



Donald Insall Associates

Chartered Architects and Historic Building Consultants

25 John Street, London

Design & Access Statement and Heritage Statement

December 2022



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Contact information

Michele Verdi (Senior Architect)
michele.verdi@insall-architects.co.uk

Robin Dhar (Director)
robin.dhar@insall-architects.co.uk

London Office
12 Devonshire Street, London, W1G 7AB
Tel: 020 7245 9888
www.insall-architects.co.uk

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1 Summary of Report

This Design and Access and Heritage Statement is part of the information provided for the Planning and Listed Building Consent applications.

This set of proposals comprises of minor works that complement the recently approved Planning and Listed Building Consent applications (Ref. 2021/3925/P and 2021/4813/L).

This application is being made for minor works mainly including the removal of the cementitious render in the front lightwell and the installation of new security bars to windows and door at basement level; the removal of modern radiators and installation of traditionally designed radiators at first floor level; the installation of an air brick for the extractor outlet of the bathroom at the rear of the property, and additional minor alterations, as indicated in the drawings accompanying this application.

2 Introduction

The property is located on the west side of John Street, in the Borough of Camden, London.

The property is listed at Grade II, forming part of a group listing for Nos.22-28 John Street, and is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.



Street View of John Street (Donald Insall Associates)

25 John Street

John Street

3 Historical Summary

3.1 Area History

John Street lies within the Holborn area, which was developed along the 'Houlbourne' (name given to part of the river Fleet), since the middle ages. The area was built following the developments of Covent Garden on one side and Bloomsbury on the other. John Street was laid out from the south as a wide thoroughfare, and built up in 1756-9 by carpenter John Blagrove.

The status and character of the area declined during the 19th century, but the beginning of the 20th century presented substantial improvements of the area from an industrial, commercial and infrastructure point of view.

Holborn suffered extensively during the Second World War; however, it appears that John Street was not substantially affected by the bomb's damage.



Horwood's Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster, 1792-99, John Street marked in red (British Library)



Ordnance Survey map, 1896, site marked in red (National Library of Scotland)

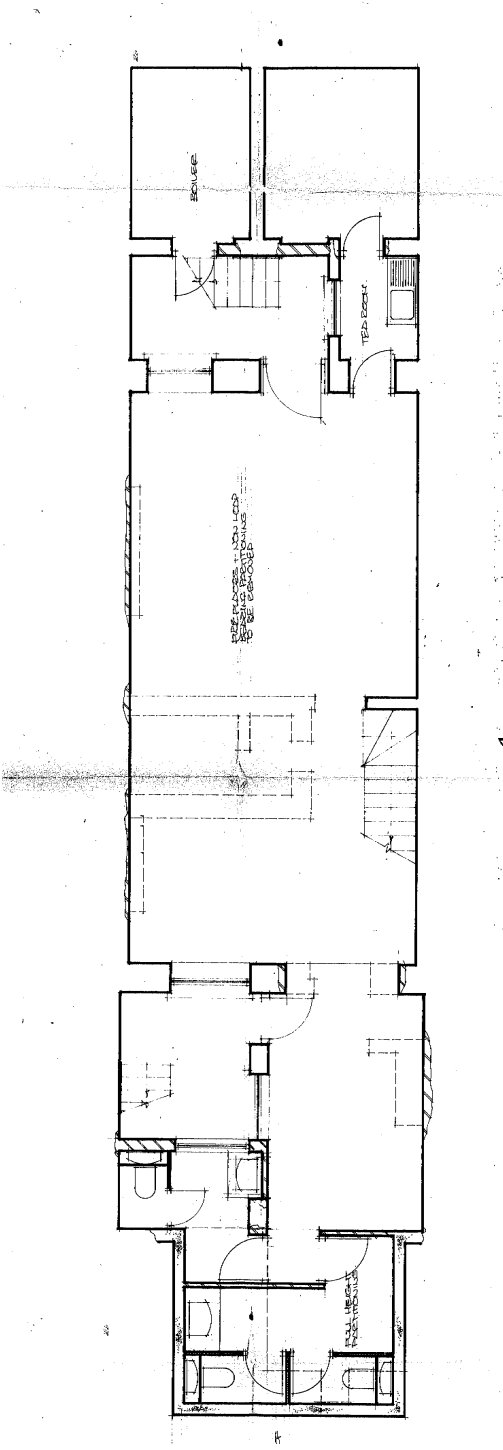
3.2 25 John Street

According to map evidence, 25 John Street was built between 1800 and 1819 as part of a range of terraced houses along the street’s west side. There are no original plan records for the building, though lease records from Camden Local Studies and Archives show that 25 John Street was subdivided and let as offices (possibly with a mix of flats) most likely from 1888, or from 1898 at the latest.

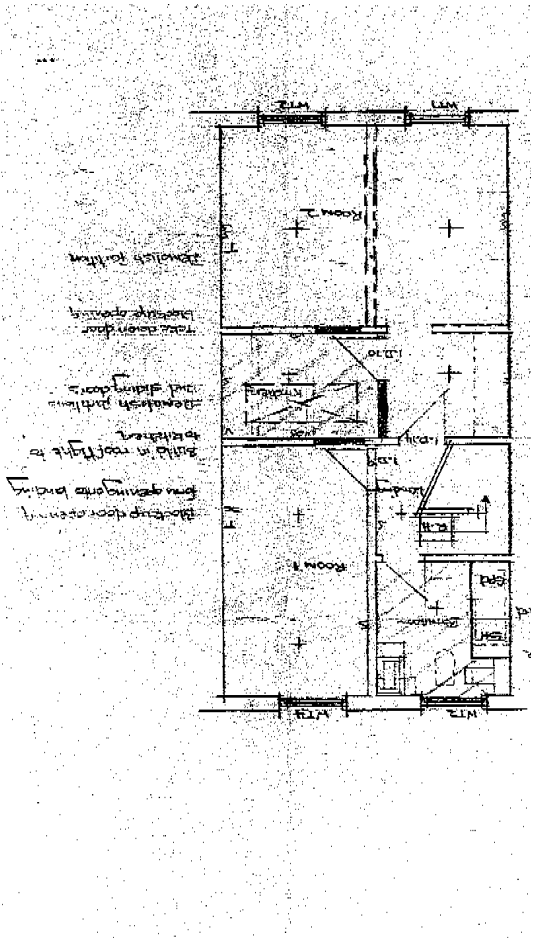
The Ordnance Survey map of 1894-96 illustrates the footprint of the main house and mews at the end of the 19th century, with a long rear closet wing already built along the south wall of the plot. The 1953 Ordnance map shows that the building mostly retained the footprint of that shown in 1915. The earliest available floor plans date from the early/ mid 1970s, and show that the house was in mixed office and residential use at this time.

