



**Donald Insall Associates**  
Chartered Architects and Historic Building Consultants

**Melia White House Hotel, Albany St, London NW1**

Historic Building Report  
For Lomondo Ltd.

August 2018





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### Contact Information

**Ashleigh Murray (Senior Historic Buildings Advisor)**

E: [ashleigh.murray@insall-architects.co.uk](mailto:ashleigh.murray@insall-architects.co.uk)

T: 020 7245 9888

London Office  
12 Devonshire Street  
London, W1G 7AB  
[www.insall-architects.co.uk](http://www.insall-architects.co.uk)

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Ordnance Survey map with the site marked in red.  
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## **1.0 Summary of Historic Building Report**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Donald Insall Associates was commissioned by Lomondo Ltd in December 2017 to assist them in the preparation of proposals for areas on the ground floor of Melia White House Hotel, Albany St, London NW1 3UP.

The investigation has comprised historical research, using both archival and secondary material, and a site inspection. An illustrated history of the site and building, with sources of reference and bibliography, is in Section 2; the site survey findings are in Section 3. The investigation has established the significance of the building, which is set out below. This understanding will inform the development of the proposals, by Mackay + Partners Ltd.. Section 4 provides a justification of the scheme according to the relevant planning policy and guidance.

### **1.2 The Building and its Legal Status**

The White House, now known as the Melia White House Hotel, is a Grade II-listed building. Whilst it is not in a designated conservation area, it is located adjacent to the Regent's Park Conservation Area in the London Borough of Camden. Development which affects the special interest of a listed building or its setting requires listed building consent and planning permission.

The statutory list description is included in Appendix I, while extracts from the relevant planning policy documents is in Appendix II.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision-making on applications that relate to the historic environment. Section 66 of the Act imposes a statutory duty upon local planning authorities to have 'special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess'.

In considering applications for listed building consent, local authorities are also required to consider the policies on the historic environment set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The key message of the NPPF is the concept of 'sustainable development' which for the historic environment means that heritage assets 'should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance'.

The NPPF recognises that, in some cases, the significance of a designated heritage asset can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. The NPPF therefore states that any harm or loss to a designated heritage asset 'should require clear and convincing justification' and that any 'less than substantial' harm caused to the significance of a designated heritage asset should be weighed against the benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. A designated heritage asset is defined as a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area.

### **1.3 Assessment of Significance**

The White House was designed in 1935 as serviced flats by Robert Atkinson (1883-1952). Lindsay Parkinson in 'This Way Forward' (1955) describes the plan as 'daring, both in materials and layout.' The building's primary significance lies with Atkinson's very modern approach to the building and its resulting overall form and unusual plan. The unique star-shaped plan provides natural ventilation and light without the need for lightwells, which were a common feature by this date. The building was also constructed using up-to-date materials, including a reinforced concrete structure and faience cladding. Atkinson was also innovative in his approach to servicing the building, particularly with the use of risers and the embedding of lighting and heating services within the concrete floors.

The modern single-storey extensions between the west and east wings are detracting features as they confuse and undermine the original plan form, which is of the highest significance. The modern uPVC windows are poor-quality replacements that also detract from the significance and appearance of the building as they undermine the uniformity of the façades, although it is noted that permission has been granted for their replacement, which would result in an improvement to the building's appearance.

Only areas that form part of the proposals have been assessed. On the ground floor this includes the southern and central wings, in addition to the entrance hall. The original plan form of these areas has been substantially altered, with many areas also extended, and is, therefore, of little historic interest. Although the open-plan layout of the central west wing is of some interest, as it echoes the layout of the original restaurant, this area has been altered with the blocking of the windows and the introduction of a modern interior decorative scheme which is not in keeping with the original date of the building. The entrance hall has also been considerably altered and is now of limited historic interest. The basement fitness centre and conference room, the 'Albany Room', are of no significance. There are modern fixtures and fittings throughout all of the assessed areas, these are of no interest.

#### **1.4 Summary of Proposals and Justification**

The proposals are outlined in the drawings and Design & Access Statement produced by Mackay + Partners Ltd., which this report accompanies. The works involve the internal refurbishment of the ground floor of the Melia White House Hotel, focusing on the central wings and the two southern wings. The proposals would include the formation a new bar and meeting rooms, the reconfiguration of the entrance lobby, and the enlargement of the existing buffet restaurant.

The proposals would see the loss of some elements of the original plan form which could, at worst, be said to cause very much 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of the building. However, these areas have been altered and the overall ground-floor plan is now of limited interest.

On the other hand the proposals would offer the following public benefits:

- improving the proportions of the rooms with improved ceiling heights and appropriately designed cornices;
- the general upgrade and refurbishment of the dated interior to enhance the viability of the listed building to help secure its long term future;
- the creation of an active ground floor with the insertion of a bar in the south-east wing.

The NPPF places a particular emphasis balancing the harms which would fall out of proposals against their public benefits. In this case any perceived harm would be out-weighed by the public benefits of the proposals.

In accordance with the statutory duties outlined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building would be preserved by the proposed works. In terms of the National Planning Policy Framework, it is considered that these works would enhance the significance of the listed building. The proposals are, therefore, considered to be acceptable in heritage terms.

## 2.0 Historical Background

### 2.1 The Area

John Rocque's 1746 map of London shows that the land north of Tottenham Court and what was then known as Mary Le Bone (now Marylebone) was predominantly arable land **[plate 1]**. It was not until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that development of London reached beyond the Marylebone Road. In 1811, The Prince Regent (later King George IV) commissioned the architect John Nash to design The Regent's Park, with rows of grand terraced housing surrounding the landscaped park **[plate 2]**.<sup>1</sup>

Nash's audacious scheme envisioned a via triumphalis rooted at Carlton House in the south – then the home of the Prince Regent – stretching across Oxford Street and sweeping up Portland Place to a picturesque arrangement of villas and terraces set within the former hunting grounds. A summer palace for the Prince Regent was also planned in the park, but never built. Nash's scheme for the park, after several permutations including a steep decrease in the number of villas from fifty-six to eight, was accepted in 1812 and took seventeen years to build.<sup>2</sup>

As Portland Place problematically stopped just short of Marylebone Park and the New Road (Now Marylebone Road) – laid in 1756-7 at the outer edges of the metropolis to relieve east-west traffic in the centre of London – Nash was faced with the difficulty of how to extend the grandeur of the late-18<sup>th</sup>-century Portland Place and carry the eye and mind over the humdrum trade of the New Road (now Marylebone Road) and on into the park Nash resolved to build a full circus over the junction **[plate 2]**. However, after the completion of the southern section of the circus in 1823, it was remodelled into a crescent and a square with symmetrical terraces **[plate 3]**.<sup>3</sup>





1 John Roque's 1746 map



2. Regent's Park plan 1812 (Westminster Archive T136 (440)).



3. Regent's Park plan 1826 (Westminster Archive T136 (64))

## 2.2 The White House

The 1870 Ordnance Survey map shows Nash's completed crescent to the north of Portland Place **[plate 4]**. Holy Trinity Church, designed in 1825 by Sir John Soane, is shown to the north-east of the crescent. Further north is a plot of land (now occupied by the White House, the subject of this report) that was bounded by Osnaburgh Terrace (south), Albany Street (west), Longford Street (north), and Osnaburgh Street (east) **[plate 5]**. This plot of land was flanked on each side by rows of terraces. At the centre of the plot was a small road, Fredrick Mews, accessed from Longford Street, which contained a number of small mews buildings.

Rebuilding in the area began in the 1930s, which included the redevelopment of this plot of land.<sup>4</sup> The existing terraces and mews buildings were demolished by 1935 **[plate 6]** and were replaced by a new block of c.780 luxury serviced flats. The new building was designed by the architect Robert Atkinson (1883-1952) and was complete by 1936. The consulting engineers were The Trussed Concrete Steel Engineering Co. Ltd.

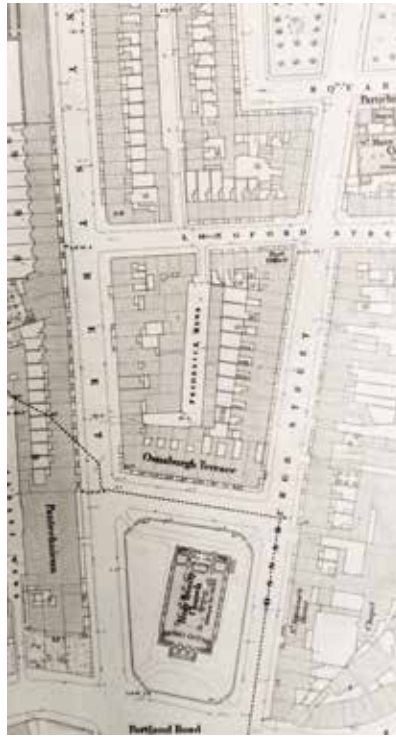
An original drawing of the front elevation shows the 9-storey building with casement windows with long horizontal glazing bars flanked by narrower horizontal glazing bars **[plate 7]**. The central roof-level tower shown in this drawing does not appear to have been constructed. In Pevsner's 'Buildings of England' the building is described as 'quite modern for its date'<sup>5</sup>, while Lindsay Parkinson in 'This Way Forward' (1955) states that 'the plan is daring, both in materials and layout.' The building has a star-shaped plan, with a central service area from which various wings radiate. This form of plan was radical at the time as it provided optimum light and ventilation without the need for lightwells, a feature of many buildings by this date. This unique star-shaped plan is clearly shown in a 1955 photograph of the building **[plate 8]**.

