Hunter Street and Bloomsbury Fire Compartmentation and CSR Works – Design and Access Statement

8th September 2022

Introduction

This statement has been prepared for Camden Council to provide a further insight into the proposed works at the property known as Hunter Street and Bloomsbury Health Centre, 8 Hunter St, London WC1N 1BN.

Although both health centres operate under separate names it is noted they are connected internally, hence including them on a single application.

Hunter Street and Bloomsbury was originally constructed as the Royal Free Hospital School for Medicine in the late 1800's. The health centres are part of the larger building and are Grade 2 listed.

Following a recent fire risk assessment it has been identified that works are required to the passive fire compartmentation within both buildings. This work amounts to the following:

- Replacement of damaged or defective fire doors.
- Fire compartmentation, predominantly filling around cable penetrations.
- Installation of fire shutters internally to protect external means of escape.

In addition it has also been identified that the layout of the existing baby change and accessible WC to the patient area within Bloomsbury does not meet current standards and is not fully accessible for all patients. It is therefore proposed to refurbish this area to improve this situation.

Location

Hunter Street and Bloomsbury Health Centres face onto Hunter Street and Handel Street. The site is in proximity of Brunswick Square, and adjoins St George's Garden. Within the wider area it is in the vicinity of King's Cross and St Pancras's stations.

Building Listing

The Historic England building listing describes the site as follows:

II Former London School of Medicine for Women, renamed the London (Royal Free Hospital) School of Medicine for Women in 1896, and now housing various institutions. Built 1897-1900 by J.M. Brydon. Red brick with stone and gauged brick dressings. Tiled mansard roofs with dormers and tall brick chimney-stacks with stone cornices. Queen Anne style. C-shaped plan built in 3 successive phases from Wakefield Street to Hunter Street. EXTERIOR: To Hunter Street, 3 storeys, attic and basement. 8 windows with

slightly advanced end bays. 2 central chimneys banded and linked to form an arch with keystone above a dormer with keystone and section of cornice; dormers to end bays have segmental pediments and barrel roofs, each with a round-arched sash flanked by upswept parapets. Symmetrical design apart from entrance set next to right hand end bay with a Doric doorcase having a broken pediment and round-arched door with patterned fanlight and rusticated voussoirs. Slightly recessed sashes; ground floor segmental-arched with keystone, 1st floor have keystones flanked by lugged voussoirs and continuous sill band, 2nd floor, flat-arched with mutule cornice at sill band level and Gibbs type surrounds to end bay windows. Eaves cornice. Return to Handel Street has stepped and shaped gable with gauged brick detailing, and a 2-storey range below this with broken stone pediment. Then, set back, 9 window bays and a central first floor Venetian style window. Similar stepped and shaped gable to east end with stone banding and gauged brick detailing. To rear of this, facing courtyard, is an advanced squared bay in the corner, with 1st floor wide window under rounded arch with red gauged brickwork surround and corner pilasters, and apron carrying the words: 'LONDON ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL SCHOOL OF MEDICINE FOR WOMEN. Founded 1874. Rebuilt 1897'. The roof in this corner is capped with a cupola and weathervane. Return to Wakefield Street has eight window bays, those to first floor under rounded archesl; those 5 to the courtyard elevation with stone surrounds and gauged brick pilasters. Attached but of lesser interest is the c.1915 range also known as No.2 Wakefield Street. INTERIOR: Not fully inspected. Metal baluster stairs with scrolled balusters; range along Wakefield Street has metal tension rod truss roof and roof lights; lecture theatre in corner with raked floor and later modifications; C20 modifications throughout for continued institutional use.

HISTORY: The London School of Medicine for Women was founded in 1874, within three years becoming a part of the University of London. The first dean (from 1883-1903) was Dr. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the first Englishwoman to qualify in medicine, and an important national figure in medical and women's history. Anderson employed her friend, the notable architect J.M. Brydon for this project, and he has also designed the hospital Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital on the Euston Road (q.v.). The school initially occupied a large house at No.30 Handel Street, but by 1897, with 170 students and leases about to run out, a programme of rebuilding was necessary. The work began on Wakefield Street, which was formally opened in July 1898 and which contained rooms for teaching chemistry, physiology, anatomy and physics. This was funded by Emily Pfeiffer and known as the Pfeiffer wing, with additional funds being contributed after the Princess of Wales agreed to open the building. Work began immediately on the second stage of construction, along Handel Street, which housed 2 lecture theatres, a library, a biological lab and other classrooms, and was completed by autumn 1899. By this time, the old houses on Hunter Street had been demolished and the last stage was built the following year. The school became associated with the Royal Free Hospital during Anderson's deanship, and it was renamed the London (Royal Free Hospital) School of Medicine for Women in 1896. SOURCES include the following articles: The Sketch, June 15, 1898, p.69; The Daily Graphic, July 12, 1898; Daily News, Sept. 13, 1900; The Builder, April 16, 1898. p.367.

Listed as the former London School of Medicine for Women, rebuilt 1897-1900, under the deanship of the medical pioneer Elizabeth Garrett Anderson to the designs of J.M. Brydon. It has architectural interest for its handsome Queen Anne Style as well as considerable historic importance, for its strong links with Anderson and as an early purpose-built medical school for women.

Information about Proposal

As noted above this proposal will be described in three sections:

Replacement internal fire doors and fire compartmentation

A recent survey of the site has identified a number of fire doors which are defective and require replacement.

The doors to be replaced all appear to be of a similar age and style, being 44mm solid core timber paint grade doors with central vision panels of various styles. It is estimated these doors are circa 20-25 years old and appear to have been installed as part of a previous refurbishment.

