

Alexandra Road Estate

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# Rowley Way Flat 89E

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**Design & Access Statement**

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Rev C

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**August 2015**

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Levitt Bernstein

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Section 01

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01

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Introduction





## Section 01

# Introduction

**This Design and Access statement has been produced by Levitt Bernstein, on behalf of Camden Council, as part of a Listed Building Consent application for flat 89E in the Alexandra Road Estate.**

### Context

Camden Council owns a number of 'void' properties that have been vacated by their tenants. Works are proposed to address change, wear and damage that has affected these properties over time, and to adapt the original layouts to be suitable for contemporary needs.

There are a number of concurrent applications for the 'voids', of which this is one. The contents of the applications will also inform two other sets of works, the Better Homes programme and a future set of Estate Management Guidelines.

### Better Homes

Simultaneously with the voids applications, the Council is preparing a programme of works to achieve Better Homes standards, to be rolled out across the Estate. Comprising alterations and refurbishment to kitchens and bathrooms, and re-wiring, this will affect all Council-owned dwellings on the Estate. The void dwellings will be the first to which the Better Homes changes apply.

The voids applications therefore act as a pilot for the Better Homes works. The Better Homes applications will follow separately, giving the opportunity to learn from these first dwellings and to engage further in stakeholder consultation, developing the detail as that project moves forward.

### Management Guidelines

Similarly, the Council is preparing for the creation of a new set of Estate Management Guidelines.

Previously, the Estate was part of a pilot scheme by English Heritage (now Historic England), 'Streamlining Listed Building Consent'. Here, principles and agreed works were written down in a set of Management Guidelines to enable regular maintenance, repairs and minor alterations to occur without recourse to Listed Building Consent.

The original Management Guidelines developed by English Heritage and Camden's District Housing Office were put in place in March 2000.

In 2003 the District Housing Office commissioned SEF Architects to prepare Listed Building Applications for the then void properties. It was agreed with English Heritage to extend this across the whole estate, covering current and future void properties. Three listed building consents were granted on this basis:

|            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| LWX0202074 | 18th June 2002 |
| LWX0202178 | 18th June 2002 |
| LWX0202179 | 18th June 2002 |

Levitt Bernstein have been involved with the Alexandra Road Estate since 2001 and have seen through a number of capital projects with London Borough of Camden and other pilot works with English Heritage. In August 2004 Levitt Bernstein were appointed to update the Management Guidelines and to incorporate the work of SEF architects above.

Due to organisational changes within EH and the London Borough of Camden the exercise was never concluded. As an interim measure London Borough of Camden put a draft version of the Management Guidelines on their website dated January 2006.

Through the voids and Better Homes works, there is the opportunity to revisit and update the Management Guidelines and complete the work started in 2004. The voids applications mark the start of this process, again giving an opportunity to learn and develop the proposals, which will eventually become the basis of a Heritage Partnership Agreement with Historic England.

A temporary first version of the Heritage Partnership Agreement is intended to form the basis of the Better Homes works.

### The current application

This application therefore relates to specific works within one dwelling, but lessons learnt through the works and through the associated consultation will be used to inform the Better Homes works and the first and final versions of the Heritage Partnership Agreement.

This is a second version of the information originally submitted, which has been revised in response to consultation meetings with Camden Council's Conservation Officer, Historic England, and the Alexandra and Ainsworth Estate Tenants and Residents Association Better Homes and Conservation Consultation Group.

Section 02

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# 02

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Analysis

# The Alexandra Road Estate

The quality and importance of the estate has been widely recognised both in England and abroad. It is a powerful icon of the optimism and idealism that underpinned post-war public sector architecture.

## Statement of Significance

The Alexandra Road Estate is a residential estate of 520 dwellings in Camden, NW8. The majority of the estate was listed Grade II\* in 1993, the remainder now falling within the Alexandra Road Conservation Area, designated in 1996.

Designed in 1968 by Neave Brown of the London Borough of Camden Architects Department and built between 1972-78, the estate is among the most ambitious social housing schemes of this time, one of a series of low rise, high density schemes.

The street is the dominant element in the design, a modern translation of the traditional London street where the sum of the whole exceeds the individual parts. The linear, stepped section, influenced by Leslie Martin's work, by Denys Lasdun at the University of East Anglia (1962-68) and by Patrick Hodgkinson at the Brunswick Centre (1967-72), enables all dwellings to have a sunny outdoor space and the seven storey A block shields the estate from the noise of the railway line to the north.

The estate also represents a development of Brown's earlier work in private practice, for housing societies at Winscombe Street and Fleet Road. Though much smaller, these too were essays in high-density developments of stacked dwellings and the considered sequencing of spaces from public and semi-public to private and semi-private.

## Internal features

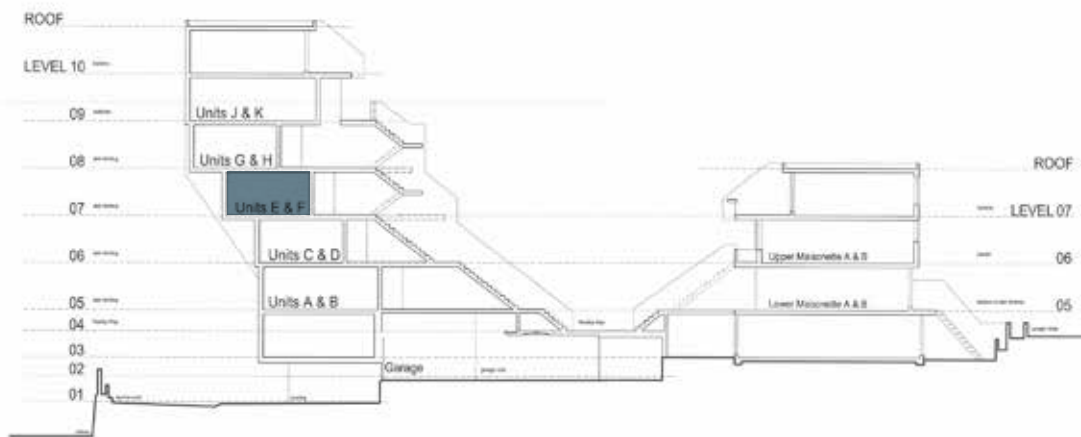
The estate contains a number of different dwelling types, all sharing a similar approach and a number of key features. The high density of the estate led to tight interior layouts, mitigated by open plan elements. Sliding doors and glazed partitions allow flexible arrangements, with the potential for views and light to pass through each dwelling.

