

Proposal

04.02 Design strategy response

As outlined in section 2.03, the site is located within the Seven Dials Conservation Area, Sub-Area1, forming part of the northern boundary to the Conservation Area. Camden's Conservation Area Statement (CAS) identifies the properties along Shaftesbury Avenue having a differing character to the central and southern areas, with larger and taller building plots.

As outlined in section 2.03 the application site, and the adjoining property on Earlham Street (originally built as a single development) have aspects which impact negatively on the Conservation Area as a whole. Issues identified include:

- Materials
- Detailing
- Scale
- Impact at street level (car park entrance)

As a retrofit project, much of the existing property is to be retained and therefore it is not possible to fully address many of the issues identified in the CAS. Within the limited scope of changes that are being proposed, the application responds to the CAS in the following ways:

- The proposed modifications to the external façade seek to significantly improve the internal quality of the office floorspace, increasing daylight, outlook and well-being. It is recognised that the existing building is incongruous with much of the Conservation Area but nonetheless has a singularity and consistency of architectural expression. The design approach seeks to update the external expression of the building whilst respecting and responding to the existing character of the property. The application proposes to re-clad the primary corner of the façade, responding to the language and scale of the existing, using high quality materials. The new façade is composed as a series of bays, retaining this prominent proportioning feature. The strong horizontal banding is also retained but reduced in scale, reducing the monolithic nature of the building. This approach aligns with policy SD2 within the CAS which supports the positive contribution that well designed, modern buildings and refurbishments can bring to the dynamic character of the Conservation Area as a whole.

- Historic research has identified that earlier buildings on the site (that preceded the 1975 property) occupied the whole corner site, but had their primary entrance along Mercer Street, rather than Shaftesbury Avenue. Whilst recognising the prominence of Shaftesbury Avenue as a major central London avenue, one result of the existing entrance facing onto

Shaftesbury Avenue is that Mercer Street has a sterile quality at street level, particularly as the other buildings along Mercer Street do not contribute to street activation either. As a result the building has a poor sense of connection to Seven Dials and Covent Garden. The proposal to relocate the entrance to Mercer Street will restore this historic arrangement and also promote greater activity and activation at street level. It is intended to psychologically anchor the building with Seven Dials. This will address some of the negative aspects of the existing building identified within the CAS.

- Similarly, the existing gated vehicular entrance to the existing basement is identified within the CAS as negatively contributing to the Conservation Area. Whilst it is not possible to omit these, the proposals do seek to improve this aspect of the existing building. By reducing the quantum of vehicular parking and significantly increasing the quantum of cycle parking it is expected that there will be a fundamental shift away from vehicular use and activity. It is proposed to replace the gates themselves with a new high quality design, featuring an abstracted artwork which relates to the Seven Dials area. This will significantly improve the appearance of the gates at street level whilst also providing a site specific, cultural reference to what is otherwise a practical element of the building.

- The property and the adjoining building which wraps onto Earlham Street (which were delivered as a comprehensive development in 1975) are identified as a negative feature due to their scale and design. Although the two properties are now in separate ownership they still read as a monolithic, singular development, resulting in the incongruous sense of scale, identified within the CAS. The application proposes the comprehensive redevelopment of 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, taking a retrofit approach. This seeks to retain the existing structure on the basis of the value of the embodied carbon, rather than the quality of the existing design. In combination with the re-cladding of the primary corner, as outlined above, it is proposed to retain the existing brickwork.



Proposal

04.03 Existing Facade Analysis

The existing property was designed in 1975 by Seifert's and forms part of a larger comprehensive, mixed use development that originally included the buildings to the rear (including Earlam Street and the south of Mercer Street).

The building is not of any particular historical significance. In our view, it is not a building of particular architectural quality and it is specifically identified within Camden's Seven Dials Conservation Area Statement as having a negative impact on the conservation area itself. The building is considered out of scale and unsympathetic in design to the character of the Conservation Area – particularly the materials and cladding. The car park entrance is also highlighted as being particularly damaging to the street scene along Mercer Street.

Despite the average quality of the building itself and the poor relationship with the wider conservation area it must be recognised that the building is singular in its architectural composition and design. Setting aside design quality and appropriateness to the heritage context there is a clear architectural language that has been consistently applied. In considering how the building might be adapted and improved to extend its useful life it is important to recognise the elements that are key to its own architectural character.

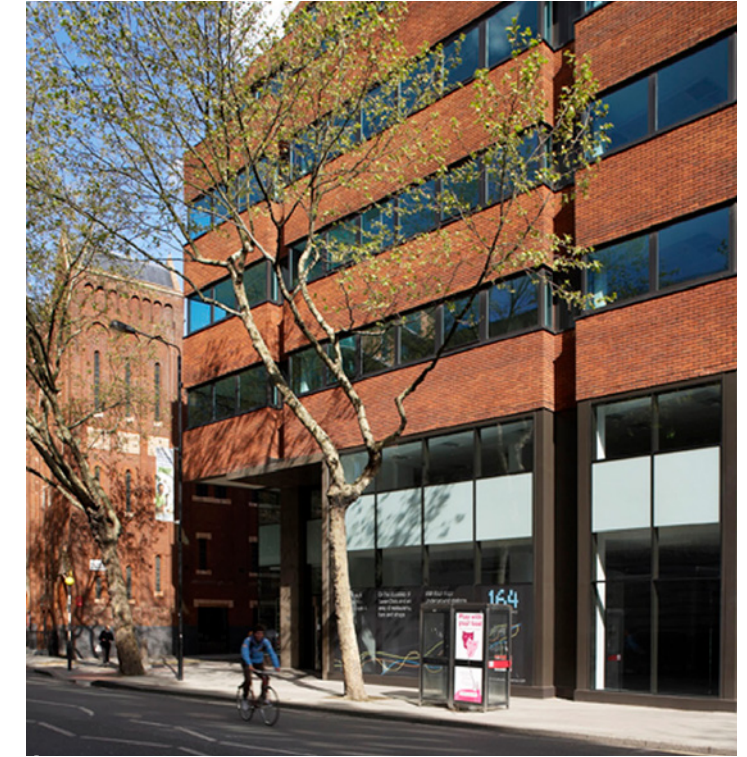
We believe that there are three key elements that define the building's character and architectural expression. These are:

- A strong horizontal expression through the use of distinct bands, formed of alternating brickwork and ribbon windows. Window openings within other buildings along Mercer are a series of punched openings within masonry facades, whereas 164 Shaftesbury Avenue has continuous horizontal bands of glazing, with a regular pattern of vertical glazing divisions. There is a strong horizontal line formed within the facades between first and second floor, demarking a distinct division between the upper storeys and the façade at street level.
- A clearly articulated series of vertical bays within the facade. These bays are accentuated by deep setbacks between the bays themselves which create distinct shadows. A clear rhythm is set up along Mercer Street, with the corner articulated as single, major element. Along Shaftesbury Avenue the central bay is emphasized. A change in material from glazing to metal cladding within the 'window band' also helps to articulate the setbacks between bays.
- The upper storeys of the building are characterised by a series of chamfered profiles, with upper storeys reducing in a series of set backs. These chamfered setbacks to not

deploy a change in material as might be more commonly seen (either in a traditional mansard or in more modern interventions that take a similar approach). Therefore these upper floors clearly read as part of the primary facades and not as a roof element as might be more commonly seen in central London.



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Proposal

04.04 Design strategy

The existing building is a commercial office property which features a horizontal banding of red brickwork and glazing, with curtain walling at street level across ground floor and first floor. The elevations are dominated by a series of projecting bays which give a formal composition to the facades. Furthermore the angled setbacks at fifth and sixth floor level also contribute strongly to the building's characteristic appearance. At ground floor this ordered composition breaks down and the existing façade is less than welcoming. In particular the recess at ground and first level creates an awkward relationship between the lower and upper floors, and only creates wasted space in front of the building, flooded with handrails and accessibility ramps.

To resolve the strange composition at ground floor, we propose to bring the setback forward, in line with the rest of the facade. In addition to this, the new entrance will be moved onto Mercer Street, to establish a stronger and closer relationship with the Seven Dials and Covent Garden's busy areas. The entrance will be highlighted at street level via a double height portal frame, to be easily noticeable from further away.

