

HERITAGE DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Project:	Provision of New Entrance to 10A South Square from Field Court and associated paving alterations to provide step-free access	Ref/File No: HK 2285/3.1
Applicant:	The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn	
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INTRODUCTION

This application is for Planning Consent for the introduction of a new doorway to the Field Court elevation of No 10A South Square and associated external paving adjustments to provide step-free access to the ground floor of the building and thence via existing lift to all floors.

BACKGROUND

10A South Square comprises the northern third of the terrace (Nos 11-12 and 10A) forming the west side of South Square (Edward Maufe c.1953). It turns the corner to abut the rear of 10 South Square (Raymond Erith c.1971). The building has a 3-bay northern elevation overlooking Field Court set between the rear of 10 South Square and 3 Field Court (rebuilt 1950's – see 1887/1914 plan at Fig 7). The Inn as a whole, lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and is included on Historic England's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

The entrance to No 10A South Square is currently approached via 3 steps from a recess in the NW corner of South Square (Fig 1). A further flight of stairs immediately inside the front door then leads to the raised ground floor level. The building has a lift which whilst not of sufficient size to be fully DDA compliant, does allow those unable to use the stairs to access all floors. However as noted, there are two separate flights of steps which have to be negotiated to allow access to the lift from street level.

The levels and layout of the pavement approach from South Square preclude any adjustment of levels or introduction of a ramp at the entrance. Once inside, the layout of the stairs with doors immediately at the bottom and either side at the head of the stair (Fig 2) preclude installation of a stair chair lift. Solutions involving a new entrance at pavement level with lift to ground level would not be sympathetic to the overall appearance of the Square as whilst these particular buildings are not listed, the design does reflect the architectural concept of the original Square albeit in what is now recognisably a 1950's classical idiom of interest in its own right.

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Fig 1 - No 10A South Square
Entrance showing external steps to front door



Fig 2 - No 10A South Square
Internal flight of stairs from front door to raised ground floor



Fig 3 - North elevation of 10A South Square facing onto Field Court



Fig 4 - No 3 Field Court adjacent

BLOOMSBURY CONSERVATION AREA & ADJACENT LISTED BUILDINGS

The Conservation Area Appraisal (Para 5.152) summarises the character of Gray's Inn as follows:

The whole area has a private, internalised feel, hidden from the main surrounding streets except at key locations where there are glimpsed views into the larger gardens. Historically, the north side of Gray's Inn Gardens was left undeveloped to provide views to Highgate. Today, the gardens are screened from Theobald's Road by tall cast-iron railings, planting, mature trees and lawns which slope down from street level. The sense of privacy of the Inns of Court is reinforced by continuous enclosed street frontages with gateways or arches. Indeed, it is the interrelationship between the varying sizes and types of spaces and the high quality of the environment which contributes to the distinct character of the sub area.

A number of listed buildings abut Field Court. In the immediate vicinity, this includes the rear elevation with attached railings of No 1 Gray's Inn Square. The setting of this building, defined by Historic England as 'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced', extends to the paved area affected by the proposals.

LISTING DESCRIPTION (1 GRAY'S INN SQUARE)

CAMDEN GRAY'S INN (West side) Gray's Inn Square No.1 and attached railings 24/10/51 GV II Terraced chambers. c1676, restored c1948. Brown brick with red brick dressings. Brick bands between floors. Tiled roof. Four storeys and cellar. Double-fronted with eight windows. Stone doorcase with consoles and broken segmental pediment with ball in centre. Gauged red brick flat arches and dressings to flush frame windows with boxing and glazing bars. Wood block bracketed eaves cornice.*

INTERIOR: panelled with wood cornice and turned balusters with square newels to dog-leg stairs.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with torch flambe finials to rear.

PROPOSALS

Having explored options for introducing level access to the front of the building, we concluded that this was not possible without unacceptable alterations to the appearance of the building as this would require an additional doorway at the half level, upsetting the balance of the architecture. It also wrote off significant internal space on two levels. We therefore examined whether level access could be achieved from Field Court as the existing ground levels here are closer to the building's ground floor level than at the front.

Wheelchair access requires a paved surface and, where ramped, a gradient of appropriate inclination.

The proposals involve the introduction of a new pedimented stone doorcase to the centre bay of the Field Court elevation. This matches the existing pedimented doorways to the South Square elevation of the building. A level landing and inclined bridge crosses the existing basement area, set within wing walls of a similar projection to those already existing. Levels to the existing paving beyond are adjusted to achieve the necessary gradients. New railings are introduced to guard the lightwell which match and continue those already existing to the rear of No 10 South Square.

A pre-war engraving (Fig. 5) just shows the original building (4 Field Court) on the site of the north elevation of the current 10A South Square which it will be noted had a pedimented entrance onto Field Court in a very similar position to that now proposed.



Fig 5 – Engraving of Field Court c.1890 looking east toward rear of 1 Gray's Inn Place (left) and 10 South Square (right). Note stone doorcase to former building on right (4 Field Court)



Fig 6 – The same view today



Fig 7 – OS Plan showing Field Court in 1887 (Nos 2, 3 & 4 remain as shown in 1914 revision)

IMPACT

The introduction of a new pedimented entrance onto Field Court reflects the original building in the location and enlivens both visually and in terms of use a somewhat utilitarian façade. It is considered that the proposals will therefore enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

There are some changes to historic paving levels and layout to necessitate level access and ramps of an appropriate gradient. However, these do not impinge on the central paved axis seen in both the engraving and current photograph above. As such they cause no harm to the significance of either the Conservation Area or the adjacent Listed Building.

Even if it were considered that the paving level adjustments caused harm to the significance of the adjacent designated heritage assets, that harm is clearly 'less than substantial' and is outweighed by the public benefit of providing step-free access to the building and visual improvements to the building itself.

ACCESS STATEMENT

The proposals will provide step-free access to the raised ground floor of the building from where it is possible to access the passenger lift providing lift access to all floors and parts of the building.

The Reception, Clerks Room and Meeting Rooms are all located at raised ground floor level so will become fully accessible for wheelchair users entering via the new entrance from Field Court.