

Vernon-Sicilian House & 21 Southampton Row

Design and Access Statement - **Section 5 of 8**

July 2022

halebrown

5.0

The Retail Strategy

5.1

The Retail Strategy

Existing retail unit occupation

Currently there are only two retail tenants remaining in operation within the Sicilian Avenue, with one of these recently indicating their intention to vacate.

Both of these tenants occupy spaces comprising of units that have been enlarged from their original proportions.

While new tenants have been sought the configuration of the small units and narrow staircases to the basements are not in line with current market demands, therefore put off a number of retailers.

As a result Sicilian Avenue is now largely deserted and only used as a pedestrian cut through.

Yet it has the potential to be a vibrant place once more if retail units can be modernised and made suitable for modern day retailers.



Existing Sicilian Avenue Ground Floor

- Occupied Retail Units
- - - - Retail Becoming Vacant Shortly
- - - - Vacant Retail
- - - - Vacant commercial office
- ↔ Office entrances & Exits

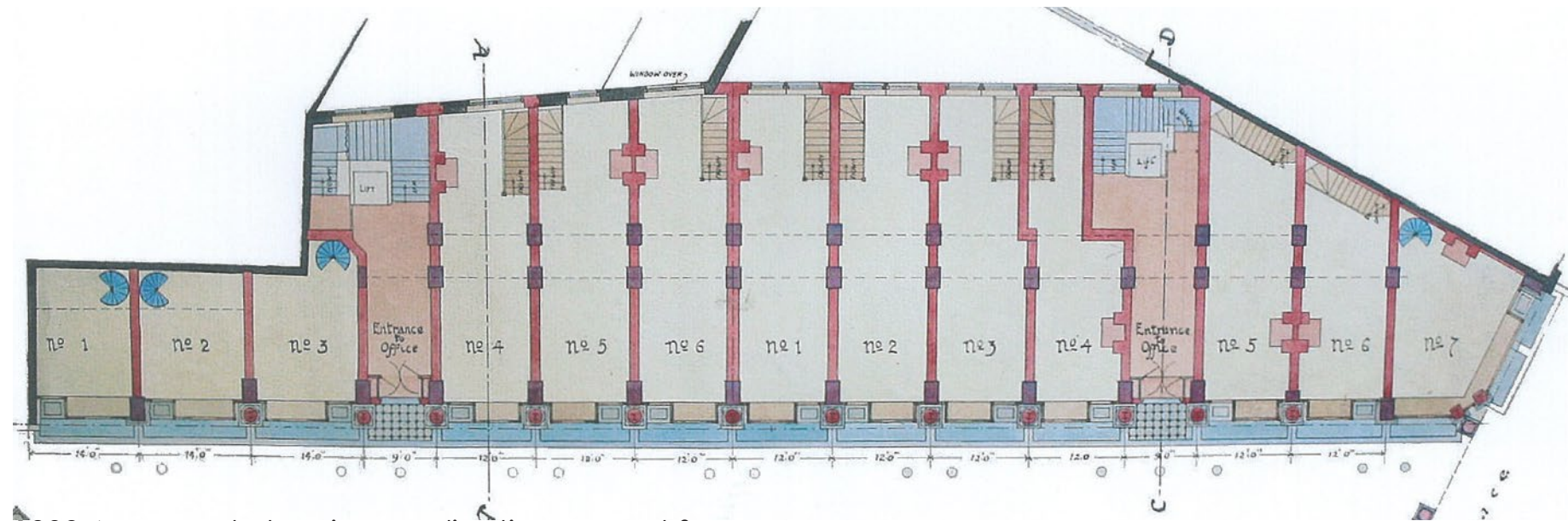
Vernon-Sicilian House & 21 Southampton Row

