

Alexandra Road Estate

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# Rowley Way Flat 33J

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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



# 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 33J 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

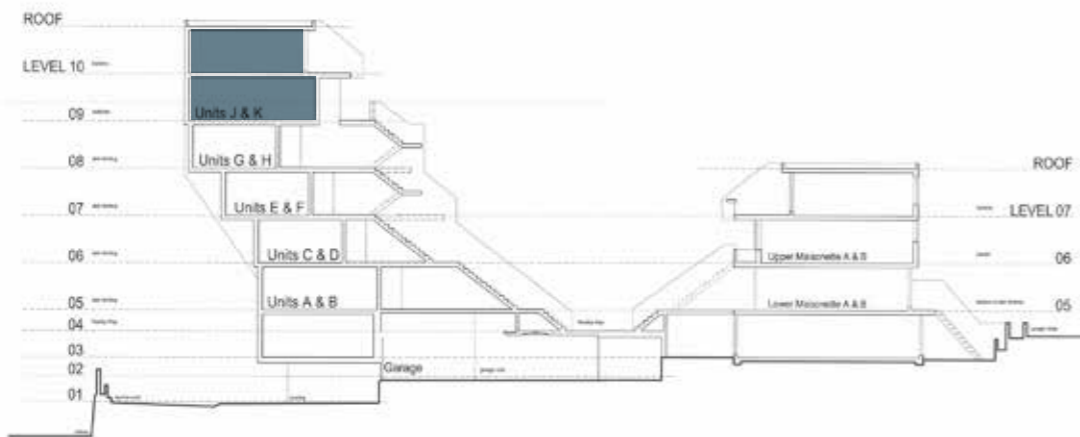
The estate contains a number of different dwelling types, all sharing a similar approach and a number of key features. The high density of the estate led to tight interior layouts, mitigated by open plan elements. Sliding doors and glazed partitions allow flexible arrangements, with the potential for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

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

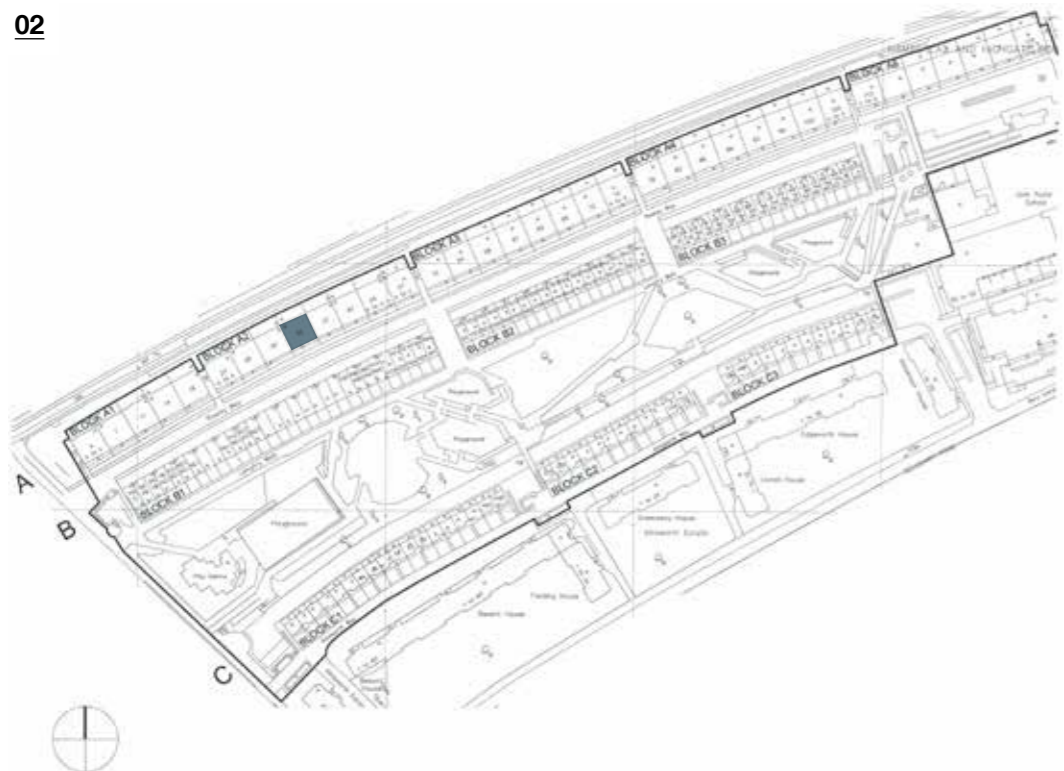
Finishes are restrained, white paint contrasting with stained timber and brown tiling. Simple joinery shelves and cupboards are formed from plywood, while the stairs are a more developed piece of joinery work. In the kitchens, concrete worktops form a striking, almost sculptural element. These are tiled, 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 A2 Flat Type

This maisonette dwelling is situated on level 09 & 10 of Block A.

