

22 BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON WC1B 3HH

DESIGN & ACCESS AND HISTORIC IMPACT STATEMENT

APPLICATION FOR PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

July 2019

Ref: E189 076

Planning Application

This Statement should be read in conjunction with the Application for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent for alterations submitted to Camden Council and the plan, section and elevation drawings attached thereto.

Historic Assessment

The premises comprise a Georgian townhouse that has been extended with a 1980s addition and linking structure at the rear. An assessment of the existing property has been undertaken, to establish and record the status and construction of the building overall, together with the extent and state of preservation of original features.

A copy of the historic assessment is attached to this document and should be referred to for details of the location and context of the property, the construction of the original townhouse and its 1980s extension and a record of the features within the rooms of the townhouse.

Proposed Works

The proposed works envisage the following:

- **Townhouse:** retention of the existing, historic building with minimal works to the fabric; generally only those associated with maintenance. The services installations (electrical, data, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning) will, however, be renewed and upgraded, but this will be in line with the approach adopted within adjacent properties, aimed at minimising disturbance to the historic fabric. – this forms part of separate application refs 2019/3444/P and 2019/3534/L
- **Link structure:** it is proposed to widen the link to provide a more open and useable space at each level. This will take the form of a new steel and/or concrete structure that encloses the space between the brickwork rear projections of 22 and 23 Bedford Square at lower ground level and extends the ground to second floors into/above the rear courtyard. At second floor level the link will be extended across the existing flat roofs at the side and at the rear adjacent to the rear building.
- **Rear Building:** the general fabric of the rear building will generally be retained though it is proposed to remove the ceiling within the upper floor, to obtain a better spatial volume and to incorporate new rooflights, and to insert new structures to house toilet facilities within the light wells to the back of this building. Essentially, the rear building will be re-fitted out internally to achieve a more

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contemporary standard of finish and facilities. this forms part of separate application refs 2019/3444/P and 2019/3534/L

- **M&E Plant:** new M&E plant, to replace existing installations, will be inserted into the light wells of the rear building such that there should be no visual or acoustic intrusion for adjoining properties.



Render of proposed, extended link structure

Design Considerations

In order to develop a proposal for refurbishing, upgrading and extending the existing building into a scheme that is suitable for contemporary office requirements, an approach has been taken whereby the overall property is considered as three distinct elements:

- a historic Georgian townhouse which, while it has already been altered internally, retains many original features that need to be preserved and, where possible, enhanced;
- a relatively modern rear office building with a deep floor plan, for which the original design has been treated in a 'Georgian-esque' manner both internally and externally though, notwithstanding that it is an imitation, it does provide a suitable correspondence with the townhouse;
- and a linking structure that is similarly treated.

The proposed extension of the linking structure aims to provide a more open, spatial feel to the link, which currently simply acts as a corridor across the site; to bring the rear building more together with the townhouse, such that the two can act more effectively as an integrated office use. Notwithstanding this intention, it is proposed that the identity of the townhouse as a historic structure will be maintained, by design of the extension to the link as a modern form that is distinct from, but respectful of, the townhouse, and by use of internal finishes that establish the individual character of the building.

By largely removing new toilet facilities and service plant into the modern rear buildings as part of the upgrade, it is intended to 'lighten the load' on the historic townhouse, allowing it to be presented, particularly at lower levels, in a way that is more equivalent to its original form.

The design of the new extension as a faceted 'glass box' aims at a structure that maintains a light and open feel in relation to the existing rear courtyard, both in terms of the openness of the internal spaces to the courtyard and the perception of the structure from the courtyard. The construction will be designed to 'touch' the townhouse without the need for extensive works that would affect the historic fabric.

In general terms, the proposed alteration and extension to the link building would be similar in character to insertions and extensions that have already been carried out to adjacent listed properties, an intervention that is striking and modern but is slightly underplayed such that it does not seek to compete with the historic building and treats it respectfully.

