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Memorandum

To	Michelle O'Doherty, Clare Brady
Copy to	Alastair Young, Jack Brudenell, Kay Georgiou, File
From	Robin Flindell
Date	28 September 2015
Subject	Memo; Heritage Gain Summary
Project No/Name	235990 40 Great James Street

Description: 40 Great James Street was constructed in 1724 as a four storey townhouse including a basement. It is Grade II* listed as part of a group listing within a terrace. There is a remarkably high survival of original fabric. Currently the building has a mixed residential / commercial use class.

Proposals: The proposals are to keep the existing mix of residential & commercial use but within a single tenure as a 'live work' unit with no subdivisions.

Purpose of note: Following a site meeting with Alasdair Young of Historic England and Michelle O'Doherty of London Borough of Camden, this note has been prepared to summarise the heritage benefits of the proposed scheme and address 3 specific concerns:

1. Structural Interventions
2. External Services distribution
3. Over-floor heating

This note should also be read in conjunction with the drawings, Design and Access Statement and Heritage Statement that accompany the application, which contains further information on each of the points below.

General: The proposals represent a considerable number of heritage gains as follows:

- The building is to remain in its existing commercial / residential use with 1 tenant across the floors. This will obviate the need for further internal sub-division.
- The building, currently at risk, will be brought back into use appropriate with its age and character
- Repairs are to be minimal, confined to those that are absolutely necessary. A strategy of minimal intervention is to be adopted throughout.
- Repairs are to be undertaken on a like-for-like basis following accepted best-practice for dealing with a building of this age and importance, and as set out in Historic England guidance.
- The historic character of the property is to be enhanced, including:
    - Decorative schemes based on historical precedent and evidence uncovered from the property, such as paint samples.
    - Existing historical features such as the staircase are to have disfiguring layers of paint removed (following paint analysis) to expose the fine hand-carved detail.

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    - The front elevation is to be sensitively cleaned to retain patina whilst exposing original detail such as the red-brick window surrounds.
- Modern interventions that are detrimental to the historic character of the property are proposed to be removed. This includes:
    - Existing services surface-mounted to original timber panelling
    - Modern partitions and doorways
    - Concrete roof tiles; existing original clay roof tiles are to be relocated to outer slopes with new clay tiles sourced to match
    - Modern windows, which are to be replaced with historically-correct 6-over-6 sashes with glazing bars to the correct profile. Original sash boxes are to be retained wherever possible.
    - Removal of modern extensions to the rear.
    - Remodelling of modern balustrading to the basement stair.
    - Removal of modern accretions to the basement rear lightwell, such as an iron escape stair.
- Well-considered and sensitive interventions that are as invisible as possible to ensure that they do not impact upon the historic character of the building.
- Where enacted, modern interventions are to be clearly recognisable, allowing the character of the property to be 'read'.
- Interventions such as services distribution are to be fully reversible.

Structural Interventions: A number of structural issues have been discovered within the property:

- Structural beams and joists within the building are generally undersized, resulting in considerable distortion to floors in some areas of the building.
- Historic areas of water ingress have resulted in outbreaks of dry rot which have destroyed beam ends and wall plates and there is evidence of significant structural movement relating to this.

In this instance the 'do nothing' option is not viable. If no remedial action is taken, there is a real possibility of structural failure and collapse, resulting in considerable loss of historic fabric, in particular the interior panelling, already heavily distorted on the upper floors.

To address this The Morton Partnership, structural engineers specialising in work to historic buildings, have conducted an exhaustive process of options for the strengthening works and propose a scheme with minimal of intervention and loss of fabric as follows:

- The overall loading requirements have been reduced, and therefore the amount of intervention. Following negotiations with building control and in view of the proposed live / work nature of occupation, the required loadings for commercial use have been reduced to levels similar those for domestic use.
- Historic England guidance on loadings for commercial buildings has been followed. This has identified zones where heavy items of furniture can be placed (i.e. adjacent to party walls & within basement areas), further reducing the amount of structural intervention required.

- Splicing of main beams and insertion of steel plates; this will stiffen the beams whist keeping them in-situ and minimising disruption to adjacent fabric.
- Re-supporting of beam ends and joists with bolt-on steel elements and new sections of timber alongside the existing, again allowing maximum retention of existing fabric in-situ.
- Localised replacement of wall plates damaged by dry-rot with new sections of timber to match the originals
- No attempt will be made to 'correct' the building by straightening of any elements. Where sagging of floors is considerable this will be compensated for by the introduction of over-floors (see below) which will be reversible and will keep all historic fabric in-situ.

