

36 Lancaster Grove NW3

Heritage Assessment

Proposed conversion of the former Belsize Fire Station
into residential accommodation

Anthony Walker
Dip arch(dist), grad dip(cons)AA, RIBA, AABC



DLG Architects LLP Studio 12.0G.1 The Leathermarket 11-13 Weston Street SE1 3ER
January 2016

1 Scope

- 1.1 This Heritage Assessment has been produced to accompany planning and listed building applications for the conversion of the former Fire Station at 36 Lancaster Grove, London NW3. The extent of the application is set out in the planning statement and does not include those parts of the building which are already in residential use.
- 1.2 It is based on examination of the building and archive material in the local history study centre and the London Metropolitan archive, together with the Survey of London and relevant planning guidance which includes the Conservation Area Appraisal.
- 1.3 The study has been produced by Anthony Walker, a Conservation Architect Accredited in Building Conservation and with a postgraduate Diploma in Building Conservation. He has been a Visiting Professor at Kingston University and he lectures on Building Conservation matters at the Architectural Association and at Cambridge University.

2 Site location and setting

- 2.1 The site forms a triangular shape at the intersection of Lancaster Grove and Eton Avenue. The whole area was part of the Eton College estate which was sold for residential development towards the end of the 19th century.
- 2.2 It lies within the Belsize Conservation Area, subsection 3 Eton Avenue.
- 2.3 In addition to the impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, consideration has to be given to any impact on the setting of designated Heritage Assets of which there are a number along the length of Eton Avenue.

3 Historical background and significance

- 3.1 Belsize Fire Station is a grade II listed building, built in 1914-15 under the direction of Charles Canning Winmill of the LCC Architects' Department where he had been since 1892. He started work in the housing section but, following a significant fire in 1897, he was appointed to design and supervise the erection of a new fire station in Red Cross Street. In December 1899 the fire brigade section of the department was reorganised under Owen Fleming, with Winmill as second in command. The fire brigade section was given responsibility for doubling the number of London fire stations with the aim to establish six new stations every year. According to his daughter's account of this period, the first world war years of 1914-18 were particularly demanding; the staffing of the section was reduced from 30 to only 3 or 4 and many innovations were in progress such as the sliding poles which were introduced from America and, from about 1913, the gradual replacement of horsedrawn with motor-driven fire-engines.
- 3.2 Belsize Fire Station was quite late in the fire station programme. One of the architects, John Summerson, wrote that the long, two-storey building facing south had something of the character of a Kentish farmhouse and that the subtle combination of brick, stone and iron, the neat junction of the roofs and the finish of the eaves was clearly the work of a man who, like Philip Webb, knew and understood the vernacular architecture of southern England and found it a sound starting point from which to approach the problems of the present day.

- 3.3 As noted by Summerson, the building combines the traditional detailing of a larger domestic building with a robust and functional interior. Winmill had a great interest in vernacular buildings, having undertaken a close study of their detailing. This interest would have been reinforced by conditions concerning the sale of land which required that the buildings be of good design and constructed of stone and red brick. In the event of adaptation or new buildings, these should be similar in character to the adjacent building (to the west) or to those opposite. The petrol store at the eastern end is slightly incongruous in being the only single storey element and providing potentially smelly storage immediately beside the residential part of the fire station.
APPENDIX A Photograph of building
- 3.4 The site lies within the Belsize Conservation Area: sub-area 3 Eton Avenue, which is described in the Conservation Area Statement. There are several listed buildings in Eton Avenue close to the site, one of which is directly opposite and another on the same side as the Fire Station, two doors away to the west. These are, in general, built of the same palette of materials as the fire station but range from Italianate villas to Arts and Crafts design. Many have dormer windows and bay windows in various forms.
APPENDIX B Photographs of Eton Avenue properties
- 3.5 The main working areas of the station, including the main hall for the fire tender with the dramatic central staircase which unites the building and provides access to both the tender hall and the rest/recreation rooms, and the wing with residential accommodation, all designed with a simple tiled finish. Some additional areas of square tiling appear to be later additions but in other areas the tiling provides a continuous surface with bull-nosed finishes surrounding the openings. The staircase presents a challenge since it is very tall and with quite steep risers. The central well is narrow and has a drain at the foot which was used for emptying hoses. It is anticipated that this could provide a location for a small lift without detracting from the overall robust appearance: minimal alterations would be needed to the balustrading. At the first floor, facing south there is a wood-panelled room which, although not of a very high quality, is of interest in providing a recreation area. Alterations have been made to provide a small lavatory at the western side.
APPENDIX C Photographs of interior as existing.
- 3.6 The eastern wing provides two levels of residential accommodation with simple internal detailing in contrast, to some extent, with the careful brickwork detailing of the southern façade. Below this is a semi-basement area with storage rooms of various types, approached by central steps down from the courtyard, and then a short passageway to left and right. There is visual evidence that some of these stores have been altered in the past. Each has a window looking to the south over the garden area and the headroom is restricted but it appears that it would be practical to reduce the floor level without harm to the external appearance of this area.
APPENDIX D Photograph of eastern wing.
- 3.7 There are generous roof spaces over the main body of the building with access from the central staircase. There are small windows already in existence at the gable ends and some additional dormers would be required to make effective use of these spaces.
APPENDIX E Photographs of roof spaces
- 3.8 The Arts and Crafts domestic informality of the designated heritage asset makes it open to careful and sensitive adaptation. The internal robust finishes provide

an interesting contrast to the delicacy of some of the external detailing and are strong enough to be retained. The brickwork is in an English bond with significant areas of decorative bonding.

APPENDIX F Photographs of brickwork

- 3.9 The London Metropolitan Archive has plans of the original building from 1913 and some with later alterations. A summary of the key features and alterations which have occurred is set out below.

APPENDIX G Ground and first floor plans 1913

3.10 Eastern Wing

- 3.10.1 The residential wing has a basement, a raised ground floor with a balcony accessed from steps up from the western end, and the first floor above it, again with a balcony access but this time from the central staircase. There is further residential accommodation at first floor level in the main block which is considered in 13.12. At the far end of the eastern wing is a single storey oil and petrol store.

APPENDIX H North elevation of eastern wing and section through main building.

- 3.10.2 Basement. The basement is approached by steps leading down from the enclosed courtyard on the northern side to a corridor along the northern side of the building. The basement area under the residential wing of the building is shown as providing a number of store rooms for varying uses ranging from eight coal stores, a battery store, a store for men's coats and a number of general stores. They are in the form of three groups but do not provide a regular format. Each group has a central corridor from a door under the walkway to the ground floor residential accommodation and leading to the semi-circular window on the south elevation. They are clearly utilitarian spaces with no special architectural detail internally.

APPENDIX I Basement plan

- 3.10.3 Ground floor. This provides three flats, originally designed as one single-bedroom and two two-bedroom units, each with a scullery and a bathroom. This was modified in the 1920s, linking two of the units to provide a three-bedroom flat with a larger entrance hall.

APPENDIX J Alterations

- 3.10.4 First floor. This provided three two-bedroom flats. The balcony access was originally completely open but later a translucent roof was installed. Various minor alterations were carried out.

3.11 Main Wing Ground floor

- 3.11.1 At the northern side is an appliance room including a watch room with an office and workshop along the back of the appliance room at the western end. A corridor runs the length of the block from the central staircase on the eastern side to a door in the western façade. To the south of this corridor are the main recreation room at the eastern end and a wash room at the western end; in between there is a single lavatory with a hot closet behind and then, on the southern side of the corridor, the coke store and the stokery,

- 3.11.2 Appliance room. This space would have housed three appliances and while the overall space can be appreciated when empty much of the time this impact would have been modified by the presence of the appliances. Two of the three poles in the building drop down into the appliance room and are of significance. The floor finish is a small ribbed tile which according to the English Heritage guide is probably not original, it has been patched with non matching tiles.

Metal work framing is in place around the main doors and is assumed to provide some protection. Wall finish is large scale light coloured tiles which is generally intact.

- 3.11.3 Watch room. The original room had a flat wall overlooking the appliance hall with a glazed screen divided into three bays; the central bay provided an access door from the appliance room. See Appendix G for original layout of watch room.

