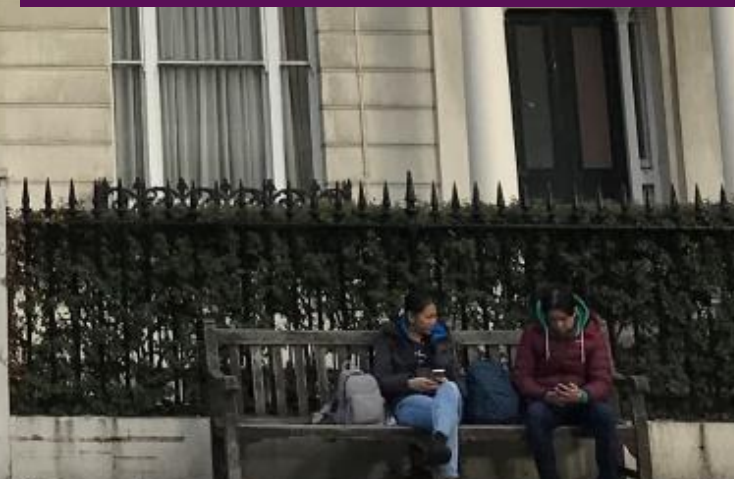


# Heritage Assessment

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Vernon House,  
St. Mark's Square,  
London NW1 7TN

June 2019 | Project Ref 3970A



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# 1. Introduction

**1.1** This heritage assessment has been written and prepared by Heritage Collective on behalf of SAV Group. It relates to a grade II listed building known as Vernon House, and a proposed part three/ part four storey side-infill extension on the Princess Road elevation of the property. Vernon House was built circa 1860 and listed grade II on 14 May 1974. The site in question comprises numbers 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the terrace on St. Mark's Square, and it should be noted that numbers 9, 10 and 11 St. Mark's Square were also part of Vernon House until 1996 at which point they were returned to use as single dwellings. The listed building is officially described as follows (the listing description has not been updated since 9, 10, 11 St. Mark's Square were returned to use as single dwellings):

*"Terrace, formerly of 8 houses, now converted to one building. c1860, altered. Stucco with rusticated ground floor and quoins. 4 storeys and basements; projecting end bays, left hand with extra attic storey. Symmetrical facade of 13 windows and 3-window left hand return. Prostyle Doric porticoes with dentil entablatures continuing across and around the buildings; doorways of former Nos 5 (on left return), 6 and 10 with pilaster-jambes carrying cornice heads, sidelights, fanlights and half glazed doors. Other doorways converted to windows. Tripartite ground floor sashes, most with cast-iron window guards; projecting left hand bay with canted bay window and cast-iron window guard. 2nd floor sashes architraved with console bracketed segmental pediments and continuous cast-iron balconies; projecting left hand bay with canted bay window and balcony. 2nd floor, architraved sashes with console bracketed cornices; 3rd floor, architraved sashes with keystones. Projecting left hand bay with tripartite sashes to 3rd, 4th and attic storeys; 2nd floor with console bracketed cornice. Simplified dentil entablature with console bracketed cornice and blocking course. INTERIOR: not inspected."*

**1.2** The terrace stands opposite St. Mark's Church, a grade II listed church built 1851-2, with mid-20th century interiors. There are a number of listed buildings in the vicinity of 5-8 St. Mark's Square. These comprise (all grade II): 16 Prince Albert Road, 17-22 Prince Albert Road, 1 St. Mark's Square, 2 and 3 St. Mark's Square, and 36 Regents Park Road – all of which are stucco fronted mid-19th century semi-detached villas. Number 10 Regents Park Road was designed by Erno Goldfinger, and constructed in 1954-56 on a mid-terrace bomb damage site. The Grafton

Bridge over the Grand Union Canal is another grade II listed asset in the vicinity of the site in question.

