

CARMODY GROARKE

Herbrand House
Design and Access Statement

October 2020
London Borough of Camden

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Executive summary

This executive summary has been prepared to summarise the Section 73 and Listed Building Application for the alteration of the rear window treatment of Herbrand House in Bloomsbury, London.

The Art Deco building was designed by Wallis, Gilbert & Partners, and constructed in 1931 for the Daimler Hire Company. The grade II listed building was substantially remodelled in 2000.

The brief

The brief calls for a review of the rear facade window treatment which is currently a frosted film in order to respect the privacy of the adjoining residential occupiers. The current window treatment creates a very flat appearance with little depth, light or shadow created in the building. The proposals aim to provide a sympathetic window treatment to the historic building whilst improving the sense of light and atmosphere of the interior office space.

It is understood the details of the glazing to the side and rear elevations were secured through condition of the 1998/1999 planning permission. As a part of this permission, there was a restriction imposed to include scoop blinds in order to protect the privacy of occupiers in nearby residential premises. There are currently no signs of scoop blinds within the building, as approved under PS9804711R1.

It is therefore proposed to submit a Section 73 application to remove the condition and to concurrently submit an application for listed building consent so that the correct approvals are obtained.

With its prime location and historic grade II listed facade, Herbrand House provides an ideal site for refurbishment and upgrade of the existing office space to modern-day standards. Improvements to the rear window treatment has the potential to vastly improve the atmosphere within the office space and make a

much more attractive proposition for new tenants. This will allow a more extensive refurbishment to become viable and as such, this section 73 application will serve as a precursor to a wider scheme application.

Design Team

Architect - Carmody Groarke
Employers Agent - Mace
Cost Consultant - Labtech
Structural Engineer - London Structures Lab
Building Services Engineer - Desco
Fire Engineer - Jensen Hughes
Planning Consultant - DP9
Heritage Consultant - Montagu Evans
Daylight Consultant - GIA
Sustainability Consultant - XCO2

This piece of work has been informed by:

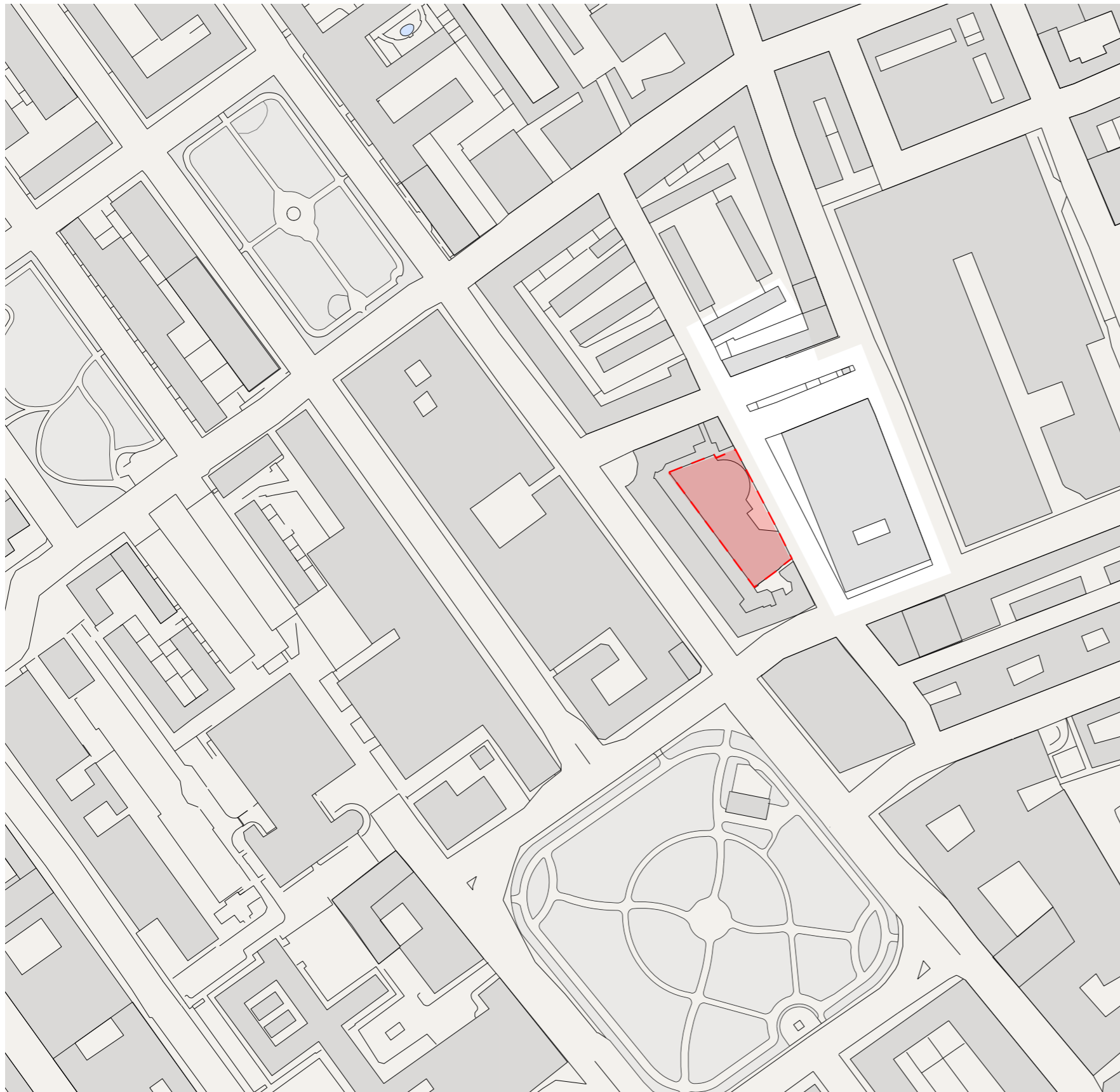
- Research into the existing building
- Workshops with the Design Team and Labtech
- Planning and heritage workshops with DP9/Montagu Evans

Site

Location

Built in 1931, Herbrand House is situated in the centre of the urban block bounded by Woburn Place, and Coram, Herbrand and Bernard Streets adjacent to Russell Square.

7-11 Herbrand Street is situated at the north-west extremity of the sub-area 11 of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.



Key



N



Herbrand House



Bloomsbury Conservation Area

Site plan



"Entrance on Herbrand Street" Architectural Review, November 1931

The site of 7-11 Herbrand Street was primarily terraced housing until 1931 when the Daimler Hire Company commissioned the architects Wallis, Gilbert & Partners to build a new garage in a 'modernist' style on the site.

The building served the dual purpose of being both a public and a private garage. In all it held about 500 cars on the four floors, with provision for an additional floor, the ramp tower having been roofed with a section of track with this future expansion in view

The structure is wholly of reinforced concrete. The amenability of the material allowed clear spans of 62 feet across the floors, eliminating the need of internal stanchions. The beams were designed as large tees with spanning panels between about 8 inches in thickness. Each floor was connected by a double-way semicircular ramp 21 ft in width. Externally a natural finish was given to the concrete by rubbing down as soon as the formwork was struck, which eliminated board marks and gave a smooth surface. The building has been painted in later years. The private owners' garage was equipped with a waiting room, lavatories and telephones, forming a suite with a separate entrance and attendant's office.

The ownership of the building passed with the takeover of the Daimler Hire Car Company, and it became a taxi and bus garage with the London Taxi Centre using the upper storeys and the Frames Rickard coach company using the basement. This continued for many years, until the condition of the building started to deteriorate. In 2000 an extensive renovation was completed and the building was converted to office space.

The building was awarded Grade II listed status on 9 March 1982 and remains an important example of commercial architecture in the Modernist style. Extract from listed entry below:

[...] Reinforced concrete construction. "Modernistic" 4-storey garage with attached offices, lift blocks and ramp. EXTERIOR: garage with large rectangular metal framed windows of small horizontally set lights set between plain concrete continuous horizontal bands at floor levels and divided by channelled concrete pilaster strips, the channelling corresponding with the horizontally set lights. Ground floor entrance bays. Attached to left, a lift shaft with narrow vertically set window, above a door, rising the height of the shaft. 3 and 2 storeys of offices with similar fenestration to the garage, the 1st floor above an entrance bay on the diagonal right return. Parapet of lower level articulated with narrow vertical niches. Ground floor of pavement facade with deep rectangular window recess beneath central 1st floor window and small rectangular recess to the left. Moulded concrete and coloured inset faience decorative detail. At the right angle, a semicircular stair turret, with door and small window, to offices above. To the right, a projecting lift shaft, the central, narrow vertically set window emphasised with vertical strips of coloured faience and moulded concrete balcony at the base, above 3 square-headed entrances. 3 corner windows at each floor level on the left hand angle light the adjoining stair. Attached to the right of the lift, a sweeping spiral ramp (giving access to the upper floors) expressed externally and emphasised by windows (similar to the garage) which follow the rake of the ramp through 3 storeys. Vehicle entrance next to base of lift shaft. Single storey coach station entrance to the right with later doors and fascia above. [...]

Site



View from Herbrand Street (looking north)

Existing context



View from Coram Street (looking south)

Herbrand House is located in the London borough of Camden in a neighbourhood of mixed office and residential.

The street block, skirted by Coram Street in the north, Bernard Street in the south, Herbrand Street in the east and Woburn Place in the west, is largely characterised by a series of red brick buildings with stone detailing dating from the turn of the 19th century. The greatest interest is in the elevation of the former bank that marks the junction with Russell Square, at No 1 Woburn Place.

The majority of views of Herbrand House are from Herbrand Street itself, where the building appears much lower in scale than its immediate neighbours. The longest view is found from Coram Street, where the street widens and views can be seen through the landscaping which exists on central island. The curved facade of the historic ramp creates a characterful frontage within the street setting.