The Basement, Ground Floor and First Floors were in use as offices in 1975, whereas the Second and Third floor were comprised of a single residential unit. On the Third floor, a small kitchen was located at the centre of the floorplan, with evidence of a rooflight that was to be added here as part of the 1975 proposals.

In 1988, an application was consented to rebuild and enlarge the rear extension, and to add an additional rear conservatory.



1972 Basement Plan (Camden Planning)



1975 Third Floor Plan (Camden Planning)



Rear elevation of 25 John Street, 1975 (London Metropolitan Archives)

4 The Existing Property

Works have recently started on site in compliance with the previously approved Planning and Listed Building Consent applications (Ref. 2021/3925/P and 2021/4813/L).

The main access to the property is from John Street, where a few stone steps and a landing lead to the front porch and entrance door.

On the Ground Floor, a corridor precedes the staircase, which retains its historic layout. The Front room and Mid room are part of the original building's footprint and generally retain their historic proportions, whilst the Back room and Conservatory are part of a later modern extension.

The upper floors also retains the original proportions of the rooms and the historic plan form. Modern additions like service risers, conduits and electric devices are being rationalised as part of the current approved application and works.

The Basement floor has been much altered over the years and its historic plan form has been lost. This level presented modern finishes, lightweight partitions, a suspended grid ceiling and modern services.



Basement



Basement front room

Cementitious internal and external render, trapping moisture within masonry wall.



Basement External View

Modern security bars to be replaced with traditionally designed metal bars, set within the external window reveals.

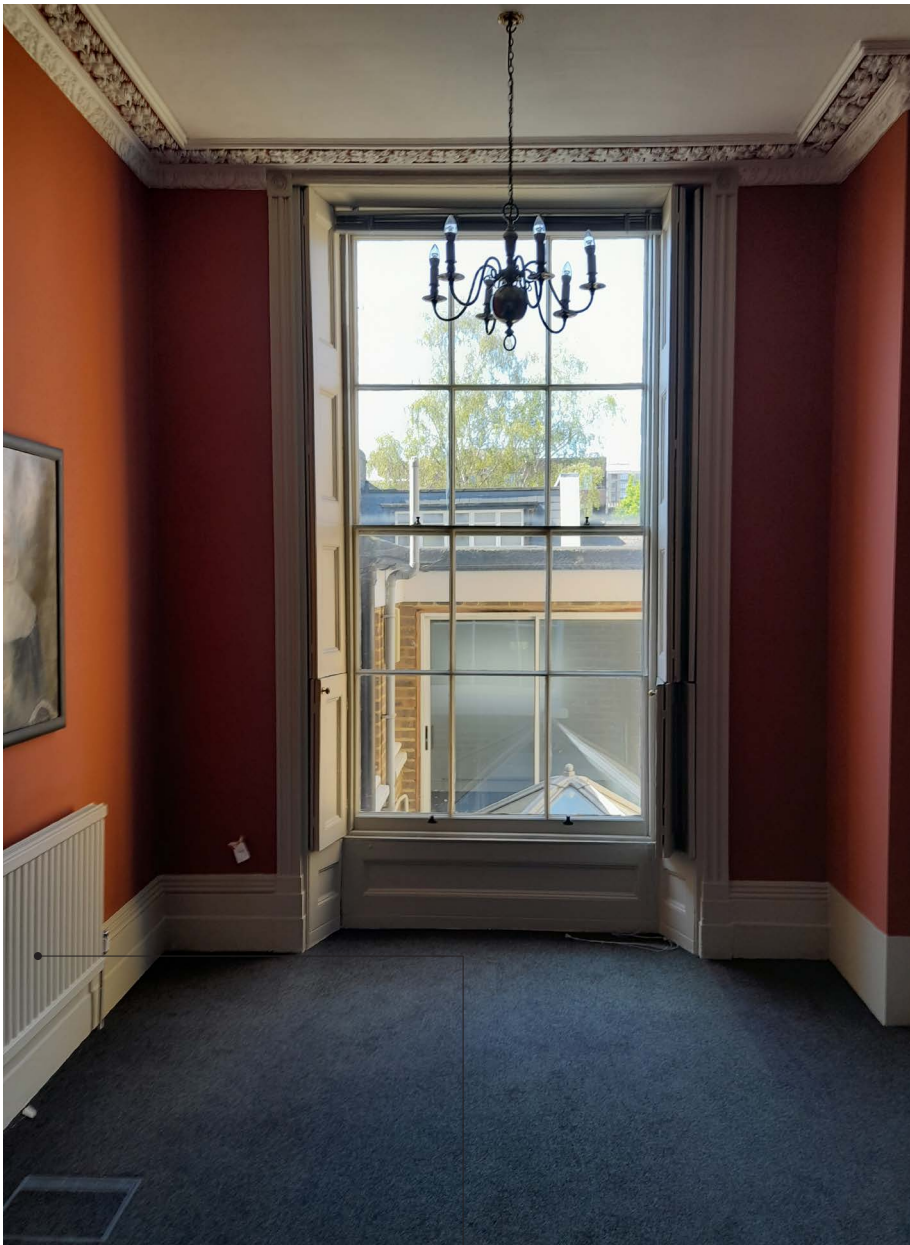


Basement rear room



First Floor front room

Existing modern radiator.

