APPENDIX 4

RESPONSES TO MR. BAXTER'S COMMENTS

Comments on the proposal made by Mr. Baxter in his e-mail of 10 April 2018, (see ***Appendix 2***), are repeated in this Appendix against the various elements of the proposed changes to the building, together with corresponding responses.

APPEAL AGAINST REFUSAL OF LISTED BUILDING CONSENT FOR WORKS AT 31 DOWNSHIRE HILL PROPOSED IN OWNER'S REQUEST SUBMITTED 4 FEBRUARY 2018
APPENDIX 4

RESPONSES TO MR. BAXTER'S COMMENTS

1. Basement Back Room Floor

Mr. Baxter's comment:

"The raising of the floor, quite apart from the total loss of the fabric of the floor itself, will require the loss of the hearthstone and the removal of the surrounding cupboards and will affect the timber partition dividing the back room from the passage. It will also entail the insertion of an impermeable modern floor which is likely to drive moisture into the walls where it will either cause rising damp or be trapped in the brickwork by the damp course."

Response

1.1. I pointed out to Mr. Baxter in my e-mail dated 10 April 2018, (see ***Appendix 2***), that 'It is not proposed that the floor be raised, rather that the corridor level be lowered to correspond with the finished floor level of the back room.' The new finished floor level will give a minimum ceiling height of 2,220 mm which enables a cooker hood to be accommodated and ensures that standard height kitchen units installed against the back wall will not encroach above the window cill.

1.2. The proposal involves removal of the timber partition in order to combine the back room and the corridor and removal of the alcove cupboards because, being shallow, they offer little storage space and would impose an unwelcome constraint on kitchen design. For further comments on the timber partition and alcove cupboards see below.

1.3. There is no hearthstone as such. What appears to be a hearthstone is in fact lime mortar, placed on bricks, skimmed with a layer of variable thickness, some 2 to 5 mm, of darker, denser, harder material which I would characterise as artificial stone, see photo no. ***Hearthstone 1*** which shows a piece of cracked mortar from the 'hearthstone'. The present imitation hearthstone is badly cracked in one area

and has a thin sand/cement skim over another area, see photo no. ***Hearthstone 2***. Nothing of historic value will be lost when the 'hearthstone' brickwork is covered by the new stone floor.

1.4. Regarding the partition dividing the back room from the passage I advised Mr. Baxter in my e-mail of 10 April 2018, (see ***Appendix 2***), that 'the proposal involves removal of this partition'. Examination of the doorway in the corridor reveals rebates for hinges, see photo nos. ***Basement 1 and 2*** and for a lock keep, see photo no. ***Basement 3***, revealing that a door once hung in this doorway. The door which presently serves the back room fits the corridor doorway exactly, including the angle between the top and the side edges which is out of square by 3 degrees as a result of building subsidence. From this we may safely conclude that the back room door once hung in the corridor, also that the door was trimmed to accommodate the subsidence and later moved to its present position. The present hinges are replacements since they are wider than the original rebates. From consideration of this doorway it becomes clear that the partition separating the corridor from the back room did not feature in the house as built.

1.5. The partition between the corridor and back room is painted on the corridor side, see photo nos. ***Partition 01, 02, 03 and 04***, but was covered with hardboard on the back room side, see photo no. ***Partition 05***. This hardboard was in place when I purchased the house and when Mr. Baxter visited. With a view to establishing the construction of the partition I removed a small rectangle of the hardboard, see photo no. ***Partition 06***. This established that the panel was unfinished on the room side. I then removed all the hardboard exposing the room side completely, see photo no. ***Partition 07***. The suppliers stamping of the hardboard shows 'LLOYD MEDIUM? BOARD MADE IN ENGLAND', see photo no. ***Partition 16***. With the room side of the partition exposed its construction becomes clear. The partition has been made from wall panelling taken from another building. (In this house wood panelling has been used for partition walls but not as a dressing for masonry walls.) Three major separate pieces of panelling can be identified in the partition by reference to long panel boards placed side by side without glueing or careful fitting. Some filler pieces of wood have been added at the doorway end. Careful examination of the three panels indicates that originally they were not part of the same panel, however, all elements of the partition would originally have been

installed against a wall and the room side of the panel is unfinished and uneven because it was not intended to be seen. This explains why the back room side of the partition was covered with hardboard and gives a clue as to when the partition would have been installed in its present location since the earliest appearance of hardboard is the 1920's. Notwithstanding that the pieces of panelling from which this partition has been assembled are old, there should be no objection to removal of the partition since its construction and installation would appear to be 20th century and its quality is much inferior to original panelling in the building which appears in photo nos. ***Panelling 1 through 7***.

