

Christian Leigh

Chartered Town Planner

Leigh & Glennie Ltd 6 All Souls Road, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 9EA
01344 297094 | mail@christianleigh.co.uk | www.christianleigh.co.uk

13a Motcomb Street, London, SW1X 8LB

Heritage Appraisal accompanying an application for internal changes to first to third floors and replacement of windows, and installation of condenser units to rear lower ground floor in existing service yard

September 2021

Our ref: 1111

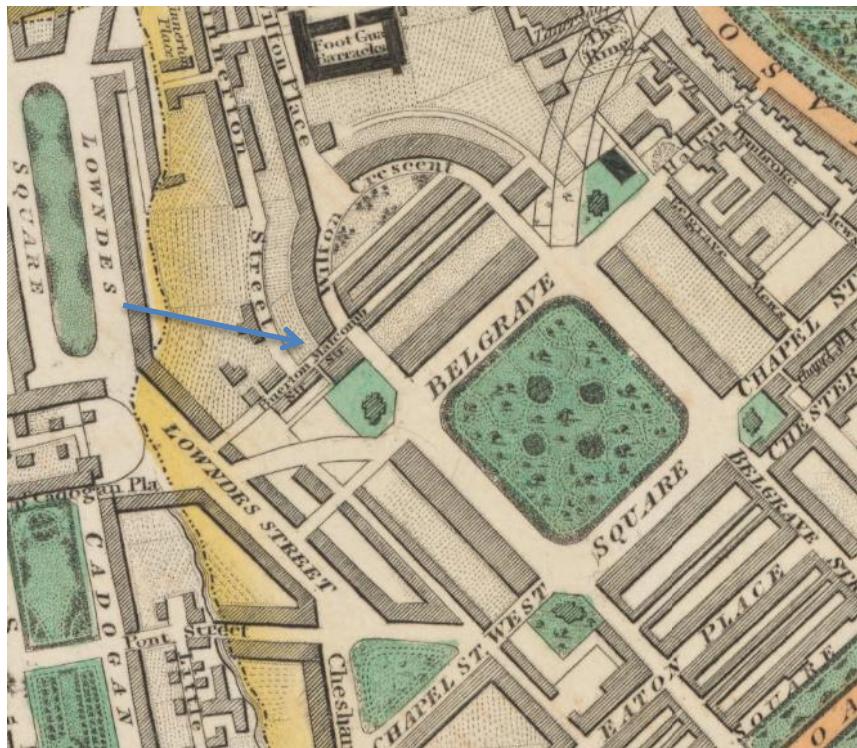
Introduction

1. An appraisal of the property has been undertaken following a request by Grosvenor Properties to provide an opinion and Heritage Appraisal relating to internal works at the upper floors and replacement of windows and installation of condenser units to rear lower ground floor in existing service yard of 13 Motcomb Street, London, being the property known as No. 13a Motcomb Street.
2. The statement has been prepared in accordance with guidance contained in Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) and the Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. Regard has been paid to the Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning 2.
3. The Statement has been prepared by Christian Leigh BSc(Hons), MPhil (Dist), MRTPI. I have 25 years' experience on projects concerning Grade I, II* and II residential and commercial properties within central London and the South East. Wider work involves heritage appraisals, planning and listed building application and appeals, and enforcement matters. I have prepared advice relating to conservation area designations. Clients include a number of the London Estates, local and central Government, as well as major developers and householders within central London. I am currently a lecturer in planning law and practice, including heritage matters, at the Henley Business School, University of Reading.
4. Paragraph 194 of the NPPF states that applications for consent affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by a description of the significance of the heritage asset affected and their contribution to their setting of that significance. This assessment was prepared following a review of the statutory records for the property, an appraisal of published documentation and an internal site visit to No. 13 in May 2021. A visit to the Westminster Archives was undertaken in June 2021.

