

23 Gloucester Crescent

Heritage Impact Assessment

July 2022



This supporting statement forms part of a Listed Building Application and is accompanied by the following documents:

Existing situation:

GC 500 location plan 1:1250.pdf
GC 501A Site plan existing 1-50.pdf
GC 502A North elevation existing 1-50.pdf
GC 503A West elevation existing 1-50.pdf
GC 504 Section AA and details existing 1-50/1:2.pdf

Drawings of proposed works:

GC 601A Site plan proposed 1-50.pdf
GC 602A North elevation proposed 1-50.pdf
GC 603A West elevation proposed 1-50.pdf
GC 604A Section AA and details proposed 1-50/1:5.pdf

Design and Access Statement

23 Gloucester Crescent

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1 Introduction

A practical conservation-led design requires knowledge of the physical condition and structural integrity of an asset, to complement an assessment of its significance. Following from this work it is possible to understand the impacts of proposals on significance and to ensure that any negative consequences are avoided or mitigated as fully as possible.

Arts Lettres Techniques obtained consent for amendments to the existing planning and listed building consent on 6th August 2021 (2021/2518/L). Following completion of the works to the house the question of privacy and vulnerability arose, with the low garden wall giving little screening from passers-by, tourists or people with addiction issues who have traditionally used the side streets away from the market area.



Fig.1 Number 23 Gloucester Crescent viewed from North-West – note low wall in relation to passers-by.

The proposal to reinstate responds to the wider context of the Crescent. The Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement has few references to the boundary walls, Page 22 refers to the erosion of the front walls around the Crescent:

A number of walls and front garden areas have been altered or lost to forecourt parking. These alterations have had a significant negative impact on the green character of this part of the Conservation Area and the setting of the buildings.

Within this context, this proposal is in accordance with guidance PH 36 (p33) of the Primrose hill Conservation Area Statement:

“Proposals to erect new boundary structures or replace or alter existing boundary structures should respect the original boundary style. Where original boundary structures have been lost these should be reinstated to match the original”.

During the research into the house and surroundings photographic evidence within the ‘Collage London Photographic Archive’ of the original boundary wall, taken in 1967 was found, which

together with on site evidence fully informs the proposal to reinstate the scale, materiality and detail of the original wall.



Fig.2 23 Gloucester Crescent viewed from North-West circa 1967 – note original wall indicated – refer to Fig.3.



Fig.3 Number 23 Gloucester Crescent detail of North wall circa 1967.

Figure 2 and 3 show the original North boundary wall, the 'saltire' latticework was a standard boundary detail around the Crescent and wider streets, the remaining examples within the Crescent are documented in the accompanying Design and Access statement. The poor condition of the original wall may have been the reason for its removal – it is evident through the remnants of the 'saltire' details remaining around the Crescent that the fragment shown in Fig.3 extended around the perimeter wall. The rest of the wall is lower because the rest of the 'saltire' details had already been removed by the time Fig.3 was taken.

2 Heritage Impact Assessment

This section describes the amendments proposed to the North section of the boundary wall and assesses significance as follows:

- Key**
- 1 - Exceptional significance
 - 2 - Considerable significance
 - 3 - Some significance - threshold for inclusion
 - 4 - Little significance

North and West boundary wall

Existing Coping – significance 3/4

The intervention to raise the wall to its original height requires the removal of the undecorated existing Portland cement coping which is a copy of the original detail, a fragment of which is extant on the return wall from the raised corner seen on the left of the wall in Fig.4 and in detail in Fig.5.



Fig.4 Composite photograph of the North boundary wall, rising with a swept coping detail to the original wall height.

The existing cement coping reaches the North lime tree, which corresponds to the length of the original 'saltaire' wall, its use likely employed to repair the top of the wall when the 'saltaire' blocks and brick piers were removed after 1967.

The use of cement on a lime mortar bonded original wall goes against best practice, the inability of the brittle cement coping to move and settle in accordance with the behaviour of lime based mortar creates cracking, water entry, plant growth (seen in Fig.4) and spalling of the masonry. The creation of the swept corner detail post-1967 used modern bricks with cement-based mortar that has created an incompatibility issue between mortars together with a crude bonding method that disfigures the wall (fig.5). The original coping shown in fig. 5 is pale buff coloured and its properties of water release result in the avoidance of staining characteristic to Portland cement.



Fig.5 Corner detail showing original Roman cement coping and band which frame the dimension of the 'saltaire' blockwork.

In summary the copying of the original moulding detail on the post 1967 coping is sympathetic to the boundary wall of the listed building, however the use of cement is detrimental to the performance and appearance of the wall itself. Of some significance is the original section of wall returning to the house (rated 2), with elements of the render that are securely attached to the brickwork to be retained with missing elements repaired in matching Roman cement. The removal of the modern brickwork bedded in cement mortar will require careful cutting away, avoiding the use of percussive tools to secure the original wall from damaging impact or vibration.

Proposed Coping – significance 3

The reinstatement of the 'saltaire' lattice blockwork backed with a single stretcher bonded infill with a Roman cement setting coat visible through the 'saltaire' diamonds is in accordance with guidance from the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement (PH36 page 33) which recommends the returning of historic boundary treatments to enhance the presentation of important streetscapes. With both 24 and 22 Gloucester Crescent retaining their 'saltaire' wall details (albeit number 22 concealed behind dense ivy), the reinstatement to number 23 delivers both privacy to the occupants of the house and presents to passers-by the highly significant North elevation of the house as it was originally presented. Significantly it also ties these three houses together in the way the crescent is experienced when entered from Inverness Street. The value of reinstating the 'saltaire' wall is therefore rated at 3.

