

4A MECKLENBURGH STREET – GARDEN ROOM EXTENSION
DESIGN, ACCESS & HERITAGE STATEMENT

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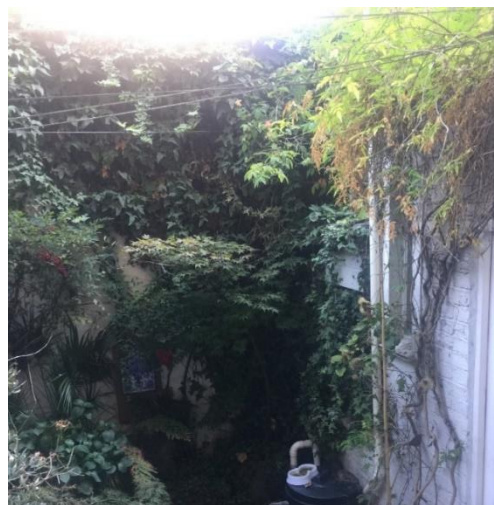
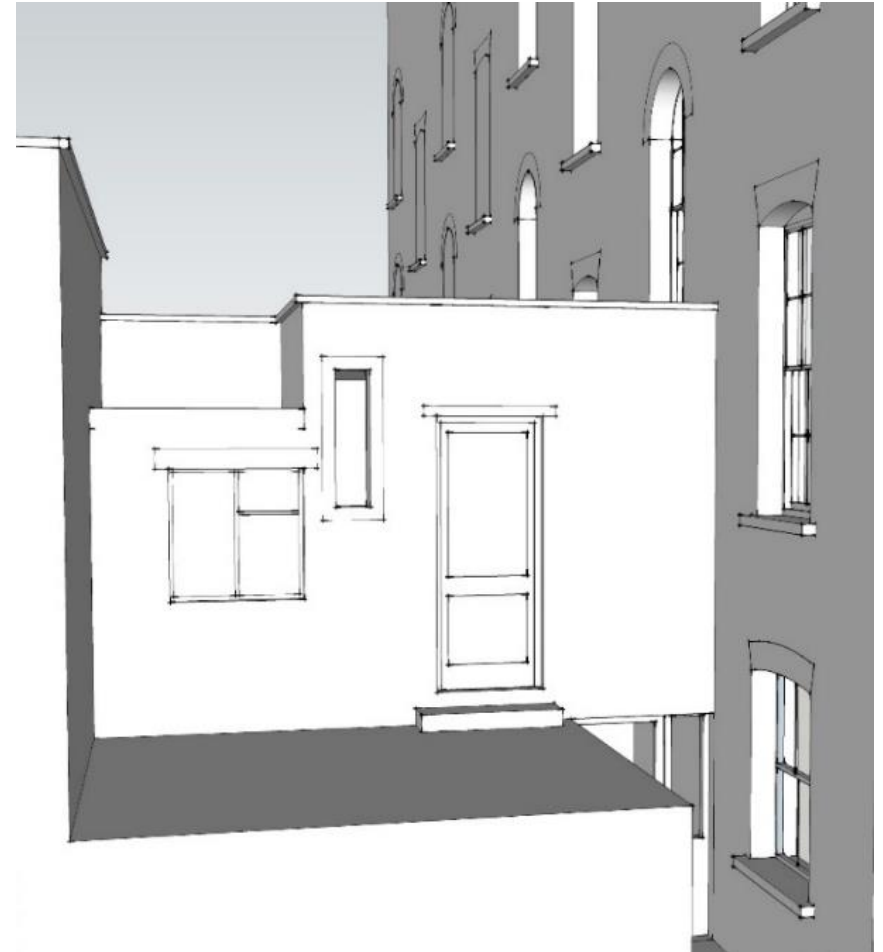
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1. INTRODUCTION

4A Mecklenburgh Street is the ground floor and basement duplex flat of a Grade II listed early 19th Century terrace in Bloomsbury, London.

The existing rear courtyard garden, which is easterly facing, is enclosed by London stock brick walls and includes a basement light well adjacent to the rear façade of the terrace. To the south side, there is a single storey wing with basement housing the kitchen and bathroom, and to the rear, a tall brick wall backs onto a single storey commercial property fronting onto Grays Inn Road.

