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# Heritage Statement—Revised scheme

10 Grand Union Walk, London  
Borough of Camden

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On behalf of Mr Jarrett Brown

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January 2020 | Project Ref. 00102 | V.1  
(revised May 2020)

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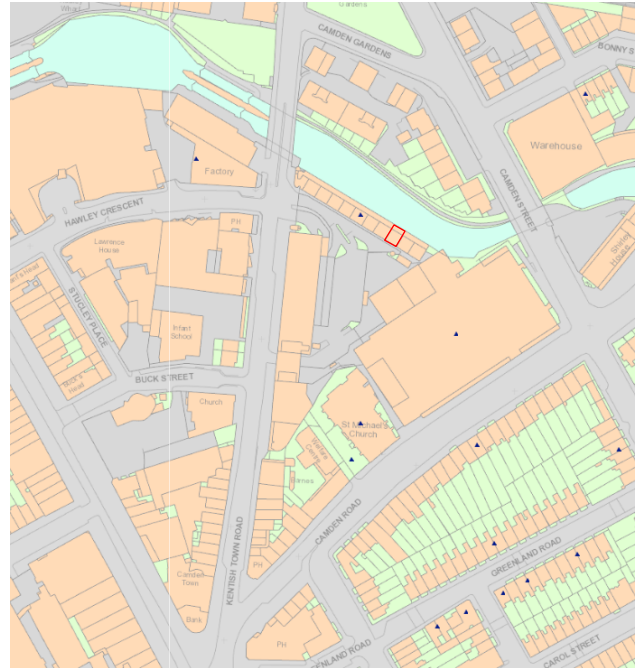


**JON LOWE**  
HERITAGE



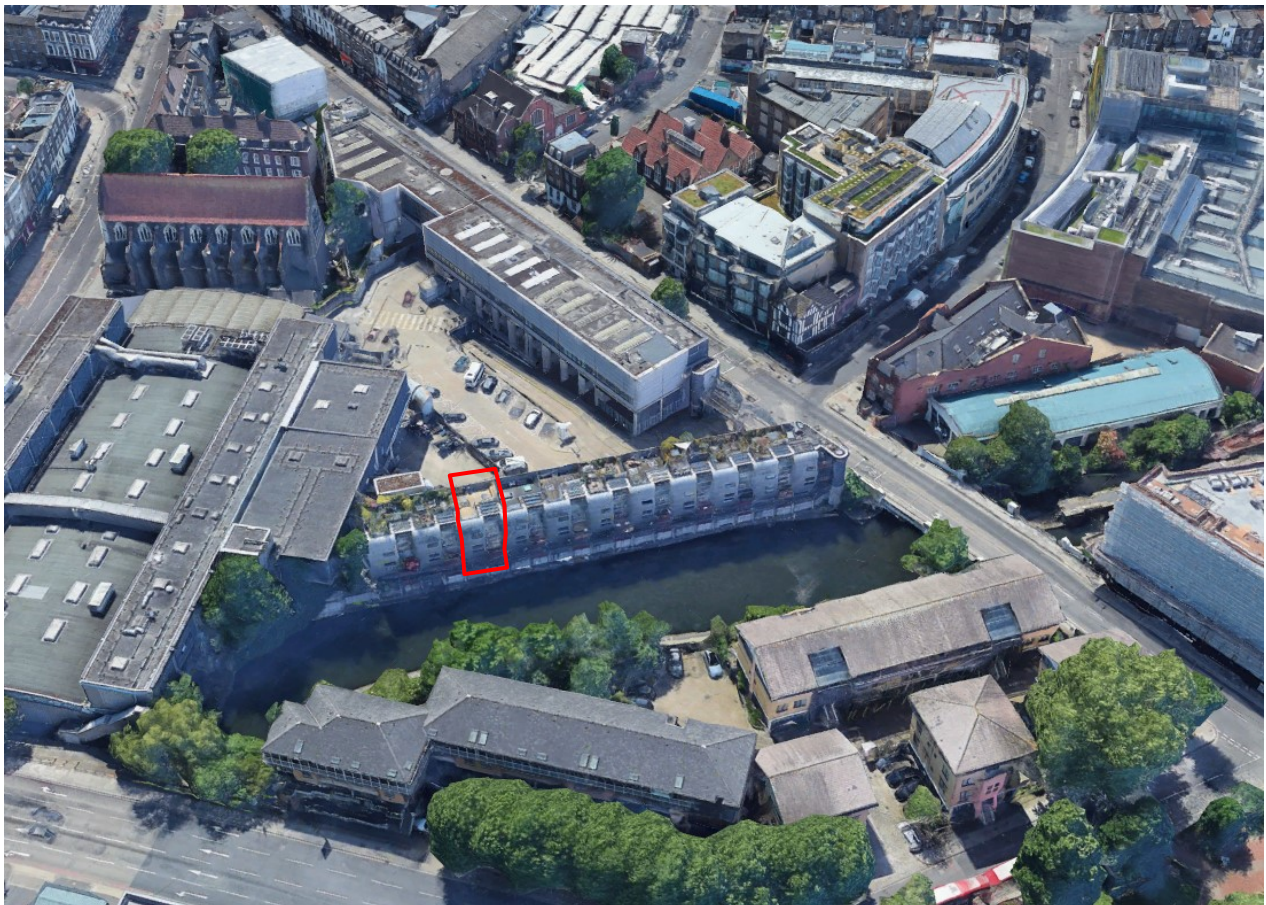
# Introduction

1. This Heritage Statement accompanies an application seeking listed building consent and planning permission for proposed works to 10 Grand Union Walk, Camden NW1 9LP. (The application site hereafter) The property was designed as a single dwelling unit and remains as a private dwelling. The statement includes a reappraisal of the scheme following a reduction in the scope of proposed works following discussions with Camden Borough Council Officers during the course of determination.
2. Nos 1-12 Grand Union Walk is a terrace of 10 houses and 2 flats built in 1986-88 as part of a wider development by J. Sainsbury's to designs by Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners. The terrace forms a north facing single aspect linear block of shallow depth that fronts the grand Union Canal to the north. The terrace is architecturally and visually distinctive and is one of the only residential examples of the High Tech movement.
3. The terrace was added to the national list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest at Grade 2 on 19 July 2019. At the same time the adjacent Sainsbury's supermarket, also built to the designs of Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners, was also listed at Grade 2.



