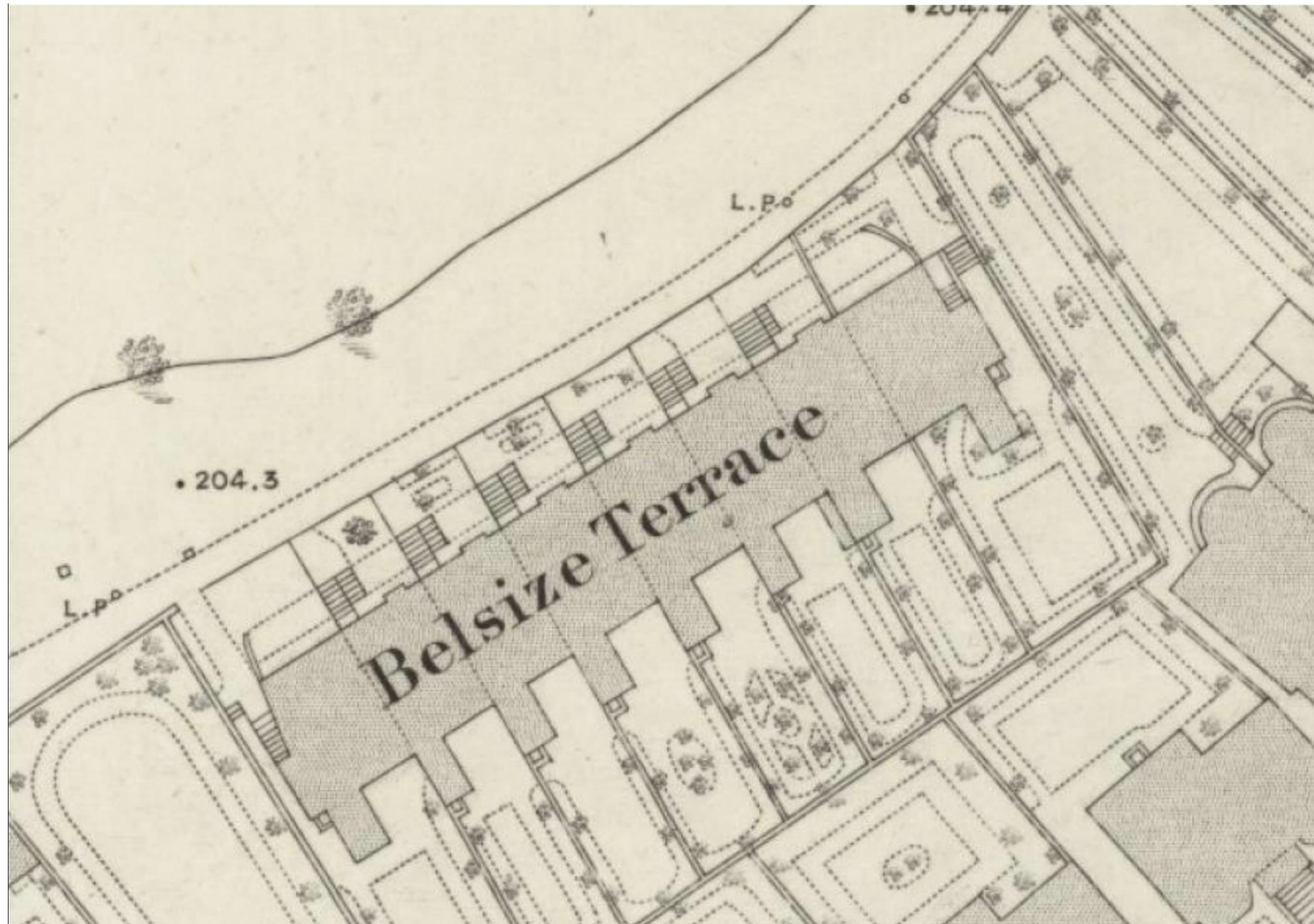


Heritage Appraisal  
91a Belsize Lane, London, NW3 5AU

March 2024



# Heritage Appraisal

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### 1 Introduction

1.1 The following Heritage Appraisal has been prepared in support of applications for planning permission and listed building consent for the renewal of exterior paving and steps in the front garden of no. 91a Belsize Lane, London, NW3 5AU. No. 91a comprises the ground and lower ground floors of no. 91 that was converted into two, two storey maisonettes in the 1970s.