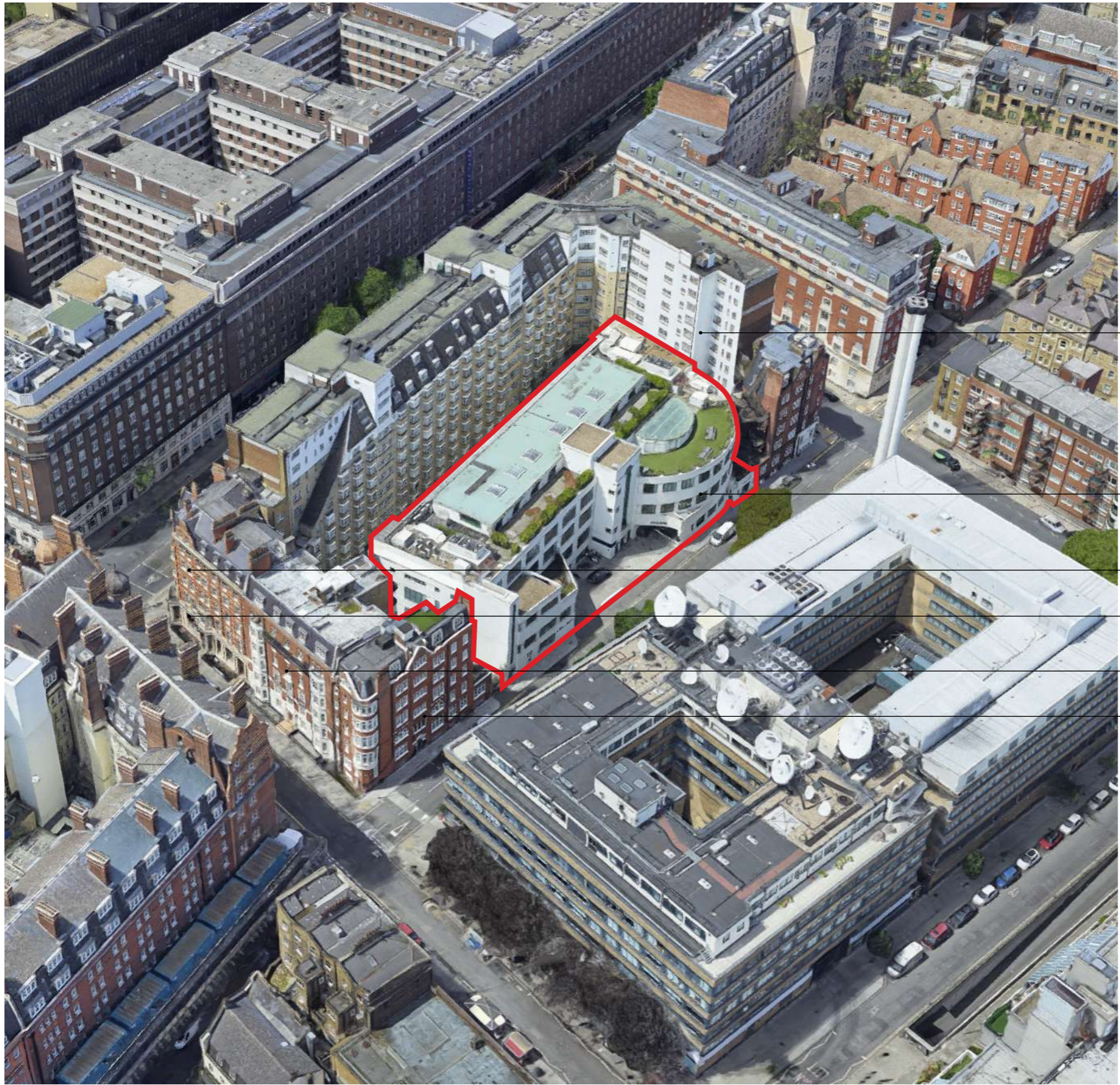
The south, western and northern façades are not visible from the street and only from the residential block behind.



Site plan

Existing building

Existing context



Neighbouring Residents

To the west of Herbrand House is Russell Court, a large-scale Art Deco 1930s residential block at Nos 3-16 (consec) Woburn Place. Rising to nine storeys, the building's wide façades are clad in red brick with stone relief expressing the lower floors and the staircase towers. The block is within close proximity of Herbrand House, being within 10m of the rear facade and spans the western and northern sides of the site.

To the south is Morton Hotel, HSBC bank and Woburn Court, a period mansion block of five storeys.

Russell Court

Herbrand House

Morton Hotel

HSBC

Woburn Court

Woburn Place

Key



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23 Finsbury Circus

Site aerial

Existing building



01. Main central core and courtyard

Exterior



02. View from the top of the ramp looking south

Finished in painted concrete, Herbrand House's most notable feature is a bold spiral ramp, creating a characterful curved facade within its street setting.

Constructed of reinforced concrete and extending over four storeys (and basement level) the building comprises a main block, with a central stairwell and lift core. Each of the storeys features Crittall metal-framed windows forming distinctive horizontal bands. The piers between each window are set with horizontal channels, mirroring those in the windows.

The central core has a narrow, continuous vertical window providing illumination into the staircase and lift lobby. The facade is painted white, the window frames picked out in a distinctive green colour characteristic of the architect's work at this time. The central core window and doorways feature distinctive green and black faience tile surrounds.

At roof level a new modern extension has been built as part of the 2000 refurbishment in a similar style to the existing building, with white rendered facade and green Crittall style windows.

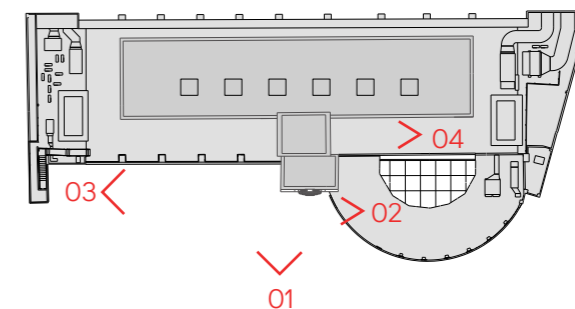


03. View looking north



04. Roof terrace

Key Plan



Existing building



01. Atrium

Interior



02. Ramp

The characteristics of the interiors are of significant contrast to the historic exterior as a result of an office fit out completed in 2000. The main floor-plates have raised floors and plasterboard ceilings, where the existing beams appear to overclad. The central core, adjacent to the central staircase and main entrance, provides two lifts creating level access to all floors apart from the basement, which is stepped access only.

The ramp has been divided into office and meeting spaces, with stepped raised floors to negotiate the levels and glazed screens. This looks onto a central atrium space which has a modern glazed roof. According to historic plans this atrium space was previously infilled with office and WC spaces ancillary to the carpark. It is understood these were removed and the glazed roof added as part of the 2000 refurbishment.

