

29a Montague Street WC1B 5BL

Heritage Assessment

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1 Scope

- 1.1 This assessment has been prepared to accompany proposals to enhance the office use of the Estate Office at 29a Montague Street
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 It is based on examination of the building, of the Bedford archives held at Woburn, the listing description and similar relevant documents.

2 Background

- 2.1 The London Estate Office was originally located in Covent garden and with the development of that area was moved to Bloomsbury where it was first located beside Montague House on the west side of Montague Street.
- 2.2 With James Burton's master plan for the redevelopment of Southampton House to provide a link between Bloomsbury Square and a new square to the north named Russell Square and the development of Montague House to provide the British Museum four houses facing Great Russell Street came back into the possession of the Estate in 1839 and by retaining the ends of the gardens a site became available on the eastern side of Montague Street at the southern end which it was considered would suit the needs of the Estate.
- 2.3 Thomas Stead the Estate Surveyor at the time drew up plans for a new Estate Office which was built in 1841-2 by William Cubitt. It was a free standing building set back from Montague Street behind a solid brick wall and with the mews serving both Montague Street and Bedford Street behind it to the east. The entrance gate from Montague Street was overlooked by a small compact lodge as a gate house.
- 2.4 The original building provided both accommodation for the staff running the Estate and secure storage termed a Muniment Room hence the metal shutters and doors to the ground floor.
- 2.5 Within the next thirty years the pressure for more space grew and in 1872 William Cross prepared alternative plans to expand the building. One provided a two storey extension to the north utilising the space now occupied by an extension to the Lodge. The other was a two storey extension at the back matching the main body of the building with a gallery around a central space at first floor.

APPENDIX A

- 2.6 A further unattributed plan was produced infilling the garden in front of the Office.

APPENDIX B

- 2.7 While these plans were not implemented as shown they are of value in showing some detail of the existing building including the ground floor chimney breast dividing the front of that floor in two and the proposals to cut across the northern most small office at first floor.
- 2.8 In 1885 number 77 Great Russell Street was designated for use by the Estate Steward as a residence and office thus relieving some of the pressure on space in the Estate Office and in 1890 number 76 was combined with 77 and retained for use by the Estate until 1919.
- 2.9 In 1921 Chas Fitzroy Doll prepared proposals for installing central heating in the Estate Office with the boiler on the northern side of the building. The accompanying letter to the Steward recommends making as few holes through the jack arches of the first floor as possible. By this time the ground floor was a single open space with the chimney breast shown on earlier plans removed. The first floor had two smaller rooms at the back and two larger ones at the front the northern most of which was subdivided to provide corridor access to the existing corridor leading to the small back staircase. The specification of the boiler house to be constructed is dated May 1927.

APPENDIX C

- 2.10 Examination of the first floor construction on the line of the chimney breasts at ground and first floor levels shows that there was a double row of metal joists from which the brick arches spring. There is no indication that in the exposed arches of either the flues from the ground floor passing through the floor nor of the presence of the chimney breasts on the ground floor. This suggests that this section of the first floor was reconstructed necessitating the removal of the first floor chimney breast.

APPENDIX C

- 2.11 In 1939 Christian Doll prepared further plans to extend the office with new wing along the southern face of the building returning to fill the area behind the existing building to the east.

APPENDIX D

- 2.12 The following year a specification was prepared for converting the Muniment Room into an Air Raid Shelter. This appears to have been carried out since in 1945 there is a quotation for removing some doors etc. building a new partition and redecoration of what is described as the ground floor strong room.

APPENDIX E

- 2.13 The building was listed grade II in 1969 and there has been no amendment since then. The listing description reads:

CAMDEN TQ3081NW MONTAGUE STREET 798-1/100/1148 (East side) 28/02/69 No.29A and attached wall, railings and lamps GV II Villa and attached lodge, set back from street in walled enclosure. 1841-3. By Thomas Stead. Villa: yellow stock brick with rusticated stucco quoins. Stucco modillion cornice and blocking course. 2 storeys. 4 windows with 1 window recessed side

entrance bay and 4 window return, mostly blind. Architraved doorway with bracketed canopy and lantern over entrance. Architraved sashes with original glazing bars. 4 decorated lead rainwater cisterns along west frontage dated 1715, 1745, 1764 and 1771. Lodge: yellow stock brick. Symmetrical single storey north wing with 3 windows and projecting pedimented central bay. Central doorway with half glazed door and bracketed canopy. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sashes. Parapet. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: courtyard railings: cast-iron railings with bud finials and ornamental lampstandard with twisted stem and ladder bars. Windsor lantern attached to south wing. Screen wall & attached railings: adjacent to street. Yellow stock brick with stone coping. Doorways at north and south ends; south doorway blocked. Attached railings with urn finials and gates.