1.2 The property forms part of grade II listed terrace that was added to the statutory list in 1974 and includes no. 79-93 Belsize Lane. The list description for the building is as follows:

*Terrace of 8 houses. Mid C19. Stucco. Slated roofs with projecting bracketed eaves and brick slab chimney-stacks to party walls. 3 storeys and basements. 2 windows each. Round-arched recessed entrances with rosette patterned architraves; doorways with pilaster-jambs carrying cornice heads, overlights and part glazed panelled doors approached by steps with cast-iron railings. Architraved sashes, most upper floors with margin glazing. Ground floor sashes have rosette-patterned architraves, console-bracketed cornices and cast-iron window guards; 1st floor, architraved sashes with console bracketed segmental pediments, having foliated tympani, and linked by continuous cast-iron balconies; 2nd floor, architraved sashes with lugged sills and flanked by enriched eaves brackets. INTERIORS: not inspected*

1.3 No. 91 also forms part of the Belsize Conservation Area which was first designated in 1973 and has been extended a number of times. Belsize Terrace was added to the conservation area in 1988 as part of a wider area. Any future proposals in respect of the proposed site will need to take into account their effect on the character and appearance of the Belsize Conservation Area as well as the special interest of the listed building.

1.4 There are no other statutorily listed buildings in close proximity to no. 91 other than those forming part of the terrace. The closest listed building to the site is the grade II listed church of St Peter, situated to the north-east. 1.6 The Belsize Conservation Area Appraisal makes specific mention of the group at nos. 79-93. It sets out at page 22 that 'Of particular note and prominent in views along Belsize Lane from the east, it is three storey, listed (Grade II) stucco terrace at nos. 79-93 with classical detailing and decorative first floor balconies).

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### 2 Site and Context

2.1 The following section provides an account, as far as is possible, of the historic development of no. 91a Belsize Lane and considers how the terrace of which it forms part has changed over time. It also takes into account the current condition and appearance of the building and provides an overview of the building's significance.

#### Historic development

2.2 The existing property forms part of a terrace of buildings at nos. 79-93 Belsize Lane. The terrace, originally known as Belsize Terrace, was recorded as 'new houses' in the parish vestry minutes of 1856 (Streets of Belsize, 2009). This date of construction matches with historic mapping which shows the area relatively undeveloped in 1853 (figure 1) and the terrace in existence by 1862 (figure 2).



Figure 1: Whitbread's New Plan of London (1853).

2.3 The terrace was constructed on previously undeveloped land that formed part of the Belsize House Estate. Initially, the terrace overlooked the open fields of Belsize Farm, a group of buildings situated to the north. Belsize Lane was an existing route linking St John's Wood and the Finchley Road with Haverstock Hill. This contrasts with much of the development to the north and south of the street which represents a more formal, organised town planning and development exercise.

2.4 Development gathered pace in the area during the 1850s, following the demolition of Belsize House in 1853. This development was led principally by a builder called Daniel Tidey. An interesting aspect of the terrace of which no. 91a forms part, is that it is a very different building form to the majority of Tidey's development which comprised large detached and semi-detached villa-style dwellings.

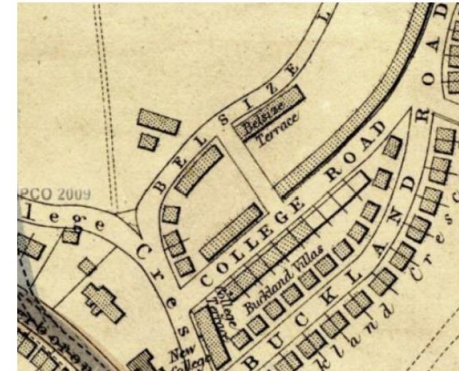


Figure 2: Map of Belsize Terrace, 1862.



Figure 3: OS map extract, 1860s with Belsize Terrace contrasting strongly in form to surrounding development. The lands of Belsize Farm to the north remain undeveloped by this time.

2.5 The terrace as a model for residential development became less popular in the later Victorian period and really in this context, nos. 79-93 is a standalone feature (as shown in later mapping such as at figure 3). It is unlikely that Tidey developed the terrace as his residential model was very different with buildings that were generally less densely developed and more substantial, set within large gardens and with a greater sense of openness and space.

