

# 46-47 Russell Square London WC1

## Heritage Assessment of proposed alterations to front lightwell in existing building

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Dip arch (dist)., grad dip(cons) AA, RIBA, AABC



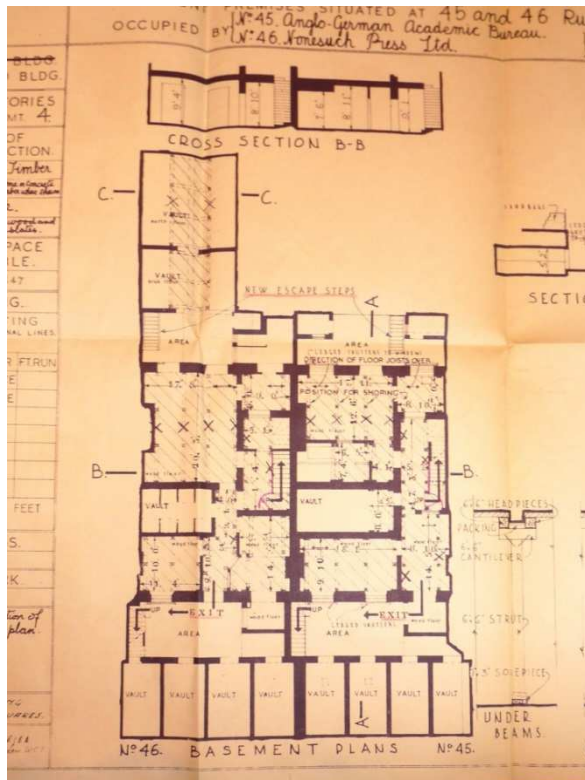
## **1 Scope**

- 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-jambs, 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 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.
- 2.11 The listing refers to the railings being mid nineteenth century indicating that they were not original to the terrace which was constructed at the beginning of the century circa 1800-03.

### **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, undesignated 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.*

### 3.6 Examination of Planning Practice Guidance states that *The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* is clear that local planning authorities should plan to

*create safe, accessible environments and promote inclusion and community cohesion.*

3.7 The building is in academic use and there is a need to provide adequate access for disabled people. To achieve this it is recognised that there is a need to make provision disabled access from the street. There is an existing internal lift which provides access to different floor levels internally.

3.8 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 Proposal.**

4.1 The application proposes an external lift with access formed as a gate in the existing railing along the back of pavement. This is described in more detail in the architects DAS.

4.2 More detailed consideration has been given to the lift which is proposed to be a simple platform with glass walls. This will be stationed in the front light well tight up against the wall to the vaults under the pavement and adjacent to the existing steps down to the front area.

4.3 It is considered that this location has two distinct advantages.  
First by being situated close to both the wall to the vaults and the small staircase when not in use and located at basement level this will be screened from view from the north and east and only be visible when standing on the access bridge to 47.  
Secondly it is proposed to form the gateway through the railing by using a section of the railing as a gate. By locating it adjacent to the existing gate to the steps this will minimise the interventions in the historic railings. The controls and locking devices will be located within the railings.

## **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.

5.2.2 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.

## **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 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 by enabling disabled access to a public institution.

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.