

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE

Heritage Statement

Relating to:

Foreign, Commonwealth &
Development Office

Main Building

King Charles Street

London

SW1A 2AH

Ground floor office refurbishment

Issue 1 – 22 October 2021



Table of contents

1	Introduction	2
1.1	Historic background	2
1.2	Building description and brief history	2
1.3	Listing description	3
1.4	Significance	4
2	Context and overview	5
2.1	Overview / background	5
2.2	Design and Consultant team	5
3	Impact Assessment	6
3.1	Existing assessment of the Historic Asset	6
3.2	Assessment of impact of proposals on the Historic Asset	6
4	Conclusion	8

1 Introduction

This statement forms part of the Listed Building Consent application in relation to the remodelling of ground floor rooms at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Main Building King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH (grade I listed).

The purpose of this statement is to provide an overview of the setting and the building's history as well as assess the impact of the proposed works on the building.

Please also refer the **Design and Access Statement** which accompanies the application.

1.1 Historic background

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) is situated in Westminster, London. It was built as part of the centre of government administration. The site was leased for the use of the Foreign Office in 1793 and has remained on site until the present day. The building is now known as the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office and was built to accommodate four separate government departments.

The architect Sir George Gilbert Scott was commissioned to design these buildings. They are referred to as The Foreign Office (1863-1868), the Colonial Office (1870-1874), the Home Office (1871-1874) and the India Office (1863-1868). Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt worked on the St James's Park front composition and the design of the India Office Courtyard, which is now known as the Durbar Court. The remaining part of the fourth floor was built in 1925 and the extended area added during the 1990's by architects Cecil Denny Heighton.

After the dissolution of India in 1947 and the relocation of the Colonial and Home Office to larger independent premises the building came under the control of one department and in 1978 become known as The Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

1.2 Building description and brief history

The building is generally referred to as classical in style with references of Italian and Greek ornamentation. The main structure of the complex comprises load-bearing brick walls rising from a concrete raft faced with Portland Stone ashlar enriched with columns and carvings. Floors and staircases are supported on iron beams.

In the early 20th century new floors were added utilising the roof spaces and by the addition of a mansard roof to flat areas. Alterations continued on an ad-hoc basis throughout the 20th Century and in 1965 the buildings were declared obsolete and that they should be demolished to make way for new buildings to accommodate Government services. There was considerable protest about these findings and in 1970 the building was listed Grade I.

In 1978 the Home Office moved out of the South East corner, and openings were made to connect into the former India and Colonial Offices, and the now renamed Foreign and Commonwealth Office occupied the whole complex. The offices were very dilapidated because little maintenance had been carried out. The refurbishment of the former Home Office was carried out with little historic research. Inappropriate decorative schemes and lighting were installed at this time.

Programmes of refurbishment continued through the Foreign Office and into the former Colonial Office. During these phases the fine areas of the complex were restored to their original appearance where possible, and the sub divisions and false ceilings in the Grand Reception and Conference rooms cleared away. Further conversion of roofs was carried out on the Whitehall and King Charles Street elevations.

Earlier façade repairs, cleaning and decoration were carried out using improper methods due to inadequate funding. There was also a lack of control of quality that allowed poor workmanship to thrive. By 2006 the result was a Grade I listed building with its external facades in an extremely poor state of repair and with a legacy of health and safety issues. Between 2006-2011 an extensive programme of façade repair, restoration and redecoration was undertaken.

The last major refurbishment project, known as the FCDO's UK Estates Reform (UKER) project, which commenced in May 2014 and completed in 2016. The project comprised the full refurbishment of two floors (including the third floor) of the building to maximise the efficiency of its London estate by consolidating its core London activities into the Main Building on King Charles Street (KCS).

