

**37-41 Gower Street
London WC1E 6HH**

Heritage Assessment

Anthony Walker
Dip arch (dist), grad dip (cons) AA, RIBA



DLG Architects LLP Studio 12.0G.1
The Leathermarket 11-13 Weston Street
London SE1 3ER
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1.0 Scope of this Assessment

- 1.1 This assessment has been prepared by Anthony Walker, a chartered architect with a diploma in Building Conservation, to support an application for exchange of planning use of the basement, ground, third and fourth floors of 2 Bloomsbury Place with that of the basement and ground floors of 37-41 Gower Street.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Numbers 37-41 were built as part of a terrace of 18 houses, of which numbers 15a to 39 were built in 1783, and numbers 41-49 in 1785. They were generally of 3 storeys with a basement and attics and were listed grade II in March 1969.
- 2.2 Gower Street is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and Gower Street itself lies within Sub Area 5.
- 2.3 The terrace is listed grade II and is described as follows:

Terrace of 18 houses. Nos 15A-39 built 1783; Nos 41-49, 1785. Nos 37-41 frontages rebuilt in facsimile but having only one doorway (that to No.39). Darkened yellow stock brick. Stucco 1st floor band with guilloche pattern. Slated mansard roofs with dormers. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys, attics and basements; Nos 25 & 39, 4 storeys and basements. 3 windows each, No.49 with unfenestrated return to Chenies Street. Round-arched doorways with fluted pilasters, cornice-heads, fanlights and panelled doors; most with panelled reveals and some with radial patterned fanlights. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sash windows, some with glazing bars. Ground and 1st floor windows with bracketed sills and cast-iron guards. Parapets. No.15a: entrance in arched porch extension with return to Store Street. 4 windows in ground floor extension, 2 at 1st floor level. Nos 19 & 21: early C20 stone entablature with bracketed cornice and fluted frieze. No.21: stone entrance surround with Doric half columns carrying entablature. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with urn finials to areas.

- 2.4 No mention is made in the listing description of the interiors, nor of the bomb damage which occurred in World War II to numbers 37-43, which indicates that little value was attributed to them. The three buildings were substantially damaged although less harm was caused to adjacent properties.

3.0 Building form.

- 3.1 The terrace has a generally consistent form with intermittent taller floors, and is well shielded from view at the back facing towards Ridgmount Street. The main road frontage has a regular pattern of openings with three at each floor level. The rear windows to 37-41 have metal, single-pane sashes.
- 3.2 Numbers 37-41 have a central main entrance door, with four windows on either side. The regular pattern of the openings is characteristic of the Gower Street frontage.
- 3.3 There is clear external evidence of a change in layout for 37-41 where, at ground level, the rhythm of the traditional pattern for the properties on either side, ie 35 and 43, consists of a main entrance with two windows to the front room of each property.
- 3.4 Internally, as part of the reconstruction after war damage, the building is planned around a central corridor with a range of rooms on either side.
- 3.5 Examination of the postwar planning applications shows that there were repeated applications for modifications to suit various uses, ranging from residential, hostels, offices and educational facilities.

3.6 The alterations largely retain similar subdivisions and maintain the principle front and back elevations although the latter is punctuated with a series of modern windows.

4 **Proposals**

4.1 The pattern of original fenestration for three houses in the terrace would have provided nine openings on each floor. Following the substantial bomb damage to 37-41 a similar pattern of openings has been provided but is based on access from a single central door which would have been in number 39, leading to a central hall running from back to front of the three houses, and linked by an internal lateral corridor.

4.2 The main front and back elevations have two windows for each room at ground level. At basement level a similar pattern is maintained with some smaller subdivision, in particular where bathrooms are located on the outer walls. The existing windows consist of a combination of single pane sashes, and six-over-six pane sashes.

4.2 The porter's flat, shown on the 2001 planning application drawings at the front of the building on the basement level, is retained as existing.

4.3 The garden, which originally would have been shared between the three properties, has already been turned into a single space which is shared between the occupants.

5 **Summary**

5.1 The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal, paragraphs 5.67 and 5.68, confirms the character of Gower Street and many of the details. It is noted that the buildings are of three storeys, apart from four exceptions which include number 39. It also confirms that the buildings were originally residential and now have a mix of uses which include halls of residence, other educational use, hotels and offices. The proposed uses of the ground and basement levels are in accordance with this mix.

5.2 The proposed change of use substantially retains the rebuilt external appearance of the building and do not harm its significance.

5.3 The existing subdivision of the interior basically forms a single space along the back of the building on either side of a central main stair at basement and ground floor levels. The levels are divided into smaller rooms, with one or two windows facing Gower Street for each room.

5.3 The internal layout at ground and lower ground levels, retains the principle of a cruciform corridor (established following the WWII substantial bomb damage) leading from the front entrance to the garden at the back, and north to south for approximately the width of the original number 39 at ground level, and slightly less at basement level.

5.4 In the existing flat facing Gower Street, the basement will be retained.

5.5 It is concluded that these proposals do not harm the significance or the character or historical use of the group of three buildings, nor do they diminish their contribution to the appearance or significance of the Conservation Area.

Anthony Walker Dip arch (Dist), Dip Cons AA, RIBA