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Historic Building Assessment
No. 36 Percy Street, London, W1T 2DH

September 2022





1 Introduction

1.1 The following Historic Building Assessment has been prepared to inform the application process in relation to proposals to carry out internal alterations to the grade II listed no. 36 Percy Street, London, W1T 2DN (the site). This report sets out the historic development and significance of the site and its context and considers the potential and scope for change and alteration.

1.2 No. 36 is situated on the north side of Percy Street and forms part of a listed group at nos. 34-37. The buildings are grouped together in this way presumably because all were originally constructed during the 1760s and subsequently refronted during the 1950s.

1.3 The proposed scheme is intended to upgrade the existing Class E provision at lower ground floor only, making alterations to areas of comparatively lesser significance. The proposals involve the reconfiguration of existing modern partitions to the rear room at lower ground floor level and seeks to reinstate a corridor to the front room based on historic plan of the property from 1894.

1.4 No works to the exterior are proposed.

Research and report structure

1.5 This assessment sets out the historic development of no. 36 Percy Street. It also provides an overview of the building's significance.

1.6 The report is divided into three main sections. The first (section 2) describes the historic development of the site and the second considers its significance together with an assessment of its surviving historic fabric. The final section describes the proposed scheme and its effects.

1.7 It should be noted that in common with many historic buildings, sites and places, it is not possible to provide a truly comprehensive analysis of the site's historic development. The research and analysis set out in this report is as thorough as possible given the type and number of archival resources available. Research has been undertaken using the London Metropolitan Archives, Ordnance Survey mapping, the Camden Local Archives Centre, LB Camden planning website; and Historic England's Archive.

Author

1.8 This appraisal has been prepared by Charles Rose of The Heritage Practice Ltd. Charles Rose BA (Hons) who has extensive experience in dealing with proposals that affect the townscape and historic environment. He has over fifteen years of local authority experience, including twelve years as a Principal Conservation & Design Officer at the London Borough of Camden. He also has experience in the private sector, preparing heritage statements and appraising the significance of historic buildings.

1.9 Historical research for this report was undertaken by Dr Ann Robey FSA, a conservation and heritage professional with over twenty years experience. She has worked for leading national bodies as well as smaller local organizations and charities. She is a researcher and writer specialising in architectural, social and economic history, with a publication record that includes books, articles, exhibitions and collaborative research.

Designations

1.10 As noted above, no. 36 Percy Street is a grade II listed building. The building was listed in 1989 and forms one of a group of 4 terraced houses dating from the 1760s and refronted in the 1950s. The terrace is situated within the Charlotte Street Conservation Area.



1.11 The list description for the terrace of which it forms part reads as follows:

4 terraced houses. 1766-70; refronted 1950s. Flemish bond brick; mansard slate roof with brick ridge and end stacks and dormers. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys and attics; 11 window range. Stucco semicircular arched architrave with fanlight to mid-C18 6-panelled door to No.34, C20 door to No.35, C20 door framed by pilasters to No.36 and early C19 panelled door set in early C19 reeded architrave to No.37. Gauged red brick flat arches over 12-pane sashes and 9-pane second-floor sashes; plain storey bands. Cornice and blocking course. INTERIORS: No.36 has mid C18 open-well staircase with fine foliated wrought-iron balustrade, mid C18 panelled doors set in moulded architraves, enriched and moulded corning to ground and first floor rooms; 1st floor has moulded dado rail to front room which has mid C18 double doors with original hinges opening into rear room with fine mid C18 fireplace having central swag and fluted frieze. No.36 has similar mid C18 doors and corning, early C19 marble fireplaces, mid C18 moulded skirtings and dado rails and early C19 open-well staircase with stick balusters. No.34 has similar mid C18 doors and corning. No.35, interior not inspected.

1.12 The list description for the group makes specific reference to various internal and external features in relation to no. 36:

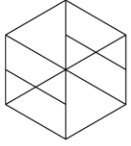
- 20th century door framed by pilasters;
- Mid-18th century open-well staircase with fine foliated wrought-iron balustrade;
- Mid-18th century double doors with original hinges;
- Mid-18th century panelled doors set in moulded architraves;
- Enriched and moulded corning to ground and first floor rooms;
- Mid-18th century fireplace to the rear room at first floor.