2.6 The terraced houses were evidently constructed on a two room plan accessed via a staircase that ran partly within a rear two/three storey outrigger. Each house was originally constructed over four floors from lower ground floor to second (some houses were altered historically to provide third floor accommodation). The exceptions to this are the end terrace houses at nos. 79 and 93 which are constructed with a slightly different plan

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2.7 The houses were occupied by the middle classes during the later 19th century with merchants, architects and solicitors amongst the occupants.

2.8 The chapter of Westminster owned considerable lands in the area during the 19th century and it is evident that the Church Commissioners were also active in Belsize Park during the 20th century. It seems probable that the Church Commissioners were originally the freeholder of the terrace. The Church Commissioners were the applicant on a number of early 1970s planning applications that sought conversion of the terraced houses into multiple units. Their estate was sold off in 1976 which would fit with the possibility of the Church adding value to its estate through a variety of contemporary permissions and associated conversions.

2.9 No. 91 was already in multiple occupation by 1910. Two families, the Greens and the Saunders, lived in the building, suggesting a probably informal separation of the building into two units. The occupants were trained professionals, a draughtsman and a master builder, but were potentially of the upper working classes. The demographic shift most likely reflects the drop in popularity of terraced house for the middle classes who instead sought out more substantial dwellings with larger gardens. The change in the terrace's social and economic circumstances inevitably led to sub-division and conversion for multiple units.

2.10 By 1937, almost all of the houses in the terrace were subdivided including no. 81, no. 85, no. 87, no. 89, no. 91 and no. 95. The houses were converted to various degrees. Several of the houses, including no. 91, have or had a door at ground floor within the closet wing, apparently leading outside. This would seem to suggest that provision was made for occupants to access the garden without going through a separate residential unit at lower ground floor level. Today, many of the houses are either split into two units or have been converted back into single dwellings. The two unit arrangement seems to date back to the conversions carried out by the Church Commissioners in the early 1970s.



Figure 4: OS map extract of 1953.

2.11 Figure 4 shows alterations had been carried out to the rear of the terrace by the 1950s. Steps down from the ground floor of the closet wing are indicated at nos. 81, 83 and 91. No. 87 has a substantial rear extension (since demolished) and there are smaller extensions to no. 85, no. 89 and no. 93.

2.12 No. 91 was formally converted into two maisonettes in 1976 to form 91a and 91b (figure 5). The proposals involved the creation of an opening between the front and rear rooms at ground floor level and a new partition in the rear room to form a hallway providing access via the main entrance to Flat 91b.

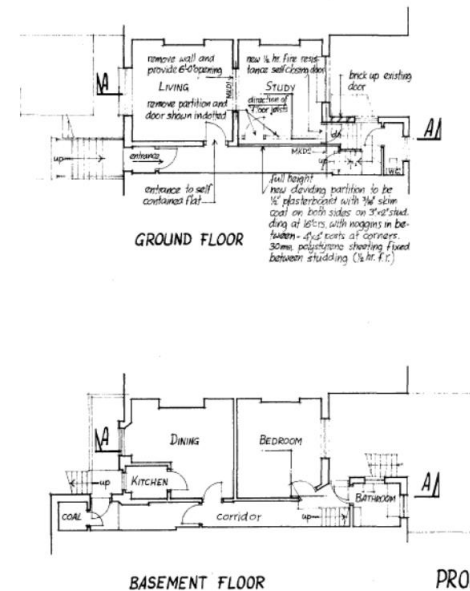


Figure 5: Approved plans, 1976.

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2.13 Since then, the existing building hasn't changed significantly and has retained its historic layout more or less. One departure from the approved plans is the addition of a partition within the rear room of the ground floor in order to provide corridor access to the rear bathroom and the lower ground floor. This has impacted on the volume and surviving architectural details of the rear room. The lower ground floor level is broadly as established by the 1976 permission.

2.14 The 1976 drawing shows the stairs from the ground floor closet wing to the garden and the then proposed plan to block the doorway leading to those stairs. This door remains in situ and, in character and appearance, it clearly dates from the first half of the 20th century.

2.15 The late 20th century occupant of the flat undertook few alterations during their residency and the property very much has a later 20th century character in terms of its superficial appearance. It is also clearly in need of upgrading, repair and refurbishment and has suffered from damp ingress at lower ground floor level.

