



Heritage Statement
No. 28 Belsize Grove



Plan of Belsize Conservation Area
With the application site coloured

1.0 Introduction

No.28 Belsize Grove forms part of a Grade II listed terrace that is composed of seven houses (nos.26-38) built in the 1820's. The terrace is symmetrical with the central house benefiting from an additional second storey which sits under a pediment, the three houses on either side have two principal stories as well as each having a basement and a mansard attic with original dormers.

The internal layout is typical of a Georgian plan where the staircase is located near the entrance on the street side and allows for the drawing room, on the sunnier gardens side, to benefit from being the full width of the house.

The front elevation of the terrace is stucco faced and painted white, and the rear is treated less formally in bare brickwork. Each house has three bays to the front with sash windows to the main stories and an attic with original dormers. To the rear, the raised ground floor has a central four bay French window which would have originally had a cast iron canopy (only remaining to no.26) over a raised balcony and a staircase that leads down to the garden. The first floor and attic both have two bays of windows from which there are panoramic views over London.

The levels are typical of such terraces where access from the street front is at ground floor level and the gardens to the rear are level with the basement. The terrace is set well back from the road with a generous front gardens behind low stone walls that are topped with cast stone balustrades (missing to much of the terrace) between gate piers that are also painted white. The houses have long rear gardens that back onto allotments and are separated by 6 foot high brick walls.



No.28

Street view of nos.38-26 (as seen) Belsize Grove

No.28 is currently separated into two dwellings, a flat in the basement and maisonette above with the original connecting staircase having been removed. It otherwise appears to conform to the original floor plan, although the windows and door openings to the rear at basement level appear to be later 20th century additions. The basement flat appears to have been formed in the 1960-70s with modern internal fittings such as replacement fire surrounds and built in joinery of that period.

3.0 The Proposals

These proposals concerns the restoration of No.28 to a single house and its subsequent refurbishment, which will reinstate the internal staircase to unite the current basement flat and the maisonette above. The basement is proposed to become a kitchen and dining room with a side hall. It is proposed that the cast iron canopy to the rear should be reinstated to the original design and that the later timber addition should be removed. This will allow the non-original kitchen at ground floor level to be removed and for an opening to be made in its place to form a more generous double reception room.

4.0 Basement Access

Existing Basement Access

The basement is currently a separate dwelling that is accessed via an external door on the front façade (1). The spaces within have been arranged to accommodate a living/dining area (2), kitchen, internal bathroom, and two bedrooms to the rear.

Proposed Basement Access

The proposal is to reinstate the internal stair from the raised ground floor to the basement which will return under the main stairs in the entrance lobby. The existing front door to the basement will be fixed with an internal window seat, and the basement will be entered through the existing adjacent side door under the steps to the main front door. The space under the steps is currently a store with a modern metal window (3) to the kitchen, and it is proposed that this window opening will be enlarged to make a new door to the basement that leads directly into the proposed side hallway and staircase, rather than into the kitchen. This new doorway will not necessitate any visible alterations to the front facade.



1. Existing main door to basement flat



2. Interior of basement living room looking towards street front



3. Kitchen window with modern metal frame

5.0 Rear Facade Treatment

Existing Façade Treatment

No.26 has a Regency canopy with elegant cast iron supports and balustrade which is believed to be original to the house. It is thought that each of the seven houses in the terrace would have originally had a matching tented canopy and the loss of many of these might be attributed to their deterioration, or due to the building of later extensions. These canopies are a significant feature of the composition of the rear elevations, and the loss of the canopy at No.28 is detrimental to its appearance.

At No.28 the canopy has been substituted with a modern timber balcony and staircase that gives access from the ground floor to the garden which is at basement level (1). The window and door at basement level are later additions and with modern proportions. Numerous external waste pipes are unsightly.

Proposed Façade Treatment

It is proposed to reinstate a canopy and balcony to match the canopy at the rear of No. 26, with a cast iron stair to the side giving access to the garden. This will allow the façade to regain its elegance and will reinforce the hierarchy of the central window. It is proposed that the space below the balcony will be discreetly enclosed with a fine framed glass that is to be set behind the cast iron structure, providing a bay window to the proposed basement dining area. The reinstatement of this elegant feature is thought to be more sensitive solution than other recent extensions to properties on the same terrace. Either side of the proposed bay window the brickwork will be stuccoed and painted white.

The rear garden door and window to the original service spaces in the basement make for dark rooms that have a poor connection to the garden. The modern family kitchen is used throughout the day as one of the most important rooms in the house and warrants a well-lit space with a stronger connection to the garden. It is therefore proposed that the section of wall between the existing door and window should be demolished to provide an opening to the garden which is centred under the French doors and the balcony of the raised ground floor. As part of the works the unsightly plumbing will be relocated internally.