1.13 While the list description would appear to indicate the survival of a good degree of historic fabric in the building, it has become evident through site inspection and minor opening up works that almost all wall and ceiling finishes are in plasterboard, the majority of corning is new and doors and architraves have also been replaced.

1.14 The refronting of the building in the 1950s was a significant intervention into historic fabric and inevitably resulted in the replacement of original or early features as shown below. Opening up works have revealed modern block work and stud partitions and the extent of the plasterboard finish. Work undertaken in the 1950s has been further compounded by alterations carried out in the 1990s following a consent for various alterations to the existing building (LB Camden planning references 9401791 and 9470350).

1.15 The effect of this work is described in more detail below but certainly corning to the principal rooms now runs around modern partitioning or risers, an indication that it is a later addition, with no trace of the previous partitioning that was relatively extensive to the lower floors at least. In addition, the fireplace referred to as being in the first floor rear room is now in the first floor front room (this is now the only fire surround in the entire building). Past alteration has been very extensive.

1.16 20th century works have therefore resulted in the substantial loss of historic fabric, at least in the context of the original 18th century house. While some features do remain, such as certain doors and the principal staircase, the vast majority of the building's current appearance is derived from later 20th century intervention. What is retained is essentially a front room/rear room plan form and the circulation around and off the principal staircase. The front elevation is modern but redolent of its original 18th century appearance. The rear elevation also appears to have been substantially rebuilt.



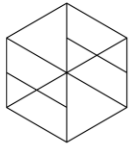
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1.17 The outcome of this, and as set out in Section 3 below, is that there is potential for change within the building because of the comparatively low significance of various areas and existing features. In addition, there are clear opportunities for the enhancement of genuine and good quality historic fabric and features.



2 No. 36 Percy Street

2.1 As noted above, no. 36 was originally constructed in the mid-18th century but has undergone numerous substantial interventions during the 20th century. The following section provides an account of the recorded changes.

Early history

2.2 *The Survey of London for Tottenham Court Road and Neighbourhood* (1949) records the early history of Percy Street. Building leases were granted on the south side of Percy Street in 1764 and on the north side in 1766. By 1770, twenty-eight houses were complete (figure 1). The buildings were originally fairly uniform in appearance: three storeys high in stock brick with red brick flat arches to the sash windows of which there were three to the upper floors. Each house has a basement with two windows and a façade terminated by a stone moulded cornice and brick parapet above which was a mansard roof with two attic dormers.

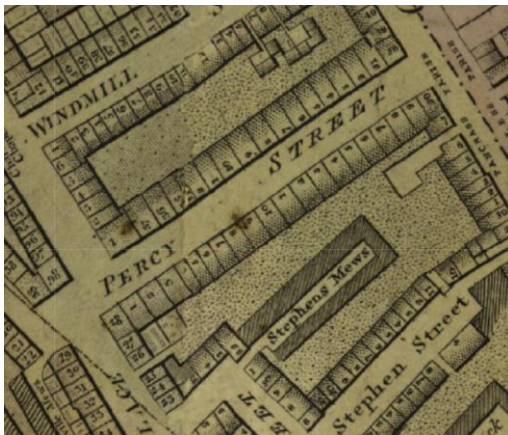


Figure 1: Horwood Map of London, 1799 with no. 36 shown.

2.3 During the 19th century, the first floor windows at nos. 36 and 37 were dropped and replaced with doors that lead onto an iron balcony (figure 2). Casements had been introduced at mansard level and 2x2 sashes were used at second floor level. Figure 2 also indicates that there were originally shutter at first floor level – these no longer exist.



Figure 2: No. 36 Percy Street, 1940s.

2.4 The Ordnance Survey map for 1870 shows the building with the chamfered rear wall and a rear outbuilding with a corresponding chamfered central bay (figure 3). The chamfered rear wall of the building is likely to be a later, 19th century addition.

