

Heritage Statement

for
Conway Hall
25 Red Lion Square
Project ref 6185

October 2015

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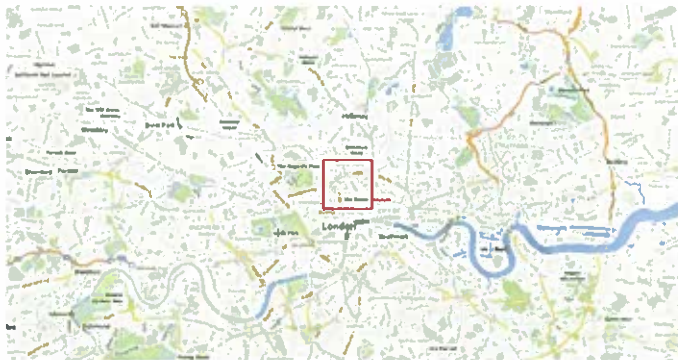
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ARCHITECTS

Introduction

This statement has been written to support an application for internal remodelling of Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London. The proposal is to remodel and refurbish the kitchen and bar area to provide a local hotspot for the community.

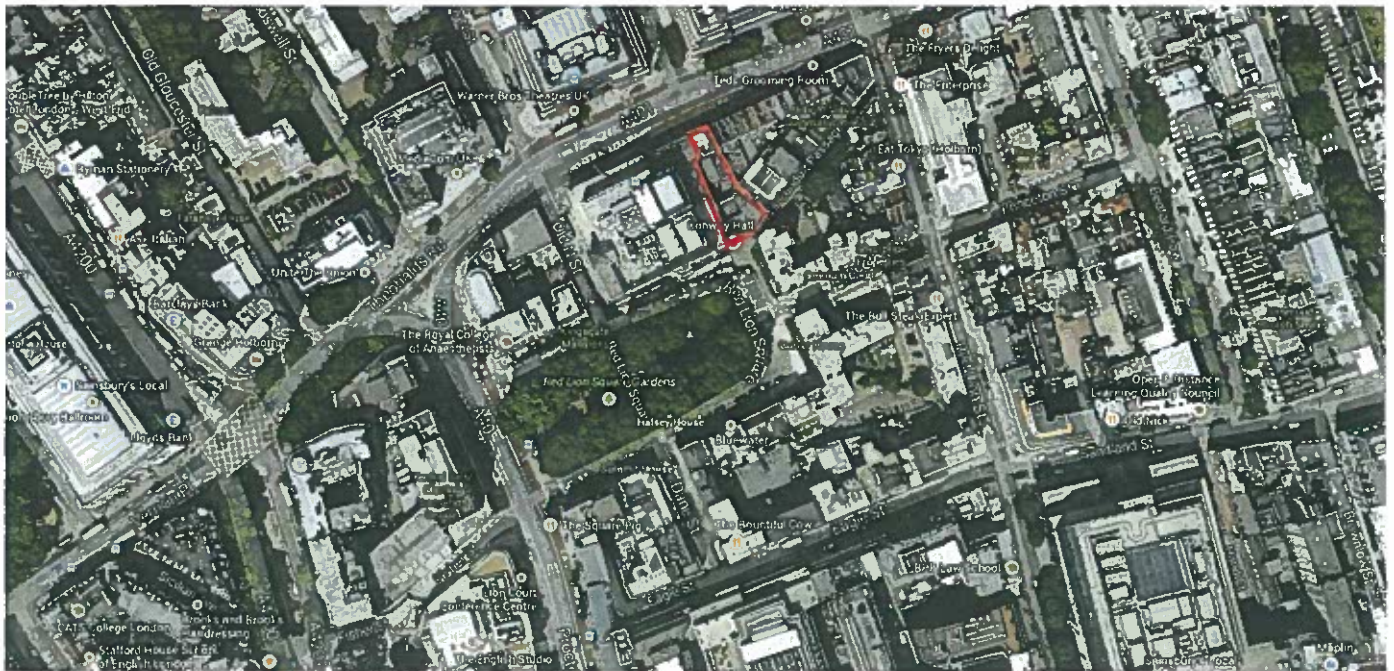
Conway Hall is located within the London Borough of Camden. The site is located within the Conservation Area of Bloomsbury. Conway Hall frames the north east corner of Red Lion Square and can also be accessed via Lamb's Conduit Passage.



