

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES AT GUILFORD PLACE

REPORT FOR CLAPHAM LEISURE

DESIGN ACCESS AND

HERITAGE STATEMENT



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Unit 5 Victoria Grove

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BS3 4AN

MAY 2021

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Introduction

This report has been commissioned by the client Clapham Leisure. This report sets out to describe the site and its relationship to adjoining listed elements and balance what is lost against what is gained and thereby sustaining a listed asset.

The Public Conveniences at Guilford Place are a listed Grade II asset. The site has been owned previously by the Local authority Borough of Camden and thence by the University College of London until the recent purchase by the current owners. Prior to the current ownership the WC has remained unused since 1970 a period of over 50 years, more than half of the sites life. It being originally constructed in 1931 and now being finally put back into use in May 2021.

The proposal is for alterations to the perimeter railings to create a gated opening onto the roof space and the provision of seating to create an outdoor A3 restaurant area to supplement the internal use adding 40m² of trading with the ability to offer lunch menus and early evening dining. The proposals will allow longer daytime trading hours and greatly improve the sustainability and viability of this site whilst improving the street scene and making a positive contribution to the area.

The location has two independent listings.

1. CAMDEN TQ3082SE GUILFORD PLACE 798-1/96/716 Ladies' and Gentlemen's Public 11/02/98 Conveniences
2. CAMDEN TQ3082SE GUILFORD PLACE 798-1/96/717 (South side) 11/02/98 Drinking Fountain

The listings are linked as a civic group, this being the relationship of the Drinking fountain to the cast iron railings of the public conveniences.

The interior has been fitted out under 'Former Public Convenience at Junction with Guilford Place Guilford Street London WC1N 1EA (2020/1343/L)' creating an internal space well suited to an A3 use. These works have effectively saved the building from dereliction and possible collapse.

No works have been proposed to the adjacent fountain with the intention being to retain the integrity of the civic grouping as above.

Significant Elements:-

- The relationship of the civic grouping of the fountain and the railings surrounding the public conveniences and as detailed in the listing description.
- The fountain and railings appear to be in a stable condition.

Location and surrounding area.

The subject site lies opposite the main entrance to Coram Fields across Guilford Street and at the top of Guilford Place, also known as Guildford Place/Lamb's Conduit Place. It is in the east of Bloomsbury, forming the short but widened top end of Lamb's Conduit Street, facing the Foundling Hospital.

The crescent surrounding the public conveniences was planned as a crescent by Samuel Cockerell, surveyor to the Foundling estate, but built instead in a square shape by William Harrison and James Tomes from about 1791 onwards (*Survey of London*, vol. 24, 1952)

When Lamb's Conduit Street was still a track leading to the Foundling Hospital, the top end of this track was still surrounded by fields until the residential development of the Foundling estate in the 1790s

It was named after Lord North, Duke of Guildford, President of the Foundling Hospital; originally known as Guildford Place, it gradually became known as Guilford Place, but the original spelling is often still used.

In 1870 a statue 'The Francis Whiting Memorial Fountain', was erected here depicting the supply of water by Lamb's Conduit. UCL Bloomsbury project (2011). The statue, representing 'The Woman of Samaria' being associated with water and purity. Was dedicated to Francis Whiting by his three daughters.

Coram's fields park is a 7 acre site of park land founded by Captain Thomas Coram. As a great philanthropist Coram was appalled by the many abandoned, homeless children living in the streets of London. On 17 October 1739 he obtained a Royal Charter granted by George II establishing a "hospital for the maintenance and education of exposed and deserted young children." It is said to be the world's first incorporated charity.



Fig2. Foundling hospital 1753

When, in the 1920's the hospital was relocated outside London, the land was sold to a developer who demolished the hospital building itself leaving only the single storey colonnaded Georgian buildings. Following a campaign and lengthy fundraising by local people the land was turned into London's first public children's playground.

Since 1936 Coram's Fields has been a vital park, playground and community resource for the children, young people and families of Central London.