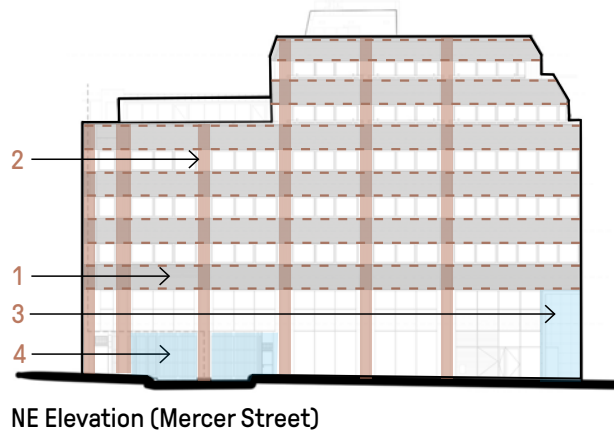
Massing wise, we are proposing to replace three bays on Mercer Street and one bay on Shaftesbury Avenue, aiming to provide a strong landmark at this junction between Mercer St and Shaftesbury Avenue which also represents an entrance to the Seven Dials. Within each bay, we improve the daylight to the internal floor plates by increasing the extent of glazing. This will greatly improve the quality of the open plan office space and consequently reduce the need of artificial lighting and energy consumption.

Each bay will be emphasised through a metallic frame surround in complementing colour. This will follow the existing proportions, with set backs between surrounds and horizontal banding created through textured spandrel panels. The proposed external changes are a reinterpretation of the existing massing constructed with contemporary and more efficient materials.

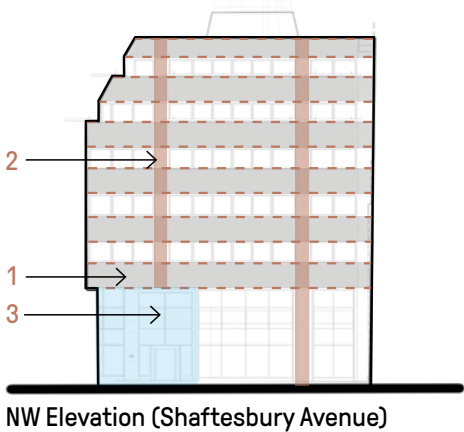
- 1 Existing horizontal brick banding
- 2 Metal recesses
- 3 Entrance
- 4 Access towards basement
- 5 Frame surrounds
- 6 Opaque panels accentuating the horizontality of the existing brick banding
- 7 Maximising glazing for natural lighting
- 8 Metal fin articulating facade proportions
- 9 Curtain wall to follow the same proportions as bays above



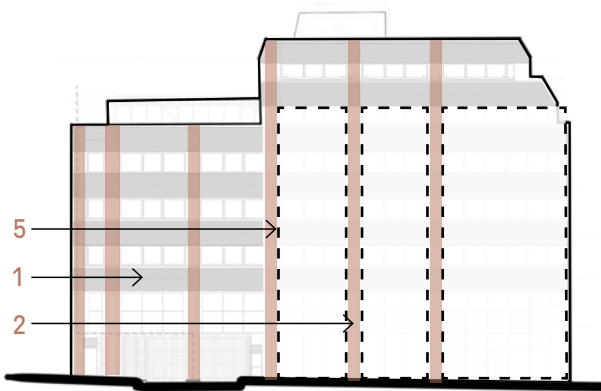
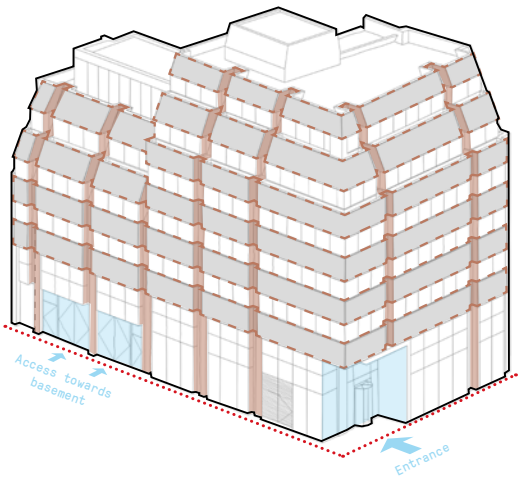
Existing building features



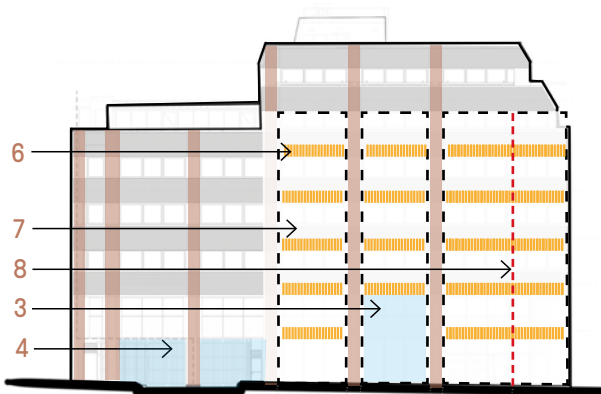
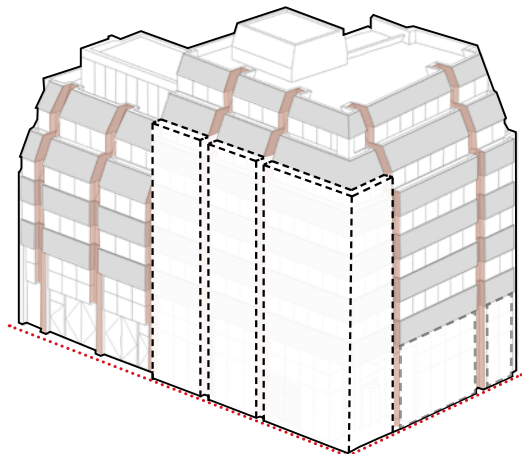
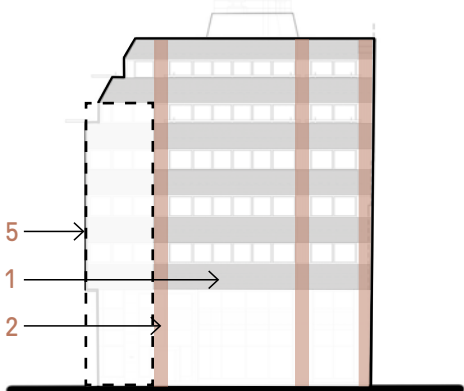
NE Elevation (Mercer Street)



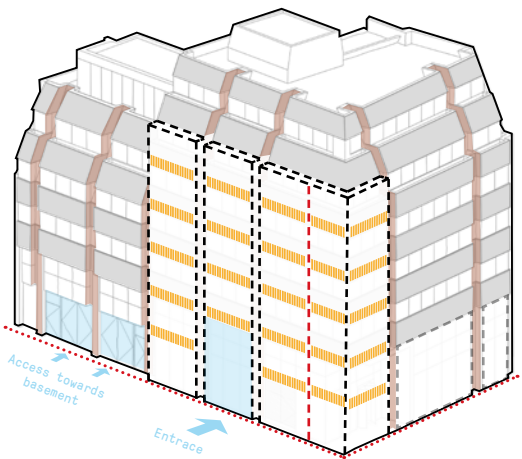
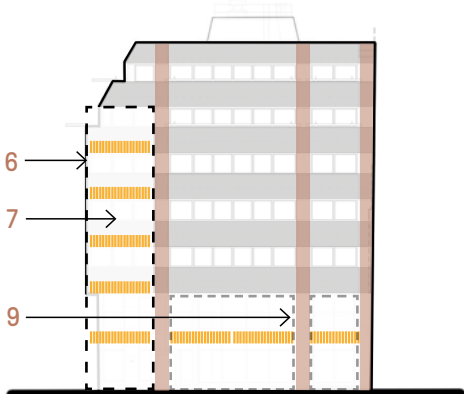
NW Elevation (Shaftesbury Avenue)



Step 1



Step 2



Proposal

04.05 Composing the Elevations

Horizontal emphasis formed from alternating bands of brickwork and ribbon windows. A clear distinction between first and second floor which delineates the upper storeys from the street level façade.

The proposals retain this horizontal expression with the extent of glazing increased to improve daylighting and outlook from within the building. The new section of the façade is articulated as a sympathetic but modern intervention that positively responds to the principles of the existing building.



Existing building study- horizontal elements



North East Elevation (Mercer Street)
EXISTING



North East Elevation (Mercer Street)
PROPOSED



North West Elevation (Shaftesbury Avenue)
EXISTING



North West Elevation (Shaftesbury Avenue)
PROPOSED

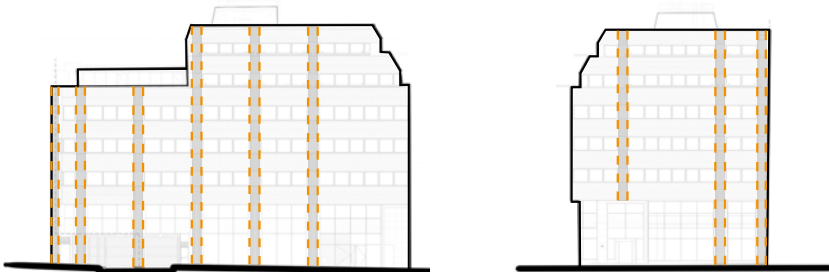


Proposal

04.05 Composing the Elevations

The existing façade is split into a series of vertical bays formed with deep setbacks in between each bay. The corner is articulated with a double width bay which ‘turns’ the corner. On Shaftesbury Avenue the central bay is emphasized with a double width bay.

