

56 DOUGHTY STREET, LONDON WC1

**APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION
AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT**

**CONSERVATION DESIGN STATEMENT
DECEMBER 2007**

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56 DOUGHTY STREET, LONDON W1

CONSERVATION DESIGN STATEMENT

1.0 SUMMARY OF HISTORIC RESEARCH FROM DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

- 1.1** The Doughty Street houses were the result of the grant of leases to numerous speculative builders over a period of some twenty years from 1794 onwards. Most of the houses were constructed after the turn of the nineteenth century. The rate books record thirteen houses in 1801, forty two in 1808 and the entire street of sixty two houses in 1820. (Dickens house at No. 48 was occupied in 1809).
- 1.2** The Horwood map (extract attached) of 1792-99 shows a number of Doughty Street houses laid out. (Note that Upper John Street on the Horwood map is now the southern part of modern Doughty Street).
- 1.3** The Greenwood map of 1824 (extract attached) shows the entire street and indeed the entire area completely developed.
- 1.4** Number 56 sits in a group of similar houses; three storeys plus basement storey with attic rooms in a mansard type roof. The front elevations are carefully regulated with three equal windows on each floor vertically aligned, with the entrance door taking the place of a window on the ground floor.
- 1.5** The resulting front elevation is very satisfying. Details vary from house to house perhaps reflecting the leasehold building campaigns.
- 1.6** The houses were it seems occupied for the most part first by the professional middle class. The census of 1861 records 8 occupants at 56 Doughty Street; a merchant, James Underwood (40), his wife Emily (30), daughter Fanny (8) and sons Joseph (7) and Frederick (2) and three female servants all aged 25.
- 1.7** By 1901 the house was occupied by two households. One household was headed by Lawrence Turner (36) who styled himself "architect, sculptor, modeller and carver", his wife Martha, two daughters and two female servants. The second household was headed

by a widow of 59, two daughters, one son and one servant, giving a total occupancy of eleven people for the house.

- 1.8 The residential character of the street changed through the twentieth century, many houses going out of residential use becoming offices as happened to 56 Doughty Street. (Offices by 1970 at the latest). Happily that trend is now being reversed and residential use is returning.