Fig3. Elevation 1935 Front entrance Foundling Hospital

http://www.ph.ucla.edu/epi/snow/1859map/foundling_hospital_a6.html

A Plaque outside the park reads:-

'The site of the Foundling Hospital established in 1739 by Captain Thomas Coram were offered for sale as building land in 1926 when owing to changing social conditions the old Hospital was sold and demolished.

After eight years anxiety as to its fate the site was eventually preserved for the use and welfare of the children of Central London by the generosity and vision of Harold Viscount Rothermere, by the efforts of the Foundling Site Appeal Council, by the co-operation of the Governors of the Foundling Hospital and of the Education Committee of the London County Council, and by the enthusiasm of many thousands of donors, large and small, who contributed their money or their toil to the saving of these nine acres, henceforth to be known as Coram's Fields.'



Fig4. Map of the area 1795 showing Foundling Hospital on Guilford St
<http://mapco.net/cary1795/cary.htm>

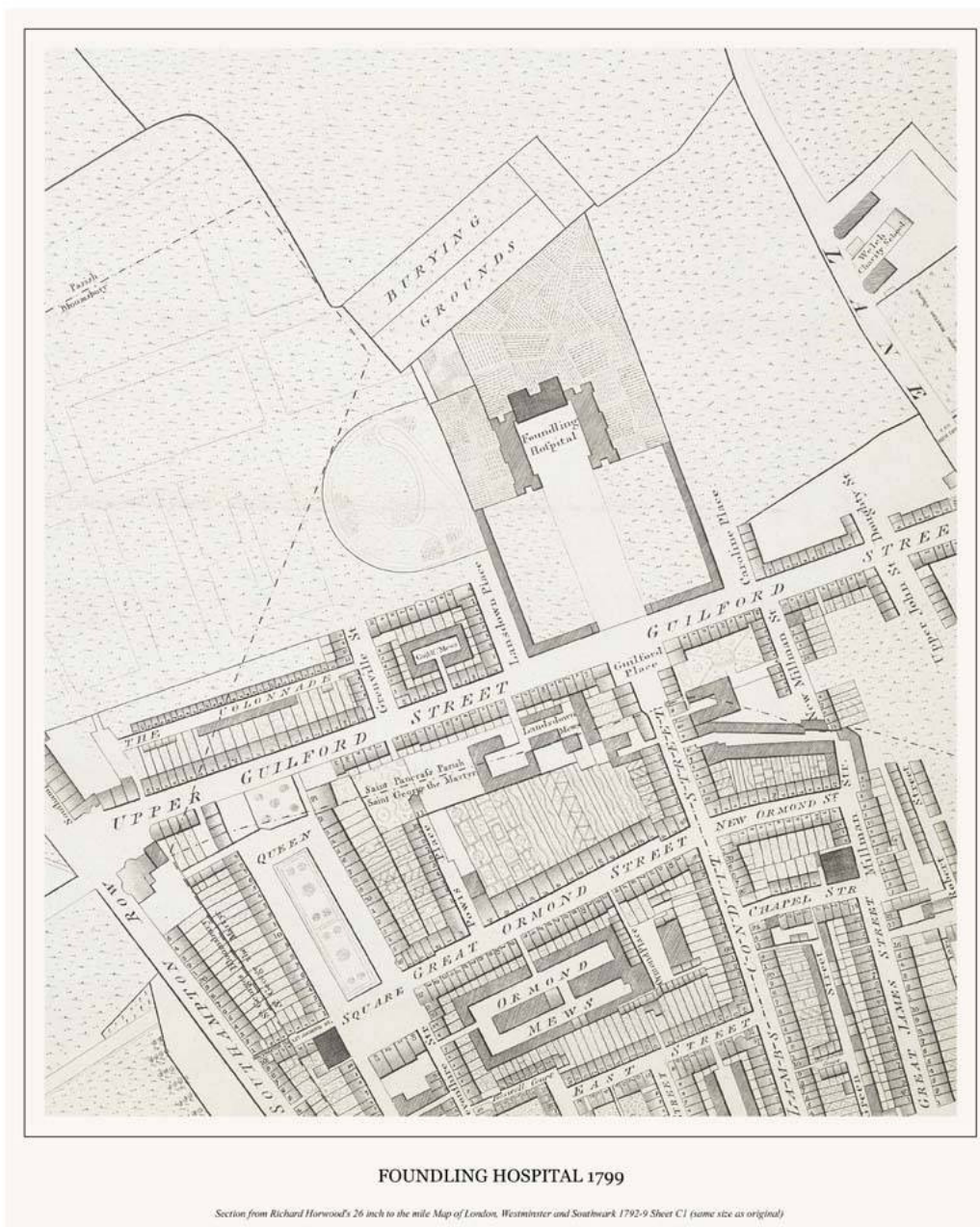


Fig5. Map of area in 1799 showing the formalisation of Guilford St, Upper Guilford St and Guilford Place. <http://www.motco.com/Map/81005/Sale/imageone-a.asp?Picno=81005961>

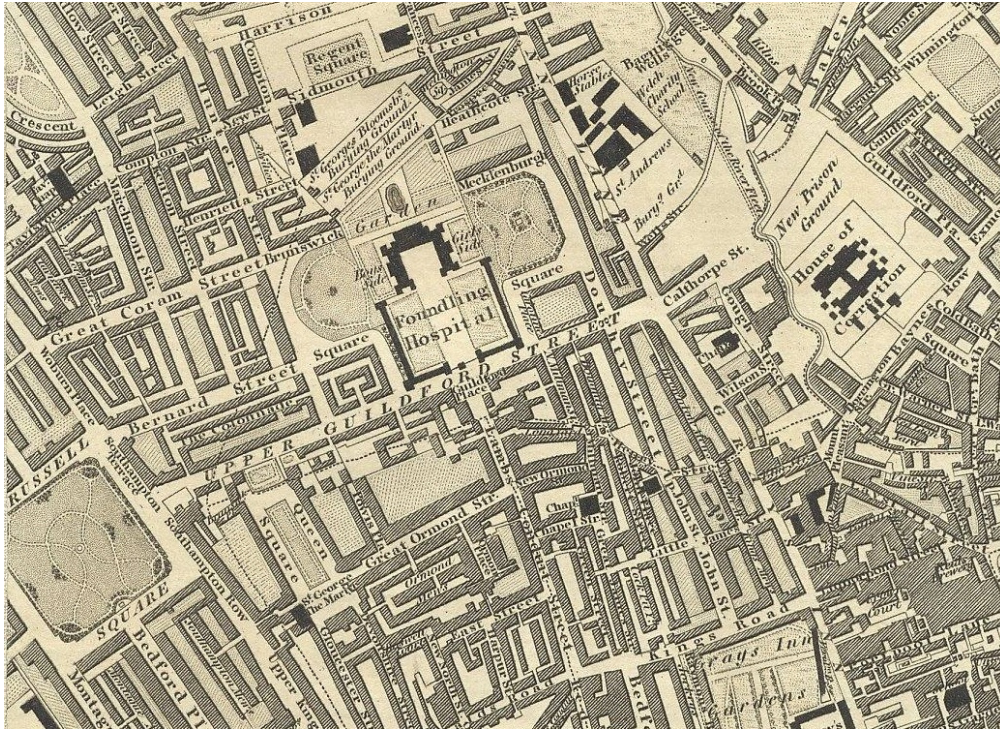


Fig6. Greenwoods map 1827 showing the residential development of the area
<http://www.gaubertgenealogy.freeola.org/gaubertimages/Maps/ormondstreet.png>

