

Design, Access and Heritage Statement



42 Bloomsbury Street, Camden

On behalf of Interactive Space

May 2017

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Design, Access and Heritage Statement has been written by Heritage Collective on behalf of Interactive Space. It relates to 42 Bloomsbury Street within the London Borough of Camden (LB Camden).
- 1.2 42 Bloomsbury Street is listed grade II and dates to c.1766. It is part of a terrace of 19 houses and is listed for its group value with numbers 24-60. The building is also located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.¹
- 1.3 Full details of the proposed development are set out within the drawn submission of the application. In summary it comprises internal refurbishment to provide a new office use to the building, previously used as a language college. It is also proposed to add a new plaque to the front elevation of the building.
- 1.4 On a site visit to the building it was apparent that some non-original door openings at ground and first floor have been closed up and plastered over recently. This application seeks to apply for retrospective consent for this change as well as the proposed internal refurbishment.

Access

- 1.5 The proposed works will not change access arrangements to the building.

Purpose of this Report

- 1.6 The purpose of this document is to assist with the determination of the application, informing decision takers of the effects of the proposed refurbishment and new signage to 42 Bloomsbury Street on the historic built environment. To this end, value judgements on the significance of 42 Bloomsbury Street (as a grade II listed building) and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area have been made. A site visit was undertaken in March 2017

¹ There are other listed buildings within the vicinity but due to the limited proposed works, which are primarily internal there will be no change to the setting of any nearby listed buildings and they have been scoped out of this assessment.

at which time access to the basement was not possible, all other areas of the property were visited.

2.0 RELEVANT HERITAGE POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 2.1 The decision maker is required by sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. There is a strong presumption against the grant of permission for development that would harm the a listed building, though the presumption will plainly be lessened if the harm is less than substantial within the meaning in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as is explained further below.
- 2.2 The decision maker is further required by section 72(1) of the Act to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 2.3 Harm is defined by English Heritage as change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset.²
- 2.4 The significance of a heritage asset is defined in the NPPF as being made up of four main constituents, architectural interest, historical interest, archaeological interest and artistic interest. The setting of the heritage asset can also contribute to its significance.
- 2.5 The NPPF requires the impact on the significance of a designated heritage asset **to be considered in terms of either “substantial harm” or “less than substantial harm” as described within paragraphs 132 to 134 of that document.** National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) makes it clear that substantial harm is a high test, and recent case law describes substantial harm in terms of an effect that would vitiate or drain away much of the significance of a heritage asset.

The London Plan

- 2.6 The London Plan (2016) provides the city-wide context within which individual boroughs must set their local planning policies. Policies of relevance to the historic environment include:

² Paragraph 84 of Conservation Principles 2008.

- 2.7 Policy 7.4 – Local Character: Buildings, streets and open spaces should provide a high-quality design response that (i) has regard to pattern and grain of existing spaces, (ii) contributes to positive relationships between urban and natural landscapes, (iii) is human in scale, (iv) allows positively contributing buildings to influence the future character, and (v) is informed by the surrounding historic environment.
- 2.8 Policy 7.8 – Heritage Assets and Archaeology: This policy seeks to safeguard heritage assets. The policy encourages development that (i) identifies, values, conserves, restores, re-uses and incorporates heritage assets, where appropriate, and (ii) that conserves heritage assets and their setting.

Local Heritage Policy

London Borough of Camden's Local Development Framework (LDF)

- 2.9 The Local Development Framework is made up of a number of documents. With the Core Strategy (2011), and the Development Policies (2010-2025) being of most relevance.
- 2.10 The Core Strategy aims to conserve the historic environment through the promotion of high quality development. CS14 - Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage is of most relevance, with the salient passages contained within this report.
- 2.11 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;**
- 2.12 Development Policy 25 deals with Heritage. The relevant parts of the policy are included below. It states that 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;
- b) only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area;

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 2.13 There is a Character Appraisal and Management Strategy for the Bloomsbury Conservation Area (April 2011) which is relevant to an assessment of the development proposals and has been used as a basis for the understanding of the importance of the application site to the conservation area.

3.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF HERITAGE ASSETS

Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter considers the significance of the heritage assets potentially affected by the proposed development. It is recognised that not all parts of a heritage asset will necessarily be of equal significance. In some cases, certain elements could accommodate change without affecting its significance. Change is only considered harmful if it erodes an asset's significance. Understanding the significance of any heritage assets affected and any contribution made by their setting (paragraph 128, NPPF 2012) is therefore fundamental to understanding the scope for and acceptability of change.

