

---

Design and Access Statement

relating to

Refurbishment Works

at

55 Gower Street

London, WC1E 6HQ

for

The Bedford Estates

## Contents

Section 1	–	Introduction
Section 2	–	Design Statement
Section 3	–	Use / Layout
Section 4	–	Access
Section 5	–	Landscaping
Section 6	–	Vehicular and Transport Links
Section 7	–	Conclusion

## Section 1 - Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared to accompany a Planning and Listed Building application for 55 Gower Street, London.

55 Gower Street comprises 2,739 square feet and is arranged over basement, ground and three upper floors.

55 Gower Street is one of 18 consecutive symmetrical terraced houses on Gower Street, with Chenies Street to the South East and Torrington Place to the North West. As with all of the properties within the block, the property became Grade II Listed on 28 March 1969 (Listing Reference – 1322177). Supplementary to this document is a heritage statement which gives a commentary of the significance of the building and how the proposals impact on the original fabric of the building. This assessment has been submitted as part of this application.

On 22 December 1978 planning permission was granted for refurbishment including new partitioning in the basement and ground floors and new opening on the ground floor.

## Section 2 – Design Statement

### Use

The current use of the property is B1 Offices and the application does not seek to change this.

### Internal Proposals

Our proposal is to refurbish the property whilst conserving the original fabric of the building. We propose to install comfort cooling to all rooms within the main building. By undertaking the following works, the property will be brought up to a modern day standard, suitable for office use, which will hopefully secure a long term tenant.

#### ■ Installation of comfort cooling to offices

A variable refrigerant volume (VRV), heat pump system is to be installed to provide heating and cooling throughout the building. The cooling installation will require indoor VRV units, 1 No. condenser unit located within the rear basement lightwell and associated pipe work connections. New, plain, electric panel heaters shall be installed in the common parts and WC's to provide heating during the winter months.

The VRV condenser units will be sited within the rear light well and will not be visible from street level.

The indoor units are to be chassis type, floor-mounted around the building perimeter, within bespoke joinery casings on the basement, ground and first floors. See drawing BB137-2017-DT01 for details of the bespoke casing. The units on the second and third floor are to be proprietary chassis mounted units with steel casings.

The indoor units will be installed over five floors, from the basement to the third floor, where possible utilising existing risers, increased in size to accommodate the additional services. Where necessary the joists will be notched to accommodate the refrigerant pipework distribution.

Refrigerant and condensate pipework to and from the VRV units will be positioned within existing notches except where this is not reasonably practicable. The pipe runs will not disturb any external features and any notches made, will be made good and structurally sound via the addition of a metal plate, fitted and secured to the joist over the notch position as detailed in the timber notch plate drawing BB137-2017-DT02.

In general, the pipework shall be installed within the existing joist notches where possible. Floor boards will need to be uplifted to facilitate the installation. This will be undertaken carefully and by numbering the floorboards, they will be reinstated in the same location. No other damage will be caused to the original fabric of the building by this installation and all of the proposals are fully reversible.

Existing, redundant pipe work running across the joists will be removed and a repair will be made as detailed in the timber notch repair drawing BB137-2017-DT03.

The existing service risers in the rear rooms will be made larger to accommodate the additional services. The existing cornice will be extended around the new enclosure.

#### ■ **Installation of cooling to communications room**

The proposal includes the installation of a wall mounted fan coil unit internally within the comms room and 1No external condenser unit located at basement level within the rear lightwell.

It will be necessary to core drill holes through the rear wall to run refrigerant pipework. A trench will be formed within the basement slab for the power supply and pipework connections between the fan coil unit and associated external condenser unit.

No other works are required to the original fabric of the building by this installation and all of the proposals are fully reversible.

#### ■ **Kitchen facilities**

The existing kitchenette in the basement will be removed and a new modern facility installed. This will be in the same location as the existing facility.

