

**10 JOHN STREET  
CAMDEN WC1N 2EB**

**Revised Siting of Air Conditioning Condensers  
Heritage Impact Assessment**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION, POLICY CONTEXT, AND QUALIFICATIONS**

### **1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 This statement examines 10 John Street, Camden – a Grade II-listed, early 19<sup>th</sup>-century townhouse which has long been occupied by solicitors’ offices – and assesses the heritage impact of the proposed installation in a reinstated roof well of air conditioning condensers.

1.1.2 The policy context and my qualifications for undertaking the assessment are outlined below. Sections 2 and 3 examine the property’s historical context, whilst Section 4 discusses the proposals and assesses their impacts on the significance of the relevant heritage assets.

### **1.2 Policy Context**

1.2.1 This analysis and impact assessment supports an application for listed building and conservation area consents in relation to proposals to install air conditioning plant at 10 John Street, Camden, WC1N 2EB. The assessment is in line with the guidelines and policies of Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1.2.2 NPPF is intended to elicit a proportionate response to development which impacts on the historic environment, which is largely defined by heritage assets including designated assets (listed buildings, conservation areas, and archaeological sites) as well as locally-identified elements which have not been formally designated. The Framework requires applicants and Local Planning Authorities to identify relevant designated and undesignated heritage assets, and to establish the degree and nature of their significance. The level of detail *“should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance”* (para. 128).

1.2.3 10 John Street is a designated heritage asset, having been statutorily listed as Grade II in 1951 as part of the terrace of houses at 10-20 John Street. (References to No. 10 in the listing statement are highlighted.)

TQ3082SE JOHN STREET 798-1/96/943 (East side) 24/10/51  
Nos.10-20 (Consecutive) and attached railings. GV II

11 terraced houses. 1799-1824. No.20, facade rebuilt in facsimile c1950. Multi-coloured stock brick with yellow stock brick patching. Rusticated stucco ground floors with band at 1st floor levels. No.20 stucco facade to John Street with rusticated ground floor; return to Roger Street, yellow stock brick. 4 storeys and basements. 3 windows each; **No.10 with 3-window (blind) return to Northington Street.**

No.20, 3 storeys and basement. 2 windows and 3-window return with 2 storey, 3-window rear extension. Gauged brick flat arches (No.10 reddened) to recessed sashes, mostly with glazing bars. Cast-iron balconies to 1st floor windows of Nos 12-19. Parapets. Original fluted lead rainwater heads and pipes. **No.10: round-arched doorway with mutule cornice-head, sidelights, radial fanlight and panelled door. Moulded cornice to parapet. INTERIOR with stick baluster stair in entrance hall with modillion cornice.** No.11: round-arched doorway with fanlight and C20 door. INTERIOR: altered but noted to retain wooden fireplace with dentil cornice on ground floor, marble fireplace on the 1st floor. Stairs with shaped balusters and shaped ends in hallway with cornice formed of paired modillions. No.12: round-arched doorway with fluted surround, mutule cornice-head, radial fanlight and panelled double doors. INTERIOR: noted to retain marble fireplace in ground floor rear room. Shaped ends to stairs. No.13: similar doorway to No.12. INTERIOR: noted to retain marble fireplaces ground floor front and 1st floor front and rear rooms. Stairs with square balusters and shaped ends in hallway whose cornice has guttae decoration. End wall with round-headed niches each side of landing window. Some added partitions. No.14: similar doorway to No.12 with patterned radial fanlight. INTERIOR: noted to retain stairs with square balusters in front hallway with guttae cornice decoration. Round-headed niches each side of landing window. No.15: slightly projecting. Round-arched doorway with wooden, attached Greek Doric columns carrying cornice-head; fanlight and panelled door. 1st floor windows in shallow round-arched recesses linked by moulded impost bands. INTERIOR: noted to retain marble fireplaces to ground and 1st floor. Stairs with square balusters. No.16: similar doorway to No.12. INTERIOR: noted to have additions but to retain marble fireplace in ground floor front room and stairs with square balusters. No.17: similar doorway to No.12 with patterned radial fanlight. INTERIOR: noted to retain stairs with square balusters. Marble fireplace, with contemporary iron centre, ground floor rear room. Marble fireplace with sculptured leafwork, 1st floor front room. Contemporary china bell pulls and door plates. No.18: similar doorway to No.12 with patterned radial fanlight. INTERIOR: noted to retain marble fireplaces with sculptured leafwork, 1st floor rooms. No.19: round-arched doorway with sidelights, fanlight and panelled door. INTERIOR: noted to retain good marble fireplaces in ground and 1st floor rooms. No.20: stucco entrance portico on return with moulded cornice and parapet; radial fanlight and panelled double doors. Rounded brick angle. John Street elevation with pilasters rising through 1st and 2nd floors to carry entablature and blocking course. Architraved, recessed casement windows; ground and 1st floor with console-bracketed cornices. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with urn finials to areas.

