



Heritage Statement

45 RUSSELL SQUARE
LONDON
WC1B 4JB

Scope

This Heritage statement has been produced to accompany the listed building application for the above property. The client, Odyssey Education has recognised the historical significance of the property and has asked AW Spaces to review the proposed works and ensure any considerations for alteration respects this.

The building has been sensitively refurbished by the current landlord in 2021 to a high standard and many insensitive alternations have been removed and the building returned as near as practically possible to its original layout. The proposed works include the installation of waste and ventilation systems to the basement and some walls to form offices on the 3rd floor.

This assessment has been produced by Ivan Holding the Managing Director of AW Spaces who has over 20 years of heritage refurbishment experience.

Location

Russell Square lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and is described in the current draft statement as being within Sub-Area 6 Bloomsbury Square, Russell Square and Tavistock Square.

Russell Square is described as:

6.83 Russell Square is the largest of Bloomsbury's squares and formed part of the phase of development that followed the construction around Bedford Square and utilised the land that had formerly been reserved to maintain the view north from Bedford House. It was originally laid out by Humphrey Repton, a leading landscape architect in the early 19th century. Although extensively replanted in 1959 it is listed grade II in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. The space is defined by railings but separated from the surrounding development by busy roads, which divide the space from the frontages. Mature trees and peripheral landscaping to some extent mitigate the impact of traffic to an extent within the space and are important elements within the surrounding streets that soften and filter views across the square. In the north-western corner of the square, located on a traffic island is a timber-clad Cabmen's Shelter (listed), an interesting historical remnant dating from 1897.

6.84 The eight storey Russell Hotel, by Charles Fitzroy Doll (listed) is a prominent landmark on the east side of the square, but isolated from the space by the busy road. It is an ornate red brick building with terracotta dressings with visual interest at roof level given by the corner turrets and gabled bays. James Burton built the original terraces at the start of the 19th century. These are four storeys in height with a basement and an attic level and are built in a yellow stock brick with a rusticated stucco base. Additional terracotta decoration was added in around 1898 following the construction of the Russell Hotel. Examples of these terraces remain on the north side (Nos. 21-24) and south side (Nos. 44-49 and 52-60). On the west

side Nos. 25-29 and 38-43 are listed but lack the later ornamentation. No. 30, the Institute of Chemistry by Sir JJ Burnett (1913), is also listed.

6.85 There are a number of 20th century insertions around the square. On the north side, the southern end of Lasdun's Institute of Education (listed) has a bronze-coloured glazed curtain wall elevation to the square. This steps up to the east to an eight storey pale red brick block on a stone plinth that continues the scale and materials of the hotel development along the east side of Bedford Way. On the south side Nos. 50-51 have been replaced by a modern block with a glazed façade that is of a similar scale to the terraces. These buildings are considered to be neutral in terms of the character of the square.

Background and description

Bedford Square was conceived during the building boom which followed the Peace of Paris in 1763. A lull from 1767-1771 was followed by an upturn between 1773 and 1777 which turned into a further down turn in 1778 when France entered into the American War of Independence. However loans to builders from the Bedford Estate allowed the scheme for the Square to be completed by the end of 1783 as part of the spread of development north of New Oxford Street.

Southampton House, later in 1734 to be called Bedford House, was built about 1657 for Thomas Wriothesley 4th Earl of Southampton on the north side of Bloomsbury Square. The 1746 plan shows the main house facing the Square with a small open area either side of the main house and development on either side. That to the east linking to Southampton Row and to the west with smaller properties leading to Montague House, which was on the site of the present British Museum. At that stage Bedford Place and Montague Street did not exist.

The Duke of Bedford obtained two Acts of Parliament for developing his Estate and the same year James Burton, who had been working with the adjacent Foundling Estate, started the demolition of Bedford House which it is reported was no longer to the liking of the Duke as development to the north had marred his view of Hampstead and Highgate hills.

This development enabled Burton to create two new roads leading due north to a new open space named Russell Square, thereby creating a substantial amount of new development value for the Bedford Estate.

Burton designed and developed many of the properties including the terrace along the south side of Russell Square in 1800-1803.

