



**23 BEDFORD SQUARE
LONDON
WC1B 3HH**

Heritage Assessment of Proposed Alterations

March 2020

1.0 Scope

- 1.1 This assessment has been prepared to accompany a listed building application for 23 Bedford Square to include minor alterations and the installation of new services including cooling and heating.
- 1.2 This report has been prepared by Sean Emmett who is a member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. It is based on a desk-top study of the building, the listing description, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area draft statement.

2.0 Location

- 2.1 The site is located on the north side of Bedford Square.
- 2.2 It lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and is described in the current statement as being within Sub-Area 6, Bloomsbury Square, Russell Square and Tavistock Square. Bedford Square is described as:

6.57 Bedford Square is one of the most significant and complete examples of a Georgian (1775) Square remaining in London. Its national importance is highlighted by the grade I listing of all the properties fronting the square. It is also notable that many original streetscape elements remain (also listed) and that the gardens are on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Greater London (Grade II*).

6.58 The square was part of a planned development of the Bedford Estate that included a series of interlinked streets and spaces and is a major landmark both along Gower Street and within the Bloomsbury area. Despite the impact of traffic along Gower Street, the Square remains a relatively intimate space with the degree of enclosure enhanced by the large mature trees and landscaping within the oval gardens. This central, private space is defined by iron railings with gates under wrought iron arches. Although initially a residential square, it is now entirely occupied by offices.

6.59 The terraces are three-storeys with a basement and attic level. The front elevations are particularly notable as they were designed as a whole to give a sense of architectural unity and harmony to the square. The elevations are constructed of yellow stock brick with tuck pointing and have a central stucco pedimented element and a rusticated base. The doorways have intermittent voussoirs of Coade stone (a type of artificial stone) and faces on the keystones.

3.0 Background and Description

- 3.1 Bedford Square was conceived during the building boom which followed the Peace of Paris in 1763. A lull from 1767-1771 was followed by an upturn between 1773 and 1777 which turned into a further downturn in 1778 when France entered into the American War of Independence. However, loans to builders from the Bedford Estate allowed the scheme for the Square to be completed by the end of 1783 as part of the spread of development north of New Oxford Street.
- 3.2 The Estate had considerable control over the form of the development and the Square is unique in having four complete sides of 'palace-fronted' terrace houses surrounding a central garden, in this case oval in shape.

- 3.3 The building facades had to keep to a regular format with an emphasis on the central properties of the ranges on each side. This uniformity has been broadly maintained although careful inspection reveals a wealth of detailed variations.
- 3.4 The coherence of appearance, combined with some very good interiors, has justified the listing of all the buildings as Grade I.
- 3.5 A lease to numbers 21, 22 and 23 was granted for 99 years to William Scott, a brickmaker, on the 20 August 1782. The plot sizes were 28 feet wide by 138 feet deep except for where an additional section which was created at the end of 21 to terminate Gower Mews.
- 3.6 Number 22 is on four main floors with a basement below. The main frontage faces the Square and is three bays wide with individual balconies to each window at first floor level along the frontage to the Square.
- 3.7 At the back the building, there is an open space running across the back of 23 and 22 and facing a new building on the northern side. There is a raised line in the paving along the back denoting what is understood to have been the original small open space behind the two buildings. On the western side, there is a new development at the back of the adjoining buildings in the Square.
- 3.8 Until the late 1980s, 23 Bedford Square was combined with 21-25 Bedford Square with a single occupier.
- 3.9 Listed Building Consent was granted in 1988, reference number 8870076 for demolition of rear extensions of 21-25 Bedford Square and of 12 Gower Mews (unlisted). Renovation of main buildings of 21-25 Bedford Square and rebuilding of 12 Gower Mews and building of new rear extensions to 21, 22, 24 and 25 Bedford Square.
- 3.10 Further Listed Building Consent was granted in 1990, reference number 9070052, demolition of rear extensions of 21-25 Bedford Square and of 12 Gower Mews (unlisted). Renovation of main buildings of 21-25 Bedford Square and rebuilding of 12 Gower Mews and building of new rear extensions to 21, 22, 24 and 25 Bedford Square.
- 3.11 Following the above consent, 23 Bedford Square underwent full refurbishment in 1990, where much of the current mechanical and electrical system was installed, including the central heating system, boiler and modern lighting.
- 3.12 There is a single planning application on Camden's records dated 22 December 1977. The existing plans are available which shows the internal configuration at this date. There are no proposed plans available on Camden's planning register; however, The Estate hold drawings dating back from this period, which shows various internal changes.

