

31 Southampton Row

Design & Access Statement - **Section 1 of 9**

May 2024

halebrown

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Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Hale Brown Architects on behalf of Hogarth Properties Sarl c/o Knight Frank Asset Management ('the Applicant') in support of an application for the refurbishment of 31 Southampton Row ('the Site') which sits within the London Borough of Camden.

The development looks to provide upgraded office spaces through internal alteration works, together with new plant equipment, cycle parking spaces and other associated works.

At ground floor the development looks to provide an improved office entrance experience from the street to the office demises. As well as reposition the existing retail units to current market requirements, while retaining the existing frontages.

The description of the development is as follows:

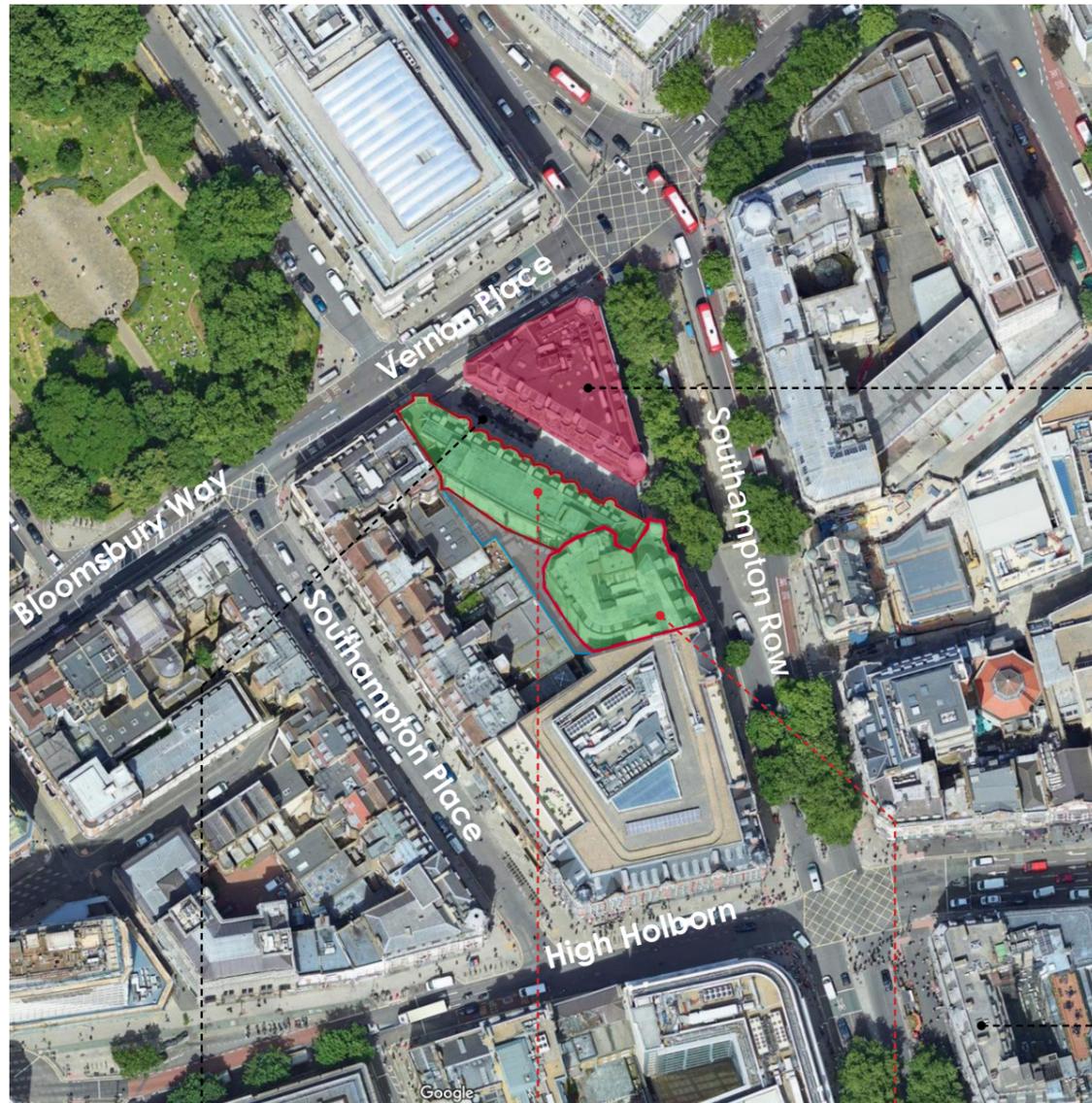
Full planning and listed building consent for internal refurbishments and external alterations.