## Flat Description

This flat is the highest level of A block, accessed only by an external walkway at the lower level of the dwelling. The flat is a two storey arrangement with two bedrooms. The lower level contains a storage, WC and bathroom zone that buffers the two bedrooms to the rear from the public walkway. On the higher level there is an open plan living / kitchen / dining separated by a sliding screen.

## Kitchen Design

The kitchen is semi partitioned by a kitchen island connected at one end to the partition dividing the living room from the kitchen. The kitchen extends from the kitchen space to the dining space with the extension of the units along the rear wall of the room.

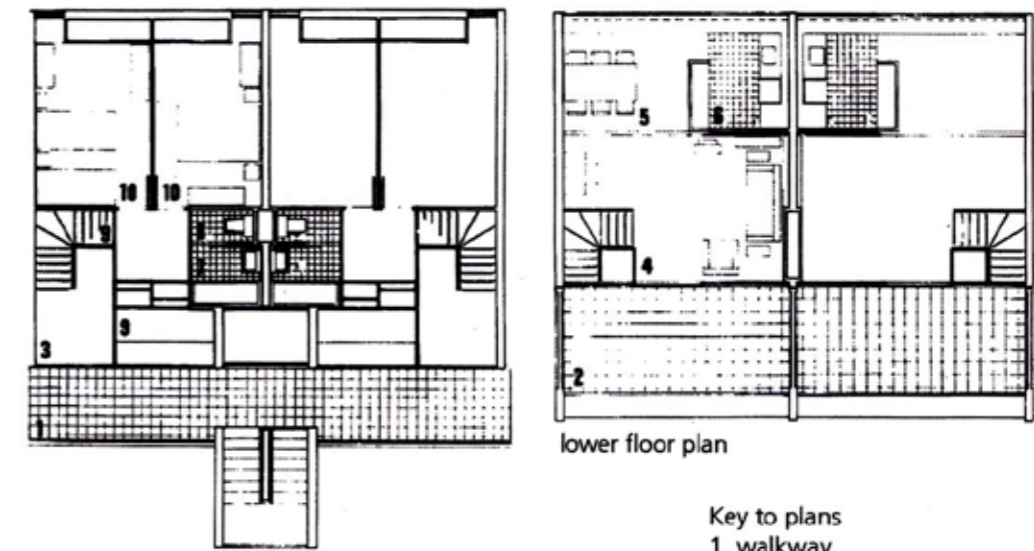
The kitchen worktops are formed with in situ concrete, clad with tiles that extend up the walls to form a splash back. The worktops do not extend to the full width of the room: on the sink side of the room, a gap is left, presumably for the oven and a gap of equivalent width is filled with a hard wood top. A metal sink is set within the grid of the tiled surface.

On the wall above the sink/oven, full length plywood cupboards are wall-fixed above the worktop. These have plain, flat, sliding doors, with simple,

linear timber profile pull handles and a distinctive horizontal timber trim at top and bottom.

There are no cupboards below the sink, but on the 'island' there are shallow plywood cupboards with sliding doors.

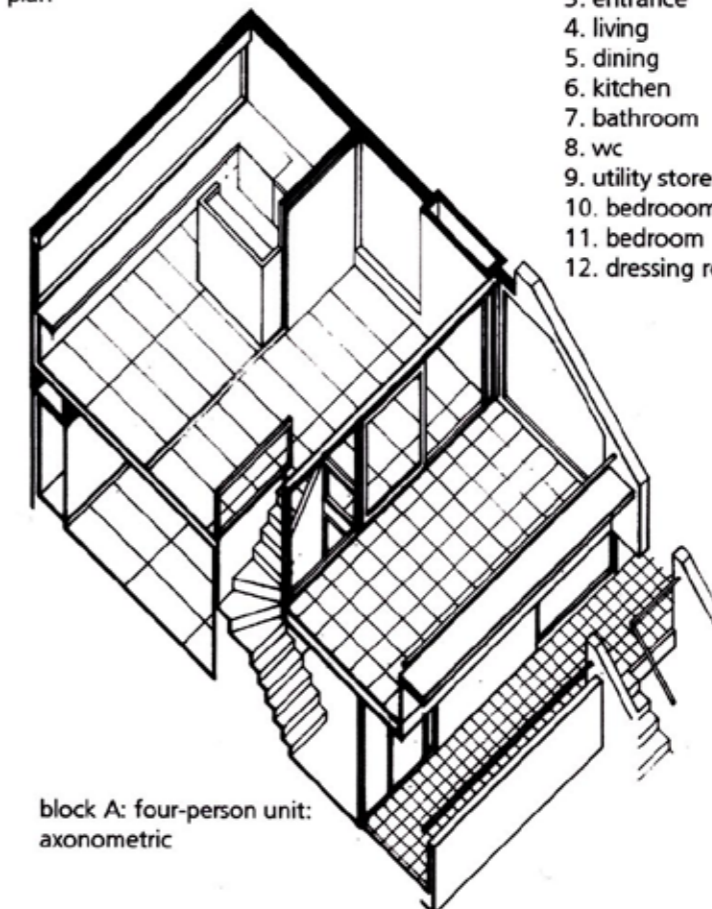
The kitchen design shows a clear, well-ordered concept, with a limited, complementary range of robust materials and a rigorous arrangement in plan. However, by modern standards there is very little room for appliances. There is an opportunity to address this in replanning the room.



