

The Heritage Practice

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Josh Lawlor
Planning Officer
Camden Borough Council
5 Pancras Square
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By Email

25th September 2019

Your reference:
2019/3532/L & 2019/3493/P

Dear Josh

34 Great James Street, London, Wc1

We are writing to you following our site visit at the above address on Friday 6th September. During the meeting, we discussed two elements of the scheme with Rose Todd in some detail and where subsequently additional information was requested. This letter addresses those two elements of the proposals:

1. Lower ground floor rear closet wing window

We discussed the possibility of reducing the size of the new RW20 window to improve the access to small rear vault. As such we have amended the proposed plans accordingly.

Please find attached amended plans: ST711-50C; 52C and 83A

2. Ground floor front room access door

There was healthy debate on-site about the merits of relocating the ground floor front room door and we agreed to provide additional justification to support our proposed layout which seeks to reinstate the curved wall and repositions the door to a more typical location.

We have carried out on-site and desktop research which we have set out below and expect this to be sufficient in demonstrating that this element of the proposal preserves and enhances the special interest of the listed building and as such the application, as a whole, will significantly enhance the significance of the grade II* listed building.

Discussion

Consistency and standardisation are key characteristics of Georgian terrace development and certain aspects of their form are common to nearly all and contribute to their special architectural and historic interest. This includes plan form. The basic plan form of the regular terraced house of the Georgian period (1715-1840) is two rooms deep. There are a limited number of related plan forms with a consistent hierarchy between front and back rooms. This includes the position of the entrance doors to the rooms as well as a standard vocabulary of typical patterns of panelling, cornices, fireplaces and skirtings.

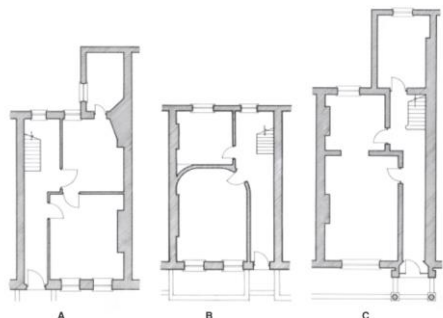
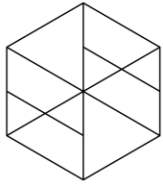


Figure 1. Shows typical ground floor plans:
A: c1700
B: c1780
C: c1850
Source: Historic England London terrace houses 1660-1860 - A Guide to Alterations and Extension



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Great James Street

A good starting point in considering Point 2 is to establish as far as is reasonable the intentions of the original developer of the terrace, placing it within its historical context. This will then assist in the understanding of the typical importance of the ground floor plan form at no. 39 Great James Street.

Our investigations of Great James Street (appendix A) confirms that the ground floor layouts along the street are typical for the 1720s. Appendix A shows that of the 26 properties, for which we could find evidence, the vast majority (65%) have the standard perpendicular rooms and typical front and rear room door arrangement expected of the period (figure 1A).

Curved corner

Only five of the 26 buildings surveyed (nos.14, 29, 30, 34, and 40) have the more distinctive and attractive curved corner arrangement between front and rear room. Of these five, nos.14 and 29 (shown red in appendix A) include the typical two door arrangement with doors located on the expected location within the panelled wall to both front and rear room. Drainage plans (figure 2) of no.14 show the layout in 1965. The historic layout of no. 29 matches its 1989 plan form (figure 3) albeit with the spine wall in the wrong location. Nos. 40 has no door to the front room. This matches the historic arrangement of no.34 shown in a drainage plan of 1957 (figure 4).

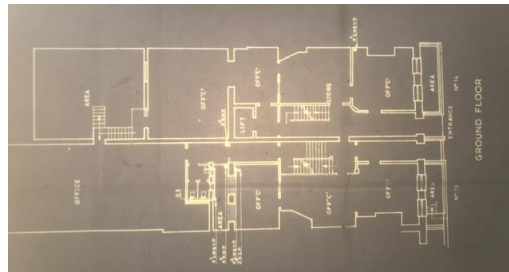


Figure 2. 1965 Drainage Plan showing ground floor layout of nos. 14 & 15 Great James Street

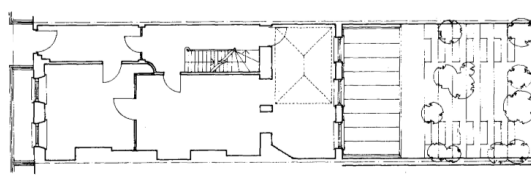
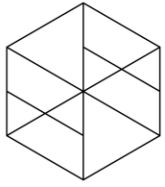


Figure 3. 1989 Ground floor plan of no.29 Great James Street



Figure 4. drainage plan of the ground floor of no.34 in 1957



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No. 34 Great James Street

The drainage plans confirm the existing arrangement at no. 34, with the door located in the curved corner wall, is not historic. This is backed up by the peculiar arrangement found on site (figures 5 & 6). Firstly, the straight door, door architrave and pediment to the front room are not original and do not match the entrance hallway and stairwell which display many original features from the early Georgian period. The door opening is also narrower than is expected because of the tight curve. Another outcome of the tight curve is the awkward arrangement of the outer architrave being applied to the wall of the rear room and the door opening being cut through the stile of the panelling above the door. Finally, from the room side, the awkward clash with panelling continues with the door opening cutting through the elegant step in the panelling which forms the junction between vestibule and spine walls. These are features which violate the vocabulary of classical architecture and when looked at closely cause harm to the ordered layout and interior of this grade II* early Georgian building.

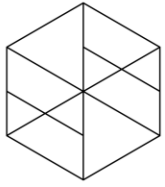


Figures 5 & 6 Images of the existing ground floor front room door at no.34

The only building in the street where a door occupy the curved wall is at no.30. However, this appears to be an outlier in the street for several reasons; firstly the position of the staircase prevents a door to the rear in its traditional location; secondly, the curve of the wall isn't as concave as the other examples on the street; and, finally it is the only building from those surveyed that has the matching curved door and panelling on the opposite side of the front room providing a symmetrical and classical arrangement typical of the mid Georgian era (figure 1B and unlike the arrangement found at the early Georgian no.34 Great James Street).

Relocating the door

Relocating the door would allow the curved panelled wall feature to be accurately reinstated in a scholarly manner. This is a distinctive feature which would give greater significance to the building through its reinstatement. The option of 'doing nothing' or replacing a door in its existing location would not address the current awkward arrangement and would most likely exacerbate the architectural inaccuracy once the remainder of the floor and building is reinstated to its early Georgian character.



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In this instance, therefore, the best option would be to locate the door to the front room in the historically typical and entirely architecturally accurate position currently proposed. This would match the majority of the layouts along Great James Street as well as exactly match the arrangements at no. 14 and 29 Great James Street who have also have the distinctive curved wall panelling.

Conclusion

The change to the ground floor front room door position would result in scholarly restoration of a key feature of one of the principle floors of the grade II* listed building in allowing an improved plan form and in reinstating the attractive curved panelled to the entrance hall wall. The current access would appear to be an unsatisfactory modification of an earlier arrangement and if maintained or adapted would remain a point of difference in what is an otherwise exemplary restoration of an early Georgian building on the street. Curved corner doors are not a common feature of this period or the street and where they exist it should be matched with a corresponding curved wall and cupboard door on the opposite room elevation as per figure 1b and the layout of no. 30 Great James Street.

The traditionally and historically most accurate layout is to insert a door in the proposed position. The panelling would be adapted to accurately relate to the door opening as shown in internal elevation drawings ST711-57A.

