

23-24 Montague Street
London
WC1B 5BH

Design, Access & Heritage
Statement

In support of Listed Building Consent
For Alterations to Layout Approved Under
2017/0044/L, at 1st Floor Level



Introduction

This design and access statement is submitted in support of Listed Building Consent for works at 23-24 Montague Street.

Specifically, it is proposed to alter the layout from the approved Listed Building Consent 2017/0044/L at 1st floor level, to meet fire safety requirements.

Application History

Listed Building Consent 2017/0044/L was granted in May 2017 to carry out external and internal alterations to the properties, in association with the change of use from hotel (Class C1) to 6 x apartments (Class C3), as per Planning Consent 2016/7061/P.

Site and Planning Context

The properties are Grade II Listed, and lie within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. They form part of a terrace of 18 houses, built c 1803-6 by James Burton.

Nos. 23-24 Montague Street were Listed in 1969, together with nos. 21-22, 25-27 and 28-29 Montague Street. The list description mentions the round-arched entrance doors with reeded door frames or sidelights with patterned fanlights (No.24), cast iron railings and cast iron balconies to first floor windows.

Within the terrace, each house is 3-windows wide, with a strong rhythm of window and door openings, which create a sense of homogeneity despite slight variations in detailing.

The existing casement windows to the front elevation are not original, and consent was granted in the aforementioned applications, to replace them with traditional, single sash windows.



Site Plan

Existing Building

In the early part of the 20th Century, openings were formed through the Party Wall between nos. 23 and 24, at basement, ground floor and second floor levels. The wall at ground level between the front room of 24 and the entrance hall was also opened up to form one open space.

In 1933, further substantial alterations were carried out. The combined room at the front of 24 on the ground floor was retained and the upper floors were subdivided and basins were installed in all the rooms.

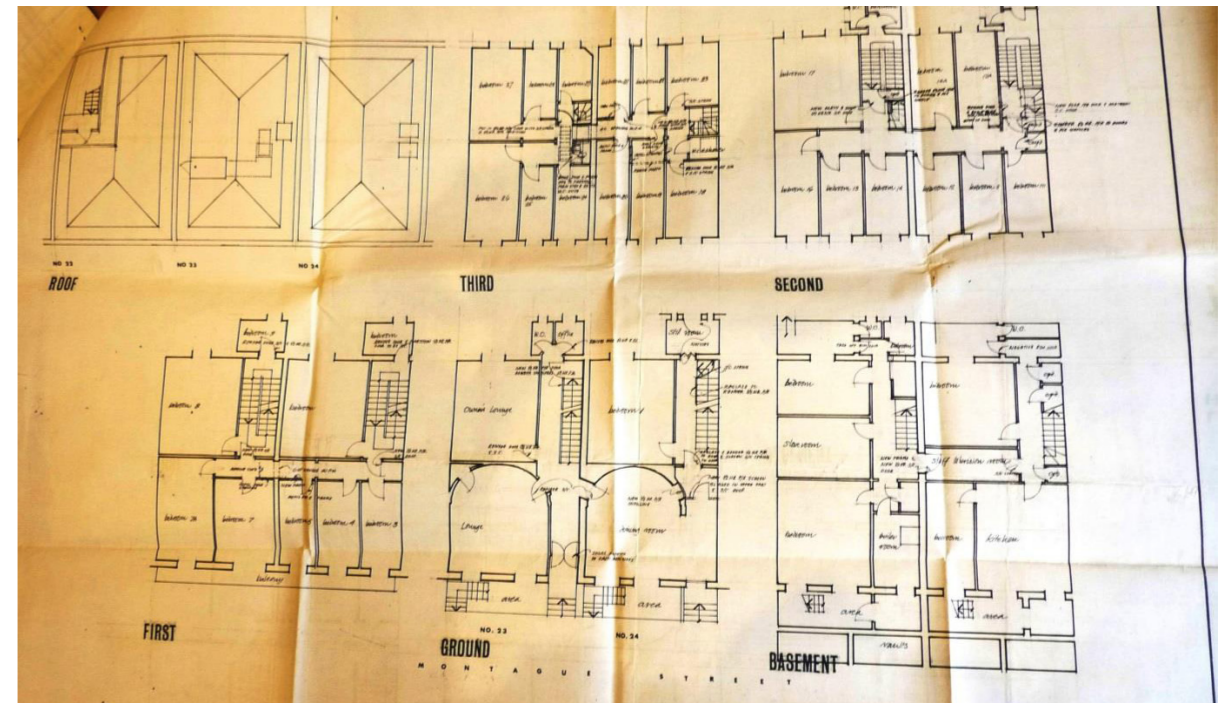
Alterations carried out in the 1970s introduced partitions that cut across the historic decorative plaster work and skirtings. In 1976, 23 Montague Street was modified to incorporate a lift which encroaches into the rear room arrangement of no. 23 Montague Street.