The main structure of the building is a reinforced concrete framework, with reinforced concrete retaining walls below street level serving a basement and sub-basement. Externally the building is faced with faience slabs which are secured to a brickwork skin with copper cramps.<sup>6</sup> The services were carefully considered before construction. All services to the flats were carried through concealed ducts which could be easily accessed for repairs. Although this is common practice today, Parkinson notes in 'This Way Forward' that it was 'a novelty in 1935.'<sup>7</sup> The electric and heating systems were also built into the concrete floors.<sup>8</sup>

The flats were served by many public areas, such as a lounge, restaurant, and a dance floor, in addition to a swimming pool and squash courts. Other facilities included a delicatessen, newsagents, chemist, hairdresser and dry cleaners. The basement was occupied by kitchens and storerooms, while there was a garden at roof level.<sup>9</sup>



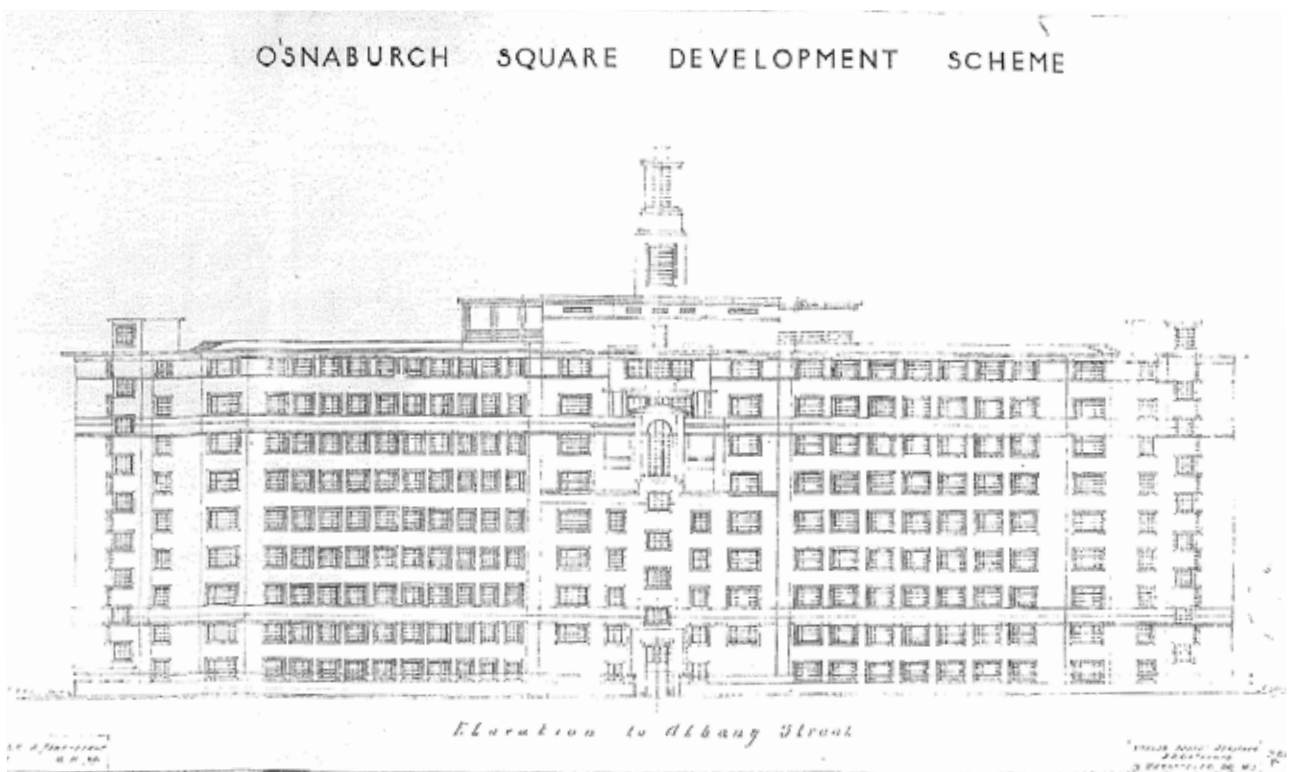
4. 1870 Ordnance Survey Map



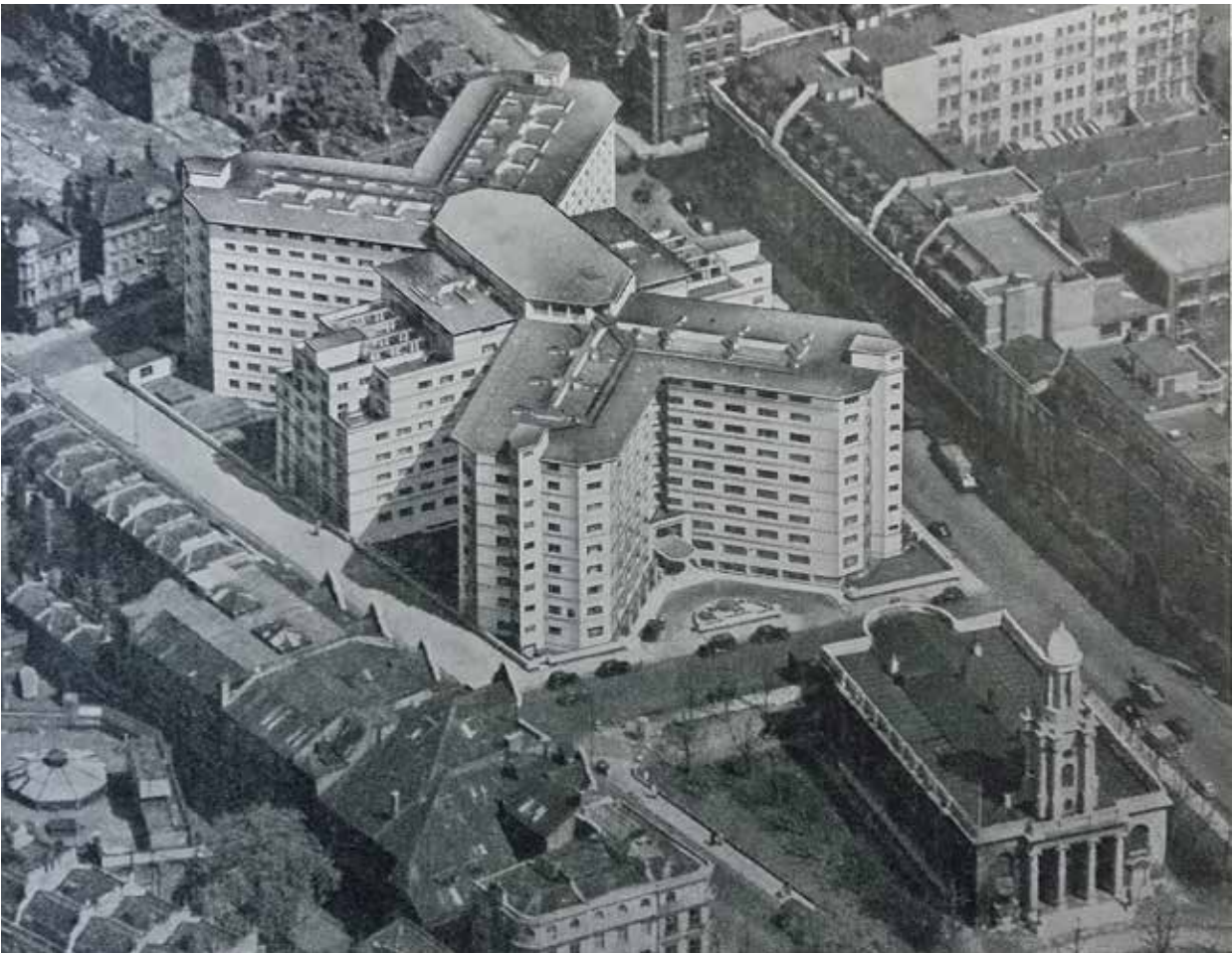
5. Original Plot of the White House, 1870 Ordnance Survey Map



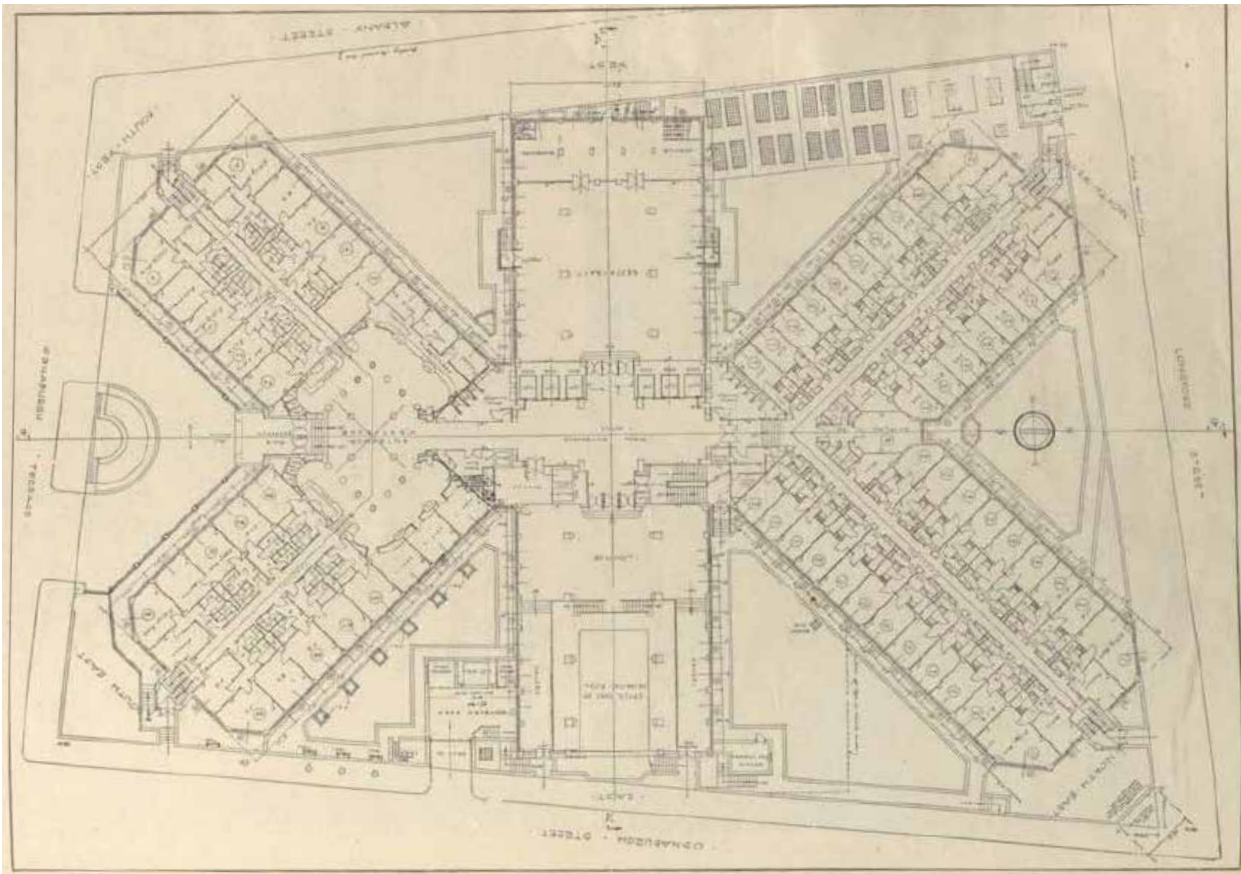
6. Demolished Buildings, 1935 Ordnance Survey Map



7. Front Elevation, 1935 (Camden Archives)



8. The White House, 1955 (This Way Forward)



9. Ground Floor Plan, 1936 (The Builder)

A 1936 plan shows that the layout of the ground floor spread out across the six wings of the star plan **[Plate 9]**. The main entrance was located at the Osnaburgh Terrace elevation where a large diamond-shaped entrance hall was located. This entrance hall comprised four central columns surrounded by a perimeter of columns. This configuration is shown more clearly in a 1936 photograph, which also shows that the room was decorated with a strip of perimeter lighting and a reflective finish to the central columns **[Plate 10]**.

