

Flat 215 Levita House
London NW1

LISTED BUILDING ASSESSMENT

3 May 2023

GJHP

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	2
2	LEGISLATION, POLICY & GUIDANCE	3
3	THE SITE AND ITS HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE	12
4	ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS	20

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Listed Building Assessment has been prepared by GJHP in support of the listed building consent application for work
- 1.2 s to improve the energy performance (the 'Works') at flat 215 Levita House (the 'Site') in London NW1, in the London Borough of Camden. GJHP is a consultancy that provides expert advice on heritage and townscape matters.
- 1.3 The assessment considers the effect of the Works on the significance of Levita House, which is listed grade II.
- 1.4 The report sets out the following:
- Relevant statutory duties and national and local policy and guidance;
 - A description of the Site and its heritage context;
 - An assessment of the heritage significance of the Site;
 - An assessment of the Works and their effect on heritage significance in light of the statutory duties of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990 and national and local policy and guidance.
- 1.5 The report should be read in conjunction with the application drawings and supporting information prepared by GDS Chartered Surveyors.

2 LEGISLATION, POLICY & GUIDANCE

- 2.1 This section contains an overview of the relevant statutory duties and national, London-wide and local planning policies and guidance that are relevant to the consideration of heritage matters.

Statutory Duties

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Listed buildings

- 2.2 Section 7 of the Act requires listed building consent for any works for the demolition of a listed building or for its alteration or extension in any manner which would affect its character as a building of architectural or historic interest. Section 16 (2) places the duty on the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting in determining applications for listed building consent.
- 2.3 Section 66 (1) of the Act states, '*in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.*'

National planning policy and guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework, 2021

- 2.4 The Government issued the latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2021. The NPPF sets out planning policies for England and how these should be applied.
- 2.5 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which has three overarching objectives; economic, social and environmental. The NPPF states, at paragraph 10, that '*at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.*'

NPPF Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

- 2.6 Section 16 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. It applies to plan-making, decision-taking and the heritage-related consent regimes under the 1990 Act.
- 2.7 Heritage assets are defined in Annex 2 of 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).'*
- 2.8 The NPPF notes, at paragraph 189, that heritage assets *'should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.'*
- 2.9 The NPPF requires an applicant to describe the heritage significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting (paragraph 194). It goes on to say that *'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.'*
- 2.10 The NPPF (paragraph 197) identifies three key factors local authorities should take into account in determining applications:
- 'The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.'
- 2.11 Paragraph 199 states that in assessing impact, the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be given to its conservation. Paragraph 200 notes that heritage significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or from development within its setting.
- 2.12 The setting of a heritage asset is defined in Annex 2 as *'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.'*
- 2.13 The NPPF states, at paragraph 201, that where a proposed development would lead to *'substantial harm'* or total loss of heritage significance of a designated heritage

asset, consent should be refused, '*...unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss*', or all of a number of specified criteria apply, including that the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site.

Regional planning policy and guidance

The London Plan 2021

- 2.14 The London Plan 2021 was adopted in March 2021. It is the '*overall strategic plan for London*' and sets out a '*framework for the development of London over the next 20-25 years*'.
- 2.15 Policy HC1 on '*Heritage conservation and growth*' notes that development proposals that affect heritage assets and their settings should '*conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings*'.

Local policy and guidance

The Camden Local Plan (2017)

- 2.16 The Camden Local Plan was adopted on 3rd July 2017. It replaced the Core Strategy and the Development Policies. It covers the period up until 2031 and aims to help the delivery of the Council's vision for Camden.
- 2.17 **Policy D2 Heritage** states the Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens and locally listed heritage assets. The policy is in line with the NPPF in respect of assessing harm to designated and non designated heritage assets.
- 2.18 In respect of listed buildings, part K states that the Council will resist development that would cause harm to the significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting.