Full details and scope of the planning assessment is described in the submitted Town Planning Assessment, prepared by HGH consulting.

This Design and Access Statement sets out an overview of the proposals of the scheme and sets out in detail the proposed design and access arrangement, including design evolution. This statement also includes site plans, existing and proposed drawings, as well as CGI visualisations and images of the proposed materials.

1.2

Bloomsbury Square Gardens
London's oldest square laid out in 1665



Application Site



31 Southampton Row
6 storey mixed use Grade II Listed building Constructed in 1906-10

Introduction The Existing Site

The site is located at the north end of Southampton Row on the junction with Southampton Row / Vernon Place. The site comprising of 31 Southampton Row is approximately 0.074 hectares. The triangular shaped building displays three highly ornate facades.

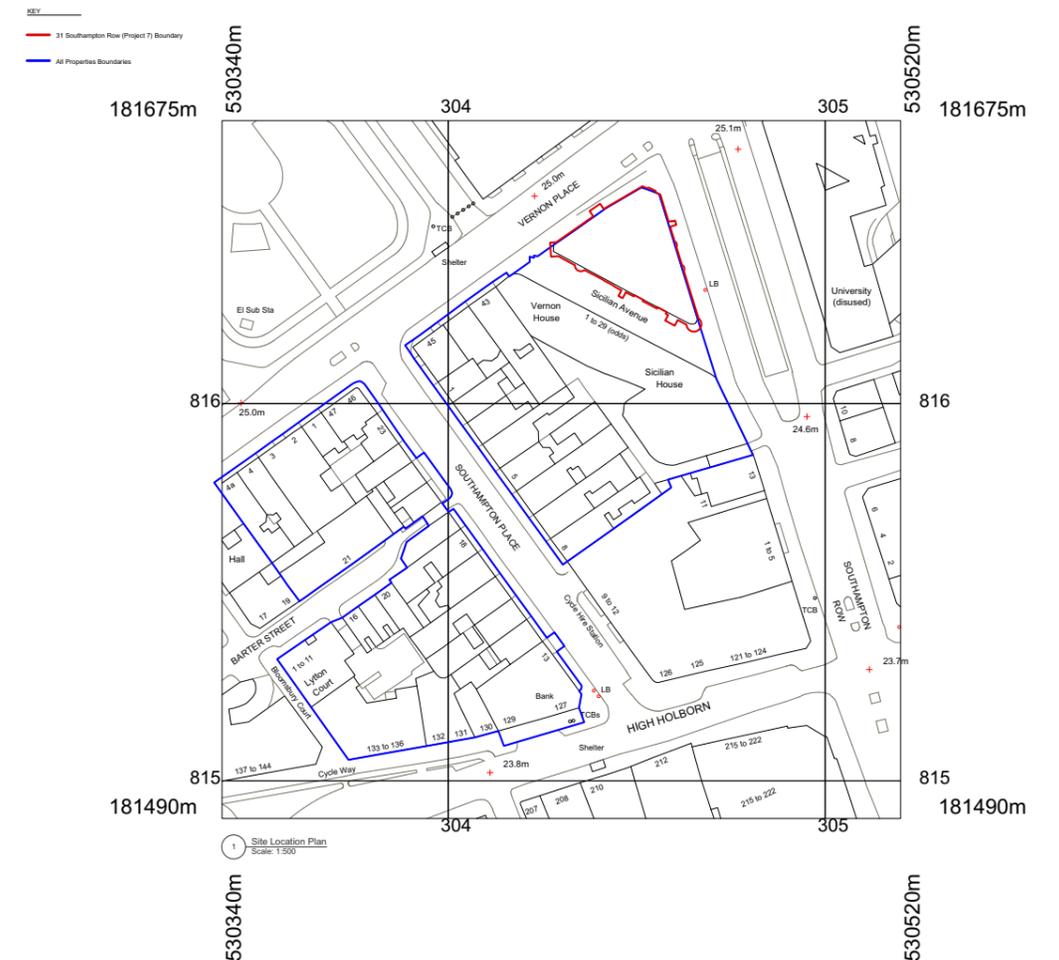
The building forms part of the wider Holborn Links Estate which is owned by the applicant.