1.2.4 The property also lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and is subject to the policies and guidelines of the *Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management*

*Strategy* adopted 18 April 2011. The applicable policies from that document are discussed in Section 4.

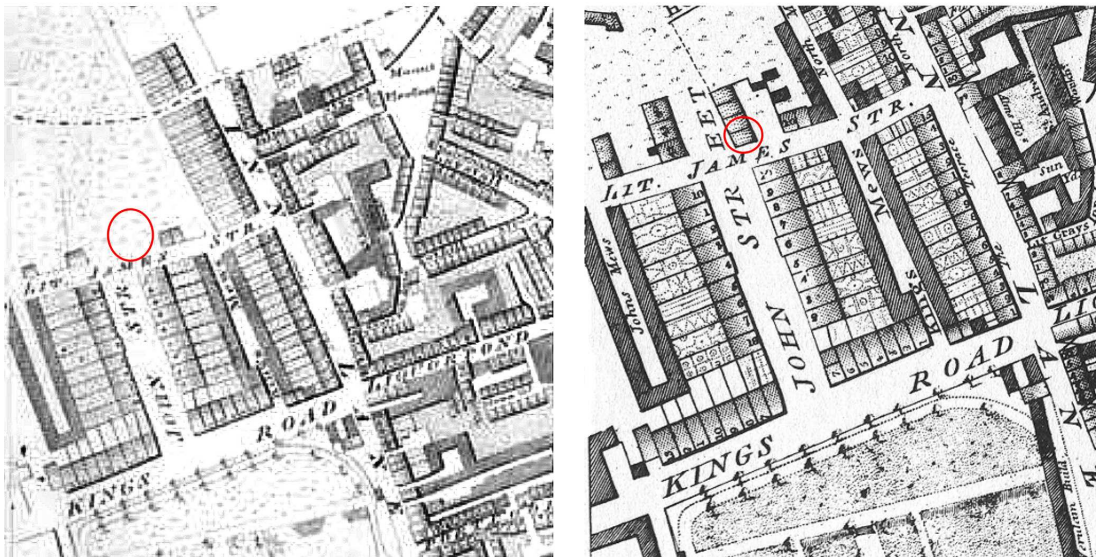
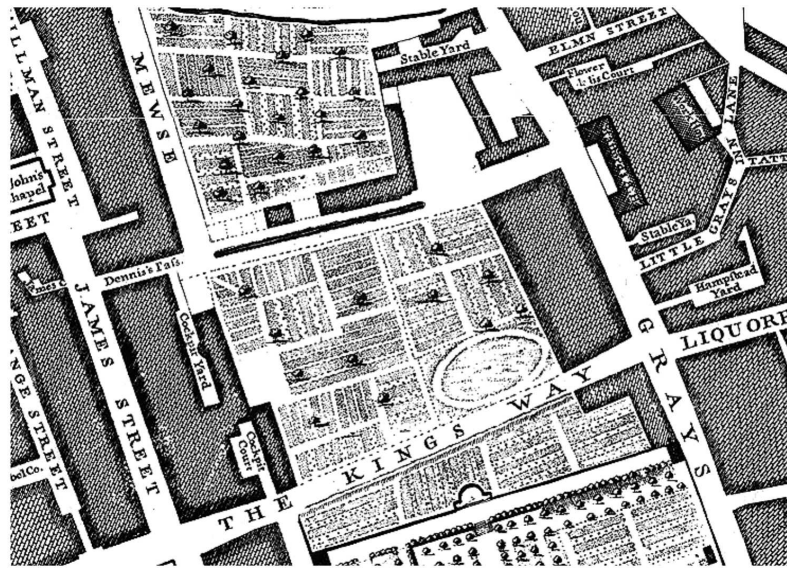
### **1.3      Qualifications**

