

Nos. 39-47 Gordon Square
Heritage Statement
Prepared for Birkbeck,
University of London
November 2021



Alan Baxter

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Executive summary

Birkbeck University seeks to adapt its existing mid-terrace property of Nos. 39–47 Gordon Square to rationalise different parts of the university into one building, as well as enhance the spaces within it.

This heritage statement accompanies the submission of a revised planning application, following feedback from the London Borough of Camden on a withdrawn planning application (2020/4620/NEW). The proposed works in this application have been scaled down, with certain plans dropped that would have caused harm. For example, the planned risers have been reduced in size and the partitioning of the front rooms on Levels 02 and 03 is no longer proposed.

Nos. 39–47 are Grade II listed, formed by nine, internally-connected mid-terrace houses. Eight of these former houses (Nos.39–46) were built in 1825 with the last house (No.47), forming part of an adjoining terrace built later in 1857. Both parts of the terrace were constructed to designs by the renowned builder-architect Thomas Cubitt and typify the celebrated Bloomsbury townscape of refined terraces set about garden squares. The terrace would gain historic interest, and perhaps notoriety, with its association with the Bloomsbury Group, a group of avant-garde, early-twentieth-century intellectuals who first gathered in salons in No. 46 Gordon Square.

The terrace was gradually converted to institutional and educational use in the early twentieth-century before becoming the University of London's nascent computer science department in the post-war years. Considerable alterations were carried out in association with this use with the buildings connected internally and a two-storey extension built across the rear facades of Nos.39-45 at basement and first floor levels and a plant room and ventilation stack built to third-floor level at the rear of Nos.42-43.

Despite these later alterations, the terrace retains a highly significant frontage onto Gordon Square that makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The interiors of the building survive to varying degrees as does the original layout of the individual houses.

The proposals seek to introduce teaching and staff facilities to support the continuing use of the building as a university faculty. To achieve the facilities necessary for a twenty-first century educational centre, some adaptations and alterations are required. Birkbeck and its architects, AHR, have taken a heritage-led approach to these adaptations, siting larger teaching rooms in areas more able to tolerate change than others and seeking to better reveal and make the most of the layout-of the buildings to both provide the necessary facilities. The works will be accompanied by a comprehensive suite of external maintenance and renovation including repairing the stucco on the facades as required; re-slatting the roofs; repairing and redecorating the historic ironwork as required; repairing the brickwork and pointing as required; and renovating the lightwells. These works will not only enhance the architectural significance of the listed buildings but improve character and appearance of the conservation area and, by extension, the setting of the adjacent listed buildings.

Some interventions will affect or remove historic fabric and these are identified as harmful to significance. In all cases these are both justified by the needs of providing a twenty-first century educational facility and guided by the avoidance of harm to more significant areas of the building. Overall such harm is less than significant and substantially outweighed by the positive benefits of undoing much of the detracting internal reconfiguration, repair and reinstatement of historic features and the long-term benefit of maintaining the terrace in an appropriate higher-educational use.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The brief

This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Alan Baxter Ltd for Birkbeck University ('Birkbeck') to assess the heritage impact of the resubmitted proposals for the reconfiguration and refurbishment of Nos. 39 – 47 Gordon Square ('the Site'). This revised application is guided by the heritage advice of the London Borough of Camden following the withdrawal of the previous planning application (2020/4620/NEW). The report provides an assessment of the significance of the buildings before assessing the heritage impact of the University's proposals to rationalise different parts of the university into one building.

1.2 The Site

The Site is formed by a row of nine, mid-terrace Georgian townhouses within a terrace made up of nineteen former houses overall, built in two phases. The first phase, Nos. 36 – 45, have four storeys above basements with attics. They were built with a symmetry across the terrace as a whole with the two end houses, and the two houses next-but-one to the ends, projecting forward with Corinthian pilasters to form pavilions. In the late 1850s, a further seven houses were added to the southern end of the terrace. Nos. 47 – 53 were larger than the earlier houses with five full storeys over basements. These are of similar appearance, if having slightly more decorative detail with the end and centre houses projecting forward of the building line with rusticated quoins. The Site, Nos. 39-47 Gordon Square, is thus formed by nine, internally interconnected buildings incorporating the southern eight houses of the earlier terrace and the first, larger house of the later terrace to the south. Today, these form a single building occupied by Birkbeck University with the exception of a separate basement flat at No. 45. The buildings are connected internally but inconsistently, with individual houses connected on some levels but not on others. The remainder of the buildings within the terrace, Nos. 36 – 38 Gordon Square (to the north) and Nos. 48 – 53 Gordon Square (to the south), are occupied by different institutes of the University of London.

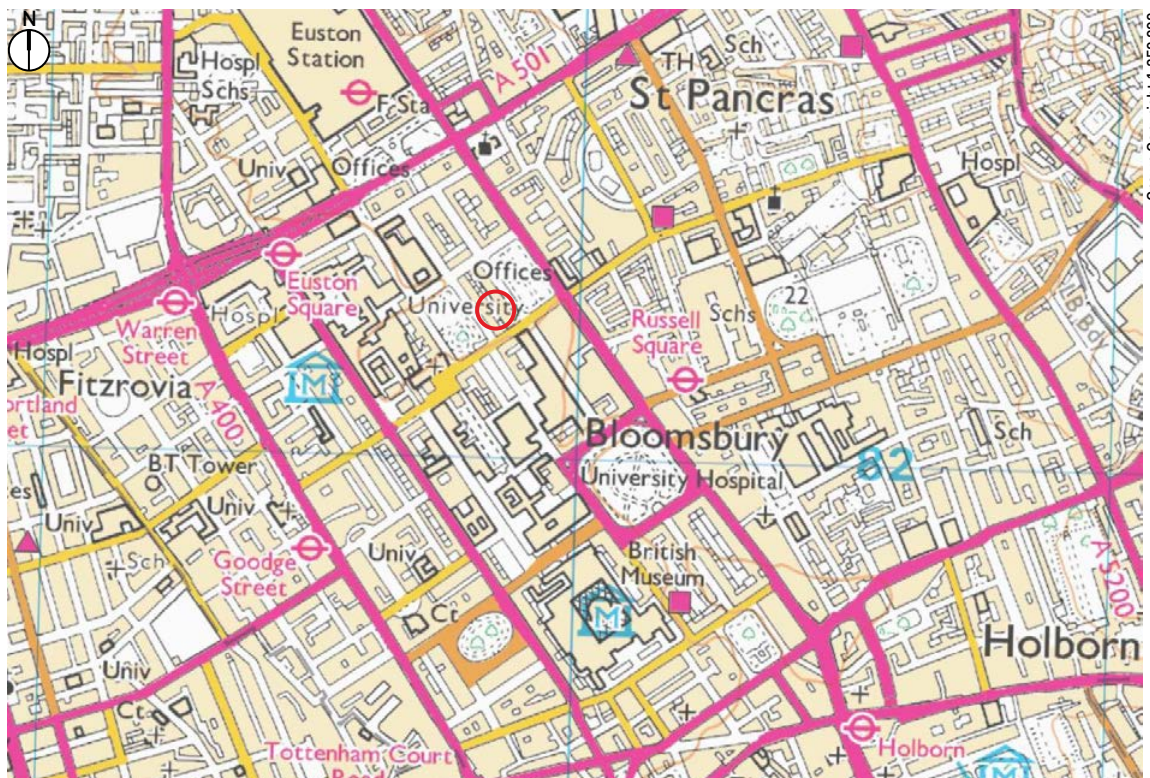


Fig. 1: Location Plan



Fig. 2: Designations plan

1.3 Designations

The entire terrace is Grade II listed, with two separate listings for the earlier and later parts (see Appendix A for the Listing Descriptions). The Site is located within Sub-Area 2 of LB Camden's Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The sub-area covers Gordon Square, Woburn Square and Byng Place, and is densely packed with nationally listed buildings and structures, as well as other non-listed buildings which positively contribute to the conservation area. The terrace to the rear of the Site (east), Nos. 29 – 45 Tavistock Square, is also Grade II listed and was also designed by Thomas Cubitt and is of similar appearance but sits outside of Sub-area 2.

Within Bloomsbury Conservation Area Sub-area 2

- Grade I:
 - Church of Christ the King
- Grade II:
 - Nos. 36-38 Gordon Square
 - Nos. 48 to 53 Gordon Square and screen wall linking No. 53 Gordon Square and No. 45 Tavistock Square
 - Nos. 14-15 Gordon Square
 - No. 16-25 Gordon Square
 - No. 26 Gordon Square
 - Nos. 55-59 Gordon Square
 - Lamp post on corner of Gordon Square and Gordon Street
 - The Cloisters (nos. 1-5), Gordon Square
 - Passfield Hall (nos. 1-7), Endsleigh Place
- Positive contribution to the Conservation Area
 - Institute of Archaeology and Classical Studies (nos. 30-35) Gordon Square
 - The Warburg Institute, Woburn Place

Outside sub-area 2, but in the vicinity of the Site

- Grade II*:
 - Nos. 29-45 Tavistock Square, including Connaught Hall (Nos. 36-45)

1.4 Methodology and limitations

The information in this report is based on archival and desk-top research and site visits carried out in early 2020, prior to the national lockdown to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Further access to historical archives has been curtailed during this period with the result that more information may exist with regard to the history and development of the buildings than set out within this report. We have drawn on existing records for other buildings within close proximity of the site and also from sources within the Feasibility Report for development within the Site, produced by Donald Insall in 2019. This includes occupancy records, which we have not been able to access. Where we have drawn on these sources but have been unable to verify the archive material ourselves due to the Covid-19 restrictions, we have noted this within the accompanying text.

We have reviewed the Historic Environment Record as part of this assessment (appended as Appendix B). There are no entries which affect the consideration of the proposal described within this report.

It is the nature of existing buildings that details of their construction and development may be hidden or may not be apparent from a visual inspection. The conclusion and any advice contained within this report – particularly relating to the dating and nature of fabric – are based on our research, and on observations and interpretations of what was visible at the time of our site visits. Further research, investigations or opening up works may reveal new information which may require such conclusions and advice to be revised.

The basement-level flat of No. 46 lies outside of the Site and has not been visited in the preparation of this report.

1.5 What is different

Listed below are the changes to the proposals, including those that have been dropped from the previous application:

- The partitions formerly proposed in the front rooms on Levels 02 and 03 have been dropped from this revised application
- In the previous application it was proposed to use the rooms at the front of the basement as offices. This would have necessitated CCTV along the façades for security reasons. In response to conservation officer advice from LB Camden, the internal layout has been reorganised so that these rooms will be classrooms with a lesser security risk, omitting the need for CCTV
- Brick repairs and repointing will now only be localised
- With a reduced amount of cooling required, the proposed risers will be smaller in size than they were in the previous planning application. This reduction in size will lessen their impact on the historic fabric
- New risers will also only be in locations where they already exist (where possible), with the formerly proposed risers in the front rooms of the terrace being removed from this application
- Only one door will now be blocked up on Level 00 between Nos. 43 and 44
- The reconfiguring of the toilets at B1 level in No. 45 has slightly changed
- There are no longer toilets proposed in Nos. 43 and 44 in the twentieth century extension at the rear
- There will no longer be a Level 01 extension at the rear of the building at Nos. 43 and 44
- There will no longer be the installation of exterior lighting

2.0 Understanding Nos. 39–47 Gordon Square

2.1 The development of Gordon Square

Before the eighteenth century, the area now known as Bloomsbury was part of the historic Tottenham Manor, with the land now occupied by Gordon Square identified as the Manor's oat field (Thames: 1993). In the decades prior to their formal development, the open fields north of Great Russell Street were known in particular for the fruit grown in small market garden plots, but their proximity to the growing city also made the area a popular site for sports and recreation from the mid-seventeenth century onwards.

By the eighteenth century, most of present-day Bloomsbury was owned by the Dukedom of Bedford, and it was the widow of the 4th Duke, Gertrude Leveson-Gower, who began the formal development of the area in the late eighteenth century. This period of the area's development, almost wholly at the hands of large-scale architect-developers backed by wealthy aristocratic landowners, was described by Donald Olsen as the *systematic transformation of the pastures of north Bloomsbury into a restricted upper-middle class suburb* (Olsen: 1984). Growth took the form of formally planned groups of Classical terraces, some grouped around squares and crescents, and was largely carried out at the hands of two builders—James Burton and Thomas Cubitt.

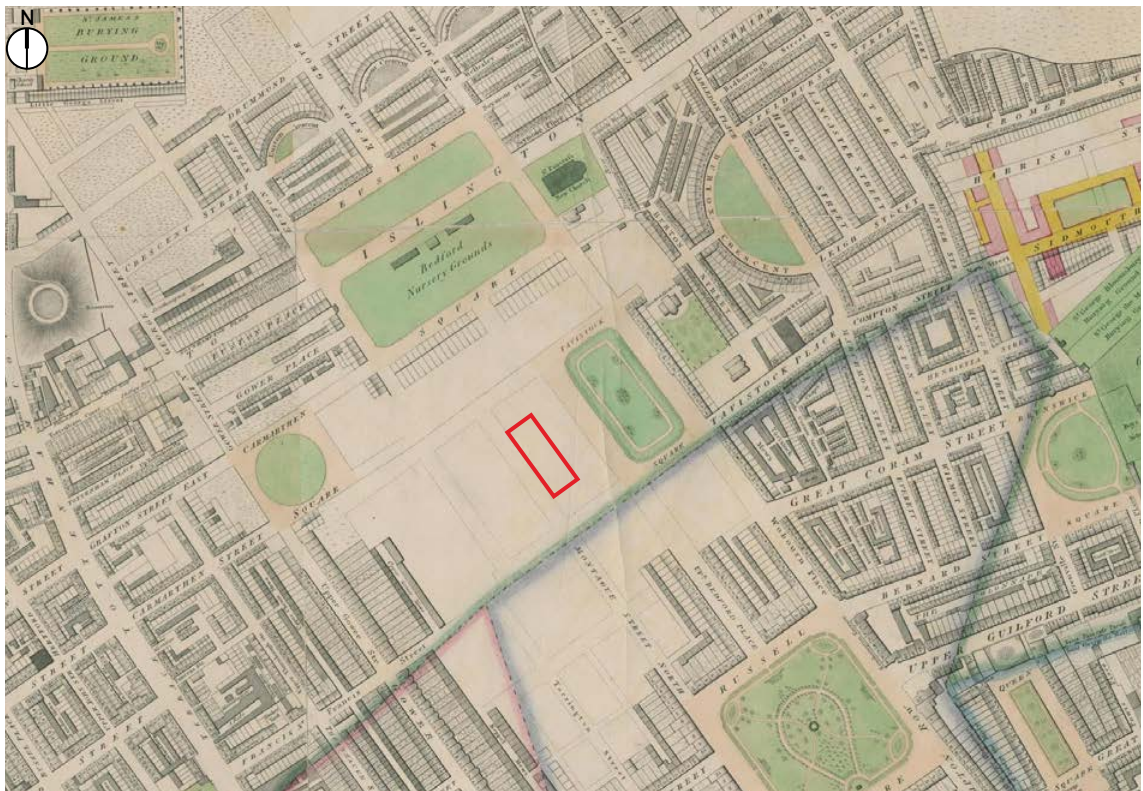


Fig. 3: 1819 map of Bloomsbury (Faden's revision of Horwood's Map of London 1793)

Burton's involvement in the north Bloomsbury area began in 1800, when the Duke of Bedford called upon him to pull down Bedford House and construct Russell Square in its place. By 1802 he had constructed almost 600 houses on the Bedford estate (Thames: 1993). Thomas Cubitt's involvement in Bloomsbury came rather late in the area's development, with most of the Bedford Estate having been laid out, if not fully built, by the time he began work there in 1820. Between the mid-1820s and 1850s, Cubitt developed the major part of the remaining area of north Bloomsbury between Russell Square and New Road (now Euston Road).

The development of the north part of Bloomsbury within which the Site sits came late in the estate's expansion as its swampy nature made it a difficult and unattractive location for building. This slow development was exacerbated by the building slump in the 1830s. After Cubitt's initial phase of building, the area's growth experienced a hiatus and remained only partly developed well into the 1850s. Gordon Square's western terrace was finally completed in 1860, some four decades after it was begun. The map of Bloomsbury dating from 1843 (Fig. 4 below) shows Gordon Square partially built. It is indicative and should not be viewed with modern expectations of accuracy – but clearly shows a limited part of the early terrace in place. The end houses of the terrace would not be complete for another 17 years.

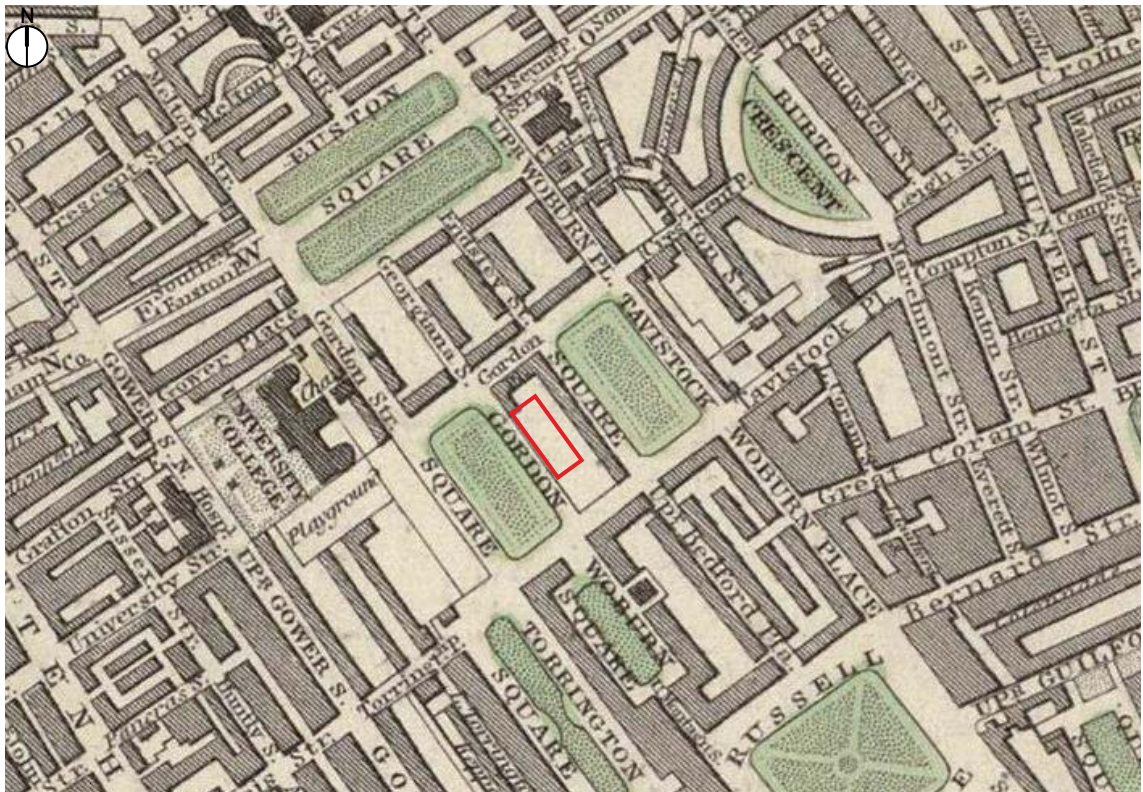
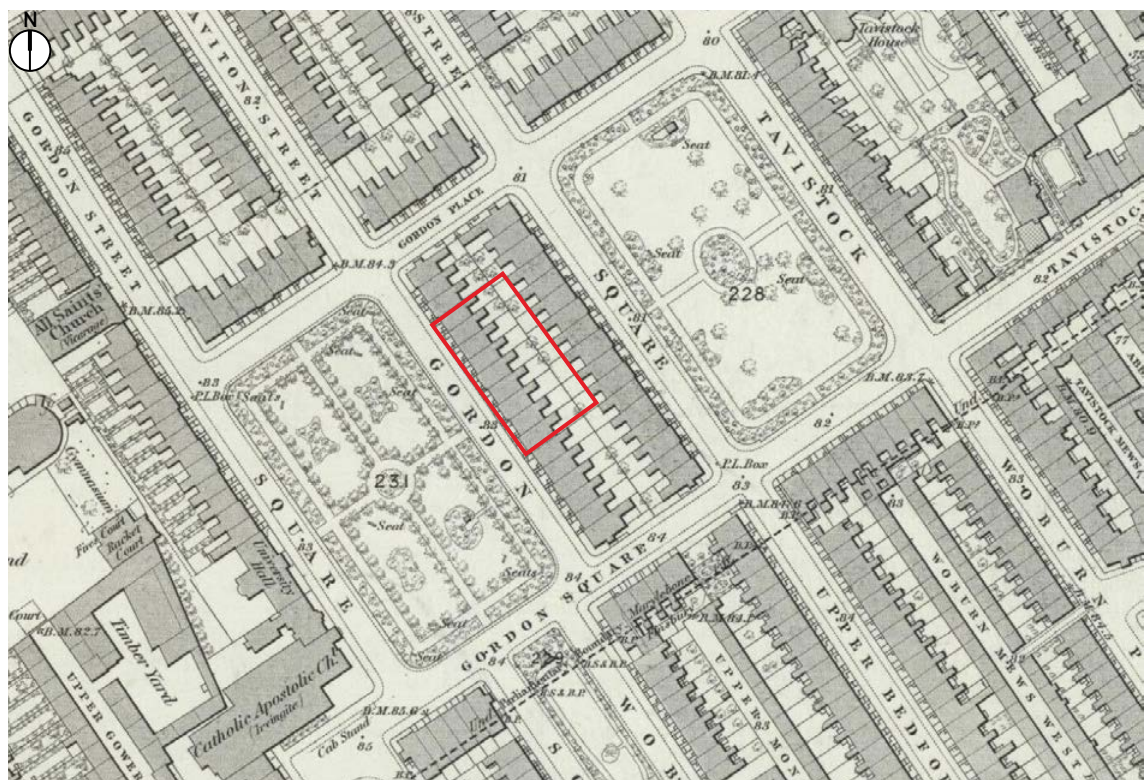


