

22 Bedford Square WC1B 3HH

Conservation Assessment for The Bedford Estate

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1.0 Scope

- 1.1 This assessment has been prepared at the request of the Bedford Estate to consider the impact of replacing the finish to the front entrance steps.
- 1.2 This report has been prepared by Anthony Walker who has a post graduate diploma in Building Conservation, has been a visiting professor at Kingston University and on the register of architects Accredited in Building Conservation. It is based on a desk top study of the building, the listing description, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area draft statement and Andrew Bryne's architectural study of Bloomsbury Square.

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 voussiors 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 down turn 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 20th August 1782. The plot sizes were 28feet 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 The main façade is clearly visible from the Square and is an important element in the composition of the terrace on the northern side of the Square.

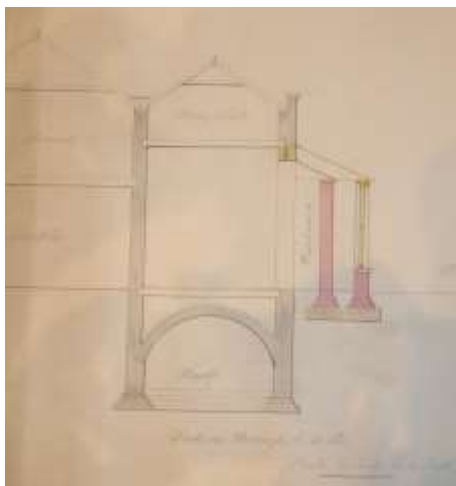
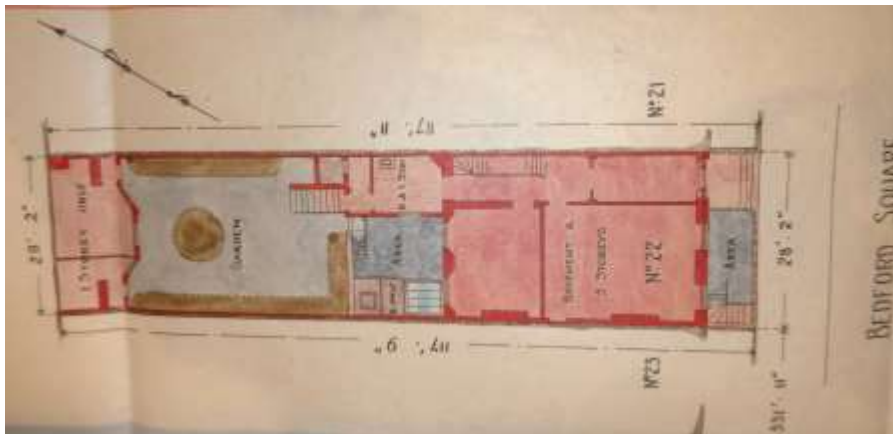


- 3.8 At the back the building there is an open space running across the back of 23 and 22 and facing a new building on the northern side. There is a raised line in the paving along the back denoting what is understood to have been the original small open space behind the two buildings. On

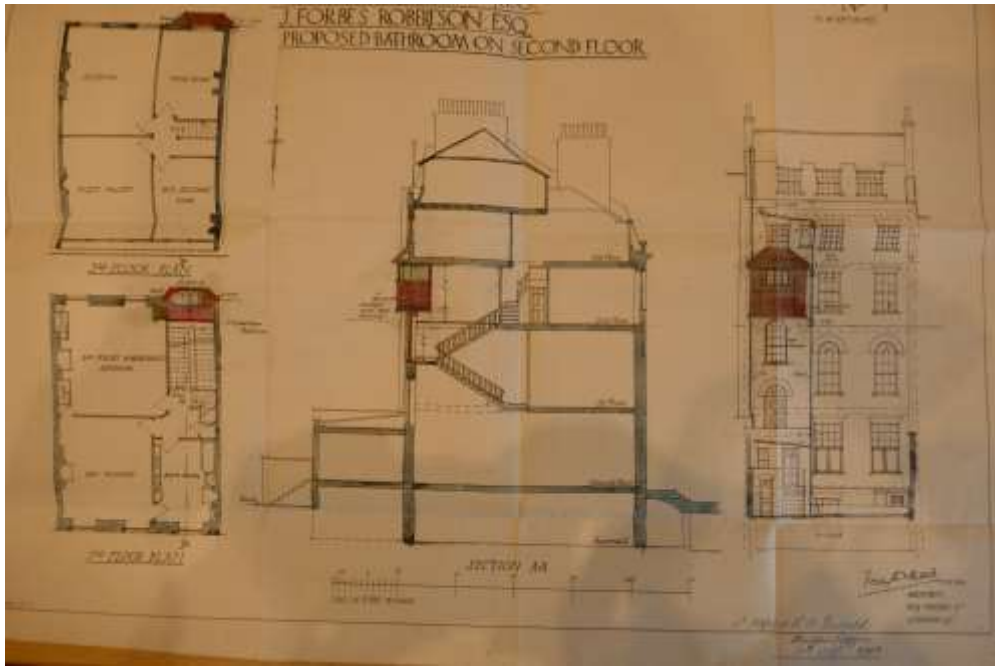
the western side there is new development at the back of the adjoining buildings in the Square.