The proximate relationship of public and private is eased by porches, decks and planting.

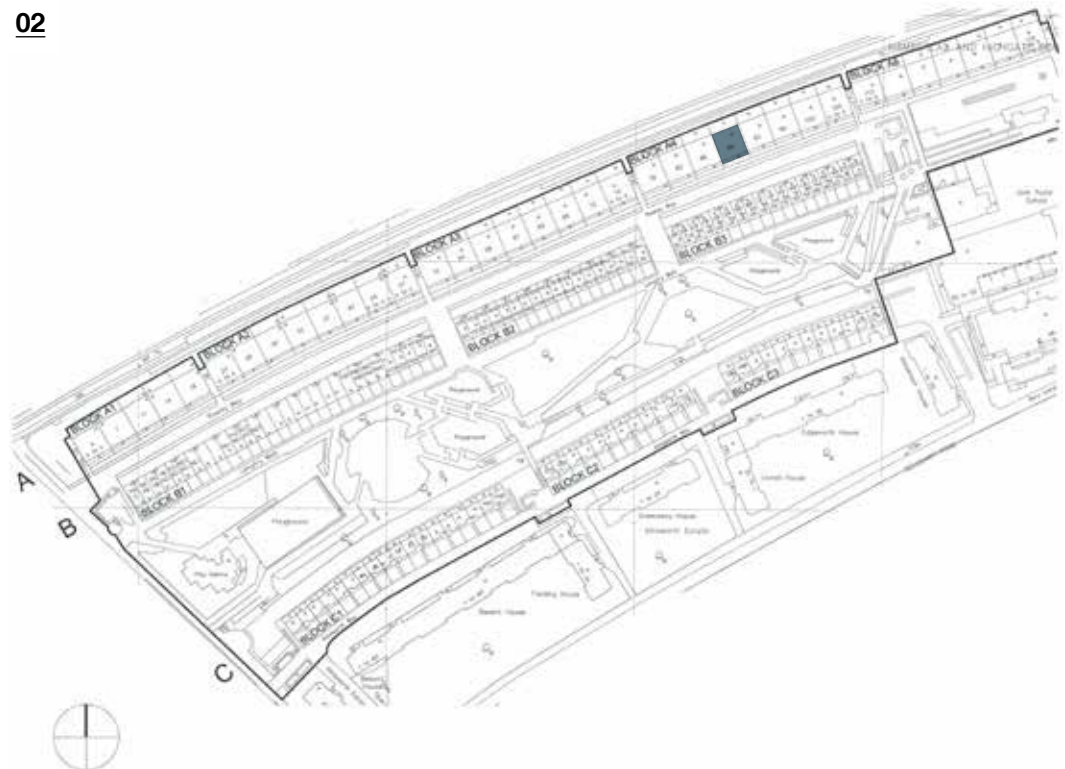
Finishes are restrained, white paint contrasting with stained timber and brown tiling. Simple joinery shelves and cupboards are formed from plywood, while the stairs are a more developed piece of joinery work. In the kitchens, concrete worktops form a striking, almost sculptural element. These are tiled, as are the walls, forming a very deliberate composition.

The number of bespoke elements is unusual in authority-built housing, and the level of ambition has led to some long-term issues. The tiled surfaces, for example, the best that could be done with the budget at the time, are now missing tiles, with the grout hard to clean. The sliding partitions are prone to stick and fail. These elements will have to be mended or replaced, as appropriate.

01



02



Key:

■ Flat Location

01 Cross section  
02 Location plan



# The A1 Flat Type

The A1 flats are similar in layout, differing only in the location of the riser that passes vertically through the horizontally staggered kitchen and WC areas.

## Flat Description

The flat is a single storey arrangement with one bedroom. A living room at the front opens onto a south facing terrace over the shared walkway. To the rear, a bedroom and WC look over the mainline railway. The kitchen and bathroom are interconnected and form a circulation route from the hall to the bedroom.

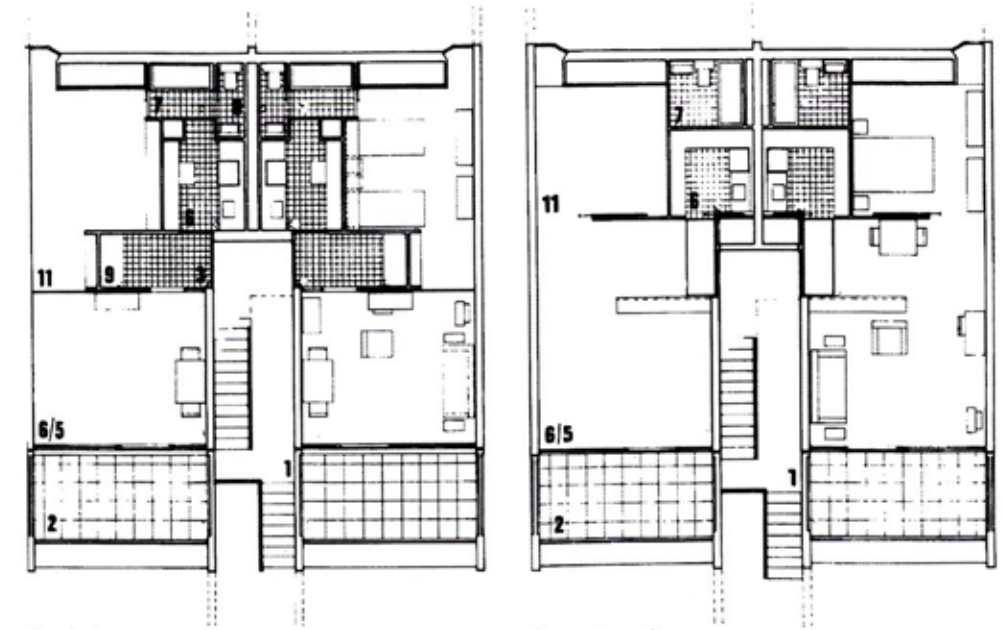
## Kitchen Design

The kitchen is a gallery arrangement, with in situ concrete worktops to both long sides, clad with tile that also extend up the walls to form a splash back. The worktops do not extend to the full width of the room: On the sink side of the room, a gap is left for the oven; on the facing side, a gap of equivalent width is filled with a removable hard wood top. A metal sink is set within the grid of the tiled surface.

