

**St Giles Circus site, WC1**  
**No. 26 Denmark Street**  
**Addendum: Record of decorative**  
**scheme in the first-floor front room**  
**Prepared for**  
**Consolidated Developments Ltd**  
**August 2017**

## St Giles Circus site, WC1: No. 26 Denmark Street

### Addendum: Record of decorative scheme in the first-floor front room

#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This is an addendum to the document by Orms submitted to Camden Council entitled '26 Denmark Street Temporary Removal of Timber Panelling' (July 2017). It has been written by Alan Baxter Ltd (ABA) for Consolidated Developments Ltd in response to a request from Camden Council's conservation officer. It records the decorative scheme in a room in the first-floor front room of No. 26 Denmark Street WC2, which was recently revealed by the removal of plasterboard covering the late seventeenth-century panelling.
- 1.2 The addendum follows Historic England guidance, *Understanding Historic Buildings. A guide to good recording practice* (HE 2016), and should be read alongside ABA's report *St Giles Circus Heritage Statement. 26 Denmark Street and 22–23 Denmark Place* (ABA December 2015). Taken together, the two documents constitute a historic building record equivalent to a Level 3 Record as defined in the HE guidance.
- 1.3 In July 2017, during work to repair and renovate No. 26 Denmark Street, modern plasterboard was removed from the walls of the first-floor front room (in fact, two rooms, because the room had been divided by the insertion of a modern partition). This revealed the timber panelling, almost intact throughout the original room, and decorated with a paint-and-wallpaper scheme of the 1930s.

#### 2.0 Description

- 2.1 The framing of the timber panels (the stiles and rails) is painted with a deep cream gloss or semi-gloss paint. Within the panels there is a colour scheme of green dado and beige filling, with a decorative wallpaper border applied to the edges of the upper panels.
- 2.2 The dado panels are covered with a low-relief wallcovering imitative of embossed tiles. This is possibly Anaglypta, although several other manufacturers produced this type of wallcovering under other brand names. It is painted over in a solid colour, mid-green with a gloss or semi-gloss finish. This type of embossed wallcovering was sold as a plain white or cream paper so that the decorator could apply the client's preferred colour and finish. It was conventional to choose a dark colour and a hard-wearing finish for the dado, to disguise wear and tear on the more vulnerable, lower part of the wall.
- 2.3 The upper panels are filled with wallpaper printed with a mottled effect in light beige. This type of 'semi-plain' paper was produced to meet the demand for pattern-free walls that arose in response to the influence of Continental modernism on British interior decoration in the 1930s.
- 2.4 Each of the upper panels is framed with a printed wallpaper border approximately 150mm wide. The design consists of overlapping stylised leaves printed in a mix of primary colours, with slight gradations of colour density within the red and blue leaves. The outer edge of the border is straight with a black background, designed so that the border can be aligned with an architectural element such as a cornice—or, as in this case, a panel. The inner edge appears to have been pre-cut around the outline of the leaves. The intention of the design is to create the impression of encroaching foliage framing each panel. The border is carefully mitred at every corner, with individual leaves cut out and made to overlap so as not to interrupt visual continuity.

### **3. Significance**

- 3.1** This type of wall decoration, combining 'semi-plain' filling papers with colourful panelled borders, was popular in the 1930s. The border paper in No. 26 is typical of mass-market designs produced by members of the Wallpaper Manufacturers Ltd (WPM), a trade association that dominated the British wallpaper industry throughout the first half of the twentieth century. This design has not been identified but many similar borders were produced by Sanderson, John Line and Shand Kydd. The widespread use of this type of cut-out and appliqué border decoration has been attributed to a desire to temper the dullness of pattern-free walls in modernist-inspired interiors (Banham January 1988).
- 3.2** This use of a contemporary wallpaper border within a Georgian architectural setting throws an interesting light on taste in decoration in the inter-war period. It suggests a strong desire to modernise the appearance of the room and a comparative indifference to the age or intrinsic quality of the early panelling. The Georgian Group, dedicated to the protection of eighteenth-century architecture, was founded in 1937 and initially concentrated on high-status buildings under threat. It was not until the 1970s that the significance of relatively humble interiors such as those at no. 26 Denmark Street would be fully appreciated. This modest decorative scheme is all the more interesting for having survived the fashion for authentic historic interior decoration that took hold in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, owing to its late date (1930s) in relation to the house (1680s), its significance is modest in the context of the overall significance of the listed building.

