

**45 RUSSELL SQUARE
LONDON
WC1B 4JB**

Heritage Assessment of Proposed Alterations



March 2021

Scope

This assessment has been prepared to accompany a listed building application for 45 Russell Square to include the alterations to the existing toilet facilities, including removal on non load bearing walls at 2nd and 3rd floor and the repair / replacement of existing services.

This report has been prepared by Sean Emmett who is a member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. It is based on a desk- top study of the building, the listing description, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area draft statement.

Location

It lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and is described in the current draft statement as being within Sub-Area 6 Bloomsbury Square, Russell Square and Tavistock Square. Russell Square is described as:

6.83 Russell Square is the largest of Bloomsbury's squares and formed part of the phase of development that followed the construction around Bedford Square and utilised the land that had formerly been reserved to maintain the view north from Bedford House. It was originally laid out by Humphrey Repton, a leading landscape architect in the early 19th century. Although extensively replanted in 1959 it is listed grade II in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. The space is defined by railings but separated from the surrounding development by busy roads, which divide the space from the frontages. Mature trees and peripheral landscaping to some extent mitigate the impact of traffic to an extent within the space and are important elements within the surrounding streets that soften and filter views across the square. In the north-western corner of the square, located on a traffic island is a timber-clad Cabmen's Shelter (listed), an interesting historical remnant dating from 1897.

6.84 The eight storey Russell Hotel, by Charles Fitzroy Doll (listed) is a prominent landmark on the east side of the square, but isolated from the space by the busy road. It is an ornate red brick building with terracotta dressings with visual interest at roof level given by the corner turrets and gabled bays. James Burton built the original terraces at the start of the 19th century. These are four storeys in height with a basement and an attic level and are built in a yellow stock brick with a rusticated stucco base. Additional terracotta decoration was added in around 1898 following the construction of the Russell Hotel. Examples of these terraces remain on the north side (Nos. 21-24) and south side (Nos. 44-49 and 52-60). On the west side Nos. 25-29 and 38-43 are listed but lack the later ornamentation. No. 30, the Institute of Chemistry by Sir JJ Burnett (1913), is also listed.

6.85 There are a number of 20th century insertions around the square. On the north side, the southern end of Lasdun's Institute of Education (listed) has a bronze-coloured glazed curtain wall elevation to the square. This steps up to the east to an eight storey pale red brick block on a stone plinth that continues the scale and materials of the hotel development along the east side of Bedford Way. On the south side Nos. 50-51 have been replaced by a modern block with a glazed façade that is of a similar scale to the terraces. These buildings are considered to be neutral in terms of the character of the square.

Background and description

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.

Southampton House, later in 1734 to be called Bedford House, was built about 1657 for Thomas Wriothesley 4th Earl of Southampton on the north side of Bloomsbury Square. The 1746 plan shows the main house facing the Square with a small open area either side of the main house and development on either side. That to the east linking to Southampton Row and to the west with smaller properties leading to Montague House, which was on the site of the present British Museum. At that stage Bedford Place and Montague Street did not exist.

the Duke of Bedford obtained two Acts of Parliament for developing his Estate and the same year James Burton, who had been working with the adjacent Foundling Estate, started the demolition of Bedford House which it is reported was no longer to the liking of the Duke as development to the north had marred his view of Hampstead and Highgate hills.

This development enabled Burton to create two new roads leading due north to a new open space named Russell Square, thereby creating a substantial amount of new development value for the Bedford Estate.

Burton designed and developed many of the properties including the terrace along the south side of Russell Square in 1800-1803.

The terraces on the south side of the Square were altered in 1898, when the new terra cotta cornice, frieze and other decorative elements were introduced by the then Duke of Bedford following the success of the Russell Hotel designed by Charles Fitzroy Doll. These alterations were carried out to designs by PE Pilditch and substantially affected the main facades.

The back of the terrace has retained much of the original simple design but extensive extensions have been permitted since the second half of the nineteenth century thereby losing the simplicity which is still retained, for example, along the back of the terraces in Bedford Place.

The site for number 45 was leased to James Burton in 1800 for 99 years. The plan shows a simple block with a garden to the south. In 1899 a new lease was granted to Charles Levy for 40 years. This time the attached plan is in considerably more detail and shows the front and back areas with a garden beyond to the south. The back area shows a small service enclosure in the south east corner against the retaining wall to the garden.

Significance

Undoubtedly the main significance of this building lies in its contribution to the terraces along the south side of Russell Square.

Internally the layout of the rooms, the main staircase and the decorative items on the ground and first floors are of significance although how much of this is original in view of the extent of rebuilding following bomb damage is not clear.

The garden area of the site has been developed under previous consents with a building which occupies the full depth of the site and about three quarters of the width. As a result the lower part of the back of the building is well shielded from external views and only the upper floors are visible. The arrangement has protected the interest in the simple form of the back of the building.

Proposals

The proposals for refurbishment and for the inclusion of additional toilet facilities are set out in the Design and Access Statements for both aspects appended to this application.

For the purposes of this Heritage Assessment they can be summarised as follows. Relocation of toilets at basement level, internal alterations at 3rd and 4th floor to accommodate additional toilets and installation of demountable partitions to enclose new toilet cubicles. It also include testing and where necessary repairing existing modern services.

There are no external works proposed and as such the proposals do not affect the external appearance of the building as seen from Russell Square or the wider area.

Assessment

None of the proposals have an adverse effect on the front elevation of the building which, as described above, is of particular significance: therefore they do not adversely affect the significance of the exterior of the listed building, nor the adjoining listed buildings, nor the Conservation Area.

The majority of the internal demolition work relates to non-original demountable partitions and generally speaking the layout will be reverted to its original form, improving the historic value.

The minor alterations at 2nd and 3rd floor, to square off the rear room will result in very limited loss of historic fabric as the skirting boards and cornices are all modern. This change will result in a more traditional layout.

The repair or replacement of any of the services will only impact modern additions and will not have any impact on the historic fabric or special interest in the building.

Upgrading the toilets provisional will ensure the building is suitable for the given use class and will ensure sustainable long term use.

In summary it is considered that the proposals comply with both national and local

guidance on the protection of designated heritage assets and the conservation area while ensuring that the building provides a sustainable asset.

Sean Emmett
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