Supplementary planning documents, guidance and other

Camden Planning Guidance – Design (2021)

- 2.19 The Camden Planning Guidance on Design was published in January 2021 and supports the local plan. It gives information on detailed design issues, including

design excellence and heritage, and supports policy D2 (amongst others) in the Camden Local Plan.

- 2.20 In respect of alterations to listed buildings it notes that the Council will consider the impact of proposals on the historic significance of a building, including its features, such as:

- original and historic materials and architectural features;
- original layout of rooms;
- structural integrity; and
- character and appearance.

- 2.21 It goes on to say that the Council will expect original or historic features to be retained and repairs to be in matching material. Proposals should seek to respond to the special historic and architectural constraints of the listed building, rather than significantly change them.

Camden Planning Guidance Energy efficiency and adaptation January 2021

- 2.22 This guidance includes a section called ‘What if a building is historic, listed or in a conservation area?’ which notes:

‘In order to identify the most appropriate measures, the Council recommends taking the following approach, which takes into account measures best suited to individual buildings and households (i.e. taking human behaviour into consideration as well).

A range of thermal efficiency measures can then be implemented, which avoid harm to the historic environment. Ranked according to their impact on heritage and the technical risks, these include:

1. *Ensure that the building is in a good state of repair*
2. *Minor interventions - upgrade the easier and non-contentious elements:*
 - *insulate roof spaces and suspended floors;*
 - *provide flue dampers - (close in winter, open in summer);*
 - *provide energy efficient lighting and appliances*
 - *draught-seal doors and windows;*
 - *provide hot water tank and pipe insulation.*
3. *Moderate interventions - upgrade vulnerable elements:*
 - *install secondary (or double) glazing (if practicable);*
4. *Upgrade building services and give advice to building users on managing them efficiently:*
 - *install high-efficiency boiler and heating controls;*
 - *install smart metering;*
 - *install solar panels, where not visible from the street or public spaces.*

5. Major interventions - upgrade more difficult and contentious elements (where impact on heritage values and level of technical risk shown to be acceptable)

- provide solid wall insulation.'

Other guidance

Historic England: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (March 2015)

- 2.23 The purpose of this note is to provide information to assist local authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing historic environment policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the related guidance given in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). These include assessing the significance of heritage assets, using appropriate expertise, historic environment records, recording and furthering understanding.
- 2.24 In terms of general advice on decision-taking it notes at para 4 that, *'The first step for all applicants is to understand the significance of any affected heritage asset and, if relevant, the contribution of its setting to its significance'*. The guidance goes on to suggest a number of common steps in assessing significance.

Historic England Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage assets (October 2019)

- 2.25 The purpose of this note is to provide guidance on analysing the significance of heritage assets. It elaborates on the policy, guidance and advice set out in the NPPF and national PPG. It suggests a staged approach to assessing the effect of proposals on heritage significance which would usually include:
- '1. Understand the form, materials and history of the affected heritage asset(s), and/or the nature and extent of archaeological deposits*
 - 2. Understand the significance of the asset(s). These two stages fulfil the requirement in paragraph 189 of the NPPF and are undertaken by the applicant.*
 - 3. Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance. This stage fulfils the requirement in paragraph 190 of the NPPF and is undertaken by the LPA. However, the applicant needs to be aware of impacts so that the analysis of significance submitted to the LPA, under paragraph 189, is sufficient in its level of detail.*

4. *Avoid, minimise and mitigate negative impact, in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF*
5. *Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance’.*

Historic England: Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings, How to Improve Energy Efficiency (June 2018)