Fig. 4: B R Davies map of 1843 showing a half-finished Gordon Square – Reliance should not be given to



© National Library of Scotland

Fig. 5: OS 25 Inch surveyed 1870 published 1876, showing completed Gordon Square (Site outlined in red)

2.2 History of Nos. 39–47 Gordon Square

2.2.1 Nineteenth-century residential development

The majority of the terrace including, Nos 39 – 46 Gordon Square, were built under the direction of the prolific and celebrated builder Thomas Cubitt from 1825 to 1831 concurrently with his completion of Tavistock Square, Woburn Place and the adjoining roads (Cubitt Lease Book, 1820s–40s: LMA). Cubitt's terraces in north Bloomsbury, all constructed in during a short time period, bear many stylistic similarities. Nos.36–46 Gordon Square are typical of the type, being a four-storey stock brick terrace with wider projecting end bays and stucco detailing in the form of pilasters rising from a rusticated ground floor to a large modal entablature at second-floor ceiling height, and a further simple cornice above the third-floor windows. The first floor is identified as the *piano nobile* by way of large French windows leading onto cast-iron balustraded balconies.

The difficult ground conditions and economic downturn of the 1830s made further progress slow however. Although constructed to one of his designs, the end properties, Nos. 47–53 Gordon Square, were not constructed until the 1850 – 60s, after Cubitt's death. The greater size and slightly different layout of No. 47 relative to those other houses occupied by Birkbeck reflects the increasing demand for improved sanitary facilities in the decades after the first part of the terrace was completed.

The terrace is curiously absent from the Cubitt Lease Books, which list the dimensions of plots and initial leases of the properties built by Thomas Cubitt on the Bedford Estate (Cubitt Lease Book, 1820s–40s: LMA). The buildings first appear in the Post Office Street Directories in 1841, which suggests it took several years for occupiers to be found, likely due to the stagnation in the speculative building market in the 1830s.

Despite a lack of original drawings, it seems that much of the early fabric of the buildings survives, with their external appearance facing Gordon Square remaining largely unchanged.

Original Layouts

The layout of all of the houses was fairly typical for mid-nineteenth century houses with basements accessed via front light-wells. These had stairs on the south side and direct access to the basement service area at the northern end. Each had two or three coal vaults beneath the pavement. The front room at basement level was a kitchen with a square servant's room to the rear and a store between. A closet wing to the rear of each house housed a small room with a fireplace.

At ground-level, steps and a bridge across the light wells gave access to the front door of each property, situated on the northern side of the front elevation. These led to an internal hallway and stairs running along the northern party wall of each house. The two main rooms at ground floor level each had a fireplace on the southern party wall. The closet wing again included a small room and fireplace.

The first floor accommodated the primary reception room stretching across the entire frontage of each house with a smaller room to the rear. A half landing on the stair included a window to the rear.

The second and third floors supported smaller rooms with two rooms at the front (smaller room to the north, larger room to the south). As a result of this subdivision, these floors included fireplaces on the northern party walls as well as the south. Half-landings again incorporated small windows to the rear.

A servant's staircase, with a plainer balustrade, led to the attic storey with four small rooms and a roof lantern above the stairwell at each house.

2.2.2 The Twentieth-Century

Change in character

The exact history of each of the buildings during the early 20th century is not known (although it is likely that more light could be shed on this when public archives are reopened after the Covid-19 lockdown period). Donald Insall's Feasibility Report provides a collation of occupancy records from unknown sources. We have no reason to doubt their accuracy but have not been able to verify these ourselves. It is known that the gentility of occupier sought by the Bedford Estate was never really achieved, with most houses occupied by the middle-classes. By the turn of the twentieth century, Bloomsbury, just to the south of three major railway stations, began to transform into a more transitional area with many residential properties converted into commercial uses or subdivided into homes for less affluent occupants than the original occupiers.

The early decades: Celebrity at No.46 – The Bloomsbury Group

In 1905, into this increasingly diverse mix, came the sisters Virginia and Vanessa Stephen (later the acclaimed writer Virginia Woolf and the equally acclaimed artist Vanessa Bell) and their two brothers Thorby and Adrian. The four young people's home became the base for an influential and intellectual group of writers, artists and thinkers who would later become known as the Bloomsbury Group. With the nearby University of London; the British Museum and the area's earlier association of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the Bloomsbury Group cemented the association of Bloomsbury's squares with avant-garde intellectualism, perhaps altering the fashionable (and economic) decline of the area. Rather than conversion to boarding-houses, many of the larger homes began to be taken on by institutions and professional businesses.

Virginia Woolf would remain based in Bloomsbury for the remainder of her life but the spiritual home of the movement was founded at No.46 Gordon Square as she wrote in 1922:

These Thursday evenings were as far as I am concerned the germ from which sprang all that has since come to be called by the name of Bloomsbury. And the headquarters of Bloomsbury have always been in Gordon Square.

So there was now nothing that one could not say, nothing that one could not do, at 46 Gordon Square. It was, I think, a great advance in civilisation."

'Old Bloomsbury' in Moments of Being, Virginia Woolf, 1922

Following the departure of Virginia and her husband Leonard from Gordon Square in 1916, No. 46 was bought by another member of the Bloomsbury Group: the celebrated economist John Maynard Keynes and his prima ballerina wife Lydia Lopochova. By 1920, the basement, ground and first floors of No. 46 were Keynes' offices with residential areas restricted to the upper floors and rented out.



Fig. 6: 46 Gordon Square (1970, Collage)

Bloomsbury group

A group of artists and intellectuals who lived and worked in Bloomsbury in the early decades of the twentieth-century. They were associated with many different properties in Bloomsbury but first formed as a group at No.46 Gordon Square, with their activities revolving around the Stephen siblings who lived there together from 1904. The group originally composed of a writer's and artist's group formed by Thorby Stephen, his sisters and his university friends: the writer Lytton Strachey; art critics Clive Bell and Roger Fry; publisher Leonard Woolf and the economist John Maynard Keynes with other influential writers, artists and thinkers such as EM Forster and David Garnett joining the group later. Leonard Woolf would marry Virginia Stephen and Clive Bell would marry Vanessa Stephen who would become prominent by their married names as a writer and artist, respectively.

The group were known as much for their exhibitions, artistic outputs and philosophies as for their complicated love-lives, including open extra-marital and bisexual relationships: deeply shocking in an Edwardian society where homosexuality was still illegal. A common witticism, attributed to American satirist Dorothy Parker, was that the group *lived in squares, painted in circles and loved in triangles*.

Between them, the group produced many of the celebrated artistic, literary and philosophical works of the early half of the twentieth-century.



© Tate

Bloomsbury Group at High and Over, Sussex

Further change – The 1920s-1950s

By 1923, floorplans (see Appendix B) and occupancy records show that many of the houses had been converted into offices and flats. For example, No. 43 Gordon Square had become the offices of Proprietary Articles Trade Association following the general change of character of the area. Additional openings were made in the walls on every floor of this house except the third, with a partition removed in the fourth-floor attic storey to create one larger rear room. Bathrooms were known to have been added to the stairwell of No. 43 at this time and it seems likely that similar alterations were occurring within the other properties.

By 1930, all of the buildings within the terrace had been converted into flats or offices with flats above which must have necessitated some changes with internal layouts. For example, plans for No.40 (Fig. 31, Appendix C) show the house now supporting four separate flats.

The Site survived the Second World War with No.47 suffering non-structural blast damage. Nos. 46 and 47 also suffered blast damage with the rear closet wings seriously damaged.

Available records for other buildings within the terrace show that, by the 1950s, much of the terrace was in commercial use (including, at No. 38, the offices of the architects Adams, Holden and Pearson, who were at the time designing Birkbeck's primary buildings within Bloomsbury at nearby Malet Street).



Fig. 7: London Bomb Damage Map showing the site in red – Orange and yellow denote blast damage with red showing more severe damage

Birkbeck University

Founded in 1823, Birkbeck University is one of London's earliest higher education institutions and as such it is particularly remarkable that it was founded on the then radical basis of educating working people. Dr George Birkbeck passionately believed in education for all social classes and, whilst lecturing at the Andersonian University in Glasgow, founded a 'Mechanic's Institute' on the model of a recent innovation in Edinburgh. This was to provide lectures and access to books for working men. In 1823, after moving to London he started another such group: the London Mechanic's Institute, recalling the name of the originals in Scotland. This became the model for many such 'Institutes' across the country and were much sought-after by working people, if not universally popular amongst the educated classes. The London Institute found a home in Chancery Lane and, in 1830, remained true to its principles of radical egalitarianism by opening its doors to educate women.

The Institute was renamed the Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution in 1866 relocating to Fetter Lane before again being renamed as Birkbeck College in 1903. Birkbeck became a constituent college of the University of London in 1920, moving to its redeveloped post-war campus in Bloomsbury in 1952.



George Birkbeck by Samuel Lane, 1830

© University of Birkbeck

The university at Gordon Square ***Expansion of the university***

In the years immediately prior to the Second World War, the University of London began a rigorous plan of expansion across Bloomsbury, buying up blocks of terraces in and around Gordon Square. The construction of nearby Senate House in 1937, designed by Charles Holden and his partners, was the first of what was originally planned to be a sweeping series of developments throughout Bloomsbury. The building was startling in its scale and highly controversial. After the war, materials shortages greatly altered the university's plans, but its expansionist ambitions remained with many new buildings commissioned - and many older terraces lost as a result. This continued into the 1950s and 60s with Denis Lasdyn's Brutalist Institute of Education to the south of Gordon and Tavistock Squares originally masterplanned to extend north to replace the terraces of those squares. This modern expansion is generally credited with kickstarting the modern conservation movement in the United Kingdom as people reacted against the proposed loss of historic properties in the name of progress. The terraces of Gordon Square, which had been bought by the university in the 1950s to facilitate their expansion masterplan, were instead retained and converted to university use (Karol, 2007).



Fig. 8: 37-39 Gordon Square (1970, Collage)

Changes at Gordon Square

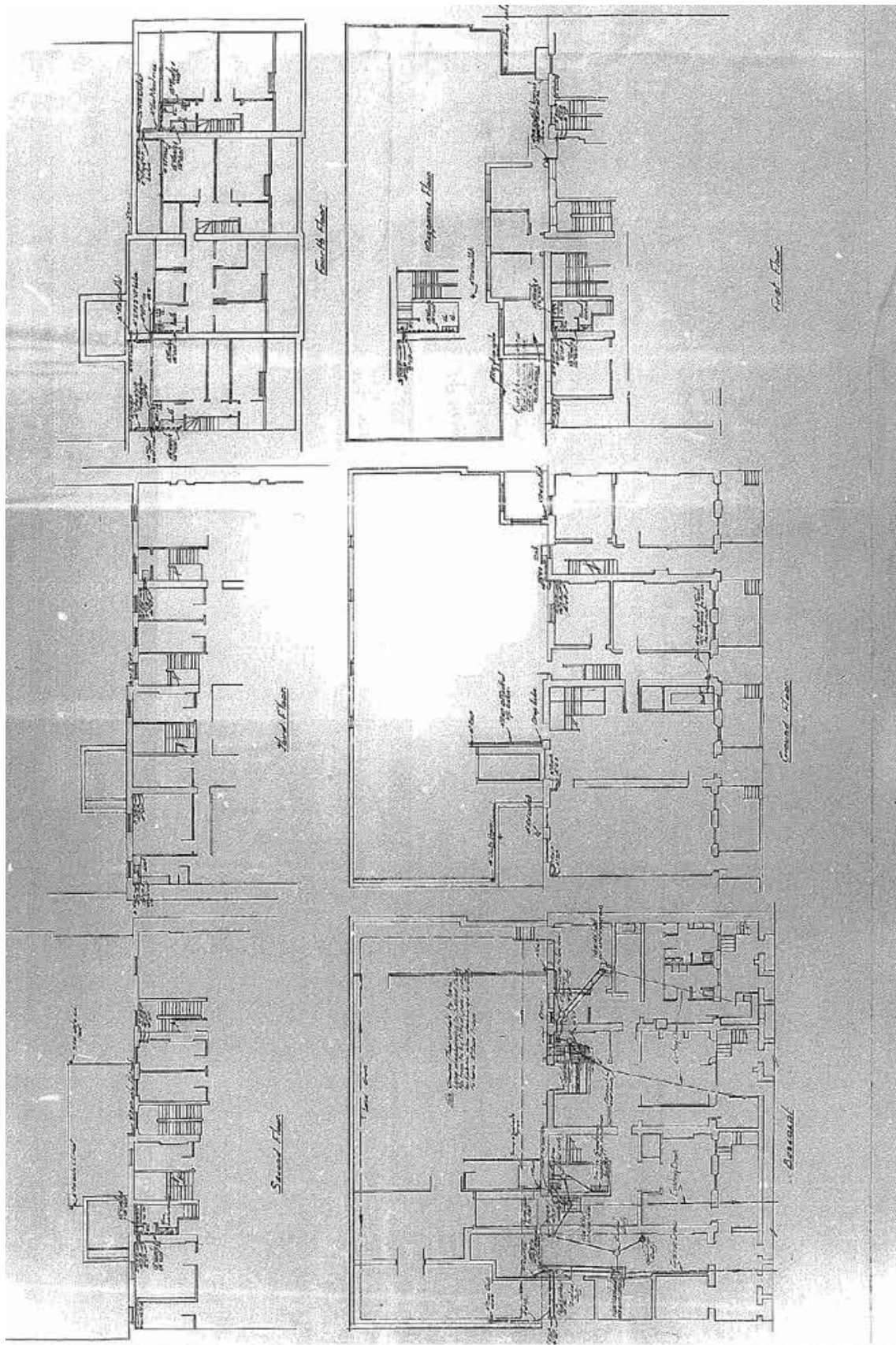
By 1960, the University of London's computing department was housed within Gordon Square at Nos. 44-45. By the end of decade, the department had spread to all of the houses making up the Site with the exception of a basement flat at No. 46. Computers were then substantial machines and significant change was needed to accommodate the expanding department in formerly residential buildings. This is set out in Donald Insall's 2019 report in detail and is repeated here:

In the early 1960s, the Computer Unit issued an urgent plea to the University for more space. The number of employees based in Gordon Square had increased to 100 staff and a further 20% increase was predicted in the 1964-66 period. A scheme was submitted in December 1962, which involved major lateral connections between several of the terraced houses (Nos. 42-45) and substantial internal alterations to create more space

The scheme involved substantial changes with the removal of the principal staircase in Nos. 42 and 43, the basement-to-ground floor staircase flight within No. 45, and the secondary staircase in No. 43. A new principal staircase was erected in No. 43 to the south of its original location, resulting in the eradication of the original plan form at every level. The partition walls on the ground floor of No. 42 were also removed to create one large open-plan space. A full-width, two-storey extension with associated lightwells was erected to the rear of all four buildings, with the loss of any remaining closet wings. A 1965 photograph of the rear of the terrace shows this extension [Plates 2.24]. The photograph and the 1962 drawings show that a single-storey extension was also erected at first-floor level to the rears of No. 43-44, while an associated cooling tower rose to the third floor behind No. 43. Lateral connections were also formed in the buildings in various locations, and further internal alterations were carried out, as described below.

The detail of the first to third floors is not fully clear but the drawings appear to suggest that all four terraced houses were substantially altered with the insertion of large lateral corridors that connected with associated openings in the party walls. The corridors were apparently formed through the rear rooms of each building.

As such, the substantive changes that remain within the buildings today: the entrance within No.42; the loss of the staircase at No.43; the extension to the rear; the loss of closet wings and the cooling tower to the rear of No.43 date to the conversion of the terrace to the university's computing department.



© LMA via Donald Insall

Fig. 9: 1962 Plans submitted to LB Camden by the University of London Computing Department showing substantial alterations to the internal layout and proposing the existing rear extension

The exact division of space between the University of London more generally and Birkbeck University itself over this period is not known. Again, further investigation of the archives may clarify this.

Appendix B shows various ground-floor plans dating from throughout the twentieth-century which were included within Donald Insall's Feasibility Report of 2019. These images have informed an understanding of age of fabric and significance. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the authors of this report have not been able to verify the plans in person at the Camden Local Archives or to research for further evidence.



© LMA

Fig. 10: Rear elevations, 1975

Birkbeck in the twenty-first century

In 2005, the Birkbeck (rather than the University of London) applied to convert part of the rear extension into a Centre for Film and Media Studies. The plans show that the two-storey extension was by then in use as the library of the School of Continuing Education. The striking internal redesign with an auditorium, café and offices was completed by Surface Architects and opened in 2007, winning the RIBA' prize for architecture in the London category that year.

Over successive years, applications for minor changes to windows and internal layouts within the rear extension have resulted in the appearance of the building as seen today with much of the rear extension given over to facilities associated with the cinema, a café and other spaces.



Fig. 11: 2007 internal remodelling of the rear extension by Surface Architects, 2020

2.3 Age of fabric drawings

The following drawings are based on visual assessment and a comparison with available plans. As the documentary record is incomplete, these demonstrate our best understanding. Further investigation may determine that the individual elements differ from the findings that follow.

