



VICTORIA HOUSE

DESIGN AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

Change of flooring and additional office partitions

1. Introduction

This document has been prepared by LAB VH Limited (the Applicant) in support of the Listed Building Consent application for the change of flooring in the lift lobbies from levels 1 to 7 (levels 4 and 5 retrospective), the addition of 4 internal partitions with doors at levels 5 and 6, and the repositioning of 2 partitions in level 4 (also retrospective) in the Grade II listed Victoria House, Bloomsbury Square, WC1B 4DA.

The application is an adjustment to the Listed Building Consent 2019/6203/L approved 13th May 2020.

2. The Building

- Victoria House was built in 1926-32 as the headquarters for The Liverpool Victoria Insurance Company
- The building has eight storeys, a sub-basement and basement. Retail units are located on the east side of the building at street level, facing Southampton Row
- The building occupies a rectangular area between Bloomsbury Square and Southampton Row in London WC1 with facades to Bloomsbury Square, Bloomsbury Place, Vernon Place and Southampton Row.
- The building was listed in 1990 and the current listing refers to Victoria House and current railings, No.37-67 Southampton Row.
- Victoria House was subject of a comprehensive refurbishment in the early 2000s, under Listed Building Consent reference LSX0004958
- Victoria House lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

3. Consented works by LSX0004958

Details of the listed building consent granted in 2001 in respect of specified works for the alteration and extension of the listed building have informed the conditions and level of intervention recommended for this proposal.

Summary of Internal Works consented by LSX0004958

The refurbishment works internally were very extensive within the office accommodation areas and included major alterations that created new space arrangements.

Two atriums to the south and north ends of the building have been formed within the existing light wells. These have curved walls of glazing from ground to roof level.

Within the atriums are suspended 'pods' that provide meeting room areas. These are accessed directly from the office accommodation and lift lobby landing areas via glazed lined walkways.

The central reception area has been fitted with a new raised glazed floor over the existing covering and steps.

Four new lift shafts have been constructed to provide access to the newly arranged floor layouts.

Introduction of service bay and vehicular access in the northern pavilion of the Bloomsbury Square front.

4. Recent consents

Since 2019 LAB VH have been working in the refurbishment of the building. The offices floors continue to be improved to run co-working floors, with all works sensitively considering the heritage assets of

the site. The design approach to the offices provides a comfortable, well-considered working environment within the unique historic setting of the Grade II Listed Victoria House. LABS proposals aim to compliment and enhance the historic fabric with low impact construction and high-quality materials.

PLANNING REF	PLANNING DESCRIPTION	STATUS	APPROVAL DATE
2019/4278/L	Internal works to improve the existing layout and redecorate the office areas in the 4th and 5th floors (superseded)	Granted	17/10/2019
2019/6203/L	Flex offices layout 1st to 9th floors. Fixed service points and plant rooms.	Granted	13/05/2020
2020/0798/L & 2020/0771/P	Insertion of duct work through four window openings at 5th floor level to north and south elevations and associated ducting to serve two existing plant rooms within the building.	Granted	14/05/2020
2020/1262/L & 2020/1238/P	External alterations to refurbish and install new MEP services at 1st to 3rd floors and 6th to 9th floors of Victoria House, replacement plant at roof level and other associated works.	Granted	14/05/2020
2020/2896/L	Internal refurbishment works to upper and lower ground floors of Victoria House comprising replacement of later floors, re-cladding of later plaster finishes, light cleaning of historic stone surfaces, refurbishment of existing light fittings and enhancement of the lighting scheme, and associated mechanical and electrical improvements.	Granted	13/08/2020
2020/4089/L	Details of the doors between lift lobby to southern lightwell required by condition 4 of listed building consent ref: 2020/2896/L dated 13/08/2020 for the "Internal refurbishment works to upper and lower ground floors of Victoria House comprising replacement of later floors, re-cladding of later plaster finishes, light cleaning of historic stone surfaces, refurbishment of existing light fittings and enhancement of the lighting scheme, and associated mechanical and electrical improvements".	Granted	09/11/2020
2020/3919/L	Relocation of existing pendant bowl light within northern lift lobby at ground floor level and addition of contemporary light features.	Granted	29/10/2020
2021/3582/L	Internal refurbishment works to existing offices from 7th to 9th floor	Granted	04/11/2021
2021/2775/L	Refurbishment and upgrade of cycle parking and changing facilities in Basement Level 1	Granted	17/08/2021
2021/4244/L	Refurbishment of upper Ground Floor Office	Granted	18/11/2021

5. Proposals

This application seeks the regularisation of minor amendments in the previously approved cellular office space.

2019/6203/L granted consent for a system of plasterboard bulkheads and partitions and lightweight glazed partitions allowing the formation of offices of different sizes following a grid. The proposed layouts were considered to be tentative, as the positioning of the approved partition system would respond to the occupiers needs from open plan offices to multiple medium or small size ones.

Toilets and kitchenettes were provided at each end of the building, clustered around the cores.