1.3.1      My qualifications for undertaking this analysis and assessment are based on my work as a professional building and topographical historian who researches, documents, and assesses historic buildings. I hold a B.A. from the University of Ottawa (1974) and an M.Sc. in urban and regional planning from the University of Toronto (1976), and since my first involvement with architectural and urban history as a post-graduate student (where I studied criteria for designating historic buildings and sites) I have spent over 35 years in the fields of building preservation and historical research.

1.3.2      For the past 30 years I have worked as a consulting researcher in support of professionals and companies dealing with historic buildings and sites. My work has included documenting topographical and building history, professional assessments of the historical significance and listability of buildings and building elements, providing specialist input to policy plans, and writing policies and explanatory text for conservation management plans. The latter commissions have included the buildings of the former Royal Naval College at Greenwich and parts of the College and Chapel of St George at Windsor Castle, and I have drafted similar policy plans for the Royal Household's occupied palaces. I have also held consultancy appointments with the Crown Estate Commissioners and the Royal Household Property Section, and have provided expert witness testimony on historical property issues in the Chancery Division and at the Lands Tribunal.

## 2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1 The orchards and gardens shown in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century north of what is now Theobald's Road were owned from the 1560s by William Harpur's Bedford Charity estate, and were developed for housing from the late 1790s to 1824. No. 10 was added to Horwood's maps of London between the original edition of 1799 and the revision of 1813.