Materials and Finishes

The structure of the new extension will be in steel and, or concrete. Externally, the new walls will be in full height glazing. The new flat roofs at low level will be finished in a single ply polymeric roof covering overlaid with insulation and timber decking, to permit access and use as balcony decks, and will have glass balustrades with stainless steel handrails to perimeter edges. The new roof to the upper floor of the link will have a sedum roof.

The small extension to the end of the rear building will be raised in traditional construction to match the existing, with a slated mansard roof with leadwork flashings.

Internally, materials used within the new extension will generally match those of the existing adjacent areas and will be simple, as would be anticipated within a building of this type which seeks to be complementary to, but considerate of, existing structures. Walls and ceilings will be plaster without cornices, doors will be plain panelled in timber frames with moulded architraves and skirting will be plain square edge timber. There will generally be painted finishes.

Internal finishes to the upper extension of rear building will match existing, adjacent.

Disabled Access

Front Entrance

Due to the age of the original building access for disabled persons from the street is necessarily restricted. In particular, the stepped entrance would be problematic for some ambulant disabled and all wheelchair bound persons to negotiate.

In order to avoid alteration to the historic structure, it is proposed that current access into the building is maintained and that disabled access, is managed by the building occupants, as and when required. Should a permanent installation (such as a stair lift, etc) be required to accommodate a disabled person at some future date, it is proposed that this will be installed when needed.

Front Lift: the lift at the immediate rear of the townhouse is small, inserted as part of the 1980s extension, and non-compliant with respect to wheelchair use. It serves the lower ground to third floor (so the fourth floor has no lift access). At first, second and third floor levels, there are steps up to the lift landing, to accommodate the differences in level between the townhouse landings and the floors of the link structure, and these, together with the fact that some lift stops are off intermediate landings of the main stair, might pose difficulties for some ambulant disabled persons when accessing upper floors of the townhouse.

Though it is intended to replace the lift car within the existing shaft including, if possible, slightly enlarging the car and realigning the direction of the entrances for better access, there is no potential to be able to reconfigure the landing locations relative to floor levels or bring the car up to a size that would be compliant, such that the townhouse would become accessible to the wheelchair bound. The level of access for ambulant disabled will be maintained.

Rear Entrance

The rear entrance to the rear building from Gower Mews is at grade and is accessible by wheelchair bound and ambulant disabled persons.

Rear Lift: the existing lift at the back of the rear building is c 1 m wide x 1.3 m deep, slightly smaller than the recommended minimum internal size of 1.1 m wide by 1.4 m deep for a wheelchair accessible lift. It is not fully compliant with respect to wheelchair use but with the capacity to accommodate a wheelchair. It serves all floors of the rear building including the ground level of the mews at the rear.

It is not currently proposed to upgrade the size of the lift, though this might be considered at some future date when it reaches the end of its useful life and is due for renewal.

The level of access for both wheelchair bound and ambulant disabled persons from the rear of the building, to the whole of the rear building and the link, will be maintained.

Waste

Waste is currently stored on site by the tenant of the building for disposal by the regular Council collections of general waste in conjunction with any special/individual measures put in place with independent contractors by the tenant. Separate containers are used for general and recyclable waste, in common with contemporary practice and it considered that this procedure will continue. It is not anticipated that the proposals will lead to any increase in the volume or type of waste produced by the users of the buildings.

Adjacent Properties

Rights to Light

The building owner, which also owns the adjacent properties, does not consider that there will be a potential for right to light issues to arise from the extension of the upper floor of the link structure, with respect to windows of adjacent properties. Possible impact is generally considered to be unlikely or, at worst, minimal. The building owner will however undertake investigations where it is considered that any infringement of a right to light may occur.

Means of Escape

A reciprocal arrangement for escape from the upper level of the townhouse in the event of fire appears to exist, or to have existed, with adjacent properties. A doorway from the fourth-floor office opens into the staircase of 23 Bedford Square. A hatch in the ceiling of the fourth-floor office appears to give access to the leadwork flat section of the lower roof over the front part of the third floor from which metal fire escape steps give access over the party wall to the roof of 21 Bedford Square. Investigation is required with the building owner, The Bedford Estate as to what arrangements are still in place, however, it is not intended to alter any existing arrangements as part of the proposed works.