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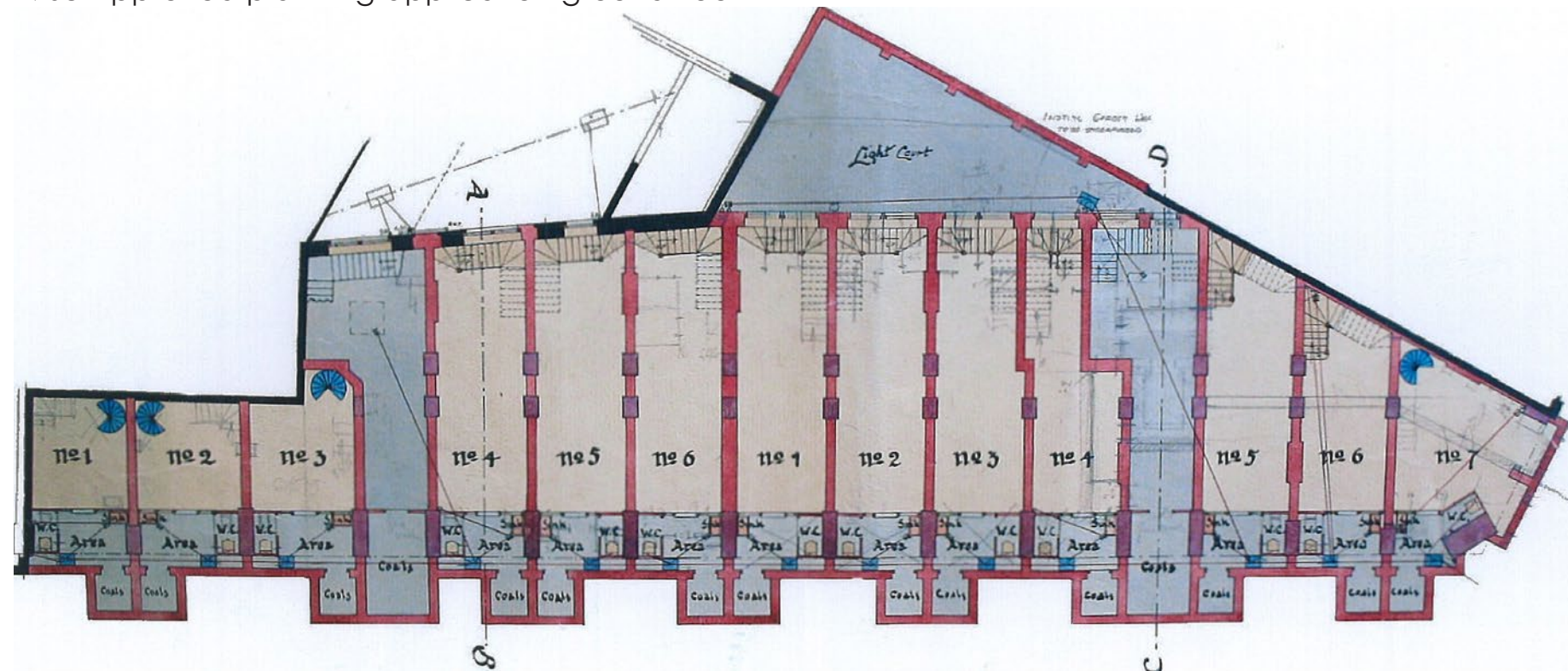


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1908 Approved planning application ground floor