The use is significant in that it was an essential part of the functioning of the station however the room itself has been through considerable change. Most of the wall facing the appliance room has been replaced and although it is clad in white tiles these do not match the originally tiling in any way. A new door has been formed in the western wall and the fire place has been removed.

APPENDIX K Altered watch room bay window as it exists today.

- 3.11.4 Office and workshop. These are two simple rooms. The office has no direct door to the appliance room although there is a window. The workshop does have a door and its location possibly explains the pit having been moved from the location shown on the original drawings

APPENDIX L Photograph from appliance room showing relationship with pit.

- 3.12.5 Corridor and staircase. The staircase consists of a steep metal framework around a narrow well which is labelled on the ground floor as housing a hose hoist and pole. The stair well and smaller openings above in the tower were to allow hoses to hung up to dry. The staircase now has doors leading out to the terrace on the western side at first floor and to the access balcony also at first floor level to the east however these do not appear on the original plans and it appears that this was originally an open space.

APPENDIX M Central staircase showing third pole for fast response.

3.12 Main Wing First floor

- 3.12.1 On the north side over the appliance room is a lofty hall which originally was subdivided with low partitions to provide single firemen's accommodation. At either end of the central corridor are the poles to the appliance room below; leading to this was a mess room with panelled walls and a large fire place which still exists. There was a scullery and a reading room on either side of the access corridor and at the northern end were a bathroom and lavatories.

APPENDIX N 1913 section through single men's accommodation showing panelled partitions.

- 3.12.2 In the centre is a small open courtyard facing west. There were five pavement lights set into the asphalt roof finish which was laid to fall to a hopper head on the west elevation. Two of these have been replaced by a larger central, raised roof light. From views of the underside of the remaining roof lights they appear to be more modern and may be replacements.

- 3.12.3 On the south side were two two-bedroom flats, one with access from the courtyard (converted later to an office), and one with direct access from the staircase. The western most flat has an inappropriate fire place inserted which it would be beneficial to remove.

3.13 Roof spaces

- 3.13.1 The roof spaces were planned with simple structures enabling good open space for storage. Rafters are generally 5x2 inch sections with a 9x4 inch purlin in the upper third of the span and tied with a 5x2 inch tie. The ceilings are supported

by 7x2 inch joists. In some areas there is a deep truss supporting the purlins and in others the ceiling joists are 4.5x3 inches.

APPENDIX O, Section through eastern wing, including the roof.

3.14 Tower

3.14.1 The tower rises in the centre of the complex. From the third floor upwards access is by a tight spiral staircase and there is an open void in the centre of the small floor which is lit at each level by a west-facing window. The opening aligns with the opening and drainage point below and presumably allowed the maximum length of hose to be suspended.

APPENDIX P Tower as it is today.

3.14.2 Central staircase. This is an impressive central feature which is both visually striking and is at the heart of the functional activity in the building. It was used for hose drying and the drainage point in the floor is a reminder. It was a steep staircase and use in the case of an incident was supplemented by a third pole located at the western end of the well. This has now been removed. The balustrade to the well is a simple metal rail, supported on square section balusters. The walls are lined with tiles reflecting the functional use and, in contrast to the panelled walls of the recreation room on the south side and those of the mess room to the north, have been retained.

APPENDIX Q Photograph of stair tower interior.

3.15 Exterior North façade

3.15.1 The north façade has two main components. The prominent north-west wing comprising the appliance room with, originally, the single men's dormitory above and, to the east is the accommodation wing with storage in the basement and two floors of flats with an access balcony at each level. There is a decorative metal balustrade along this front supported between stone piers. The top level was originally open but has since had a glazed sheet roof installed to provide weather protection. The quality of this addition is poor and detracts from the appearance of the building.

APPENDIX R 1913 elevation of north facade.

3.15.2 The large-scale doors for the appliances and the open courtyard in front create a different character for the building and are in contrast to the general character of the area. Curved metal guards are provided to vulnerable corners.

APPENDIX S Photographs of doors and corner protection.

3.15.3 The scale of the northwest wing due is markedly different from that of the majority of the building and is accentuated by the tall dormer windows lighting the dormitory, between which a small dormer has been inserted as a later addition.

APPENDIX T Photograph of dormer windows.

3.16 Exterior East façade

3.16.1 This view shows the end of the eastern residential wing with the single storey oil and petrol store. Behind is the gable wall to the residential wing, showing the steep pitch of the roof and the chimney stacks to the individual fire places. See Appendix O

3.16.2 On the northern side the façade of the appliance room and accommodation above can be seen.

3.17 Exterior South façade

3.17.1 The south façade presents a long, low building range dominated by the substantial roof. At the eastern end there are the three semi-circular windows lighting the cross corridors in the basement of the eastern residential wing. This sets the level for what is, in effect, the range of ground floor windows along the whole façade of the residential wing at the eastern end and the recreation room with its bay window; then at the western end is that which started as further residential accommodation but was later converted to administrative use. Below this is the wash room with high-level windows.

APPENDIX U 1913 Elevation to Eton Avenue

3.18 Exterior West façade

3.18.1 The designers were always aware of the need for a change of level to the adjoining site and allowed for a small retaining wall. The fire station is screened by the fence between the two properties. A range of semi-circular windows provides light to the appliance room and the wash room. There is a single door giving access from the corridor leading to the central staircase. This is clearly a space which was used but it has a 'left-over' feel about it.

APPENDIX V 1913 West Elevation facing adjoining house Millbank.

3.19 Setting

3.19.1 The building is, as noted above, set within a triangle of land at the junction of Lancaster Grove and Eton Avenue. The land on the Lancaster Grove side of the site is largely devoted to hard-surfaced yards with cobbled paviers, described in the Conservation Area Statement section Streetscape as large stone setts to crossover and forecourt which appears to be in contradiction of the paving which exists today. The area directly in front of the appliance room is open to the street to facilitate a fast response to an emergency. To the east along Lancaster Grove the frontage is enclosed by a brick wall with an entrance gate leading to the corner where it changes to a hedge running along the Eton Avenue frontage.

3.19.2 The area between the hedge and building which runs along Eton Avenue is used as a garden, echoing those of the houses along the road. Due to the changes in level there is a small retaining wall, leaving a hard-paved area immediately along the whole of the frontage of the building at about 450mm below the garden level. The garden is well planted and, as a result, the building benefits from good plant screening.

3.19.2 There is a later barbeque structure at the western end of the garden which is incongruous and does not relate to the architectural detailing of the building; elsewhere however there are a number of carefully considered details including the curved protective barriers to vulnerable corners and the rainwater shoes and hopper heads.

3.20 Significance

3.20.1 The building is listed grade II and is described as follows:

Belsize Fire Station II Fire station with water tower and accommodation in the form of flats. 1914-15. By CC Winmill of the LCC's Architects' Department. Red brick with stone dressings. Steeply pitched gabled tiled roof with projecting eaves, hipped dormers to engine shed and tall brick chimney-stacks with dentil bands to accommodation. L-shaped plan with tall water-tower in angle.

EXTERIOR: engine-shed stone faced to front with openings having part-glazed folding doors; steeply pitched roof with 3 long transom and mullion windows with small panes to dormers and 1 small box dormer. Right hand return with lunettes at ground floor and 6-light transom and mullion window to gable end; left hand return, 4 glazed doors to ground floor and 5 windows to 1st. Enriched

brick water tower having recessed panels set between pilasters; 1st storey panels with segmental-arched recesses and dentil frieze; 2nd storey with further rectangular recesses, 2 made into windows, and dentil friezes; 3rd storey with deep dentil frieze and lattice-work brick panels having arcaded friezes. Parapet. Staff accommodation in flats on 2 storeys and semi-basement. Ground floor stone and brick verandah with lunettes to semi-basement and 1st floor balcony with cast-iron balustrade. Part-glazed doorways with overlights and sidelights. Tripartite sashes. To left, a single window projecting gabled bay. On both returns tall gable end chimney-stacks have hipped roof to one side allowing a small attic window. Rear facade to Eton Avenue gives appearance of terraced cottages with a ground floor canted bay and transom and mullion windows; upper floor with ten 3-light casement and oriel windows. All with small leaded panes. INTERIORS: not inspected.