Site location. Listed buildings are identified by blue triangle

Aerial view showing application site and terrace's canal frontage





4. Given the recent nature of the listing there have been no prior listed building consent applications or decisions for the application site. Likewise there appears to not have been any listed building consent applications for any of the property within the terrace.
5. The building is situated within the Regent's Canal Conservation Area (designated 25th April 1974 with boundary extensions and adjustments 1983, 1984, 1985 and 2004).
6. The proposed external works to the building are minor in nature, limited to a new rooftop air conditioning unit set behind a parapet and the replacement a roof access structure. These proposed works would not affect the character or appearance of the conservation area. Accordingly this Heritage Statement provides only a cursory assessment of its significance and a proportionate assessment of the effects of the works upon it.
7. The current owner and applicant acquired the building in July 2019 with the listing review process being concluded in advance of completion. It is proposed to undertake modest changes to the interior, including repairs and refurbishment, and minor external works at roof level. A full scope of the works is set out in a design and access statement prepared by Hugh Cullum Architects.
8. The purpose of this statement is to:
  - Present Camden Borough Council (the decision maker) with a proportionate description of the significance of the listed building (the terrace) and the Regent's Canal Conservation Area; and
  - Appraise the impacts of the amended scope of proposed works and their effects on the heritage assets affected.



1952 aerial photograph showing the former commercial buildings of the Aerated Bread Company. The approximate footprint of 1-12 Grand Union Walk is shown as a red tone.

## Historic Background

9. The list description summarises the sites history:

*"In the early 1980s J Sainsbury took ownership of a former industrial site in the heart of Camden with a view to developing an urban superstore. The scope of the project reached beyond just the store and between 1986 and 1988 a mixed-use scheme comprising a supermarket (listed Grade II), a terrace of houses (1-12 Grand Union Walk), a commercial building (known as Grand Union House) and a small crèche building were constructed to designs by Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners.*

*Situated to the south of the Grand Union Canal (originally Regent's Canal), the site was in mixed industrial and residential use in the C19. During the C20 an increasingly large part was occupied by the Aerated Bread Company (ABC), which ceased production in 1982 leaving a roughly triangular site bounded on two sides by busy roads and on the third by the Grand Union Canal. In April 1985 Sainsbury's obtained outline planning permission for a scheme by Scott Brownrigg and Turner. This, however, was rejected by Sainsbury's newly-established vetting committee, chaired by the architecture critic Colin Amery. Amery was formerly assistant editor to the Architectural Review and architectural critic for the Financial Times; in his new role he reported directly to supermarket chairman, Sir John Sainsbury. Amery described the approved scheme as 'not quite good enough' for the site and in November 1985 the architects were replaced by Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners on his recommendation. Sainsbury's also owned a plot north of the canal which was designated for a housing association development under a section 52 agreement in the outline planning permission of 1985. Although it formed part of the planning permission, it was not included in Grimshaw's site.*

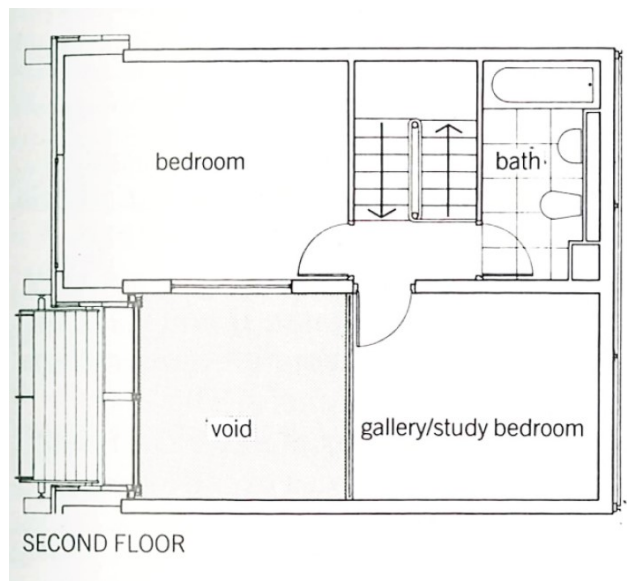
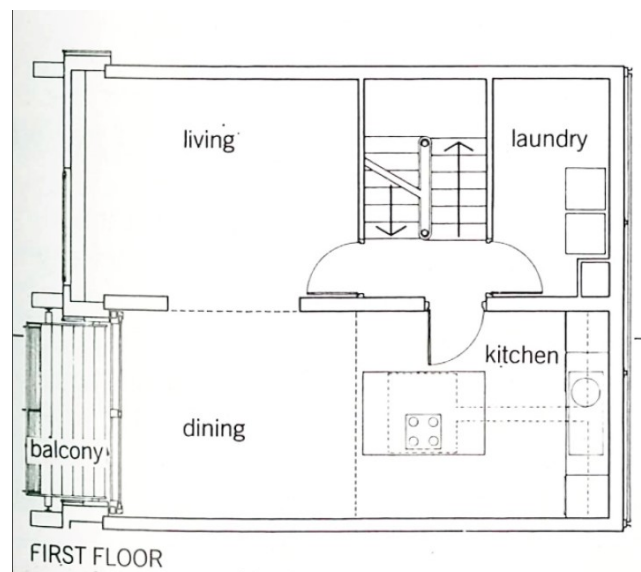
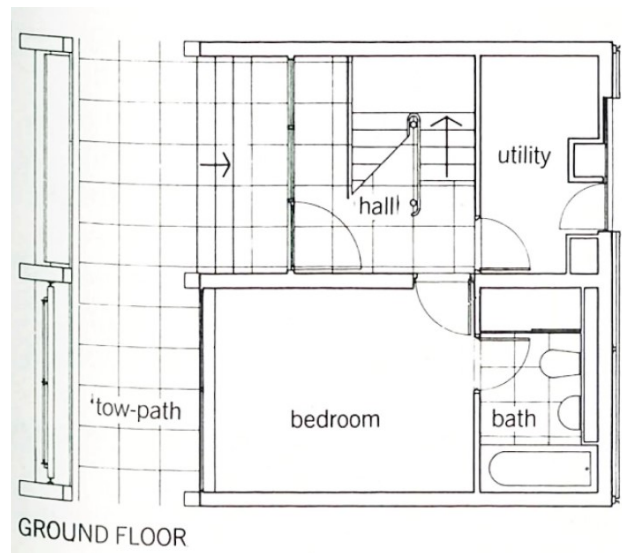
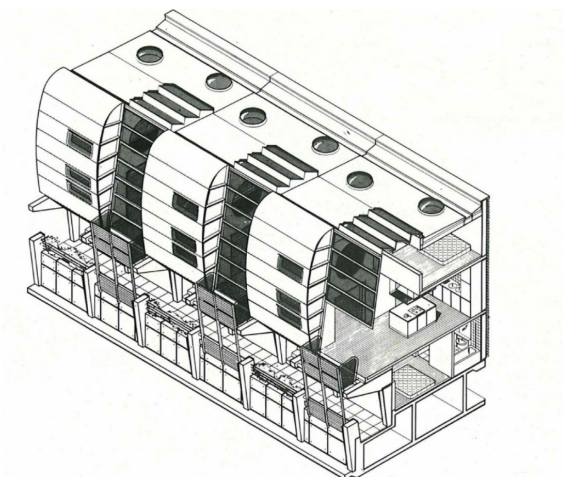
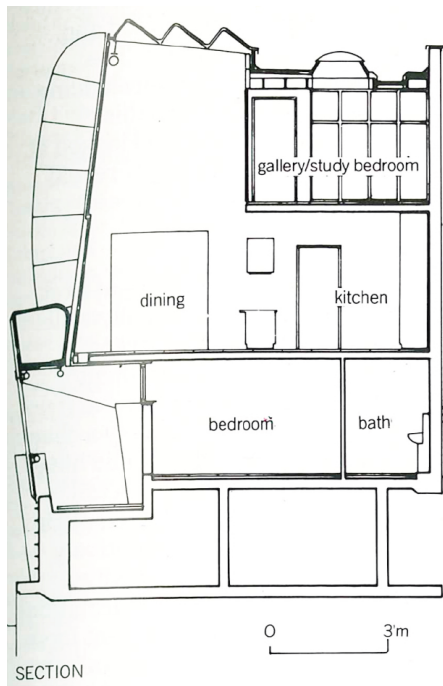
*Though opposed by the Regent's Canal Conservation Advisory Group, the scheme Grimshaw devised for Sainsbury's enthused Camden's planners, who, as he recalled it, wanted a sophisticated modern building rather than a pastiche. Detailed planning permission was granted in May 1986, having been commended by the Royal Fine Art Commission as an 'example of bold and enlightened patronage'. Construction commenced in August 1986, with Wimpey as main contractor."*