1908 Approved planning application basement

The Retail Strategy

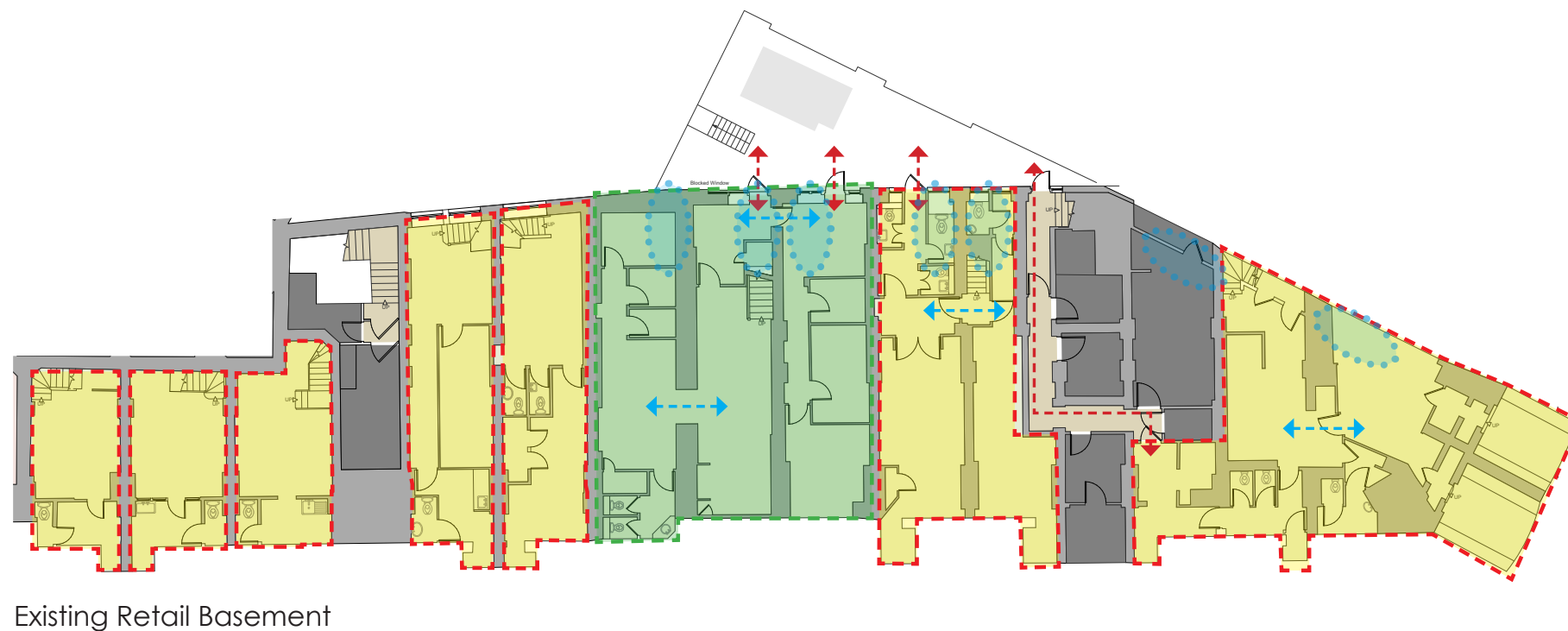
Historic Ground and Basement

- Historically underneath Vernon & Sicilian House the avenue was made up of 13no. small narrow units with single glazed frontages facing onto the pedestrianised street.
- The division of the units was created by a series of high strength brick piers with masonry walls spaced at 12 feet intervals, running from Sicilian Avenue to the rear of the building.
- Each unit had a similarly narrow basement accessed by a narrow timber staircase.
- Within the basement at the front of the building each unit had a small WC and wash room.
- The units were suited to small independent retailers typical of the period.