block A: four person unit  
upper floor plan

lower floor plan

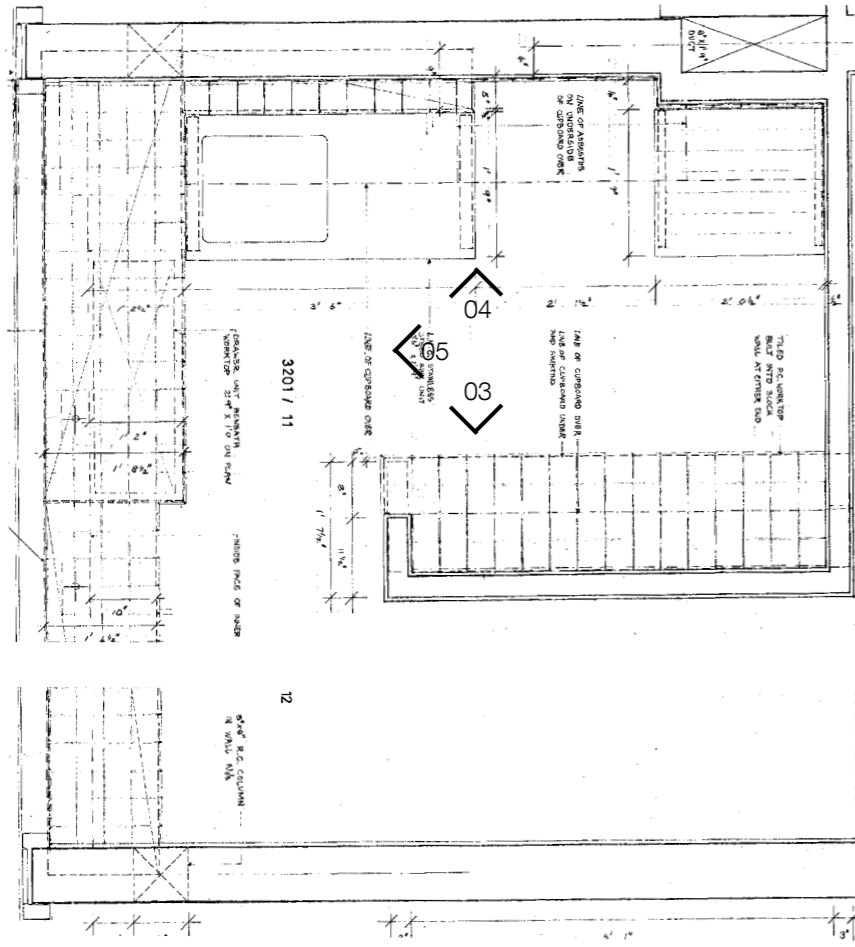
- Key to plans
1. walkway
  2. terrace
  3. entrance
  4. living
  5. dining
  6. kitchen
  7. bathroom
  8. wc
  9. utility store
  10. bedroom 2
  11. bedroom 1
  12. dressing room



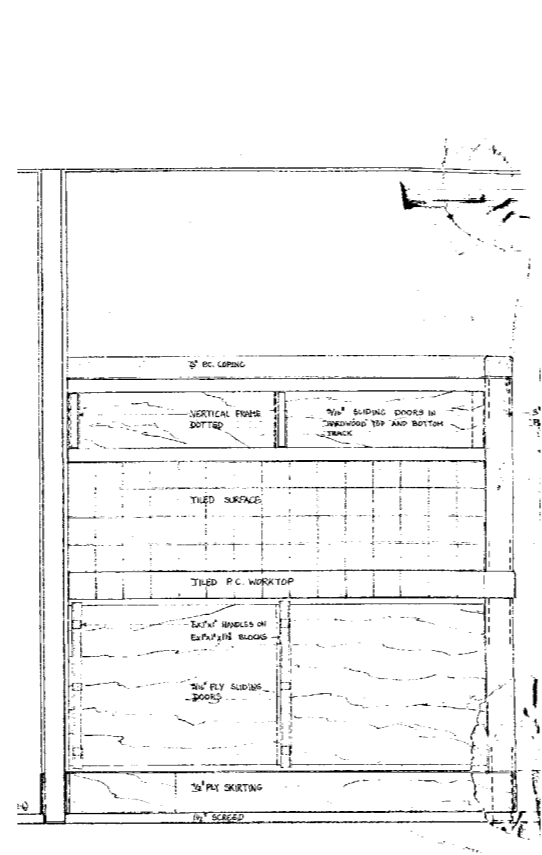
block A: four-person unit:  
axonometric