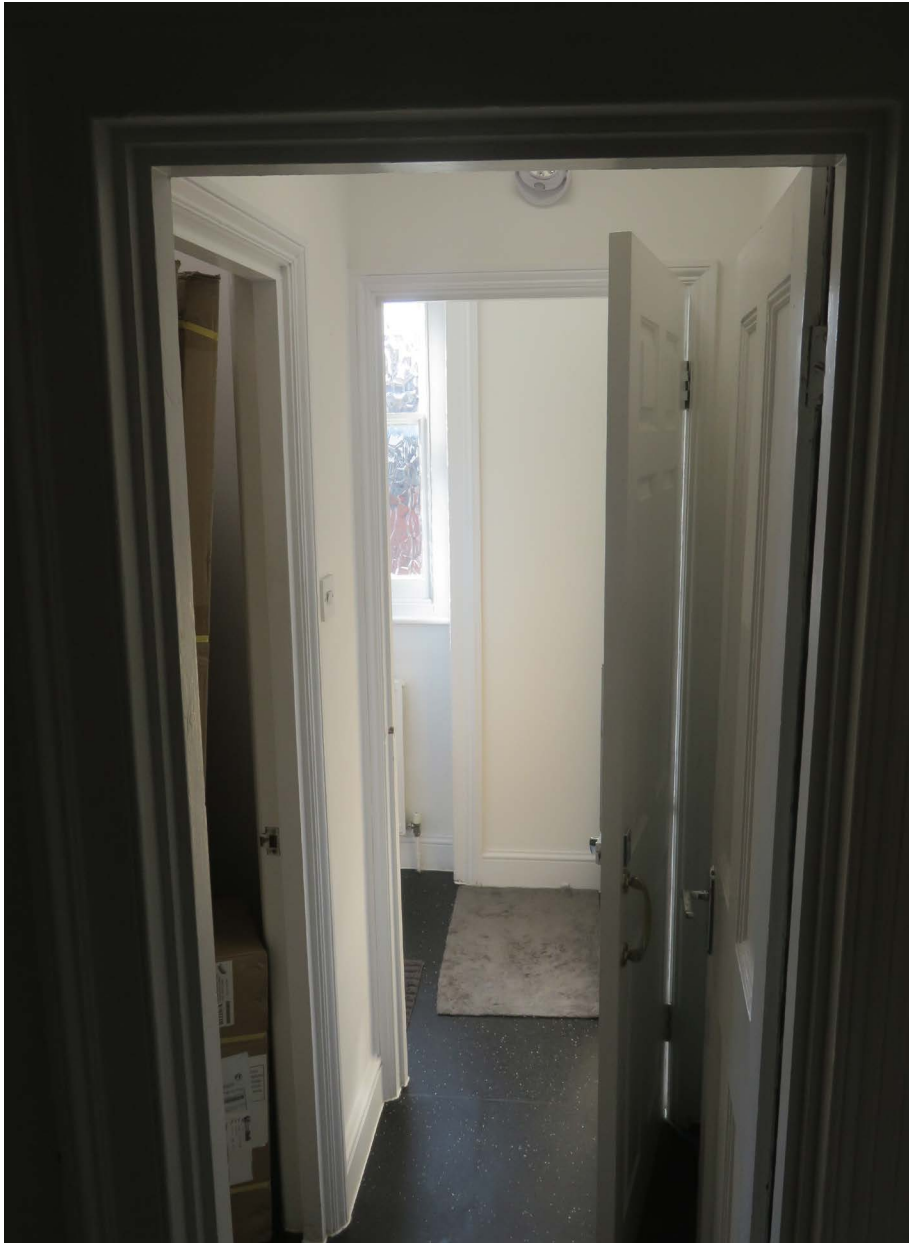


First Floor rear room

Existing modern radiator.



Second Floor rear room in master bathroom, showing modern plasterboard ceiling.



Third Floor bathroom at the rear of the property, showing modern finishes and fittings.



Third Floor room where new en-suite bathroom is to be installed.

6 Assessment of Significance

6.1 No.25 John Street

No. 25 John Street is of special interest as an example of an early-19th-century townhouse. Its principal significance lies in its external appearance and its contribution to the listed terrace, the wider street scene and the conservation area. The interior plan form has been largely preserved and is of significance, particularly on the principal floors, apart from the basement which has been considerably altered.

This assessment of significance focus on the rooms affected by the alterations included in this application, as the other rooms of the property would not be affected by the current proposals.

The **basement** floor has been much altered in recent years when the rooms were used as offices and a modern grid ceiling with downlights was installed.

The plan form of this level has also been transformed to suit the layout of the office space, leaving only the stairs and immediate lobby unaltered. This special interest is manifest in the fabric and plan form of the building, which has the following hierarchy of significance.

Of **moderate significance** are:

- The original basement staircase with its modern handrail;

Of **limited significance** is:

- The basement plan form which has undergone substantial alteration, with only fragments of the original layout remaining;

Factors which **detract** from the building’s significance are:

- Trunking and tiled suspended ceilings in various rooms at basement level;

- The wire-glazed screen that partially replaces the balustrade of the basement staircase;