1.



2.



3.



4.

6.0 Basement Layout

Existing Layout

The original layout has been compromised by the removal of the staircase between the ground floor and basement and its subsequent result in subdividing the house. The basement rooms are dingy (1) with small windows and appear aged due to non-original fittings and finishes.

Basement Proposed Layout

The intention is to provide simple spaces within the basement recalling the original service use. A kitchen located towards the street front and a family dining area towards the garden, with a hall and reinstated staircase to the side.

It is proposed to strip out the modern kitchen (2) and bathroom (3) along with the joinery which disguises the original chimney breasts (4), which should be re-exposed. The front fireplace benefits from its original grate (1) which will be retained, the rear fireplace has been blocked and will be re-opened to house a solid fuel burning stove with no fire surround.

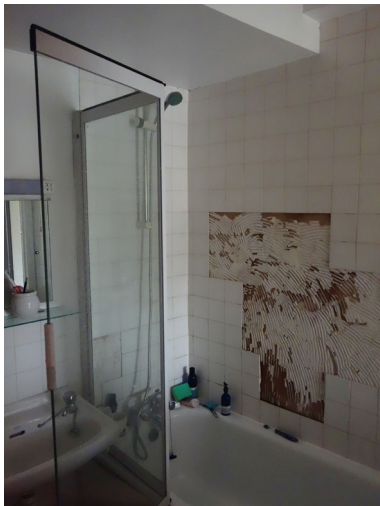
To counter the darkness of the front of the basement and to connect the cooking and eating areas, it is proposed to form an opening in the central spine wall which will be the width of a pair of double doors, and with a downstand to maintain the integrity of the original rooms. To the rear it is proposed to remove the existing internal wall dividing the two bedrooms to provide a full width dining room overlooking the garden. The rooms will have no skirting, architraves or cornices.



1. Living/Dining Room



2. Modern Kitchen



3. Interior Bathroom



4. Master Bedroom

Existing Basement Floor

The current floor to ceiling height of the basement is 2200mm, which together with small window openings, particularly to the rear, make the interior dark and with a sense of confinement.

Proposed Basement Floor

To counter the low ceilings in the basement it is proposed to lower the floor level by 200mm, bringing it level with the garden. The existing floor is uninsulated and the insertion of a new slab will allow the opportunity to provide insulation and underfloor heating, a more continuous low-level heat source suitable for countering damp in a basement. The fixing of the original front door and insertion of a window seat avoids a step here and disguises the new, slightly lower floor level. The new slab will have a lime floor finish, soft in appearance and unpretentious.

7.0 Ground Floor Layout

Existing Layout

The house is entered at ground floor level into a lobby that leads to a staircase hall. The room at the front has been converted into a kitchen and the room at the rear of the house, overlooking the garden, is a living room. The cornice and skirting is original but has been compromised by the insertion of the kitchen, which has resulted in boxing out and instillation of fitted cupboards (1).

The location of the doorway into the front rooms appears to not be original and was possibly relocated as a result of the layout and instillation of the later kitchen. The central panel to the side of the stairs continued below floor level (2) which suggests that the two steps between the hallway and the lobby have at some stage been relocated.

Proposed Layout

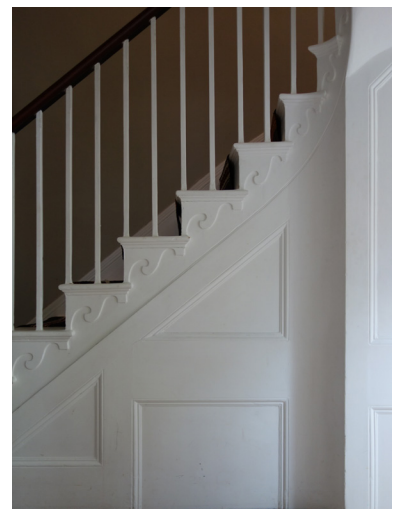
It is proposed that the ground floor kitchen and any boxing should be removed to expose the original cornice and skirting, and that the original fireplaces should be preserved. If site investigations during the works confirm our belief that the hall to front room doorway has been relocated we propose reinstating it in its original location, which would also be preferable for the layout of furniture. It is proposed that we create a new opening in the wall between the front and rear rooms and the careful proportioning of this opening is intended to allow freer movement and better light to the rear of the property, whilst still promoting the integrity and separate character of the two rooms.



1. Loss of cornice to boxing in above



2. Location of the kitchen door



3. Panel continuing below floor level