Historic c. 1910 avenue photograph

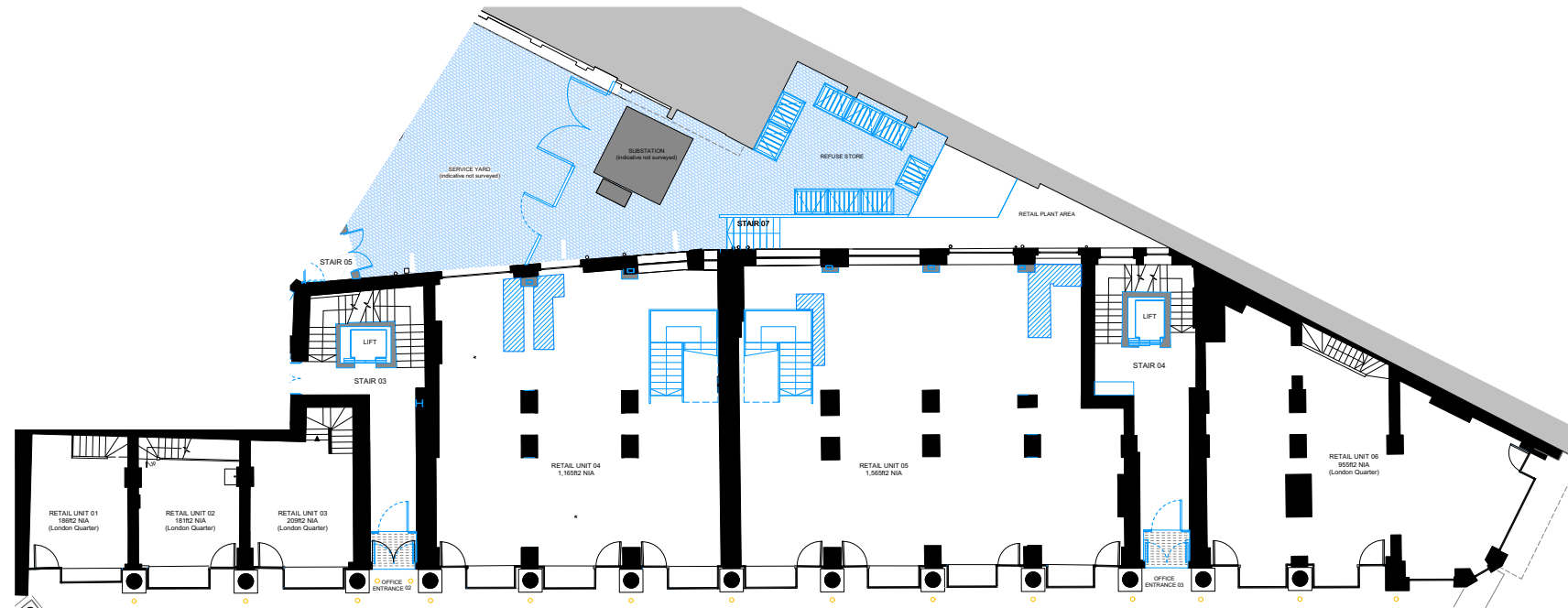
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