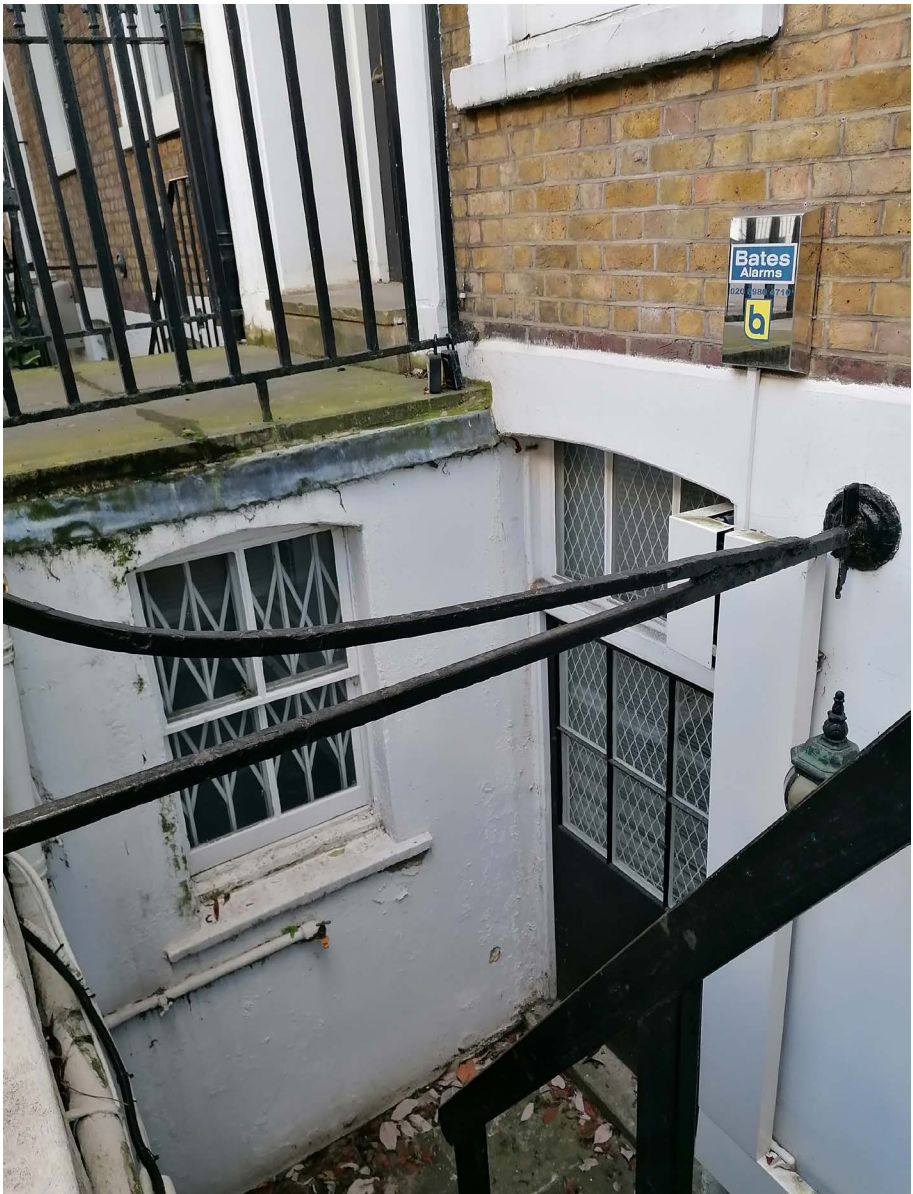
The interior plan form has been largely preserved on the **upper floors** and is of significance, particularly on the principal floors. The original hierarchy of floor levels (and their different status) is still evident in terms of the varied storey heights and some of the surviving decorative features.

Of **high significance** are:

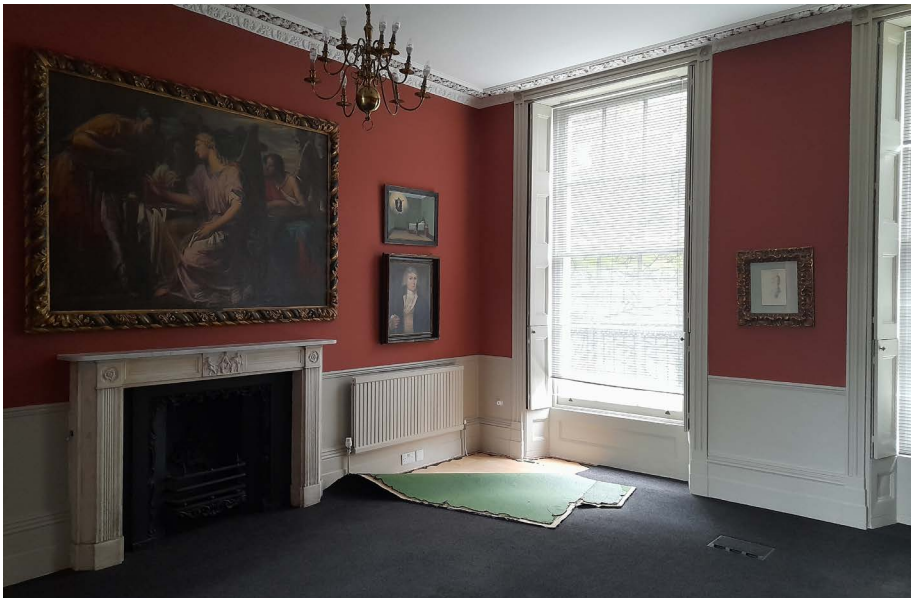
- Original/19th-century decorative features and joinery, where they remain, including chimneypieces, cornices, doors, window and door architraves, window aprons, skirtings dado rails etc. (which will not be affected by the proposed works).

Of **neutral significance, neither contributing to nor detracting** from the significance of the whole are:

- 20th-century/modern fixtures and fittings, such as doors, cornices, skirtings and chimneypieces, some of which contribute to a sense of character but which are of no interest in terms of their fabric;
- Modern lavatories and bathrooms;