2.14 In 1970 the condition of the properties facing Great Russell Street were described as being so bad that unless something were done they would not survive. By that time they had been unoccupied for five years due to the cost of making them habitable. Thus during the 70s there was a major restoration of those buildings including the construction of a modern wing stretching back to join with the Bedford Estate office. An opening was formed in the southern wall of the of 29a at first floor allowing the Estate office to link into the modern building with a much needed expansion of the Estate Offices. This required further modifications of the first floor of 29a including the removal of the inner wall to the front office in the south west corner, formation of a new shower room and other alterations.

APPENDIX F

2.15 Thus the original form of the building at first floor level with two larger rooms at the front and two smaller ones at the back with a corner back staircase had been lost with the need to provide additional office space to meet the Estate needs.

2.16 Examination of the skirtings and similar details confirms that a variety of changes have taken place.

APPENDIX G

2.17 Consent was obtained in 1997 to extend the residential unit along the northern side of the Estate office.

2.18 Consent was granted in 2002 for alterations to the main building including a pavilion extension on the eastern side to provide a Board room for meetings and fitting out the ground floor with glazed partitions to increase the efficiency of the working environment. This included new steps set between the pavilion and the historic building.

3 The proposals

3.1 There is increased activity needed in the London Estate office and the proposals are in response to the continued need for a more efficient working environment. They are described in more detail in the DAS.

3.2 At ground level a re-arrangement of the disabled lavatory accommodation and the removal of one section of the glazed offices provides more space of visitors and meetings to take place at ground level.

- 3.3 The Stewards office is removed to the first floor where better contact can be retained with other members of staff. An arched opening is proposed beside the chimney breast to facilitate easier communication between staff. The central back office is retained as existing and it is proposed to form an arched opening in the wall to the north back office again to improve the working space and connectivity for the office staff. The wall at the back of the office opposite the corner staircase was inserted as part of the 1970s link to the modern extension to the properties in Great Russell Street and is to be removed. See Appendix F
- 3.4 It is proposed to install PV panels on the flat roof behind the brick parapet to improve energy consumption. These are set in independent racks and do not necessitate any structural alterations to the building. The panels will be below the parapet level.

4 Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

- 4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework)
- 4.1.1 The Framework provides the basis for achieving sustainable development which is defined in paragraph 7 by reference to economic role, a social role and an environmental role which includes protecting the historic environment.
- 4.1.2 Paragraph 134 sets out the requirements where there is less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset.
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 benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
- 4.1.3 Significance is defined in the glossary as: **Significance (for heritage policy):** *The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.*
- 4.2 Camden Local Plan
- 4.2.1 The Local Plan was adopted in 2010. Policies CS14 and DP25 are relevant.
- 4.2.2 **CS14 Promoting High Quality Places and protecting 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 context 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.*

4.2.3 DP25 Conserving Camdens Heritage

Conservation areas

In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will:

a) take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;

.....

Listed buildings

To preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will:

e) prevent the total or substantial demolition of a listed building unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention;

f) only grant consent for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building; and

g) not permit development that it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building.

4.3 Bloomsbury Conservation Area

4.3.1 The building is situated at the southern end of Montague Street and is in sub areas 6 of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area

5.88 Montague Street links the south-east corner of Russell Square to Great Russell Street.

The street benefits from views north towards the greenery of Russell Square, but has its own uniform townscape with a high sense of enclosure created by the 1800s terraces on its east and west sides, all of which are listed grade II, and were developed by the Bedford Estate following the demolition of Bedford House in 1802.

The strong visual consistency derives from the repeated identical frontages. The properties are of four storeys with a continuous parapet and are built in a yellow stock brick with a continuous band at third-floor sill level and a rusticated stucco ground floor and basement level. Each townhouse is three-bays wide with a recessed, semi-circular arched doorway and iron balconies to first-floor windows. The terrace on the west side is a continuation of one facing Russell Square, with several buildings converted to office use for the British Museum. The terrace conceals the great bulk of the main museum buildings, which are of a very different scale to the domestic scale of the houses. The back gardens have been colonised by the laboratory and workshop buildings of the museum. On the east side, properties in the past were laterally converted to create sizeable hotels, a predominant use around Russell Square. On both sides of the street, a number of properties remain in residential use. In the centre of the east side, between the gap between the two terraces, stand some decorative iron gates dating from 1899, which project forward of the main building line. They give access to the rectangular private communal garden behind, which is maintained by the Bedford Estate for the benefit of the surrounding terraces.

