

Design, Access and Heritage Impact Statement

30 Russell Square, Bloomsbury, London WC1B 5DT

our ref: F466-A-DnA002 Revision A 15.06.2017

Description : Opening-up of 2 rooms into 1no. open-plan office



Applicant:

Birkbeck College, University of London

Agent:

Spheron Architects

SpheronArchitects

1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Site Appraisal	3
3.0 Planning Policy	6
4.0 Analysis of Significance	8
5.0 Design Considerations	9
6.0 Access	9
7.0 Assessment	9
8.0 Conclusions	10

SpheronArchitects

1.0 Introduction

This Design, Access and Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared by Spheron Architects to accompany an application for listed building consent for alterations to the 2no. office rooms on ground floor at 30 Russell Square.

2.0 Site Appraisal

The site lies within Bloomsbury Conservation area known for its Georgian terraces. Russell Square itself is largely made up of 3 and 4-storey late 18th or 19th century terraces, it is also the largest of Bloomsbury's squares. It was laid out by an early 19th century landscape architect Humphrey Repton, and extensively replanted in 1959.

30 Russell Square however was built between 1913-14 by Sir John James Burnet (1857-1938) and was grade II listed in 1974 alongside the attached railings (list entry number: 1246378). It is of brown brick with stone dressings and has 5 storeys including the attic and semi-basement with bracketed cornice and parapet. The facade facing Russell Square is only 3-bay wide, whereas the elevation fronting the narrow alleyway is 7-bay long and is asymmetrical. The entrance is located at the longer elevation in the third bay from the left, topped by an open segmental pediment, to its left are square-headed recessed sash windows, to its right are round-headed in shallow arched recesses with Keystones and joint together by stone impost bands. There is a mixture of round-headed and flat-arched windows, the round-headed ones are mostly found on ground floor.

Description of the rooms concerned:

The interior of the building has been altered and there appears to be no record of when these changes took place. At the time of listing in 1974 the interior of the building was not inspected.

A visual inspection was carried on 10 March 2017 in the absence of any original drawings. Both rooms concerned do not seem to have any original features or elements of significance and are utilitarian in appearance.

SpheronArchitects



Top: Room G04, utilitarian in appearance, no features of significance found.

Bottom left: General view facing the entrance to the room, note the steps.

Bottom right: Entrance door to G04.

SpheronArchitects



Top: Room G05, General view facing the entrance to the room, note the steps.

Bottom left: General view facing the window.

Bottom right: Entrance door to G05.

3.0 Planning Policy

The following provides a review of the statutory, national, regional and local policy relevant to 30 Russell Square as a designated heritage asset.

Relevant Legislation:

The Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990: provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest over and above the protection provided through the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Under Section 16(2) of the Act in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving any features of special architectural or historic interest which the building possess.

Under Section 72 of the Act the local planning authority also has a duty to pay special attention to the 'desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance' of conservation areas.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): published on 27 March 2012 cancelling earlier national policy, such as PPS5. Chapter 12 of the NPPF sets out national policy in relation to conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

The NPPF still retains a general presumption against development that would harm the significance of a heritage asset; and the greater the harm to the significance of the heritage asset the greater the justification will be needed for any loss.

However, paragraph 14 of the NPPF sets out that at its heart there 'is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.' The onus is on decision makers to support sustainable development wherever possible and without delay.

PPS5 Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (March 2010): whilst PPS5 has been revoked, it is a useful tool to aid analysis and as such is a material consideration.

Both the NPPF and PPS5 recognise the value of a heritage asset because of its archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interests. In paragraphs 55-57 the Practice Guide notes that it is important to understand:

1. The nature of the significance;

2. The extent of the fabric that holds that interest;
3. The level of importance of that interest.

British Standards Institution, BS 7913: Guide to the conservation of historic buildings, 2nd ed, 2013:

The BS 7913 codifies standards for historic building conservation, on the other hand, identifies four different groups: cultural, social, economic and environmental, as well as a 'non-exhaustive' list of 25 alternative individual heritage values.

Nevertheless, there are no hard and fast rules as to how the significance of a historic building should be assessed and presented, but the assessment should be handled on a case by case basis, in the spirit of Semple Kerr's philosophy.

The London Plan (2011): sets of the strategic planning policy for London. This proposal does not give rise to issues of a strategic nature and so the detailed policies of the plan are of limited weight in determining this application.