01

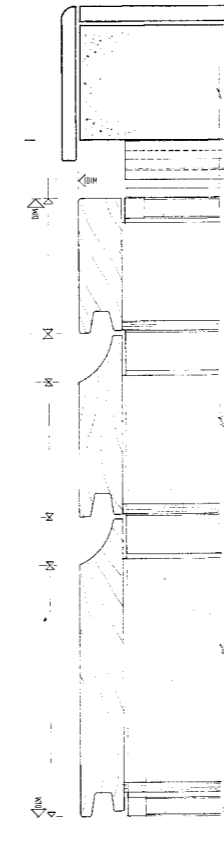




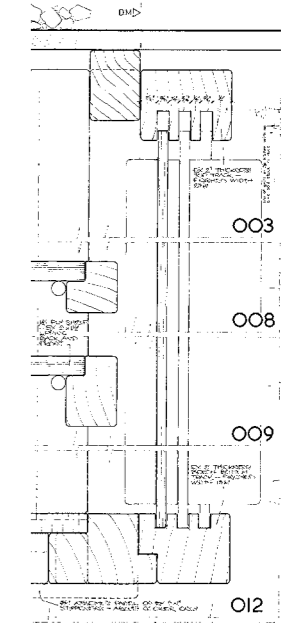
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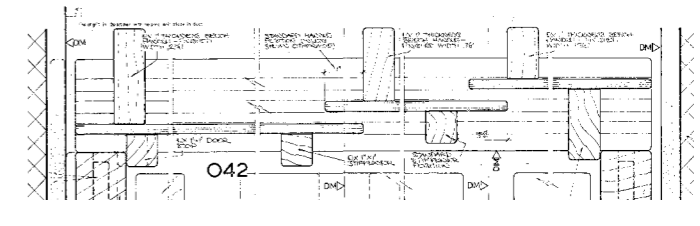