5.89 The terrace on the west side stops short at its southern end, due to the presence of the 1820s east wing of the British Museum main frontage, a large-scale neo-classical stone building designed by Robert Smirke in a Greek Revival style. The streetscape opens up at this point, giving views to the south-west of the museum forecourt which is enclosed by heavy, cast-iron railings, listed grade II. Both sides of the southern end of the street benefit from mature trees which play an important role in long views.*

Opposite the museum, on the east side, is No 29a, a grade II listed two storey villa with attached lodge, dating from 1841, which is set back from the street behind a tall boundary wall and built in yellow stock brick with

stucco dressings. The modern extension that links the block to the Great Russell Street frontage is of a similar scale with vertically proportioned openings and is neutral in streetscape terms. These buildings are the offices of the Bedford Estate.

4.4 Preapplication advice

4.4.1 A preapplication submission was made and advice received on 18th August. Two options were submitted for comment.

4.4.2 The advice recognised that the building has been predominantly in use as the Bedford Estate Office since its construction and that there is a close historic attachment between the building and its function.

4.4.3 It was acknowledged that there have been significant alterations since an early stage in its life in order to maintain its function and relationship with the Estate.

4.4.4 Although the benefits which were brought forward were seen to ensure the continued use of the building for its historic function neither of the options proposed were considered totally acceptable. However it was suggested that a balanced approach could be considered. This approach would:

- *Create an enlarged opening between the proposed rooms; 'reception' and 'Elizabeth's Office', however investigative works would need to take place to appreciate the fabric. Historic floor plans show that alteration has taken place in the past in this location; therefore there may be more scope to make changes here. Any works however should be minimal and result in the retention of historic detailing (cornices etc.) by way of substantial nibs and downstand.*

- *Removal of the wall adjacent to 'Marks office'; historic plans show that this is not in a location as per the historic plan form and is considered a modern addition and would not involve loss of historic fabric, or impact on the historic plan form. This however should still be justified further at application stage.*

4.4.5 The advice recognised that the building is grade II listed in its own right and is not associated to or constructed in style or form which matches the adjacent properties.

4.4.6 It was considered that the PV panels on the roof could be supported in principle subject to the detail design and a condition that they would be removed once no longer in use.

5 The significance of the building and the impact of the proposals on that significance

5.1 The significance of a building as defined in the Framework can include architectural, artistic or historic values.

5.2 The Bedford Estate office having been built to provide the administrative base for the London Estate with particular architectural features such as the metal shutters and doors on the ground floor has considerable architectural and historic significance. The original building was separated into individual interlinked rooms heated by open fire places. The corner staircase was a

utilitarian means of access between the two floors while the northern staircase provided a public means of access.

- 5.3 The building has been used to provide office and meeting spaces from the outset to be used by the Estate Staff and the Duke of Bedford for the management of the Estate. The purpose of the proposed alterations is to ensure the continuation of this historic function.
- 5.4 The need for change to allow this to happen has been demonstrated over the years and is part of the character of the building. Apart from the alterations to the residential element on the northern side of the building and the conservatory at the back the alterations during the second half of the twentieth century onward have not affected the exterior of the building.
- 5.5 The current proposals do not affect the appearance from the public realm. The two external alterations are the installation of PV panels which have a public benefit by reducing the need for generated power supplies and alterations to the modern steps beside the pavilion. The panels are hidden behind the existing brick parapet and are fitted in trays which ensure that there is no intervention with the fabric other than for a connecting cable. Access for maintenance can be over the flat roof from the properties in Great Russell Street which is within the Bedford Estate ownership. The steps are modern and the intention is to retain them in the current location but provide new stone steps and landing.
- 5.6 Internally note has been taken of the preapplication advice.
- 5.6.1 The wall along the back of the first floor room in the south west corner is removed and a plan is provided in appendix F showing how that worked when the link was formed as part of the 1970s alterations uniting the Estate Office with accommodation on the first floor of the extension to the Great Russell Street properties. It is considered that the reinstatement of the Estate Office as a self contained unit is beneficial to the understanding of its historic role and setting. The partition to be removed is modern and its removal although it does not produce an exact replica of the original room does create a space more in accordance with the original size and proportions.
- 5.6.2 The western wall to the room on the first floor in the north east corner has been retained with a reduced arched opening thus retaining the form of the room and all the decorative features. The skirting removed will be used for the return faces of the arched opening. A proposal to create this opening was shown on some of the historic drawings. It is not known whether this was implemented and one stage and then blocked up but the current proposals do retain the form of the room and the principle of access from one room to another.
- 5.6.3 A small opening is proposed in the short wall from the first floor fireplace to the outer western wall. This again will enhance communications between the different working groups and retain all decorative plaster work with skirtings reused to line the returns of the arch. It is considered that