Camden Core Strategy (2010): sets out the vision for the borough and includes Policy CS14: Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage.

Camden Development Policies (2010): provide detailed planning criteria used in the determination of planning applications. Policy DP25 notes that the Council will 'only grant consent for... alterations...to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building.'

4.0 Analysis of Significance

Architectural Interest

The following assessment identifies those elements of 30 Russell Square that contribute or detract from its architectural interest:

1. The exterior of the building is of architectural interest since it was designed by a noteworthy late 19th century and early 20th century British architect.
2. Its key elements include the round-arched windows and broken segmental pediments etc. are all external.
3. Alterations have taken place internally and there is no identifiable features of architectural interest present within the two rooms.

Historic Interest

The historic interest associated with 30 Russell Square and the wider group of buildings within this part of Bloomsbury Conservation Area is primarily associated with the external appearance of the properties. The primary interest is in relation to the front street elevation, which will remain unaltered.

Artistic Interest

There is no artistic significance associated with 30 Russell Square over and above its architectural style. Although the overall architectural features on the front facade have some artistic value in their own right like the broken segmental pediment, they will not be affected by the proposed development.

Archaeological Interest

30 Russell Square appears to be located very close to the London Suburbs Archaeological priority area, nonetheless the proposed interventions are internal and minor, therefore will have no effects on any assets of archaeological significance.

5.0 Design Considerations

Objectives:

In considering the objectives for the development of this property, it has been necessary to identify and assess the site, its opportunities and constraints.

Opportunities and constraints:

These include, the actual size and shape of the site, its physical and geographical features, its contextual relationship with adjoining developments, the character of the area, the need to provide a high quality living environment, as well as to ensure that due attention is paid to the planning requirements set out in the development plan and the relevant SPG's produced by London Borough of Camden.

Proposals:

The applicant proposes to remove the dividing wall between room G04 and G05 of the office of Department of English, in order to create an open-plan office area. The existing door to G04 and the steps will be blocked and removed as a result. The new room will be refurbished and made good (see architectural drawings for details), these interventions are all necessary to bring the new rooms in full compliance with latest Building Regulations Requirements.

6.0 Access

No change is proposed to the main access in to the property

7.0 Assessment

This section of the Statement provides an assessment of the proposed development in the context of the key planning, design and heritage issues arising from the policy framework, as well as other guidance. It also considers the impact of the proposals, on the architectural and historic significance of 26 Russell as an individual building, on the character and appearance of Bloomsbury Conservation Area and in relation to other relevant heritage assets.

SpheronArchitects

Effect on the Architectural Interest

The listing of 30 Russell Square is based on certain architectural merits of a building designed by a noteworthy late 19th century/20th century British architect. The submitted proposals are wholly for works to the internal, therefore hidden from street level.

Furthermore, the rooms in question do not have any found architectural features that display architectural merits. As such, there is no harmful effect not the architectural appearance or interest associated with the property.

Effect on the Historic Interest

The primary historic interest of 30 Russell Square lies in its exterior appearance and in particular the front facade, while at the time of listing the interior was not inspected.

The proposed refurbishment involves only two rooms that have already been modernised, and therefore there is no unacceptable material impact on the historic interest of the premises.

Effect on the Bloomsbury Conservation Area

The proposed works are all internal and so do not have an impact on the Conservation Area, there is no harm to the surrounding area resulting from the proposed alterations to the extant permission. The appearance of the existing building will be preserved and its integrity retained in relation to the Conservation Area.

Effect of the Proposals on Amenity

The proposed alterations will improve and enhance the amenity of the room and do not give rise to any unacceptable amenity effects in terms of nearby properties.

8.0 Conclusion

The principal significance of 30 Russell Square relates to the front facade and the building's relationship to the street. The proposed work does not harm this significance nor it gives rise to any harmful effects since all the proposed works are internal and not visible from the public realm. Furthermore, the proposed modern interventions are necessary in order to bring the space in line with modern working standards expected of a reputable High Education institution, as well as to make it become building control compliant. The

SpheronArchitects

proposed refurbishment whilst preserving the special character of the existing listed building will also enhance the quality of life for its current and future occupants. On this basis, we consider that the proposed work preserves the integrity of the host building, is appropriate to its setting, and the significance of that setting, and has no discernible effect on the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The proposal is therefore compliant with national and local policies and we request that planning permission be granted.