

39 GREAT RUSSELL STREET
DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
CONSRVATION STATEMENT
PROPOSED ROOF EXTENSION



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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Mowbray Crawshaw Architects are responsible for the project for the restoration and enhancement of 39 Great Russell Street.

Planning permissions have been obtained for 3 family sized dwellings, a shop at the front of the ground floor and a extension over 4 stories at the rear, including an incremental storey on the 2 storey wing at the rear facing Willoughby street (application ref. 2012/0021/P granted on 16 February 2012).

Following a meeting with a duty planner (Sally Sheppard on 8th October 2012) in order to open dialogue with the council, we are pleased to submit proposals to add an incremental top floor to the main body of the existing building as an enhancement of the uppermost residential unit.

The building is not listed, but has been designated as a positive contributor to the Bloomsbury Conservation area.

At Mowbray Crawshaw Architects, our principal background is in the restoration of listed buildings and we believe that the proposals constitute an enhancement of the historical character of the building for the area as explained in this document.



Figure 1.
No's 39-42 (consecutive)
Great Russell Street

2.0 AREA HISTORY

After the Great Fire of 1666 landowners saw the potential for new fashionable suburbs to be developed North of St Giles High Street. They took their inspiration from Covent Garden where fine town houses and the church of St Peter's had been built around an arcaded square for the Duke of Bedford, to the designs of Inigo Jones in the 1630's.

Development continued northwards between Holborn and Great Ormond Street when the Earl of Southampton's estate also passed to the Russell family (the Dukes of Bedford) after the 4th Earl's daughter married William Russell in 1669. Great Russell Street itself was formed in this period (around 1670).

The later Georgian and Regency period saw another rapid expansion of development northwards from Great Russell Street and Great Ormond Street towards Euston Road as developers capitalized on demand from the expanding wealthy classes. Shops to serve the increased population also appeared during the 19th century. Many were inserted into existing domestic terraces on the ground floor, examples of which are in evidence in Great Russell Street and Museum Street.

During the mid 19th century many of the terraces were rebuilt and re-fronted using a more decorative treatment of stucco finishes and classically influenced ornamentation such as rusticated quoins, window architraves, cornicing and balustrades at parapet level. Many of the Victorian timber shop-fronts are retained, providing interest at street level. No's 39 to 42 are characteristic of this later period of building.

Awareness of the area's heritage value was heightened during the 1960's in response to the proposal to create a new British Library in this city quarter.

Great Russell Street is now a relatively busy east-west route that changes in character along its length. Earlier four-storey terraces, interspersed with some larger and later 19th century mansion blocks, predominantly front the street.

3.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

No's 39-42 (consecutive) Great Russell Street is a uniform terrace of four townhouses; the windows facing Great Russell Street are grouped in threes and there is strong horizontal banding. The consistency in height, mass, materials and detailed elevation treatment gives a very distinctive and mid-19th century character to this part of Great Russell Street.

Number 39 is a substantial terraced house occupying a dominant position at the street corner, although the architecture is set within the uniformity of the block of 4 buildings. The most architecturally significant elements of the building are the principal façades facing Great Russell Street and Willoughby Street. The architectural style of the façade is typical of the mid-nineteenth century Italianate tradition.

The basement is accessible from the inside of the house via steps beneath the main staircase. A shop accessible from Great Russell Street occupies the ground floor. All the other floors, now designated as residential, are accessible from two doors on Willoughby Street.

While the building is not listed, it is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area sub-area 7. No. 39 and has been designated a positive contributor to the historic character of the area.

3.1 FAÇADE

39 Great Russell Street is built of brick masonry construction with white stucco render at all levels. The stucco render on the ground floor has been painted to make a shop front. A flat asphalt roof is concealed behind a high balustrade.

The Architectural décor is an elaborate variant on decorative Victorian neo-classical design. Rusticated pilasters separate the principle bays. The tripartite Venetian windows of the 'Piano Nobile' are framed by pilasters carrying ionic capitals. The second and third floor windows are framed with elaborate architraves and corbelled string courses, balusters and entablatures. The roof-line balustrade is visually supported by a cornice with block modillions and gargoyles. Broadly speaking the composition is carefully composed and embellished and forms a coherent architectural statement.

