

## **Personal statement for 11 Regent Square WC1H 8HZ**

**By Andrew Smith and Lucy Howard Smith**

We have lived for many years in London and always wanted to be more centrally located. In 2014 we bought 11 Regent Square which had housed missionary nuns for over 40 years. Our plans were to maintain and renovate the house as a flexible and welcoming family home for us, our grown up children and wider family.

However our circumstances changed as through 2015 Andrew developed walking problems. A diagnosis of post-polio syndrome (a degenerative condition resulting from contracting polio as a child) and a major spinal operation made us move our bedroom from the second floor to lower ground where we are now mostly self-contained. This degenerative condition (PPS) affects the entire neurological system and for Andrew particularly his legs. Walking has become more difficult requiring equipment, ranging from sticks, leg braces, wheel chair, electric scooter and walking frame, with the inevitability of a motorised indoor wheel chair becoming a necessity in the near future. Without these aids and a well-designed space in which to use them any degree of independence is severely diminished. Our current quarters on the lower ground floor are cramped and inadequate for our current needs and impossible for wheel chair use.

We therefore decided to reconfigure the living spaces in the house to allow us to live primarily on the lighter and brighter upper floors, which have been modified significantly over the years, and for access to be achieved via a lift. This will allow us to use the house without stairs which are becoming complete barriers for Andrew and the upper floors will be redesigned and made fit for disabled living. The provision of a lift was originally planned as an internal structure but after various iterations it is now seen as an external extension subordinate to the rear face and which will not be seen from any public space.

In restoring the use of the building to a family home after a long period of previous use as separate flats and institutional use we wish to recover the quality of the spaces and the special character of the building while providing for our family the security and comfort that living as an extended family can bring. The Carer's role currently undertaken by Lucy is assisted by family members. In the future a dedicated live-in carer may be required with the space to accommodate them.

Very few central London houses can deliver a degree of flexible, communal living which could be possible at 11 Regent Square. By adding a wheel chair accessible lift and attendant sensitive alterations a new lease of life could be gained by the house and an improved quality of living by us.

*Mr & Mrs Smith, October 2020*