Context 2.16 As indicated above, many of the houses within the terrace are still subdivided into two units. No. 89 is the only property that has been reunited. Subdivision clearly has had an effect on the significance of the terrace's interior where as a rule, lower ground floor and ground floor are separated from the upper levels and the upper levels are separated from the garden.

2.17 The architectural and aesthetic value of the exterior of the terrace as a group is clearly unaffected by internal subdivision. The principal, street elevation of the terrace is very attractive and characteristic of the later 19th century development of Belsize Park.

2.18 The terrace's rear elevation has undergone a high degree of change since the mid-20th century, principally through the addition of rear extensions. In some cases, these have taken the form of single storey rear extension at lower ground floor level, infilling the gap between closet wings (as at nos. 81, 83, and 87) (figure 6-8). In other cases, the closet wing has been extended by a storey as at no. 89. Three storey rear infill extensions have been added to no. 87 and no. 93 and there are dormer extensions at roof level in a number of cases.

2.19 Indeed, although all of the buildings within the terrace have been extended either through infill development, extension to closet wings or through development at roof level, the original rhythm and pattern across the rear of the terrace is legible. There is no consistent pattern either in form or in architectural detail for the various infill extensions and rear facing alterations.

2.20 In many cases, access to lower ground floor infill extensions has been facilitated by the removal of the lower ground floor window or door and the widening of an opening at this point. This is generally now an established characteristic of the terrace as a whole.

#### Summary

2.21 The key phases of no. 91a's historic development include:

- Constructed c. 1855 as part of a terrace of 8 houses;
- The house was a single dwelling until the late 19th/early 20th century when it became home to multiple occupants/families;
- A ground floor door and fire escape were added during the early-mid 20th century. The fire escape is no longer in situ.
- The house continued as at least two units until 1976 when this arrangement was reconfigured and ratified;
- Alterations since 1976 have included the addition of a partition within the rear room at ground floor level;
- Works to the front area have been undertaken more recently by the managing freeholder.

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### Significance

3.1 No. 91a is a property that has been affected by historic alteration. While the house is no longer a single dwelling, the property allows for an appreciation of the detailing, form, layout, hierarchy and fixtures of a house of this type and age.

3.2 Some alterations have resulted in an element of harm to the significance of the building such as the creation of a corridor at ground floor level (figure 28) and the following:

- Subdivision in the 20th century has resulted in the inability to access the rear ground floor room from the main entrance hallway and has removed the requirement for a door in this location;
- The partition to the rear room at ground floor level currently detracts from the significance of the property;
- The modern door between front and rear rooms at ground floor level is atypical in this context;
- The red brick retaining wall to the front garden (introduced by the previous occupant to deal with flooding issues) appears over engineered and in material terms is a discordant, harmful feature in the context of no. 91 and the terrace as a whole; and,
- One of the lower ground floor windows is modern and designed to incorrect proportions. It contrasts with the other front lower ground floor window.

3.3 The intrinsic interest of the historic form and fabric of the building remains legible to some extent beneath later additions and alterations with the recent updating works and rear extension enhancing the historic significance of the property through the various restoration initiatives completed

3.3 Externally, the building is little altered, particularly to the street elevation (figure 29) although several minor alterations have had a cumulatively harmful effect on its significance and its contribution to the terrace. This includes the modern red brick retaining wall to the front garden which is discordant in this context. The front elevation is clearly the focus of the terrace's architectural expression and interest and historic window alterations and the retaining wall affect that architectural expression.

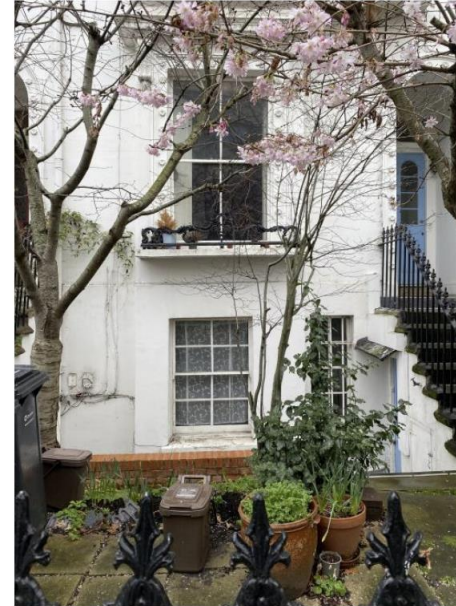


Figure 29: Front elevation with poor retaining wall treatment.