The building is Grade II listed and is also located within the Bloomsbury Conversation Area.

To the north of the site is Bloomsbury Square Gardens, London's oldest square laid out in 1665. The north west corner of the site is visible from the gardens.



Holborn - London Underground Station
Central & Piccadilly Lines



Sicilian Avenue
Pedestrian parade designed by Robert Worley in 1906 in a monumental Edwardian style



Vernon & Sicilian House
6 storey mixed use Grade II Listed building Constructed in 1906-10



21 Southampton Row
7 storey mixed use Grade II Listed building Constructed in 1906-10

Refurbishment works currently onsite in accordance to:
 Application ref: 2022/3985/L
 Application ref: 2022/3301/P

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1.3



1975 Photographs of Sicilian Avenue



2021 Photographs of Sicilian Avenue

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Introduction Sicilian Avenue Overview

Designed by Robert James Worley and built between 1906-1910 31 Southampton Row was designed as part of the pedestrianised shopping street Sicilian Avenue, which featured individual small retail units at ground and basement with apartments above.

Despite the criticism raised of Sicilian Avenue at the time of its construction for being old fashioned, the buildings are nevertheless a 'tour de force' in the combined use of terracotta and brickwork architecturally and are also an extremely interesting piece of urban planning linking the two streets, Southampton Row and High Holborn with a pedestrianised shopping street of individual small retail units.

While the retail units were originally designed as individual units of between 12 & 14 feet wide, over the years a number have been combined with openings through the separating walls, in order to create larger units in line with current market demands.

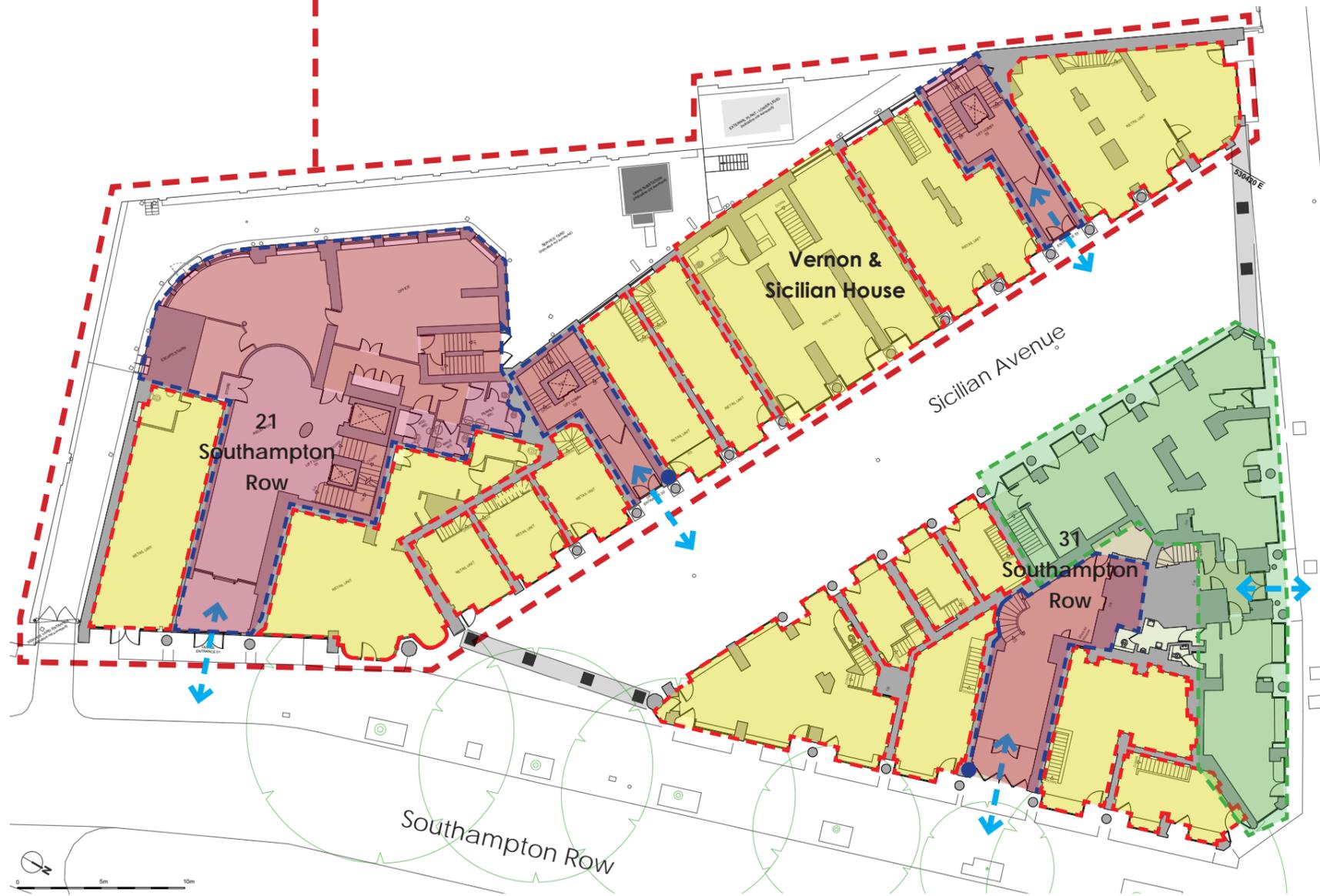
Today the challenging configuration of the retail units has made it difficult to retain or attract new tenants. This has resulted in all but one unit being vacant for a considerable time.

