



APPRAISAL & IMPACT ASSESSMENT

**33 Mornington Terrace
Camden
London NW1 7RT**



**20, North Street
Sudbury
Suffolk CO10 1RB**

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33 Mornington Terrace, Camden

This report is prepared on behalf of the London Borough of Camden who wish to carry out alteration and improvement works to the building. This report addresses the impact of the proposed works on the building in view of its status as a listed building (Grade II).

Location and Description

The property is part of a continuous symmetrical terrace of town houses being one of the central projecting properties built in a classical style with yellow stock bricks with rusticated stucco to the ground floor and slate roof concealed behind a parapet wall at the front with a steep slated mansard to the rear. It is dated in the formal listing description as dating from the mid 19th Century.

The property is arranged over three storeys with attic and semi basement and two windows at each level. The front elevation has stucco portico with pilasters with entablature; fanlight and panelled entrance door. There are stucco fluted ionic pilasters marking the divisions between the properties at first and second floor carrying entablature at third floor level. Upper floor windows have recessed, architraved sashes and first floor windows have cornices with console brackets together with continuous cast iron balcony.

The front door is accessed via stepped access with vertical spear headed cast iron railings either side. The semi basement area has no external access and has cast iron railings with geometrical design.

The rear elevation is plain yellow stock brickwork rising to the third floor with stone capping and hidden parapet gutter. Above this is a vertically slated wall with casement windows serving the attic rooms.

To the rear elevation there is a lower, two storey, flat roof extension again of yellow stock bricks with stone coping and double hung sliding sash windows. This appears to be contemporary with the main building.

Original Design

Although some internal works have been carried out since the property's original construction partly by the provision or sealing of doorways and changing room uses, the original layout remains readable and for the most part intact.

Internal finishes are relatively plain with plastered ceilings and decorative cornice to the principle ground floor level. The staircase rises continuously from the main entrance level to attic with a continuous curved handrail and turned balusters.

The staircase connecting the basement area is separated from the main staircase although runs beneath it. This has previously been removed being replaced by a simple steel flight with no handrail or guarding.

The principle rooms have chimney breast and fireplace openings although only a small number survived, the majority have been covered or sealed.

Internal doors would have been timber four panel doors, some examples remain although the majority have been replaced with functional flush fire doors. Internal doors do have decorative architraves and the full height front windows at first floor have internal cases and shutters which remain. These have been stripped of all decoration to show bare timber finish.

Later Alterations

At semi basement (lower ground floor) level the front room window has an exterior mesh grille and the adjacent former hallway has been subdivided by studwork partitioning to form a small bathroom and cupboard. The small front window to this bathroom is of modern 20th Century design and may well be within a sealed up door opening as there is no other means of access to the external sub basement area which does itself contain two storage areas beneath the front paved garden. No access was possible to these areas for inspection.

As previously mentioned the original staircase communicating to the ground floor above has previously been removed and replaced with a utilitarian steel flight which has no handrail or guarding. A single acrow prop remains supporting the floor to the stairwell.

The rear extension room has obviously suffered considerable defect and damage as plaster is loose and missing and new softwood floor joists have been provided above with no ceiling finish. There were visible signs of water staining and penetration to this floor and ceiling of the adjacent lobby area.

At ground floor level the following alterations are evident:

1. The original entrance door from hallway to the front room has been sealed with the outline just perceptible in the wall plaster.
2. A wide blank opening has been formed in the internal cross wall between the two principle rooms at this level.
3. The rear room within the two storey extension has been converted to use as a bathroom and a new studwork cylinder cupboard provided.
4. Fitted kitchen units provided to the rear principle room, these rooms at this level being used as a single bedsit sharing the bathroom within the rear extension with the bedsit unit at first floor level.

At first floor level the following alterations are evident:

1. Fitted kitchen units provided within the rear room as both rooms at this level form a separate bedsit unit.
2. Door to the landing and stairway replaced with flush fire door.

At **second floor level** the following alterations are evident:

1. Partition inserted to divide the front room forming two bedrooms.
2. New door inserted within the cross wall connects into the rear room.
3. Partition inserted to subdivide the rear room to form inner hallway and bathroom.
4. Partial enclosure of the staircase landing and provision of a fire door to form entrance doorway to the self contained flat occupied at second and third floor levels.
5. Loss of newel post, handrail and balustrade from the staircase connecting to third floor.

At **third floor level** the following alterations are evident:

1. Replacement of the access doorway to stairwell with flush fire door.
2. Removal of lath and plaster to the cross partition exposing studwork and linking front and rear rooms.

