

# RUNDELL ASSOCIATES



## Heritage Statement

40 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3HX

REV P5 SEPTEMBER 2020





## 1.0 Application description

This application is for the replacement of the existing glazed structure that links the Grade I listed building at 40 Bedford Square with the Mews House to the rear.

## 2.0 Introduction

This Heritage statement has been prepared to inform and accompany an application for Planning and Listed Building Consent – originally submitted in September 2019 - for the abovementioned works to the Link structure at 40 Bedford Square. This document aims to provide a level of information proportional to the importance of the Heritage Asset and the potential impact of the proposals on its Historical Significance. The information is required to comply with the requirements set out in Policy D2 Heritage of the Camden Local Plan.

The Link provides access between 40 Bedford Square, a Grade I listed terrace house, and 9 Bedford Avenue a Mews House to the rear that was substantially rebuilt in the 1980s (except for the facade retained to Bedford Avenue). As the link is attached to, and within the curtilage of, a Listed Building it is itself listed but it does not have any particular historical significance. The Link was constructed in the 1980s and hence there is no mention of the Link within the listing.

The significance of the Link structure lies in its proximity to, and in views from, the Grade I Listed main house, in views from other Grade I Listed buildings on Bedford Square, and in its location within a Conservation Area. As such, the proposed design should be subservient to the main Heritage Asset and provide a suitably recessive link between the two host buildings.

This Heritage Statement is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement and architectural drawings in support of the application for planning and listed building consent.

## 3.0 History

In the late 18th century, John Russell, the fourth Duke of Bedford, began planning an ambitious suburban development within the Bloomsbury Estate. Development of Bedford Square began in 1775 after his death. This was overseen by his wife, Duchess Gertrude and the Estate surveyor, Robert Palmer. The unornamented, uniform facades, partially designed by architect Thomas Leverton, reflect the classical tastes of 18th century London. Leverton was known at the time for his decorative interiors, he later lived at 13 Bedford Square. William Scott (bricklayer) and Robert Grews (carpenter) built the houses around the square as empty shells, leaving the final interior decoration to the specification of the individual buyer.

The four sides of the square were undertaken as whole units. Their proportion and



symmetry are typically Georgian in design. The uniformity & architectural consistency throughout the square was a first for London residential squares and would influence developments of this type for the century to come.

All houses in the square (1-54) are intact and Grade I listed. As an extensive, intact example of late 18th century architecture, and given their influence on London's built form, they are a valuable piece of English Heritage.

Bedford Avenue, to the south of the square, was developed at a later date as one of three streets of coach houses and stables servicing the households on the square (the other two being Morewell Street and Gower Mews). The stables/coach house at the rear of 40 Bedford Square has since been demolished. In the 1890s, the entire row of mews buildings along Bedford Avenue was reconstructed, with a consistent red-brick facade from Adeline Place to Bloomsbury Street. This facade, which still stands today, features an arrangement of matching mews frontages with independent access at street level to each property, a high level window to the lower ground level, and a sash at raised ground level. The plots are delineated by relief patterning and terracotta/stone detailing, and by the datum line at parapet level which is broken with decorated corner piers. The Mansard storey along the entire street was added piecemeal during the following century, often with the demolition and reconstruction of the entire mews building behind the Bedford Avenue Facade. The mews house at 9 Bedford Avenue was most recently rebuilt during the 1980s in a project which involved the retention of the Bedford Avenue facade and the complete reconstruction of the mews buildings behind. As part of this rebuild, the existing link structure was added to provide a covered walkway joining the main house to the mews house.

Bedford Square, in its entirety, was included on the National Heritage List for England in 1951. Since its addition, all alterations to its fabric have required detailed applications for the proposed works be submitted and approved by the relevant authorities.

#### 4.0 Planning History

##### 4.1 8470170 - GRANTED (Aug 20 1984)

Refurbishment of main building at 40 Bedford Square, demolition of mews offices bounded by Bedford Avenue and Adeline Place, and rebuilding on site of existing mews offices in Bedford Avenue.

##### 4.2 2008/5278/P - GRANTED Subject To A Section 106 Legal Agreement (Aug 26 2009) 2008/5310/L - GRANTED (Aug 25 2009)

Additions and alterations in connection with the change of use of the main building from office use (Class B1) to a single family dwelling house (Class C3), and of the rear building from office use (Class B1) to three self-contained flats (Class C3).