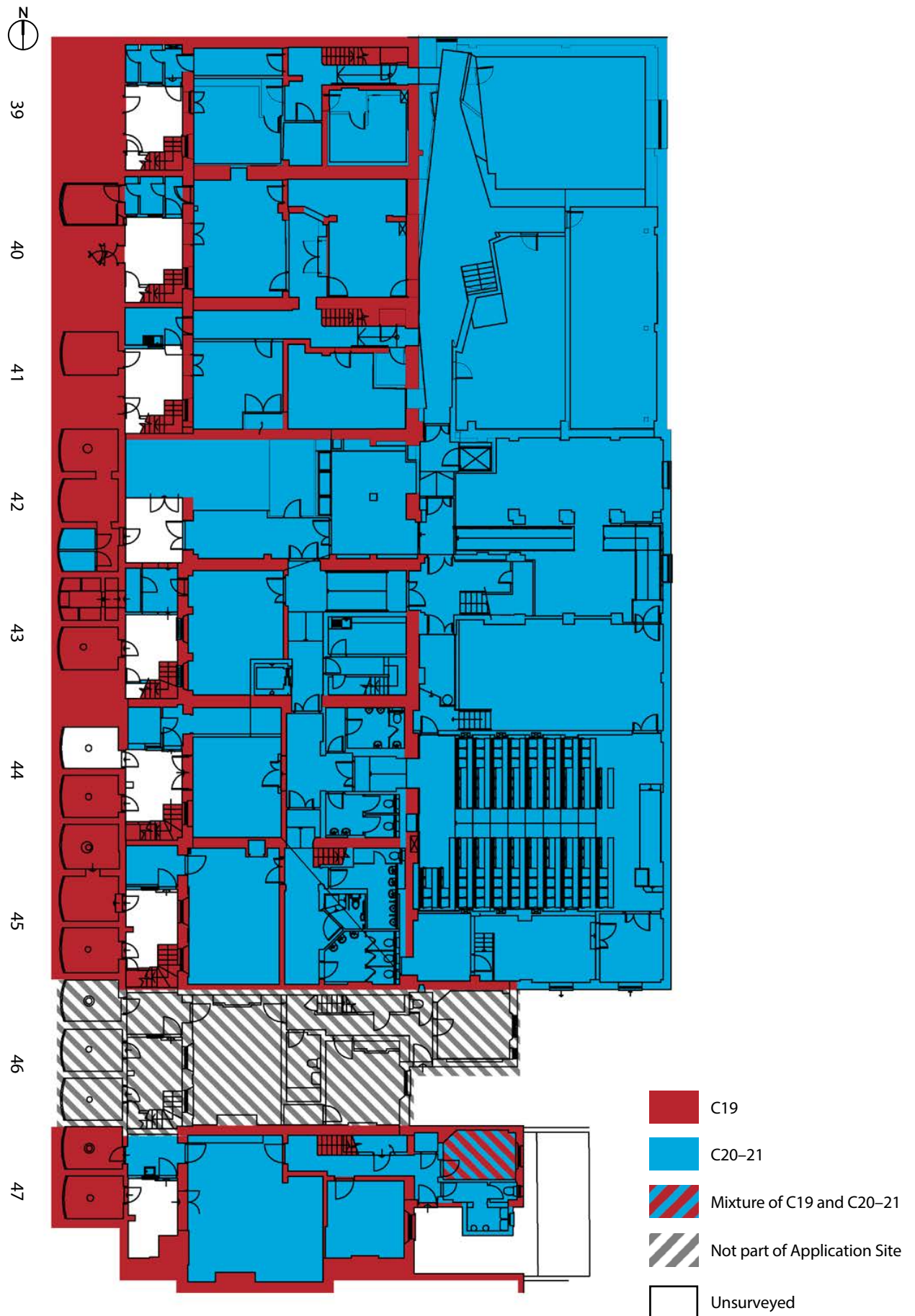


Fig. 12: Basement

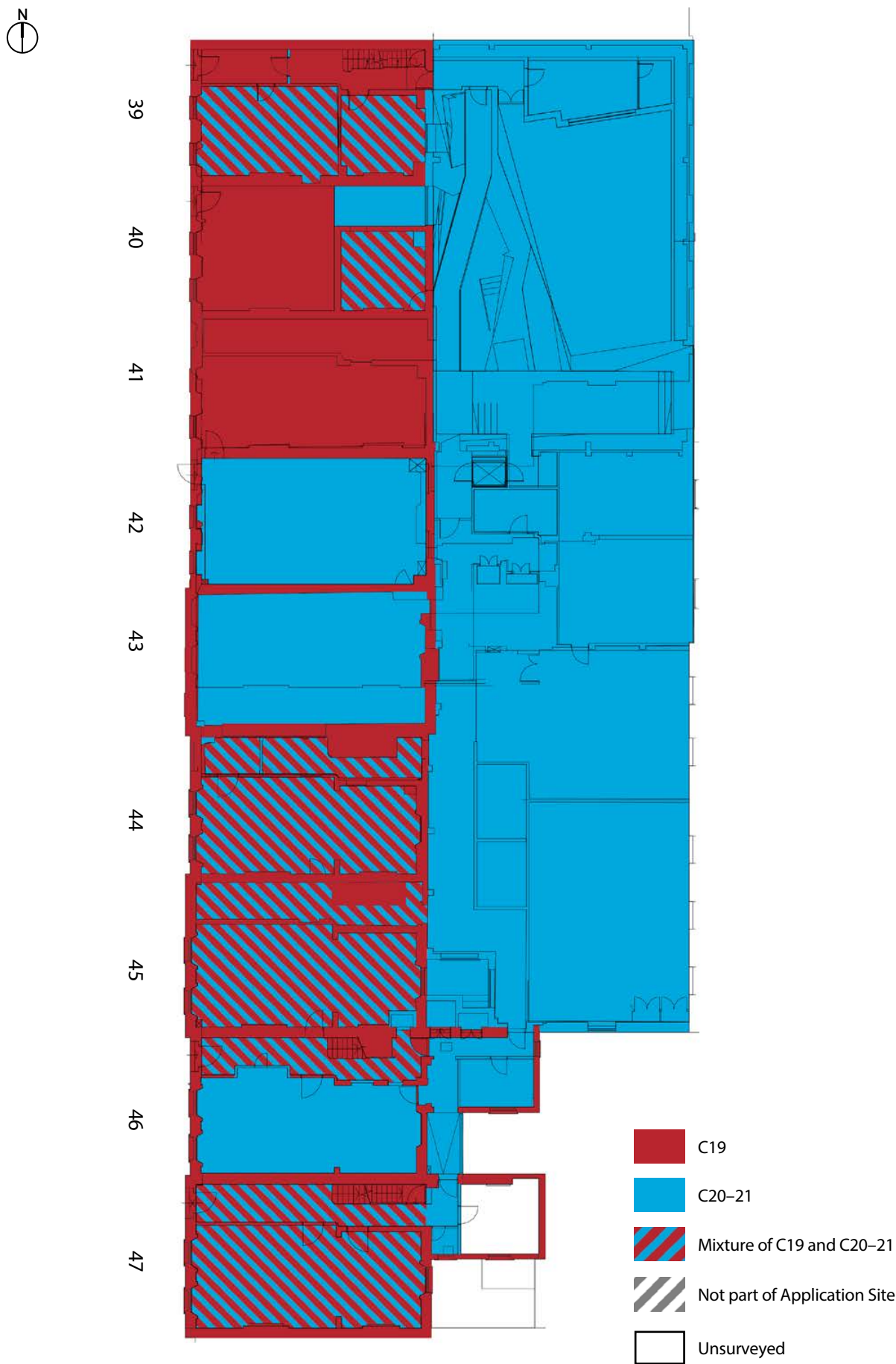


Fig. 13: Ground Floor

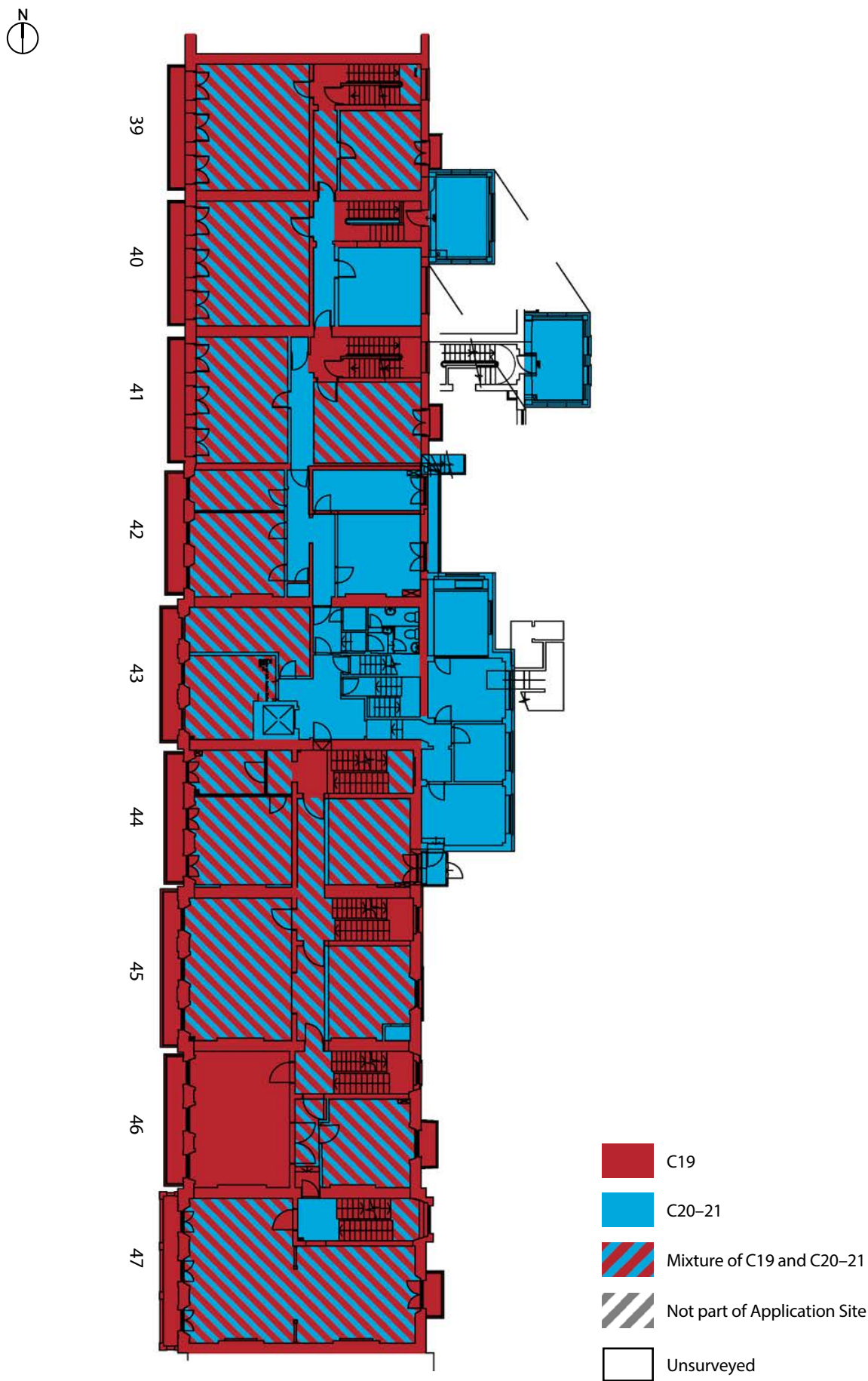


Fig. 14: First Floor

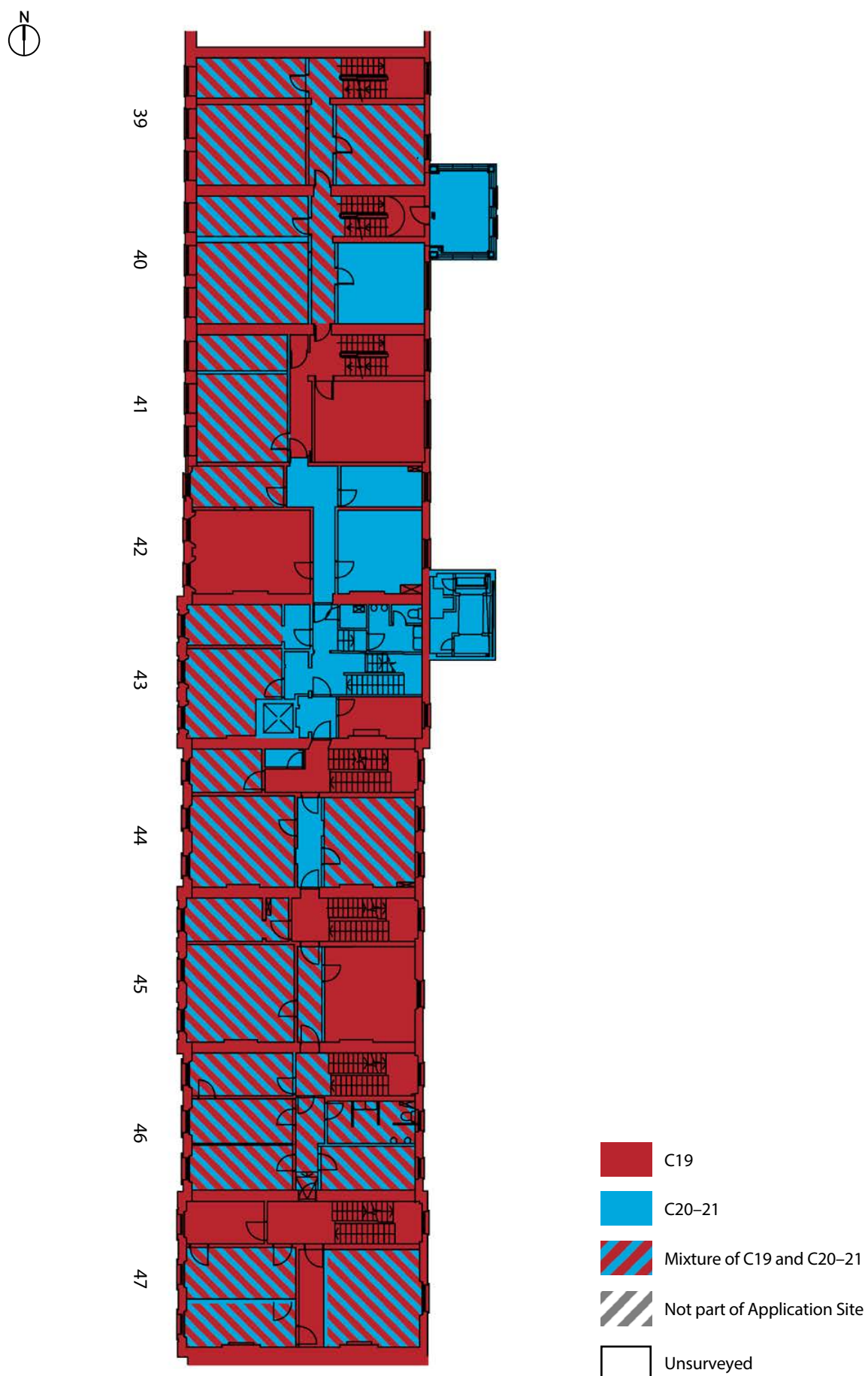


Fig. 15: Second Floor

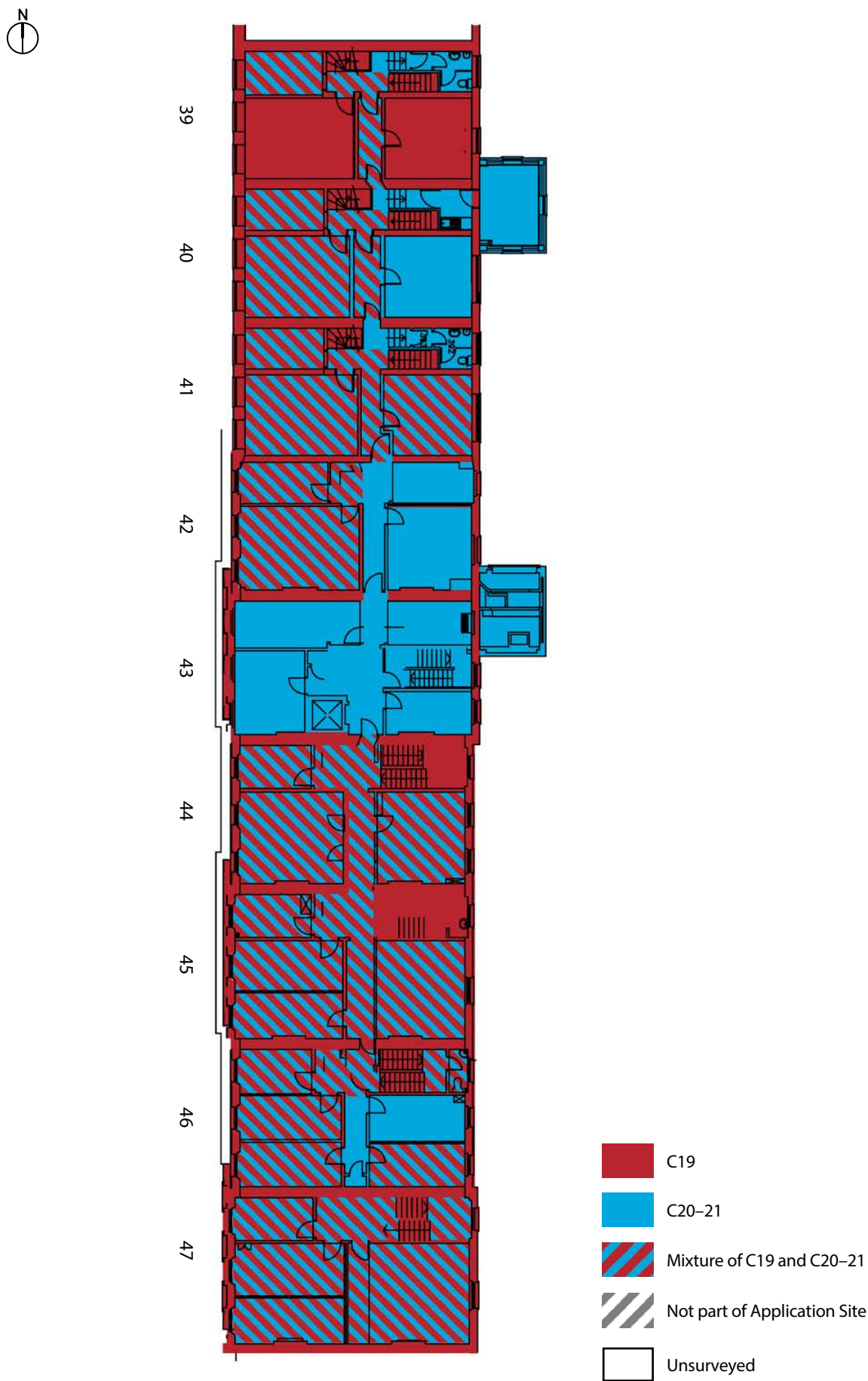


Fig. 16: Third Floor

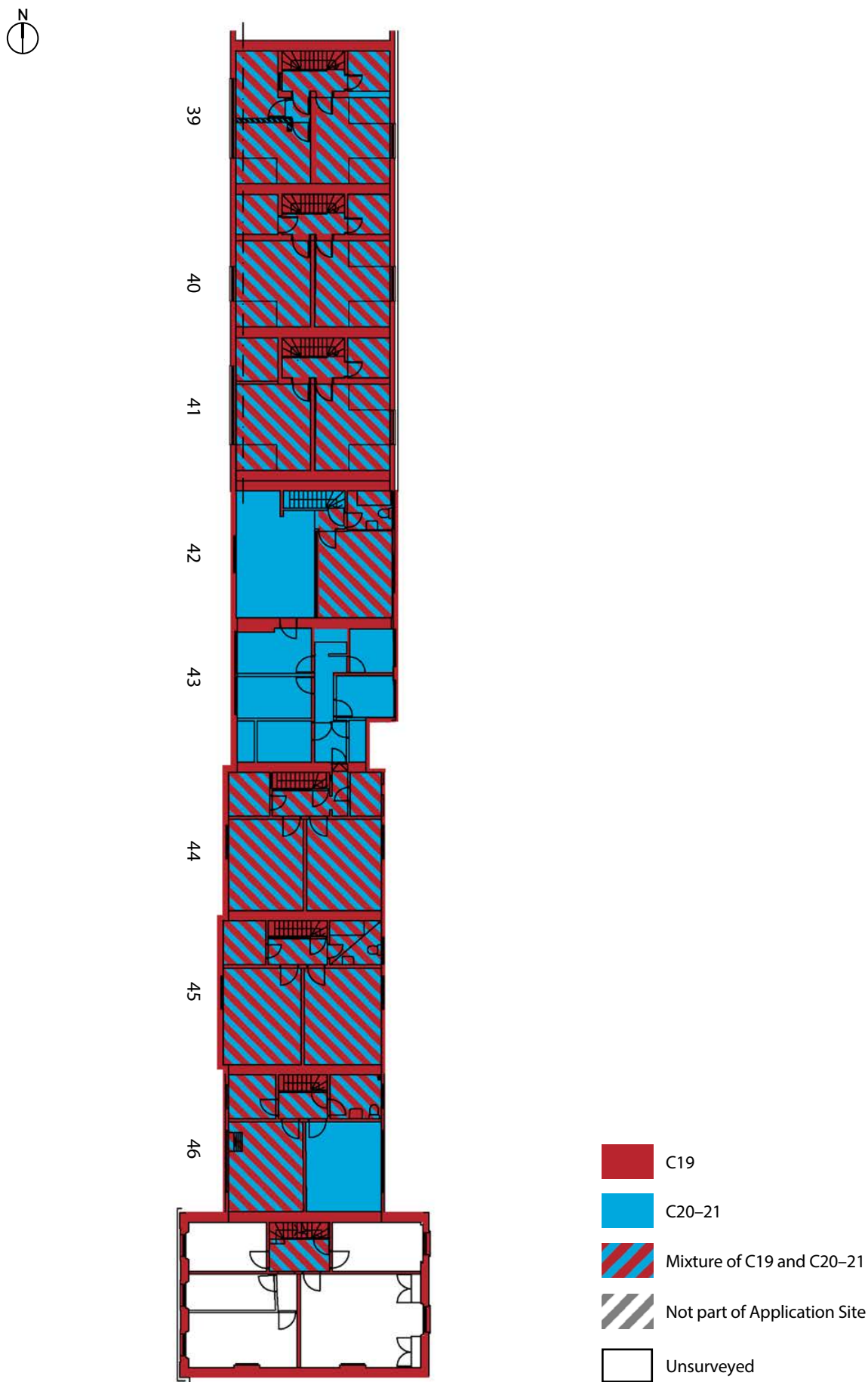


Fig. 17: Fourth Floor

3.0 Assessment of Significance

3.1 Assessing significance

Assessing significance is the means by which the cultural importance of a place and its component parts is identified and compared, both absolutely and relatively. The purpose of this is not merely academic; it is essential to effective conservation and management because the identification of elements of high and lower significance, based on a thorough understanding of a site, enables owners and designers to develop proposals that safeguard, respect and where possible enhance the character and cultural values of the site. The assessment identifies areas where no change, or only minimal changes should be considered, as well as those where more intrusive changes might be acceptable and could enrich understanding and appreciation of significance.

Statutory designation is the legal mechanism by which significant historic places are identified in order to protect them. However, it is necessary to go beyond these in order to arrive at a more detailed and broader understanding of significance that considers more than matters archaeological and architectural-historical. This is achieved here by using the terminology and criteria from the NPPF. This document places the concept of significance at the heart of the planning process.

Annex 2 of the NPPF defines significance as:

The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Historic England's *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008) includes a methodology for assessing significance by considering 'heritage values'. A revised version of this document is currently in consultation which brings these 'heritage values' more in line with the 'heritage interests' used in the NPPF. Heritage interests are used here because their adoption simplifies the preparation and assessment of planning and listed building consent applications, but the equivalent heritage values are given in brackets for reference.

This assessment uses three main types of interest as defined below:

Architectural and Artistic Interest ['aesthetic value']: *These are the interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.*

Historic Interest ['historical value']: *An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide an emotional meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity ['communal value'].*

Annex 2 of NPPF defines **archaeological interest** [**‘evidential value’**] in the following way:

There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Historic England has helpfully sought to clarify the distinction between archaeological interest and historic interest that the NPPF intends. Para 13 of HE's *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice In Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-taking in the Historic Environment* (July 2015) begins:

Archaeological interest, as defined in the NPPF, differs from historic interest . . . because it is the prospects for a future expert archaeological investigation to reveal more about our past that need protecting.

The assessment of significance is usually an amalgam of these different types of interest, and the balance between them will vary from one case to the next. What is important is to demonstrate that all these interests have been considered. This is achieved by assessing the significance of the whole site relative to comparable places, and the relative significance of its component parts.

This assessment begins below with a Summary Statement of Significance, then by an assessment of significance by location on the site. This chapter of the report will be updated with colour-coded significance plans once accurate survey drawings of the building become available.

This assessment uses five levels of significance, as set out in the table below.

High significance	Original plan-form and decorative features
Moderate significance	Spaces that essentially retain their original plan-form and some original fittings
Low significance	Spaces that essentially retain their original plan-form but have been stripped of their original fittings and finishes; or, plan-form of late nineteenth-century extensions
Neutral significance	Twentieth- and twenty-first century partitions, fittings and finishes
Detracts from significance	Twentieth- and twenty-first century partitions that obscure original plan-form

3.2 Summary of significance

The Grade II listed terrace is a highly significant combination of Georgian and Victorian terraces which survive in their entirety along the eastern side of Gordon Square. Although there have been minor and detracting adaptations relating to its conversion to offices and institutional uses in the early twentieth century, the terrace remains appreciable as an original residential terrace of high architectural merit, facing onto a (formerly) residential square – an architypical Bloomsbury Square.

With the Grade II* listed terrace of Tavistock Square to the rear, the terraces form a rare surviving collection of a designed townscape that was once typical of the early development of Bloomsbury. Today the terraces, and the squares they face, form an characterful, pleasant and instantly recognisable part of Bloomsbury's internationally renowned university core. The exterior of the terrace is thus of high significance for its own architectural and historical interest, as well as its contribution to the setting of the adjacent Grade II* listed terrace of Tavistock Square and its significant contribution to the character and appearance the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Internally, the individual buildings have been modified to varying degrees with few retaining clearly legible original floor plans. This is most significantly affected by the insertion of lateral connections, with front and rear rooms partitioned to form corridors and in Nos. 42 and 43, the loss of the original staircase. In many cases, the partition walls divide rooms that have surviving cornice detailing, truncating the volume of original spaces. Combined with the blocking up of stairwell windows and the creation of openings in varying locations on the party walls, navigation within the terrace, and an appreciation of the individual houses, is difficult and the overall experience of being within the listed terrace is compromised.