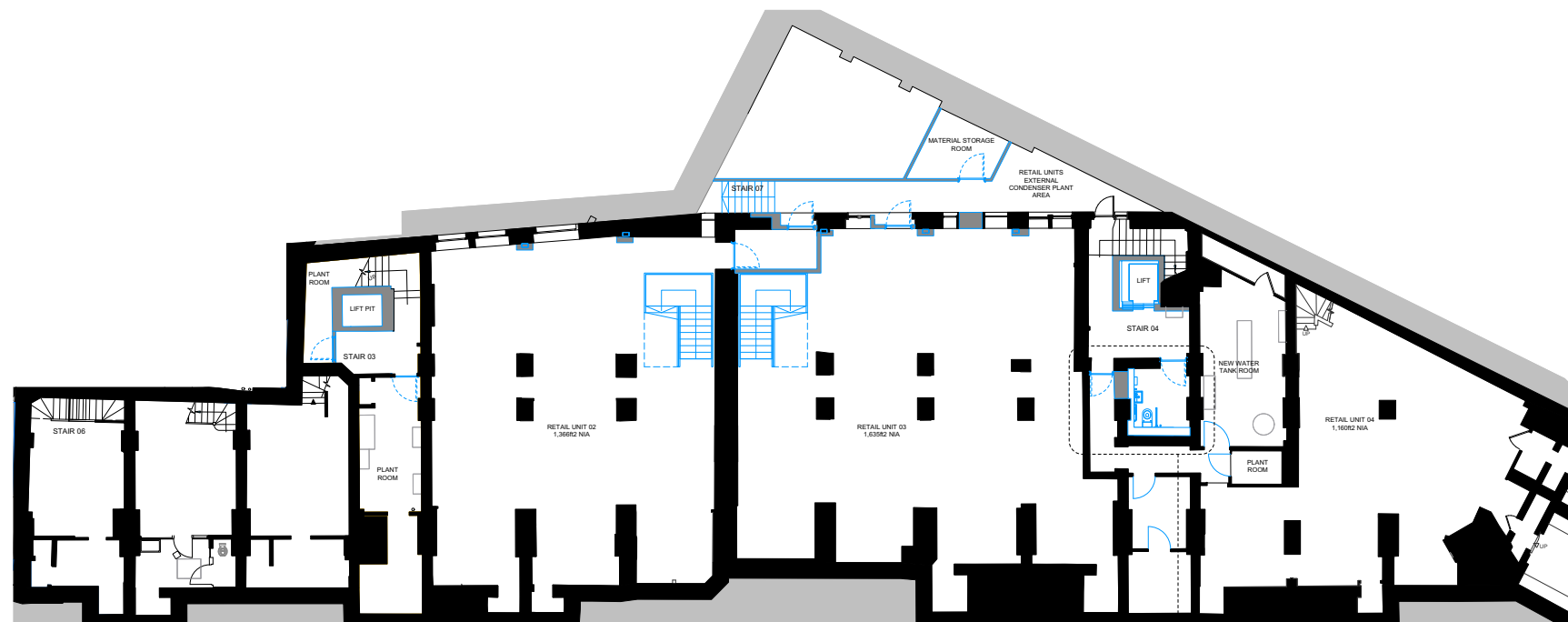
The Retail Strategy Existing Ground and Basement