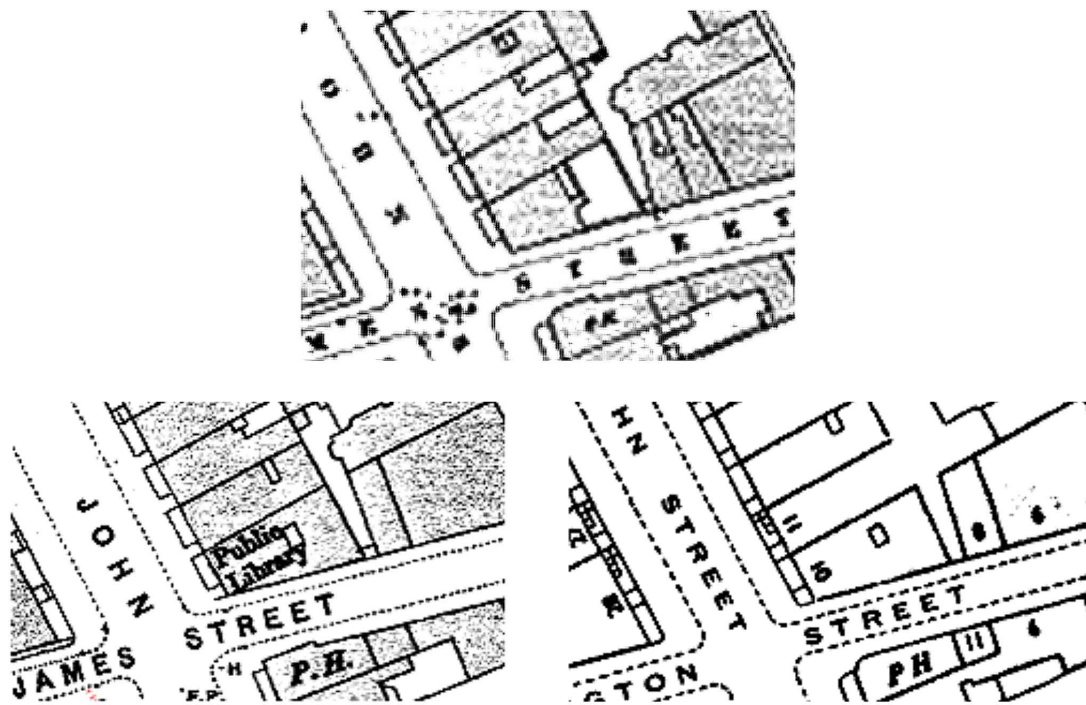


Top: 1745 (Roque)  
Bottom: 1799, 1813 (Horwood), highlighting No. 10

2.2 The houses in the street were initially well-occupied by private residents. By 1841, however – when No. 10 housed an elderly widow, her adult family, and three servants – the street recorded fifteen practising professionals (twelve of whom were solicitors) as

well as twenty-three private residents. This trend continued until the end of the century, by which date almost all of the houses were either in single or multiple professional occupation (mainly solicitors and architects), with just three of the thirty-eight addresses not listing professional occupants in 1895.

2.3 The occupation of No. 10 was entirely consistent with this pattern, with William French (a surveyor and his family) recorded in 1851, and John Evans, a solicitor and his family, in 1861. Evans remained here until c.1893 (before moving next door to No. 11), when he was succeeded by the Holborn Public Library, a use which was still recorded here in the 1930s. The 1875 and 1896 Ordnance Surveys record the addition of a single-storey extension to the rear of the property, and given the size of Evans's family and his legal practice – he had two marriages, at least eleven children, two or three servants, and in 1882 was operating from the house with two other solicitors – it seems likely to have been added by him in the 1870s to provide additional office and/or living space.



Top: 1875 O.S.  
Bottom: 1896 (unchanged in 1932) and 1952 (unchanged in 1962).



**10 John Street, 1974.**  
*(copyright Collage/City of London)*



**Northington Street frontage, 2015.**

2.4 A photographic studio occupied the basement and rear extension in the 1960s, but otherwise the house has been used as offices since at least the mid 1950s. It was extensively refurbished in 1981, when an additional storey was added to the rear wing and the well between the pitched roofs was altered to the existing flat roof. Consent was obtained in 2007 and 2015 for change-of-use to a single-family house, but the building remains in office use at the present time.

