

Introduction

Summit House, Red Lion Square (hereafter 'the Site') is a Grade II listed building located within the London Borough of Camden. The Site is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and forms part of the townscape with a number of other designated heritage assets, including the terraced group at no's 14-17 Red Lion Square.

This report is an addendum to the Heritage Statement produced by Turley Heritage for application no's 2017/0077/P and 2017/0814/L. It addresses the removal of plant ducting installed at roof level and its replacement with new more modest, screened and set back plant ducting which is not considered to harm the significance of the listed building or Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Significance of Heritage Asset

The significance of Summit House is attested by the fact that the building is Grade II listed. Historic England suggest that the aspects that reflect worth are the following values that people associate to a place: aesthetic value, communal value, evidential value and historic value. The NPPF suggests that the significance of a place can be assessed by identifying its 'aesthetic, evidential, historic and communal values'. These four categories of conservation principles are identified by Historic England's *Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance 2008*.

The significance of the Grade II listed Summit House lies chiefly in the features of the buildings form and elevations (appearance, materials and detailing), which are visually dominant and coherent and represent bold Moderne/ Art Deco architecture. It is listed for its architectural and historic interest. Its architectural form, setting and its group value within the wider square and Bloomsbury Conservation Area in which it sits have good aesthetic and historic values.

In terms of the aesthetic contribution made by its visual appearance, architectural style, and legibility as a heritage asset, it is judged that this principal makes a good contribution to the significance of the asset. The two elevations which front onto Red Lion Square and Dane Street have a distinctive Moderne/ Art Deco style. The building is structurally steel framed and faced with deep yellow faience cladding which emphasises its grid-like construction. The windows are metal framed with spandrel panels and provide geometric faience relief decoration. The entrance doors are modern timber doors although they do incorporate two reused caved panels by sculptor Percy Metcalfe. Although not assessed as part of the designation process, the interior contributes to the special interest of the building. As with public buildings, there is a clear hierarchy of importance, with architectural significance being reserved for the principal spaces such as foyers, stairs and boardrooms. The original floor plan has been largely altered although fragmentary elements do survive. The aesthetic value of Summit House is considered to be **high**.

There is a strong coherent narrative for the building, with its association with nationally important architect and designer Joseph Emberton (and Percy James Westwood) as well noted sculptor Percy Metcalfe for the original decorative timber entrance doors. Their association with the Site provides the building with high associative (historical) value. The building is of historical interest as past occupants include the national fashion retail company, Austin Reed, who commissioned it as their head office (with ancillary warehousing). The existing stylistic elements demonstrate the then popular styles, use of materials and construction methods for interwar commercial architecture in London, and also records the intensity of redevelopment and commercialisation on this part of Bloomsbury in the interwar period. The historic value of Summit House is considered to be **high**.

Communal value currently makes a **low** contribution to the significance of the asset as it was built as a purpose-built office and only a small proportion of people in the context of the local community would have had access to and experienced the asset.

The building offers physical evidence of a purpose built office building from the interwar period, albeit evidence has been eroded by past change and alteration. Owing to these past alterations the building's evidential value is relatively low. The internal elements have undergone a degree of later alteration and although some features belonging to the original layout remain, including elements such as the decorative details of the entrance lobby, the building has been altered throughout its interior to a great extent. Additionally, the rear elevations to Eagle Street and Yorkshire Grey Yard have also been altered and make a lesser relative contribution to the overall significance of the building. No significance is derived from roof level which has for many years featured a range of services and plant equipment.

The principal elevation to Red Lion Square remains very much as originally conceived and constructed, which does contribute to the evidential value of this building and its group value as a defining corner building enclosing the key urban space of Red Lion Square with other buildings of a mix of ages, scales and architectural styles, however the evidential value of the building is considered to be **low**.

Proposed development

The proposed development is restricted to roof level. The recently installed ducting to the plant equipment was assessed as being not in accordance with the approved plans. This application seeks to remedy this by removing the installed ducting and replacing it with an alternative that is reduced in size and features additional screening on the Dane Street elevation.

The existing roof level is relatively complex, incorporating a series of level changes, it is largely flat and asphalted and features a successive build-up of modern utilitarian service equipment, service housing structures, modern lift overruns and plant (this was also the case prior to the recent works). These modern and functionally designed elements do not contribute to the special interest of the heritage

asset and despite the building having a high level of aesthetic value, overall no significance is derived from roof level, as evidenced by the numerous previous modern installations.

Assessment of Impact

The proposed installation of this plant ducting is not considered to harm either of the two designated heritage assets; the listed building or the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The plans demonstrate how much the ducting has been lowered in height and reduced in a number of locations compared to the previously installed works. Owing to the existing roof scape not forming part of the listed building's significance, the proposed installation of new plant ducting is not considered to harm the special interest of the listed building.

If the plant were to be located internally, then it would further degrade the internal character of the listed building and would likely necessitate interventions in the historic fabric. There is also a clear precedent for plant ducting at roof level, owing to the recent approval for such works as part of applications 2017/0077/P and 2017/0814/L. It is considered that locating the proposed plant ducting at roof level would have the least impact upon the significance of the heritage asset.

The new plant ducting which is to replace the as installed layout has been positioned and designed to ensure that it is not visible and will not impact on public views from the surrounding streets within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The tight street pattern and density of the built environment to the south of Red Lion Square strictly restricts the extent of public views of roof level of the heritage asset. The same is true of views towards the building from the north and across the square, where mature trees obscure the appreciation of the roof scape to a significant degree. The buildings tall parapet to the principal elevation also assists in screening the plant ducting.

Despite not being visible from street level, the proposed plant ducting is still to be screened as to comply with section 11.7 of the Camden Planning Design Guidance. This screen will serve to minimise the effect on private views of the plant ducting from the neighbouring taller buildings.

Conclusion

Summit House is an example of a piece of architecture from the early 20th Century. The heritage significance of Summit House is primarily derived from its architectural interest and is considered to have high aesthetic and historical values, as well as the positive contribution the building makes to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The proposed works would not affect those aesthetic or historic values and would not introduce a new element that would affect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The development proposals are of a minor nature and take into account the heritage significance of the

building. The impact of the proposals would not harm the significance of Summit House, as the proposals avoid the main contributors to the significance of the building. As the proposed plant ducting has been designed and located to minimise any potential impact, it will not be visible from the surrounding streets within the conservation area, and it will not cause any harm to the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.