

46-47 Russell Square London WC1

Heritage Assessment of proposed alterations to existing buildings

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1 Scope

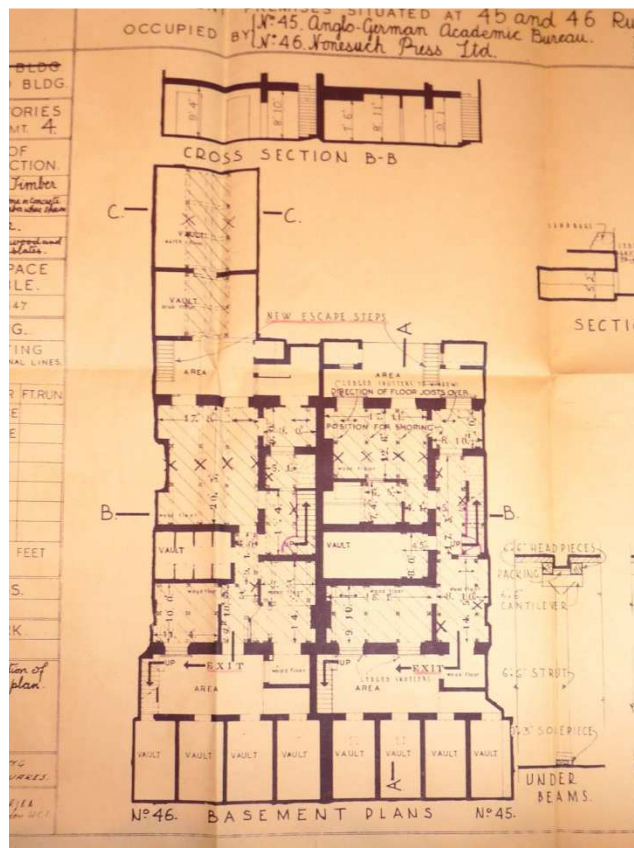
- 1.1 This Assessment has been produced to accompany planning and listed building applications for 46/47 Russell Square.
- 1.2 The Assessment is based on an examination of the building, consideration of the listing, the Survey of London, the Conservation Area Appraisal and other relevant sources of information. The conservation and design legislation outlined in section 3 is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all relevant policies but rather to indicate the key aspects relevant to this Assessment.
- 1.3 It has been prepared by Anthony Walker, a registered architect with a post graduate diploma in Building Conservation who is on the register of Architects Accredited in Building Conservation. He has been a visiting professor at Kingston University and lectures on building conservation matters at the Architectural Association and Cambridge University.

2 Background

- 2.1 The site is on the south side of Russell Square and lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area within Sub-Area 6 Bloomsbury Square, Russell Square and Tavistock Square.
- 2.2 The buildings are part of a terrace listed in 1969 grade II. The listing description reads: *CAMDEN TQ3081NW RUSSELL SQUARE 798-1/100/1420 (South side) 28/03/69 Nos.44-49 (Consecutive) and attached railings GV II Terrace of 6 houses, formerly a symmetrical terrace similar to Nos 52-60 (qv); with one surviving, projecting end bay (No.44) and central bays (Nos 47-49). c1800-03. By James Burton, altered c1898 by PE Pilditch. Multi-coloured stock brick with rusticated stucco ground floors and slated mansard roofs with dormers. Later terracotta dressings. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys, attics and dormers. Projecting bays 4 storeys. 3 windows each, No.44 with return of 4 blind windows to Montague Street. Round-arched doorways with pilaster-jamb, cornice-heads, fanlights, sidelights and double panelled doors; Nos 44, 47 and 48 with square-headed terracotta surrounds. Recessed, architraved casement and sash windows. 1st floor with cornices and central windows with pediments; Nos 47-49 central windows 3-light canted bays. Continuous cast-iron balconies to 1st floor windows. Projecting bays with 3rd floor cornice and enriched frieze below. Parapets. Dormers with terracotta cornices; projecting bays with alternating triangular and semicircular pediments, Nos 45 and 46 with semicircular pediments to centre dormers only. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached mid C19 cast-iron railings to areas. HISTORICAL NOTE: the Duke of Bedford was inspired to add terracotta dressings to these houses following the building of The Russell Hotel (qv).*
- 2.3 Bedford Square was conceived during the building boom which followed the Peace of Paris in 1763. A lull from 1767-1771 was followed by an upturn between 1773 and 1777 which turned into a further down turn in 1778 when France entered into the American War of Independence. However loans to builders from the Bedford Estate allowed the scheme for the Square to be completed by the end of 1783 as part of the spread of development north of New Oxford Street.
- 2.3 Southampton House, later in 1734 to be called Bedford House, was built about 1657 for Thomas Wriothesley 4th Earl of Southampton on the north side of Bloomsbury Square. The 1746 plan shows the main house facing the Square

with a small open area either side of the main house and development on either side. That to the east linking to Southampton Row and to the west with smaller properties leading to Montague House, which was on the site of the present British Museum. At that stage Bedford Place and Montague Street did not exist.