The proposals retain the bays with new sections of the façade clearly articulated within an aluminium framing element which stops at fifth floor level. Glazing is kept within the frame of each bay and metal cladding to the setbacks. The existing rhythm is retained with the double corner bay and double central bay on Shaftesbury Avenue.



Existing building study- vertical elements



North East Elevation (Mercer Street)
EXISTING



North West Elevation (Shaftesbury Avenue)
EXISTING



North East Elevation (Mercer Street)
PROPOSED



North West Elevation (Shaftesbury Avenue)
PROPOSED



Proposal

04.05 Composing the Elevations

Chamfered profiles of the upper storeys of the existing building are formed in a series of setbacks. These start at fifth floor on the Shaftesbury Avenue / Mercer Street corner and at fourth floor on the lower section of the building along Mercer Street.

The proposals respect and retain the chamfered profile to the building with the new framing to the bays terminating at fifth floor. This does alter the profile of the building although the difference is small and does not impact the overall character of the building. Nor do the proposals fundamentally alter the bulk and massing of the building.



Existing building study- setback at fifth and sixth floor



North East Elevation (Mercer Street)
EXISTING



North West Elevation (Shaftesbury Avenue)
EXISTING



North East Elevation (Mercer Street)
PROPOSED



North West Elevation (Shaftesbury Avenue)
PROPOSED



Proposal

04.06 Proposed elevations



Proposed North East Elevation (Mercer Street)



Proposed North West Elevation (Shaftesbury Avenue)

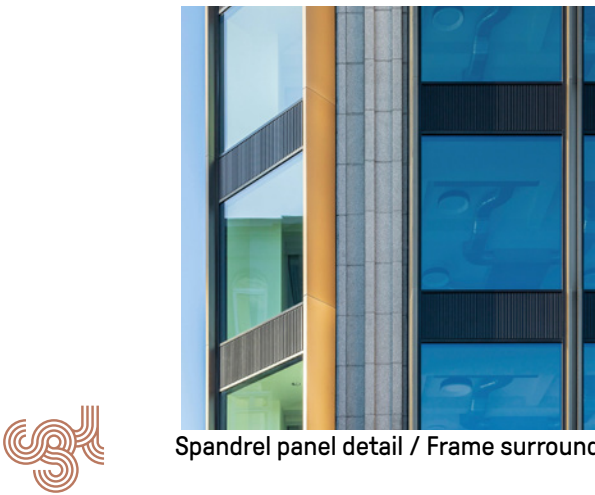
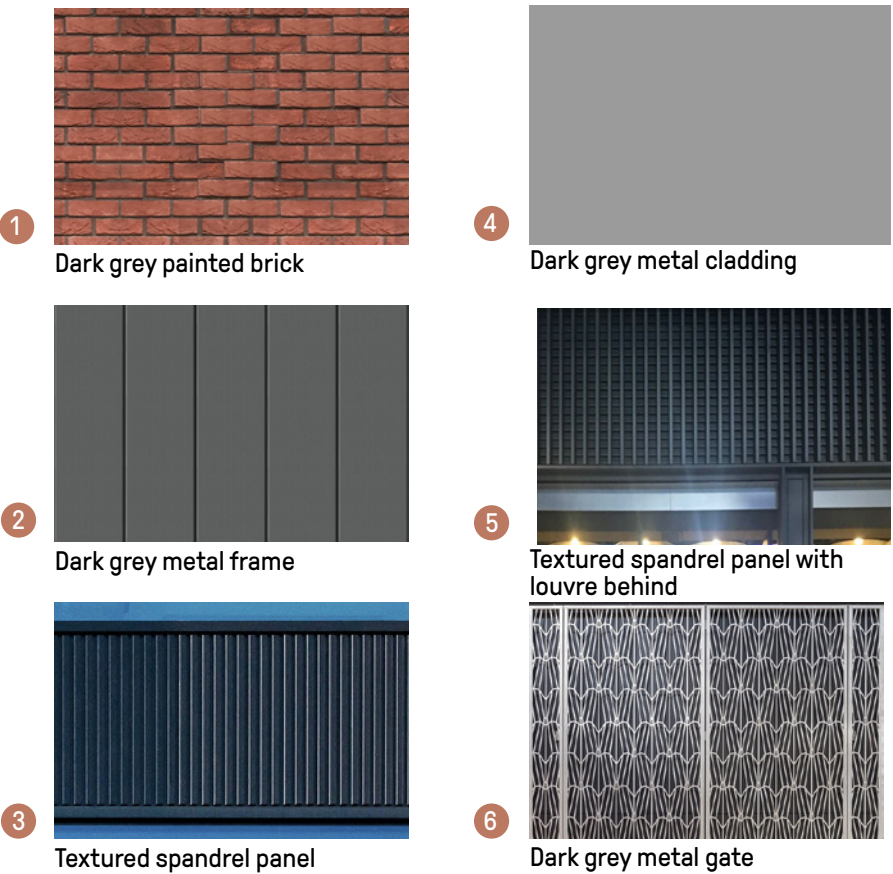