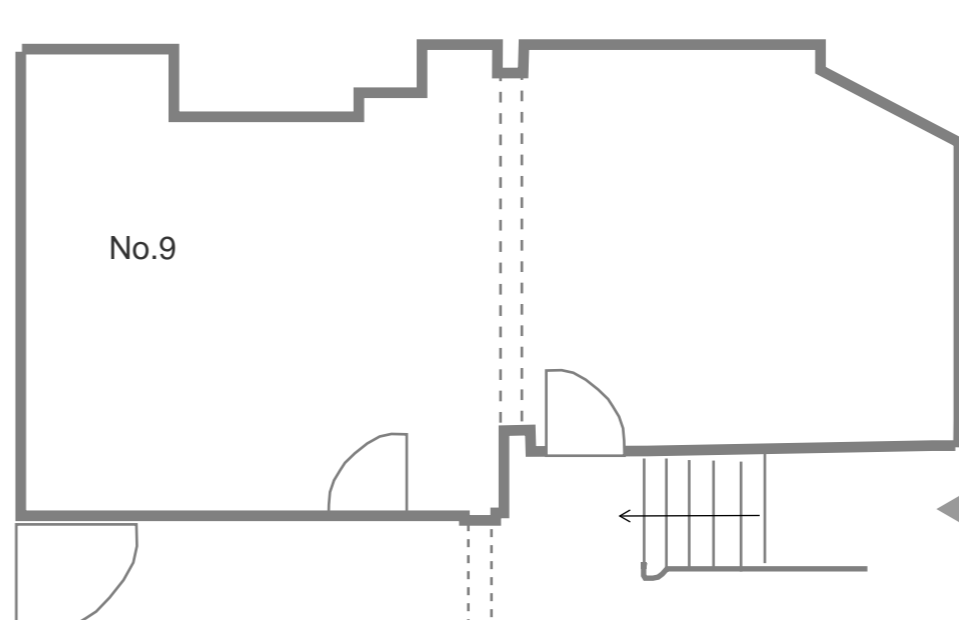
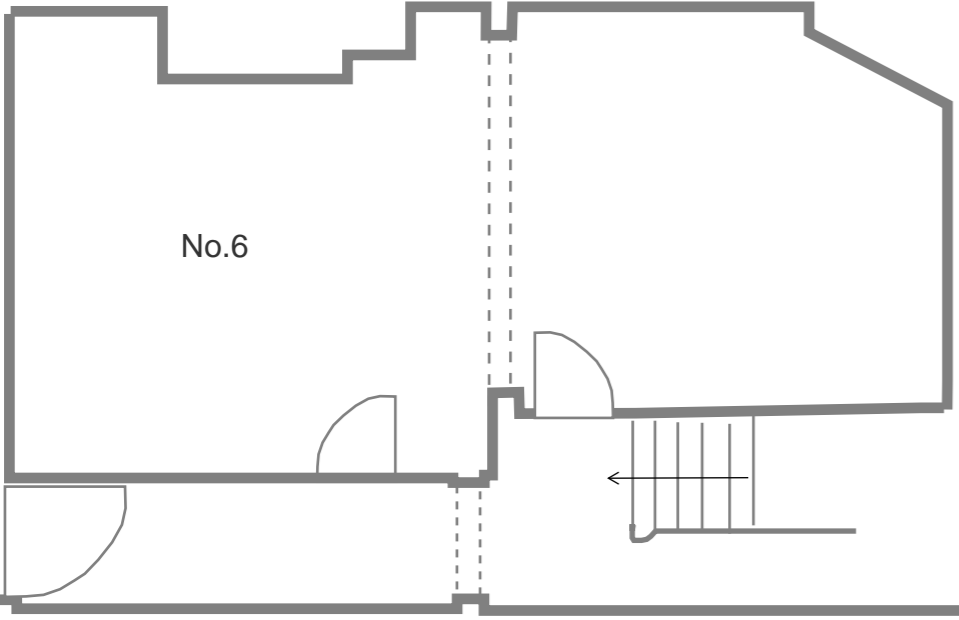
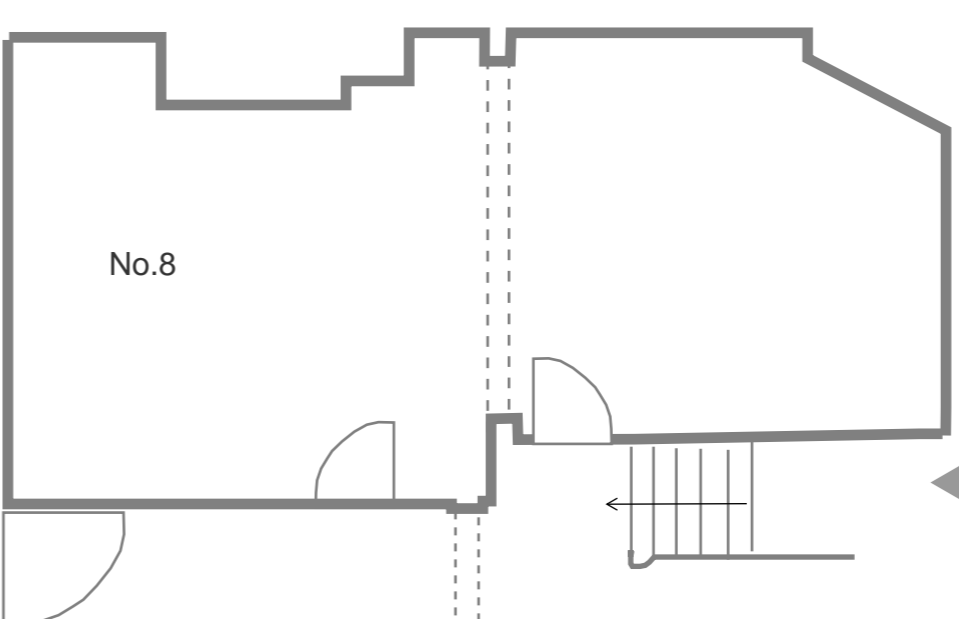
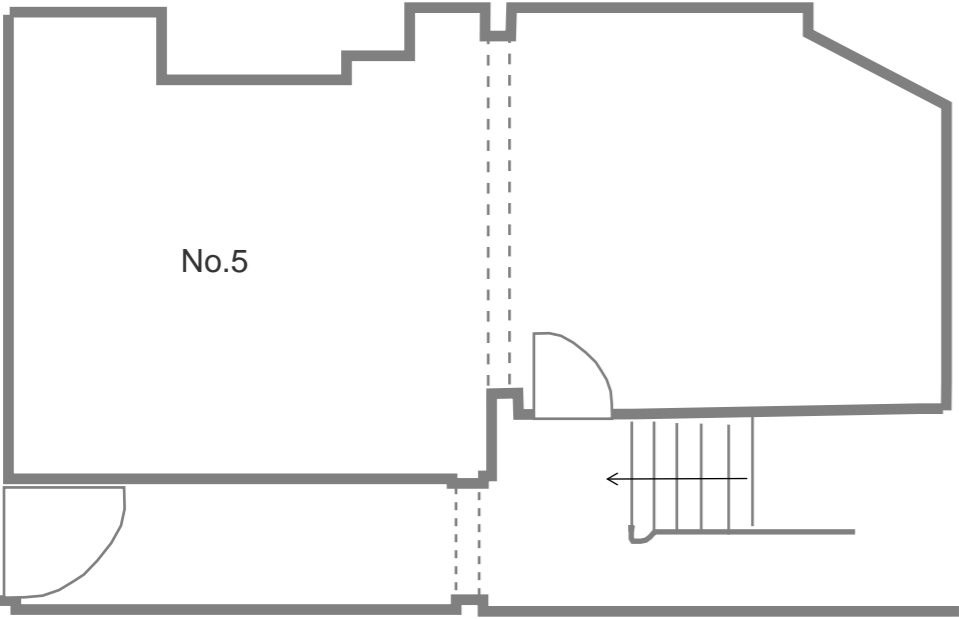
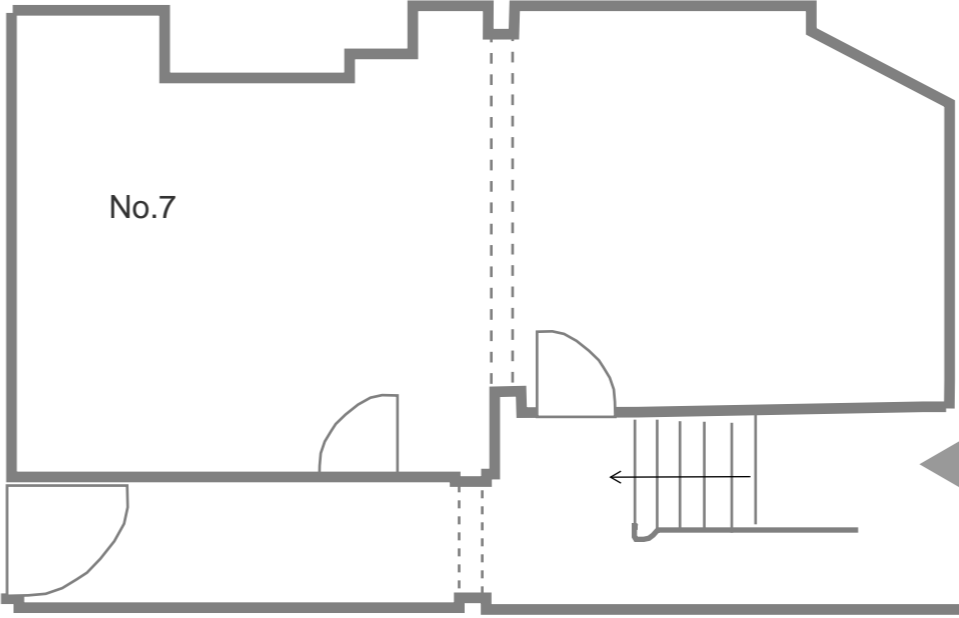
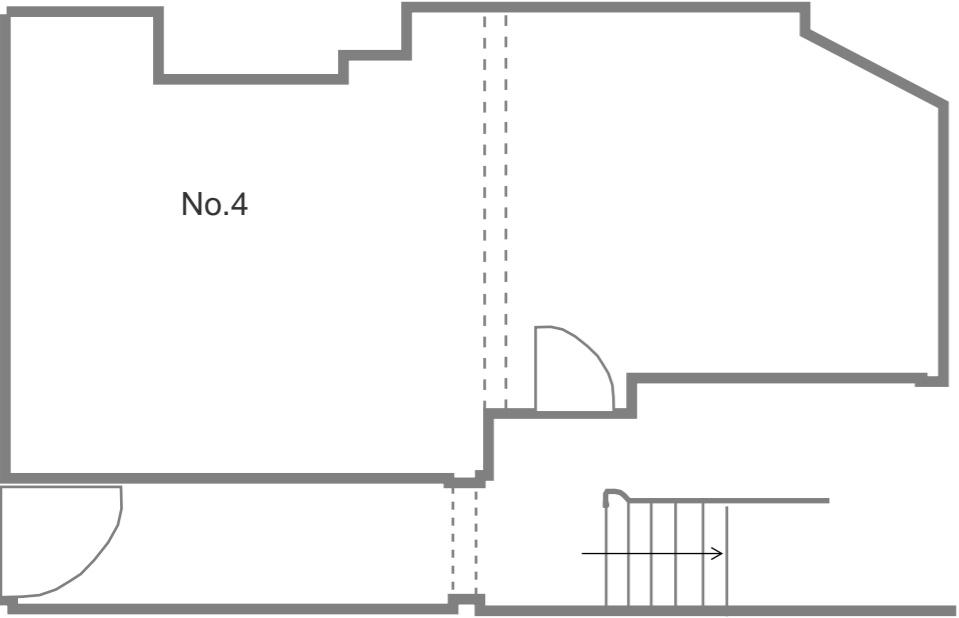
We have demonstrated through careful consideration and clear and convincing justification, based upon a good understanding of the building and its neighbours in the street, that the proposed change is desirable and necessary. The small loss of historic panelling resulting from the repositioning of the door would, in our professional opinion, be outweighed by the scholarly restoration of the distinctive curved panelled section of wall and ultimate the considerable heritage gains brought about from the proposed scheme as a whole.