As summarised in the Heritage Statement submitted as part of application 2017/0044/L, the changes throughout the century, reflected changing standards from a basic hostel to a moderate quality hotel, with basins in all rooms, lift access and lounges and dining rooms on the lower floors.

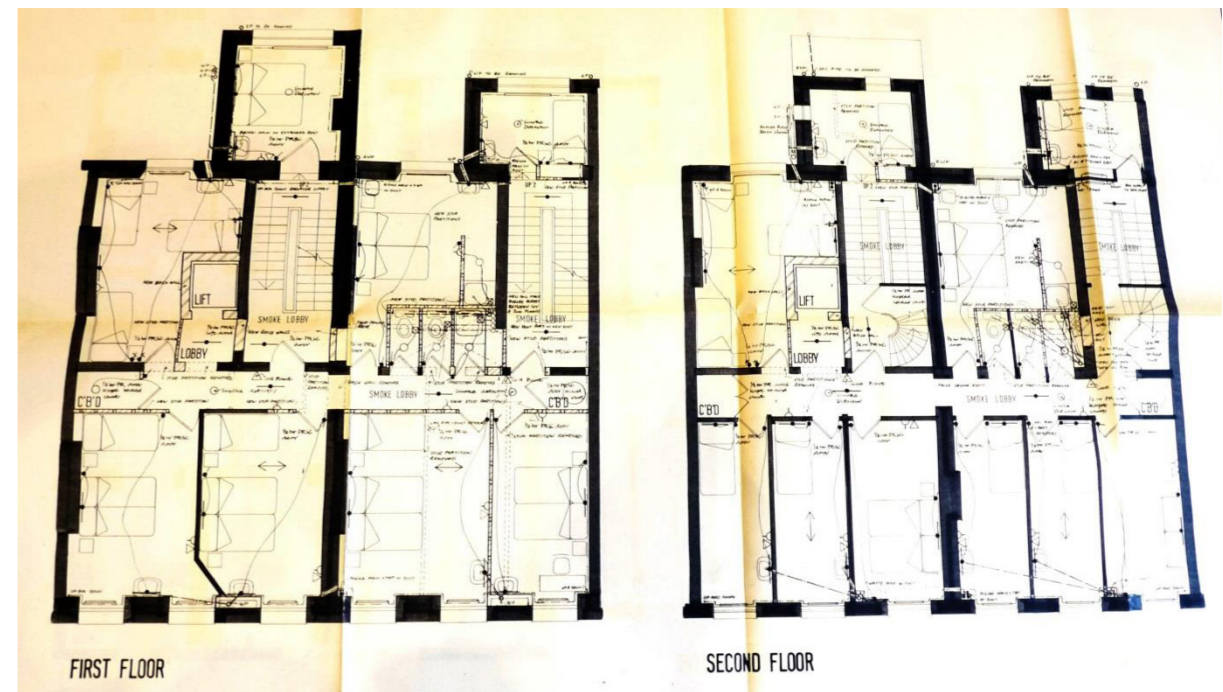
The consequence of this was the formation of lateral corridors and the subdivision of many of the larger rooms.

This contributes to the loss of a sense of hierarchy between spaces, which is exacerbated by the loss of many of the architectural features such as cornices.