This report has been prepared in support of an application to build a glazed garden room in the rear half of the courtyard garden space, with internal access via the existing kitchen. The application also includes a proposed raised terrace in the remaining external space to provide a level threshold with the internal kitchen floor and to make better use of the space over the basement light well.



2. SITE & CONTEXT

2.1 FRONTAGE & SETTING

The handsome frontage of the property offers oblique views across to Mecklenburgh Square, and this wider open space provides additional external amenity space in the immediate vicinity.

Whilst the rear façade is more functional with external pipework and a less rigid composition, the windows follow the same proportions. This pattern at the upper levels of the terrace is visible from Grays Inn Road.

Given the small plot to the rear of the building and the low rise commercial premises immediately adjacent, there are views over the rear wall towards the imposing façade of the Eastman Dental Hospital which was formally the premises of the London Free Hospital, and which is located on the other side of Grays Inn Road. This contributes to the historic setting, and this view is visible from most of the rear windows of the building with the exception of the basement.

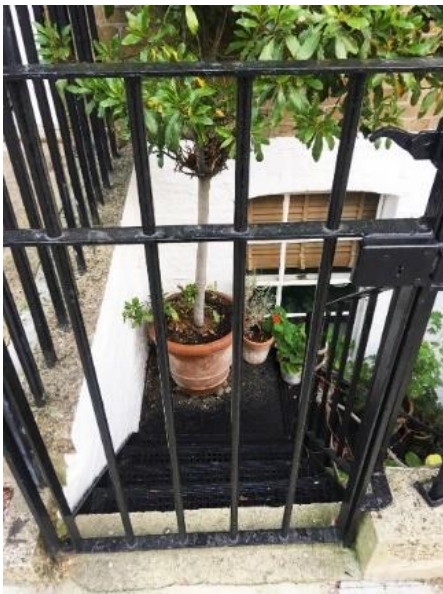


2. SITE & CONTEXT

2.2 FRONT LIGHTWELL

The light well at the front of the property is of a similar scale of space to the rear terrace in its proposed form and also shares the white painted brickwork maximising the light within the enclosure.

Here all metalwork including the railings, the staircase with gridded treads and checker-plate half landing are all painted or finished in black. The recently replaced doorset is also in black which contrasts with the white walls and helps to detract attention from this non-original intervention.



2. SITE & CONTEXT

2.3 REAR COURTYARD GARDEN

The existing courtyard garden follows the pattern of small private external spaces along the rear of the terrace. With tall brick walls on all sides, the drainage pipes, flue outlet and overgrown planting, the space feels more like a light well rather than an amenity space. Also given the considerable drop in level from the upper ground floor level, it feels quite disconnected from the rest of the flat. The surrounding brick walls are all painted in white to a datum around the space, and the copings to the parapets, buttresses, party walls and garden walls are at a variety of heights above this level.