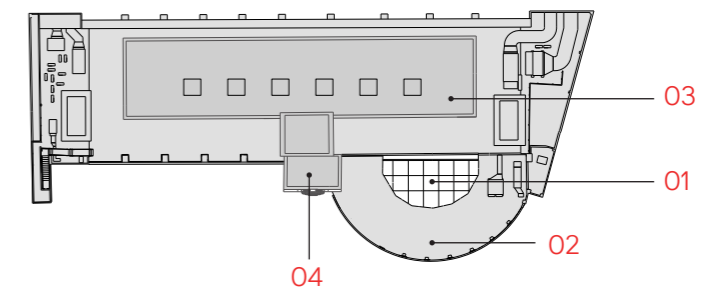


03. Typical office floor



04. Lift lobby

Key Plan

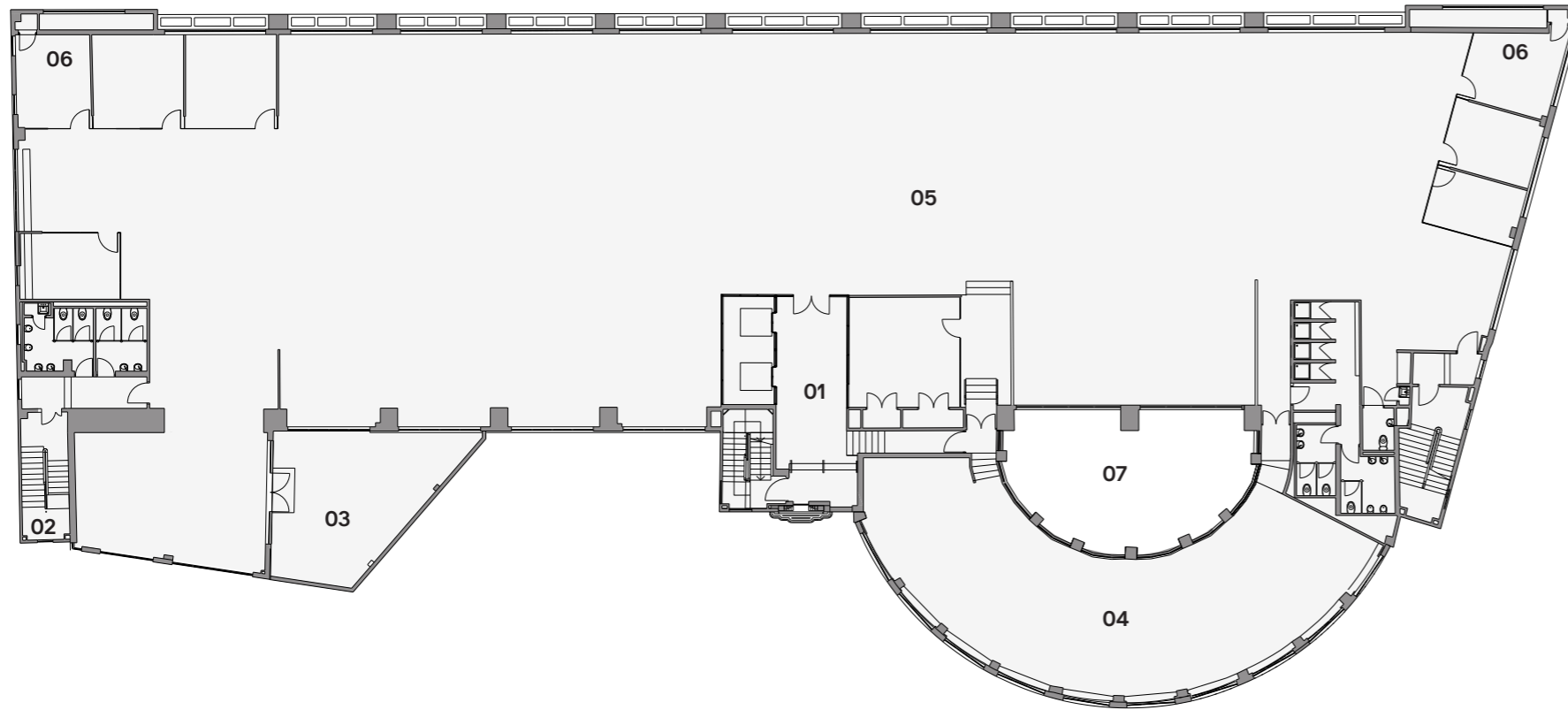


Existing building

Typical office

Typical office

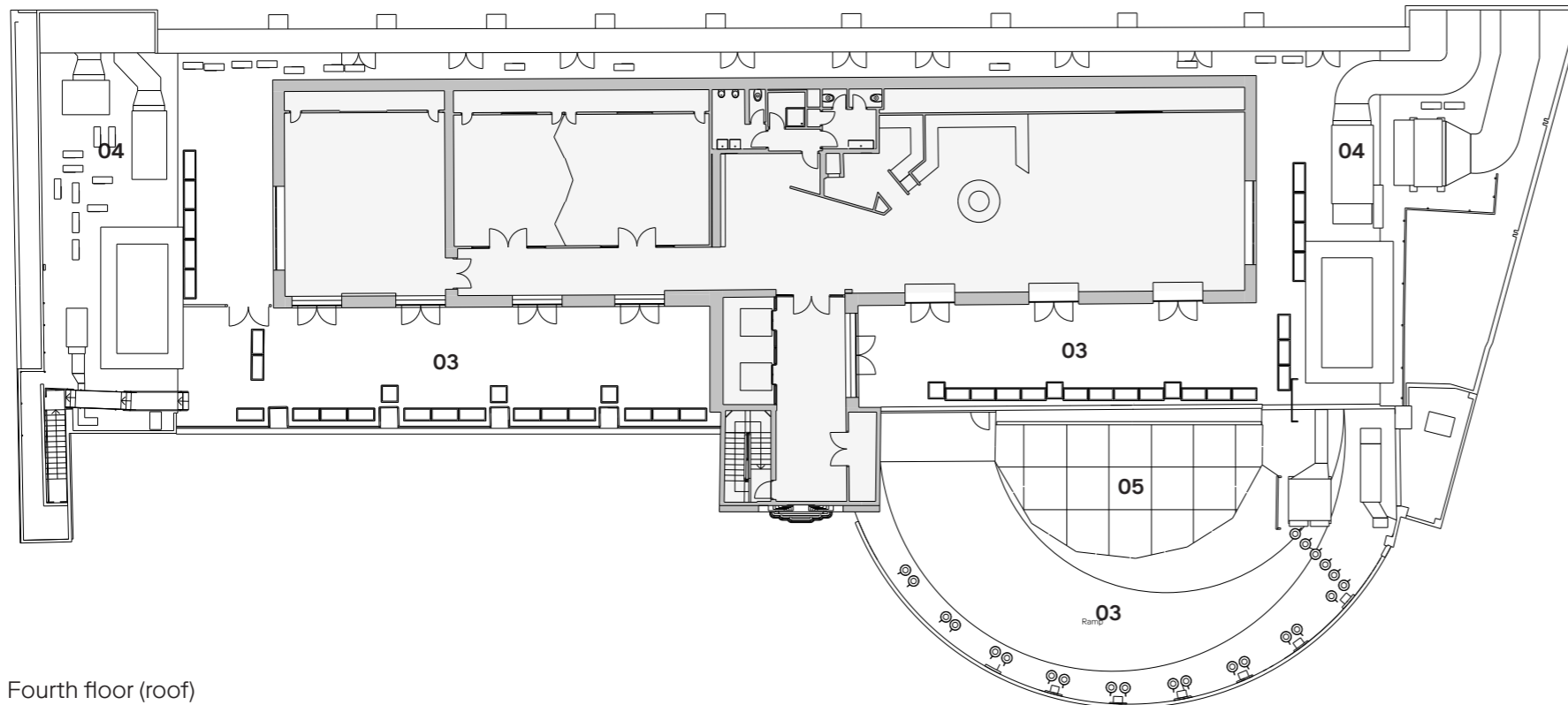
- 01 Primary core, with 2no. passenger lift (neither currently fire-fighting) and stair access
- 02 Female and Male WCs either end of floor-plate adjacent to secondary stair cores
- 03 Roof terrace
- 04 Ramp, currently partitioned into offices
- 05 Single tenancy per floor
- 06 Risers
- 07 Atrium



Typical office floor (second floor)

Roof

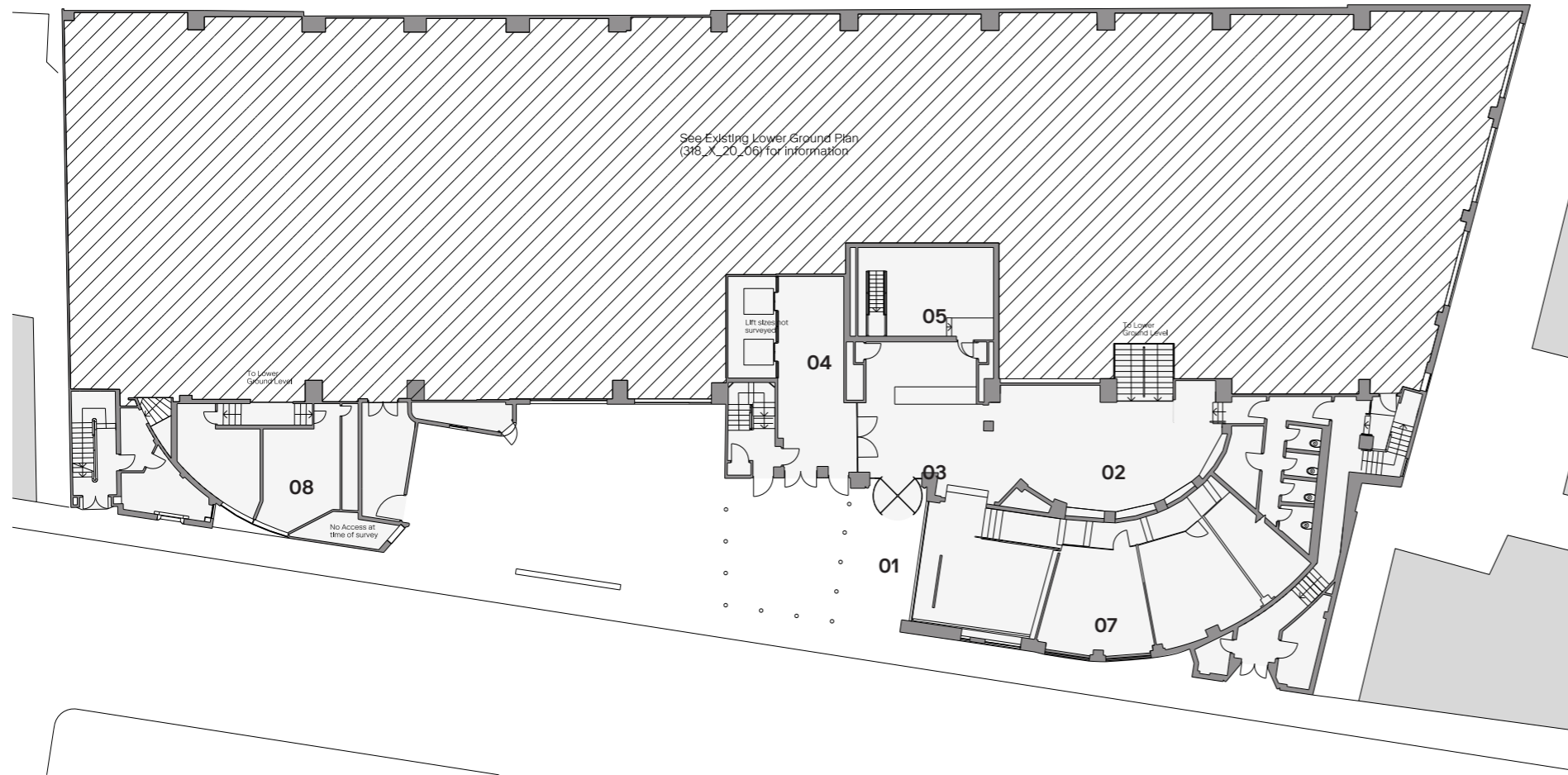
- 01 Existing core to centre of plan, with 2no. passenger lift (neither currently fire-fighting) and stair access
- 02 Central female and male WC block
- 03 Roof terrace
- 04 Plant (exposed)
- 05 Atrium roof including smoke vents



Fourth floor (roof)

Existing building

Ground floor



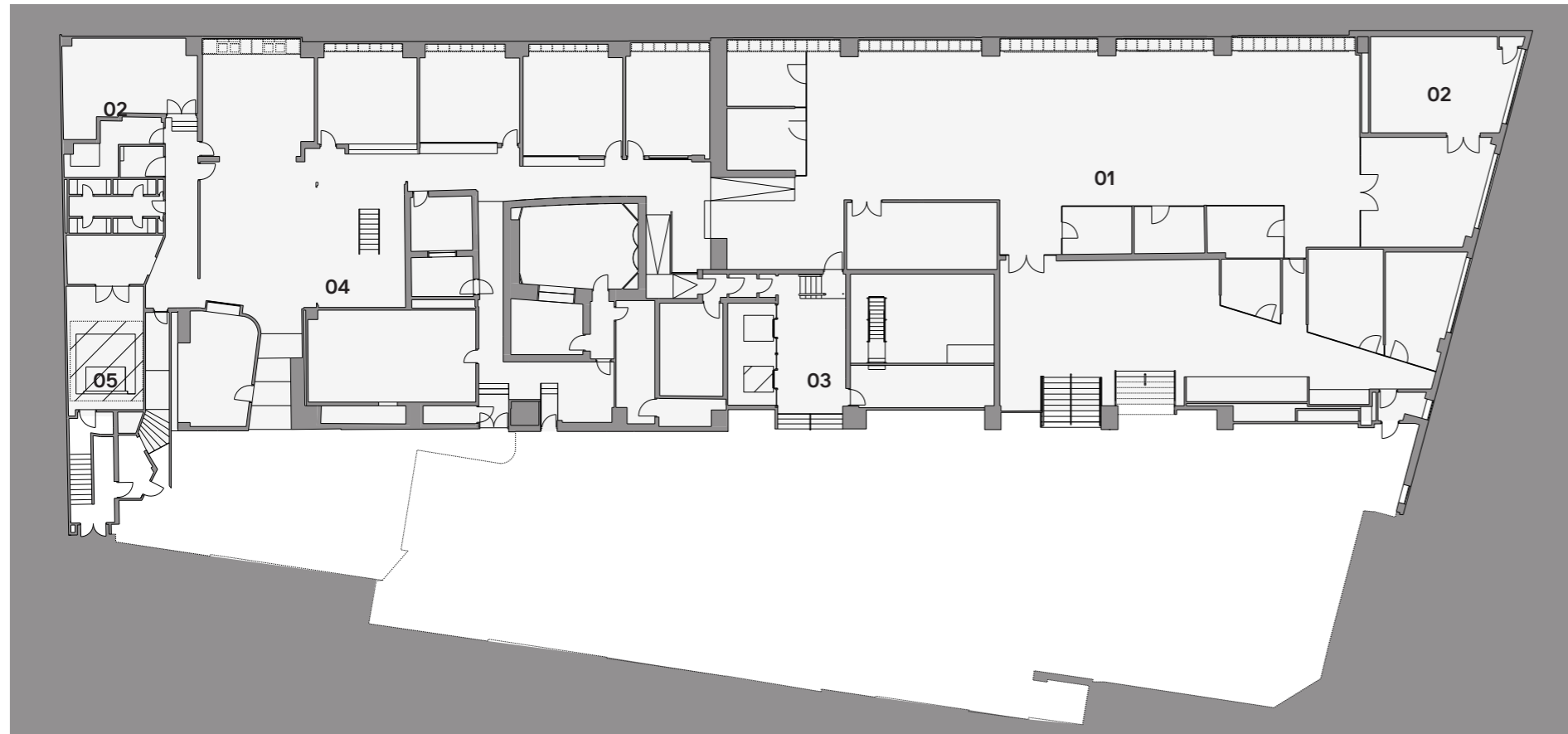
Ground and entrances

- 01 Primary entrance to building from Herbrand Street
- 02 Atrium space
- 03 Foyer
- 04 Existing core to centre of plan, with 2no. passenger lift (neither currently fire-fighting) and stair access
- 05 WCs
- 06 Building Management Suite
- 07 Ramp divided into meeting rooms
- 08 Ramp to basement in-filled with office and bin store