On both walls, full length plywood cupboards are wall-fixed above the worktop. These have plain, flat, sliding doors, with simple, linear timber profiles and a distinctive horizontal timber trim at top and bottom.

There are no cupboards below the sink, but on the opposite side are shallow plywood cupboards with sliding doors.

The kitchen design shows a clear, well-ordered concept, with a limited, complementary range of robust materials and a rigorous arrangement in plan. However, by modern standards there is very little room for appliances. There is an opportunity to address this in replanning the room.

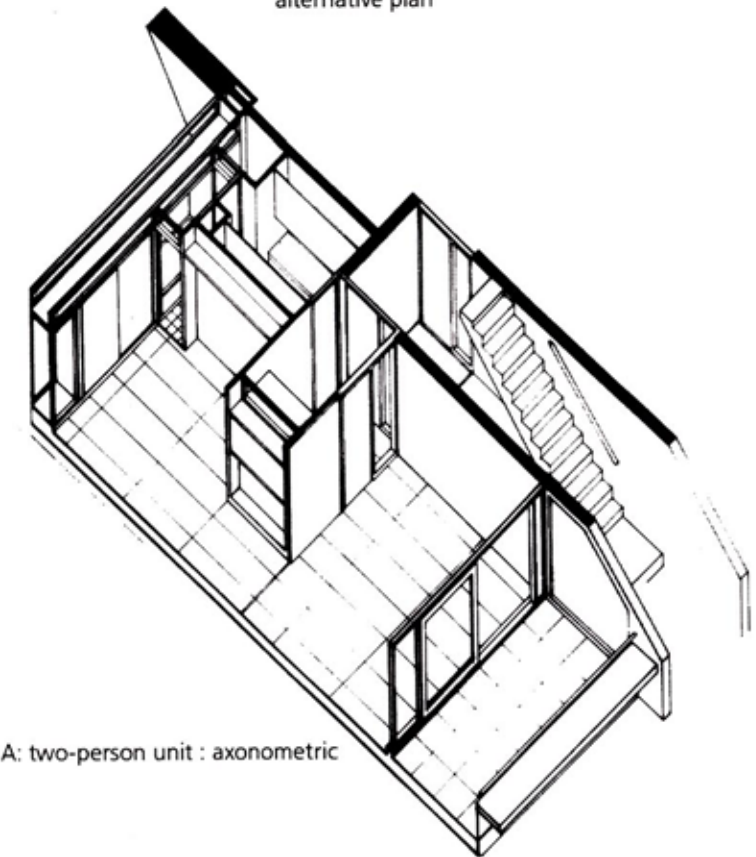


block A: two-person unit plan

alternative plan

## Key to plans

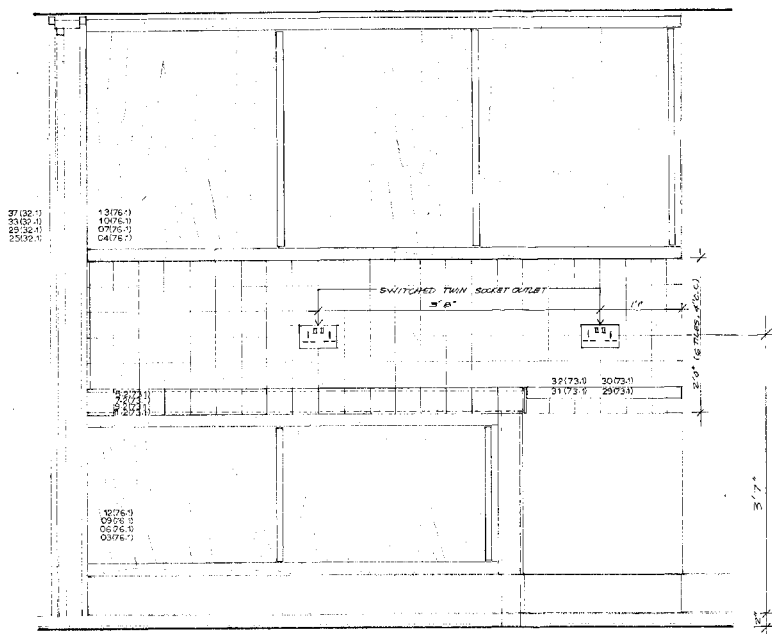
- 1. walkway
- 2. terrace
- 3. entrance
- 4. living
- 5. dining
- 6. kitchen
- 7. bathroom
- 8. wc
- 9. utility store
- 10. bedroom 2
- 11. bedroom 1
- 12. dressing room



