Heritage Statement

Upper Class Residence

22 Bruton Street was built by Edward Cock in the late 1730s. Three bays wide, it may originally have been only three storeys tall, like other houses of its date. On the ground floor, the righthand bay contained the entrance from Bruton Street. On this side of the house is a grand stone staircase (the bottom of which was altered to turn at a right angle in c. 1900), in front of a service stair and a closet wing, whilst on the other side were two large rooms, one at the front and one at the rear. A photo from c. 1900–10 shows that in the nineteenth century the ground-floor of the front elevation had a rusticated render, and the first floor windows were provided with a balustrade balcony. This photo also shows two small windows either side of the front door, flanked by two half columns. Historic drawings and photographs show that this arrangement survived in 1935 but had been simplified by 1975. The building remained in residential use throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and was home to several aristocrats, including Lord Hastings, the Earl of Fife and the Earl of Bathurst. However, from 1894–1899 it was the headquarters of the Pioneer Club, a progressive women’s club founded by the temperance and women’s-rights activist Emily Massingberd (Horowitz and Stark, 2016).

Commercial Use: 1929 Extension Shopfront

In 1929 the ground floor of the building was converted for commercial use and became the principal store for Madame Brenner, a corsetière. An ‘L’-shape extension was constructed to the rear of the building at ground-floor level, completely filling the space between 22 Bruton Street and the mews house at 39 Bruton Place. The central and left-hand bays on the front elevation were transformed into a shopfront, with the entrance to the shop to the right of a full-height plate-glass window. At this time the wall between the original front and rear rooms was removed and the entire shop, which occupied the whole of the newly extended length of the ground floor, was fitted with neo-Georgian panelling and an egg and dart cornice. Much of this decorative detail survives in the rear room of the store today. The single, large room of the extension (it was subdivided later in the century) was lit by two windows in the centre of the rear wall (now enclosed in the rear bathroom), as well as an octagonal steel-framed lantern and two smaller rectangular ones, decorated with moulded covings. Although all of the coving has since been removed, decorative ceiling mouldings survive in the rear room, surrounding the rectangular lanterns. Also in this room are some remains of the 1929 wall treatment, including skirting boards and panels (see photos, p. 9–10).

1930s Shopfront

By 1933 the shop was the premises of Victor Stiebel, a dressmaker, milliner and furrier. Judging by his Art Deco-style advertisement in The Bystander magazine, he may have been responsible for the surviving Art Deco lettering which is fixed to the building at first floor level. Stiebel installed a new shopfront, which appears to have included the polished granite surround that survives to this day. The outer piers have a distinctive Art Deco profile – curved in plan, incorporating shallow fluting. However, as shown in an elevation drawing of 1935, the rest of the shopfront then looked quite different. It incorporated a central doorway flanked by taller vertical elements. The shop name was presumably applied to the lower of the two horizontal bands (the upper band survives and has no traces of lettering). No plans of the building survive from this period, and the simplified elevation drawing gives no indication as to the depth of the shopfront in relation to the street line. Shopfronts of this period typically incorporated a recessed entrance and some depth to the window reveals.

Proposed Works

The proposed works to the storefront will not affect or damage any listed elements of the building. The metallic cladding will be fixed in such a way that will not require mechanical fixing to the polished granite storefront. The mechanical fixings will be made around the granite, into the masonry. When the metallic cladding is to be removed the masonry will be made good.