1. Location - London



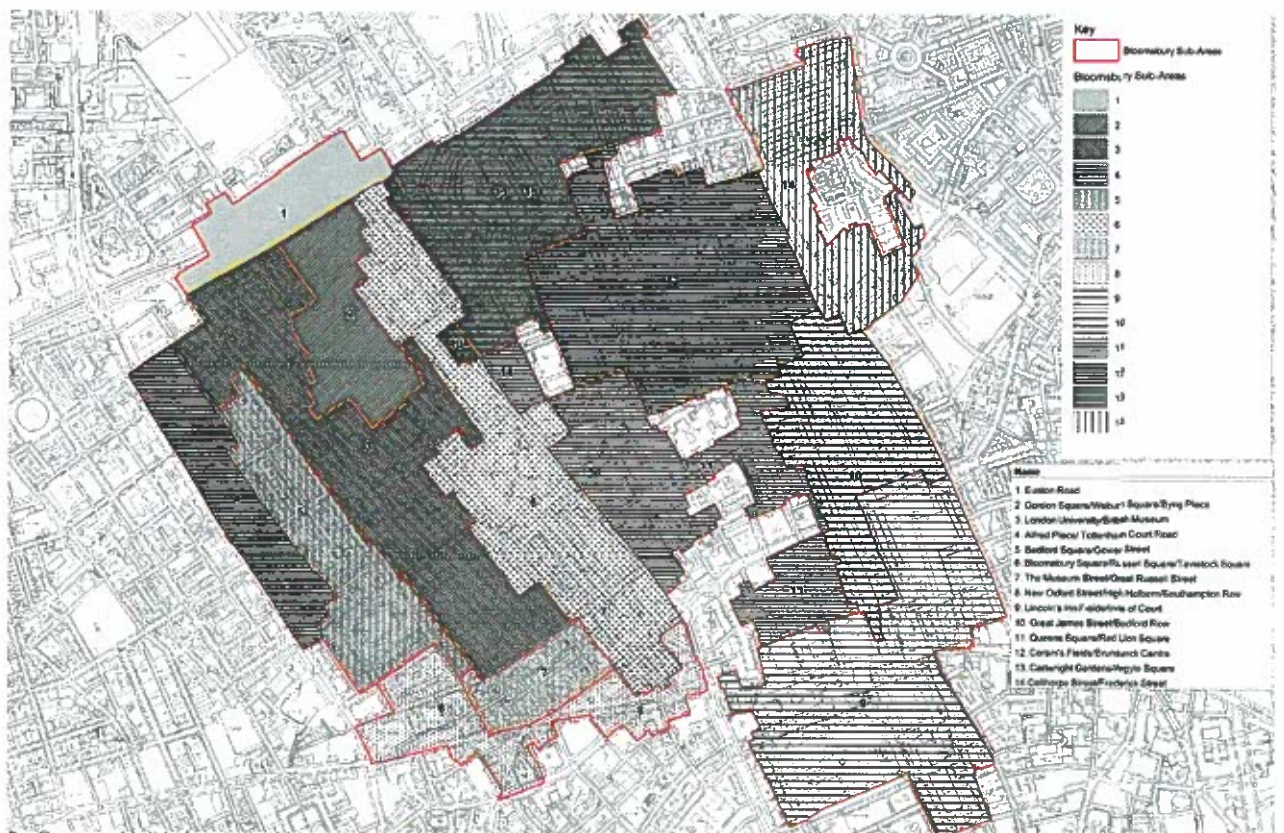
2. Location - London Borough of Camden



3. Aerial view of surrounding area



4. Bloomsbury

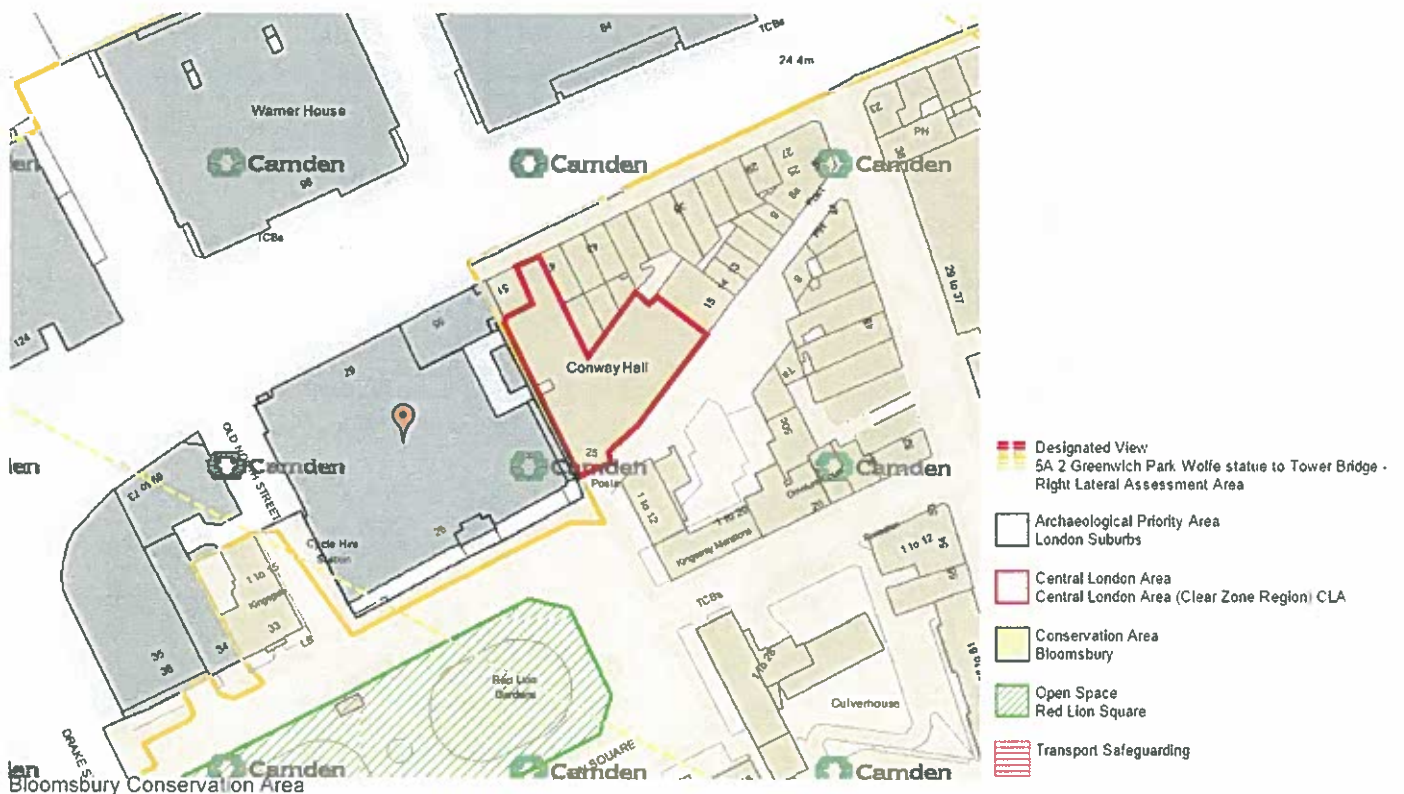
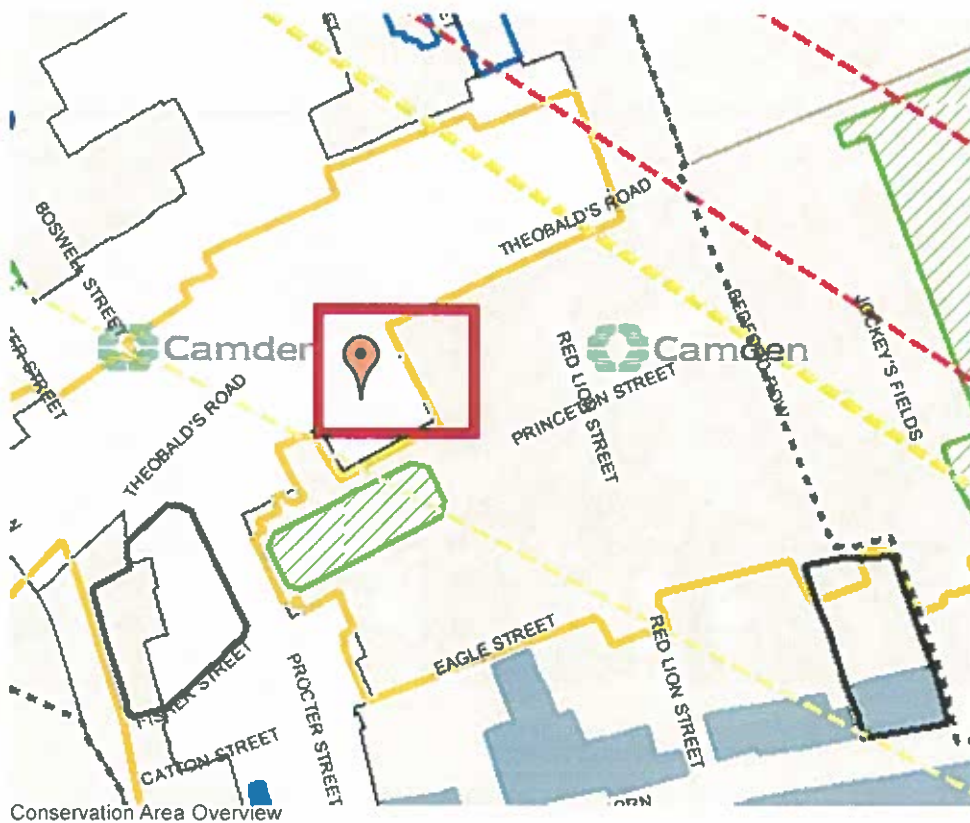


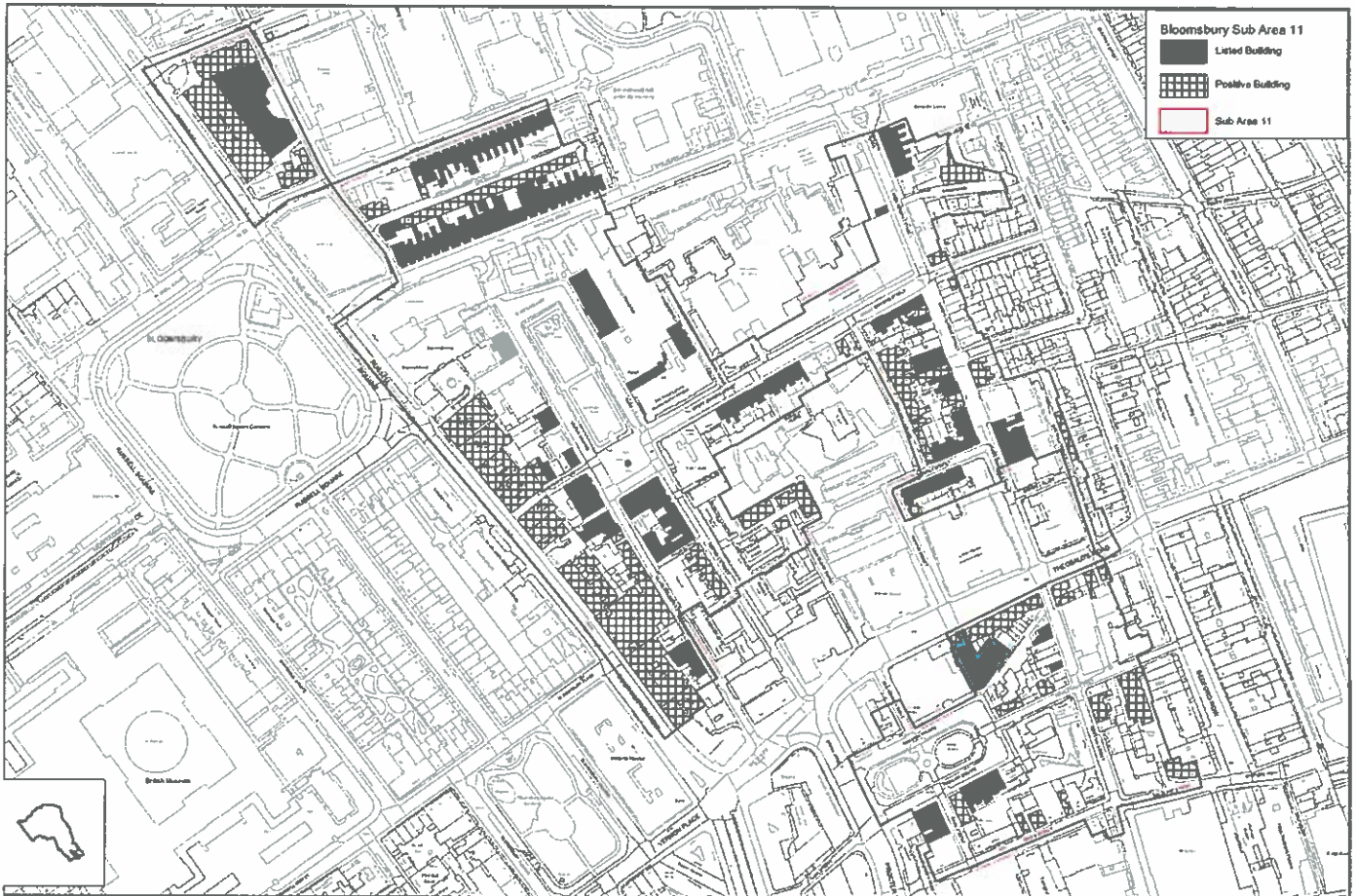
5. Conway Hall is located within sub area 11 of Bloomsbury

