

**St Giles Circus site, WC1
No. 9 Denmark Street
Addendum: Record of historic wall
finishes, third-floor rear room**

**Prepared for
Consolidated Developments Ltd
June 2018**

St Giles Circus site, WC1: No. 9 Denmark Street**Addendum: Record of historic wall finishes, third-floor rear room****1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1** This is an addendum to the Heritage Statement submitted to Camden Council in 2017 entitled 'St Giles Circus Heritage Statement 9 Denmark Street' (September 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 the third-floor rear room of No. 9 Denmark Street WC2 (Grade II), which was recently revealed during investigation works.
- 1.2** In August 2017, investigation work at No. 9 Denmark Street undertaken in connection with an approved refurbishment scheme, revealed tongue-and-groove boarding in the third-floor rear room. Gaps between the boards revealed another layer of wall finishes behind, with traces of historic wallpaper visible. At the request of the conservation officer Sarah Freeman the boards were carefully removed and stored in order to reveal the full extent of the historic wallpaper.
- 1.3** This recording report follows the Historic England guidance, *Understanding Historic Buildings. A guide to good recording practice* (HE 2016), and should be read alongside Alan Baxter's report 'St Giles Circus Heritage Statement 9 Denmark Street' (September 2017). Taken together, the two documents constitute a historic building record equivalent to a Level 3 Record as defined in the Historic England guidance.
- 1.4** It is the nature of existing buildings that details of their construction and development may be hidden or may not be apparent from a visual inspection. The conclusions and any advice contained in our reports — particularly relating to the dating and nature of the fabric — are based on our research, and on observations and interpretations of what was visible at the time of our site visits. Further research, investigations or opening up works may reveal new information which may require such conclusions and advice to be revised.
- 1.5** Abbreviations used in this report: NW wall = North-West wall. NE wall = North-East wall.

2.0 Description and analysis

- 2.1** The tongue-and-groove boarding revealed following removal of modern plasterboard is shown in figures 2 and 4. The timber boards are laid horizontally, each one flush with the next. All the boards have a layer of ingrained green paint. In the case of the NW wall this is overpainted with later layers of yellow and white paint.
- 2.2** It was found that in most cases, the 'tongue' joint along the top edge of the board was no longer fitted into the groove on the underside of the board above, suggesting that the boards have contracted over time as the timber has dried out.
- 2.3** Robust tongue-and-groove boarding of this type was typically used during the nineteenth century in heavily used rooms where a robust treatment was required, e.g. in an industrial setting. This boarding contrasts with the smaller-scale, vertically laid, tongue-and-groove panelling that is sometimes found in domestic settings, e.g. in hallways or stair wells.
- 2.4** The wallpaper revealed following the removal of the tongue-and-groove boarding is shown in figures 3 and 5. The wallpaper is applied directly to the studwork partitions. The partitions are composed of traditional lath and plaster, fixed to vertical timber studs. The wallpaper is applied continuously across the studs, without a border treatment of any kind.
- 2.5** The wallpaper appears to be of the block-printed type, i.e. printed by hand using carved wooden blocks to transfer the paint. There are two colours, blue and cream, applied to a biscuit-coloured ground (see figures 6 and 7). Printing with two colours was more time consuming to produce and therefore usually more expensive than wallpaper printed with one colour.
- 2.6** No marks have been found to give an accurate date for the wallpaper. The overall pattern of circles, quatrefoils and stripes is of a type that can be found in eighteenth-century wallpaper, but would typically have incorporated flowers within the borders. Here, the quatrefoil borders incorporate stylised motifs that are only loosely based on plant forms. These curvilinear motifs are characteristic of early to mid nineteenth century design.
- 2.7** Taking into account the analysis set out above, a plausible date for the wallpaper would be c. 1830-40. After that date, block-printing becomes much less common (McDermott, p. 153).

3.0 Conclusions

- 3.1** Considered together, the two different layers of historic wall finishes show the evolution of the use and status of the house:
- 3.2** The wallpaper is entirely domestic in character and dates from the building's original use as a house. Later on the match-boarding was added, covering up the wallpaper and creating a more robust finish, indicative of commercial or industrial use. This phase might be related to the building's use as a 'portmanteau factory' as indicated on the Goad insurance map of 1888.
- 3.3** In summary, the wallpaper and boarding appear to be of considerably later date than the house itself (1680s). Their significance is relatively modest in the context of the overall significance of the listed building. Nevertheless, both layers of wall finishes make a positive contribution to the historical interest of the interiors and of the listed building.

4.0 Postscript

- 4.1** Following discussions with the Senior Conservation Officer Alfie Stroud, Ian Chalk Architects have been able to preserve the wallpaper *in situ*, with the exception of one area in the NW wall where a doorway is being inserted, as per the approved scheme (ref. 2012/6867/L). The tongue-and-groove boarding is being reinstated in the same manner. The wallpaper will then be covered up as it was prior to the investigation. Having taken into account the fragile nature of the historic wallpaper, this is considered to be the most effective way of ensuring its continued survival and preservation.

