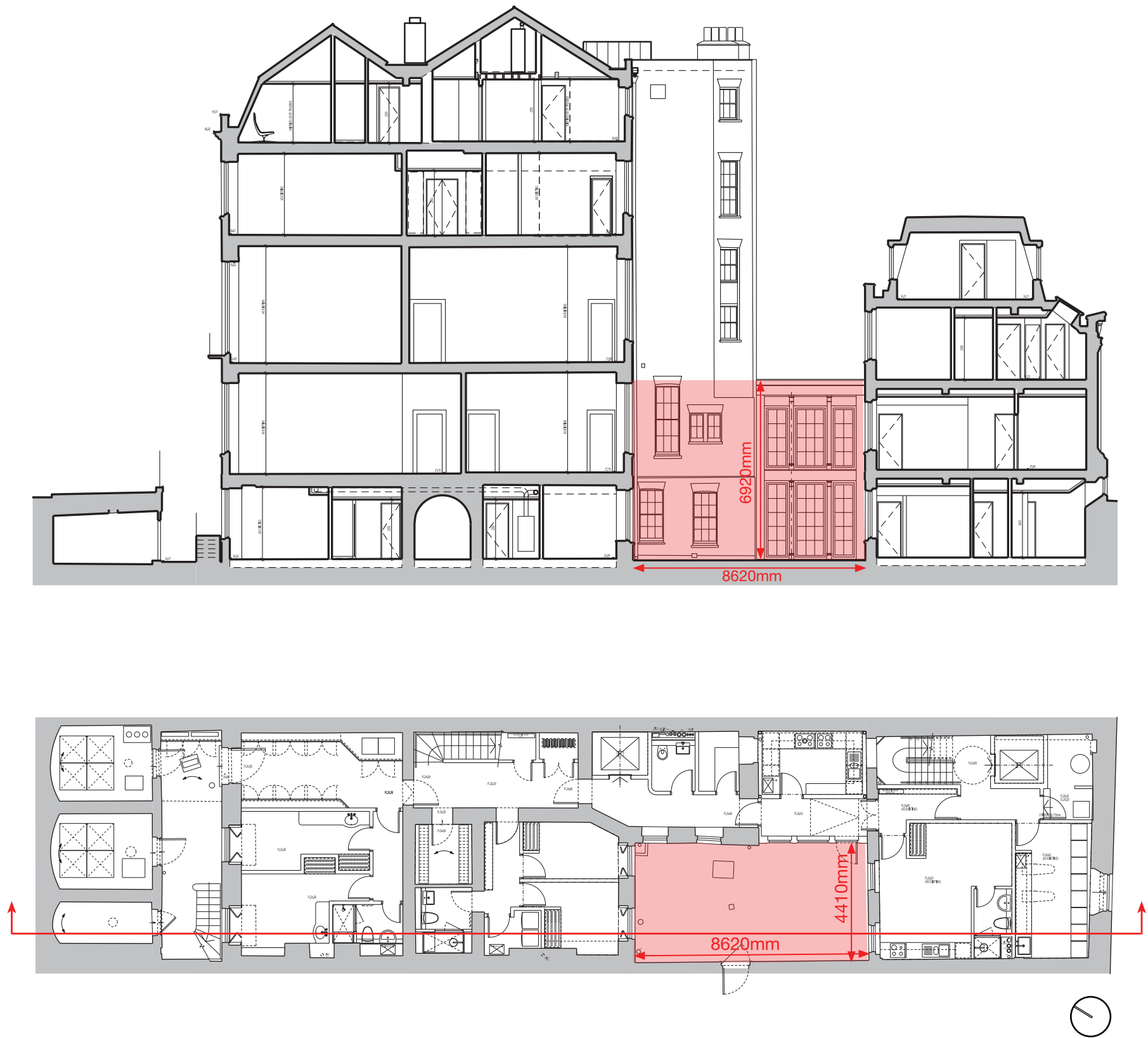
2.3 Character and Daylight

The courtyard space is enclosed on all four sides. The link building to the east and brick party wall to the west are two storeys in height, spanning lower ground and ground floor levels. The main house to the north is five storeys in height, whilst the Mews to the south is shorter at four storeys. The level of enclosure means that sunlight rarely reaches the base of the courtyard. The brickwork is painted white at lower ground level to improve the perception of light.

Access is limited to the lower ground floor level, the courtyard is of restricted size, provides limited opportunities for use, external recreation and quiet enjoyment by residents. The aspect from a number of the principal rooms within the Main House and accommodation with the Mews are also not enhanced by the poor, utilitarian quality of this service space.