- This side of Sicilian Avenue below Vernon/Sicilian House is now divided up into 8no. retail unit spaces of differing sizes and configurations.
- This has been achieved through openings being created in the masonry spine walls.
- Along with these works 7no. of the original timber staircases have also been removed, in order to improve the use of the ground floor spaces.
- Due to the narrow width of the staircases the basements have historically not been particularly accessible to the general public, meaning they have typically been used as back of house areas and store rooms.
- These secondary uses of the basements has though been complicated by years of water ingress issues into the basements.
- Additionally only 3no. units have access to the rear service yard, requiring deliveries and refuse to be taken through Sicilian Avenue.
- As advised the configuration of the existing units is not in line with current market demands, with the configuration of the remaining walls and narrow staircases to the basements not providing the flexibility modern retailers require.
- This has led to the units proving difficult to let at competitive rents.
- Currently of these units only 1no. tenant remains, although they are now due to leave shortly.
- As such the once thriving pedestrianised retail street has become a deserted cut through.

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Proposed Retail Ground Floor



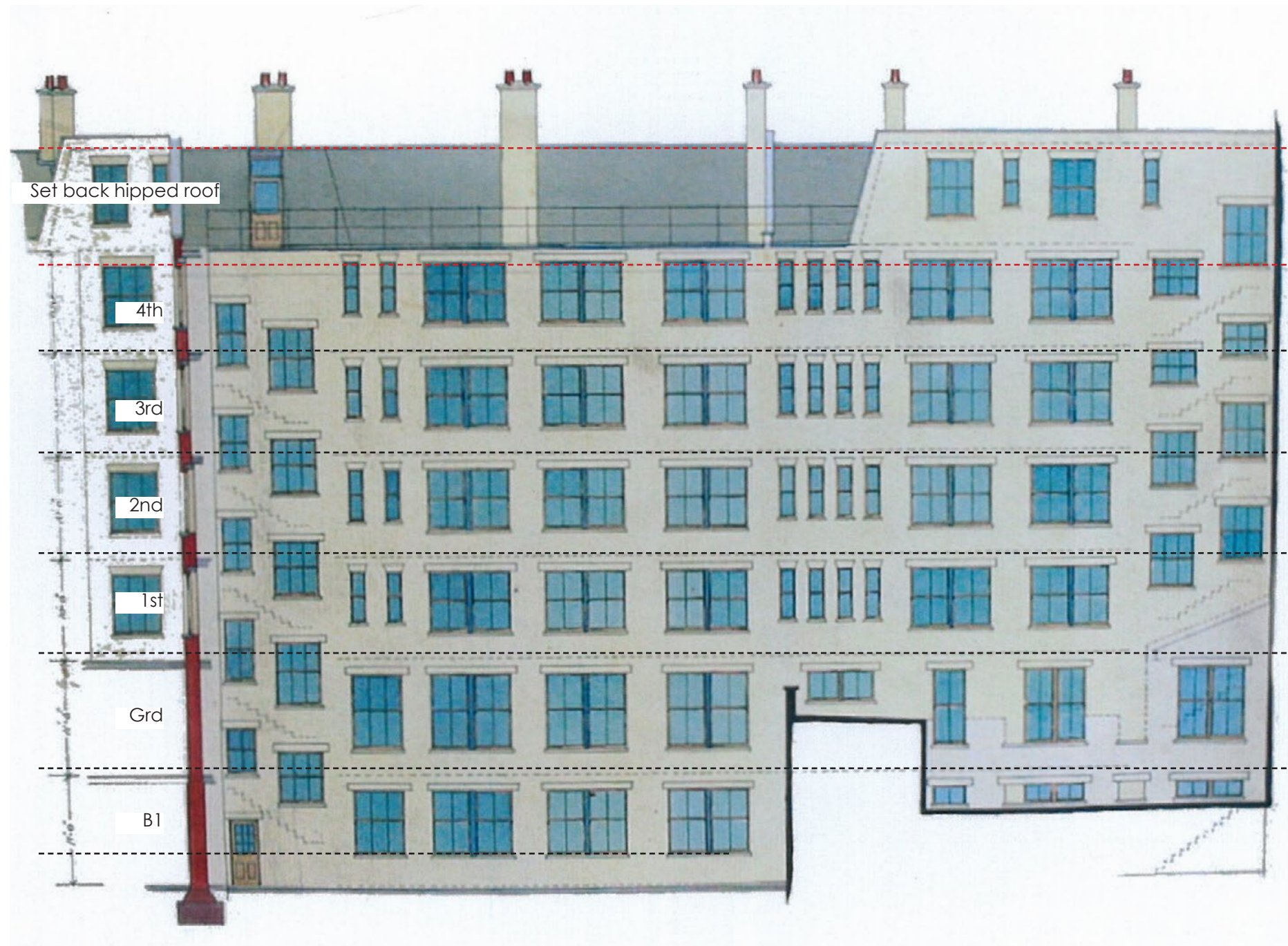
Proposed Retail Basement

The Retail Strategy

Proposed Ground and Basement

- Following feedback from Pre Application discussions with Camden the three smallest retail units to the southern end of the avenue will remain in their existing configuration.
- Within the units between the cores of Vernon and Sicilian Houses it is proposed to remove the remaining separating masonry walls but retain the high strength brick piers, to create 2no. larger more open plan units.
- The position of the original separation walls will though be expressed by the retained piers and structural nibs on the front and rear elevations.
- Downstand beams running between the nibs and piers will further express the position of the original separation walls.
- Within these units the 2no. remaining original narrow staircases are proposed to be removed.
- These will be replaced by 2no. new compliant staircases, providing improved public access to the basement areas.
- Works to the unit at the northern end of the avenue, formerly a public house, will be limited to removal of the former tenant fitout.
- While the 3no. small units will remain in their current configuration with no access to the rear service yard, the 3no. larger units will all have access to the service yard for improved deliveries and escape routes.
- Collection of refuse will also be improved for these units via the proposed central refuse collection point within the service yard.
- To improve the market offering of the new units 3no. kitchen extract routes have been identified on the rear elevation.
- These proposed extracts and other works to the rear elevation are discussed on the subsequent pages.
- Enlarging these units and introducing the compliant staircases maximises flexibility for possible future uses.