The restaurant was a large open-plan space located in the central west wing, which a 1936 photograph shows was plainly decorated **[Plate 11]**. Natural light was provided by the flanking windows, while artificial light was produced from large rectangular lights positioned in recessed areas between structural beams. The lounge and upper part of the swimming pool area were located in the central east wing, which are clearly depicted in a 1936 photograph **[Plate 12]**.

The other wings on the ground floor were served by central corridors flanked by a series of small rooms. The remainder of the ground floor was occupied by one or two bedroom flats. The one bedroom flats appear to have comprised a small kitchen, bathroom, built-in cupboards, and a bedroom. There was also a one-bedroom flat where the north-west and north-east wings meet, which later was converted to the main rear entrance. The two-bedroom flats were located at the ends of the north-east, south-east, south-west and north-west wings. These included a small kitchen, bathroom, built-in cupboards, two bedrooms, a sitting room and a spacious hall. Flanking a large lobby at the centre of the building were six lifts - in two groups of three – and a principal staircase adjacent to a pair of service lifts.

The earliest plan of the basement dates from 1936 but this mostly shows the service strategy, with elements of the plan form confined to the swimming pool area and service corridors **[Plate 13]**. This plan does, however, show that the basement was also largely spread across a star plan, although there was some infilling between the wings on the eastern side.



10. Entrance Hall, 1936 (The Architect & Building News)



11. The Restaurant, 1936 (The Builder)



12. Swimming Pool, 1936 (The Architect & Building News, Supplement)



## 2.3 Later Alterations

Plans made in June 1953 show proposals for the conversion of the existing restaurant in the central west wing into 14 flats and the relocation of the restaurant, albeit much smaller, to the south-west wing **[Plate 14]**. This scheme, however, appears to have been superseded by a later scheme made in September that year **[Plate 15]**. The September scheme shows only minor changes to the original flats in the south-west wing. In the central west wing, however, partition walls were proposed to subdivide the existing restaurant into office spaces and a large conference/ breakfast room. However, it is unclear if either of these proposals was implemented, as the west wing appears in its original form in a later 1973 plan of the building.

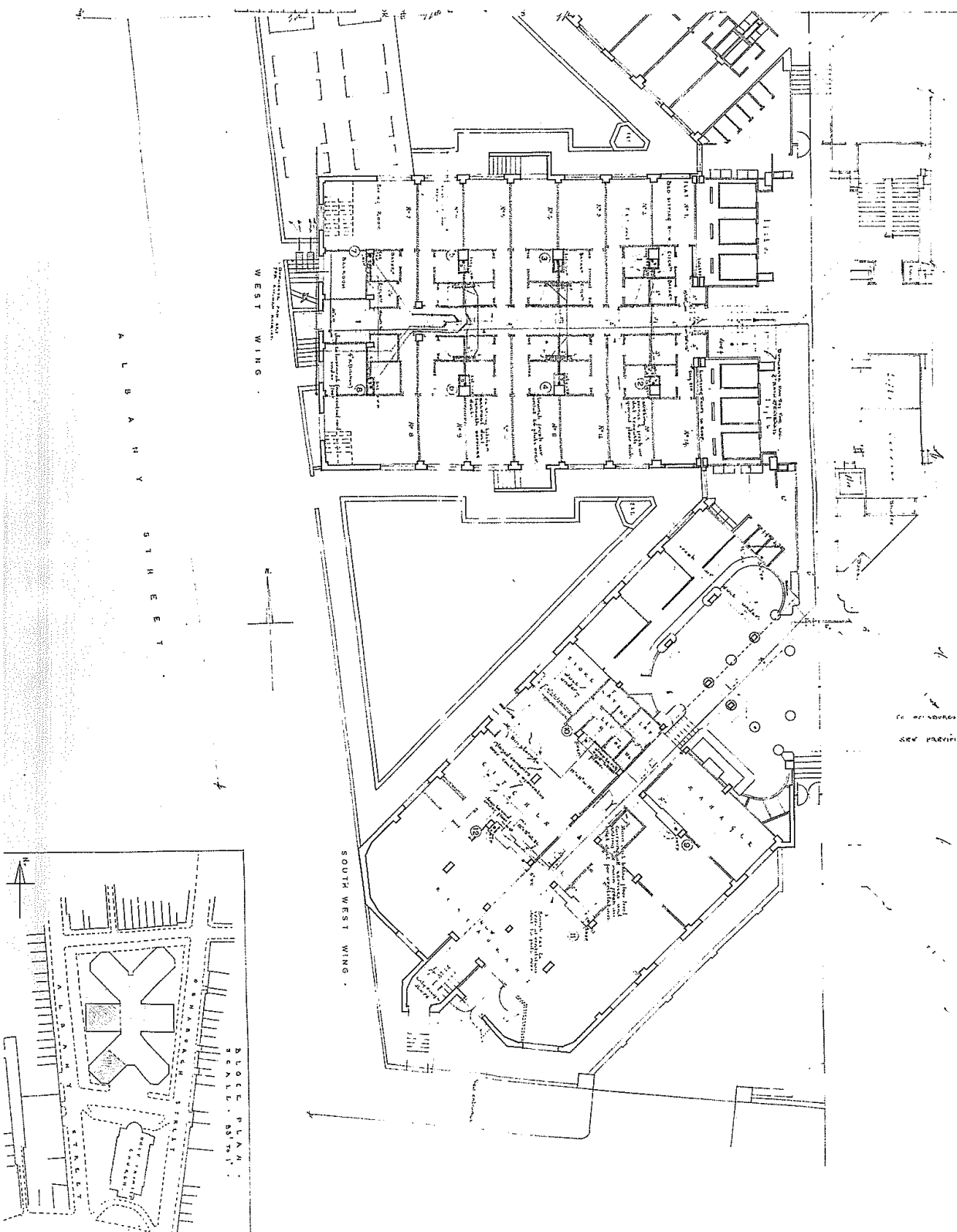
From 1959 the building was gradually converted into a hotel and by 1970 the building was operating entirely as a hotel. In 1964, during these conversion works, a new spiral staircase was installed to the north-west of the building which connected with a large lounge and conference room, known as the 'Albany Room', in a basement extension between the north-west wing and the central west wing.

In 1972 the hotel was purchased by Rank Organisation, who undertook a three-year renovation. A 1972 ground-floor plan shows that extensions had been made between most wings, apart from the area between the central west wing and the north-west wing **[Plate 16]**. These extensions were designed to accommodate services, including plant and a preparation kitchen, and on-site inspections have revealed that they are single storey.

The 1972 ground-floor plan shows that the one bedroom apartment at the north apex was replaced by a lobby and the former window was replaced by a new entrance onto Longford Street. In the central east wing, the area overlooking the swimming pool was built over and a second restaurant was introduced. Other major alterations included the removal of partition walls in the south-east wing to accommodate a large lounge bar. An opening was made in the stairs of this wing to provide access from the lounge bar onto Osnaburgh Street. Other alterations involved the removal of partition walls to create several larger rooms in the south-west and north-east wings. Four large passenger lifts also replaced the six original lifts. In the north-east wing, a corridor was introduced to provide access into the kitchens, located in the infill extension between the north-east and east wing. The north-west wing appears to have retained its original plan form at this time.

The 1972 plan shows proposals to replace the original entrance with a large circular hall, but this alteration does not appear to have been implemented. This is further confirmed by a 1974 plan of the lounge bar located in the south-east wing which shows the adjacent entrance hall **[Plate 17]**. While the circular plan was not introduced, some changes to the entrance hall had occurred by this time **[see Plates 9 & 17]**. Originally there was a flight of steps at the entrance that served the sunken entrance hall. By 1974 these were reconfigured and a wide platform was formed that served the entrance and lounge bar. The entrance hall also appears to have been reduced in size, with many of the original columns removed or integrated within new walls, thereby presenting an asymmetrical layout.





See drawings  
see plan

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
DRAWING PLAN  
ground floor level