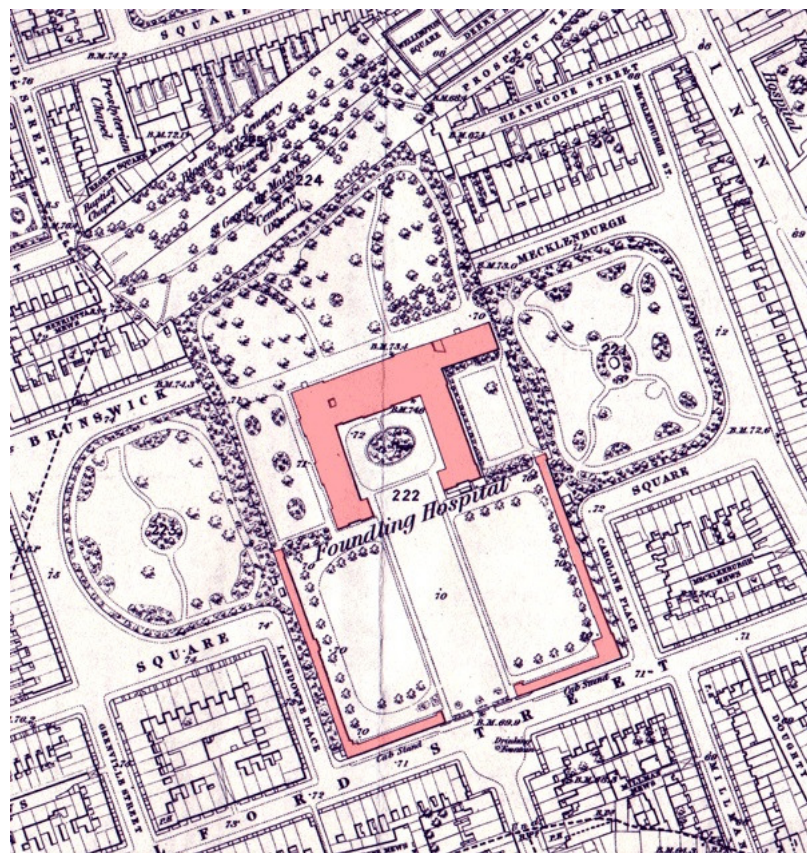


Fig7. Ordnance survey map 1871 showing the fountain in Guilford Place
http://www.francisfrith.com/bloomsbury/historic-map-of-london_hosm65578/personalise#standard-map

Site History

The Ladies' and Gentlemen's toilets are sited at the junction of Guilford Place and Guilford Street and opposite the original entrance to Coram's Foundling Hospital. They stand adjacent to the Francis Whiting Memorial Fountain.



Fig8. Street view public conveniences at Guilford place

The drinking fountain appears on the Ordnance survey map of 1871 but the public conveniences are not indicated at this time.

'It was only in Victorian times that public toilets appeared in any large numbers. The Public Health Act of 1848, called for Public Necessaries to be provided to improve sanitation. The Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851 had toilets for visitors. These were installed by George Jennings, a plumber from Brighton. To offset the cost, visitors were charged 1d (penny) for using the toilets. William Haywood, City of London Corporation Engineer, installed the first municipal public toilets and the first underground public toilets in 1855. These were outside the Royal Exchange. At that time nearly all public conveniences were for men with few provided for women. There was a feeling that it was not decent to have public toilets for women.' Mr David March. Source English Heritage. NMR (2014)

The adjacent drinking fountain was commissioned by the Misses Whiting to commemorate their father. This is a granite based structure with a round arched niche for an animal trough and is surmounted by a sculpted figure of the Woman of Samaria kneeling to fill a water jar. This structure was designed by Henry Darbishire who is mostly recognised for philanthropic schemes and was also responsible amongst others for the design of the Peabody housing trust buildings prior to 1900 and the drinking fountain in Victoria Park of 1862, given to the park by Baroness Angela Budett-Coutts.



Fig9. Drinking fountain viewed from the north

Listing Description

The public convenience and fountain are Grade II listed with both being listed on the 11/02/1998. The listing description links the fountain and the railings of the public conveniences as a civic group. The descriptions are as follows:-

CAMDEN TQ3082SE GUILFORD PLACE 798-1/96/716 Ladies' and Gentlemen's Public 11/02/98
Conveniences GV II

Ladies and Gentlemen's public conveniences sited on a traffic island. Late C19. Rectangular site. Enriched railings on stone coped sleeper wall and iron gates with overthrows and lanterns. The railings form a civic group with the Francis Whiting Memorial Fountain (qv), in front of them. Lavatories with yellow tiles, mahogany doors, decorative grills and original fittings.