The Heritage Assets

The proposals will have impact upon the following heritage assets:

1. Conway Hall 25 Red Lion Square





Bloomsbury Townscape Appraisal - Conway Hall highlighted in blue

Conway Hall is a Grade II listed complex of halls and library built in 1929 by Frederick Herbert Mansford incorporating a mid-late Victorian terrace on Theobalds Road, for the South Place Ethical Society. The building serves as a venue a wide variety of events such as conferences and lectures, concerts, dance classes, drama, festivals, film screenings, charity fund-raisers, as filming location and more.

List description:

Conway Hall is of special architectural interest in its elegant design of which the elevation to Red Lion Square is particularly handsome with its grand classical entrance bay and stone urns along the parapet. The interior of the building is finished with quality materials, largely intact. This significance is enhanced by the historic interest of the building as the headquarters of the South Place Ethical Society, a long standing, free thinking organisation to which a number of important figures have been connected in the past.

NGR: TQ3065281777



Name: CONWAY HALL

English Heritage Map listing - 1392343



Existing Information

History

Conway Hall was built in 1929 as the headquarters of the South Place Ethical Society. The Society was previously based in a chapel in South Place, Finsbury and hoped that this new purpose-built hall would, in the words of a pamphlet issued in 1927: 'enable the South Place Ethical Society to continue and increase its work and activities for a fuller and more vigorous moral, intellectual, and religious life... It is the aim of the Trustees and Committee to place at the disposal of the members and visitors from the Provinces, British Dominions, United States of America and other countries, Headquarters in the heart of London, where men and women of advanced thought could meet and enjoy the amenities of social discourse, with facilities for writing, rest and refreshment'. Plans were prepared for 'a dignified and commodious building' by a Society member, Frederick Herbert Mansford (1871-1946), a Licentiate of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and the hall was built at a cost of about £45,000. Its name was chosen in honour of Moncure Daniel Conway (1832-1907), an anti-slavery advocate, supporter of free thought and biographer of Thomas Paine. The choice of Bloomsbury as the location for the new hall may have been influenced by the area's connotations of intellectual radicalism in the early C20, mainly through the reputation of the Bloomsbury Group circle of writers, artists and thinkers.

The society stemmed from a group of Christian dissenters and originally appointed ministers of religion as leaders. In 1888, however, it was renamed the South Place Ethical Society and hence became allied with a general movement promoting nontheistic religion established by Felix Adler in New York City in 1876 (although members at the time later forced the minister who had enacted the name change, Stanton Coit, to resign because they did not want to be part of the British branch of this movement). From 1897 the South Place Ethical Society appointed lecturers instead of ministers to deliver a Sunday address, preceded and followed by music. A number of ethical societies were established in the late C19 and early C20 in London, Cambridge and Cheltenham amongst other places, but the movement remained largely east-coast American in popularity. The South Place Ethical Society is the only remaining such society in the UK. In its early days it was connected with a number of important figures including Joseph McCabe, the secularist writer and lecturer, Herbert Burrows, a socialist reformer, and John Hobson, social theorist and economist.

Frederick Herbert Mansford was the architect of a number of schemes in London, including houses, offices and a restaurant on Earls Court Road in 1913, none of which is listed. Conway Hall was the most high-profile commission of his career.

The site of the hall was occupied by the Raglan Music Hall in the 1870s. This building was demolished before the end of the C19 and terraced houses built along Lambs Conduit Passage. These were cleared to make way for a second large building, possibly a hall, built in the Edwardian period, which was in turn replaced by Conway Hall in the 1920s.