Currently the only retail tenant that is in occupation is the restaurant in retail units 14-20 to the northern end of Sicilian Avenue. Their unit is one of the largest units that has already been combined. Their unit also incorporates the buildings original historic residential entrance on Vernon Place.



Historic residential entrance currently part of larger retail unit

Refurbishment works currently onsite in accordance to:
 Application ref: 2022/3985/L
 Application ref: 2022/3301/P



Existing Sicilian Avenue Ground Floor

- Retail Becoming Vacant Shortly
- Vacant Retail
- Vacant commercial office
- ↔ Office entrances & Exits

Introduction Wider Site Context

Prior to the applicant purchasing the Holborn Links Estate in 2020 Sicilian Avenue and the three buildings fronting onto it had been in slow decline.

Ground and basement retail units had been struggling to operate or attract new tenants.

Similarly the office units on the upper floors of the buildings had become vacant and were not appealing to new tenants, as they needed complete modernisation.

Works to revitalise the avenue and the wider Estate have now started with 21 Southampton Row, Vernon & Sicilian House (Project 1) currently undergoing refurbishment works under approved Planning and Listed Building applications.

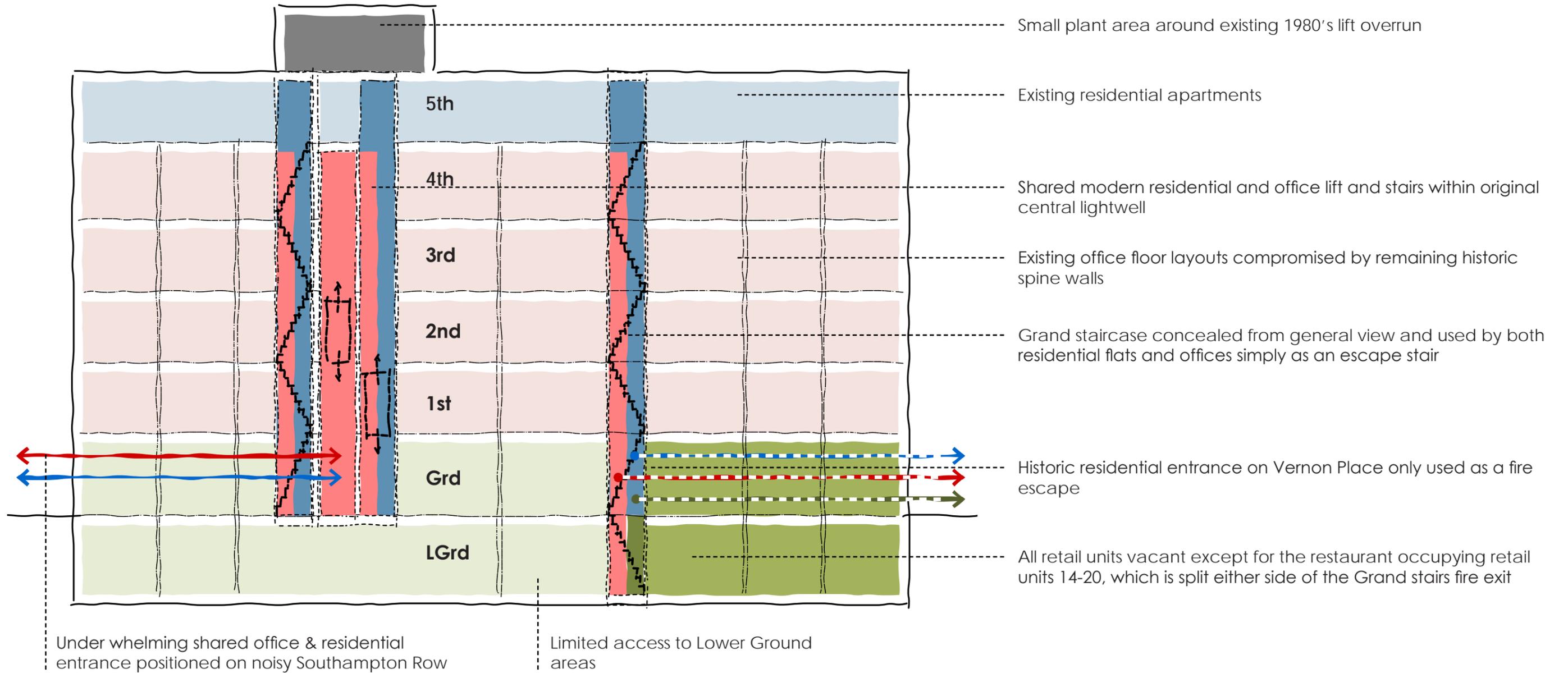
To complete the re-activation of Sicilian Avenue Planning and Listed Building consents are now being sort for the refurbishment of 31 Southampton Row (Project 7).

As part of the new applications it is proposed that principles and alterations agreed for Project 1 are to be replicated in 31 Southampton Row (Project 7).