Proposal

04.07 Material Palette



Mercer Street Elevation



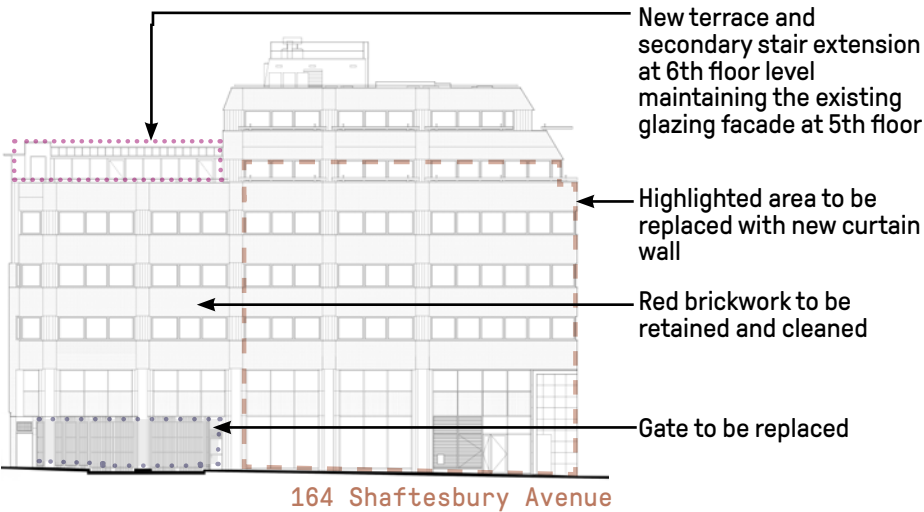
Spandrel panel detail / Frame surround



Spandrel panel detail / Frame surround



Curtain wall mullion detail



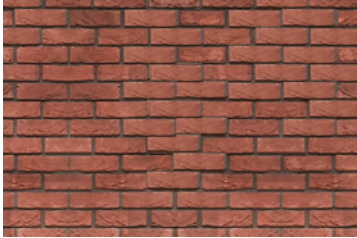
Proposal

04.07 Material Palette




Shaftesbury Avenue Elevation

1



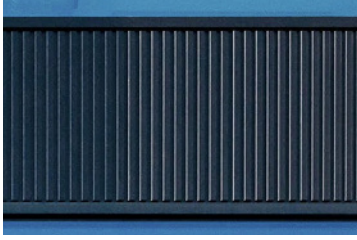
Dark grey painted brick

2




Dark grey metal frame

3




Textured spandrel panel

4



Metal frame surround colour

5



Textured spandrel panel with louvre behind



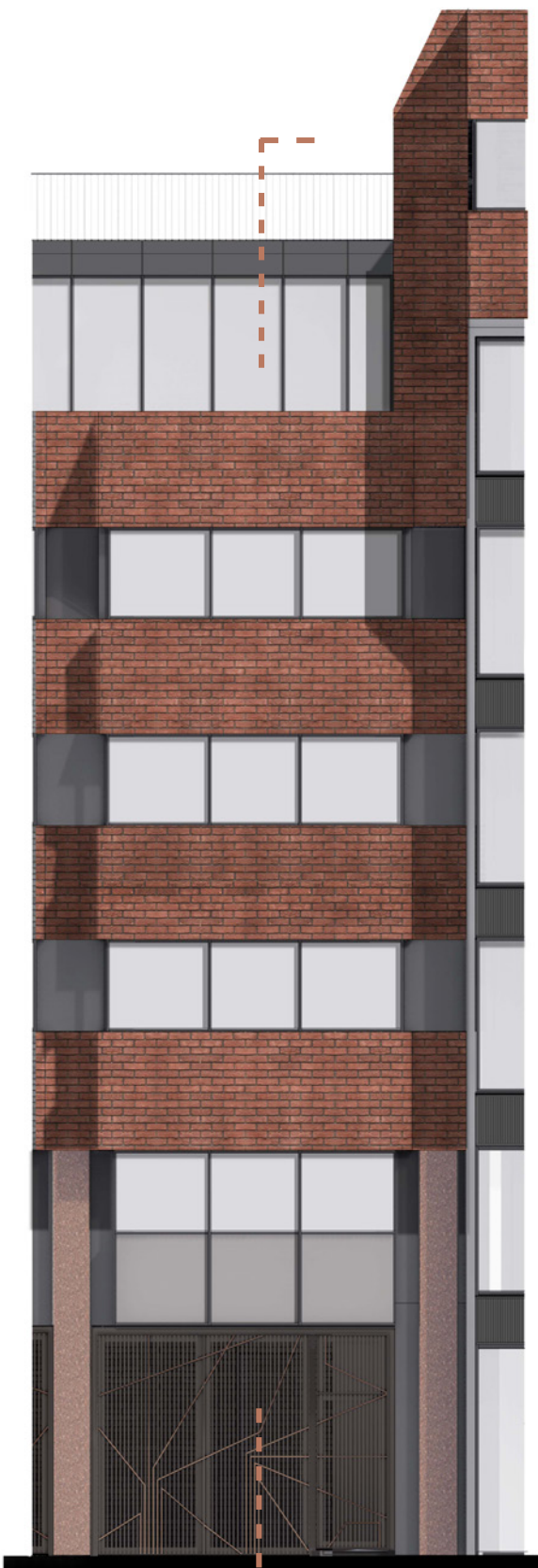
Red brickwork to be retained and cleaned

Highlighted area to be replaced with new curtain wall

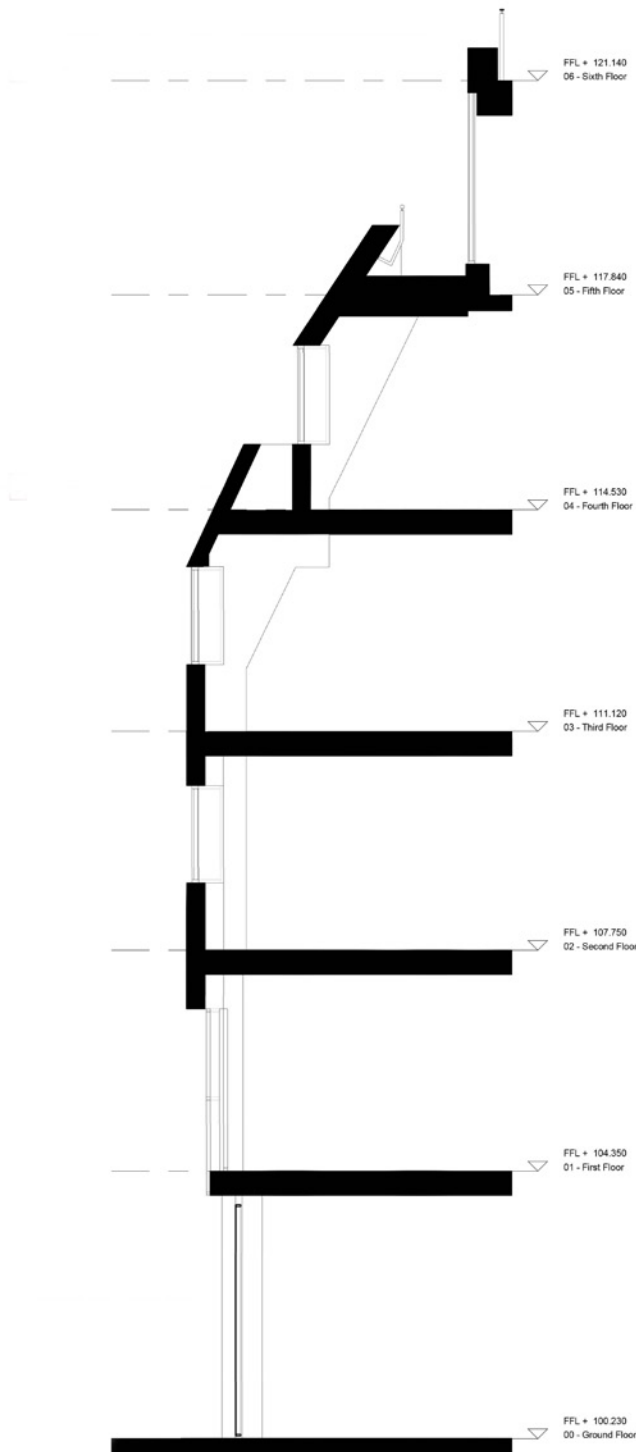


Proposal

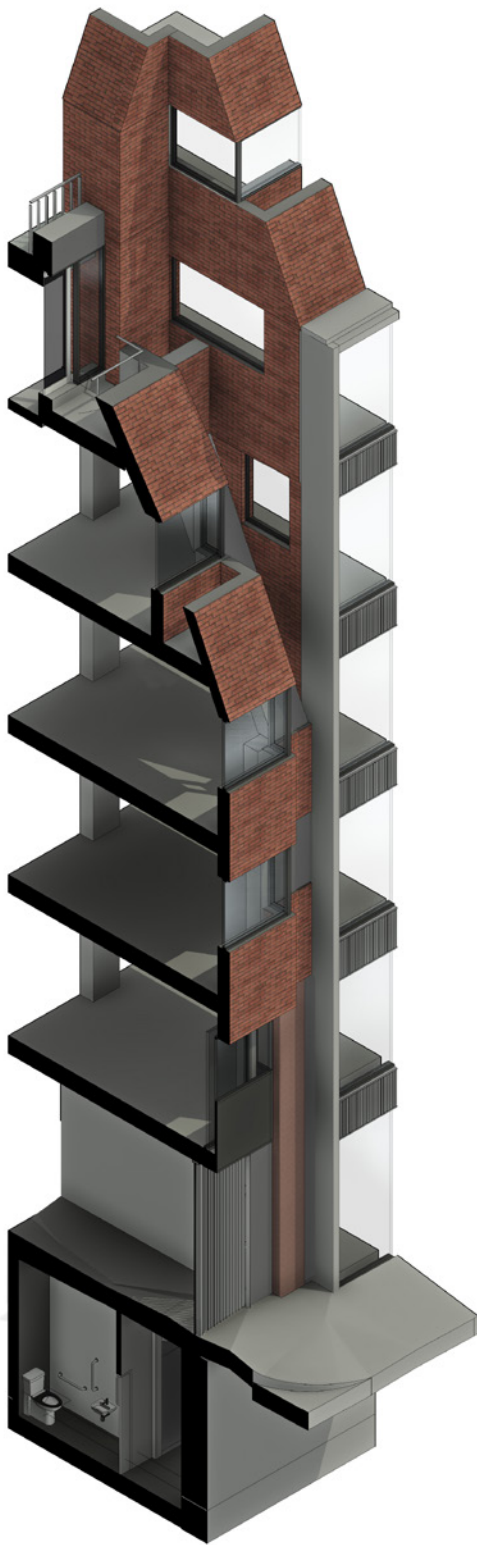
04.08 Bay Studies



Bay Study 01



Existing 3D Bay



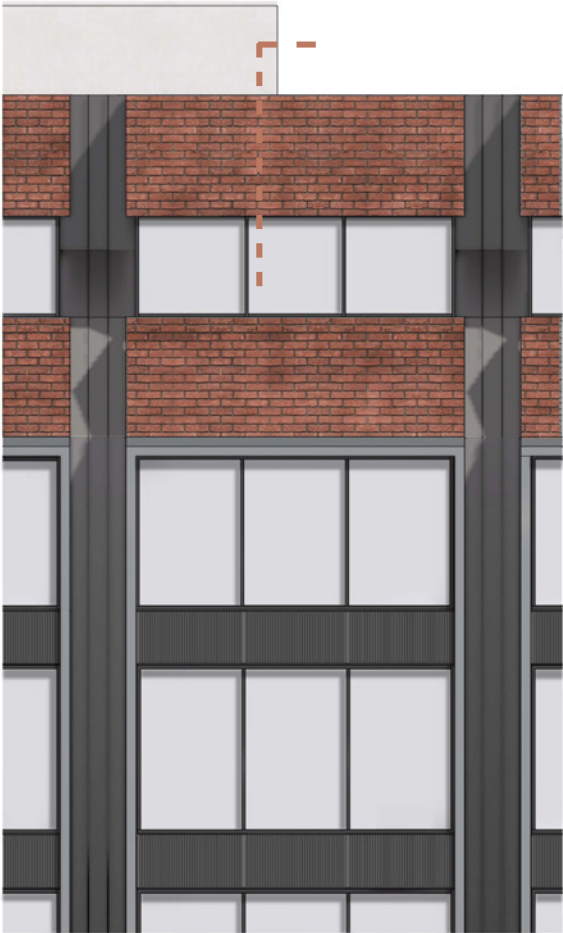
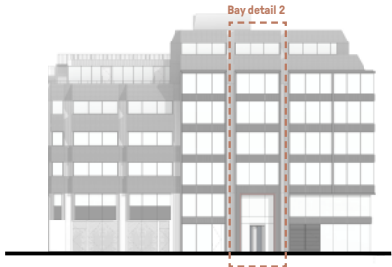
Proposed 3D Bay