- 2.4 In 1800 the Duke of Bedford obtained two Acts of Parliament for developing his Estate and the same year James Burton, who had been working with the adjacent Foundling Estate, started the demolition of Bedford House which it is reported was no longer to the liking of the Duke as development to the north had marred his view of Hampstead and Highgate hills.
- 2.5 This development enabled Burton to create two new roads leading due north to a new open space named Russell Square, thereby creating a substantial amount of new development value for the Bedford Estate. Burton designed and developed many of the properties including the terrace along the south side of Russell Square in 1800-1803.
- 2.6 The terraces on the south side of the Square were altered in 1898, when the new terra cotta cornice, frieze and other decorative elements were introduced by the then Duke of Bedford following the success of the Russell Hotel designed by Charles Fitzroy Doll. These alterations were carried out to designs by PE Pilditch and substantially affected the main facades.
- 2.7 The back of the terrace has retained much of the original simple design but extensive extensions have been permitted since the second half of the nineteenth century thereby losing the simplicity which is still retained, for example, along the back of the terraces in Bedford Place. This is shown on the drawings in 1940 when the basement of 46 in conjunction with that of 45 was taken over for an air raid shelter.



- 2.8 Number 45 suffered significant war damage affecting the Party Wall and it was inevitable that much of the original fabric including ceilings and wall plaster was lost at that time.
- 2.9 During the latter part of the twentieth century there were a series of applications for the combined buildings. These include:
- HB 2802/R3 internal alterations in 1982
 - HB 9370111 internal alterations with new partitions to the 2nd 3rd and 4th floors 1993
 - 9470336 internal alterations and erection of partitions to form fire lobbies 1994
 - 2003/0018 retention of self contained flats ground, first and second floors 46 and change of use for the rest of the accommodation 2003
 - 2008/1898/L Internal refurbishment and rearrangement to improve reception, teaching and faculty offices and student facilities.2008
- 2.10 The result of these applications is that the basic form of most of the floors is substantially changed and few of the original partitions are retained. Both of the main staircases have been extended upwards. Many of the decorative details have also been changed.

3 Legislation

3.1 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

3.1.1 In Section 66 of the Act it is stated that *'in considering whether to grant permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting the local planning authority..... shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'*

3.1.2 In Section 72(1) regarding Conservation Areas, it is stated that *' special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.'*

3.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

3.2.1 It is stated in policy 14 that at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.

3.2.2 Section 12 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. There are a number of paragraphs relevant to this assessment including the following:

126. Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment,29 including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:

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

131. In determining planning applications, 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;*

134. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefit.

3.3 National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, paragraph 3.

'Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in everyday use to as yet undiscovered, undesigned buried remains of archaeological interest'.

3.4 London Plan

Policy 7.8 Heritage Assets

D Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.

Policy 7.9 Heritage led Regeneration

A Regeneration schemes should identify and make use of heritage assets and reinforce the qualities that make them significant so they can help stimulate environmental, economic and community regeneration.

B The significance of heritage assets should be assessed when development is proposed and schemes designed so that the heritage significance is recognised both in their own right and as catalysts for regeneration. Wherever possible heritage assets (including buildings at risk) should be repaired, restored and put to a suitable and viable use that is consistent with their conservation and the establishment and maintenance of sustainable communities and economic vitality.

3.5 Camden Local Plan

CS14 Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage

The Council will ensure that Camden's places and buildings are attractive, safe and easy to use by:

a) requiring development of the highest standard of design that respects local and character;

b) preserving and enhancing Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens;

c) promoting high quality landscaping and works to streets and public spaces;

d) seeking the highest standards of access in all buildings and places and requiring schemes to be designed to be inclusive and accessible;

e) protecting important views of St Paul's Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster from sites inside and outside the borough and protecting important local views.