- 3.20.2 The background to the development of fire stations is set out in *London's Historic Fire Stations*, produced by English Heritage and the London Fire Brigade in 2010. The 1866 Act of Parliament gave rise to the first publicly funded fire brigades, of which the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, led by Captain Eyre Massey Shaw, was the first. He drove an intense programme of building which continued into the 1880s. The LCC replaced the Metropolitan Board of Works with responsibility for building and adapting fire stations in 1889 and there was a lull in new building until the turn of the century. The mechanisation of all appliances provided another spur to development, with the first station to have only mechanised appliances being the Wapping station in Red Lion Street in 1905. The First World War brought a halt to the boom although stations already in progress continued.
- 3.20.3 The form of historic fire stations varies considerably. The change from horse-drawn to mechanised appliances clearly had a significant impact on layout, as did the introduction of slippery poles in 1904. Residential accommodation was often provided, sometimes as separate cottages. Mess rooms, often with a good quality fire place and panelling, were provided as well as a separate billiards room.
- 3.20.4 Architectural style varied and often reflected current fashion. After 1900 a significant change in design came about with an emphasis on British Design and Civic pride. It is stated in *London's historic fire stations* that '*The development of architectural detailing ranging from Classical and Queen Anne through to Arts and Crafts can be seen producing stations that resemble suburban mansions*'. *The crucial emphasis seems to be designing for the location – hence Cannon Street station of 1906 had a façade like a city bank while Belsize of 1916 emulates the artists' studios of its neighbourhood.*
- 3.20.5 The original agreement with Eton College for the land includes a requirement to fit in with the surroundings and to retain the trees along Eton Avenue.
- 3.20.6 While Belsize clearly incorporates many of the then current innovations, most of these were not in fact new. Mechanised appliances had been in use for ten years or more as had slippery poles. To understanding the building it is important to realise that there was a clear aspiration that it be appropriate to the location and this is reflected in the materials and details, many of which reflect those of the residential area in which it is set.
- 3.20.7 Construction details show a simple steel frame internally with decoration relegated to the exterior of the building in the form of intricate, and often elaborate, brickwork detailing. The steel frame and external walls are supported

on substantial concrete strip foundations and pads but there is no evidence in the file as to whether this is a reflection of the ground conditions or the anticipated loading of the building.

- 3.20.8 Change has been a natural consequence of the use of the building. The partitions for the single men's dormitory have gone, the watch room has changed its wall overlooking the appliance room, the original sets and ironstone floors have given way to light, non-slip tiles and the coal stores in the basement have been converted to general storage.
- 3.20.9 The need for change is exemplified in the purchase in 1939 of 24 Eton Avenue to accommodate auxiliaries attached to the Belsize Fire Station. This was done under the Air Raid Precautions Act 1937 and clearly relates to the wartime demands.
- 3.20.10 An important aspect of the significance of the building lies in the fittings and equipment which still exists. Much of this has changed, for example the heating and drying systems located by the wash room on the ground floor. Other changes such as the removal of the single mens cubicles referred to in 3.12.1. The general principle of the proposed works is to retain items of historic interest even where these are no longer functional.

A general list of such items is set out as follows:

Appliance room.

1. Wall tiling. The white wall tiling here, in the stair well and in the wash room will all be retained with only minor repairs carried out where essential.
2. Flooring. The existing flooring falls towards the north. This will be retained and a new level floor will be placed over the existing tiles. This will end with a step where the floor comes close to the main doors allowing these to open and a view to be had of both the flooring and the brass runners for the large doors.



3. Radiators. There are four radiators mounted on brick plinths around the appliance room. Three are on white glazed bricks and the other beside the watch room is on a brown brick plinth which it is assumed was rebuilt when the watch room window was changed to a shallow bay.



4. Main doors. The main doors all remain unchanged and capable of being opened. Inner doors will be provided inside the line of the outer doors swing to the appliance room.
5. Hold back devices and hooks



6. Hanging racks north west corner of appliance room. A similar rack exists in the washroom on the eastern side and there is evidence of two other fittings having been fixed to the wall in that space. These are similar to harness racks however since this was never intended to have horse drawn appliances and there no evidence of stabling or hay storage it appears more likely that this may have had a more general support role.



7. Belfast sink on the eastern wall of the appliance room. There is no sink shown on the original drawings nor any drainage point. The taps are modern fittings and it is not considered that the sink itself is of any special interest.



8. Pole access. The two poles in the appliance room and the single pole in the stairwell will be retained. The floor will be infilled over the appliance room and the surrounding enclosure at first floor level will be retained. In the stairwell the gates providing access to the pole will be secured and retained in position.



9. Modern protective metal structures and services on soffit of floor above the appliance room. The structures either side of the main doors support control equipment and are of no historic significance. Drainage and heating runs for services installed at various stages can be seen suspended below the floor for the single mens dormitory above.