The only internal doors that remain are to the ground floor front rooms - all other doors have been replaced with modern flush fire doors.



Historic Lease Map - 1960s, Before Insertion of Passenger Lift



Historic Lease Map - late 1970s, Showing Passenger Lift

Development Proposals

Change to Approved Layout

The approved layout included the construction of new partitions in the rear principal room, to form a lobby into the 1st floor flat, plus a bathroom.

During the course of the detailed design, we realised that we needed to form a protected lobby, off the staircase. The new layout therefore flips the approved bathroom and lobby positions, to create this. The amount of partitioning is no different from that previously approved.

The lobby needs to be fire rated, and the doors off it to be fire doors. The approved plan suggested that the bathroom be built as a 'pod' in order to allow the main room to be read as a principal space. However, to maintain the fire rating of the lobby, it would be necessary to extend the partitions to the ceiling.

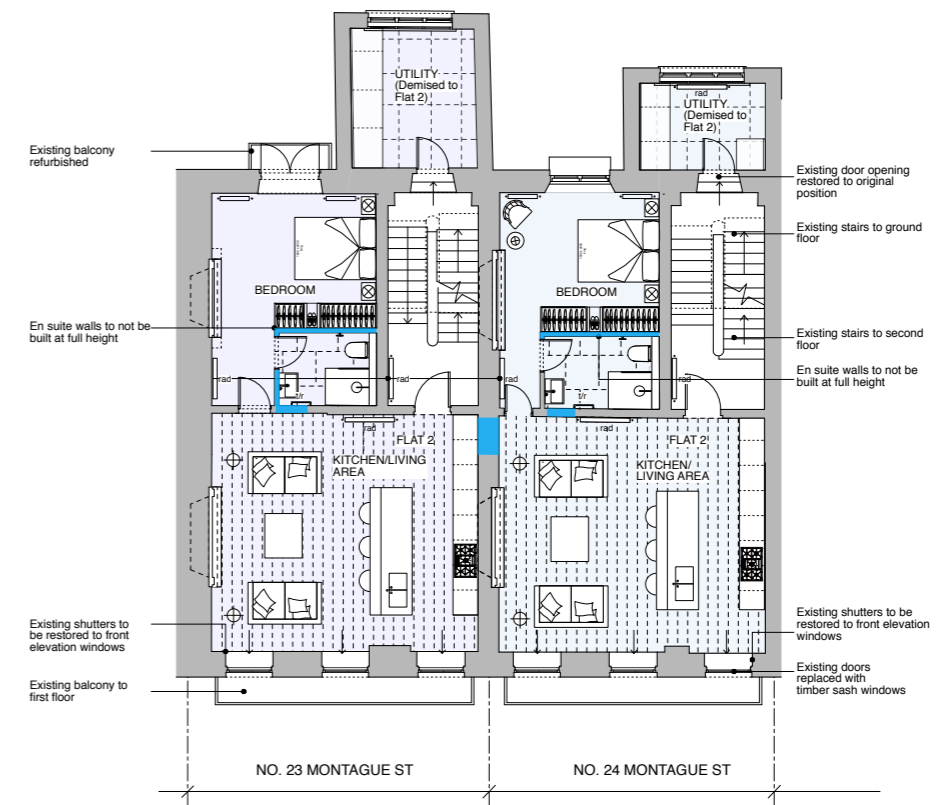
We therefore propose to build a secondary ceiling below the main space, and to build the partitions up to it. This will allow the cornice (if it exists), and the original lathe and plaster ceiling to remain unaltered. The new partitions will abut the secondary ceiling, thereby providing the fire rating required.