1.6. It is a requirement of the Building Regulations that design of the new solid floor incorporates an impermeable damp proof membrane, see image no. ***Floor 6*** which is the relevant extract from the Building Regulations. Omission of such damp proofing can cause problems with timber in direct contact with the floor, see photo no. ***Pantry 2***, which shows the effect of damp on the existing timber partition wall of the modified pantry. The existing electro-osmotic damp course will prevent rising damp in the walls and dampness below the damp course can be expected whether or not the floor is permeable. The front basement room has had an impermeable membrane of the type proposed for the last 35 years and provides a practical demonstration that moisture is prevented from rising above the damp course or membrane where it might otherwise cause problems.

Mr. Baxter's comment:

"If, as you suggest, the floor was altered in the 1950's to maintain the room's proportions after the ceiling subsided following the construction of the mid-century pub next door, it would surely have been done in concrete.

It does not appear at all definite that, in response to a visually imperceptible settlement in the ceiling of the basement, a 1950's occupant might have pulled up an existing stone floor, dug down by at least a foot (to allow joists etc.), then installed a complicated new suspended timber floor including a hearthstone, four inches below the prevailing floor level. And if the timber floor is not a 1950's response to the mid-century pub, its age is completely unknown."

Response:

1.7. I had suggested that the timber floor had been laid with a finished floor level 4 inches below the level of the earlier solid floor because subsidence had caused the chimney breast side of the ceiling to drop some 6 inches at the lowest point (as checked by laser level). However, I doubt that it was subsidence that prompted replacement of the floor. It is much more likely that the original solid floor was replaced as a consequence of installing a drain beneath the floor. This drain would not have been part of the original house as the Downshire Hill sewer would not have existed then. Drainage at the back of the house would have been directed via a gully to the river Fleet. Trenching of the floor in the back room to a depth of some 700 mm would have been necessary to install the drain. Subsequent restoration of the floor would then have been necessary and a timber floor was selected, probably on the basis of cost, ease of installation and compliance with building regulations. Construction of the floor comprises a lean concrete sub-base, bricks placed on a slate damp course, timber bearers placed on the bricks and joists across the bearers, see photo no. ***Floor 4***. Slates and bricks are clearly second hand and would have been obtained at little or no cost. Joists are only 100 mm deep as they are well supported along their length.

1.8. Selection of a ventilated timber floor was a mistake because the ventilation required for its preservation makes the back room too cold for year round habitation. (The large double radiator is in no way capable of maintaining a temperature of 18 deg C when the external temperature is -1 deg C). It is the failure to restore the floor to its original solid masonry construction that is the harm to historic fabric, and it is a mistake that needs to be corrected for the room to return to year round beneficial use.

1.9. As to the date the floor of the back basement room was constructed I would first mention that when I moved into the house in 1977 the appearance of the floor indicated that it was recent. This was evident from the width of the boards (120 mm), the average gap between boards (2 mm), the absence of cracks in the boards and the general lack of distressing on the surface. With a view to being more specific about date I have taken up one board and report the following:

1.9.1. This board has not been lifted previously, witness the single set of nail holes in the joists, see photo no. ***Floor 2***. This board is white pine, 21 mm thick, the standard thickness of a modern 1 inch planed all round board.

1.9.2. A comparison of an original floorboard with the lifted board follows:

	Original Floorboard	**Lifted Floorboard**
Width	160 mm	120 mm
Thickness	18 mm	21 mm
Material	Red pine	White pine
Underside	Sawn	Planed
Top surface	Rippled	Smooth
Evidence of worm	Some	None
Edge water staining	Some (due to scrubbing)	None

1.9.3. The above differences, and <u>in particular the planed underside</u>, indicate that the lifted board is 20th century. Other pointers to a 20th century origin are:

a) 21 mm is the standard thickness for a modern nominal 1 inch thick board, planed all round, and indicates that the board has not been sanded. The fact that the board is planed all round confirms that the board is modern as before the advent of machine planing floor boards were sawn and unfinished on the undersides. Photo no. ***Floor 3*** shows a piece of original floorboard alongside a back room floor board with the undersides uppermost

b) The 120 mm width is a standard modern size

c) The gap between floorboards in the back room is 1-2 mm. The corresponding gap for original floors is 3-5 mm. The larger gap between original boards is the result of long term shrinkage.

d) Floor boards in the back room show little distressing compared with original boards.

e) There is a piece of hardboard whose end is embedded in mortar beneath the floor, see photo no. ***Floor 5***.