The stucco render shows signs of cracking, staining, flaking and other symptoms of water damage. The balustrades are also in need of maintenance.



Figure 2.
No. 39 Great Russell Street
North facade

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

The property has been the subject of two recent successful planning applications.

In July 2011:

Permission was granted for the change of use of the upper floors from offices (Class B1a) to one self contained three bedroom flat (Class C3). (Application number 2011/1663/P)

In February 2012:

Permission was granted for a four storey rear extension, a single incremental storey to the rear wing and a roof terrace on the wing facing Willoughby Street (figure 4). Permission was also granted for two new light-wells and the enlargement of the existing light-wells with glass block covers in the pavement on Willoughby street, and the installation of a sliding roof-light at fourth floor level for the use of the roof as a terrace in connection with the change of use and conversion of the ancillary retail and office space at the rear basement and ground floors to create 3 self contained residential units. (Application number 2012/0021/P)



Figure 3
No. 39 Great Russell Street
West façade on Willoughby
Street as existing



Figure 4
No. 39 Great Russell Street
West façade on Willoughby
Street showing proposed
extension granted permission in
February 2012. (Application
number 2012/0021/P)

5.0 PROPOSED ROOF EXTENSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This proposal seeks to extend the house at roof level by infilling behind the balustrade at the rear of the building (well away from Great Russell Street).

There is to be no increase in the over-all height of the building. There is to be no increase in the height of the balustrade facing Great Russell Street and there is to be no visible increase in the height of the balustrade facing Willoughby Street.

The new floor is set within the existing height of the parapet, with a low profile roof (in terne coated stainless steel) set below the chimney cornice, and extending out to a discrete shallow gutter set over the rear portion of the balustrade.

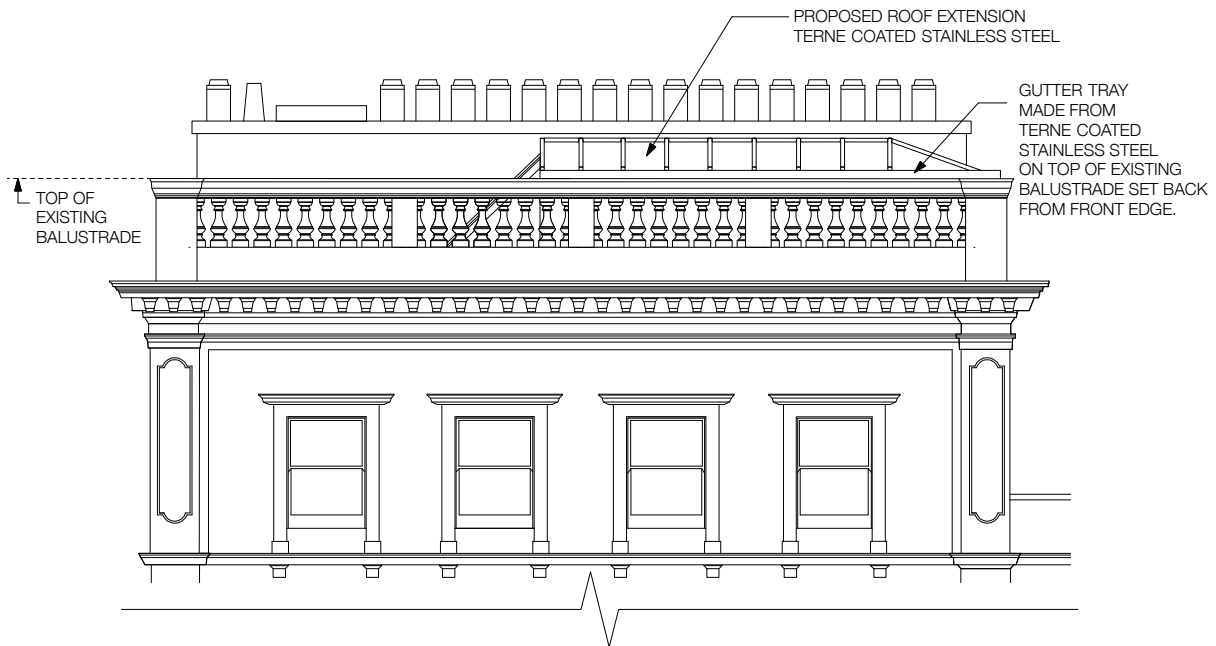


Figure 5
Elevation on Willoughby Street
Showing proposed roof
extension behind existing
balustrade

5.2 VISIBILITY

The key consideration behind this proposed roof extension is its invisibility from all vantage points at street level.