Existing Southampton Row frontage

Introduction Existing Building Configuration

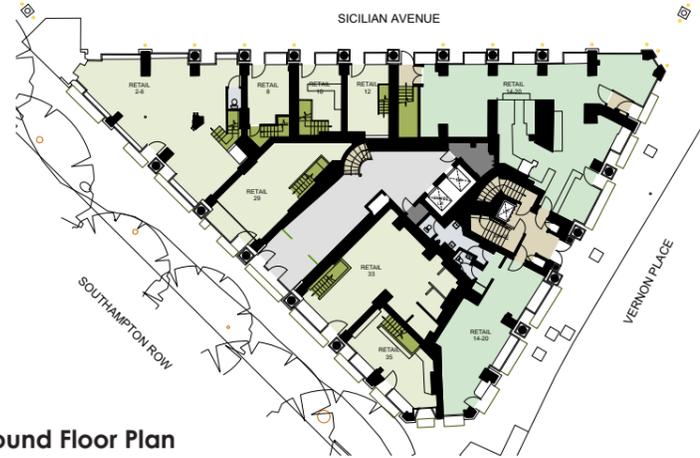


Existing schematic building use section

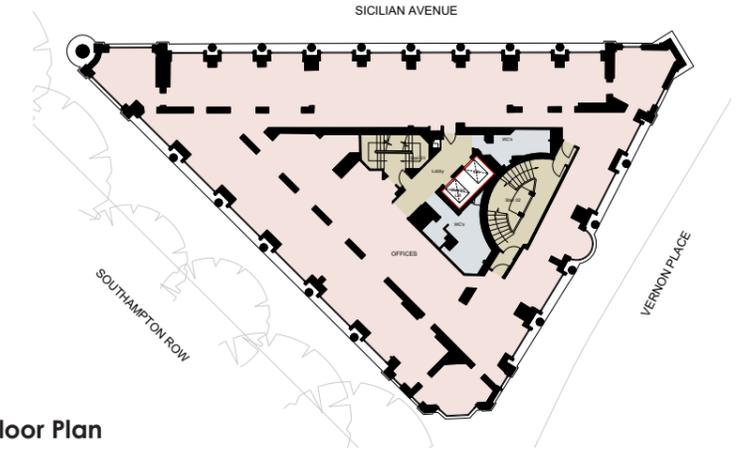
Introduction Existing Building Plans