164 Shaftesbury Avenue

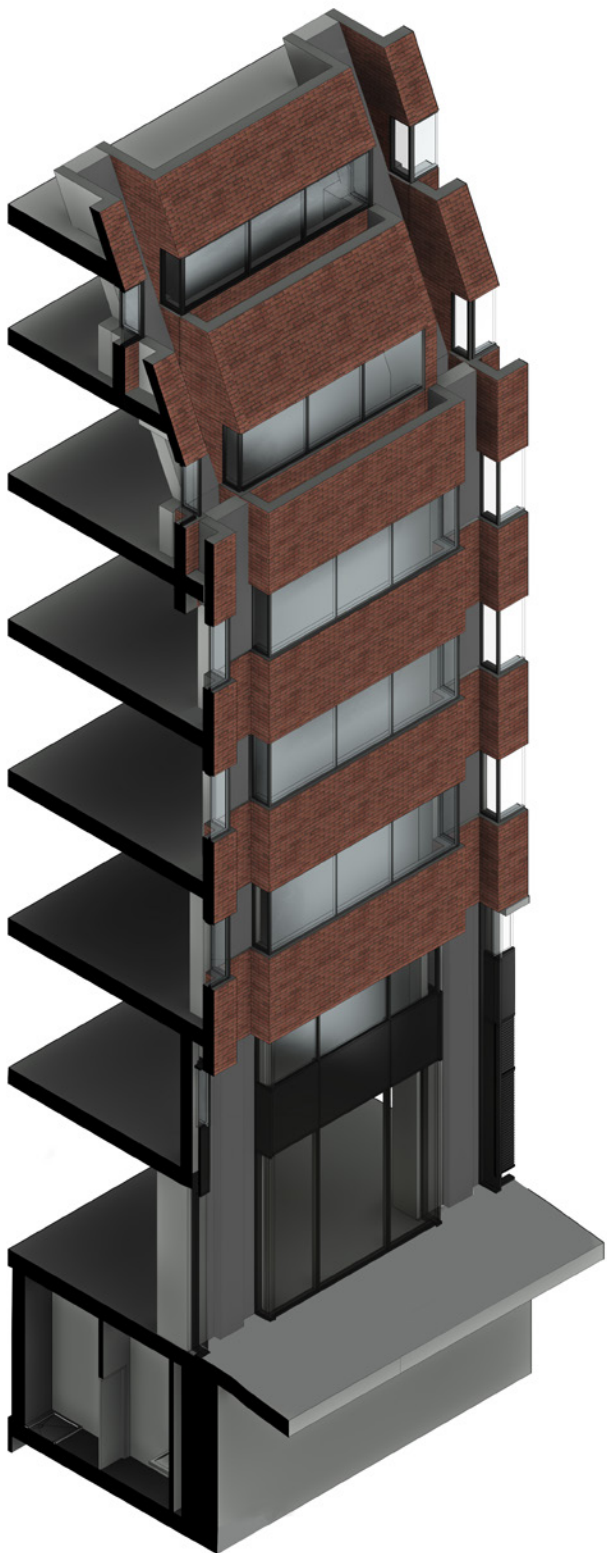
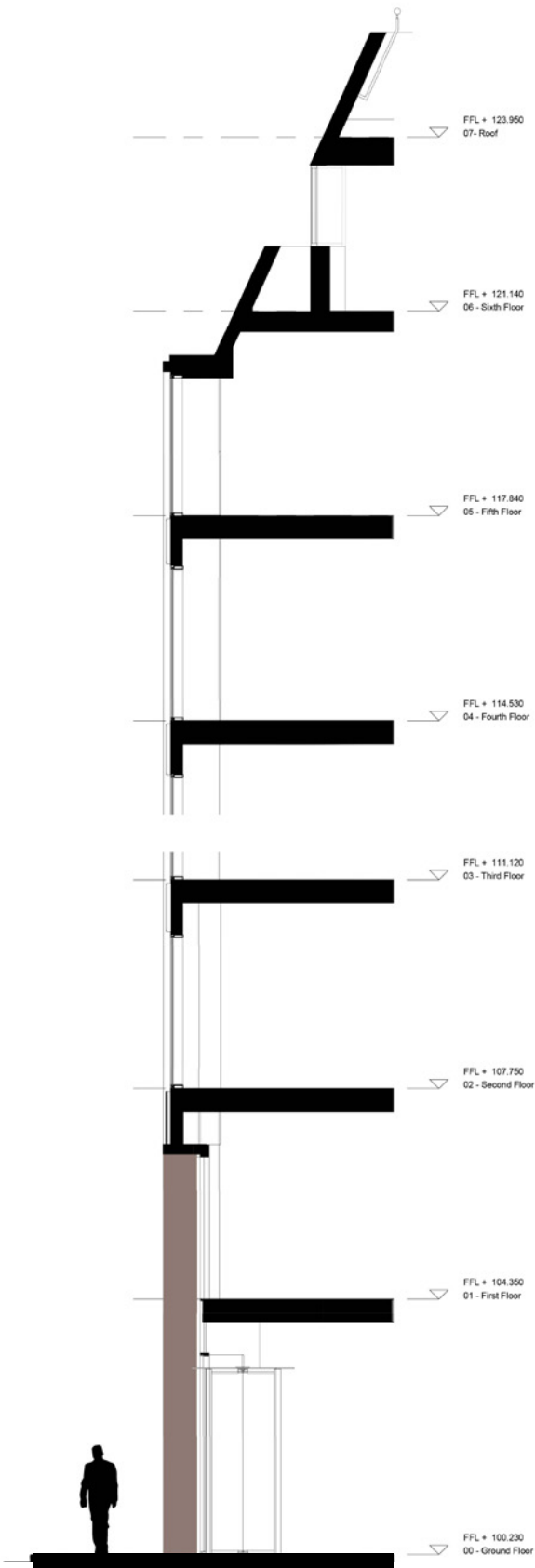