Ground floor

Existing building

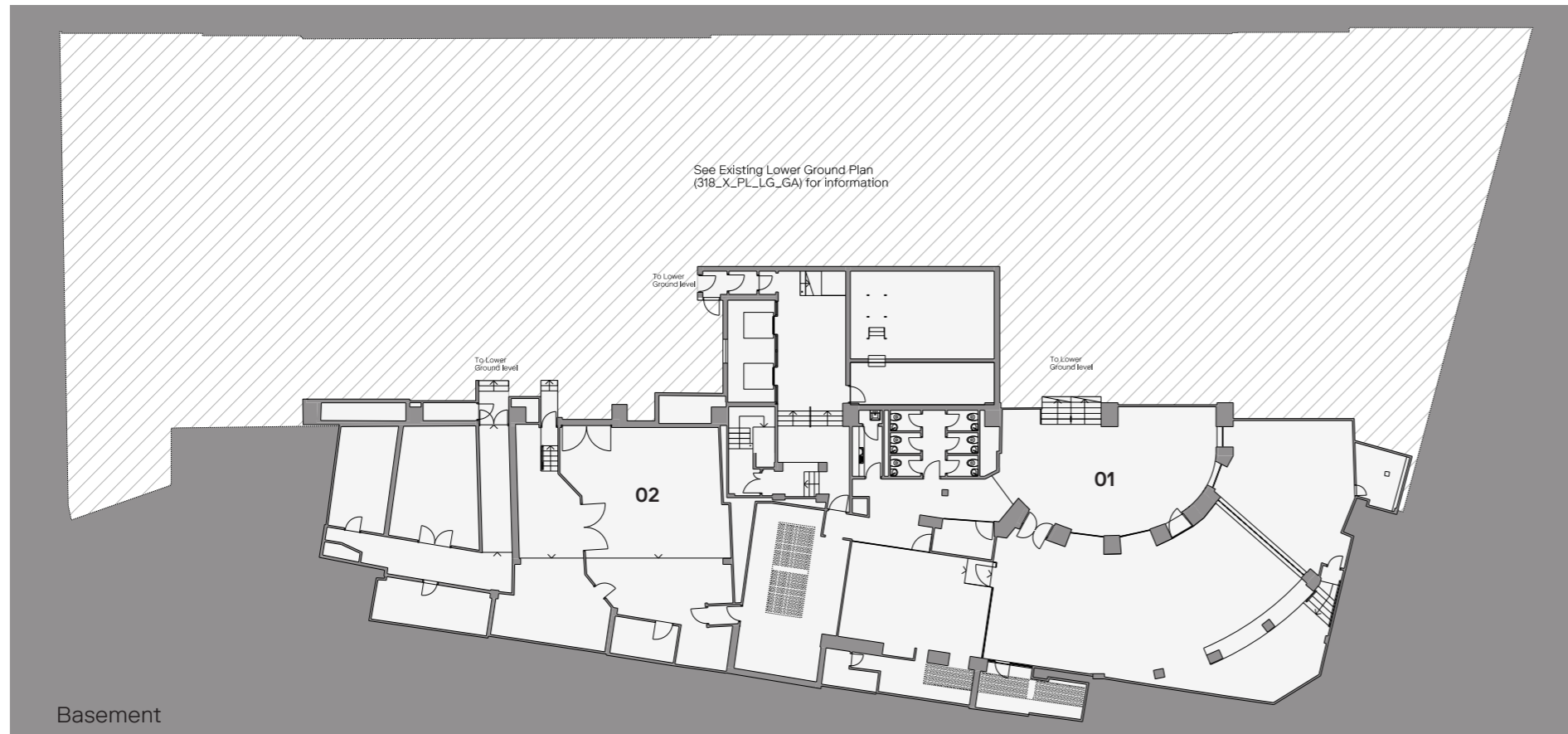
Lower floors



Lower ground

- 01 Office space, 400mm raised access floor, ramp access only
- 02 Plant room (AHUs)
- 03 Core to centre of plan, with 2no. passenger lift (neither currently fire-fighting) and stair access
- 04 Void to level 1 and open stair
- 05 Substation

Lower Ground floor



Basement

- 01 Office space, stepped access only
- 02 Plant rooms

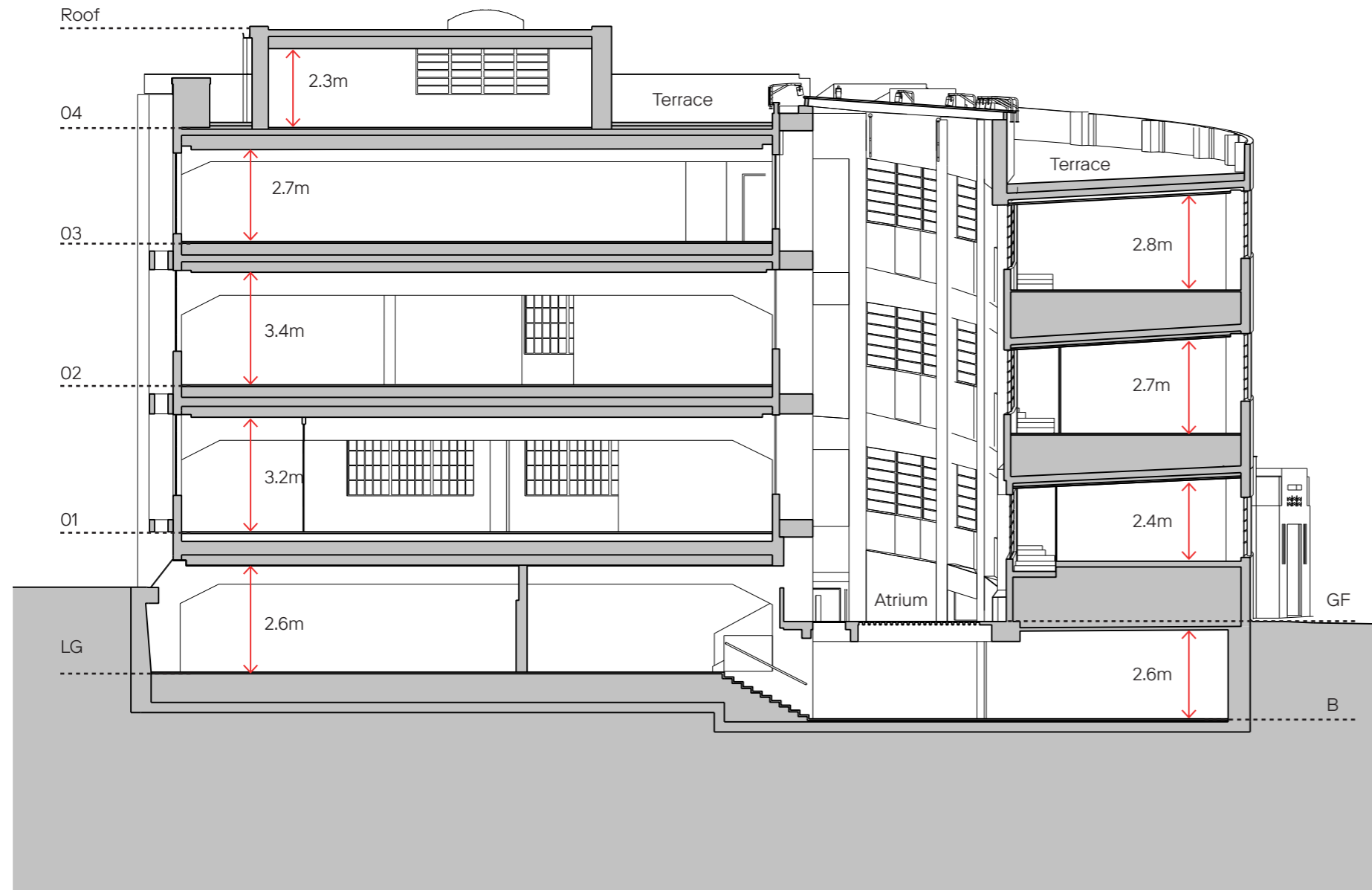
Basement

Existing building

Section

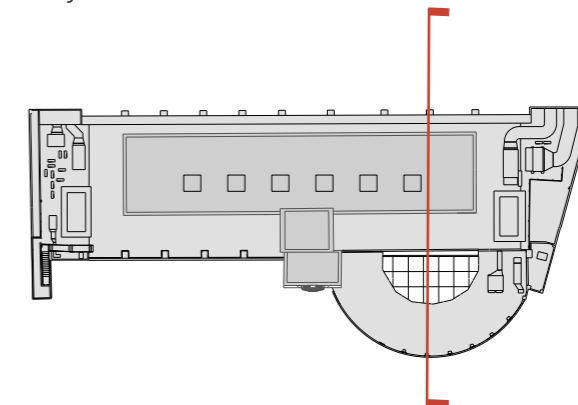
The existing section is characterised by large, open floor-plates, a modern roof extension and the ramp at the front of the building. The enclosure of the original office/ancillary space provides a four storey atrium, which divides the ramp and office space, with a glass roof light. There are currently 5no. office floors, plus a basement level which is largely plant.