42 Bloomsbury Street

- 3.2 The application site dates to 1766 and was built as part of the speculative development of Bloomsbury Street. The list description reads:

'Terrace of 19 houses. c1766. Yellow stock brick with slated mansard roofs with dormers and tall slab chimney-stacks. Plain stucco continuous 1st floor sill band. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys, attics and basements. Nos 24, 26 & 58, 2 windows each; remainder have 3 windows each. Round-arched doorways with fluted pilaster-jambs carrying cornice-heads; fanlights and panelled doors. Gauged brick flat arches (some painted red) to recessed sash windows with some original glazing bars. Blind boxes to some ground floor windows. Parapets. No.24: stucco entrance surround and plain door frame. No.28: ground floor painted black. No.32: stucco entrance surround with pilasters. No.36: stucco entrance surround with rusticated bands and female head on keystone. Ground floor painted black. No.38: stucco entrance surround with vermiculated rustication to pilasters supporting entablature with enriched frieze; patterned radial fanlight. Ground floor painted black. No.40: rusticated stucco doorway surround. Nos 46 & 48: all brickwork painted black. No.56: with enriched arch to radial patterned fanlight. Nos 58 & 60: vermiculated stucco rustication to entrance arch and jambs; female heads to keystones. No.58 with radial patterned fanlight. Some houses with original lead rainwater heads. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with urn or torch flambe finials to areas.'

- 3.3 42 Bloomsbury Street has architectural interest in its external elevations and internal features. The buildings external architectural interest is primarily drawn from its Georgian style and similarity with other buildings in the terrace. The building is of yellow stock brick with altered sash windows and a traditional mansard roof. The entrance has been altered, resulting in the loss of one of the stained glass panels to the side of the front door. The contribution of the front elevation to the architectural interest of the building is primarily drawn from its contribution as part of a long terrace of buildings of similar heights and features despite later alterations.
- 3.4 Internally the building retains a number of features of architectural interest including the staircase between ground and second floor, doors, architraves, skirting, fireplaces and shutters. All these elements contribute to the architectural interest of 42 Bloomsbury Street.
- 3.5 The building is of historic interest as part of the distinctive terraced development of the area. The building is not known to have any associative interest with important figures.
- 3.6 The building has some archaeological interest derived from its contribution to a set piece of development that dates to the 18th century. There is further archaeological interest in the surviving built fabric within the building.
- 3.7 The building is of limited artistic interest resulting from the level of craftsmanship internally including the stained glass panel to the entrance door and the tiles to the fireplace at first floor level.

Bloomsbury Conservation Area

- 3.8 First designated in 1968 the Bloomsbury Conservation Area has been extended on several occasions to include development beyond the Georgian core of the area. An appraisal was produced by LB Camden in 2011 and is adopted supplementary planning guidance (see map at Appendix 1). The area covers up to 160 hectares and incorporates what is considered to be an internationally important example of town planning based on formal landscaped squares located on a grid of streets. There is much uniformity in the townscape of the area, despite changes in the use of the buildings from residential to office and

commercial uses during the 19th and 20th century. Cultural institutions and educational establishments also form a significant part of the area.

- 3.9 This is a conservation area with very high architectural and historical importance and interest. Its architectural value is derived not only from the variety of built form, but also the quality of the design of the terraces and individual architectural details that make up the area and its built environment. Listed buildings within the area possess the most important architectural interest but other unlisted buildings also contribute to the architectural value of the place as a whole. Historical value and importance is derived from the people associated with the development of Bloomsbury and the past inhabitants of its buildings, including significant composers, artists, scientists, authors and members of parliament who lived and worked in the centre of London during the 18th and 19th century. Historical interest is also derived from the development of the street scene and the buildings over time and of course the overall town planning concept that underpins the entire character of the area.
- 3.10 Bloomsbury is additionally of archaeological significance given its location and potential for as yet unknown archaeological evidence of past occupation. It is also of high artistic value as an area which contains works of art and sculpture in and around the institutions within the area. The British Museum elevates the special architectural and historical interest of the area due to its international import.

Contribution of 42 Bloomsbury Street to the Significance of Bloomsbury Conservation Area

- 3.11 The application site contributes to the character and appearance of the conservation area by being part of its 18th century development. Although the external elevation has undergone some change, 42 Bloomsbury Street has similarity with other buildings in the terrace. It also contributes to the character and appearance of the conservation area as part of the original layout of the area.

4.0 POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter of the statement examines potential impacts on heritage significance. It addresses the nature of the development, the effects on the elements that make up setting, and the effects on the core constituents of significance. It also has regard to mitigation and minimising harm.