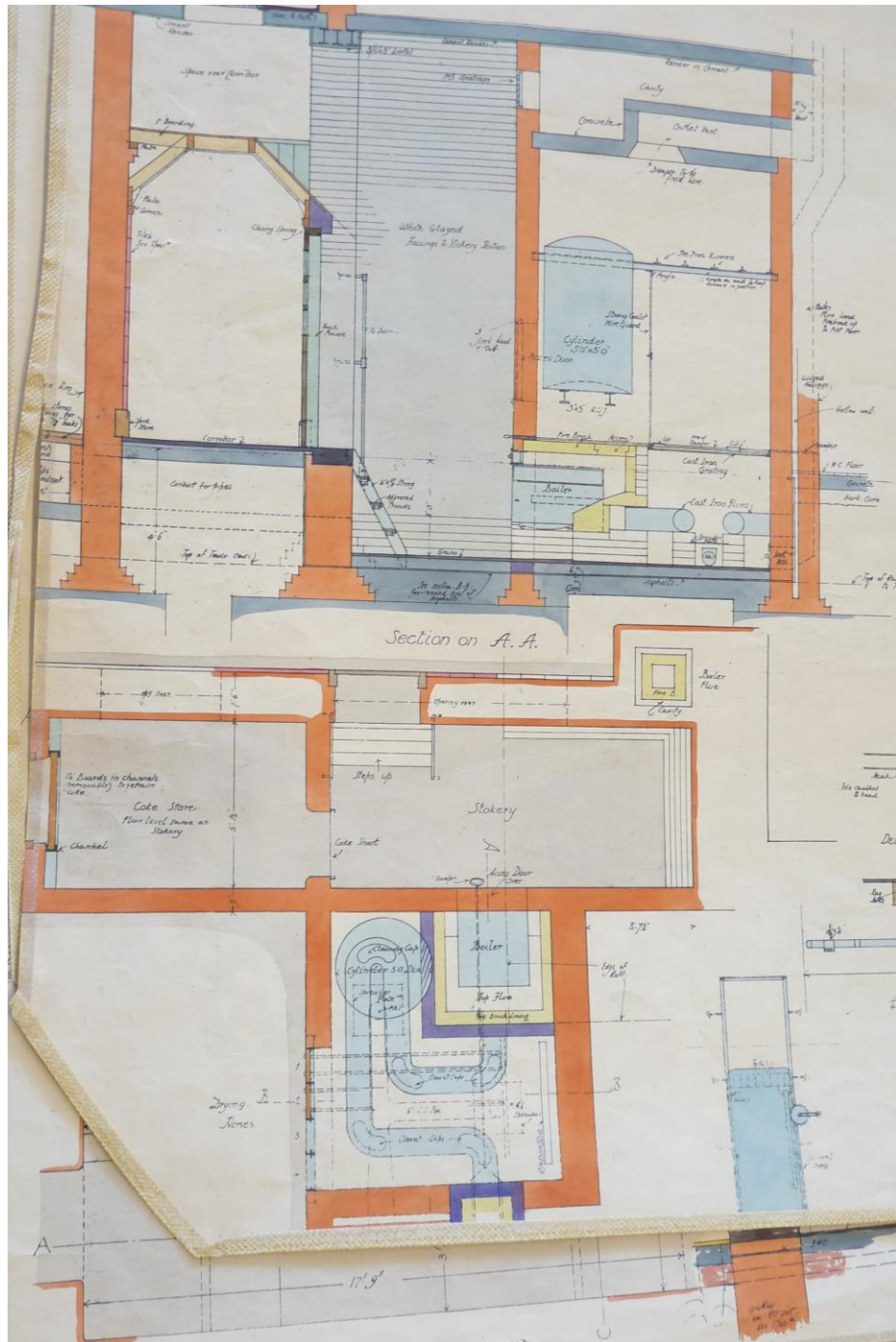
Watch room

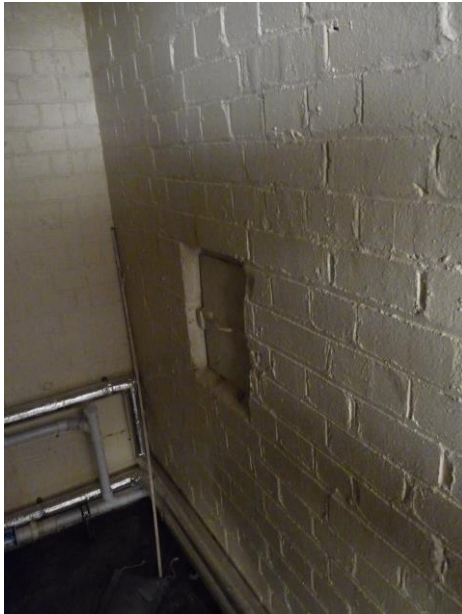
1. Originally designed with a flat window overlooking the appliance room this was changed to a canted bay with a new doorway into the room in the western wall. The proposals provide for the reinstatement of a flat face similar to that originally installed.
2. The fireplace has been removed but the chimney breast is retained.

Wash rooms and related accommodation proposed apartment 5

1. This area has been significantly changed in layout with virtually all fittings having been removed.

2. Panelling to the recreation room will be retained as existing and restored.
3. The small corner cupboard door will be retained but the simple internal shelves will be removed to form a way through to the entrance hall.
4. The entrance hall was originally the heat exchange and drying room with racks over a winding flue from the boiler set below the general floor level. All the fittings have been removed. The flue has been removed and a metal cover is located where it passed through the wall. This is located where there is the access through the corner cupboard but will be retained and moved sideways to retain a memory of the previous use of the hall.





5. The entrance to the flat uses the door from the corridor linking to the main staircase. This leads to steps to a lower level and originally was the stokery situated at the the same level as the boiler since removed. The room to the right on entering was the coke store which will now provide access to bedroom 1. The existing fire door will be retained for access but relocated at floor level. As can be seen from the tiling this door was moved, probably when its use as a coke store ended.



- 6 The wash room was originally a simple single space with coppers along the western wall and sinks along the southern wall. The walls are tiled but most of this has been painted over. It is proposed to remove the paint. The area has been subdivided into three separate spaces with light weight partitioning. Where there had been coppers there are now

rows of hooks. These are clearly not original but it is intended to retain a number as they appear to be part of the evolving use as a washroom.



The above coat racks were a later addition and formed out of standard metal tube. They are not of special architectural or historic interest, however it is proposed to reuse these within the apartment as being of general interest.

Basement rooms to eastern wing apartments 2,3 and 4

1. Existing windows



These windows will be dropped to floor level to provide access to the outside and increased natural light. A single door will be provided in the centre with fixed lights on either side thus respecting the form of the existing windows.

Fireplaces Existing original fire places will be retained.

1. Fire places in original single mens mess room

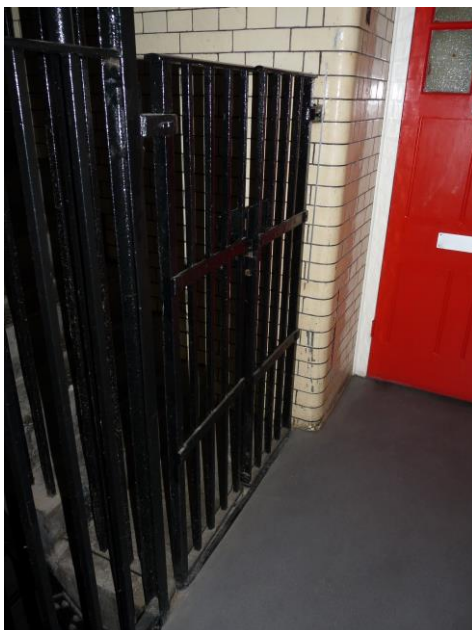


2. Fire place in original recreation room set into panelling which is also to be retained.



Main staircase see APPENDIX M

1. The main staircase rises in the centre of the building initially with treads supported on masonry and then from the first floor with precast concrete supported on steel strings.
2. A rapid access pole is located at the western end of the stairwell with a door access from the first floor landing.
3. The balustrade is a simple metal handrail on square section balusters with intermediate supporting u section channels spanning between floors.
4. A gate with two leaves gives access to the flight leading to the second floor. From that level upwards there is a small tight spiral staircase. The central opening is significantly reduced in size to allow for hoses to hang down the centre but no longer accommodating the stair flights. The view between floors is significantly reduced





5. The wall finish for the upper levels of the tower also changes from the robust industrial tile to a softer painted brick and the character of these upper floors is no longer one of long views but rather of light coming from above. It is proposed to infill these openings with an obscured glass slab thus retaining that present character and in a way which would be fully reversible.

External works

1. Corner protection. Three quarter round steel protection guards are provided to most of the brickwork corners in areas designed for vehicular traffic. These will all be retained.



2. Tile ventilators. There are a number of small ventilators formed with tiles spanning across an opening. Fly screens have been added probably as a later detail.



3. Rainwater gully cover plates. These will be retained.



4. Rainwater hopper heads. Castellated design will be retained.



5. LCC Crest on the wall to appliance room and single mens dormitory will be retained.
- 6.



7. Pedestrian gate. This gives a view enclosed yard with tiled finish to be retained.



4 Relevant National and Local Conservation Legislation and Guidance

4.1 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990

4.1.1 Section 7 requires consent to be obtained for any works which affect the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building.

4.1.2 Conservation areas are to be designated as areas of special architectural or historic interest and special attention shall be paid to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.

4.2 National Planning Policy Framework NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance PPG

4.2.1 Paragraph 14. *At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.*

4.2.2 Section 12 deals with conservation and the following extracts are relevant to the proposals.

132. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the

asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting.

134. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

4.3 London Plan

POLICY 7.8 HERITAGE ASSETS AND ARCHAEOLOGY

A London's heritage assets and historic environment, including listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and other natural and historic landscapes, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields, scheduled monuments, archaeological remains and memorials should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be taken into account.

D Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.

4.4 Camden Local Plan

4.4.1 In Core Policy CS14, Conserving Heritage, it is stated that the Council will ensure that Camden's buildings are 'attractive, safe and easy to use by (b) preserving and enhancing Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings'. This is amplified in paragraph 14.9, confirming that conservation area statements will be material considerations in assessing applications.

4.4.2 Camden Planning Guidance 1, Design

Section 3 Heritage. Camden has a rich architectural heritage; development within conservation areas will only be permitted if it preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area.

Section 4, Extensions, alterations and conservatories. Alterations should take into account the character and design of the property and its surroundings, that windows, doors and materials should complement the existing.....

4.4.3 Policy DP25 - Conserving Camden's heritage

Conservation areas

In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will:

a) take into account the conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;
b) only permit development, within conservation areas, which preserves and enhances the character and appearance of that area;

.....and

e) preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of the conservation area and which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.

Listed buildings

To preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will:

e) prevent the total or substantial demolition of a listed building unless exceptional circumstances are shown which outweigh the case for retention;
f) only grant consent for a change of use of, or alterations and extensions to, a listed building where it considers that this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building;

and

g) not permit development which it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building.

