

# LABS<sub>HOLBORN ESTATE</sub>

VICTORIA HOUSE Unit 2

DESIGN AND ACCESS and HERITAGE STATEMENT



## INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the proposals for the interior refurbishment of Unit 2, Victoria House, 37-63 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4DR.

Victoria House is listed Grade II and lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Listed building consent is sought for internal works to improve the existing layout and redecorate the unit. There are no remaining historic or architectural features of interest within the unit.

The unit has been granted planning and listed building consent in 2014 and 2016 for internal alterations and advertisement displays.

The unit is currently vacant; a new tenant is awaiting to take possession.

## PLANNING HISTORY

Application Number	Address	Development Description	Date	Decision
<a href="#">2016/4620/L</a>	2 Victoria House 37-63 Southampton Row London WC1B 4DA	Display of signage and installation of DDA sensor.	22/08/2016	Granted
<a href="#">2016/3654/A</a>	2 Victoria House 37-63 Southampton Row London WC1B 4DA	Display of 1 x non-illuminated, internally placed fascia panel, 1 x externally illuminated projecting sign, internally applied vinyl lettering, internally applied vinyl manifestations and 1 x internally applied opening hours vinyl.	09/08/2016	Granted
<a href="#">2014/5720/L</a>	Unit 2 Victoria House 37-63 Southampton Row London WC1B 4DA	Internal and external alterations in association with the display of 1 x internally illuminated projecting sign, 1 internally illuminated sign behind fascia glazing and 2 x window vinyl graphics applied to shop front.	11/09/2014	Granted
<a href="#">2014/5491/A</a>	Unit 2 Victoria House 37-63 Southampton Row London WC1B 4DA	Display of 1 x internally illuminated projecting sign.	11/09/2014	Granted

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Victoria House was commissioned as the headquarters of the Liverpool Victoria Insurance Company and built between 1926 and 1932. The architect was Charles William Long.

The Grade II Listed building comprises 8 storeys with a basement and sub-basement. It occupies a rectangular island site with facades on Bloomsbury Square, Bloomsbury Place, Vernon Place and Southampton Row.

The building is steel framed and clad in Portland stone. It features sculptures by Herbert William Palliser and ornamental brasswork by the Bromsgrove Guild. At ground floor level are a series of

impressive lobby spaces, faced in marble and with decorative brasswork and a coffered ceiling to the central space. At basement level is the original ballroom and associated circulation spaces, with coloured glass light fittings and original door surrounds and furniture in stainless steel.

The building was comprehensively refurbished in 2003 to create modern office accommodation to a Category A standard arranged around two central enclosed atriums created from previous central courtyards within the building. This refurbishment retained the original facades and much of the original structure with additional strengthening works carried out. Following the refurbishment, the individual tenants within the building have undertaken fitting out works beyond the landlord's Category A finish. Some of these alteration works are very bespoke reflecting the specific requirements of each tenant.

Externally the building is largely in its original form but for the ground floor retail units on Southampton Row, which have been altered with new glazed shopfronts.

Unit 2 is part of this group.

## PROPOSALS

The proposal seeks to reorganise the modern partitions to improve the layout of the unit, optimising the back of house and service areas at the back. It is also proposed to redecorate the unit utilising a mix of traditional and contemporary materials. No works are proposed to the external fabric of the listed building.

## USE

The unit planning use is A3 Restaurants and Cafes. The existing use will be retained.

## AMOUNT

The proposals subject of this application do not add any internal or external built areas. There will be no increase in the existing square footage of the unit.

## LAYOUT

The proposed layout retains the principal and party walls, removes later partitions and adds new ones to reorganise and improve the back of house and services areas.

## SCALE AND APPEARANCE

No change is proposed to the external appearance and scale of the listed building.

## ACCESS

No changes are proposed to the access.

## LANDSCAPING

There are no open spaces requiring landscaping within this application.

## HERITAGE CONSIDERATIONS

### *Significance Assessment*

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines 'Significance' as 'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'. 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment', describes instead a range of heritage values, arranged in four groups, which may be attached to places as follows:

- Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.
- Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Victoria House is a substantial building arranged over eight floors, with further accommodation at basement and sub-basement level. Its elevations are an elegant neo-classical composition built of high-quality materials such as Portland Stone and bronze. The building occupies an entire block between Southampton Row and Bloomsbury Square; the architectural motifs and articulation repeats in all four elevations creating a harmonic sense of solid coherence.