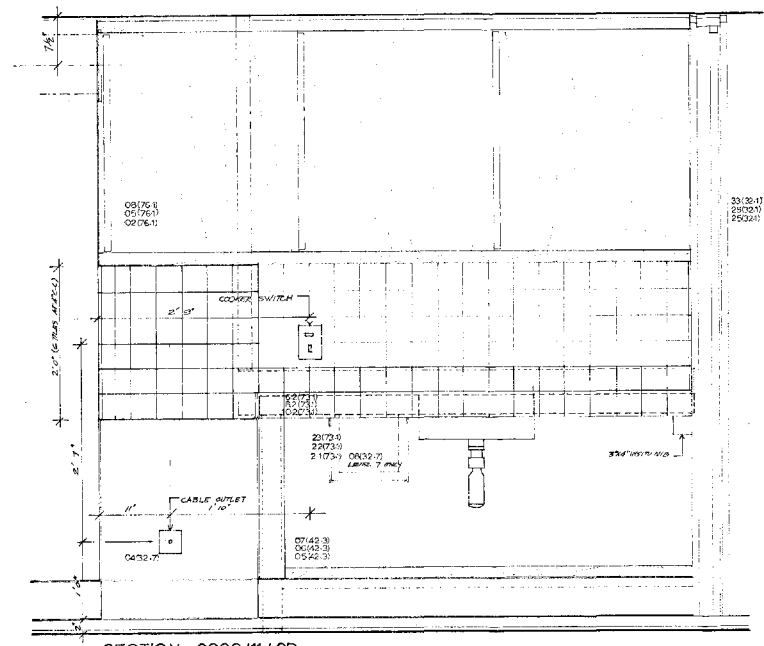
block A: two-person unit : axonometric

01

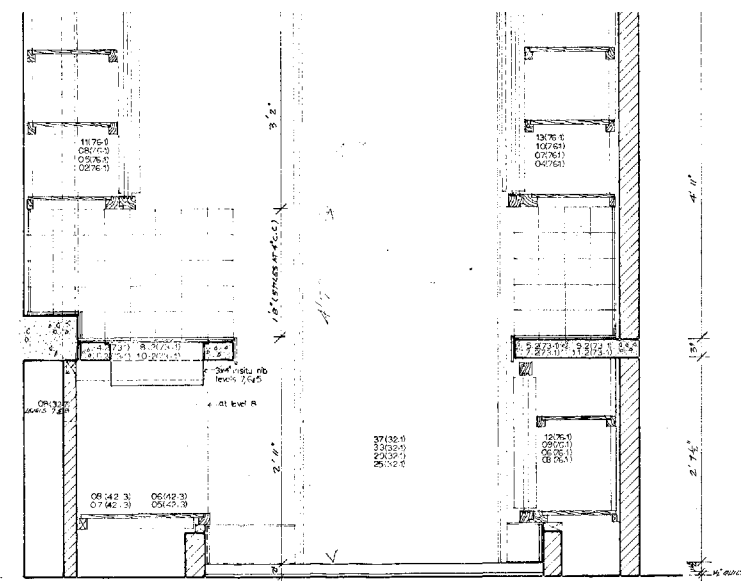




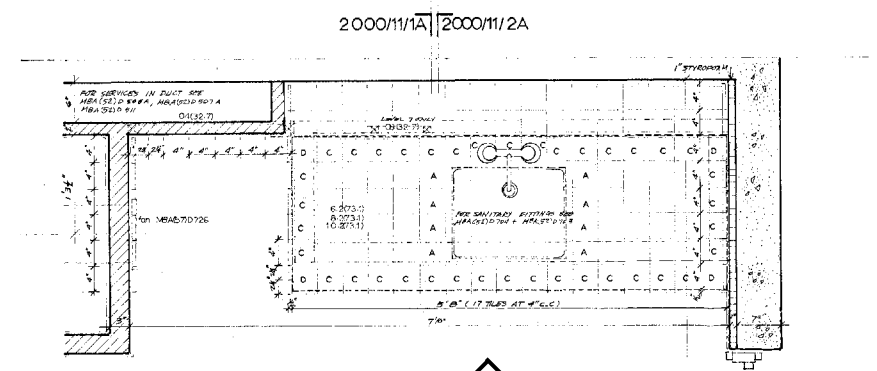
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**02**



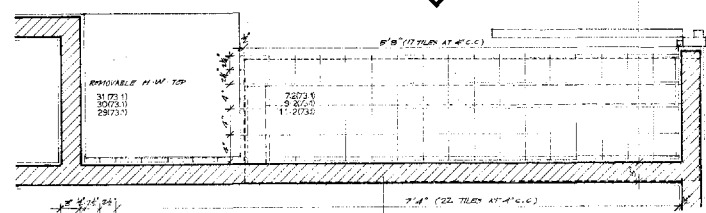
SECTION 2000/11/2B  
**03**



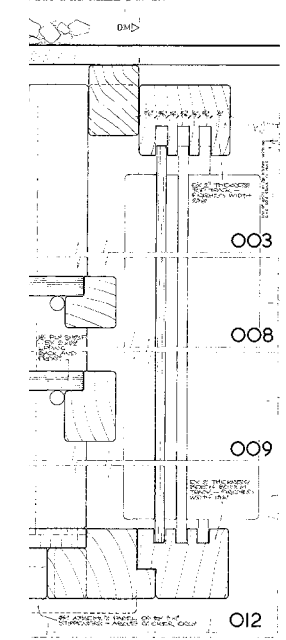
SECTION 2000/11/2A  
**04**



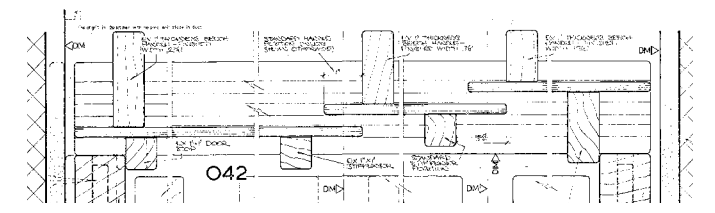
2000/11/2B  
2000/11/1B  
2000/11/2B  
2000/11/1B  
**05**



2000/11/1A | 2000/11/2A  
**06**



**07**



- 01 Plans and axonometric
- 02-04 Kitchen elevations
- 05 Kitchen plan
- 06 Plan/section details of sliding doors
- 07 Section details of drawers

# Protected Features

The heritage listing of the property is specific to certain original features and finishes of the individual properties.

## Features to be preserved and restored

The images to the right show typical completed interiors to various dwelling types (not just A1), with their original intended finishes and fittings.