1.3 Listing description

List entry number: 1250045

Grade: I

IoE Number: 207600

Ordnance Survey grid reference TQ 2979NE – 91/4 and 9079NW – 92/14

City of Westminster Whitehall SW1 (West side) The Foreign Office (Foreign & Commonwealth Office with Home Office) date 5/2/70

The list description reads as follows:

“Government Offices. 1861 design, completed 1873 by Sir George Gilbert Scott with Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt for the St James’s Park front composition and the design of the former India Office courtyard. Portland stone with polychrome enrichment of polished granite columns and insets as well as other coloured stones; slate roofs. Italianate opulence (at Palmerston’s insistence) in the Venetian-Genoese manner evenly distributed in bold relief over symmetrical Whitehall and King Charles St elevation but with asymmetry to Downing St and picturesquely composed Park with front tower. Massive building planned around courtyards, the main one entered by triple archways from side streets, 2 smaller ones behind Whitehall front and India Office court (now glazed over) in South West corner. Generally of 3 stages, the upper and lower ones containing 2 storeys. Whitehall front has broad centrepiece and end pavilions. Large semicircular arched portal; arcaded Ground Floor windows with carved figured and spreading out in spandrels; Upper floors have 2 orders of coupled columns, but with pilasters to end pavilions, the upper windows tripartite with granite colonettes; above first floor windows are portrait medallions whilst the spandrels of the First and Second Floor centrepiece windows are enriched with carved figures. Enriched entablatures between storeys and deep crowning entablature with balustrade parapet surmounted by figure sculpture. Pavilions punctuate King Charles Street façade with triple arched gateway in centre, rusticated quoined, pedimented pavilion; more restrained Italianate (sic) elevational details with archivolt arched windows beneath cornices or pediments. Park front distinguished by square tower finished off with a belvedere storey and balustraded parapet; quadrant return to projecting south west portion of front with 2 tiers of orders and tall arcading to its centrepiece; corner pavilion with Downing Street. The latter elevation similar to King Charles Street but asymmetrically composed to west end with a polygonal elaborated bay window above steps down to park. The main courtyard elevations of 2 main storeys and attic storey with 3 storey pavilions, all but pedimented; 4 two storeyed porches; figure sculpture enrichment. The decoration, with majolica friezes made by Minton, Hollins & Co and polished granite column superimposed orders; 4 statues by H Protat in corners, First floor statues by W Nocholls and 2nd floor ones by T Phyffers, busts over 2nd floor windows by Protat. Rich Italianate interiors and very grand staircase in Foreign Office with Imperial, marble flights and tripartite thermal arrangement to gallery with coffered barrel vaults flanking dome on pendentive s over centre of compartment; important collection of C18 and C19 statues associated with the former India Office etc.”

1.4 Significance

The FCDO Main Building is designated grade I listed, which recognises the building of having exceptional interest. The building is steeped in cultural history and is amongst the Nation's most important buildings both nationally and internationally.

The rooms to be refurbished are classified by the Sensitivity Analysis in 2012 as “**Not Sensitive**” and “**Less Sensitive**”. For security reasons we are unable to identify the location of the area on plan.

The rooms have been viewed by Historic England's Mr Billy Reading and the FCDO's Conservation Adviser – Mr Jon Evans. During the inspection it was agreed that the area has been previously altered with little historic features remaining. However, it was noted that some original tiling and the fire place remain and should be photographically recorded for reference. The proposed works do not impact the remaining historic features.

2 Context and overview

2.1 Overview / background

The FCDO propose to carry out an office refurbishment / remodeling to four adjoining rooms located on the ground floor. The area comprises four rooms, mainly used as offices, which were fully refurbished approximately 20 years ago.

The existing condition of the rooms are fair. The FCDO would like to upgrade the offices and provide additional meeting room space.

As noted in the Design and Access Statement, the rooms have undergone significant alterations in the past which has removed many of the original features / detailing.

2.2 Design and Consultant team

The design has been prepared by FCDO Services team of architects and engineers.

Conservation advice to the project team and liaison with Historic England is provided by Mr Jon Evans MRICS, Director of Heritage Surveys Ltd. Heritage Surveys is a Chartered Building Surveying Practice specialising in the care and restoration of historic buildings. In particular, Jon has provided historic consultancy advice to the FCDO for the past 15 years, ensuring that best conservation practice is adopted and is being observed on an on-going basis.

3 Impact Assessment

3.1 Existing assessment of the Historic Asset

The existing office area was fully refurbished approximately 20 years ago creating a secure office environment. The areas impacted by the works are classified as 'not sensitive' and 'less sensitive' areas of the building, as highlighted in the Sensitivity Analysis carried out in 2012 by Fielden and Mawson.

