

PLANNING & LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION FOR

113 ALBERT STREET
NW1 7NB



Rev. B
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INTRODUCTION

Ben Smith Architecture have been appointed by the owners of 113 Albert Street to prepare an application to carry out remedial damp-proofing works to the house including dry lining the vaults at the front of the property, improve the habitability and levels of the rear bedroom at lower ground floor level, and improve accessibility into the building.

THE BUILDING

The terraced property at 113 Albert Street is Grade II listed and is included within the Camden Town Conservation Area.

The house is built over five floors among a group of terraces of yellow stock brick facades, with rendered ground floors and traditional metal railings to the first and second floor. Like most of the houses on the street, no. 113 has undergone extensive refurbishment over the years, including mansard roof extensions, rear infills and complete internal refurbishments.

LISTING

113 Albert Street, as many of the houses that form part of this terrace group, was completed circa 1845. The English Heritage listing does not mention any internal features, and very few original features remain. The Listing does make specific reference to the front elevation and iron railings. These cast-iron railings and gates with spike finials onto Albert Street, although part of the listing as a subsidiary feature, are believed to not be original, but actually a modern copy to match the style and design of the original.

Some of the alterations carried out to 113 Albert Street over the years have resulted in significant damp damage to the house, which leaves sections of the interior of the house in a state of disrepair. The proposed works aim to remedy this, and relate primarily to the lower ground floor and rear of the property, which were refurbished in the early 2010's.



Scale 1:2000



THE WORKS

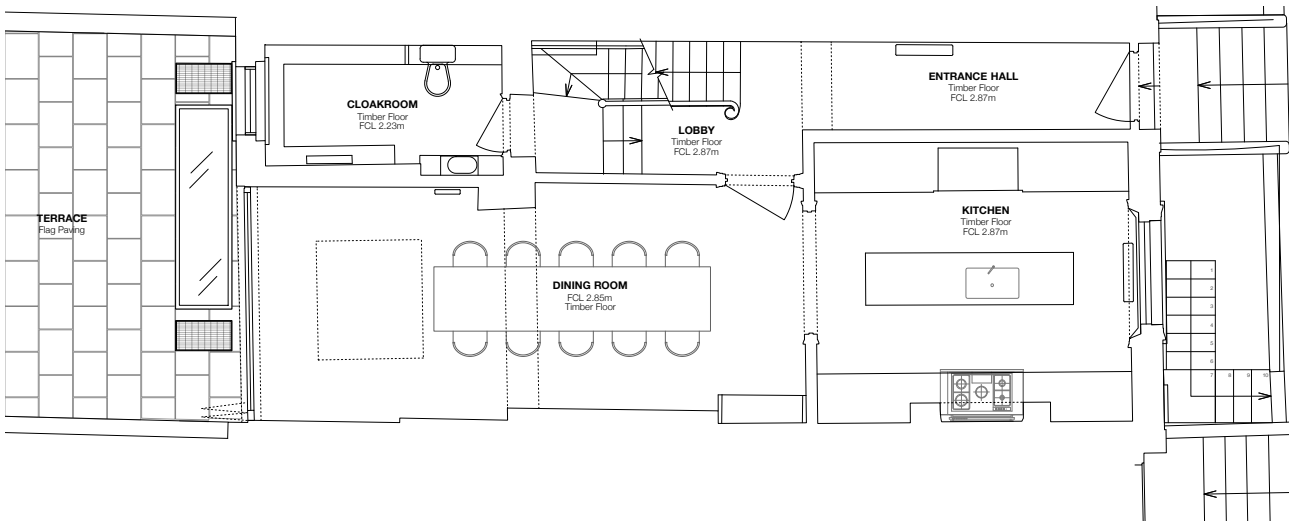
The applicants and their family have lived in the property since they purchased it in the early 2010s, and over the years have invested in refurbishing and bettering their home by renovating the interior, improving the low-quality lower ground floor work of when they first purchased the house, and repairing the sagging asphalted front steps into the property.