- 4.5 Belsize Conservation Area
- 4.5.1 36 Lancaster Grove lies within sub area 3 of the Conservation Area.
- 4.5.2 This sub area is described as having predominantly Victorian housing with some Edwardian examples, predominantly of two storeys with an attic level. The area is notable for its variety of styles but with a general consistency of materials with red brick walls and roof tiles. Eton Avenue is described as having large detached villas, predominantly in Queen Anne style, but with many Arts and Crafts examples. Recurrent themes include canted bays.
- 4.5.3 The fire station is noted as an impressive Arts and Crafts building, with steep hipped roofs and intricate brick detailing, which forms a landmark.
- 4.5.4 There are a considerable number of listed buildings in Eton Avenue which are supplemented by a large number of properties in both Eton Avenue and Lancaster Grove which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.
- 4.5.5 Features which enhance the Conservation Area are identified in the Conservation Area Statement and include the hedge to the fire station and the mature street trees. Street trees are also identified in Lancaster Grove, as are the large stone setts to the cross-over and forecourt.
- 4.5.6 Guidance is provided with regard to new building or alterations, although much of this relates to residential properties. It is stated in the guidelines that the Council will resist the loss of front garden walls.

5 Proposals

- 5.1 The proposals are set out in the architects' Design and Access Statement.
- 5.2 For the purpose of this Heritage Assessment they may be summarised as the conversion of the original fire station at 39 Lancaster Grove to provide residential accommodation.
- 5.3 The building form has been retained with minor extensions on the western side, screened by the boundary fence and rebuilding the petrol store on the eastern side to create an independent flat while maintaining the line of the south face of the building. New dormer windows consistent with the surroundings will be created to light the roof space. Existing tiles and other fabric will be reused.
- 5.4 As a general principle historic details will be retained both internally and externally.
- 5.5 A positive approach has been adopted to the appliance room and the wash room and associated areas. Both have been through a number of changes but have also retained a number of features. The appliance room now appears an empty space but in fact most of the time it would have been relatively full with up to three appliances. The approach has been to reoccupy the space with two pods which do not seek to replicate appliances but rather to populate the space. The wash room area has also been substantially changed but the corridor access which leads from the central staircase has been preserved and the existing door

leading to the stokery is retained as the entrance to the new flat. Within the flat features such as the fireproof door to the coke store will be retained.

6 Assessment of the impact of the proposals on the significance of the Designated Heritage Asset and the Belsize Conservation Area

- 6.1 The main external form of the building is unchanged other than the addition of dormer windows in the main roof slope and small single storey extensions at the western and eastern ends.
- 6.2 The small extensions at the western end make use of an under used space and are well hidden by the fence to the adjoining property and along the southern face of the fire station. The design has been carefully developed to avoid interfering with the half round windows lighting the appliance room and instead make use of the blank walling below these windows. It is considered that this does not harm the historic or architectural interest of the building nor the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 6.3 The extension at the western end replaces a small single storey store. This appears to always have been considered as an appendage to the main building being of a different scale and detailing. Such outhouses were common adjuncts to fire stations. The existing building has no intrinsic architectural merit. It does have historic interest in being the location for some ancillary storage but it is suggested that this can be covered by a full record of the building being provided to the local history archives. The proposed building respects the primary building lines and materials. It is considered that it does not harm the architectural interest of the main building and the historic interest can be preserved by recording. This end of the site is well screened by planting and it is considered that this low extension by retaining a discreet low form will not harm the appearance or character of the conservation area.
- 6.4 The dormer windows in the main roof reflects the description of a terrace of cottages which in this area would almost without exception have dormers set into their roofs. The English Heritage assessment of fire stations of this period describes the design policy as being one of fitting in with the area in which the fire station stands. Again here the general appearance varies but does have a consistent use of dormer windows. They are designed to be clearly subservient to the main roof form and the fenestration below. The roof space was designed to be used albeit originally for storage and has good access from the main staircase and small windows at the end to provide some light. The existing building derives its image as a fire station and hence much of its significance from the presence of the central tower associated with drying hoses and celebrated by the decorative brickwork combined with the large access doors for the appliances. None of these features will be affected by the dormers. It is considered that the significance of the building will not be affected and that the presence of the dormers will enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area being consistent with other roof dormers nearby.
- 6.5 The open areas around the fire station will retain the original form with yards on the Lancaster Grove frontage some behind the existing wall and an open area in front of the appliance room. On the Eton Road frontage the planted garden and hedge will be retained. The hard paved area immediately along the frontage will be retained with small lightwells to the windows/doors to the basement in the eastern wing.
- 6.6 Internally although one thinks of a fire station in terms of the fire fighting equipment in fact a lot of the space is associated with living quarters either for

single or married officers or for those on duty but not necessarily resident. Thus the eastern wing other than the basement (which partly provide storage for the flats) is already devoted to flats as is the rest of the southern façade at first floor level. These areas will retain much of their existing form.

- 6.7 The ground floor and first floor over the appliance room together with the towers are the areas where the change of use will involve change. In these areas there are a number of details such as the main central staircase and the poles giving access to the appliance room and the staircase well which will be retained. All the panelling associated with the original use of the first floor for single mens accommodation was removed sometime ago but feature such as the significant fire place in the mess room with its tiled over mantle will be retained as will other tiled fire places. The panelling in the recreation room will be retained.
- 6.8 The two most challenging areas are the appliance room itself with its associated spaces such as the watch room and on the other side of the cross corridor the original wash room, hot closet, stokery and coke rooms. All these spaces had clearly defined uses and in the case of the group on the south side of the building these had very specific machinery and equipment much of which has already been removed or modified. These spaces do not have specific architectural interest, their original uses have some historic interest but much of that has already gone due to the change in the means of heating etc. It is considered that the alterations proposed in this location do not harm the special architectural interest of the building and that the historic interest can be preserved by recording and where practicable retaining details.
- 6.9 With regard to the appliance room when seen at present it is just a large space. The line of the wall to the watch room and the workshop/office is retained. Consideration has to be given to what the actual appearance would have been in use. Undoubtedly the durable utilitarian finishes would have been clearly apparent although some of them such as the floor finish may not be original. Most of the time within that space there would have been up to three large vehicles visually occupying the space. There would have been activity around them whether it was due to a call out or maintenance of equipment or training. The proposals have sought to recognise nature of larger objects in the space and activity around them. The front section facing Lancaster Grove is kept open with two larger blocks further back. The ceiling will run through thus preserving the appearance of the single space. Features such as the poles down from the floor above will be preserved. It is considered that this will preserve the architectural interest of the larger space and features such as the poles retain the identity of the historic use. The original large doors will be retained and thus there is no adverse effect on the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 6.10 Impact on the Conservation Area. The character of the conservation area is one of large domestic buildings in traditional materials and forms. The firestation is clearly not part of that character although as a public building it relates to the community. The conditions attached to the sale of the land and the objectives of the Architects Department were to take account of the appearance of the surroundings. The design of the building was referred to as being similar to a farm house and the detailing of the original building is sympathetic to other buildings in the area. The additions such as the dormers have been designed to take account of details in the area and their appearance is similar to dormers in the area and the spacing reflects the scale of roofs nearby. It is concluded that the proposals do not lose any of the significance of the original use and do

enhance the appearance and character of the area as well as relating well to the nearby designated heritage assets.

- 6.11 Impact on the designated heritage asset. Apart from the retention of the hierarchy of the historic spaces considerable care has been taken to retain historic features as set out in 3.20.10. This ensures that although the use will have changed there will be a continuing memory of the historic context while externally the building will retain the arts and crafts architectural form and be available to a wider public being the new occupants and their visitors.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposals have been considered in the context of the designated heritage asset itself and its setting in the Belsize Conservation Area. The requirement of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act to pay special attention to the significance of the designated heritage assets as been taken into account.
- 7.2 Great weight has been given to the buildings conservation. It had become redundant for its original use but much of the building is already in residential use and are thus not part of this application for a change of use. Where there is a change of use the detail of how this is achieved has been carefully considered to preserve both the form of the building and much of the historic detail. It is believed that this has not caused harm but if it had caused less than substantial harm then in accordance with clause 134 this would be weighed against the public benefit of securing an optimum viable use which is consistent with the residential setting of the area.
- 7.3 The significance of the asset has been assessed in accordance with the London Plan Policy 7.8 and is conserved by the proposals being sympathetic to the form, scale materials and architectural detail.
- 7.4 Similar consideration has been given to the Camden Local Plan Core Policy CS14 and Camden Planning Guidance 1 Design with the objective of preserving and where appropriate enhancing the building and the conservation area while alterations have taken account of the character and design of the property and surroundings.
- 7.5 The Belsize Conservation Area has been considered. Sub area 3 is described as having predominately Victorian Housing. It is recognised that the fire station was designed to fit into that environment and had a domestic character compatible with the large houses in the area. It is considered that the limited external alterations continue that theme and enhance the appearance of the building and character of the conservation area. The external spaces which provide the setting for the building also retain their historic form with paved forecourts to the north and garden setting along Eton Avenue.
- 7.6 It is concluded that the proposals comply with both national and local conservation legislation and guidance and conserve the building and the conservation area in accordance with their significance.