Use and Amount

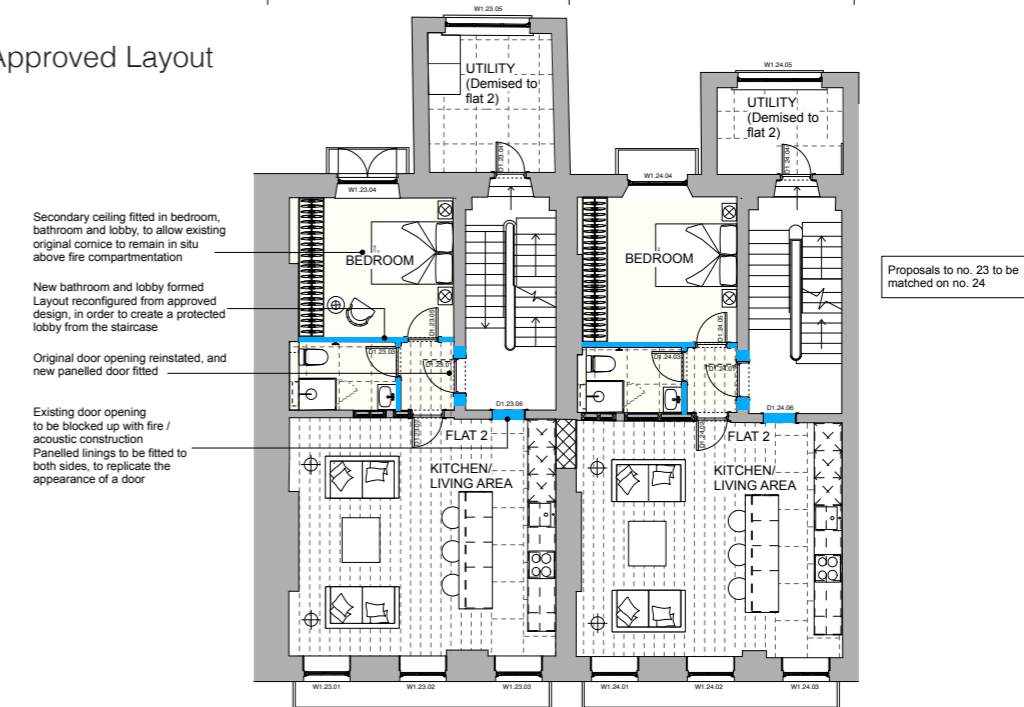
The use of the 1st floor will remain as per the approved design, a 1-bed apartment. The area of the flat will be unchanged from the approved scheme.

Internal Appearance

Any architraves, cornices and skirting details will be retained. Missing features will be reinstated to match. The door openings will have new architraves to match the existing, and the new timber door leaves will be panelled to match the original doors at ground floor level.



Approved Layout



Proposed Layout

Heritage Statement

The approved scheme was supported by Council, for a number of reasons:

- The removal of lateral connections - thus restoring the hierachial significance of the scheme, with main rooms being clearly preserved at ground and 1st floors
- The removal of inappropriate subdivisions, to reinstate the significance of individual rooms
- The retention and repair of original achitectural features
- The creation of a viable and sustainable residential use in accordance with the original buildings and objectives, of the NPPF.

The proposed variations do not rescind these benefits. They do, however, ensure the design meets the building regulations and fire safety requirements.

Adding a secondary ceiling, below the original ceiling and cornices (if they exist), will retain the legibility of the historic plan form.

The 1st floor is currently arranged as corridors, bedrooms and bathrooms, so the new proposals are a vast improvement upon this unsympathetic position.

We therefore consider that these alterations will cause no harm to the historic interest of the building, and that the work will enhance and preserve the heritage features.

The rooms at 1st floor level are particularly tall - over 3.7m tall, although the rear window stops well short of this height, at 2.685m. The insertion of a secondary ceiling to the rear room will therefore have no impact on the window or surrounding detailing.