3.1.1 Not sensitive areas

The 'not sensitive' areas comprise a modern office area with raised access floors, suspended ceilings, and modern panelled doors. The window shutters have been fixed shut with metal window grilles fitted over. The original timber double hung sash windows have secure locks and an opaque film fitted but are otherwise generally unaltered.

The suspended ceiling is lower than the window head and therefore obscures the view of the whole window.

3.1.2 Less sensitive areas

The area for the new entrance lobby and meeting room is classified as 'less sensitive'. There is an original fire place and existing tiled areas below the raised access floor. The previous refurbishment works have lifted the floor level which hides the original features. The flooring has previously been replaced with a combination of chipboard flooring and raised access floors.

The window treatments and ceiling details are similar to the non-sensitive area noted above.

The room has a curved wall detail, plain rounded plaster corner moulding and decorative plaster coving. It is not intended to impact these features.

3.2 Assessment of impact of proposals on the Historic Asset

The proposed works are considered to be general office refurbishment with security upgrades. There will be no change to the historic significance or character of the building as a result of the works. The proposed works will have a **low impact** on the asset as set out below:

3.2.1 Strip out

The strip out works involve removal of modern finishes such as suspended ceilings, plasterboard partitions and sections of raised access floors. No original floorboards are intended to be removed or relocated.

3.2.2 Structural Interventions

The works will require additional structural interventions to support the new walls and access control areas. The design of the structural elements has considered the historic fabric to ensure minimal intervention to areas such as fire place hearths etc. Further details of the specific junctions with the historic fabric have been identified on the accompanying drawings.

All structural elements have been designed by FCDO structural engineers.

3.2.3 Superstructure

A new secure entrance lobby will be formed using modern materials in an area previously used as server / IT areas. Therefore the impact of the new lobby and meeting rooms will not alter the significance of this area.

The new wall and internal roof will require the original plaster to be chased out along the junction lines, which will be kept a minimum.

3.2.4 Secondary elements

3.2.4.1 Ceiling

The modern suspended ceiling is to be replaced with a raft ceiling incorporating lighting and acoustic treatment. The existing ceiling is low and hides some the window head detailing. By replacing the ceiling, the window heads will be more visible and ceiling heights generally increased. This will have a positive impact on the building.

3.2.4.2 Chimney flue

The chimney flue is not used and will be blocked up. No historic impact.

3.2.4.3 Secondary glazing

Secondary glazing is proposed to the windows overlooking the quadrangle. It is intended to improve the current arrangement where possible, which will involve removing the modern metal grilles and providing new secondary glazing over the entire window. The window architraves will not be impacted and the overall appearance of the window improved from its current arrangement, therefore this work is considered to be an improvement. Where possible existing fixings will be renewed, however additional fixings are likely to be required. New fixings will be into plain wall sections.

It is proposed to infill an existing window facing an internal staircase. Whilst this will alter the appearance, this is considered to be a minor alteration.

3.2.4.4 Internal doors

The existing modern door is to be replaced, therefore no impact on the historic fabric. The new door will be panelled and designed to match the appearance of the original adjacent corridor doors.

Two existing doors will be retained and adjusted. The internal reveals and frames will have minor alterations to suit the new locks and openers.

3.2.4.5 Raised access floors

The existing raised access floors will be extended and altered. In addition new stepped access will be provided. No historic impact.

3.2.4.6 Fireplace

The original fireplace surround has been previously raised and a new hearth insert as part of the previous refurbishment. The proposed works will not impact the original surround or hearth.

3.2.5 Finishes

Existing modern finishes throughout will be replaced to match existing finishes. No historic impact.

3.2.6 Services

The services will be renewed throughout, however this is considered to be simple replacement using existing containment and service runs. Additional penetrations will be required, which are set out in the accompanying drawings, however these are in non-sensitive areas and considered to be minor interventions.

No additional external mechanical plant is proposed.

4 Conclusion

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office is considered to be amongst the Nation's most important historic assets. The building is Grade I Listed and of exceptional interest.

The FCDO are proposing to upgrade existing office areas in an area of the building which is not considered to be historically sensitive.

The proposed works are considered to have a **low impact** on the historic asset and will not harm or alter the significance of the listed building.