Existing Photographs

Lobby Area -



Existing notice board and roll of honour



Main entrance hall



Main entrance view towards Larce hall

Bar Area -



Bar area clerestory mirrors and wood panelling



Bar area existing metal framed windows

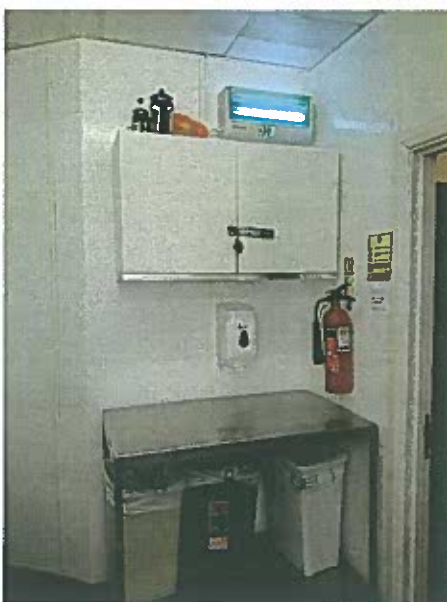


Bar area - service area

Kitchen Area -



Existing lightwell

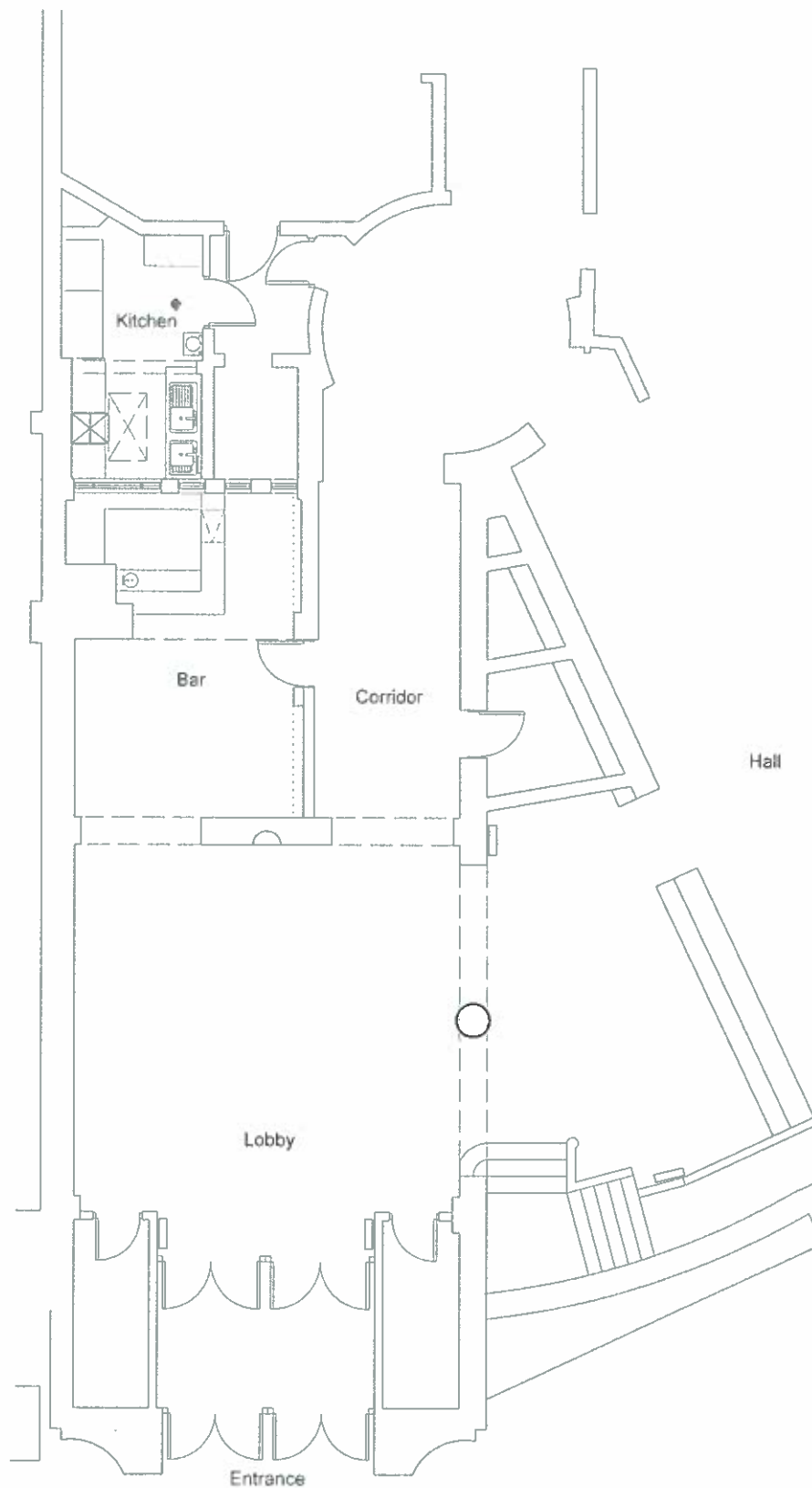


Limited counter available

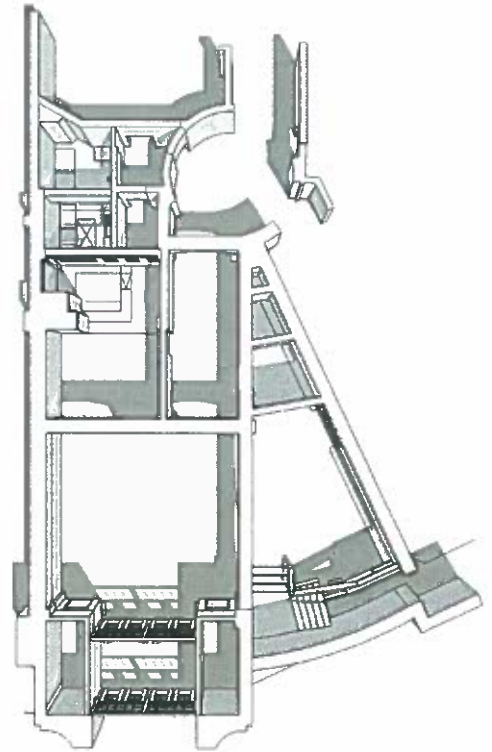
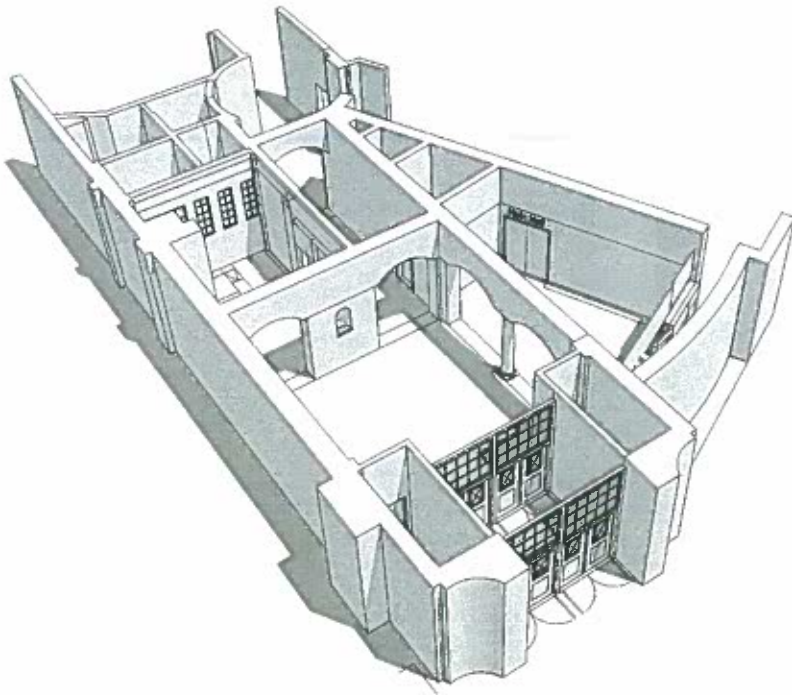


Limited appliances

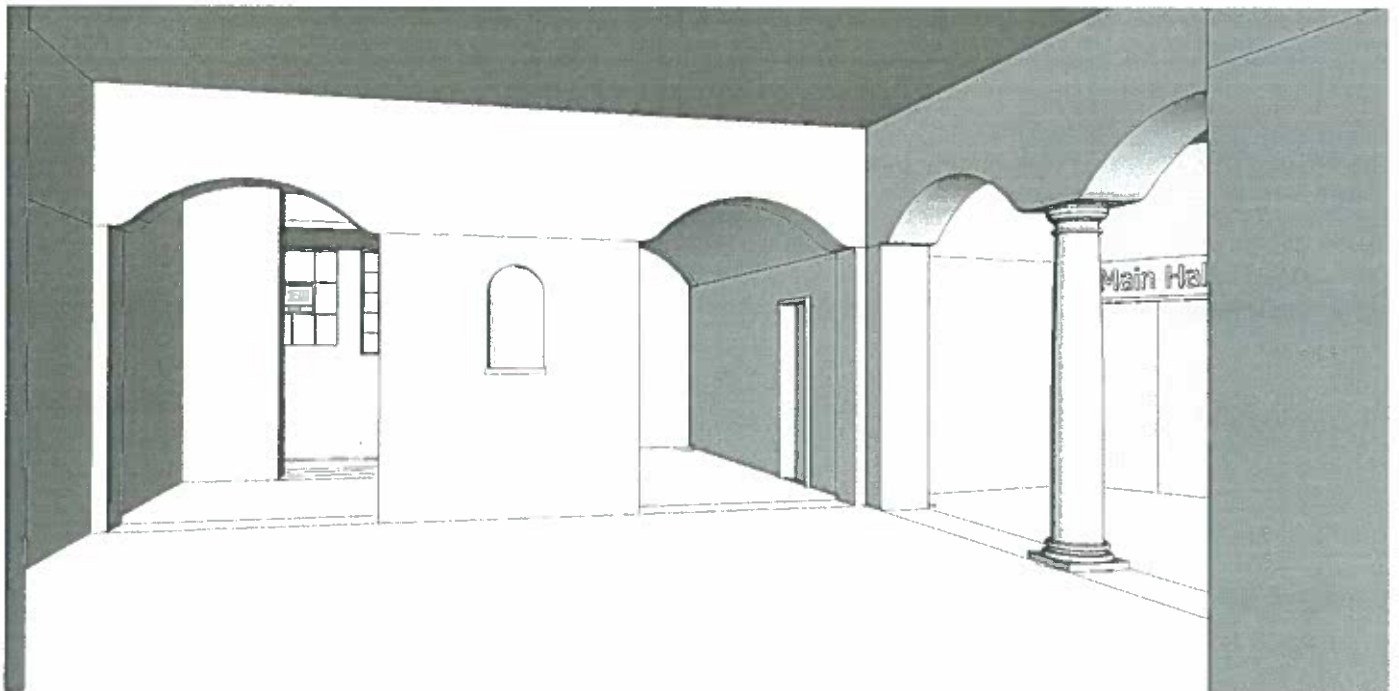
Existing Drawings



Existing ground floor plan



Existing 3D view of ground floor configuration



Existing 3D view of entrance hall / lobby

Significance of Conway Hall

Interiors

Largely unchanged since 1929. There are five principal areas of note: the lobby, the staircase, the central corridor, the library and the main hall. The lobby is lined with polished reconstituted stone and has a tiled floor. There is a two-bay arcade with tapering shallow arches supported by a central marble Tuscan column with a plain capital, which divides the foyer from the staircase area. Similar arched openings lead off the lobby to the central corridor and to the bar area (formerly the ladies cloakroom).

