

195 - 199 GRAYS INN ROAD, CAMDEN, WC1X 8UL

Design Access and Heritage Statement  
Office Scheme  
May 2017



# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report is prepared in support of an application for full planning permission for the following works:

- Demolition of existing single storey structure
- Construction of 2 storey office building comprising 178m<sup>2</sup> of new office floor space



1.0 | Site Location Plan



## 2.0 SITE



The site is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area approximately halfway up Gray's Inn Road, a wide thoroughfare which links Holborn to the south with Kings Cross to the north.

The site is 130m<sup>2</sup> in area and rectangular in proportions. It accommodates an existing single storey structure which occupies the full available site footprint. The existing building abuts the pavement edge to the east forming part of the street frontage.

To the north, west and south, the building shares a boundary with the rear gardens of Mecklenburgh Street.

The street edge to the immediate north and south of the site is formed of a combination of retail frontage and garden wall. In contrast to much of the Grays Inn Road the frontage drops to a single storey with larger development set back from the street. The heterogeneity of heights and materials provide poor definition to the street edge. Since the removal of a series of advertising hoardings, the frontage to either side of the existing development is a low level garden wall. The modest scale of development and lack of street presence create an uncomfortable relationship with the Eastman Dental Hospital across the road which ranges from 14 to 20m in height.



2.1 | View of existing site looking north



2.2 | Existing street frontage in location of application site



### 3.0 SITE LOCATION

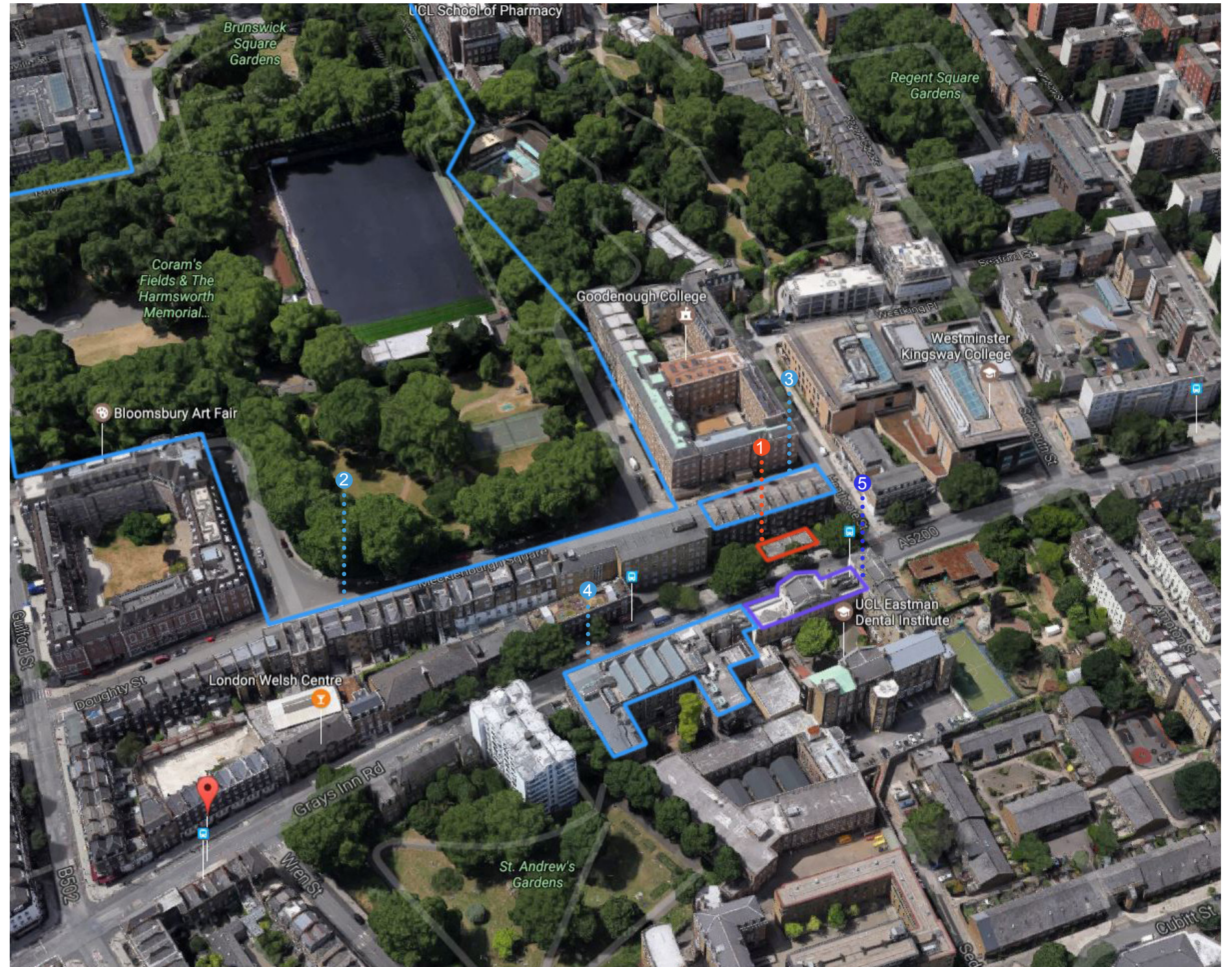
The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy observes that Gray's Inn Road:

- Is characterised by a mix of uses with a more varied character than the quieter side streets
- Reflects a courser grain where piecemeal development has occurred over the 19th & 20th centuries
- The more recent buildings tend to be taller with larger footprints. Smaller scale 19th century buildings can be found close to the junctions with Frederic Street and Ampton Street on the east side between Cromer Street and the entrance to Argyle Square on the west side.
- Shows evidence of a great variety in the materials, particularly in the later developments which employ stone, glass steel and concrete,
- The predominant material is London Stock Brick.
- The architectural detailing has consistent themes including strong vertical definition with the same rhythmic windows patterns and height as buildings in more residential parts of the sub area (See para 5.247)

Building on this analysis an in-house assessment of the Gray's Inn Road street frontage has been carried out. The adjacent photostudy (Fig 3.2) demonstrates that despite the heterogeneity of development a series of recurring architectural features can be identified. These features lend visual coherence and strength of character to the streetscape.

#### TYPICAL ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES ALONG GRAY'S INN ROAD

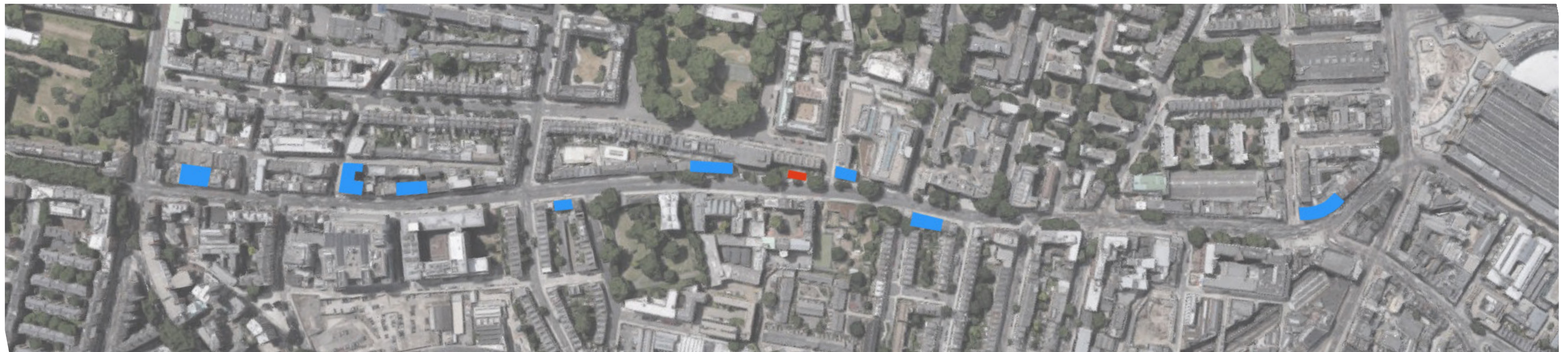
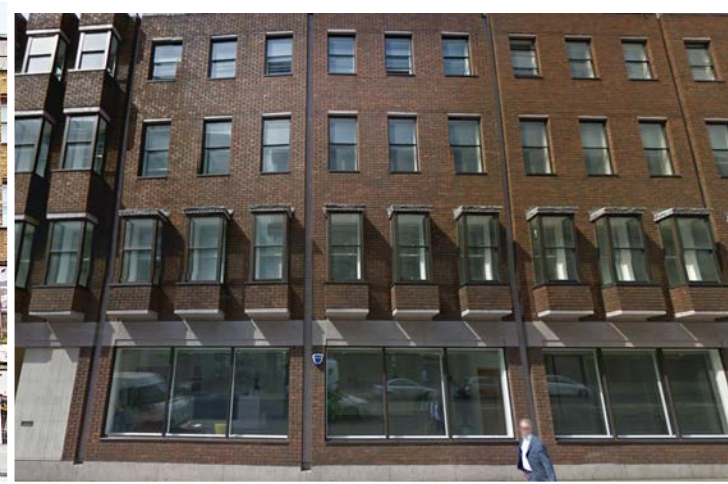
- Subdivision of ground floor into clearly defined bays
- Direct relationship with pavement edge
- Ground floor glazing framed by fascia / pilasters
- Expressed/visually dominant ground floor level
- Use of horizontal detailing and rustications to articulate ground floor level
- Larger grain of articulation at ground floor level
- Finer grain to panellised windows at upper level
- Subdivision of glazing to create panels with vertical emphasis
- Lower solid to void ratio at ground floor level
- Solid upper level with punctured windows in regular grid
- Use of brickwork for upper level storeys



