Aerial view of nos. 6-14 Highgate West Hill and the surrounding area.

Contents

1.0 **Introduction**

This statement has been prepared by Union Architects on behalf of our client Myles Payne.

It describes proposed alterations to no.11 Highgate West Hill, a Grade II listed property within the London Borough of Camden.

Site Address:

11 Highgate West Hill
London
N6 6JR

Architect:

Union Architects
1 Kimberley Court
Kimberley Road
London
NW6 7SL

Tel: 07786 132726
Info@union-architects.com
www.union-architects.com

2.0 **Practice Profile**

Formed in October 2011, Union Architects became the next step in a long running association between its two directors.

Emerging from prominent UK practices, we set out with a specific objective: to create an inclusive and exciting approach to design. One that through effective communication allows our clients to become immersed in the process.

We specialize in high quality alterations to existing buildings.

One of our key strengths is applying design to sensitive situations. We have worked successfully within many conservation areas and have completed renovations to a number of listed buildings. We believe in forging a relationship between innovation and an existing building's context by complimenting proportion, scale and materiality.

3.0 **Examples of Work**

Some examples of Union Architect's sensitive refurbishment of historic buildings.

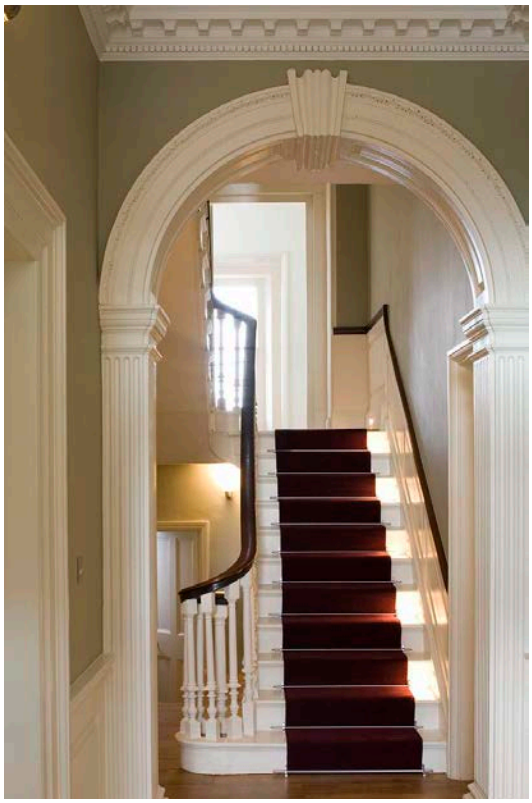

fig.1 Grade II listed refurbishment within a Conservation Area

fig.1a Refurbished Grade II listed façade

fig.2 Extension to Grade II listed building in a Conservation Area

4.0 **Context Analysis**

Highgate West Hill is located within the 'Camden Highgate Conservation Area'; 1 of 39 such areas designated within the London Borough of Camden. The area was in fact enlarged to encompass Highgate West Hill in 1978, and is now divided into 5 Sub-Areas. Of these no.11 Highgate West Hill is located with Sub-Area 5: Merton Lane & Millfield Lane which is characterized by clusters of houses built within the grounds of larger properties and has subsequently become a 'patchwork of building types and scales'.

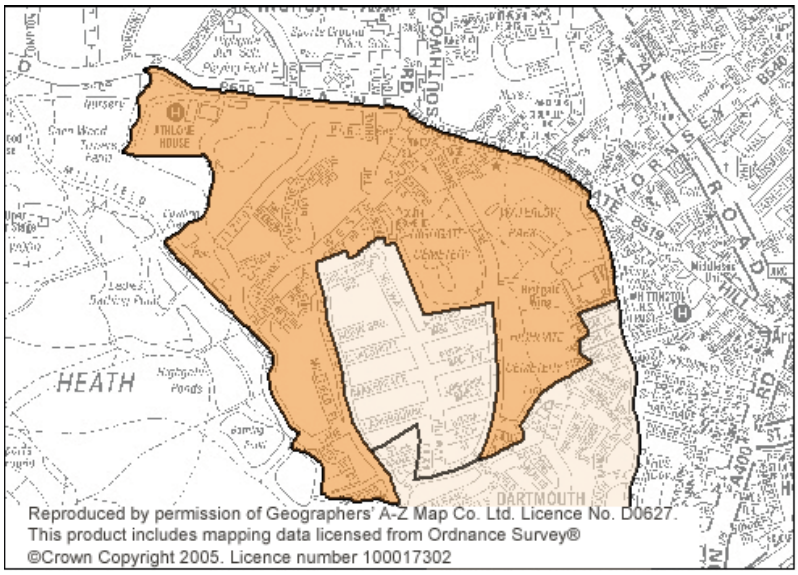

fig.3 Camden Highgate Conservation Area.