Proposal

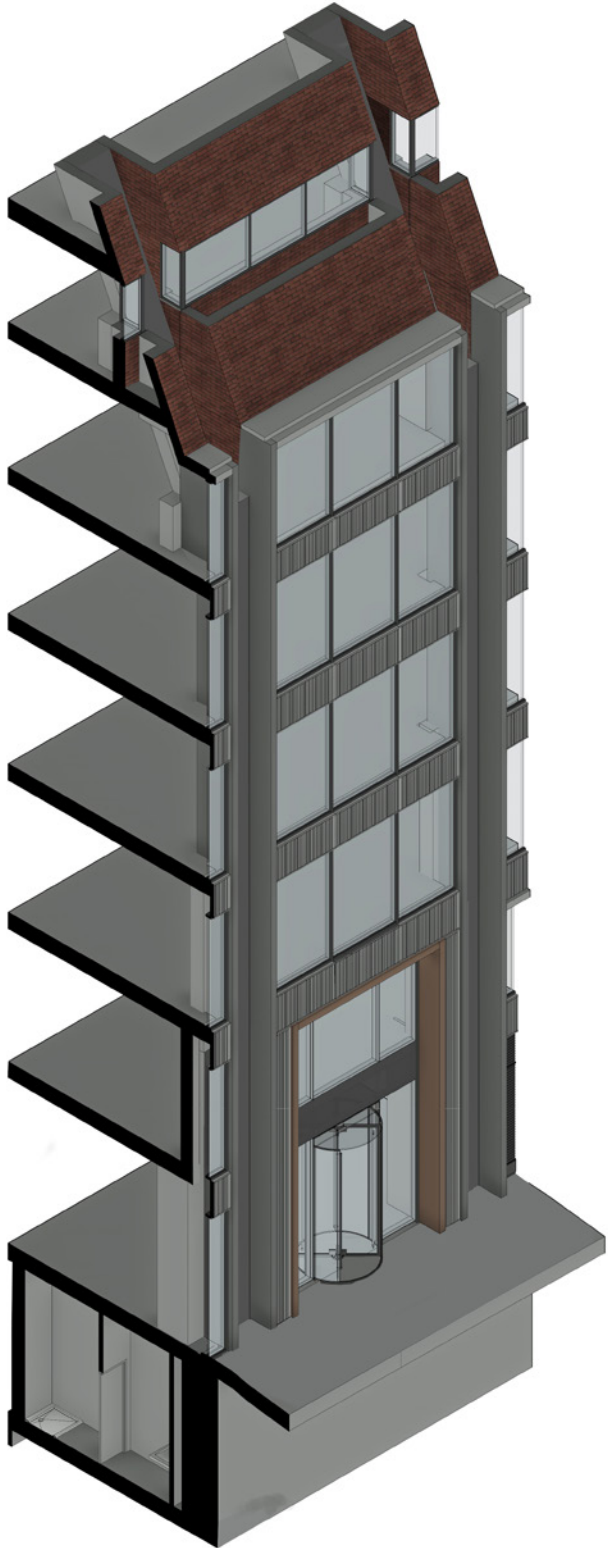
04.08 Bay Studies



Bay Study 02



Existing 3D Bay



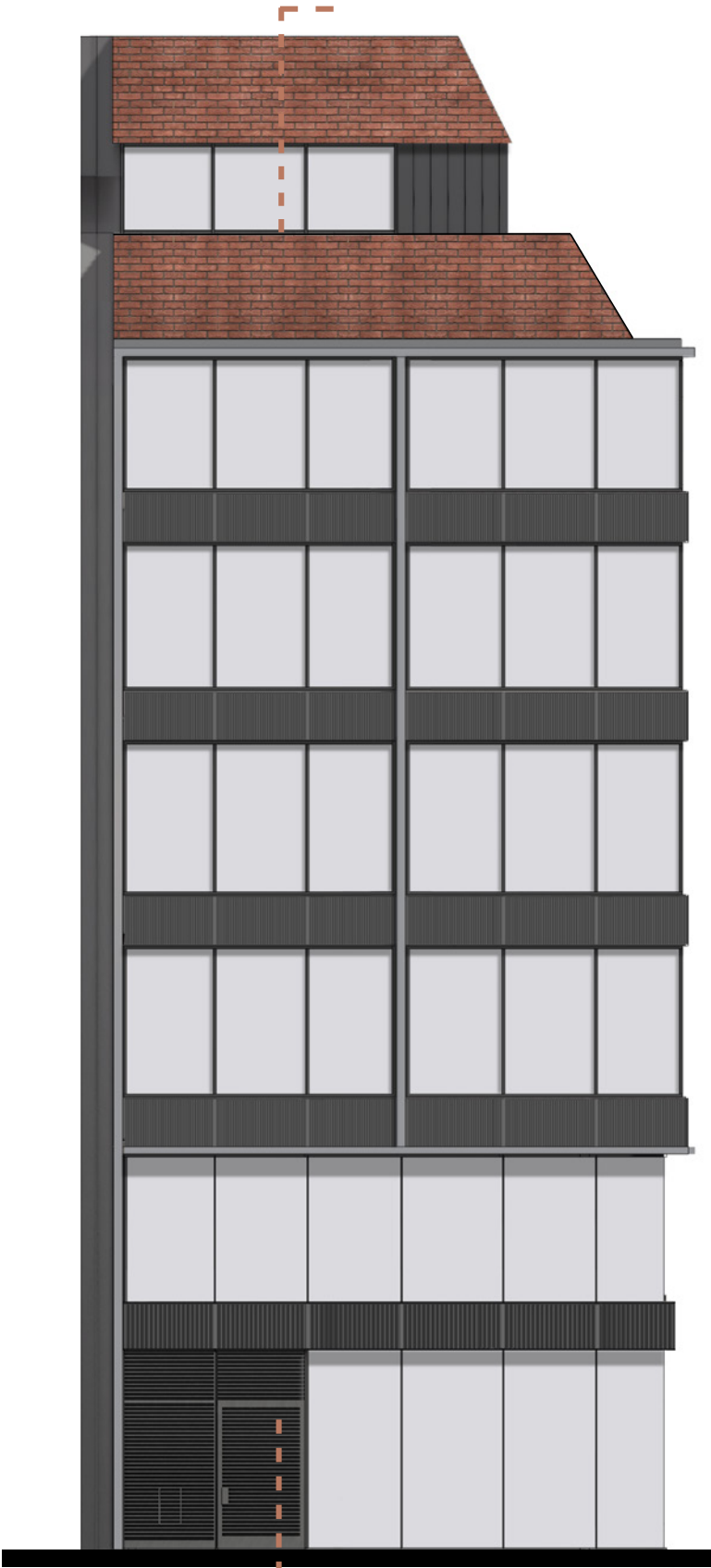
Proposed 3D Bay

164 Shaftesbury Avenue

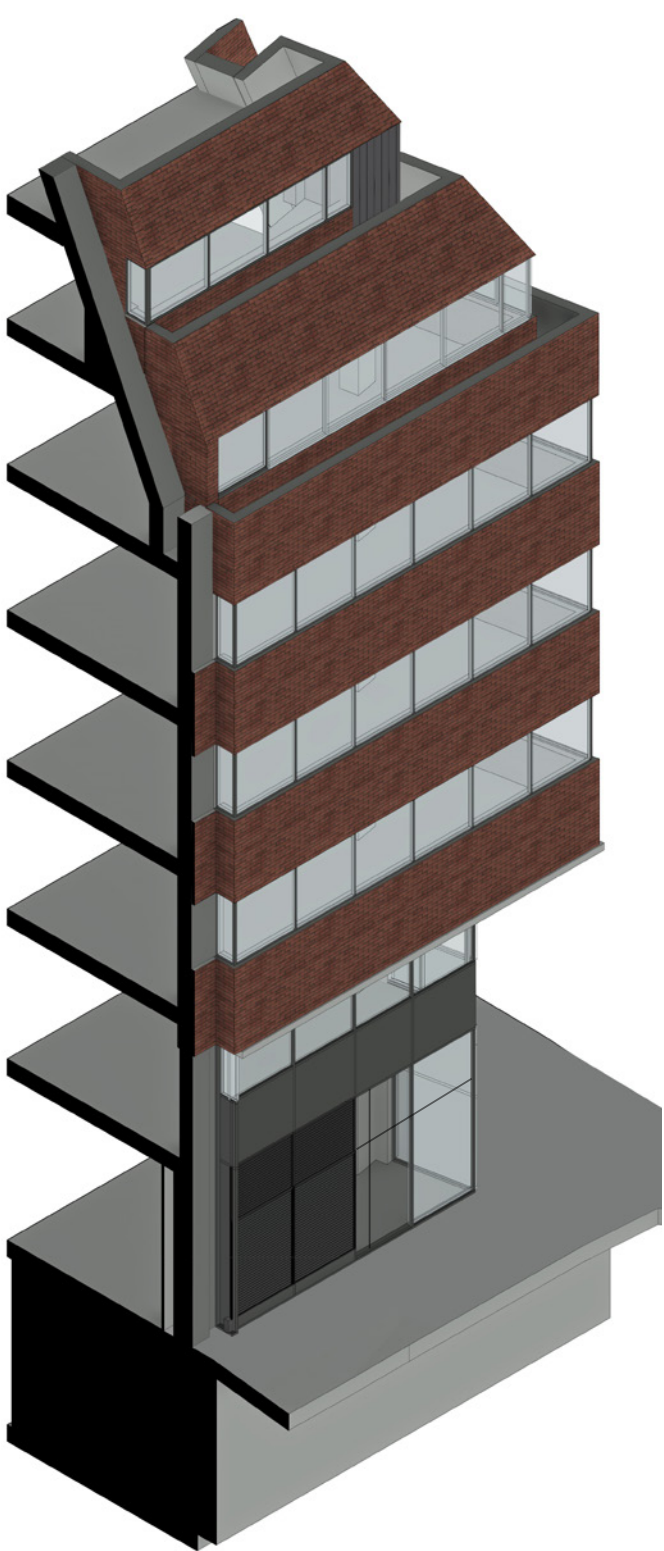
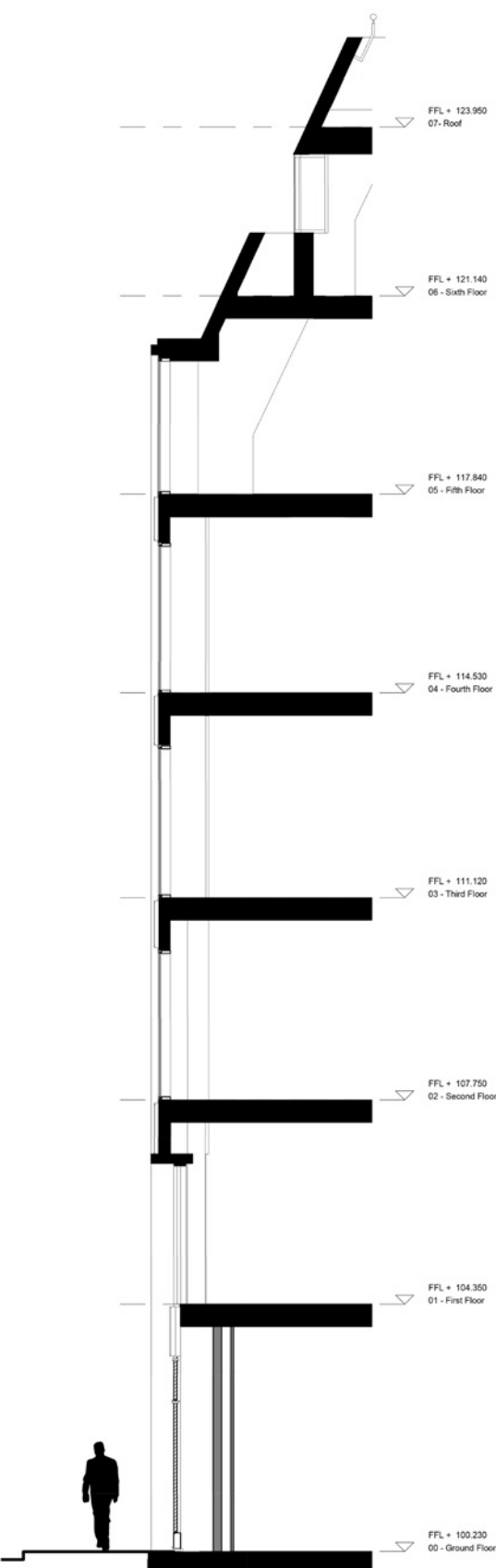