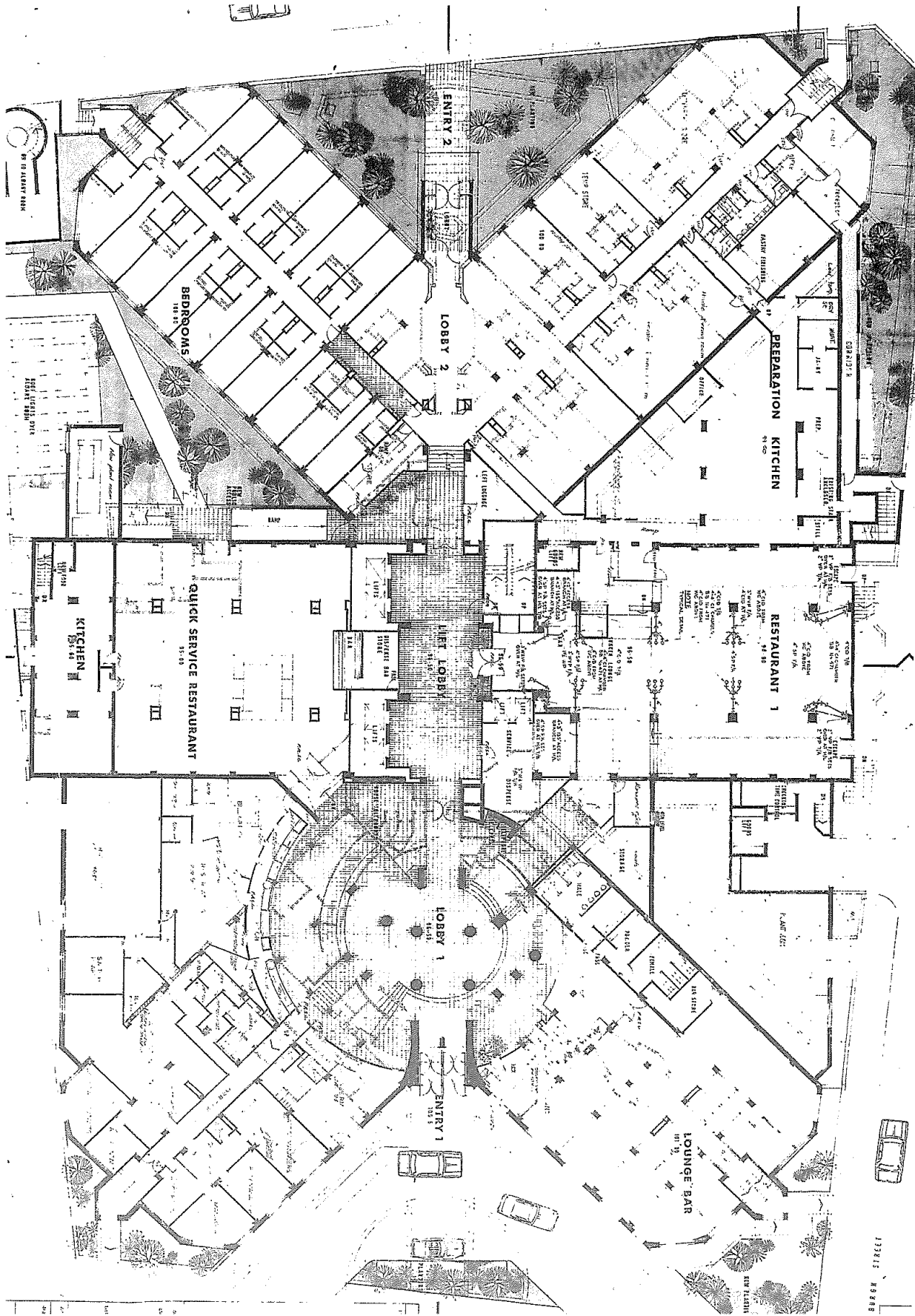
THE WHITE HOUSE  
A-BANY STREET  
CONVERSION OF THE  
EXISTING RESTAURANT  
INTO FLATS AND THE  
RESTAURANT RESIDING.

JARS  
DRAWN BY J. J. JARS

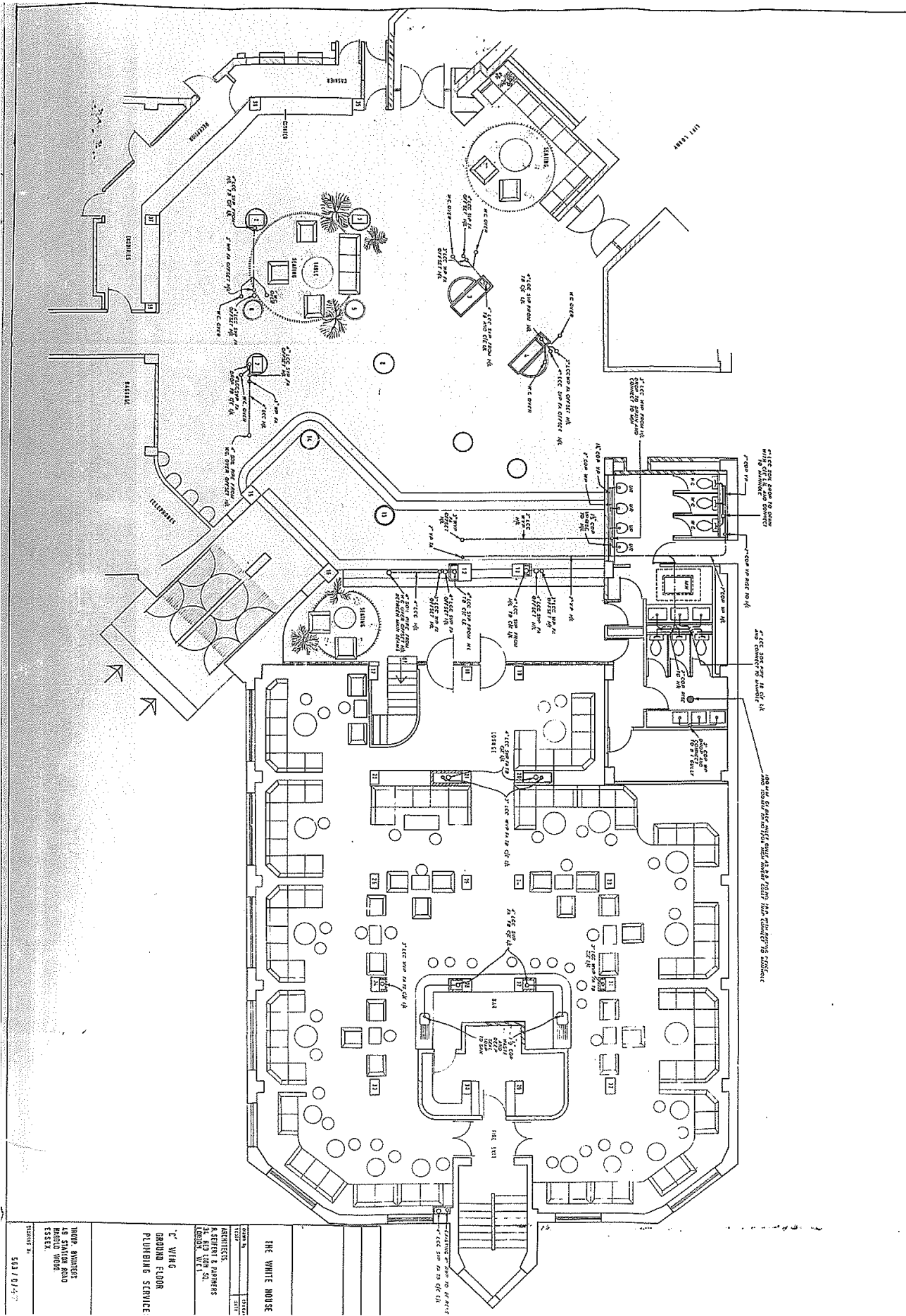
ARCHITECTS  
THORPE & BARKHAM  
CHARLTON SQUARE  
16 FITZROD STREET  
W.1

14. Proposed conversion of the existing restaurant into flats and restaurant residing, June 1953 (Camden Archives)





16. Ground Floor Plan, 1972 (Camden Archives)



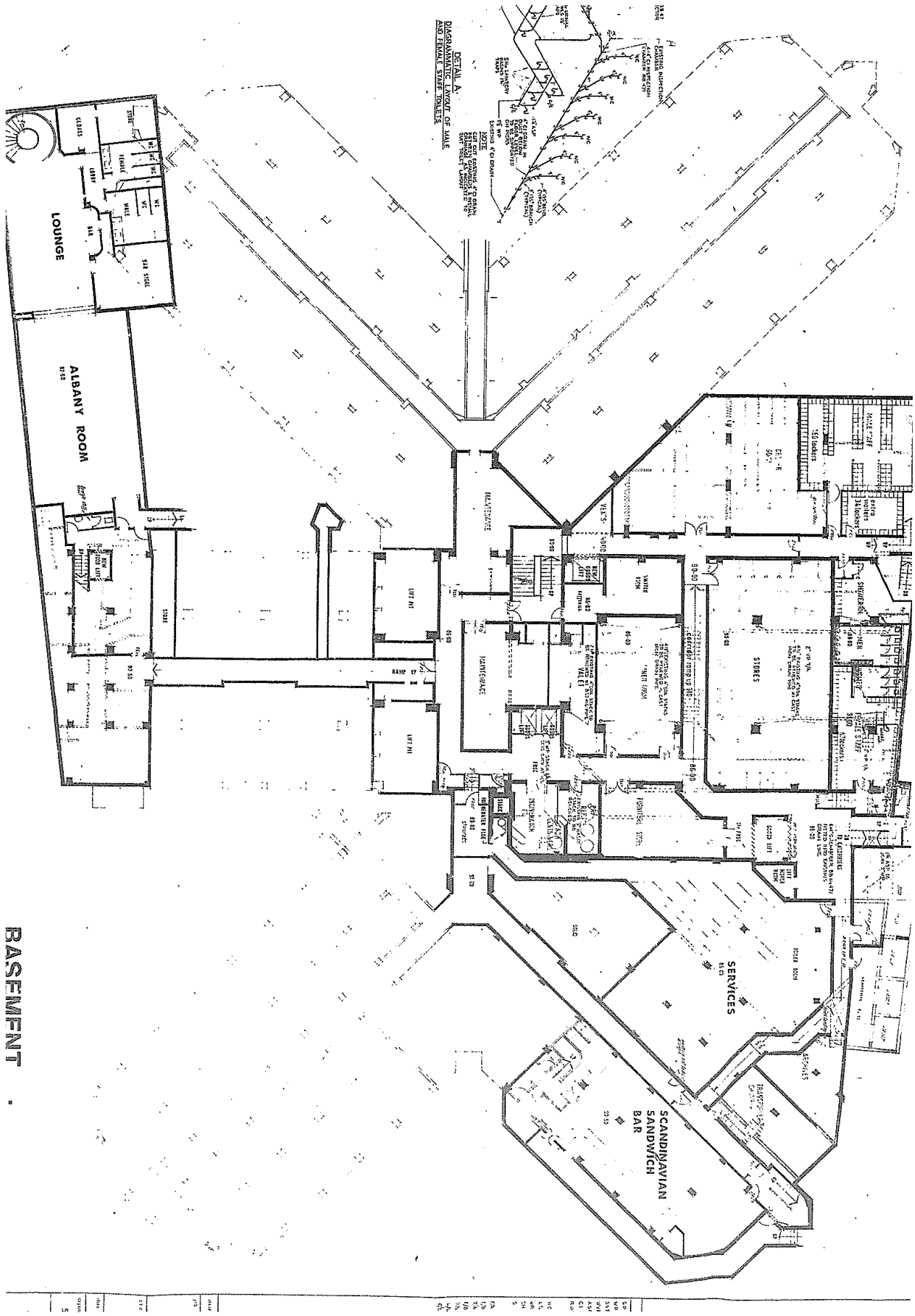
17. Ground Floor Lounge Bar in the south-east wing, 1974 (Camden Archives)

A partial plan of 1972 of the basement shows the conference room, the 'Albany Room', to the north-west of the building, in addition to the altered swimming pool which had been infilled to create store rooms [Plate 18]. The south-east wing was also in use as a sandwich bar and was accessed by a staircase that connected with the ground-floor entrance hall. In 2002 the sandwich bar was converted to a fitness centre.