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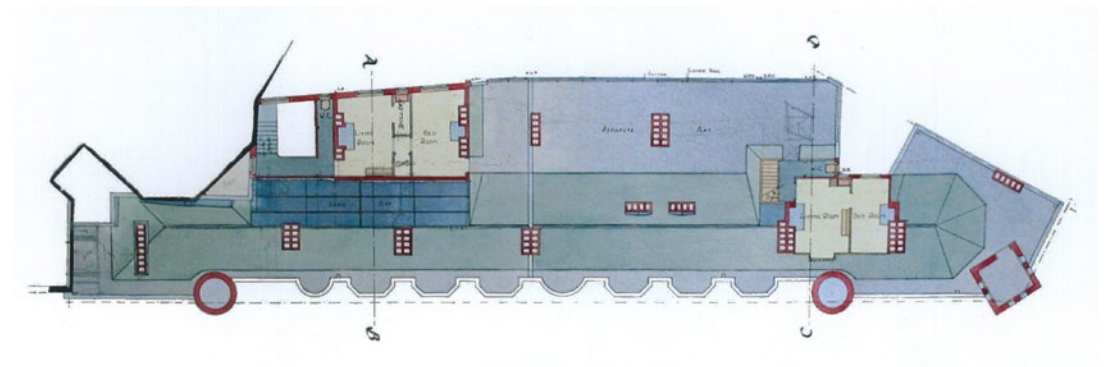


