

client Mishcon de Reya

project Africa House, Kingsway, London, WC2B 6AH

document Design, Access & Heritage Statement





## Heritage Statement

Africa House, Includes: 64-78 Kingsway, 1-17 Gate Street, Camden, London

### Introduction

This statement describes the heritage significance of the building and the anticipated impacts of the current proposals. This document supports applications for planning permission and listed building consent for a revised rear door pattern design and minor alterations to the approved new entrance and associated canopy.

National and local planning policy requires applicants to have special regard to the desirability of preserving buildings of historic or architectural merit or their settings or any features of architectural or historic interest which they possess. It also requires a level of information to be provided in support of a proposal that is proportionate to the significance of the asset and the potential impact upon that significance.

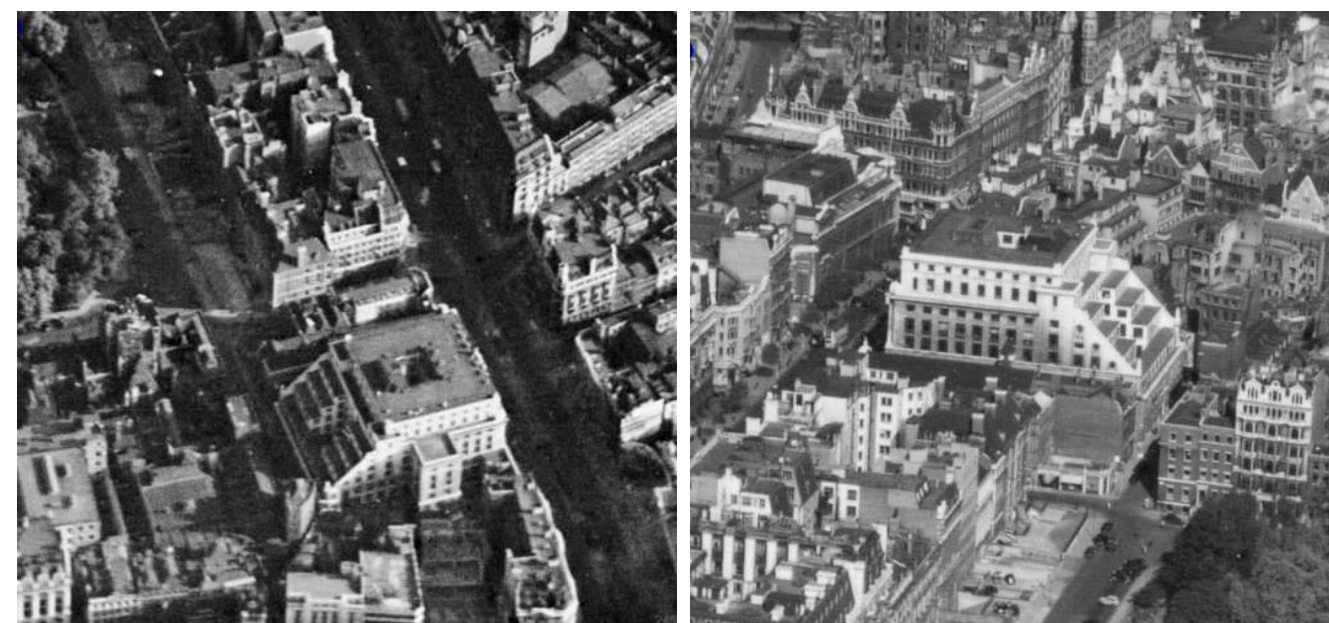
The site under consideration is Africa House, 64-78 Kingsway, 1-17 Gate Street, Camden, London. For the purposes of this statement, the area of study been concerned principally with Africa House, as the alterations to the listed building are minor in scale and nature, the impact upon the wider setting of Kingsway Conservation Area is also assessed.

This statement is produced in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (Chapter 12) as supported by the Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (2010) and as required by planning policies contained in the Core Strategy (2010) and Development Policies Document (2010).

