

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Following a preliminary visit to the site with Sarah Freeman and Anna Roe of Camden Council, the following further investigation and opening up works were proposed and agreed by e-mail from Sarah Freeman dated 16th March 2017.
- 1.2. The following sections and photographs describe the findings of the investigation works and describe how these findings have influenced the proposals.

## 2. Investigations.

- 2.1. **First Floor boarding** - Layers of chipboard and hardboard were removed from the first floor to uncover the floorboards fixed to the joists. Local temporary removal of floorboards to inspect the condition of the joists will be acceptable pending subsequent proposals. This revealed a number of main areas with different boarding, and revealed areas where alterations have taken place.

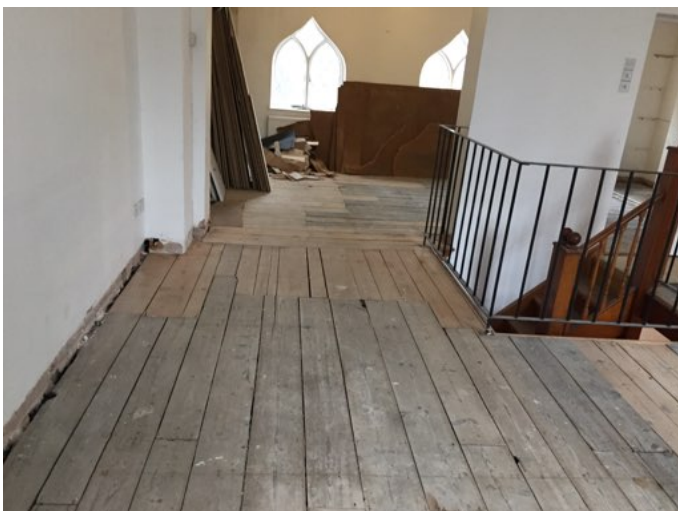
- 2.1.1. Within stair - The floor was patched with pine square edged boards adjacent to the existing stair. This confirmed our expectation that a previous stair flight from the ground floor door has been removed. There were no boards, with chipboard directly over joists at the base of the stair to the second floor.



- 2.1.2. The remaining photographs are taken from the stair enclosure sequentially towards the modern stair, to the left towards the front elevation, and then around through the arched opening to the rear room. Running from the stair there is a band of apparently original, dark stained but narrow boards, around 155mm wide, patched locally. There are areas of historic infestation damage leaving the boards soft, fragile and unsound in areas. Running from the



modern stair towards the centre of the front wall is a section of 4x140mm wide modern pine boards that run along the line of the wall below, and of a partition drawn in the 1972 drawing. The floor is significantly sunken where it meets the front wall at this position by around 100mm below the door threshold to the stair. It rises again towards the opposite wall, which is boarded with a relatively consistent section of older, wider boards, unstained, and ranging in width from 180mm to 230mm. There is a further patch of modern boarding into the acute front corner where joists have also been repaired. Below this the joist have been spliced and bolted to more modern joists into the party wall.



2.1.3. Back towards the rear room through the modern arched opening is a further patched area. with the boards running front to back, indicative of a section of floor previous filled in, possibly when the adjacent stair was installed and new trimmers will have been required.

2.1.4. On the wall line under the arched opening, more new boards run in the direction of the wall.





2.1.5. The boards in the rear room run parallel to the rear elevation across the building. The joists below this run across the rear room from back to front. There is a modern boarded area over the utility room consistent with the location of a spiral staircase on the 1973 drawing. This is consistent with the removal of a stair indicated in the drawing. The direction of the boards indicates that the joists within the utility room run in the



long direction. This is consistent with the wall below not being an original supporting wall for joists in the narrow direction. The evidence is consistent with the 1972 drawings which indicate a wall removed at first floor level and the floor being reconstructed at this location.

2.1.6. With the exception of a single board, the remainder of the boards within this room appear original and are again in a dark stain. These also range from 180mm to 230mm in width, but are in a better condition than those adjacent to the stair enclosure in the front room. The highest area of the first floor is in the rear corner by the fireplace. These boards are in reasonable condition.