CAMDEN TQ3082SE GUILFORD PLACE 798-1/96/717 (South side) 11/02/98 Drinking Fountain GV II

Drinking fountain situated on a traffic island. 1870. Designed by architect Henry Darbishire for the Misses Whiting to commemorate their mother. Granite base with stone figure. Raised circular plinth with 2 block steps to circular base of rough-hewn granite blocks with round-arched niche for animal trough at base, supporting projecting semicircular basin and smooth granite drum surmounted by a sculptured figure of the Woman of Samaria, in loose robes and scarf, kneeling on left knee to fill a

water jar. The drinking fountain forms a civic group with the cast-iron railings to the Ladies' & Gentlemen's public conveniences (qv), situated behind it.

Existing condition

The toilets have recently been refurbished and have a use class of A1/A3 under 'Former Public Conveniences Guilford Place London WC1N 1EA (2015/6141/P)'. Prior to this they were on the English Heritage at risk register and in poor condition with high levels of water ingress and vegetation growing out of the stone work causing damage to the structure. The building had been empty for over 50 years which equates to more than half of its 90 year existence.

The roof has been refurbished and the toilet cubicles modified to accommodate booths with seating and tables. These works have approval under 'Former Public Conveniences Guilford Place London WC1 (2016/4431/L)' Replacement of pavement light roof and 'Former Public Convenience at Junction with Guilford Place Guilford Street London WC1N 1EA (2020/1343/L)' Internal alterations to convert former public convenience to bar and restaurant, plus installation of external lighting.

The building is listed on the 'Historic England at Risk Register', however good progress has been made. The condition since 2015 has moved from 'Poor' (a low rating) to 'Good' (the highest rating) It's priority category in 2015 was C (Slow decay) and has now moved to F (Repair scheme in progress and (where applicable) end use or user identified; or functionally redundant buildings with new use agreed but not yet implemented).

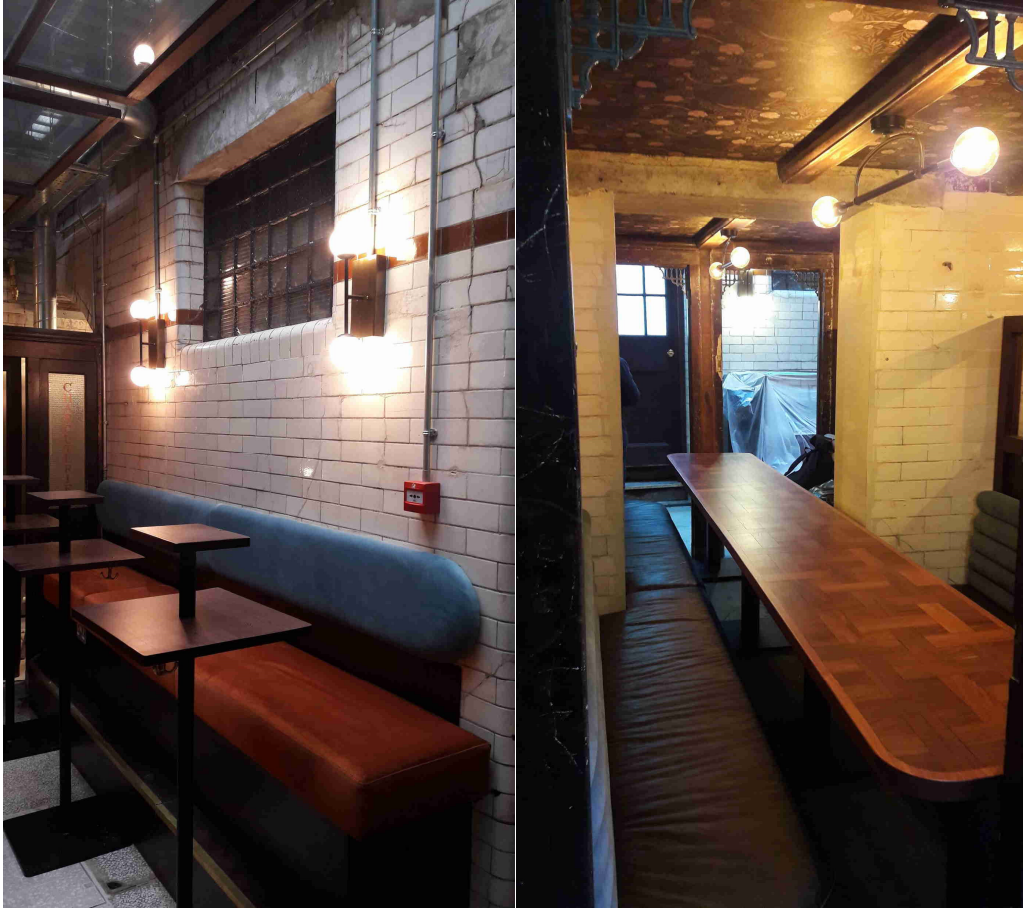
The building has now entered the final phase with the planning being implemented and the site enjoying Class E use formerly (A1/A3).