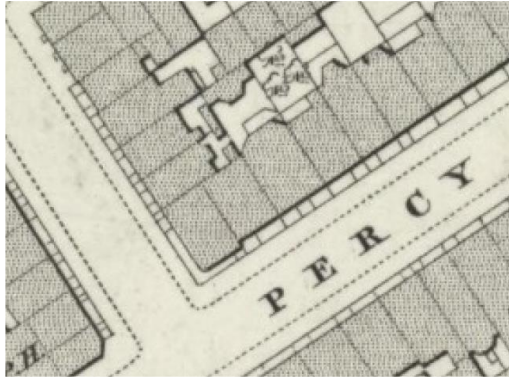
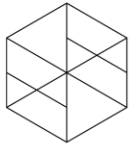


Figure 3: OS map 1870-1875.

2.5 By 1948, the Goad plan for the area indicates a number of changes to the site. These included the provision of a single storey extension to the two storey rear outbuilding (shown on the Goad plan to be in ruins – figure 4). The principal building and the rear extension were linked by a single storey wooden link building. The mansard roof is shown as having a slate covering to the front and a tile covering to the rear. In use terms, the building is no longer in domestic use but has various commercial uses and a restaurant at basement level.

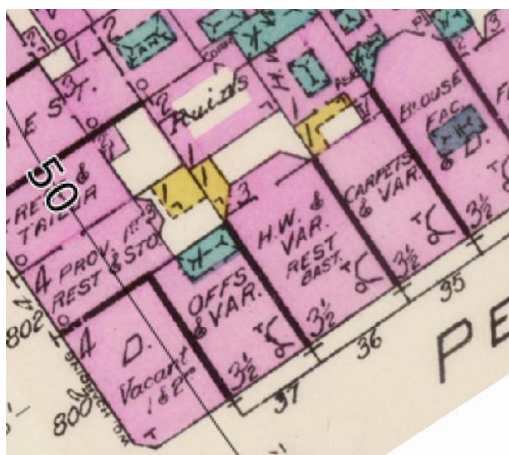


Figure 4: Goad Plan, 1948

2.6 In the 1950s, nos. 34-37 were refronted. This meant new construction with new windows and other features including a new front door. The balcony was removed and the first floor windows were resized to their

original proportions (figure 5 shows the newly reconstructed frontages in a photograph of the 1960s). Works to the front elevation inevitably had consequences for the interiors (certainly the front rooms and wall dividing the front room from the staircase). Fabric was lost internally and replaced with modern fabric.

2.7 Also in the 1950s, the historic rear outbuilding was replaced (figure 6). Drainage plans show an outbuilding with a deeper plan than the existing. The appearance of the existing rear extension is the result of works



undertaken in the 1990s.

Figure 5: No. 36 Percy Street in the 1960s showing the reconstructed facades of nos. 34-37 Percy Street.

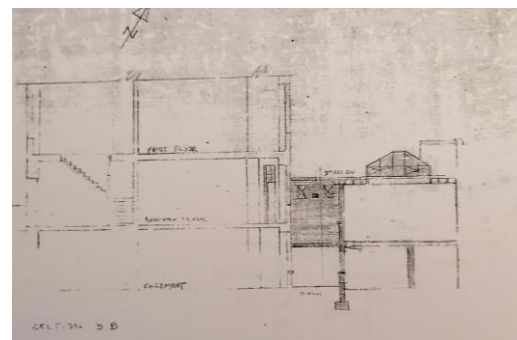
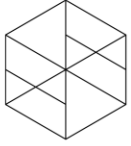


Figure 6: Drainage plan application 1950 showing rear extension.

2.8 The works of the 1950s made fairly fundamental changes to the building and wider site. In the period from the 1950s until listing in 1987, various other alterations were made to the building. Comparing drainage plans of 1950 for the lower floors with existing plans from



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1988 (figure 7) the level of change and intensification of use is evident.

2.9 There are no traces of the partitioning in the existing floor and ceiling finishes or in the corncing. This, together with minor opening up works that have revealed modern fabric, further informs the knowledge that much of the internal fabric has been replaced.