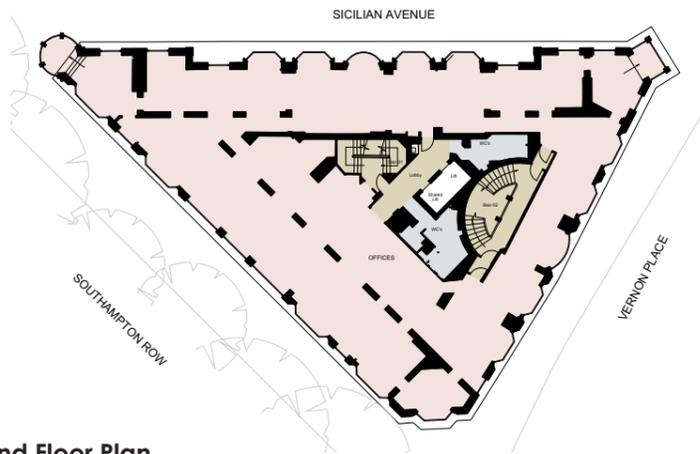
Lower Ground Floor Plan



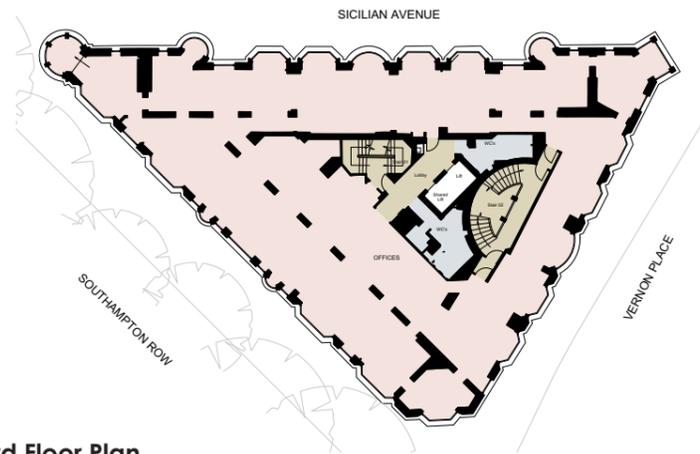
Ground Floor Plan



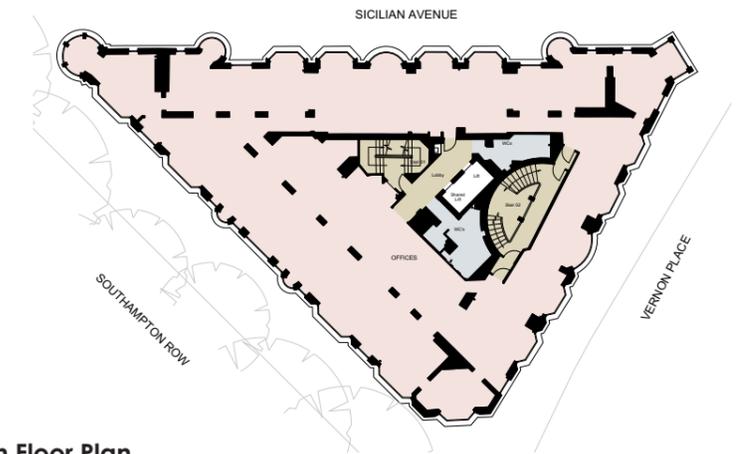
First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



