

<b>Delegated Report</b>		<b>Analysis sheet</b>		<b>Expiry Date:</b>			
		N/A / attached		<b>Consultation Expiry Date:</b>			
<b>Officer</b>			<b>Application Number(s)</b>				
Nick Baxter			2024/0889/P and 2024/1940/L				
<b>Application Address</b>			<b>Drawing Numbers</b>				
51b Lamb's Conduit Street London WC1N 3NB			Refer to decision notice.				
<b>PO 3/4</b>	<b>Area Team Signature</b>	<b>C&amp;UD</b>	<b>Authorised Officer Signature</b>				
<b>Proposal(s)</b>							
Replacement of the existing kitchen units and appliances, the replacement of bathroom sanitaryware in existing locations, the redecoration throughout and the replacement of modern chipboard and floating floor coverings. Floor joist and timber bressumer strengthening works. The installation of energy efficient heat recovery extract fans to both the kitchen and the bathroom. Electrical and plumbing replacement works in existing locations.							
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>		Refused					
<b>Application Type:</b>		Planning permission and listed building consent					
<b>Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:</b>		Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
<b>Informatives:</b>							
<b>Consultations</b>							
<b>Adjoining Occupiers:</b>		No. notified	<b>00</b>	No. of responses	<b>00</b>	No. of objections	<b>00</b>
				No. electronic	<b>00</b>		
<b>Summary of consultation responses:</b>							
<b>CAAC/Local groups* comments:</b> *Please Specify							

## Site Description

The site is a one-bedroom flat within a terraced house of 1715 with later shop, listed grade II and making a positive contribution to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The list description says: "Terraced house with later shop. c1700-15, refronted c1779. Yellow stock brick. 4 storeys and cellars. 3 windows. Good early C19 wooden double shopfront with Greek Doric attached columns carrying entablature with enriched architrave, inswept frieze and projecting ovolo cornice. Central entrance; shop windows altered, panelled stallboards. House doorway to right with fanlight and panelled door. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sashes with early glazing bars. Parapet. Lead rainwater head and pipe. INTERIOR: not inspected but noted to retain some early C18 panelling and staircase with twisted balusters and carved brackets to treads."

The floor has been partly raised, revealing hand-sawn timbers of 1715 in their original configuration.

## Relevant History

No relevant history.

## Relevant policies

Local Plan 2017:  
D1 Design  
D2 Heritage  
NPPF 2021  
London Plan 2021

## Assessment

The applicant wishes to insert two extract fans in the exterior of the building (one in the façade), and to carry out strengthening works to the floors, as well as the other internal works detailed in the proposal above.

### Floor works

In the rear room, under the floor boarding, hand-sawn timber joists cross the room from side to side, terminating at a massive timber bressummer which foots the wall of the stair compartment.

The proposal will entail removing the 300-year-old joists, attaching a C-section steel beam to the bressummer supporting the stair compartment wall, cutting the ends off all of the joists, notching them and refitting them within the steel beam. The beam will have "end bearings built in the wall and encased in concrete".

Since the joists will need to be removed to insert the beam and to be cut down to shape, it will also be necessary to demolish the ceilings of the rooms below, which are attached to the joists, although this does not form part of the application.

In the front room, the works will entail partial demolition of a wall to insert a "strap". The existing joists will be doubled up with "sister joists", which will require additional pockets to be cut into the walls to support them.

There is no visible contextual evidence of failure, such as cracking or distortion. The heritage statement describes the floors as being "springy underfoot", but during the site visit they were found to be firm, with no discernible give when jumped on.

The works are justified by a surveyor's report. This states that its conclusions "were based on the

assumption of timber being of C16 grade, which is conservative for the historic timber in good condition”.

However, the category “C16” refers to modern, fast-grown softwood. Since the house dates from 1700--1715, and its floor structures will be made from ancient slow-grown oak, the calculation should be based on at least D24.

After several pages of calculations relating to modern pine, the report concedes, in a footnote, that “It is likely that the bressummer is formed from hardwood”. The report then says that, this being the case, it would still be overstressed by “around 20%”.

However, as noted, there is no visual evidence of cracking or distortion and the beams when jumped upon showed no evidence of “deflection”.

Notes submitted in a subsequent email state that “none of the floor timber elements meet in full the current design standards”. However, it is not reasonable to impose current building regs on 300-year-old buildings.

The notes go on to say: “The bressummer is *likely to be overstressed* and we recommend that further action is undertaken. Two strategies are possible: *further investigations* or strengthening. The additional investigations will require *specialist advice to grade the timber*, and further removal of finishes to have *a better picture of the bressummer and the wall above it*. It is *more likely than not* that the investigations will confirm the need for strengthening.”

The parts of these notes indicating uncertainty have been set in italics by this conservation officer for the purposes of this document. It will be seen that, on the strength of suppositions, themselves apparently based on the wrong type of wood, the applicant has chosen to opt for intrusive and harmful works, instead of the further investigations equally recommended by the surveyor, ideally undertaken by a specialist in early-18<sup>th</sup>-century buildings.

In conclusion, the insertion of steel and concrete in historic buildings is unsympathetic and often harmful. The alterations to the underfloor structures would be highly damaging to ancient fabric and appear excessive given the absence of symptoms of collapse. No consideration appears to have been given to the collateral issue of the ceilings below, which would need to be removed for the joists to be worked upon.

### **Extraction fans**

Illustrations in the Vent Axia brochure show that, internally, the fans will take the form of a plastic box attached to the wall at high level. Externally, they will present a 10cm wide plastic pipe projecting approximately 20cm from the wall.

While the rear extraction device will be mounted in the kitchen, and its external flue will be viewed in the context of a large duct belonging to the restaurant on the ground floor, the front one will be prominently sited on the otherwise unspoilt front elevation of 1779.

The front elevations of neighbouring buildings are similarly free of such additions at high level, so it would mar an otherwise pristine terrace as well as the host building.

There is no public benefit to the works.

It is considered therefore that the proposal would result in loss of historic fabric, causing harm to the special interest of the listed building, contrary to policy D2 (heritage) of the Local Plan and would harm the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, contrary to policies D1 (design) and D2 (heritage) of the Local Plan.