The staircase is also made of polished reconstituted stone and cantilevers from three sides of the stairwell which is lit by large windows and contains a hanging lantern. The balustrade is solid stone and has a stone seat set into it on the first floor landing. The central corridor, leading from the lobby to the secondary entrance from Theobalds Road and providing access to the main hall, cloakrooms and a smaller hall, is tiled and lit by skylights.

The first floor library retains its original parquet flooring, clock, fireplace and bookcases; inscriptions record that the latter two fixtures were bequeathed by or in honour of Society members. It is lit by a skylight and a pair of French windows which lead to a balcony at its southern end. Plans that the library would expand to fill a gallery were never executed. The library retains its original light fittings.

The main hall is panelled and contains a stage and a concrete gallery on three sides. It originally seated 325 on the ground floor and 178 in the gallery and the original fixed and numbered seating survives in the gallery. The capitals of the pilasters flanking the proscenium contain panels with bas-reliefs of a man, woman and child holding a light (to the left) and a mirror (to the right); the latter may symbolise self-knowledge, a theme alluded to in the motto painted across the proscenium arch 'To thine own self by true'.

The gallery is faced with oak plywood, and has balustrading in a metal lattice design; the original clock also survives. The shallow barrel vault ceiling contains skylights which are currently blocked. Behind the stage is a second staircase providing access to the gallery; on the landing are original lockers used by musicians.

In addition there are a number of rooms of lesser interest: rooms behind the stage, offices, a former caretaker's flat, a former secretary's flat and cloakrooms. The section of the building facing Theobalds Road, the mid-late Victorian terraced house, retains its plan and features including several fireplaces.

Design Concept of Proposal

The proposal is an internal conversion and would not affect any external walls or the façades of the building. Namely, the proposal is to create a daytime café facility by remodelling the existing kitchen, incorporating the existing servery area and linking into the lobby foyer space.

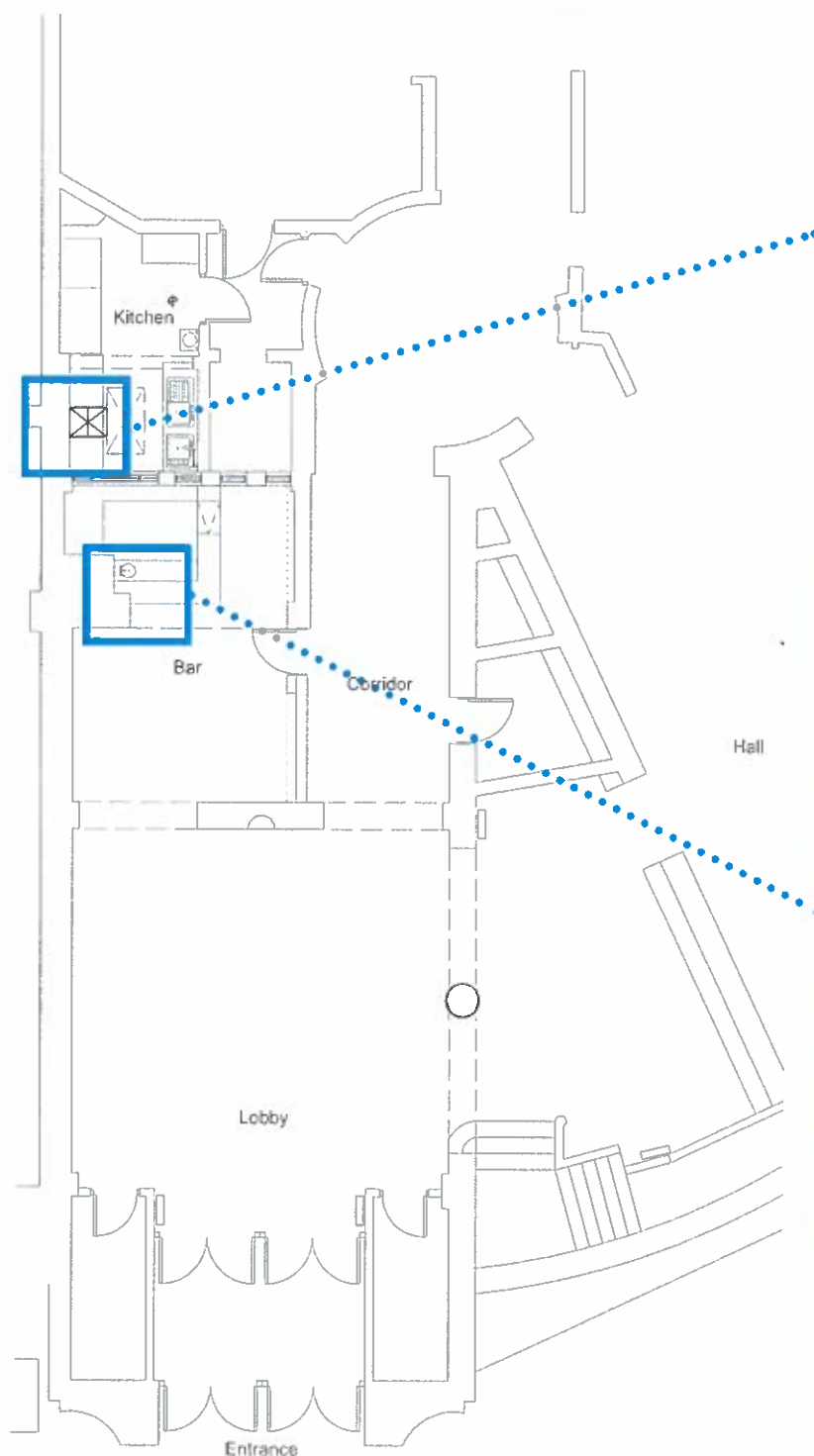
The décor of the main entrance is part of the special interest of the listed building. All features of historical value such as the niche in the wall facing the double doors, the floor tiles, marble column, arches in the walls and period furniture will be retained.

As far as the existing servery is concerned, fittings and furnishings such as high level mirrors, wood panelling, box riser, bar, suspended ceiling, light fittings and wall tiles, appear to be recent additions which do not contribute to the character of the building's interior. It is therefore proposed that this space is stripped back and redecorated.

By knocking through two of the existing window openings on the far right, a new doorway is proposed to link the room to the adjacent kitchen. This was discussed on site and as agreed that one of the windows will be retained adjacent to the proposed door. In order to improve the ambience of this dark space, it is suggested that the remaining windows on the rear wall are uncovered, thus allowing light from the kitchen lightwell to spill through.

Impact of the works upon Conway Hall

In pre application discussions and meeting the Heritage/Conservation officer Nick Baxter of Camden Council, requested the wall finishes behind the new panelling be removed in part to assess the original fabric. There were panels removed in the bar area and kitchen which showed the background to be painted plaster in most situations.