The existing roof is currently hidden behind the parapets at the front and side. The parapet itself is concealed by a dominant and projecting cornice. The proposed roof will remain completely concealed by the same parapet when viewed from pavement level.

We have undertaken measured sectional studies of the sight lines from both Great Russell Street and Willoughby Street.

Figure 6 shows that the extension will not be visible from the other side of Willoughby Street.

Figure 7 shows that the extension will not be visible from the other end of Willoughby Street or from the other side of Great Russell Street.

The proposed extension will not be visible from the forecourt of the British Museum.



Figure 6.



Figure 7.

In order to achieve complete invisibility of the proposed roof extension at the rear, when viewed from Willoughby street, the existing parapet is to be extended from the West façade to the South (rear) façade. (Figure 8 and 9)



Figure 8.
View from Willoughby Street
Showing existing parapet and proposed
side extension (permitted)



Figure 9.
View from Willoughby Street
Showing proposed parapet and
proposed side extension (permitted)

The existing historic pattern of decoration on the west façade is to be extended to improve the small area of the South façade that is visible from the street. This minor alteration is essentially a tidying-up exercise and will allow the proposed roof extension to remain completely invisible from the street.

We believe that this alteration is in accordance with the LON\NEW Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy Adopted draft 18 April 2011 which requires that:

“modern design can be accommodated and enhance the Conservation Area, by carefully assessing and responding to the form and qualities of surrounding buildings and spaces.”

and:

“(it should) positively enhance the character, history, archaeology and nature of existing buildings on the site and other buildings immediately adjacent and in the surrounding area, and any strategic or local views.

5.3 REAR FAÇADE PROPOSALS

Where the parapet is to be extended on the South façade the proposed architectural décor has been carefully considered. We have undertaken a detailed study of design options. Figure 10 shows option 1 where the existing balusters, cornice, block modillions and string-course on the street front are reproduced in their totality on the South façade. Option 2 (figure 11) shows a treatment that has been simplified to register the transition to the less formal and domestic character of the rear of the building and to preserve the emphasis on the expression of the facades facing the street, as originally intended. We think that option 2 would be more appropriate.