The main office floor-plates are characterised by deep concrete beams which have been overclad with plasterboard. A minimal service void exists at high level to allow for a chilled beam cooling solution which is understood to be fed from the floor zone above. A substantial floor void exists at low level for service distribution, particularly at basement level where this exceeds 900mm. Clear floor to ceiling zones range across the building from 3.4-2.6m (between beams) and 2.7-2.3m (below beams) on the main floor-plates. At roof level the modern extension which was added in 2000 has a suspended ceiling and 2.3m clear floor to ceiling height. Office areas within the historic ramp have significant raised floors in order to negotiate the steep slopes.



Existing section

Key Plan



Rear Facade

Brief

This pre-application for Herbrand House seeks to introduce the proposals to improve the current rear window treatment to the northern, western and southern façades at levels 01-03 as well as initial proposals for lower ground windows.

The brief has been considered through the analysis of the key aspects listed below:

1. Light and atmosphere

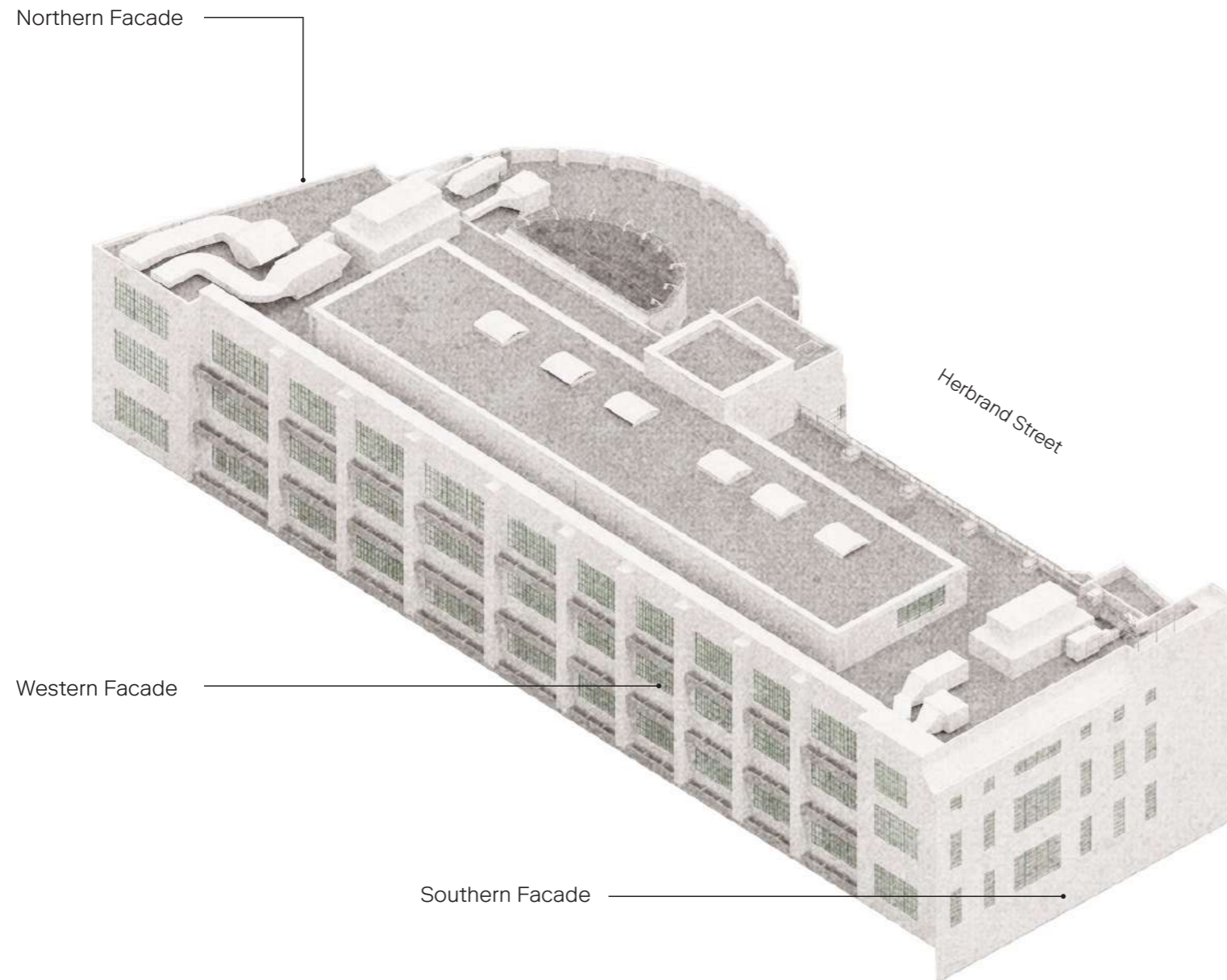
Opportunities to improve the existing internal atmosphere, through depth, light and shadow.

2. Privacy

Consideration of the neighbouring residents, ensuring proposals secure the privacy of nearby occupiers.

3. Heritage

Ensuring proposals are sympathetic to the Grade II listed building both internally and externally.

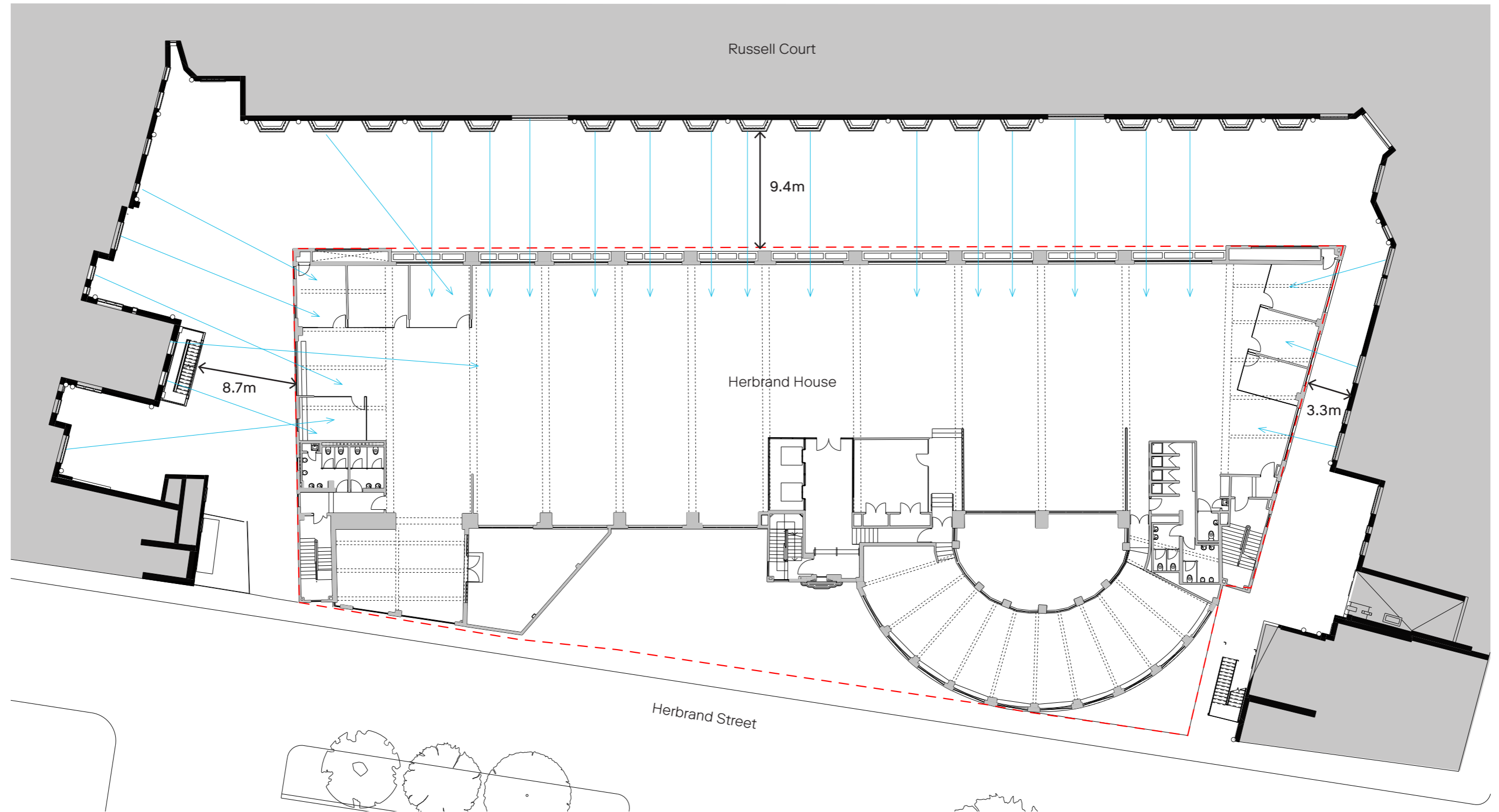


Location of windows in existing building

Rear Facade

Existing

The windows of the adjacent Russell Court and Woburn Court buildings significantly overlook the office windows, which has been currently addressed using a frosted film on the North, West, and South elevations. The separation distances and locations of neighbouring windows are indicated below.