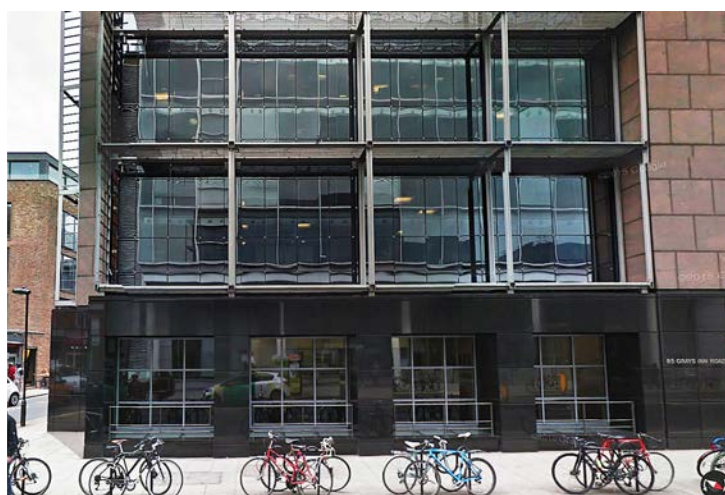
3.1 | Site Location Aerial showing heritage context

- 1 | Application Site
- 2 | Coram's Fields with Mecklenburgh and Brunswick Squares GRADE II LISTED
- 3 | 1 - 8 Mecklenburgh Street GRADE II LISTED
- 4 | Eastman Dental Hospital Former Eastman Dental Clinic GRADE II LISTED
- 5 | Eastman Dental Hospital Former Royal Free Hospital SPECIAL CONSERVATION AREA CONTRIBUTION





3.2 | Photostudy : Gray's Inn Road street frontage





## 4.0 LOCAL AUTHORITY FEEDBACK

### PLANNING HISTORY

The enclosed proposal builds on guidance provided by the local authority at pre-application stage via email correspondence and at a pre-application meeting held on 20th September 2016

Prior to this the site was subject to a number of relevant applications. Feedback in respect of these applications has informed the present application.

### RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Full Planning Application 2014.5154.P\_REFUSED  
construction of a new build 2 storey building accommodating 3 dwelling houses within Victorian shopfront elevation

Full Planning Application 2015.2228.P\_REFUSED  
construction of a new build 2 storey building accommodating 3 dwelling houses within Victorian shopfront elevation

Appeal X5210 W15 3138686\_REFUSED

Full Planning Application 2015.6408.P\_WITHDRAWN  
construction of a new build 2 storey building with contemporary elevation to provide office (B1a) accommodation on the lower floor and 2x1 bed residential units on the upper floor.

Full Planning Application 2015.6409.P\_WITHDRAWN  
construction of a new build 2 storey building with contemporary elevation to provide 4x1 bedroom residential units.