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### Proposed works

4.0 The Proposed works are set out in Fig. 33 and involve:

- Renewal of exterior paving in the property's front garden and lower ground floor external steps;
- Installation of a linear drain with traditional Mosaic Iron Grating at the foot of the lower ground steps at footwell level (see Fig. 32) as a flood prevention measure;
- Proposed material for paving will be Grey Sawn York Stone slabs to the paved areas (Fig. 31)
- Proposed material for lower ground floor steps will be Grey Sawn York Stone risers and bullnose Grey Sawn York steps (see Fig.30)

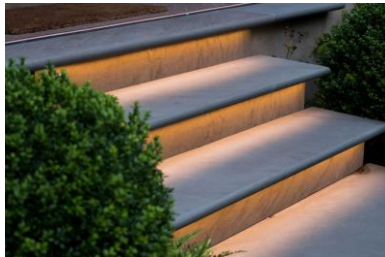


Figure 30: REFERENCE IMAGE - Grey Sawn York stone steps with bullnose finish



Figure 31: REFERENCE IMAGE - Grey Sawn York stone slabs



Figure 32: REFERENCE IMAGE – Mosaic Iron Grating laid to lower ground floor footwell

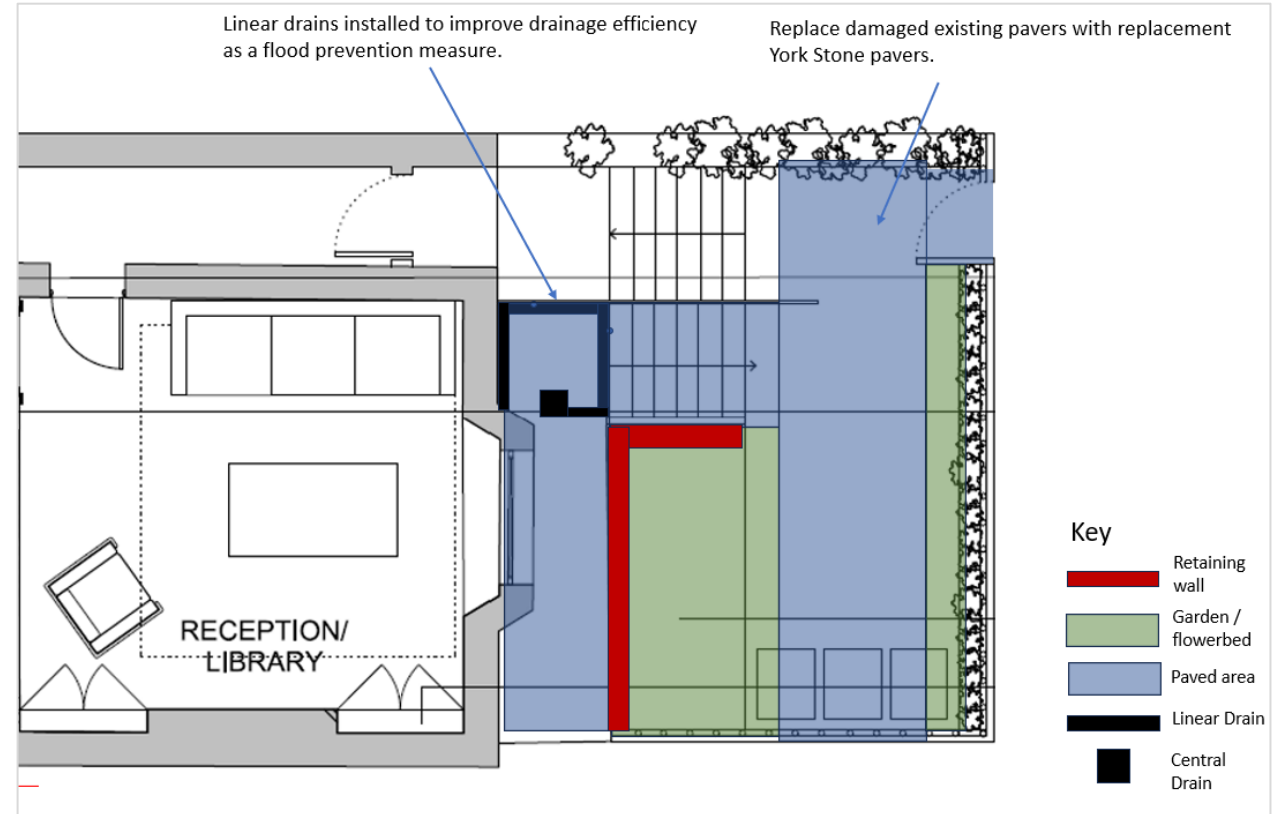


Figure 33: Planned works detail

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**Policy Compliance**

5.0 The main issues for consideration in relation to this application are the effect of the proposals on no.91a as part of a listed terrace and the impact of external changes to the building on the character and appearance of the Belsize Conservation Area.

5.1 The proposed renewal of the exterior paving and lower ground floor steps are sympathetic and would result in a benefit to the listed building given the proposal considers the removal of damaged concrete pavers and replacing them with traditional York Stone which would be seen as a more appropriate material that enhances the special character of the building and terrace as a whole.