Figure 10.
Showing proposed treatment of rear
Façade. Option 1



Figure 11.
Showing proposed treatment of rear
Façade. Option 2

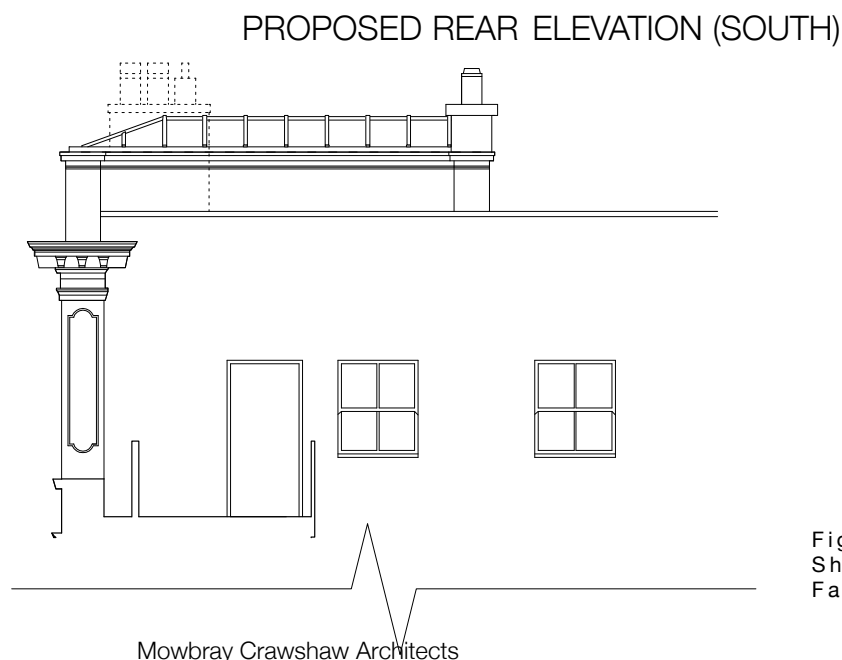


Figure 12.
Showing proposed treatment of rear
Façade. Option 2

5.4 Architectural Design

The proposed roof in-fills the South side of the roof between the existing spinal chimney stack, which forms the party wall with number 40 Great Russell Street, and the existing balustrade on Willoughby street. The finish of the roof is to be terne coated stainless steel formed onto standing seams and running down to a stainless steel gutter tray on the top of the existing balustrade.

