

Design, Access and Heritage Impact Statement

Peltz Gallery, 43 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PD

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Description : Installation of an external signage at the entrance to 43 Gordon Square.



Applicant: Birkbeck College, University of London

Agent: Spheron Architects

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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 the proposed installation of an external signage at the entrance at 43 Gordon Square.

2.0 Site Appraisal

The site lies within Bloomsbury Conservation area known for its Georgian terraces. 43 Gordon square belongs to a terrace of 11 houses including no. 36 & 46 & attached railings and wall on Endsleigh place return, 36 to 46, Gordon square screen wall linking no. 36 Gordon Square, Tavistock square, 29 Ensleigh Place. As a group it was first listed on 28 March 1969 (list entry no: 1113031). They were built in circa 1825 by Thomas Cubitt. No. 43 Gordon Square shares many similar or varied features found in other houses of the same terrace, such as the rusticated stucco ground floor, the composition of 4 storeys and basement with 3 windows on each level. It has projected 1F to 3F with four pilasters running up between the windows, a feature shared with 36,38 and 45, all yellow stock brick which is consistent across the terrace. Above the 2F windows is a continuous band of entablature, a feature that repeats itself above the 3F windows. It has continuous cast-iron balconies to the 1F Piano Nobile.

3.0 Planning Policy

The following provides a review of the statutory, national, regional and local policy relevant to 26 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 26 Russell Square that contribute or detract from its architectural interest:

1. The exterior of the building is of architectural interest given its early 19th century town house appearance.
2. Its key elements include the classic elements such as the rusticated ground floor, the pilasters, the entablature. The sash windows and the cast-iron balustrade are also of architectural merits.

Historic Interest

The historic interest associated with 43 Gordon Square and the wider group of buildings within this part of Bloomsbury Conservation Area is primarily associated with the external appearance of the properties as a planned and coherent example of housing development in the early 19th century. Such buildings are not uncommon and a number of them have been listed including 43 Gordon Square. The primary interest is in relation to the front street elevation, which will remain unaltered.

Artistic Interest

There is no artistic significance associated with 43 Gordon Square or the buildings in the immediate vicinity over and above their shared architectural style. Although the overall architectural features on the front facade have some minor artistic value in their own right, they are common features on a building of this age and style and will not be affected by the proposed development.

Archaeological Interest

26 Russell Square appears to be located very close to the London Suburbs Archaeological priority area, nonetheless the proposed interventions are 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 proposal is to install a small (29cm x 30cm) external front signage at the entrance to 43 Gordon Square. (See Specification for details) The signage is necessary to assist visitors to locate Peltz Gallery.

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 43 Gordon Square as an individual building, on the character and appearance of Bloomsbury Conservation Area and in relation to other relevant heritage assets.

Effect on the Architectural Interest

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The listing of 43 Gordon Square as part of the group built by Cubitt is based on certain key elements intrinsic to the late Georgian/Regency townhouse architecture deemed contemporary of that era. These key elements include features on the front facade like the sash windows, cast-iron railings etc. The submitted proposal involves only the installation of a small signage (for fixing details see the specification). As such, there is no harmful effect on the architectural appearance or interest associated with the property.

Effect on the Historic Interest

The primary historic interest of 43 Gordon Square lies in its exterior appearance and in particular the front facade, as well as interior layouts and decors, although at the time of listing the interior was not inspected.

The proposed signage would have no unacceptable material impact on the historic interest of the premises.

Effect on the Bloomsbury Conservation Area

The proposed works are minor 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 do not give rise to any unacceptable amenity effects in terms of nearby properties.

8.0 Conclusion

The significance of 43 Gordon Square is as a listed building in proximity to similar buildings designed in the around and about the same period within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The principal significance 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 minor. 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.