

DESIGN STATEMENT

**11, MECKLENBURGH SQUARE**  
LONDON, WC1N 2AE

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Prepared by:  
Christian Garnett Partners LLP  
Holborn Hall, 195 High Holborn, London WC1V 7BD  
Tel: 020 7404 7677 Fax: 020 7404 6648

On behalf of:

**Navigator Securities**  
15, Bruton Place, London W1J 6LU

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Proposals outline**

We are applying, on behalf of our client, Navigator Securities, for planning and listed building consent for the following alterations at no. 11, Mecklenburgh Square:

- A change of use from 1no. office unit and 2no. residential units into a single residential dwelling.
- Internal layout reconfiguration in the basement, second and third floors and rear extension.
- Replacement of an existing white timber framed roof conservatory with a new contemporary frameless glass conservatory with its plan reconfigured on the roof terrace such that it is set back from the street façade and spans the width of the building.
- A new brick infill party wall at roof level between the front and rear north chimney stacks to allow for abutment of the replacement conservatory against no. 12 Mecklenburgh Square.
- Removal of the existing ground floor infill element of the rear extension in order to improve natural daylight into the basement and ground floor rear rooms.
- A new decked rear external terrace at ground floor level as a consequence of the partial demolition of the ground floor infill extension.

By virtue of both its location within the Bloomsbury North East conservation area and its historical importance as a Grade II\*, the site is a sensitive one. This proposal aims to contribute positively to the scale and character of the area whilst enhancing the aesthetics and historical fabric of the existing building.

The following report shows that the proposal has been considered in a manner wholly appropriate to the character, scale and visual amenities of the surrounding area whilst complementing the existing building.

## 1.2 Historical context

Mecklenburgh square formed an integral component of the Foundling Hospital Estate when it was built as a residential area in the early nineteenth century. Designed by Joseph Kay, it was one of “two imposing squares... flanking the hospital gardens on the western and eastern sides, and open towards them, so that the residents should have an uninterrupted view of the gardens, and the occupants of the Foundling Hospital should look on to the fronts of houses instead of the unsightly backs.”<sup>1</sup>

No. 11 Mecklenburgh Square constitutes one of three classically-fronted stucco blocks characterising the square’s attractive eastern façade. These houses in particular were designed “to be of the most expensive type, to attract wealthy residents to the vicinity of the hospital and keep up its status.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Survey of London, City of Westminster Archive Centre

<sup>2</sup> Survey of London, City of Westminster Archive Centre



## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Location and use

The site area is situated some 500 metres north east of Russell Square station on the east side of Mecklenburgh Square, running parallel to Gray's Inn Road (see location plan). The building is currently in mixed use, with offices on ground and first floors (133.4 sq m), two residential units above and below the offices (312 sq m), and a shared office / residential circulation space and staircase (58.6 sq m).<sup>3</sup> The proposals aim to sympathetically restore the building back to a single residential dwelling, respecting as closely as possible the original plan whilst retaining and restoring as many of the original features as possible. Although, as a result of the proposals, office space will be lost, the professionals in question, Ashgate Publishing, are to relocate locally into new premises at Lincoln's Inn Fields. A peculiarity of 11 Mecklenburgh Square is that London Welsh, is now located behind the building on Grays Inn Road, retains a right of way through the ground floor rear extension and basement of the building. This has come about as a result of previous occupation of both buildings by London Welsh who, in order to downscale their club accommodation, selling the property and moving into their current accommodation in Grays Inn Road (see planning history). The proposals have been developed on the basis that the right of way, now redundant in terms of fire escape requirements for London Welsh, will be removed and therefore no longer influence the layout of the rear extension and basement.

### 2.2 Conditions of Existing Site

The site contains a five storey brick-built Georgian terrace building with white stucco facade dating from the 1800s and a three storey rear brick extension. As a result of various alterations to the building and its use, many original Georgian features in basement, second and third floors appear to have been lost, and it is probable that the current layout does not reflect the original plan of the building. The important historical features which remain, including the oval stone staircase and stucco front elevation (see drawings and photographs), will be retained and restored as necessary. While the main building fabric requires only minor alterations, the awkwardly positioned ground floor rear extension is to be partially removed, allowing daylight into the ground and basement floors and improving the natural amenities within the building. Furthermore, a contemporary frameless glass conservatory replacing the existing and white timber framed roof conservatory will minimise visual impact on the front facade from street level through its transparent nature and being set back from parapet line. The proposed changes to the roof conservatory and rear extension, as well as external and internal repairs, will serve to prolong the useful life of the building and restore its historical character within the borough.