Panelling removed to kitchen area

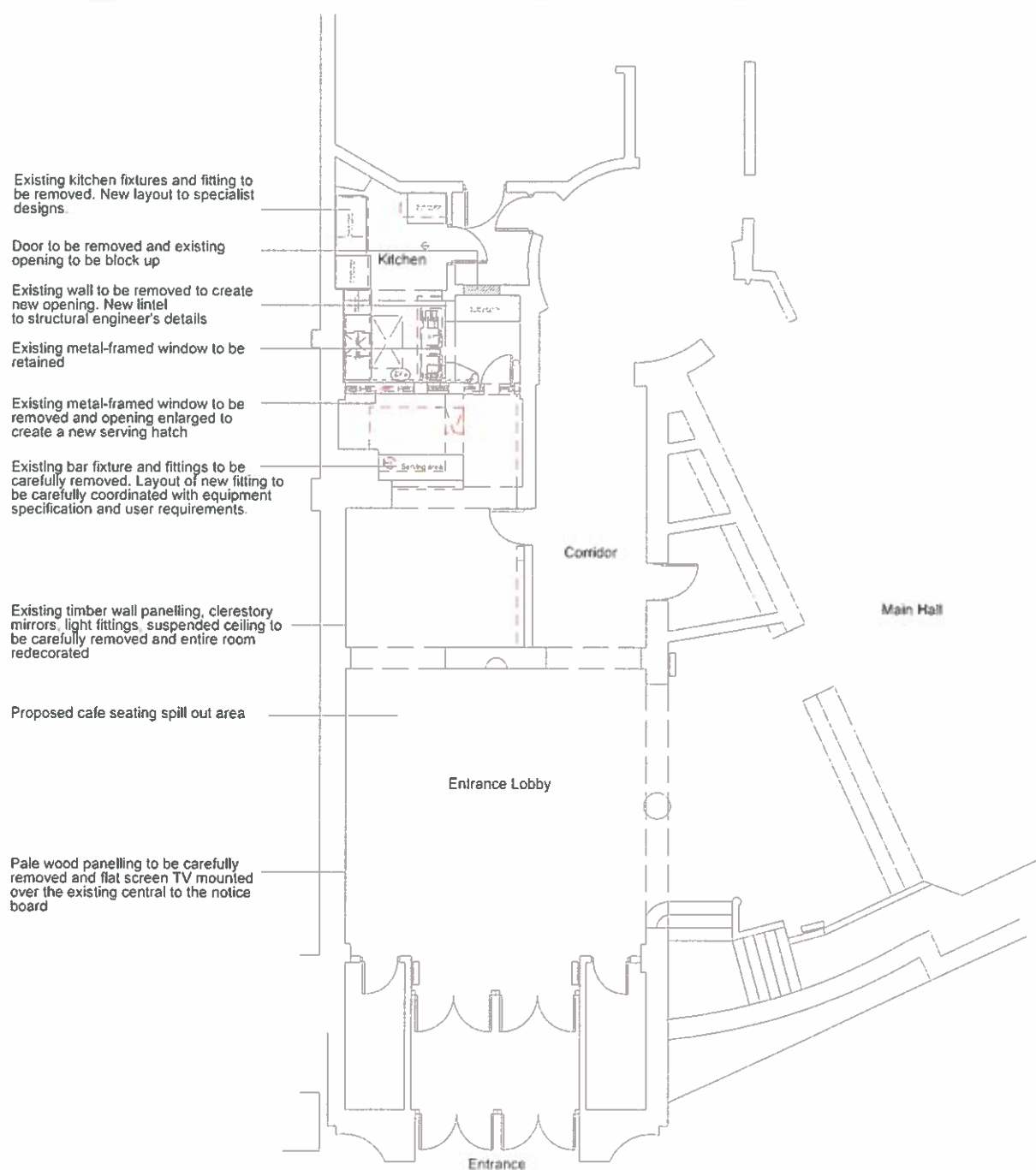


Panelling removed to lobby area

Proposed Internal Remodelling

Proposed internal remodelling will involve careful removal of existing fixtures and fittings key areas will be:

- Existing kitchen equipment
- Timber wall panelling and clerestory mirrors
- Existing window openings to be maintained where possible



Proposed Ground Floor Plan

Appearance of the Proposed Development

The proposed works will match all adjacent surfaces internally in order to retain the character of the existing building. Modern materials will be used where necessary in order to meet current Building Regulations. Glass roof to the once lightwell was discussed but is not feasible to replace, both physically or financially.

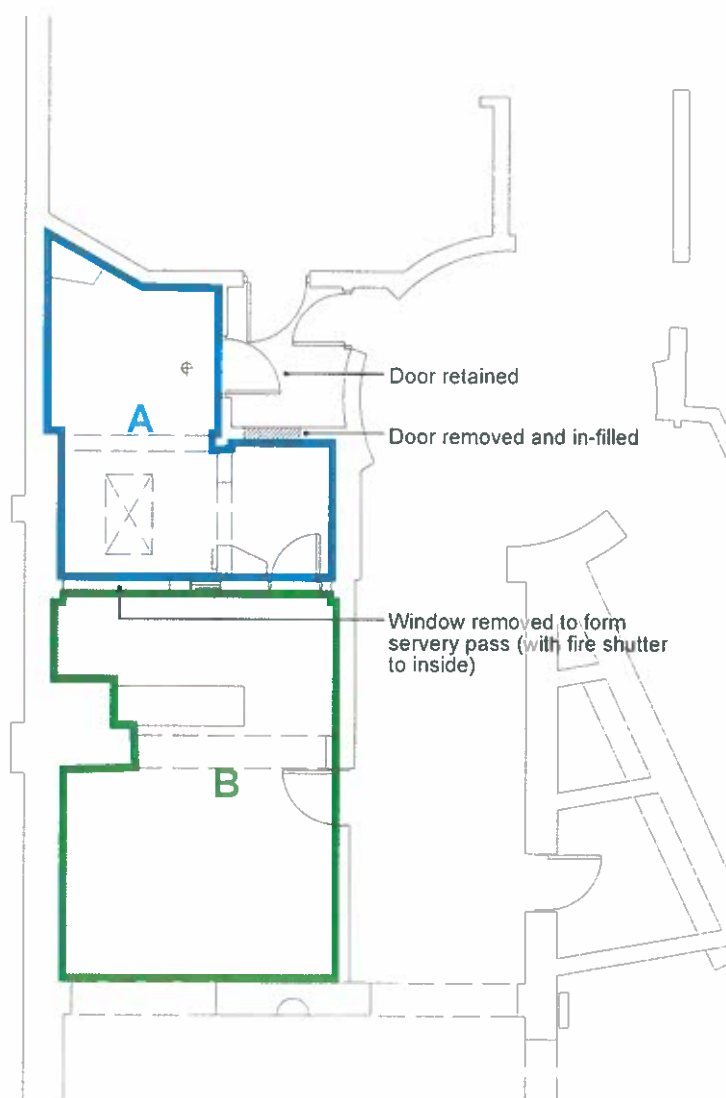
Existing finishes:

Flooring - Currently vinyl, various colours and finishes in the kitchen and bar area. This will be replaced with non slip vinyl in the kitchen.

Walls - Painted plasterboard on support frame. Investigation areas show painted finish masonry/plasterboard.

Ceilings - Are not in a good condition to expose. A combination of stainless steel and Whiterock (or similar) hygiene wipe down finish on support frame (similar to current). This will in turn protect the existing brick and finishes behind the hygienic finish.

Door - Timber veneered / laminate.



Proposed Finishes:

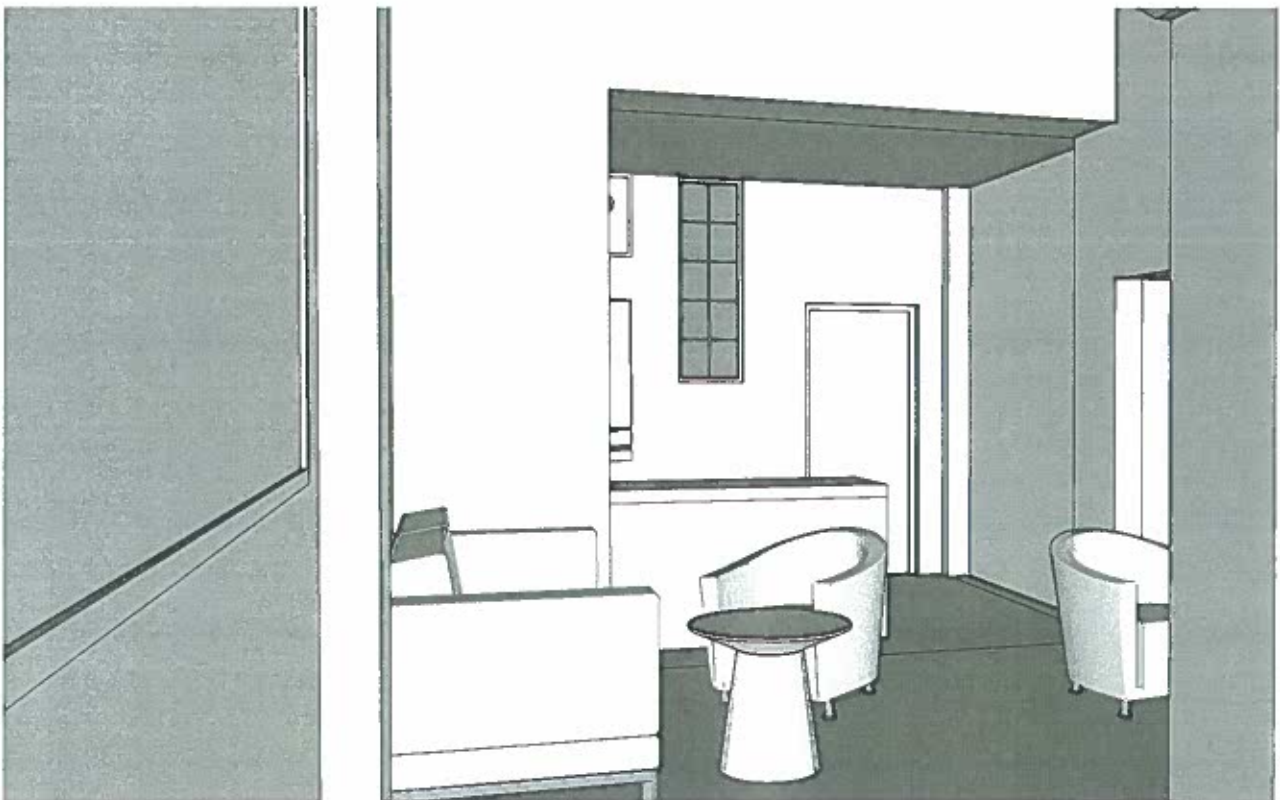
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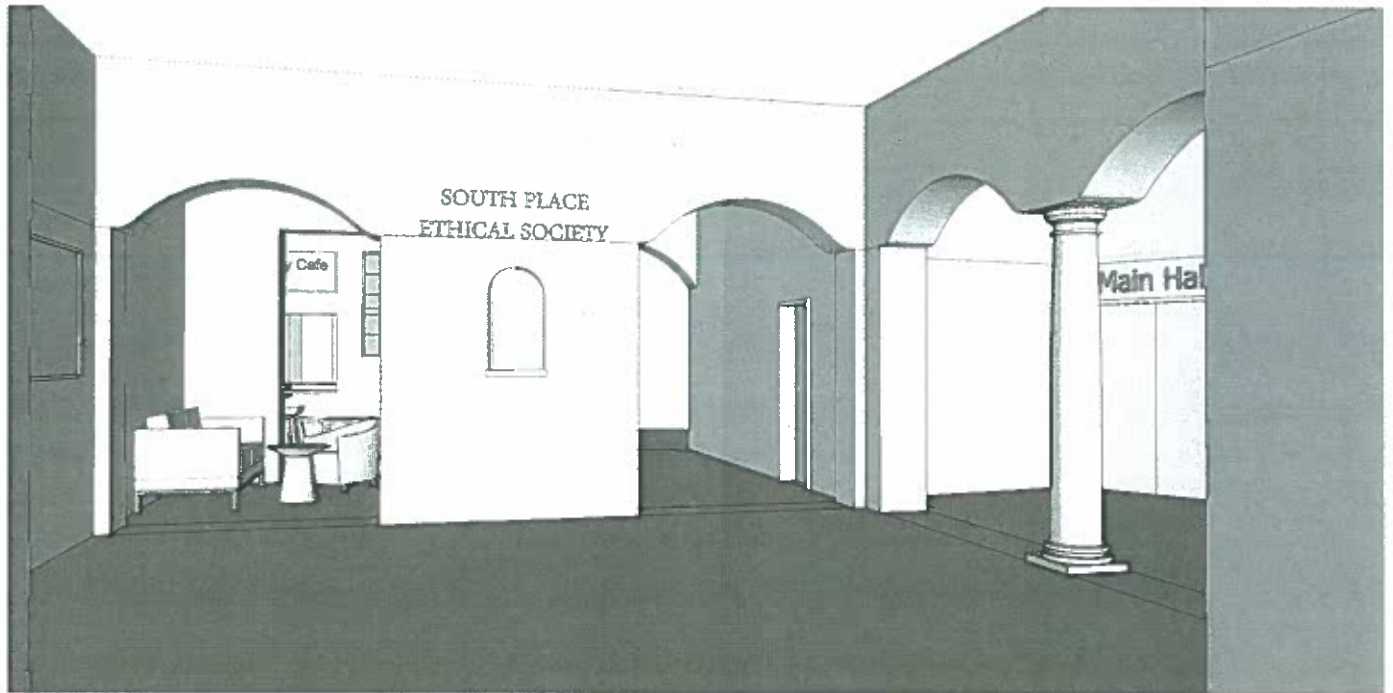
Floors - Non slip vinyl
Walls - Whiterock or similar
Ceilings - Suspended ceiling tiles with integrated lighting.

B

Floors - Vinyl
Walls - Painted plasterboard
Ceilings - Plasterboard finish with pendant lighting