1908 Approved planning application rear elevation

The Retail Strategy

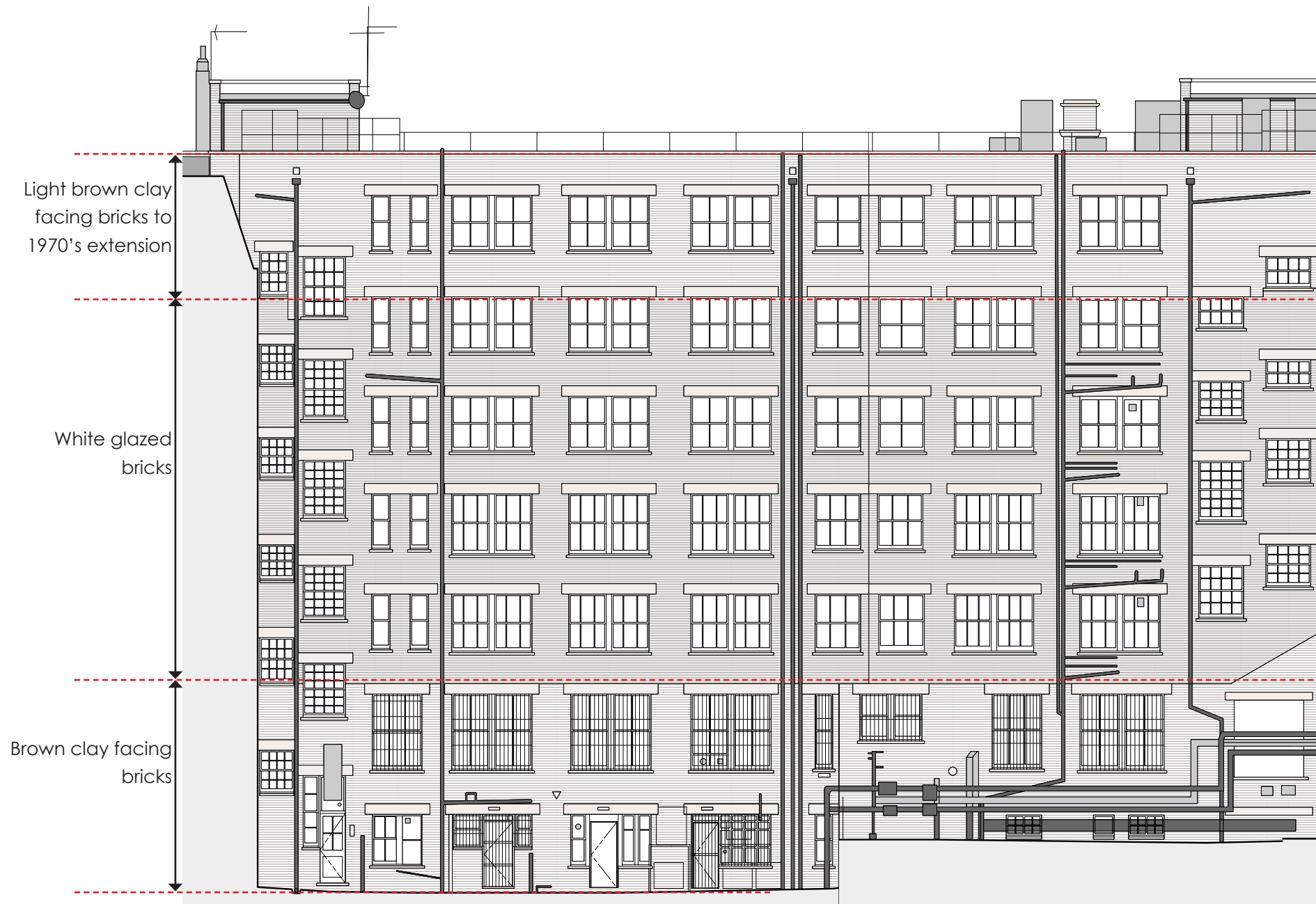
Historic Rear Elevation

- Originally the building was designed and built with a set back hip roof at 5th floor level.
- Within the roof at the 5th floor were also two further apartments with principle aspects looking towards the rear service yard.
- Tall brick chimneys then extended up beyond the top of the roofs ridge line.
- The original rear elevation was constructed with brown clay facing bricks to the basement and ground floors with white glazed bricks from 1st to 4th floors and partial 5th.



1908 Approved planning application roof plan

5.6



Existing rear elevation

The Retail Strategy

Existing Rear Elevation

- In the 1970's when the building was altered considerably with the 5th floor and roof being reconstructed, the rear elevation was extended using light brown clay facing bricks.
- As part of the 1970's internal works new office WC's were installed resulting in numerous soil vent pipes being added to the rear elevation along with surface mounted rain water pipes.
- In subsequent years further servicing pipes and ductwork have been added to the rear elevation, along with a number of external condensers being installed at low level to serve the retail units
- A series of additional cables and ducts also run from the external GRP covered sub station and old AHU.



Existing site photographs

5.7



Proposed rear elevation

The Retail Strategy Proposed Rear Elevation

- The proposals look to clean up the rear elevation by tidying up the service and drainage routes.
- A dedicated external plant area at the lower basement level will be created, where future retail tenants can place their equipment subject to further planning approvals.
- The redundant gas pipes and boiler ductwork running along up elevation will be removed as part of the update to the buildings servicing strategy.
- With proposed reconfiguration of the internal office WC's the external soil vent pipe routes can also be rationalised, further helping to create a cleaner rear elevation.
- Restoration work to the existing soft wood timber sash windows is also proposed.
- To improve the market offering and viability of the three larger retail units, 3no. kitchen extracts do need to be routed up to the roof level.
- These extract ductwork routes are essential for enabling the units to trade as restaurants with commercial kitchens installed within the basements, being served by deliveries from the rear service yard.
- The extract ductwork will run up to the roof level where new external plant equipment will be located as part of the upgrades to the office floors.
- To proposals and details of the new roof top plant please refer to section 6.