Design and Access Statement

Relating to Irrigation and Access Control at Bedford Square Gardens, London, WC1B for The Bedford Estates

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Section 1 - Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared to accompany a Listed Building application for Bedford Square Gardens, London.

Bedford Square is the finest surviving Georgian square in London, laid out between 1775 and 1780 as a show-piece for the next phase of the Bedford Estate.

Bedford Square, 1ha, is located to the east of Tottenham Court Road and west of the British Museum, in Bloomsbury. The garden, which is on level ground, is enclosed by late C18 cast-iron railings with spearhead finials (listed grade II with the gates). The gardens and railings, both in an oval shape, are surrounded by the buildings of the Square, which are on a rectangular plan. Gower Street and Bloomsbury Street run down the east side of the Square. Bayley Street runs east/west from the north-west corner of the Square, connecting it to Tottenham Court Road.

Section 2 – Design Statement

Use

The current use of the garden is a private garden with adjacent tenant access and the application does not seek to change this.

Internal Proposals

The proposal is limited to the excavation and installation of a full submerged water tank and pressurisation unit to serve the existing ring main of water services along with the associated power to the pressurisation unit, including all necessary services. We propose to upgrade the existing 2no access gates. The gates are currently key operated and the Estates charges tenants a fee for these keys and access. We propose to upgrade to a cloud-based online fob and app system. This will allow the Estate to greater monitor who is using and who can access the garden. By undertaking the following works, the garden will be brought up to a modern-day standard and in regard to irrigation allows our in-house gardeners to effectively and efficiently water and maintain the garden space.

The works are fairly limited in nature and for the purposes of this application, the works entail a fully submerged water tank with an above ground pressurisation unit. The pressurisation unit shall be housed in a timber shed structure and obscured from view via planting both within the garden and from outside the garden. We propose to continue the current mien of planting with the following species:

- Ligustrum vulgare
- Mahonia x media
- Garrya elliptica
- Skimmia japonica
- Cornus sp.

We will also incorporate a number of British native species for added aesthetic effect and biodiversity. These would include:

- Cratageus monogyna (Hawthorn)
- Rosa canina (Dog Rose)
- Viburnum opulus (Guelder Rose)
- Prunus avium (Wild Cherry)
- Corylus avellana (Hazel)

Externally there will be no change to the appearance of the garden except for the addition of in keeping planting as set out above and new lock mechanisms to work in conjunction with the cloud-based online fob system.

Section 3 – Use / Layout

Careful consideration has been given to the most appropriate location for the tank and after ongoing discussions with Rob Tulloch, Conservation Officer for Camden Council and Christopher Wright the arboricultural consultant, it has been located on the existing compost mound site which shall be cleared in order to facilitate the excavation.

As supported by the appended Arboricultural Report some tree loss is required, in order to facilitate the proposed development, these losses have been confined to one low-quality tree on site (T135), while better quality trees have been retained. By seeking arboricultural advice and designing for tree retention, the proposals have provided the best possible chance of successfully retaining better quality trees. A schedule of all proposed tree works with reasons for the works is attached at Appendix B of the Arboricutural Report.

Section 4 – Access

As part of the design phase, we have undertaken an assessment of the current access arrangements with the view of utilising existing gate access.

In regard to bringing the plastic tank and mini-digger into the site, this shall be achieved via existing vehicular access routes with hardstanding. A trailer shall be used to bring these items on to the site and these items shall be stored outside of RPAs.

Section 5 – Landscaping

Excavation works are proposed to facilitate the installation of the tank. In consultation with the arboculturalist we have proposed exaction in accordance with Option 4 of the V-Tank Option 4 installation guide. This involves a shored vertical excavation inclusive of anchor straps and a compacted crushed rock, gravel and stabilised sand base.

The tank shall be fully submerged and back filled with crushed rock/ gravel followed by an approved clean excavated crushed rock or gravel backfill and finalized with a reinforced poured concrete slab grade 32 on which will be housed the pressurisation unit contained within a timber shed construction and concealed with in keeping planting to match the garden.

To aid protection to the existing trees within the garden we will fence off to prevent and accidental damage during the course of the work.

Section 6 – Vehicular and Transportation Links

The vehicular and transport links to the building will not be affected by the proposed works.

Section 7 – Conclusion

We believe that the proposed works will not adversely affect the garden square.

Through our design, we have carefully considered the most discreet and practical location for the tank to minimise the impact on the garden externally and internally. The plant will not be visible from any adjoining properties and will not have any adverse impact on the amenity of the adjoining owners.

A carefully considered approach will be implemented whilst excavating so as to not adversely affect plant life. Specifically, the perimeter of the pit to be dug for the tank shall be dug manually down to a depth of 1000mm and 500mm across. This shall allow for any tree roots that will be within the footprint to be cut with a clean and sharp blade*. The remainder of the pit can then be excavated with a 3-tonne mini-digger placed upon suitable ground protection (such as TrakMat Ground Guards) and from existing hard-standing where feasible. Where the pit is to be left open for more than two hours, the sides shall be covered with hessian and kept moist, down to a depth of at least 1000mm, to prevent soil desiccation. Due to the nature of the pit, which is 7.5m away from the stem of T88, runs radially from T88, and occupies no more than 5% of the total RPA of T88, the total potential root loss is likely to be far less than if the pit ran tangentially, because roots typically radiate out from the base of the tree. Incursions into the RPA of T136 and T145 are very minimal.

In our opinion, the installation of the irrigation tank as a whole will not adversely affect the garden and will benefit all future users. By improving the irrigation provision within the garden we anticipate a far more sustainable and effective way to water and maintain this historic garden space.