#### ■ **Upgrade of existing WC's**

The WCs are non original and are likely to have been replaced within the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The existing finishes comprise wall and floor tiles, white china sanitary ware and chrome fittings. Our proposal extends to removing the WC on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, which is inappropriately located and installing an additional WC at ground level in the former boiler room. The WCs on the upper floors will largely maintain the existing layout but simply replacing the finishes and fittings to give a more contemporary feel.

#### ■ **Testing and repairs to existing electrical installations**

55 Gower Street has a somewhat dated electrical installation having not been rewired for a considerable period of time. The propose scheme involve renewing all electrical installations from the point of entry into the building to facilitate a single occupier, designed and installed to new statutory standards. This full re-wire will involve lifting floorboards and chasing walls. All floorboards will be numbered and carefully reinstated on completion. Walls with decorative mouldings will not be touched as part of any re-wiring that may be required. Walls will be repaired to exactly match existing materials.

## ■ **New lighting**

All light fittings throughout the property will be replaced. The type of fitting proposed depends on its location within the building. The lighting scheme will be similar in concept and design to the scheme recently carried out at 25 Bedford Square by The Bedford Estates.

Generally, the existing chandeliers within the front principal rooms on the ground and first floors will be replaced with new contemporary chandeliers. This will ensure no damage is caused to the existing wall and ceiling finishes.

Slim line luminaries suspended from the ceiling will be installed in the basement, the rear rooms within the first, second and third floors.

The existing stairwell and landing lighting comprises both recessed spotlights and wall fittings. New fittings will be installed in a similar configuration.

When removing the wall fittings, the redundant cabling will be safely terminated and the walls made good. When removing the ceiling recessed fittings, the cabling will be removed and the plasterboard ceilings patched in. The works will have limited impact on any lath and plaster ceilings.

Through our design, we have been careful to specify fittings which will not have a negative impact on the appearance of the building.

## ■ **Fire Alarm**

A new wireless fire alarm system will be installed throughout to meet current building regulation requirements. We have deliberately selected a wireless system so that no walls or floors will need to be disturbed.

The fire alarm panels will be located behind the main entrance door.

## ■ **Data / Telecommunications**

A new CAT 5e system will be installed throughout the property. Data points will be installed to all walls to provide flexibility for any incoming tenant. Where possible, existing wall mounted data points will be re-used to avoid chasing of walls and disturbance to existing skirting boards.

Floor boxes will be installed between the existing floor joists to support the installation and allow the ingoing tenant flexibility.

## ■ **Door Access Control**

A replacement door access control system will be installed to the main entrance at street level. The

---

external door access panel will be recessed into the brickwork reveal (to match existing) and finished in brass.

## ■ **Removal of Demountable Partitions**

The proposal extends to minor demolition works, much of which are non original. This includes the removal of the walls subdividing the front rooms on each of the floors. These would have originally been single rooms and later divided to meet the occupier's requirements. Where cornices are disturbed or the profile differs from the main rooms these will be extended in replacements, moulded to match the existing profile.

The proposal also extends to forming openings between the front and rear most rooms on the upper floor, a typical introduction to many similar properties.

It is intended to increase the width of the opening between the entrance hallway and principle room at ground floor level. Given that the opening already exists we do not believe increasing the width materially affects the heritage asset and is similar to a recently approved alteration at 10 Bayley Street, application 2013/5920/L

## ■ **Service Riser**

As part of modernising the property to meet the demands of a typical office user and to ensure its continued sustainable use, a shallow mechanical and electrical riser will be formed within the rear rooms at each level. The location has been chosen after careful consideration of the various options. There is an existing riser in this location, although it is too small to contain all the necessary services. By increasing the size of the riser alterations will need to be made to the non-original cornice. This will be extended around the enclosure in a matching profile.

The introduction of the riser will be fully reversible and have no significant impact on the historic fabric of the building.

## ■ **Flooring**

All existing carpets throughout the property will be replaced with new carpet. Stair runners with satin stainless steel stair rods will also be installed on staircases.

The existing floor tiles to all WC's will be replaced with new porcelain tiles.

## ■ **Doors**

All modern flush fire doors will be replaced with purpose made 4 panel timber doors with a 30 minute fire rating. These will be reinstated into the existing opening retaining the original architrave & door lining.