The road is located on a steep hill, the southern end of which borders a separate conservation area, the 'Holly Lodge Estate'. There is a great deal vegetation to either side of the road collectively screening the majority of set back, early to mid 19th century buildings. Beyond this screening these buildings are revealed to be diverse, comprising a variety of style though consistent designation of Grade II listing exists commonly between nos 6 to 14.


fig.4 Aerial view of south section of Highgate West Hill.

5.0 **Building Appraisal**

No 11 is one such building. It received joint Grade II status in 1974 with the attached no 10 (List entry number 1379022). The pair are described as such;

'Semi-detached pair of villas. Early/mid C19. Stucco. 2 storeys. 3 windows each. Round-arched, recessed doorways with patterned fanlights and panelled doors, No.10 flanked by pilasters. Recessed sashes; canted bay windows through ground and 1st floors at angles, central windows tripartite to ground floor and separated by pilaster strips at 1st floor. Plain 1st floor band. Cornice and blocking course. Interiors: not inspected.'

We believe the houses to have been originally conceived as two villas, designed around their own central, double fronted plan with a secondary outrigger extending back into the rear grounds. Since then both properties have been sub-divided into smaller dwellings for which no planning history is available. While no 10a has been built directly behind and adjoining the rear of the original no 10 building, no 11a exists as the original outrigger of no 11. A flying freehold exists between the two dwellings – the kitchen of no 11 sits beneath a first floor area within no 11a's curtilage (see existing plans).

fig.5 Front elevations to no 11.

The buildings themselves remain broadly as described within the listing details - rendered entirely in Cream Stucco around a series of pilasters and cornices. The multi-paned, single glazed sash windows are believed to be original.

Though no records of the interiors are available, renovation work has clearly taken place. Modern floor finishes appear on both ground and first floors though the connecting staircase with its stone steps, delicate timber balusters and winding handrail is thought to be original. Original decorative cornicing exists within most ground floor rooms with a simpler modern variation to the first floor landing only.

With the exception of the aforementioned dwelling division and a modern glass conservatory to the rear (planning application reference 8470008), no significant changes appear to have been made to the ground floor room arrangement.

fig.6 Rear elevations to no 11.

At first floor level, two small bathrooms have been built - one located off the landing presumably to serve the main house, via what is thought to be an original arch. The other acts as an en-suite to bedroom 01 (see plan). Together these occupy the footprint of what perhaps would have originally been a larger *Piano Nobile* style room at first floor offering fine views from the bay window. We believe access to a similar sized room to the rear (now part of no 11a) via a door opening to the left of the existing family bathroom door.

fig.7 Entrance to the main bathroom from first floor landing

Given the original first floor to ceiling heights, sub-division into these smaller rooms would otherwise have resulted in disproportionately tall spaces. This perhaps explains the reason for a false, secondary ceiling over both bathrooms. Between these and original ceiling joist level now exists a redundant void containing modern pipework and timber studs (see fig.8).

fig.8 Void between original first floor ceiling joists & modern bathroom ceiling

The building's original roof comprises three separate spaces;
Above both first floor bedrooms (03 & 04, adjacent to party wall with no 10), sits a large, hipped loft space. This encompasses a unified chimneystack along the party wall with an exposed brickwork arch. Support for the roof seems to have originally been via two timbers, king post trusses spanning from the ridge to the front and rear walls of the house. While that adjacent to the chimney breast is no doubt original with existing *mortice & tenon* joists secured with separate wooden pegs, a replacement built from modern machined timber and mechanical fixings has been built upon what seems to be the original lower tie beam section.

fig.9 Original Kingpost truss adjacent to chimney stack

fig.9a Modern timber truss replacement

Similar examples of repair are evident elsewhere within the space with secondary timber supports and courses of modern brickwork visible around the loft perimeter.