f) Nails used to fix the boards are modern factory made cut nails (stamped from steel sheet), see photo no. **Floor 7**. On the left of the photo is a nail taken from the raised floorboard, in the centre is a similar nail purchased in August 2018 and on the right is a nail saved when an original board was raised.

g) Directly under the board removed was a loose brick, see photo nos. ***Fletton 1 and 2***. This brick has three dovetail grooves on one long side and one similar groove on one end. The brick has the following lettering indented on the frog 'LBC Phorpress 1'. This brick is a keyed fletton and is modern. A page from a London Brick Company (LBC) brochure appears as image no. ***Fletton 4***. This page shows a brick with the same marking as the brick found beneath the floor and carries the following information 'By appointment brickmakers to the late King George VI'. King George VI died in 1952 so this gives some indication of the date of manufacture of the brick in question. Two other Flettons, similar, though not identical to the first, were also found under the floorboards, see photo no. ***Fletton 3***. It is worthy of mention that the front wall of the house has been rebuilt from the ground up using flettons which have been rendered in sand and cement. This was revealed to me when a plumber knocked a hole in the wall close to basement ground level to install a sink drain. It is likely that the flettons found under the floorboards are leftovers from rebuilding the front wall.

1.9.4. For an artisan building of this date and scale it would be normal for the original toilet to be located in a shed in the garden, however, at some time an indoor toilet was installed in the original pantry cupboard. A drain has been laid from the toilet to an inspection pit in the back garden, see photo no. ***Inspection Pit 1***, and from the inspection pit the drain was taken under

the back and front basement rooms to the main sewer in Downshire Hill, see image no. ***Inspection Pit 5*** (drawing no. 31DH006E) for the route of this drain. Run-off from the roof and from the reduced level concrete area adjacent to the back wall are also directed into this inspection pit, see photo no. ***Inspection Pit 2***. Note that construction of the reduced level concrete area is associated with the lower floor level and air bricks for ventilation of the timber floor in the back room. This indicates that installation of the drain, timber floor and toilet were done at the same time. The inspection pit cover was supplied by Snewin Bros & Co., a builders' merchant located in Clapton, see photo no. ***Inspection Pit 3***. I have not been able to establish the period over which Snewin Bros.was in business but the auction catalogue shown in photo no. ***Inspection Pit 4*** shows that they were in business in 1933. This is close to 1936, the date that the new Freemasons Arms was completed.

1.9.5. Photo no. ***Basement 5*** shows a square held up to the doorway in the basement corridor and the out of squareness resulting from the subsidence cannot be fairly said to be imperceptible. Measured out of squareness is 3 degrees.

1.9.6. It is not clear why Camden have designated the floor in the back room as historic fabric which should not be harmed when Mr. Baxter acknowledges that its "…age is completely unknown".

2. **Pantry and Alcove Cupboards**

Mr. Baxter's comment:

"The three timber cupboards, even if altered in the past, are possibly contemporaneous with the house and are certainly of great age."

Response:

2.1. The cupboard in the corner of the corridor would have been intended to serve as a pantry and is, I am sure, contemporaneous with the house. This is clear from the

masonry dividing wall and the small window in the back wall, see photo no. ***Pantry 1***. This window has bars for security because, though presently glazed, it would originally have been fitted with a fly screen for ventilation instead of glazing. This cupboard has however been radically modified at some time to accommodate a toilet in the following ways:

2.1.1. All shelving has been removed.

2.1.2. Two outward opening doors have been replaced by one inward opening door and a partially glazed wooden panel, see photo nos. ***Pantry 3, 4, 5 and 6***. The existing inward opening door, which has an edge rebate and is narrower than an internal door, is probably one of two original outward opening pantry cupboard doors. Hinge rebates on the non-hinged edge, see photo no. ***Pantry 3,*** indicate that the door was originally mounted on the same doorpost as at present, but opening outwards instead of inwards. It would appear the decision that the door should open inwards was made when the corridor was created so that an opening door should not present a hazard to someone walking down the corridor. The second pantry door is missing.

2.1.3. The back wall end of the glazed wooden panel has been located some 40 mm closer to the doorway than would originally have been the case to provide increased space for the toilet. This is apparent from measurements at the back wall and the dividing wall and from the way the wood panel partition impinges on the back door architrave to which it has been joined with a modern moulding, see photo no. ***Pantry 8***.

2.1.4. A hinged and glazed window has been added to the ventilation opening.

2.1.5. A toilet, which has subsequently been removed, was installed. The ceramic drain connection for the toilet can be partially seen below the skirting in photo no. ***Pantry 7***.

