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Dear Elaine

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)**

**PLANNING (LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)**

**38 RUSSELL SQUARE, LONDON, WC1B 3QQ**

**APPLICATIONS 2018/4344/P AND 2018/3983/L FOR FULL PLANNING PERMISSION AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT**

**PROPOSED REFURBISHMENT AND INSTALLATION OF PLANT: AMENDED PLANS**

On behalf of our client, the Trustees of the British Museum, please find enclosed a full set of amended plans and documents showing changes to the proposals submitted in August 2018 as part of an application for full planning permission and listed building consent for the refurbishment of 38 Russell Square, W1B 3QQ.

**38 Russell Square**

The property at 38 Russell Square is Grade II listed as part of the terrace of buildings at 38 to 43 Russell Square. The building is located in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area to which it makes a positive contribution by virtue of its classical detailing and original architectural features.

The principal elevations of the property retain detailing which contributes to the uniform appearance of the historic terrace, including the original brickwork, fenestration arrangements and cast iron railings and balconies facing Russell Square.

Some historic plans from the 1960s and 1987 give an understanding of the plan form of the property and its plan form. The internal spaces have been altered throughout to facilitate their use as office accommodation, though the original plan form remains broadly legible (with some areas of significant alteration). A principal staircase remains in its original location, with historic balusters and handrails, and other original features such

as ceiling roses, cornices and door architraves remain at ground and first floor levels. A full appraisal of the internal features is set out at Section 4.0 of the Heritage Statement submitted with the 2018 application.

The building possesses historic and architectural interest as part of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century speculative terrace associated with James Burton, a prolific Georgian architect.

### **The Proposed Development**

In 2018, applications for full planning permission and listed building consent were submitted, seeking to refurbish the buildings and facilitate their continued use as offices (B1), including the upgrade of services, and necessary remedial work (2018/4344/P and 2018/3983/L). By refurbishing the property internally, the Museum intends to improve the office accommodation, and to separate the rear two storey accommodation referred to as 'The Annex' from the principal building. The Annex is intended to function as a separate office.

During determination of the applications, the project team has engaged in extensive consultation with the Council and, as a result, a number of amendments to the submitted scheme are now sought to minimise the alterations to the proportions of internal spaces, and to avoid alterations in the most sensitive parts of the building, as well as simplifying the external appearance of the building.

The proposed amendments which have been agreed with officers at Camden include:

- The removal of rooftop plant and the introduction of an external VRF unit to be accommodated in the rear yard at basement level, where it will not be experienced in views within the wider CA.
- The cycle storage and cycle track to the side of the metal stairs will be omitted.
- The omission of central spine risers and the creation of a new riser within the stairwell, which will be symmetrical with the adapted riser on the opposite wall. This locates the services within a minimally sensitive location, and preserves the historic proportions of the principal rooms.
- Revision to the brickwork cleaning strategy to clarify that new bricks, joints and lighter areas would be soot washed to match the patina of the existing facades.
- The previously proposed joinery casings to the VRF units will be omitted internally and standard products and casings to be used.
- The location of the emitters in the front office to Russell Square will be adjusted to the rear wall behind the new risers.
- The preparation of an additional method statement 11 for works to timber floors.
- An updated acoustic report to reflect the revised location of the external plantwork.

As agreed with officers, the revised proposals retain the overarching principles to refurbish the building and introduce new service provisions whilst minimising the effect on the listed building. These comprise specifically:

- The re-use of existing service risers in the building, with these to be enlarged by the minimum necessary where required;
- The reinstatement of cornices and skirtings where these have been interrupted by removed partitions and the new risers, and the creation of new profiles to match those existing.

These changes, and the rationale behind them, are detailed in the drawings submitted with this letter and prepared by Dannatt Johnson Architects. For clarity, where changes are not described, the proposals remain the same as described in the 2018 application documents. The amended proposals are accompanied by a suite

of supporting documents, which are set out in the drawing issue sheets from DJA Architects and Alan Baxter Associates.

### **Heritage Statement Addendum**

In light of the above modifications, we have carefully considered the effects of the proposals upon the significance of the Grade II listed building, and the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. This section provides a heritage assessment of the revised proposals.