Existing typical plan within site context

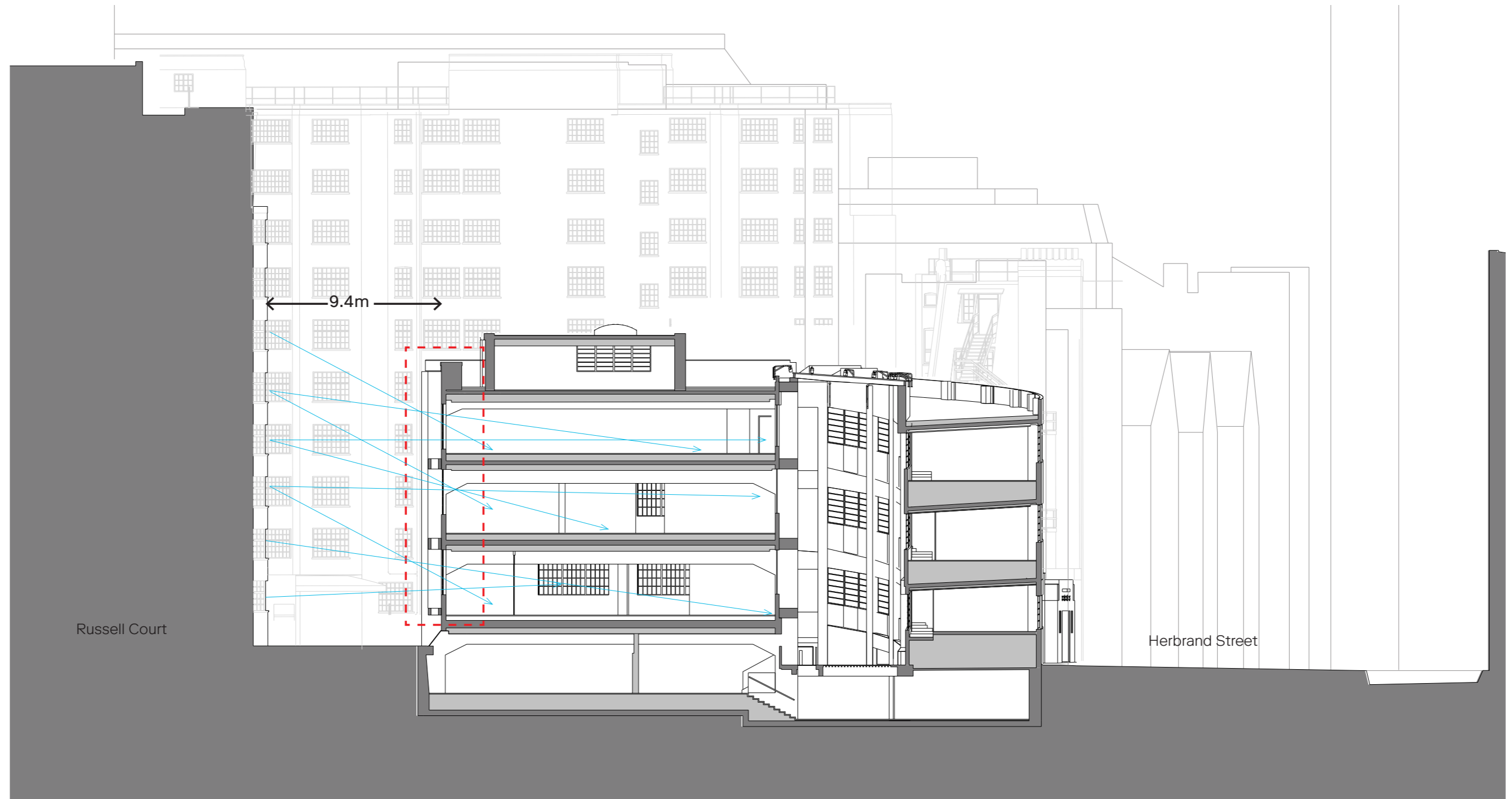
→ Potential sight lines

- - - Site boundary

Rear Facade

Existing

Russell Court is located approximately 9.4m from the facade of Herbrand House (west) and 3.3m (north). Woburn Court is located to the south, located 8.7m from the existing facade at the nearest point.



- Existing site section (East - West)
- Potential sight lines
- - - Windows to be refurbished

Rear Facade

Existing

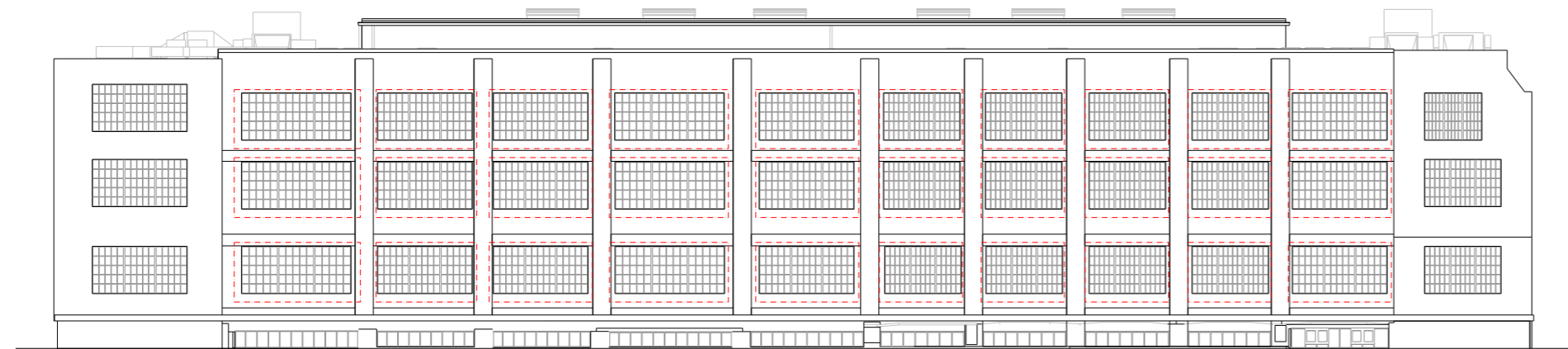
The windows have been treated with a frosted film at levels 01, 02 and 03 as well as for the lower ground windows at high level. The proposals look to alter this treatment on levels 01-03, as highlighted in the elevations opposite. A total of 57 window units, 470sqm.




Existing southern elevation

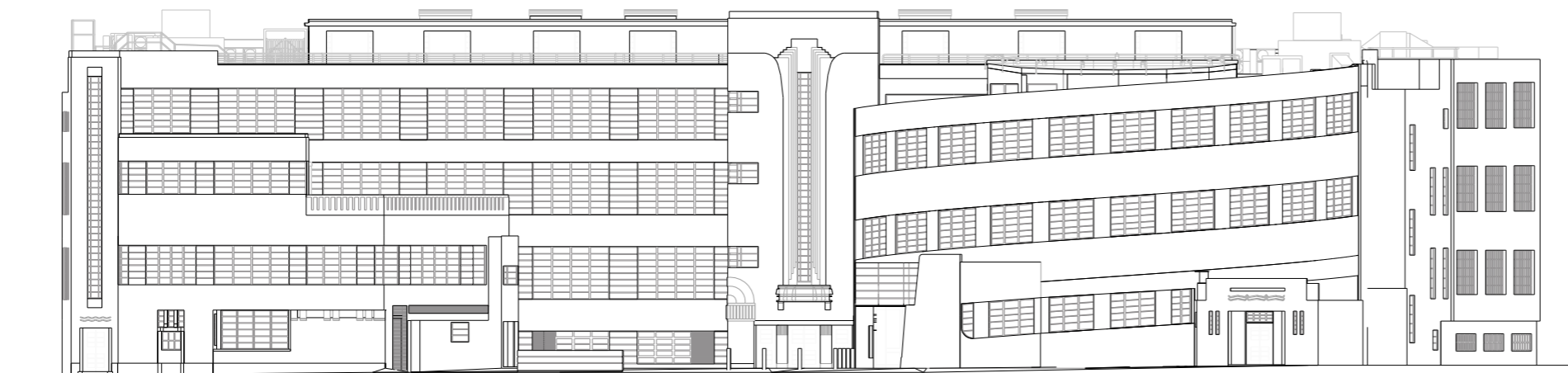


Existing northern elevation



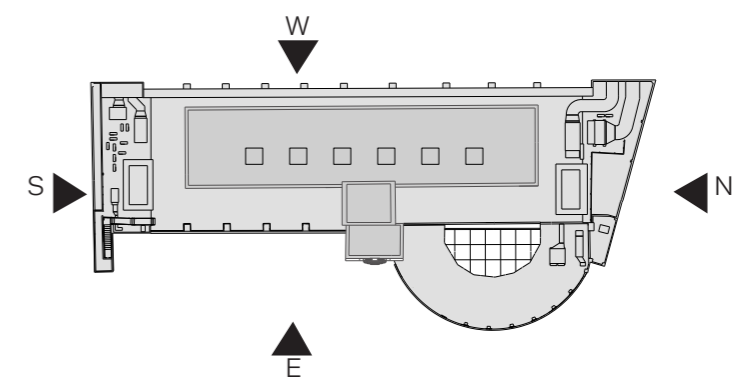
Existing western elevation

 Windows to be refurbished



Existing eastern (front) elevation

Key Plan



Rear Facade

Existing

The frosted film gives a flat, translucent appearance with little change in light and shadow. A number of windows also have blinds fixed internally.

The windows themselves are not original, having been replaced as part of the 2000 refurbishment and made by Crittall Windows and installed by Anglia Fixing Ltd. The frames are steel with double glazed units. Whilst not original the design appears in line with it's historic context, closely matching the proportions shown in earlier drawings and photographs.



