

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Project:	Provision of ramped access and new doorways to rear of 2 and 3 Gray's Inn Square to provide step-free access.	Ref/File No: HK 2265/3.1
Applicant:	The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn	
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INTRODUCTION

This application is for Planning Consent for the introduction of new doorways at rear elevation basement level together with ramped access route to provide step-free access to Nos 2 and 3 Gray's Inn Square. The necessary alterations to the railings attached to No 1 also require Listed Building Consent

BACKGROUND

2 and 3 Gray's Inn Square are part of a terrace (Nos 1 to 4 inclusive) enclosing the east side of the square. The rear of the terrace directly abuts and overlooks the gardens (known as The Walks). No 1 dates from c.1676 and was restored c.1948 following war damage and is listed Grade II*. Nos 2, 3 and 4 were completely destroyed and the current buildings date from 1953.

Both buildings have steps to the front door from Gray's Inn Square. In addition, the interior planning of the entrance lobby to Nos 2 and 3 is split level with a further set of steps immediately inside the front door leading to the raised ground floor level. Both buildings have a lift, which whilst not of sufficient size to be fully DDA compliant, does allow those unable to use the stairs to access all floors. However as noted, there are two separate flights of steps which have to be negotiated to allow access to the lift from street level.

The levels and layout of the pavement and roadway approach from South Square preclude any adjustment of levels or introduction of ramps at the entrance to No 2 in particular, to overcome these steps. Similarly the interior planning of the entrance lobby does not permit room for a ramp. Solutions involving two separate stair chair lifts are not considered appropriate. Similarly solutions involving a new entrance at pavement level would not be sympathetic to the overall appearance of the Square and whilst these particular buildings are not listed, the design does reflect the architectural concept of the original Square albeit in what is now recognisably a 1950's classical idiom of interest in its own right.

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No 2 Entrance showing external steps to front door



No 2 Entrance level showing internal steps to raised ground floor level



Attached railings to rear of No 1 Gray's Inn Square



Base of No 2 Rear Elevation

PROPOSALS

Having explored options for introducing level access to the front of the building, we concluded that this was not possible without unacceptable alterations to the appearance of the building. It also wrote off significant space on two levels. We therefore examined whether level access could be achieved to the rear of the building at basement level as the existing ground levels here are closer to building floor levels than at the front.

Wheelchair access requires a paved surface and, where ramped, a gradient of appropriate inclination. The garden to the rear is only open during specified hours (generally weekdays 12.00 – 14.30Hrs)). DDA access to the building is necessary 24 hours so any route through the garden must be separated from it.

The proposals involve the introduction of an inclined pathway immediately to the rear of the terrace set behind a retaining wall with railings to the garden side. Access is achieved from Field Court by introducing gates into the existing railings to No 1. The small basement 'lightwell' at the southern end which does not serve any windows will be bridged across by a steel mesh walkway to maintain air circulation below. Beyond that the path will continue in York stone.

The path is set down below the existing ground level of the garden behind a dwarf retaining wall topped with railings. The railings are required to prevent access to the gardens when closed and at the northern end to provide guarding where the new path is set more than 600mm below the garden level. Arguably this will improve the visual junction of building with the ground which is currently somewhat unresolved with an asphalt drainage channel. The introduction of path and railings will also have a secondary benefit of preventing summer lunchtime picnickers from sitting too close to open windows and causing disturbance to occupiers.

We do not consider that the alterations to the railings to No 1 to introduce gates and the installation of a mesh walkway to the small lightwell has any impact on the historic significance of the listed building which is therefore maintained.

ACCESS STATEMENT

The proposals will provide step free access to the basement level of the building from where it is possible to access the passenger lift providing lift access to all floors and parts of the building.

The Clerks Room for No 2 and No 3 are located at Basement Level so will become immediately accessible for wheelchairs users entering via the new rear entrance

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