Above bedroom 01 and those adjacent bathrooms sits a second hipped, loft space smaller and lower than that outlined above. Extensive remedial work seems to have been carried out here. Two modern machined, timber trusses have been built onto what may have been original tie beams. Where the ends of these meet the supporting masonry walls, modern, galvanised steel angles have been bolted on presumably to strengthen against decay. Original purlin beams span across the tops of the trusses with original rafters cut and spliced with modern timber around the perimeter where again, they meet modern wall plates and masonry walls. Modern sarking board sits between these rafters and the external weather proofing. Lastly a small Velux rooflight has been installed to the roof's southeast facing pitch.

fig.10 Modern timber truss replacement

Externally both roofs are finished in small, riven slate tiles with lead flashing over the ridge board and hip rafters.

This space abuts a third roof space above no 11a via a modern block work wall though no inspection beyond this has been possible. Similarly, this is also finished in slate and lead though it sits at a higher level to either of no 11's roofs.

fig.11 Boundary wall to 11a within roof space

A further example of significant intervention exists in this space. A formed lead gutter appears to pass internally through at joist level, alongside the party wall (shared with no 11a) and to egresses towards the flank wall. It presumably outlets into the visible, high-level upvc gutter on that elevation (fig.11b).

Since no rainwater downpipes exist elsewhere to no 11's elevations we believe this to be the principle flow of rainwater from no 11's roof. It was perhaps installed following sub-division of the original villa so that neither property contained trespassing drainage. We also believe that this unsatisfactory method may have led to long term leakage throughout both loft spaces perhaps explaining the level of modern remedial work which is now apparent in either.

In any case we strongly feel the arrangement cannot be left in its current form. We therefore propose altering the falls to those lead soakaways, reversing the water flow so that it can join the same high level gutter via the bay flat roof (see proposed roof plan & side elevation). To aid this we suggest replacing the upvc gutter with a cast iron one in line with original pipework elsewhere. Equally we suggest relocating the existing cast iron hopper to simplify that elevation somewhat.

fig.11a Ingress of lead gutter along the now party wall

fig.11b High level gutter to side elevation of no 11.

6.0 **Design Brief & Approach**

Our client Mr Myles Payne and his family acquired and occupied the building in mid 2015. As a family of four they have spent the time since considering their options on how they might extend the property. While the three existing bedrooms are adequate for themselves, the bathroom facilities are somewhat disproportionately small and they wish to provide both further accommodation for guests and a small study area to facilitate working from home.

A major part of our client's initial brief for us was to tackle this space requirement while preserving the key aspects of the building's character. Having previously lived within the same conservation area and being long term admirers of these buildings, they are keen to only enhance the historical asset they have acquired in no. 11.

Our view is that the house undeniably exists in a very different state to that which it was originally conceived. We believe nos 10 & 11 to have originally been designed as a pair and have since undergone subsequent division to form four dwellings. Furthermore and as our analysis shows much previous renovation has altered original features. However we believe that a sufficient historic foundation still exists which can continue to offer insight to its past but also deserves a sensitive and considered approach to future development.

A major asset to the building is its original roof structure, namely the existing King Post truss within loft space 01 but also those original purlins, common rafters and roof slates that sit undisturbed above both loft spaces. What remains beyond this are two, large, uninterrupted loft volumes which we believe if approached sensitively, may be occupied without detriment to character of the building.

The design concept is therefore simple in its ambition; to create two lightweight staircases neither structurally reliant nor visually fixed to surrounding walls. They would each lead up to the respective loft space above each offering a separated room; one for accommodation and one for working.

At first floor level we wish to create a new bathroom space between bedrooms 03 & 04. Serving as the main bathroom to the house this would allow the removal of those modern yet dilapidated bathrooms adjacent to bedroom 01. We propose a new, lower ceiling level above that new bathroom. By doing so we are able to create adequate head height within the proposed bedroom 05 above. However by introducing a raised single bed and storage cupboard over those bedrooms, we are able to both save on required floor space in bedroom 05 and avoid lowering the original floor to ceiling heights of bedrooms 03 & 04 (see fig.12).

