

Project:

New Secondary School

File Reference :

52-53 Russell Square, London, WC1B 4HP

Date :

2262/ 10_1

May 2018

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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Revision 1 _ Listed Building Application

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1. Use and Need

The brief is to provide a new Secondary School for a private French international School that offers the French curriculum and bi-lingual education. The School has an existing Primary School nearby in Bedford Square, and now wants to open a small - 180 place - Secondary School to complement their Primary School offer. The change of use to provide accommodation for the School has been separately considered under the Application Ref. 2017/ 2285/ P, which received a resolution to grant Planning Permission on 26 October 2017.

2. Amount

The existing building extends to 1,388 sqm Gross Internal Area, over six floors (Basement, Ground and Four Upper Floors). The proposals are for a refurbishment of the existing buildings, no additional floorspace is proposed as part of this Application.

3. Existing Building

52-53 Russell Square are two terraced buildings built c1800 by James Burton and designed as a continuous terrace forming part of the south side of Russell Square. The buildings are Grade II Listed. The terrace of which 52-53 are part is well preserved, and mostly unaltered to the front, but has numerous amendments and additions to the rear. No 52 forms the corner to Bedford Place, so is viewed on the side as well as the front elevation. From site inspection, the rear of 52-53 seems to have been re-built in part, the lower part being soot stained and the upper part being faced in a cleaner brick, suggesting that the buildings were damaged by bombing during World War II and were subsequently rebuilt. The Landowner remains the Bedford Estates; the current occupants are the Chartered Institute of Public Relations who moved there in 2009.

While the exterior of the building that is seen from the street has been preserved close to its original form, the interior has been modified over time. The proposals within this Application propose further modifications to the largely modern internal fabric.

The building extends over six floor levels: Basement, Ground floor and four upper floors. The main houses to the front contain generally one or two large rooms per level, with a smaller secondary room per level facing to the rear. Toilets and ancillary accommodation are located off the single central staircase which rises the full height of the building and is flanked also by the lift which rises full height.

The extension to no. 53 is a modern two-storey addition with a single open-plan room on each floor level. The extension to no. 52 appears more original, and spans the basement and ground floor linked with a modern spiral staircase.

4. Proposals

The existing accommodation of the buildings will be converted from office and training use to School use. The School entrance and reception and visitor rooms will be accommodated in the Ground Floor suite of spaces. The larger rooms on the upper floors will house classrooms and assembly / seminar rooms; the smaller rooms will be used for small group working and resources. The top floor will contain staff accommodation.

4.1 Lower Ground Floor rooms:

The existing lower ground floor rooms include an existing semi-commercial kitchen fitout, plant and IT rooms and storage spaces. The plan form and decorations are modern and very simple without ornamentation. The proposal is to retain the existing structural and solid walls and reuse the existing rooms. The existing kitchen fittings will be stripped out and the room redecorated as a small group teaching room. The current IT room will be refurbished as a medical room, and a shower enclosure created. The larger room within no. 52 will be refurbished as a study room with the adjacent room used for IT study. Due to the limited external windows, it is proposed to introduce a mechanical ventilation system to these areas. The least intrusive system possible has been studied and proposed which is proposed to consist of tall ventilation units situated within the study room, with intake/extract ducts passing out through the external walls to new louvred grilles. The louvred grilles to the front courtyard are proposed to be contained within the spandrel panel of brickwork below the existing windows and finished in white to match the existing walls. Similar white powder coated metal louvres are proposed to be inserted above the existing rear-facing patio doors replacing the existing glazed overlights. The mechanical ventilation installation is proposed to be reversible and could be removed and the limited number of apertures in the walls reinstated in future to revert the building back to its current situation.

4.2 Smoke Control Lobbies (Ground, First and Second levels):

In order to provide classroom spaces on the upper levels, it will be necessary to provide smoke control lobbies on each level to the existing staircase. To the No.52 side a space for this already exists in front of the lift, and here a new door is proposed on each level in the already existing doorway opening on the party wall line between No.s 52 and 53;

To the no.53 side the proposal is to create a smoke control lobby on each level as there are no lobbies currently. There is not sufficient space in the existing stairwell to create lobbies, therefore the proposals are to create lobbies within the rear rooms on the Ground, First and Second Floor levels.