In 1999 the building was statutorily listed. That year, Sol Meliá purchased the building and completed a major renovation project, including works to the entrance lobby, bedrooms, meeting rooms and restaurant. The total number of available hotel bedrooms is 548.<sup>10</sup> A listed building consent application submitted in 2000 for the internal refurbishment of the main public areas includes an existing ground-floor plan [Plate 19]. This shows that further alterations had been made throughout the building by this time, with the removal of many partition walls. The original restaurant in the central west wing was also altered with the reconfiguration of the entrance steps, forming a large platform, and the introduction of several partitions walls. The main entrance to the building was also extended between the two flanking southern wings.

The current ground-floor plan shows various changes that have occurred to the ground floor to date [Plate 20]. The entrance hall has been extended to incorporate a section of a single-storey extension and the internal entrance steps have been reconfigured. The former lounge bar, now a buffet restaurant, in the south-east wing has also been extended into the adjacent single-storey extension. A restaurant has been introduced to the north-east wing, resulting in the loss of many partition walls and a section of the corridor, and the rear lobby has also been enlarged. The central west wing has also been reconfigured to form a larger open-plan room, in use as bar, which echoes the layout of the original restaurant, albeit with some differences.

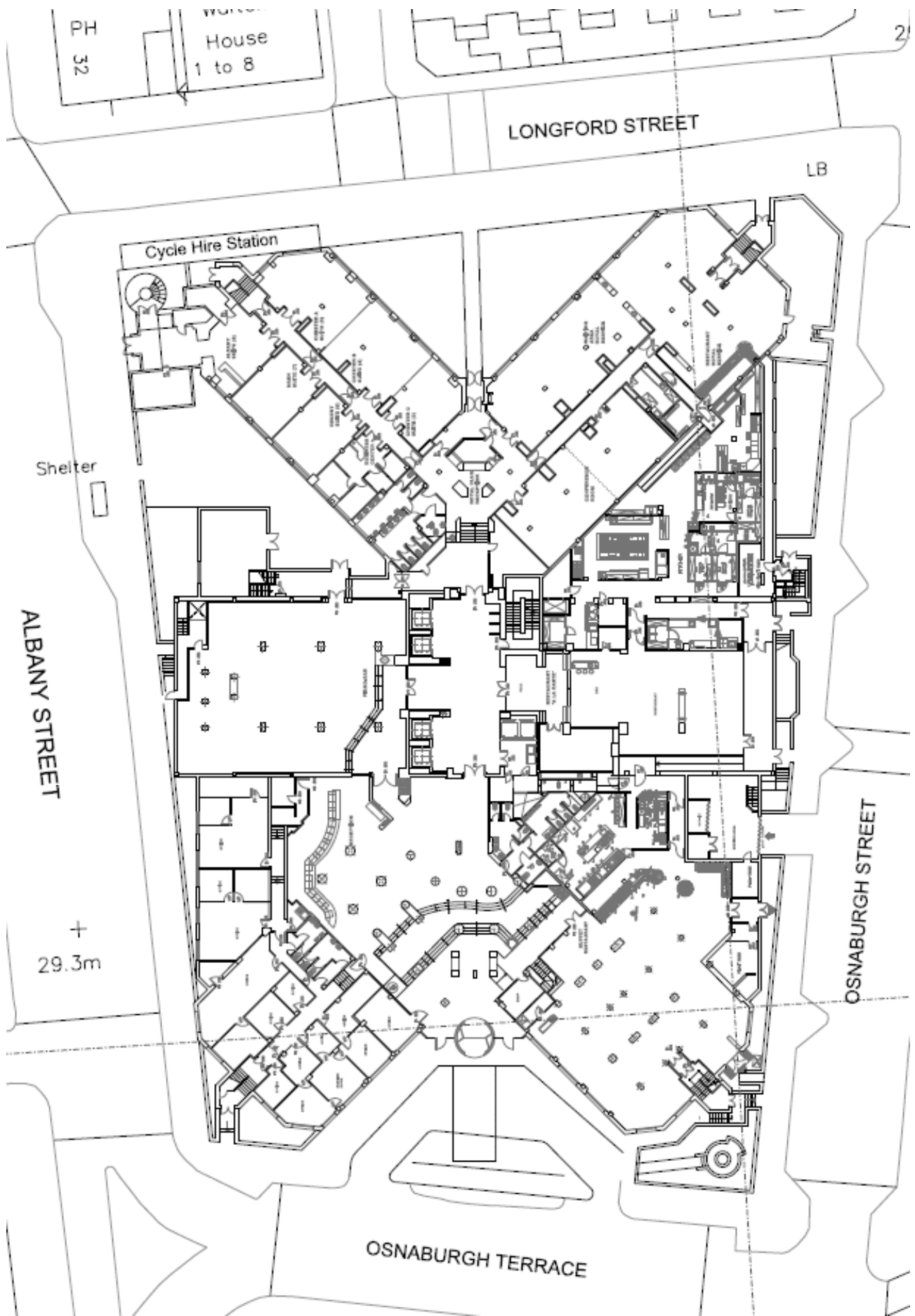
In 2017 planning permission and listed building consent was granted for the refurbishment of areas of the ground floor, including the north-west, north-east and central east wings, in addition to the creation of a terraced area to the north-east of the building. The works have yet to be implemented and will no longer include the refurbishment of the central east wing, as that area forms part of the current proposals.



**BASEMENT**

18. Basement plan, 1972 (Camden Archives)





20. Current Ground-Floor Plan (Mackay + Partners Ltd.)



## **2.3 Relevant Planning History**

### **18572 – Granted June 1974**

The erection of a ground floor extension for hotel use at the White House, Albany Street.

### **8700503 – Granted April 1987**

Installation of an automatic circular door to the main entrance and modernization of the facade to Albany Street entrance to banquetting suites as shown in drawing numbers 937/201B and 937/103.

### **LSX0004884 – Granted October 2000**

Internal alteration involving refurbishment of main public areas at ground floor.

### **LSX0105119 & PSX0105118 – Granted November 2001**

Installation of new screen and revolving doors to main entrance of hotel.

### **LSX0204485 – Granted September 2002**

Internal alterations at basement area to refurbish an existing bar area into a fitness centre. Works include insertion of partitions, reconfiguration of a staircase and insertion of air conditioning and other related services

### **2006/4058/L & 2006/4057/P – Granted November 2006**

Internal alterations and basement level and installation of external electrical transformer and associated equipment and enclosures at ground floor level on Osnaburgh frontage and relocation of blue plaque at the hotel.

### **2011/4612/P & 2011/4621/L – Granted March 2012**

Alterations including the replacement of the existing external doors and access and the addition of a new canopy structure on Osnaburgh Street elevation to existing hotel (Use Class C1).

### **2015/1260/L – Granted July 2015**

Cleaning the faience elevations to the hotel, carrying out localised repairs.

### **2017/0874/L & 2017/0841/P – Granted March 2017**

Replacement of all Crittall and uPVC windows with steel framed windows to match existing fenestration pattern.

### **2017/2840/L & 2017/2750/P – Granted May 2017**

Creation of external ground floor terrace on Osnaburgh Street for the use of the existing bar/restaurant; creation of a new external door opening to provide access to terrace; interior refurbishment of ground floor, including bar restaurant and meeting rooms; installation of new mechanical services; removal of existing and installation of replacement plant at roof level.

## 2.4 The Architect: Robert Atkinson (1883-1952)

The following is an abridged version of Robert Atkinson's entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography - <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38347?docPos=3>

Atkinson, Robert (1883–1952) was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1883 in Cumberland, the son of Robert Atkinson, a joiner and cabinetmaker, and his wife, Elizabeth Johnston. By 1896 his family had moved to Nottingham and there he trained as an architect at the Nottingham School of Art and at University College. He was articled to the Nottingham architect James Harris before moving to London in 1905, working in the office of John Belcher. He later became a draughtsman for C. E. Mallows, the country-house architect, and collaborated with R. Frank Atkinson (no relation) and the leading landscape architect T. H. Mawson.

In 1907 he set up in practice with George Nott, Charles Gascoyne, and Alick Horsnell and in 1912 entered into partnership with George Alexander. The following year he was appointed head of the Architectural Association School, London, and in 1915 he was elected FRIBA.

In his buildings Atkinson showed himself a highly versatile eclectic and he made his name as a pioneer in cinema architecture. His talents for colour, decoration, and interior design, developed in cinemas in Edinburgh, Liverpool, and numerous midland towns, culminated with the Regent Cinema, Brighton (1919–21; 1923; dem. 1974), called by Howard Robertson 'his No. 1 Symphony'. This was the first luxury cinema designed on the American model in Britain and was one of the most remarkable British buildings of the 1920s. Atkinson's flair for decoration reached its peak in the entrance hall of the Daily Express Building (1931–2), probably the best surviving art deco interior in Britain.

Atkinson also engaged in new building techniques and types. St Catherine's Church, Hammersmith (1922–3; dest. 1940), was the first steel-framed church in England and the Barber Institute of Fine Arts at the University of Birmingham (1935–9) was the first British purpose-built institution for the study of art history. The Barber Institute was deemed by Sir John Summerson to represent 'better than almost any other building (except, perhaps the RIBA in Portland Place) the spirit of English architecture in the 1930s'. Other inter-war works by Atkinson included: the Gresham Hotel, Dublin (1925–7); the Dome Hall of Music and Corn Exchange, Brighton (1934–5); Wallington Town Hall and Municipal Library (1933–5); and Oslo Court, Regent's Park (1936–7). After the war Atkinson worked on electric power stations at Croydon (1945–51) and Wigan (1947–51). In the post-war years, with economic stringency and the predominance of the modern movement, he found himself obliged to produce less creative and convincing work, such as the government offices, Marsham Street, Westminster (begun in 1949 but radically revised after his death), and the government rehousing scheme, Gibraltar (1946–50).