The exterior of Victoria House remains largely in its original form, retaining its external finishes and architectural detailing. To Southampton Row the ground floor retail units have been altered, with new glazed shopfronts, however these works do not detract from the overall quality of the facade, blending with the retail and commercial character of Southampton Row.

The building is considered to have high aesthetic and architectural value, not just due to its elegant facades which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area but because of its grand internal spaces such as the entrance lobbies and basement ballroom.

The building has been a contributor to the evolution of the Bloomsbury area and it has significant townscape value due to its imposing neo-classical facades which are highly visible within the streetscape and its strong relationship with Bloomsbury Square. It is therefore considered that Victoria House has significant historic and aesthetic value as well as lesser degrees of communal and evidential significance.

### *Proposed works and impact on the significance of Victoria House*

The proposals aim to reconfigure the back of house and service area, and to redecorate the unit. The works include:

- a. Removal of modern non-structural partitions;
- b. Construction of new stud wall partitions;

- c. New flooring;
- d. General decoration.

None of the existing fittings or decorations are of heritage value, therefore the proposed works are considered not to cause any impact on the values and significance of the listed building.

Historic England Conservation Principles accepts that change is part of the life of heritage assets: 'Change in the historic environment is inevitable, caused by natural processes, the wear and tear of use, and people's responses to social, economic and technological change'. We believe that the proposed works are necessary to secure the continuous occupation of the unit in the short and long term, and the impact is considered generally beneficial.

## PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

This section provides supplementary information about the extent of the impact of the proposals on the significance of the heritage assets affected in accordance with National and Local Policies.

### Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act - Section 66 & 72

*Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that when considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the decision maker shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possess. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also provides that, in respect of development affecting conservation areas, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.*

- No changes are proposed to the exterior of the building; therefore, the character and appearance of the asset and conservation area will not be affected. There are no historic or architectural features of interest in the interior of the unit.

### National Planning Policy Framework March 2012

*126 - Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:*

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
- *opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.*

*128 - In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance [...]*

*131 - In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

*132 - When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. [...]*

*134 - Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.*

- No external works are proposed, hence there will be no impact on the historic fabric of the building and the character of conservation area as a whole.
- It is our belief that the new layout reorganization will lead to a more practical and friendly use of the unit, therefore contributing to secure its future.

The London Plan March 2016

The London Plan defines the overall strategic plan for London, setting out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of London over the next 20–25 years.

*Policy 7.8 - Heritage assets and archaeology*

*Strategic*

*A - London's heritage assets and historic environment, including listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and other natural and historic landscapes, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields, scheduled monuments, archaeological remains and memorials should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be taken into account.*

*B - Development should incorporate measures that identify, record, interpret, protect and, where appropriate, present the site's archaeology.*

*Planning decisions*

*C - Development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.*

*D - Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.*

*E - New development should make provision for the protection of archaeological resources, landscapes and significant memorials. The physical assets should, where possible, be made available to the public on-site. Where the archaeological asset or memorial cannot be preserved or managed on-site, provision must be made for the investigation, understanding, recording, dissemination and archiving of that asset.*

#### *Supporting text*

*4.29 - London's built and landscape heritage provides a depth of character that has immeasurable benefit to the city's economy, culture and quality of life. [...] Ensuring the identification and sensitive management of*

*London's heritage assets in tandem with promotion of the highest standards of modern architecture will be key to maintaining the blend of old and new that gives the capital its unique character.*

*4.30 - Crucial to the preservation of this character is the careful protection and adaptive re-use of heritage buildings and their settings. [...]*

*7.31A - Substantial harm to or loss of a designated heritage asset should be exceptional, with substantial harm to or loss of those assets designated of the highest significance being wholly exceptional. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimal viable use. [...]*

- It is considered that the new layout and internal decoration will facilitate the continuous occupation of the unit; and given the lack of historical features, it is our belief that no harm will be caused to the heritage asset at large.

#### *Draft New London Plan*

*Consultation for the Draft New London Plan ran from 1 December 2017 to 2 March 2018. The Examination in Public (EiP) is targeted for autumn 2018, and adoption of the plan in autumn 2019. Although not yet adopted, the Draft Plan policies are a material consideration as they hold weight, albeit limited weight, in decisions going forward. As such the proposal has taken into account the Draft Plan policies. Policy HC1 Heritage Conservation and Growth*

*(c) Development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings. The cumulative impacts of incremental change from development on heritage assets and their settings, should also be actively managed. Development proposals should seek to avoid harm and identify enhancement opportunities by integrating heritage considerations early on in the design process.*