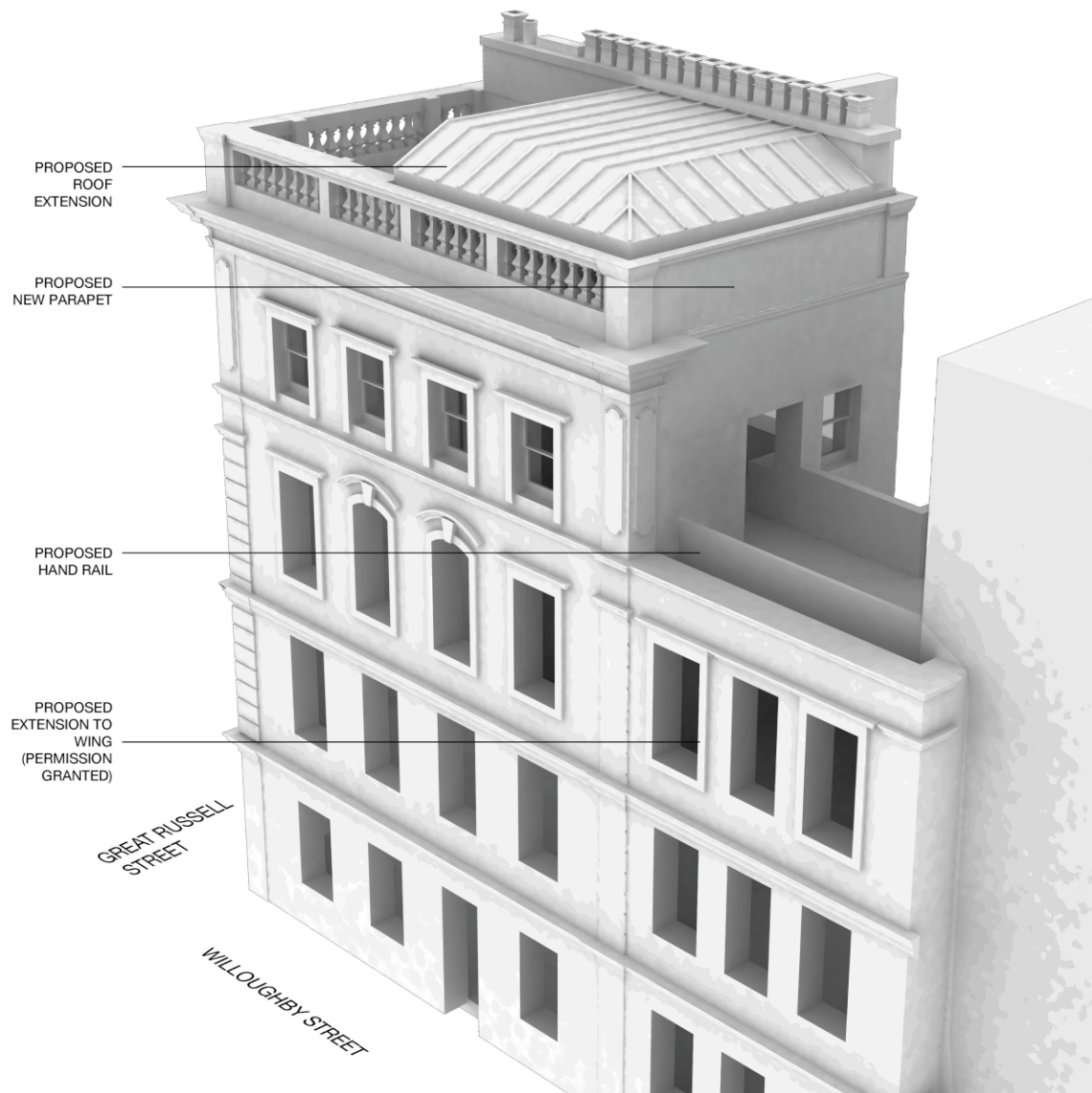


Figure 13.
Digital model Southern aerial view
Showing proposed roof extension

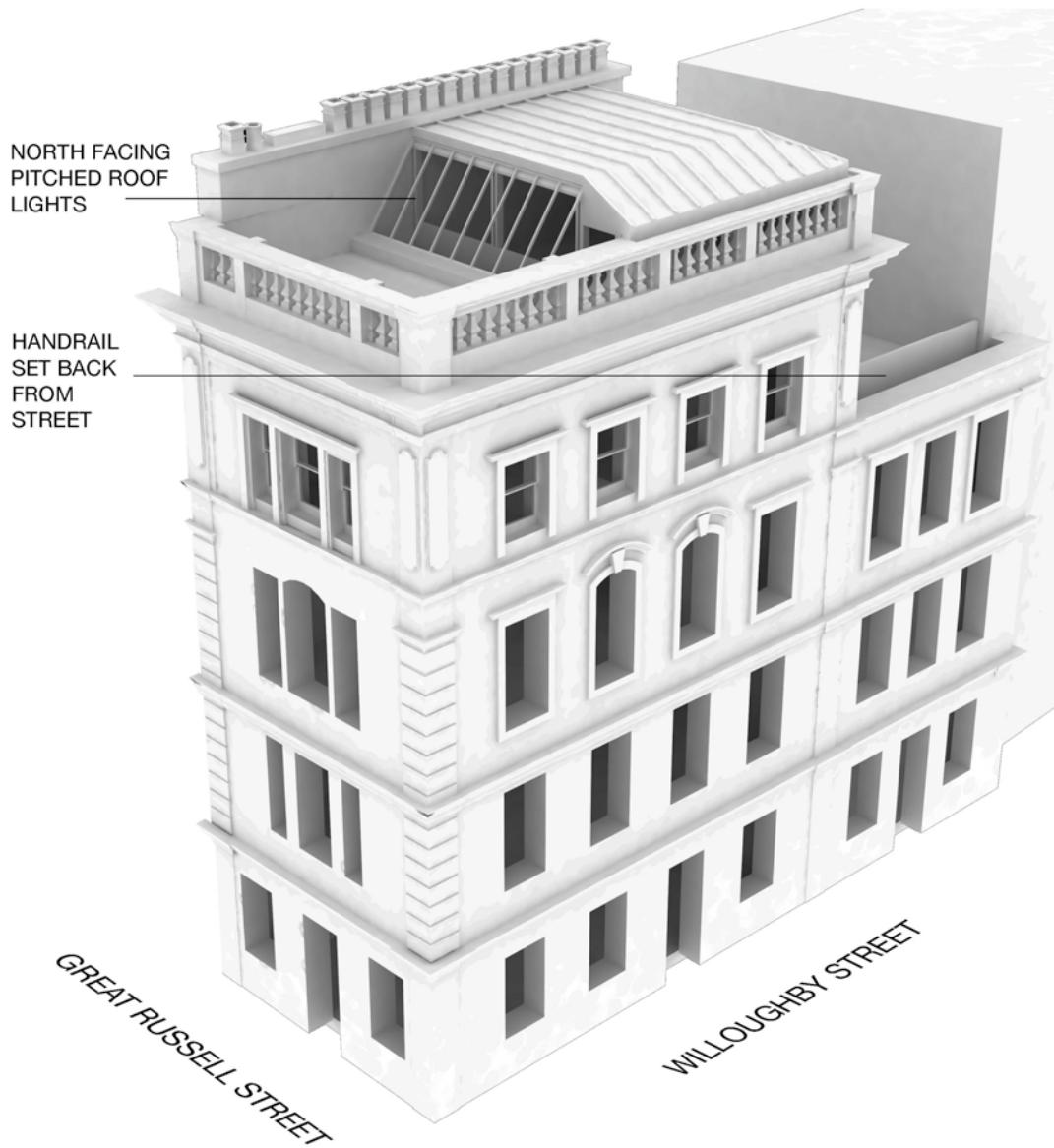


Figure 14.
Digital model Northern aerial view
Showing proposed roof extension

The North side of the existing flat roof is to be used as a roof terrace. Pitched roof lights are to span a light-well between the extension and the roof terrace. The disused chimney stack in the South-West corner of the roof is to be demolished and removed.

In line with recommended guidance for the control of light spillage, lighting to the proposed upper floor is to be directed downwards wherever possible. All new luminaires are to be specified to minimize the spread of light, and the lighting design philosophy is focused on the avoidance of over-lighting.

6.0 MAIN FAÇADE REMEDIAL PROPOSALS

In accordance with council policy:

“In all cases the Council will expect original architectural features and detailing to be retained, repaired, protected, or refurbished in the appropriate manner, and only replaced where it can be demonstrated that they are beyond repair.”