- 2.26 The introduction notes *‘this guidance is for anyone who wishes to improve energy efficiency in an historic building. There are many reasons to do this. Improving energy efficiency will lower carbon emissions and fuel bills and often increase comfort. It also might be necessary to ensure that a building complies with legal requirements. More broadly, improving energy efficiency forms a part of the wider objective to achieve a sustainable environment’*; going on to say, *‘It is a widely held view that older buildings are not energy-efficient, and must be radically upgraded in order to improve their performance. In reality, the situation is more complicated, and assumptions about poor performance are not always justified. Even so, the energy and carbon performance of most historic buildings can be improved, which will help them remain viable and useful, now and in the future. But striking the right balance between benefit and harm is not easy. The unintended consequences of getting energy efficiency measures wrong (or doing them badly) include: harm to heritage values and significance, harm to human health and building fabric, and failure to achieve the predicted savings or reductions in environmental impact.’*
- 2.27 The guidance describes the key stages of the *‘whole building approach’*, and concludes with checklists of practical measures that might be considered.
- 2.28 In the section on *‘Planning Energy Efficiency Improvements’* the guidance states, *‘The interrelationship between heat and moisture in buildings is complex. In a well-maintained building that is adequately heated and ventilated, the daily and seasonal cycles of wetting and drying, heating and cooling, balance out. However, the equilibrium may be adversely affected when changes to building fabric, heating or ventilation are made to increase energy efficiency.... Thus, when planning energy efficiency improvements, it is important to understand the way a building is performing as an integrated environmental system’*.
- 2.29 The guidance notes a *‘whole building approach’* is one that *‘uses an understanding of a building in its context to find balanced solutions that save energy, sustain heritage significance, and maintain a comfortable and healthy indoor environment. A whole building approach also takes into account wider environmental, cultural, community and economic issues, including energy supply. It ensures improvements are suitable, proportionate, timely, well integrated, properly coordinated, effective and sustainable, and helps to highlight and resolve uncertainties, reconcile conflicting aims, and manage the risks of unintended consequences’*; going on to say *‘measures should be*

appraised to evaluate their efficiency, cost-effectiveness and suitability. Their impact on the character and significance of the building should also be assessed, along with technical risks and the likelihood of unintended consequences. The measures finally selected need to form a coherent and well-integrated package. For example, fabric improvements that reduce air infiltration should be accompanied by a ventilation strategy to remove excess moisture and maintain indoor air quality.'

- 2.30 The guidance states weighing up the cost and benefits of various measures can be challenging. Section 3 summarises practical energy efficiency improvements and considers their respective benefits, costs and technical risks and sets them out in a checklist format. Internal insulation and replacement windows are identified as *'high-risk and/ or high cost options: careful consideration needed'*.
- 2.31 The checklist notes in respect of walls generally:
- *'Demands careful design, correct choice of materials, good detailing and extremely high standards of workmanship*
 - *Methods and materials will vary according to type of wall, and whether it is being insulated externally, internally or by filling a cavity*
 - *Great care must be taken to eliminate all possible moisture sources from the wall before works begin*
 - *Internal and external wall insulation will hide the condition of the wall beneath, so it is wise to consider installing time-of-wetness sensors or other moisture monitoring to reveal problems should they occur'*
- 2.32 It goes on to say in respect of *'Insulating walls Internally'*:

General comments

- Permeable, hygroscopic insulation would normally be preferable.
- Thickness may need to be limited to reduce moisture accumulation risk.
- Significantly reduces interior floor space, which can be problematic in small rooms.
- Installation requires the occupants to vacate the building.
- Tends to cause problems of thermal bridging.

Other considerations

- To limit thermal bridging, partial insulation may be necessary to upper floors, partitions and party walls where these meet the insulated wall.
- Walls will tend to become colder (therefore wetter) as the amount of heat transferred from inside the building is reduced.
- Internal services, including electrical wiring and heating pipework, may need to be rerouted.