- 1.3** The site in question is predominantly surrounded by other housing of a similar age and style. To the south of the site is St. Marks Church, and to the east (next to number 11 St. Mark's Square) is the Grand Union Canal.
- 1.4** The site is within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area.
- 1.5** This report accompanies planning and listed building consent applications for a part three/ part four storey side infill extension formed above the existing 2 storey element facing Princess Road, acting as a link between 5 St Mark's Square and number 2 Princess Road.
- 1.6** This heritage assessment describes the significance of the heritage assets and assesses the potential impact of change on their significance.
- 1.7** Multiple site visits were undertaken in 2018 for earlier phases of work, and on 16 May 2019, specifically for the proposed infill extension. Heritage Collective have completed a number of other supporting documents for both internal and external changes to Vernon House, and as such have a robust familiarity with the site.



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## 2. Relevant Heritage Policy and Guidance

- 2.1** The decision maker is required by sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possess. There is a strong presumption against the grant of permission for development that would harm the listed building, though the presumption will plainly be lessened if the harm is less than substantial within the meaning in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as is explained further below.
- 2.2** There is a broadly similar duty in respect of the preservation of the character and appearance of a conservation area in section 72(1) of the Act.
- 2.3** Harm is defined by Historic England as change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.4** The significance of a heritage asset is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as being made up of four main constituents, architectural interest, historical interest, archaeological interest and artistic interest. The setting of the heritage asset can also contribute to its significance. Setting is defined in the NPPF as follows:
- "The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral."*
- 2.5** The NPPF requires the impact on the significance of the heritage asset to be considered in terms of either "substantial harm" or "less than substantial harm" as described within paragraphs 193 to 196 of that document. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) makes it clear that substantial harm is a high test, and

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 84 of *Conservation Principles* 2008.



case law describes substantial harm in terms of an effect that would vitiate or drain away much of the significance of a heritage asset.

**2.6** Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset when considering applications that affect its significance.

**2.7** This assessment is confined to the significance of the heritage assets and the impact of change on that significance. It does not address the planning balance in which public benefit is weighed against the degree of harm, if any.

**2.8** In the Camden Local Plan the policy relating to the alteration of listed buildings is summarised below:

*Policy D2(j) states the Council will 'resist proposals for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where this would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the building'.*



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## 3. The Significance of the Heritage Assets

### Introduction

**3.1** This chapter of the assessment identifies the significance of the designated heritage assets according to the guidelines in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

### Vernon House, 5-8 St. Mark's Square, London.

**3.2** Vernon House (5-11 St. Mark's Square) was listed grade II on 14 May 1974. The list description has not been updated to reflect the subdivision and conversion of numbers 9-11 as single dwellings.

**3.3** In 1840 the Southampton Estate was sold in freehold parcels for development. The sale map shows the expectation for a grand estate populated by detached and semi-detached villas in generous gardens. This layout is largely reflected in the street pattern of the area at present, though with a greater range of accommodation types than first drafted on the sale map.

**3.4** Detached and semi-detached villas were the most common building types of the late 1840s, but the 'grand terrace compositions' (such as 5-11 St. Mark's Square) incorporated a density that had not originally been envisaged for the area. By 1870 the estate was almost completely developed.

**3.5** When it was first built the terrace would have consisted of basement level plus four floors. It is not clear whether the mansard roof accommodation is original or a later addition. The dormer window frames at fourth floor date to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

**3.6** Until the electrification of the nearby railway line in the 1970s, the area had a poor environmental quality, and demand for grand residences was not as high as it had been. Accordingly, many large single dwellings were converted into multiple

residences. The record of conversion for Vernon House has not been located, but it is probable it was converted to multiple residences around this time.