The main purpose of this new phase of proposed works is to:

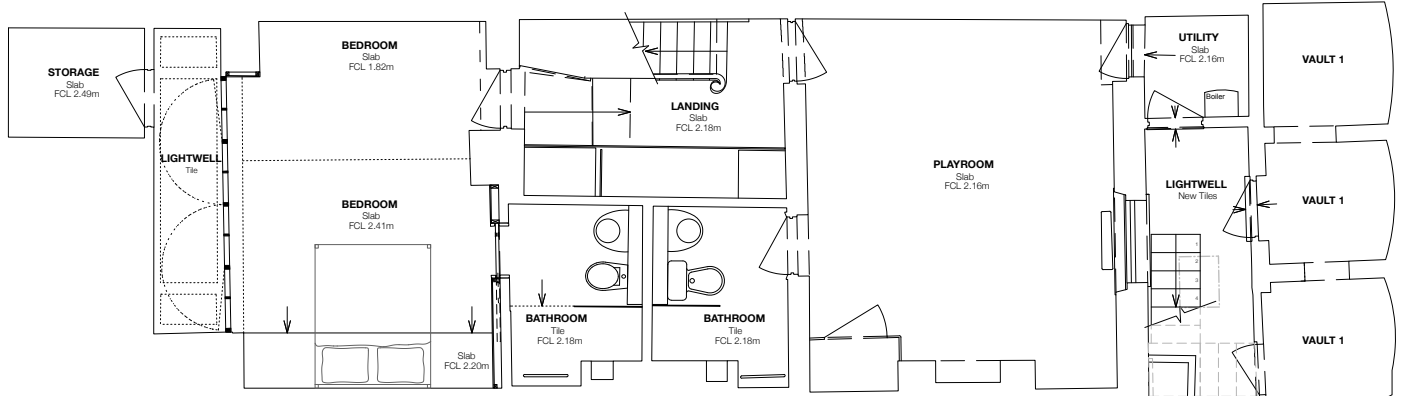
1. rationalize the floor levels in the rear bedroom at lower ground floor level, to ensure this can be used safely as a guest bedroom, including by the applicants' elderly parents;
2. connect both existing lightwells at the rear to make a larger usable space and help bring light into the rear bedroom; and improve how this lightwell relates to the transition between the ground floor and terrace/garden;
3. improve the damp-proofing of the lower ground floor and ground floor level, currently suffering severe damp issues;
4. improve access into the building by replacing the currently steep and impractical steps into the front lightwell, and resurfacing the steps up to the main entrance

The first three items have been assessed holistically and comprehensively to deliver a single solution that improves the practicality of the building and its water-tightness, with the aim of preserving the integrity of its fabric. The last item is crucial to enhance the functionality and aesthetics of the home.

PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR



PROPOSED LOWER GROUND FLOOR



Scale 1:100

1. FLOOR LEVELS

The lower ground floor layout currently comprises of:

- a large bedroom at the front, currently used as a playroom. This faces onto the front lightwell, which will mostly remain unaltered.
- a large bedroom at the rear, used as a guest bedroom, facing onto 2no. separate lightwells
- 2no. central bathrooms, each accessed directly from each of the bedrooms.

The works aim to improve the currently impractical floor levels in the rear bedroom and create a more functional and luminous lightwell to serve this space. This rear bedroom currently has a step in the middle of the room, which splits the usability of the room but also creates an obstacle difficult to navigate around by guest with limited mobility (such as elderly parents).

In order to address this, but also limit the disruption and excavation works to the house, we propose to essentially “push” this step towards one side of the room. This would remove the step from its current central location but would also allow us to preserve a “safe” zone around the footings of the house, to avoid complicated underpinning works.

2. LIGHTWELL CONNECTION

The rear bedroom at lower ground floor level currently faces onto 2no. separate lightwells:

- one covered by a metal grille, directly outside the bi-folding doors at ground floor level that lead from the dining room into the garden
- one with a walk-on rooflight that leads to a storage room under the rear terrace.

This current configuration results in two separate small lightwells, which are not practical nor do they maximise natural daylight into the room. The metal grille located directly in front of the doors onto the terrace is in the area with heaviest footfall and makes for both an impractical and uncomfortable transition.

The scheme proposes to combine both existing lightwells by excavating the 900 x 950mm section between both lightwells, to connect them and create a functional, brighter external space ancillary to the guest bedroom. Directly above, at ground floor-level, a large, central walk-on rooflight will allow natural light into the space below and create a more practical and aesthetic threshold between the dining room and terrace. At either side of this central rooflight, two smaller metal grille sections will allow natural ventilation into the space below. The lightwell itself will be rendered white to maximise light into the bedroom below, and a set of double glazed Crittall-styled doors and fixed panels will maximise further the natural daylight into the room.