5.0 Sources

Alan Baxter Ltd (2017), *St Giles Circus Heritage Statement: 9 Denmark Street. Prepared for Consolidated Developments Ltd.* [report submitted to Camden Council]

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

McDermott, Allyson (2015), 'Historic wallpaper', pp. 151-161 in *Journal of Building Survey, Appraisal & Valuation*. Vol. 4, No. 3

Appendix – Images

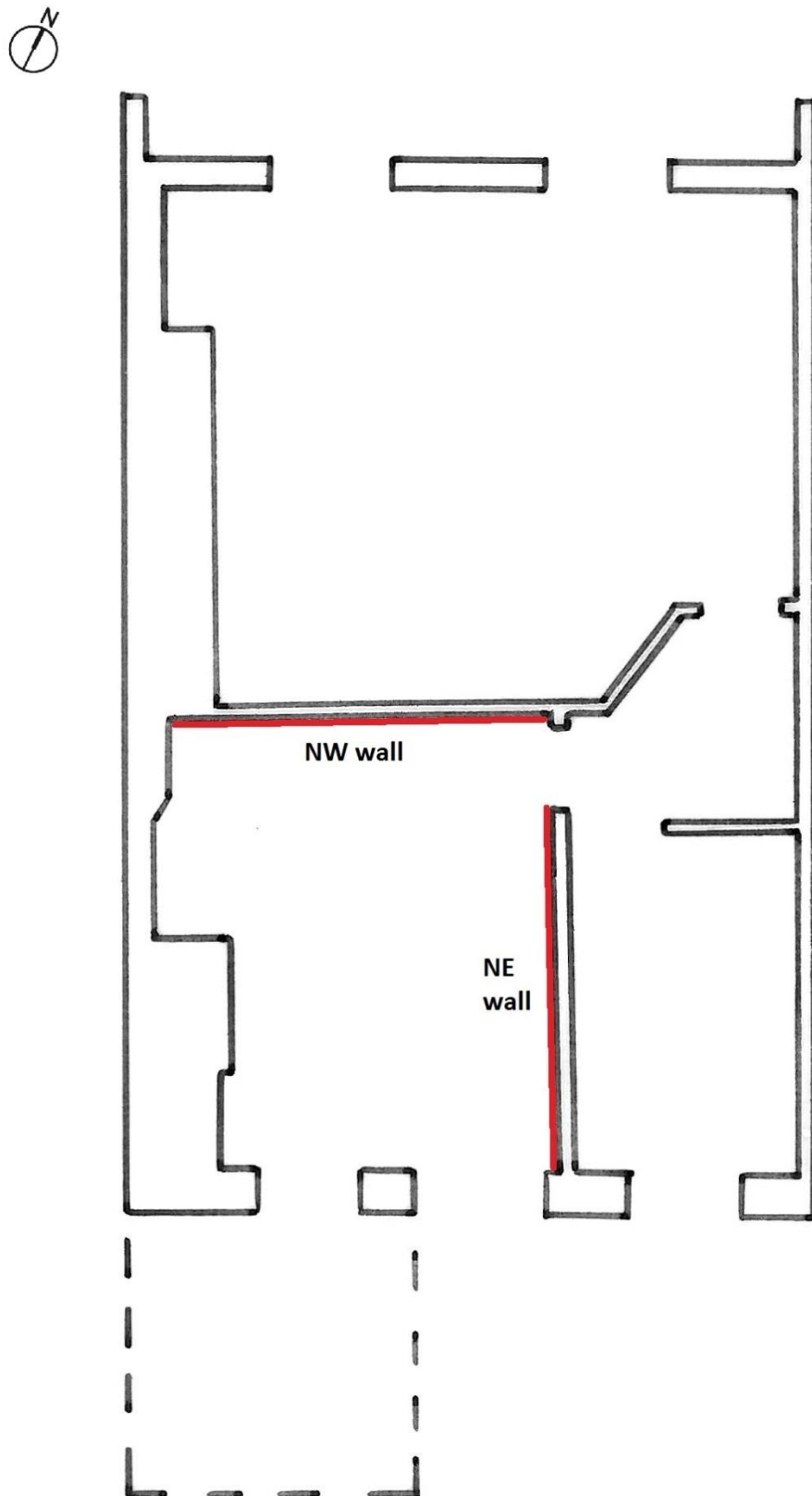


Figure 1: Sketch plan of third floor, 9 Denmark St. The red lines indicate the position of the historic wallpaper



Figure 2: NW wall, Aug 2017



Figure 3: NW wall, Jan 2018



Figure 4: NE wall, Aug 2017



Figure 5: NE wall, Jan 2018



Figure 6: NW wall, detail of wallpaper



Figure 7: NE wall, detail of wallpaper



Figure 8: NW wall, oblique view from doorway

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