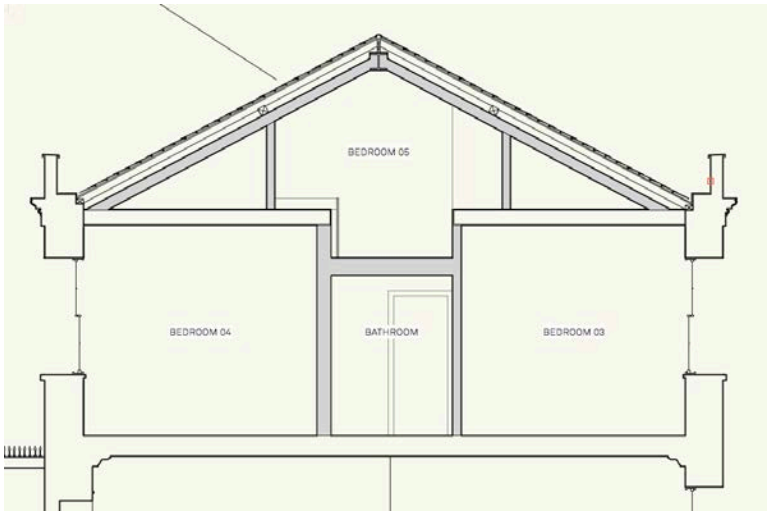

fig.12 Section through proposed main bathroom & bedrooms

In place of the existing bathrooms we propose the introduction of a joint dressing room and en-suite to serve bedroom 01. These would occupy a lesser floor area than the existing facilities and would be arranged in a more rectangular, orderly plan. As a result bedroom 01 resumes a more logical, rectangular footprint in line with its original state as master bedroom.

One of the aforementioned proposed stairs would lead up from the dressing room to a mezzanine study area within loft space 02. With a balustrade wall to its perimeter this room would benefit from views directly over onto the bedroom below.

7.0 **Proposal Impact**

Concept
Extensive inspection of the house has made it clear that a significant amount of original fabric has been removed. We have therefore identified that of historical worth which remains and designed around this. Furthermore the proposals are based around a general conservation principle – that of touching the building lightly. It is our intention that all new structure should sit independently of existing fabric. It should be designed and constructed in such a way to facilitate simple, future dismantling without risking damage to those surrounding areas.

Loft space 01
The creation of a new room within this space would require removal of the modern replacement truss we document above (fig.10). Because of its limited historical importance or indeed design worth, we feel this is entirely warranted. Replacement structural support would come in the form of five steel rafters supporting a new ridge beam beneath the existing and original ridge board and existing purlins. The nature of this structure would allow it to carry the load of the existing roof, transferring this down to the solid front and rear walls. No load bearing would therefore be required of the party wall, original chimney brickwork nor crucially the remaining original truss, all of which would remain undisturbed. From this new structure, insulation and dry lining may be hung avoiding the need to fix back to those original timbers above.

