

4<sup>th</sup> June 2024

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Dear Andreas

**FLAT 1 GILES BUILDING, UPPER HAMPSTEAD WALK, CAMDEN LONDON NW3 1DE**

*Instructions*

We have been asked to comment on the existing structure of the above flat which forms part of a block that has been converted to residential accommodation, with respect to its construction and the likely use of the building previously, specifically with regards to the basement. The basement area is currently a void and does not provide any useable space to the current flat above and the question is whether this formed a useable part of the building previously.

*Construction*

The property was constructed in the Victorian period as a medical facility which has obviously been altered considerably during its lifetime. The base construction comprises load bearing masonry on typical brick spread foundations although there has been some localised strengthening of these in the form of underpinning in concrete, the extent of this appears limited. There has also been additional works to the structure to provide support to the floor above in the form of brick piers. Whilst the majority of the foundations exposed as part of trial pits dug around the property are as originally built, the alterations noted reflect the change in use of the building and subsequent changes to the construction that this has generated.

This is also evident in that new timber floors have been provided presumably as part of the conversion of the property into flats for residential accommodation and within the basement void brickwork support piers have been added to provide further support to the new floor structure.

There is considerable debris within the basement void, and this appears to be as a consequence of demolition elsewhere within the property with the material being deposited in the void to avoid the cost of removal.

From the information available as part of the inspections carried out to date there does appear to be areas of infill brickwork at this lower basement level which potentially could have been access points to this area. This would suggest that access was available to this area exclusive of the existing ground floor.

The ground investigations carried out show that the vast majority of the surrounding areas show substantial made-up ground around the building suggesting that the ground floor level was located at a significantly higher level from the surrounding site than it is at present. This would have afforded the opportunity for access to have been provided to the area beneath the existing ground floor.

### *Design*

The period of construction for the building in the Victorian era and its use as an institutional hospital facility is borne out by its design which is typical of this use class. These institutions were mostly privately funded and as a consequence were less architectural and much more functional.

The emphasis with respect to this philanthropy was to make as much use of the funding as possible which drove repetition of plan and appearance with consistent sizing and arrangements of windows doors and floor plates throughout the buildings. As materials were expensive the methods of construction reflected this and hence building was focused on creating functional environments with no wasted space, design details or materials. There was also a limit to the services provided to these buildings and so advantage was taken of naturally cool or dark spaces for storage, with through ventilation from windows and natural daylight. This would have meant that basement areas became valuable in these medical style facilities as they would have been naturally cool and dark.

Given the constraints that would have existed on this structure at the time of its construction it would have been unusual to create the basement area without a purpose in mind. The fact division walls were provided, and that suitable head height was allowed for would suggest that this was considered part of the building and had a specific purpose. It should also be borne in mind that surface finishes and materials used within this area would have been of a basic standard as these locations would have been largely unseen by people admitted to or visiting the facility.

Construction of this time could best be described as frugal, purposeful and functional. The external appearance of the property despite the later alterations would bear out this design approach.

It is also often the case that materials would have been salvaged from this build in the past which could have been used elsewhere particularly items such as stone slabs which may have formed a floor structure in the basement. With this in mind the current condition of the basement even when cleared of rubble may still appear somewhat basic in appearance and not reflect its condition at the time of construction

Whilst there is no access at present to this area this may well have been obscured by later alterations to the site and the raised levels around the building. Further investigation of the infilled areas of brick work noted within the void may also confirm where access was previously available.

### *Summary*

The question has been asked as to whether the basement area would have been used previously as part of the day-to-day use of the building. Based on the information that has been made available and that which can be seen on site our view would be that there was originally a lower level/basement as it would have been unusual given issues of cost and availability of materials that this space would have been constructed with no clear purpose in mind.

It is apparent that over the passage of time the site has changed considerably, and this has obscured the previous use, access and construction with a significant increase in levels around the building. The void itself been filled with demolition rubble presumably as part of alterations to the structure of the building over its lifetime which also obscures details within this area.

As with all buildings of this age the construction evidence should be considered in tandem with the

I hope these comments have been useful in your consideration of the basement void, its purpose and likely use.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Dillon', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Kevin Dillon BSc MRICS  
**Dillon Associates**