##### 4.3 2010/4417/P - GRANTED Subject To A Section 106 Legal Agreement (Apr 26 2011)

Alterations and additions including new door to basement, new windows on rear and side elevations, new pipe works on the side and rear elevations and partial removal



of connecting walkway and associated alterations to existing dwelling house (Class C3) as revision to planning permission (ref: 2008/5278/P) granted (subject to S106) on 04/03/2010 for (the additions and alterations in connection with the change of use of the main building from office use (Class B1) to a single family dwelling house (Class C3), and of the rear building from office use (Class B1) to three self-contained flats (Class C3).

**4.4 2010/4401/L - GRANTED (Jan 26 2011)**

External alterations including installation of new windows on the rear and side elevations, new pipe works on the side and rear elevations and partial removal of connecting walkway and associated alterations and internal alterations as revision to listed building consent (ref: 2008/5310/L) granted on 18/12/2009 for (the works associated with additions and alterations in connection with the change of use from office use (Class B1) and works of conversion of the main building to a single family dwelling and of the rear building to four flats (Class C3).

**4.5 2011/0993/L - GRANTED (Apr 28 2011)**

Internal alteration including the replacement of stone slabs in the ground floor lobby and hallway with new Portland slabs on a like for like basis, associated to application 2010/4410/L 04/03/2010 for (the additions and alterations in connection with the change of use of the main building from office use (Class B1) to a single family dwelling house (Class C3), and of the rear building from office use (Class B1) to three self-contained flats (Class C3).

**4.6 2011/1419/L - REFUSED (Apr 28 2011)**

Internal alterations to remove ceiling beams and increase ceiling height at third floor level to dwelling house (Class C3).

**4.7 2011/1420/L - GRANTED (May 6 2011)**

Internal alterations in connection with the strengthening of floor beams on all floors, including alterations to joists at second and third floor levels to dwelling house (Class C3).

**4.8 2011/1716/P - GRANTED (Jul 4 2011)**

**40 Bedford Square**

Installation of 3 x air conditioning units to basement corridor with associated grilles in flat roof on Adeline Place side of existing house (Class C3)

**4.9 2011/3271/P - GRANTED (Sep 28 2011)**

**40 Bedford Square**

Installation of 2 x new timber windows in rear elevation of lift shaft and reconstruction of existing entrance door to existing dwelling house (Class C3).



## 5.0 Design Proposal

The existing Link is currently used for informal storage and as the primary access route between the Main Grade I Listed house at 40 Bedford Square and the Mews House to the rear.

The proposal seeks to lower the overall height of the structure, to replace the timber glazing with a new metal framed glazed screen of contemporary appearance, to extend the glazing to enclose the access at lower ground floor level and to reorganize the floor plates within the structure so as to improve access between the two buildings.

During a round-table meeting at the Council Offices the relationship of the link structure to the two host buildings was extensively discussed and the advice from the Design and Conservation Officers was that the new structure needed to be as visually “quiet” as possible, although exhibiting an evident level of design and construction quality that would suit its prestigious location. Whilst the design process that subsequently followed is fully described in the Design and Access Statement it is relevant to note that this principle was followed so as to minimise the impact on views from surrounding areas, both during the day and at night.

The new glazed link is therefore proposed to be a contemporary structure in which the glazing is largely concealed behind a fixed metal screen. The screen will feature strong vertical rails that echo the railings found throughout the square with a similar materiality to other ironwork found on and around the building.

We believe that a modern treatment both respects and emphasizes the authenticity of the adjacent Heritage Asset. As Bedford Square is widely recognized for its architectural coherence, a pseudo-historical design could cause confusion and seems inappropriate.

By lowering the entire structure, installing a flat roof, and simplifying the facade, a clear hierarchy has been established between the Grade I listed building and the link structure.

No further external alterations are proposed and the application does not involve the loss of any historic fabric from the listed building.

## 6.0 Heritage Value

The timber glazed link structure is of little historical interest as it was added in the 1980s and is of indifferent quality.

There is no evidence of any original covered link structures between the main houses along Bedford Square and the Mews Houses to the rear, and indeed any such link would have been very unusual. There is no evidence that the existing link existed before the refurbishment works in the 1980s.



The façade of the link plays a part in the streetscape of Adeline Place, but whilst classical in materiality and general appearance its fabric and heritage does not directly relate to the main Heritage Asset, having been constructed over two centuries subsequently.

There is little in the design, decoration or craftsmanship of the existing link that gives it any particular architectural quality. Although it was constructed in the 1980s it does not clearly relate to the dominant schools of Architecture at the time. The design neither references neo-classical architecture in the style of post-modernism, nor is it cleanly detailed in the style of late modernism.