### 3. SELECTED CHRONOLOGY

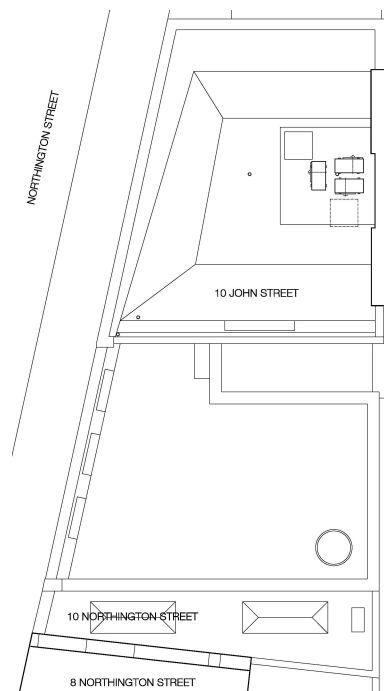
- 1745 Rocque map shows land north of Theobald's Road (then The King's Way) as orchards and gardens.
- 1799-1813 Horwood maps show houses constructed south of Northington (then Little James) Street in 1799, with Nos. 10-13 added by 1813.
- 1841 Census and street directory record Mrs E. Simpson (75, of independent means) with W. Simpson (45), Elizabeth Simpson (35), Charles Simpson (30), and 3 servants.
- 1851 Census records William French (surveyor , 41); wife 4 daughters and 1 son (ages 4 months to 9 years); a governess and 4 servants.
- 1861-1891 Censuses. John Evans (solicitor, 35 in 1861), wife, family (remarried by 1871, total of at least 11 children), and servants.
- 1882 Directory lists three solicitors at 10 John Street (John Evans, Francis Arthur Lewty, and Charles Bendle).
- 1893 Public Library established at 10 John Street (listed in *Clegg's International Directory of the World's Book Trade*, 1894, and later street directories). John Evans thereafter listed at 11 John Street until his death in February, 1911.
- 1937 Ordnance Survey still marks house as Public Library.
- 1951 Nos. 10-20 John Street statutorily listed Grade II (Group Value).
- 1955 Planning consent obtained for change of use to offices.
- 1963 Planning consent obtained for use of basement and single-storey rear extension as photographic studio and darkroom.
- 1968 Initial designation of Bloomsbury Conservation Area.
- 1981 Listed building and planning consents obtained for refurbishment of main building (including altering the roof by adding a flat roof over the former well), and adding an additional storey to the rear wing.
- 2007 Planning consent obtained for change of use from offices to single-family dwelling house.
- 2009 Listed building consent for external repairs and redecorations.
- 2014-2015 Pre-application advice obtained in relation to installation of air conditioning condensers on roof of the 1981 rear extension.
- 2015 Planning consent re-granted for change of use from offices to single-family dwelling house.



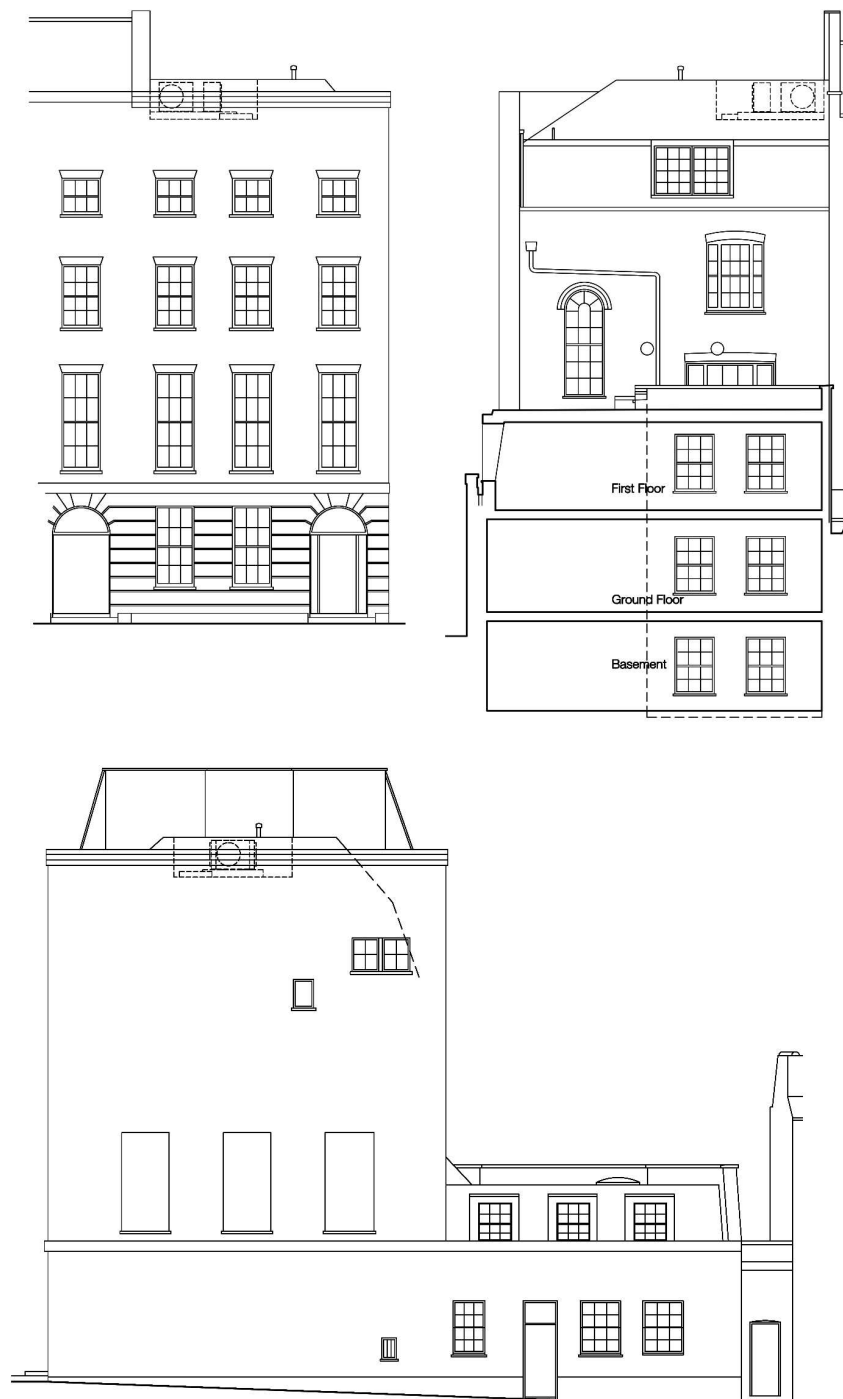
#### **4. PROPOSALS AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