External Services distribution: There is extensive timber panelling throughout the property, lining the external walls and constituting the internal partitions, which in many cases are less than 2 inches thick. Consequently, there are no areas within the building where vertical services can be accommodated sympathetically. Historically this has been achieved via surface mounted conduits, cabling and pipework, which have had a detrimental effect on the fabric and character of the property, which otherwise appears much as it would have during the early 18th century. Concealing services behind panelling is also not an option, as these are in limited locations, of inadequate depth and would require the removal of panelling, which is to be avoided to prevent unnecessary damage and issues with re-fixing.

To address this and incorporate services with minimal impact on historic fabric, enact minimal interventions and ensure reversibility, it is proposed to place all vertical service runs externally on the rear face of the rear closet wing. This has the following advantages:

- This elevation cannot be seen from the public realm. It therefore has minimal impact on the external appearance and historic character of the building.
- The rear face of the closet wing has been largely rebuilt, with the result that minimal historic fabric will be impacted by the proposals.
- The form of the riser (timber weatherboarding on a timber frame) is based on the type of addition for services, etc, typically seen on buildings of this type during the 18th & 19th centuries. It there for follows historical precedent.
- Services run vertically within the new timber riser, entering the building horizontally at the level of the new overfloor (see below). Since the rear wall is largely modern, minimal historic fabric will be affected.
- No impact on timber panelling or cornicing, timber floors or plaster ceilings within the building.
- Existing services surface-mounted to panelling can be removed, providing the opportunity for the repairs to the panelling to restore its historic character.

Over-floor heating (including internal services distribution):

The building is not currently centrally heated; previously heating has been achieved through the use of gas fires within the fireplaces (requiring gas supplies to be notched through the floor joists), electric panel radiators fixed to the timber panelling or portable electric heaters. This is inherently inefficient and unsustainable, both in environmental and financial terms.

To improve the utility of the building by making it desirable as an office and residential space and therefore provide it with a sustainable future it is proposed to install central heating. However, this presents certain issues:

- There are no existing radiator locations that can be replicated.
- As a result of the above, there are few notches within joists that can be re-used to run pipework to new radiators.
- The creation of new notches is not possible due to the structural issues outlined previously.
- Incorporation of radiators, etc, will have an impact on the historic character of the building, obscuring original timber panelling and requiring the creation of holes within the existing floorboards, also largely original. Even small free-standing radiators below windows will impact on the presentation of what is a fine and largely untouched early-18th century interior.
- Reuse of the gas fires will necessitate the lining of flues. This will have a considerable impact on historic fabric, necessitating the removal of timber panelling and the creation of apertures within the brickwork behind, as well as the installation of liner pipes within the flues themselves.

To address this it is proposed to install an over-floor heating system. This takes the form of an insulated floating floor within which pipe work is incorporated with a new timber floor finish over to a total build-up of 38 mm. This has the following advantages:

The current horizontal services distribution in the building is unsatisfactory and must be re-installed to ensure that the property is brought up to modern standards. Services are currently crudely cut through overly large notches within floor joists, or run in surface mounted conduit on the timber panelling, in some places cutting through it.

- Central heating can be incorporated with an absolute minimum of impact on the historic fabric, since the proposed over-floor system sits over the top of the existing joists and floor boards.
- Timber panelling and skirting is not affected, since a small gap is to be left to the perimeter of all rooms.
- The presentation and historic character of the property remains unaffected since all alterations are effectively invisible, with no radiators, etc obscuring original features.
- Localised levelling of floors can be incorporated within the overfloor, leaving historic fabric intact.
- The provision of the overfloor allows creation of voids within it to run horizontal services such as cabling, which are to be picked up from the vertical riser from the rear. This removes the need to disturb historic fabric and notch joists and beams. Sockets can also be located within the overfloor, allowing these to be located away from the timber panelling and maintain the historic character.
- All controls for the heating system can be located within discreet boxing incorporated within the new bathroom areas within the closet wing.
- Since it does not involve alteration of the existing fabric, the proposed system is completely reversible and can be fully removed a future date.

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Conclusion

The above approach represents an innovative approach to the refurbishment of the building that is both sensitive and respectful of the important historic fabric and character. Every effort has been made to formulate proposals that retain the maximum amount of existing fabric and represent minimal interventions, use like-for-like materials and are as reversible as possible.

The proposals provide considerable heritage gains throughout the property which, when combined with sensitive interventions will preserve and enhance the buildings historic character whilst making it suitable for modern occupation, thereby providing it with a sustainable future.

We therefore respectfully request that the proposals be granted planning and listed building consents.

David Hills

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