STBA Guidance Planning Responsible Retrofit of Traditional Buildings (2015)

- 2.33 The Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance (STBA) is an alliance of not-for-profit organisations representing the sustainability, heritage and professional sectors in the UK. This guidance has been supported by the Construction Industry Trading Board (citb), Historic England and Historic Scotland and has been endorsed by CADW.
- 2.34 The introduction to the guidance notes, *‘There are many reasons for retrofitting your building. These include the desire to reduce carbon emissions, to save money, to improve comfort and health, to reduce worry about fuel bills and supply, and to improve the value of a property. Some people are also obliged to retrofit because of legislation or building regulations’*. It goes on to say in respect of balance that, *‘Achieving responsible retrofit often requires compromises between different values. It also requires a Whole Building Approach whereby there is integration of the fabric measures (such as insulation, new windows, draught proofing), and services (particularly ventilation, heating, controls and renewables) along with proper consideration of how people live and use the building. All of these must be adapted to the context of the building (its exposure, status, condition, form etc). When these are integrated well, a building is in balance.’*
- 2.35 Section 4 sets out the risks involved in retrofitting historic buildings considering them under three main headings as follows:

Building health: risks to building fabric and human health

- Fabric decay
- Surface condensation and mould growth
- Poor indoor air quality
- Overheating or uneven temperatures

Risks to heritage: damage to, and loss of, historic fabric; impact on neighbourhood or community

- Significant change in the external appearance/ loss of historic fabric
- Change in internal appearance and/ or loss of historic fabric

Risks to achieving expected energy savings: resulting environmental impact

- Energy improvement not as large as expected
- Environmental impact increased
- Direct rebound effect
- Indirect rebound effect

2.36 In respect of '*Change in internal appearance and/ or loss of historic fabric*', causes are identified as follows:

- Loss of original features such as timber mouldings and plasterwork
- Loss of original window frames and glazing
- Insulation over historic floors
- Ventilation and plumbing/electric intrusions

2.37 The guidance provides a summary table of the key risks arising from specific retrofit measures including:

Internal wall insulation

Main risks:

- Heritage impact (internal)
- Moisture risks leading to rot of fabric
- Poor IAQ from poor ventilation and damp
- Heat loss from wet walls or thermal bridging

Action:

- Assess building properly for condition, context, use and interactions. If uncertain, take expert advice for heritage, moisture and thermal strategy
- Take whole building approach especially junctions and ventilation
- Use trained/qualified contractors

Level of risk & care required

- Very high

3 THE SITE AND ITS HERITAGE CONTEXT

Location

- 3.1 Levita House forms the main southern block of the Ossulston Estate in Somers Town in the LB Camden. The estate comprise an urban block defined by Phoenix Road to the north-west, Ossulston Street to the north-east, Wier's Passage to the south-east and Chalton Street to the south-west.
- 3.2 The Site does not lie in a conservation area and there are no adjoining listed buildings.
- 3.3 St Pancreas International and King Cross Mainline and London Underground Stations lie one urban block to the north-east.

The Site

- 3.4 Flat 215 Levita House is at 1st floor level in the northern wing of Levita House, accessed from an external deck reached via communal stairs via a gated entrance from the north-west within the estate. The access deck overlooks the internal garden courtyard, and the principal rooms overlook Chalton Street.



Levita House - Ossulston Street frontage



Levita House – north-west elevation

Heritage significance

- 3.5 The National Planning Policy Framework defines heritage significance at 'Annex 2: Glossary' as:

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

- 3.6 This statement of significance, in line with PPG paragraph: 006, considers the various heritage interests of the building as follows:

‘Archaeological interest *There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.*

Architectural and artistic interest *These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.*

Historic Interest *An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation’s history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.’*

- 3.7 The following assessment of significance is based on on-site visual inspection, the list description, published material and planning records. It is proportionate both to the importance of the asset and to the nature and extent of the application proposals. It is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the Works on heritage interest.