In 1927 Atkinson was awarded an honorary March by the University of Liverpool, and the same year was appointed an assessor of the competition for the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford upon Avon. In 1931 he became an assessor for the RIBA Building, Portland Place, London, and for the city hall, Norwich. In 1932 he was made a director of the Building Centre. Five years later he and his partner, Alexander Anderson, were awarded the RIBA London architecture bronze medal for Stockleigh Hall flats, Regent's Park, and in 1946 he gained the RIBA architecture bronze medal for the Barber Institute. In 1951 he was appointed OBE. His death occurred unexpectedly, after a short illness, on the 26<sup>th</sup> December 1952 at Beaumont House, Beaumont Street, London.

## **2.5 Sources and Bibliography**

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Drainage Plans

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## 3.0 Site Survey Descriptions

### 3.1 The Setting of the Building

The immediate setting of the listed building is quite varied. It occupies an island site and is bounded on all four sides by wide roads. To the south of the site is Holy Trinity Church, design in 1825 by Sir John Soane. The principal elevation of this Portland-stone building is at its southern end, while the elevation facing the White House is of yellow stock brick, with an apsidal end. To the west of the site is a terraced row of four-storey stuccoed houses. A three-storey pub is located to the north-west of the site, which has a corner turret, and adjacent to this is a four-storey block of flats. Both buildings date from c. 1900 and are of red brick with faience detailing. Further east, to the north of the site, is a long modern four-storey block of flats of yellow brick with red-brick detailing. The façade has been broken with the addition of plain protruding bays supported on round columns. Large modern office block developments are located to the east of the site, ranging from 9 to 18 storeys.

### 3.2 The Building Externally

This nine-storey white faience-clad building has an unusual star-shaped plan which has largely been retained, apart from the addition of several single-storey extensions between the west and east wings. The front entrance has also been extended beyond the main building line, with a revolving door beneath a canopy that stretches out towards Osnaburgh Terrace **[Plate 21]**. The casement windows generally consist of long central horizontal glazing bars flanked by narrower horizontal glazing bars; originally these were steel-framed windows but many have been replaced with uPVC versions. The elevations are decorated with thick faience cills bands but otherwise the façades are plain.

The south-west and south-east wings mirror those to the north **[Plate 21]**. These wings are five bays in length and three bays wide, with canted corners. Additional triangular bays which rise above roof level are located at the ends of each wing. To the south the windows are all modern uPVC replacements, while to the north the windows are somewhat varied with a mixture of what appear to be the originals and modern uPVC replacements. The north-west wing retains four floors of original metal windows, while the north-east wing retains mostly original metal windows, apart from a handful of modern replacements on the south elevation.

The central east and west wings also mirror each other and are seven bays in length, with the upper floors set back forming stepped roof lines. The end elevations are five bays wide and the upper floors also narrow at the top in a stepped manner **[Plate 22]**.

The main entrance is located between the two southern wings, with a corresponding entrance at the northern side. There are also secondary entrances at the ends of the central eastern and western wings which have doorcases with carved figurative friezes **[Plate 22]**. The original doors have all been replaced.



21. Southern Wings (Insall, 2017)



22. End Elevation, Central East Wing (Insall, 2017)

### 3.3 The Building Internally

Only the ground floor areas that form part of the proposals have been assessed, which include the southern and central wings, in addition to the associated single-storey infill extensions, as well as the basement conference area, the 'Albany Room'. All of the original 1930s style fixtures and fittings appear to have been removed, apart from a pair of plain service doors connected with an original service staircase.

#### Ground Floor

##### Entrance Hall

Original sunken entrance hall, used as the hotel reception **[Plate 23]**. Its plan form has been substantially altered and it has also been extended, particularly to the west where it occupies a section of an adjoining single-storey extension. Several columns have also been added or removed, in addition to the embedding of several original columns within later walls. The entrance steps have been altered and extended to create two platform levels, and a modern staircase in the south-east corner connects with the basement. Modern fixtures and fittings throughout, including a marble floor and marble cladding to several walls. The columns have a plain plaster finish with a marble skirting, while the ceiling is suspended and includes spotlights.

##### South-West Wing

This wing was originally designed with flats but has been considerably altered with the removal of several partition walls and the extension of the entrance hall into this area. This wing also connects with a northern single-storey extension with additional offices. Remnants of the original flat layouts are discernible at the south-west end, where offices are now located. The service staircase at the end of the building is original and retains a plain metal balustrade and incised plaster to the stairwell forming a skirting and dado rail **[Plate 24]**. The plain doors to the service staircase, with small multi-paned glazed panels, appear to be original. Otherwise, all modern fixtures and fittings throughout the wing, including doors, architraves and suspended ceilings.

##### South-East Wing

This wing was originally designed with flats but has been considerably altered with the removal of all partition walls to form a large, open-plan restaurant **[Plate 25]**. The restaurant also connects with a northern single-storey extension, which has involved the removal of a large section on the original northern exterior wall. Plain modern decorative scheme with a timber floor, panels fixed to plain plastered walls, and areas of suspended ceilings. Within the northern extension and a section of the original wing is a warren of back-of-house areas, used for kitchens and services.

##### Central West Wing

Formally the original restaurant, this sunken area has undergone some alteration with the reconfiguration of the entrance steps to form a large platform and the blocking of the windows due to the flanking extensions **[Plate 26]**. There are modern fixtures and fittings throughout, including full-height timber panelling, a marble floor, and a suspended ceiling.



23. Entrance Hall (Insall, 2017)



24. Service Staircase, South-West Wing (Insall, 2018)



25. Restaurant, South-East Wing (Insall, 2018)



26. Bar, Central West Wing (Insall, 2018)



27. Restaurant, Central East Wing (Insall, 2017)



28. Private Dining Room, Central East Wing (Insall, 2017)



29. Fitness Centre, Basement (Insall, 2018)

## Central East Wing

This wing originally included the upper part of the swimming pool with an adjoining lounge. The area was substantially altered later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the infilling of the opening above the swimming pool and the insertion of several new partition walls.

This area is now a restaurant, with a bar at the entrance. The dining area is raised and is served by a short flight of steps **[Plate 27]**. There are modern fixtures and fittings throughout, including dado-height timber panelling and a moulded cornice. A private dining room to the south includes dado-height timber panelling, a moulded cornice, and built-in timber cupboards with glazed doors that flank a simple classical marble chimneypiece **[Plate 28]**.

Timber floorboards are in the dining areas, while there are floor tiles in the bar area. There is a suspended ceiling throughout, with recessed areas that include simpler cornices and spotlights.

## Basement

### Fitness Centre

Modern fixtures and fittings throughout the fitness centre and the adjoining corridor and associated WCs **[Plate 29]**.

### Albany Room

Conference centre in modern extension to the building between the central west and north-west wings. Modern fixtures and fittings throughout, including the spiral staircase **[Plate 30]**.



30. Albany Room, Basement (Insall, 2018)



## 4.0 Commentary on the Proposals

### 4.1 Description of the Proposals and their Impact on the Listed Building

The proposals are outlined in the drawings and Design & Access Statement produced by Mackay + Partners Ltd., which this report accompanies. The works involve the internal refurbishment of the ground floor of the Melia White House Hotel, focusing on the central wings and the two southern wings.

#### South-West Wing

The south-west wing would be altered with the removal of the partition walls to form a large, open-plan bar, accessed via a new flight of steps (north) and also a ramp (east). The bar would also be accessible from the existing south-west external entrance. Although some elements of the original plan form would be removed as part of these works - namely the corridor and several partition walls separating the current offices - the plan form has previously undergone some alteration with the removal or reconfiguration of several partition walls, particularly with the extension of the entrance lobby. It is unclear if sections of the existing walls date from 1935 or were rebuilt later in the century. Either way, this fabric is of limited interest

It is also proposed to remove a section of the former north-west external wall, now enclosed by a modern single-storey extension, to amalgamate the new bar area with a section of the adjacent extension. Structural columns would also be installed, with two new fireplaces inserted between. The remaining area of the extension would be reconfigured to form a meeting room and WCs serving the entrance lobby. As this area of the building has already undergone alteration, these proposals would not cause any harm to the significance of the listed building.

As the plan form of the ground floor has already been substantially altered, it is considered that, overall, these proposed alterations would have a very limited impact on the significance of the listed building, which now primarily lies in its overall star-shaped plan and external façades. In addition, the listed building and the adjacent Regent's Park Conservation Area would benefit from the creation of a more active ground-floor frontage with the provision of a bar.

#### Central West Wing

The central west wing, currently in use as a bar, would be subdivided to form two meeting rooms, a sales office, and associated corridors. The entrance steps serving this sunken space would also be reconfigured to suit the new layout. This wing was originally used as a large, open-plan restaurant. Although the original open-plan form is largely apparent, this space has previously been subdivided (see plate 19). The room has also been altered with the reconfiguration of the entrance steps to form a large platform and the blocking of the windows as a result of the later flanking extensions. The meeting rooms would be separated by oak faced moveable partitions for flexibility, allowing the large volume of this space to still be discernible when not in use. As such, changes to the plan form of

this central west wing would cause limited harm to the significance of the listed building, which, as stated above, principally lies with its overall form and unusual star-shaped plan and external façades.

It is also proposed to remove the modern entrance doors and create a reception area for groups. These proposed alterations would have no impact on the significance of the listed building.

### **Entrance Lobby**

The plan form of the entrance lobby would be rationalised with the erection of a new wall serving the proposed bar (south-west wing), the reconfiguration of the western later partition walls to form male and female WCs, and the removal of several eastern later partition walls. The entrance steps would also be further altered with the formation of a ramp, and two smaller ramps are proposed to the south-west and south-east wings. The reception desk would also be relocated. These proposals would cause no harm to the significance of the listed building as the form of the entrance lobby has already been considerably altered.

### **South-East Wing & Central East Wing**

The majority of the partition walls – which do not relate to an original layout - within the south-east wing would be removed, to further open up the buffet restaurant. It is proposed to partially infill between the existing columns with partitions and install a partition wall on the east side of the restaurant. Overall, these proposals would have no impact on the significance of the listed building

It is also proposed to further amalgamate the restaurant within the south-east wing with the adjacent single-storey extension, in addition to the central east wing, with the removal of several later partition walls. An open kitchen is proposed in the central east wing, in addition to a buffet abutting a new partition wall, to serve the enlarged restaurant.