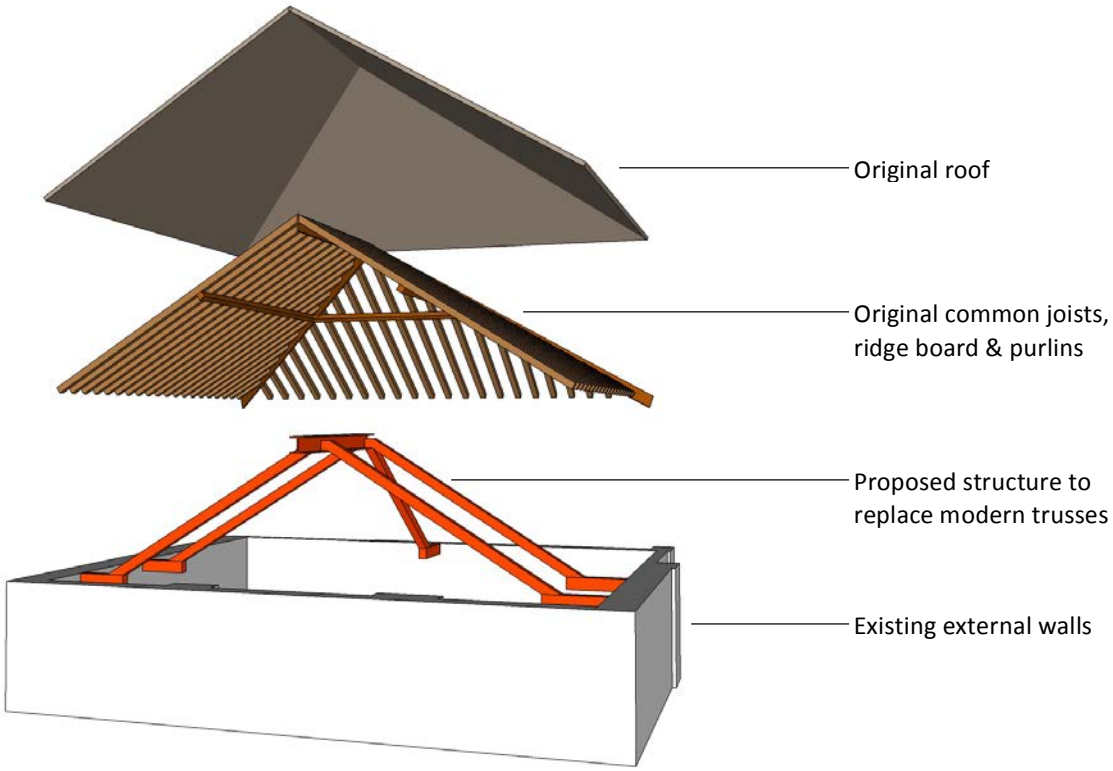

fig.13 An exploded schematic model of the proposed steel structure to support the existing roof.

The stair leading to this space would be located alongside the landing wall of bedroom 02. While the age of the wall fabric is unknown its location is likely to be original and certainly a contributing element of the generously sized and well-proportioned first floor landing that exists. We therefore strive to maintain this. With the stair as described, an existing doorway to bedroom 02 would require infilling. Located off centre we believe its position to be arbitrary and of little historical importance. A replacement door opening (receiving the retained door and architraves) is proposed to the corner of this room allowing the new stair to wind 90˚ and open itself up to the landing.

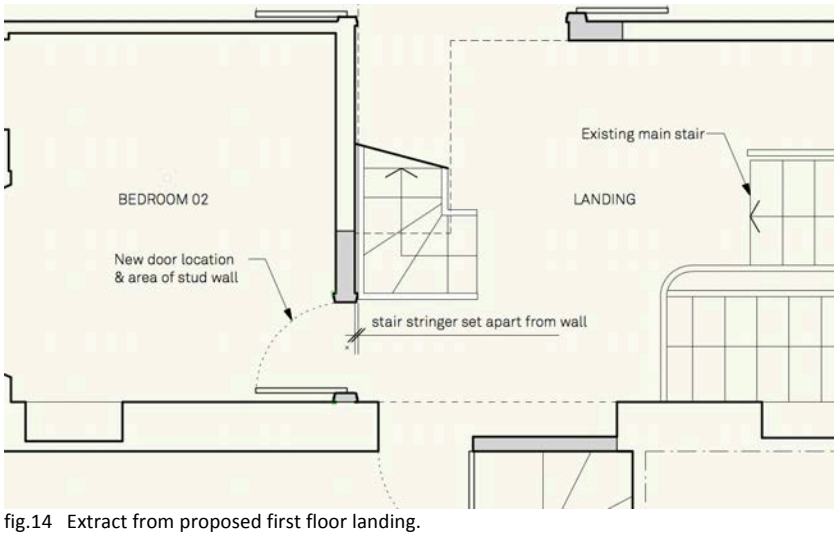

fig.14 Extract from proposed first floor landing.

The stair is to be constructed from lightweight timber panels set independently apart from the adjacent bedroom wall. The stair stringer would be located a nominal distance from this avoiding any fixings or subsequent loading. In-line with our overall concept, the stair construction method would facilitate future removal and ensure no residual damage to the wall or surrounding areas. While the stair itself would be prominent, we believe that given its lightweight design and the existing size of the landing, it would appear appropriate to that space.