4.0 Significance

- 4.1 The building, in common with all of Bedford Square, is listed grade I. The listing description states that:

TQ2981NE BEDFORD SQUARE 798-1/99/77 (North side) 24/10/51 Nos.12-27 (Consecutive) and attached railings (Formerly Listed as: BEDFORD SQUARE Nos.1-54 (Consecutive))

GV 1

Symmetrical terrace of 16 houses forming the north side of a square. 1776-1781. Mostly built by W Scott and R Grews; probably designed by either Thomas Leverton or Robert Palmer; for the Bedford Estate. Yellow stock brick with evidence on most of the houses of tuck pointing. Plain stucco band at 1st floor level. The 2 centre houses, Nos 18 & 19, are stuccoed. Slate mansard roofs with dormers and tall slab chimney-stacks. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys, attics and basements. 3 windows each. Recessed round-arched entrances with Coade stone vermiculated intermittent voussoirs and bands; mask keystones. Enriched impost bands and cornice-heads to doors. Side lights to panelled doors, some 2-leaf. Fanlights, mostly radial patterned. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sashes, most with glazing bars. The following have blind boxes: Nos 16-19, No.20 to 1st floor only, Nos 21 and 25. The following have cast-iron balconies to 1st floor windows: Nos 12-15, 18-21, 23-25. No.12 has a good early C19 cast-iron balcony with round-arched trellis and tented canopy. Cornice and parapets, Nos 12 & 27 having balustraded parapets. INTERIORS not inspected but noted to contain original stone stairs with cast and wrought-iron balusters of various scroll designs, decoration and features; special features as mentioned: No.12: 5 window return to Gower Street, some blind, plus single storey extension. The doorway is stucco, not Coade stone. No.13: Leverton's own house, occupied in 1782 but he did not settle here until 1795. Stucco doorway, not Coade stone. Rear elevation with canted bay to lower 3 floors and cast-iron balconies. INTERIOR: stair replaced by a timber version late C19. 2 fine plaster ceilings. No.14: rear elevation with full height canted bay. Plasterwork friezes and ceilings. Some curved doors. No.17: plaster ceiling. Nos 18 & 19: rusticated ground floor; 5 Ionic pilasters rise through the 1st and 2nd storeys to support a frieze with roundels above each pilaster, and pediment with delicate swag and roundel enrichment on the tympanum. At 2nd floor level a continuous enriched band running behind the pilasters. INTERIORS with curved staircases; No.18 with original cellar including a storage cupboard. Attached to and facing the rear of No.19, a finely proportioned contemporary 2 storey and basement stuccoed building. 3 windows. Round-arched ground floor openings; windows set in architraved Coade stone surrounds with guilloche impost bands and female head keystones. 1st floor palm leaf string course. A rare survival of this kind of building attached to the rear wall of the coach-houses. No.21: screens and a plaster ceiling. Attached to and facing the rear, a well detailed contemporary 2 storey brick building. 3 windows. Arcaded ground floor with stucco impost bands. Entrance with radial patterned fanlight. Gauged brick flat arches to all sashes. Brick mutule cornice which continues around the pediment containing a blind oeil-de-boeuf. A rare urban survival of an ancillary building of the period. No.23: panelled doors and a plaster ceiling. No.24: rear elevation with canted bay to lower 3 floors. Plaster ceilings and panels. No.25: rear elevation with full height bow and full height half-canted closet. Wood carving and plaster ceilings, one originally with painted panels. No.26: plasterwork and closet room behind

the stairs. No.27: original basement door with interesting metalwork. Some houses with original lead rainwater heads and pipes. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings to areas with urn or torch-flambe finials. No.17 with a wrought-iron lamp bracket and snuffer. Most houses with good wrought-iron foot scrapers. HISTORICAL NOTE: the houses in Bedford Square form a most important and complete example of C18 town planning. Built as a speculation, it is not clear who designed all the houses. Leverton was a country house architect and may have been involved with only the grander houses; he lived at No.13. Palmer was the Bedford Estate surveyor and may be responsible for the vagaries of the square. The majority of the plots leased by the estate were taken by Robert Grews, a carpenter, and William Scott, a brickmaker. No.22 was the residence of Sir J Forbes Robertson, actor (plaque). (Byrne A: Bedford Square, An architectural study: London: -1990)

The building is clearly of significance as part of the complete range of terraces around Bedford Square and as an example of this type of development.

