planning & Heritage Statement for

115 ALBERT STREET
NW1 7NB

Rev 0: 25th June 2018
Rev A: 19th October 2018
Rev B: 21st January 2019

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Introduction

Ben Smith Architecture have been appointed by the owners of 115 Albert Street to refurbish the property and adapt it to their updated needs.

The Building

The terraced property at 115 Albert Street is grade II listed and is included within the Camden Town Conservation Area. The house is built over five compact floors including a basement level, among a row of dwellings built in the late 19th century with raised entrances and regular separation across two bay windows.

Onto Albert Street, the terraces have rendered ground floors with stock brick above and with articulation of ground floor and first floor with traditional metal railings. Additionally, the majority of dwellings on the terrace, including No.115, have a mansard roofs with two dormer windows at third floor level.

Listing

The English Heritage London terrace houses 1660-1860 listing section guide highlights that frequently a house may have been altered or acquired later additions which can have a damaging impact. This is undoubtedly the case of No.115 Albert Street. Additionally, the guidance highlights the need to weigh the case for retaining alterations against the benefits of reinstating the overall integrity and the wider group as a whole.

115 Albert Street underwent a major refurbishment in the 1970s, before the current owners acquired the property, and the rear elevation in particular currently illustrates an irregular fenestration with an off-center dormer extension and a glazed extension at basement and ground floor level which function as two separate living spaces. These works, in particular the rear ground floor extension and basement level adaptation, are of poor quality. As a result the fabric shows some signs of water damage, in particular at lower ground floor and roof level, and all the original windows at the rear were replaced by metal-framed sash windows. The proposal described below aims to respectfully adapt the interior layout of the building to adapt to the client's needs, and reinstate or retain many of the items which enhance the historic character of the building.

Scale 1:2000

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The Works

The proposed works pertain only to the interior and rear of the property; the existing front elevation will remain unchanged. The works we describe below are mindful of the character of the listed building, and aim not only to not harm it's historic value and attributes, but remedy much of the harm done in previous renovations.

The applicant's family has lived at the property for many years, and as the family grows they hope to adapt their home to their new needs. The aim of the proposal is to:

1. Reconfigure and improve the lower ground floor layout to create a self-contained studio that would remain connected to the main house above.

2. Replace the existing single-storey rear extension with one of high-quality construction and performance; improve the habitability of the ground floor spaces, and their connectivity to the garden.

3. Lightly adjust the internal layout of the building by reconfiguring the first and second floor layouts to introduce bathrooms/toilets at every level, and create a better distribution of the main rooms.

4. Rationalise the roof elevation at the rear by creating a mansard roof extension with two dormer windows to replicate the arrangement at the front of the property. This would also allow for the creation a shower room at landing level to serve the third floor bedroom.

5. Improve the overall aesthetics of the rear elevation by reinstating the timber sash windows to the original design.

Proposed rear elevation
Scale 1:100

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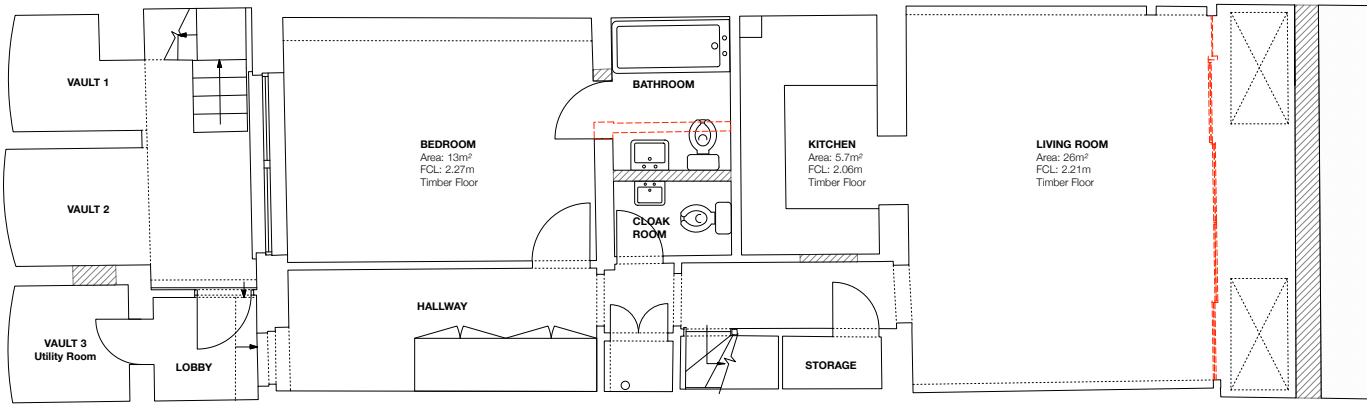
1. Lower Ground Floor