Basement - Cementitious render and rising damp in front wall



First Floor - Front Room

7 Design Proposals

7.1 Basement and First Floor

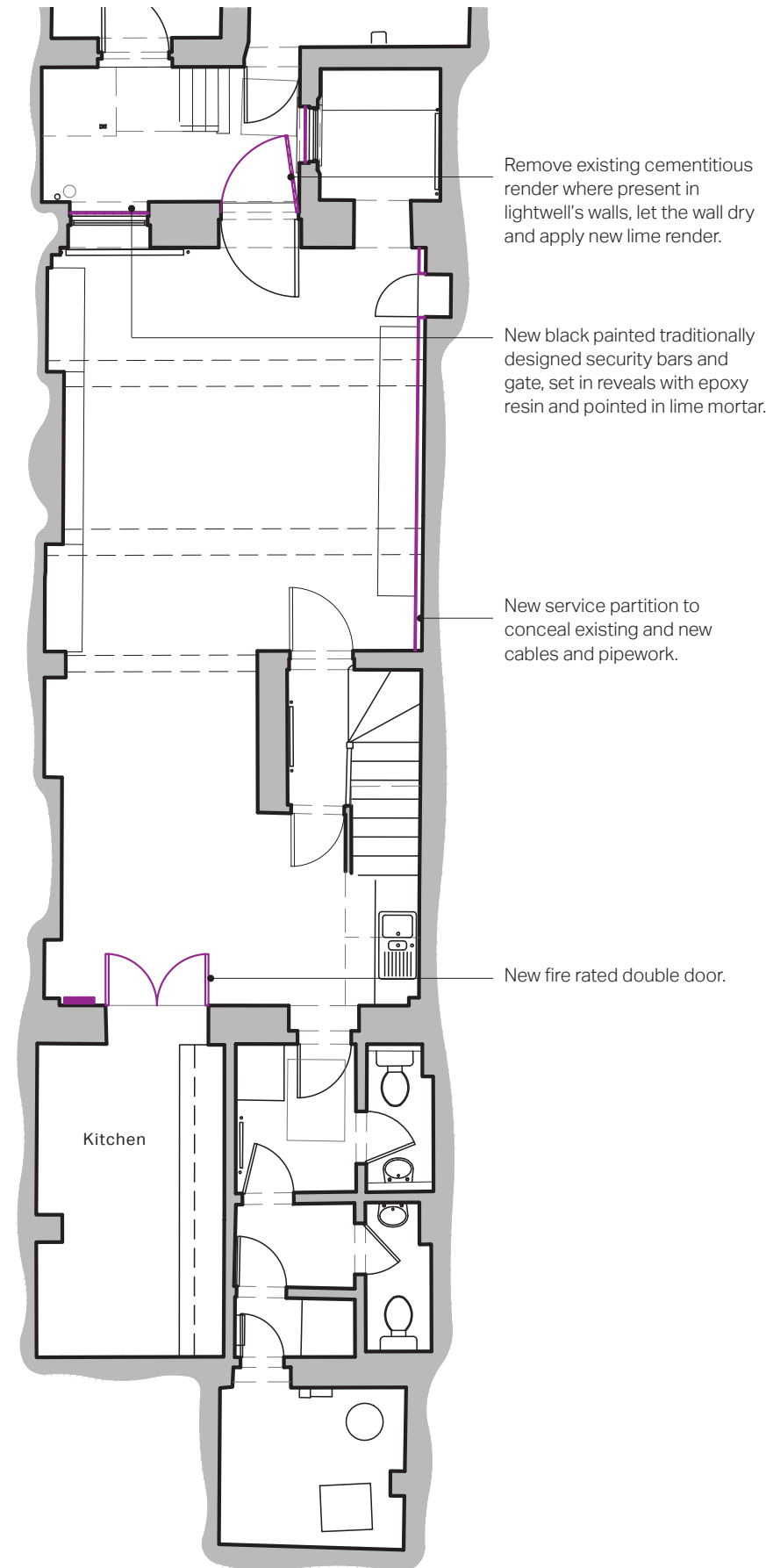
In conjunction with the works permitted under the previously consented applications (Planning and Listed Building Consent applications Ref. 2021/3925/P and 2021/4813/L), it is proposed, at **basement** level:

- To remove the existing cementitious render in the front lightwell, and to let the damp walls dry, and then apply a layer of breathable lime render, to be painted in a white colour.
- The installation of a new fire rated double door to separate the existing kitchen.
- The installation of new black painted traditionally designed security bars to basement front windows and door, to be set within the existing reveals, and fixed with epoxy resin, and to be pointed in lime mortar.
- The installation of a lightweight service partition to conceal existing and new electric cables and pipework.

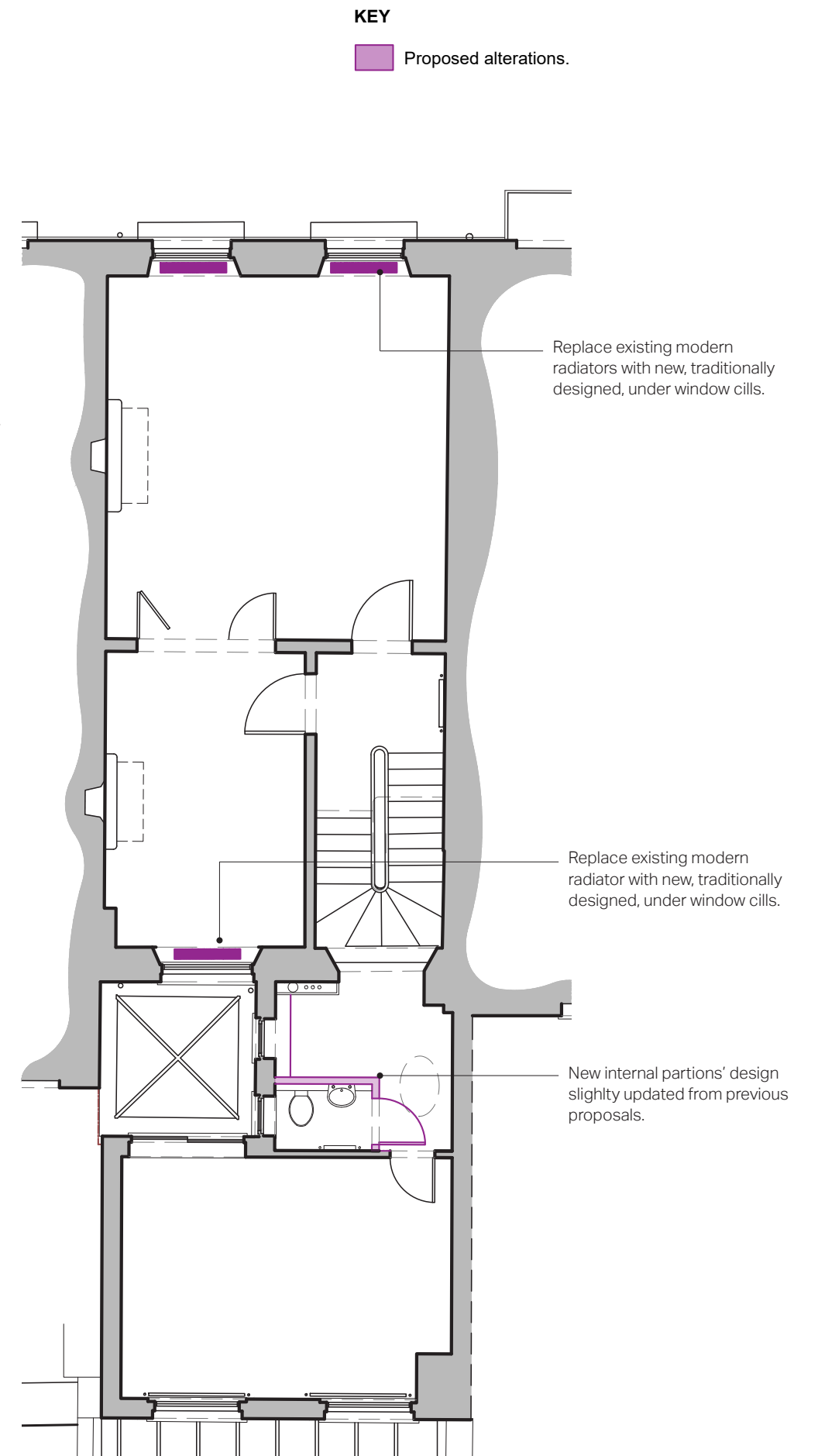
No alteration is proposed to the ground floor.

