

Home House, Portman Square

For: Home House

Ref: PI2853

Heritage Note

30th October 2023

Introduction

This note has been prepared by Smith Jenkins Planning & Heritage in support of an application for listed building consent for the replacement of first floor windows at Home House, Portman Square. The property is formed by the grade I listed Home House (Former Courtauld Institute) and the separately listed grade I Royal Institute of British Architects Drawings Building. The site is also within the Portman Square Conservation Area and Portman Square itself is a grade II Listed Registered Park & Garden.

In respect of the Registered Park & Garden, this will not be directly affected and for the purposes of this application, if a conclusion is reached that the works proposed preserve the significance of the listed building, there will be a commensurate effect on the Registered Park & Garden and the Conservation Area.

The Proposed Works

The proposed works involve the replacement of the first floor windows to both the grade I listed Home House and the separately listed grade I Royal Institute of British Architects Drawings Building. These will be replaced in facsimile to maintain appearance which will include the replication of the window profiles to ensure that there is no visible change.

The Heritage Asset

Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 sets out the information requirements for determining applications and states that:

*‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance’.*¹

A heritage asset is defined by the NPPF as:

*‘A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)’.*²

¹ NPPF 2023

² NPPF (2019) Annex 2: Glossary (p.67)

Designated Heritage Assets

A Designated Heritage Asset is described by the NPPF as:

'A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation'.³

Such assets are statutorily identified as having a level of heritage (architectural and/or historic) interest to justify designation. There are then particular procedures in planning decisions to ensure that their special interest is preserved or enhanced.

The application site includes two listed buildings, being the grade I listed Home House (Former Courtauld Institute) and the separately listed grade I Royal Institute of British Architects Drawings Building. The site is also within the Portman Square Conservation Area and Portman Square itself is a grade II Listed Registered Park & Garden.

For the purposes of this assessment, and bearing in mind the need for proportionality, we have not considered the significance of the conservation area or the Registered Park & Garden in particular detail. These works are focussed on the significance of the listed building and, in this regard, if there is an acceptable impact on the listed building, there would be a similar impact on the conservation and the Registered Park & Garden.

Significance and Special Interest

The significance of a heritage asset is defined within the glossary of the NPPF as:

'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'.⁴

Listed buildings are statutorily designated and, for the purposes of the NPPF, are designated heritage assets. Recognising this statutory designation, buildings must hold special architectural or historic interest. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport publish the 'Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (2010)' which is supported by thematic papers, 'Listing Selection Guides', based on building type, which give more detailed guidance.

Conservation Areas are identified if they are of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which should be preserved or enhanced. Historic England has published guidance on the designation of Conservation Areas which provides a framework for the identification of those features that form the character and appearance.

The identification of a site as a non-designated heritage asset does not provide any legal protection of such asset, however, for the purposes of the NPPF, they are a material consideration in the determination of applications.

Historic England has published 'Conservation Principles' (2008) which identifies four types of heritage values that a heritage asset (whether it be designated or non-designated) may hold – aesthetic, communal,

³ NPPF (2019) Annex 2: Glossary (p.66)

⁴ NPPF (2019) Annex 2: Glossary (p.71)

evidential or historic interest. Conservation Principles (2008) is currently being updated by Historic England after a Consultation Draft was published on 10th November, closing on 2nd February 2018. Historic England has also published a Good Practice Advice Notes on the 'Setting of Heritage Assets' (2nd Edition, 2017) which is used to understand the surroundings of a heritage asset which may contribute to the significance of a heritage asset.

Home House (Former Courtauld Institute) (grade I listed)

Home House (the Former Courtauld Institute) was added to list of buildings of architectural or historic interest at grade I on 10th September 1954. Whilst the list description is for information purposes only, it includes a detailed description of the building which includes a reference to first floor French casement windows:

'Terraced town mansion. 1773-76, by Robert Adam for Elizabeth, Countess of Home; retaining exceptional Adam interior. Brown brick; concealed slate roof. Elevation designed to form one composition with No. 21 q.v. 4 storeys (attic storey an addition) and basement. 5 windows wide. Semicircular arched doorway in 2nd bay from right, under projecting painted stone porch with slender fluted Doric columns, dentil cornice and shallow pediment with die-acroterion. Ground floor recessed sashes with flat gauged arches set in blind arcade with stuccoed roundels in spandrels. 1st floor has recessed French casements, and upper floors recessed sashes, all under flat gauged arches. Painted stone guilloche bands above 1st floor and as sill band to 2nd floor with, in between, painted stone panels framing garlands and paterae. Cornice over 3rd floor and stucco balustrade to later attic. Continuous, cast iron, simple geometric patterned balcony across 1st floor. Wrought iron area railings with urn finials. Rear garden elevation has bowed, stucco, Ionic columned portico-porch; recessed sashes and a Venetian window composition to ground and 1st floors; 4 Coade stone circular relief medallions below 2nd floor windows and cornice below 4th attic floor crowned by balustraded parapet. Very fine Adam interior with plasterwork by Joseph Rose and inset painted panels and roundels by Zucchi and Angelica Kaufmann, the room shapes modelled in depth with a typically inventive Adam use of varied apsidal and screened volumes and outstanding quality of original finishes and furnishings. Spectacular circular tower-stairwell, set behind entrance hall, and top lit by dome, the stairs rising in one arm to niched landing and returning in 2 curved arms, with moulded soffits, to 1st floor; gallery at 3rd floor; refined wrought iron and gilded balustrade of open work pilaster pattern with anthemion and bucrania enrichment. The principal decorated rooms are the front and back drawing rooms, music room and back parlour with delicate colour schemes, stuccowork, attenuated architectural detailing and small-scale ornament; statuary marble and scagliola chimneypieces; etc. Home House; Margaret Whinney'.