### The Proposals in Brief

It is proposed to revise the pattern design of the Gate Street rear entrance door, which has planning and listed building consent reference 2014/6748/L, 2014/6695/P. The proposal includes the following elements.

- Revised rear door pattern design
- Strip LED lighting on the underside of the canopy
- Removal of the decorative support arm to the canopy



Top: View of Kingsway shortly after completion with Africa House on the left.

Bottom: Aerial photographs from 1932 and 1948 showing the distinctive massing of Africa House. The terraced upper floors and light well are clearly shown.



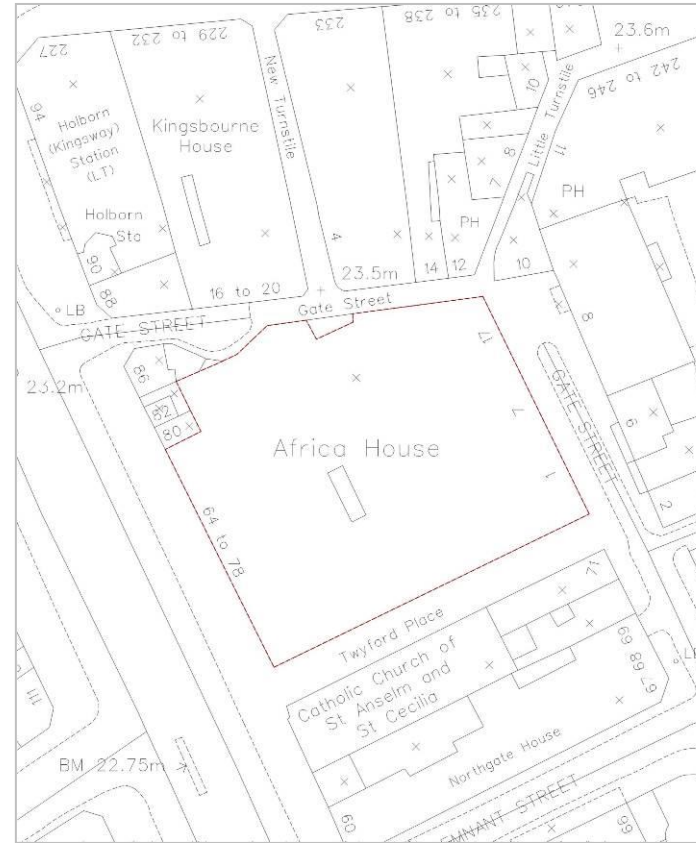
**Description of the Site**

The site is located on the east side of Kingsway, near to the junction with High Holborn and is within the London Borough of Camden (see Location Plan). The site is within the Kingsway Conservation Area, with Lincoln's Inn Fields to the south-east (see proposals map extract).

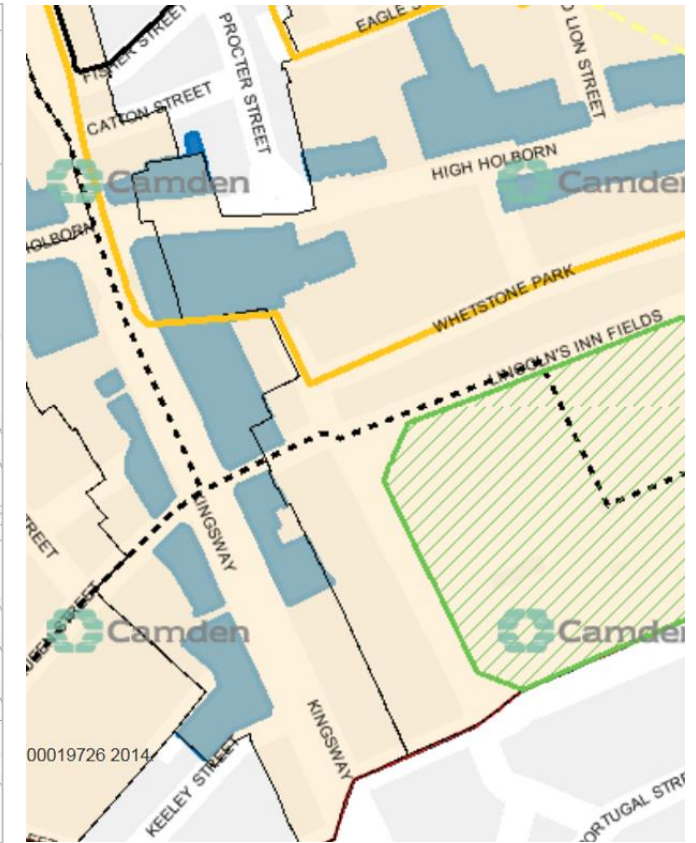
Africa House is a 9 storey mixed use building with public house (A5) retail (A3) and office (B1a) uses at ground floor level and offices on the upper floors. It was constructed in 1921-2 and has a significant history being one of the last major builds of the prestigious Kingsway development (see historic maps right), which was the most significant highway improvement in London after the completion of Regent Street in 1820. The building is Grade II listed.