Whilst the courtyard may have been wholly suited to the historic use and function of a 16th century Georgian town house, the external courtyard now provides little benefit to the re-established residential use of the house and the expectations of 21st century domestic use of external space.





Plan and Section Drawing of the consented scheme for which works are programmed to commence in January 2016 (Listed Building Consent 2014/4634/L and Planning Permission 2014/4633/P)

The courtyard space based on the consented scheme measures approximately 8620x 4410w. The height of the link building remains below the level of the party walls to the east and the west of the property at below 7m from the floor level of the courtyard. The plan illustrates that the courtyard space has its most immediate relationship with accommodation at the lower ground floor. The external courtyard space is accessed via a door in the proposed link building.



View of Courtyard from Ground Floor in the Main House

The site plan on this page illustrates the sun path in relation to the courtyard space. 3D studies have been carried out to establish sunlight conditions within the courtyard. These studies show us that the lower ground floor of the courtyard does not enjoy any direct sunlight throughout winter and the spring and autumn equinox's. It is only during the middle of summer and for the mid section of the day that sunlight reaches the lower ground floor level and even then, half of the courtyard remains shaded by the Mews House.

This emphasises the limited opportunity for use that the courtyard offers. Reduced sun results in a space that is not attractive to occupy and also inhibits many plant types from flourishing within the space, in turn preventing the opportunity for a successful landscape space at this level.

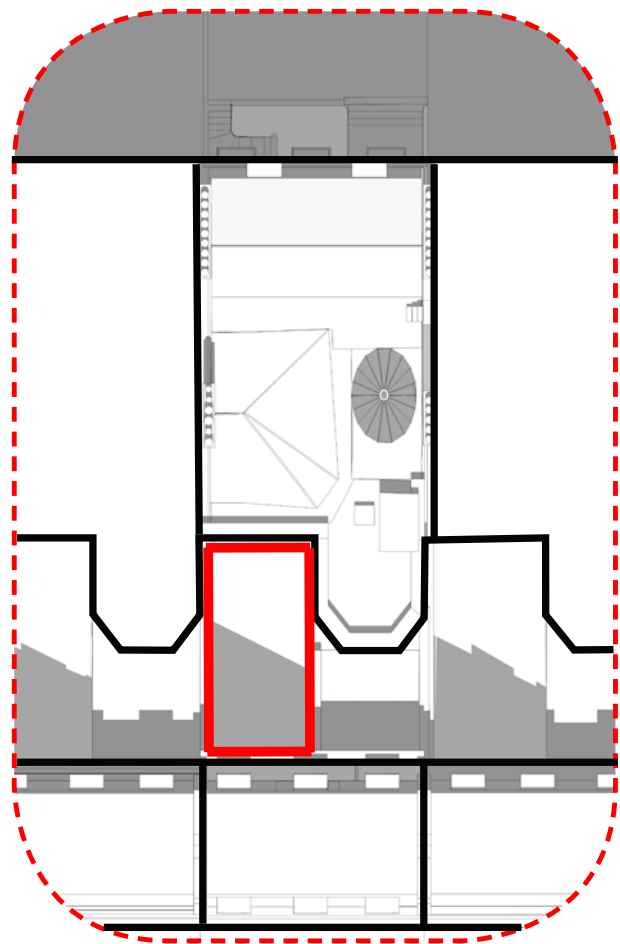


View of the courtyard from the Main House rear bay at third floor.