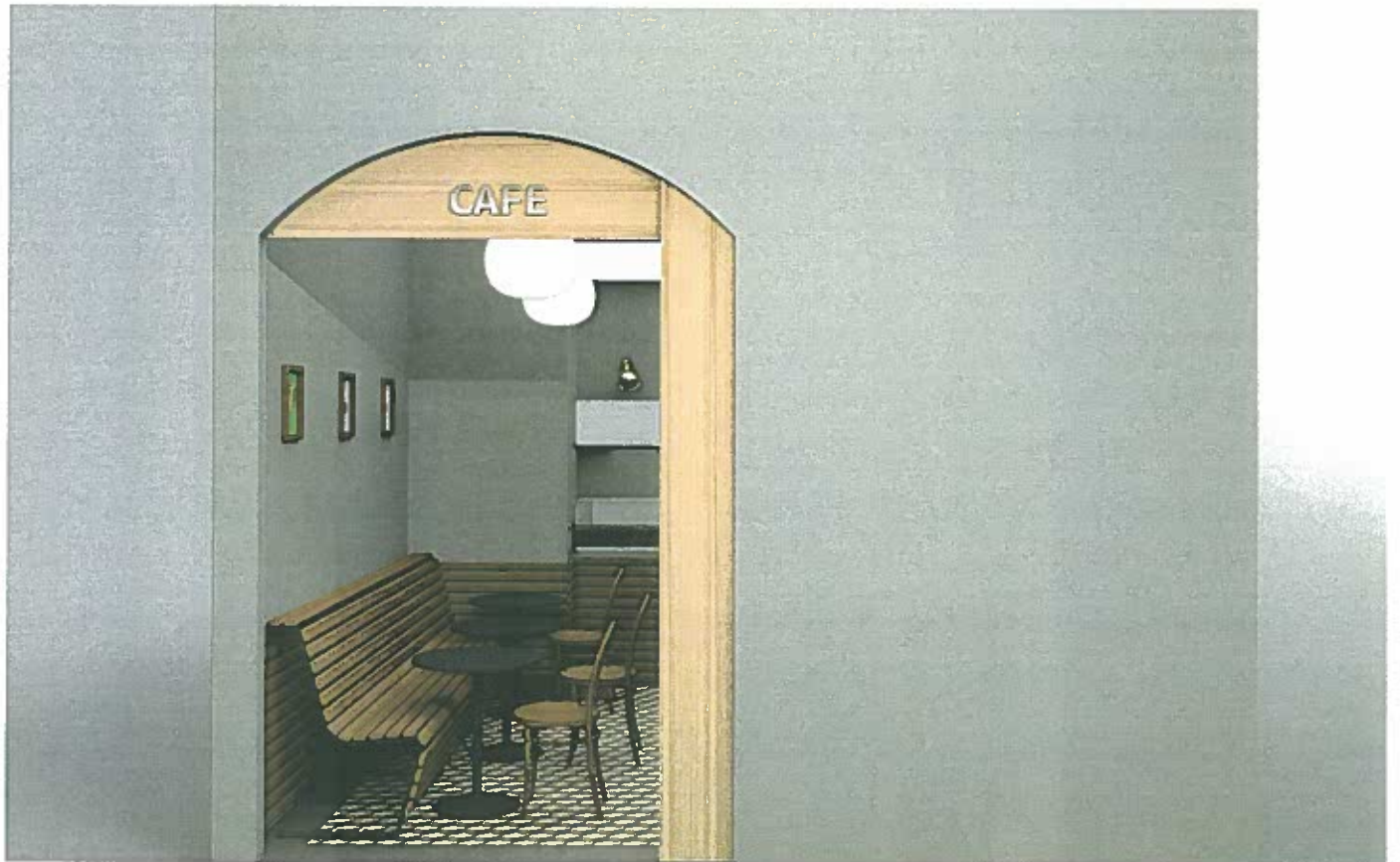
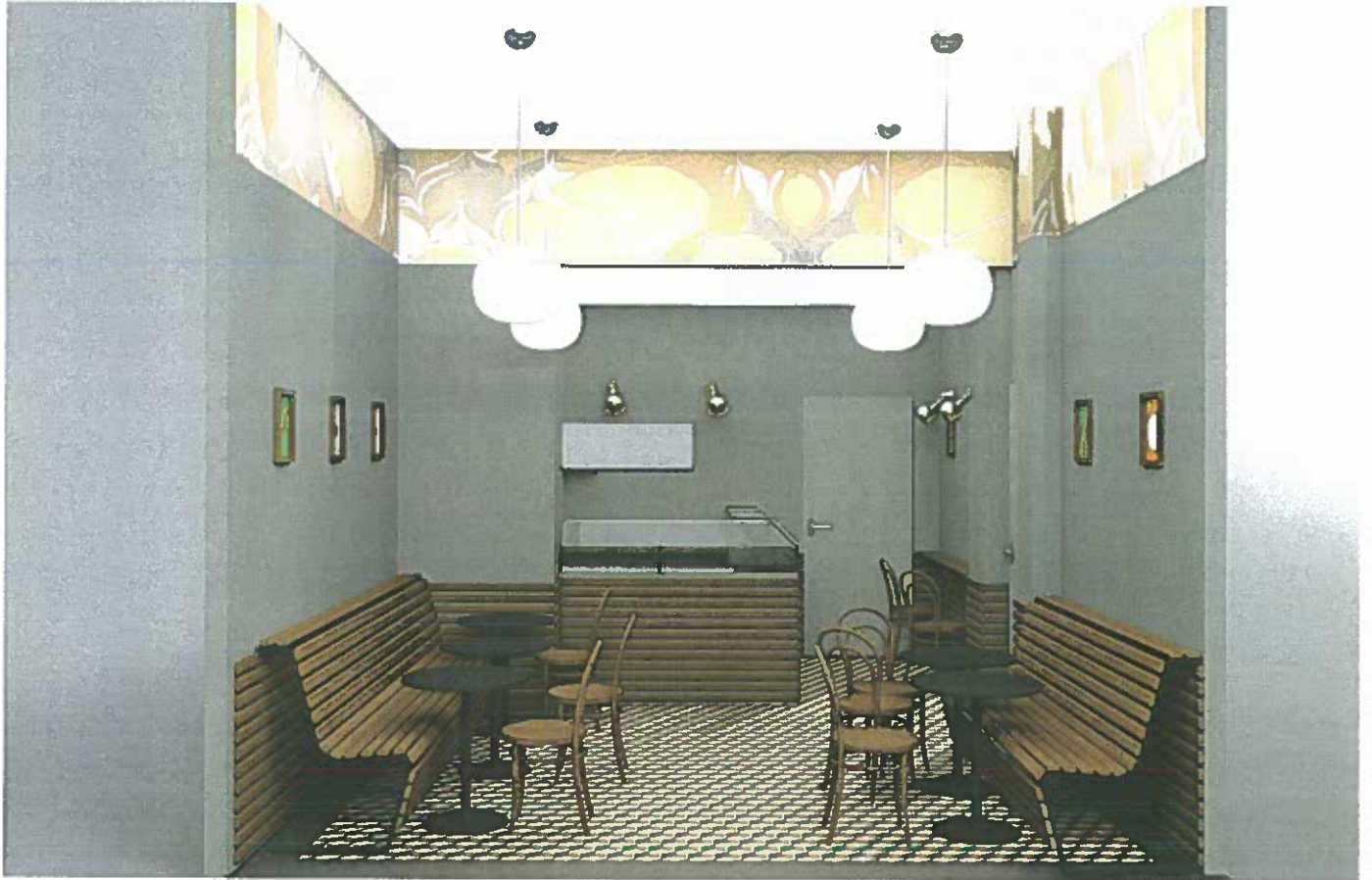
Internal 3D Proposed Views





Interior Design

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Additional Notes

Comments in response to the officer's report following the site meeting (attached - see numbered paragraphs):

Paragraph 2

The timber panelling has been removed.

Paragraphs 3 & 4

These proposals have not been progressed and are not being applied for.

Paragraph 5

Opening-up works have been undertaken and photographs have been included in this document.

Paragraph 6

We are proposing to open parts of the back wall as set out, creating a serving pass and doorway access, and retaining one window.

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN											
PLANNING											
CONSERVATION AND URBAN DESIGN											
Proposed Development at: Conway Hall 25 Red Lion Square London WC1R 4RL											
Proposal: Conversion and remodelling of the existing kitchen along with incorporation of the current servery. Provision of a daytime cafe facility linking the kitchen, servery area and linking into the lobby foyer area.	Case No: 2014/5808/PRE										
Case Officer: Nick Baxter	Date:										
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Conservation Area	X										
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TPO											
Local Design Policy											

OBSERVATIONS:

Mted CO' 7/10

Please note that the information contained in this email represents an officer's opinion and is without prejudice to further consideration of this matter by the Development Management section or to the council's formal decision.

The site is a largely unaltered complex of halls of 1929, listed grade II and a positive contributor to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The applicant wishes to connect a former light well now used as ancillary rooms to a room used as a café and rearrange partitions in the light well. He is also interested to know how to reinvigorate the foyer.

Notes

1. The scheme of décor of the foyer as a whole is part of the special interest of the listed building, and should be restored, rather than altered. Given that structural alterations are not likely to be acceptable, more careful use of high-quality furnishings appropriate to the period of the building and of lighting are likely to be the best way to improve the appearance of this area. The heavy wooden benches along the western wall, for example, and the hexagonal table in the centre, add to the historic character of the foyer, while more recent additions in pale wood clash with the prevailing character and so dilute and detract from it.
2. An initial check of the records suggests that the large, pale wooden panel incorporating a flat-screen TV does not have listed building consent, and ought to have. The material and design are not appropriate, and the noticeboard behind it (symmetrical with the roll of honour to its right) is completely obscured. If it is the case that listed building consent is not

in place, the opportunity must be taken in any future application to replace this with an acceptable installation and regularise the position.

3. The proposal to cover the roll of honour with Perspex is also unacceptable. If it is being damaged by users, this should be controlled by management, not by physical alterations.
4. The proposal to cut a hole in the back of the niche is unacceptable.
5. The finishes and fitted furnishings in the café area appear to be recent – notably clerestory mirrors, pendant ball lights, pale wooden panelling, bar and box riser, and a suspended ceiling with downlighters. Alterations here may be acceptable, subject to careful opening up and retention of any historic surfaces and fittings. Well-managed light spilling from within this space could be used to improve the character of the main foyer.
6. We would wish to retain the original plan form of the room and its relationship with the back wall and light well. However, a limited amount of opening up of the back wall may be possible, say a doorway – perhaps retaining parts of the original metal-framed window above to create a fanlight - and the enlargement of the main window to create a serving hatch. The middle metal-framed window could be retained.
7. In the light well, the addition of a glazed roof would help reinstate the original form and would add light deep in the plan, which might improve the overall ambience.
8. Alterations to the recent walls within the light well are likely to be acceptable. However, we would expect historic external brick walls to be left in their original finish (i.e. not rendered or covered).

Negotiate	
Approve	
Refuse	

Nick Baxter 9/10/14

Signed----- Date-----