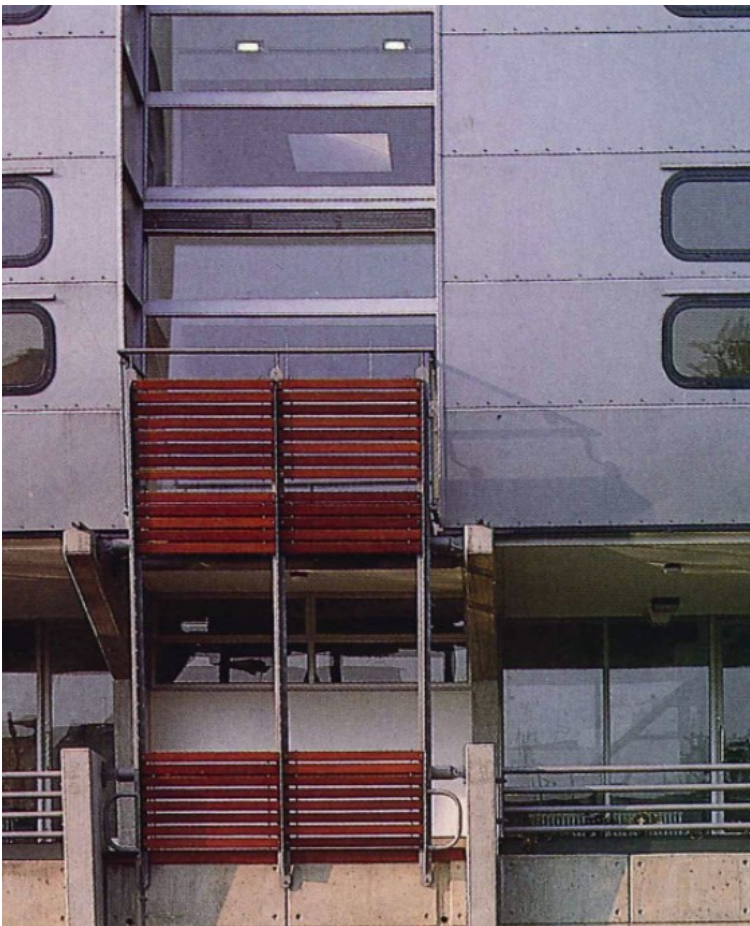
10. On 31 October 2003 planning permission (2003/1569/P) was granted and subsequently implemented for:



*"The use of the roof of the residential block of flats as a terrace for residents, and the associated raising of parapets on side and rear elevations, glass/steel balustrading to the front elevation, timber decking, replacement rooflights, and external lighting."*

11. Individual properties have been subject to changes affecting character and appearance. At roof level the properties have been finished with roof decking, seating and planters of varying designs, materials and quality. Internally several of the properties have been altered with typical changes including: replacement floor finishes; enclosure of the gallery to form a room or variation to the balustrade; new bathrooms and kitchens.
12. Upon completion, in 1988, the original designs were illustrated and described in the Architects Journal. (see below)





Architect's Journal images showing frontage after completion



# Significance

## 1-12 Grand Union Walk

13. The detailed list description (Appendix 1) gives the following principle reasons for the designation of the building:

Architectural interest:

- in its bold styling, resourceful planning and creative use of materials and detail, it is a scheme which exploits the canal-side setting with humour and panache;
- as one of few examples of High-Tech style applied to housing;
- as part of an ambitious and successful mixed-use scheme which marked a turning point in the career of Nicholas Grimshaw, one of the country's leading proponents of High-Tech architecture.