originally the access to the main room on the first floor in the north west corner was by the main staircase with a small corridor link to the internal stair which can be discerned from the plan in Appendix C. The doorway between the two rooms on the western side of the first floor was a later alteration echoing that which is now proposed on the western side of the chimney breast. There is a double beam in the first floor construction in this location which can be seen from below. The space between the beams is not wide enough for flues from the floor below where originally there was another chimney breast which appears to have been removed with the advent of radiator heating. It is possible that these beams were inserted when the ground floor chimney structure was removed in which case the first floor structure may have had to be removed and rebuilt. It is considered that the proposed small opening retains the form of the small wall.

- 5.6.4 On the ground floor the alterations proposed are all to the works carried out earlier this century and do not involve historic fabric. They do not conceal any fabric of significance.
- 5.7 It is considered that the alterations by helping ensure the continued use of the building for its original historic function and maintaining public access for the community of the Estate needing to conduct business with the Estate makes the biggest contribution to sustaining the significance of the building. However it is also considered that there are other benefits including on the first floor reinstating the general form of the south west room so that there are two similar sized spaces along this side of the building. This makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the building. The two openings it is proposed to form are subservient to the walls in which they are formed and continue the principle of access through adjoining rooms which was part of the original concept of the space.

Summary

- 4.1 There are no changes to the exterior of the building other than the installation of the pv panels which are hidden from view and thus there is no impact on the external appearance of the building or the Conservation Area and the replacement of the modern steps which are tucked in between the historic building and the pavilion with stone steps and landing in a similar layout. The character and appearance of the conservation area is preserved.
- 4.2 From the archive investigations and inspection of skirtings etc on site it is clear that the interior of the building has been subject to continual changes in the interests of improving the working environment while retaining the historic use of the building. It is considered that the current proposals are part of that historic pattern of change and constitute the optimum viable use for the building which will preserve its role at the heart of the London Estate.
- 4.3 It is acknowledged that there is some small loss of historic fabric although in the main any decorative material will be reused and decorative plaster work