03



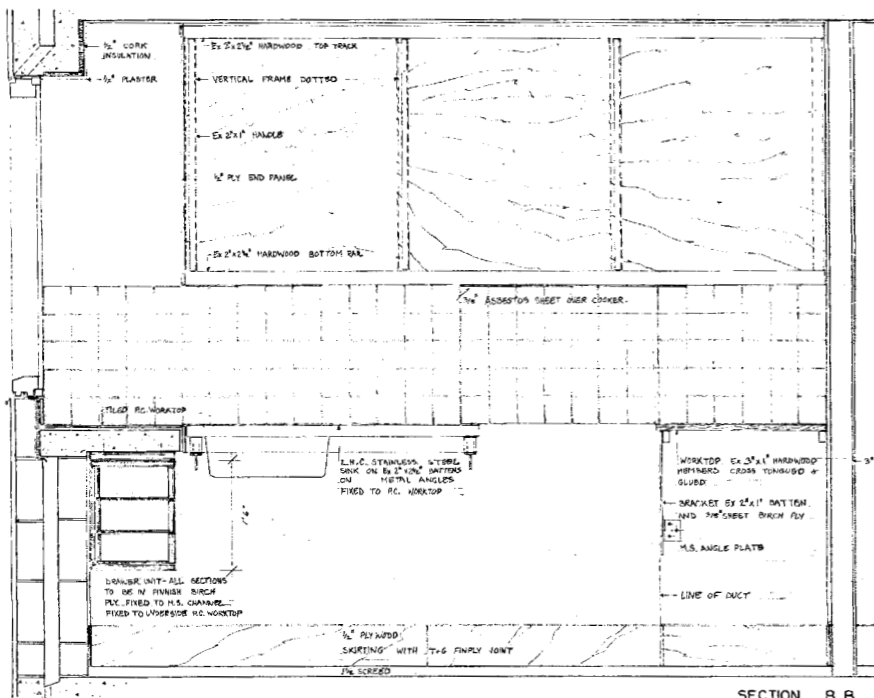
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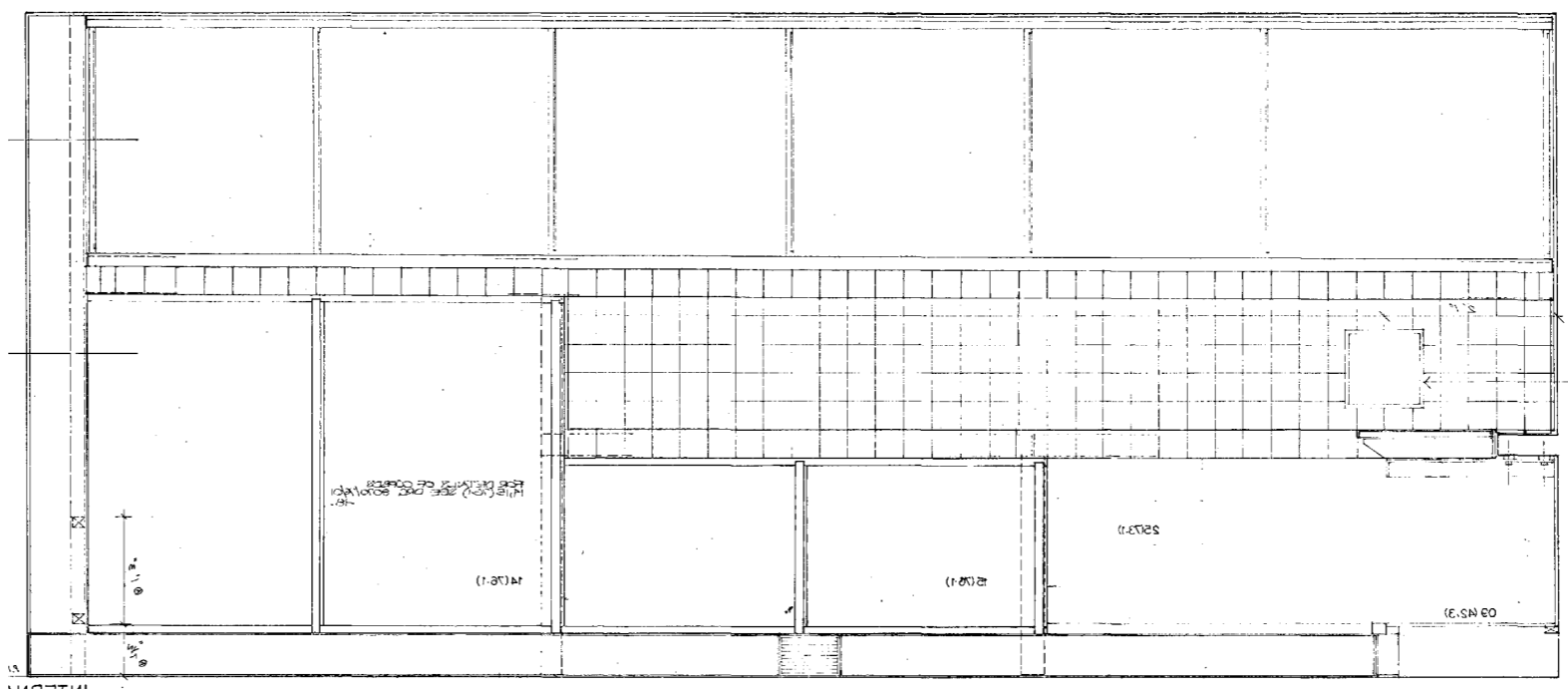
07