Anthony Walker
27 January 2016

**APPENDICES
APPENDIX A**

Photograph of building showing tree screening in Eton Road with 'cottage' appearance to the main building which here is mainly residential use.



APPENDIX B
Eton Avenue Properties



APPENDIX C



Interiors as existing
Modern fire place in first floor office to be removed

Recreation room panelling



Mess room fire place



Domestic fire place

APPENDIX D
Eastern wing as existing



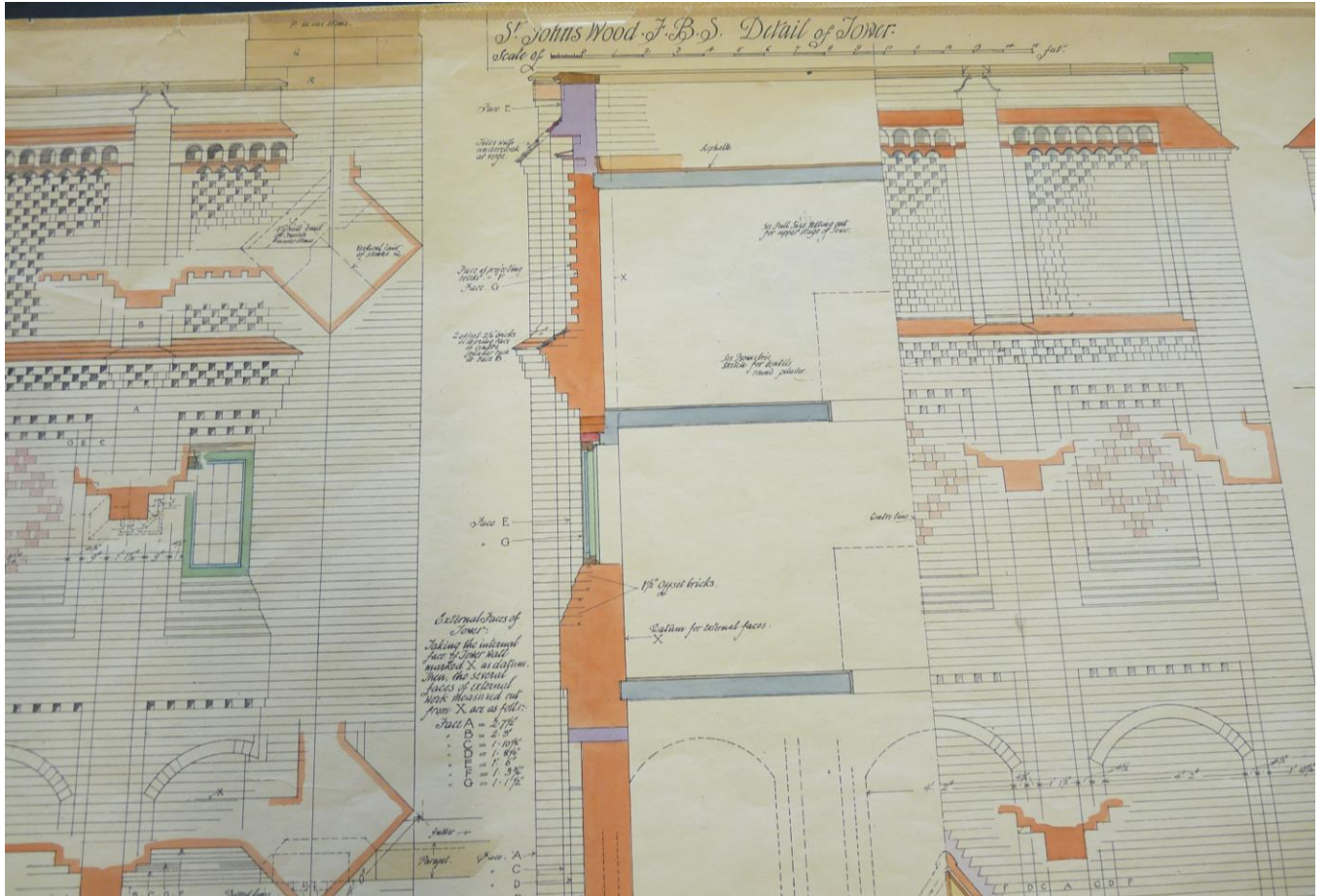
APPENDIX E
Roof spaces



APPENDIX F

Brickwork details

By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London

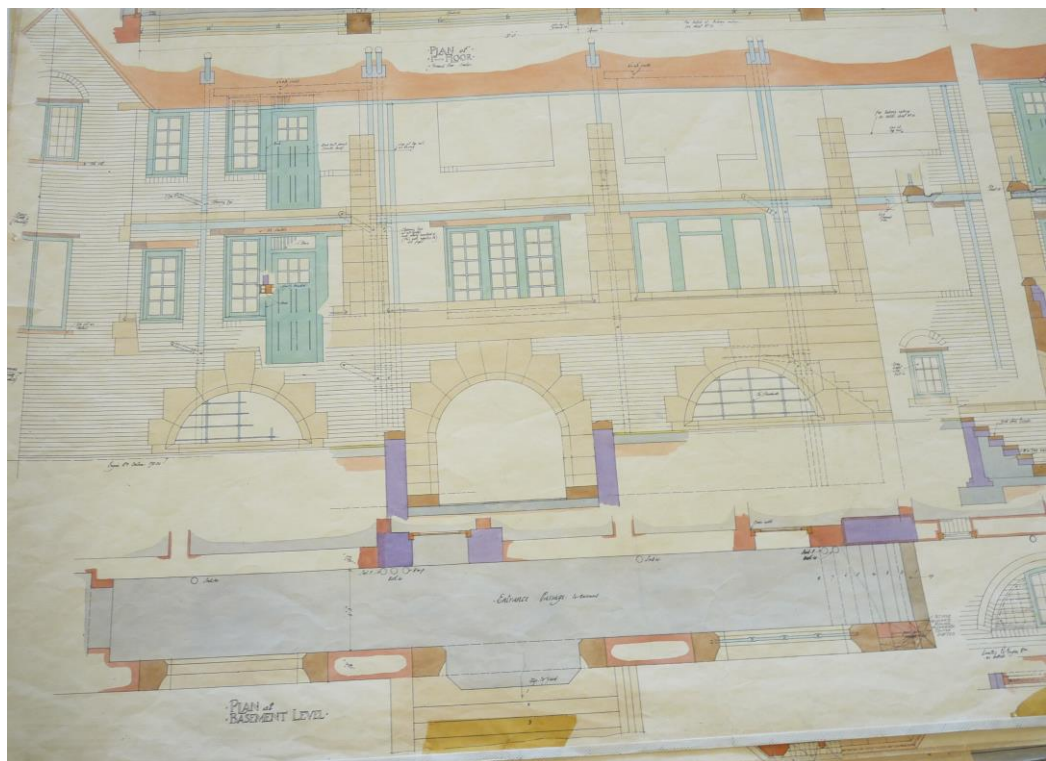


APPENDIX G
1913 Ground and first floor plans
By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London