2.0 HISTORIC ALTERATIONS TO THE EXTERNAL ENVELOPE

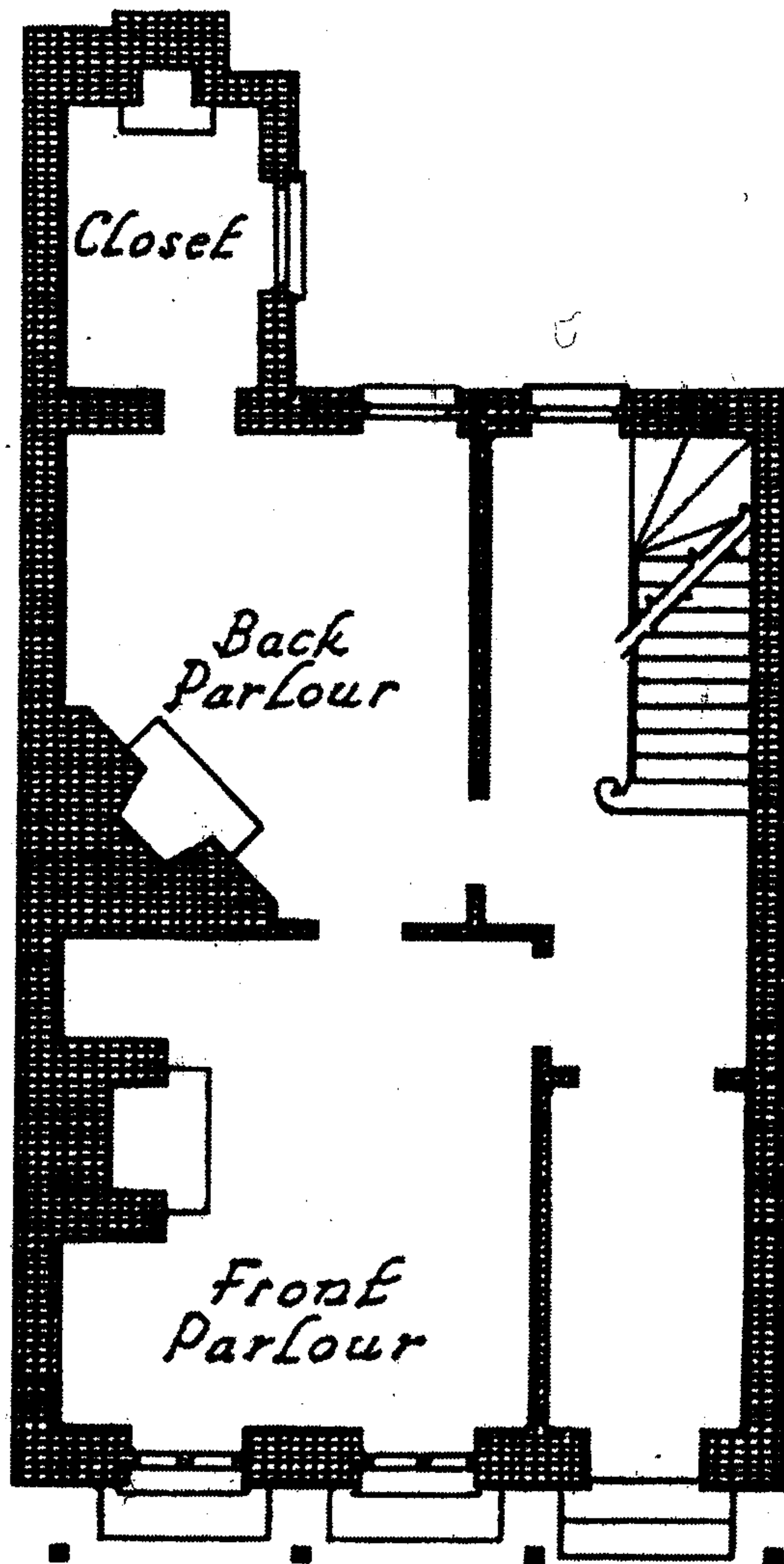
- 2.1 56 Doughty Street is on the east side of the street, the front facing approximately to the south west and the garden façade roughly north-east. The garden extends to the blank rear wall of the mews building (not part of the same ownership).

- 2.2 To the back of the main house a small closet wing originally occupied the space on the stair enclosure side of the house (same side as existing rear extension).
The 1871 Ordnance sheet indicates this small wing, and similar wings at 57, 58, 59 and 60. However by 1871 an additional extension had been added to the opposite side of the house (noted on the 1871 O.S.). That new extension was perhaps entered through the rear wall near the corner of the rear room. There is a blocked up door or window opening in the existing rear wall complete with arched head. The extension may have used the Regency cupboard door as its entrance! (This extension recalled the most common earlier type wing extension in London terrace houses as shown in "Behind the Façade" by Neil Burton (2007)). At this stage of the development it seems that the original small closet wing was kept in use and additional space created at ground and basement levels. (In the existing basement there is evidence for this construction).

- 2.3 The 1894 Ordnance sheet indicates the arrangement with two rear extension wings and a small light-well between. The neighbouring houses are as shown in the 1871 survey.

- 2.4 The 1921 Ordnance sheet records no further changes to 56 but major changes are recorded to the neighbouring property at 55 which was greatly extended occupying former garden to almost the full height of the house, on the boundary of 56. No. 57 seems to have been extended to the extent of No. 56's closet wing. The extension of 57 had little impact on 56 but the extension at 55 had and has a major impact on 56 making a

Introduction



Plan of a London house characteristic of the period after the Great Fire. From John Summerson's *Georgian London* (Yale University Press).

visual “block” to the back of the terrace. From drainage records it seems that the extension at 55 was carried out c.1900, when No. 55 still retained both its rear wings.