Royal Institute of British Architects Drawings Building (grade I listed)

The Royal Institute of British Architects Drawings Building was added to list of buildings of architectural or historic interest at grade I on 10th September 1954. Whilst the list description is for information purposes only, it includes a detailed description of the building which includes a reference to first floor French casement windows:

'End of terrace town house. c.1772, by James Adam for the collector William Loch of Norbury; retaining fine Adam interiors. Brown brick; concealed slate roof. Elevation designed to form one composition with No. 20 (Home House) q.v. 4 storeys (attic storey an addition) and basement. 3 windows wide, with 5-window return with entrance to Gloucester Place (canted bay to north). Semicircular arched doorway with side lights and fanlight under stucco Doric porch, to return. Ground floor sashes set in blind arcade continued from No. 20, with same stucco roundels in spandrels; 1st floor French casements to Portman

Square and glazing bar sashes to upper floors, all under flat gauged arches. Guilloche bands, garland and paterae panels and cornice as on No. 20; the attic storey with crowning cornice but without balustraded parapet. Later C.19 cast iron balcony to 1st floor. Similar details to return. Cast iron area railings with urn finials. Interior retains elegant wrought iron staircase balustrade in top lit well; vaulted and apsed anteroom with Venetian window and back drawing room on 1st floor retain painted and stuccoed interiors; door furniture; chimneypieces etc'.

Significance of the windows at first floor level

The proposals are for the replacement of the window casements to the first floor of both grade I listed buildings.

A photograph from 1764 of no 20 Portman Square shows the original first floor window arrangement which shows full height windows within the existing frames. These are notably different to the current windows in situ which are clearly not of any historic fabric being an upper light (which is framed in metal) with a wooden casement French doors which are framed in timber).



(above) No 20 Portman Square, 1764. Illustration for London Houses from 1660 to 1820 by AE Richardson and C Lovett Gill (Batsford, 1911)⁵.

The changes in material, being a mix of metal and timber clearly show that there has been a degree of change to these windows which continues across the façade.

As set out in the accompanying documents, it must be noted that the condition of the windows is generally poor with joints starting to fail and loss of (modern) fabric. The Home House Chief Engineer has reviewed each of the windows and noted that the windows are beyond physical repair as a result of rot. The Club has

⁵ <https://www.lookandlearn.com/history-images/M390526/London-No-20-Portman-Square-1764>

a long history of careful repair of its fabric, however, in this case, consideration has been given to whether new timber can be scarfed in to maintain existing fabric, but given that the windows are not historic, this is not considered to be an acceptable solution and would undermine the integrity of the windows overall.

On this basis, and given the evidence available, the casement windows are of no historic value (demonstrated by the changing materials) and their replacement is the only viable option.

Turning to the new windows, these have been carefully designed to exactly replicate the existing timber windows in the lower part of the frame. They have been accurately measured so that they can be replaced in facsimile and maintain the existing appearance. This approach maintains the metal upper parts of the windows as these are in good condition and would be unnecessary to remove.

On this basis, the application proposals would preserve the significance of the listed building and are therefore considered to be wholly acceptable.

Considerations against Legislation and Policy

Statutory Duties

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 place a duty upon the decision maker in determining applications to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

This statement has identified the significance of the designated and non-designated heritage assets which could be affected by the application proposals and concludes that the application proposals will preserve the significance of the grade I listed buildings affected and, consequently, the Portman Square Conservation Area and Registered Park & Garden.

NPPF (2023)

The significance of the heritage assets (both designated and non-designated), as required by paragraph 194 of the NPPF, has been set out in Section 3 of this report. In accordance with paragraph 197 of the NPPF, the application proposals will preserve the significance of the grade I listed buildings, the character and appearance of the Portman Square Conservation Area and the Registered Park & Garden.

The conservation of heritage assets has, in line with paragraph 199 of the NPPF, been given great weight the application proposals are in accordance with the NPPF.

Local Policy

The Council's City Plan policies which concern the Historic Environment is Policy 39 which identifies that works to listed buildings should preserve their special interest and relate sensitively to the period and architectural detail. The application proposals will replace the existing non-original casements in facsimile. This will preserve the existing situation and the proposals will be wholly acceptable.

***For and on behalf of Smith Jenkins Planning & Heritage
30th October 2023***