APPENDIX H

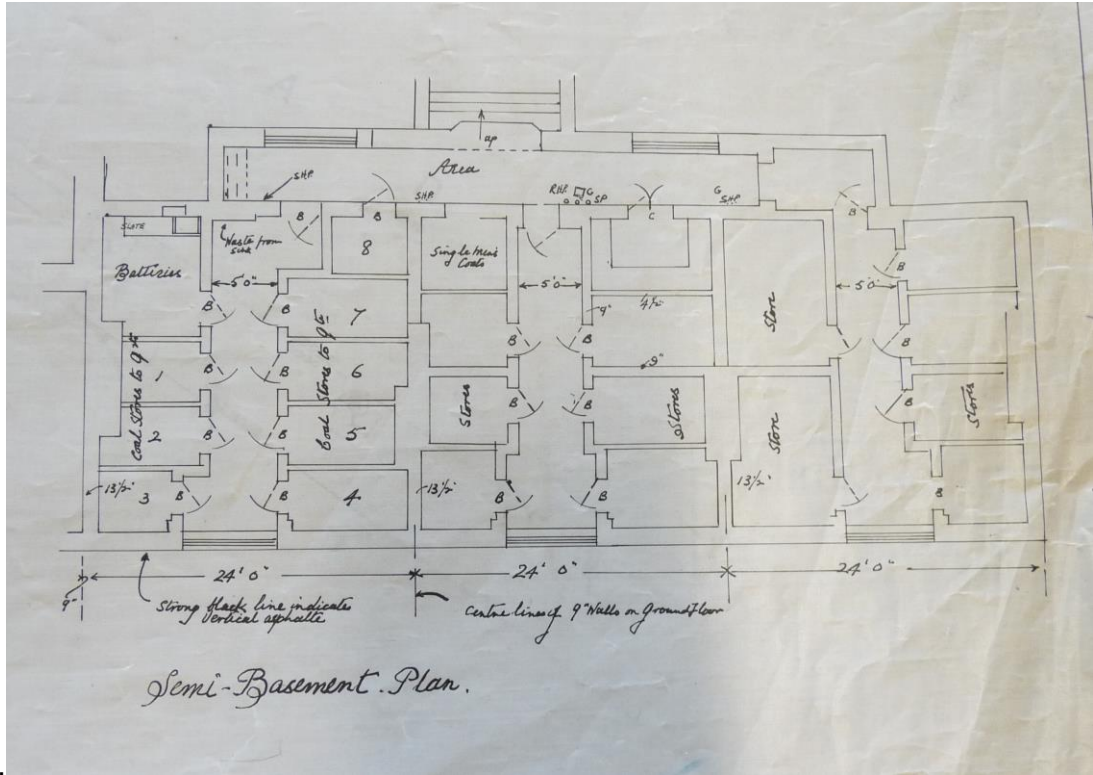
1913 North elevation of eastern wing and section through main building.
By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London



APPENDIX I

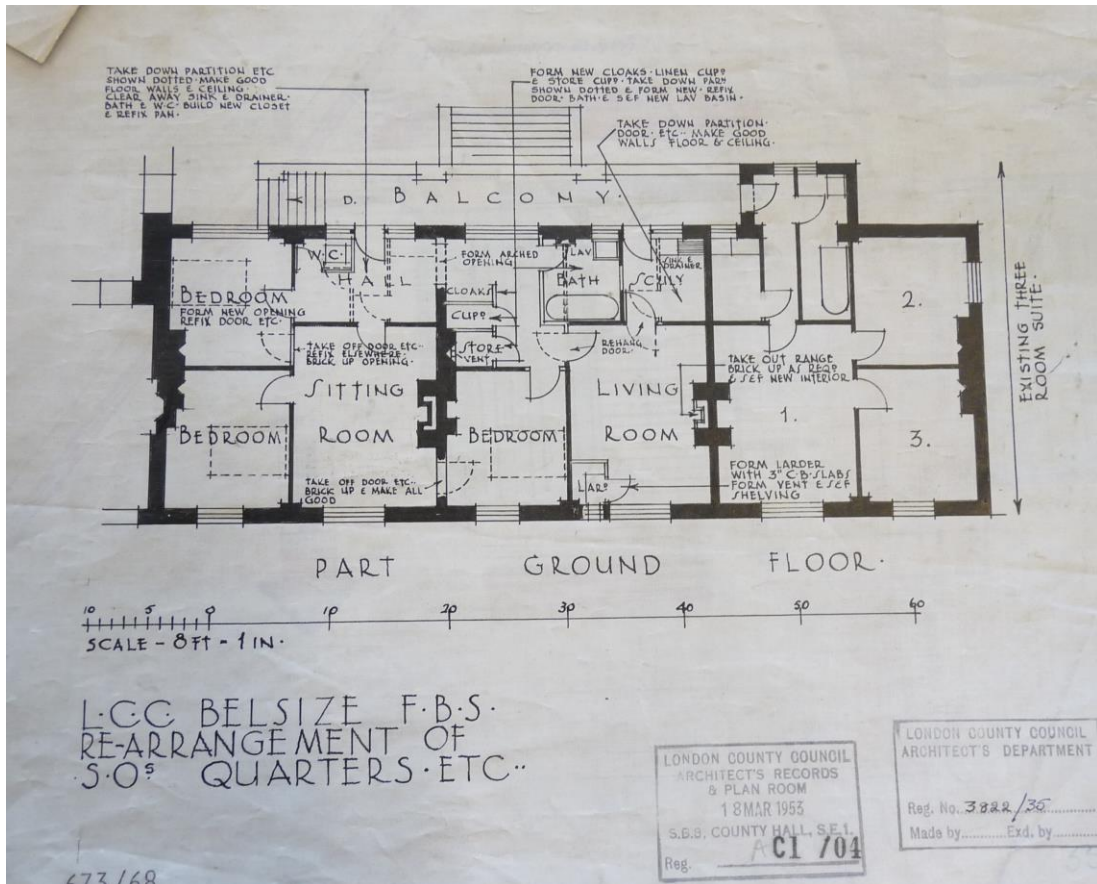
1913 Basement plan

By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London



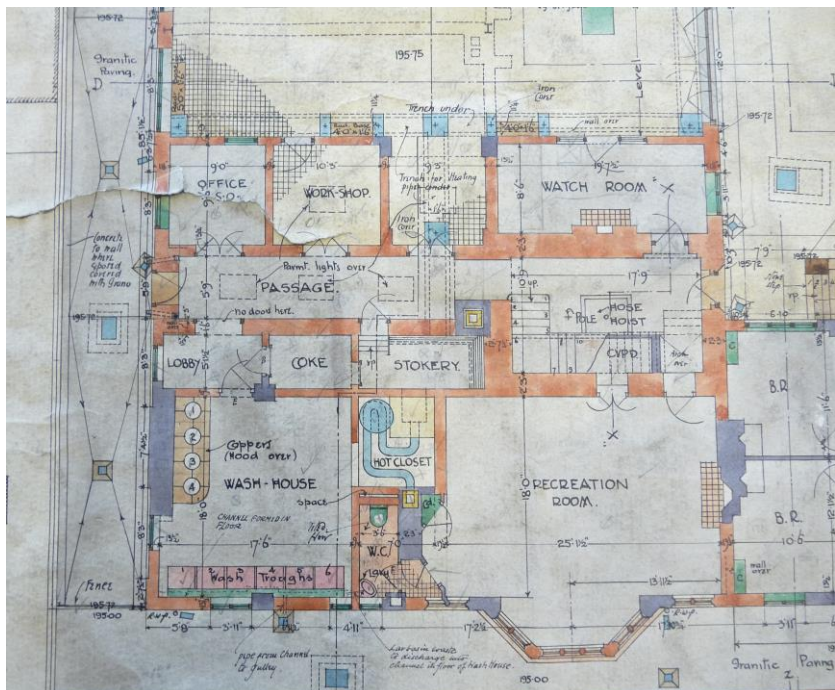
APPENDIX J

1920s Alterations to flats in eastern wing.
By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London



APPENDIX K

Altered watch room bay window as it exists today, plan showing original layout and detail through corridor and stoker.



By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London

APPENDIX L

Photographs of office and workshop adjacent to appliance room also showing radiators on plinths in the appliance room.