*(d) Development proposals should identify assets of archaeological significance and use this information to avoid harm or minimise it through design and appropriate mitigation. Where applicable, development should make provision for the protection of significant archaeological assets and landscapes. The protection of undesignated heritage assets of archaeological interest equivalent to a scheduled monument should be given equivalent weight to designated heritage assets.*

#### *Supporting Text*

*7.1.3 Ensuring the identification and sensitive management of London's heritage assets in tandem with promotion of the highest standards of modern architecture will be essential to maintaining the blend of old and new that gives the capital its unique character.*

*7.1.7 Heritage significance can be represented in an asset's form, scale, materials and architectural detail and, where relevant, the historic relationships between heritage assets. Development that*

*affects the settings of heritage assets should respond positively to the assets' significance, local context and character to protect the contribution that settings make to the assets' significance. In particular, consideration will need to be given to impacts from development that is not sympathetic in terms of scale, materials, details and form.*

#### Camden Local Plan 2017

The Camden Local Plan sets out the Council's planning policies and replaces the Core Strategy and Development Policies planning documents adopted in 2010. The Local Plan will cover the period from 2016-2031.

#### *Policy D2 Heritage*

*The Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens and locally listed heritage assets.*

#### *Designated heritage assets*

*Designed heritage assets include conservation areas and listed buildings. The Council will not permit the loss of or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, including conservation areas and Listed Buildings, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss [...]*

#### *Policy D2 Listed Buildings*

*To preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will:*

- i. resist the total or substantial demolition of a listed building;*
- j. resist proposals for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where this would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the building; and*
- k. resist development that would cause harm to significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting.*

The proposed works are considered to fully comply with the requirements of Camden's Local Development Framework. They are considered to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building in line with the statutory duty. The proposals also accord with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework, in particular ensuring that the significance of the listed building is sustained and that it is put to viable uses consistent with its conservation.



## APPENDIX I

### LIST ENTRY

#### VICTORIA HOUSE AND ATTACHED RAILINGS

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1378788

Date first listed: 04-Dec-1990

Date of most recent amendment: 11-Jan-1999

Statutory Address: VICTORIA HOUSE AND ATTACHED RAILINGS, 37-63, SOUTHAMPTON ROW

Details

TQ3081NW 798-1/100/1481

CAMDEN SOUTHAMPTON ROW(West side) Nos.37-63 (Odd) Victoria House and attached railings

(Formerly Listed as: SOUTHAMPTON ROW Nos.37-67 Victoria House and attached railings)

04/12/90 GV II Commercial building with ground floor shops on east side. c1926-32. By Charles William Long. For the Liverpool Victoria Insurance Company as their headquarters. Sculpture by Herbert William Palliser. Ornamental brasswork by the Bromsgrove Guild. Steel frame clad with Portland stone, bronze infill panels and copperlite glazing surrounds. Green slate mansard roof with dormers. EXTERIOR: eight storeys, sub-basement and basement on a rectangular island site with facades to Bloomsbury Square, Bloomsbury Place, Vernon Place and Southampton Row. Long sides, 15-window bays; returns five-window bays. West facade to Bloomsbury Square with tall channelled ground floor, central distyle-in-antis Ionic (Erechtheion) portico through first to fourth (attic) floors. Attached columns as far as projecting end bays with paired pilasters. Ground floor to third floor windows tripartite with small panes; second floor with relief pediments. Attic windows, with small panes in plain rectangular recesses, grouped in trios in the frieze (corresponding to window beneath). Tympanum with sculpture of central robed figure with arms outstretched flanked by other figures expressing the bounty of the natural world. To either side, cornice surmounted by parapet with panels of open ornamental brasswork behind which a further attic storey with trios of windows slightly offset from parapet openings. Mansard dormers slightly offset again; all echoing shape of triangular pediment. Central two storey feature above mansard. East facade similar but with shops at ground floor level (originally recessed but now with projecting C20 shopfronts) and tympanum sculpture on the theme of navigation and new forms of industry. Returns similar in style with distyle-in-antis centres, paired pilasters and no tympana. Entrance doors on all sides of panelled bronze. INTERIORS: virtually unaltered. Entrance lobbies on all four sides faced in Subiaco marble with Greek style decoration and much decorative brasswork. Central ground floor public area, open through three floors to elaborate coffered suspended ceiling. Basement meeting/dance hall with coloured glass light fittings, door furniture and surrounds in polished steel and radiator grilles embossed with VH monogram. Extensive mahogany panelling to third floor offices. Some rooms with C18 fireplaces from houses previously on the site.

Listing NGR: TQ3039381709

## APPENDIX II

### 2019 IMAGES