### 3.7

Architectural interest: Vernon House was built circa 1860, at a period of rapid development in the area. Originally built as a terrace of 7 houses, following the prevailing local use of stucco, with rusticated ground floor and quoins. The building is 5 storeys high (one of which is in the mansard roof) and basements; the projecting western end bay has an extra attic storey. The façade is symmetrical with 13 windows and a 3-window left hand return. The entries are emphasised with Prostyle Doric porticoes with dentil entablatures which continue across and around the buildings. The doorways of number 5 (on left return), 6 and 10 have the best surviving examples of pilaster-jambs carrying cornice heads, sidelights, fanlights and half glazed doors among the terrace. The ground floor windows are tripartite sashes, most with original cast-iron window guards. The projecting left hand bay has a canted bay window and cast-iron window guard. The second floor sash windows are architraved with console bracketed segmental pediments and continuous cast-iron balconies; with the projecting left hand bay with canted bay window and balcony. The third floor windows are architraved sashes with keystones. The projecting left hand bay features tripartite sashes to third, fourth and attic storeys; while the second floor has a console bracketed cornice. The interiors have been substantially altered in the process of reconfiguration, with the original floor plan largely illegible through many modern partitions dividing the original room volumes, and suspended ceilings featuring prominently throughout the building. The building is visually distinctive as a large, complete terrace running between Princess Road and the Grand Union Canal. The decorative detail adds interest, however it is not so unique as to possess more than a moderate amount of aesthetic interest.

### 3.8

Historic interest: Vernon House has not been attributed to a particular architect. There is an illustrative link to the morphology of the area, as the 'grand terrace' model is a clear departure from the previously popular detached and semi-detached villas of the area in the 1840s-1850s. This illustrates the changing perspectives on density in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and also how the area has developed over time. The

history of conversion and re-conversion of the building shows how the site has changed over time, and how attitudes to the area have also changed.

**3.9** Artistic interest: The building is not directly associated with any artist or artistic movement of note, and therefore possesses no intrinsic artistic interest.

**3.10** Archaeological interest: Vernon House is not of intrinsic archaeological interest.

**3.11** Summary of significance: Vernon House is of special architectural and historic interest. Its significance is largely derived from its principal front elevation and contribution to the local street-scene. Internally, there is little remaining original detail, and even the plan form has been consistently obscured throughout. It retains its historical value and is of medium significance.

## Primrose Hill Conservation Area

**3.12** 5-8 St. Mark's Square falls within the boundary of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area. The conservation area was designated in October 1971, and extended in June 1985. The conservation area statement was adopted in December 2000. The conservation area is divided into four sub-areas, of which the site in question is in sub-area 1: Regent's Park Road South.

**3.13** The conservation area is generally residential in character, comprising a series of well laid out Victorian terraces. It is punctuated with local industries, shops and pubs.

**3.14** Sub-area 1 of the conservation area is largely flat, with a small incline from south-east to north-west. It is neighboured to the west by Primrose Hill, and bounded on the south by Regents Park and London Zoo, Regent's Canal to the north-west and the railway line to the north. The sub-area is characterised by Italianate Villas lining principal streets, with generous set-backs and mature street trees giving the area a leafy character. Three to four storey Italianate villas are the primary typology in the area, with raised ground floors and numerous decorative features. The villas are generally semi-detached or in terraces, and most commonly have stucco fronts, rusticated on lower floors.

**3.15** St. Mark's Square is referred to in the conservation area statement as one of two 'grand terraces' in the area, and makes a positive contribution to both the immediate street-scene and wider conservation area.



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## 4. Potential Impacts on Significance

### Introduction

- 4.1** This chapter of the assessment describes the proposed changes that have the potential to affect the significance of the building and surrounding heritage assets. It should be read in conjunction with the Design and Access Statement.

### The application proposal

- 4.2** The proposed scheme is for a part three and part four storey side infill extension. The extension will be formed above the existing 2 storey building and be a link between 5 St Mark's Square and number 2 Princess Road. (Figures 1-6).
- 4.3** It is proposed to extend the existing two storey portion of Vernon House on Princess Road to a four storey volume with a mansard roof. The proposed layout alters the area to the north-western part of the existing building only, extending and rearranging existing units over 1st-3rd floor levels. The Lower Ground and 4th Floor levels remain unchanged.
- 4.4** The proposed development fills in an existing gap in the urban fabric, providing continuity to the street elevation of Princess Road. The 1970s lift shaft and other additions from this time have resulted in a crowded and unappealing space between the buildings of St. Mark's Square and Princess Road (Figure 5). The addition of the proposed new infill element will provide a sensitive addition to the street scene and remove the negative visual impact of the 1970s rear additions upon Princess Road and the conservation area.
- 4.5** The proposed new element has responded to the architectural details and form of the buildings either side. The set-back of the main volume is informed by the quoins of 2 Princess Road and Cornice of 5 St. Mark's Square, ensuring the integrity of these elements are maintained. The set back of the mansard extension has been done to ensure it is not visible from Princess Road.



