
THE WIENER LIBRARY ENTRANCE STEPS

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

JULY 2021



Client

The Wiener Holocaust Library
29 Russell Square, London, WC1B 5DP

Design Team

Barbara Weiss Architects (Architect)

Jon Lowe Heritage (Heritage Consultant)

Background

The Wiener Holocaust Library at 29 Russell Square is one of the world's leading and most extensive archives on the Holocaust, the Nazi era and genocide. The Library's unique collection of over one million items includes published and unpublished works, press cuttings, photographs and eyewitness testimony.

The building was built in circa 1814 as part of a terrace of houses by James Burton. It is Grade II listed and lies within Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Barbara Weiss Architects were architects for the conversion and restoration of the building in 2010 and have been appointed recently to address the safety of the entrance access requirements of the building.



Fig.1 Existing concrete steps



Fig.2 Proposed over- clad yorkstone steps

Design Principles

The existing steps and landing are non-original concrete additions. The bottom step has a different riser height to the other steps and the top landing has a steep sloped gradient. The proposals seek to retain the existing steps and over-clad them with a more in keeping stone finish. The new risers will all be of constant height and the top landing will have a shallower gradient so that there is less risk of wheelchair users rolling backwards when using the existing stair lift.

There will be no modifications to the existing fixed railings and the non-original metal gate on the landing will have its undercut modified to accommodate the slightly altered levels on the landing. The edge of the stairs will have an insitu concrete upstand cast around the fixed rails. The original foot scrappers will be rebedded into the new yorkstone landing, in their same positions.

To retain the historic proportions of the entrance door and half columns, we have maintained an entrance door threshold step and the Library will continue to use the temporary ramp for users that require truly step free access.

The proposals follow on from a number of 'near miss' incidents whereby wheelchair and mobility scooter guests as well as dignitaries have lost control due to the steepness of the top landing gradient. The proposals seek to address the safety of the aging readership of the library while respecting the heritage of the building as well as enhancing the entrance through the use of high-quality materials which complement the main building and surround area.

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