Where party walls, staircases and fragments of the original layouts survive at all levels, these are designated as highly significant. The significance of spaces within the original buildings varies, depending on the survival of original fabric and detailing. The rear elevations of the buildings have undergone change and generally of moderate significance. Late twentieth-century and twenty-first century fabric is of no historic significance even where interiors are of high-quality and striking in architectural design.

3.3 Statement of significance of Nos. 39-47 Gordon Square

3.3.1 Exterior – Front elevation

Nos. 39-47 Gordon Square form part of the core of late Georgian terraces designed by one of the leading architect-builders of the period, Thomas Cubitt. The buildings have generally retained their appearance, scale and massing and their relationship with the well-treed Gordon Square even as the remainder of the square has undergone significant change. As a complete terrace, which has survived in its entirety, its exterior appearance is of **high significance** including the slightly more decorative but clearly related exteriors of Nos. 47-53.

3.3.2 Exterior – Rear elevation

The rear elevation of the terrace is of lesser architectural interest than the front elevation but retains historic interest in the sense of the appreciable fabric of a nineteenth-century rear elevation. This is particularly relevant as the lack of built form to the north or south of the terrace, allows in clear views from Gordon Square to the south and Endsleigh Place to the north.

The rear elevation of the terrace underwent significant change in the twentieth-century. The rear elevations of Nos. 46 and 46 were likely rebuilt in the post-war period and of No.s. 42-43 are now dominated by the rear extension and cooling tower and the rebuilt closet wings of the 1960-70s which **deduct** from the historic and architectural significance of the terrace. Where the original form, materials and proportions remain visible, they are of **moderate significance**.

3.3.3 Basement

Across the nine houses, the level of intervention to the basement varies considerably. Generally speaking, the outer original walls survive with the plan form of a front and rear room remaining legible to varying degrees usually minimally. This plan form survives only in No. 41 although this too has later partitions. These original walls are of **high significance**. Later partitions, which are universally of **negligible significance**, have obscured plan forms of most of the individual houses with the spaces within them generally of **negligible significance**. The insertion of a corridor in Nos. 43-44 makes their plan forms hard to read. No. 45 remains clear and this area therefore has some **low significance**. The different layout of No. 47 relative to the rest of the terrace results from a marginally different floor plan in this later building. The staircases survive in only four properties (Nos. 39, 41, 45 and 47) and are of **high significance**.

The fabric of the surviving pavement vaults is of **high significance**. The spaces within them are deemed to be of **moderate significance** unless obscured by later plant where they have **negligible significance**.

The two-storey rear extension and its interior have **negligible significance** in heritage terms.

3.3.4 Ground floor

On the ground floor the original fabric is deemed to have **high significance**. Very little of the interior finishes survive but where historic plan form is legible, this is considered to be either **high or moderate significance** depending on the survival of original cornices or other features. The original layouts are discernible only within Nos. 39 and 42. Where greater levels of intervention are made, significance is lower. Where the original staircases remain, they are of **high significance**.

Risers and an access ramp **deduct** from the significance.

The ground floor rear extension has **negligible significance** in heritage terms.

3.3.5 First floor

Again, few interior finishes survive but where historic plan form is legible, this is considered to be either **high or moderate significance** depending on the survival of original cornices or other decorative features. Where this plan form has been truncated by corridors, significance is **limited**. The lateral corridors and lift-shaft **deduct** from significance as does the heavily modified circulation core in No. 43. The cooling tower, central extension and twentieth-century closet wings **deduct** from significance. Where the original staircases remain, they are of **high significance**.

3.3.6 Second and third floors

Where the original partitions are legible, these and the original primary staircases are of **high significance**. Spaces are determined to be of **moderate or low significance** depending on the presence of cornices or other detailing. Corridors **deduct** from significance with some spaces created due to their insertion of **negligible significance**.

The third floor retains staircases to the fourth floor in all but No. 43. Depending on the degree of survival of original fabric significance varies with a maximum value of **moderate significance** as a result of the lesser significance of the space within the overall hierarchy of the layout of the house.

3.3.7 Fourth floor

Very little original fabric exists. Where the original partitions survive these are of **high** significance. Spaces that retain a sense of the original room layout are of low significance. Rooms are otherwise of **negligible** significance. Where spaces have been significantly altered or reduced they **detract** from significance. The fourth floor in No.47 was built as a full storey rather than an attic storey and has a different floor plan to the other buildings making up the terrace.

3.4 Contribution to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (2011) sets out that the predominant building type in Bloomsbury is the three- to four-storey terraced townhouse that is classical in style, with regular fenestration and larger windows on the first floor, denoting the *piano nobile* (the floor with the most important rooms). These houses also usually feature Cast Iron railings along their frontages, separating the pavement from the front lightwell. As such, Nos. 39-47 Gordon Square is highly representative of the historic character of Bloomsbury Conservation Area and therefore make a **positive contribution** to its significance.