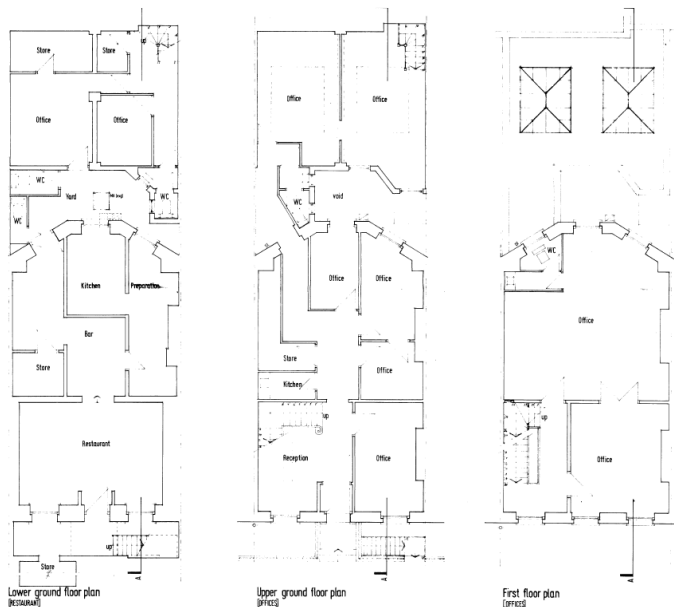
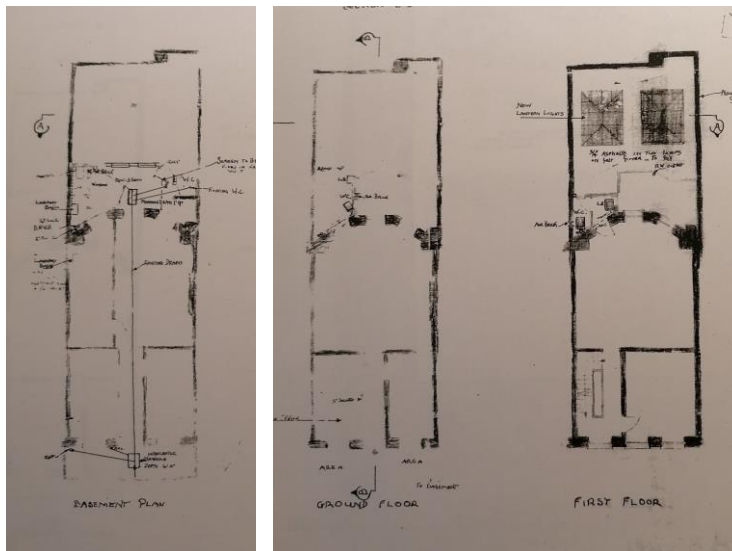
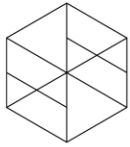


Figure 7: 1950 plans (above) and 1980s plans (below). At basement level, partitions have been removed to the front room and added to the rear room. The ground floor rear room was very heavily partitioned by the 1980s and a small area of partitioning was added at first floor level to the rear room. The plans show that the staircase between ground and lower ground was removed during the post-war period.



Relevant planning history

2.10 There are a number of applications that relate to the site. These include the following:

- **1988** (reference 8870213): *Demolition and rebuilding of rear extension at basement and ground floor levels and internal alterations.* The informative attached to the decision noted that the building was at that time being considered for listing. The application proposed a change of use to offices with an existing residential use at second and third floor relocated to the lower ground. The approved scheme also involved the partial rebuilding of the rear extension on a smaller footprint and with a larger link corridor (reference 8800553). Approved but apparently not implemented.
- **1990** (reference 9070040): *Interior refurbishment and alterations consequent on the relocation of existing residential unit within the basement, including rebuilding wall to rear extension.* The conditions attached to this listed building consent application required detailed drawings for 'new French doors to the rear elevation at basement level' and 'new fire surround in ground floor rear room'. Approved. There are no available drawings online for the proposed 1990s scheme (only existing). Given that the existing plan no longer reflects the existing of 1990, it can be assumed that works were undertaken at this point.
- **1994** (reference 9470350): *The erection of a third dormer window on the front elevation.*
- **2001** (reference LSX0005155/R1) installation of air conditioning unit to rear extension.
- **2006** (2006/1172/P): Certificate of Lawfulness granted for office use at basement level.
- **2022** (2021/3167/P & 2021/3167/P): *External and internal alterations in connection with the refurbishment of existing office space, including new black aluminium doors and windows to internal courtyard, enlarged replacement roof lanterns and new roof glazing, alterations to rear parapet walls, installation of new metal railing to rear 1st floor window, and fixing of black metal lettering adjacent to front entrance door; Internal alterations include, removal and replacement of non-original partitions at various floor levels and restoration of original stone staircase of the entrance hall at ground floor level.*
- **2022** (2022/1470/L) Internal works at lower ground and third floor levels. Refused May 2022

