

**Rolfe Judd**  
Architecture



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# 70 Grays Inn Road

Design and Access Statement

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# Contents

- 1.0** Introduction 2
- 2.1** Analysis - Location 3
- 2.2** Analysis - The Existing Building 4
- 2.3** Analysis - Design Proposals 5
- 3.0** Description of Proposed Works 8
- 4.0** Access & Building Facilities 9

# 1.0 Introduction

This Design & Access Statement relates to the proposed refurbishment of Verulam Gardens – 70 Grays Inn Road, London EC4.

The proposed works include:

- Change of use of B1 office area to flexible A1/A3 café use at ground floor level.
- Alterations to the existing façades at ground and 1st floor levels to improve the external appearance of the building and give it greater street-presence.
- Alterations to existing office entrance and creation of new corner street entrances to ground floor offices and retail unit.
- Creation of new dedicated cyclists' entrance and separate refuse storage access.



# 2.1 Analysis Location

Verulam Gardens, 70 Grays Inn Road is located on the east side of Grays Inn Road, bounded by Portpool Lane to the north, Verulam Street to the south and a private park and garden to the east. The property borders the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, although it is not located within its boundary.



## 2.2 Analysis The Existing Building

The building comprises lower ground floor, ground floor plus five upper floors of multi-let B1 office accommodation arranged around a central core. It was originally constructed in the early 1990s in a neo-Georgian pastiche style, clad predominantly in a mixture of facing brickwork, stonework and slate roofing with metal-framed windows and painted metal railings. The office entrance was modified in around 2006 to introduce a new glazed entrance screen incorporating horizontal metal banding over the entrance and new signage.

The existing office entrance lacks adequate street presence commensurate with the scale of the building. The current façade contributes poorly to the street scene and appears inactive and unapproachable to the public.

The existing ground floor office areas to the south of the main entrance are currently of limited viability due to their isolated location, disjointed from the remainder of the building and low attractiveness to potential tenants. Currently these areas are under-occupied, being mainly used for storage and building services (server rooms etc).



Corner of Grays Inn Road and Verulam Street



Office Entrance



Rear Facade



Corner of Grays Inn Road and Portpool Street



## 2.3 Analysis Design Proposals Arrival

Following the departure of a key tenant these proposals seek to improve the internal layout of the ground floor and also the presence of the building from an urban realm perspective.

The building was constructed in the early 1990s for occupation as offices. The office accommodation at ground floor is divided by the main office reception. This has resulted in the current tenant being unable to occupy both wings of the ground floor efficiently and one half has become by default a storage / IT area. This tenant has signalled their intention to leave the

building which creates an opportunity to create a more efficient use of the ground floor coupled with improving the general presence of the building within its streetscape setting.

The location of the central lift core demands that the office entrance remains in a central location. Current market demand suggest that flexibility of office space is key and given the location of the entrance the southern ground floor office space becomes landlocked and it is difficult to see how this will be used efficiently by a new tenant.



Existing Building

First/ ground floor re-glazed - precast spandrel panels replaced with dark bronze P.P.C



Office entrance marked with projecting canopy which extends back into reception

Consistent branding defined A1 retail offer

Prominent branded bike entrance

View 01 - Corner of Verulam Street and Grays Inn Road

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## 2.3 Analysis Design Proposals Arrival

It is therefore proposed that a small café use would be ideal in this location. It would work in tandem with the main office entrance as well as having its own entrance located on the corner of Grays Inn Road and Verulam Street. It is not proposed that this unit would include a kitchen and therefore no extract is indicated.

To maximise flexibility, it is proposed that the remainder of the ground floor office space has its own discrete entrance on the northern corner of Grays Inn Road and Portpool Lane. This unit may potentially be connected to the lower ground floor unit below via a spiral stair.

A cycle storage facility is to be provided in Verulam Street.

An important part of the proposals involves various improvements to the building below first floor level. It is proposed that all the windows and doors on Grays Inn Road, Portpool Lane and Verulam Street at ground and first floor are replaced in a dark bronze finish. The concrete spandrel panels will also be clad in a matching panel. These new windows will extend to pavement level and the existing railings to Grays Inn Road will be removed. New entrances are proposed on each corner of the two spayed corners to accommodate the café and separate office demise.



Existing Building



View 03 - Corner of Portpool Lane and Grays Inn Road

## 2.3 Analysis Design Proposals Arrival

The office reception is being comprehensively refurbished and as a part of that initiative a canopy will be introduced to allow the entrance to have greater visibility from street level. Smaller projecting canopies will also be provided at each of the new corner entrances.