Significance of Levita House

The listing

- 3.8 Levita House, including the attached shops and Somers Town Coffee House, was listed grade II on the 13 December 1996. The full list description reads as follows:

‘13/12/96 GV II Includes: Nos.16A-76A Levita House, attached shops, screen and Somers Town Coffee House CHALTON STREET. Blocks of council flats and attached shops and coffee house/tavern forming part of the Ossulston Estate; frontages to Ossulston Street, Chalton Street and Weir's Passage. 1930-31. To the designs of the LCC Architect's Department under G Topham Forrest. Flats and shops: load-bearing brickwork rendered with coloured roughcast, channelled to ground floor to appear as stone; reinforced concrete balconies. Hipped pantiled roofs with dormers and tall chimney-stacks.

PLAN: central spine on north-south axis with four diagonal spines from angles joined to north and south blocks to form enclosed courtyards; enclosed courtyard to west, open to east.

EXTERIOR: five and four storeys plus attics. Windows mostly flush framed sashes with exposed boxing. Balconies designed to make the voids above them read as holes punched in the building. Eastern range has central courtyard block of ground floor portico with outer bays of projecting balconies and inner bays of flush rectangular balconies grouped 2:3:2 to three upper floors; top floor has round-arched voids. Diagonal flanking wings have alternating canted bays.

North and south-eastern facing blocks with central round-arched vehicle entrances above which long rectangular voids with bowed fronts; top floor of three round-arched voids and central projecting semicircular balcony, all with cast-iron balustrade. Flanking bays of long rectangular voids with three vertical slits beneath each. Outer bays of paired sashes in shallow full height recesses. Other facades are variations to this style using voids, axes and massing to effect; southern facade has Lombardic frieze to parapet.

Western courtyard is enclosed by a range of single storey shops with central fluted Doric screen flanked by pillars having fielded finials to angles. Coffee house/tavern: the Somers Town Coffee House on Chalton Street forms the southern part of the entrance to the northern courtyard. 1927-8, believed to be by Halsey Ricardo. Rendered and painted brickwork. Pantiled hipped roof with tall chimney-stacks, dormers and coved cornice to projecting eaves. Two storeys, attic and cellars. Five windows and four window left hand return. Public house frontage of central transom and mullion window with small panes flanked by similar windows with central part-glazed doors. First floor slightly recessed sashes with exposed boxing.

INTERIOR: not inspected.

HISTORICAL NOTE: despite policy to house as many Londoners as possible on outlying cottage estates, pressure of waiting lists and urgency of slum clearance forced Cecil Levita, Chairman of the LCC Housing Committee to review the situation. The Ossulston Estate is the most important inner-city estate of the inter-war period, representing the most considered attempt by the LCC to inject new thinking into inner-city housing estates. It was influenced in particular by Viennese housing models and was innovative in terms of layout and elevation. This complex forms a group with Chamberlain House, Phoenix Road (qv) and the southern block of Walker House, Phoenix Road including The Cock Tavern.'

Archival material

- 3.9 The original architectural drawings for the estate are held at the London Metropolitan Archives as part of their LCC Estates collection. A 3rd floor plan with cross section drawings and an elevation detail can be found on the National Archives website at <https://www.layersoflondon.org/map/records/levita-house-ossulston-estate-st-pancras>

Historic development

- 3.10 The historic development of the estate is set out in the list description above. Levita House was built in 1930-1. The Pevsner volume 'London 4: North' notes in respect of the wider estate and earlier Chamberlain House:

'OSSULSTON ESTATE, (Principal assistants R Minton Taylor and E. H. Parkes under G. Topham Forrest). It was planned to cater for housing needs not met by the cottage estates on the edge of London, and was also intended to be a visual improvement on the standard four- or five-storey walk-up block of flats.

CHAMBERLAIN HOUSE (1927-9) was the first part to be built. Three blocks around a courtyard, with roughcast walls above a granite-faced ground floor with arched windows.'