modern fabric to walls and ceilings and the likelihood of modern corncicing and other fabric. Obviously, all of the front elevation is modern and this extends through to the rear elevation and extension.

The 1990s work is not fully documented but it is clear that work was extensive. As indicated by the existing plans of the building, work was undertaken at all levels. Opening up works have revealed the extent of

2.11 The following section considers the existing building in more detail and the significance of its composite parts and as a whole.



3 Description and analysis

3.1 No. 36 is in theory a mid-18th century townhouse. The plan form of the building is broadly characteristic of this period but alterations to the layout and the subdivision of areas and floors have eroded its legibility and overall character. In plan, front and rear rooms are arranged around the principal staircase but at lower ground and ground floor, the legibility of this original layout has been diminished. As noted above, the degree of survival of historic fabric is comparatively low, following refronting and a substantial conversion in the 1990s.

Elevations

3.2 The principal elevation is three storeys high above the basement and three bays wide with a central doorcase. The main entrance door is modern, as are the windows which are all timber sashes. The building is constructed in stock brick with rubbed red brick arches (figure 8).



Figure 8: Front elevation.

3.3 The elevation comprises a full height and full width canted bay (figure 9). The upper levels appear to have been rebuilt or heavily repaired with the window arches to the lower floors replaced. The windows to the rear elevation are not original but match the fenestration pattern seen on the front elevation. As noted above, the link block and rear extension within the courtyard are modern.



Figure 9: Rear elevation

Plan form

3.4 As noted above, subdivision of the later 20th century has diminished the ability to appreciate plan form at lower ground and ground floor levels in particular. The second floor layout has also been altered. The ground and lower ground floor layout has been compromised partly due to the creation of corridors to the lower floors to link through into the rear additions.

3.5 The original vertical circulation remains in part with the principal staircase running between ground and second floor levels. A secondary staircase runs between first and



second floor levels. The staircase to the basement from ground floor has been removed with a new stair outside of the main body of the house within the modern extension (figures 10 and 11).



Figure 10: Principal staircase from ground to second floor.

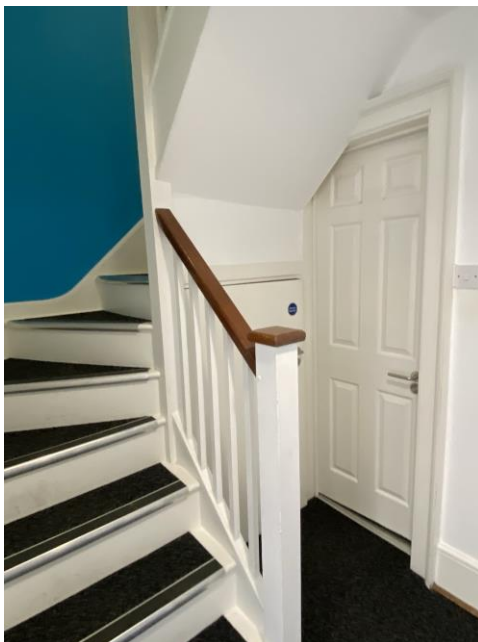


Figure 11: Modern secondary staircase in original location.

Interior

3.6 The interior has a superficial 18th century character but opening up works throughout the building have demonstrated that there is a considerable amount of plasterboard finish to walls and ceilings and modern stud wall partitions. The latter are found both in the later subdivision of principal spaces and on the line of original partitions – i.e. historic fabric has clearly been removed throughout the building.