5.1 The proposed works are considered to comply with the relevant sections of the London Borough of Camden's Local Plan 2017.

5.2 Policy D1 – Design requires development to respect local context and character, preserve or enhance the historic environment and heritage assets and comprise details and materials that are of high quality and complement the local character. Policy D2 – Heritage outlines that the Council will preserve, and where appropriate enhance the borough's rich and diverse heritage assets, including conservation areas and listed buildings. Any less than substantial harm must be outweighed convincingly by the public benefits of the scheme. In conservation areas, development is required to preserve or where possible, enhance their character or appearance. With regard to listed buildings, the Council will resist proposals to alter or extend them where this would cause harm to their special architectural or historic interest and setting.

5.2 For these reasons, and for those set out above, it is considered that the proposed scheme will conserve the special interest of the listed building and the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposals would therefore comply with the relevant historic environment statutory and policy provision.



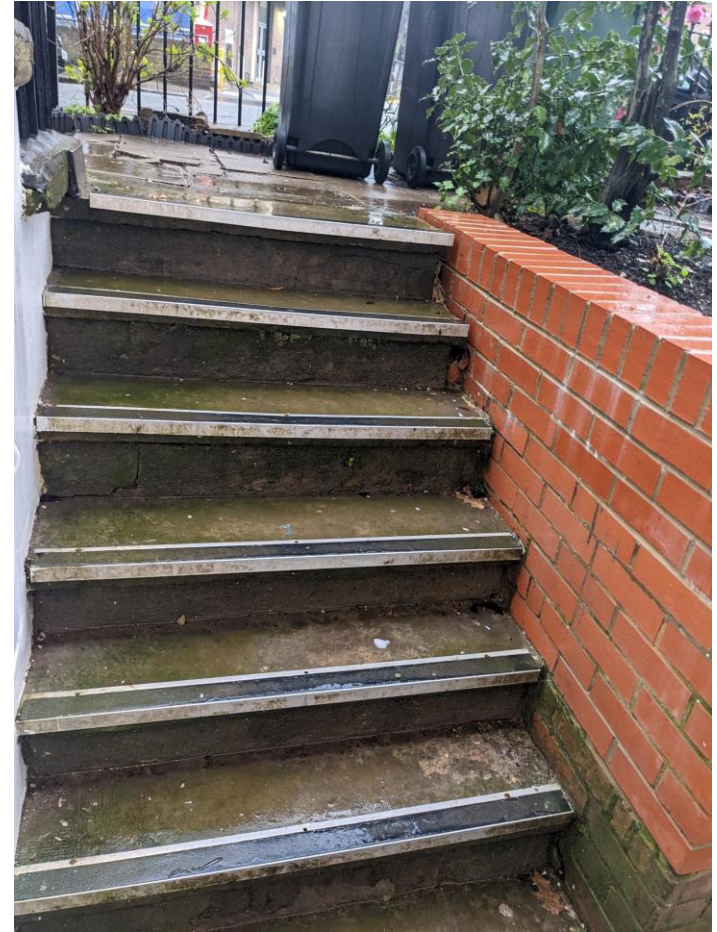
**Appendix A: Photo sheet - 91a Belsize Lane**



Concrete paving stones in disrepair



Concrete paving stones in disrepair and flowerbed



Lower ground floor steps