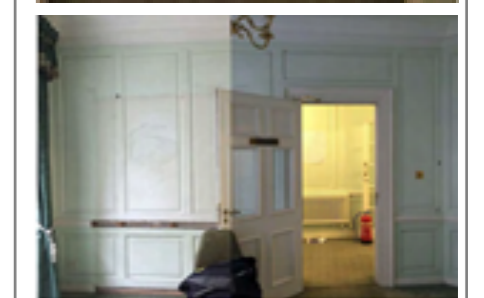
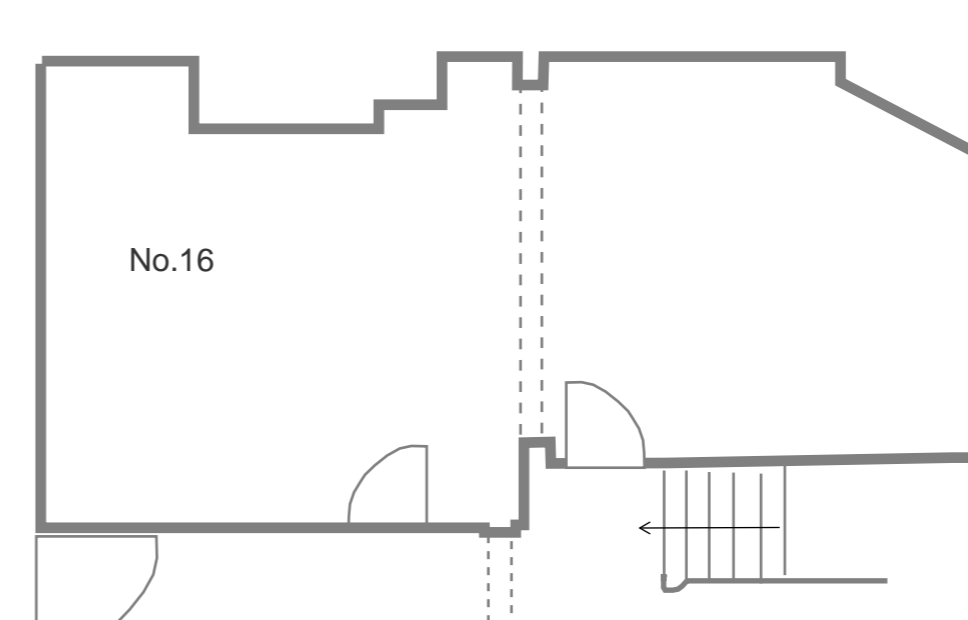
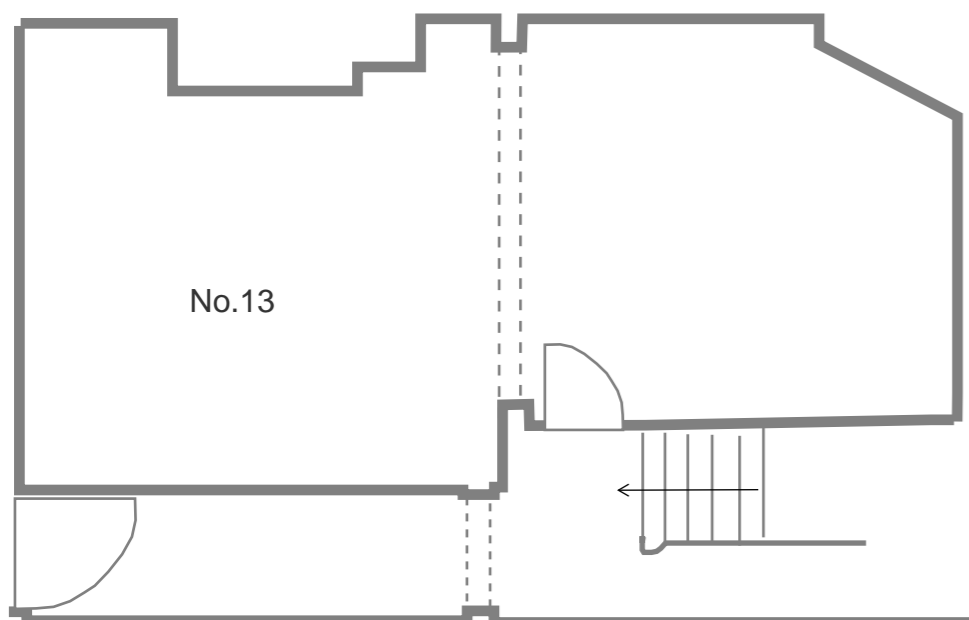
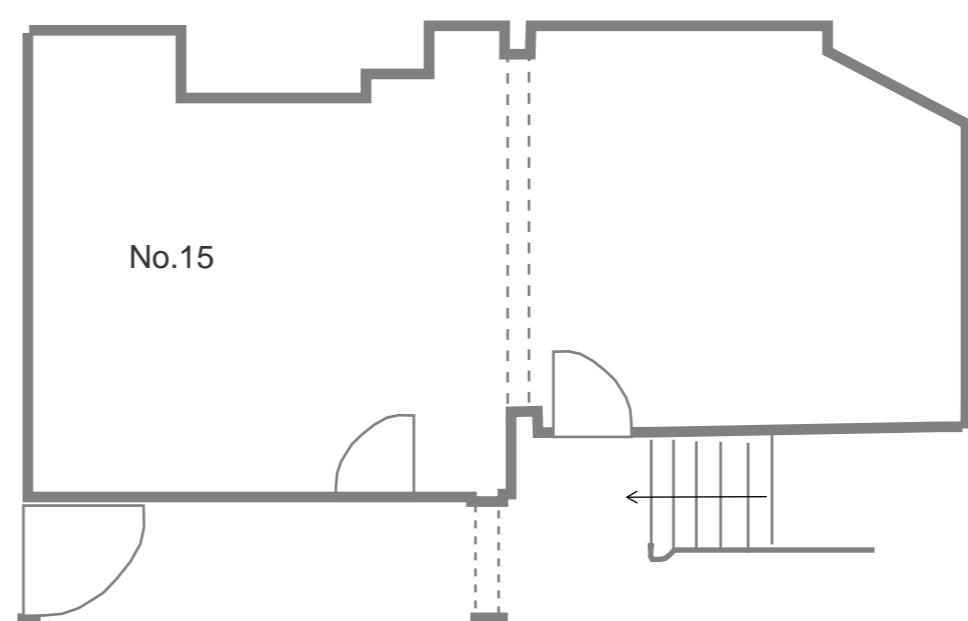
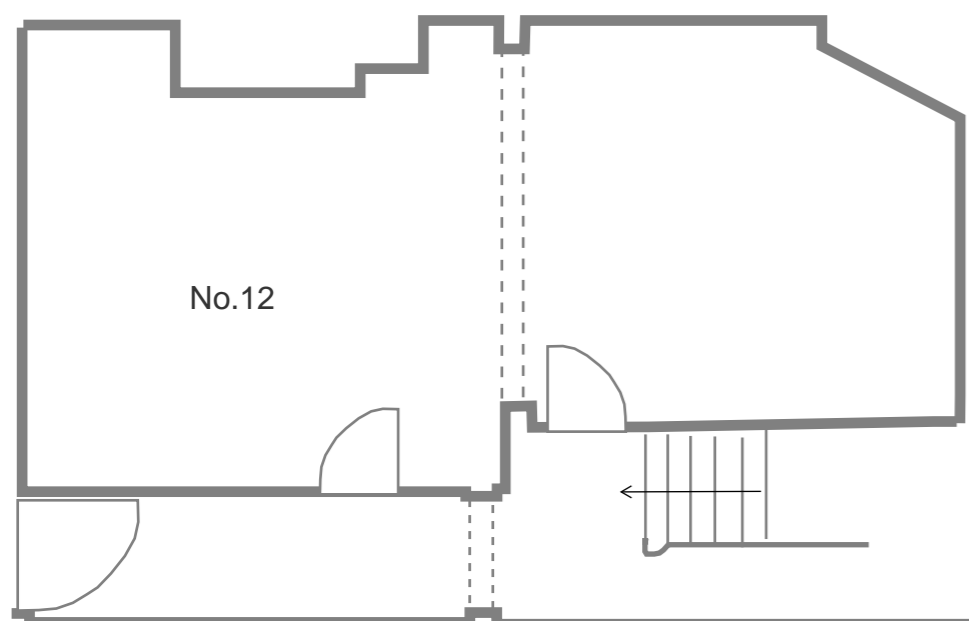
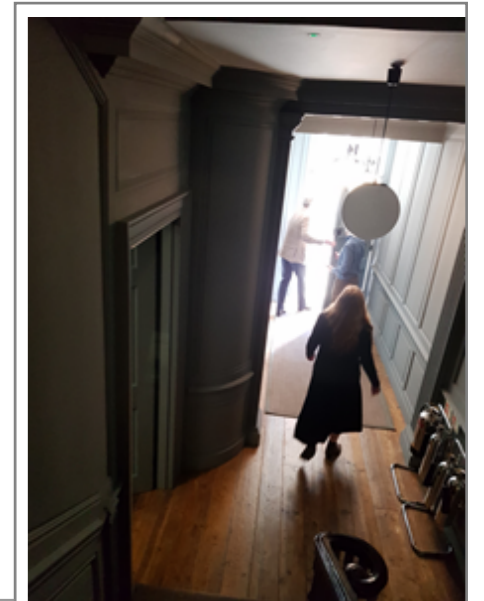
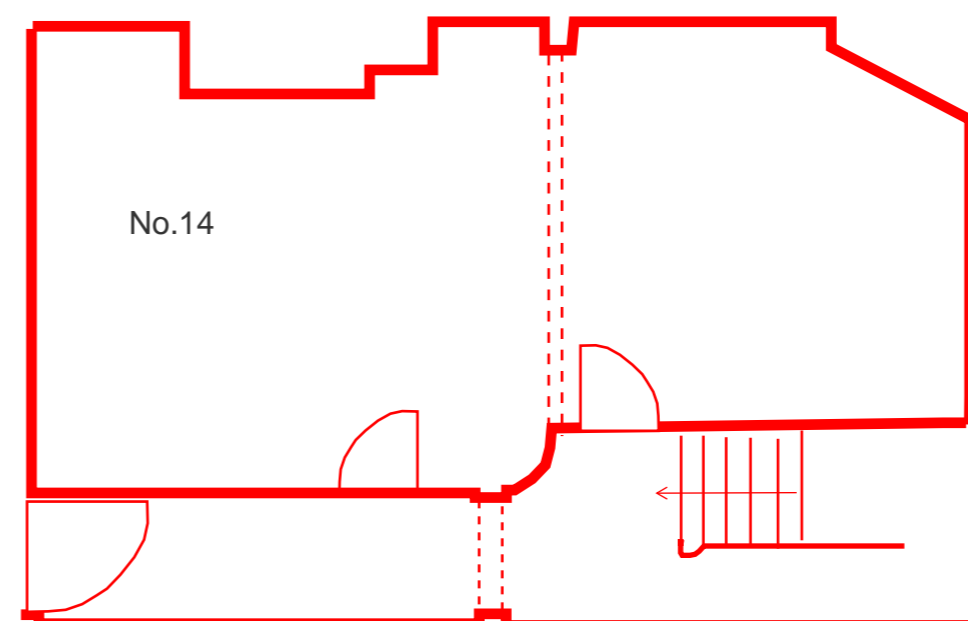
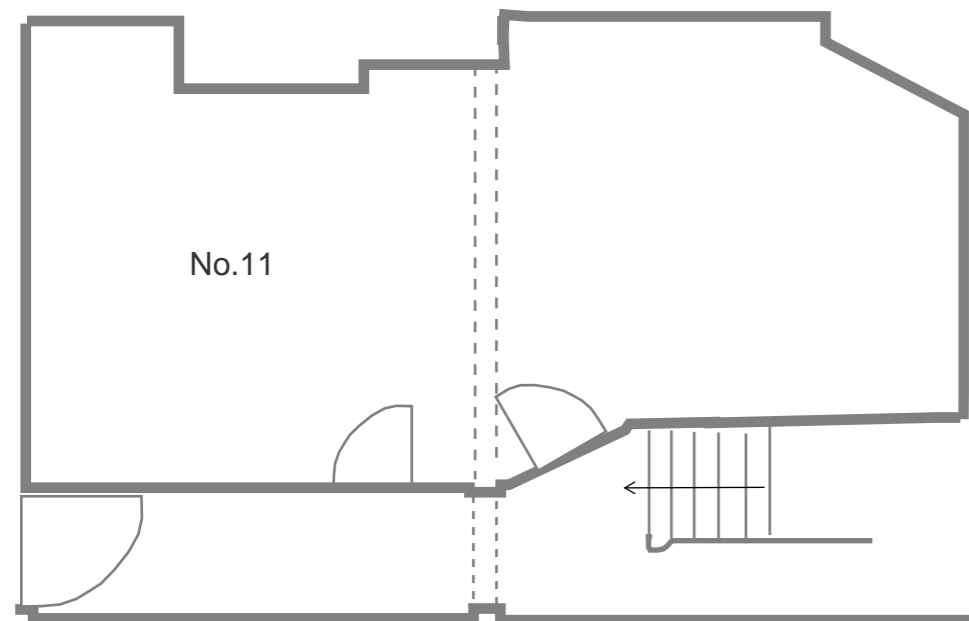
Change to heritage assets, including listed terraces, is inevitable and is only harmful when it damages or harms. The proposed change would avoid harm and when combined with sensitive interventions will preserve and enhance the buildings historic character as family dwelling, thereby providing the Building at Risk with a sustainable future. We therefore respectfully request that the proposals be granted planning and listed building consents.

