

~ 3 Fitzroy Square ~

London Borough of Camden

Historic Support Statement

by

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of

Historic Buildings Consultants

This document is as per the previous application PP-01353623. **New text is highlighted in red.**

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1. Introduction

No 3 Fitzroy Square is listed Grade I, and is part of the centerpiece of the East side of Fitzroy Square which was designed by Robert Adam *circa* 1770 and built by James and William Adam, 1792-1794. Fitzroy Square was intended as a grand neo-Classical layout with unified symmetrical elevations like Adam's contemporary Charlotte Square in Edinburgh. The elevations were faced in Portland Stone, unique in eighteenth century London domestic architecture. The full scheme was held up by the French Wars and only the East and South sides were built to the original designs. The West and the North sides were completed in a simpler manner, faced in stucco in 1827-8 and 1832-5 respectively.

No 3 has the best-preserved and most interesting original interior in Fitzroy Square, retaining a fine stone cantilever staircase, and fittings in the principal rooms at ground and first floor level. It was used as a private hotel in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, and this helped to preserve the interior in a little altered state. It was subsequently offices, and is now a single family house once again.

This house escaped the severe bomb damage which gutted the South end of the East terrace and destroyed part of the South terrace in the Second World War (happily reconstructed in scholarly replica afterwards – a rare occurrence in London unlike St Petersburg, Warsaw, Munich, Florence etc.)

No 3 Fitzroy Square was acquired by the present owners some 10 years ago for occupation as a single family dwelling. At that time the second and third floors were refurbished by James Gorst & Partners. The same architects are now completing the

project with the restoration of the main rooms, the reconstruction of the (unlisted) mews building at the rear, and the addition of a new kitchen at main ground level.

2. Brief History

Fitzroy Square is notable for its splendid unified architectural treatment, the last work in London of Robert Adam who died on 3 March 1792. The square was built posthumously, the East side exactly according to Adam's annotated elevation drawings preserved in the Soane Museum. These include the figured dimensions. There are no designs by Robert Adam for the interiors. Fitzroy Square, like Portland Place, is composed of houses built as individual speculations behind symmetrical 'palace frontages' to Adam's design. The area was developed as a characteristic leasehold building estate by Charles Fitzroy, 1st Lord Southampton as younger son of the 2nd Duke of Grafton and great-grandson of Charles II after whom he was named. (He was a soldier and had taken part in the Battle of Minden in the Seven Years War.)

Adam's design for the frontages was made in 1790, but construction only began after his death. The East side was built first. The leases are dated from August 1792 to January 1793. No 1 was leased to David Piper, a brick-layer. Nos 2, 9 and 10 were in the name of James Adam, Robert's younger brother and co-designer who was also involved in Portland Place. He died in 1794. Nos 3-8 including the present house, were in the names of James Adam and William Adam.

William Adam was the business-brain in the family company and – unlike Robert and James – he did not design himself. The family building firm set up in 1764 was called 'William Adam & Co.' As well as building construction it also had interests in Aberdeen granite quarries and brickworks in Essex. Its principal project was the

financially unsuccessful Adelphi project overlooking the Thames in 1768-1727. The firm remained in business until 1801 when it went into liquidation. William Adam died aged 84 in 1822, the last of his siblings.

No 3 Fitzroy Square was therefore built by the family firm under the direction of William Adam and, until his death in 1794, James Adam. It is likely that the interiors of No 3 were designed by James Adam, as there are no drawings for it by Robert Adam, whose role before his death in 1792 seems to have been solely the elevations of the East and South terraces. The interior of No 3 nevertheless has several fine Adam features including apsidal room shapes, marble chimneypieces and stucco cornices.

The leases for the South side were dated January 1794. There again James and William Adam were the main contractors, apart from No 33 at the West end which was built by Thomas Best, a carpenter.