- 3.11 In more recent years there have been various works to Levita House. Wikipedia notes Levita House was extensively refurbished by Sprunt Architects in 2004-07, with works including the creation of larger flats, external refurbishment of the fabric and the transformation of the courtyard areas (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ossulston_Estate).
- 3.12 Applications refs: 2003/2976/P & 2003/3012/L were granted for the 'Internal and external alterations in association with the conversion of 60 flats to provide 13 x 1 bed units, 15 x 2 bed units, 8 x 3 bed units, 4 x 4 bed units, 3 x 5 bed units and 1 x 7 bed units (44 in total) , new lifts, extension to existing electricity substation and new ramps to Flats 61-133 and estate security works including gates and boundary treatment to Levita House as a whole including Ossulston Street and Chalton Street frontages' at Levita House on the 08/07/2004'.
- 3.13 Avanti Architects undertook restoration and refurbishment works in 1997; <https://avantiarchitects.co.uk/project/levita-house/>
- 3.14 In 2016 listed building consent was granted for 'the replacement of existing windows and door; re-roofing; render repairs; pre-decoration repairs and redecoration; concrete repairs; and access balcony surface recoating' at flats 136 - 180, 181 - 203 and 204 - 238 Levita House (applications ref: (i) 2016/1174/P (ii) 2016/0575/L).

Description

- 3.15 The block is described in the list description above. The Pevsner volume 'London 4: North' reads as follows:

'LEVITA HOUSE, to the S, of 1930-1, is more boldly massed, with a formal approach to a seven-storey centrepiece, flanked by splayed wings with balconies enclosed within tall arches. Both the courtyard layout and the drama of solid and void unrelieved by any ornament pay tribute to the grand housing schemes of Vienna, which Topham Forrest visited at this time. Earlier proposals had been even more novel, for American-influenced plans of 1925 had proposed nine storey blocks served by lifts, with central heating and with a small number of flats for private tenants on the upper floors. This proved unrealistically expensive; revised plans of 1927 reduced the height and cut down on the lifts. Top-floor studios and the idea of subsidizing public housing by private flats proved unacceptable, but a remnant of the concept remains in the formal courtyard to Ossulston Street, which was to have provided a segregated entrance to the superior apartments. All flats had the novelty of electric servicing (although heating was provided by coal fires). Behind the main frontage are three large internal courtyards; community facilities included the coffee house in Chalton Street and, N of Phoenix Road, The Cock.'

Flat 215

- 3.16 Flat 215 is at 1st floor level in the western return of the northern wing of Levita House. The deck access looks onto the north courtyard, and the principal rooms overlook Chalton Street to the north-west. Both the kitchen and the bathroom have windows onto the deck access, either side of the entrance. The front door is modern and the fenestration comprises modern double glazed replacement units, casements to the deck access and vertical sliding sashes to the rear. There are areas of later brickwork evident in the elevation to the deck access, suggesting that the door and window arrangement has been reconfigured here.



Deck access to flat



Detail of infill brickwork

- 3.17 The flat comprises a kitchen, hot water tank cupboard and bathroom at the front, and 3 rooms, each with one window, to the rear. The layout has been altered, as evidenced through comparison with the historic plans for the 3rd floor. It is not clear when this was done, but it will have been necessary to provide a separate bathroom and kitchen for this flat.



Room 1 window and skirting detail



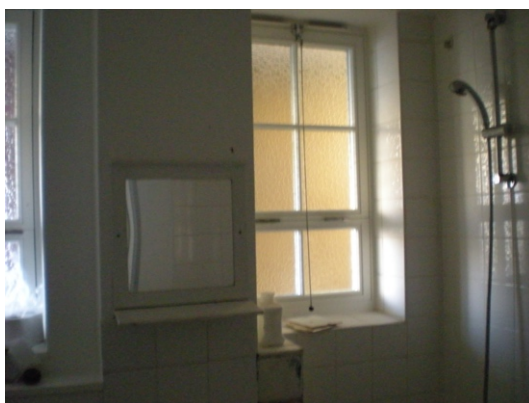
Room 2 window and skirting detail



Modern cill/cill cover in room 3



Kitchen window detail



Bathroom



Cupboard with hot water tank (backing onto access deck)

- 3.18 No original features survive and there are few decorative elements bar a simple modern shallow skirting. It is unlikely there will have been many decorative features when originally built, and all the fire surrounds have gone and the chimney breasts

where they survive/ remain visible, are boxed in and covered. The bathroom and kitchen fit-outs are modern.