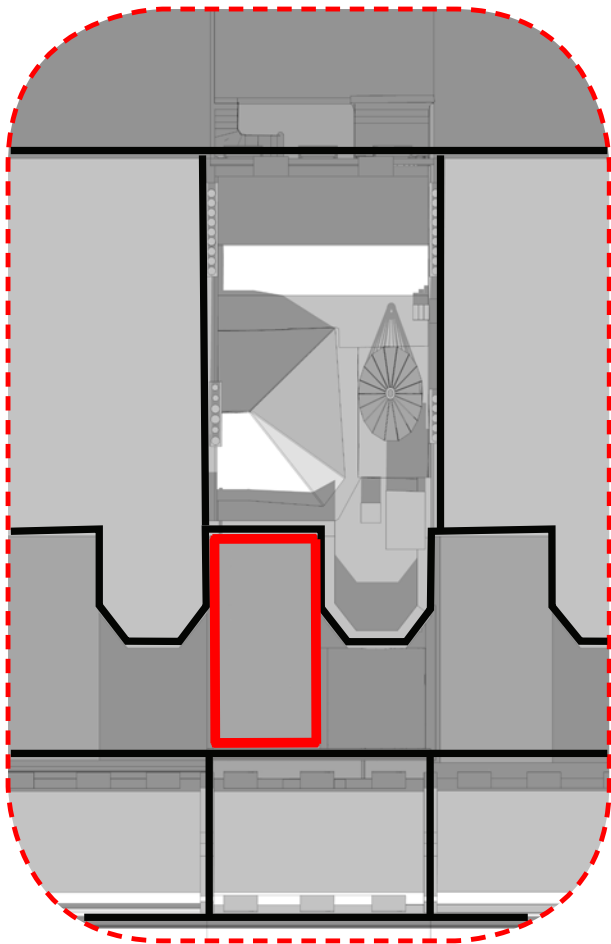


Site Plan showing the sun path in relation to the courtyard space between 42 Bedford Square and 13 Bedford Avenue

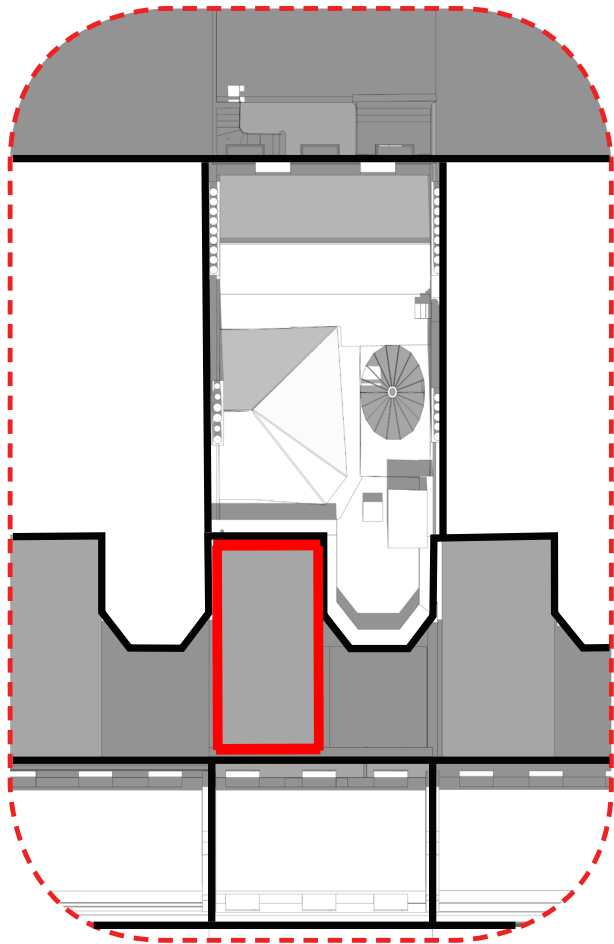
Sunlight Studies based on the courtyard space of the consented scheme