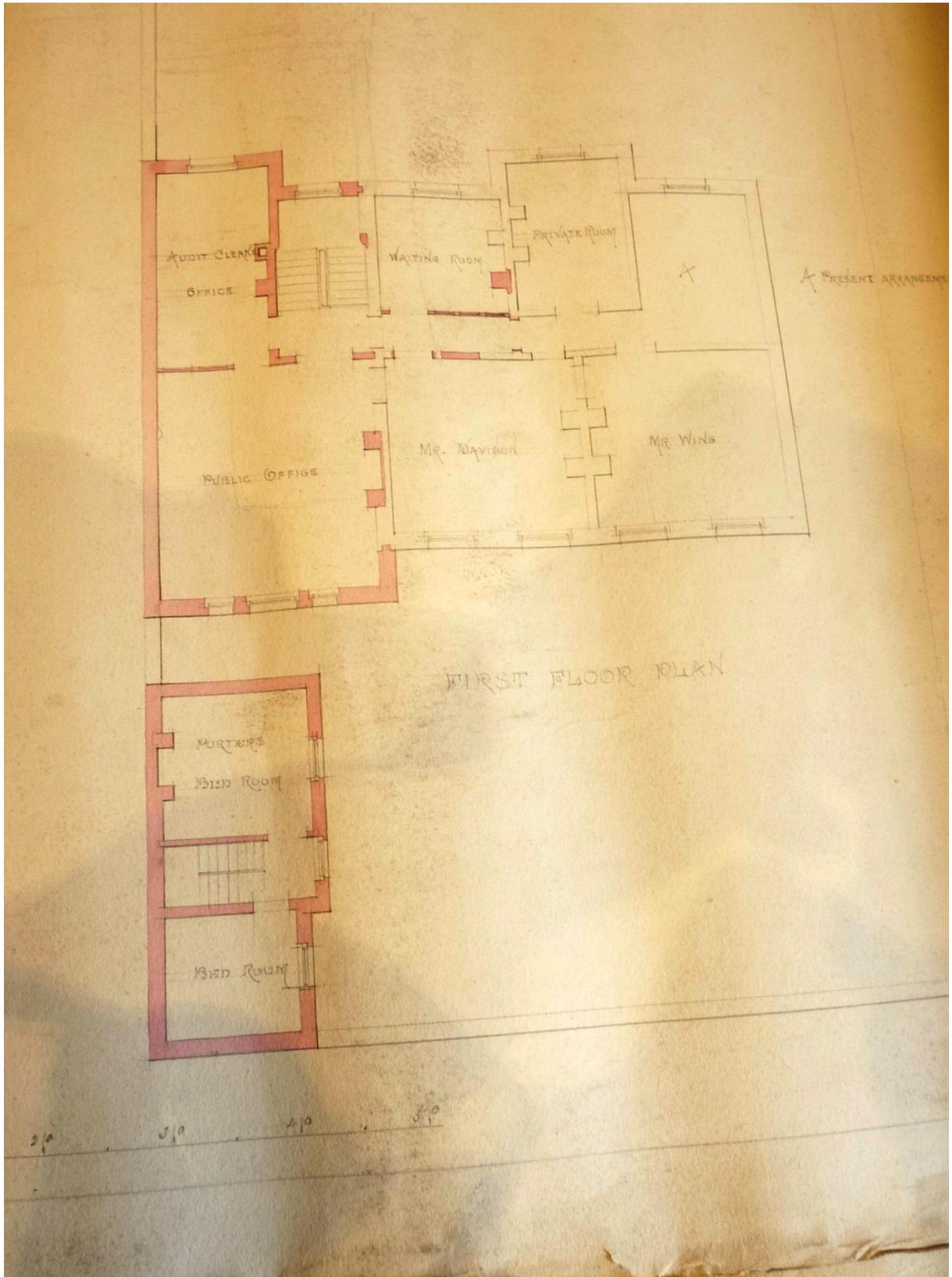
is left unchanged. There is therefore less than substantial harm but it is argued that this is balanced by public benefits. The building is generally hidden from public view by a high brick wall. The continued and enhanced use as the Bedford Estate London Office allows continued access by a range of the public either as tenants, prospective tenants, advisors, workmen and so forth. Thus it is argued that this represents the optimum viable use as recommended in the Framework and in addition as noted in 5.7 also enhances the spatial arrangement at first floor level.

- 4.4 It is considered that the proposals do follow the requirements of the Local Plan as set out above and protect the designated heritage assets. Although there are a number of listed buildings close by as there is no development externally it is considered that these are unaffected visually although from social and historic aspect the continued viability of the Estate Office does have a beneficial relationship with many of them.
- 4.5 It is therefore considered that the proposals do comply with both national and local conservation legislation and guidance.