Many of the properties have been altered by their tenants over the years with many of the original features and finishes either altered or removed completely.

## Sliding Partitions

The original design of the flat included sliding partitions and built-in furniture which unified the spaces and gave the flats a degree of flexibility. These sliding screens are one element that is to be preserved and restored where necessary. Many of the screens require paint to be stripped from their frames and restoration of the track mechanisms.

## Windows and Doors

All original windows are single glazed softwood timber units with a dark brown/black stain. Most of these are in good condition, having been replaced in the 1990s however many have been painted internally and require stripping back to their original condition.

## Kitchen

The kitchen finishes and fittings are another item of specific architectural historic interest. This is described in more detail in the following section.

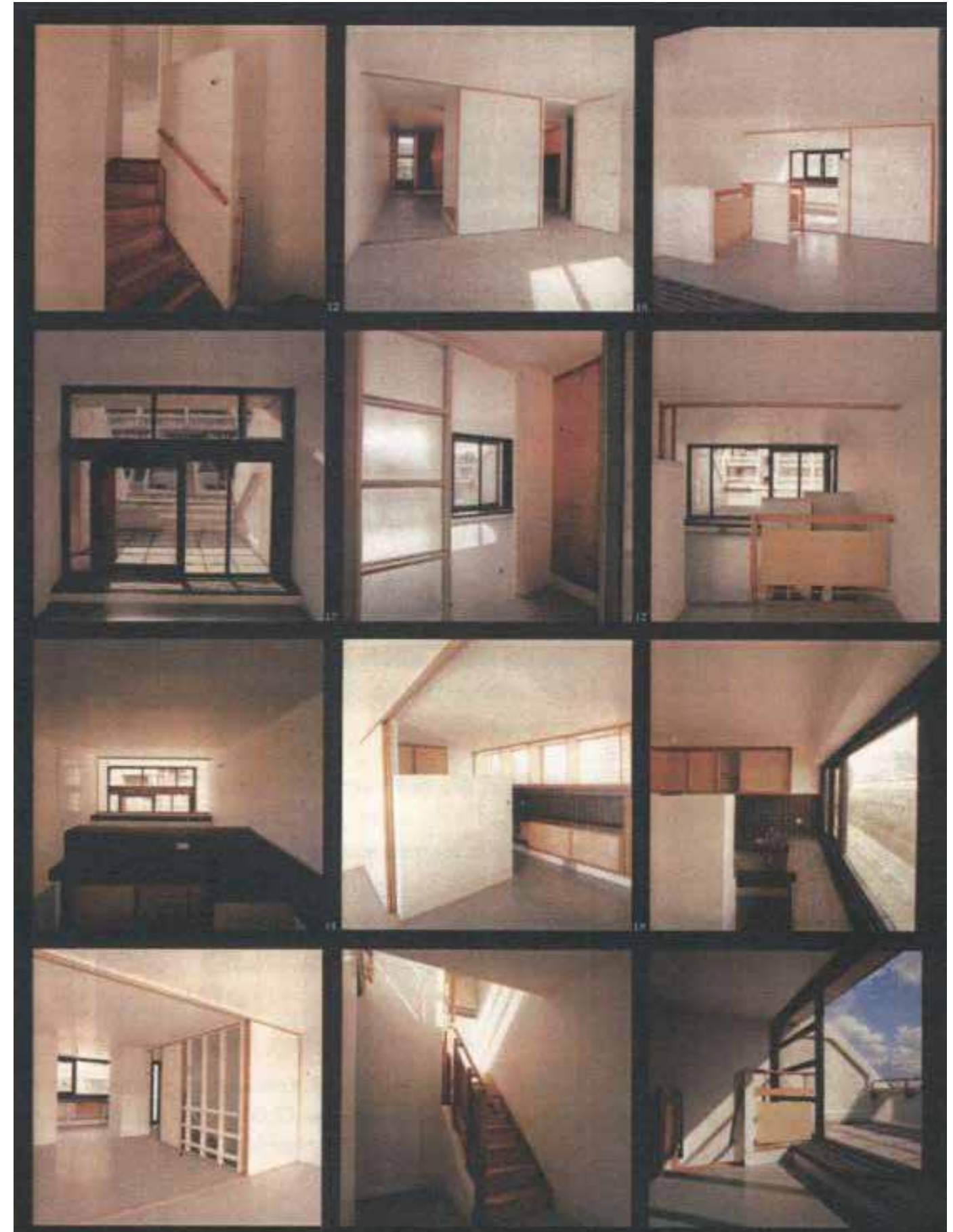
## Other features

Other features and finishes of the flats that are significant but which previously did not require Listed Building Consent to alter are:

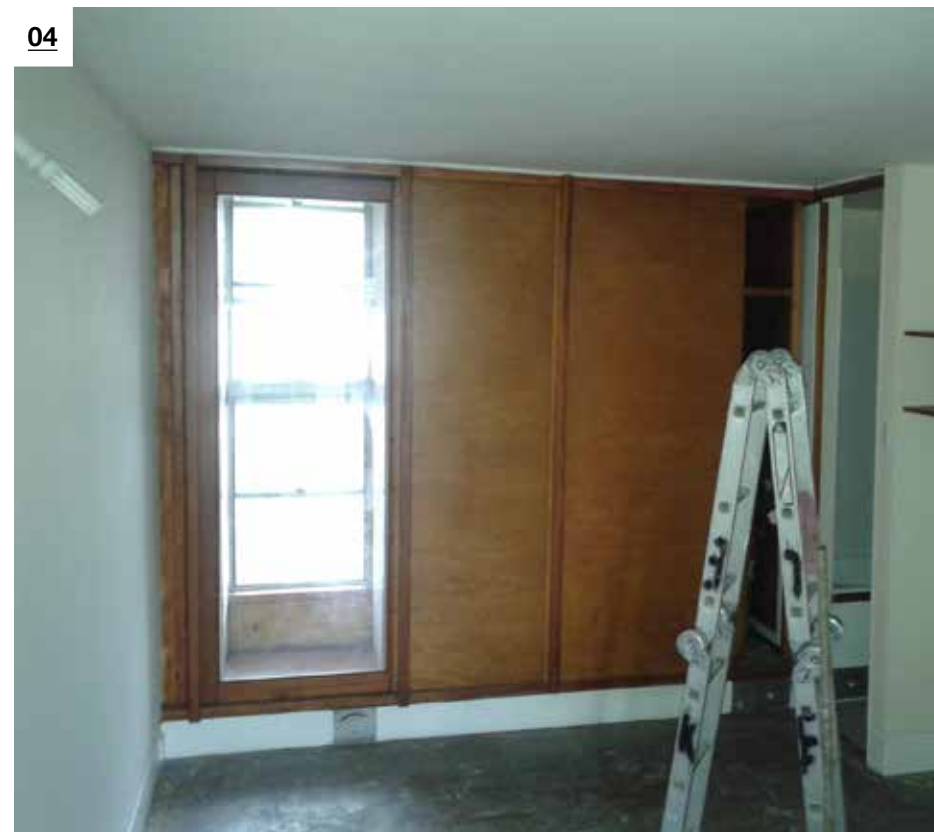
- floor finishes
- paint finishes
- wall tiles
- shelving
- electrical fittings
- sanitaryware