This new stair would of course require headroom passing from first to effective third floors. With the winding tread arrangement we have minimised the degree of existing ceiling that would subsequently be removed. This is expected to be 1.3sqm. Should it be found during initial investigations to comprise historic plaster & lath, we would ensure any making good to those surrounding areas are line with those proposed construction details outlined in section 8.

With those construction techniques we outline, we believe that some internal walls can be successfully moved without having a detrimental impact on the overall building. No decorative features for example exist within either bedrooms 03 & 04. Their sizes are currently generous and so we believe can accommodate the creation of a new bathroom between. By duplicating the dividing wall and effectively moving these outwards by around a metre, we create a minor yet adequately sized bathroom of some 1.7m wide internally. External views from rear garden and street alike via their windows would not noticeably change. Chimney breasts in either room would furthermore remain untouched as a reminder of the original arrangement. Existing panelled doors and their architraves would be retained and reused in those new locations. By comparison the less private first floor landing, one of the greater assets within the house, would not be unduly altered with the main wall to bedroom 04 remaining largely in place.

Loft space 02

As outlined we can currently see extensive work has taken place above and to bedroom 01 (new stud walls, lowered ceilings, modern fittings & finishes etc). We believe there is little historic fabric to be retained here and that a revised view of simply improving these spaces architecturally should apply. By relocating the current stud wall between bedroom 01 and existing bathroom/en-suite the original master bedroom begins to resemble its original state by becoming the largest bedroom in the house. Since the spaces beyond are already sub-divided we believe remodelling would constitute a vast improvement.

Nevertheless we feel the introduction of a second stair with the same design ethos as that in the landing is still appropriate. This would be located alongside a solid and perhaps unoriginal party wall (now shared with no 11a) and again we would seek to set the inside stringer away from this so to avoid any loading or fixing. Matching lightweight timber panelling would make up the stair balustrade in the same way.

Creating a room above, as with bedroom 05 would require the removal of those modern timber trusses currently supporting the roof. Again due to what we believe are relatively recent installations, we don't feel the loss of these or their design to be an issue. Replacement structure would come in the form of two sets of steel rafters supporting a ridge beam and original ridge board above. A fifth rafter would follow the pitch of the front roof slope and permit secondary timber hip rafters and joists between. Modern insulation and gypsum could then be fixed to these rather than those original roof timbers above.

To enable the mezzanine relationship to the bedroom 01 below, the study would require the existing ceiling above to be removed throughout. Made up from a combination of modern gypsum boards, few original joists and more modern timber replacements this does not seem an example of noteworthy historic fabric. Similarly no cornices or decorative features currently exist within bedroom 01 and so we feel that its removal in order to permit the introduction of a revitalised space is justified.

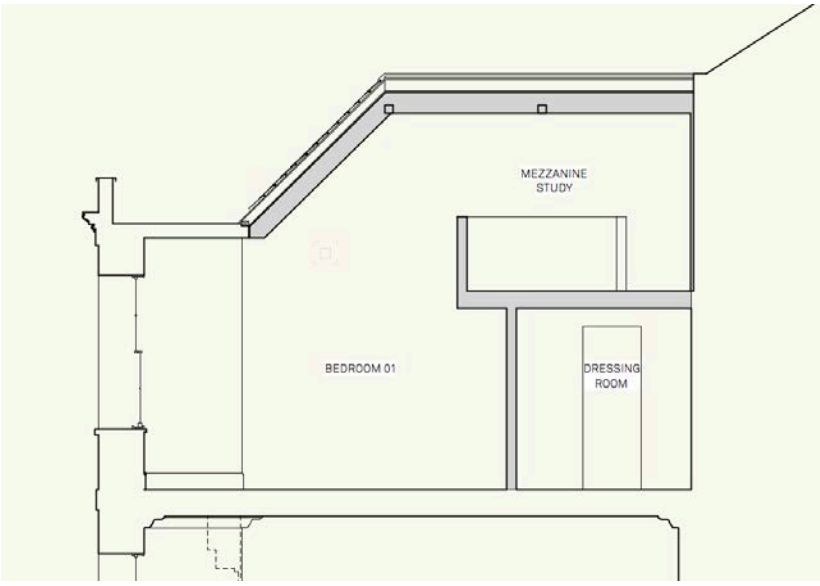

fig.15 Extract from proposed first floor & mezzanine section.