The main entrance to Africa House is from Kingsway (see Photo 3), a series of rear entrances are provided on Gate Street (photos 4-6).

Site location plan



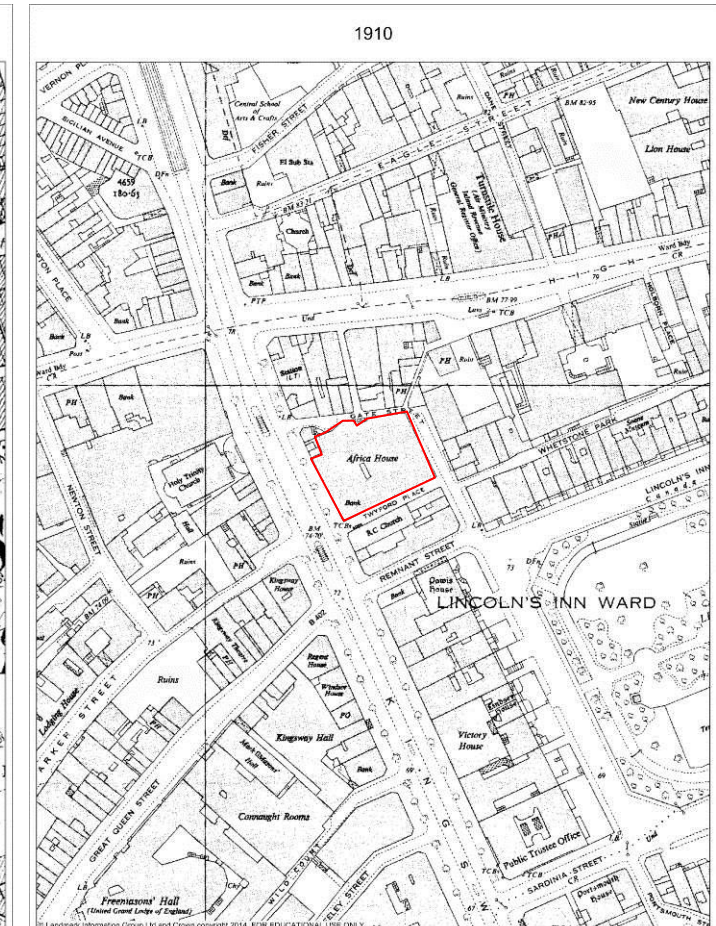
Proposals map extract



Pre Kingsway and Africa House construction



Post Kingsway and Africa House construction





## Assessment of Significance

The site in its original form comprised 8 floors of office space, a mansard roof has since been added along with a rear extension fronting Gate Street. Today the site comprises 11,800sq m office related net internal area. The ground floor accommodates a mix of uses including public house, retail, and office floorspace (see ground floor plan right).

The original building layout featured open plan offices to the front either side of the grand entrance hall with rear entrances, central lifts and a light well in the centre.