All windows, doors and canopies will all be formed from matching dark bronze framing to bring a cohesive quality to the whole building when viewed from street level.



View 02 - Grays Inn Road Elevation

# 3.0 Description of Proposed Works

## Entrance / Reception Area

- Modified entrance with new glazed entrance screen to increase street-presence, bring a greater amount of daylight into the space
- New projecting canopy extending back into reception to increase definition of entrance
- Reconfigured reception area, which will incorporate new Part M compliant reception desk and new internal decorative finishes throughout
- Internal link to proposed café

## New Retail Café

- Conversion of under-used ground floor office areas to the south of the main entrance to provide public café with internal link to office reception
- Corner to Verulam Street at ground and 1st floor levels to be opened up to incorporate new prominent street entrance with projecting canopy
- Modifications to façade to provide defined retail demise (see 'Alterations to Building Façade' below)

## New Ground Floor Office Entrance

- Corner to Portpool Lane at ground and 1st floor levels to be opened up to incorporate new prominent street entrance with projecting canopy to mirror café entrance to opposite corner
- Secondary office entrance to provide independent street access to self-contained ground / lower ground floor office unit

## New Cyclists' Entrance / Refuse Access

- Prominent branded cyclists' entrance to support and encourage cycle use by office tenants
- New cycle storage facility with direct internal links to office circulation areas
- New separate entrance to dedicated refuse storage area to provide direct access for street-level refuse collection

## Alterations to Building Façade, Ground and 1st Floor Levels

- Windows to Grays Inn Road, Portpool Lane and Verulam Street façades to be replaced – dark bronze coloured polyester powder coated metal framework
- Existing precast spandrel panels re-clad with new dark bronze coloured metal panelling to match window frames
- Splayed corners to Grays Inn Road with Portpool Lane and Verulam Street to be opened up and glazed / panelled to match Grays Inn Road façade
- Minor modifications to the rear façade to provide additional ventilation at ground floor level
- Facade above first floor to remain unchanged

# 4.0 Access & Building Facilities

## External Routes to Building Access Points

### Principal Access

- The principal access to the building is from street level on Grays Inn Road and will remain step-free and fully accessible. The entrance will be clearly distinguishable and contrasting from the remainder of the façade. Accessibility will be further improved by the enlargement of the entrance and reception area.
- New external access points to the retail café and ground floor offices will also be designed to be step-free and fully accessible, and will be clearly distinguishable and contrasting from the remainder of the façade.

### Service Access

- Service access is available via Grays Inn Road and Verulam Street, from where all vehicular deliveries / collections etc are handled during prescribed servicing hours. This will remain unchanged.

## Building Access, Circulation & Facilities

### Office Entrance Screen

- The new office entrance screen will comprise a pair of glazed doors for both ambulant and wheelchair access, flanked by fixed glazed screens.
- The principal entrance doors and side panels shall be fully glazed with clear glass. Discreet manifestation shall be applied in order to meet statutory safety requirements.

### Office Entrance Hall / Reception Area

- The office entrance foyer will be designed to provide an easily accessible and convenient transition from the outside to the inside. This will assist with orientation once inside the building.
- The area will be well lit with adequate circulation space for wheelchair users. Routes from the lobby to the rest of the building will be clearly signposted.
- A new Part M compliant reception desk will be provided. The receptionist's face and visitor's faces will be clearly visible and well-lit to allow lip reading. The reception counter will be capable of accommodating an induction loop if the incoming tenants and/or building management team consider this to be necessary.

### Vertical Circulation

- Existing access via 2 passenger lifts and 2 means of escape staircases is to be retained.

### Internal Doors

- Where internal doors are to be replaced, the use of self-closing doors will be minimised where possible as they disadvantage many people who have limited upper body strength.
- Where doors are to be opened manually, they will be provided with fully adjustable closing devices to ensure that the opening force will not be greater than 30 Newtons.
- Door furniture will be selected to be easily reached and gripped. For example tubular handles and levers rather than knob mechanisms.
- Doors, frames, door furniture and surrounding surfaces will be clearly identified by tonal contrast.

### Toilet Facilities

- Existing wheelchair-accessible toilets to ground and upper floor levels are to be retained.

### Refuse / Waste Management

- The current refuse storage provision and waste management strategy will remain unaltered and maintained throughout the life of the building for the use of all the occupiers.

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