3.5 Significance plans



Fig. 18: Basement

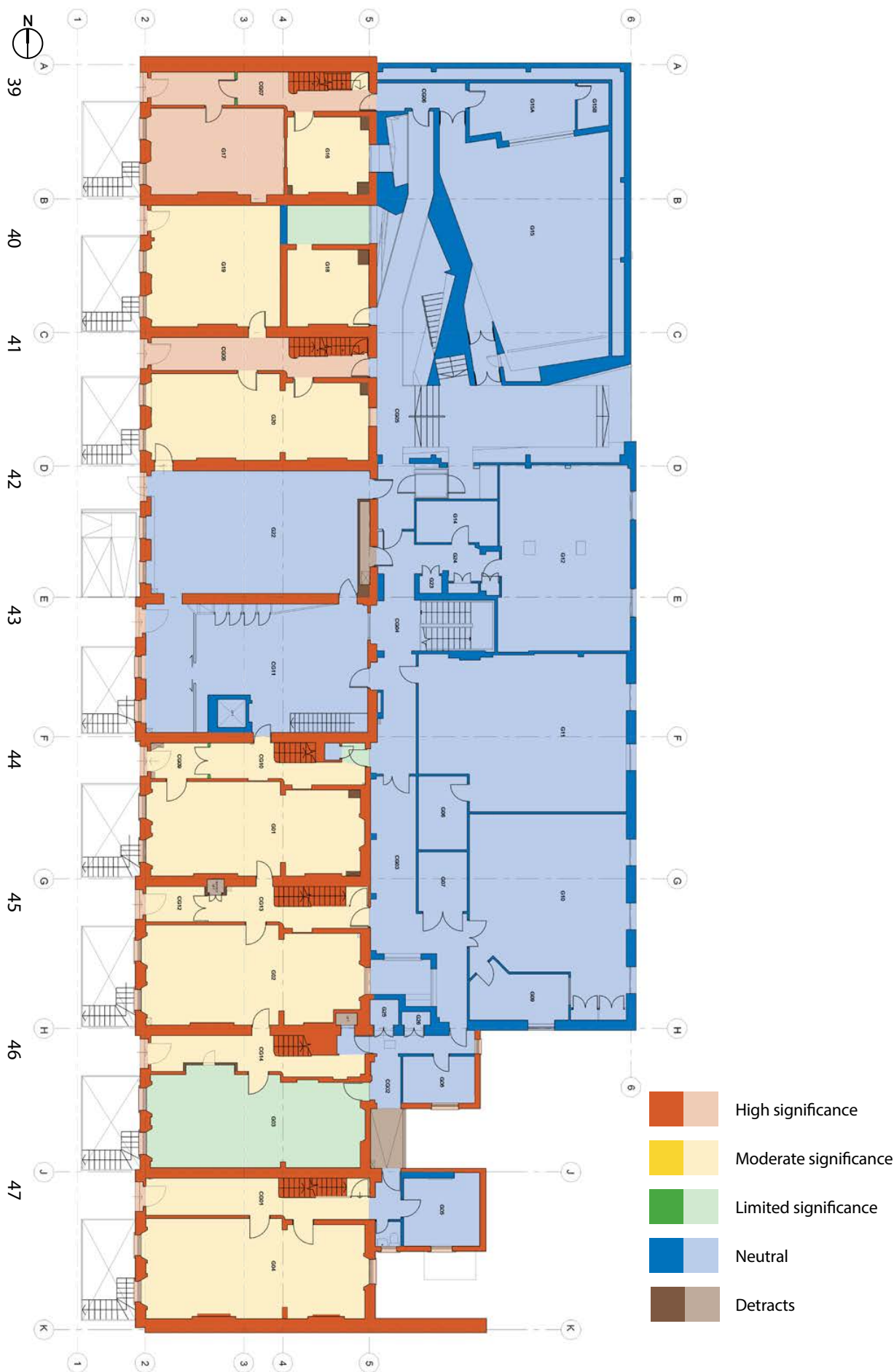


Fig. 19: Ground Floor



Fig. 20: First Floor

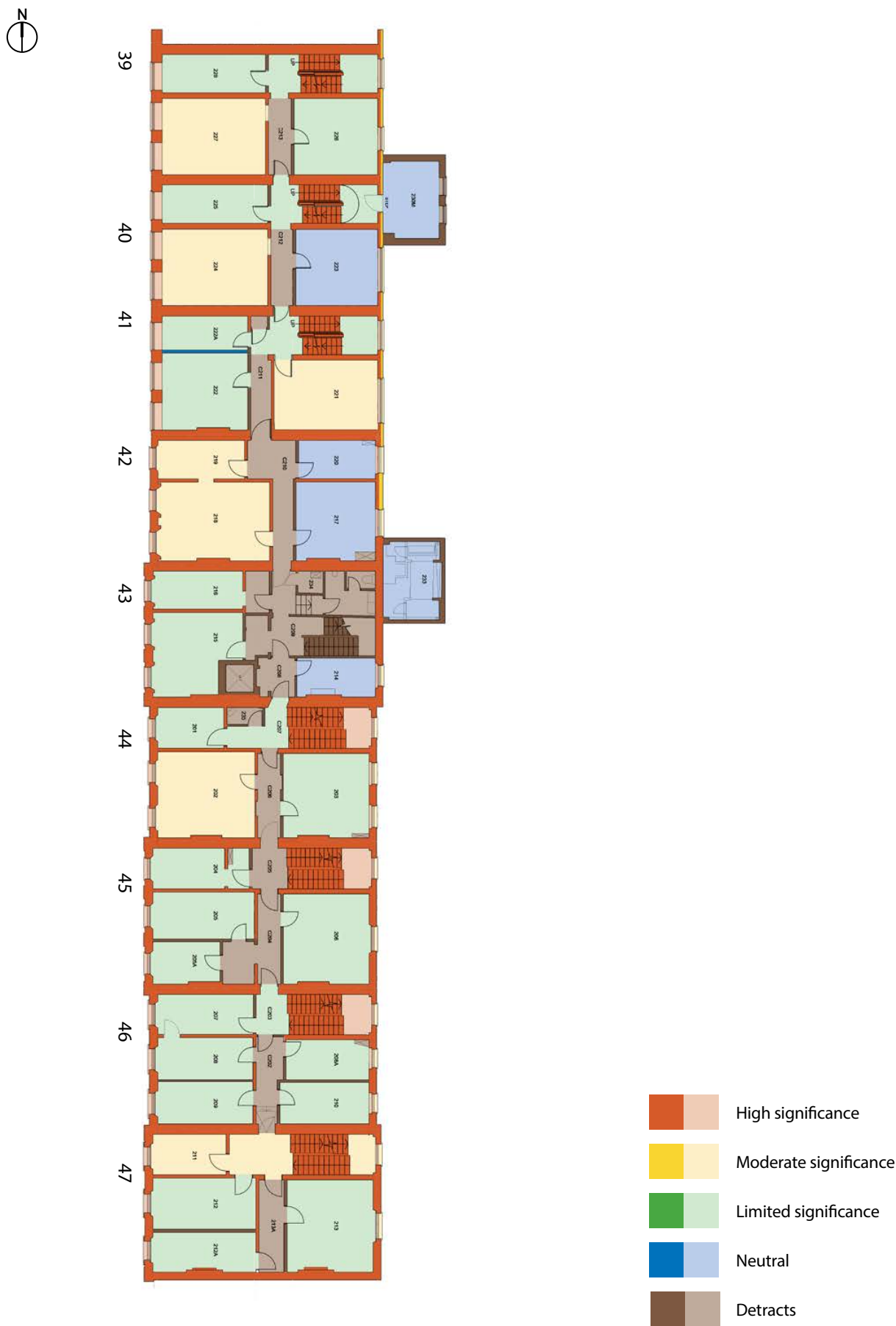


Fig. 21: Second Floor

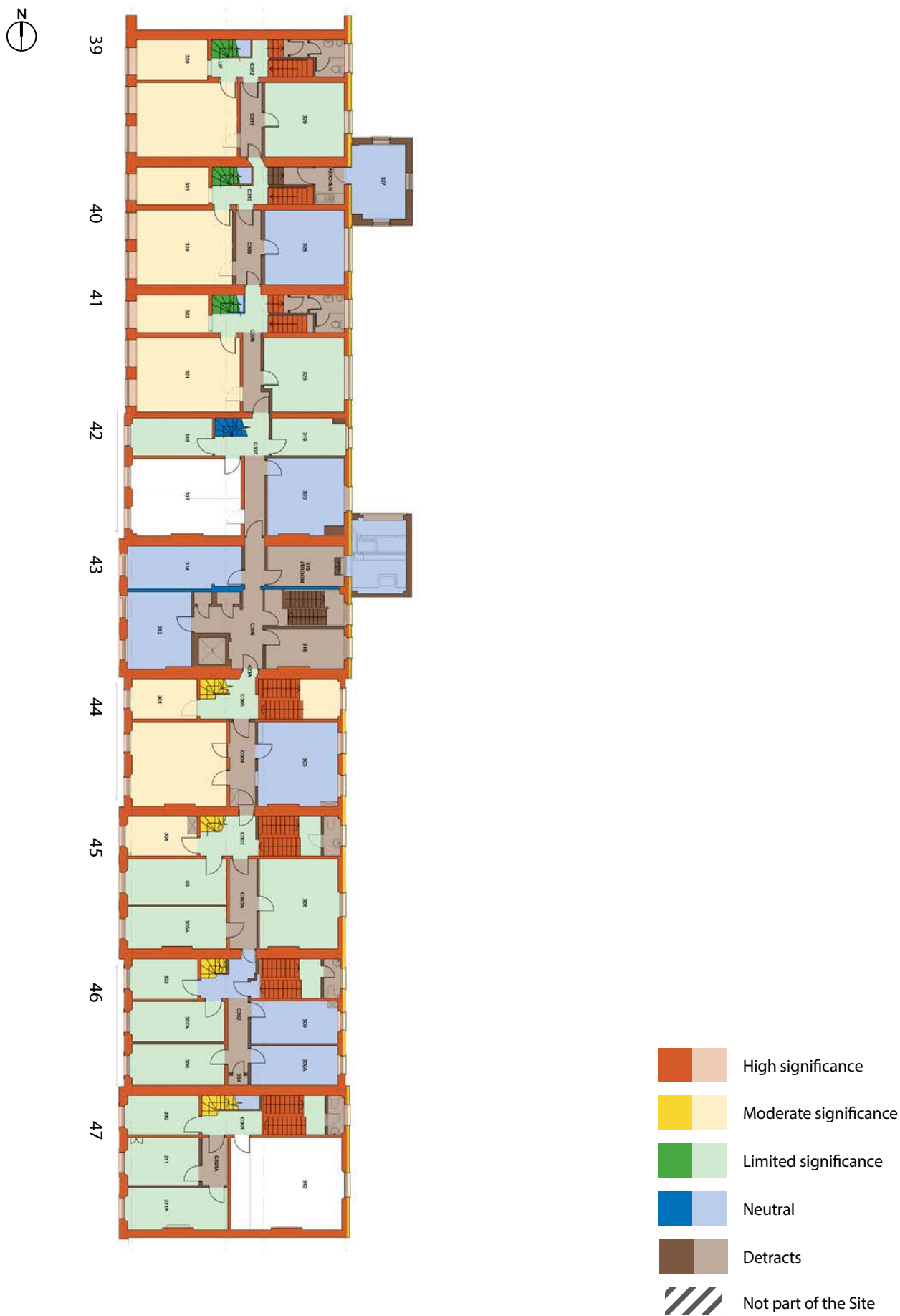


Fig. 22: Third Floor



Fig. 23: Fourth Floor

4.0 Heritage impact assessment

4.1 Introduction

Birkbeck operates a single operational building across the nine original houses. To aid clarity in identifying where changes are proposed, each individual former house is referred to as an individual building within the table below with the overall building termed the terrace.

4.2 Aims

The changes are motivated by Birkbeck's need to rationalise different parts of the university into one building to provide adequate teaching, learning and research spaces suitable for the delivery of higher education in the twenty-first century. The opportunity is being taken for a comprehensive and conservation-led overhaul of the fabric of the property as well as making the amendments necessary to maintain the university's presence within the terrace. The extensive suite of repairs and maintenance works to original and later fabric includes the removal and replacement of roof slates, roof felts, mortars and some stucco. The works also include substantial remedial works such as floor strengthening throughout the terrace following years of overloading and structural interventions that have left floors weakened and unsuitable for continuing use. This proposal differs from the withdrawn planning application (2020/4620/NEW) in the following ways:

- The partitions formerly proposed in the front rooms on Levels 02 and 03 have been dropped from this revised application
- In the previous application it was proposed to use the rooms at the front of the basement as offices. This would have necessitated CCTV along the façades for security reasons. In response to conservation officer advice from LB Camden, the internal layout has been reorganised so that these rooms will be classrooms with a lesser security risk, omitting the need for CCTV
- Brick repairs and repointing will now only be localised
- With a reduced amount of cooling required, the proposed risers will be smaller in size than they were in the previous planning application. This reduction in size will lessen their impact on the historic fabric.
- New risers will also only be in locations where they already exist (where possible), with the formerly proposed risers in the front rooms of the terrace being removed from this application.
- Only one door will now be blocked up on Level 00 between Nos. 43 and 44
- The reconfiguring of the toilets at B1 level in No. 45 has slightly changed
- There are no longer toilets proposed in Nos. 43 and 44 in the twentieth century extension at the rear.
- There will no longer be a Level 01 extension at the rear of the building at Nos. 43 and 44
- There will no longer be the installation of exterior lighting

The principle of intervention is conservation led: to retain original fabric if possible, repair where necessary but to replace as required. Degradation of render, tiles and other exterior fabric has

resulted in water ingress and is damaging to the historic and architectural interest of the remaining fabric. The repair and restoration works are necessary to secure the longevity of the buildings and to maintain their continued contribution to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The comprehensive nature of repairs and alterations reflects the fact that many elements have not been repaired in the buildings' near two centuries of existence or have been repaired on an ad hoc basis.

Those works that fall under amendments to accommodate the university's teaching and staff are also comprehensive, with the aspiration that the changes will allow the university to remain and thrive in the buildings as teaching and learning methods continue to evolve in the digital age. The works include the conversion of spaces to teaching and lecture spaces; updated toilets and access to accommodate staff and students of all mobilities and the creation of high-quality accommodation for the university's academic and administrative staff. The aims of the works include:

- Providing naturally lit and attractive classrooms (predominantly in the front rooms at ground, first and basement level).
- Providing necessary lecture and teaching spaces with minimal impact to historic fabric.
- Providing meeting and break-out space for academic and research staff.
- Improving lateral and vertical wayfinding in the building by realigning corridors, removing the confusing array of twentieth-century partitions and maximising the use of natural light in corridors and stairwells.
- Allowing the original volume of spaces, and any decorative plasterwork or mouldings to be appreciated by employing free-standing office pods and glazed screens, replacing corridor walls that bisect principle rooms added in the twentieth century.
- Making good any defects in historic fabric or later repairs using appropriate materials as close as possible to the original fabric.

In the table below, elements which provide heritage benefits are coloured in green, harm in yellow and any element of no or negligible impact in blue, and marked as neutral. Where elements are identified as harmful to historic fabric, this option has been taken as the least harmful design option available to meet a particular need of the university. All harm identified within the table is less than substantial with any substantially harmful options discounted at an early stage in the design process.

4.3 Review of individual interventions

Area affected	Element of proposals	Impact	Commentary
Exterior			
Roof	Repair and replacement of slate roofs (including replacement underlay, copper nails, lead soakers and flashings).	Benefit	<p>The scheme involves complete removal and re-slatting of the pitched roofs of the buildings, re-using the existing timber battons where possible.</p> <p>Whilst this involves the loss of historic slate, slate roof tiles typically survive around 125-200 years. The existing roof is for the most part 195 years old and deteriorating.</p> <p>Flashing is to be replaced across the entirety of the roof to halt destructive water ingress.</p> <p>Replacement of the roofs will arrest ongoing decay due to water ingress and support the continued maintenance and occupation of buildings in active use and as such, is a heritage benefit to the listed buildings and to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area more widely.</p> <p>Where possible, the slate can be recycled and reused but, on visual inspection, there is limited expectation for comprehensive retention of existing slates. The new slates are to closely match the existing in colour.</p>
Roof	Dormers to be repaired and re-covered	Neutral	Dormers will be repaired and re-covered in felt to prevent water ingress.
Throughout	Repair or replacement of rainwater goods and relining of guttering	Benefit	<p>The gutters are to be relined in lead with rainwater goods temporarily removed (to allow stucco repairs) and repaired where necessary. If elements are not repairable they are to be replaced with suitable cast iron replacements, painted black to match the existing.</p> <p>Similar to the other repairs, this maintenance approach will prioritise the retention and repair of historic fabric with any necessary replacements to be carried out in historically appropriate materials. This conservation-led approach to overhauling the drainage pipework will maintain the architectural significance of the buildings and is a heritage benefit.</p>
Elevations	Localised brick repairs and repointing	Benefit	Repointing with a suitable lime-based mortar will support the longevity of the historic brickwork and the listed buildings.

Area affected	Element of proposals	Impact	Commentary
Front elevations	Localised stucco repairs and redecoration	Benefit	Localised stucco repairs and redecoration to damaged areas will complement recent redecoration that has taken place.
Lightwells	Refurbishment of lightwells.	Benefit	All historic flagstones are to be cleaned and repointed with repairs as necessary to concrete steps. Repainting is also proposed throughout.
Bridges (Nos. 46 & 47)	Refurbishment of flagstones.	Benefit	All flagstones are to be repointed. New flagstones are to be laid to the bridges of Nos. 46 and 47 which have been patch-repaired in concrete.
Railings	Railings to be repaired and redecorated where damaged	Benefit	Existing paint is to be stripped, ironwork is to be treated where corroded and repainted.
No.43	Installation of signage to railings, bridge and elevation	Neutral	<p>The proposal includes two non-illuminated signs to be fixed to the railings on either side of the access bridge to No. 43 with backlit lettering attached to the surface of each. The brass finish signs are to have the Birkbeck symbol of an owl cut out from the surface. The signs have been sized to match the size of the ground floor openings to maintain a sense of proportion when viewed across the scale of the terrace. They are to be accompanied by wall-mounted, brass-finish plaques across the front elevation positioned between the grooves of one band of the rusticated stucco. In addition, a brass-finish plaque is to be mounted onto a paving slab on the bridge to indicate the entrance. To complete, the scheme seeks two perpendicular brass-finish sign to project from the stucco of the front elevation.</p> <p>All of the signage is of high quality and none detracts from the historic or architectural interest of the building or wider terrace, individually appropriate to the appearance of the listed building. Considered in combination, the overall amount of signage must be described as having neither harm to, nor an enhancement of, significance.</p>

Area affected	Element of proposals	Impact	Commentary
Interiors - Throughout			
Ground to fourth floors	Floor strengthening	Benefit	A comprehensive programme of floor strengthening is proposed throughout the building. Investigative works indicate that the historic floors survive with steel and timber strengthening at ground floor level (possibly inserted during the intensive alterations in the 1960s and 70s). Steel joists are to be laid into the floor between existing timber joists, minimizing impact to historic fabric and maintaining the original structure.
All floor levels	Removal of floor finishes	Neutral	Floor finishes are generally low-quality and do not appear historic. Where historic floor finishes are encountered against expectations, further advice would be sought if and as required by Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Act.
All lightwells	Refurbishment of lightwells	Benefit	The proposal includes the cleaning and refurbishment of all of the lightwells across the terrace.
All floor levels	New light fittings	Benefit	The proposals include the replacement of all modern light fittings. Their replacements would be in keeping with the heritage asset and complement existing features such as the cornicing and ceiling roses.
Basement			
No.40–47 inclusive	Removal of twentieth-century cupboards, partitions and toilets	Neutral	Removal of twentieth-century partitions, cupboards and toilets would have no impact to the significance of the building.
Nos.42, 43 and 45	Rearrangement of partition walls	Neutral	A rearrangement of the partitions within the back rooms of these buildings would have no impact on the significance of these spaces which are already sub-divided or have a compromised layout.
All lightwells	Refurbishment of lightwells	Benefit	The proposal includes the cleaning and refurbishment of all of the lightwells across the terrace.
Existing rear extension	Removal of lecture theatre fittings and rearrangement of layout	Neutral	Removal of twentieth-century fittings and an alternative arrangement of partitions would have no impact to historic significance in this mid-twentieth century extension.
Street-side rooms	Change of use of the street side rooms into classrooms	Neutral	<p>The change of use of these rooms into classrooms will have no impact on their historic significance.</p> <p>In the previous application it was proposed to use these rooms as offices, which would have necessitated CCTV along the façades for security reasons. In response to conservation officer advice from LB Camden, the internal layout has been reorganised so that these rooms will be classrooms with a lesser security risk, omitting the need for CCTV.</p>

Area affected	Element of proposals	Impact	Commentary
Ground Floor			
Nos. 43-44	Infilling of the door closest to the street between Nos. 43 and 44	Neutral	Repairing one of the openings in the party wall is a minor heritage benefit if negligible in scale.
No. 43	Removal of twentieth-century cupboards	Neutral	The removal of twentieth-century cupboards would have no impact to the significance of the building.
Existing rear extension	Rearrangement of layout	Neutral	Removal of twentieth-century fittings and a re-arrangement of partitions would have no impact to historic significance in this mid-twentieth century extension.
Nos. 39-42 and 44-47	Repairs and reinstatement of damaged or missing cornices	Benefit	Repairs and reinstatement of missing sections of cornicing constitutes a significant heritage benefit. By reinstating this detailing to match the existing surviving cornicing the quality of the interior spaces will be enhanced and the architectural interest of the interiors will be better revealed, even where they have undergone change. In all cases, cornicing survives sufficiently to be able to introduce historically accurate facsimile.
Nos. 39, 40 and 47	Repairs to ceilings	Benefit	Repairs to damaged or obscured ceilings will constitute a heritage benefit
Nos. 39, 40, 44, 45, 46 and 47	New or enlarged risers	Harm	With a reduced amount of cooling required, the proposed risers will be smaller in size than they were in the previous planning application. This reduction in size will lessen their impact on the historic fabric. However, in certain cases, particularly in No. 47, intervention will be required.
No. 39	Swing door reversed between corridor and room G.0.2	Neutral	Reversing the swing on this door will have no impact on the historical significance of the building.
No. 43	Bench recessed into decorative timber panel lining	Neutral	This will replace twentieth century cupboards and will therefore have no impact on the historical significance of the building.
No. 43	New services boxing with access hatch built into decorative lining	Neutral	The ground floor plan of No. 43 has already been lost, including the interior features, such as the cornices that survive in other rooms on the ground floor. This will therefore have no impact on the historical significance of the building.
First Floor			

Area affected	Element of proposals	Impact	Commentary
Nos.41–46 inclusive	Removal of twentieth-century partitions	Benefit	<p>The removal of lightweight partitions will not affect historic fabric. Where rooms have been subdivided to form lateral corridors or smaller spaces, the removal of the partition's walls will allow the geometry and plan form of the original rooms to be appreciated, even where lateral connections remain. In some cases, historic cornices survive, truncated by the corridor partitions. Allowing the full, original plan of the rooms at first floor level to be appreciated will be a substantial heritage benefit.</p> <p>The removal of the walls and consequent removal of the dark corridors would also substantially improve the quality of the remaining spaces, allowing natural light and a sense of orientation for those moving through the terrace. This would allow the individual houses of the terraces to be better appreciated, removing the warrenlike environment that currently exists. This improvement to the feel and appreciation of the remaining spaces is also a heritage benefit.</p>
Nos. 41 & 42	New lateral connection	Neutral	Whilst making an opening between these two properties would result in some loss of historic fabric this is a relatively small intervention, outweighed by the significant benefit of removal of the corridor and reinstatement the floor plan of the front rooms of both properties. The new opening would allow for the removal of the existing partitions through the front rooms (above). Realignment of the corridor and new openings would also assist with navigation within the terrace, aligning the lateral movement routes through these two properties with lateral movement routes in the other buildings.
No.43	Demolition of staircase and circulation core	Neutral	The existing arrangement detracts from the historic significance of the No. 43. Removal of mid twentieth-century fabric of no historic or architectural interest would have no impact to the historic significance of the listed building.
Existing rear extension	Rearrangement of layout	Neutral	Removal of twentieth-century fittings and a re-arrangement of partitions would have no impact to historic significance in this mid-twentieth century extension.
Nos. 39-40, 45-47	Repairs and reinstatement of damaged or missing cornices	Benefit	See reinstatement of cornices at Ground Floor level.
Nos. 39–46	Railings to be repaired and redecorated where damaged	Benefit	Existing paint is to be stripped, ironwork is to be treated where corroded and repainted.
Nos. 39-46	Relaying of asphalt	Benefit	Asphalt to be re-laid to provide fall away from building. Upstand to asphalt to be built up at the junction of the balcony and the wall with new flashing into the brickwork

Area affected	Element of proposals	Impact	Commentary
Nos. 39 and 40	New doors inserted in lateral corridor	Neutral	Both of these doors will be inserted in locations that reflect the plan form of the original houses.
No. 41	New door between corridor and front room	Neutral	There is currently a partition wall in this location that will be removed as part of the creation of a new lateral connection between Nos. 41 and 42 (above). This will therefore have no impact to the historic significance of the house.
No. 42	Insertion of door at current opening between corridor and front room	Neutral	There is currently an opening between the two parallel corridors in No. 42. The removal of the street-side opening and the creation of a lateral connection between Nos. 41 and 42 (above) will enlarge the front room. The insertion of a door in this location will have no impact to the historic significance of the house.
Nos. 39, 40, 41, 45, 46 and 47	New or enlarged risers	Harm	See similar works at Ground Floor level.
Second Floor			
No.43	Demolition of staircase and circulation core	Neutral	The existing arrangement detracts from the historic significance of the No. 43. Removal of mid twentieth-century fabric of no historic or architectural interest would have no impact to the historic significance of the listed building.
Nos.41, 42, 43 and 45	Removal of twentieth-century partitions	Benefit	The removal of lightweight partitions will not affect historic fabric. Where rooms have been subdivided to form lateral corridors or smaller spaces, the removal of the partition walls will allow the geometry and plan form of the original rooms to be appreciated, even where lateral connections remain. In some cases, historic cornices survive, truncated by the corridor partitions. Allowing the full, original plan of the rooms at first floor level to be appreciated will be a substantial heritage benefit.
Nos. 44 & 45	Removal of toilets from half-landings	Benefit	The conversion of the original half-landings to toilets in the early decades of the twentieth century reflects changing domestic conditions and the subdivision of the buildings into flats. Removal of these to open up the landings is a positive heritage benefit returning natural light to the principal staircases of these houses.
Nos. 46 & 47	Removal of interconnecting steps	Neutral	No loss of historic fabric and no impact to significance.
Nos. 39, 40, 42, 45, 46, 47	Repairs to cornices	Benefit	See reinstatement of cornices at Ground Floor level.
Nos. 41 & 42	New lateral connection and stopping up of the existing	Benefit	See similar works at First Floor Level.