- 2.5 The 1938 Ordnance sheet records no further change.
- 2.6 The 1951 Ordnance sheet records the rear extension at 56 as now found. The rearrangement resulted in a very poor arrangement for surface drainage, which has resulted in significant dampness at the back of the house, all water drainage ending up in the vestigial gridded area which gives very poor light to the rear basement rooms. The work may have been put in hand as the war was approaching and perhaps was rather rushed resulting in poor consideration of detail, particularly water run-off at the back of the house.
- 2.7 The other significant external alteration to the form is the raising of the rear roof and rear wall (compare with No. 57, 58 and 59) to allow a higher ceiling and larger window at the top floor rear room. This may have been to compensate for the impact of the extension at 56.
- 2.8 Many undesirable and poor alterations to the interior were carried out c.1970 when the house was in office use. Office use necessitated more toilets and also resulted in blocked doorways and “upgrading” doors etc. for fire resistance. Inappropriate heavy cornicing was introduced to the ground floor and first floor rooms, overwhelming the lightness and delicacy of the Regency design.

3.0 THE ORIGINAL LAYOUT

- 3.1 From the basement up the original layout was as follows:

Basement	-	Service Rooms
Ground Floor	-	Reception and Dining
First Floor	-	Intercommunicating Reception
Second Floor	-	Bedrooms (2 no.)
Third Floor	-	Bedrooms (3 no.)

The “public” rooms were on ground and first floor.

Looking at the houses from the gardens the impression would have been of uniform rear elevations grouping in a similar way to the front elevations although less grand.

The front elevations are generally intact but the rear elevations exhibit many significant changes, some of which impact severely on the neighbouring houses; in the case of 56 the extension at 55 makes a major impact.

4.0 SIGNIFICANT EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS TO FRONT OF HOUSE

4.1 The Front Elevation

The brickwork of the front is largely of the first build but all the original sashes have been lost and the windows now contain crude replacement sashes of incorrect pattern and sections and mouldings.

4.2 The marble pavement to the front step is a late Victorian or Edwardian overlay to the original stone; both are defective.

4.3 The steel staircase to the front area is a “recent” alteration of poor quality.

The entrance screen to the basement level is a “recent” arrangement of poor quality.

5.0 THE LAYOUT OF THE HOUSE AS ORIGINALLY DESIGNED AND THE PROPOSAL

5.1 The house is to be used again as a family dwelling. Typically, the house has good sized rooms to the front and smaller rooms to the rear. The partitions between front and back do not align above each other (refer to section drawing).

5.2 The proposal has been developed from a detailed analysis of the house and designed to use the house in a way which requires least intervention. The original fabric will be carefully repaired.

5.3 At ground floor level the front room is much larger than the back and the rooms intercommunicated by way of a double door width opening. (Opening now blocked).

- 5.4 The front room was no doubt a formal reception room and the rear room may have been a breakfast room – it would have had good morning light and sunshine with a view to the garden which the original small closet wing would not have interrupted as does the side wall of the current extension. The kitchen to serve these rooms would have been in the basement; the servants carrying everything up and down.

At basement level there were two rooms front and back. Between the basement front and rear rooms was a stone shelved larder/store and this is still largely intact and will be retained.

- 5.5 The first floor rooms were formal reception rooms, which occupied the entire floor with interconnecting doors.
- 5.6 The second floor was the principal bedroom floor, the front room occupying the full width of the house and unusually having two doors from the staircase and two fireplaces. (Two doors are unusual but not unique; the second fireplace is very unusual).
- 5.7 The second floor was additional bedrooms.
- 5.8 The table below compares original with proposed uses.

<u>Floor</u>	<u>Original Uses</u>	<u>Proposed Uses</u>
Basement	Services Uses and Kitchen	“Service” uses including store and home office. The stone shelved larder will be retained.
Ground	Reception/Dining	Reception/Dining/Kitchen
First	Principal Bedroom	Principal Bedroom
Second	Bedrooms	Bedrooms

6.0 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT DEFECTS IN THE CONSTRUCTION

- 6.1 The roof coverings and gutters are in very poor condition.

6.2 The basement floor is defective (not original) and damp. All original floor finishes have been removed.

6.3 The rear basement area collects the rear yard water run-off and is a cause of damp in the building.

The small rear gridded area is completely inadequate to light the lower level which is permanently saturated.

6.4 Various leaks have caused damage to internal joinery fittings, particularly window surrounds.

6.5 The proposal incorporates recovering of the defective main roof.

7.0 ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACTS OF THE PREVIOUS ALTERATIONS

1. Front Elevation

- The loss of correct window sashes is a significant loss to the public realm as well as the internal spaces.
- The paint colours are not sympathetic to the building.
- Replacement metal stair to lower ground floor (basement) is poor.