042



04



05

- 1 Flat plans and axonometric
- 02 Kitchen Plan
- 03 Kitchen Island elevation
- 04 + 05 Kitchen elevations
- 06 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 A2), 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.

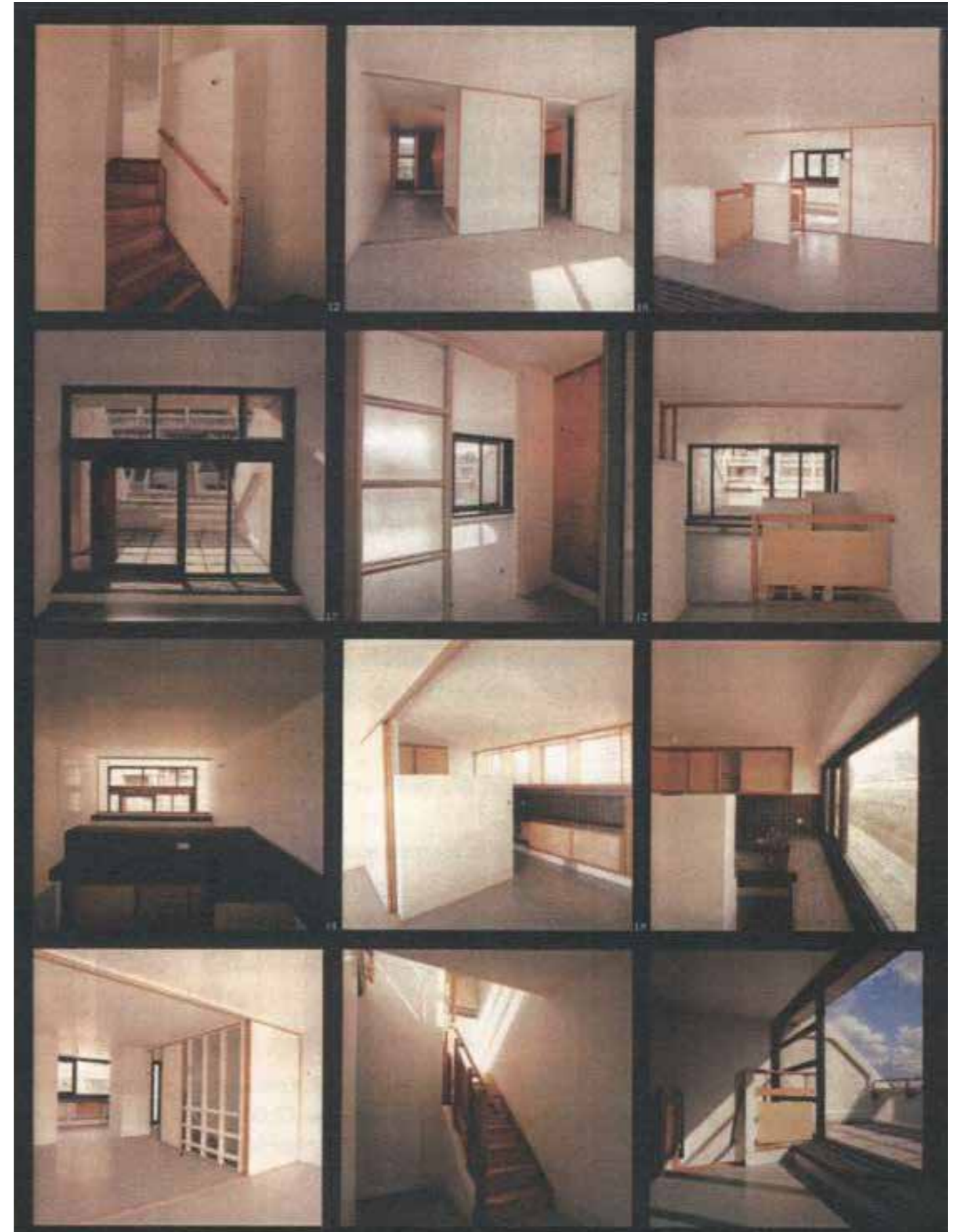
## Other features

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.

The images opposite are examples of an A2 type dwelling with well maintained finishes and fittings.



- 01 Stair top landing in foreground, dining space in background
- 02 Kitchen / dining threshold
- 03 Original plywood built-in cupboards
- 04 Original island with cupboards and tiled worktops



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:

- All original timber features have been painted. [02 + 03]
- Sliding door missing between lobby and bedroom/WC/bath rooms.
- Non-original shelving unit installed to lobby storage.

## Living / Dining:

- Original stained timber top to window ledge has been overpainted. [04]
- Non-original timber shelving has been fitted to recess. [06]

## Bedroom 1 + 2:

- Stained timber sliding doors have been painted over.
- Timber details have been overpainted.

## Kitchen:

- All worktops, wall and base cupboards and kitchen unit island have been replaced/removed. [05]
- Tiling has been replaced with inappropriate product. [05]
- 5 no. approx acoustic tiles to window are damaged.

## Bathroom:

- Non-original fittings and fixtures have been

fitted. [01]

- Tiling has been replaced with inappropriate product. [01]
- Concrete slab and ceiling finishes above shower head are damaged.
- Non-original blinds have been installed to window.

## WC:

- Non-original fittings and fixtures have been fitted. [01]
- Non-original tiling has been installed. [01]

## Stair:

- Non-original timber handrail has been fitted to stair. [02]
- Timber features have been painted. [02]
- Original balustrade at to landing has been replaced with inappropriate product. [04]
- Original timber balustrade top rail at top of stair is missing. [04]

## General:

- Laminate timber flooring/tiling has been installed throughout.
- Surface mounted conduits have been installed for wiring.



04



05



06



# Kitchen Details

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**The most significant works within the dwelling will affect the kitchen, where changes are required to accommodate modern appliances below the low, concrete worktops, and where current regulations prohibit low 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 completely removed, and replica worktops will be formed from timber framing with marine ply facing. The surface of the marine ply is to be tiled to match the original appearance. The distance between the two facing worktops will be increased, to allow better access.

The thinner, hardwood section will be relocated, to allow a washing machine adjacent to the sink to be installed below. A second, matching panel allows a fridge-freezer to be accommodated opposite.