Those making alterations to any of the above were encouraged by the 'Alexandra Road Estate Management Guidelines' to do so in the spirit of the original design. A similar approach will be used here.

On the opposite page are a series of images of a part-refurbished type A1 flat with examples of well restored finishes and fittings.



- 01 Shallow tiled kitchen worktop with cupboards above and below
- 02 Deep tiled kitchen worktop with kitchen cupboards above and below.
- 03 Built-in shelf unit above bed
- 04 Timber sliding doors to cupboard and window
- 05 Sliding partition from living/dining to bedroom



Section 03

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03

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Proposed Works



# Design Approach

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**The proposed works are generally limited to refurbishment and reinstatement of the existing scheme. The arrangement of the flat will be unchanged.**

## **Use, scale and layout**

There are no proposed changes to the use, scale or layout of the dwelling.

## **Access and Inclusive Design**

There are no proposed changes to transport provision or the external approach to the dwelling. It is not proposed to change the dwelling itself, beyond reconfiguration of the kitchen worktops.

## **Basic Principles**

An appropriate level of reinstatement must be agreed, one which takes account of current regulations (e.g. gas, electricity and energy performance certificates) and the needs and aspirations of the residents but maintains the historic, listed interiors.

Bespoke features introduced by residents present a maintenance liability for London Borough of Camden and are generally stripped out when renovating voids.

However, London Borough of Camden's Conservation Team requires original features removed without authorisation/consent to be reinstated as original or agreed alternative arrangement.

## **Approaches to existing elements**

Wherever practical, the original elements will be kept in place and refurbished. Subsequent elements and finishes will be removed, to reinstate the original scheme, or a new scheme that is more sympathetic to the original intentions.

The ideal extent of works would be limited to repair of the existing finishes and minimal changes in order to accommodate modern appliances. Only where the original fittings have been significantly damaged or removed would there be the opportunity to install a comprehensive new scheme.

A hierarchy of approaches, in order of descending preference, informs the decision-making behind the design as follows:

1. Keep original elements intact and in place. Refurbish them. Reinstatement original elements (or damaged parts of elements) that have been removed, with matching designs.
2. Make alterations to existing elements that are no longer compliant, or relocate them if necessary. Replace original elements (or damaged parts of elements) with historically sensitive alternatives.
3. Remove or replace existing elements, or introduce wholly new alternatives.

# Current condition

The current condition and the extent of alterations to be rectified within the flat is considered below.

## Entrance lobby:

- Plinth to cupboard base has been removed, sliding doors have been replaced with swing doors. [01]

## Living / Dining:

- Laminate timber flooring has been installed. [02 + 03]
- Original stained timber top to window ledge has been overpainted. [03]
- Wallpaper has been applied to walls. [03]
- Curtain rail has been fitted to window. [03]

## Bedroom:

- Stained timber sliding doors have been painted over. [04]
- Laminate timber flooring has been installed. [04]
- Timber details have been overpainted. [04]
- Original shelving has been removed. [04]
- Wallpaper has been applied to walls.

## Kitchen:

- All worktops, wall and base cupboards have been replaced. [06 + 07 + 08]
- Tiling has been replaced with inappropriate

product. [06 + 07 + 08]

## Bathroom:

- Tiles have been removed above the second row. [05]
- Timber trim missing from bath panel. [05]
- Shelving has been fitted to walls. [05]

## WC:

- Non-original fittings have been fixed to walls.

## General:

- Laminate timber flooring has been installed throughout.



04



05



06



07



08



# Kitchen Details

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**The most significant works within the dwelling will be the kitchen, where changes are required to accommodate modern appliances within the low, concrete worktops, and where modern regulations prohibit cupboards above oven hobs.**

The level of remodelling carried out by previous tenants in this dwelling make it necessary to carry out a comprehensive reinstatement of the original kitchen design. This gives an opportunity to accommodate appliances beneath the worktop.

## Worktop materials

The original worktops, brown tiling over reinforced concrete, formed a striking, heavy feature that related to the scale and weight of the estate. These were, in the original design, complemented by lightweight elements: Steel sink units, and hardwood infill panels that could be removed, enabling taller fridge units to be installed if required.

The worktops in this instance have been retained and covered over. On the narrow side it is proposed to uncover the original worktop and repair/replace the original tiles as necessary.

On the other side, it is proposed to form a replica worktop from timber framing with marine ply facing. The surface of the marine ply is to be tiled to match the original appearance.

This worktop will be shorter than the original, with a new, thinner, hardwood section to allow a washing machine to be installed below. The plywood fin supporting the end of the new section uses an original detail used elsewhere within the Estate.

This alteration allows standard washing machines to be installed without raising the general height of the worktops, reducing the impact on the room as a whole.