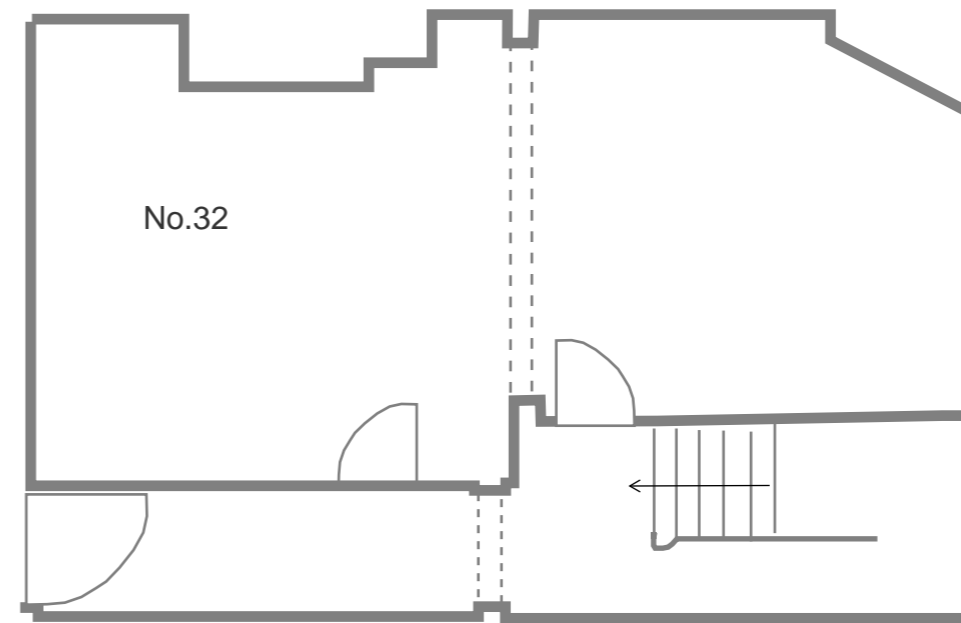
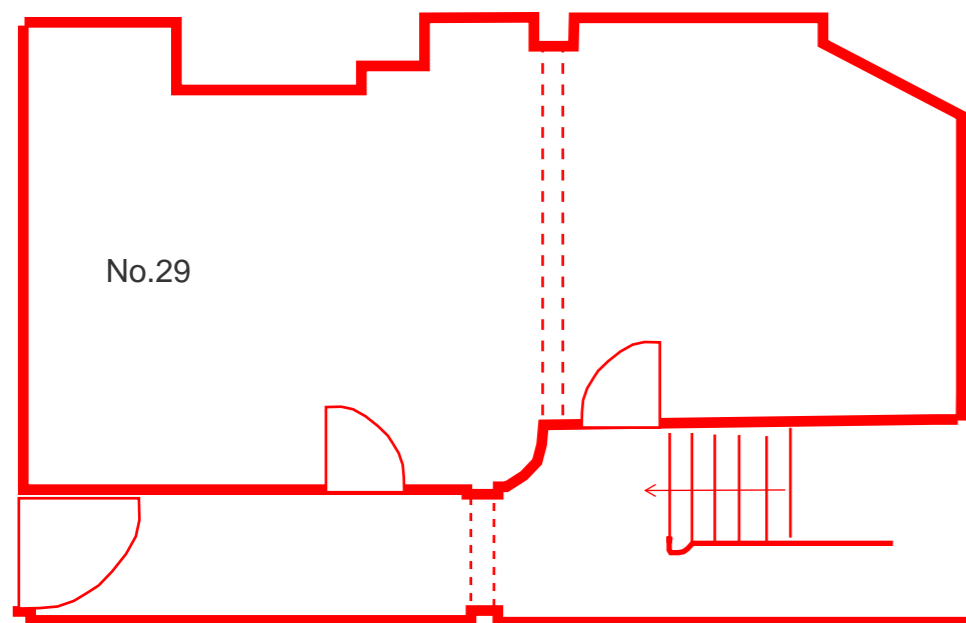
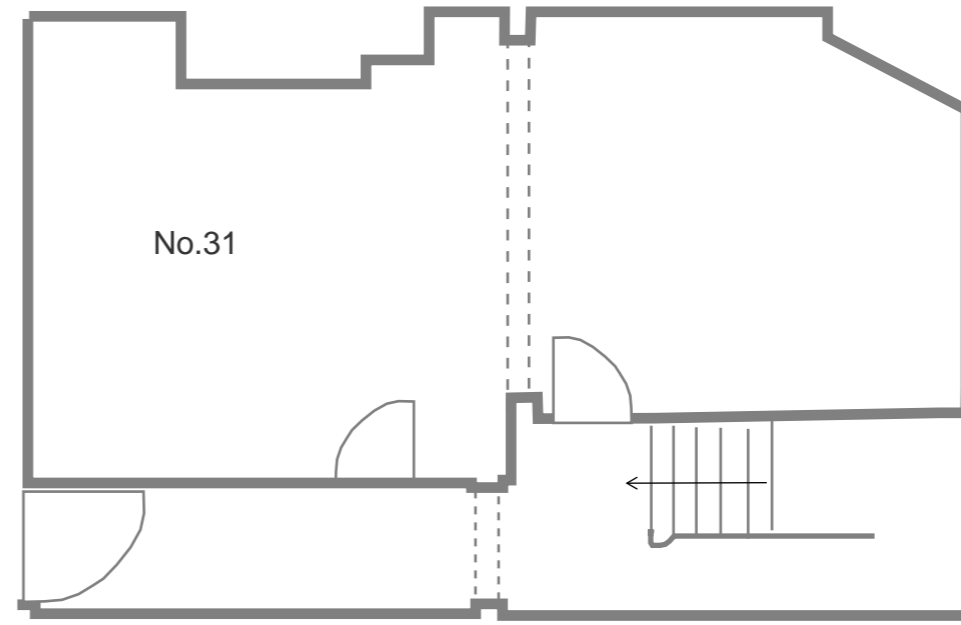
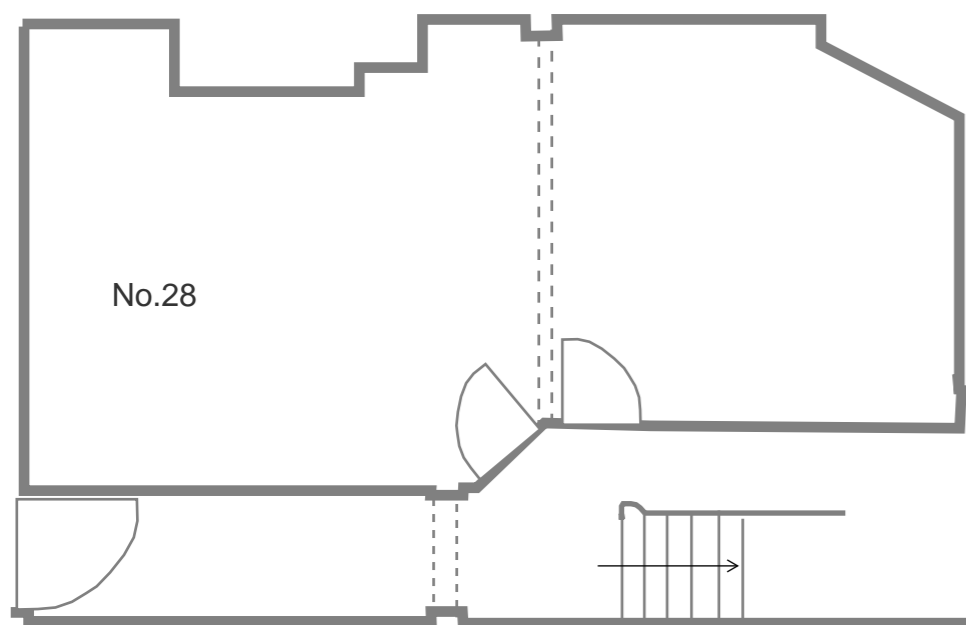
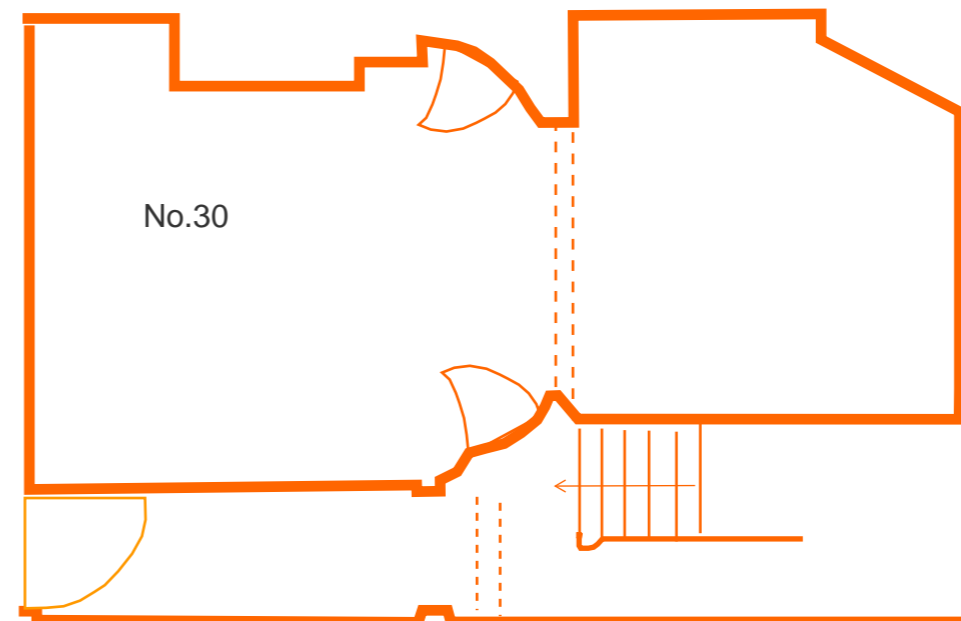
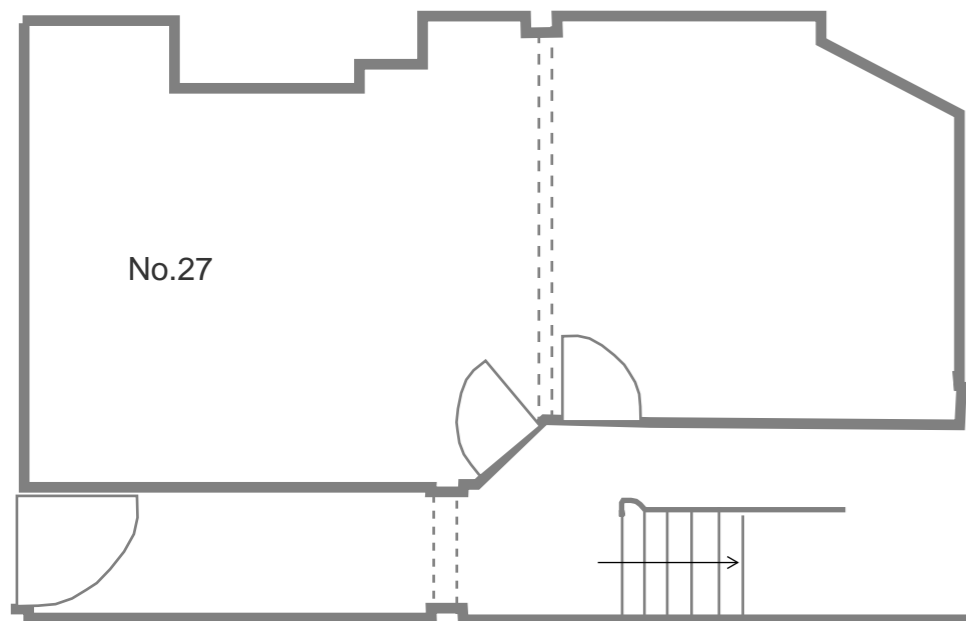
Yours sincerely
Charlie Rose