- 4.6** The massing is also subservient to 5 St. Mark's Square, as well as to the adjacent buildings, serving as a transition between the grand terrace of Vernon House and the adjacent row of houses on Princess Road. The elevation has been carefully considered, with elements from the surrounding buildings informing the overall composition of the infill.
- 4.7** The fenestration of the infill element is informed by the neighbouring buildings, and will respond to the proportions and rhythm established either side. The windows will be vertical PPC coated sash windows in black. The façade will be of stock-brick and have a simplified painted stucco cornice and window surrounds to match proportions of the adjacent buildings. The set-back mansard roof will be covered in natural slates and have conservation rooflights, and has been designed to not be visible from Princess Road to ensure the subservience of the infill element.
- 4.8** The proposed modern infill will feature a restrained level of detail so as to appear subservient to the original features of adjacent buildings.

## Effects on the core constituents of significance

- 4.9** Impact on Architectural interest: The architectural interest of the building is best understood through the front façade of the terrace. The proposal has been designed to respond sensitively to the context of the surrounding buildings, and fill a void in the streetscene which currently exposes the jarring 1970s rear additions to 5-8 St Mark's Square. The external elevation responds to the form and detail of the adjacent buildings, mediating between the grand terrace of St Mark's Square and the simpler terrace of Princess Road. There will be a very limited amount of fabric loss to provide new entrances to the new spaces created. This loss is restricted to the extension element and third floor window indicated in Figure 8. This limited loss of fabric is isolated to an area of the building which makes a very minor contribution to the overall architectural interest of the building.

- 4.10** Although there will be a change to the setting of the listed Vernon House, this change will not be such that the appreciation of the building's significance will be impacted.
- 4.11** The proposal for a subservient infill extension with minimal loss of original fabric, will therefore have a negligible effect on the architectural interest of the building.
- 4.12** Impact on Historic interest: The proposed changes will not affect the historic interest of the building. The continued use will retain the historic connection with the original domestic function of the building.
- 4.13** Impact on Artistic interest: Vernon House is not of intrinsic artistic interest, and there will therefore be no effect on artistic significance.
- 4.14** Impact on Archaeological interest: Vernon House is not of intrinsic archaeological interest, and there will therefore be no effect on archaeological significance.

## Effects on Primrose Hill Conservation Area

- 4.15** The proposed scheme for the infill-extension has been designed with sensitive regard for the special interest of the host building, and will fill an existing void in the continuity of the streetscene and ameliorate the impact of the 1970s extensions which dominate the space at the moment. The design is restrained, but embraces the architectural form and elements of the neighbouring properties. The character and appearance of the conservation area will be preserved for the purposes of the decision maker's duty under section 72(1) of the Act.

## Summary of impacts

- 4.16** Consideration of change and harm: The addition of a sensitively designed infill extension and the removal of three small sections of wall to lower the sill heights of windows to convert to doorways will have a negligible impact on the significance of the building, which has already been significantly altered internally over the course of its existence. The proposed infill extension has been designed sensitively to

reference the architectural detail and scale of the surrounding buildings, with deliberate subservience to these properties. The extension will fill a void that currently has an unappealing appearance due to the awkward arrangement of 1970s extensions.

**4.17** The change to the setting of the listed Vernon House will not affect the ability to appreciate its core components of architectural and historical interest, which are most clearly conveyed at the front elevation of the property.