### SUMMARY FEEDBACK FROM PLANNING AND PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

- The scale and character of the Victorian shop front schemes were supported in design and conservation terms
- The brick option presented at pre-application in September 2016 was supported in character but not amenity terms
- Brick is preferred as the predominant building material
- Active frontage is encouraged
- The front elevation should have a tripartite arrangement in reference to the historic use of the site as 3 subdivided retail premises
- An overly contrasting relationship with the conservation area setting is discouraged
- Legibility of the proposed elevation must be carefully considered
- Investigate local Mews style development as a possible precedent



### 4.1 | Photostudy : Local mews development

In response to the Local Authority feedback a study of mews style development in the local area was carried out. The survey covered nearby Dougherty Mews, John's Mews and Kings Mews.

#### MEWS DEVELOPMENT : TYPICAL ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

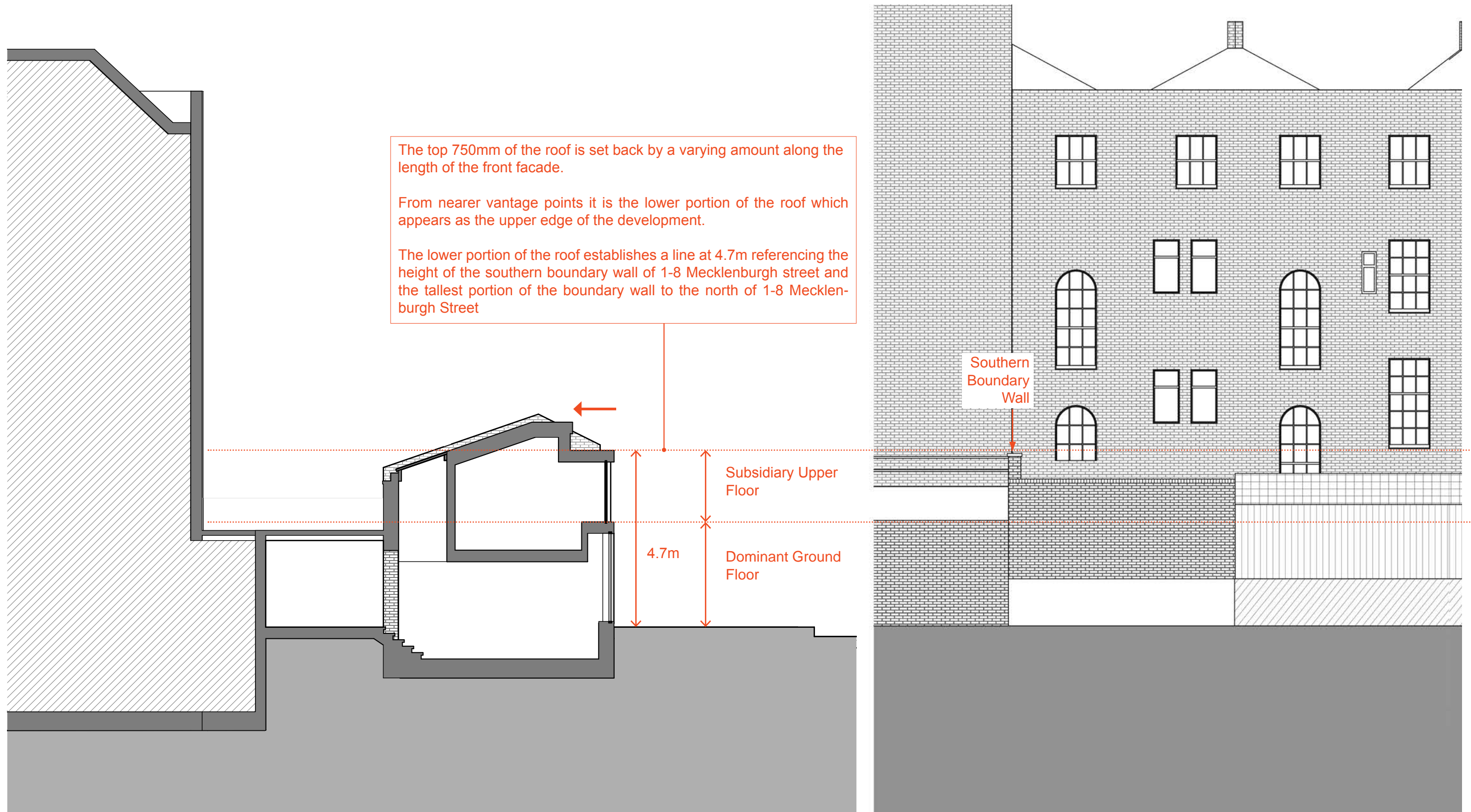
- Direct relationship with pavement edge
- Visually dominant ground floor level
- Larger grain of ground floor level
- Ground floor glazing framed by lintel / brick piers
- Subdivision of large openings into smaller door modules
- Lower solid to void at ground floor level
- Solid upper level with punctured windows in regular grid
- Use of brickwork for upper level storeys