The lower ground floor is currently laid out as a semi-self contained studio, with a bedroom, kitchenette and bathroom. It currently has direct access to a sunken courtyard that connects with the main garden at ground floor level. The current layout and extension were most likely carried out during the 1970's refurbishment works, and show signs of aging and decay due to the low quality of materials used.

The brief called for the re-configuration of the basement, by removing the courtyard and existing stepped access to the upper garden, to create and a physical and visual separation between the self-contained studio and main house above. This would be achieved by removing the existing low-quality glazing, pushing the internal wall back to include the current courtyard space, and installing 2no. walk-on rooflights above to bring natural daylight into the room. In addition to this the internal layout of the lower ground floor would be reconfigured to create a new en-suite. This self-contained studio intends to create flexibility for the family, as their child grows up and is granted greater independence.

Existing low quality glazed doors onto lower ground floor courtyard

Lower ground floor courtyard leading to garde



Proposed Lower Ground Floor
Scale 1:100

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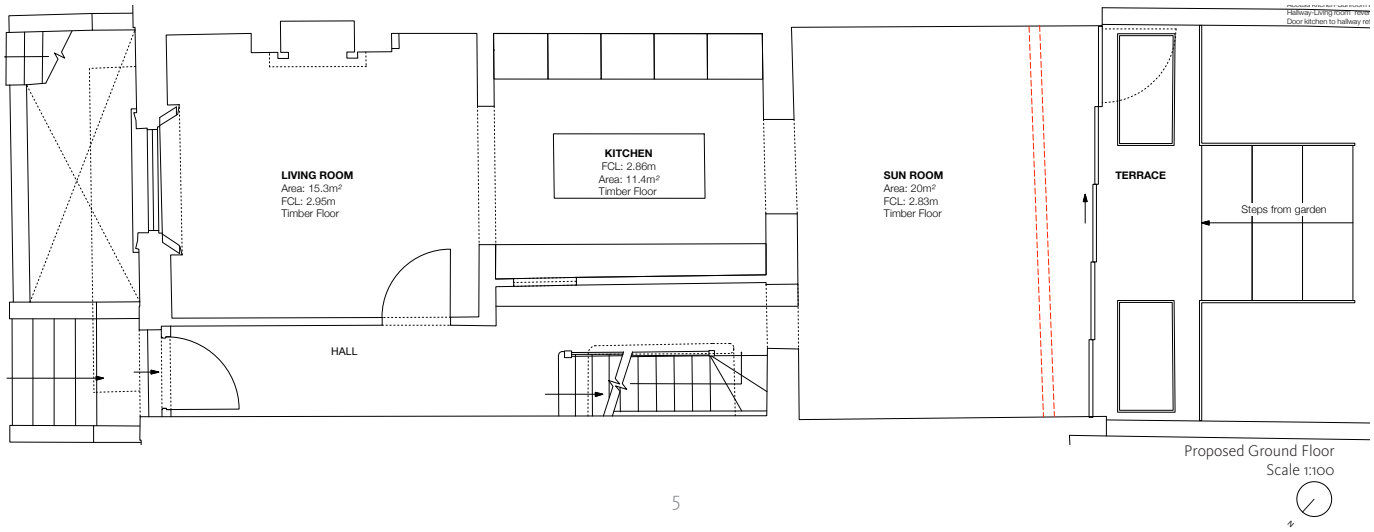
2. Ground Floor

At ground floor level, the scheme proposes to marginally extend the existing single-storey rear extension to bring it in line with the neighbours' at either side, and replace the currently poor-performing glazed windows from the previous refurbishment with a new thermally efficient glazing system. The roof of this new single-storey extension would have a green roof to improve the thermal performance of the structure but also create a view from the snug/ study at first floor level. The existing timber terrace and lateral steps that lead from the ground floor terrace onto the garden would be replaced and reconfigured to create a better connection between the interior of the house and the garden.