## **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.

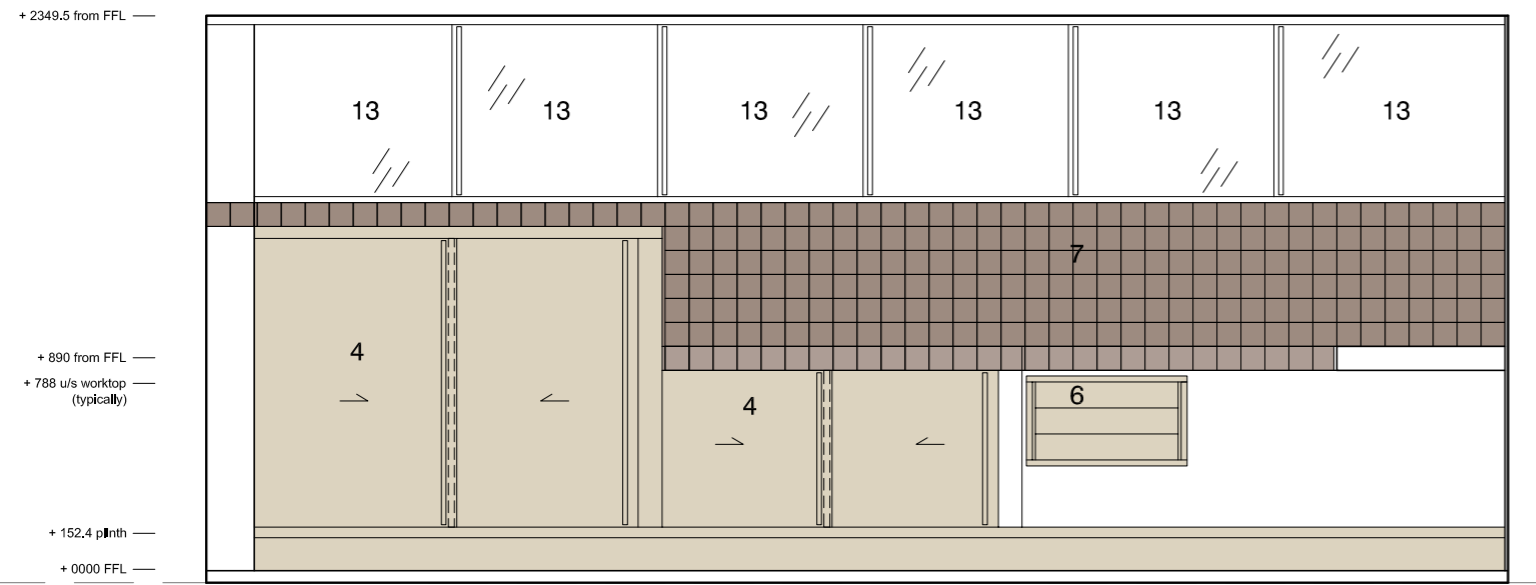
To accommodate the fridge-freezer, the smaller wall cupboards will not be reinstated, and the base units will be reduced in width.

## **Joinery**

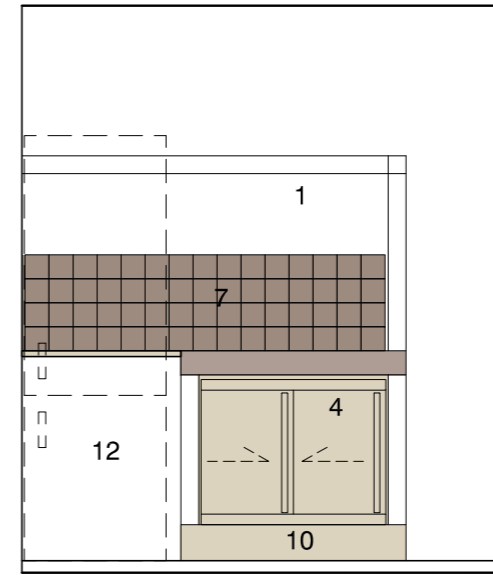
Doors will be replaced by new to match the existing. Where pull handles have been over-painted, it may be more effective to replace the pull handle rather than attempt to strip it in-situ. Where pull handles have become damaged or warped, this may be more appropriate in any case.

The replica sliding door shown will be reduced width, to suit the new worktop layout.