It is therefore proposed to replace these doors with those of a similar style to the existing. Please refer to the Gleeds door elevation drawing for exact configuration and location of doors, appended to this application.

For the doors to perform adequately as fire doors within the NHS estate the doors must have third party fire test accreditation. Therefore the proposed doors shown have been selected from a range of third party certified doors. They have been selected as in keeping with the current door style on the site, given every door is not due to be replaced.

It is noted to the solid doors at Hunter Street to the upper floors the internal architrave appears to be significantly older than the doors. Where possible these architraves will be retained and re-fitted to the replacement doors.

Replacement of external doors and fire shutters

It is also necessary to increase the fire protection to the external escape routes, through providing fire protection to external doors and windows adjoining the escape route.

The existing external doors cannot be confirmed to be fire rated. It is therefore proposed to replace the external doors with new external quality timber paint grade doors with a glazed vision panel. As described above the doors as fire doors need to meet third party certified performance and they have been therefore been selected from this range.

Given the scale of the elevation and the proximity of the fire escape it is not anticipated this change will significantly impact on the overall elevation.

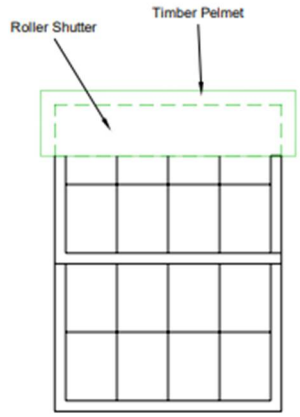
It is also necessary to provide a fire rating to the windows to protect the means of escape. Usual practice would be to replace the window with a non-opening fire rated window.

It is however recognised that the timber sash windows are significant to this elevation. Therefore it is alternatively proposed to install fire shutters internally. This will allow the existing windows to be retained unaltered.

The fire shutters will sit over the windows internally. During normal operation the shutter itself, will not be visible, with only the box section to the top exposed. In the event of an emergency activation the shutter would come down and cover the window opening providing flame protection.

The fire shutter box section to the head of the windows will be in steel and of modern appearance. To reduce the impact of this internally as part of the works it is proposed to install a timber pelmet to the head of the windows and around the shutter. Although not now seen as present in this building, this is a typical detail of buildings of this age.

Below is an extract from the proposed internal window elevation drawing, included with this tender pack, showing this:



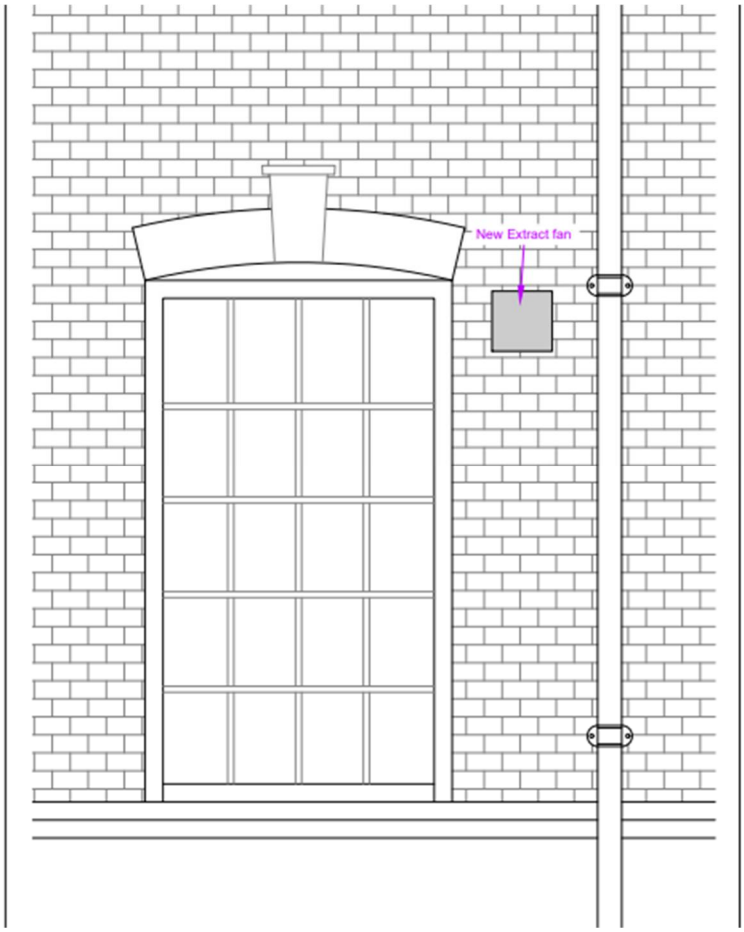
Accessible WC Refurbishment

It has been identified the accessible WC and baby change area within Bloomsbury does not comply with current recommended layouts or is not suitable operationally.

It is therefore proposed that this area is refurbished. There is a plasterboard stud partition that divides the space currently into separate baby change and accessible WC. It is proposed this partition is removed to revert the space to its original size.

The existing pipe boxing and sanitaryware appears to be circa 20-25 years old. This will be stripped out and replaced with new IPS, sanitaryware and finishes.

There is currently no extract ventilation in this space. It is therefore proposed to introduce a new extract vent through the wall, to terminate via the façade. To minimise the impact of the appearance of this new vent it is proposed to install a heritage style metal vent cover. Examples of these are seen at other NHS sites in London, such as St Charles Hospital in Kensington which is of a similar age and construction style. This vent cover will also be located as closely as possible to the nearest downpipe, avoiding the façade becoming cluttered in appearance.



Summary

In summary these works will ensure that this site remains operational as a health centre providing services to the local community.

The impact of the works to the historic fabric and the reading of the significance of the building is minimal if at all, with due regard having been given to the historic impact.