Through the main entrance is a double height hall with a domed and vaulted ceiling. Two marble staircases run up either side of the hall to the central landing. The floor of the hall is finished as a Roman mosaic with marble slabs and a central star design; a motif which is repeated in the columns and dado borders. The entrance hall has been altered over time and the original marble in parts has been replaced, in many cases, by poorly matching materials. Specifically, the replacement marble tile is neither the same colour nor scale as the original. West of the four columns, parts of the original entrance hall features and layout have been retained, though everything east of the columns is modern installation and largely unsympathetic to the character of the original design. The combination of un-matching marble tile, in colour and scale, and the frosted glass screen to the east of the entrance where a new bridge has been installed in particular create a confusing interior aesthetic.

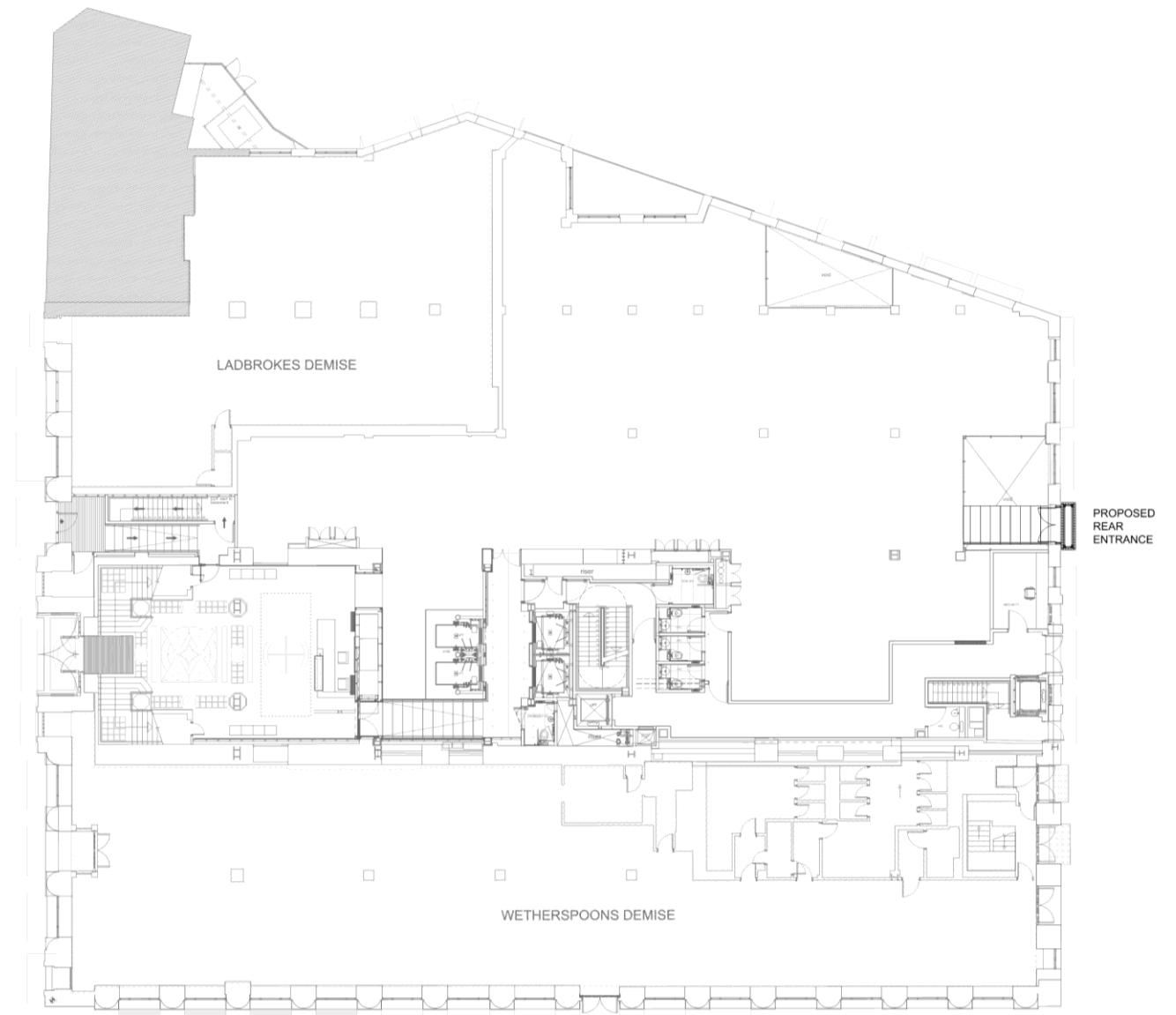
Beyond the entrance hall, very little of the original office layout remains. Originally the offices of the directors and boardroom were lavishly finished in African mahogany and parquet floors however these finishes have since been removed. The building floorplans are currently laid out as open plan office areas north and south of a central core with open plan staircases which run the full depth of the building. The alterations have increased the flexibility and usability of the commercial floorspace, which are well lit and can be subdivided by partitions if required.