Existing window treatment on a typical floor



Existing window treatment - level 02



Existing film on windows

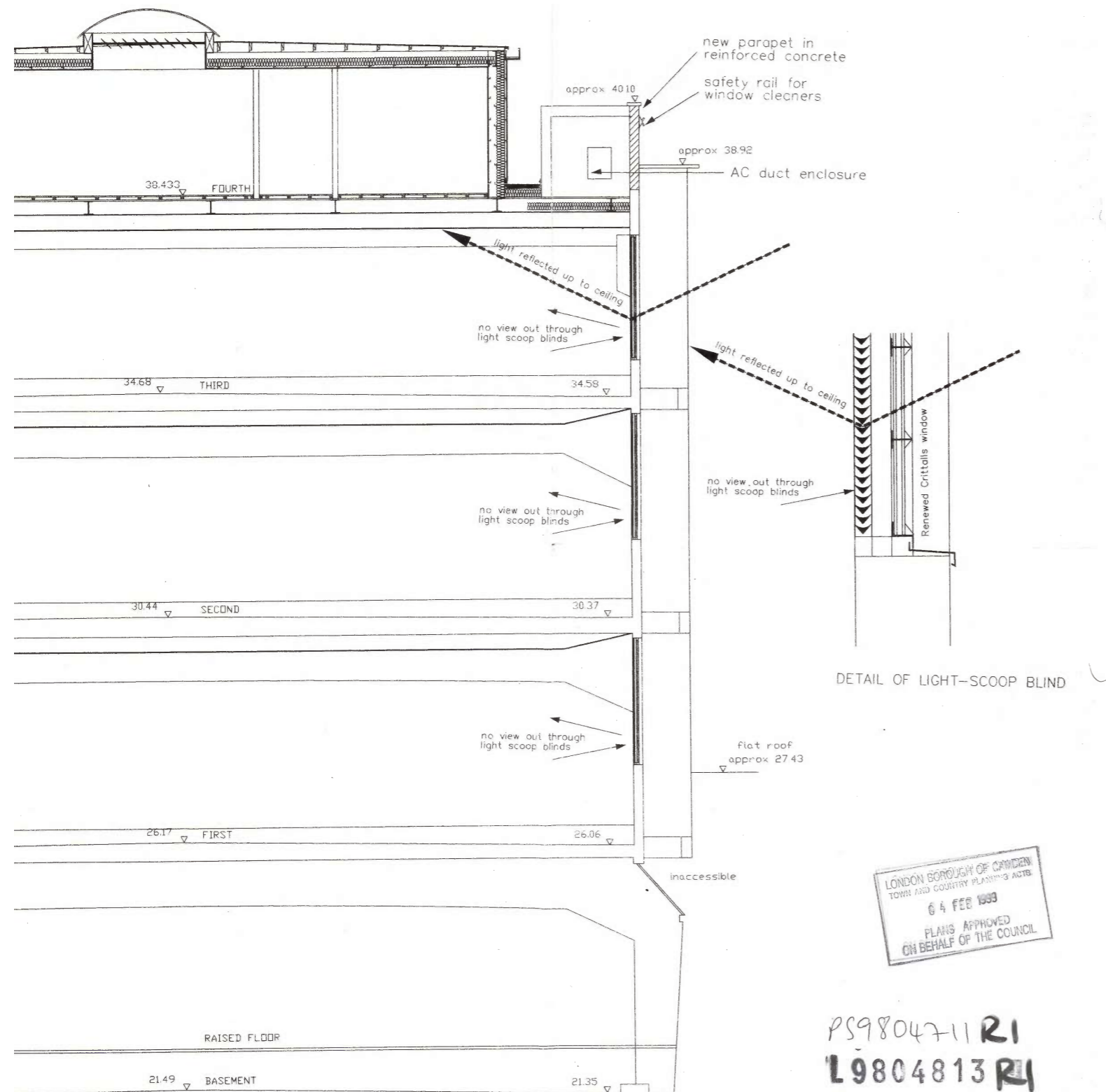
Rear Facade

Analysis

Privacy

It is understood there was restriction imposed by earlier consents to include scoop blinds. The explanation within the Decision Notice associated with the restrictive condition confirms that this is protect the privacy of occupiers in nearby residential premises. However, there are no signs of the scoop blinds within the building approved under PS9804711R1. All of the rear windows are covered with film.

There was a Licence for Alteration to the building made by the tenant in 2000. The 'as built' drawings included in the License for Alteration refer to 'manual blinds fitted into alcove' but do not refer to the film. It is not clear therefore if the exchange for film was approved; or whether the scoop blinds were previously installed and then removed and replaced with manual blinds.



Scoop blind solution consented 2000

Rear Facade

Analysis

Heritage

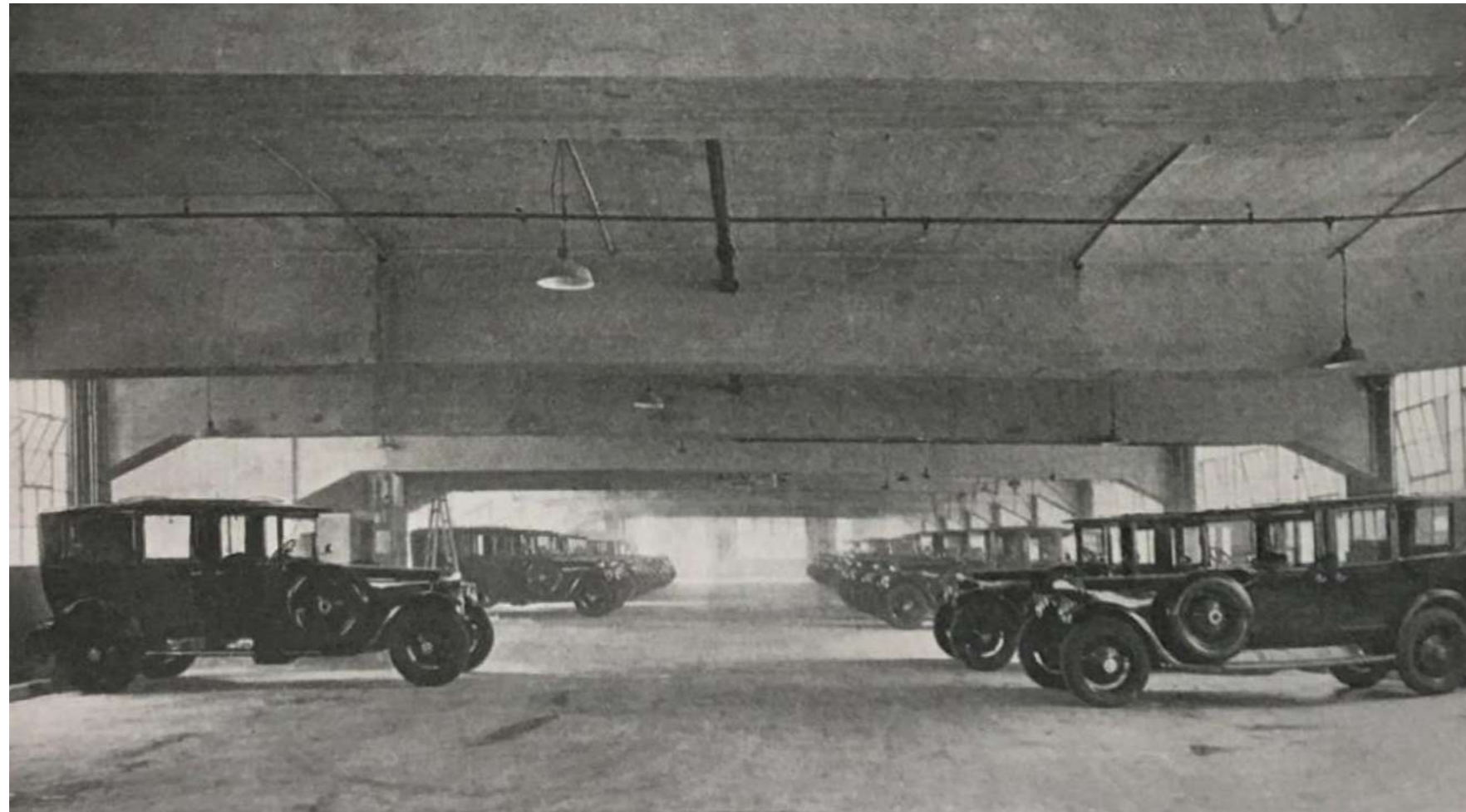
The building is listed Grade II and therefore careful consideration has been given to ensure the proposals do not result in any heritage harm and are sympathetic to the existing building.

The Crittall windows create a strong architectural identity which characterise the open floorplates of the original Damiler Hire Garage. On a typical floor the windows are carried up to the ceiling between the beams, highlighting the single span construction and uninterrupted garage space on each floor.

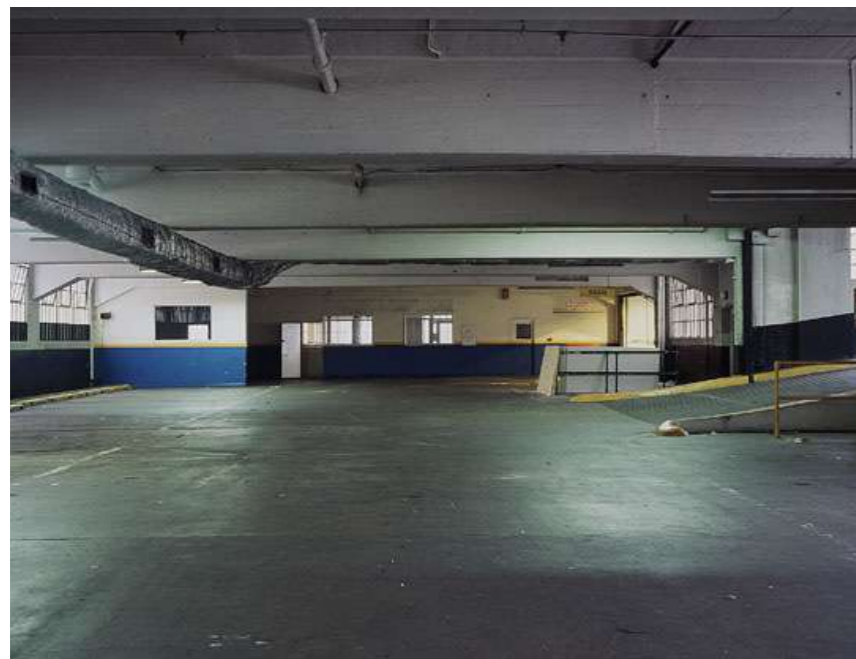
The original open-able Crittall windows, which can be seen in the historic photographs opposite, were replaced as part of the 2000 refurbishment with a similar design. It is understood the replacement frames matched the originals in proportion and style, but allowed for double glazed window units to improve the thermal performance of the building and removed the open-able panels.

The scoop blind solution which was conditioned under PS9804711R1 arguably obstructs the historic proportions from the office space, altering the architectural identity of the internal space. To the exterior, the proposal will ensure the visual expression of the building is maintained. The external appearance of the building and its Art Deco style will be preserved. Again, relative to the consented blinds scoop blinds and existing frosted film treatment, the external appearance of the building is likely to be enhanced.

It is hoped we will be able to regularise the window treatment through a Section 73 application and application for LBC, allowing for a more sensitive solution sympathetic to the character of the listed building.



"A typical floor" Architectural Review, November 1931



A typical floor, carpark pre 1999



Level 03, carpark pre 1999

Rear Facade

Analysis

Light and atmosphere

The current manifestation is very flat in its appearance with little depth, light or shadow. A daylight study has shown that little additional daylight can be gained in the building by changing the window treatment, but there is still the potential to vastly improve the atmosphere within the office space and make a much more attractive proposition for potential new tenants.

Alternative glass treatments have been explored which retain privacy whilst creating a sense of depth beyond the window. Reeded textured glass provides obscuration and is a well-established, vertical, ribbed design which would be suitable for this application. Reeded glass will add much needed texture, privacy and light to the office floor plates whilst sitting comfortably within the existing Crittall glazing frames.