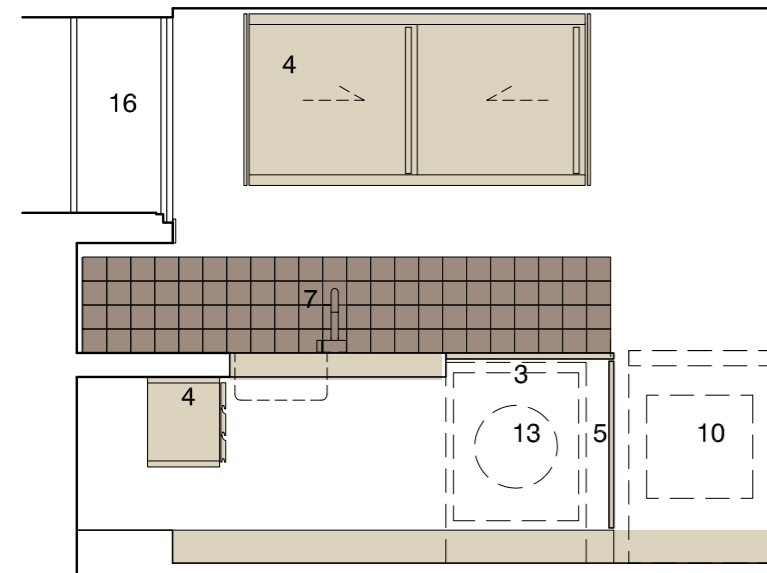




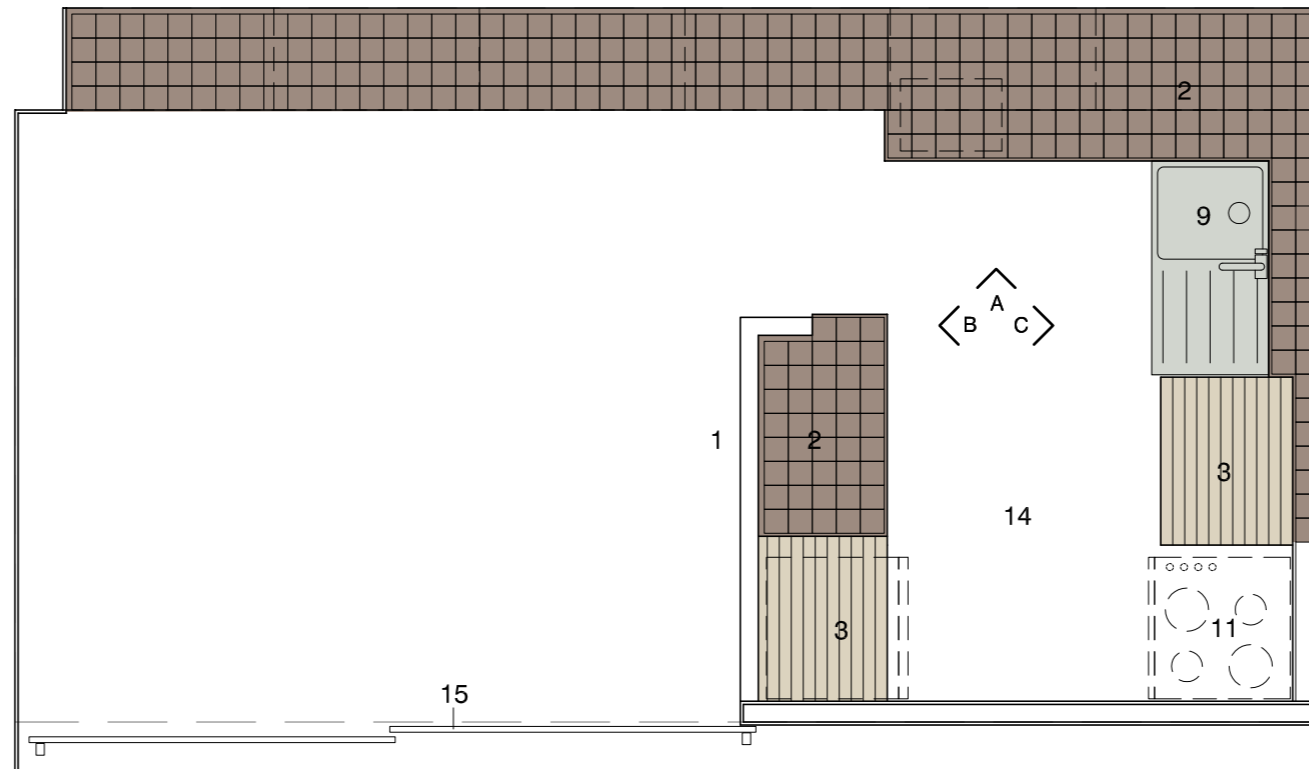
A



B



C



Key

- 1 Replica wall
- 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
- 7 Tiled splashback
- 8 -
- 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
- 15 Replica sliding door, reduced width to suit relocated worktop
- 16 Existing window

# 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 and Kitchen Tiles

A plain off-white 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>
1.2 Missing sliding partition in entrance foyer	Replace to match existing	To be formed from plywood timber with hardwood timber pulls. Metal sliding mechanism at the base. Stain to match existing.	<b>Y</b>
1.3 Missing sliding partition between living and kitchen/dining rooms	Replace to match existing	Timber stain to match original.	<b>Y</b>
<b>2.0 Kitchen units and fittings</b>			
2.1 Reinstate worktops and pedestal units	Replace tiled concrete worktop and suspended joinery cupboard. Height to be raised to suit new appliances on one side.	Install timber framed worktop with marine ply facing and tiled to match original, with cupboards below. Cupboards formed ex stock carcass with James Latham birch plywood facing and routed handle. Blanco Claron undermounted sink with Minta mixer tap.	<b>Y</b>
<b>3.0 Wall mounted units</b>			
3.1 Replace wall mounted units	Replace wall mounted plywood cupboards, length to match 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 white tiles to be selected , 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	Shelving within recess	Remove any shelves installed by previous occupants and strip back to original carcass.	Replace missing shelves, to original detail.	<b>Y</b>
5.2	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>
<b>6.0 Painting and decorating</b>				
6.1	General refurbishment	Clean and repaint all walls, doors and ceilings. Fill any damage to plaster walls.	Heritage shade of white paint to be used, matt on walls and satin on joinery.	<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	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 kitchen/dining room	Damaged acoustic tiles to be replaced	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>
10.2	Electrical cables	Cables in surface mounted trunking to be chased into plaster where possible.	Make good any damage from trunking and paint.	
<b>11.0 Stairs</b>				
11.1	Non-original handrail fixed to wall	To be removed and replaced with handrail to match original detail.	Hardwood timber with stain to match existing.	<b>Y</b>
11.2	Non-original balustrade at top of stair	To be removed and replaced with balustrade to match original detail to a height of 1100mm	Hardwood timber rail and uprights with plywood timber infill. Stain to match original.	<b>Y</b>
11.3	Existing timber balustrade	Rail to top of balustrade missing		

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