2. Basement

- The modern floor screed is defective.
- Loss of original stone floors.
- Loss of most detail including doors.
- Rear (original) basement room is very poorly lit and damp. The window is not original as the panel below is a thin rebuild suggesting that a door was once inserted here.
- Good original stone shelved larder store.
- Good original stone stair to basement.

3. Ground Floor

- Recent “overcornices” to rooms behind which are the original Regency cornices. “Jacobethan” ceiling centre is out of character and detracts.
- Damaged Regency fireplace to front.
- Hallway floorboards irreparably damaged.
- Loss of light into back of hallway by virtue of design of rear extension.
- Loss of view from front door due to form of late alterations.
- Interconnecting doors removed and partition infilled.
- Doorway from hallway into rear room blocked.
- Stairwell down to basement enclosed and blocked crudely and loss of balustrade.
- Widening of opening at ground floor stairwell through to rear has spoiled the top of the basement stair.
- Alterations to panelled doors for fire upgrading.

4. First Floor

- Recent heavy plaster “Jacobethan” ceiling centre to front room.
- Out of scale and hazardous (fire risk) wooden surround and fireplace obscuring Regency hearth to front.
- Loss of fireplace to rear – alterations to panelled doors.

5. Second Floor

- Partition introduced to sub-divide front room.
- Loss of cupboards to either side fireplace – front room.
- Loss of cupboards to rear room.
- Loss of fireplace to rear room.
- Alterations to panelled doors.

6. Throughout

- Inappropriate service installations which were installed to suit office use.

The cumulative effect of the alterations:

- a) Impact negatively on the architectural character.
- b) Many are out of character with the Regency building, for example, the crude glazing bars and wrong pane proportions and the heavy over-cornices.
- c) Spoils the quality of light and view which are inimical to Regency interiors.

8.0 DESIGN STATEMENT FOR THE EXTENSION AS PROPOSED

The proposal has been developed following a careful assessment of the historic use and layout of the house. We have made:

- A careful assessment of the details in the house including lost/covered/moved features.
- Studies of the house in relation to orientation and light.
(Some study sheets are attached to illustrate this process).
- A review of the structure with a structural engineer.
- An assessment of the context.
- Examination of historic maps, drainage records etc.

The proposal has several objectives

- Full repair of the exterior.
- Repair and reinstatement of the interior (maximum retentions of original fabric).
- Minimum intervention.

- Design for reversibility.
- Design out major alteration by careful disposition of functions to spaces.
- Solving water run-off from the rear paved areas and damp.
- Careful incorporation of new services, heating, lighting, power, telephones, computer and security.
- Regaining the Regency sense of light throughout the house by reinstating (often hidden behind recent crude additions) the Regency cornices, dado, skirtings and fireplaces and opening views into and through the house as designed but now blocked by recent works and alterations.

The key to achieving the objectives are

- a) Using the layout in a manner which suits the design of the building.
- b) Remodelling the rear extension so that the objectives can be achieved.
- The redesigned extension re-establishes a distinct “back” to the original house by allowing the rear elevation to be read as a whole, its brick exposed and with its original openings displayed.
- The proposal also regains the sense of openness in views out from and through the main house.
- The impacts of the three storey neighbouring extension and the existing extension to the house is to produce a narrow slot outside the rear French doors which controls all views from the important rear ground floor room; the proposal overcomes this negative impact.
- The proposal regains the sense of openness by removing the extension wall (always in the shade due to orientation) completely and allowing an expansive view.

- By using a light stone flooring in the extension (to indicate the original external space) the maximum light is brought into the Regency interior.
- The reworked extension resolves historic, aesthetic and practical problems and will regain a sense of balance through the spaces. (The design studies included with this statement show how the entire plan is proportioned and balanced and is based on a square).
- Large glazed doors open onto the garden. The scale of all the spaces are carefully designed to relate to the Regency house.
- The extension will serve as a kitchen and dining space. It is not practical to have a kitchen in the basement with a dining room on the ground floor.
- The new space is an "intermediate" space, like a terrace between house and garden. The structural glass roof-light will give a separately articulated element which does not conflict with the original building.