## Cupboards

For ease of construction, standard carcass units will be used behind sympathetic plywood cladding. The sliding doors, horizontal timber head and base details will all be reproduced, as will the vertical plywood panel at any exposed ends.

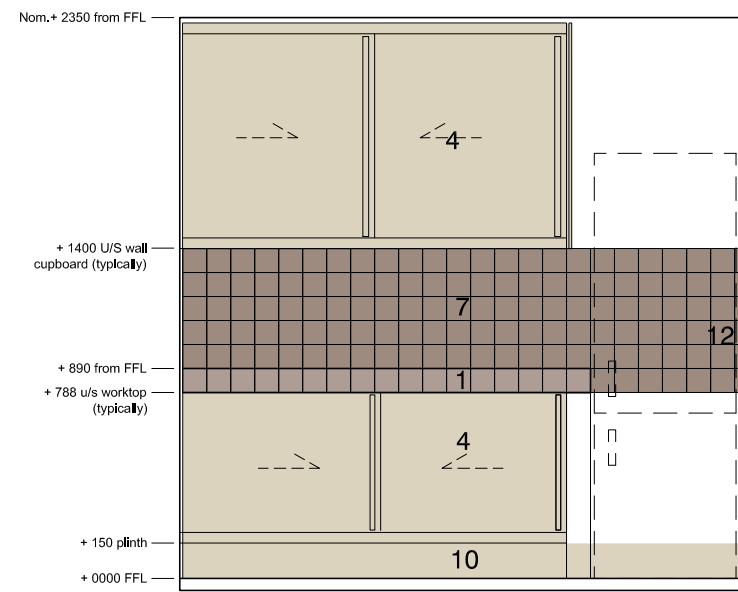
As current regulations prohibit wall cupboards directly above gas hobs, the end wall cupboard will be omitted.

To provide additional storage, a drawer unit will be installed below the sink, using the finger pull detail found elsewhere on the Estate. 'False' drawers will conceal the sink and gas meter.

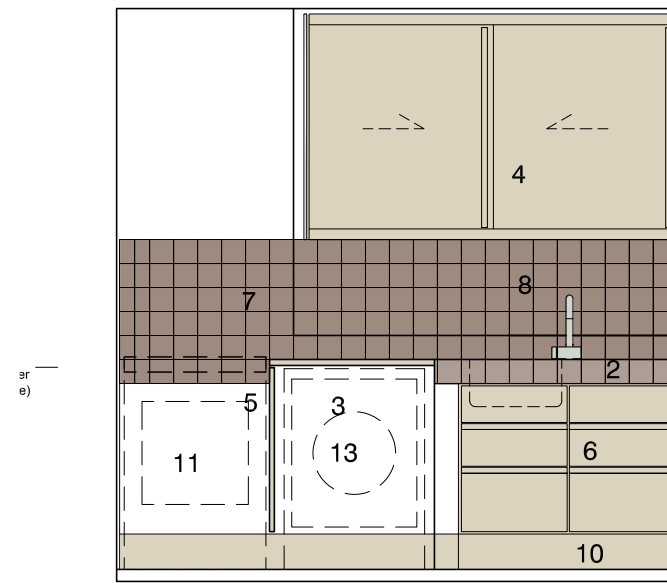
## Joinery

Doors will be replaced by new to match the existing. Where pull handles have been over-painted, it may be more effective to replace the pull handle rather than attempt to strip it in-situ. Where pull handles have become damaged or warped, this may be more appropriate in any case.

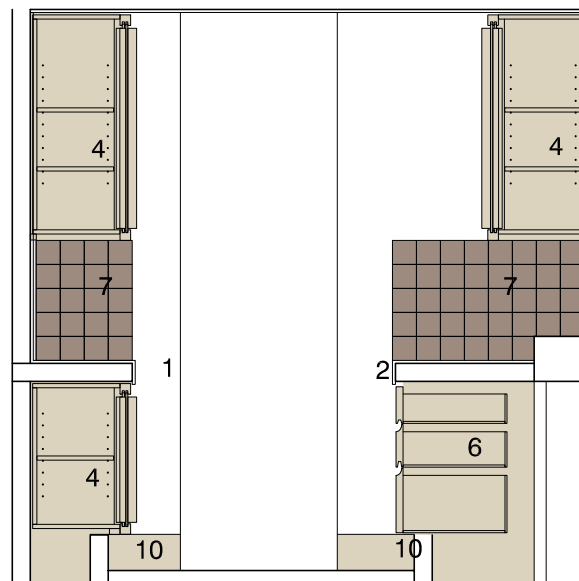




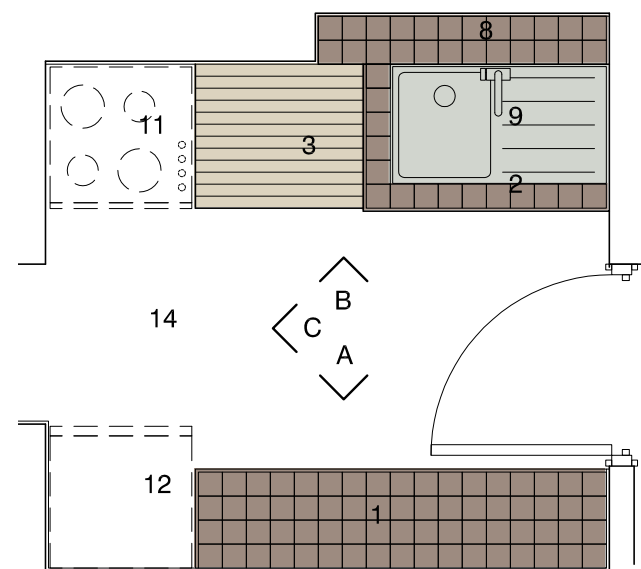
A



B



C



Key

- 1 Refurbished tiled worktop
- 2 Replica tiled worktop, reconfigured to suit layout
- 3 Beech worktop, on plywood end support
- 4 Plywood faced cupboard with standardised carcass, replica doors and trims, replica end panels
- 5 Replica plywood fin support detail
- 6 Plywood faced drawer unit, including concealed gas meter
- 7 Tiled splashback
- 8 Tiled recess (edge moved to suit cupboard)
- 9 Stainless steel sink and drainer
- 10 Replica plywood plinth
- 11 Space for freestanding oven
- 12 Space for fridge or fridge/freezer
- 13 Space for washing machine
- 14 Lino floor

# Products

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Alterations by the tenants of the dwelling over time has resulted in a mix of original fabric, in need of restoration, and contemporary replacements not in line with the heritage listing of the dwelling. The products below are suggested substitutions for the original fabric that maintain the aesthetic and functional aspirations of the original designs.