Area affected	Element of proposals	Impact	Commentary
Nos. 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46 and 47	New or enlarged risers	Harm	See similar works at Ground Floor level.
No. 47	Close existing opening between front and back rooms	Benefit	The closing up of this opening will allow the geometry and plan form of the original rooms to be better appreciated.
Third Floor			
Nos. 39–46 inclusive	Removal of twentieth-century partitions, cupboards and toilets	Benefit	<p>The removal of lightweight partitions will not affect historic fabric. Where rooms have been subdivided to form lateral corridors or smaller spaces, the removal of the partition walls will allow the geometry and plan form of the original rooms to be appreciated, even where lateral connections remain. In some cases, historic cornices survive, truncated by the corridor partitions. Allowing the full, original plan of the rooms at first floor level to be appreciated will be a substantial heritage benefit.</p> <p>The removal of under stairs cupboards in No. 42 will have no impact to the historic significance of the space where the staircase was removed in the 1960s.</p>
No. 43	Insertion of toilets and rearrangement of partitions	Neutral	The relocation of toilets to this central house, where minimal original fabric survives, would have no harm to historic fabric. The loss
Nos. 39–41 and 45–47	Removal of toilets from half-landings	Benefit	<p>The conversion of the original half-landings to toilets in the early decades of the twentieth century reflects changing domestic conditions and the subdivision of the buildings into flats. Removal of these to open up the landings is a positive heritage benefit returning natural light to the principal staircases of these houses.</p> <p>The exception is at No.40 where the connection to the existing rear extension will prevent the reintroduction of natural light.</p>
Nos. 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46 and 47	New or enlarged risers	Harm	See similar works at Ground Floor level.
No. 45	Repairs to cornices	Benefit	See reinstatement of cornices at Ground Floor level.
Fourth Floor			
Nos. 43, 45 and 46	Removal of toilets and cupboards	Neutral	There is no harm to historic significance as a result of these changes.
No. 43	Insertion of partition wall	Neutral	The insertion of a partition into the floorplan of this house would have no impact to historic fabric.
No. 39	Insertion of services cupboard	Neutral	The insertion of a services cupboard would have no impact to historic fabric.
No. 47	Enlarged riser	Harm	See similar works at Ground Floor level.

4.4 Risers

Following consultation with the London Borough of Camden the risers proposed in this revised application are smaller in scale. Following reconsideration, it has been decided that a reduced amount of cooling is required. This reduction in size will lessen their impact on the historic fabric.

Assessments by the mechanical engineering team (Hydrock) have demonstrated that in today's climate and with the intended uses, overheating is likely in many parts of the terrace. For the classrooms and offices at the front of the building, the historic significance of the façade, and the interiors of many of the rooms, has disbarred the insertion of air circulation risers. To reduce the visual impact of the services, all major horizontal distribution from the central service system is proposed at basement and ground floors. Above the ground floor, each building shall be served via a vertical riser within the rear room of each building: a less invasive alternative than running external services up the front facades of the building from the plant in the pavement vaults, which would have been detrimental to the architectural significance of this highly significant frontage. On each floor, the services shall distribute within the floor void, or using existing ductwork, to serve the rooms at the front of the building. This will be carried out in such a way that the modifications required to existing floor joists are minimised.

Whilst this approach results in a riser in each rear room above ground floor level, in this revised application services have been distributed to be smaller in size, minimising their impact. They will also only be placed (where possible) in locations where there already are existing risers.

5.0 Conclusion

Birkbeck University seeks to adapt its existing mid-terrace property of Nos. 39–47 Gordon Square to rationalise different parts of the university into one building, as well as enhance the spaces within it.

Additional works, such as refurbishing the flagstones, the railings and the lightwells, as well as repairing damaged or missing cornices and removing twentieth century partitions, are proposed to undo some of the damage to the historic significance, and the internal environment of the interior spaces of the listed building. Lateral connections already exist and are necessary for the proper function and accessibility of the individual buildings as a single facility. This includes the re-alignment of lateral connections and the removal of many later partitions. The ‘walls’ of the lateral corridors are instead to be formed by temporary pods or glass screens allowing the volumes of the original spaces to be read with original (and repaired) cornices visible. This would also allow lateral movement through the buildings to be lit by natural light and improve both wayfinding and the look and feel of being within the historic buildings, an experience that is much diminished at present in the warrenlike corridors of the upper floors.

Some harm will arise to the significance of the buildings, primarily through alterations and openings in historic fabric, such as the enlargement and creation of new air risers, cables and pipework. However, following the conservation officer’s comments on the previous application, these have been significantly reduced in size. Alongside this, the former plans to subdivide many of the rooms on the second and third floor levels, has been removed from the proposals, to maintain the volume and legibility of these originally proportioned rooms.

The proposals are accompanied by a comprehensive suite of historically appropriate maintenance and repairs on a wide and detailed scale. Many of these works, which seek to arrest decay and contribute to the longevity of the terrace, have the added benefit of improving the appearance of the listed buildings and by extension, the setting of those in the near vicinity. There are no harmful effects and some substantial benefits to the setting of the buildings, any nearby designated heritage asset, the experience of being within Gordon Square or any other part of the conservation area.

In conclusion, the design choices of the scheme have been heritage-led, have responded to officer advice and both preserve and enhance the architectural significance of the listed buildings as well as helping the terrace to continue to contribute to the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area in accordance with Policy D2 of the LB Camden’s Local Plan (2017).

6.0 Sources

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Appendix A: Listings

09/07/2020 NUMBERS 36 AND 46 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS AND WALL ON ENDSLEIGH PLACE RETURN SCREEN WALL LINKING NU...



Historic England



NUMBERS 36 AND 46 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS AND WALL ON ENDSLEIGH PLACE RETURN SCREEN WALL LINKING NUMBER 36 TAVISTOCK SQAURE

Overview

Heritage Category:

Listed Building

Grade:

II

List Entry Number:

1113031

Date first listed:

28-Mar-1969

Statutory Address:

NUMBERS 36 AND 46 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS AND WALL ON ENDSLEIGH PLACE
RETURN, 36 TO 46, GORDON SQUARE

Statutory Address:

SCREEN WALL LINKING NUMBER 36, GORDON SQUARE

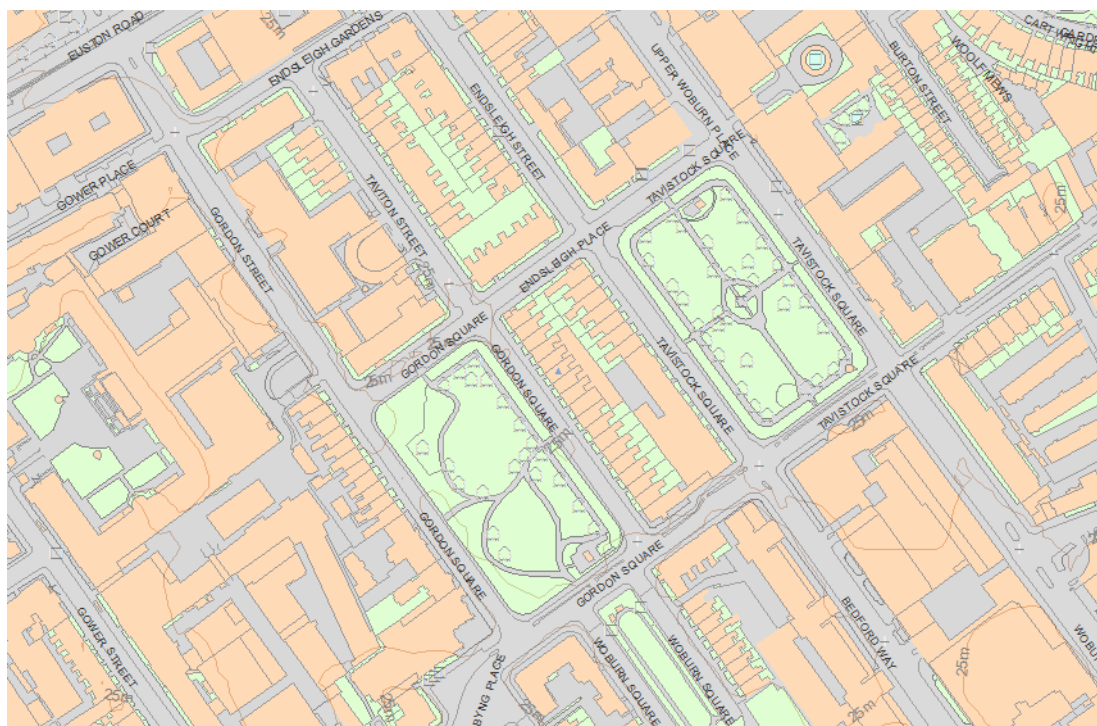
Statutory Address:

TAVISTOCK SQAURE, 29, ENDSLEIGH PLACE

09/07/2020

NUMBERS 36 AND 46 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS AND WALL ON ENDSLEIGH PLACE RETURN SCREEN WALL LINKING NU...

Map



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This copy shows the entry on 09-Jul-2020 at 07:18:56.

Location

Statutory Address:

NUMBERS 36 AND 46 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS AND WALL ON ENDSLEIGH PLACE
RETURN, 36 TO 46, GORDON SQUARE

Statutory Address:

SCREEN WALL LINKING NUMBER 36, GORDON SQUARE

Statutory Address:

TAVISTOCK SQUARE, 29, ENDSLEIGH PLACE

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113031>

2/4

09/07/2020 NUMBERS 36 AND 46 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS AND WALL ON ENDSLEIGH PLACE RETURN SCREEN WALL LINKING NU...

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:
Greater London Authority

District:
Camden (London Borough)

National Grid Reference:
TQ 29798 82303

Details

CAMDEN

TQ2982SE ENDSLEIGH PLACE 798-1/94/594 Screen wall linking No.36 Gordon 28/03/69 Square & No.29 Tavistock Square

GV II

See under: Nos.36-46 and attached railings and wall on Endsleigh Place return GORDON SQUARE.

CAMDEN

TQ2982SE GORDON SQUARE 798-1/94/594 (East side) 28/03/69 Nos.36-46 (Consecutive) and attached railings and wall on Endsleigh Place return

GV II

Includes: Screen wall linking No.36 Gordon Square & No.29 Tavistock Square ENDSLEIGH PLACE. Terrace of 11 houses. c1825. Built by Thomas Cubitt. Yellow stock brick with rusticated stucco ground floors (No.46 plain). Balanced composition of 4 storeys and basements. 3 windows each. Entrance to No.36 on return to Endsleigh Place. Square-headed, recessed doorways with fanlights and panelled doors. Nos 36, 38, 43 and 45 slightly projecting with 4 Corinthian pilasters through 1st and 2nd floor carrying entablature, continuing across the rest of the terrace, at 3rd floor level. Continuous cast-iron balconies to 1st floor casements, No.46 with cornices. 2nd and 3rd floor, architraved sashes. 3rd floor with pilaster strips above the pilasters. Cornice and blocking course. Return of No.36, with balustraded entrance porch, continues the entablature and pilaster treatment and forms a balanced composition, linked by a low screen wall (along Endsleigh Place), with No.29 Tavistock Square (qv). INTERIORS: not inspected. HISTORICAL NOTE: No.46 was the residence of John Maynard Keynes, economist (GLC plaque). (Survey of London: Vol. XXI, Tottenham Court Road and Neighbourhood, St Pancras III: London: -1949: 92).

Listing NGR: TQ2979582311

Legacy

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Legacy System number:
477358

Legacy System:
LBS

09/07/2020 NUMBERS 36 AND 46 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS AND WALL ON ENDSLEIGH PLACE RETURN SCREEN WALL LINKING NU...

Sources

Books and journals

'Survey of London' in Survey of London - Tottenham Court Road and Neighbourhood St Pancras Part 3: Volume 21, (1949), 92

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

End of official listing

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09/07/2020

NUMBERS 47 TO 53 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS TO AREAS AND WALL TO NUMBER 45 TAVISTOCK SQUARE SCREEN WAL...



Historic England



NUMBERS 47 TO 53 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS TO AREAS AND WALL TO NUMBER 45 TAVISTOCK SQUARE SCREEN WALL LINKING NUMBER 53 GORDON SQUARE AND NUMBER 45 TAVISTOCK SQUARE

Overview

Heritage Category:

Listed Building

Grade:

II

List Entry Number:

1113034

Date first listed:

03-Apr-1969

Statutory Address:

NUMBERS 47 TO 53 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS TO AREAS AND WALL TO NUMBER 45 TAVISTOCK SQUARE, 47 TO 53, GORDON SQUARE

Statutory Address:

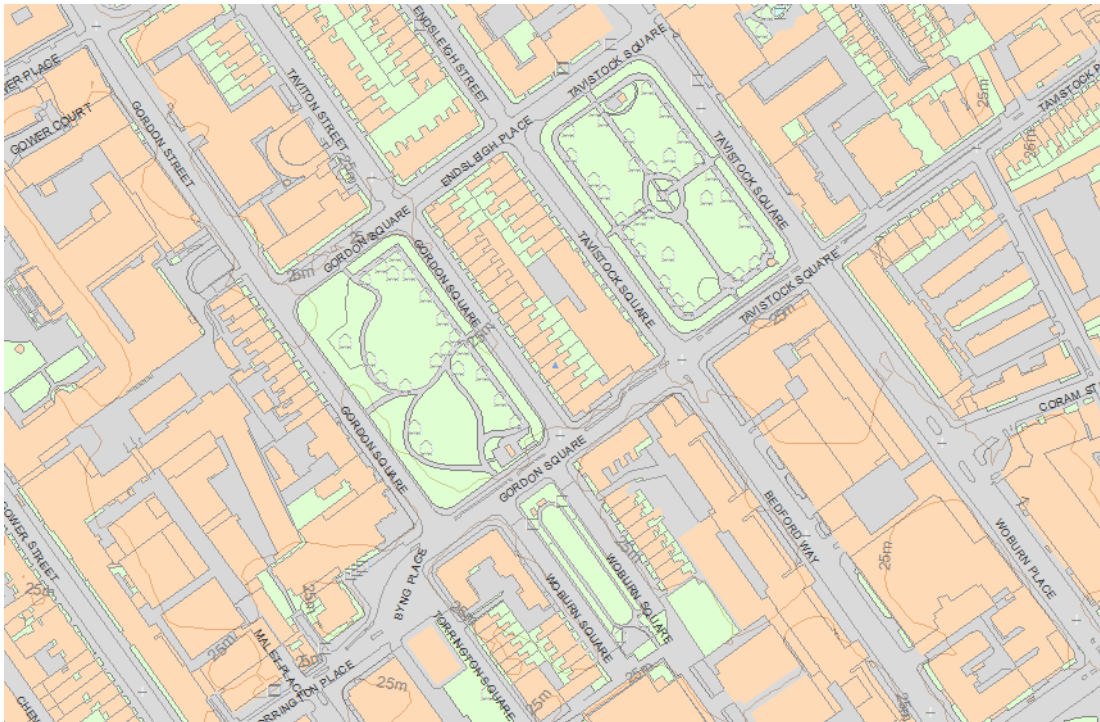
SCREEN WALL LINKING NUMBER 53 GORDON SQUARE AND NUMBER 45 TAVISTOCK SQUARE, TAVISTOCK SQUARE

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113034>

1/4

09/07/2020 NUMBERS 47 TO 53 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS TO AREAS AND WALL TO NUMBER 45 TAVISTOCK SQUARE SCREEN WAL...

Map



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Location

Statutory Address:

NUMBERS 47 TO 53 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS TO AREAS AND WALL TO NUMBER 45 TAVISTOCK SQUARE, 47 TO 53, GORDON SQUARE

Statutory Address:

SCREEN WALL LINKING NUMBER 53 GORDON SQUARE AND NUMBER 45 TAVISTOCK SQUARE, TAVISTOCK SQUARE

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113034>

2/4

09/07/2020 NUMBERS 47 TO 53 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS TO AREAS AND WALL TO NUMBER 45 TAVISTOCK SQUARE SCREEN WAL...

County:

Greater London Authority

District:

Camden (London Borough)

National Grid Reference:

TQ 29837 82251

Details

CAMDEN

TQ2982SE GORDON SQUARE 798-1/94/595 (East side) 03/04/69 Nos.47-53 (Consecutive) and attached railings to areas and wall to No.45 Tavistock Square

GV II

Includes: Screen wall linking No.53 Gordon Square & No.45 Tavistock Square TAVISTOCK SQUARE. Terrace of 7 houses. Mid C19. Yellow stock brick with alternating rusticated and plain stucco ground floors. Rusticated stucco quoins. EXTERIOR: 5 storeys and basements. 3 windows each and 3-window right hand return (1 blind) forming entrance to No.53. Symmetrical composition in Italianate style with projecting central (No.50) and end bays (Nos 47 & 53). Nos 47, 52 & 53 with Doric prostyle porticoes with balustraded parapets. Square-headed, recessed doorways with fanlights and panelled doors. Architraved 1st floor sash windows, Nos 47, 50 & 53 with pediments and continuous balustraded balconies on large brackets. Nos 48, 49, 51 & 52 with cornices and continuous cast-iron balconies. Remaining windows architraved sashes, the 2nd floors of Nos 47, 50 & 53 with cornices. Moulded stucco 4th floor sill band. Projecting, bracketed stucco cornice. Slab chimney above No.53 with similar, scaled down cornice. Attached cast-iron railings with pineapple and foliated finials to areas. INTERIORS: retain good features and moulded ceilings. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached wall from return of No.53 to No.45 Tavistock Square (qv) forming a balanced composition; stucco, divided into 7 bays by pilasters. HISTORICAL NOTE: No.51 was the home of Lytton Strachey, critic and biographer (GLC plaque).

CAMDEN

TQ2982SE TAVISTOCK SQUARE 798-1/94/595 Screen wall linking No.53 Gordon 03/04/69 Square & No.45 Tavistock Square

GV II

See under: Nos.47-53 and attached railings to areas and wall to No.45 Tavistock Square GORDON SQUARE.

Listing NGR: TQ2983782251

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number:

477361

Legacy System:

09/07/2020 NUMBERS 47 TO 53 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS TO AREAS AND WALL TO NUMBER 45 TAVISTOCK SQUARE SCREEN WAL...