2.2. I believe this work would have been contemporaneous with the drain which serves the toilet and runs underneath the house, requiring the floor in the back room to be

trenched and then restored and the ground level against the back wall to be reduced so that air bricks could be installed to ventilate the sub-floor, see photo no. ***Inspection pit 2*** showing the connection of drains from the roof run-off, the toilet and the reduced ground level area with the drain which runs underneath the house to the Downshire Hill sewer.

2.3. The doorway end of the glazed wooden panel shows evidence of past bolts and a lock on the corridor side, see photo no. ***Pantry 6***. These do not relate to the inward opening door and, together with the amateur glazing indicate that the panel was not made for installation in its present location and has been salvaged from elsewhere.

2.4. Considering the two alcove cupboards the claim of 'great age' is not supported by the evidence. The cupboard doors appear to be old, however these doors are clearly not hanging in the position for which they were made. I have revised my idea that the doors for these cupboards had been taken from the original pantry cupboard because I see a more likely candidate for the pantry cupboard doors, (see above paragraph 2.1.2).

2.5. Careful inspection reveals that both alcove cupboard doors have once had finger plates on their outer surfaces, see photo no. ***Cupboards 4***. This would be appropriate for an internal door, but not for a cupboard door. It is also notable that rebates for the hinges of the right hand cupboard door cross the full thickness of the door, see photo no. ***Cupboards 2***, which indicates that this door, which is presently hung as a left hand opening door, has previously been hung as a right hand opening door. The hinges for the doors are modern rolled steel and the screws used on both sides of the hinges are modern brass, see photo no. ***Cupboards 1*** which shows on the left one of the cupboard hinges and the brass screws used to fix it and on the right an original hinge taken from the back door (its partner had failed requiring the hinges to be replaced). Had the doors been installed in this house during the nineteenth century I would expect to see nineteenth century hinges fixed with iron or steel screws. The door panels have corner mouldings, see photograph no. ***Cupboards 5***, and their pattern and width (710 and 740 mm) suggests an internal door rather than a cupboard door. All internal doors in this house are plain panelled, see photograph no. ***Panelling 7***,

and it is clear that the alcove cupboard doors began life as internal doors in another building.

2.6. Examination of the back of the cupboard reveals at the base that the wall has been rendered with sand/cement, see photo no. ***Cupboards 3***. The cupboards in their present form could only have been installed after the wall was rendered, again indicating they are a 20th century addition. The right hand cupboard has two shelves supported on battens. The battens are nailed to the wall with wire nails having diamond textured heads, see photo no. ***Cupboards 6***. These are modern mass produced nails.

2.7. My conclusions as to the alcove cupboards are as follows:

2.7.1. The cupboards in their present form were installed in the 20th century, after the suspended timber floor was laid, which is clear from the fact that the bottom of the door is just above the finished floor level, and after the wall was cement/sand rendered since it would not have been possible to render the wall with the cupboards in place..

2.7.2. There is no evidence that the doors once hung 4 inches higher as might be expected if they had hung in the same location before the floor level was lowered.

2.7.3. The cupboard doors were brought into the house as second hand items.

2.7.4. There might, or might not, have been cupboards in the alcoves prior to the rendering, but that is something we will never know.

2.7.5. The top of the cupboard wall shows evidence of damp, see photo no. ***Cupboards 7***. This wall has not been damp coursed. Where damp coursing was done the finish, whether plaster or sand/cement, was removed to 1.5 m and replaced by special formula plaster. To extend the electro-osmotic damp coursing along this wall it would have been necessary to remove the alcove cupboards and fireplace and unbrick the hearth infill. This is why it was not done when the rest of the basement was damp

coursed. From investigation of the chimney breast it would appear that the sand/cement rendering has been done to a height of about 1.5 m, see photo no. ***Chimney 1***. (Note that the grid on the wall has been drawn to enable repeatable damp measurements for monitoring purposes). Rendering with impermeable sand/cement was used widely after the war as a treatment against damp but would be frowned on nowadays because it prevents the wall from breathing and encourages damp to travel further up the wall. That is what has happened in this case. There are signs of damp at the top of the wall where the joists could be at risk of rot. Removing the cupboards, which are not ventilated will promote evaporation from the wall and serve to reduce the risk to ceiling timbers. However, initial reasons for proposing removal of the alcove cupboards were:

a) To permit effective kitchen design

b) To make easier the replacement of the floor

c) To provide period doors for restoration of the pantry

2.7.6. Removal of the alcove cupboards and opening up of the chimney breast will permit the electro-osmotic damp coursing, which has proved successful in the rest of the basement, to be extended to the chimney breast and alcoves.