Existing rooflight and gridded lightwell cover



Lightwell grille cover directly outside main access to garden

3. DAMP-PROOFING

The key driver for carrying out any of the works to the house, apart from the functional work described above, is to correct the severe damp-proofing issues of the property.

The client commissioned H&R, a damp-proofing specialist, to carry out an extensive survey of the house highlighting the key areas of damage, their causes, and appropriate recommendations. For completion, we have appended the report to this application, but the key damaged areas to treat are as follows:

- A. Lower Ground Floor Front Room
- B. Lower Ground Floor Rear Bedroom
- C. Lower Ground Floor Lightwell
- D. Ground Floor Cloakroom
- E. Vaults
- F. Other remedial work to existing structure

Little of the original internal fabric of the building remains, as most skirtings, floors and wall linings were replaced before the clients first acquired the property. The report identifies the principal cause of the damage is that the existing damp-proofing systems, designed to keep water away, are failing. Instead, the measures proposed as part of this application intend to revert as much as possible to the original method of allowing the building to dry itself.

The ultimate aim is to improve the overall appearance of the house, currently in a severe state of disrepair due to the damp, by removing the damp-staining and preventing these from reoccurring. Please refer to typical damp-proofing details on the drawing *PD14_Proposed Damp Proofing Measures* for further information.

A. LOWER GROUND FLOOR FRONT ROOM

The existing damage to the lower ground floor front room onto the lightwell is at the point where the original facade, at low level, allows water ingress into the building.

This has caused water to flow into the masonry and through the structure, and as a result the interior plaster and decorative finishes (including skirtings and architraves) are stained and damaged.

As part of the application we propose installing a ventilated dry-lining system. This requires minimal removal of the existing damaged wall lining and skirting, but allows us to install a studded waterproofing membrane and create a vented gap to allow the existing masonry to dry, and prevent damp from reaching the plasterboard and timber details.



Existing damage to walls and timber-work in the front room onto the lightwell



B. LOWER GROUND FLOOR REAR BEDROOM

The works proposed to the lower ground floor rear bedroom as described in sections 1 & 2 above, connecting the two lightwells and partially lowering the slab to move the step towards the boundary wall, will do away with a key source of damp in the room (the central remaining section of wall connecting both lightwells), and allow us to implement an improved waterproofing system.

Here, another ventilated dry lining system with a studded waterproofing membrane, correctly detailed around the new glazing, and over the existing lowered slab, will create the needed separation between the plaster and timberwork and the masonry/rear elevation. As in the front room the ventilated dry lining system will allow the masonry to continue to dry as necessary.

C. REAR LIGHTWELL

In addition to the above, this rear bedroom and the annexed lightwell are also severely affected by the following:

- The current failing detailing around the lightwell, which allows water to flow through the masonry and structure into the bedroom below;
- Insufficient falls on the ground floor garden paving, which means water can collect against the rear facade; and
- The failing waterproofing system applied on the garden retaining wall in the lightwell, which is causing the wall tiles to bulge.

As part of the works to connect both rear lightwells, the level of the rear terrace at ground floor level will be retained, but the surface drainage would be improved to avoid water stagnating at the base of the elevation, and ensuring the surface water drains towards the rear garden instead. The new rooflights will be adequately detailed to create a safe waterproofing connection between the ground and lower ground floors, and the lightwell retaining wall itself would be treated with a lime render that allows moisture building up below the garden to evaporate through and avoid damp buildip.



Top & bottom: water ingress into the room from above

Top: Weak waterproofing point around metal grille over rear lightwell
Bottom: Bulging wall tiles in the lightwell from water pressure buildup beneath the garden

D. GROUND FLOOR CLOAKROOM

As described above, the rear terrace at ground floor level currently allows water to fall towards the building and stagnate against the rear elevation. This has caused severe damp issues in the ground floor cloakroom extension (as can be seen in the photo below).

Creating slight falls in the terrace towards the garden as described above will prevent the main cause of water ingress. To mitigate any potential further damage, the works propose to clear away the damaged timber and plasterwork as required, and apply a studded waterproofing membrane up to dado-rail height only, and installing a half-height (up to dado rail) timber panelling around the room, isolated from the masonry wall. This would allow the timber to be physically separated from the walls to prevent damage, and at the same time create a vented cavity that allows the existing masonry to dry.

E. VAULTS

The existing vaults at the front of the house underneath the pavement are currently untreated and showing the usual signs of damp, so these are not currently conditioned and therefore remain unused. As part of the works we propose to waterproof these with a studded waterproofing membrane and dry lined system, to allow the clients to use the vaults as storage.