The building has undergone considerable alteration and historic fabric has been removed due to the alterations. Internally, a new core has been implemented in the centre of the building, located to the east of the entrance hall. A new bridge has also been implemented crossing the void left by the new lift cores, connecting the ground floor level of the entrance hall with the lifts and office demise.

### This proposal

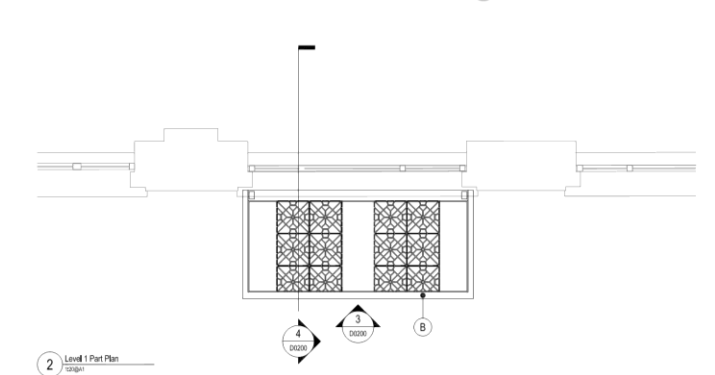
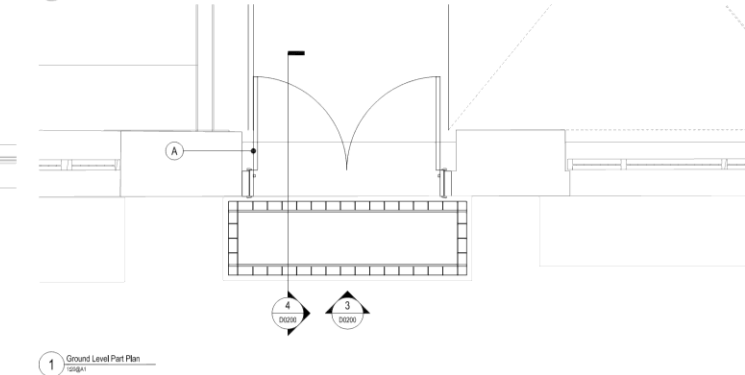
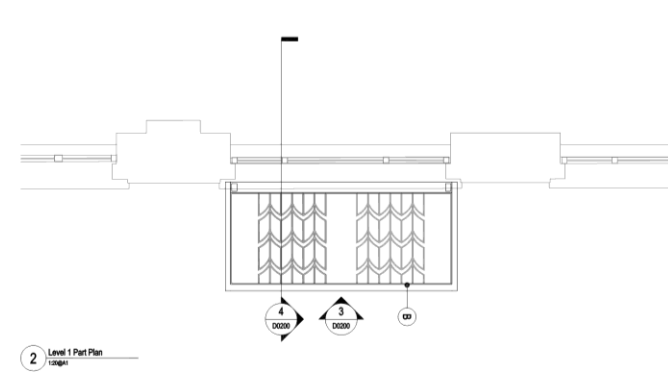
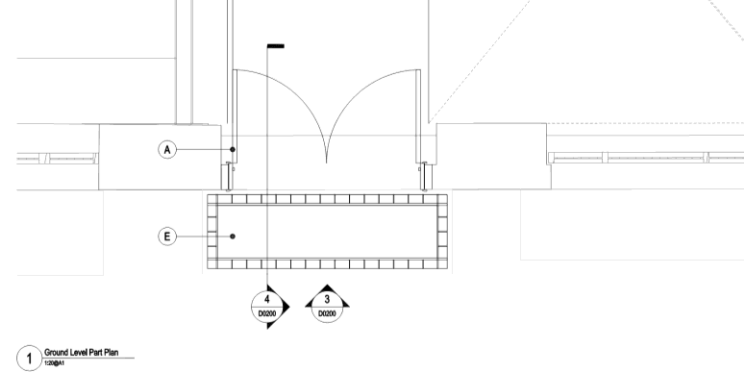
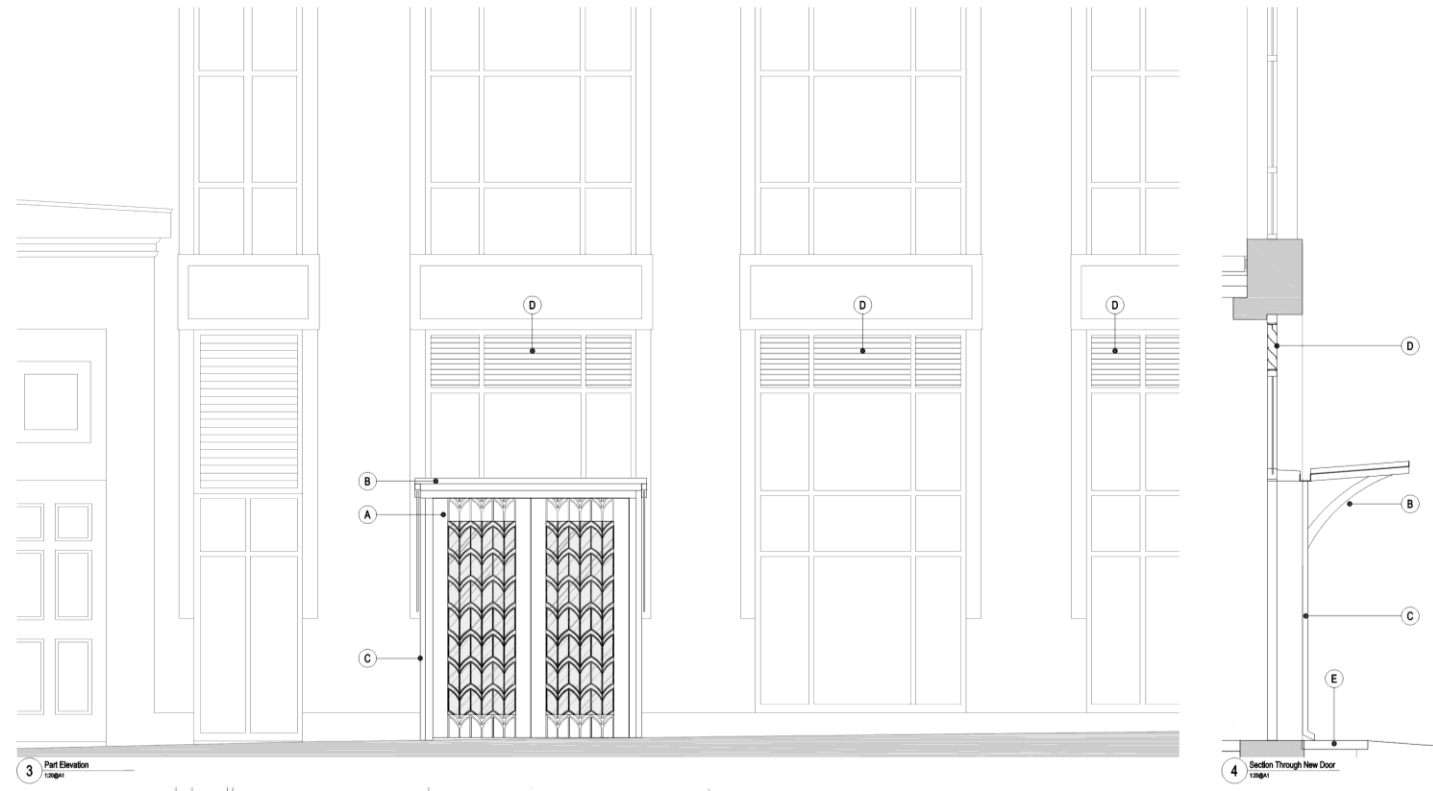
This application for a revised rear door pattern design and minor alterations to the approved new entrance and canopy helps to identify the building, and reflects the occupiers desire to reflect the historical significance of the building.

Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Approved rear entrance door pattern

Proposed rear entrance door pattern, LED light strips and removed canopy arm



The building was originally built in 1921-2, designed by architects Trehearne and Norman and was one of the last European Palazzo style buildings of the Kingsway development. Africa House was a landmark design constructed on a large plot surrounded by lower buildings. This led to the incorporation of a set back of the top two stories, and a distinctive terracing of upper floors on the Gate Street elevation, reducing the impact of the building's massing on its neighbours.

The Doric columns and the round triumphal arch style entrance inscribed "Africa House" surmounted by sculptured lions (photo 11 & 12) are the most notable features at ground floor level on the main Kingsway frontage. The architecture, with an Italian palazzo theme, incorporates a modern massing akin to contemporary American commercial buildings of the time. This was a common pattern of development adopted for the Kingsway development with many other similarly conceived buildings. However, unlike many of its contemporaries in Kingsway, the external walls are built entirely of Portland Stone without a steel frame. Commercial activity at ground floor was a design feature from the outset, requiring more light ingress and a load bearing open colonnade treatment was adopted that wraps around the building on the southern return (photo 12).

#### Recent Alterations to the Building

The proposed alterations simply revise an unimplemented, extant planning and listed building application and is within an area of the building that has been altered significantly in the recent past.

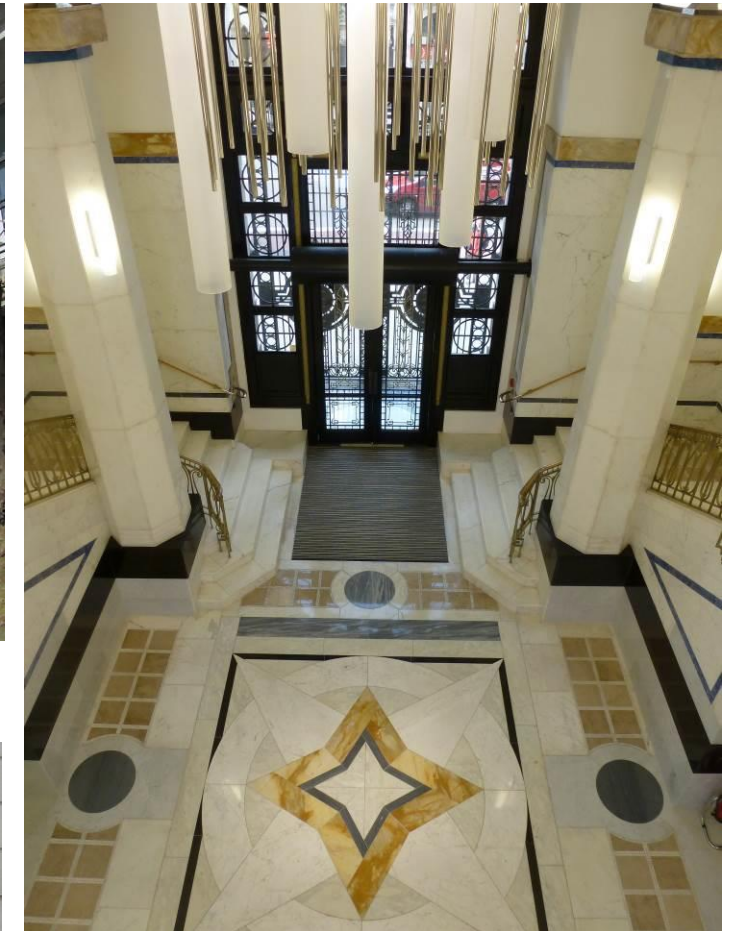
- Comprehensive refurbishment, alterations to the main entrance (2007/4111/L)
- Installation of new door, canopy and louvres at ground floor level on Gate Street (east) elevation 2014/6748/L, 2014/6695/P