There is a clear overlap between the architectural principles expressed along the Gray's Inn Road and those identified in the neighbouring mews streets. These principles have been used to guide the elevational design of the proposed development.





## 5.0 PROPOSAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES



5.1 | Proposed Section

5.2 | Proposed Front Elevation





The development has been dropped to -850mm from pavement level limiting the height increase needed to accommodate 2 levels of floor space.

Analysis of the Gray's Inn Road and surrounding mews context establishes that the development should have a visually dominant ground floor.

This design intent has been achieved through manipulation of the section such that the ground floor glazing extends beyond the first floor level to the underside of a projecting bay of windows. The appearance from street level is of a full height ground floor and subsidiary storey above.

The front elevation is subdivided into 3 repeating bays. The tripartite arrangement makes reference to the 3 no. Victorian shops which historically occupied the site

The fenestration design seeks to incorporate dominant trends evidenced along Grays Inn Road:

- Increased solidity at first floor with regular arrangement of punctured windows
- Increased use of glazing at ground floor level
- 3no. large ground floor openings framed by brickwork piers and a concrete lintel
- The glazed openings are subdivided into 4 panels with a vertical emphasis
- The verticals are further subdivided into irregularly spaced horizontal bands. The smaller panels will add a richness of character, harmonising with the varied grain and texture to the rear of Mecklenburgh Street



## 6.0 MATERIAL TREATMENT



Grey/brown brickwork walls and piers. The brickwork seeks to harmonise with the various colours of stock brickwork found in the rear elevations of Mecklenburgh Street/ Mecklenburgh Square and associated gardens , as well as the grey purple engineering brick cladding to the former Eastman Dental Clinic (to the south of the Current Eastman Dental Hospital)

Lead Roof Finish

Pale timber glazing fins, window frames and door. The timber details will contrast with the principal building materials providing articulation and order to the elevation design

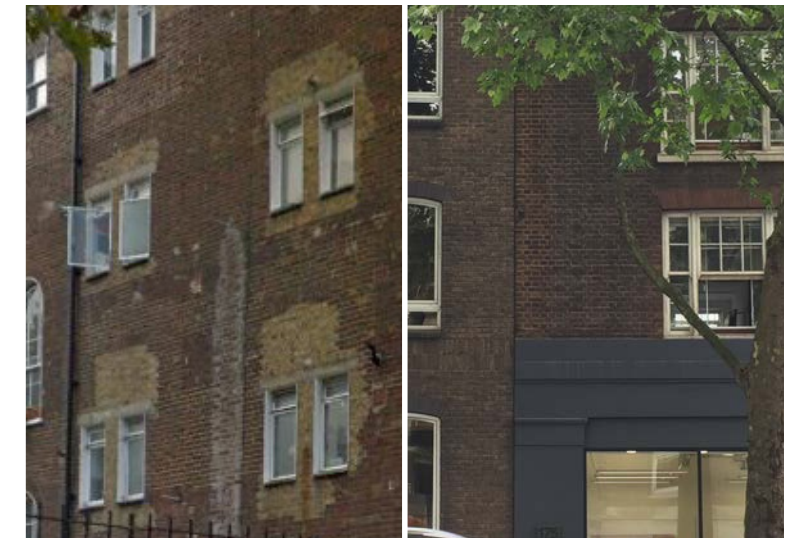
Pale Concrete lintels and interior downstand. The pale concrete seeks to resonate with the buff brick and portland stone dressing of the former London Free Hospital (to the north of the current Eastman Dental Hospital);



Eastman Dental Hospital (Former Royal Free Hospital)



Eastman Dental Hospital (Former Eastman Dental Clinic)



Rear to Mecklenburgh Street / 175 -185 Grays Inn Road

6.1 | Proposed Front Elevation showing material treatment





7.1 | Aerial view looking south east