LBS

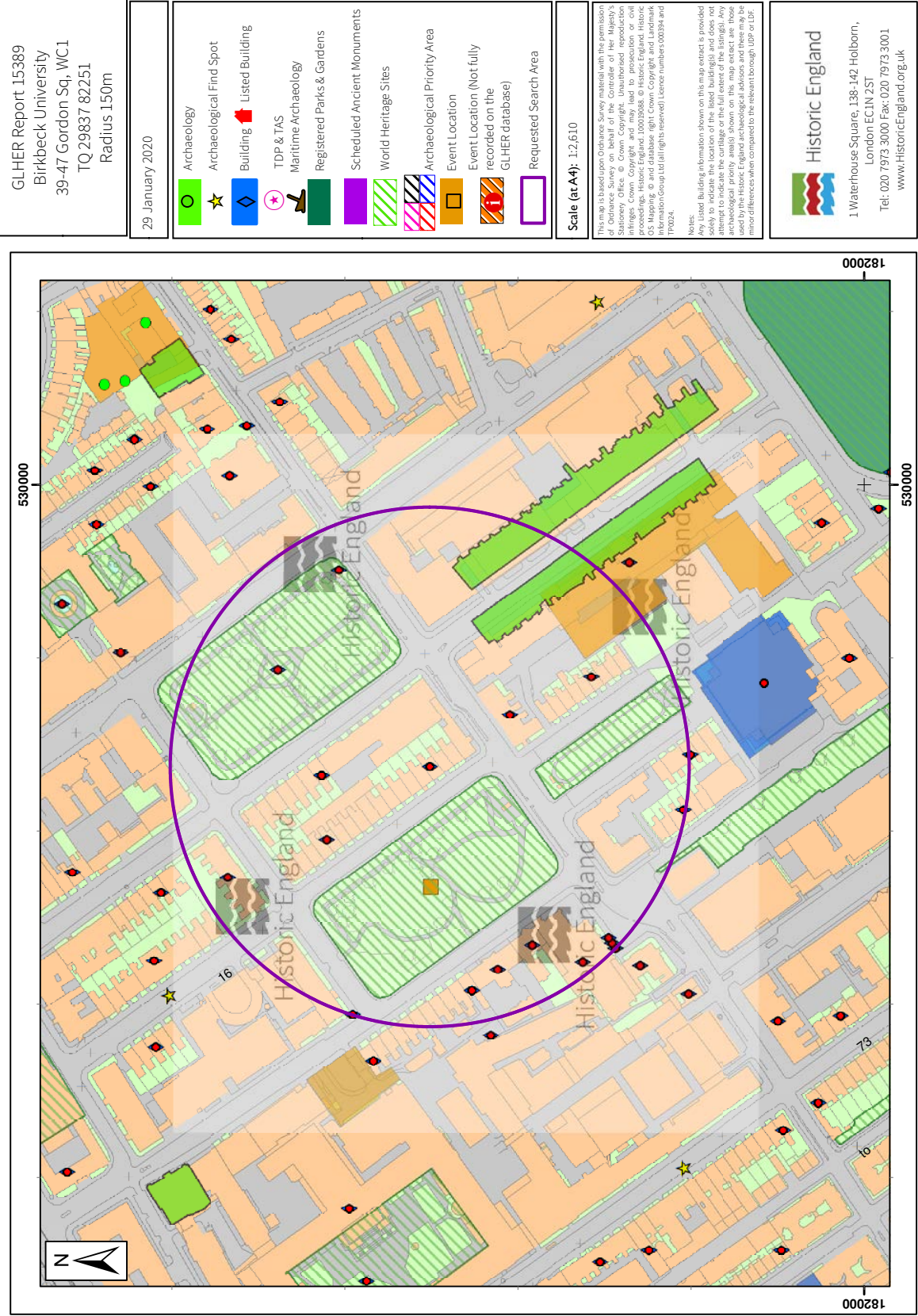
Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

End of official listing

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Appendix B: Historic Environment Record



Appendix C: Twentieth-Century Plans (from Donald Insall Feasibility Report, 2019)

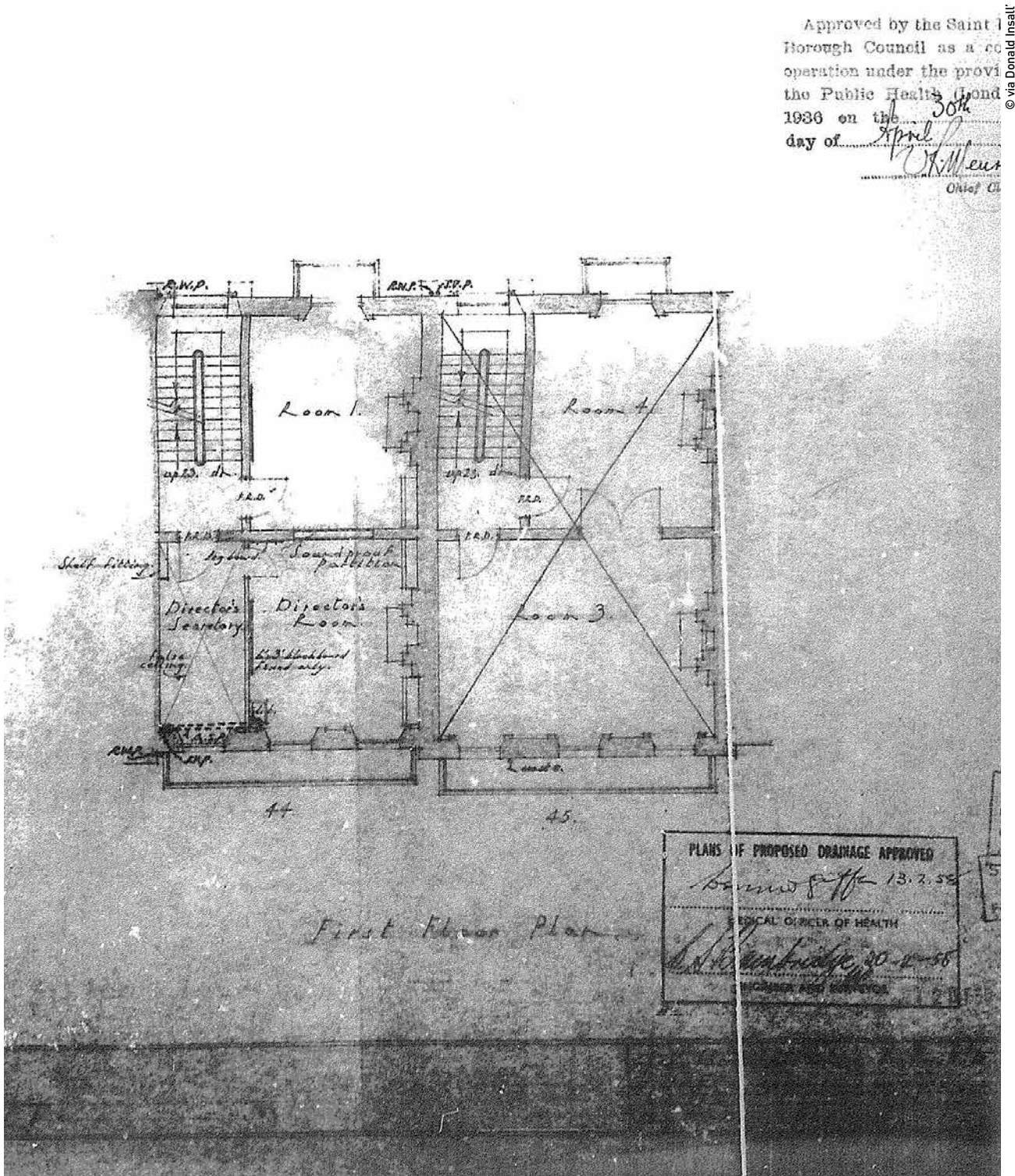


Fig. 24: Nos. 44 and 45 Gordon Square, first floor, 1957, Camden Archives

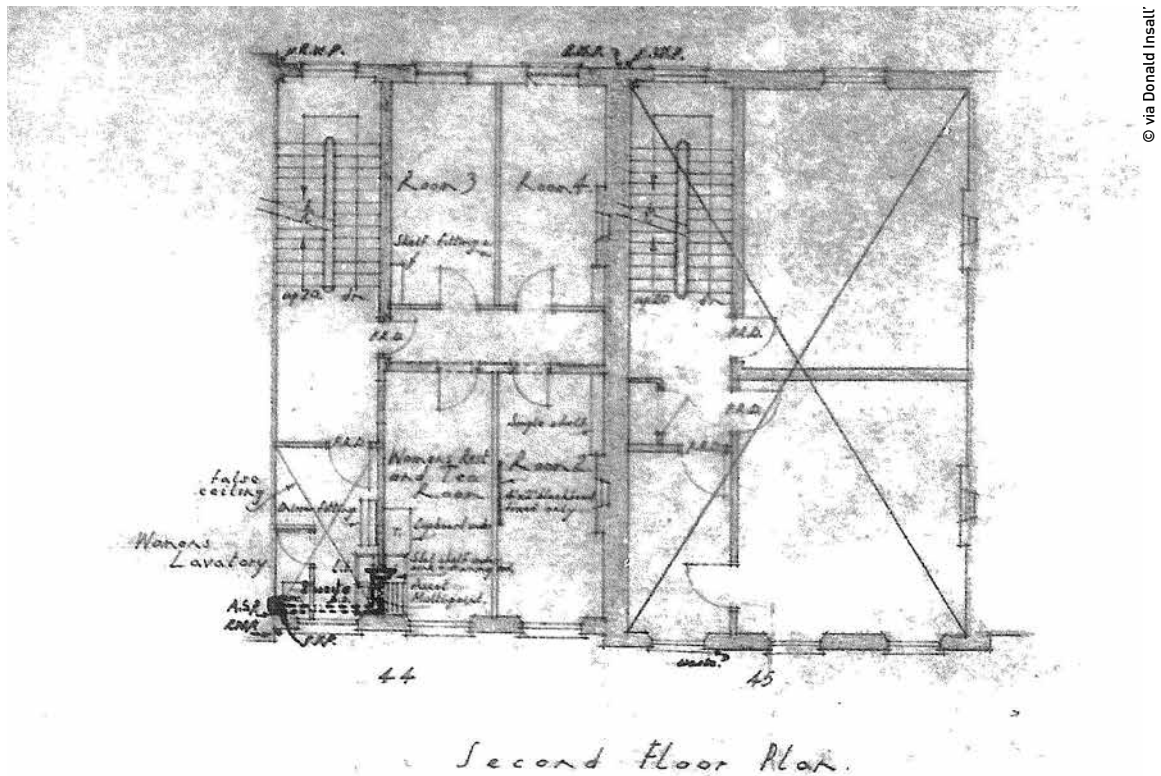


Fig. 25: Nos. 44 and 45 Gordon Square, second floor, 1957, Camden Archives

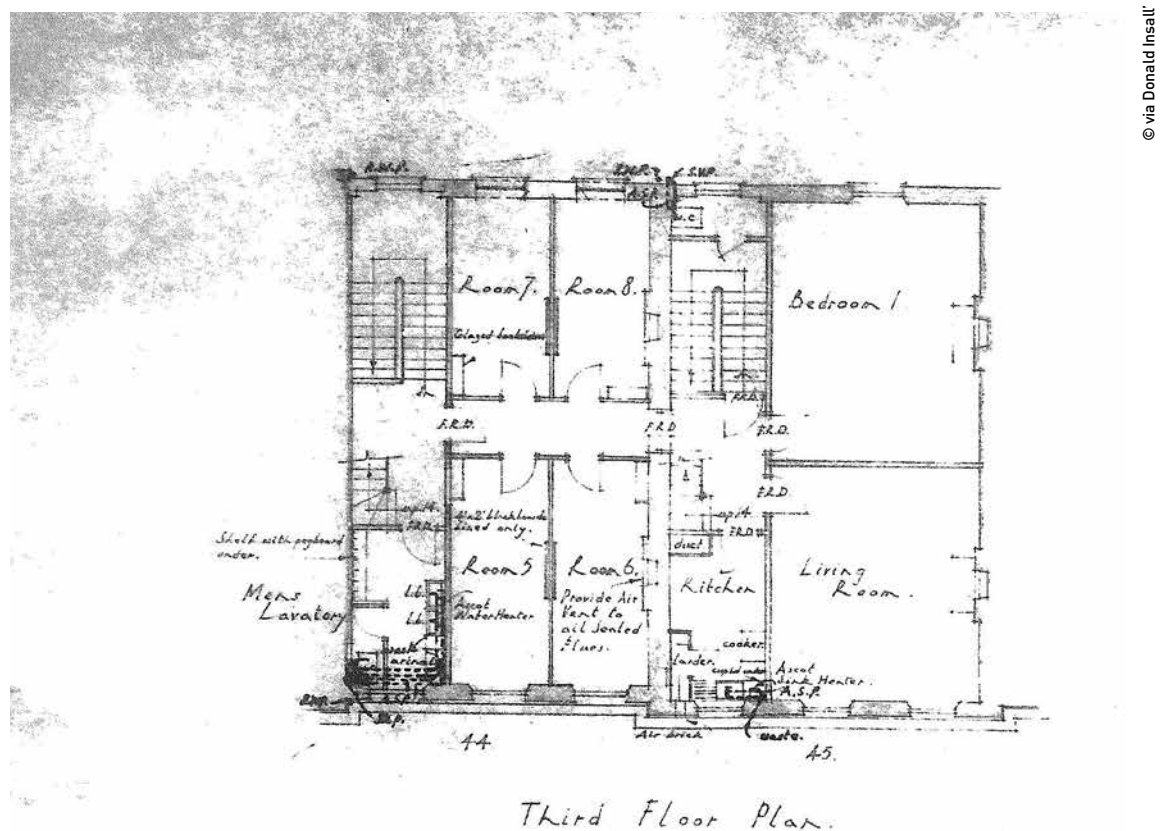
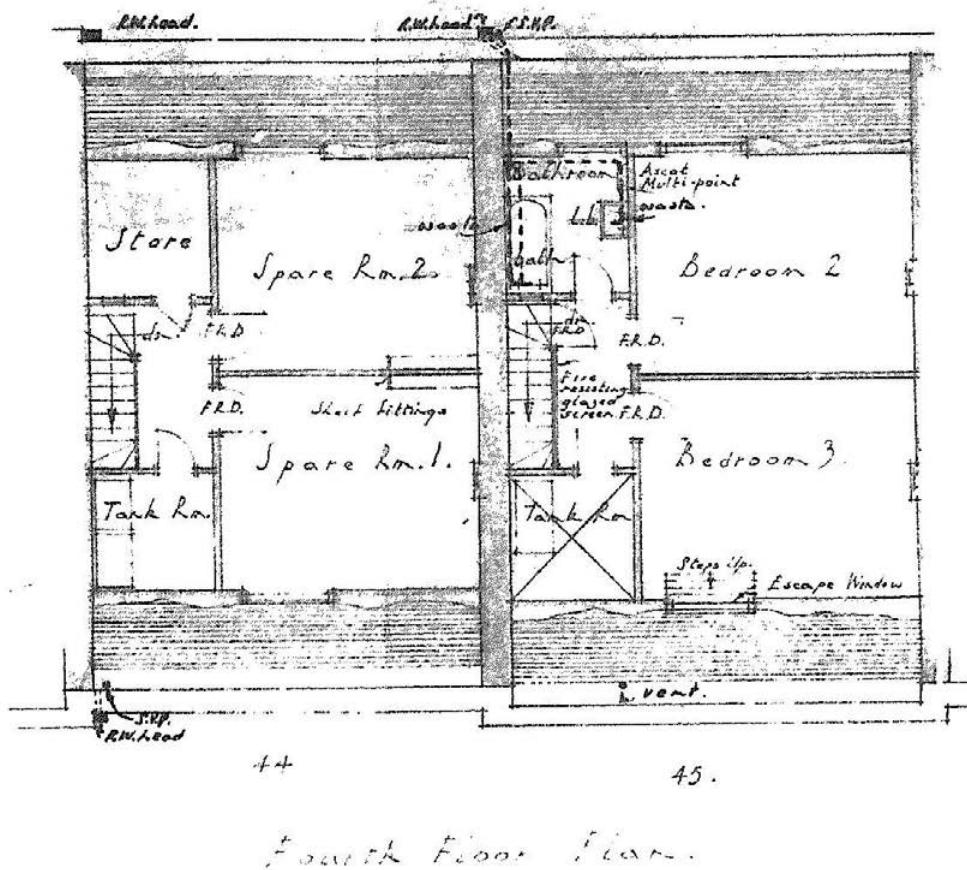
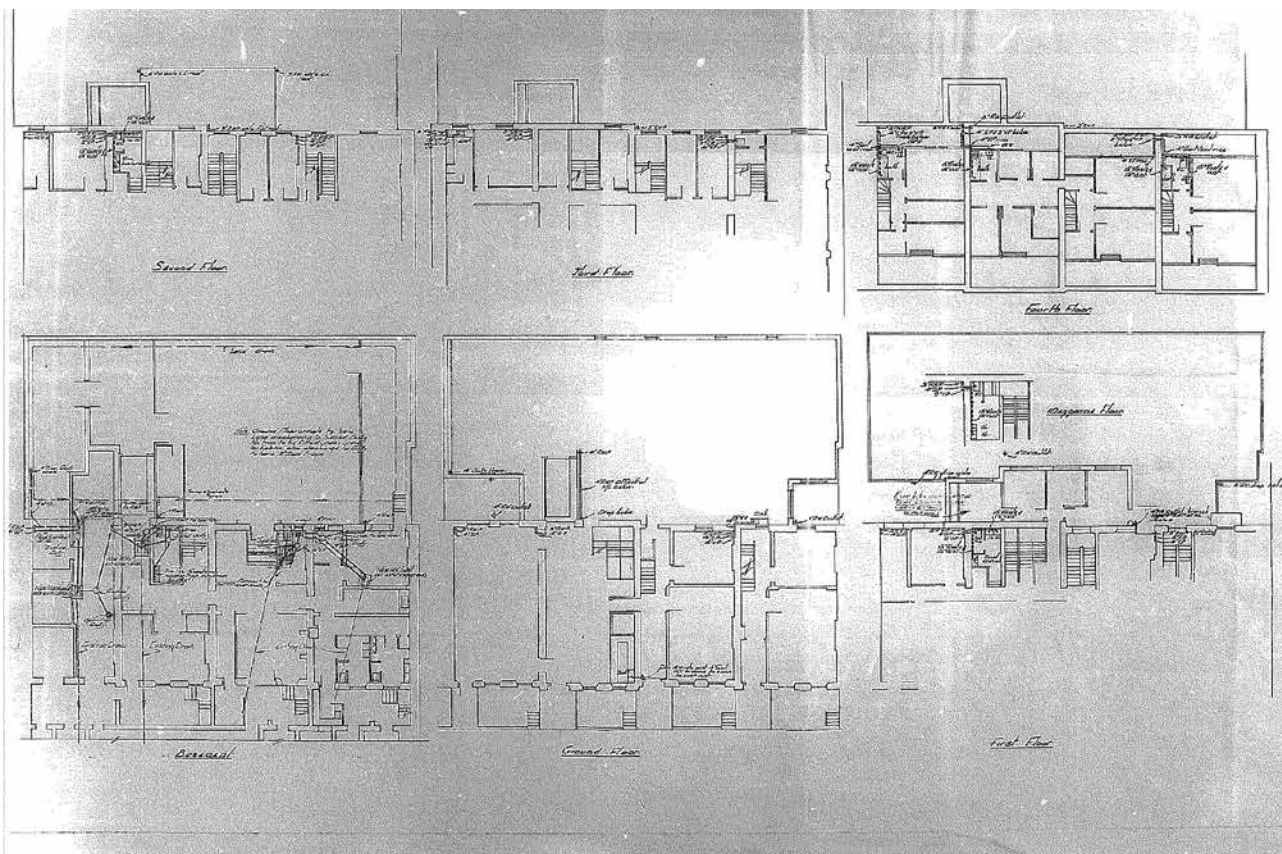