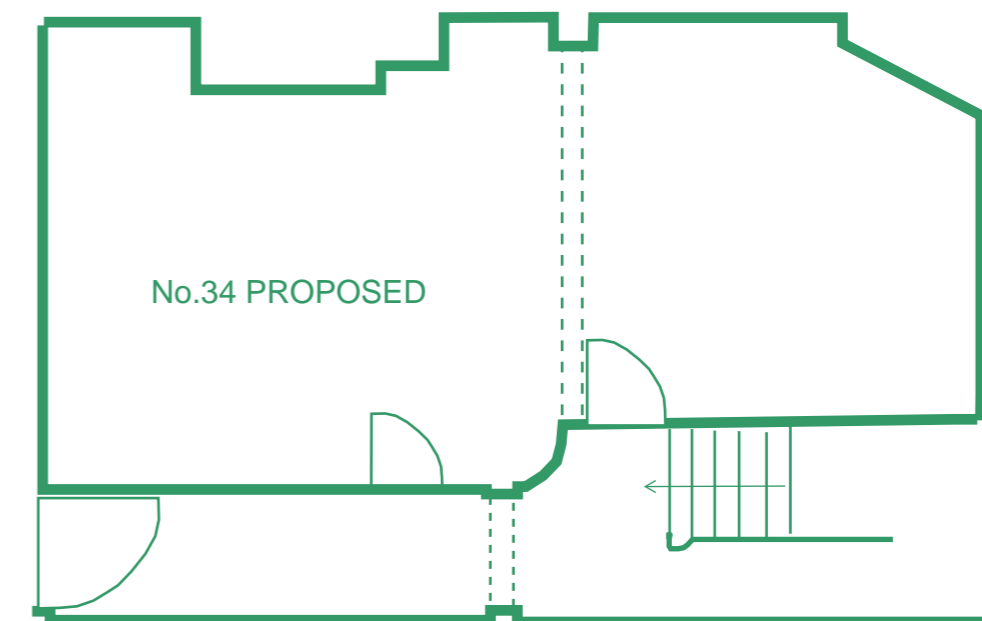
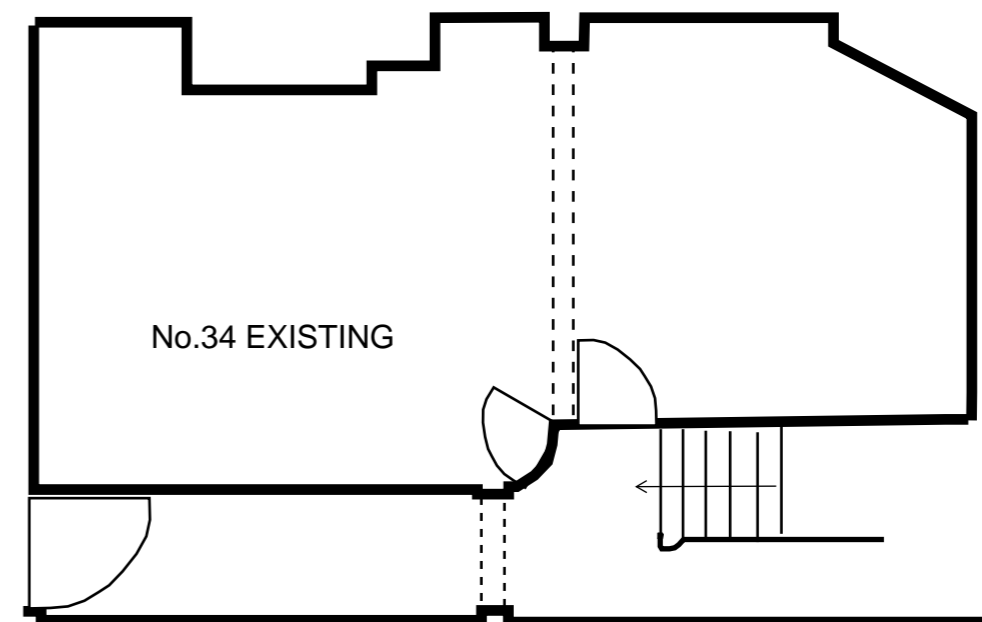
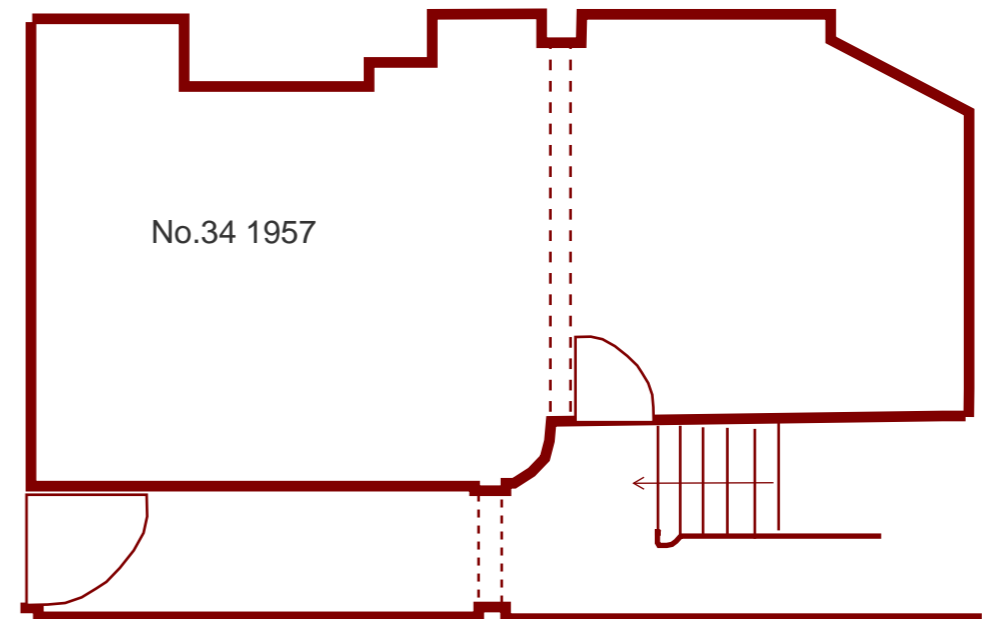
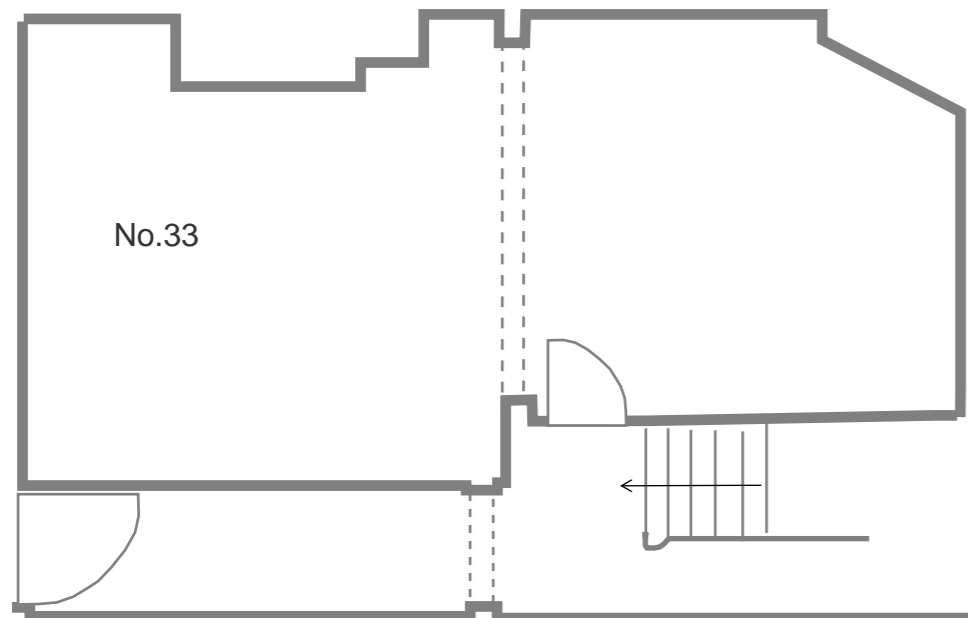
Cc Clare Brady, Historic England
Rose Todd, LB Camden