The façade is to be restored to its original condition. Render is to be repaired and the façade cleaned with a low-pressure vortex cleaning system. The stucco shows signs of cracking, staining, flaking and water damage. The damaged areas are proposed to be stripped back and repaired or renewed where necessary, and repainted to match the existing.

7.0 EXISTING ROOFSCAPE ON ADJACENT PROPERTIES

There are a variety of structures and terraces currently in use at roof level in the terrace and adjacent buildings (see figure 15).

No. 40 Great Russell Street has a roof level structure occupying approximately half of the roof area. No. 41 has a similar structure surrounded by an in-use roof terrace. No. 42 has a full roof terrace and stairwell enclosure (application ref. 2010/2227/P). No. 3 Willoughby Street has a similar stair enclosure and roof terrace and no. 1 Coptic Street also has a stair enclosure and a more elaborately landscaped roof terrace.

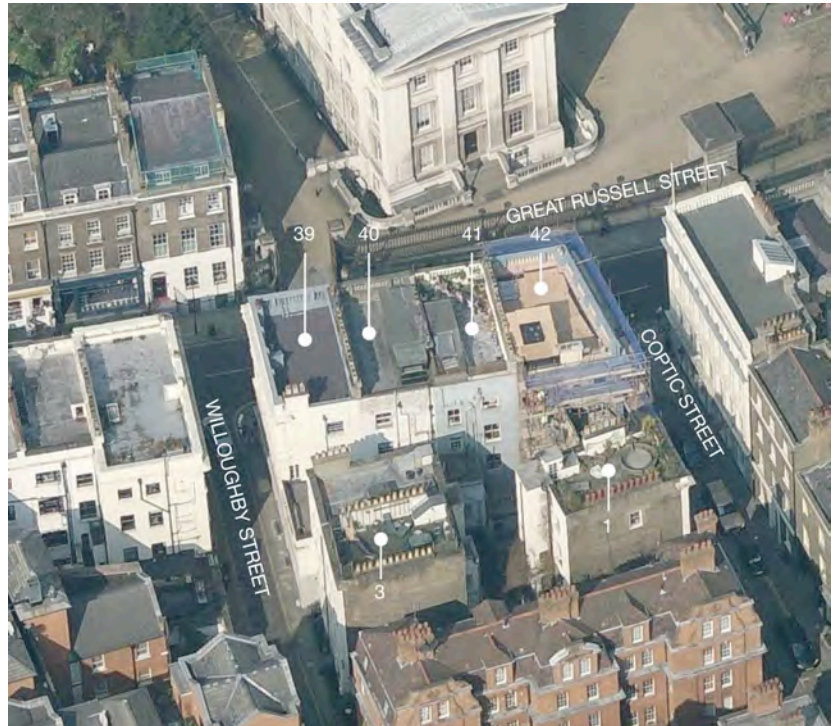


Figure 15.
Aerial photograph of 39 Great
Russell Street and adjacent
buildings

Figure 16 shows that the predominant pattern is of roof level enclosures, out of sight of the street frontage, and surrounded by roof terraces. Our proposals are in conformity with this established pattern.