Robert Adam's designs for the elevations were for handsome four-storeyed terraces with symmetrical end pavilions and strongly modeled centerpieces. They were intended to give a special architectural character to the Square regardless of the individual three-bay houses behind the elevations. In fact the party walls of the houses do not correspond with the architectural features of the elevation. This is especially noticeable at No 3 where two of the bays from the part of the grand architectural centerpiece of the square, while the other one is part of the plainer southern link.

The East side (including the plain Northern extension in Fitzroy Street) contained 11 houses, each with a 24 foot frontage. Part of No 3 occupies two fifths of the central feature, which like the whole terrace is faced in Portland Stone. The centerpiece has above a rusticated ground storey, attached Ionic columns *in antis*. On top is an attic

storey with square pilasters and flanking circular windows set in rectangular panels with striated fluting. The frieze was originally ornamented with festooned rams' heads, fluting and anthemion, but only parts of this now survive, having weathered away.

The East side was completed and occupied in 1795. When first built the Square was fashionable. The houses remained in private occupation throughout the nineteenth century, but increasingly by artists and academics rather than the peers, baronets, bankers, naval officers and imperial officials of the early intake. Increasingly 'Fitzrovia' acquired a raffish, bohemian reputation. In the twentieth century many of the buildings were commercialized as hospitals, branch banks and offices. No 3 became a small private hotel, and remained so until after the Second World War. Latterly it was offices.

The first occupant of No 3 was Sir Robert Stewart Bt and his wife. Sir Robert was MP for Blackfriars. The Stewarts were succeeded in 1812 by James Smith of Ashlyns who lived there from 1813 to 1849, and from 1849 until 1861 by Sir Charles Forbes Bt and his wife. Sir Charles had made his fortune in Bombay in India, and became Tory MP for Beverley and then Malmesbury.

It is possible that the interior was specially fitted up for Sir Robert Stewart in 1794. It is more elaborate and carefully finished than the other houses in the Square. It has a bespoke quality with geometrical room-shapes, more elaborate and elegant staircase and good carved marble chimneypieces. It differs from the other plainer houses in the terrace which have the standard London plan with rectangular rooms one behind the other and narrow rectangular staircases rising on the axis from the street. That No 3 may have been specially fitted for the first occupant is suggested by the frieze in the ground floor front room (dining room) which has roundels containing a crest.

Though over-painted this comprises a half naked figure rising from a crest wreath. The Stewart (baronets) crest is a 'Demi-Savage holding a club wreathed about the head and middle with laurel.' Such a use of heraldry in the frieze of a living room in a Georgian terraced house in London is very unusual, and was personal to the first occupant.

Few alterations have been made inside the house which retains much of its plan-form and decoration, apart from the addition of plaster wall panels in the main rooms, probably after the house became a hotel in the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century as they look like hotel decoration. The roof was reconstructed in the mid-twentieth century when the original multi-hipped slated arrangement was replaced with a flat centre. The top storey rear brickwork was also rebuilt at the same time. This no doubt took place after war damage when the two southernmost houses in the terrace were gutted by a bomb in 1940 and their interiors destroyed. The associated mews buildings behind No 3 Fitzroy Square in Grafton Mews was also rebuilt in the mid-twentieth century as a plain stock brick structure with ground floor garage and Crittall windows.

No 3 was acquired by the present owners, Mr & Mrs Harley, *circa* 2000. Some works to the upper floor were carried out then by the architect James Gort, and the oval glazed sky-light over the main staircase was restored by them.

3. Architectural Description

THE EXTERIOR

The principal frontage of Portland Stone towards the Square, including iron area railings, survives largely as designed by Robert Adam before his death in 1792. The front basement window is original. The only missing element is the decoration of the principal frieze of the centrepiece which has part weathered away, the rams' heads being missing, though the flutes survive, from the projecting bay. The rear elevation is plain of stock brick with large three-pan wide-sash windows under brick arches. (That to the basement is blocked.) The upper parts were rebuilt to match *circa* 1950, presumably after War damage.