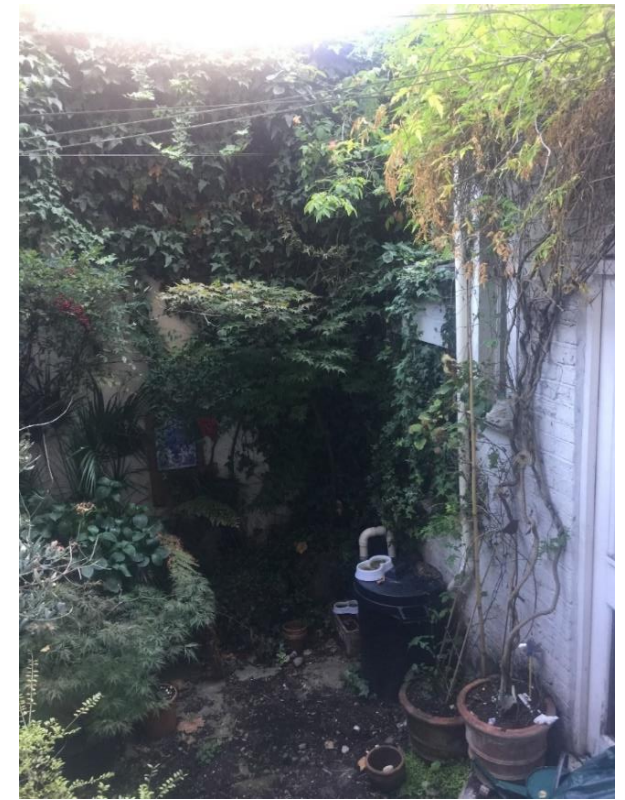
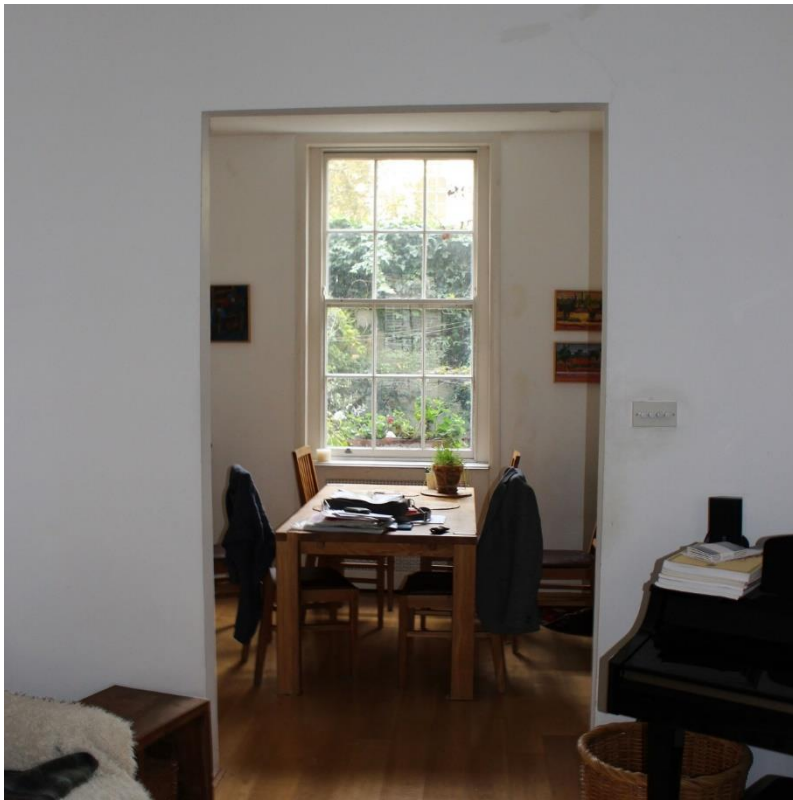
The basement light well is currently enclosed with netting and the drop in level is not sufficiently protected by today's standards set out in Part K of the building regulations. This light well provides the final drainage point for the pipes to the rear façade and for the pipes at the rear of the garden.



2. SITE & CONTEXT

2.4 VIEWS FROM THE INTERIOR

The photographs below show the sight line through the main reception rooms on the upper ground floor level, through the sash window to the courtyard garden and up to the façade of the Eastman Dental Hospital. They also help to demonstrate the way in which the reception rooms are disconnected with the outdoor space given the considerable drop in floor level and light well between.



3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME

As part of a feasibility study, potential locations for the garden room were considered and analysed, given the amount of constraints in the space.