On the **first floor**, it is proposed to:

- Remove the existing modern radiators in the front and rear rooms, and to replace them with traditionally designed radiators, fitted under the existing window cills.
- Slightly update the partition layout of the loo on the modern mezzanine floor, as indicated in the drawing accompanying the application.



Basement Plan - Extract from drawing 2000



First Floor Plan - Extract from drawing 2002

7.2 Second Floor and Third Floor


On the **second floor** it is proposed to:

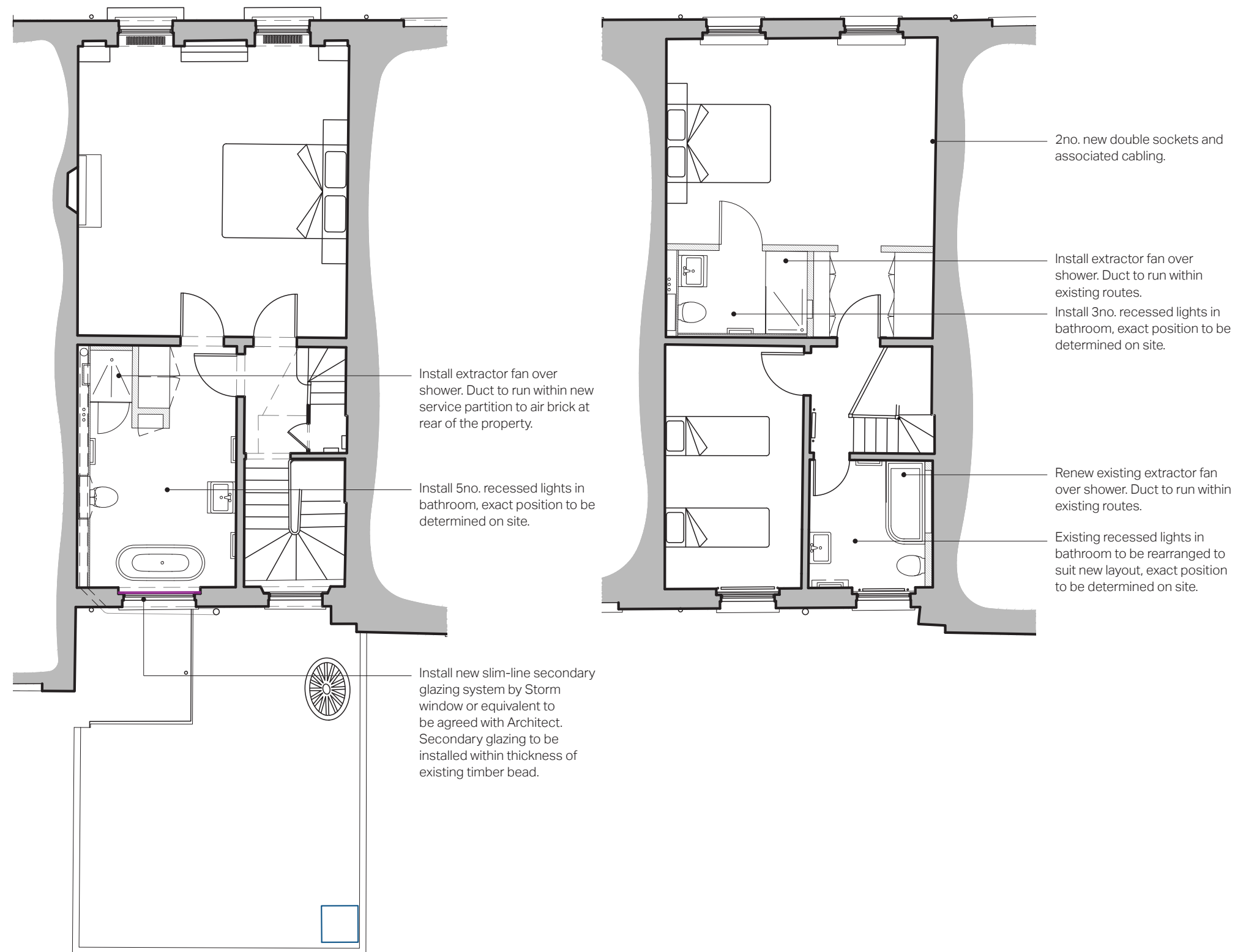
- Install a new extractor fan over the shower. The extractor fan's duct would run within the new lightweight service partition without affecting the existing fabric, to an air brick at the rear of the property. The air brick would match in size, colour and appearance the existing adjacent bricks, and the affected masonry would be made good with brickwork and mortar to match the historic adjacent.
- Install 5no. recessed downlights to the existing modern plasterboard ceiling in the rear bathroom.
- Install new slim-line secondary glazing system to the rear window in the bathroom. Secondary glazing system by Storm window or equivalent to be agreed with Architect, and to be installed within the thickness of the existing timber beads.