- 3.19 The windows have plain simple surrounds with plaster reveals. The windows themselves and the internal frames and beading are modern. Those to the principal rooms with a simple solid timber cill (or in the case of room 3 a MDF replacement). The extent of the inner frames is not consistent resulting in some windows with very narrow internal frames along one side, for example in the kitchen.
- 3.20 The flat has been fitted out with central heating with the boiler flue (which does not meet current standards) extending up the external wall and suspended across the access deck to the building's edge (as seen in photograph above). Pipework and wiring, both external and internal, are surfaced mounted.



Detail of external pipework

Archaeological interest

- 3.21 Dating from the 1930s and having been refurbished internally, the block is of limited archaeological interest.

Architectural and artistic interest

- 3.22 The principal architectural interest of the listed building lies in the plan form of the block and the elevation designs. The list description notes the design was influenced by Viennese housing models and was innovative in terms of layout and elevation. No feature of interest survive inside the flat and the plan form of individual flats has been altered.

Historic Interest

- 3.23 Levita House is the main block of the Ossulston Estate. The estate is noted in the list description as the most important inner-city estate of the inter-war period,

representing the most considered attempt by the LCC to inject new thinking into inner-city housing estates.

Group value

- 3.24 Levita House forms a group with Chamberlain House, Phoenix Road and the southern block of Walker House, Phoenix Road including the Cock Tavern. The interiors of the individual flats do not contribute to the group value of the block.

4 ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 This section assesses the effect of the Works on the heritage significance of flat 215 Levita House. Reference should be made to the application drawings and other material submitted with the application. Section 3 includes a statement of significance of the listed building which sets out where alterations have taken place in the past.
- 4.2 In line with good practice and government guidance, the application proposals have been closely informed by a clear understanding and appreciation of the significance of the listed building. The scheme has sought to balance the special interest of the listed building with the requirements of a modern home, and addresses comments that arose during preapplication cross departmental discussions.

Proposed Works

- 4.3 The Works comprise various alterations adopting a fabric first approach to upgrading the energy performance of this flat in a grade II listed building as set out below:
- Installation of internal wall insulation (breathable) to external walls within the flat.
 - Installation of mechanical ventilation units with external grills in the kitchen and bathroom.
 - Installation of new bathroom and kitchen fittings.
 - Making good the external flue and pipework.
- 4.4 The application material includes a general method statement of how the Works will be undertaken, full specifications (and dimensions) of the internal insulation system, details of the extractor fan units and external grills, and the specification for the new bathroom and kitchen fit-outs. Areas where plaster will need to be chipped back to allow for the installation of insulation have also been identified (see below).
- 4.5 Submitted drawings include annotated floorplans that highlight where the internal insulation will be installed, and a typical vertical and horizontal cross section drawing through a window opening (to a main room) to illustrate the thickness of the insulation to the walls and reveals, and how the cill will be fitted, and skirting reattached.
- 4.6 There are minor external alterations and the position of the new grills are shown on annotated photographs.