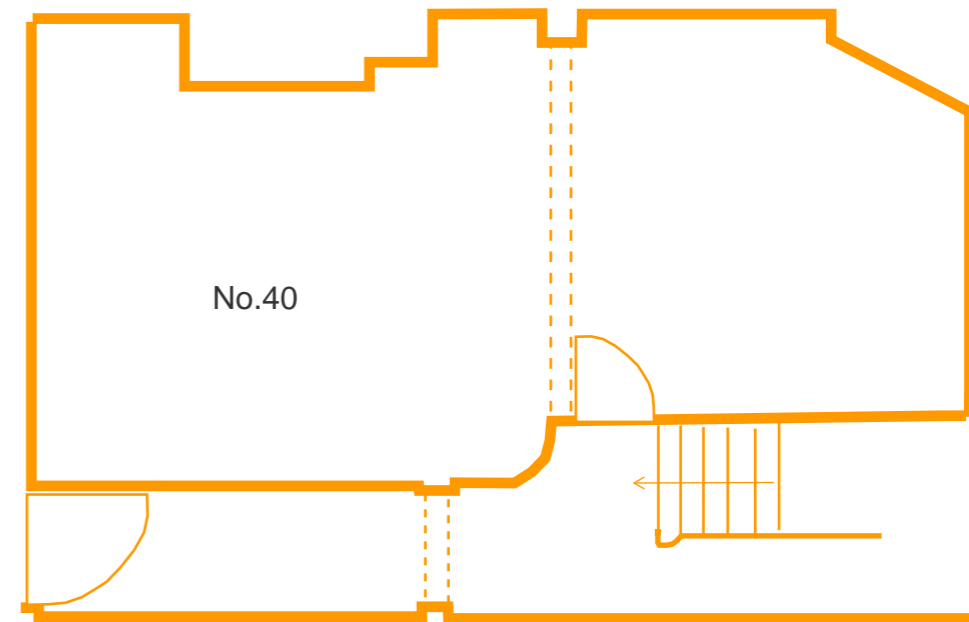
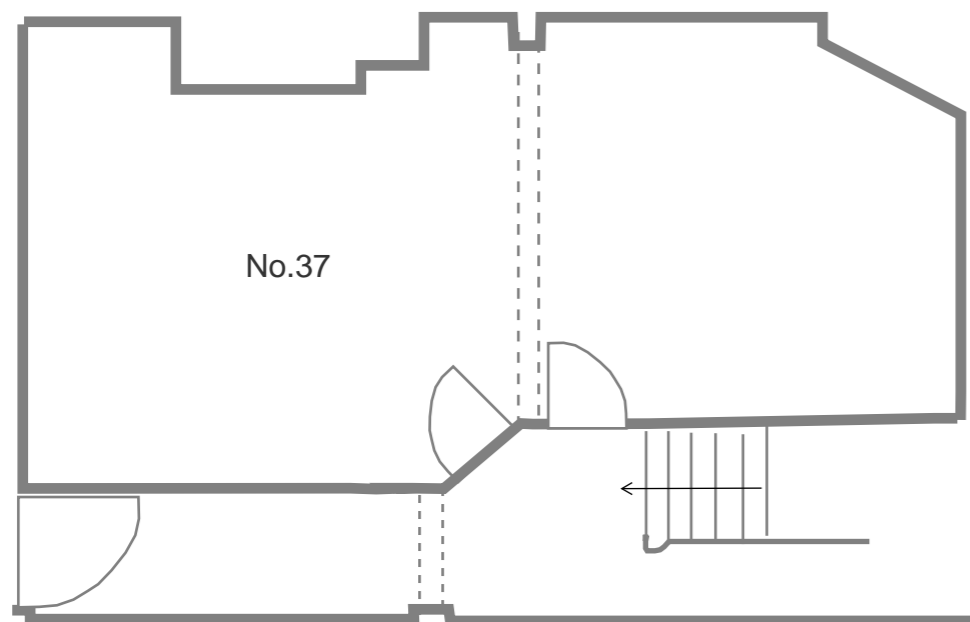
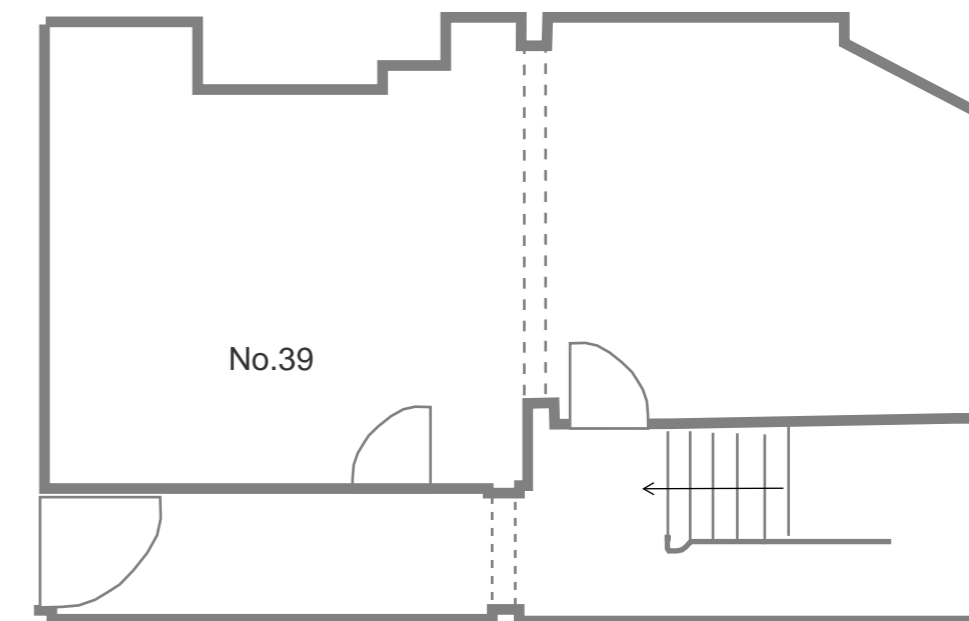
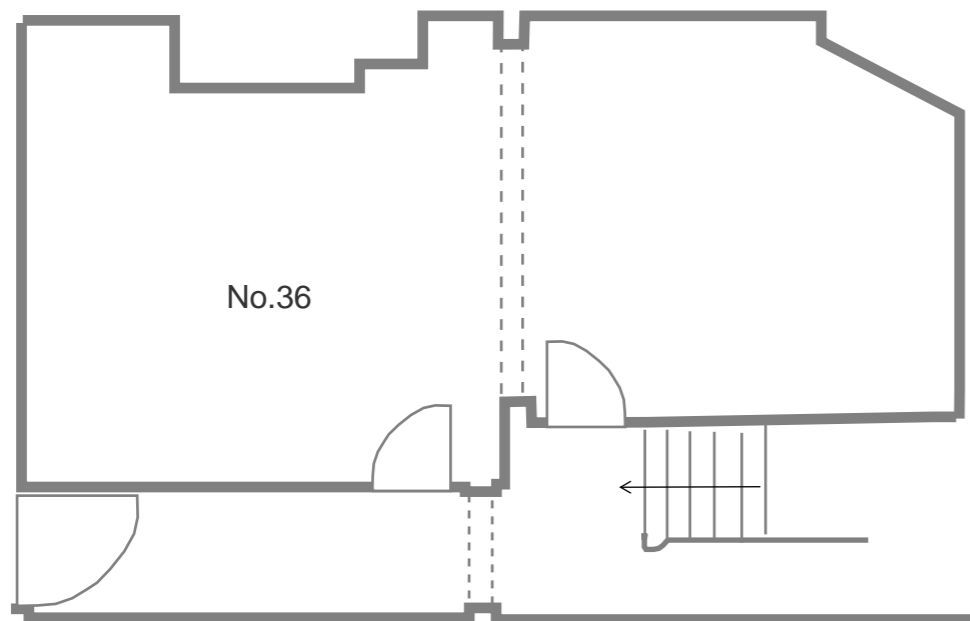
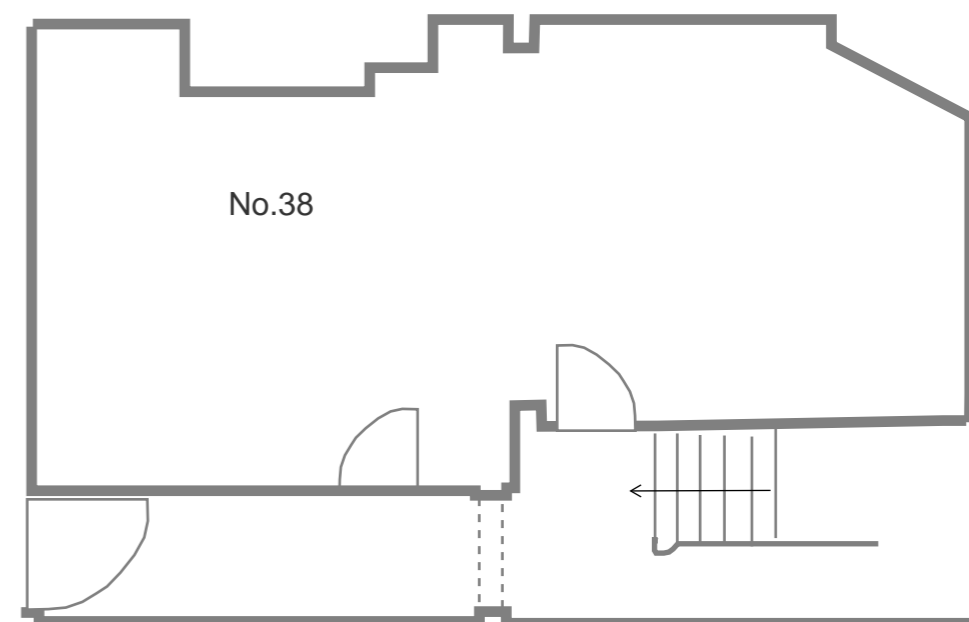
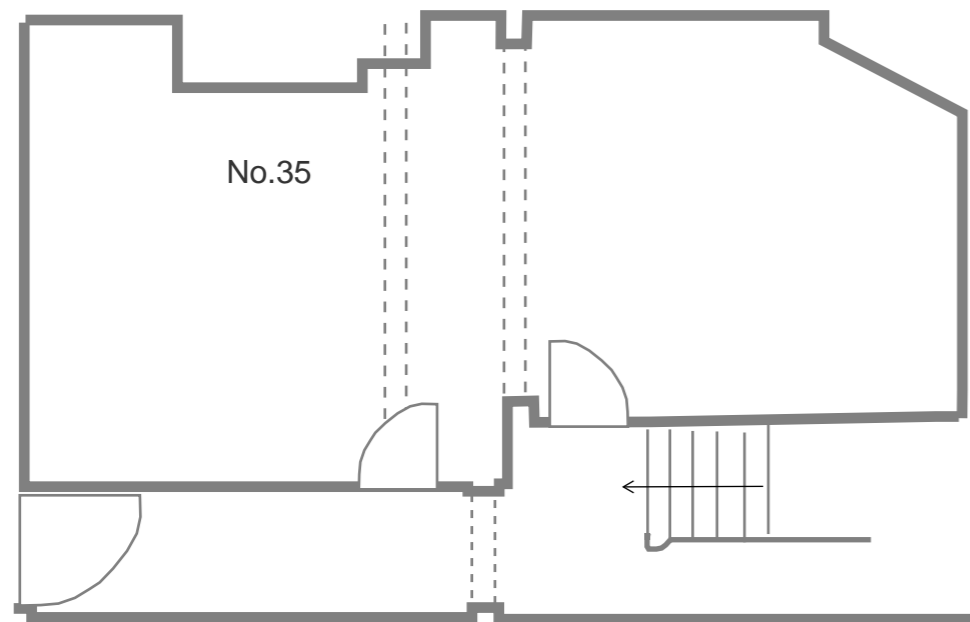
APPENDIX A GREAT JAMES STREET - GROUND FLOOR LAYOUTS