History of the area and property

Belgravia and the vicinity of the application site

5. Motcomb Street is part of the estate now known as Belgravia, which was first a nickname to Belgrave and Eaton Squares and the streets radiating immediately from them. Motcomb Street links Lowndes Street and Wilton Crescent.
6. Originally, in Medieval times, the Belgravia area was known as ‘Five Fields’ as it was intersected by footpaths cutting it into five. It was marshy and flat, used for grazing and later for market gardening. The land was part of the Manor of Ebury, which was subdivided and the land passed through a succession of owners until 1656, when the ownership became established with the Grosvenor family.
7. Roque’s map of 1746 shows that the land remained rural into the mid-18th century, with early development confined to the fringes of the district along Knightsbridge and Hyde Park Corner, and in the south west corner. Development in the central part of the Five Fields area came later. In 1761, George III purchased Buckingham House, just to the east of what is now Belgravia Conservation Area. More widespread development soon began to follow and by the time of Horwood’s Map in 1799 terraces had grown up along Upper Grosvenor Place overlooking the Queen’s Gardens, with additional new streets appearing further south, off Buckingham Palace Road.
8. Plans for the rest of the Five Fields area were drawn up by James Wyatt and William Porden in 1795, but it was not until 1821 when Lord Grosvenor appointed Thomas Cundy I as surveyor to the Grosvenor Estate that a definite plan for the Five Fields was approved, setting out criteria for building.
9. In 1824 Thomas Cubitt came to an agreement with the Grosvenor Estate to lease nineteen acres on the south side of what is now Belgrave Square. This included draining the area and massive works to the land. Other speculative builders took sites elsewhere on the estate for development. Seth Smith (1791-1860) took the ground north and south of Cubitt’s and the remaining important sites in the southern part of the area went to Thomas Cundy II and Joseph Cundy.
10. From 1826 development proceeded rapidly. Building began in Belgrave Square, and then Eaton Square, Chester Square and Wilton Crescent. The Lowndes Estate, immediately to the west of Grosvenor estate land, was also developed by Thomas Cubitt between 1826 and 1855 and includes Lowndes Square, Chesham Place, Lowndes and Lyall Streets. The Greenwoods Map of 1827 shows the progress of development in the area, which by that time had reached Lowndes Street. The line of Motcomb Street had been established by that time, though it was named Matcomb Street at the eastern end and Buerton Street at the western end:



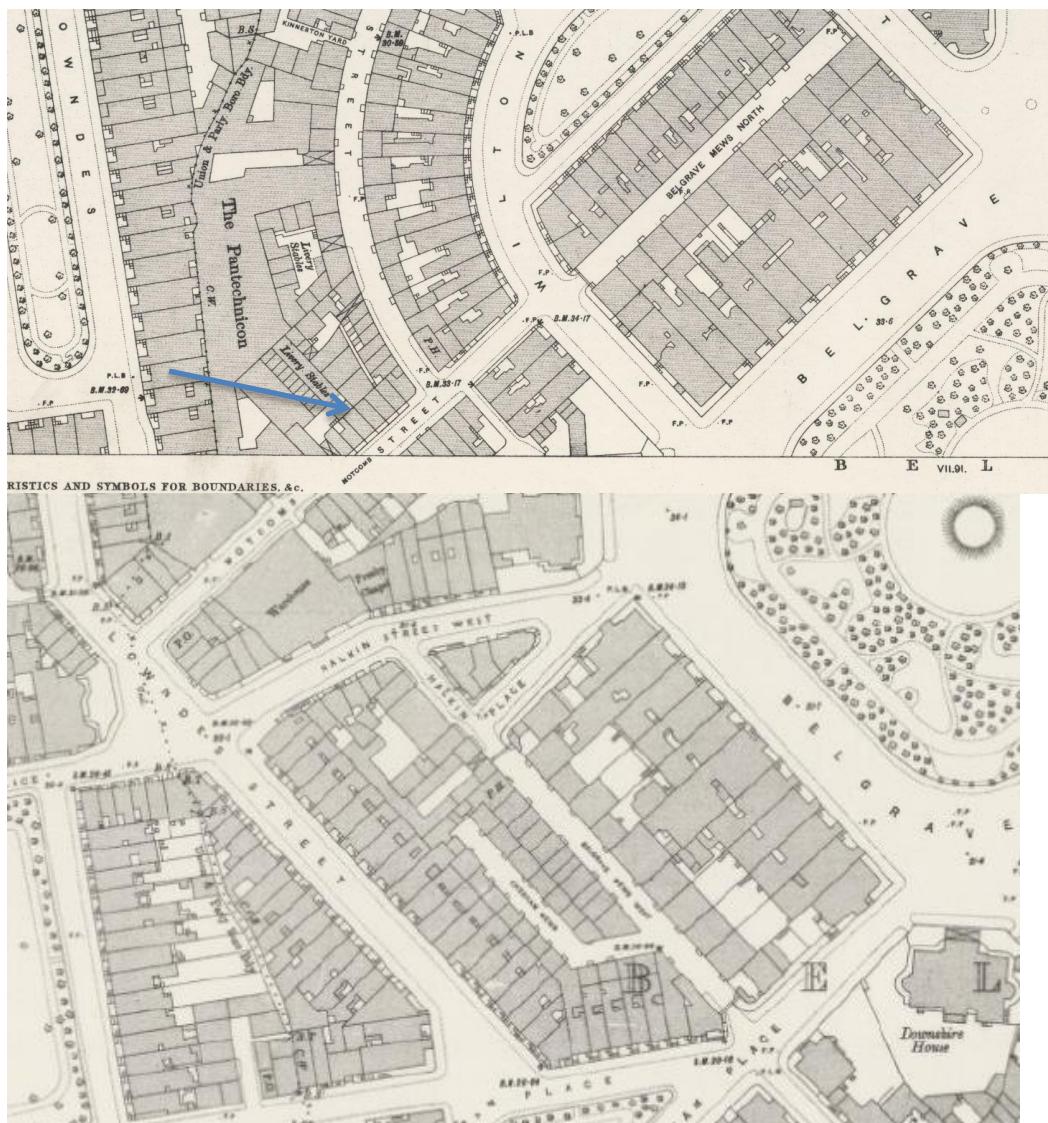
Greenwoods map 1827 (later 1830 edition), with the position of Motcomb Street marked