The design team have studied various possible options for placement and design of the lobbies, and have discussed their position and design with Camden Conservation Officer during the Pre-Application process. The position in the rear-facing rooms was chosen as it will retain the principal front-facing rooms in each level as they are at present and thus be least invasive to the significant rooms of the building. At ground floor level there appears to have been a previous partition dividing the rear room into a room and passageway at some time in the past, and the new lobbies are proposed to follow this line at each level. The proposed walls enclosing the new lobbies are designed to include a full height glazed section, mirroring the position and size of the existing linking double doors between the front and rear rooms. This glazed screen is proposed in order to minimise the impact on the existing building and particularly allow the appreciation of the plan form of the existing rear rooms from inside the lobby or the room. The lobby enclosing walls will be treated simply, with flush white doors and simple painted architraves around the glazed screens, so that they are read as new inserted elements and do not try to be part of the original fabric.

4.3 Other sub-dividing partitions (Ground, First and Second Levels):

In No.52 the front and rear rooms will be divided once more into two rooms by reinstating the central partition which originally existed. Record plans from before the 2007 works show that the rooms were divided into front and rear rooms along the line of the piers and bulkheads that still remain in each room. Skirtings matching the existing pattern will be continued along the new dividing partitions. As the existing bulkheads carry the existing cornices, there will be no need to reinstate any cornice work, the partitions will bring back the layout of No.52 closer to the original plan.

4.4 Acoustic wall-linings (All levels):

Acoustic wall linings to the separating wall between No.53 and the adjacent property at No.54 are proposed in association with the resolution to grant Planning Permission, Application Ref. 2017/2285/P and in association with a clause in the Section 106 agreement requiring details of the acoustic measures to be put in place at the property.

Acoustic wall linings are proposed to be fitted to Basement, First, Second, Third and Fourth Floor Levels in order to increase the sound separation between the buildings. In each case the proposed lining will consist of two-layers of sound-block plasterboard on independent metal studs set in front of the existing walls. The perimeters of the linings will be sealed with a soft compound to the surrounding walls.

The linings are designed to be fully removable, so that should the School move out then the linings could be removed and the original fabric revealed with only minor redecoration of fixing holes in the existing plasterwork required. The proposed design of the linings varies as described below to react to the particular features present in each of the floor levels:

At basement level the linings will be full-width and full-height to the existing plant room and proposed new group teaching room (currently the kitchen). There are no original features currently along this wall.

To Ground Floor no works to the wall is proposed as the proposed uses have been selected to be quieter uses and the rooms also abut the existing entrance lobby to no.54 which itself provides additional acoustic separation.

At First and Second Floor levels, the proposed lining will be full-width between the chimney breasts, full height, and fully sealed around all edges to the walls on either side and to the cornice above and floor below. A new skirting in a matching pattern to the existing will be fitted to the new lining, and the new lining terminated to the underside of the existing cornice.

To Third Floor the lining is proposed full-width across the length of the separating wall to no.53/54, fitted around the fireplaces, as there are no protruding chimney breasts.

To ensure the fireplaces themselves do not offer acoustic weak points, the existing fireplaces where they exist will be boarded up with mineral wool infill, and the boarding sealed around with a soft caulking, again so that this treatment is reversible in future.

To Fourth Floor the existing situation is a loft space and modern fire exit corridor built within the original loft space, which is mirrored on the opposite site, ie. Not occupied rooms. During the acoustic testing this area was found to be an acoustic weak point therefore the independent lining is proposed in the loft space, and additional acoustic sealing is proposed to the (modern) connecting door.

4.5 Third Floor Level:

The Third Floor is proposed to be refitted as laboratories for the new School. This level would have originally been a bedroom level, and has been chosen as it is beyond the level containing the fine internal feature skirtings and cornices. The laboratories are proposed to occupy the main existing rooms in no. 52 and 53, with prep and store rooms proposed to be created by adding new internal partitions following the line of the existing lift and stair cores. There will be new mechanical ventilation installed as part of the proposals, ceiling mounted and concealed along the perimeters in drylined bulkheads. The new bulkheads will be kept to a minimum size and along the long (blank) walls only and not crossing in front of windows. In order to contain and route the drainage proposed from the laboratory sinks down to ground level, two new boxed-in pipe routes are proposed: The first is proposed within the modern lift lobby area to No.52; The second running vertically in the corner of no.53 in the rear room by the staircase wall where there is already a stepping-out of the wall. In this way the new drainage is proposed to be enclosed and routed in the most discrete manner possible and without needing external pipework.