3.7 In terms of features, all of the windows are modern, there is only one fireplace and the main stone stair has been painted over and the steps laid with glued carpet. Some original doors remain. There is no panelling or historic or decorative plasterwork as would be expected in a house of this date. Historic photographs of other properties on Percy Street and the *Survey of London* record the decorative schemes seen in other nearby properties. From this, it is clear that panelling and decorative plasterwork would have been original features of the building.

3.8 Nos. 2 and 29 have the same staircase design as no. 36 but no. 29 at least is also panelled with moulded plaster ceilings. It is reasonable to assume, given the design consistency of the street, that no. 36 would also have originally had similar features.

Basement

3.9 The basement is entirely modern in character with no visible features of historic interest. The layout of the rear room has been altered with a corridor at lower ground floor level through to the rear extension. The lower ground floor staircase has also been removed.

Ground

3.10 The principal rear room has been heavily subdivided. The main entrance hall and stair compartment and front room retain a degree of historic character but much of the fabric to these areas is modern (figure 12). No fireplaces exist at this level and in the rear



room, a partition cuts through the chimney breast.



Figure 12: Ground floor front room.

First floor

3.11 The first floor retains the original front and rear room layout. The only fireplace in the building is located in the first floor front room although we know from the list description that this has been relocated from the rear room (figure 13). The rear room is a substantial size but has modern plaster finishes throughout.

Second Floor

3.12 At second floor level the main staircase terminates. There is a small later WC enclosure over the stair and an arched opening to the secondary staircase (figure 14). There are modern partitions to the rear and the dividing walls between front and rear rooms and the front room and stair compartment are in modern stud work and plasterboard (figure 15).



Figure 13: First floor front room.



Figure 14: Second floor WC and arch through to the secondary staircase.

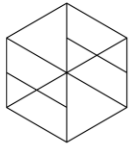


Figure 15: Second floor rear room.

Third floor

3.14 The existing third floor has a three room layout with all modern fabric. There are no visible features of historic interest at this level.

Significance

3.15 The assessment of heritage significance below draws upon the definitions of heritage interest provided by the Statutory legislation; the NPPF, the widely-referenced definitions of heritage value devised by Historic England's 2008 study Conservation Principles, and the Government's supplementary planning Historic England guidance 'London Terrace Houses 1660-1860- A Guide to Alterations and Extensions'¹ and

newly adopted guidance on conserving Georgian and Victorian terraced housing².

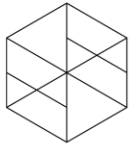
3.16 The statutory listing provides some guide to the importance of the historic building. No. 36 is a grade II listed building, added to the statutory list in 1989, much later than the majority of mid-18th century houses in the street. This is presumably due to the refronting of nos. 34-37 in the 1950s. Although listed, the buildings lack a degree of authenticity that is otherwise seen in other listed buildings on Percy Street. This is also reflected in its interior where there is very little fabric of interest.

3.17 Due to the building's history of development, there is little value in the retained fabric (with the exception of stand-out items such as the main staircase). The interest lies mostly in the building's architectural value – its layout where it survives and its principal elevation to the street. The latter reinforces the consistency originally seen in 18th century Percy Street and the architectural composition of the terraced houses as a cohesive group.

3.18 In the architectural consistency reinstated in the 1950s, the overall design intent of the 19th century developers of Fitzrovia is more legible (although this did result in the loss of early 19th century features). The building therefore contributes to the narrative of the development of the wider area albeit in a lesser way because it lacks the same integrity and authenticity of comparable examples.

¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/find/a-z-archived/#atoaL>

² <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conserving-georgian-victorian-terraced-housing/>



4 The application scheme

4.1 The following section provides an overview of the application scheme and considers its effects on the existing building. This section should be read in conjunction with the application drawings (A1.11 and 03 A1.1 03).