F. OTHER REMEDIAL WORK

In addition to the five key areas identified above, the damp-proof report identifies a few other damages or failing systems in the building which can easily be rectified and made good, without affecting the integrity of the Listed Building, such as:

- Repairing cracks on the external render with appropriately breathable materials
- Repointing and repairing cracks on the brickwork
- Treating and redecorating all remaining stained plasterwork and skim
- Replace any damaged decorative timber (ie skirtings) to match the original
- Improve the existing but inefficient ventilating system in the lower ground floor bathrooms



Damp damage in the cloakroom extends to the wall lining, floor finish and timberwork

4. IMPROVEMENT OF ACCESS

MAIN ACCESS

The main access into the (raised) ground floor is via a series of steps up from street level. This arrangement is repeated along the terrace group of buildings, although the finish and treatment of these differs amongst the properties. In the case of 113 Albert Street, the steps are coated in a bituminous treatment that, as can be seen in the appended damp investigation report, shows signs of damp damage. As part of the works we propose to strip back the existing damaged asphalt and repave the treads and risers in York stone, with bull-nosed edges to the treads, to match neighbouring properties, such as no. 115. This will help enhance the overall appearance of the main access, and the terrace group in general.

The process of removing the existing asphalt may reveal the original, damaged York stone steps below. The ultimate aim is to end up with re-paved stone steps, replicating the original, and if in order to achieve this it is necessary to remove the damaged original stone and recondition the substrate to take the new stone (like-for-like) replacement, this will be carried out in a diligent and respectful manner with the Listed nature of the building.

LIGHTWELL ACCESS

The property has a secondary entrance via the front lightwell into the lower ground floor area. This is accessed through the railings and gate that run the length of the terrace (subsidiary feature of the Listing), and down a steep cast iron staircase.

The gate itself is only approximately 650mm wide, and the stair is not only steep but also slippery due to water collecting on the treads. The rubbish and recycling is stored in the front lightwell, away from clear view from the street, and the narrow steps therefore serve as the only route for the waste disposal removal. The current configuration with narrow, steep, slippery steps, and a narrow gate onto the street, makes maneuvering even the smallest of the council's recycling bins up to street level a hazardous activity.

To remedy this we propose to widen the existing (non-original) gate by a single finial to achieve a more comfortable (approx.) 700mm wide opening. We would then also replace the current impractical stair with a new cast iron one, in the style of the existing, but with a consistent, more gentle pitch and perforated treads (to avoid stagnating water) for ease of use. We have been liaising with a specialist metalworker to ensure we can achieve a finish for both railings/gate and stair that respect the history and fabric of the building to preserve the consistent style of the building and rest of the terrace group.



New proposed steps to raised ground floor to be clad in Portland stone to match neighbouring properties



Existing steep, slippery and narrow stairs leading to front lightwell

MATERIALS

The scheme proposes little external work to the front elevation, and all that proposed is either to address the damp-proofing issues of the house, improve the accessibility to the property, or enhance the overall appearance of the Listed Building

To the rear at ground floor and above, the scheme does not propose any external work except remedial work to address the damp-proofing issues highlighted in the report and application above.

Externally at lower ground floor level, the lightwell walls will be rendered white with light-coloured Crittall-style doors and fixed glazing to maximize the natural light into the bedroom.

Internally, the original floor and lath and plaster linings, as well as other original features (fireplaces, ceiling roses, cabinetry etc.) have already been replaced over the years, so the proposed work to the lower ground floor does not alter any original features.

The floor layouts are unaffected by the works, and the upper floors will remain unaltered, except for minor remedial decorative work.

SERVICES

The existing services to the house will remain unchanged.

AMOUNT

The proposed works would increase the area of the external lightwells at the rear by 0.9sqm (from 2.7sqm to 3.6sqm). The works proposed does not increase the internal floor area of the property.

LANDSCAPING

The current configuration at the rear of the property comprises of a deep terraced section with flag paving directly against the rear elevation, with a generous garden beyond.

The scheme proposes to retain the existing paved area but create a subtle fall away from the building and towards to garden, to work with the recommendation of the damp-proofing report. The existing paving slabs will be retained and reused.

ACCESS

Access to the main house is from Albert Street and will remain unchanged by the proposed works.

REFUSE & RECYCLING

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