## ■ **Ironmongery**

All existing ironmongery, which are non original, will be replaced with new satin stainless steel fittings. New secondary glazing will be fitted throughout and will be Selectaglaze Slimline 20 (VS) units.

## ■ **General Repairs**

Inevitably, there will be a need to undertake repairs to walls, floors and ceilings. Where required, these repairs will be undertaken to match the existing in terms of materials and method applied.

Any patched in wall and ceiling mouldings and joinery items will be made to match the existing as closely as possible.

## ■ **Redecorations**

All existing ceilings, walls and joinery items will be suitably prepared and redecorated. We do not propose to carry out poultice cleaning to the decorative coving unless it is deemed essential on site. Most of the areas of redecoration are sound but in some areas we may need to strip and relime the walls where damage has occurred, either through impact or water. It may also be necessary to replace plasterwork in those areas which is only obvious once we commence repairs. If repairs are required, we will use traditional lathe and plaster.

## External Proposals

### ■ **External Condensers**

It will be necessary to install external condensing units to serve the cooling for the offices and the communication room as detailed above.

The external plant will be located within the rear lightwell, see drawings drawing BB137-2017-GA01.

We have commissioned an acoustic report to assess the impact these external condensing units will have on the adjoining buildings. This report confirmed that the noise levels will not exceed the permissible levels detailed within Camden planning policy. A copy of this report is included within the application.

### ■ **Staircase**

The proposal extends to the replacement of the metal front basement steps, currently unsafe due to its steepness. The replacement staircase will be of a similar design, with a lower pitch.

## Section 3 – Use / Layout

The proposal seeks to reinstate the original layout, removing the subdivision which has been installed since the building was constructed. It also includes introducing door openings between the principle room at the front and the rear most room, a common alteration completed in many properties of this type and across the Bedford Estate.

The scheme allows for widening the opening between the entrance hallway and front principle room at ground level, greatly improving accessibility and visitor experience.

## Section 4 – Access

As part of the design phase, we have undertaken an assessment of the current access arrangements with the view of improving access where possible.

The benefits of installing a motorised lifting platform to assist wheelchair users gaining access to the property from street level have been considered. Even if a wheelchair user could access the property, the changes in levels and the lack of an internal passenger lift will prevent access to all but the ground floor rooms.

Due to the above and as the building is Grade II Listed, it is our opinion that it is not feasible to make all of the necessary adaptations without having a detrimental effect on the fabric of the property. The visual appearance of an external motorised lifting platform within the Conservation Area would also be contentious and the introduction of an internal passenger lift will result in significant loss of historic building fabric.

Every effort will be made to bring access opportunities up to the best available standard within the constraints imposed by the listed nature of this building.

The following best practice guidelines have been considered:

- Equality Act 2010
- Building Regulations Approved Document M and K
- BS 8300:2001 – Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people Code of Practice

## Section 5 – Landscaping

There are no landscaping works proposed as part of this scheme.

## Section 6 – Vehicular and Transportation Links

The vehicular and transport links to the building will not be affected by the proposed works.

## Section 7 – Conclusion

We believe that the proposed works will not adversely affect the original fabric of the building. The removal of the demountable partitions will reinstate the building to its original configuration. Replacing the flush doors with purpose made timber paneled door will reinstate an important architectural feature.

Through our design, we have carefully considered the most discreet and practical location for the external plant to minimise the impact on the building externally and internally. The introduction of a vertical riser is essential to allow for the building to be modernised and will negate the need for surface mounted services and unsightly boxing.

A careful considered approach will be implemented whilst lifting floorboards to run the pipework and cables to each of the fan coil units internally. The units are also to be positioned on the floor, which will minimise potential damage caused to original skirting and joinery items.

In our opinion, the installation of comfort cooling will not adversely affect the original fabric of the building and will benefit all future occupiers. By improving the service provision within the property, such as lighting, data, WC's, small power etc, we anticipate securing a long term tenancy.