4.2 The existing building is in Class E use and the continuation of this use is proposed.

4.3 At lower ground floor, the front room would be divided to provide a more flexible space in line with the companies core business. The site will be occupied Caudalie which is a French skincare company, specialised in Vinotherapie. The proposal is to utilise part of the lower ground floor space for treatment rooms. The works relate to the front and rear rooms only.

Front room

4.4 At present the front room presents itself as a single volume (figure 17). However, Figure 16 shows evidence of the former historic layout of the front room which contains two partitions creating a corridor from the front door leading from the front lightwell.

4.5 Corridors forming dedicated access routes from the front lightwell were fairly typical for houses of the period. However these were often set to one side of the property aligned with the entrance door. Here the entrance door and door to the front lightwell is in the centre of the building, this has created a central corridor arrangement.

4.6 The proposed intension (figure 18) would be reinstate, as far as possible, the historic corridor. The only difference being that one side of the corridor is scalloped to take account of the door opening to the rear room.

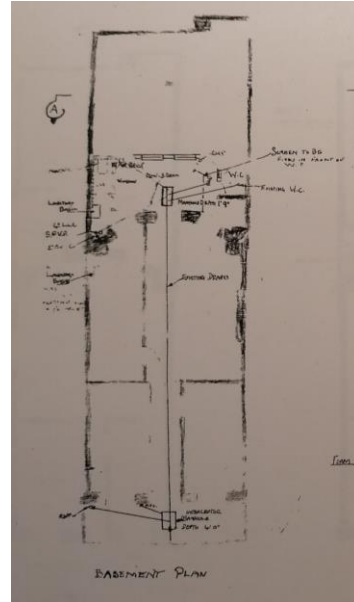


Figure 16: Extract from Drainage plan showing the historic partitioning to the front room and rear room.

4.7 Were the partition to be straight (as indicated by the dashed green line on the plan) it would crash into the existing retained door opening. For this reason righthand-side partition is shaped rather than angled. This allows for a more generous entrance or waiting area.

4.8 The proposed works to the front room would seek to reinstate the former partitions and would not cause harm to the harms the spatial qualities of the space which was seemingly divided historically.

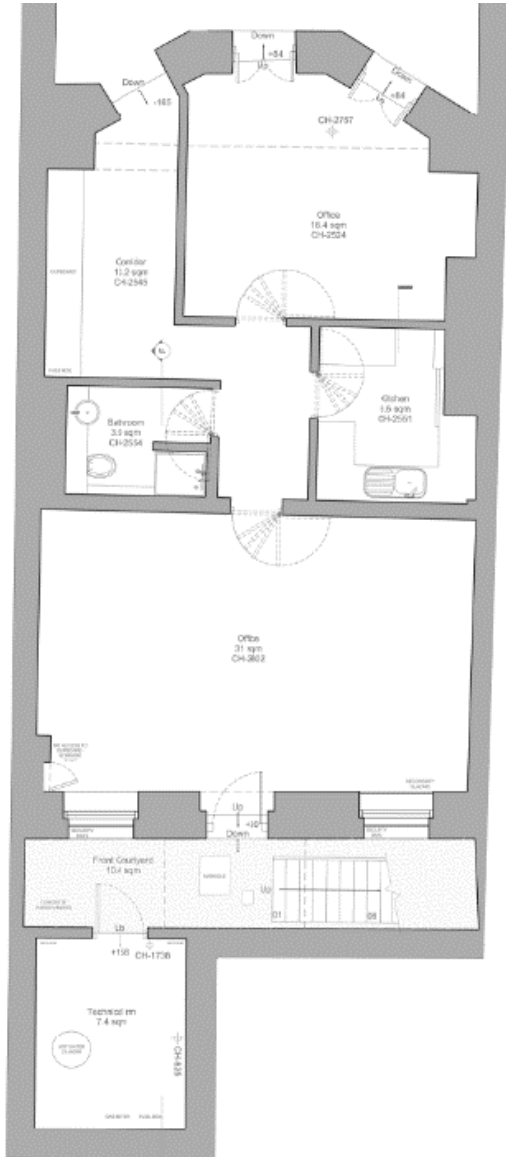
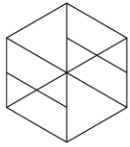