The central east wing was substantially altered in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the infilling of the original open area above the swimming pool and the introduction of a restaurant, and the single-storey extension is a later addition that has obscured the original plan form of the building. As such, these works would not cause any harm to the significance of the listed building.

### **General**

It is proposed to replace the modern suspended ceilings and associated cornices, which detract from the special interest of the listed building. The design of the new ceilings would more closely align with the pattern of the structural beams forming the original ceiling structure. More simplified cornices are also proposed and the new ceiling levels would be considerably raised to improve the volume of these interior spaces. These works would be more in keeping with the character of the listed building, thereby enhancing its significance.

Where new or reconfigured doors are proposed, these would match the style of the other modern timber doors in the building. Similarly, new wall finishes, including panelling and skirting, would match the existing modern decorative schemes. The modern floor coverings would also be replaced by unified Bolon vinyl and new lighting is proposed throughout. These works would have no impact on the significance of the listed building.

## **4.2 Justification of the Proposals**

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision making on applications that relate to the historic environment. Section 66 of the Act imposes a statutory duty upon local planning authorities to consider the impact of proposals upon listed buildings and their setting, and also to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the special architectural or historic interest of listed buildings. It is considered that these proposals would, overall, preserve the special interest of the listed buildings, although some limited harm is identified, which is described below. None of the harm identified would have an overall negative effect on the special interest of the listed building.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2018) has crystallised previous policy approaches to the historic environment. At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and it emphasises the need to take account of the 'pros' and 'cons' of any proposal to alter and adapt buildings of 'special' architectural and historical interest. Following on from this, the NPPF states that any 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of a heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing the optimum viable use of a designated heritage asset (NPPF para 196 – see appendix).

The removal of the elements of the plan form in the south-west wing and the partial subdivision of the central west wing could, at worst, be said to cause very much 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of the building due to the loss of elements of the original plan form. However, as outlined above, these areas have been altered and the overall ground-floor plan is now of limited interest.

On the other hand the proposals would offer the following public benefits:

- improving the proportions of the rooms with improved ceiling heights and appropriately designed cornices;
- the general upgrade and refurbishment of the dated interior to enhance the viability of the listed building to help secure its long term future;
- the creation of an active ground floor with the insertion of a bar in the south-east wing.

The NPPF places a particular emphasis balancing the harms which would fall out of proposals against their public benefits. In this case, any perceived harm would be out-weighed by the public benefits of the proposals.

## **4.3 Conclusion**

In accordance with the statutory duties outlined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building would be preserved by the proposed works. In terms of the National Planning Policy Framework, it is considered that these works would enhance the significance of the listed building. The proposals are, therefore, considered to be acceptable in heritage terms.

## Appendix I - Statutory List Description

**Name: THE WHITE HOUSE**

**List entry Number: 1113231**

**Grade: II**

**Date first listed: 11-Jan-1999**

Former serviced flats, now a hotel. 1936. By Robert Atkinson. Steel frame clad in pale cream faience tiles, slightly darker to ground floor and bands. Star-shaped plan providing optimum light and ventilation without light-wells. 9 storeys. Diagonal blocks have chamfered angles and central triangular bays which extend above the roof line. 3-light Crittal windows have continuous sill bands and meet at angles of triangular bays. Original steel windows remain in situ to the north-east and central west ranges; all other windows have been replaced with UPVC windows of a similar design in c.1992. Main entrance to Osnaburgh Terrace altered but subsidiary entrance on Albany Street with good moulded doorcase with figurative frieze, approached by steps with original cast-iron handrail. Flat roof with projecting eaves. INTERIOR: not inspected. Spencer-Longhurst P (ed.): Robert Atkinson 1883-1952: Architectural Association: 1989-; 36-37). Bibliography 8011 Robert Atkinson 1883-1952 (Paul Spencer Longhurst), 1989, Page (s) 36,37

## Appendix II Planning Policy and Guidance

### Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The Act is legislative basis for decision making on applications that relate to the historic environment.

Sections 66 and 72 of the Act impose a statutory duty upon local planning authorities to consider the impact of proposals upon listed buildings and conservation areas.

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that:

*in considering whether to grant permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority, or as the case may be the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of pre--serving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.*

Similarly, section 72(l) of the above Act states that:

*... with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.*

### National Planning Policy Framework

Any proposals for consent relating to heritage assets are subject to the policies of the NPPF (July 2018). This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. With regard to 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment', the framework requires proposals relating to heritage assets to be justified and an explanation of their effect on the heritage asset's significance provided.

Paragraph 7 of the Framework states that the purpose of the planning system is to 'contribute to the achievement of sustainable development' and that, at a very high level, 'the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

At paragraph 8, the document expands on this as follows:

*Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives:*

*a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*

*b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and*

*c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.*

**and notes at paragraph 10:**

*10. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).*

With regard to the significance of a heritage asset, the framework contains the following policies:

*190. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.*

In determining applications local planning authorities are required to take account of significance, viability, sustainability and local character and distinctiveness. Paragraph 192 of the NPPF identifies the following criteria in relation to this:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality;*
- and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

With regard to potential 'harm' to the significance designated heritage asset, in paragraph 193 the framework states the following:

*...great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether the any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*

The Framework goes on to state at paragraph 194 that:

*Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification.*

Where a proposed development will lead to 'substantial harm' to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset paragraph 195 of the NPPF states that:

*...local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:*

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

With regard to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, of the NPPF states the following;

*196. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*

### **National Planning Practice Guidance**

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was published on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014 to support the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 and the planning system. It includes particular guidance on matters relating to protecting the historic environment in the section: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. The NPPG will be updated, as appropriate, to reflect the revised NPPF published in July 2018.

The relevant guidance is as follows:

Paragraph 3: What is meant by the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment?

*The conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core planning principle. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and effective conservation delivers wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits.*

*Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in everyday use to as yet undiscovered, undesignated buried remains of archaeological interest.*

*In the case of buildings, generally the risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time. In the case of archaeological sites, many have no active use, and so for those kinds of sites, periodic changes may not be necessary.*

*Where changes are proposed, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out a clear framework for both plan-making and decision-taking to ensure that heritage assets are conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner that is consistent with their significance and thereby achieving sustainable development.*

*Part of the public value of heritage assets is the contribution that they can make to understanding and interpreting our past. So where the complete or partial loss of a heritage asset is justified, the aim then is to capture and record the evidence of the asset's significance which is to be lost, interpret its contribution to the understanding of our past, and make that publicly available.*

#### **Paragraph 8: What is "significance"?**

*"Significance" in terms of heritage policy is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

*In legislation and designation criteria, the terms 'special architectural or historic interest' of a listed building and the 'national importance' of a scheduled monument are used to describe all or part of the identified heritage asset's significance. Some of the more recent designation records are more helpful as they contain a fuller, although not exhaustive, explanation of the significance of the asset.*

Paragraph 9: Why is 'significance' important in decision-taking?

*Heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset, and the contribution of its setting, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals*

Paragraph 13: What is the setting of a heritage asset and how should it be taken into account?

*The "setting of a heritage asset" is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

*A thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset under consideration and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.*



*Setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may therefore be more extensive than its curtilage. All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not.*

*The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each.*

*The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights or an ability to access or experience that setting. This will vary over time and according to circumstance.*

*When assessing any application for development which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change. They may also need to consider the fact that developments which materially detract from the asset's significance may also damage its economic viability now, or in the future, thereby threatening its ongoing conservation.*

Paragraph 15: What is a viable use for a heritage asset and how is it taken into account in planning decisions?

*The vast majority of heritage assets are in private hands. Thus, sustaining heritage assets in the long term often requires an incentive for their active conservation. Putting heritage assets to a viable use is likely to lead to the investment in their maintenance necessary for their long-term conservation.*

*By their nature, some heritage assets have limited or even no economic end use. A scheduled monument in a rural area may preclude any use of the land other than as a pasture, whereas a listed building may potentially have a variety of alternative uses such as residential, commercial and leisure.*

*In a small number of cases a heritage asset may be capable of active use in theory but be so important and sensitive to change that alterations to accommodate a viable use would lead to an unacceptable loss of significance.*

*It is important that any use is viable, not just for the owner, but also the future conservation of the asset. It is obviously desirable to avoid successive harmful changes carried out in the interests of repeated speculative and failed uses.*

*If there is only one viable use, that use is the optimum viable use. If there is a range of alternative viable uses, the optimum use is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset, not just through necessary initial changes, but also as a result of subsequent wear and tear and likely future changes.*

*The optimum viable use may not necessarily be the most profitable one. It might be the original use, but that may no longer be economically viable or even the most compatible with the long-term conservation of the asset. However, if from a conservation point of view there is no real difference between viable uses, then the choice of use is a decision for the owner.*

*Harmful development may sometimes be justified in the interests of realising the optimum viable use of an asset, notwithstanding the loss of significance caused provided the harm is minimised. The policy in addressing substantial and less than substantial harm is set out in paragraphs 132 – 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

Paragraph 20: What is meant by the term public benefits?

*Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 7). Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits.*

*Public benefits may include heritage benefits, such as:*

*sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting  
reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset  
securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset*

### **Historic England: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning (March 2015)**

The purpose of the Good Practice Advice note is to provide information on good practice to assist in implementing historic environment policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the relate guidance given in the National Planning Practice Guide (NPPG).