- 4.2 The layout of the main building retains the original form with two main rooms on the western side of the house facing north and south. Beside these to the east are the main staircase at the back and a small front room located over the entrance hall which takes up a similar space on the ground floor.
- 4.3 To the rear of the main house and behind the original staircase is a geometric outrigger, extending to all levels and from 1st floor upwards forms an inner room from the principal room.
- 4.4 Internally, the layout of the rooms in the original building, the main staircase and the decorative items, particularly on the ground and first floors, are of particular significance. As expected at basement level, there is little by way of decorative features and many of the finishes are modern, including plasterboard ceilings.
- 4.5 For the Conservation Area the significance of the building is, as noted in 4.1, its relationship to the terrace of properties.

5.0 Proposals

- 5.1 The proposals for refurbishment and for the inclusion of comfort cooling are set out in the Design and Access Statements.
- 5.2 For the purposes of this Heritage Assessment they can be summarised as follows. Upgrading of lavatories and kitchen facilities previously modernised, upgrading of services as necessary, removal of modern partitions at basement areas to reconfigure the kitchens and WCs. It also includes the removal of a wall within the basement removing an unnecessary corridor.
- 5.3 For the comfort cooling the work entails the removal of redundant boilers, radiators and redundant pipework combined with the installation of new units internally in purpose made free standing joinery units. The condenser units will be installed within the redundant cold water storage house, which is located on the main roof. The cold water storage tank, a modern addition having been granted planning permission for 1990, will be partially rebuilt to include louvered walls to allow sufficient ventilation. As confirmed in the Design and Access Statement this will have no impact on the visual appearance of the building, and given that the tank room is set 6m from the rear elevation and hidden behind existing pitched roofs, it will not be visible from ground level or adjoining properties.

- 5.4 The pipework serving the internal comfort cooling units will be routed within existing service routes. Vertically, the pipework will run within an existing riser located in the rear corner of the main house where the redundant central heating pipework will be removed. Horizontally, the pipework will be routed within the existing floor voids. Generally, the internal units have been located in the same position as the redundant radiators, which will allow pipework to run in existing service penetrations/notches within the timber joists.
- 5.5 Externally, apart from the redundant tank room detailed above, the only changes will be a new entryphone plate by the front door.
- 5.6 Thus the proposals do not affect the external appearance of the building as seen from Bedford Square or the wider area.

6.0 Assessment

- 6.1 None of the proposals have an adverse effect on the exterior of the building which, as, described above, is of particular significance. They therefore do not adversely affect the significance of the exterior of the listed building, nor the adjoining listed buildings or the Conservation Area.
- 6.2 The proposals for internal distribution of services keeps these concealed using existing voids for the purpose and thus they do not adversely affect the significance of the interior features.
- 6.3 When considering the removal of the wall dividing the basement room, although not believed to be modern, it is not deemed to be original. This is not a normal configuration and is not seen on any of the adjoining properties on Bedford Square. The adjacent surfaces, such as the ceiling, are of modern plasterboard construction and therefore there will be no damage to adjacent historic surface.
- 6.4 The new services will be run in existing routes to mitigate the impact on the fabric of the building, the risers, etc will be cleared of redundant pipework and cabling to make space for the new services.
- 6.5 The installation of variable refrigerant volume (VRC) units to provide heating and cooling is beneficial in meeting modern comfort standards with the least intervention in the building and in a way which is fully reversible. The replacement of the existing gas combustion boiler with a VRV system will also improve the thermal performance of the building. This complies with the objectives of the NPPF in achieving a sustainable building which despite being located on a busy highway, can maintain reasonable environmental standards while at the same time conserving the heritage asset.
- 6.6 Upgrading the lavatory and kitchen facilities only affects modern additions/fittings, having been installed during earlier alterations, and will bring these up to the required modern standard.
- 6.7 In summary, it is considered that the proposals comply with both national and local guidance on the protection of designated heritage assets and the conservation area while ensuring that the building provides a sustainable asset.