On the **third floor** it is proposed to:

- Install a new extractor fan over the shower of the new en-suite bathroom (re-using existing routes for ducting, where possible) and to renew the existing extractor fan in the second bathroom at the rear of the property.
- Install recessed downlights within the existing modern plasterboard ceiling of the bathrooms, which are set back from the front elevation and are not visible from the street.

KEY

 Proposed alterations.



Second Floor Plan - Extract from drawing 2003

Third Floor Plan - Extract from drawing 2004

8 Accessibility

The current proposals would not affect the accessibility to the property.

The existing stepped entrance through the front door on John Street would remain unaltered.

9 Impact of Proposals

The removal of the existing cementitious render in the front lightwell, which is believed to currently be trapping moisture, would allow the existing fabric to dry and let the trapped moisture evaporate. Once the external walls would be dry, the brickwork would be protected with a layer of lime render, painted white to match the existing appearance. The lime render would allow moisture to 'travel' and evaporate according to the weather and seasons, and not be trapped in the existing structure.

The new service partition in the basement would be lightweight and reversible, and would be sensibly conceal existing and new electric cables and pipework.

The new security bars to the windows and the gate to the door in the front lightwell would improve the overall security of the property and enhance the appearance of the front elevation, where the current modern bars are currently detracting. The new security bars and gate would be traditionally designed and black painted, and would be set within the external reveals, and fixed with epoxy resin into the existing masonry. The fixings would then be pointed in lime mortar.

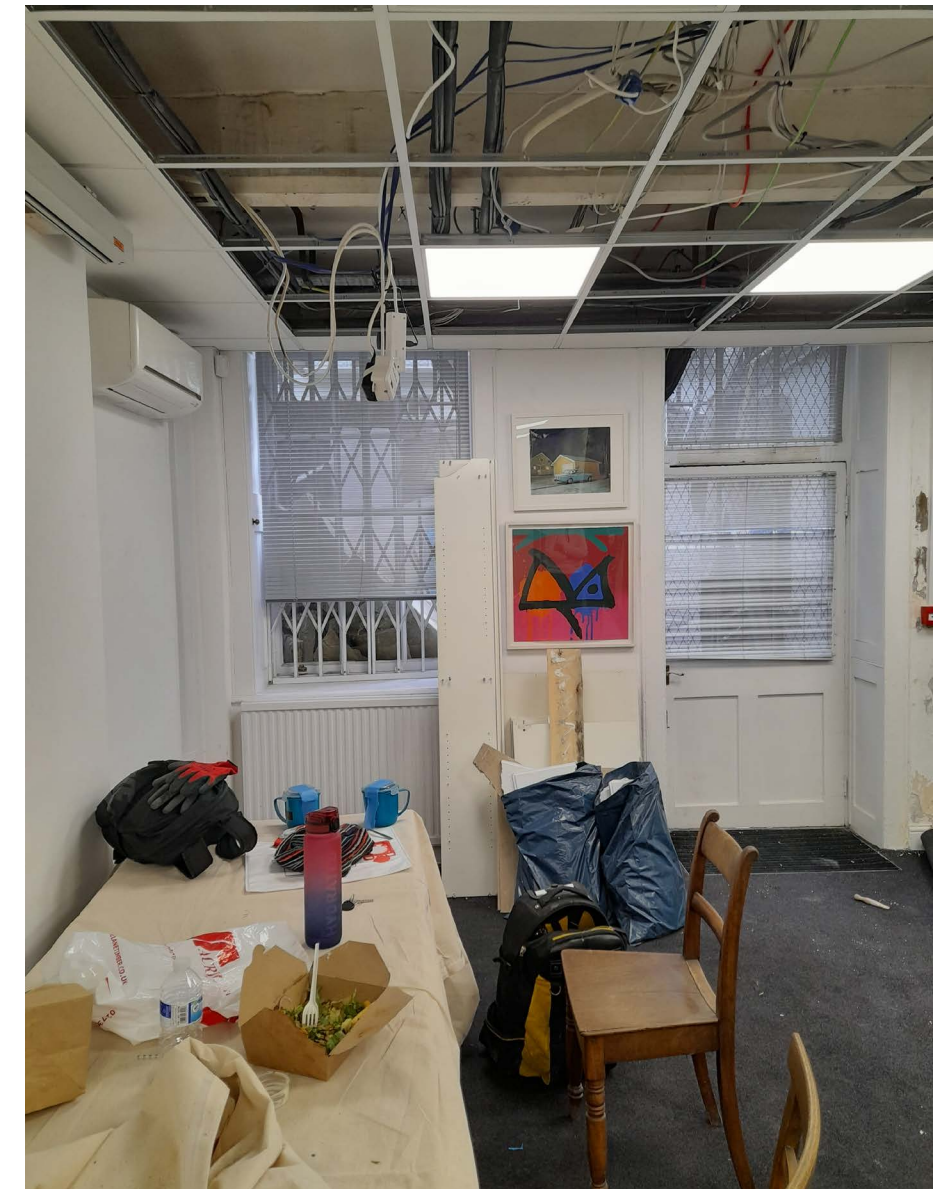
On the first floor, the existing modern radiators would be removed and new traditionally designed radiators would be installed under the window cills, to compliment the historic feeling of the principal rooms. Existing routes would be re-used as much as feasibly possible, with minimal impact and alterations to the existing fabric.

A new extractor fan would be installed in the new bathroom at second floor level, together with 5no. recessed lights that would be installed in the modern plasterboard ceiling. The recessed lights will not be visible from street level as the room is at the rear of the property. The extractor fan's outlet would cause minimal disruption to the existing setting, whilst aligning to the latest current regulations in terms of ventilation. The fabric affected by the installation of the extractor's outlet would be minimal, and would be made good with bricks and lime mortar to match the historic adjacent. The extractor's outlet would be concealed in elevation by an air brick of the same size, colour and appearance of the adjacent brickwork.