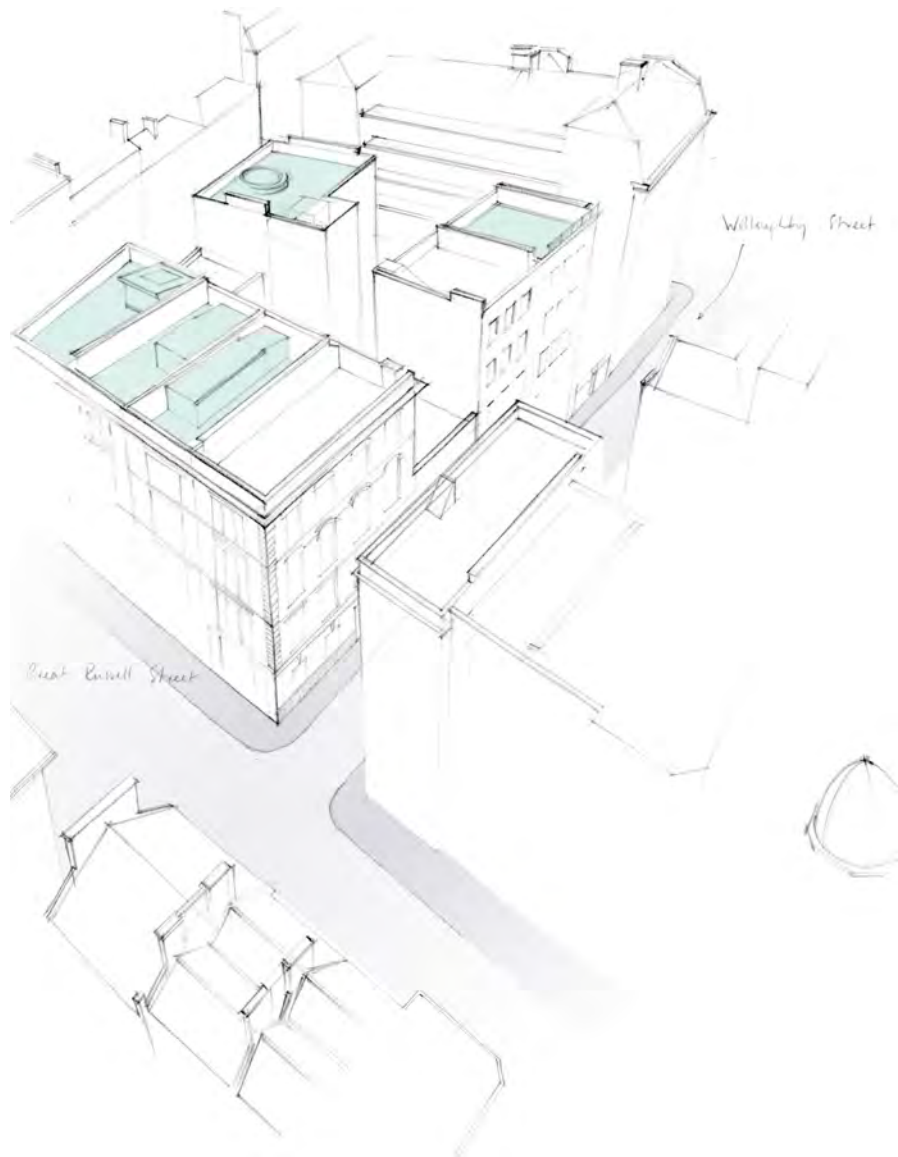


Figure 16.
Aerial sketch showing roof top
structures and terraces on adjacent
buildings