Following occupation of the 4th, 5th, and 6th levels the grid was adjusted and new partitions added to improve the space and allow different tenants to share the floors. The modifications are as follows:

- a) Minor deviation in the location of 2 partitions in level 4 (c. 400mm from approved grid)
- b) Introduction of 1 new partition in level 5
- c) Addition of 4 partitions with doors (2 in level 4 and 2 in level 6)

Further to the partition alterations the grey flooring approved in the lift lobbies by LSX0004958 has been replaced by the same terrazzo flooring installed within the offices in levels 4 and 5. This application seeks to regularise this change and to replace the rest of the lobbies in levels to 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 and the pods bridges with the same terrazzo tiles.

6. Heritage considerations

Significance Assessment

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines 'Significance' as 'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'. 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment', describes instead a range of heritage values, arranged in four groups, which may be attached to places as follows:

- Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.
- Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Victoria House is a substantial building arranged over eight floors, with further accommodation at basement and sub-basement level. Its elevations are an elegant neo-classical composition built of high-quality materials such as Portland stone and bronze. The building occupies an entire block between Southampton Row and Bloomsbury Square; the architectural motifs and articulation repeats in all four elevations creating a harmonic sense of solid coherence.

The exterior of Victoria House remains largely in its original form, retaining its external finishes and architectural detailing. To Southampton Row the ground floor retail units have been altered, with new glazed shopfronts, however these works do not detract from the overall quality of the facade, blending with the retail and commercial character of Southampton Row.

The building is considered to have high aesthetic and architectural value, not just due to its elegant facades which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area but because of its grand internal spaces such as the entrance lobbies and basement ballroom.

The building has been a contributor to the evolution of the Bloomsbury area and it has significant townscape value due to its imposing neo-classical facades which are highly visible within the streetscape and its strong relationship with Bloomsbury Square. It is therefore considered that Victoria House has significant historic and aesthetic value as well as lesser degrees of communal and evidential significance.

Impact assessment in the areas affected by the proposals

The areas subject of this application are within the office space originally refurbished in 2001/3 and recently in 2020/21.

This sector of the building does not present any historic features of significance, having been largely stripped and renovated.

The lifts and lobbies were installed during the early 2000s works therefore all building elements affected by these proposals are of contemporary nature.

There are no changes to the facades of the building in this application.

7. SUMMARY

The proposals will see a further improvement in the office space at Victoria House.

The comprehensive refurbishment of the offices provides high quality space responding to the significance of the building and tenants' expectations.

The proposed improvements will allow LABS to run prime co-working office floors, sensitively considering the historic elements of the site, and bringing the building up to modern standards for an office building within the unique setting of this heritage asset.

APPENDIX I

List entry

VICTORIA HOUSE AND ATTACHED RAILINGS

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1378788

Date first listed: 04-Dec-1990

Date of most recent amendment: 11-Jan-1999

Statutory Address: VICTORIA HOUSE AND ATTACHED RAILINGS, 37-63, SOUTHAMPTON ROW

Details

TQ3081NW 798-1/100/1481

CAMDEN SOUTHAMPTON ROW(West side) Nos.37-63 (Odd) Victoria House and attached railings
(Formerly Listed as: SOUTHAMPTON ROW Nos.37-67 Victoria House and attached railings)

04/12/90 GV II Commercial building with ground floor shops on east side. c1926-32. By Charles William Long. For the Liverpool Victoria Insurance Company as their headquarters. Sculpture by Herbert William Palliser. Ornamental brasswork by the Bromsgrove Guild. Steel frame clad with Portland stone, bronze infill panels and copperlite glazing surrounds. Green slate mansard roof with dormers. EXTERIOR: eight storeys, sub-basement and basement on a rectangular island site with facades to Bloomsbury Square, Bloomsbury Place, Vernon Place and Southampton Row. Long sides, 15-window bays; returns five-window bays. West facade to Bloomsbury Square with tall channelled ground floor, central distyle-in-antis Ionic (Erechtheion) portico through first to fourth (attic) floors. Attached columns as far as projecting end bays with paired pilasters. Ground floor to third floor windows tripartite with small panes; second floor with relief pediments. Attic windows, with small panes in plain rectangular recesses, grouped in trios in the frieze (corresponding to window beneath). Tympanum with sculpture of central robed figure with arms outstretched flanked by other figures expressing the bounty of the natural world. To either side, cornice surmounted by parapet with panels of open ornamental brasswork behind which a further attic storey with trios of windows slightly offset from parapet openings. Mansard dormers slightly offset again; all echoing shape of triangular pediment. Central two storey feature above mansard. East facade similar but with shops at ground floor level (originally recessed but now with projecting C20 shopfronts) and tympanum sculpture on the theme of navigation and new forms of industry. Returns similar in style with distyle-in-antis centres, paired pilasters and no tympana. Entrance doors on all sides of panelled bronze. INTERIORS: virtually unaltered. Entrance lobbies on all four sides faced in Subiaco marble with Greek style decoration and much decorative brasswork. Central ground floor public area, open through three floors to elaborate coffered suspended ceiling. Basement meeting/dance hall with coloured glass light fittings, door furniture and surrounds in polished steel and radiator grilles embossed with VH monogram. Extensive mahogany panelling to third floor offices. Some rooms with C18 fireplaces from houses previously on the site.

Listing NGR: TQ3039381709