With the planning now being implemented and the site trading it should be possible to have the building removed from the 'At Risk Register' which after 50 years of dereliction would be a landmark moment.

The nature of the site being underground has meant that it can only operate in the evenings. This is promising to not be viable in the long term. The realistic trading hours being between 5pm and 11 pm week days and 5pm and 12pm on Friday and Saturday means that the opportunities for custom and therefore turnover are limited. To quote the owner of WC, Mr Andy Bell. 'People just don't want to be in an underground bar when it's daylight outside. The roof space would allow increased trading between lunch and early evening making the site much more viable. It's the café society sitting out having lunch.' The changes to the roof top use will make the site much more sustainable, it increases the enjoyment of this site for all and ensures its ongoing preservation whilst making a major contribution to the street scene.



Internal views of the refurbished interior.



Internal views of the refurbished interior.

The Proposals

Use

It is proposed to adapt the roof area to be used for additional seating and dining area consistent with the approved A1/A3 use now Class E. This allows the maximum use and therefore the continued sustainability of this site ensuring the ongoing preservation of this heritage asset.

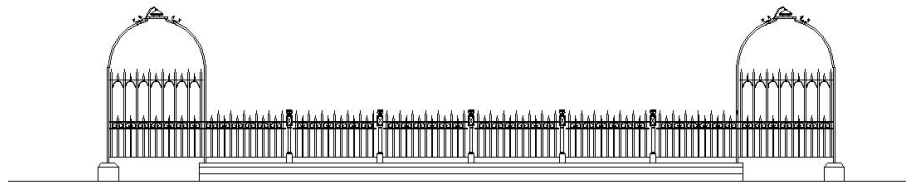
The use of the roof top area and associated works are essential to the viability of the site. The increased area would add an additional 40m² of space which will be self-contained on the site at street level and would make an ideal use of this space. As the site is a restaurant the noise levels against background street noise will be acceptable and the inclusion of planters with evergreen shrubs will greatly improve the street scene. The alterations to the railings and the harm caused by creating an access on to this roof space is far outweighed by the increased viability and sustainability of the site going forward and its contribution to the surrounding area.

Concept

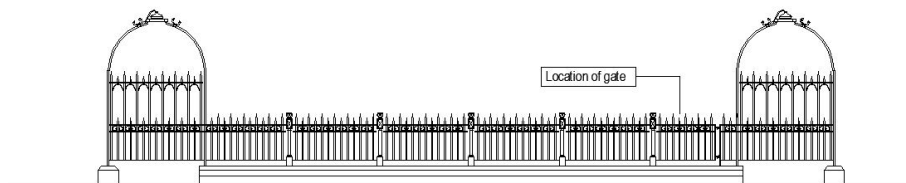
Overall the exterior appearance is to remain unchanged thereby protecting the relationship of the railings and the Whiting memorial fountain and retaining the importance of this civic grouping as detailed in the Historic England listing. The proposal is for the creation of a gated opening in the north east corner to allow access on to the flat roof and then for the area to be populated with tables and chairs with some soft planting in containers to the perimeter. This area is ideally suited to this use with the adjacent tree canopy offering natural shading and the existing listed railings providing a barrier to control the movements of clients and contain the use specifically to the roof area.

Proposed Works

The proposed works are intended to be sympathetic to the existing building with the emphasis being on the protection of the civic grouping, these being the relationship of the fountain to the adjacent railings. The use of this site will enhance the site whilst alterations to the railings will take the form of a hinged section of the original railing making the opening read with the existing grouping. The addition of planting to the perimeter will soften the street scene and enhance the conservation area.