The projecting rear wing has later fenestration of inferior type, including Crittall downstairs and nineteenth century plate glass at upper levels. The mews building in Grafton Mews at the rear has modern stock brickwork, and Crittall windows under segmental brick arches. There is a roll-up metal garage door under a concrete lintel. It is lower than the adjoining buildings on either side.

THE INTERIOR

Basement

There are three unusually spacious brick vaults under the front pavement. Under the main house, the rooms are plain. The front room has been subdivided and most of the door joinery is modern, but retains the original front windows with architraves and shutters. The central wine cellar retains its brick vault. Both it and the under-stairs store has original six panel doors (with ventilation holes in the top panels) and

architraves. The rear ground floor room retains an original door architrave and part-original paneled cupboards flanking the chimneybreast. (The door itself is covered with a fireproof panel but could be original.) The rear window, originally a wide paned sash has been blocked. The rear part under the court and the mid-twentieth century mews building are modernized and simple, with plain, poor-quality joinery, and modern fittings. The staircase leading up to the ground floor has stone steps and is original.

Ground Floor

Entrance Hall

The tripartite entrance doorcase is original but has a narrower modern inner frame and replacement door. The fine fanlight with coloured glass margins was restored by the present owners in recent years. The inner archway to the Staircase Hall retains the original fanlight but has lost its part-glazed doors. All the room doors at this level retain their original architraves and beaded six panel doors. The frieze is well-preserved with alternating bucrania and rams' heads. (The underscaled ceiling rose is modern). The chimneypiece is original with lozenge frieze, floral corner roundels, and fluted side-pieces. It is of stone – as was the convention in entrance halls – but has been overpainted. The ceiling, here as throughout the main spaces, was plain. The skirting and dado is original, but the thin plaster wall panels are a later addition. (The floor was originally stone but has modern coverings.)

The Staircase Hall

This is one of the finest features of the house. It is of stone cantilever form, top-lit from an oval skylight (restored by the present owners). The arrangement is unusual in

that it rises from the back, not on the axis from the street. It is given special elegance by the curved corner treads. There is a fine wrought iron balustrade ornamented with sparse anthemion and oval paterae with Palmyrn sun flowers. The slim banister rail is of polished mahogany. (The paneled enclosure of the lower stair to the basement is an original feature.) The skirting, dado, architraves and door are original. The plaster wall panels with neo-rococo flourishes are incongruous later additions which detract from the neo-Classical restraint of the otherwise harmonious and elegant design.

The Dining Room (Front Room)

This is largely original with paneled pilasters framing the side-board area at the rear. This is a feature of all the house plans on the East side of Fitzroy Square (and many late-Georgian London plans) to give more space round the ends of the dining table. It is likely that columns were also intended as in other similar arrangements (no doubt Ionic like those on the façade). But there are no contemporary plans. All the joinery (and the floorboards) is original (including paneled window shutters and arched soffits). The chimneypiece is also a handsome original design of Carrara marble with elegant fluted console brackets and carved central frieze plaque incorporating a beswagged urn.

The stucco frieze is of especial interest as it suggests that the unusually fine finishing of No 3 Fitzroy Square was carried out specially for the first occupant Sir Robert Stewart Bt. It comprises Adam festoons and circular roundels framing the Stewart family crest, a demi-savage holding a club. This is a unique feature in such a situation. There is also an ornamented ceiling rose.

The Rear Room (Originally Morning Room or Library)

This room has an apsidal rear wall, which interlocks with the apsidal side wall of the room in the rear wing. This is the most distinctively Adamesque feature of the plan-form at No 3, and distinguishes the layout at both ground and first floors. The symmetrical doors, flanking the central window in the apse are curved to follow the line of the wall (one is a cupboard). Skirting, dado, architraves, shutters and cornice are all original. The design of the latter incorporates well-spaced wreaths and small paterae. The chimneypiece is simple with panels and corner paterae. The poorly moulded wall-panels were added when the house was a hotel in the early twentieth century. They clash with the original architecture. The ceiling rose of the same date, as is parquet floor.