Alternative layouts were considered before adopting this solution. The front ground floor room was considered for use as a kitchen but this has major disadvantages in relation to the house; a good Regency room would be fitted up inappropriately and ripped apart by services. The small rear room is not capable of being fitted up as a kitchen given its layout and size and would spoil a good historic room even if it could be and also prevent access through to the garden.

In the proposal these rooms are dealt with very lightly to be used as linked reception rooms as intended thus regaining the Regency plan.

The existing rear extension is not suitable for a kitchen to serve this large house.

The new extension has been designed to sit very lightly when viewed from the garden with a well proportioned simple elevation. The quality of light, a vital Regency concern into the main house will be improved by a) the design of the new glazed roof (which will also abolish all the damp problems at low level) which gives as good a view of the sky as is currently possible, b) by reflectance from a limestone floor, c) opening up the view to the garden by returning an open expansive view of the outside as intended by the original design.

The proposed staircase which gives access to the lower ground floor will allow good daylight to fall into lower ground floor area. The existing gridded area brings almost no light into the space; this with the damp means that the basement rooms are unattractive and are poorly used and do not contribute to the good repair or presentation of the building. By making these spaces attractive the use and future repair will be assured.

9.0 PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TO STRUCTURE

In the house itself only two small alterations to "old" historic fabric are proposed (other than for example returning doorcases to correct locations, etc)

- a) Main Bedroom (Second Floor). A small door opening ("secret" door type) in the partition to give access through to the bathroom.
- b) Window in Rear Basement Room. The existing window is not itself original and has been subject to various alterations. It seems that the current sash window has been a doorway (look at panel below the cill). The sashes are however reused possibly from elsewhere. The proposal is to make this window a pair of glazed French doors using lambs tongue glazing bars.

10.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT OF PROPOSAL ON NEIGHBOURING BUILDINGS

The proposed rear extension including the roof scape of the proposal will not be visible from any other dwelling or adjacent neighbouring buildings. No neighbours windows look towards the proposed extension. The boundary walls of the house will remain as they are at present without alteration and there will be no visual impacts at the boundaries.

11.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT ON THE LISTED BUILDING

The only fabric to be altered to provide for the remodelling at the rear is mid twentieth century or later and of distinctly poor quality. There will be negligible impact on the historic fabric, the structural glass roof only requiring a sealant/gasket where it abuts the rear wall of the house.

All other repair and conservation is directed to preserving the original fabric and bringing coherence to the design, reversing in the process poor interventions resulting from office use.

CONCLUSION

The approach is to respect the design and layout of the house, retaining the maximum possible historic fabric, repairing what is possible; and designing a new rear extension (the one element of the house which has been subject to ongoing change throughout its history) so that an approach of minimum intervention, maximum retention is possible.

The proposal is a “natural” arrangement of the house which requires no significant changes to the original fabric. The proposal will reinstate recently blocked doorways to their correct arrangement, repair fabric e.g. plaster cornices and original fireplaces and reinstate appropriate matching fireplaces surrounds where missing.

The proposal has resolved the problem of modern services in the house, without the need for damaging alterations, by arranging all wet services and drains at the back of the house. This enables pipe runs and drainage in particular to be accommodated with minimum disruption to the building.

The extension has been conceived so as not to result in any unsatisfactory space or impacts on adjoining properties to allow the “natural” arrangement of rooms and to “regain” the relationship of the house to the garden. The design layout is the key to solving the problems, practical and aesthetic.

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APPENDICES TO DESIGN STATEMENT

1. Extracts from historic maps and Ordnance Survey sheets.

1792-99	Horwood Map
1824	Greenwood Map
1871	Ordnance Sheet @ 1:1250
1894-96	Ordnance Sheet @ 1:1250
1921	Ordnance Sheet @ 1:1250
1938	Ordnance Sheet @ 1:1250
1951	Ordnance Sheet @ 1:1250
2004	Ordnance Sheet @ 1:1250

1. Extract from Survey of London. Pages 50 to 53 inclusive.

2. Aerial Photograph

3. Diagram of Plan Proportions

4. Schematic Preliminary Analysis

5. Sun Path, Light and View Diagrams