8.0 **Proposed details**

As with all listed projects on site, we suggest a phase of careful fabric investigation prior to demolition. Where historic plaster & lath construction is found we would ensure the use of an available equivalent product when making good. Specialists *Rose of Jericho* (www.rose-of-jericho.demon.co.uk) or similar would be consulted from the early stages of construction, the details of which would then be coordinated with the local authority's conservation department. Equally should any plaster be found to be lime based or contain fibres, we would ensure the correct quantities are introduced with the appropriate number of coats and advised drying periods.

Walls to be removed would be done so carefully avoiding damage to surrounding areas. Where any damage does occur, this would be made good and feathered into the adjacent coats using a matching equivalent plaster product.

New stud wall construction would be of modern timber and gypsum. We believe the introduction of historic construction methods in non-original locations to be misleading and not in-line with current conservation thinking. The end uprights of new stud walls would be set apart from adjacent perpendicular walls by approximately 20mm, purposely avoiding fixing back to these. Instead these new walls would be supported from fixed studwork within the ceiling and to floor joists below.
The resulting gaps to the ends would then be filled with loose insulation and finished with a flexible (low modulus), silicone filler (see fig.16). Should it ever be necessary, this technique allows simple stripping and removal of these walls avoiding any resulting damage.

Where original skirting is to be removed this is to be done carefully by extracting fixing nails initially to minimise pulling away adjacent wall plaster. Where possible these profiles will be cleaned and reused. Where not, we would seek local authority approval with profiles of matching design and size.

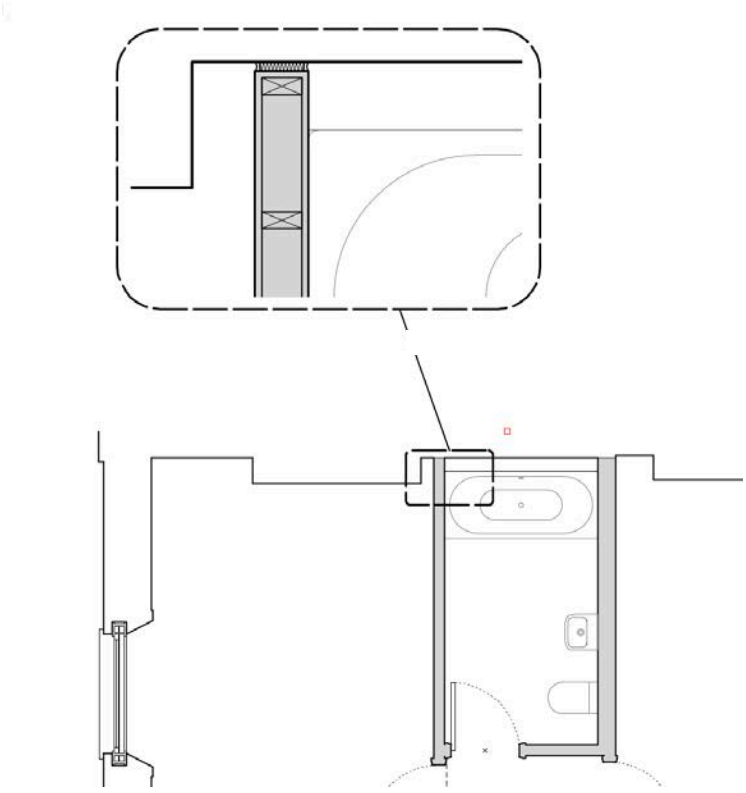

fig.16 Example of the detailing method used for new stud walls.

9.0 **Conclusion**

The proposals involve both organisational and material changes to the first and loft floors. Those changes reflect developments in lifestyle over the 140 or so years since the house was built. Our feeling is that these changes can be accommodated as long as the overriding strategy is strictly observed through to completion – If those new enhancements are designed and built to sit lightly within the building then not only can they help prolong its usable life but they can act as an exemplary precedent for future proposals to follow.

In this way we believe the proposals contribute to both preserving and enhancing the listed building and wider conservation area.