The Rear Wing Main Room

This was original a Man's Dressing Room. The main room has an apsidal South wall, and corner chimney. The simple chimneypiece is marble. The architraves, doors, skirting and shutters are original, as is the stucco frieze incorporating thin anthemion and urns.

The Closet (Small room behind)

This has lost its original features. (The remains of lincrusta paper decoration no doubt survive from early-twentieth century hotel use.)

First Floor

Front Drawing Room

This survives in original condition with good proportions and detailing. There are matching double doors under segmental arches both to the staircase landing and the Rear Dining Room. All joinery, including dado and shutters, is original, as is the stucco cornice with winged sphinxes. The carved marble chimneypiece is exceptional, the central panels with affronté leopards flanking an *anthénienne* or tripod urn; the side pieces with anthemion, rayed heads and festoons. The inset cast iron grate is early-nineteenth century – *circa* 1830. The thin plaster rococo wall panels, and the very thin panels on the dado, are later appliqués of poor quality.

The Rear Drawing Room

This room repeats the apsidal plan of the ground floor, and arrangement of symmetrical curved paneled doors flanking the window. These and all the joinery are original. The marble chimneypiece is finely carved with little sphinxes and scrolls in the frieze, lidded urns in the corners and features at the sides. The chaste stucco frieze contains griffins flanking urns (derived from the Temple of Faustian in Rome) in semi-circular panels. The florid ceiling rose is Victorian. The thin Louis Seize plaster wall panels are modern.

Rear Wing, Main Room (Lady's Dressing Room)

This has the same form as downstairs with apsidal side wall and corner chimney. There is original joinery, and simple moulded cornice. The chimneypiece has blank panels and simple fluted sidepieces. The rear wall to the closet has been opened up spoiling the dimensions. The Closet has lost much of its character but retains paneled window shutters.

Second Floor

The principal staircase terminates at this level. A transverse secondary staircase with plain stick banisters and Tuscan newels serves the top floor. This is the original arrangement. The plan form survives. The front and back rooms retain simple moulded cornices and original joinery, including architraves, plain six panel doors and window shutters. The principal front room has a nineteenth century marble fireplace and cast iron grate. The dressing room has a simple original chimneypiece with painted timber surrounds and marble slips. The rear room repeats the apsidal arrangement of downstairs. The chimneypiece is not original. The areas were restored 10 years ago when modern bathrooms were introduced, and the rear wing gently re-planned.

Following the hierarchy of the house, the detailing is simpler up here, with plain four panel doors, simple painted timber chimneypieces, and plain moulded cornices. There are no window shutters. The rear wing is all one modern space, currently a kitchen. (This rear part seems to have been reconstructed following war damage.)

THE MEWS BUILDING

This is twentieth century and has no features of special architectural interest.

4. Proposals

The proposals involve the continuation of the internal restoration begun 10 years ago by the same architects, James Gorst Architects for the present owners. It is intended to restore all the principal rooms at ground floor and first floor levels. No work is intended to the front elevation. At the rear it is proposed to open up the original back basement area, and to construct a new L-shaped family kitchen linked to the rear wing at ground floor level and enclosing the Court. The unlisted mews building at No 3 Grafton Mews is to be demolished and replaced by a modern building of sympathetic scale and materials, set-back further from the principal Adam house. A swimming pool will be made under the Mews and Courtyard, but not under the listed building itself, and separated from it by the restored rear basement area. It will not, therefore, impinge on the historic fabric.

Restoration work to the principal building

The Hall

Work here includes the removal of the modern inner frame of the doorcase and reinstatement of the original dimensions; the door would be copied from the surviving originals in the adjoining houses. The stone paved floor will be uncovered and repaired and replaced as necessary. The missing double inner doors to the staircase hall will be put back – with solid panels below and glazed above; the glazing bars will relate to the original fanlight above. It is considered that all these works will be an enhancement of the special interest of the building and will fully restore the original architectural quality.

The Staircase Hall

The only change here will be to remove the plaster wall panels from the walls. These are poor later decoration, and not of interest in themselves. They detract from the original architectural treatment of the space which is otherwise intact. It is considered that their removal will improve the appearance and restore the original character of the walls.