Internally, the current layout of the ground floor makes for difficult navigation of the spaces and poor connection to the garden. During the 1970's refurbishment work, an internal arched opening was created between the kitchen and sun room extension. Whilst this helps create a visual link between the kitchen and the garden, it makes for difficult circulation and flow between the spaces. As part of the works we propose to square off this current arched opening, and to create a passage that will physically connect the kitchen in it's current central location with the living room at the front, the sunroom and garden at the rear. Because the existing arch is not original to the house, it's replacement by a full-height, squared off (non-arched) opening would not detract from the historic character of the building

View of low quality single storey ground floor rear extension

Non-original arched opening between kitchen and sun room which difficults movement through the ground floor



Proposed Ground Floor
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3. First and Second Floors

The current internal arrangement of the first and second floors shows:

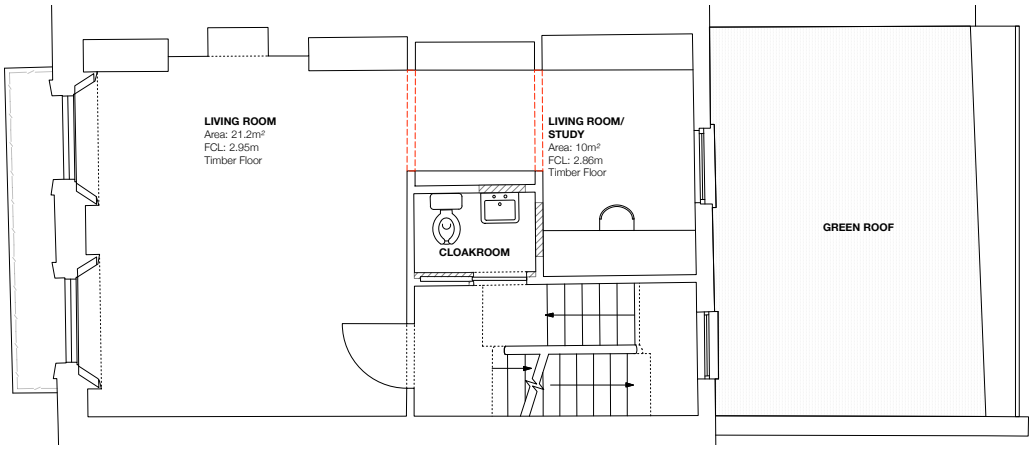
- a large habitable room at the front that spans the whole width of the building
- a small central lobby, directly accessible from the stairwell
- a bathroom located on the centre half of the plan, off-set against the party wall, accessible from the lobby
- a smaller habitable room at the rear, also accessible from this central lobby space.

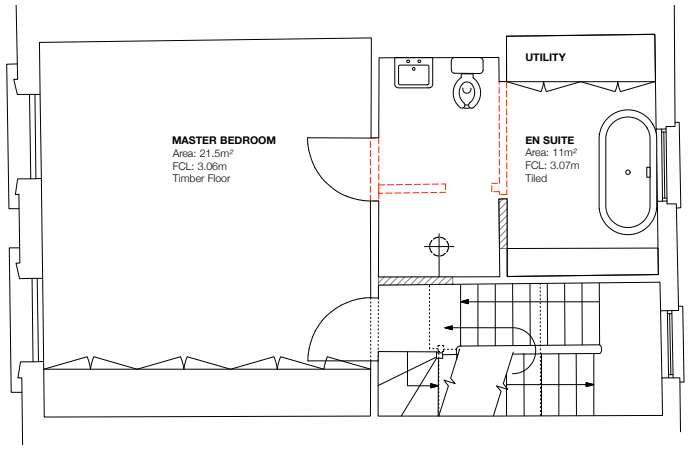
This current arrangement of the plan would not have been original from when the house was first constructed, but would have been most likely created when previous owners decided to modernise the property and install sanitary ware facilities in the upper floors. However, although this distribution does ensure bathrooms are conveniently located at (almost) every level, the bathroom and lobby layout sacrifices valuable internal space for circulation, which could otherwise be given back to the rooms

As part of this application we propose to do away with the lobby space on both floors, to rationalise the circulation and create more generous habitable rooms.