Proposal

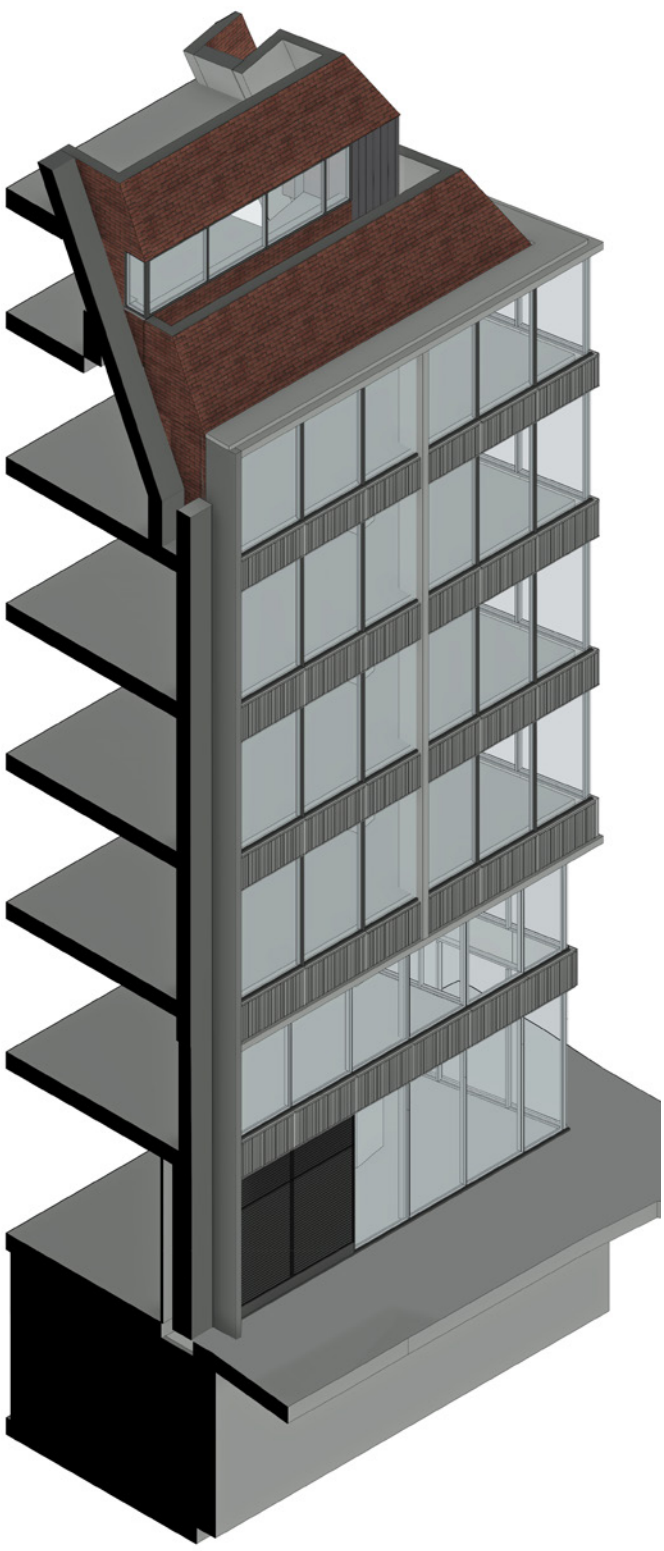
04.08 Bay Studies



Bay Study 03 L



Existing 3D Bay



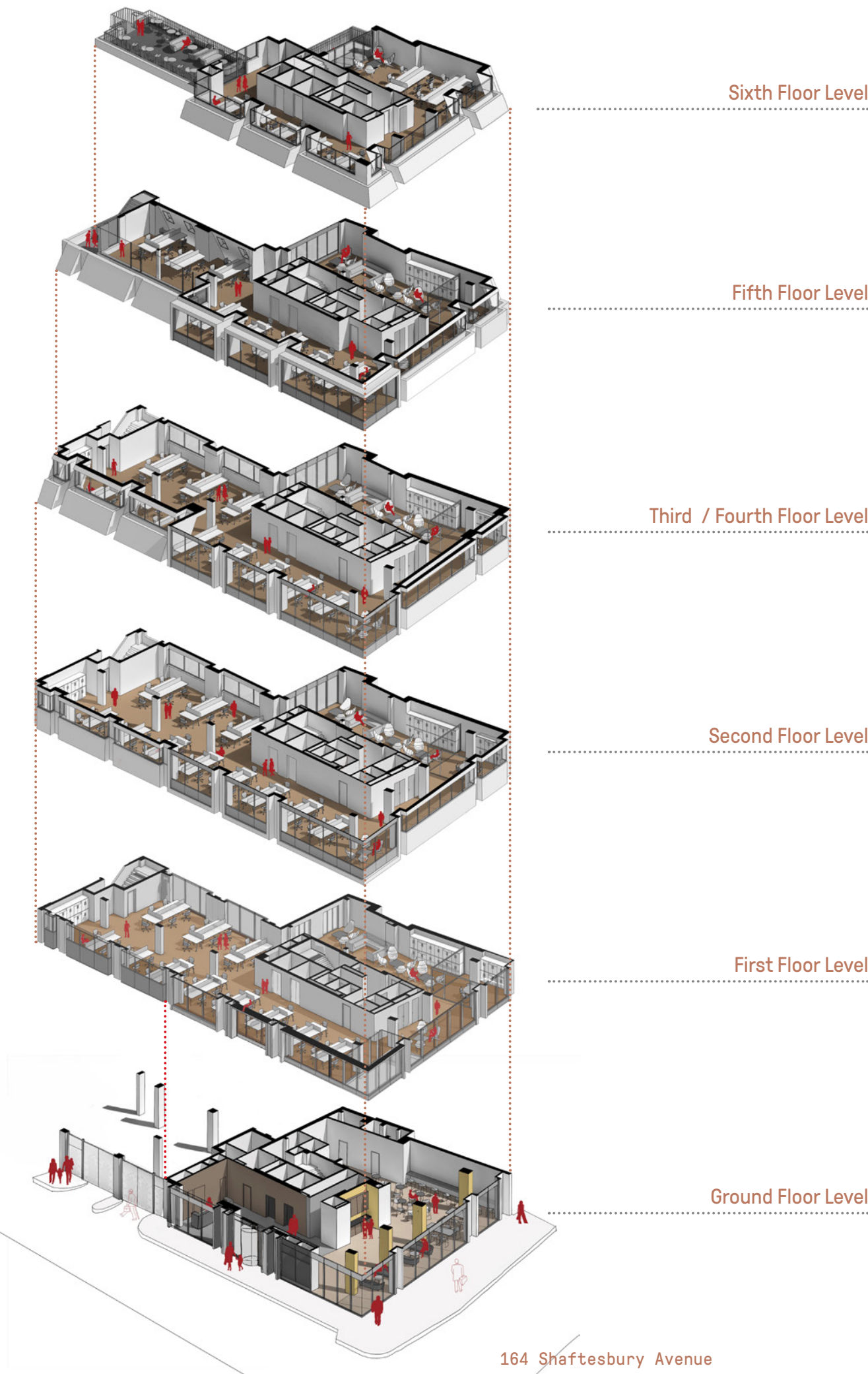
Proposed 3D Bay

164 Shaftesbury Avenue



Proposal

04.09 Massing

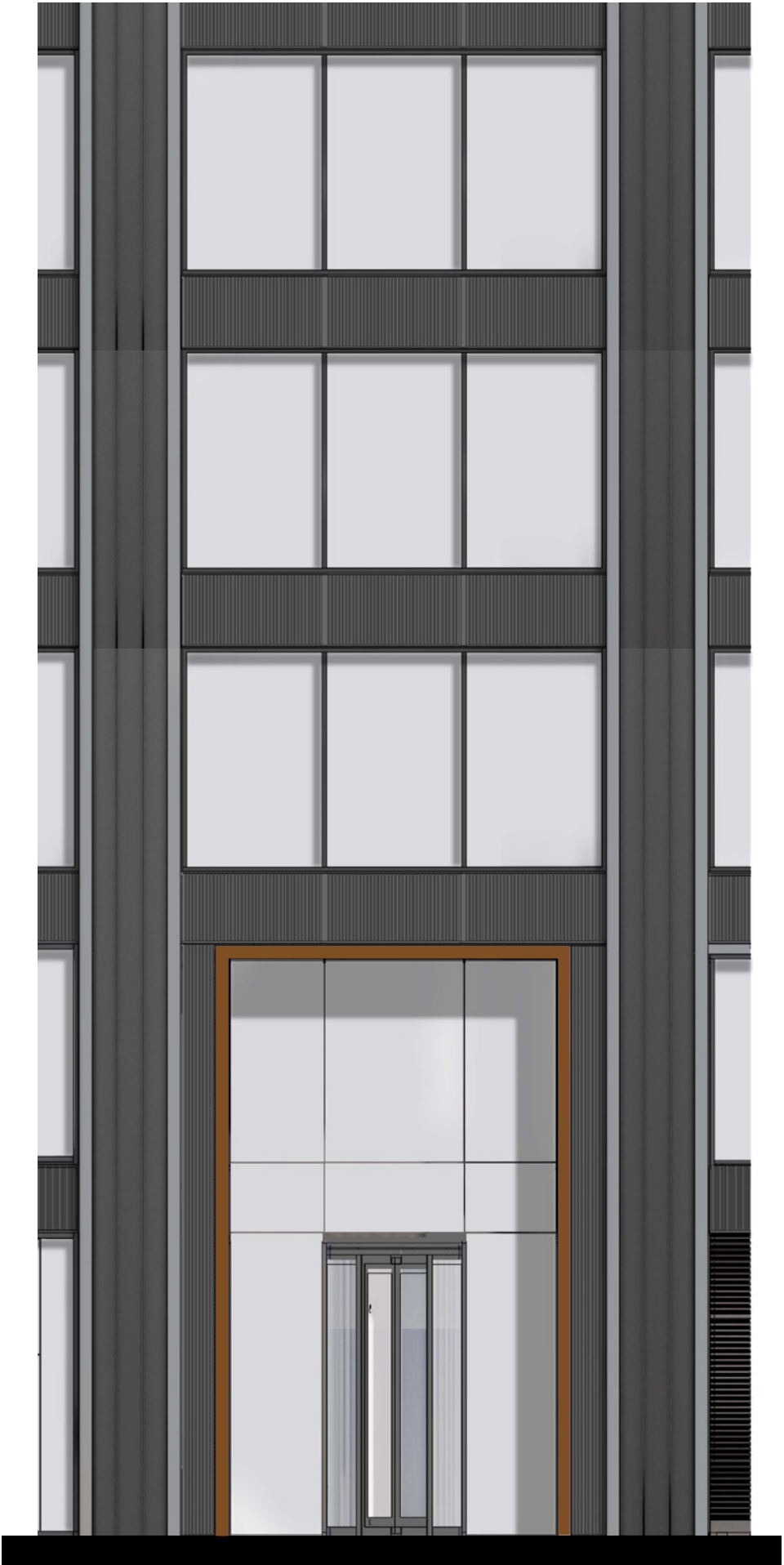


Proposal

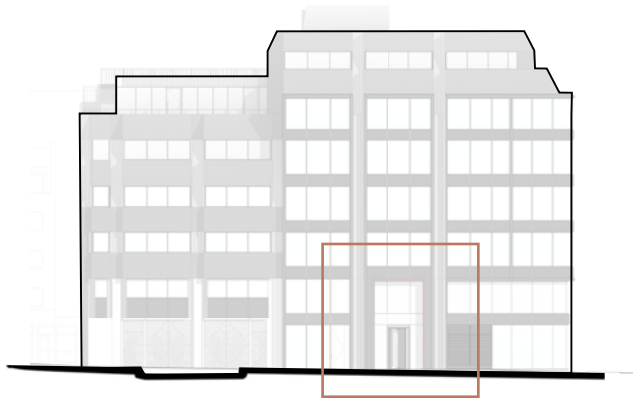
04.10 Entrance Study

As part of the new internal layout, we propose to relocate the main entrance onto Mercer Street, to mimic the historical entrance into the building as discussed in Chapter 2.02 Site History. This move benefits the building by bringing the entrance closer to the reception area, while allowing for flexible/waiting space towards the Shaftesbury Avenue frontage. This also allows for a quicker access to the building's core and a more private entrance way from Mercer Street.

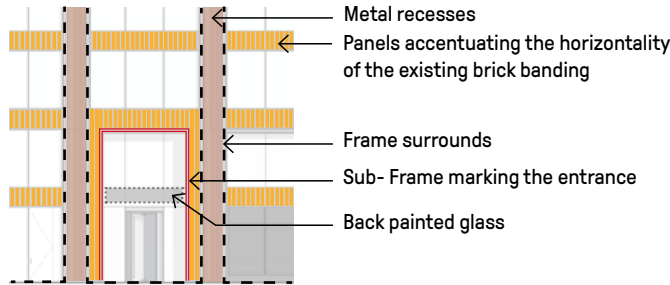
The entrance is marked by a metal subframe in a bold colour. This alongside the textured inserts around it, will make the front door stand out.



Entrance sketch



NE elevation (Mercer Street)



Entrance Callout



Proposal

04.11 Gates towards basement study

The metal gates on Mercer St provide access towards basement and exit from the secondary fire stair, are in poor state and of utilitarian aesthetic. We see these as having a lot of potential in improving and enlivening the streetscape.