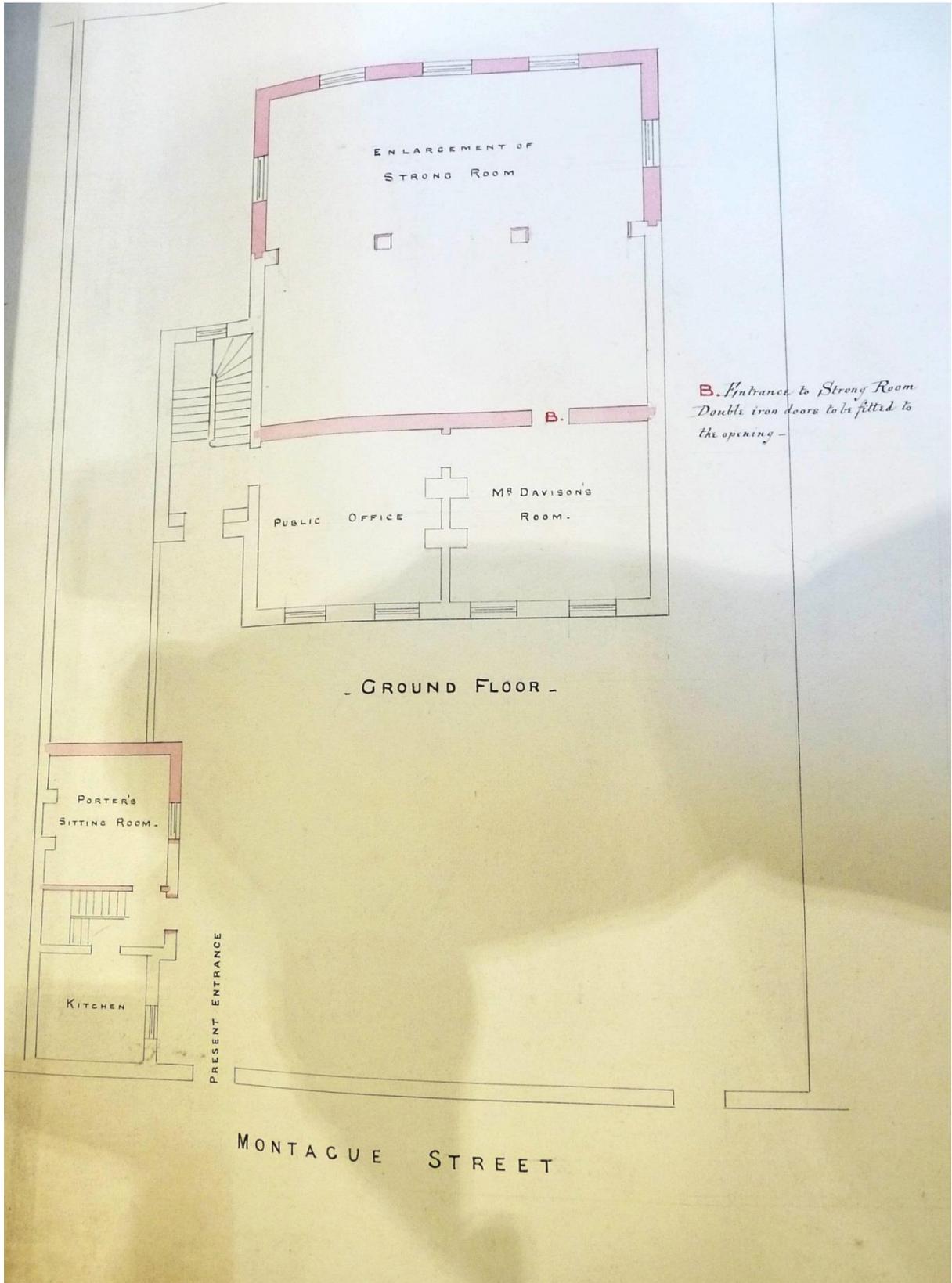
Anthony Walker
23rd November 2016

APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

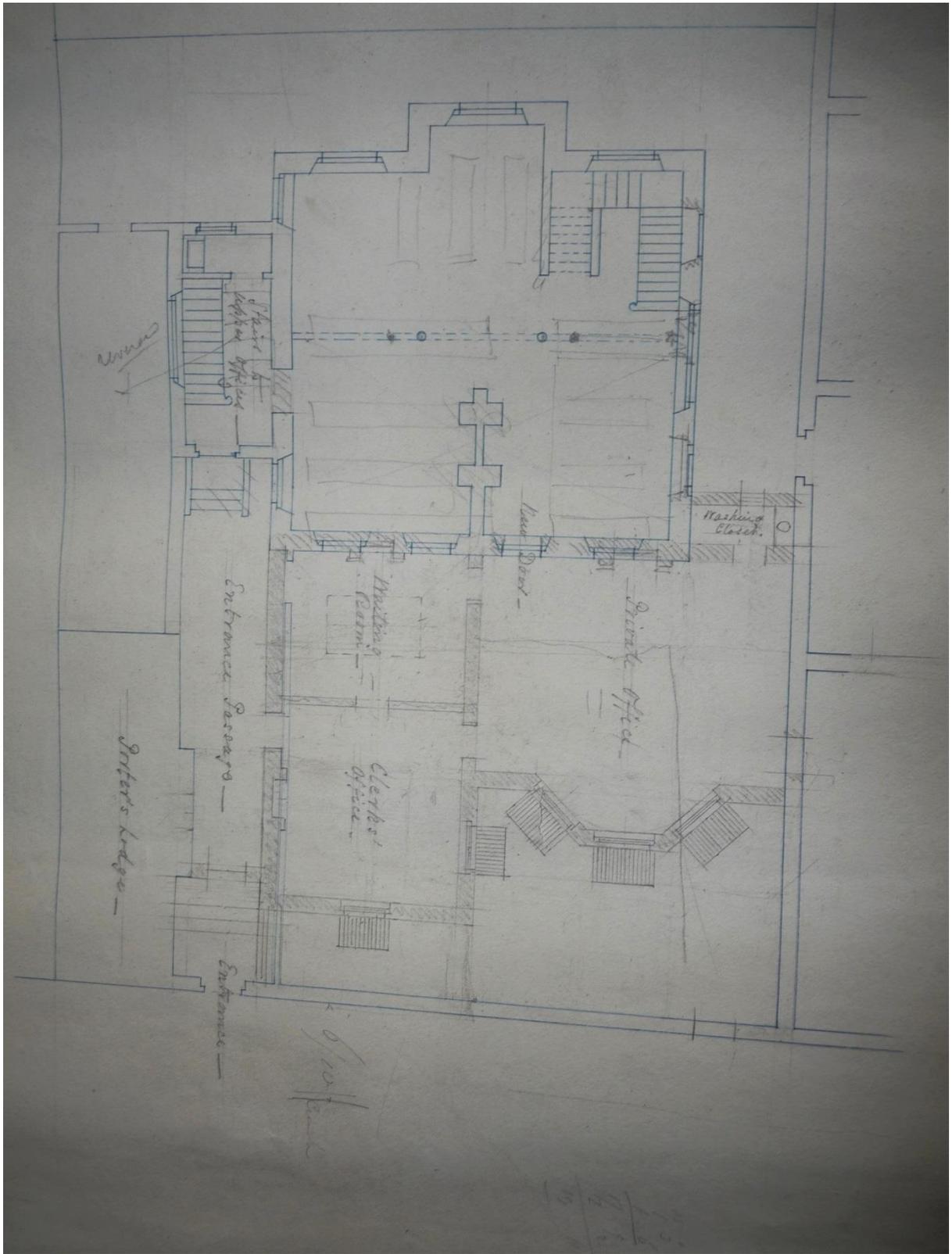
Proposed expansion at the side first floor plan showing new corridor through the first smaller office at the back.