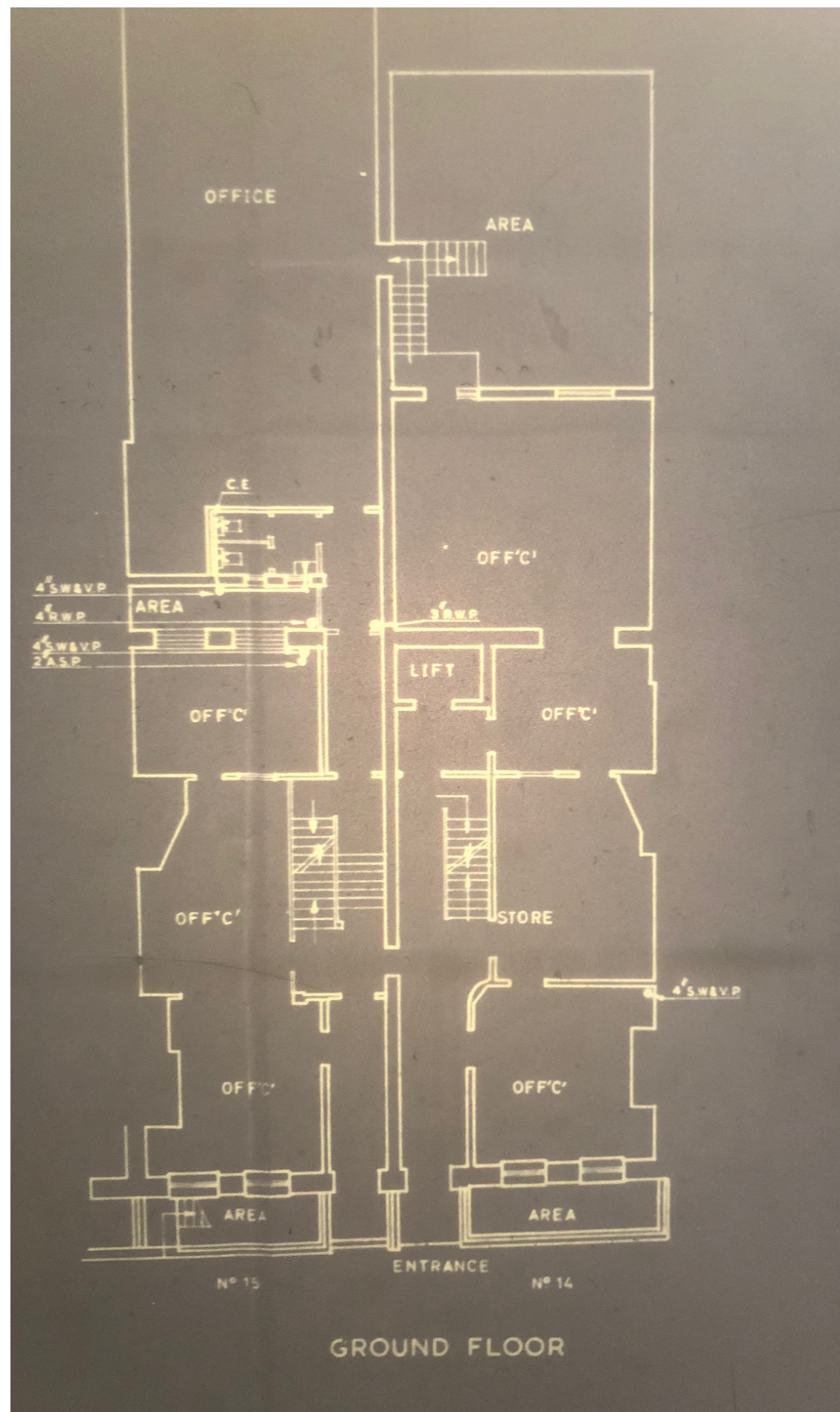


Figure 2. 1965 Drainage Plan showing ground floor layout of nos. 14 & 15 Greats James Street

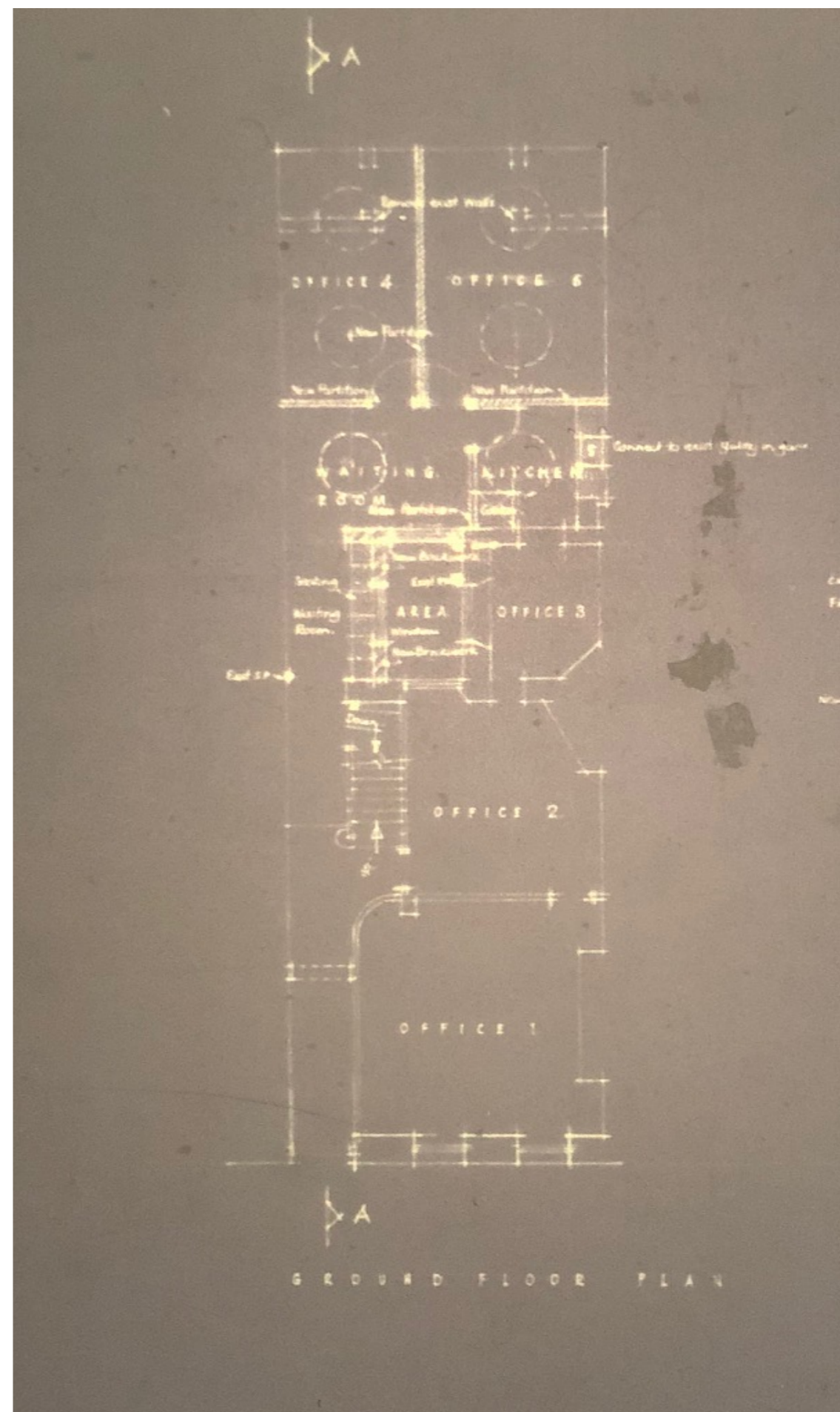


Figure 4. drainage plan of the ground floor of no.34 in 1957