### 2.3 Character of surrounding area

11 Mecklenburgh Square forms part of a symmetrically designed terrace of 24 five storey Georgian houses, with three classically fronted stucco blocks equally spaced between buildings with brick facades. Although the front facades are of uniform character, retaining most of their original features, variation in height has occurred with the addition of a sixth floor mansard roof to the stucco block to the north of the terrace towards Mecklenburgh

<sup>3</sup> Areas measured as Gross External Areas

Street. The rear elevations reflect some historic architectural changes, revealing a pattern of brick partial and full infill extensions of varying heights and fenestration pattern. Although originally planned as a residential terrace, over time most of the buildings have been converted into mixed offices and residential use.

## **3.0 DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

### **3.1 Brief**

- i. The design brief, to convert the building into a single dwelling, has led to design moves such as a reduced ground floor extension and replacement roof conservatory. These have been generated from our client's requirement to improve the fabric of the existing building in conjunction with its full residential restoration.
- ii. Our client's instructions required that the replacement glass conservatory is designed to the highest specification, as light and transparent as possible, with minimum impact on the frontage of the building (see Precedent Glass Extensions).

### **3.2 Demolition**

- i. It is intended that the minimum amount of intervention to the original building fabric is proposed to allow for a conservation led approach to restoring the building back to a single residential dwelling.
- ii. All external demolitions are limited to the rear and roof of the building, with no alterations to the existing stucco street façade. The proposed replacement roof conservatory is intended to reduce the visual impact on the parapet line and symmetry of the terrace. Changes to the rear of the building include partial demolition of the rear extension at ground floor level (currently the basement maisonette's second bedroom and en-suite) and its replacement with a new London stock brick addition, corresponding in style, size and materials to the existing extension above. At roof level, the demolition of the existing conservatory and reconfiguration of the upper staircase treads will allow a new frameless glass conservatory to be set back from the front façade, its contemporary frameless glass appearing less imposing on surrounding buildings than the existing white timber framed roof conservatory.
- iii. Further external alterations involve renovation of the existing building fabric to lift the appearance of the property whilst preserving its character (see drawings).
- iv. Internally, changes to the existing layout, primarily at basement, second and third floors, involve removal of mainly unoriginal partition walls to create more modern living accommodation. This will enable the building to realise its spatial potential without detracting from its historical value primarily in the ground and first floors.



### 3.3 Design Approach

- i. The proposals comprise a reduced size ground floor rear extension with access to an adjacent enlarged external terrace, and replacement single storey frameless glass roof conservatory with sloping structural glass roof.
- ii. The new traditionally constructed rear extension, in place of the basement flat second bedroom and en-suite, will help to restore the building into a single unit both schematically and aesthetically. The new addition housing a reading room and store, to be accessed from the basement / ground floor half landing, is designed to correspond to the first floor extension above in style, size and materials to create visual continuity to the rear of the building. As the existing extension mass makes way for an enlarged outdoor terrace, sufficient daylight will penetrate into the basement spaces, transforming them into lighter, more habitable spaces. New timber framed glazed double doors and a new traditional timber sash window overlooking the rear courtyard on the side elevation will enable natural ventilation and access to the terrace.
- iii. The proposed replacement conservatory will be set further back from the front façade than the existing layout, spanning the distance between chimneys, with access provided via reconfigured upper treads to the existing stairs. A brick infill extending from the northern rear chimney is designed to allow for the party wall abutment of the new conservatory, and will match the brickwork style of the chimney and infill opposite (see photograph 7, 651-3-01-004-25, As Existing Photo Survey) with minimal, if any, visible alteration from street level. While the marginally larger new conservatory will create more habitable space which reveals new panoramic views, the chosen materials and location are designed towards its subtle integration into the surrounding context and reduced architectural imposition. The frameless appearance of the glass conservatory is designed to respond sensitively to the site, imposing minimal visual intervention on its surroundings, and simultaneously emphasising the brick and stucco render materiality of the existing building with a contrasting contemporary design. Folding glass doors along the face of the conservatory will provide natural ventilation and access to the roof terrace, as well as allowing daylight to penetrate into the third floor.
- iv. The main body of internal alterations is mostly a consequence of reverting the building back into a single residential unit, alongside the requirement for providing modernised spaces which logically reflect their new allocated functions.
- v. Thus the general design approach is to sensitively merge traditional with contemporary, improving existing living conditions in terms of daylight intake, space and amenities.