Note 2 'Managing Significance in Decision-Taking'

This note provides information on:

*assessing the significance of heritage assets, using appropriate expertise, historic environment records, recording and furthering understanding, neglect and unauthorised works, marketing and design and distinctiveness.*

It states that:

*The advice in this document, in accordance with the NPPF, emphasises that the information required in support of applications for planning permission and listed building consent should be no more than is necessary to reach an informed decision, and that activities to conserve or investigate the asset needs to be proportionate to the significance of the heritage assets affected and the impact on that significance.*

In their general advice on decision-taking, this note advises that:

*Development proposals that affect the historic environment are much more likely to gain the necessary permissions and create successful places if they are designed with the knowledge and understanding of the significance of the heritage assets they may affect. The first step for all applicants is to understand the significance of any affected heritage asset and, if relevant, the contribution of its setting to its significance. The significance of a heritage asset is the sum of its archaeological, architectural, historic, and artistic interest.*

Paragraph 6 highlights the NPPF and NPPG's promotion of early engagement and pre-application discussion, and the early consideration of significance of the heritage asset in order to ensure that any issues can be properly identified and addressed. Furthermore, the note advises that:

*As part of this process, these discussions and subsequent applications usually benefit from a structured approach to the assembly and analysis of relevant information. The stages below indicate the order in which this process can be approached – it is good practice to check individual stages of this list but they may not be appropriate in all cases and the level of detail applied should be proportionate.*

- 1. Understand the significance of the affected assets;*
- 2. Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance;*
- 3. Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF;*
- 4. Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance;*
- 5. Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance and the need for change;*
- 6. Offset negative impacts on aspects of significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.*

### **The Assessment of Significance as part of the Application Process**

Paragraph 7 emphasises the need to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting early in the process, in order to form a successful development, and in order for the local planning authority to make decisions in line with legal objectives and the objectives of the development plan and the policy requirements of the NPPF.<sup>11</sup>

*8. Understanding the nature of the significance is important to understanding the need for and best means of conservation. For example, a modern building of high architectural interest will have quite different sensitivities from an archaeological site where the interest arises from the possibility of gaining new understanding of the past.*

*9. Understanding the extent of that significance is also important because this can, among other things, lead to a better understanding of how adaptable the asset may be and therefore improve viability and the prospects for long term conservation.*

10. Understanding the level of significance is important as it provides the essential guide to how the policies should be applied. This is intrinsic to decision-taking where there is unavoidable conflict with other planning objectives.

11. To accord with the NPPF, an applicant will need to undertake an assessment of significance to inform the application process to an extent necessary to understand the potential impact (positive or negative) of the proposal and to a level of thoroughness proportionate to the relative importance of the asset whose fabric or setting is affected.

## **Historic England: Conservation Principles and Assessment (2008)**

Conservation Principles (2008) explores, on a more philosophical level, the reason why society places a value on heritage assets beyond their mere utility. It identifies four types of heritage value that an asset may hold: aesthetic, communal, historic and evidential value. This is simply another way of analysing its significance. These values can help shape the most efficient and effective way of managing the heritage asset so as to sustain its overall value to society.<sup>12</sup>

### Cumulative Impact

28 *The cumulative impact of incremental small-scale changes may have as great an effect on the significance of a heritage asset as a larger scale change. Where the significance of a heritage asset has been compromised in the past by unsympathetic development to the asset itself or its setting, consideration still needs to be given to whether additional change will further detract from, or can enhance, the significance of the asset in order to accord with NPPF policies. Negative change could include severing the last link to part of the history of an asset or between the asset and its original setting. Conversely, positive change could include the restoration of a building's plan form or an original designed landscape.*

### Listed Building Consent Regime

29. *Change to heritage assets is inevitable but it is only harmful when significance is damaged. The nature and importance of the significance that is affected will dictate the proportionate response to assessing that change, its justification, mitigation and any recording which may be needed if it is to go ahead. In the case of listed buildings, the need for owners to receive listed building consent in advance of works which affect special interest is a simple mechanism but it is not always clear which kinds of works would require consent. In certain circumstances there are alternative means of granting listed building consent under the Enterprise & Regulatory Reform Act 2013.*

### Opportunities to Enhance Assets, their Settings and Local Distinctiveness

52. *Sustainable development can involve seeking positive improvements in the quality of the historic environment. There will not always be opportunities to enhance the significance or improve a heritage asset but the larger the asset the more likely there will be. Most conservation areas, for example, will have sites within*

*them that could add to the character and value of the area through development, while listed buildings may often have extensions or other alterations that have a negative impact on the significance. Similarly, the setting of all heritage assets will frequently have elements that detract from the significance of the asset or hamper its appreciation.*

#### Design and Local Distinctiveness

*53. Both the NPPF (section 7) and PPG (section ID26) contain detail on why good design is important and how it can be achieved. In terms of the historic environment, some or all of the following factors may influence what will make the scale, height, massing, alignment, materials and proposed use of new development successful in its context:*

*The history of the place*

*The relationship of the proposal to its specific site*

*The significance of nearby assets and the contribution of their setting, recognising that this is a dynamic concept*

*The general character and distinctiveness of the area in its widest sense, including the general character of local buildings, spaces, public realm and the landscape, the grain of the surroundings, which includes, for example the street pattern and plot size*

*The size and density of the proposal related to that of the existing and neighbouring uses*

*Landmarks and other built or landscape features which are key to a sense of place*

*The diversity or uniformity in style, construction, materials, colour, detailing, decoration and period of existing buildings and spaces*

*The topography*

*Views into, through and from the site and its surroundings*

*Landscape design*

*The current and historic uses in the area and the urban grain*

*The quality of the materials*

#### **The London Plan Policies (Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP) 2016)**

In March 2016, the Mayor published (i.e. adopted) the Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP). From this date, the FALP are operative as formal alterations to the London Plan (the Mayor's spatial development strategy) and form part of the development plan for Greater London.

The London Plan has been updated to incorporate the Further Alterations. It also incorporates the Revised Early Minor Alterations to the London Plan (REMA), which were published in October 2013 and March 2015.

#### Policy 7.8: Heritage Assets and Archaeology

##### *Strategic*

*A. London's heritage assets and historic environment, including listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and other natural and historic landscapes, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields, scheduled monuments, archaeological*

*remains and memorials should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be taken into account.*

*B. Development should incorporate measures that identify, record, interpret, protect and, where appropriate, present the site's archaeology.*

*Planning decisions*

*C. Development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.*

*D. Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.*

#### Policy 7.9: Heritage-led regeneration

*Strategic*

*A. Regeneration schemes should identify and make use of heritage assets and reinforce the qualities that make them significant so they can help stimulate environmental, economic and community regeneration.*

*This includes buildings, landscape features, views, Blue Ribbon Network and public realm.*

*Planning decisions*

*B. The significance of heritage assets should be assessed when development is proposed and schemes designed so that the heritage significance is recognised both in their own right and as catalysts for regeneration. Wherever possible heritage assets (including buildings at risk) should be repaired, restored and put to a suitable and viable use that is consistent with their conservation and the establishment and maintenance of sustainable communities and economic vitality.*

### **London Borough of Camden**

Camden Council's Local Policy (2010) has the following policy which is relevant to the proposals outlined in this report:

CS14 - Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage

The Council will ensure that Camden's places and buildings are attractive, safe and easy to use by:

- a) requiring development of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character;
- b) preserving and enhancing Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens;
- c) promoting high quality landscaping and works to streets and public spaces;
- d) seeking the highest standards of access in all buildings and places and requiring schemes to be designed to be inclusive and accessible.

Camden Council's Development Policies (2010) has the following policies which are relevant to the proposals outlined in this report:

#### DP24 – Securing high quality design

The Council will require all developments, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, to be of the highest standard of design and will expect developments to consider:

- a) character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings;
- b) the character and proportions of the existing building, where alterations and extensions are proposed;
- c) the quality of materials to be used;
- d) the provision of visually interesting frontages at street level;
- e) the appropriate location for building services equipment;
- f) existing natural features, such as topography and trees;
- g) the provision of appropriate hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatments;
- h) the provision of appropriate amenity space; and
- i) accessibility.

#### DP25 – Conserving Camden's heritage

##### Conservation Areas

In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will:

- a) take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;
- b) only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area;
- c) prevent the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area where this harms the character or appearance of the conservation area, unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention;
- d) not permit development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character and appearance of that conservation area; and
- e) preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of a conservation area and which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.

##### Listed Buildings

To preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will:

- e) prevent the total or substantial demolition of a listed building unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention;
- f) only grant consent for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building; and
- g) not permit development that it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building.

## Appendix III - List of Plates and Endnotes

### List of Plates

1. John Roque's 1746 map
2. Regent's Park plan 1812 (Westminster Archive T136 (440))
3. Regent's Park plan 1826 (Westminster Archive T136 (64))
4. 1870 Ordnance Survey Map
5. Original Plot of the White House, 1870 Ordnance Survey Map
6. Demolished Buildings, 1935 Ordnance Survey Map
7. Front Elevation, 1935 (Camden Archives)
8. The White House, 1955 (This Way Forward)
9. Ground Floor Plan, 1936 (The Builder)
10. Entrance Hall, 1936 (The Architect & Building News)
11. The Restaurant, 1936 (The Builder)
12. Swimming Pool, 1936 (The Architect & Building News, Supplement)
13. Basement Plan, 1936 (Camden Archives)
14. Proposed conversion of the existing restaurant into flats and restaurant resiting, June 1953 (Camden Archives)
15. Scheme 2 - Proposed conversion of ground floor west and south-west wings, September 1953 (Camden Archives)
16. Ground Floor Plan, 1972 (Camden Archives)
17. Ground Floor Lounge Bar in the south-east wing, 1974 (Camden Archives)
18. Basement plan, 1972 (Camden Archives)
19. Existing Ground Floor Plan, 2000 (Camden Planning)
20. Current Ground-Floor Plan (Mackay + Partners Ltd.)
21. Southern Wings (Insall, 2017)
22. End Elevation, Central East Wing (Insall, 2017)
23. Entrance Hall (Insall, 2017)
24. Service Staircase, South-West Wing (Insall, 2018)
25. Restaurant, South-East Wing (Insall, 2018)
26. Bar, Central West Wing (Insall, 2018)
27. Restaurant, Central East Wing (Insall, 2017)
28. Private Dining Room, Central East Wing (Insall, 2017)
29. Fitness Centre, Basement (Insall, 2018)
30. Albany Room, Basement (Insall, 2018)



## Endnotes

- 1 Colvin, H., 'A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840', London: 1995
- 2 Summerson 1935
- 3 Mansbridge M. John Nash A Complete Catalogue 1991
- 4 Bridget, C., and Pevsner, N., 'The Buildings of England: London 4: North', London: 2002
- 5 Pevsner, 'The Buildings of England' p. 382
- 6 Parkinson, L., 'This Way Forward: A resume of building construction and civil engineering during seventy-five eventful years', 1955
- 7 Ibid p. 24
- 8 Ibid
- 9 Ibid and [http://www.regentpalacehotel.co.uk/the\\_melia\\_white\\_house\\_hotel.asp](http://www.regentpalacehotel.co.uk/the_melia_white_house_hotel.asp)
- 10 [http://www.regentpalacehotel.co.uk/the\\_melia\\_white\\_house\\_hotel.asp](http://www.regentpalacehotel.co.uk/the_melia_white_house_hotel.asp)
- 11 Historic England. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 2 – Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (2015) p3
- 12 Historic England. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 2 – Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (2015) p5