### **4. Sources**

Alan Baxter Ltd (December 2015). *St Giles Circus Heritage Statement: 26 Denmark Street and 22–23 Denmark Place. Prepared for Consolidated Developments Ltd.* London: ABA

Banham, J. (January 1988) Wallpaper Between the Wars. *Traditional Homes, 1988, Volume 4* (4), p. 52

Historic England (2016), *Discovering Historic Buildings. A guide to good recording practice.* London: Historic England

## Appendix - Images

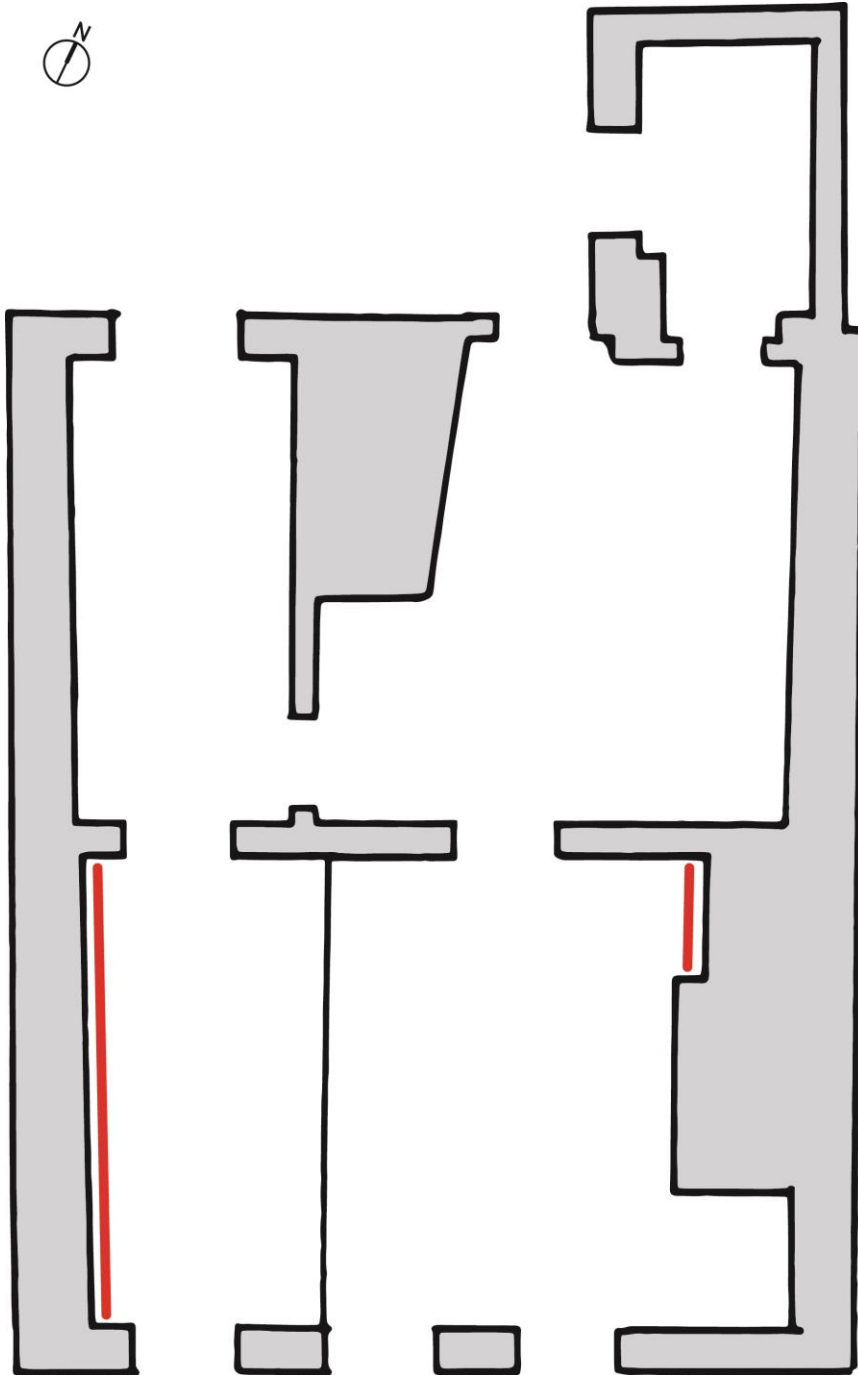


Figure 1: Sketch plan of first floor. The red lines indicate the position of the surviving wallpaper.



Figure 2: West wall, viewed facing south



Figure 3: West wall, viewed facing east



Figure 4: West wall (northern end), viewed facing west



Figure 5: East wall, viewed facing east

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