8.0 DESIGN

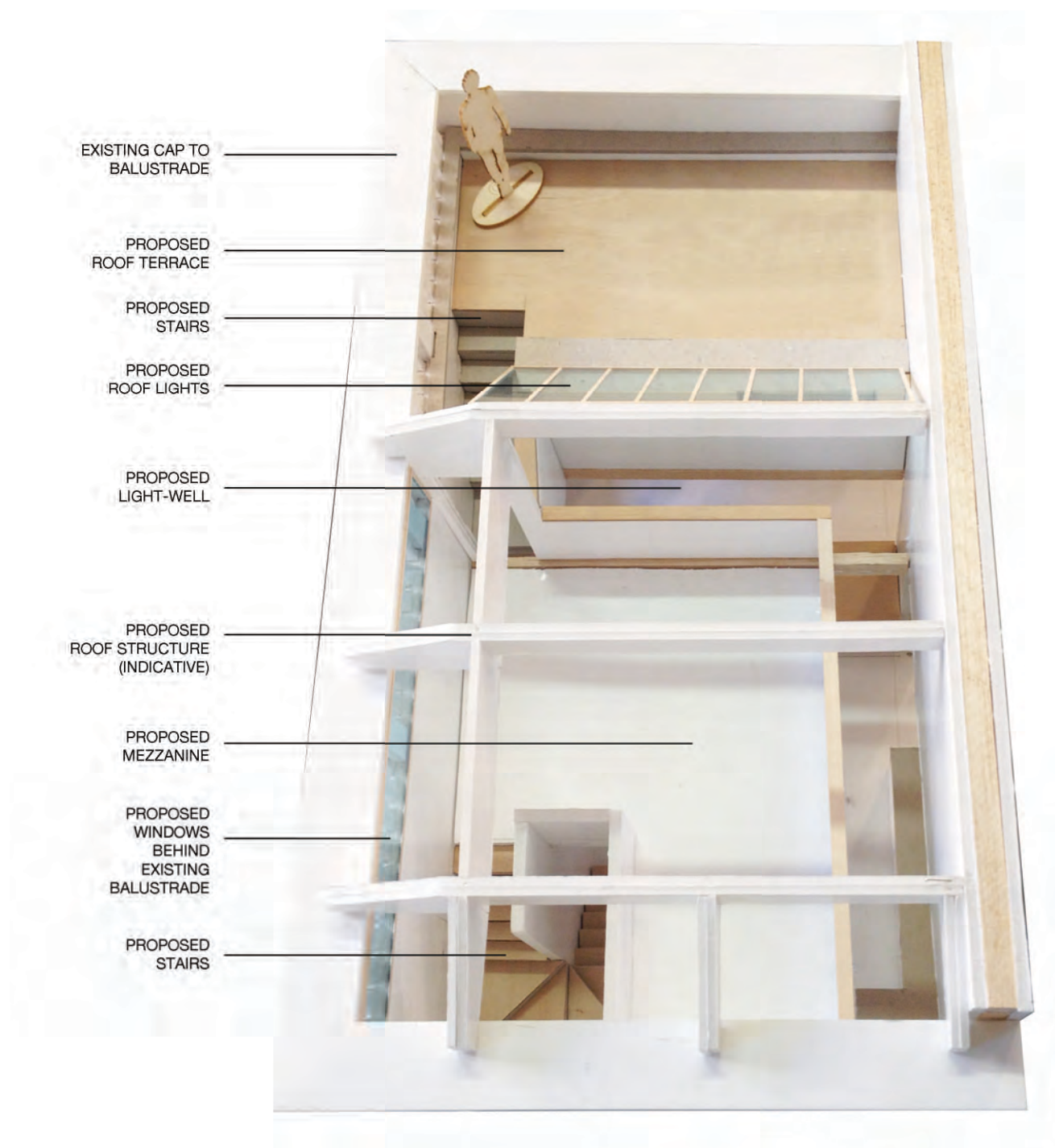


Figure 17.
1:25 Model showing interior of
proposed roof extension



Figure 18 and 19.
1:25 Model showing interior of
proposed roof extension