14. As a recent addition to the national statutory list the description is accurate and comprehensive, setting out the history of the asset and an architectural description of the interior and exterior.
15. The listing review included an internal inspection of two of the houses and neither of the two flats. No.10 was not inspected.
16. The list description recognises changes to have taken place prior to listing: *"the interiors of the houses have been altered ad hoc over time, with some fittings and finishes being altered or replaced". It highlights that each house retains the double height space but that "in many the mezzanine room has been enclosed to give privacy".* By adding the buildings to the list it is clear that the level and nature of variation from the original design has not diminished the overall architectural interest.

## No.10

17. The property's interest derives from it forming part of the terrace with each of the three principal reasons for designation, cited above, being applicable.
18. The house retains the original plan form and much of its original character but it has undergone minor alterations, redecoration and upgrading of services. As with many of the houses the upper floor landing features the post 2003 roof access stairs with a glass access pavilion over. Other works include: (1) The second floor mezzanine gallery has been enclosed with the removal of the original railing and insertion of large aluminium framed sliding windows;

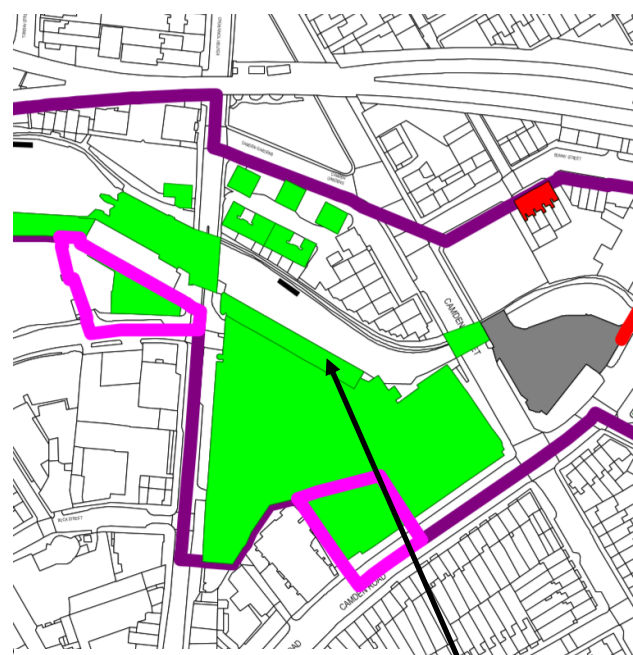
(2) At ground floor the wall between bedroom and entrance hall has been supplemented with additional plasterboard; and (3) there has been replacement and slight reconfiguration of services including replacing floor radiator in first floor living room with new wall mounted radiator.

19. The decorative order and condition of the property is relatively tired and in need of attention. The property would benefit from investment that includes considered and sensitive repair, restoration of key architectural features and works that accord with the original design intention.

## Conservation Area

20. On 11 September 2008 Camden Borough Council adopted the 'Regent's Canal Conservation Area Appraisal and management Strategy'. It offers the following summary of the area's significance:

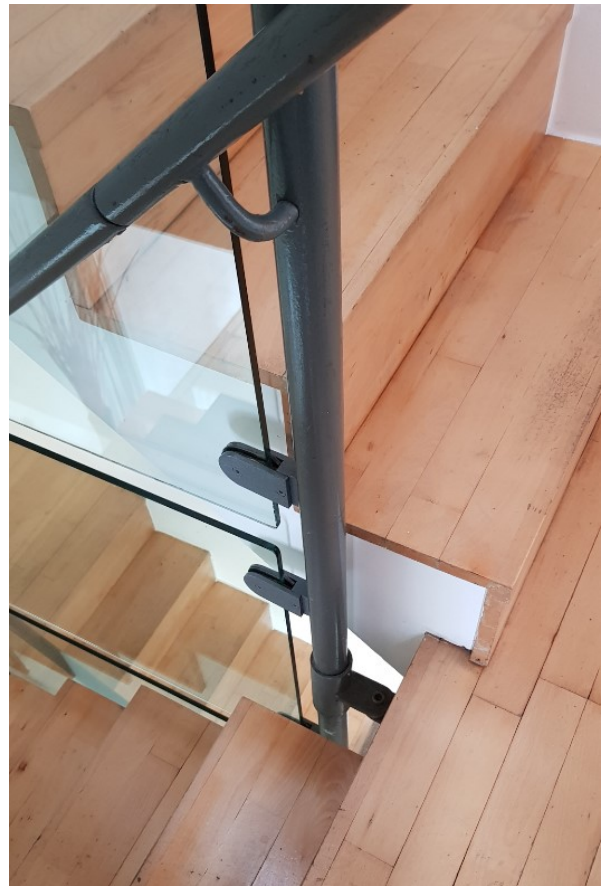
*"The Regent's Canal, part of the Grand Union Canal, winds its way through the London Borough of Camden on its way to joining the river Thames, forming a corridor of unique character. The Canal is linked to a 3,000 mile*



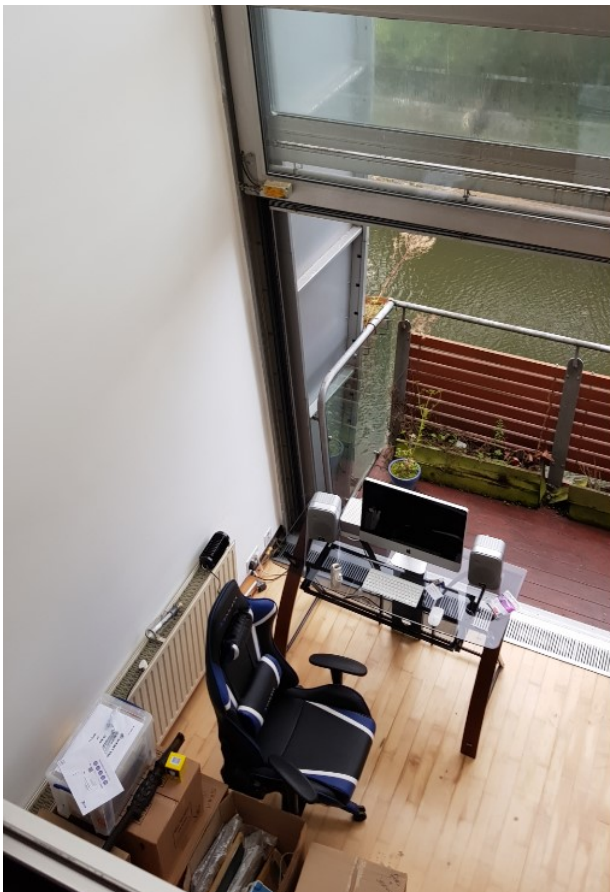
- Listed Building
  - Negative Building
  - Positive Building
  - Regents Canal CA
  - Proposed Conservation Area Regents Park
  - Opportunity Site
- The site