At first floor level the bathroom would be brought to the centre of the plan (away from the boundary wall), and it would be accessible from the stairwell, minimising circulation space. This new location of the bathroom allows the creation of an L-shaped living space that visually connects the front and rear of the property, with a formal living room at the front and a study/snug at the back. The new green roof of the single storey extension would create visual continuity of these rooms with the garden. The green roof itself would only be accessible for maintenance purposes, through the existing opening on the rear elevation.

At second floor level, we propose to reinstate the secondary door that used to lead from the bedroom, and use it to access a new master en-suite in the centre and rear of the plan. Again, this would allow us to get rid of the central lobby, and maximise the special potential of the room.





Proposed First (top) and Second (bottom) Floor
Scale 1:100

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4. Third Floor and Roof

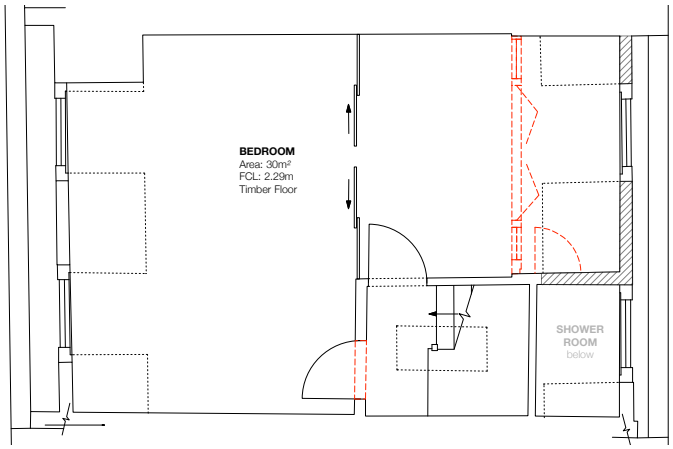
The current arrangement at third floor level shows a mansard roof with two dormers at the front onto Albert Street, with a small (impractical) balcony onto the rear accessible through a set of glazed timber doors, and a mansard extension across half of the plan that hosts a water cylinder.

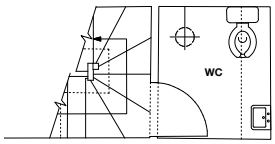
Here we propose to omit the terrace and glazed access and replace it with a mansard roof that extends across the whole width of the property, with two new dormer roofs to match the arrangement at the front of the building. This roof extension would allow us to recondition the current storage space accessible from the second-to-third-floor landing by making this into a compact shower room that would predominantly serve the third floor bedroom.

Internally this would create a larger bedroom upstairs. We propose to install a lightweight sliding screen structure across the room, to allow this to occasionally be split into two separate bedrooms for guests. The sliding screen system itself would be a lightwell structure, such as Shoji-style Japanese screens (made of light materials such as timber and paper or fabric), fixed at the top and sides only, to serve as a temporary physical/privacy separation rather than as built-in partition in itself. This lightwell screening system would touch the walls and ceiling lightly to avoid damaging or altering the historic fabric of the building.

Existing mansard roof and dormer extension to front to be replicated at the rear

Example of type of lightweigh partition proposed for third storey bedroom





Proposed Third Plan (left) and landing WC plans
Scan 1:100

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5. Glazing to Rear

In addition to the work described above, which aims primarily to improve the functionality and practicality of the home, the application proposes to replace the current non-original, poor quality, metal-framed sash windows with new timber sashes to replicate the style of the original. It must be noted that although the windows at the rear themselves are not original, and were changed various decades ago without Listed Building consent, the openings and brick arches are original.

A specialist window manufacturer, with experience in creating and replacing windows in historic settings, will be appointed to supply the new fenestration. Because the original windows are no longer in place, we would suggest surveying and replicating the windows of the neighbouring properties, in particular No.117 Albert Street, which were replaced following getting Listed Building Consent in 2016.