The existing gated vehicular entrance to the existing basement is identified within the CAS as negatively contributing to the Conservation Area. Whilst it is not possible to omit these, the proposals do seek to improve this aspect of the existing building.

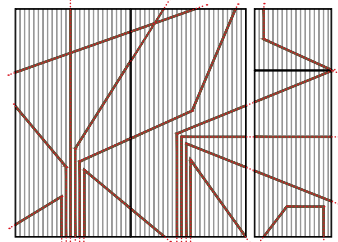
By reducing the quantum of vehicular parking and significantly increasing the quantum of cycle parking it is expected that there will be a fundamental shift away from vehicular use and activity. It is proposed to replace the gates themselves with a new high quality design, featuring an abstracted artwork which relates to the Seven Dials area. This will significantly improve the appearance of the gates at street level whilst also providing a site specific, cultural reference to what is otherwise a practical element of the building.

The area has the imprint of a unique legacy, as an appreciation of this unique street plan the design looks to enhance the history of Seven Dials using the map to reflect this.

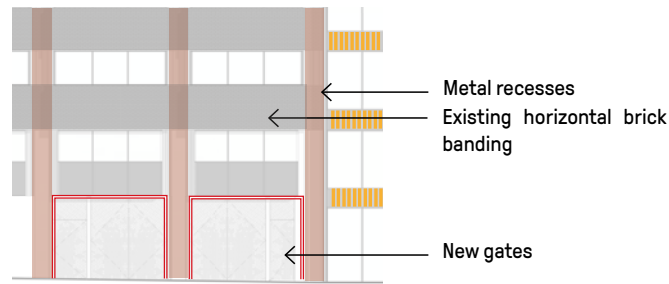
The design takes the negative of the street plan, simplifying the outline of the pathway and end up with a conceptual map of the area.



Map Diagram



NE elevation (Mercer Street)



Vehicle Entrance Callout