4.1 Pre-application advice was obtained in 2014 and 2015 for the proposed installation of air conditioning condensers. The first scheme would have placed two large units within a screened enclosure on the roof of the 1981 rear extension, whilst the second proposed five smaller units in acoustic cases in the same position. Both proposals were deemed to have unacceptable impacts upon the listed building and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, whilst a later proposal to place five small units within the lightwells was not pursued due to acoustic issues.

4.2 Applications for planning and listed building consents were subsequently submitted in 2017 to install condensers on the roof of the main building. Although lines-of-sight analysis indicated that the height of the roof would ensure that the units would not be visible from ground level, concerns were raised in respect of long-view visibility. The proposals have thus been revised to lower the units into the roof void, both as a precaution against potential visibility, and to ensure that the acoustic impact is within the relevant limits.

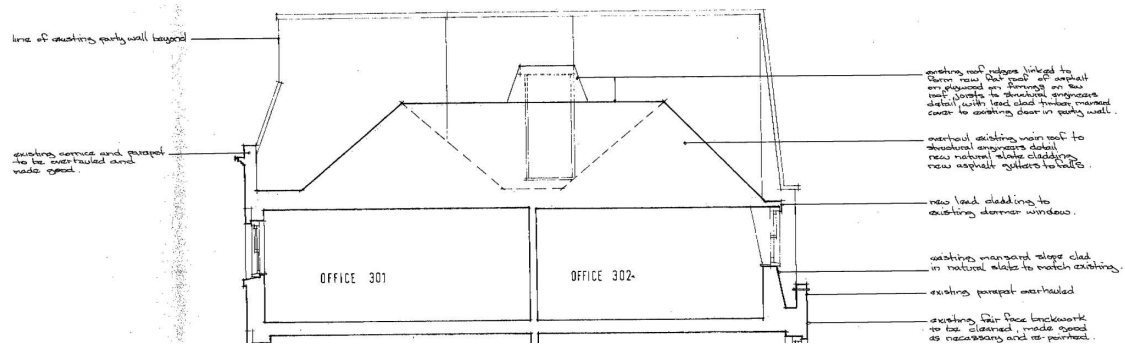


**Proposed Roof Plan**



### Siting of Condensers - Proposed Elevations

4.3 The existing configuration of a flat roof with slopes on three sides dates to 1981, when approval was granted to install a plywood flat to bridge the space between the roof ridges. The plans also show a (later-removed) lead-clad timber mansard cover for access to a door in the party wall to the fourth floor of No. 11 John Street.