The Nature of the Development

- 4.2 It is proposed to refurbish 42 Bloomsbury Street and provide a new plaque to the front external elevation.
- 4.3 The proposed works include:
- Removal of one door at basement level;
 - Installation of new counter and tea point in basement area;
 - Door at first floor level to be modified to improve circulation and;
 - Installation of a new plaque to the front elevation.
- 4.4 In addition, non-original openings have been blocked in two locations. These works have already been undertaken but do not have consent. As part of this application it is sought to regularise these works. The single width door openings have been infilled at ground and first floor level. These changes have not involved the removal of historic fabric and have had a positive effect on the significance of the building, restoring the original plan form as two separate front and rear rooms.
- 4.5 It is proposed to remove a door at basement level. This is a six panelled door of an appropriate style for the age of the building, although unlikely to originally to have belonged in this location due to the traditionally subservient nature of the basement. The door will be stored on site and can be reused in future. The removal of the door and its retention will not require the permanent removal of historic fabric and this change will preserve if not enhance the significance of the building by restoring an experience of the buildings hierarchy where architectural detailing would have been simpler at basement level.

- 4.6 The installation of a new counter and tea point will not harm the significance of the building. The tea point will utilise existing service runs and will not require new intervention into historic fabric. The attachment of the units will require some minimal intervention into historic fabric but this change will not affect the special architectural or historic interest of the building.
- 4.7 The proposed alteration of the door at first floor level will not affect the significance of the building. The door will be retained, but will be re-hung to improve the circulation pattern of access to this floor. This change will preserve the significance of the listed building.
- 4.8 It is proposed to locate a new plaque on the front elevation of the building. The plaque will be 300mmx200mmx60mm attached to the brickwork with four aluminium fixings. The sign will be a white background with blue writing and logo (see drawing 598-INT). The sign will not be illuminated. This change is entirely sympathetic to the significance of the listed building. The size and style of the sign is appropriate for advertising the new use of the building and will not affect the buildings character of special architectural and historic interest.

Effect on the Heritage Values of 42 Bloomsbury Street

- 4.9 The proposed works would enhance the architectural interest of the building by restoring plan form. Although it is proposed to remove one six panel door this will be stored on site and can be re-used in the future.
- 4.10 The historic interest of the building will be retained. This is primarily found in its similarity with other buildings in the terrace. The addition of a small, non-illuminated plaque on the front elevation will preserve the historic interest of the building.
- 4.11 The archaeological interest of the building will not be affected by the proposals. No historic fabric will be removed and the contribution of the building to the composition of the terrace will not be affected.
- 4.12 Overall the proposals would enhance, the significance of the listed building and no harm is identified by the proposed refurbishment or change to the plan form.

Effect of the Proposals on the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

- 4.13 The only external change to 42 Bloomsbury Street will be the addition of a small plaque to the front elevation. The size and style of the plaque is completely appropriate to the character and appearance of the conservation area and no harm is identified by this change.
- 4.14 The architectural, historic, artistic and archaeological interest of the conservation area will be preserved by the addition of the plaque. The contribution of the front elevation of 42 Bloomsbury Street will see a minor change that will be almost imperceptible to the contribution that the building makes to the significance of the conservation area.

Planning Policy Compliance

- 4.15 No harm is identified to the character and appearance of the conservation area and paragraphs 132-134 of the National Planning Policy are not engaged. The proposed works are entirely sympathetic to both the listed building and the character and appearance of the conservation area and are therefore in compliance with **Camden's Core Strategy Policy 24** and **Development Policy 25**.

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 42 Bloomsbury Street is a grade II listed building within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area in LB Camden. The proposals are for the refurbishment of the building and the addition of a new sign to the front elevation of the building.
- 5.2 The listed building is of interest as part of a terrace of 18th century buildings that reflects the original development of the area. Internally a number of features survive including; joinery, doors, architraves, fireplaces and staircases.
- 3.12 The conservation area is characterised by its town planning, based on formal landscaped squares located on a grid of streets. There is much uniformity in the townscape of the area, despite changes in the use of the buildings from residential to office and commercial uses during the 19th and 20th century. Cultural institutions and educational establishments also form a significant part of the area.
- 5.3 The proposed internal refurbishment and new external plaque are entirely sympathetic to the significance of both identified heritage assets and will not result in any harm to the interest of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area or the grade II listed building. There will be a slight enhancement to the building by the restoration of the floor plan. Paragraphs 132-134 of the National Planning Policy Framework are therefore not engaged. The **proposals are entirely appropriate and compliant with LB Camden's planning policies**; Core Strategy Policy 14 and Development Policy 25.

APPENDIX 1: Photographs 2017



Appendix 1.1: 42 Bloomsbury Street front elevation



Appendix 1.2: 42 Bloomsbury Street front entrance



Appendix 1.3: Entrance Hall and staircase



Appendix 1.4: Ground Floor



Appendix 1.5: First Floor landing



Appendix 1.6: Rear reception room at ground floor



Appendix 1.7: Fireplace at first floor level (rear reception room)



Appendix 1.8: Rear reception room at first floor



Appendix 1.9: Rear reception room at second floor level