Third Floor Plan



Fourth Floor Plan



Fifth Floor Plan

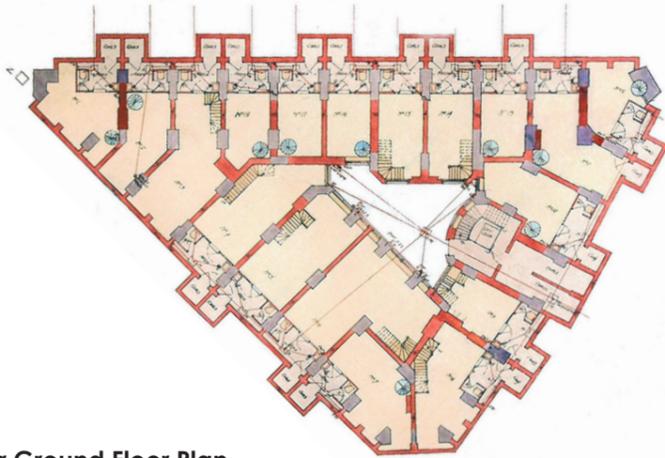
Note: Flat layouts c information and no



Introduction Existing Areas

FLOOR	Existing									
	Gross External Area		Gross Internal Area		Office		Retail		Residential	
	GEA (sqm)	GEA (sqft)	GIA(sqm)	GIA(sqft)	NIA (sqm)	NIA (sqft)	NIA (sqm)	NIA (sqft)	NIA (sqm)	NIA (sqft)
Basement	764	8,224	704	7,578	18	194	454	4,887	0	0
Level 00	611	6,577	561	6,039	0	0	348	3,746	0	0
Level 01	603	6,491	574	6,178	436	4,693	0	0	0	0
Level 02	639	6,878	613	6,598	479	5,156	0	0	0	0
Level 03	644	6,932	614	6,609	484	5,210	0	0	0	0
Level 04	644	6,932	616	6,631	488	5,253	0	0	0	0
Level 05	484	5,210	432	4,650	0	0	0	0	344	3,703
Roof	10	102	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	4,399	47,345	4,114	44,283	1,905	20,505	802	8,633	344	3,703

Introduction Historic Plans



Lower Ground Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



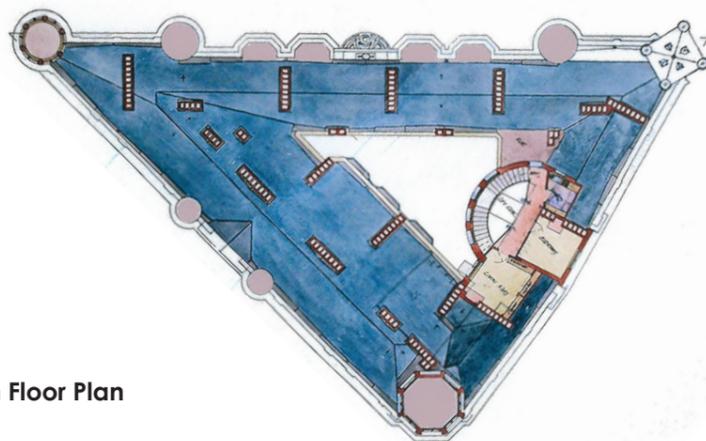
Second Floor Plan



Third Floor Plan



Fourth Floor Plan



Fifth Floor Plan

Historic plans show that the building was originally constructed with a central lightwell running down the building.

LGrd & Grd were constructed as small retail units. The upper floors were laid out as residential units accessed from long circulation corridors.

Access to these residential floors was via the Grand Staircase, accessed from Vernon Place.

On the fifth floor there was one apartment within the pitched roof.



Existing aerial view of Sicilian Avenue

Introduction

Key Objectives

The existing office and retail provision have reached the end of their serviceable life-span and need to be refurbished and revitalised.

Fundamentally the proposed works look at enhancing the existing heritage assets by retaining and restoring the remaining heritage envelope of the building. Internally the proposals look at reconfiguring and refurbishing the already extensively altered spaces to create retail and office units that meet current market demands and expectations.

Key objective proposals include:

- Retain and restore the historic street frontages of the buildings.
- Review and update the currently vacant retail provision, while focusing on retaining the historic retail frontage.
- Create an improved office entrance experience by relocating the entrance to Sicilian Avenue.
- Create a dedicated residential entrance in the historic residential entrance on Vernon Place.
- Reposition the existing dated office provision to be attractive to current market trends and tenants.
- Update the servicing strategy for the buildings to meet modern requirements and sustainability targets.
- Enhance the environmental performance and energy efficiency of the building as far as is feasible considering the constraints of the Grade II listing.

Introduction

Planning Pre-application advice

In June 2023, a pre-planning application was submitted to the London Borough of Camden. Proposals within the submissions included:

- Reconfiguring the retail units to help meet market expectations and improve lettable.
- The addition of an office entrance on Sicilian Avenue, to improve the arrival experience to the offices and to activate foot traffic along Sicilian Avenue.
- Re-establishing the historic entrance from Vernon Place, to improve the arrival experience for residential occupiers.
- Reduction of the structural spine walls to the upper office floors to meet market expectations and improve lettable.
- Creation of a new cycle and shower facilities at basement, with a dedicated entrance off Southampton Row.
- Reconfiguring and improving the office WC facilities.
- Upgrading of office floor servicing to facilitate wider energy and sustainability improvements.
- Reinstatement of the historical grand staircase.