2.1.7. The step though the doorway is higher than the floor on both sides, but the step is larger to the rear room.

2.1.8. The proposed layout is compatible with the findings from exposing the floor boards: The installation of the stair within the stair well is consistent with a modern patch in the floor; the location of an en-suite bathroom is at a location of replaced floor, the removal of the existing stair will reinstate an area of floor.

2.1.9. There is a preference to level the floor, and it is clear from the various layers of chipboard removed that this has been attempted previously. The difference in level across the floor is over 100mm.

2.1.10. There is a requirement for a sound level floor, a need to infill floor where the existing stair from the ground floor is to be removed, a requirement to retain as much original fabric as possible, and a need to renew the building services. Balancing these requirements leads to the conclusion that the most appropriate response is to carefully remove existing boards, which will also allow the existing building services to be removed, and new services to be installed; to fix fillets to the existing joists; repairing any individual joists that may require attention; then relaying the existing original boards so far as is practicable to a level finish.

2.1.11. The proposed approach is to relay existing boards in a consolidated area together, or generally in their original locations, supplemented. There is no intention for the boards to be the final floor finish, all will be covered by finishes, but they need to be sound. The rear room/bedroom has the most intact area of existing boarding, and it is therefore proposed to relay the original boards in this area, supplemented with original boards reclaimed from the front room. Remaining boards can then be relaid running from the stair enclosure as far as boards in adequate condition can be reclaimed. The remaining area could be laid with new pine boards. The applicant is open to alternative approaches subject to further advice from the Conservation Officer.

2.2. **Ground Floor construction** - Open up the existing GF construction by local removal of quarry tiles at each level and breaking out substrate to investigate the construction below at the locations marked on the adjacent photographs.



2.2.1. The tiles were removed in the rear corner of the main room to give visibility to both the base of the rear wall and internal wall as well as the floor construction below the quarry tiles. The quarry tiles are laid over 50mm of screed in 2 layers, approximately 15mm over approximately 35mm. Below this is a 100mm concrete slab. There is no damp proof membrane or damp protection. The rear external wall sits on a brick base with a 3 course red

engineering brick footing, the top of which is set approximately 200mm below ffl. The thickness of the screed appears to relate to the difference in floor levels between this room and the lower utility room floor. The utility room floor is also more damaged.

2.2.2. The location of the hole coincided with heating pipes running along the rear elevation. These were set at the base of the concrete slab without sheathing/





protection or insulation. The pipework, and the slab, appears to run below the internal wall, with the slab thicker at the wall position.

2.2.3. The findings are compatible with the proposal to remove and relay the ground floor slab to incorporate insulation and a damp proof membrane.

2.3. **Existing wall across rear GF room** - Open up the wall across the rear GF room to determine its materials and construction. Openings limited to 250mmX250mm at 2 locations as marked.



2.3.1. The main room side consisted of a gypsum plaster skim finish over a gypsum plaster and lime plaster base over a brick wall. The lime plaster is closer to the doorway. Tapping the wall indicates that there is a large extent of debonding of the plaster finish. There was a timber stud embedded in the wall, suggestive of the possibility that the brickwork could be infill within a timber stud wall, and the poor quality of the brickwork supports this possibility. There was decay within the timber stud parts of which become powder on touch, there is no evidence of any lath



either on the timber stud, nor in the pattern of remaining lime plaster.

2.3.2. On the **utility room** side, the finish was gypsum plaster over a lath and plaster base on brickwork. Again, the hollow sound upon tapping suggests that this plaster appears to be debonded.

2.3.3. This wall is somewhat incongruous. Having speculated initially that this wall may pre-date the rear elevation, that appears not to be the case, as the rear elevation and its foundation is prominent, and the slab upon which it sits is set within the rear wall.



2.3.4. This wall is not a primary aspect of the architectural and historic interest in the property although it contains some features of interest. It is constructed on a concrete slab without dpm that we would like to replace, the lime plaster is cracked and debonded from the wall and the timber studs are in poor condition.