Throughout most of the building's 35 year history it has been used as a circulation route between office spaces; it is currently provides storage and occasional access from the Main House to the Mews House which has remained vacant for the last ten years. No nationally important individual or group is associated with the building, nor is it associated with important events or aspects in the Nation's history.

Some relationship to the main house was evidently considered in the design of the existing link, though this appears limited to details and materiality of the fenestration. The framing and facade cladding does not reference the unadorned 'flat-ness' of the exemplary Georgian house adjacent to it. There is no discernable continuous datum between the main house and the link structure. Neither heads of windows, sills, or the parapet is at the same horizontal datum as any feature on the back facade of 40 Bedford Square. The overall effect is of a structure divorced from its two hosts, whilst its considerable height and the extent of decorative detailing call attention to its presence. It is not a quiet structure.

In summary the Heritage Value of the Link lies entirely in its setting and its proximity to Heritage Assets that include both the numerous Grade I listed buildings in the surrounding area and the Conservation Area itself.

## 7.0 Impact assessment

As a building within the curtilage of the Grade I listed 40 Bedford Square, any proposal for the replacement of the link building must be considered:

- as an ancillary structure that is subservient to the Main house, maintaining the historic layout that includes the courtyard it opens onto
- as a significant view from a Grade I listed building
- as viewed from the street on approach/departure to/from Bedford Square
- as a building within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area



## 7.1 Floor-by-floor break-down of works and their impact on Heritage Assets

### 7.1.1 Lower Ground Floor

- Facade to be extended to courtyard, to enclose lower ground floor
- New glazed façade with metal screen
- Door installed for courtyard access
- New floor finish to match finished floor within Main House
- Lightweight stud lining to existing masonry party wall
- No original fabric will be affected on this floor

Works on this floor will not be visible from the street and therefore should only be assessed as viewed from the main Heritage Asset at 40 Bedford Square.

### 7.1.2 Ground Floor

- New glazed façade with metal screen
- New floor structure and finish (at new height to align with Mews House)
- Lightweight stud lining to existing masonry party wall
- No original fabric will be affected on this floor

Works on this floor will be visible from the street and therefore should be assessed as viewed from the street as well as the main Heritage Asset at 40 Bedford Square.

### 7.1.3 Roof

- Overall height of link structure reduced
  - New "flat" lead roof with traditional lead rolls to match existing lead work on both the main house and mews house
  - No original fabric will be affected on this floor
- The lowered roof will not be visible from the street – views of the roof will be limited to views from the upper windows in 40 Bedford Square.

## 7.2 With reference to specific policies within the Local Plan:

### 7.2.1 Section 16 paragraph 185 of National Planning Policy Framework

*" c) The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; "*

We believe that the existing link lacks any significant design qualities or historical integrity in relation to the main listed building or to the mews house. The proposal to replace the timber glazing with a contemporary flush faced façade - whose metalwork has a direct association with the railings that form the boundary to properties throughout the area – was a deliberate step that will in future be recognizable as relating to the





minimalist aesthetic that is currently popular within architectural circles. The decision to use a completely flush façade was influenced by the flush nature of the main host building and the dark colour also taken from the dark hue of the brickwork – thereby more directly referencing the main host building than its less distinguished partner.

#### 7.2.1 Section 16 paragraph 196 of National Planning Policy Framework

*“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. ”*

The proposed works will not cause any harm to the Heritage Asset, or result in any loss of historic fabric. The corridor between the main house and the mews house is of low quality and the level changes between the two buildings makes the access route sub optimal. The replacement of the link structure with revised floor levels will improve the practical connectivity of the site.

#### 7.2.2 Section D2 “d.” of Camden Local Plan, paragraph 185

*“ Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place”*

We believe the proposed Link will introduce an appropriately high quality structure to replace an indifferent building dating from the mid 1980s. The proposed Link would have a distinctly contemporary appearance and therefore establish a clear design narrative within the culturally significant site.

#### 7.2.3 Section D2 “f.” of Camden Local Plan, paragraph 185

*“ f.) Resist the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.”*

No demolition is proposed.

### 8.0 Conclusion

By reducing the height of the link and developing a bespoke flush façade system which makes direct reference to the host building via its materiality and colour palette, the new link has achieved the level of visual quietness requested by the officers. We believe that the removal of the current indifferent link building, followed by its replacement with a high quality contemporary structure would therefore benefit both the Conservation Area as a whole and improve views from the listed buildings in the neighbourhood.