Critical to the reinstatement is to follow original detail, material and scale. The moulding to the original wall fragment (Fig.5) is identical to number 24 and 22 Gloucester Crescent, and the new work will be made using a 'run in-situ' technique using timber guides and a hand-cut profile as per the original wall, executed by the same craft plasterer who reinstated the lime cornices and plasterwork within the house. Mortar will be lime/sand without the use of ordinary Portland cement.

The 'saltaire' blocks will be cast in Roman Cement, which is as close to the historical cement mix as possible. The detail and dimensions of the mould will be taken directly from the two remaining 'saltaire' blocks present in number 23 – located at high level in the South lightwell party wall (Fig.6), which match the adjoining properties.



Fig.6 Detail of cast 'Saltaire' on the party wall of 23 Gloucester Crescent.

The end of the reinstated wall terminates at the lime tree. Fig.7 indicates the wall was likely simply truncated when the rest of the 'saltaire' panels were removed prior to 1967.



Fig.7 Detail of the truncated end of the original wall circa 1967.

Reinstated wall height – significance 2

The material loss incurred by the reinstatement has negligible impact, the top of the current wall has a twentieth century soldier course bedded in cement mortar installed when the original

'saltire' blocks were removed – it is in poor condition (Fig.8) and has no heritage value. The significance of the raising of the wall to its original height and design affects the contemporary experience of the house as owned by Alan Bennett, which had during his tenure the lowered wall height. This contemporary image of the house creates a tension between the historic value of the original boundary, the reinstatement of which repairs the loss of original appearance that has happened over time, and the loss of the presentation of Bennett's house, which has the lowered wall revealing more of the garden to the passer-by.



Fig.8 Detail of West wall cement mortar bedded coping using a soldier course

Whilst acknowledging the change in appearance that reinstatement brings, on balance the act of lowering the wall during the 1960's was detrimental to both the appearance of the house and to the owner's enjoyment of the garden without over scrutiny by onlookers. The increased use of the lowered wall as a location for anti-social behavior following the installation of private security in the Inverness Street retail strip in May 2022 at the behest of LB Camden has added urgency to this decision to reinstate the wall in original form.

The loss of appearance of the site as known to Alan Bennett is ameliorated through the retention of the gateposts and gates preserves the access to the house as used by Bennett and the Lady in the van, whilst at the same time restoring a significant entry point to the Crescent from Inverness Street.

3 Conclusion and summary table

The proposal is based on documentary and material evidence of the original boundary treatment, its scale and detailing fully evident and defining the dimensions, details and brick bond of the proposed design.

The most interesting detail of the post 1969 intervention was the entry to the driveway and the driveway itself - the exact setting for the Lady in the van. Both flagstone paving, gateposts/ wall to the party wall and the gates are retained, maintaining the identity of the only access to the house, whilst achieving the original appearance around the remainder of the site perimeter.

Appendix 1

Summary table of actions

Item	Proposals	Justification	Significance	Benefit/mitigation	Assessment
Remove existing wall coping	Removal of Portland cement coping and modern brick swept corner detail.	Unoriginal/incompatible material, workmanlike execution of details, lowered wall lack of privacy.	Low The existing details are insignificant and are detrimental to the setting of the listed building.	Benefit Allows reinstatement of original boundary scale, materiality and detail. Mitigation Unnecessary.	Positive Removal linked to reinstatement.
Wall coping and 'saltire' panel reinstatement	Reinstatement of matching bricks using matched lime mortar with Roman cement cast and in-situ run coping details to match original.	Reversal of the loss of characteristic boundary treatment in the Conservation Area, creating appropriate level of privacy for 23 Gloucester Crescent.	High Reinstatement of original boundary treatment to the listed building.	Benefit Fully retain original materiality, scale and detailing to the North boundary. Mitigation Unnecessary.	Neutral Reflects boundary detail on opposite corner of Inverness Street at the entry point to the Crescent.
Change of appearance of the house when occupied by Alan Bennett	Reinstatement of height affecting view of the house when Bennett was in residence.	Reinstatement of original boundary treatment encouraged within PHCA Statement, addresses anti-social behaviour.	Mid The reinstatement changes the contemporary appearance,	Mitigation The gateposts, gates and wall adjoining No.22 is retained acknowledging the presence of the Lady in the van.	Positive Positive boundary reinstatement for the crescent.

Appendix 2

Heritage Category:

Listed Building

Grade:

II

List Entry Number:

1342077

Date first listed:

11-Jan-1999

Statutory Address:

23, GLOUCESTER CRESCENT

District:

Camden (London Borough)

National Grid Reference:

TQ 28710 83848

Details

CAMDEN

TQ2883NE GLOUCESTER CRESCENT 798-1/76/559 (East side) No.23 GV II

House with left hand return forming a symmetrical end bay to Nos 37-43 Inverness Street (qv). Mid C19. Stucco. Slated mansard roofs behind gabled fronts with narrow bargeboards. 3 storeys and basement. 2 windows. Entrance in recessed prostyle portico to right; panelled door with overlight. Right hand ground floor window an architraved sash with console bracketed cornice; left hand a canted bay. Lugged architraves to 1st floor sashes with lugged sills. 2nd floor cornice. Round-arched architraved 2nd floor windows with sill bands. Return with channelled stucco ground floor and blocked windows; ground floor a truncated tripartite sash with enriched brackets to mullions, 1st floor a similar full size sash with console bracketed pediment. Plain 1st floor band. Moulded cornice with parapet having arcaded balustrading. INTERIOR: not inspected.