Extract of Camden Borough Council's Regent's Canal Conservation Area Townscape Appraisal Map (adopted 11 September 2008, predating the addition of the Site to the list)









*network of waterways. The concentration of industrial archaeology along the Camden section of the canal, with its associated railway features is of exceptional interest and quality, unparalleled in London. It is an important feature of historic and visual interest in the wider townscape and, following the decline of traditional canal-related commercial activities, has been increasingly recognised as a valuable resource for water-based leisure activities, for its tranquil seclusion, for its ecological value and its potential for transportation and informal recreation. It is the Council's intention to conserve and enhance the existing character of the canal and to improve its potential for recreation, transportation and wildlife.*

*The ever changing views, the variety and contrast of townscape elements and the informal relationship between buildings and canal make significant contributions to the character of the canal. Different sections of the canal vary considerably in terms of aspect, level, width and orientation and in the nature and function of adjacent buildings and landscape."*

21. Nos 1-12 Grand Union Walk, together with the remaining elements of the Sainsbury's development, were identified as making a positive contribution to the conservation area. This contribution is made up of the terrace's individual and bold architectural design response to its canal side setting, its part within the wider Sainsbury's group designed by Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners and the variety and interest the terrace offers to the canal as a primary townscape feature.

## Legislation and Policy

### Legislation

22. The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the current legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas and is a primary consideration.
23. In respect of proposals affected listed buildings, Section 66 states that "in considering whether to grant planning permission of permission in principle for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses".
24. With regard to conservation areas, Section 72 places

a duty on the decision maker: "In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any functions under or by virtue of any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area."

### National Planning Policy Framework (revised 2019)

25. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England, providing a framework within which locally prepared plans can be produced. It is a material consideration and relates to planning law, noting that applications are to be determined in accordance with the local plans unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Chapter 16, 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment', is of particular relevance.
26. Heritage assets are recognised as being a irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. (Paragraph 184) The conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is also a core planning principle.
27. Conservation (for heritage policy) is defined at annex 2 as: "a process of maintaining and managing change in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance." It differs from preservation which is the maintenance of something in its current state.
28. Significance (for heritage policy) is defined at annex 2 as: "The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting..."
29. At paragraph 185, the NPPF, directs that local plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, taking into account four key factors:
  - a. "The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
  - b. The wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
  - c. The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
  - d. Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place."



30. Describing the significance of any heritage asset affected is the responsibility of an applicant with any assessment being proportionate to the asset's significance. (Paragraph 189)
31. Identifying and assessing the particular significance of any heritage asset potentially affected by a proposal, taking into account evidence and expertise, is the responsibility of the Local Planning Authorities. The purpose of this is to 'avoid or minimize any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal'. (Paragraph 190)
32. In decision making where designated heritage assets are affected, Paragraph 193 places a duty of giving 'great weight' to the asset's conservation when considering the impact of a proposed development, irrespective of the level of harm.
33. Harm to designated heritage assets is categorized into 'substantial harm', addressed in Paragraphs 194 and 195 of the NPPF, or 'less than substantial harm', addressed in Paragraphs 196.
34. The effects of any development on a heritage asset, whether designated or not, needs to be assessed against its archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic interests as the core elements of the asset's significance.

## Local Policy

35. Relevant local planning policy is set out in the Camden Local Plan 2017. Policies D1 Design, D2 Conservation Areas and Policy D2 Heritage are of most relevance.
36. Policy D1 requires that development:
  - A *Respects local context and character;*
  - B *Preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2 Heritage;*
  - E *Comprises details and materials that are of high quality and complement the local character.*
37. Policy D2 Heritage states that, relating Conservation Areas, The Council will:
  - E *require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area;*
38. Policy D2 Heritage states that, relating to Listed Buildings, The Council will:
  - J *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; and*

- K *Resist development that would cause harm to significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting.*

## Proposed Works

39. Proposals have been drawn up by conservation accredited architects, Hugh Cullum Architects, in consultation with Jon Lowe Heritage Ltd. The proposal responds to a brief set by the current owner/occupier/applicant, who acquired the building because of its architectural interest.
40. The proposals have sought to maintain the special architectural interest of the building's interior through sensitive upgrading and restoration to achieve a good working and decorative order and to continue its habitation as a single dwelling unit. The proposed works are minor in nature and largely affect the interior. Any works affecting the exterior are confined to the altered roof level and would not bring about any perceivable change to the building's outward appearance.
41. The full scope of the proposals is presented in annotations on the proposed drawings submitted with the application and with a design and access statement.

## Assessment of the Effects of the Proposals

42. The impact of the proposals on the significance of the listed building and the conservation area have been appraised. The impacts considered include tangible change to fabric, form and features, as well as the overall character, appearance and special interest that may derive from circulation or function.
43. The effects of the proposals on the special interest and significance of the heritage assets have also been considered. The effects are identified as being beneficial (bring about a positive change or enhancement), neutral (having negligible effect, including where a positive change neutralises a negative change, and adverse (where there will be some harm to or loss of significance).
44. The impacts, effects and concluding remarks about each itemised proposed change is tabulated in the following pages.

Note: The following table has been updated to reflect the revised scope of proposed work.