2 Existing North Elevation
Scale: 1:50



6 Proposed North Elevation
Scale: 1:50



Sample planting

Implications of the proposals

The proposals aim to preserve an until recently derelict site. The proposed alterations having a less harmful impact on the listed status of the building by making the site more commercially viable and therefore sustainable ensuring its ongoing preservation.

In effect, the proposals would have no adverse effect on the significance of this listed building, as it would lead to the preservation of a listed building.

Justification of the Proposals

In determining planning applications the local authority should take account of: The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

The proposals would enhance this asset.

The benefits can be balanced against the less than substantial harm to the significance of the asset as described and in relation to the civic grouping as detailed above.

Weighing in favour of this proposed scheme.

1. It sustains or enhances the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting.
2. It reduces or removes risks to a heritage asset.
3. It makes a positive contribution to economic vitality and sustainable communities.
4. It is an appropriate design for its context and makes a positive contribution to the appearance, character, quality and local distinctiveness of the historic environment.
5. It better reveals the significance of a heritage asset and therefore enhances our enjoyment of it and the sense of place.

The proposals lead to all of the above benefits and therefore enhancement of this Grade II building with the usage being in keeping with similar applications made for public conveniences elsewhere in the capital.

Conclusion

Guilford Place Public Conveniences has astonishingly been derelict for more than half of its life, 50 years and following listing the site has been on the Historic England At Risk Register for a number of years. The recent approved works have made the site structurally safe and allowed the site to finally be put back into a new use making a vibrant addition to the area, regenerating a building that formerly detracted from the conservation area due to its poor condition.

The use of the roof space and the soft planting is an obvious addition to this building and compliment the street scene and Coram Fields opposite.

The proposed alterations to the railings and the proposed use of the roof to increase the useful trading area will provide great benefit to the site and the street scene making it more viable, sustainable and thereby ensuring its ongoing preservation for future generations.

It is, therefore, the conclusion of this report that the proposals would be fully justifiable, and should therefore be granted Listed Building Consent.

References

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Appendix 1

Listed Buildings

LADIES AND GENTLEMENS PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

Name LADIES AND GENTLEMENS PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

Designation Type Listing

Grade II

List Entry ID 1245849

Location

LADIES AND GENTLEMENS PUBLIC CONVENIENCES, GUILFORD PLACE

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
Greater London Authority	Camden		London Borough

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 11-Feb-1998

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 477953

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

CAMDEN

TQ3082SE GUILFORD PLACE 798-1/96/716 Ladies' and Gentlemen's Public 11/02/98 Conveniences

GV II

Ladies and Gentlemen's public conveniences sited on a traffic island. Late C19. Rectangular site. Enriched railings on stone coped sleeper wall and iron gates with overthrows and lanterns. The railings form a civic group with the Francis Whiting Memorial Fountain (qv), in front of them. Lavatories with yellow tiles, mahogany doors, decorative grills and original fittings.

Listed Buildings

DRINKING FOUNTAIN

Name DRINKING FOUNTAIN

Designation Type Listing

Grade II

List Entry ID 1246147

Location

DRINKING FOUNTAIN, GUILFORD PLACE

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County District District Type Parish
Greater London Authority Camden London Borough
National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 11-Feb-1998

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 477918

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

CAMDEN

TQ3082SE GUILFORD PLACE 798-1/96/717 (South side) 11/02/98 Drinking Fountain

GV II

Drinking fountain situated on a traffic island. 1870. Designed by architect Henry Darbishire for the Misses Whiting to commemorate their mother. Granite base with stone figure. Raised circular plinth with 2 block steps to circular base of rough-hewn granite blocks with round-arched niche for animal trough at base, supporting projecting semicircular basin and smooth granite drum surmounted by a sculptured figure of the Woman of Samaria, in loose robes and scarf, kneeling on left knee to fill a water jar. The drinking fountain forms a civic group with the cast-iron railings to the Ladies' & Gentlemen's public conveniences (qv), situated behind it.