On the third floor's en-suite bathroom, 3no. recessed lights would be installed in the modern plasterboard ceiling, in conjunction with a new extractor fan, that would satisfy the ventilation requirements for this room. In this case, existing routes in the roof void would be re-used as much as possible so as to not impact the existing fabric. In the second bathroom at the rear of the third floor, the existing extractor fan would be renewed and the existing recessed lights (4no.) would be rearranged to suit the new bathroom's layout.



John Street early-mid C20



Front window and door at Basement level

10 Conclusions

The proposals are minor in nature, and would see:

- The removal of the existing cementitious harmful external plaster in the front lightwell and the installation of a breathable lime render.
- The installation of traditionally designed security bars and gate in the reveals of the openings at basement level to improve the overall security of the property.
- The installation of a service partition in the basement to conceal existing and new cables and pipework.
- The removal of modern radiators in the principal rooms of the first floor and subsequent installation of traditionally designed radiators to compliment the surrounding historic context.
- The installation of an air brick to conceal the bathroom's extractor fan, and recessed lights in the modern plasterboard ceiling of the bathrooms on the upper floors.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision making on applications that relate to the historic environment. Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Act impose a statutory duty upon local planning authorities to consider the impact of proposals upon listed buildings and their setting and conservation areas, and to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the special architectural or historic interest of listed buildings and preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021) has crystallised previous policy approaches to the historic environment. At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and it emphasises the need to take account of the pros and cons of any proposal to alter and adapt buildings of 'special' architectural and historical interest.

For the reasons outlined above, it is considered that the proposals would preserve the special interest of the Grade II-listed building and preserve the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. As the proposals would not cause any harm to the significance of any of the relevant designated heritage assets paragraphs 201 and 202 of the NPPF, relating to the assessment of harm to heritage assets, are not engaged.

Therefore the proposals comply with the relevant policies of the National Planning Policy Framework, including the requirement in paragraph 189 to conserve heritage assets 'in a manner appropriate to their significance', and with relevant local policies in heritage terms including specifically policies D1 and D2 of the Camden Local Plan (2017) and Policy HC1 of the London Plan, and are, therefore, considered to be acceptable in heritage terms.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Listing Description

Statutory Listing Description:

Statutory Address: NUMBERS 22 TO 28 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS, 22-28, JOHN STREET

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1379157

Date first listed: 24-Oct-1951

County: Greater London Authority

District: Camden (London Borough)

Details:

Terrace of 7 houses. c1800-19. Yellow and multi-coloured stock brick with stucco bands at 1st floor levels. Nos 27 & 28 with slated mansard roofs and dormers. 4 storeys and basements; Nos 27 & 28 with attics. 2 windows each; Nos 26 & 27, 3 windows each; No.28 double fronted with 5 windows. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sashes, most with glazing bars; 1st floors with cast-iron balconies, except No.28. Parapets. No.22: square-headed, architraved doorway with patterned rectangular fanlight and panelled door. INTERIOR: noted to retain reeded marble fireplaces on ground and 1st floors. Stairs with square balusters. No.23: similar doorway to No.22. INTERIOR: noted to retain reeded marble fireplaces on 1st and 2nd floors (original centres covered in). No.24: similar doorway to No.22. INTERIOR: noted to retain marble fireplaces with original centres on ground floor. No.25: similar doorway to No.22. INTERIOR: noted to retain marble fireplaces on ground floor. Good marble fireplace 1st floor front room with bas relief on front panel, reeded and with rosettes; original iron centre. Nos 26 & 27: round-arched doorways with reeded doorframes, lion mask stops, mutule cornice-heads, patterned radial fanlights and panelled doors. No.27 with lamp-holder incorporated in fanlight. No.26 with fluted lead rainwater head. No.28: round-arched doorway with attached Doric columns carrying entablature; patterned radial fanlight and panelled door. Cornice and blocking course. Wrought-iron overthrow lamp-holder. Return to Northington Street with 1 window and mid C19 entrance with stucco surround and console-bracketed cornice. Dentilled cornices. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with urn finials to areas.

Listing NGR: TQ3082582055

Legacy:

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

Legacy System number: 478524

Legacy System: 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.

APPENDIX II

The Building and its Legal Status and Policy Context

Nos. 25 John Street lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area in the London Borough of Camden.

25 John Street is listed at Grade II and is identified as having ‘group value’ with the neighbouring terrace buildings. The building is identified in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy as a ‘positive contributor’ (p. 143). Alterations to a listed building generally require listed building consent; development in conservation areas or within the setting of a listed building or conservation area requires local authorities to assess the implications of proposals on built heritage.

The statutory list description of the listed building is included in Appendix I and a summary of guidance on the Bloomsbury Conservation Area provided by the local planning authority is in Appendix II, along with extracts from the relevant legislation and planning policy documents.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision making on applications that relate to the historic environment. Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Act impose statutory duties upon local planning authorities which, with regard to listed buildings, require the planning authority to have ‘*special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses*’ and, in respect of conservation areas, that ‘*special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area*’.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan applicable to the site comprises the Camden Local Plan (2017), and the London Plan (March 2021).

The Camden Local Plan (2017) has policies that deal with development affecting the historic environment. Policy D1 Design asks that such development ‘*respects local context and character*’ and ‘*preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2 Heritage*’. Policy D2 states that ‘*the Council will 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*’. Regarding listed buildings, Policy D2

Heritage states that the Council will ‘*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*’, as well as ‘*resist development that would cause harm to significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting*’.

The courts have held that following the approach set out in the policies on the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 will effectively result in a decision-maker complying with its statutory duties. The Framework forms a material consideration for the purposes of section 38(6). The key message of the NPPF is the concept of ‘sustainable development’ which for the historic environment means that heritage assets ‘should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance’.

The NPPF recognises that, in some cases, the significance of a designated heritage asset can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. The NPPF therefore states that any harm or loss to a designated heritage asset ‘should require clear and convincing justification’ and that any ‘less than substantial’ harm caused to the significance of a designated heritage asset should be weighed against the benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. A designated heritage asset is defined as a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area.

Donald Insall Associates