The terraces on the south side of the Square were altered in 1898, when the new terra cotta cornice, frieze and other decorative elements were introduced by the then Duke of Bedford following the success of the Russell Hotel designed by Charles Fitzroy Doll. These alterations were carried out to designs by PE Pilditch and substantially affected the main facades.

The back of the terrace has retained much of the original simple design, but extensive extensions have been permitted since the second half of the nineteenth century thereby losing the simplicity which is still retained, for example, along the back of the terraces in Bedford Place.

The site for number 45 was leased to James Burton in 1800 for 99 years. The plan shows a simple block with a garden to the south. In 1899 a new lease was granted to Charles Levy for 40 years. This time the attached plan is in considerably more detail and shows the front and back areas with a garden beyond to the south. The back area shows a small service enclosure in the south east corner against the retaining wall to the garden.

Importance

The main significance of this building lies in its contribution to the terraces along the south side of Russell Square.

Internally the layout of the rooms, the main staircase and the decorative items on the ground and first floors are of significance although how much of this is original in view of the extent of rebuilding following bomb damage is not clear.

The garden area of the site has been developed under previous consents with a building which occupies the full depth of the site and about three quarters of the width. As a result the lower part of the back of the building is well shielded from external views and only the upper floors are visible.

The arrangement has protected the interest in the simple form of the back of the building.

Proposals

The proposals for the installation of waste pipework and ventilation to the rear of the building and the construction of some internal walls to the 3rd floor are set out in the drawing pack appended to this application.

For the purposes of this Heritage Assessment, they can be summarised as follows.

Basement

Replacement of carpeted surfaces to the 2 main areas with a safety vinyl surface to facilitate cleaning and maintenance. Installation of fixtures and fittings to form a science lab and art room with sinks to the front room and sinks and ovens to the room to the rear. The installation of 1 square white ventilation grill to each of the 2 rear windows abutting the enclosed courtyard area and installation of 50mm black waste pipe across externally under the windows to join up to the soil and vent stack in the corner of the yard. Redecoration of walls and skirting boards generally through the space.

Ground Floor

The installation of free-standing furniture, fixtures and fittings, redecoration generally and the installation of a safety barrier in the form of a glazed screen to enhance the safety of the existing handrail to the terrace area, replacement of flooring to the 2 main areas with Luxury Vinyl Tile.

First Floor

The installation of free-standing furniture, fixtures and fittings, redecoration generally.

Second Floor

The installation of free-standing furniture, fixtures and fittings, redecoration generally and a glazed barrier to the final flat length of handrail at the end of the landing, sensitively clamped to the existing metal work of the railing to provide a safety barrier for possible deep falls over a dangerously low existing handrail.

Third Floor

The installation of free-standing furniture, fixtures and fittings, redecoration generally and the installation of 3 walls to form a locked exam store and one office and the installation of one plain glazed barrier to the opening to the stair well.

The proposals do not affect the external appearance of the building as seen from Russell Square or the wider area.

Conclusion

None of the proposals have an adverse effect on the front elevation of the building which, as described above, is of particular significance: therefore they do not adversely affect the significance of the exterior of the listed building, nor the adjoining listed buildings, nor the Conservation Area.

There are no proposals to carry out any demolition to any element of the building.

The alterations at basement level result in minor visual impact to the hidden courtyard area which already contains black waste pipework and many air conditioning condensers.

The glass barrier to protect the terrace area has nearly no visual impact and is important for the safety of the children. The proposal will allow for the simple removal of this element at the end of the tenancy if required with no damage to historical elements.

The glass barrier to protect the students from the deep stair well on the 2nd floor is a necessary safety feature and has been sensitively designed to create the minimal impact on the heritage asset and can be simply removed at the end of the lease period.

The walls proposed on the 3rd floor have minimal impact to a plain room that has no heritage features and the glazed barrier on the landing is within a plastered reveal and the installation will cause no damage to heritage features and can be simply removed.

In summary it is considered that the proposals comply with both national and local guidance on the protection of designated heritage assets and the conservation area while ensuring that the building provides a sustainable asset.

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