Assessment

- 4.7 The Works are confined largely to the interior of the flat with the exception of the 2 grills to be installed on the deck access elevations of the flat.
- 4.8 There will be no changes to the plan form of the flat or the loss of any original features or details (none remain).
- 4.9 The installation of the internal insulation means there will be no effect on the external appearance of the block. This approach also means that individual flats can be upgraded as and when possible, rather than having to undertake a major package of works at once.
- 4.10 The internal insulation will be breathable and the specification and method of installation is set out in detail in the supporting information accompanying the application. The modern skirting boards will be removed and reinstated where they exist and if damaged, replaced like for like. It is necessary to run the insulation along parts of the return internal walls to reduce the risk of cold bridging (it is current best practice to do) and prevent condensation problems. It has been run up to meet chimney breasts where possible in the main living rooms; the kitchen, bathroom and meter cupboard are less sensitive spaces. It is not proposed in the kitchen as the room would become too small.
- 4.11 The window cills will be remounted and reinstated to maintain the same projection internally from the wall surface as found today following the installation of the insulation. The MDF/modern cill in room 3 will be replaced with a solid timber cill to match the others.
- 4.12 There will be very minor works to remove localised areas of plaster at some window reveals, and behind some pipework, to provide sufficient depth for the installation of the wall insulation. These areas are identified in the written schedule of works and have been kept to the minimum necessary.
- 4.13 Electric wiring and sockets and any other services on the walls to be insulated will be adapted so that the wiring runs behind the new internal insulation and the outlets are extended to surface mounted sockets. Electric extractor fans, with external grills, will be mounted in the kitchen and bathroom.
- 4.14 The only alteration to the exterior of the flat will be the installation of two small vent grills (for the electric extractor fans) in the elevations facing the deck access. These plastic grills will be finished in a colour to match the brickwork (to maintain a consistent finish over time) and will be barely noticeable in public/ street views.

4.15 Enhancements to the appearance of the exterior of the flat include:

- Installation of a new boiler flue that runs in one straight line from a higher point in the wall and is white to match the render (as seen in other flats in the block). A new opening will need to be made in the brick work, higher up the wall, and the existing flue opening will be made good with salvaged or matching bricks. The Works will result in a less cluttered appearance to the exterior of the flat.
- Running one of the existing modern pipes on the deck access elevation internally and fixing it to the existing external down pipe with a new joint.



Straight white boiler flues to other flats in Levita House

Summary

- 4.16 The Site does not lie in a conservation area and there will be no effect on any other heritage asset.
- 4.17 The Works are principally to the interior and there will be no effect on plan form.
- 4.18 Levita House is a robust block of interwar social housing that has been refurbished over time. The Works are in the spirit of the original objectives of the development to provide high quality social housing and will affect one flat in this large apartment block that has been refurbished internally and has replacement windows. The significance of this listed building is set out at section 3 and no historic features survive within flat 215.
- 4.19 Given the lack of historic features in the interior of the flat and the minor nature of the external grills (and existing modern external pipework and flue) it is considered there will be no effect on the heritage significance of this flat or Levita House. The rationalisation of the external flue and pipework will enhance the appearance of the flat and better reveal the significance of the block.
- 4.20 Should others disagree, any alleged harm caused to this listed building from the proposed measures could only be said to be '*less than substantial*' and at the very low end of this scale in terms of the NPPF. There is little effect on original fabric and

no effect on, or loss of any original features. This '*less than substantial*' harm would, in line with para. 202 of the NPPF, be balanced by the public benefits (which include heritage benefits) the Works deliver.

- 4.21 The scheme will provide heritage benefits through the rationalisation of wiring and external flues and pipes. Public benefits include:
- Implementing measures to protect the environment; and
 - Addressing fuel poverty.

Conclusions

- 4.22 The proposed Works to the interior of the flat will have no effect on the heritage significance of Levita House. The enhanced boiler flue, matching others found at the block, and internalised pipework, will enhance the external appearance of the flat and better reveal the significance of the block, albeit to a limited degree.
- 4.23 Special attention has been paid to the effect of the proposals on the historic significance of this listed building. The proposals will sustain and better reveal the significance of this designated heritage asset. The Works will be carried out to a high standard and will not impact on the plan form (no original features survive internally).
- 4.24 In conclusion, the Works will allow the upgrading of this flat to provide an enhanced more energy efficient home. They are based on a clear understanding of the special interest and significance of the altered listed building as found today. They are in line with the guidance set out in NPPG, national PPG and local plan Policy D2.

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