3. Basement Back Room Chimney Breast

Mr. Baxter's comment:

"The demolition of most of the chimney breast will result in an unacceptable degree of loss of historic fabric. This is apparently necessitated by a desire to install a full-size farmhouse range with a very large metal cooker hood. This apparatus is not appropriately scaled for this modest house."

Response

3.1. This is the only element of the proposal which requires removal of some materials which were part of the original building and might be termed historic fabric, namely bricks and mortar. The object of enlargement of the hearth is to accommodate a cooker and cooker ventilation hood, with the hood exhausting via the existing flue.

3.2. The back room chimney breast shows damp staining, see photo no. ***Chimney 2***, and high damp readings (Protimeter red, which signifies that, if sustained, moisture levels will lead to decay in organic materials) above 1.5 m from the floor and up to, and even including, the ceiling, see photo no. ***Chimney 3***. There has been evidence of damp in this wall for many years. I have made a number of attempts, in co-operation with the pub, to identify the source of this damp but so far without success. Although rising damp has previously seemed an improbable cause of the dampness which is evident above 1.5 m in the party wall, it is now shown almost certainly to be the culprit since the damp appears just above the cement/sand render level. I have noticed on a number of occasions that pump out contractors have attended the pub and, now that rising damp is implicated I shall raise the matter once more with the pub.

3.3. When the present owner purchased the property the back basement room was furnished with a 20th century concrete and mottled beige tile fireplace. The hearth had been partially bricked up on both sides and above the fireplace to suit. This non-original brickwork needs to be removed since it provides a path for damp to rise up the wall and limits the area for evaporation to occur. As the back room was originally designed to serve as a kitchen it is clear that the hearth was intended to accommodate a stove for cooking and heating. Redundant water piping is evident in the chimney, see photo no. ***Chimney 8***, indicating that a water heater was also once located in the hearth. When the non-original brickwork has been removed the hearth will be 1.2 m wide and 1.4 m high. This is larger than the hearth in the front basement room which is shown in photo no. ***Chimney 4***. To accommodate a 1.3 m wide cooker as planned the width of the original hearth will need to be increased by 150 mm. This would be achieved by reducing the thickness of the original left hand flank wall to equal that of the original right hand flank wall. To accommodate a matching cooker hood, the height of the original opening will have to be

increased by 600 mm. It is noteworthy that most of the original brickwork to be removed is associated with the cooker hood rather than the cooker itself.

3.4. The increase in size of hearth opening, which is shown on image no. ***Chimney 5***, will further reduce the cross section through which moisture can rise and further increase the surface area through which it can evaporate. This will reduce the moisture content of the wall and the risk of high moisture content initiating rot in the ceiling joists thereby reducing the potential for serious harm to historic fabric. The chimney breast above the parts removed will be supported with pre-cast, pre-stressed concrete lintels or equivalent steel beams.

3.5. It is surprising that opening up the hearth space to accommodate a modern cooker should be refused since in recent modifications in 30 Downshire Hill, (next door), which was listed Grade II at the same time as 31 Downshire Hill, the proposal to remove the whole back basement chimney breast was accepted, reference planning application no. 2013/2791/P. Relevant details of this application are included in ***Appendix 6***.

3.6. The hearth is the obvious and most advantageous place to locate the cooker because:

3.6.1. This is where the original heating and cooking stove would have been located

3.6.2. This location makes best use of available space

3.6.3. The kitchen would have controlled ventilation via the flue, in keeping with the original intent, and avoiding the need to cut a hole in the back wall for ventilation exhaust

3.7. Regarding Mr. Baxter's comment on the scale of the planned cooker, photo no. ***Chimney 6*** shows an antique heating and cooking stove which would have fitted the original hearth. This formidable piece of ironwork is representative of the type of appliance that might have been installed when the house was built and its scale is comparable with the proposed cooker. The height and depth of the planned cooker, like most cookers, is fixed to match modern kitchen units. Its length of 1.3

m is a bit more than the 1.1 m range cooker which is now the default choice for stand-alone cookers in kitchens large and small, however, the suggestion that this cooker is inappropriately scaled for a room with a perimeter of 18.6 m is challenged. Furthermore, it is worthy of note that 80% of the cooker footprint is contained within the chimney breast, space which is presently unused and unusable. The cooker which Mr. Baxter characterises as a "full size farmhouse range" reflects the priority given to cooking in this household. The planned cooker hood is the same length as the cooker as would be expected.

3.8. Should it be considered unacceptable to locate the cooker and hood in the hearth and, bearing in mind the successful planning application 2013/2791/P, I can see no reason why this should be the case, alternatives are available so the issue of cooker size and location is not critical to the proposal.