#### *External Unit*

The proposed VRF system requires an external unit, which will be placed in the rear yard at basement level, in a location previously occupied by refrigeration condensing units. This location has been carefully considered through discussion with the Council to be minimally obtrusive, and to meet noise requirements, whilst creating a comfortable office environment within the property. The revised proposed location is discreet and will not affect views towards the property or an appreciation of its significance in line with Local Plan policy DH2 (Heritage).

#### *Riser Locations and Location of VRF units*

The locations of the service risers at the property have been the subject of careful consideration, to ensure that these are the minimum size necessary to facilitate the servicing of the refurbished office spaces whilst preserving the historic proportions of important spaces within the building. The revised riser locations have been the result of extensive consultation with officers during determination.

Situating the plant room in the basement ensures that this function is accommodated in a space of lesser significance. A two pipe supply route to distribute from a point in the roof void would ensure that the existing risers are utilised with the minimum rearrangement required.

Where possible all existing risers are to be utilised to reduce the number and size of the new risers being introduced in line with design and heritage policies DH1 and DH2 which encourage the upgrade and refurbishment of historic buildings in sensitive ways. A new electrical riser will utilise the existing route in the stairwell to minimise the impact on the existing building fabric and planform. Distribution boards are proposed at basement, second and third floor levels, to preserve the character of the internal spaces at ground and first floor level, which would historically have been the grandest spaces in the internal hierarchy of the house.

The location of VRF units within the rooms has been carefully considered, and these would be situated as close as possible to the risers to minimise the extent of new routes within the floors.

The revised proposals are the result of extensive consultation with officers to develop a set of proposals which minimise intrusion into historic fabric and spaces, whilst facilitating the refurbishment and office use of the building. The new risers would therefore be discreet additions which would not harm the intrinsic historic character of the building, or its special interest.

The revised elements of the proposals discussed above would create a minimally intrusive set of proposals to sensitively equip the internal spaces for use as modern office space.

Overall, the proposals will facilitate the upgrade of the mechanical and electrical services through the building, replacing an ad hoc arrangement of exposed cables, trunking and risers which have been added piecemeal over time. The new services will rationalise these and provide heating and cooling to the office spaces. The rationale and design process is discussed in detail in the Design and Access Statement prepared by Dannatt Johnson Architects.

*Benefits to planform and refurbishment*

As discussed in the original Heritage Statement, the removal of harmful, modern partitions at ground, first and second floor levels would return the proportions of these spaces to their original, reflecting the historic circulation patterns in the property. This would be beneficial to the character and understanding of the historic property.

Similarly, the infilling of the original opening between the principal rooms at first floor level has obscured the historic floor plan at this level, and the removal of this to reinstate the opening will enable the rooms to be appreciated in their original layout.

The 'annex' to the property is to be accessed separately, and a staircase inserted to provide separate internal circulation. This will not affect the floorplan or circulation in the main property, and was supported by officers at pre-application stage.

Overall, we find that the proposed continuation of the office use of the listed building is appropriate, and that the restoration and reinstatement of identified features of note, including elements of the plan form at ground and first floor levels, cleaning, repointing and repair to the external elevations, repair to historic metalwork, and removal of harmful vegetation, would be beneficial to the listed building.

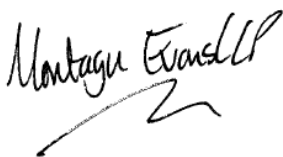
The proposals therefore accord with the relevant national and local planning policies with regards to heritage, and preserve the significance of the listed building and its contribution to the Conservation Area in line with the requirements set out at Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the 1990 Act.

**Closing**

We hope that the above and enclosed provides the sufficient information for you to consider the application and issue the decision notices.

Please do not hesitate to contact Kate Falconer-Hall (020 7312 7466 / [kate.falconer-hall@montagu-evans.co.uk](mailto:kate.falconer-hall@montagu-evans.co.uk)) or Alex Rowley (02030042918 / [alexandra.rowley@montagu-evans.co.uk](mailto:alexandra.rowley@montagu-evans.co.uk)) should you wish to discuss the above in further detail.

Yours sincerely,



**MONTAGU EVANS LLP**