3. Bloomsbury Conservation Area

5.91 Russell Square is the largest of Bloomsbury's squares and was developed following the construction of Bedford Square, utilising land that had formerly been reserved to maintain the view north from the later demolished Bedford House. The space is defined by cast-iron boundary railings (scholarly

replicas of the originals which were removed for the World War II effort), but separated from the surrounding development by busy one-way streets, which divide the space from the building frontages. Mature trees and peripheral landscaping lessen the impact of traffic on the space, and are important elements in the sub area which soften and filter views across the square and from surrounding streets.

5.92 The eight-storey, grade II listed Russell Hotel, designed by the Bedford Estate surveyor Charles Fitzroy Doll in a French Renaissance style, is a prominent landmark dating from 1892-98, which replaced earlier Georgian terraces on the east side of the square. It is an ornate red brick building with terracotta dressings with visual interest at roof level given by the steep roofs covered in green fishscale tiles, corner turrets and gabled bays. James Burton built the original, surviving terraces at the start of the 18th century. They are of four storeys with basements and attics and are built in a yellow stock brick with a rusticated stucco base. The townhouses on the south side were partly refaced in terracotta circa 1898, following the construction of the Russell Hotel. Examples of Burton's terraces remain on the north side (Nos 21-24) and on the south side (Nos 44-49 (consec) and Nos 52-60 (consec)). On the west side Nos 25-29 (consec) and Nos 38-43 (consec) are grade II listed, and retain their original fronts. No 30, the Institute of Chemistry, designed in 1913 by Sir J J Burnett, is also grade II listed.*

4 The Proposals.

- 4.1 The proposals are shown on the architect's drawings and the Design and Access Statement.
- 4.2 For the purposes of this assessment the exterior of the buildings is unchanged apart from maintenance works, the introduction at basement level of a disabled access lift and a new roof light over the modern extension at basement level behind number 47. External air conditioning plant in the front area of 47 and ducting under the basement windows to 46 will be removed. Windows in the eastern side elevation of the modern extension behind 46 will be altered to increase their height. These alterations are shown on the demolition drawings.
- 4.3 Internally the alterations are confined to areas previously altered under earlier consents.
- 4.4 The railings in front of 47 will be modified to provide access to the disabled lift. This will retain the form of the railings but allow for a section to be opened to gain access to the platform.

5 The impact of the proposals on the significance of the buildings and the Conservation Area

- 5.1 External impact
 - 5.1.1 The listing description notes the railings to the areas which it describes as being mid nineteenth century and thus not original. This does not mean that they are of no significance but clearly reduces the impact that modifications might have if they were original. The proposed modifications will preserve the general appearance while allowing a public benefit in enabling disabled access to the buildings. The lift itself will have a minimal visual impact.
 - 5.1.2 There are no changes to the front of the building and thus proposals have no adverse impact on the architectural or historic interest of the building. The removal of the plant and duct work in the front areas will enhance the setting of the designated heritage asset.

- 5.1.3 At the back of the building there are two existing back wings neither of which are original and that to number 46 is part of the air-raid accommodation from the second world war. The modifications to provide improved natural lighting will improve the sustainability of the buildings and do not have a particular impact on the architectural or historic interest of the buildings.
- 5.2 Impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.2.1 Although the gardens at the back of the terrace in Russell Square do provide a view of the back of 46 and 47 the terraces around this garden have been variously extended and the changes proposed being simple roof lights to existing spaces have a minimal impact. It is not considered that these harm the character of the area nor its appearance.
- 5.2.2 The removal of plant from the front areas will have a beneficial impact on the appearance of the conservation area from the main vantage point of Russell Square. As described above the introduction of disabled access will be done discretely and will have minimal impact on the appearance and character of the area while providing a public benefit.
- 5.3 Internal impact
- 5.3.1 The layout of the various floors and the detailing have been compromised by extensive earlier alterations. The removal of some of the miscellaneous small lavatory and similar spaces has allowed the remaining simple spaces while not being a reinstatement of the original layout to better reflect the simple layout which would have typified the original buildings.

6 Summary

- 6.1 It is considered that the proposals by retaining the external appearance of the buildings and ensuring their continued viable use fulfil the objectives of the NPPF, the London Plan and the Camden Local Plan with regard to the designated heritage asset.
- 6.2 If there is any harm to the buildings it is less than substantial and is balanced by enhancements including the removal of the external plant and the introduction of disabled access thus providing a positive public benefit.
- 6.3 The preservation of the exterior of the building will preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 6.4 It is therefore considered that the proposals comply with both national and local conservation policies.