Following initial feedback from Camden Planning officers a second Pre-application was subsequent submitted in September 2023. Proposals within this submissions included:

- A revised ground floor plan indicating retained small retail unit on Sicilian Avenue.
- Reduced structural works to the office floors.
- Option to restore, utilise and celebrate the historic staircase

Following further feedback a third Pre-application was submitted in November 2023, which outlined:

- The retention of three existing small retail units along Sicilian Avenue.
- The reinstatement of the residential entrance on Vernon Place
- Reconfiguration of the core layout with the grand staircase reinstated as a central circulation space

Please refer to submitted planning statement for further detailed analysis of the Pre-application process.

3.2.7

Reconfiguring Grd and LGrd Proposed Overview Arrangement

- In the base case arrangement the proposals look to create separate dedicated office and residential entrances within the ground floor.
- Through Spagetti House either downsizing or vacating their current unit, the proposals look to create a new residential entrance in the buildings historic entrance and an office entrance on Sicilian Avenue that links directly into the existing central stairs and lifts.
- By creating a corridor through to Vernon Place and by installing a dual/side entrance lift a new dedicated residential entrance can be created in the historic entrance, that still uses the central lift and reveals the Grand Staircase.
- In the proposed configuration, both the modern central switch back stair and the Grand Staircase will still serve as shared means of escape from the upper floors.
- To improve the buildings amenities it is proposed to use the existing entrance off Southampton Row as a cycle store/deliveries entrance.
- With the reconfiguration of the entrances it is also proposed to reconfigure the retail units into 3 no. larger units to improve their flexibility and appeal to potential incoming tenants.

31 Southampton Row
Pre-Application Report - June 2023
halebrown architects

3.4.4

Reconfiguring the frontages Sicilian Avenue New Entrance

- The proposal would look to create a new practical office entrance whose aesthetic mirrored the proportions of the adjacent bay shopfronts

31 Southampton Row
Pre-Application Report - June 2023
halebrown architects

Reduction of the structural spine walls Pre-application response

- While the retention of the chimney in Location 01 will cause some restrictions on future tenant layouts, it is believed that if the masonry rib which formed the old doorway was removed the chimney masonry could be retained and incorporated into future space plans.
- Further market feedback has though indicated that the restrictions caused by retaining the chimneys in locations 02 & 03 would remove too much tenant flexibility due to the reduced floor depth in these corners.
- As a consequence, the ongoing use and occupation of the building is understood to be at risk, through the difficulty in attracting and retaining tenants if the chimneys are retained in locations 02 & 03.
- It is therefore still proposed that the chimneys in location 02 & 03 are to be removed via the installation of new steel columns and downstand beams, similar to the approach agreed within Vernon and Sicilian House.

31 Southampton Row
Pre-Application Response - September 2023
halebrown architects

Reinstatement of the Grand Staircase Proposed configuration

- The revised core layout looks to improve the horizontal and vertical circulation and the daily use of the grand staircase, allowing it to once again become a celebrated historical feature within the building.
- With the improved access to the stairs it is expected that office users will also be able to use the grand staircase to move vertically between floors to access either the common WCs or other office spaces if a commercial tenant occupied more than just one floor.
- This will see the grand staircase being reinstated as a central circulation space on a daily basis and more than just as a means of escape route.
- While reinstating the windows in the original curved wall is not possible due to the design of the 1970's central infill, it is believed that through the introduction of the glazed screen both the visual orientation and the ingress of natural light into the staircase will be vastly improved.
- While the new glazed screens will require part of the landing walls to be removed, historically there were door openings within these walls that have now been blocked up.
- At the head of the grand staircase it is also still proposed to increase the size of the rooflight, subject to plant equipment layout, to help bring the natural daylight levels back closer to those enjoyed at the time the stair was original constructed.

31 Southampton Row
Pre-Application Response - November 2023
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Design proposals tabled in Pre-application and subsequent meetings with Camden's Heritage & Urban Design Office