Proposed expansion to the back of the existing Estate Office ground floor plan



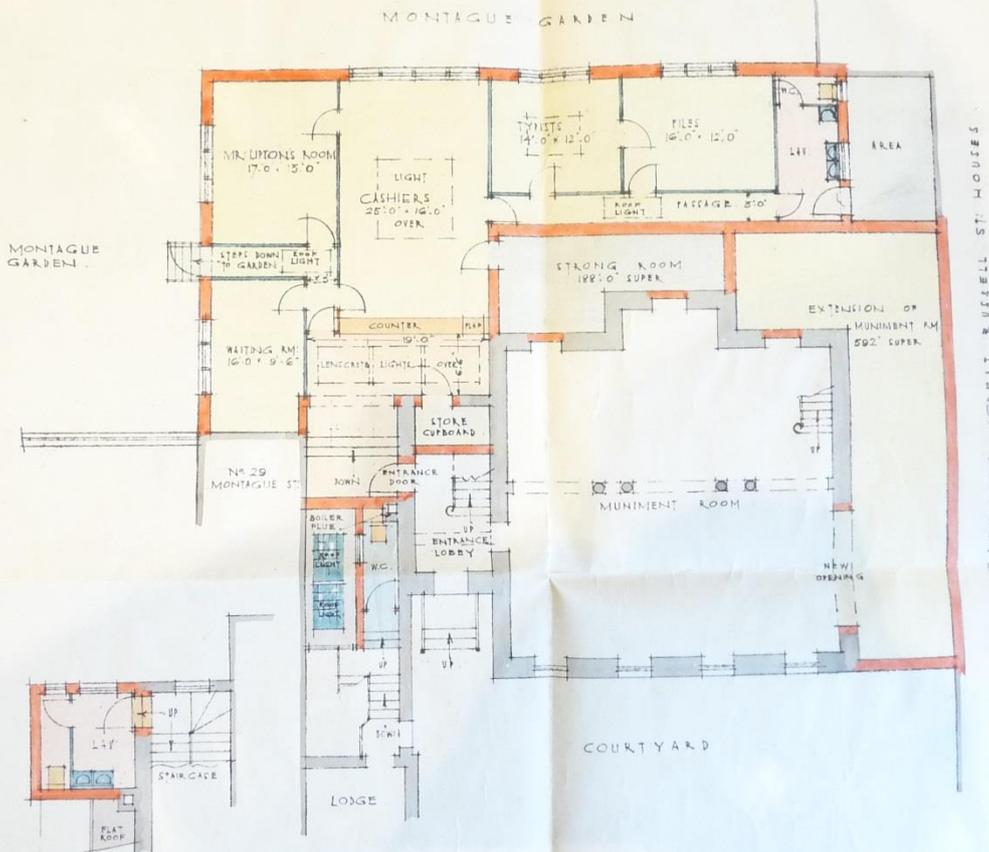
APPENDIX B
Unattributed proposals for expansion at the front of the Estate Office



APPENDIX C
Central Heating proposals

BEDFORD ESTATE OFFICE - BLOOMSBURY
 PROPOSED EXTENSION

SCALE: ONE INCH EQUALS EIGHT FEET



LAVATORY OFF
 HALF LANDING OF STAIRS

PLAN OF GROUND FLOOR

CHRISTIAN C. BOLL 1940
 5 SOUTHAMPTON PLACE N.C.