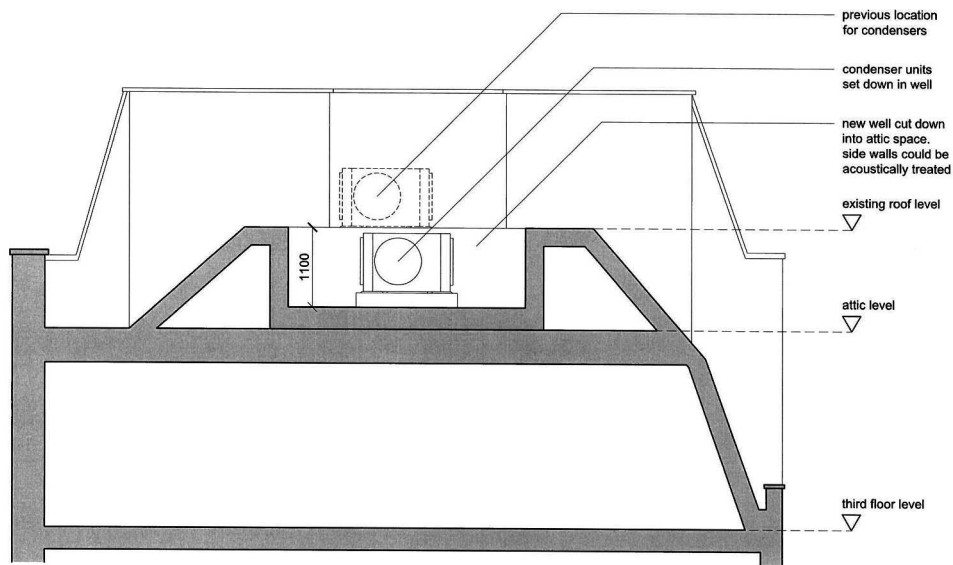
**Extract from 1981 drawing for installation of flat roof.**

The annotation at top right reads: *“existing roof ridges linked to form new flat roof of asphalt on plywood on furrings on sw roof joists to structural engineers detail, with lead clad timber mansard cover to existing door in party wall”*.

4.4 The date when the party-wall door was closed and the mansard roof cover was removed is unclear, but the 1981 enclosure of the roof well would presumably have disqualified the door as a fire escape route from No. 11 John Street. The door does not appear on plans of No. 11 dating to 2007-2008 for a change-of-use from offices to single-family residential (when a fire escape door from the fourth floor was shown on the other side of the house).

4.5 Whilst the extent to which historic fabric survives at roof level is unclear, it appears to be minimal, as the brickwork of the top two storeys clearly points to major repairs or rebuilding which would have necessitated substantial rebuilding of the roof structure. The date of this work is undocumented, but as war damage maps do not show damage to the building, and the difference in the brickwork is seen in photographs of 1974, the work most likely represents 20<sup>th</sup>-century structural repairs.

4.6 The proposed well sits within the area that was covered in 1981, in front of the former party-wall door.



**Section showing proposed siting in roof well.**

4.7 Lowering the condensers into a re-established roof well would ensure that the units are not visible from either near- or long-view positions, and addresses the policies of the *Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy* – in particular, para. 5.4, Part 2, which is concerned with the “...addition of prominent roof level plant/fire escapes that detract from both the building and character and appearance of the area”, and para. 5.42: “Where appropriate the Council will have regard to the feasibility of installing air-handling equipment so that the position, particularly in visually sensitive locations and in the proximity of residential accommodation, will protect local amenity and preserve the appearance of the Conservation Area”.

4.8 In summary, the existing roof configuration dates to 1981, and was further altered when the door in the party wall to No. 11 John Street was closed up. The proposal to create a roof well to house air-conditioning equipment does not impact on historic fabric or the architectural or historic significance of the heritage asset, and indeed can be seen as at least a partial reinstatement of the earlier, pre-1981 configuration