View of rear elevation showing low quality single storey ground floor extension, and non-traditional sash windows to upper floor

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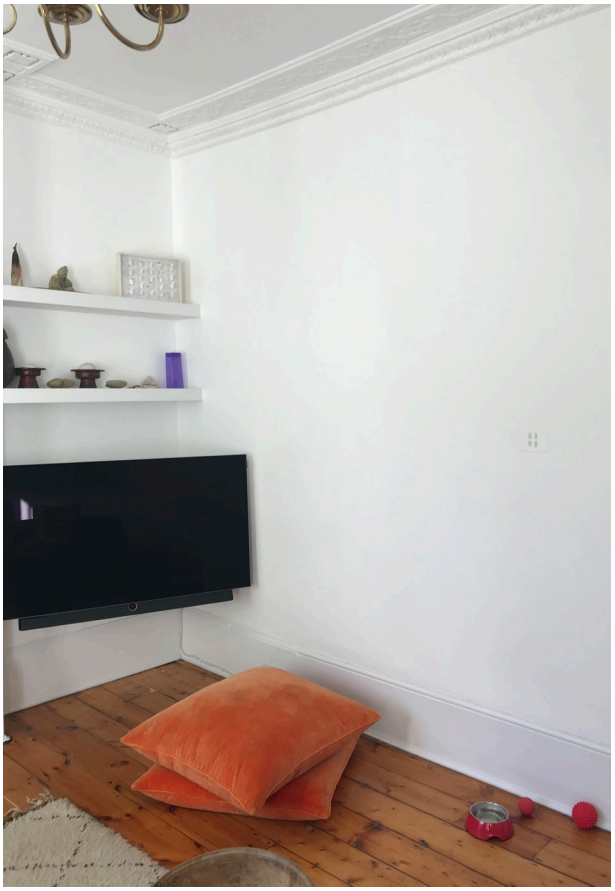
Materials

Externally, the scheme proposes to create a new dormer to the rear (in Welsh slate if possible), replace the ground floor extension, and replace and fill the basement glazing and courtyard. The roof and walls will be built to match the existing, in colour, texture and materiality. Wherever relevant we propose to use traditional techniques, such as soot washing, to tone down the new brickwork on the extension and match the overall muted appearance of the existing building where the brickwork has acquired a patina of age. The dormer windows will be made to match the existing at the front of the property; the new glazing of the rear ground floor extension and basement courtyard will be new timber double glazed folding sliding units.

Internally, we propose to retain the existing timber floors wherever possible. Where new partitions are put in and rooms are enlarged/partitioned, we propose to replace the floors completely, with new reclaimed timber floor boards to match the existing as much as possible, to ensure a consistent look throughout the room. Any cornices and skirtings will be retained, or new will be installed to match the existing where required.

As mentioned above we value and appreciate the historic interest of the building, so any replacements and additions would be considerate to ensure it's historic value is retained.



Original covings, skirtings and architraves to be retained or replicated throughout
Original timber floor boards to be retains and reused as necessary to work with new layouts

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Services
Currently, all the incoming supplies (electricity, water and gas) are located at basement level, with a boiler located in the utility room at 1st floor level, and a water tank at third floor level.

As part of the works we propose to split the services into the property, so that the self-contained flat and upper floors are run separately, as means of futureproofing the house.

We propose one of the vaults at the front of the property is conditioned to become a utility room to serve the self-contained flat. The utility room for the main house would be located at second floor level, in a specially designated service cupboard in the en-suite bathroom.

Amount
The existing dwelling has an internal floor area of approximately 244 sqm. The works proposed, with the minor extension at basement level and the dormer addition at third floor level would increase the area by 11 sqm, to create a total area of approximately 255 sqm.

Landscaping
It is proposed to replace the asphalt roof on the existing extension with a visually appealing and environmentally considered green roof. Additionally, the steps toward the garden are reconfigured to improve access with the omission of a courtyard below and the opportunity of further planting.

Access
Access to the main house and the basement is from Albert Street. There is currently a separate access from the street to the basement and to the main house; these entrances will remain unchanged.

Refuse & Recycling
The refuse and recycling route will remain unaffected by the works.

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