Alternative glass treatment examples

Rear Facade

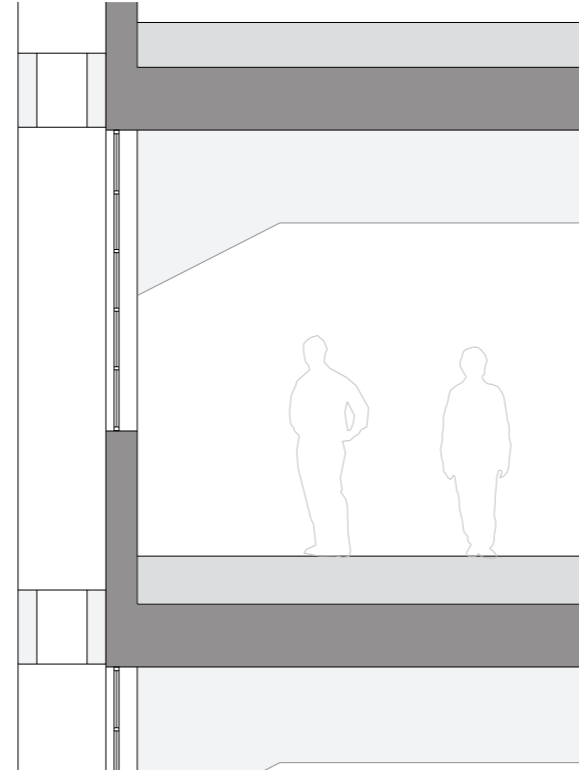


Existing Manifestation

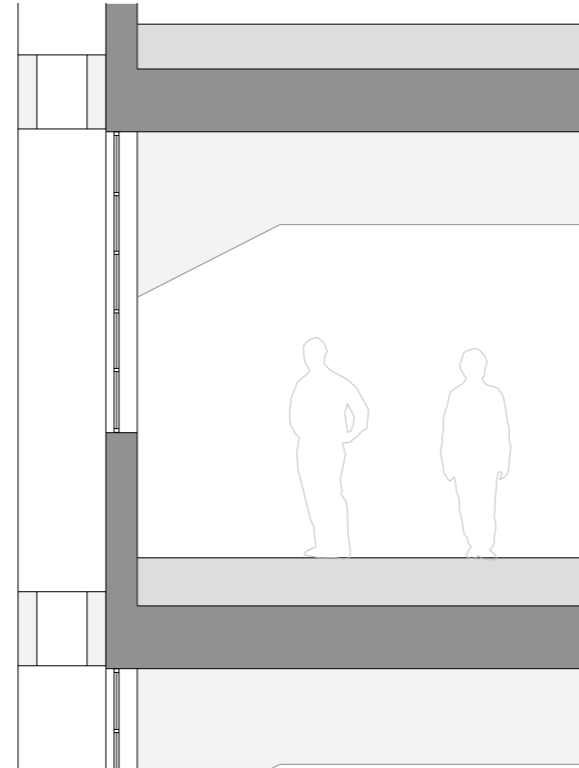


Proposed Reeded Glass

Proposals



Existing Manifestation



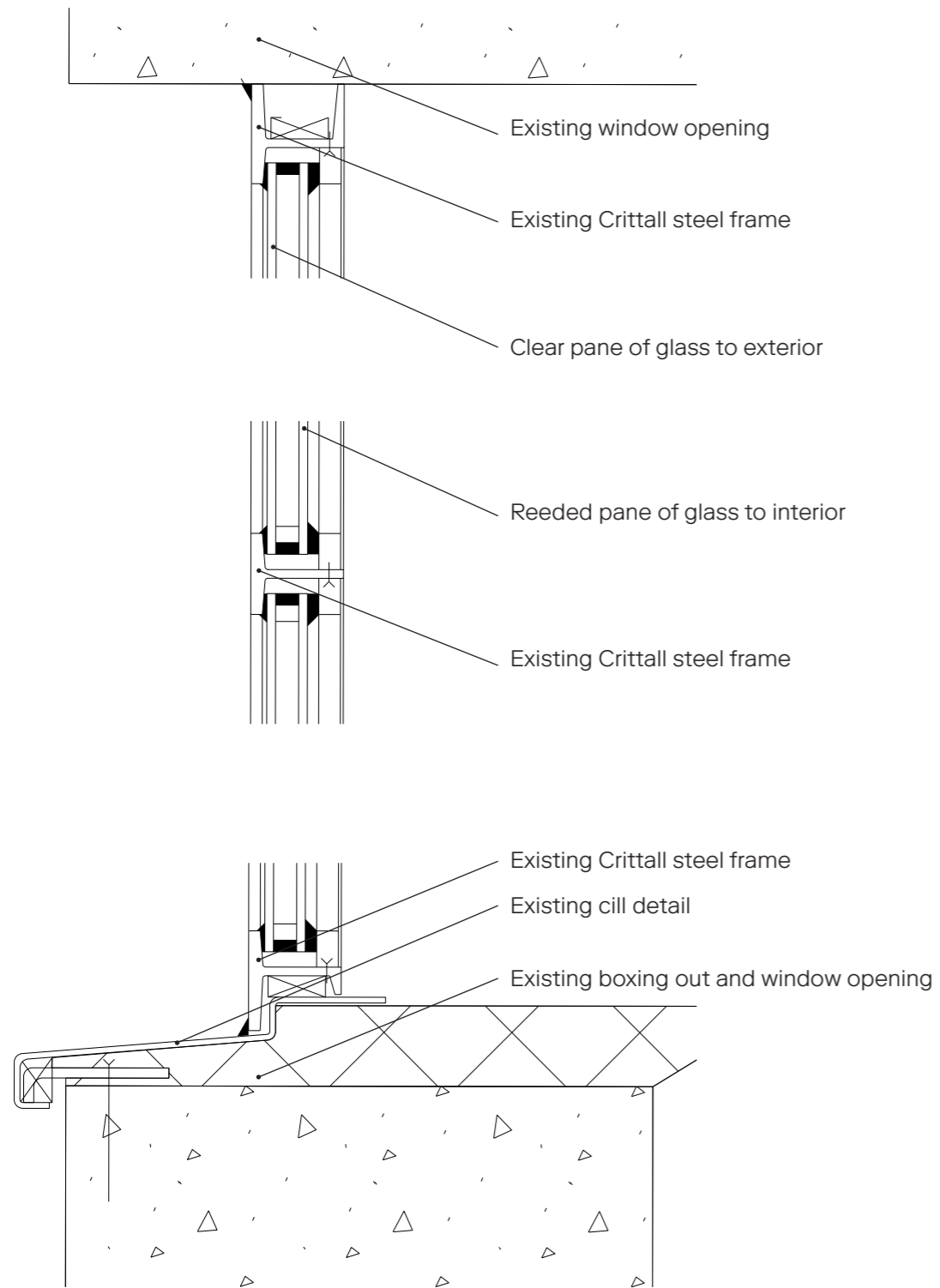
Proposed Typical section

Typical Floor

On the typical floor it is proposed to replace the existing glass with reeded glass across the entire existing Crittall unit. This would be achieved by retaining the existing steel frame and replacing the existing double glazed units, which consists of two panes of clear glass with a frosted manifestation, with double glazed reeded glass (clear exterior and reeded interior pane). The proposal allows for the perception of greater depth, light and shadow in the office, improving the atmosphere and comfort whilst retaining adequate privacy for neighbouring residents.

Rear Facade

Proposals



Proposed detail section

Typical Floor

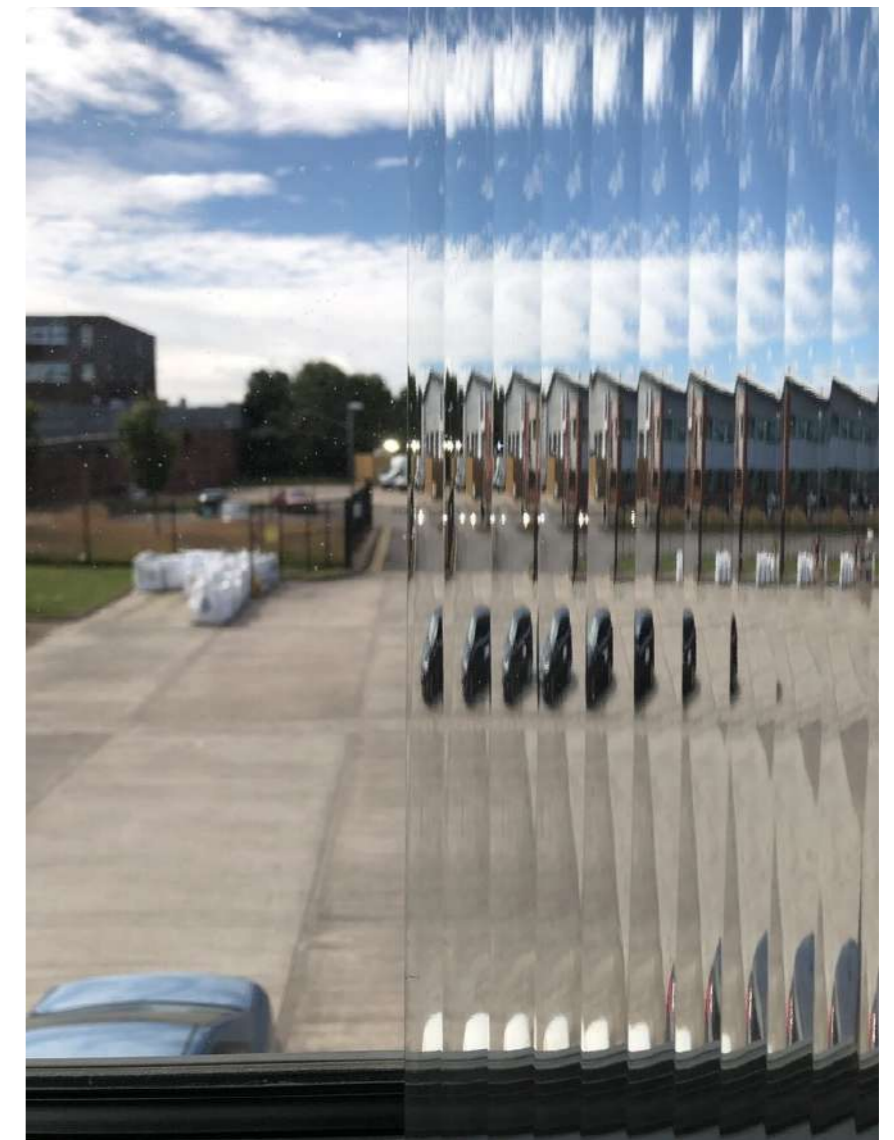
The proposal retains the existing frame whilst replacing the double glazed units to a reeded glass double frame unit.

The proposals are summarised below:

- Existing sill and frame retained and made good where required.
- Existing double paned unit with frosted manifestation removed
- Glazing replaced with new double paned unit with one clear pane and one pane of reeded glass

Thermal improvements

The existing unit is an air-filled 14mm double glass unit with a hard coat low-e pane with a U Value of 2.4. This is to be replaced with 16mm Kryton-filled double glazed units with a U Value of 1.2 for significant increase on the thermal performance of the windows.



Example of the visual effect of a reeded glass for privacy

Summary



Labtech have a multi-million pound restoration programme planned for Herbrand House and are currently undertaking a comprehensive feasibility study to consider how the building could be enhanced to add long term value. The proposals to the rear windows are a fundamental in securing a new tenant and once this is established meaningful discussions can take place about the wider refurbishment.

Proposed courtyard as part of the wider refurbishment proposals