

Home House, 20 Portman Square, London

For: Home House

Ref:

Sustainable Design Statement

6th December 2023

Introduction

This Sustainable Design Statement is submitted in support of an application for planning permission and listed building consent at Home House, 20 Portman Square, London. The proposals are for the replacement of casement windows at first floor.

This Statement has been prepared to respond to the City Plan policies, specifically:

1. Policy 38D: Sustainable Design Principles;
2. Policy 34B: Urban Greening;
3. Policy 36: Energy;
4. Policy 39: Heritage.

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

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.

The requirement for the works

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)¹.

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 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.

Consideration against policy

¹ <https://www.lookandlearn.com/history-images/M390526/London-No-20-Portman-Square-1764>

In considering the proposals, consideration has been given to whether the existing casement windows could be repaired rather than replaced. The condition of the windows is such that repair is not possible. This is as confirmed by the Clerk of Works to Home House who oversees all works to the building. The repair options that have been considered have included scarfing of timber into the frames however this option has been discounted as it would lead to a weakening of the frame overall.

On this basis, it is considered that the replacement of the casement windows is the only option available.

In this regard, and responding to the individual policies:

1. Policy 38: Design Principles – the replacement windows will match those existing which will include materials (timber) and will be better fitted to the opening to reduce drafts. Whilst consideration has been given to the incorporation of double glazing to upgrade the performance of the building, given that only the first floor windows are being replaced, this is considered to create an uneven appearance across the elevations and would be resisted by the local planning authority;
2. Policy 34B: City Greening – the proposals are for replacement casement windows and there is no capacity for urban greening given the scale and nature of the proposals;
3. Policy 36: Energy usage - The development would assist in reducing energy usage by providing windows which are better fitted to the listed building and reduces any drafts and transference of cold into the building. It is considered, given the grade II* listed status, to incorporate other energy saving measures such as double glazing;
4. Policy 39: Heritage – the heritage effects of the proposal are considered in the submitted Heritage note.

For these reasons, it is considered that the proposals comply with the policies of the City Plan.

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For and on behalf of Smith Jenkins Planning & Heritage
6th December 2023