Summer Solstice
21st June
Midday



Winter Solstice
21st December
Midday



Spring Equinox
21st March
Midday

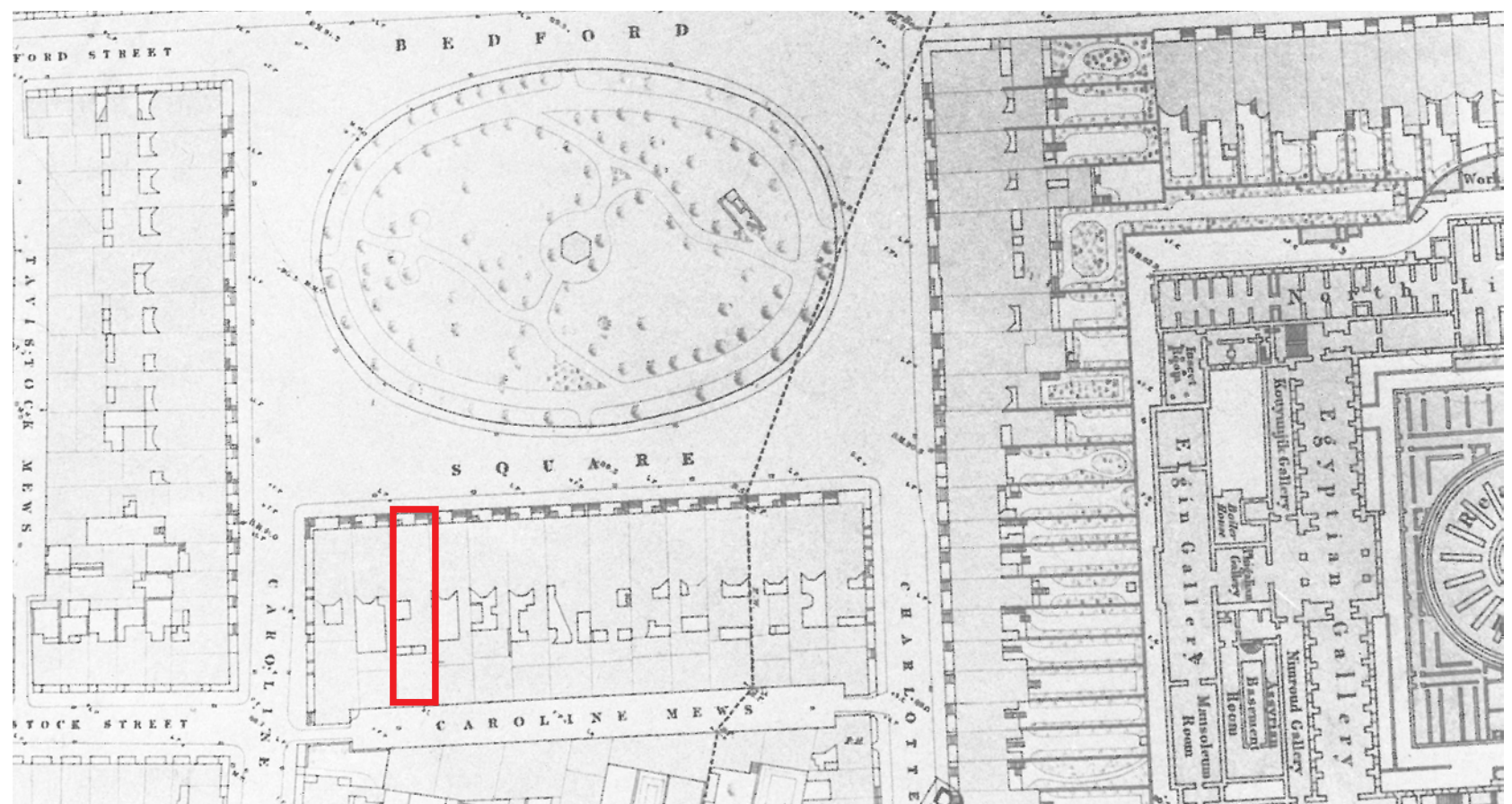
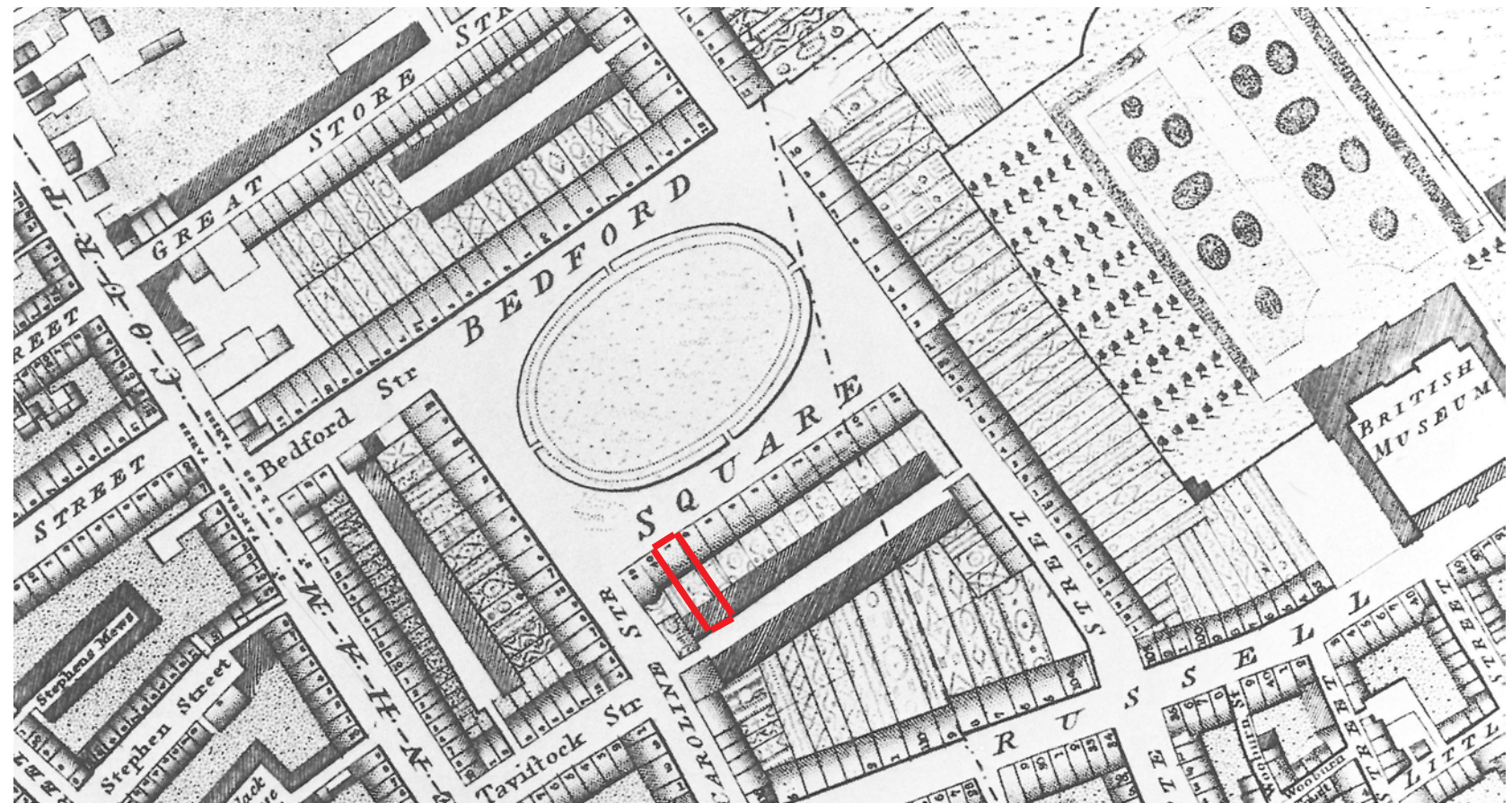
A more detailed daylight analysis has been carried out in support of the courtyard proposals outlined in this application and can be found appended to this report