- Works that are no longer proposed are striked-through text (e.g. ~~no longer applied for~~)
- New or amended proposed works and commentary is presented in italics (e.g. *new text*)

Proposal	Impact	Effect on special interest	Conclusion
Bedroom 1 (Ground floor) - Remove non original plasterboard boxing out; apply new plasterboard lining with paint finish to match the other walls	Loss of non-original plasterboard	Beneficial	A restorative change that would reinstate the original wall composition, thickness and appearance.
Entrance Hall (Ground floor) - Replace radiator with similar model in the same location	Loss of original radiator	Neutral	Any adverse effects resulting from loss of an original fitting are mitigated by its replacement with a feature of similar design and appearance to maintain the spirit of the building's original design.
Entrance Hall (Ground floor) - <del>Replace concrete paviours with Amtico flooring</del> <i>Amended proposal: Clean, polish and re-grout original paviours</i>	<del>Loss of original paviours. Visual change due to new floor finish</del>  <i>No loss of fabric. Improved visual appearance</i>	<del>Minor adverse</del> <i>Beneficial</i>	<del>Minor adverse effects are limited to a small area within one room. This change has been carried out in other houses within the terrace and was not of consequence when designating the terrace as a listed building. This limited adverse effect is offset by the sensitive and restorative works elsewhere in the building.</del>  <i>Retention and enhancement of an original feature</i>
Bathroom 1 (Ground floor) - Replace all sanitaryware, tiling and cabinetry. Provision of underfloor heating.	Loss of original and non-original fittings of little or no intrinsic heritage value	Neutral	Necessary upgrading to be executed with appropriate design to support ongoing habitation for the 21st century.  <i>Detailed design demonstrates appropriateness of form and continuation of the spirit of the original</i>
Refuse/Store/Plant room—Proposed access hatch into sub-basement for storage use	Localised loss of original concrete floor fabric to form opening with hatch	Neutral	Beneficial adaptation to release unutilised storage potential that would not compromise plan form, circulation or result in loss of important character or features.
Staircase—Steel balustrade to be refurbished and repainted	Loss of original (worn) paint. Redecoration to a high standard to achieve consistent and high quality paint finish.	Beneficial	Restoration of a primary architectural feature to achieve original finish without alteration to or loss of character.
Staircase— Replace beechwood treads and risers <del>with oakwood</del> , <del>matching new timber flooring</del> <i>where necessary</i>	Loss of original timber and occasional non original nosings. <del>Minor visual change due to introduction of new wood type</del>  <i>Impact limited to areas of wear</i>	Neutral	Design and style of floor would remain unchanged other than slight colour variation. Any adverse impact from loss of original floor is offset by the benefit of achieving a high quality reinstatement that is broadly like-for-like.  <i>Any impacts would be localised</i>
<i>Built-in joinery unit within Refuse/store/plantroom</i>	<i>Insertion of fixed cabinetry</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Removable feature. Design sympathetic to original architecture. Room is of low sensitivity.</i>

Proposal	Impact	Effect on special interest	Conclusion
<p>Kitchen (first floor) - <del>Kitchen layout rearranged and new units fitted, retaining and repositioning extract</del></p> <p><i>Kitchen layout to be retained as existing. Tired and worn out units to be replaced in the spirit of the original</i></p>	<p><del>Loss of original kitchen units and alteration to layout</del></p> <p><i>Replacement of some original some replacement units</i></p>	Neutral	<p><del>Original kitchen units are relatively low quality and do not contribute to the special interests of the building. Layout changes have negligible effect on character and by maintaining the dominant extractor (in a new location) the proposal maintains the essence of original design.</del></p> <p><i>The proposals maintain the character</i></p>
<p><del>Kitchen (first floor) - Beechwood floor replaced with Amtico</del></p>	<p><del>Loss of original timber. Minor visual change due to introduction of new finish</del></p>	Neutral	<p><del>Wear to original flooring requires attention and use of Amtico provides a hard wearing practical solution without significant visual impact. This change will not fundamentally alter character or one's appreciation of the building's special interest.</del></p>
<p>Kitchen (first floor) - Door to staircase retained but rehung</p>	<p>No loss of historic fabric. Negligible visual, physical and operation change.</p>	Neutral	<p>Joinery is capable of sustaining the change without need to modify frames. <del>Together with new kitchen layout this</del> change will minimally alter circulation but individually and cumulatively would have negligible effect on the special interest of the listed building.</p>
<p>Dining &amp; Living Room (first floor) and Bedroom 3 (second floor) - Replace non original radiators and reinstate defective trench heater</p>	<p>Loss of low quality non original fittings. Introduction of fitting of improved character and appearance. Repair of original trench heater.</p>	Beneficial	<p>Improvement to the appearance, character and environmental control of the primary space. Restoration of the trench heater will support long term operation and climatic control associated with retractable window.</p>
<p>Dining &amp; Living Room <b>&amp; Kitchen</b> (first floor) - Replace beechwood flooring with <b>oakwood like-for-like where necessary</b></p>	<p><b>Potential localised</b> Loss of original timber. Minor visual change due to introduction of new wood type.</p>	Neutral	<p>The design and style of floor finish would remain unchanged <del>other than slight colour variation.</del> Any adverse impact from the loss of the original floor is offset by the benefit of achieving a high quality reinstatement that is <del>broadly</del> like-for-like.</p>
<p>Bedroom 2 &amp; 3 (Second floor) - Replace beechwood flooring <del>with oakwood like for like where necessary</del></p>	<p>As above</p>	Neutral	<p>As above</p>