Figure 17: Existing lower ground floor plan

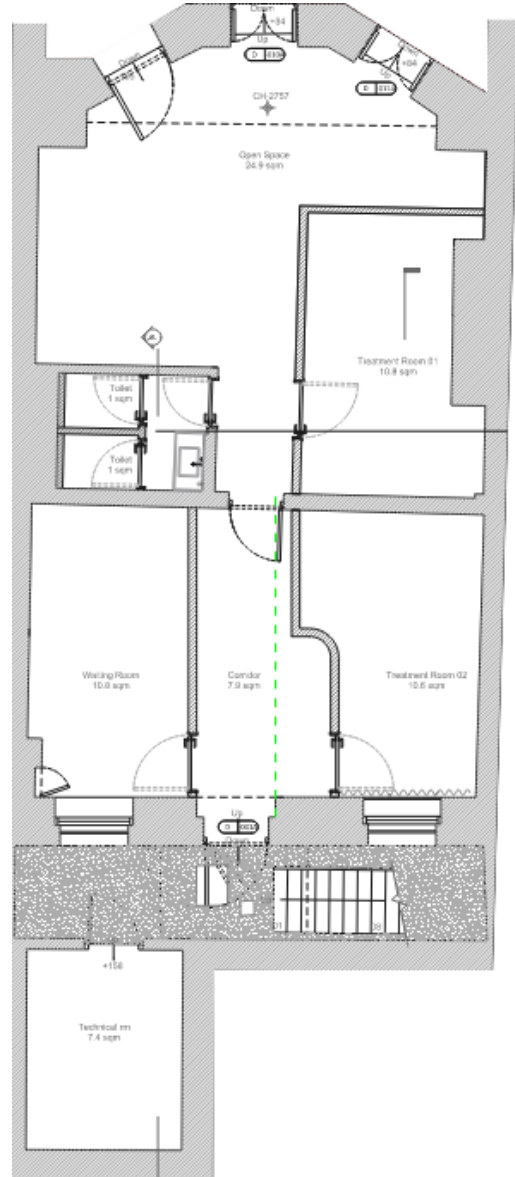
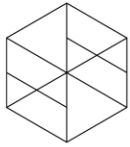


Figure 18: Proposed lower ground floor plan

Rear room

4.9 At present the rear room is divided with modern partitions forming a bathroom; kitchen; corridor and office (Drawing A1.11 figure 17).

4.10 The proposal layout would rationalise the layout. The layout of the rear room has been amended following the May 2022 refused scheme. The existing toilets remain. The laundry room has been removed. The existing kitchen and office partition walls would be removed. By doing so the corridor would be omitted creating a larger single volume to the majority of the space.



4.11 The sense of the existing 'corridor' would be further eroded through the introduction of a new door with the rear canted bar window, creating a stronger sense of a single room rather than a passage way.

4.12 The former kitchen would be replaced with a treatment room which would benefit from not cutting through the existing chimneybreast. This would allow the breast to be better appreciated and recognised, enhancing the original floor plan and sole remaining feature with the historic room.

4.13 Overall the works to the rear room would have a greater spatial quality with the removal of the narrow corridor running through the room. The comparison plans are shown below for ease of reference.

4.14 The original volume of the rear room to a more appreciable which would benefit the overall character of the listed building. In any event the treatment room partition installation would be wholly reversible. The business would undertake to reverse the works upon vacating the building if necessary.

Conclusions

4.15 The general thrust of national and local historic environment policy is to conserve and enhance the significance of designated heritage assets (such as listed buildings and conservation areas) and understandably to avoid harmfully affecting their special interest.

4.16 The proposals as set out above have been informed and shaped by an understanding of the historic building and its development.

4.17 The proposals involve the removal of fabric but this fabric is modern and therefore of little historic or architectural special interest. Where reinstatement of partitions is proposed to the front room these partitions relate to the historic layout of the building. Where new partitions are proposed to the rear room they rationalise and better reveal the volume of the

room and better reveal the remaining architectural feature space in a manner which preserves and enhances the plan form.

4.18 Overall therefore, the proposals would be sympathetic to the architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building and are considered to be acceptable.