#### Summary of Heritage Significance

Our understanding of the heritage significance of the building can be summarised as follows:

- An important commercial building forming part of the Kingsway development;
- An example of innovation in commercial building design in terms of layout, massing, style, structure, materials and decoration;
- Innovative use of materials - use of colonnade and load bearing stone and brick;
- Quality of interior finishes - distinctive arch entrance, double height entrance hall with a domed vaulted ceiling and marble mosaic floor.

Of these elements, the Kingsway façade, arched main entrance and the entrance hall interior carry the greatest significance, being a prominent presence within the conservation area and largely intact historic record of interior design of the time.



**Assessment of Heritage Impacts**

We have researched the history of the building through the Heritage Environmental Record, property record planning history and other document sources. The full listing is reproduced here (see right).

An assessment of the impacts of the proposals is required concerning:

**Direct impacts**

- 1) Alterations to the original listed fabric – on a building of acknowledged national importance (Grade II listed) within a townscape of national importance (conservation area);

**Indirect impacts**

- 2) Impact upon a building that makes a positive contribution to the Kingsway Conservation area

The assessment of the magnitude of impact (or change) requires some professional judgement in order to establish whether that impact is beneficial or detrimental. This statement has been guided by the relevant planning policy tests contained within national, regional and local planning policy, which require that proposals protect and enhance the character or appearance of the identified heritage asset.

Impacts have been assessed according to the table below:

Significance	Magnitude of Impact			
	Negligible	Low	Medium	High
Exceptional	Slight/Moderate	Moderate/Slight	Substantial/Moderate	Substantial
Very High	Slight	Slight/Moderate	Moderate	Substantial / Moderate
High	Effectively no change	Slight	Slight/Moderate	Moderate/Slight

The alterations have been assessed; as having effectively no change to a building of high significance (highlighted).

The summary assessment of impacts is shown in the table on the right. In conclusion, the additions have been assessed as having an overall beneficial impact on the building and its setting (the conservation area).

Address/ Building	Significance	Assessment of Impacts
Africa House	High National  Elements mentioned in the listing description of the building and underpinning its designation	Effectively no change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proposal is a revision of an approved door pattern design</li> <li>- LED lighting is for indication of entrance</li> <li>- Removal of decorative arm on canopy is a revision of an approved design</li> </ul> <p><b>Direct – slight beneficial</b> <b>Indirect – slight beneficial</b></p>

**Listing Description**

Large office block with shops at ground floor. 1921-2. By Trehearne and Norman. Portland stone faced steel frame. 6 storeys and 2 storey set back attic. 9 windows. Double height fluted Doric screen, with inset shops and bank, flanks a round-arched triumphal arch style entrance inscribed "Africa House" and surmounted by lions couchant. Upper storeys set back with central distyle-in-antis screen rising from 3rd to 5th floor; metal-framed windows, 5th floor with Greek scroll aprons and enrichment to heads of bays suggesting pilasters. Entablature with deep mutule cornice surmounted by a pediment of carved figures and animals. Plain attic storeys with cornice and blocking course having a central antefixa. Return to Twyford Place continues the design with a long screen.

**Conclusions**

Listed building consent is required for the proposed alterations. Applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise (section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the TCPA 1990).

The proposal seeks to protect and enhance the architectural and historic character of the listed building by avoiding direct impacts on the original historic fabric remaining and maintaining access to and visibility of key features of the building with the highest heritage significance. The proposals have been derived in a sensitive manner in sympathy with the original design and to complement the alterations that have already occurred within the building via its refurbishment. The proposal has been assessed as making effectively no change to the character and appearance of the building and its conservation area setting.

The proposals involve improvements to the building's accessibility and appearance without compromising the building's heritage significance.



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