Proposal	Impact	Effect on special interest	Conclusion
<p>Bedroom 3 (Second floor) - <del>Remove infill wall/windows to reinstate and extend second floor gallery, supported on new steels and fitted with new steel balustrade with glass panels to match external detail</del></p> <p><i>Amended design - New steel and glass balustrade to replace block work upstand wall</i></p>	<p>Loss of section of original and non-original wall. <del>Minor change to plan form resulting projection into double height space. Minor physical impact to bed steel supports in existing blockwork walls.</del></p> <p>Varied design</p>	Neutral	<p>Multiple houses within the terrace have undertaken change to this element, resulting in inconsistency. There would be minor adverse effects arising from the loss of the original gallery wall, however, the current arrangement is a departure from the original and is not consistent with other houses. The <i>amended</i> proposal offers <del>an offsetting benefit of reinstating the open gallery, albeit to an extended form.</del> The gallery extension is offset from the outer walls to maintain legibility of the original gallery line and has been sensitively designed to replicate the detailing used on the external balcony. <i>And includes a design form and aesthetic that is complimentary to the original design intent, preserving plan form and the double height space</i></p>
Staircase (second floor) - Replace 2003 approved roof access steps with shallower pitch	Loss of non-original fabric	Neutral	Proposed replacement is to be of design that is functionally better than the existing and that wholly maintains the detailing, character and aesthetic of the original staircase without any loss of original fabric.
Bathroom 2 (second floor) - Replace all sanitaryware, tiling and cabinetry. Provision of underfloor heating	Loss of original and non-original fittings of little or no intrinsic heritage value.	Neutral	<p>Necessary upgrading to be executed with appropriate design to support ongoing habitation for the 21st century.</p> <p><i>Detailed design demonstrates appropriateness of form and continuation of the spirit of the original</i></p>
Rooftop— New air conditioning unit placed behind parapet	Visual change upon rooftop	Neutral	The proposed units will be concealed by the parapet against which they are to be positioned. There will be no visible change to the appearance of the building. The rooftops are much altered and vary considerably in their detail. Accordingly the new units would introduce little perceivable change in private views and no change in public views.
Rooftop — Replace domed roof light with flat walk-on rooflight with obscured glass;	Loss of low quality original fixture.	Neutral	The replacement roof light is of superior design quality and attractive appearance. Its installation results in an improvement with a design that is sympathetic to the style and form of others within the terrace (see No.9).
Rooftop— Replace roof pod with lower, hinged opening roof light	Loss of 2003 glass structure	Beneficial	The proposal is of an appropriate design and lower height. Existing taller structure not currently visible.

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# Conclusion

45. The proposed works to 10 Grand Union Walk are consistent with its inherent value and character as a building of special architectural interest. The designs have taken into account the asset's interests and sought to minimise or avoid harm and, where possible, and to take opportunities to enhance the asset's significance.
46. The amended scheme continues the spirit of the original design and does not alter the conclusions previously found. Overall the amended design results in less change or alteration and a greater degree of preservation of the historic features, layout and character.
47. As with any building of age its finishes, decoration and fittings will experience change over time and the management and nature of that change is key to preserving the inherent significance. The list description has been recently prepared and clearly states the reasons for designation. This heritage statement has reviewed the building, the terrace and the available documentary evidence and concludes that the proposals are sympathetic and appropriate to the original intended design, preserving the overall integrity and character of the listed building. Its primary features and characteristics will remain or be refurbished to the designs of the original and where variation from this arises the level of change is minor and of little or no consequence to the special architectural or historic interests.
48. As the application building is relatively young, the proposal represents the first comprehensive review and refurbishment of its interior. There is benefit in the approach being taken as it considers the building as a whole and avoids piecemeal and ad-hoc change that may otherwise have a adverse cumulative effect.
49. The assessment of the amended design has identified minor and reduced loss of historic fabric. The loss of fabric or where changes to design details are proposed they are driven by the need for renewal due to wear and tear or to improve the efficiency and refresh the interiors for onward occupation. In each case the design and materiality of the new or replacement materials and fittings are appropriate and, where restorative they will have a positive effect that offsets any minor harm.
50. Overall there will be no loss of significance to the conservation area and the special interest of the listed terrace would be preserved. The proposals have been informed by an understanding of the significance of the assets and therefore special regards and attention has been had to the desirability of preserving or enhancing interests. The proposals are therefore consistent with S.66(1) and S.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
81. Local Plan Policy D2 is consistent with The NPPF. In accordance with the NPPF this report provides a proportionate description of the significance of the heritage assets affected or potentially affected by the proposed development. It follows a full inspection of the accessible fabric and archives. Qualitative judgements have been made based on knowledge and experience of late 20th century heritage assets and the impacts and effects of the proposed development have been fully assessed. The scheme has evolved in consultation with Jon Lowe Heritage Ltd and it is concluded that the proposal overall has a neutral effect on significance and accords with local planning policy.

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Appendix 1

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List Description

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Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1464061

Date first listed: 19-Jul-2019

Statutory Address: 1-12 Grand Union Walk, Kentish Town Road, London, NW1 9LP

### Summary

Terrace of 10 houses and 2 flats, 1986-88, built as part of a wider development by J Sainsbury's to designs by Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners, architect in charge, Neven Sidor; structural engineers, Kenchington, Little and Partners.

### Reasons for Designation

1-12 Grand Union Walk, London, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest: \* in its bold styling, resourceful planning and creative use of materials and detail, it is a scheme which exploits the canal-side setting with humour and panache; \* as one of few examples of High-Tech style applied to housing; \* as part of an ambitious and successful mixed-use scheme which marked a turning point in the career of Nicholas Grimshaw, one of the country's leading proponents of High-Tech architecture.

### History

In the early 1980s J Sainsbury took ownership of a former industrial site in the heart of Camden with a view to developing an urban superstore. The scope of the project reached beyond just the store and between 1986 and 1988 a mixed-use scheme comprising a supermarket (listed Grade II), a terrace of houses (1-12 Grand Union Walk), a commercial building (known as Grand Union House) and a small crèche building were constructed to designs by Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners.

Situated to the south of the Grand Union Canal (originally Regent's Canal), the site was in mixed industrial and residential use in the C19. During the C20 an increasingly large part was occupied by the Aerated Bread Company (ABC), which ceased production in 1982 leaving a roughly triangular site bounded on two sides by busy roads and on the third by the Grand Union Canal. In April 1985 Sainsbury's obtained outline planning permission for a scheme by Scott Brownrigg and Turner. This, however, was rejected by Sainsbury's newly-established vetting committee, chaired by the architecture critic Colin Amery. Amery was formerly assistant editor to the Architectural Review and architectural critic for the Financial Times; in his new role he reported directly to supermarket chairman, Sir John Sainsbury. Amery described the approved scheme as 'not quite good enough' for the site and in November 1985 the architects were replaced by Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners on his recommendation. Sainsbury's also owned a

plot north of the canal which was designated for a housing association development under a section 52 agreement in the outline planning permission of 1985. Although it formed part of the planning permission, it was not included in Grimshaw's site.

Though opposed by the Regent's Canal Conservation Advisory Group, the scheme Grimshaw devised for Sainsbury's enthused Camden's planners, who, as he recalled it, wanted a sophisticated modern building rather than a pastiche. Detailed planning permission was granted in May 1986, having been commended by the Royal Fine Art Commission as an 'example of bold and enlightened patronage'. Construction commenced in August 1986, with Wimpey as main contractor.