**4.18** There will be no impact upon the setting of surrounding designated heritage assets described in paragraph 1.2.



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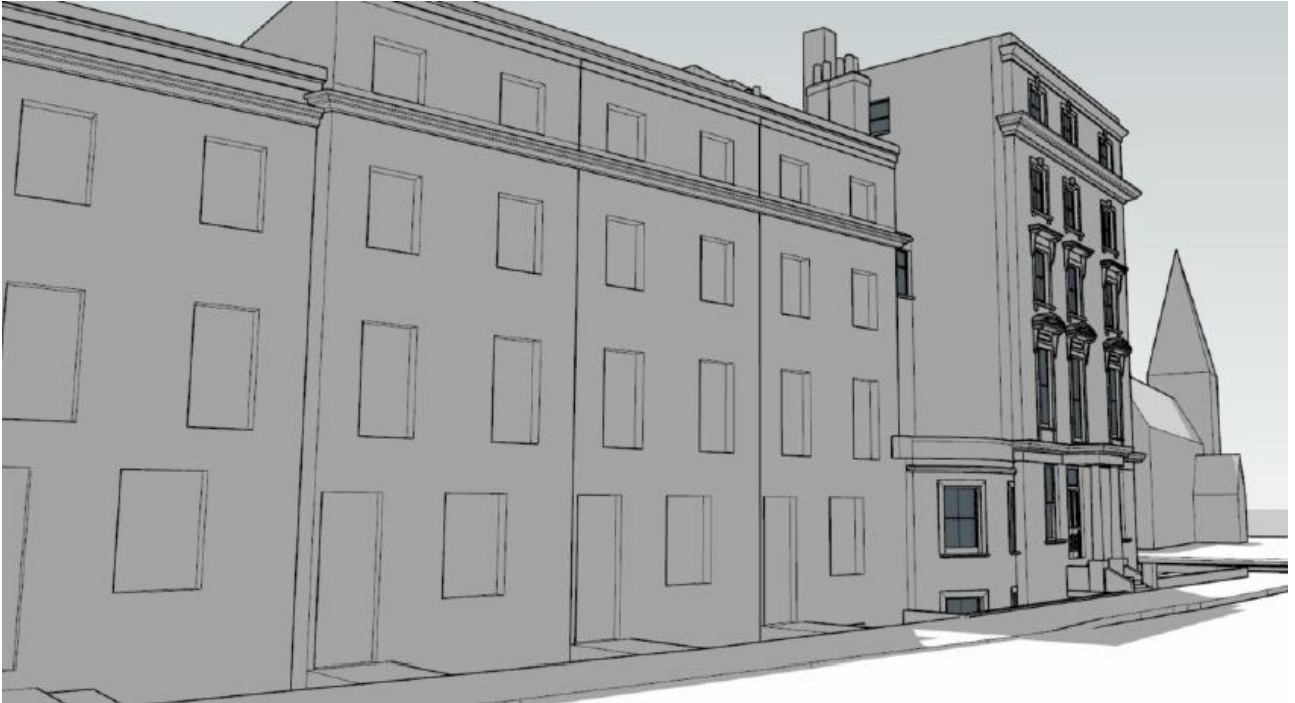
## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1** Built circa 1860 the building was part of the rapid development of Primrose Hill at the time, brought on in part by the presence of the railway terminating at Euston and by sale of land from the Southampton Estate. The building used the popular stucco finish of the area, but was one of the 'grand terraces' which diverged from the more prevalent detached and semi-detached typology which initially characterised the area.
- 5.2** The building is typical of many in the area which could not sustain use as a single family dwelling, and was therefore divided into multiple accommodation. The fact that three of the seven buildings were returned to single family dwellings in 1996 shows the changing favour of the area over time. Its changes of use have resulted in significant alterations and the loss of interior details and legibility of original plan form.
- 5.3** Heritage Collective have worked with SAV Group to minimise the harm to the listed building, with the result that the smallest amount of removal and alteration to existing fabric will be undertaken in order to provide the increased accommodation. The extension will respond sensitively to the listed host building and the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.4** The effect of the proposed extension to the building is **not harmful** for the purposes of policy D2(j) of the Camden Local Plan.
- 5.5** There will be a positive impact through screening the 1970s extensions to the rear of 5-8 St. Mark's Square with a sensitively designed extension. The negligible loss of fabric to provide new door openings, and the change to the setting of the listed Vernon House will result in **no harm** for the purposes of the duty in sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act.
- 5.6** Proposals for the infill extension have been informed by heritage advice, and the resulting proposals would **preserve** the character and appearance of the Primrose

Hill Conservation Area and street-scene for the purposes of section 72(1) of the Act.