2.4 Historic Context and Infill structures

The historic plans on this page illustrate the square at 1799 and 1874. In the latter, it appears that many of the courtyard spaces contained elements of infill, including number 42.

The page overleaf illustrates current examples of courtyard infill. Notably both neighbouring properties to number 42 Bedford Square contain single storey elements within the courtyard. In addition, these areas enjoy access to roof terraces from their respective link buildings at ground floor level.

At the end of the terrace, on the corner of Bedford Square and Bloomsbury Street, a two storey contemporary glazed structure can be seen from the street.



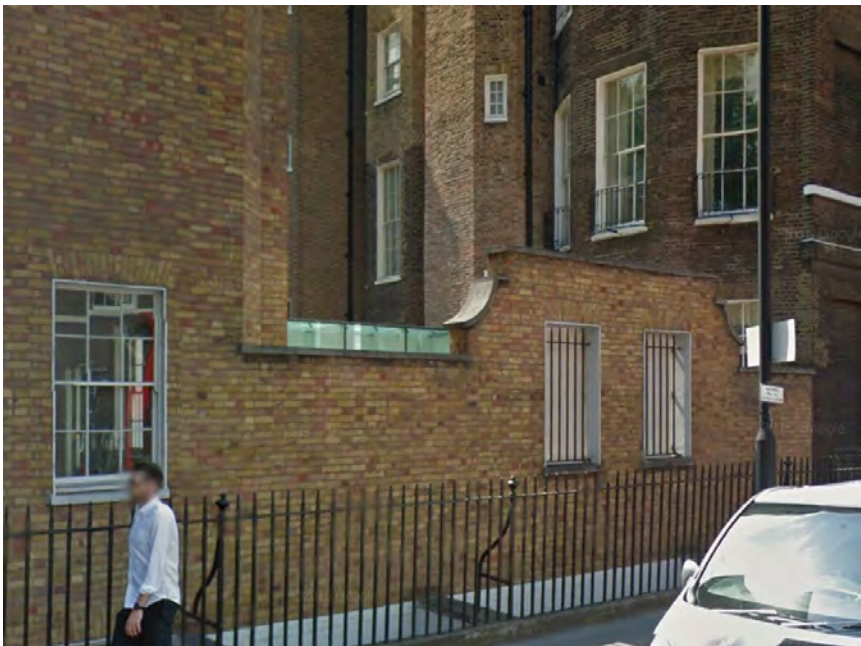
Historic plans of Bedford Square. Above: Horwood's Map, 1799. Below: Ordnance Survey Map, 1874
From Andrew Byrne, *Bedford Square: An Architectural Study*, The Athlone Press 1990.



41 Bedford Square / 11 Bedford Avenue



43 Bedford Square / 15 Bedford Avenue



53-54 Bedford Square / 35 Bedford Avenue