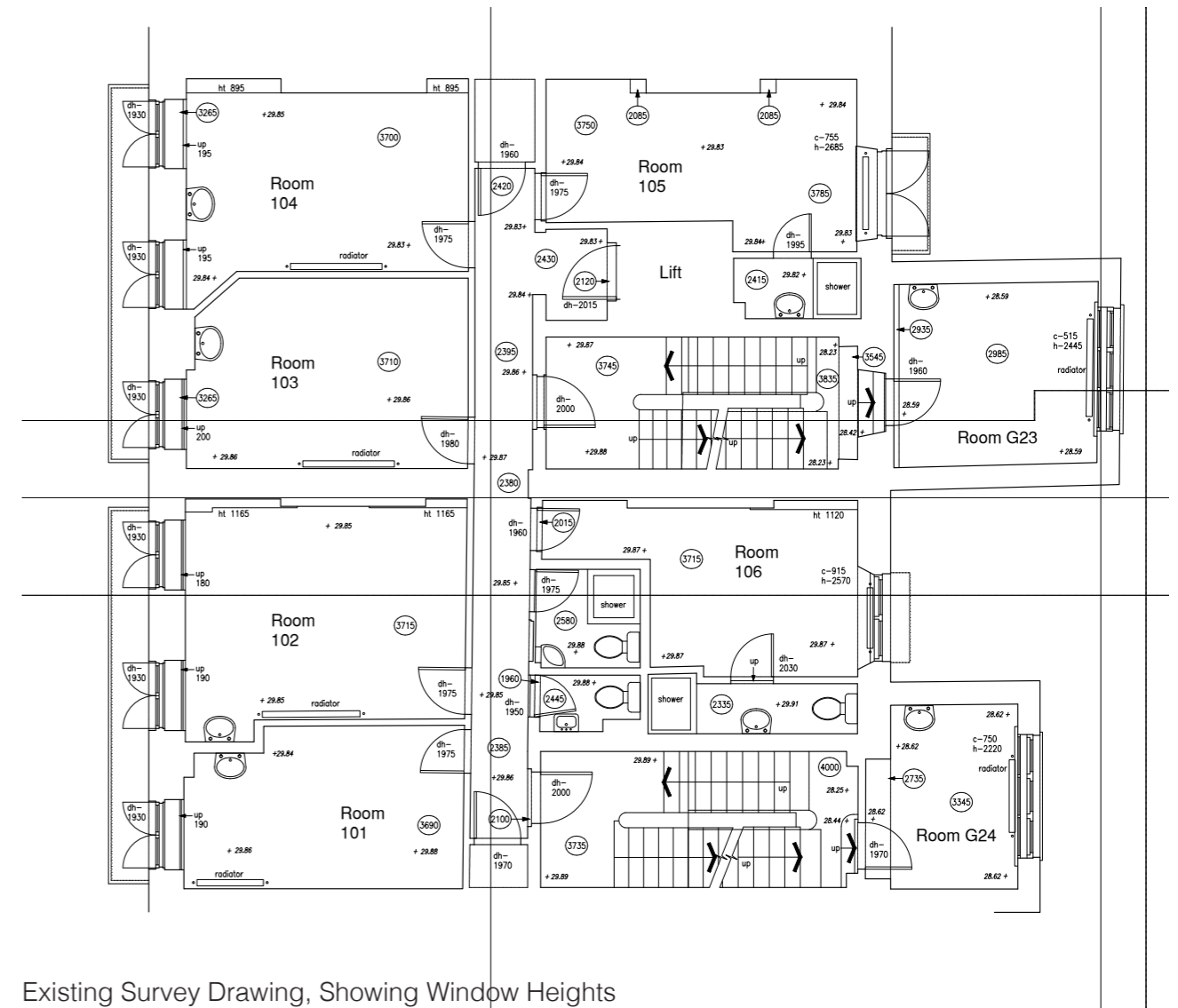
Conclusion

This application is for Listed Building Consent to vary the approved layout at 1st floor level.

The principle of subdivion of the rooms, and the addition of internal bathrooms have previously been approved. The change is a minor variation to the consented scheme, specifically:

- The addition of a secondary ceiling, to which the partitions may be built to, and the existing cornice and ceiling above to be left intact
- The exact position of the new partitions is proposed to be revised, to form a protected fire lobby off the main staircase. The number and type of partitions will not change.

We therefore consider that these changes accord with the NPPF and Policies CS14 and DP25, and trust that Listed Building Consent will be granted.



Existing Survey Drawing, Showing Window Heights