APPENDIX M

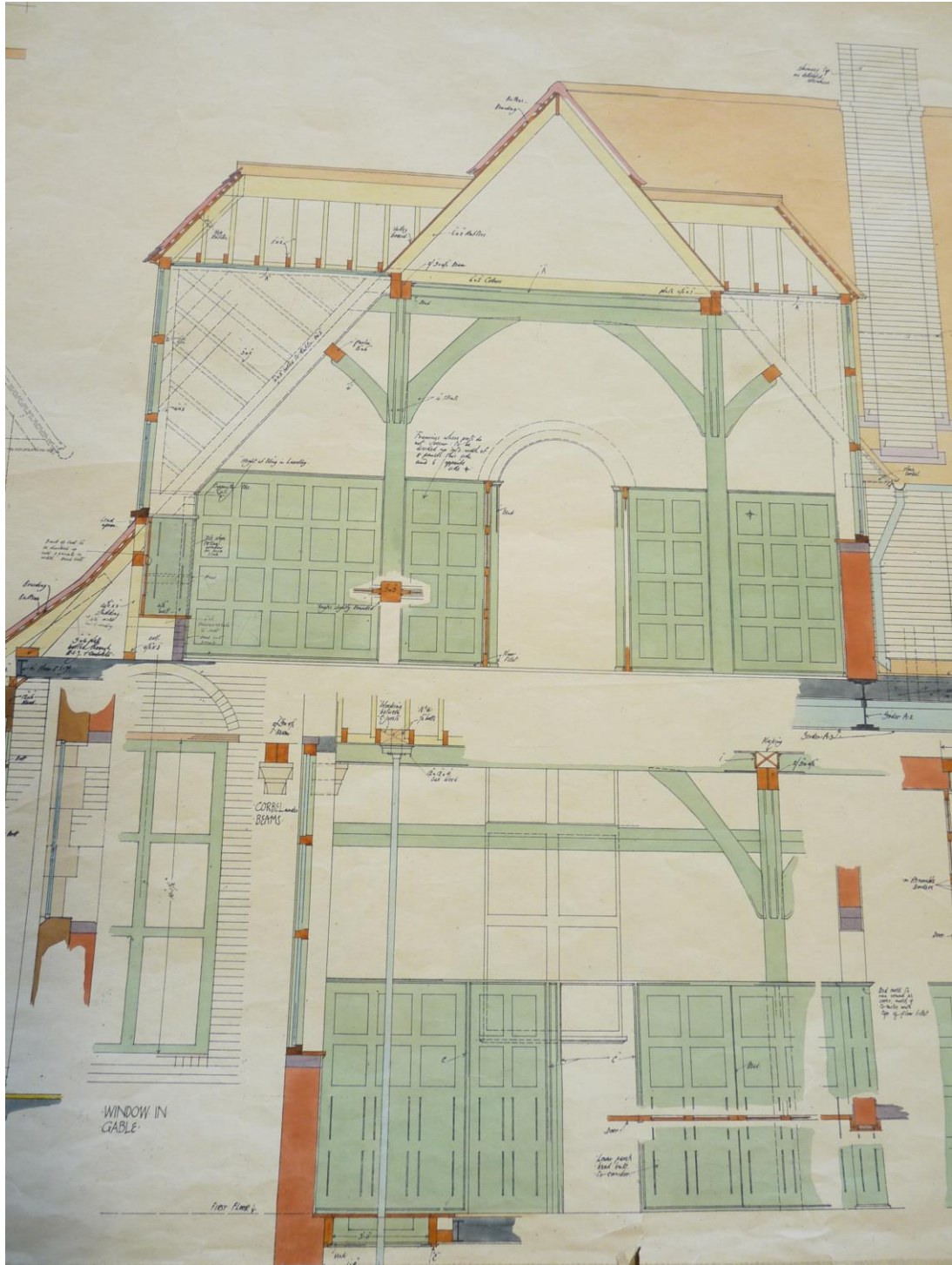
Central staircase

By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London



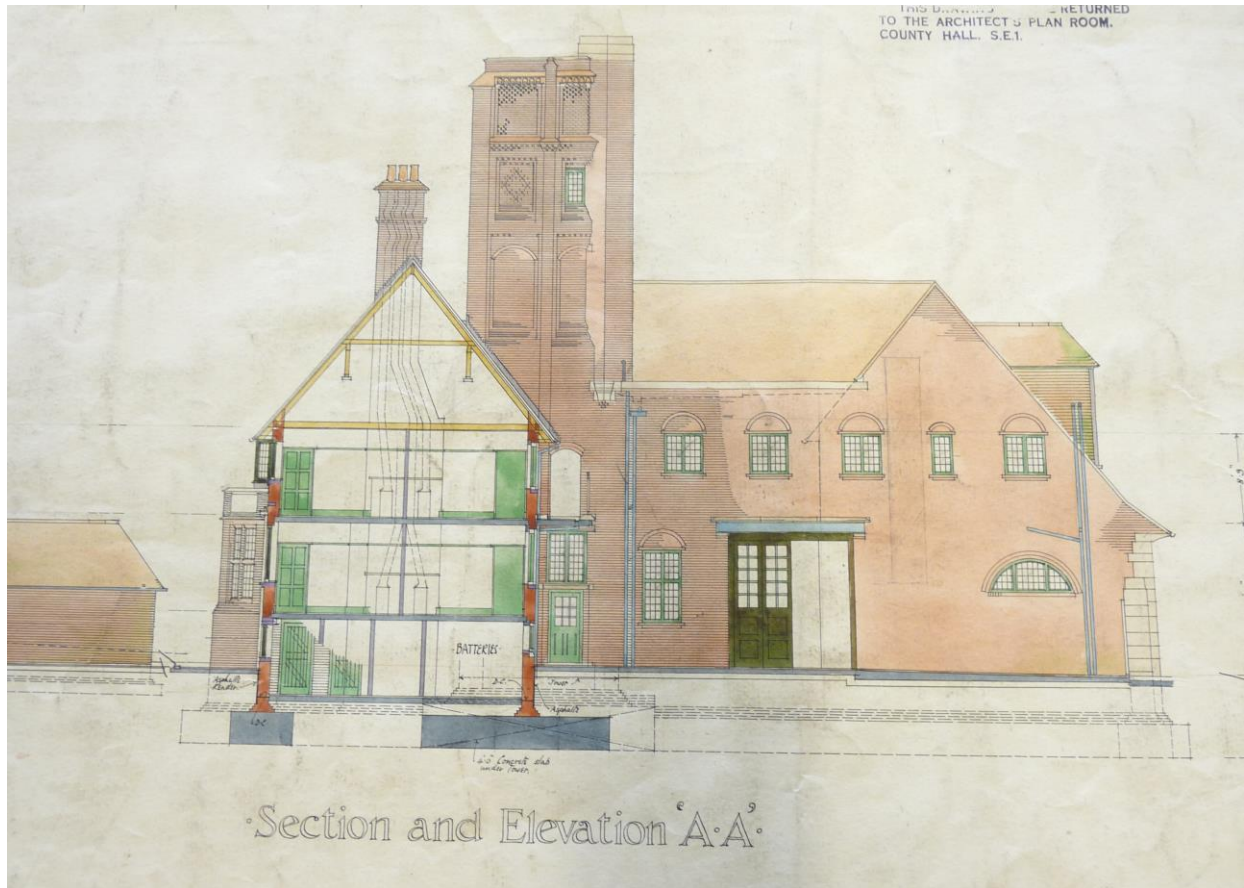
APPENDIX N

Section through single men's accommodation showing panelled partitions.
By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London



APPENDIX O

Section through eastern wing, including the roof
By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London



APPENDIX P
Tower as it is today



APPENDIX Q

Photograph of stair tower interior showing open stairwell with increased sense of enclosure at upper levels



APPENDIX R
1913 North and East Elevations
By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London



APPENDIX S

Photographs of doors and corner protection



APPENDIX T

Photograph of existing dormer windows



APPENDIX U

1913 Elevation to Eton Avenue

By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London



APPENDIX V

1913 West Elevation facing adjoining house Millbank.

By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London