## Bathroom Tiles

A plain off-white matt tile, as per the original specification:



## Kitchen Tiles

A plain dark brown matt tile, as per the original specification:



## Lino Floor Tiles

A mid-grey textured lino tile:



## Plywood Cabinetry

High grade birch plywood stained and varnished to match existing:



# Scope of Works

Note:

- Where existing tile are in good condition, retain and repair any damage and replace any missing.
- Any original fabric removed is to be retained and stored for future use.
- All wiring at low level to be concealed in skirting.
- All wiring at high level to be chased into plaster and made good.
- Where necessary strip any paint from balcony walls and remove all fixed shelving, clothes drying apparatus and garden furniture.

The elements and works listed reflect site discussions with the London Borough of Camden's Conservation Officer. The specification notes are drawn from products and systems previously agreed with London Borough of Camden, either via Listed Building Consent applications elsewhere on the Estate, or via the Estate Action Works documentation.

| Element  | Works   | Specification notes   | Heritage sensitive feature |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| <b>1.0 Walls</b>                                   |   |   |                            |
| 1.1 Sliding partitions                             | Strip any painting to the stained timber pull details.  | Replace pull detail if stripping in-situ proves unfeasible.   | <b>Y</b>                   |
| <b>2.0 Kitchen units and fittings</b>              |   |   |                            |
| 2.1 Reinstale concrete worktops and pedestal units | Replace tiled concrete worktop and suspended joinery cupboard.<br>Height to be raised to suit new appliances on one side. | Install timber framed worktop with marine ply facing tiled to match existing; with cupboards below. Cupboards formed ex stock carcass with James Latham birch plywood facing and replica handle.<br>Franke or Blanco Claron undermounted sink with drainer and Minta mixer tap. | <b>Y</b>                   |
| <b>3.0 Wall mounted units</b>                      |   |   |                            |
| 3.1 Replace wall mounted units                     | Replace wall mounted plywood cupboards, to be full width as original.   | Cupboards formed ex stock carcass with James Latham birch plywood facing and routed handle. Horizontal hardwood detail at top.  | <b>Y</b>                   |
| <b>4.0 Tiling</b>                                  |   |   |                            |
| 4.1 Kitchen tiling                                 | Remove missing/non-original tiling in kitchen, replace with new tiling to match original.                                 | Square, matt brown tiles to be selected (to match original), with white grout.  | <b>N</b>                   |

|   |   |   |  |          |
|---|---|---|--|----------|
| 4.2                                       | Bathroom tiling                               | Remove non-original tiling in bathroom, replace with new tiling to match original.        | Square, matt white tiles to be selected, with white grout.   | <b>N</b> |
| <b>5.0 Shelving, storage</b>              |   |   |  |          |
| 5.1                                       | Sliding doors                                 | Reinstate sliding doors and plinth base of cupboard in entrance.                          | Details and stain to match original.   | <b>Y</b> |
| 5.2                                       | Glazed sliding screen to external window      | Reinstate glazed sliding screen.  | Timber stain to match original.  | <b>Y</b> |
| 5.3                                       | Shelving within cupboards                     | Remove any shelves installed by previous occupants and strip back to original carcass.    | Replace missing shelves, to original detail.   | <b>Y</b> |
| 5.4                                       | Sliding doors to storage                      | Doors buckled and in need of refurbishment / replacing. Sliding mechanism to be replaced. | Details and stain to match original. New metal channel to be inserted at base so that doors slide. | <b>Y</b> |
| 5.5                                       | Built-in shelf above bed                      | Replace missing plywood built-in shelf above bed.   | Details and stain to match original.   | <b>Y</b> |
| <b>6.0 Painting and decorating</b>        |   |   |  |          |
| 6.1                                       | General refurbishment                         | Clean and repaint all walls, doors and ceilings.  | Heritage shade of white paint to be used, matt on walls and satin on joinery.                      | <b>N</b> |
| 6.2                                       | Wallpaper                                     | All wallpaper to be stripped and walls prepared for painting.                             | To be painted a heritage shade of white.   | <b>N</b> |
| <b>7.0 Floor coverings, curtains, etc</b> |   |   |  |          |
| 7.1                                       | Raised step                                   | Strip paint applied to raised step by window.   | Stain to match original.   | <b>Y</b> |
| 7.2                                       | Floor coverings                               | Strip and replace sheet flooring.   | Flooring type Ployflor Homogeneous XL PU (fossil).   | <b>N</b> |
| 7.3                                       | Curtains                                      | All curtains, rails and fixings to be removed.  | Make good any damage to windows and ceilings from fixings  |          |
| <b>8.0 Doors</b>                          |   |   |  |          |
| 8.1                                       | Door to kitchen                               | Door missing, to be reinstated. Damage to frame.  | Detail and stain to match original.  | <b>Y</b> |
| 8.2                                       | Sliding doors                                 | Paint to be stripped and stain applied.   | Stain to match existing.   | <b>Y</b> |
| <b>9.0 External Windows</b>               |   |   |  |          |
| 9.1                                       | Windows in living/dining room                 | Painted frames to be stripped. Stain to be applied.                                       | Stain to match original.   | <b>Y</b> |
| <b>10.0 Misc</b>                          |   |   |  |          |
| 10.1                                      | Non-original shelves, hooks and other fixings | All to be removed.  | Make good any damage to wall from fixings and paint.   | <b>N</b> |



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