4.6 Mews Buildings and Courtyard:

Currently there is a single-storey more original Mews building to the rear of No.52 with a side facing aspect onto Bedford Place, and a more modern two-storey Mews extension to No.53. Between the Mews buildings is an internal courtyard. There is no external access along the back of the Mews so the courtyard and extension to No.53 is landlocked and not visible from the street. The proposal is to use the existing Mews buildings as courtyards, with an internal partition introduced at First Floor level on No.53, and acoustic wall lining proposed along the dividing wall to No.54. The existing wall finishes are modern and there are no heritage features along this wall.

5. Landscaping

The external areas within the land ownership are limited to the enclosed paved area along Bedford Place, two small courtyards between the main houses and the rear extensions, and lightwells to the front spanned over by the entrance stairs. These existing light-well spaces are currently hard paved, and there are no changes proposed in this Application. The existing railings, gate and paving along Bedford Place will be retained. Inside the line of the railings, a line of 10 new 'Sheffield' type cycle stands are proposed as part of meeting the requirements of the Camden sustainable transport policy. The cycle stands will be positioned immediately behind the existing railings, will be lower than the existing railings and finished in black powder coating so as to be as discrete as possible and to appear as much as possible to just be part of the existing black iron railings themselves.

6. External Appearance:

Only very minor changes are proposed to the external appearance of the buildings. The intention is to retain the elevations, windows and doors as they are currently, having been refurbished and cleaned recently.

A small number of new ventilation louvres are proposed to be placed in front of new openings in the external walls in the lightwells (basement level). The louvres have been kept to a minimum number and size, and the proposals seek to locate them wherever possible to the internal rear lightwells where they are not viewed from the outside at all. Two louvres and one brick-vent are proposed to the front lightwell, again positioned to be as discrete as possible and not generally viewed from street level or from the wider Conservation area. The louvres are proposed to be in white powder coated metal to match with the adjacent white-painted render.

7. Access Statement:

Ecole Jeannine Manuel and Ellis Williams Architects are aware of their obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The proposals described here seek to provide a fully accessible new building in accordance with the Act within the constraints imposed by the existing Listed Building. Accessibility to all areas will be integral to the design and in compliance with Building Regulations Approved Document M. A full description of the detailed proposal will be submitted for Building Control approval in due course.

The School will maintain two principal entrances in the current locations: the one from Bedford Place providing level approach and access, and from there lift access to all internal floors. Appropriate highlighting will be used to all ramps, handrails and entrance doors.

A Document M compliant lift exists in the building and will be retained providing level wheelchair access to all floor levels and all occupied rooms for staff and pupils both in the main original house and also the existing rear buildings.

Appropriate highlighting will be used to all ramps, handrails and entrance doors. The principle entrance doors will be automatic or assisted-opening.

Internally within buildings, the following will be provided:

- Stairs/ stepped approaches will have a non-slip surface with contrasting nosing and handrails.
- Appropriate tonal differences will be used to give definition between walls, floor and ceilings as defined in the Building Regulations within the limitations of the Listed Building.
- Within classrooms, the internal surfaces will receive acoustic treatment to provide acoustic environments in accordance with BB93 requirements for speech intelligibility, helping those with hearing impairments.
- Signage will be provided in accordance with the Building Regulations requirements and RNIB guidance.
- Doors will be retained as existing, most of which are panelled heritage solid doors which form part of the Listed Building. All new doors introduced will have vision panels. Internal doors and/or frames will be decorated in tones to contrast with the adjacent wall surfaces. Doors into classrooms will be wide enough to allow wheelchair access following Document M guidance for existing buildings. A number of the main rooms are accessed by wide double doors at present.
 - Lighting will be designed to give appropriate levels of lighting for wayfinding in and around buildings and give good illumination at face level.
 - An accessible toilet will be provided at Ground Level level. The WC is located centrally in the plan, and linked by the nearby lift to the upper floors to give the shortest travel distance from each classroom.