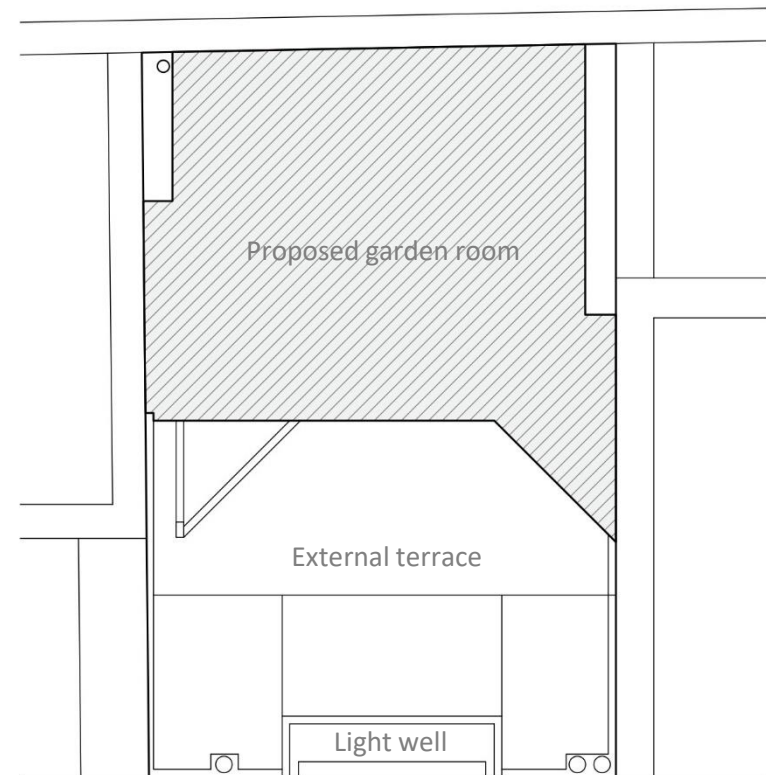
One option considered was a lean-to style garden room against the main rear façade. This posed a number of problems, particularly the issue of enclosing the basement light well with its openings from a bedroom and bathroom, and also the level differences, sash window positions, pipework and drainage.

Another option was to space the garden room with a small gap from the rear façade to keep the light well, rear windows and pipework external. However, the practicality of maintenance within this gap, keeping views through from the rear sash windows and the reduction of space remaining for the external courtyard in a generally darker part of the garden, were all factors that did not work so well with this scheme.

Another key factor considered in positioning the garden room was the approval for the development of the site at the rear at 195-199 Grays Inn Road (application 2017/2931/P) This scheme has a pitched roof rising from the top of the existing rear wall. By turning the orientation of the room to face the main rear façade of the property, it would enable a continuation of the roof slope down, and provide a more attractive focus for the remaining terrace and the views from the rear of the flat. It would also allow the remaining external space to benefit from the most sunlight within the space.

Hence the chosen concept is for the proposed garden room extension is for it to be spaced away from the rear façade to retain the visual character of this façade and light well, and to also create an independent structure that would be reversible so that it could be removed in the future.

The footprint of the extension would occupy no more than 50% of the original external space as demonstrated in the following diagram.



Existing external space overall: 15 square metres
Proposed garden room footprint: 7.4 square metres
Remaining external space: 7.6 square metres

4. DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

By positioning the garden room away from the main rear elevation, it is spaced away from the existing sash windows to the living room and bedroom, the many drain pipes and the basement light well.

The proposed garden room is intended as a reversible intervention; it is an independent freestanding structure that has minimal fixings to the existing fabric. Spacing from existing walls, treatment of the head of the cavity / roof junctions and the supporting structural steels are all intended to minimise impact to the existing fabric and existing services.

The only adaptations proposed to the existing rear wing are a new kitchen window and an enlarged doorway opening. This wider opening, which is notionally the width of a double door, allows a diagonal route between the garden room and kitchen, and this is the only opportunity for an internal connection between these spaces whilst avoiding the rear party wall. The new window provides light, ventilation and a view to the outdoor terrace from the kitchen which is currently a rather dark and enclosed space.

The proposal also includes creating a deck to the remaining external courtyard which would be level with the internal floor to the kitchen to improve access to this external amenity space, and make use of some of the space over the light well. This would also match with the pavement level to the street at the front of the property. This deck is a part glass and part metal floor over the light well, to retain the passage of natural light to the basement bedroom sash window and bathroom doorset to the flank wall. The floor finishes proposed are matching stone internally and externally to the terrace, whilst the new floor over the light well is proposed as walk-on glass in the centre in front of the basement window, and black painted 'checker-plate' anti-slip metal platforms either side following the language of the blank painted metal staircase in the front light well.