APPENDIX E

1940 Air Raid Shelter specification

SPECIFICATION OF WORKS required to be done
at the Bedford Estate Office in forming Air Raid Shelter
in Muniment Room

Christian C.T. Doll,
F.R.I.B.A.,
5, Southampton Place,
Bloomsbury. W.C.1

May 1940.

Securely pack up all window openings (excepting that for use as escape) from floor to head with books as directed. Provide and fix two stout deal supports to each window with ends fitted behind steel shutter casings to hold packing.

Form the enclosure for chemical closet where shewn 7'0" high with Paramount boarding and deal framing and provide and hang to deal frame a match-boarded door with bolt etc.

Supply one chemical closet

Erect the wall enclosing the stairs where shewn for full height of ground floor with Fletton bricks set in Portland cement mortar properly wedged to trimming above pointed and finished with fair faces. The openings to have 6"x 3" fir lintols over with a 6"x 3" support on wall at bottom of stairs.

Provide and hang hard wood door (second hand) at bottom of stairs. The escape door to be 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " deal. Both of these doors are to have suitable furniture and locks.

Provide and fix the step ladders as shewn in deal wrot with treads and string securely framed.

Cut away portion of iron grille between the flat rails and provide and hang an opening grille in the opening with a suitable bolt and hinged to open inwards.

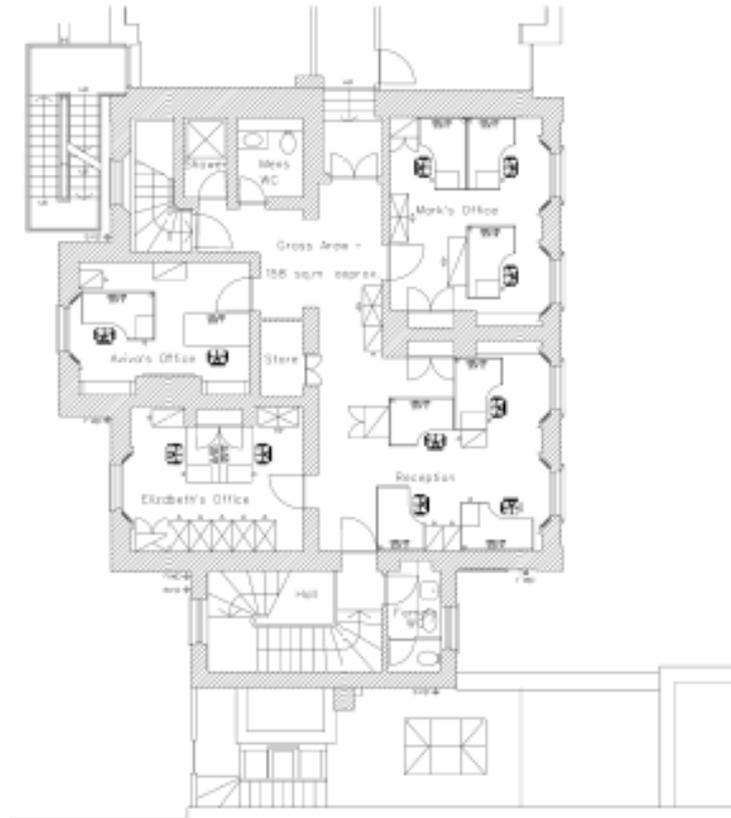
Cut away portion of metal window where shewn on detail to open and provide and hang to old steel glazing bars an opening casement with fastener and hinged to open outwards.

Prepare for and distemper on both sides the enclosure wall and closet enclosure.

Knot stop prime and paint four coats on new joinery and prepare for and paint three coats of oil colour on ironwork.

APPENDIX F

Plan showing link to modern extension to properties in Great Russell Street created in 1970s. Plan shows light weight partition to separate the office in the top right hand corner from the stairs



APPENDIX G

Variety of skirtings and deep skirtings taken across original fire places