## 5.7

In conclusion, the changes are considered to be informed and appropriate. They have not resulted in any harm within the meaning in paragraphs 193 to 196 of the NPPF, and no harm for the purposes of the duty in sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act.



*Figure 1 - Existing view looking south-east along Princess Road*



*Figure 2 - Existing view looking north-east along Princes Road.*



Figure 3 – Proposed view looking south-east along Princess Road.



Figure 4 – Proposed view looking north-east along Princess Road.





*Figure 5 – Existing elevation.*



*Figure 6 – Proposed elevation.*

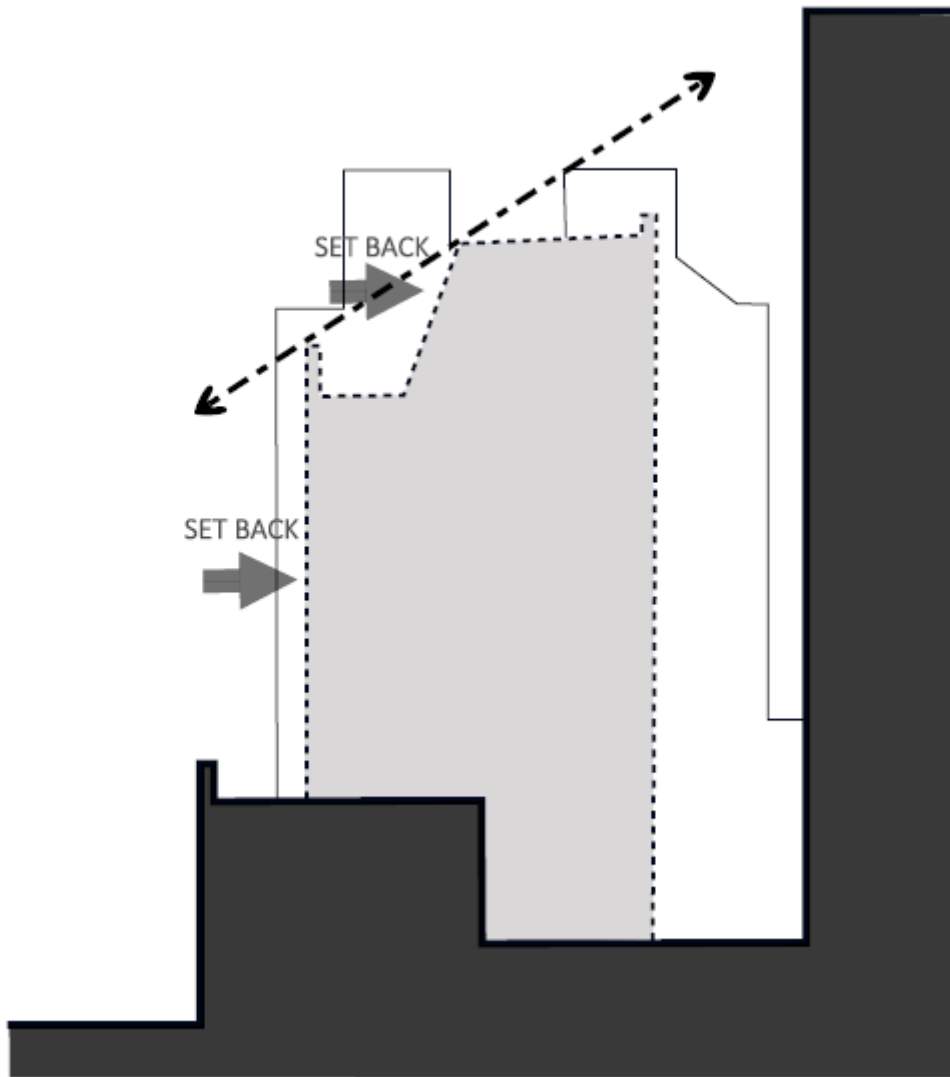


Figure 7 – Schematic section indication setbacks (proposed new volume indicated in grey wash).



Figure 8 – The extension (indicated in red) which will have window sills lowered to accommodate new door openings. The third floor window also proposed to be altered to a door opening is indicated in blue.