Each of the elements had very different planning and servicing requirements, lifespans and tenure and all needed to be fitted together on the compact, inner-city site. Grimshaw's scheme permitted each element to take its own form with the architectural design establishing continuity through a common palette of colours and materials. The location of the principal elements were dictated by the constraints and opportunities of the site: the supermarket occupies the main street frontage, the amenity of the canal is given over to the housing, and the vehicular entrances and first-floor commercial units assigned to the non-retail Kentish Town Road. A subterranean car park runs under most of the site.

It was Camden which stipulated the provision of housing, workshops and a crèche on the site. The original outline permission for the housing was for flats but at Grimshaw's suggestion this became a terrace of freehold houses (actually 10 houses and two flats), which are listed at Grade II. The housing offered Grimshaw his first opportunity to fit out a complete and relatively fixed interior; most of his previous commissions being single volume, open-plan spaces capable of flexible subdivision by occupants. When each house was sold the new owner received an 'owners manual', complete with specifications, details of services and suppliers. The commercial units, more familiar ground for Grimshaw, were housed in a single building. These were originally intended as workshops, at Camden's request, but by the time the building was completed the use had changed to B1 (general business use).

Nicholas Grimshaw was born in 1939 in Hove. He studied architecture at the Edinburgh College of Art between 1959 and 62, and in 1962-65 at the Architectural Association. After graduating he established a practice with Terry Farrell, forming his own practice in 1980. Prior to the Camden scheme his portfolio was made up of light-weight, small or medium-scale projects on dispersed sites for industrial or leisure clients. Along with the Financial Times Printing Works (1987-8, Grade II\*) and the Waterloo Eurostar terminus (commissioned 1988, built 1990-3), the Camden project

therefore occupies a pivotal position in Grimshaw's oeuvre. From the early 1990s Grimshaw came to popular attention with flagship projects such as the British Pavilion for the Seville Expo of 1992 for which he was awarded a CBE and the Grandstand to Lord's Cricket Ground (1998). Grimshaw's inclusion in the 'British Architecture Today: Six Protagonists' exhibition at the 1991 Venice Biennale heralded an international dimension to the practice which included the Berlin Stock Exchange (1997) and Bilbao Bus Station (1999). Grimshaw received a knighthood for services to architecture in 2002 and is the 2019 recipient of the RIBA Royal Gold Medal. He is considered one of the pioneers of High-Tech architecture, a movement strongly identified with Britain in the late C20.

### Details

Terrace of 10 houses and 2 flats, 1986-88, built as part of a wider development by J Sainsbury's to designs by Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners, architect in charge, Neven Sidor; structural engineers, Kenchington, Little and Partners

**MATERIALS:** concrete block cross walls with concrete floors and an asphalt-clad timber roof. The front walls are part-glazed, part-clad in smooth-skinned aluminium panels. Back walls are clad in pressed aluminium panels with horizontal ribs to match the rear of Sainsbury's and Grand Union House.

**PLAN:** the houses face north, directly onto the Grand Union Canal, their front doors opening off a private walkway along the water's edge, accessed from Kentish Town Road. The upper floors are cantilevered out over the walkway, giving a larger floor plate on the first and second floors. Each house is two bays wide and the roofs are flat; a roof garden was added to each house in about 2006 when a steel structure which spanned the terrace was placed on top of the existing roofs.

A dog-leg stair against the east party wall connects each level. The ground floor has an entrance hall, en-suite bedroom and plant room. The plant room is to the rear and has direct access to the car park. A service core against the back wall runs through the house from the plant room, passing through a utility room on the first floor and a bathroom on the second floor. At first floor the principal rooms form an 'L' around the stair – a living room to the front, overlooking the canal, leading through to an open-plan kitchen and dining area. The dining area also overlooks the canal and is a top-lit double-height space, the kitchen is towards the rear. The second floor comprises a bedroom to the front and a mezzanine room overlooking the dining area to the rear (in many cases this is now an enclosed room), and the bathroom at the back of the plan.

The two flats in the terrace are situated by the entrance off Kentish Town Road. One is a ground and first-floor maisonette, entered directly off the canal-side walkway and the other is a studio flat entered via a radiused stair tower

which punctuates the end of the terrace.

**EXTERIOR:** the terrace uses an industrial imagery, chosen to reflect a canal-side setting. It is defined by the alternating in-and-out of the jettied upper-floor bays. The east bay of each house curves outward from top to bottom, and is skinned in smooth aluminium panels. It has a vertical row of three horizontally-orientated windows with radiused corners, sealed into the cladding panels with black rubber gaskets. The bay's lobe-like section projects forward of the west bay which is fully glazed, flat, but canting inward from bottom to top. The lower part can be raised by a motorised mechanism, opening the interior to a small balcony. The balcony front cants outwards and is formed of slatted timber held on vertical steels which extend down and form part of the balustrade enclosing the walkway beneath.

At ground floor each bay is demarked by tapered concrete brackets supporting the jettied upper floors. The bays alternate between smooth white render with clerestory windows and fully glazed, the latter set back from the walkway up three steps and providing the entrance into each house. The balustrade of the walkway is made up of alternating slatted timber with bench seats and steel bars, now with an extra steel grid.

On the top of the terrace the steel mesh balustrades of the later roof gardens are visible.

**INTERIOR:** the most striking space within each house is the double-height dining area, lit by the full-height, openable glazed wall and from above by three radiused skylights. This space is overlooked on the second floor by the mezzanine room at the rear and by the front bedroom through a large circular window in the side wall. The stair has open string, beechwood treads and risers with tubular steel newels. The newels carry a glass partition up through the house between each flight of stairs, and a tubular steel handrail. Joinery comprises flush panel beech doors and square-section door frames without architraves, set flush with the wall face. Door furniture includes steel L-shaped lever handles from D Line.

The houses now all have a steep flight of stairs at the very top of the house to give access to the roof terrace and while these are not all identical, they have been carefully integrated into the original balustrades. Otherwise, the interiors of the houses have been altered ad hoc over time, with some fittings and finishes being altered or replaced. Only two houses were inspected internally but it is understood that all retain their distinctive double-height dining area, albeit in many the mezzanine room has been enclosed to give privacy. The flats were not inspected internally, they are understood to have been altered but their original plans were much more conventional to begin with.

### Sources

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