Fig. 26: Nos. 44 and 45 Gordon Square, third floor, 1957, Camden Archives



© via Donald Insall

Fig. 27: Nos. 44 and 45 Gordon Square, fourth floor, 1957, Camden Archives



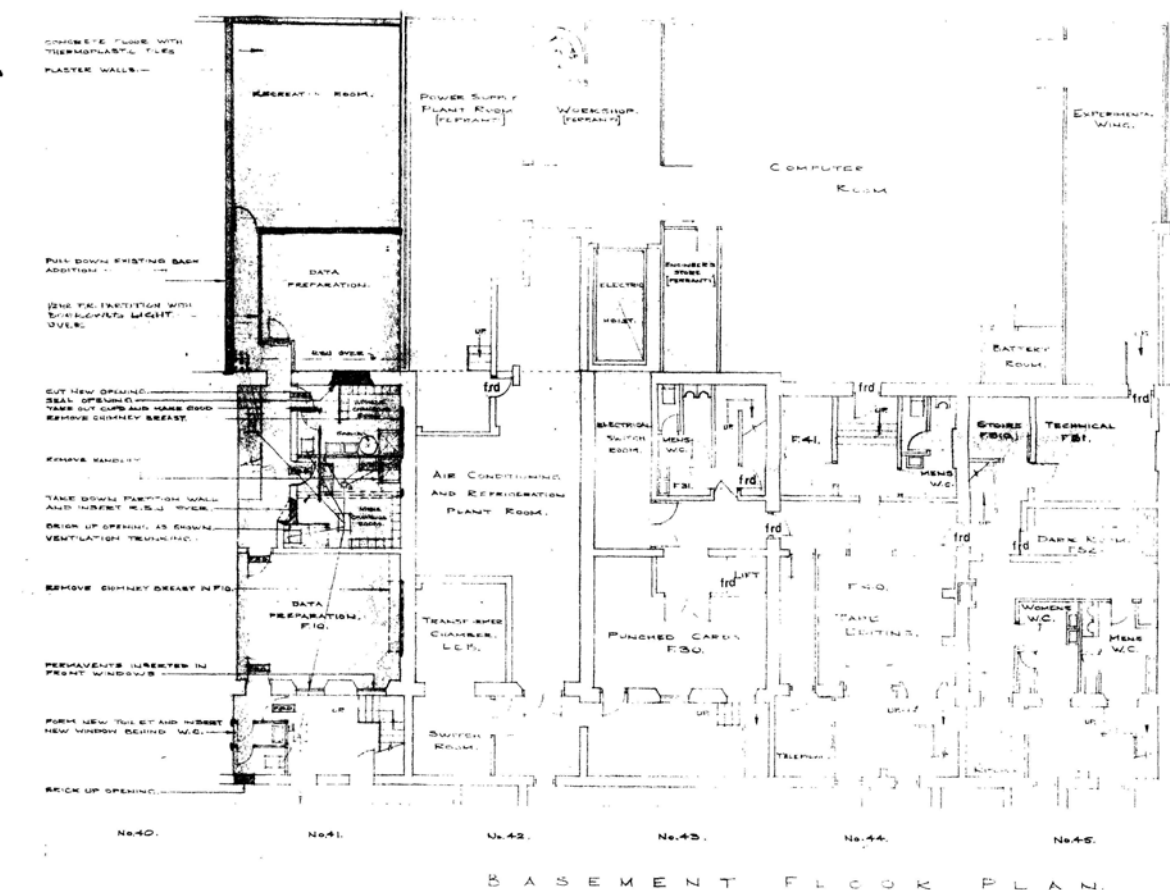
© via Donald Insall

Fig. 28: Nos. 42-45 Gordon Square, basement to fourth floor, 1962, Camden Archives



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Fig. 29: 1965 Nos. 42-46 (Collage 107958)



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Fig. 30: No. 41 Gordon Square, basement floor, 1964, Camden Archives

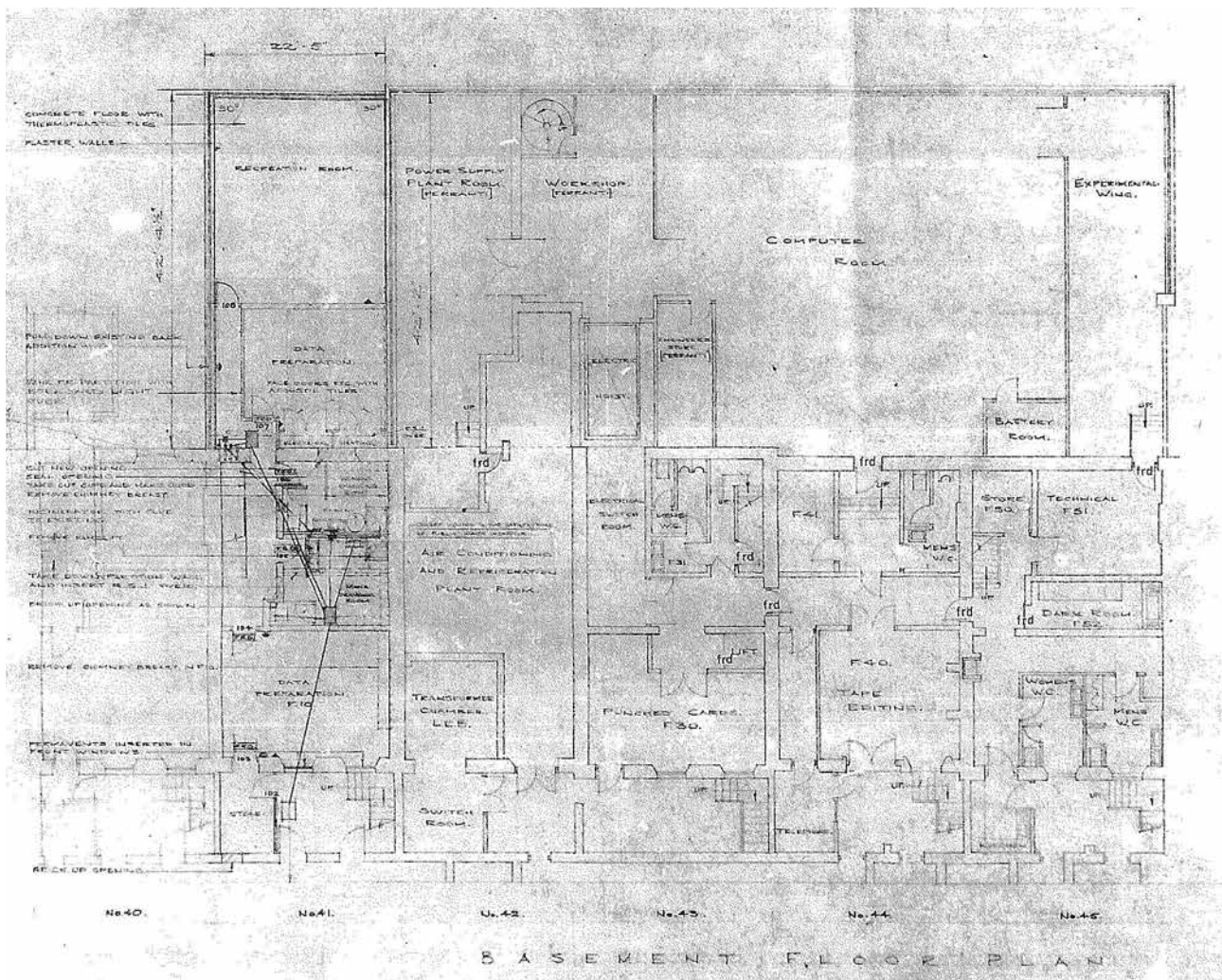
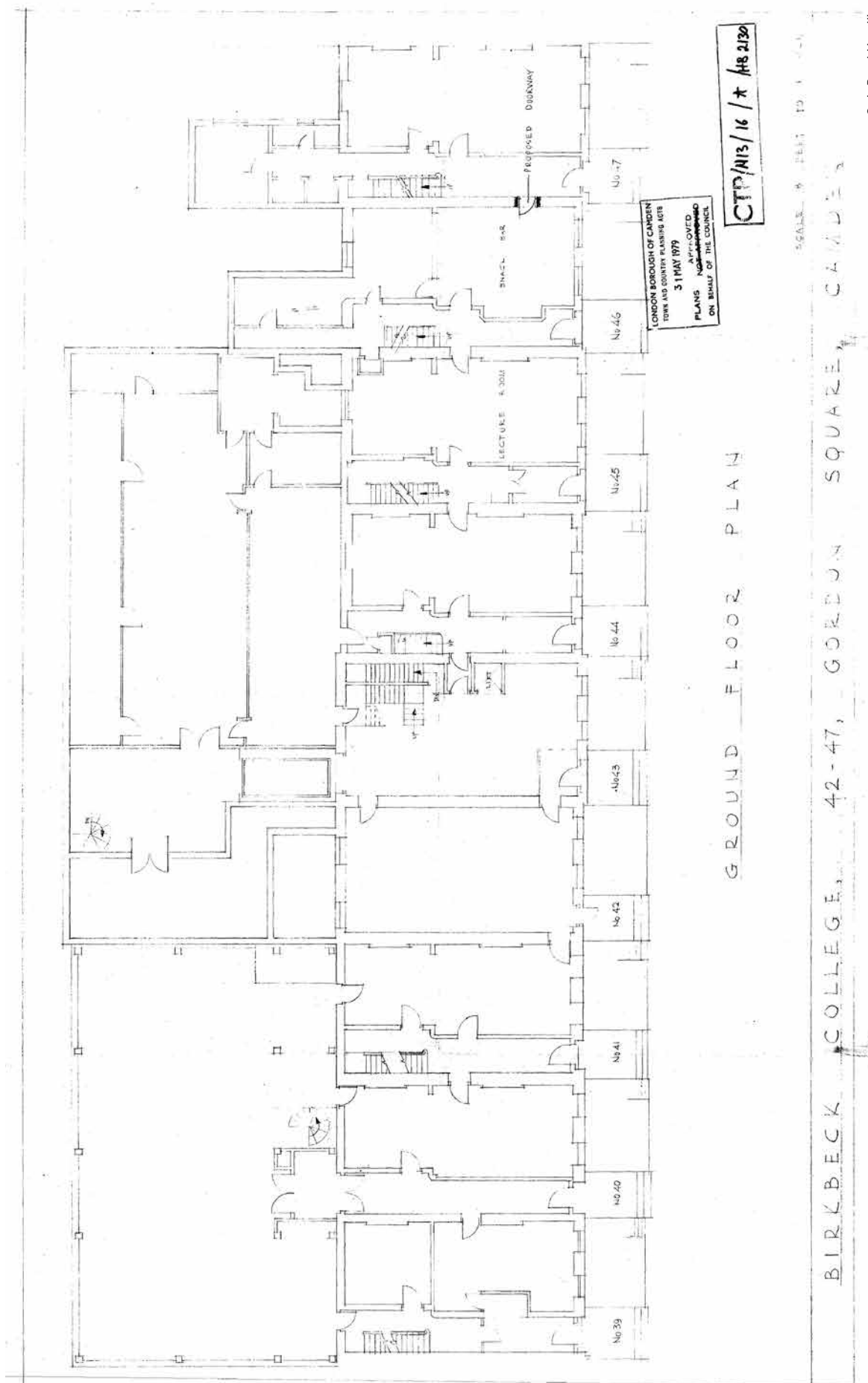
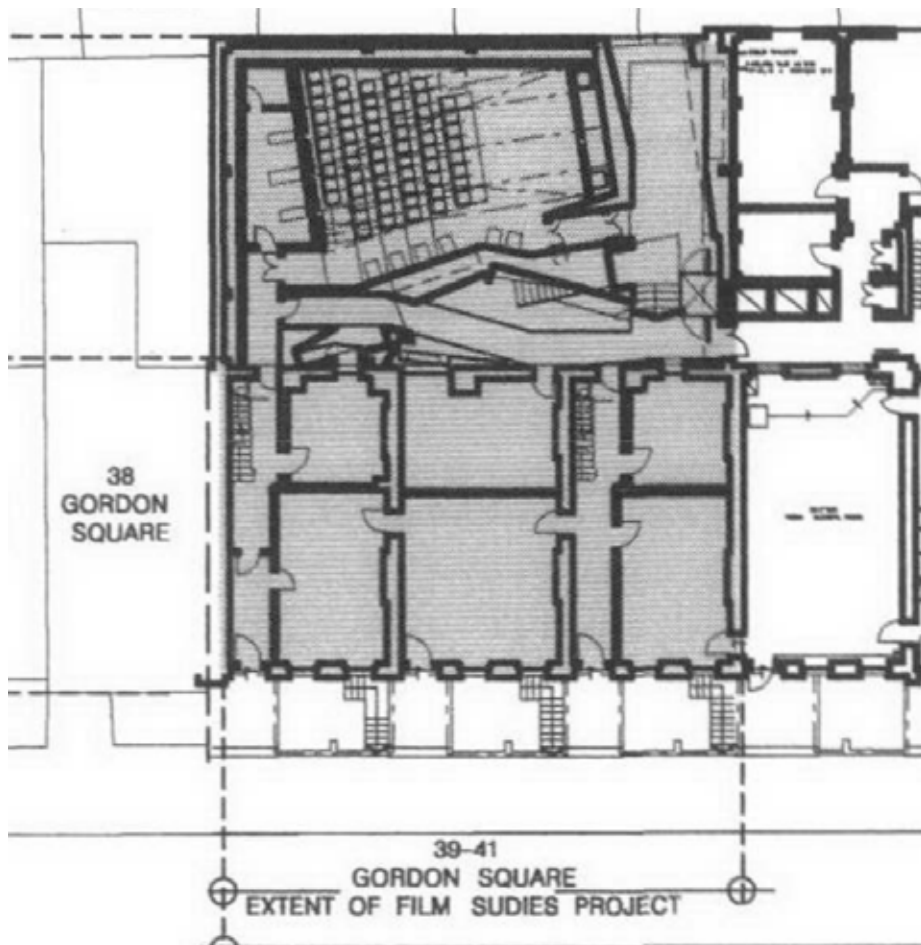


Fig. 31: Nos. 40-45 Gordon Square, basement floors, 1965, Camden Archives



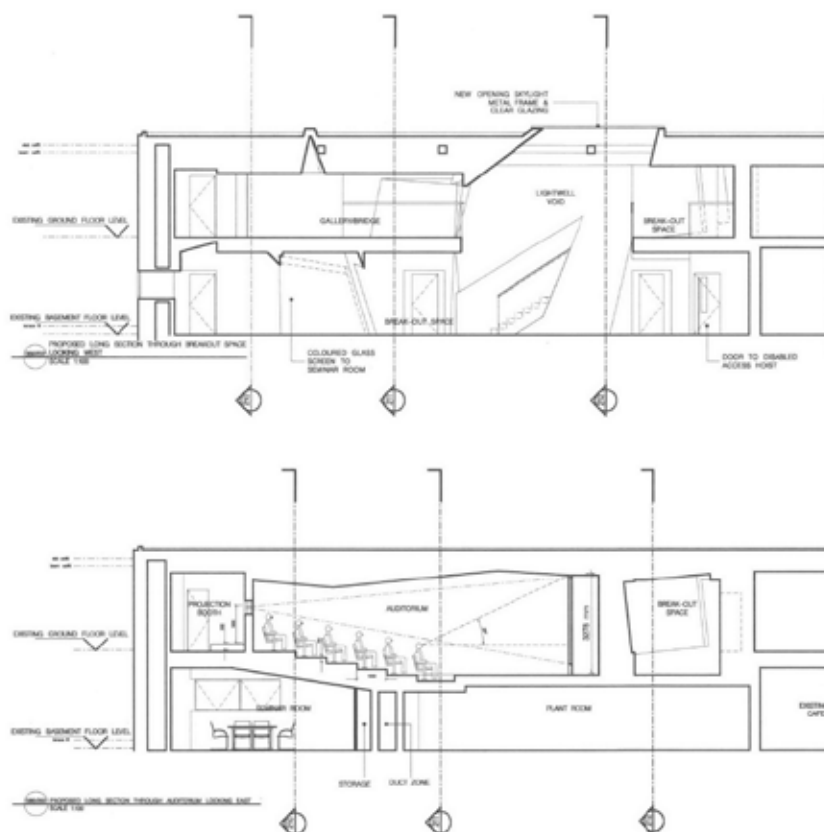
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Fig. 32: Nos. 42-45 Gordon Square, basement floor plans, 1979, Camden Archives



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Fig. 33: Nos. 39-41 Gordon Square, Proposed ground floor, 2005, Camden Planning Archives



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Fig. 34: Nos. 39 and 41 Gordon Square, Proposed section plan, 2005, Camden Planning Archives

Appendix D: Planning Policy.

National legislation and policy

Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Planning Act 1990 (As Amended)

The overarching legislation governing the consideration of applications for planning consent that affect heritage assets is contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation) Areas Act 1990.

Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act require local planning authorities, in considering whether to grant listed building consent, 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 possesses.

Section 72 of the Act requires local planning authorities, in considering whether to grant planning permission with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, to pay 'special attention [...] to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.'

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021)

The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Its core principle is to help achieve sustainable development through the planning system. Sustainable development is commonly summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Having been first published in 2012, the Framework was most recently updated in 2021. Paragraphs 194-137 are relevant to the present application:

Paragraph 194 requires an applicant to give a summary of significance of the building or area affected, proportionate to its importance. This heritage statement provides that information at an appropriate level.

Paragraph 195 advises local authorities to take account of that significance in assessing proposals to avoid or minimise conflict between the proposals and conservation of the asset.

Paragraph 197 emphasises the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of individual assets and wider, local distinctiveness, and the desirability of viable and fitting uses for a building being found or continued.

Paragraph 202 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Additional guidance to help local authorities implement NPPF is set out in:

the Planning Practice Guidance on the government's website which provides practical advice on applying the NPPF to the planning process and guidance on interpreting the language of the NPPF.

The Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2 entitled 'Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment'. This is the most relevant to this application of a number of guidance documents by Historic England.

Regional policy

London Plan (2021)

The London Plan 2021 was adopted in March 2021. It sets out a framework for how London will develop over the next 20–25 years and the Mayor's vision for Good Growth.

Policy HC1 Heritage conservation and growth states:

- A) *Boroughs should, in consultation with Historic England, local communities and other statutory and relevant organisations, develop evidence that demonstrates a clear understanding of London's historic environment. This evidence should be used for identifying, understanding, conserving, and enhancing the historic environment and heritage assets, and improving access to, and interpretation of, the heritage assets, landscapes and archaeology within their area.*

For planning decisions, it states:

- C) *Development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings. The cumulative impacts of incremental change from development on heritage assets and their settings should also be actively managed. Development proposals should avoid harm and identify enhancement opportunities by integrating heritage considerations early on in the design process*

Local policy

Camden Local Plan (2017)

In July 2017 Camden Council adopted the Local Plan, which has replaced the Core Strategy and Camden Development Policies documents as the basis for planning decisions and future development in the borough.

Paragraph 7.41 states:

The Council places great importance on preserving the historic environment. Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act the Council has a responsibility to have special regard to preserving listed buildings and must pay special attention to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Paragraph 7.44 states:

Any harm to or loss of a designated heritage asset will require clear and convincing justification which must be provided by the applicant to the Council. In decision making the Council will take into consideration the scale of the harm and the significance of the asset.

Policy D2 Heritage states that the Council will:

preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens and locally listed heritage assets.

Designated heritage assets

not permit development that results in harm that is less than substantial to the significance of a designated heritage asset unless the public benefits of the proposal convincingly outweigh that harm.

Conservation areas

e. require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area.

Listed Buildings

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

National guidance

Planning Practice Guidance (Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities 2021)

The aim of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) is to support implementation of the policies set out in the NPPF. The section 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' was last updated in April 2014.

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 – The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2015)

This advice note supports the implementation of policy in the NPPF. This document sets out guidance on managing change within the settings of heritage assets including archaeological remains and historic buildings, sites, areas and landscapes. It contains advice on the extent of setting, its relationship to views and how it contributes to significance. It also sets out a staged approach to decision-taking.

Local guidance

Camden Planning Guidance: Design (Camden Council, July 2015, updated March 2018)
Camden Council is reviewing and updating its Planning Guidance documents to support the Camden Local Plan following its adoption in summer 2017. The update is in two phases, the first of which was completed in March 2018. CPG1 Design will come under review in the second phase, but continues to apply until it is fully updated. Section 3 of this CPG sets out further guidance on how Policy D2 Heritage from the Local Plan (2017) should be applied.

Alan Baxter

Prepared by Alice Eggeling and Aydin Crouch

Reviewed by Rob Hradsky

Issued November 2021

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