It is believed all alterations are 20th Century with the majority being post 1950.

Evaluation

The entire terrace of which this property forms part was listed on the basis of its external appearance which remains essentially unaltered save for the provision of roof lights and dormer windows at roof level to some properties.

There have been few major structural alterations and the majority are non structural and designed to subdivide the accommodation into smaller occupiable units. All are currently occupied with the exception of the semi basement, lower ground floor area, which does not appear to have been occupied for a considerable period and currently houses a large amount of domestic items which preclude full access and inspection.

In the main the simple decorative features internally, plaster ceilings, cornices, architraves and skirtings are predominantly original as are some of the internal doors, although many have been replaced with flush fire doors for safety reasons arising from the subdivision to separate occupied units.

In terms of these additions little is of note or has added value to the building. Overall they have and do detract from the history and character of the building. The building has also been poorly maintained and currently exhibits a number of areas that require attention in order to safeguard and maintain the building for future generations.

Impact Assessment

Plans have been prepared for submission for planning permission and listed building consent to reverse some of the inappropriate and unsympathetic alterations, carry out essential repairs and convert the building into two self contained units. One with the basement and ground floor, accessed from new external steps at basement level, the other occupying first, second and third floor access from the existing front entrance and staircase at ground floor level.

Although in strict conservation terms the best use would be reversion to a single dwelling. However it is a Council owned property and established in multiple occupancy therefore continuance as smaller units may suit the Council's housing requirement profile so conversion into two self contained units would seem a suitable compromise as this ensures the building is repaired and fully occupied and reverses some of the earlier unacceptable alterations, particularly those associated with fire escape on a common staircase.

Bearing in mind the Grade II status of the building, as compared with Grade II* or Grade I, the current subdivision of the interior and general condition of the building it is my view that it does not warrant full reversion or intricate preservation as there is scope for new insertion and sympathetic alterations, if reversible. The test to be applied is whether the conversion adheres to the principles outlined in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15.

There do not appear to be any areas of the property itself which are inaccessible which might be sensitive to alteration and as much unsympathetic work is to be removed and essential repairs carried out the application can be determined on the basis of what is now visible.

Exterior

The plans show virtually no alterations to the exterior of the building other than that necessitated for reasons of maintenance and repair.

The rear two storey extension is to have a replacement window to the side elevation at basement level which is shown to be a purpose made single glazed timber window replacing the standard joinery frame currently installed. Also the adjacent existing opening is to have a new door and side light to properly secure and enclose the building.

The front of the property sees the major change but rather to the area in front of the building than the building itself. This will be the provision of new external stepped access required to give independent access to the semi basement and the unit at that level ensuring that the original principle entrance door again serves the other unit via a single private staircase connecting all upper floors. The detailing of these new steps and required railings are shown to match the detail of those original remaining.

Interior

The present internal arrangement of two bedsits and an apartment at second and third floor level all served from one entrance door and a single staircase provides an unhappy and inappropriate arrangement. It is my view that the proposed conversion to two units with the upper unit occupying the top three floors with the staircase and existing entrance door being the only means of access is a more suitable and acceptable arrangement for the building allowing removal of the subdividing fire door.

One area of concern which has been subject of pre-application discussion concerns separation of the two units at ground floor level within the rear of the entrance hallway. This has been achieved by provision of a curving studwork partition which will of course be reversible at some future time with little or no damage to existing fabric or features. The alignment and position of this partition ensures the principle detail and appearance of the staircase, handrail and balustrading is unaffected and the hallway remains undivided ensuring the decorative plaster ceiling and staircase can be viewed in its entirety as originally intended.

As a consequence of providing independent access for the lower unit at semi basement level ensuring the upper unit has sole use of the main entrance door, hallway and staircase it is necessary to construct a bypass corridor within the rear room at ground floor level to ensure independent access to all rooms at that level from the staircase. This would be a requirement for modern living standards and Building Control. Again, as this partition is modern, non load bearing studwork within the existing room it is completely reversible.

This rationale applies to the re-arrangement of the former bathroom at ground floor level in the rear extension which are themselves modern insertions and also the re-cladding of the exposed studwork partition at third floor level and provision of new ensuite bathroom with new softwood studwork partitioning.

Where possible flush fire doors will be replaced with traditional designed four panel doors with the aim of reinstating the original detail and appearance of the building.

In summary, the building has been altered and subdivided in an inappropriate way and suffers from lack of maintenance and is in need of urgent repair. The alterations proposed and illustrated on the drawings need not cause excessive damage to the interior if detailed appropriately and should in overall terms enhance and preserve the historic character of the remaining building.