Front Room (Dining Room)

All the original features will be retained. The later services duct, which detracts from the space, will be removed. It is also intended to remove the twentieth century plaster wall panels, reinstating the original character. At the moment there are just flat pilaster flanking the sideboard alcove at the rear of the room. The intention is to restore a pair of free-standing columns which were removed as impractical obstructions, probably to increase space when in use as a hotel dining room in the early-twentieth century. There is no record of the original arrangement, but it is likely that the columns were Ionic, matching the attached columns on the façade, and relating to the architraves of the doors and windows which have Ionic mouldings. (No changes are proposed in the Breakfast Room and Cloak Room).

New Kitchen

At the rear, forming an L-shaped round the courtyard, it is intended to build a modern single-storeyed family kitchen. This would take the form of a lightweight

glazed structure distinct from the stock brick construction of the historic rear elevation. This accords with English Heritage (and Charter of Venice) advice that modern additions should be distinct and subsidiary to the historic building. This new kitchen would also incorporate the closet area of the original rear wing, involving the removal (and support) of a small area of the rear wall at this level. The Closet area has lost all its original features (having been used as a lavatory). It is considered that the amount of loss of original fabric is small in comparison to the practical gains of having a kitchen at this level, which is essential to the working of the house in modern condition. This is an alteration considered acceptable in the context of committed long-term ownership and the continued use of a listed building for its original purpose (Cf PPG15 advice and the new, less readable, PPS5 on listed buildings).

The Rear Courtyard

This will be reinstated as a paved area at ground floor level, in place of the existing modern flat roof with large rectangular skylights over the later rear basement office spaces of no interest. These will all be removed to make the swimming pool which will also stretch under the rebuilt mews building.

Basement

The rear basement will be restored as part of this work. This will enable the reinstatement of the original wide sash window in the main rear wall at basement level, currently blocked up. Work in the basement involves the removal of the later partitions in the front room. Otherwise original joinery and surviving historic features

like the vault currently used as a wine cellar will be retained and restored. All this is considered to be a gain in historic buildings terms, and not to raise any issues.

The Principal Floor

All original features are to be retained and restored. Later incongruous wall panels will be removed as on the ground floor and in the staircase. A major improvement is the proposed restoration of the dividing wall in the rear wing recreating the original proportions of the apsidal dressing room which will be fitted as a library. These proposals for restoring the handsome architecture of the principal interiors are considered to be exemplary in historic buildings terms.

Upper Floors

Few changes are proposed for the upper floors in this phase, which were refurbished ten years ago. An elevator is to be introduced, running from basement to second floor – this is to be located in the rear projection of the house which previously housed the secondary staff staircase. The location of the lift is considered appropriate given the historic precedent of vertical movement through the house in this area.

The Mews, 3 Grafton Mews

It is intended to demolish the existing two-storeyed building at No 3 Grafton Mews to the rear of the listed building. This is not in itself listed, and is a mid-twentieth century building of no special architectural interest. Its replacement, therefore, needs to be considered in the context of the listed building and Conservation Area. Grafton Mews in its present form comprises modest two and three storeyed largely twentieth

century buildings of different types of brick, Fletton as well as yellow stock. These buildings have no historic architectural character, but here maintained the scale of a traditional London mews. It is considered that the proposed replacement building at No 3 Grafton Mews will respect this overall scale and use of traditional materials, as well as introducing an element of good modern architecture which will be an enhancement of the Conservation Area.

The new mews building will be distinct from the main house, and screened at ground level by the proposed new kitchen. Above, it will be well set back with a mansard roof and so will have a minimum impact on the setting of the listed building. Externally the main elevation and party walls mews house are clad in brickwork, with timber cladding to the ground floor mews access, in keeping with the material palette of Grafton Mews.

Altogether these proposals are considered to be an enhancement in historic buildings terms and are to be welcomed, especially the sensitive restoration of the historic interiors.