

## 53 BEDFORD SQUARE

Alterations to basement area access  
November 2016

### DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

53 Bedford Square stands at the south east corner of Bedford Square and forms the end of the south terrace. The main entrance to the property is on Bedford Square, but a secondary entrance had been formed by 1910, facing Bloomsbury Street to give access to the professional offices that occupied the ground floor. The associated mews house is accessed directly from Bedford Avenue. The house is listed Grade 1 as part of the listing of the houses forming the square. The mews was rebuilt in the 1890s as part of the development of Bedford Avenue and was reconstructed in the 1970s when the houses on the south side of the square were updated as commercial offices.

The proposal is for the replacement of the external staircase at the north east corner of the property that gives access to the basement area to Bedford Square and the removal of that to the south of the front steps to the side entrance labelled No.54 that gives access to the basement area to Bloomsbury Street. The two basement areas join at the corner of the property.

#### *Bedford Square basement area steps*

It is likely that the steps leading down to the basement area were originally constructed in stone and arranged in approximately the same location as the existing. The stone steps rose around the retaining walls of north east corner of the area to a stone landing supported on a brick quadrant arch that spanned the Bloomsbury Street area. To the south of this, cross walls, supported off brick arches to allow access along the area, braced the retaining wall. The arrangement of the steps is likely to have been similar to that surviving at No.40 at the other end of the south terrace.

The stone steps were replaced in the 20C with the present steel steps and the height of the landing was modified, being raised to the level of the head of the kerb. In addition, the top and bottom steps are restricted by the location of the landing and the right hand side of the door to the pavement vault. In consequence, the going of the present steel steps is extremely steep and makes it dangerous to use, especially when putting out dustbins on the pavement in time for the regular collection by the local authority.

This application, therefore, proposes the removal of the present landing and its supporting quadrant arch to increase the size of the stair well and the creation of a new landing supported on the existing brick arches immediately to the south. The finished level of the landing would align with the external pavement, making access much easier. The landing would be paved in York stone, laid on precast concrete slabs.

The existing gate from the landing to the pavement would be adapted and resited to a new opening to the south, and the kerb would be reduced to provide level access from the pavement. Its location is determined by the presence of a freestanding, utilities box on the pavement housing telephone communications equipment. The present gateway will be infilled with the railings salvaged from the new opening.

*Bloomsbury Street area steps*

It is understood that the steps were introduced when the property was divided between commercial and domestic uses at the beginning of the 20C. They have been redundant since the commercial use of the house extended to the whole building, and are similarly redundant now that the property is used as a single dwelling. The steps are constructed of concrete supported by painted brick walls. Again, because of the restricted stairwell, the going of the stair is very steep.

Removal of the steps will reopen the area to its original arrangement and allow much better access along the basement area.

The gate from the pavement will be replaced with railings made to match the existing.

In addition, the screen and gate beneath the steps leading to the door of No.54 will be removed. It appears to be after 1972.

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26 November 2016