2.3.5. The original proposal was to remove this wall. In discussion with the Conservation Officer, a strong preference was expressed for its retention on a precautionary basis. The proposal has therefore been revised to retain this wall and the utility room within the ground floor.

2.3.6. **Rear Elevation paintwork** - Peel back an area of paintwork of maximum approximately 400mmx400mm to the

rear elevation to determine the materials and layers of paint to aid consideration of whether this elevation should be stripped back and repainted. This will include a patch of brickwork and one of the inset panels as marked on the adjacent photograph, to determine the materials for these elements.



This is the lowest point at which this mix of materials exists. The product used is Langlow Strip Away, a water soluble viscous poultice.

2.3.7. A single layer of poultice was applied over the whole area shown for

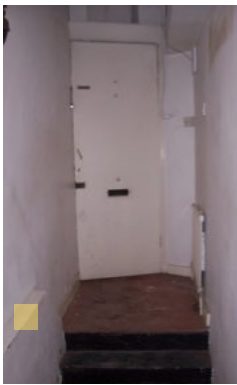


approximately 24 hours which removed the top layer of paint, revealing a yellower layer below that may be weather/pollution stained rather than that colour intentionally. A layer below is whiter, and may be a lime wash layer. A second application of poultice to the right hand half of the area revealed dark grey/black brickwork. The diamond shaped inset panel appears to be dark pennant stone, and there appears to be black mortar within the joints. A third layer of poultice removed slightly more of the paint but still did not remove it completely.

2.3.8. This suggests that the original intention may have been for this to be a black/imposing Gothick elevation rather than the white that appears to be the consistent colour since the first application of paint. That the foundation to this wall is a red engineering brick further reinforces the opinion that the original intention was for a dark finish. It is not known when the paint was first applied, and the colour changed to white, and it has also not been able to determine this through historical research.



2.3.9. Discussion at the property with the Conservation Officer prior to the investigation works suggested that there may be strong support for stripping and repainting this elevation with a breathable Keim paint subject to the findings of the investigation. A minimum of 3 applications of poultice were required to remove the modern paint. It is



not considered that returning this north facing elevation to a dark finish is desirable to either the property and the use of the garden, or its appearance from the adjacent properties to the rear. The applicant therefore proposes to maintain a white painted finish and to redecorate the elevation over the existing finishes, rather than to remove the existing finishes.

2.4. The black painted plinth will also be redecorated.

2.5. Determine construction of **internal plinth** within entrance area. This is modern gypsum plaster on the surface with red brick below. This will be repaired and refurbished alongside the installation of a staircase at this location.



2.6. **Rear Windows** - It was also agreed by the Conservation Officer that one of the rear metal casement windows could be removed for assessment and for trial repair to inform the works to the remaining windows. The windows are distorted, with gaps between sashes and frames, and rot to the surrounding frames.

2.7. A Method Statement was prepared for this purpose, included within the application as *24 Perrins window repair method statement*. This work, undertaken by George Hammond, revealed that the existing windows are significantly corroded. There is a central steel frame with thin 15mm x 3mm glazing bars to create the diamond glazing pattern. The steel frame is wrapped in lead as shown in the accompanying photograph.

2.8. It may be that the lead wrapping was added as an experimental remedial measure,







but this is a fundamentally flawed approach. The lead would accelerate the corrosion of the iron, and thereby the deterioration of the windows. The hinges and pins, and screws are also corroded and falling out.

2.9. It is proposed that the lead should be removed from the existing windows, and the windows repaired using sections to match the original profiles, including the iron glazing bars. The extent of the

damage and the proposed works are set out on the accompanying schedule *Rear Window Works*. The exact extent of the replacement of each steel sash and frame can't be determined until the lead has been removed from each. The glass will then be reset within the steel frame with putty. The windows will be fitted within their frames with new draftproofing to ensure a weather resistant seal. The work to the first sample window has not yet been completed at the time of writing.

### **3. Summary.**

- 3.1. The investigations have informed discussion and agreement over the approach and matters of detail. Not all of the resulting proposals have been discussed and reviewed in detail with the Conservation Officer, and it may be that different preferences emerge during the application process, in which case the applicant is open to alternative approaches and suggestions.