Framework to the glazing and structural steels is proposed to be powder coated in black to provide contrast with the white painted brickwork and timber sash windows, to make clear distinction between the original features and the contemporary intervention. The French doors proposed are in the 'Mondrian' style with glazing bar divisions to echo the sash windows opposite.



Pockets of external space at the rear of the proposed garden room are proposed to enable maintenance of the existing pipework to be retained and cleaning of the flank clerestory glazing to the roof.

Access during the construction work is envisaged through the front door and communal hallway of the property which provides a direct route through the hallway and kitchen to the space.

5. DETAILS OF LISTING

Description of listing to the property:

TQ3082NE MECKLENBURGH STREET 798-1/91/1115 (West side) 14/05/74
Nos.1-8 (Consecutive) and attached railings GV II

Terrace of 8 houses. Early C19. Yellow stock brick with later patching. 4 storeys and basements. 2 windows each, No.8 with 3-window return to Heathcote Street. Round-arched doorways with fluted 1/4 columns, cornice-heads and fanlights; panelled doors. Entrance to No.8 on return in single storey extension; doorway with fluted pilaster-jambs and cornice-head (Greek key pattern). Blind arcade. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sashes; 1st floor with continuous cast-iron balconies. Parapets.

INTERIORS: not inspected.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with urn finials to areas.

(Survey of London: Vol. XXIV, King's Cross Neighbourhood (St Pancras part IV):
London: -1952: 49).



6. HERITAGE STATEMENT

Number 4 Mecklenburgh Street was originally constructed as a single dwelling house, and it is currently split into a maisonette at ground and basement levels and two flats above inhabited by separate leaseholders.

In their present configuration, the properties in this portion of the terrace have small courtyard garden spaces to the rear, bordered to the east by a high wall and historic maps show that the courtyard follows the original footprint of the external space. The 1874 Ordnance Survey, perhaps the first reliable map of the buildings of London, indicates a variety of arrangements at the rear of the properties on the eastern side of Mecklenburgh Square. It appears the plot depth for the houses was shallow from the outset with a tapering wedge of land between the sites and the Grays Inn Road and with a small courtyard area at the rear of number 4 Mecklenburgh Street. This meant a constructed footprint occupying almost the entirety of the site and a regular line of smaller mews-like buildings running parallel to the rear.

To the south side of the enclosed rear courtyard, there is a single storey wing with features from the early 20th century. This rear wing is of no particular architectural merit and indeed the listing does not specifically refer to any details to the rear of the property. It would appear from the OS map record that this wing could be original to the house, but it was either substantially modified or completely reconstructed in the late 19th or early 20th century, since there is no evident sign of any residual traces from earlier construction. Alterations to properties at the end of their original lease is not unusual in London terraces of the period and the changes in the rear wing would be in line with what appears to have been a change in the pattern of use of the house between its original conception and the early 20th century. Internally the kitchen is devoid of any original details or content. Externally, there is a poor quality felt flat roof, square lintels to the two door openings and the small window with a crittall style window.



London VII.44, Revised: 1894, Published: 1896

View the individual sheets of this OS five-foot mapping by selecting "Find by place" above

Gazetteer / NG Ref: UK World or

County:

Therefore it is felt the adaptations proposed would not compromise any of the special architectural and historic interest of the building.

At some stage the rear development of 195-199 Grays Inn Road acquired the rear section of the single storey rear wing, which currently has a low flat roof and a side window within the party wall facing onto the courtyard garden of 4A Mecklenburgh Street. There is currently an approved planning application (2017/2931/P) to develop this site and whilst retaining the existing rear wall and lower single storey side element, to extend the roof behind the rear wall and remove the window within the party wall.

The present proposal for the garden room is shaped, scaled and spaced away to be clearly subsidiary to the main building, to remain legible as a modern insertion, particularly with the use of contrasting materials and shadow gaps wherever possible between new materials and existing fabric. It is detailed to minimise impact on the main body of the house and on the amenity of the neighbouring properties.

7. PRECEDENTS

The following precedent images show examples of structural glazing which is proposed for the roof of the garden room and 'Mondrian' style French windows which would be a central feature, providing access from the garden room to the outdoor terrace.