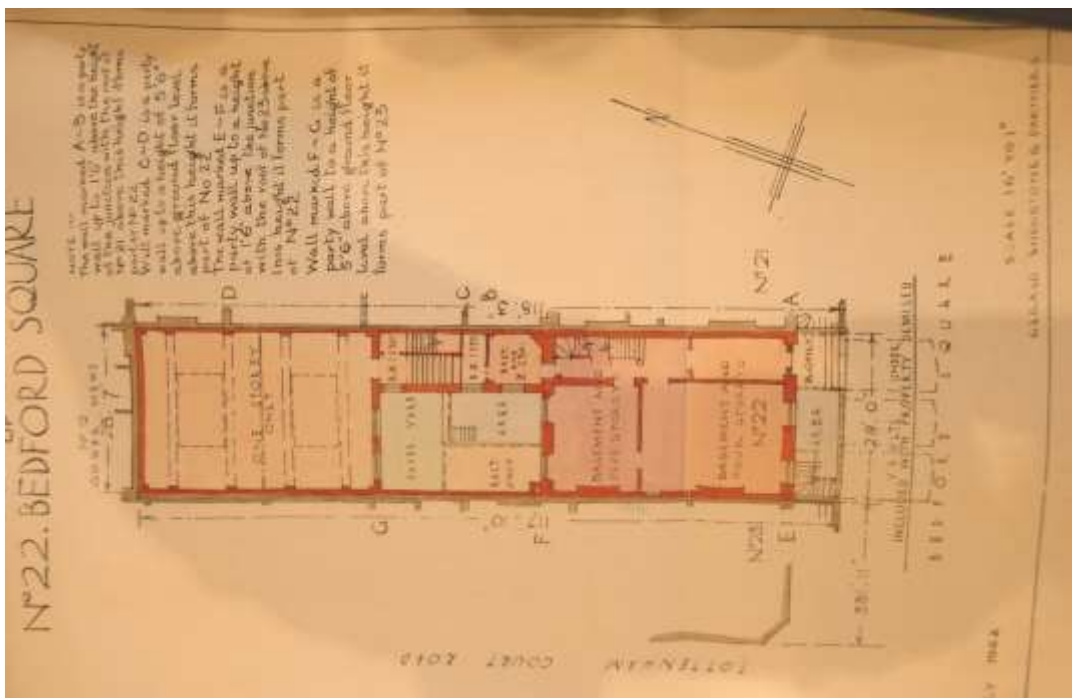
3.9 The lease at the beginning of the 20th century shows a well maintained garden with a garden room across the end of the garden backing onto the stables accessed from Gower Mews.



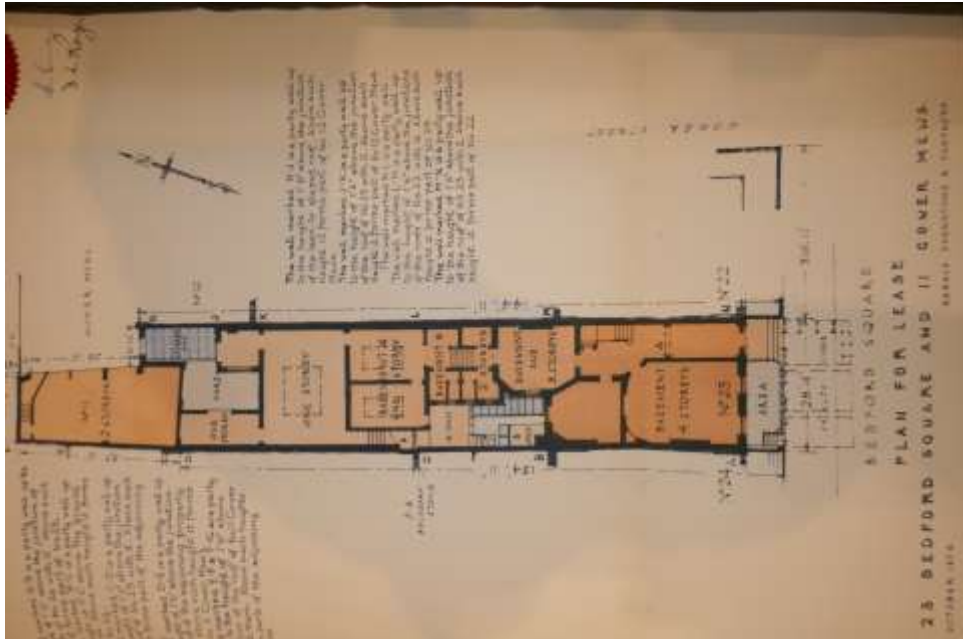
- 3.10 The 1912 section shows the small bathroom projecting beyond the end of the main staircase. It also shows the small single storey closet wing at the back of the house on the ground floor only which also is clear from the above lease plan. Above ground level there is no closet wing.



- 3.11 The 1962 lease plan shows the layout of 22 with the main building facing the Square on the right, a large single storey block to the left and a link across the top of the plan surrounding the central courtyard. This plan explains the layout of the space behind 22 and 23 identified above.



- 3.12 Number 21 although at one stage part of the group of three buildings 21,22 and 23 with lateral links across east west have been separated but as can be seen from the 1976 the extension at the back links up to Gower Mews.



- 3.13 In the 1980's the back of 22 and the areas behind 22 and 23 were developed

4.0 Significance

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

CAMDEN 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 I 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. No.23: panelled doors and a plaster ceiling. 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.

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 For the Conservation Area the significance of the main building is as noted in 4.1 in relation to Bedford Square.

5.0 Proposals

- 5.1 The proposed works comprise the replacement of the coverings to the front entrance steps, which have been historically replaced with a modern Granolithic screed.
- 5.2 The steps and landing will then be recovered with Portland stone cladding as per drawing STZ216 DS01

6.0 Assessment

- 6.1 The proposal will have a notable benefit to the front elevation of the building, reinstating the traditional Portland stone, which has been overlaid with a Granolithic screed. None of the proposals have an adverse effect on the exterior of the building which, as described above, The proposal will therefore have a possible affect the significance of the exterior of the listed building, nor the adjoining listed buildings or the Conservation Area.