11. Belgravia continued to develop, and Cubitt's map of 1865 shows the road was now known fully as Motcomb Street, though at that stage not yet completely developed:



Thomas Cubitt Map, 1865

12. By the end of the 19th century Belgravia had been completely developed, as is shown in the OS map from 1896. This illustrates the terrace of buildings along the road, including the well-known Pantechicon building:



OS map, 1894-96 survey (spread across two map sheets)

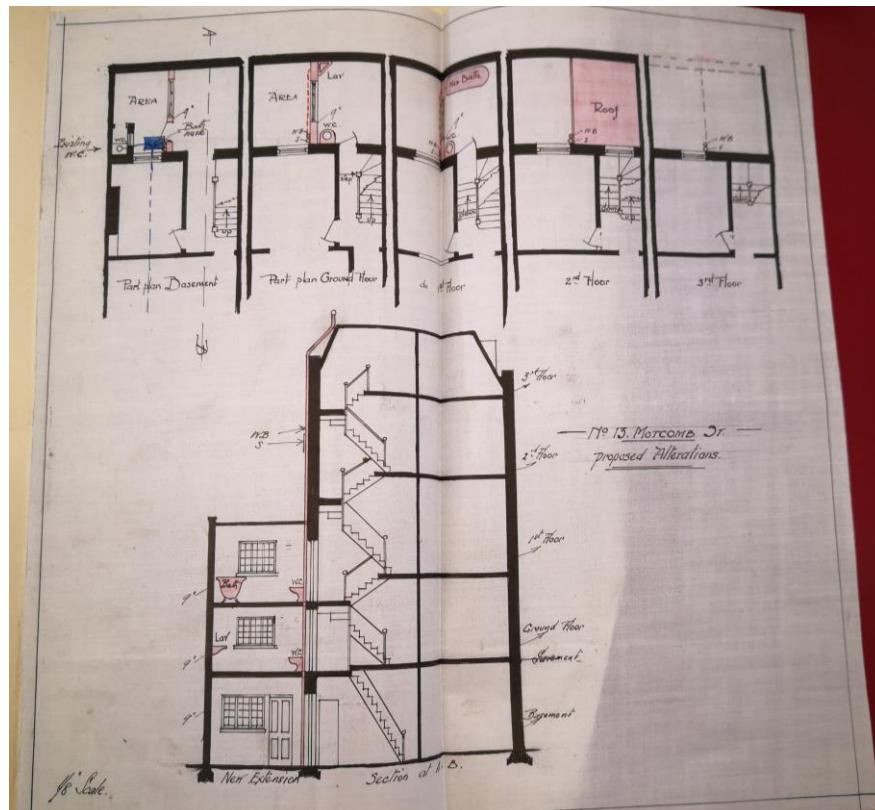
The application property

13. The property the subject of this appraisal forms part of a terrace of Nos. 11-18. These were originally houses and adjoined the Pantechicon: originally a building housing showrooms, hops and warehousing which burnt down in 1874 and was rebuilt behind the retained façade. The terrace is mentioned in Pevsner's Building of England as being by Seth Smith and of conventional design, dating from c1839.
14. By the early 20th Century it appears that Motcomb Street had changed to be a mix of some commercial properties along with retained family houses. The Post Office Directory of 1901 shows that in the terrace of No.11-18 there were still a number of houses but some businesses operating:

Motcomb street, Belgrave sq. (S.W.) 1 Wilton crescent
MAP II.
NORTH-WEST SIDE.
 9 Kennedy Capt. James Bowles
 10 Turk's Head, George Way
 ..here is Kinnerton street...

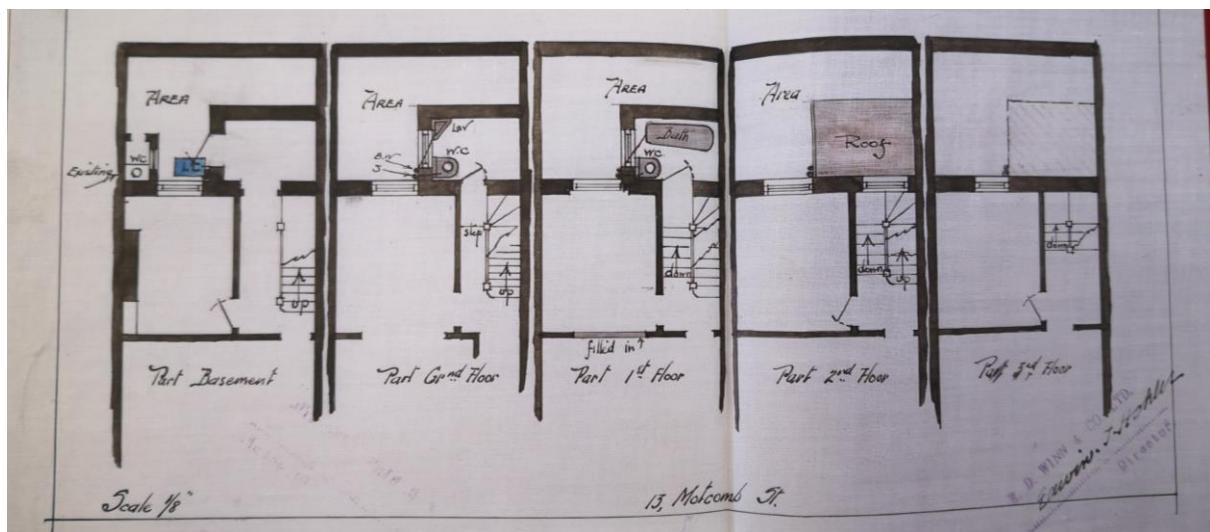
- 11 Hendrick Charles, baker
- 12 Crook Frederick, china ware
- 12 Baden-Powell Rev. James, M.A.
- 13 Crumpton Misses A.S. & M. dresses
- 13 Lush & Cook, The London & Provincial Dye Works Ltd
- 14 Sykes Henry Arthur
- 15 Jones Charles, builder
- 15 Milligan Miss
- 16 Artis Anthony, poultreer
- 17 Phillips Brothers, frimterers
- 17A, Wimbush & Co. job masters
- 18 Arthur Fredk, house decorator
The Pantechicon
- 20 Irish Industries Association The
- 21 Forder Jas. Chas. & Son, grocers
- 22 Patterson Edward Temple
- 23 Gunter & Co. confectioners
- ... here is Lowndes street...

15. The Archives show a partial internal layout for the property, dating from 1919. At upper floors there was an opening between the front and rear rooms at first floor, whilst at second and third floors there were two separate rooms. Notable alterations were proposed to the rear closet wing.



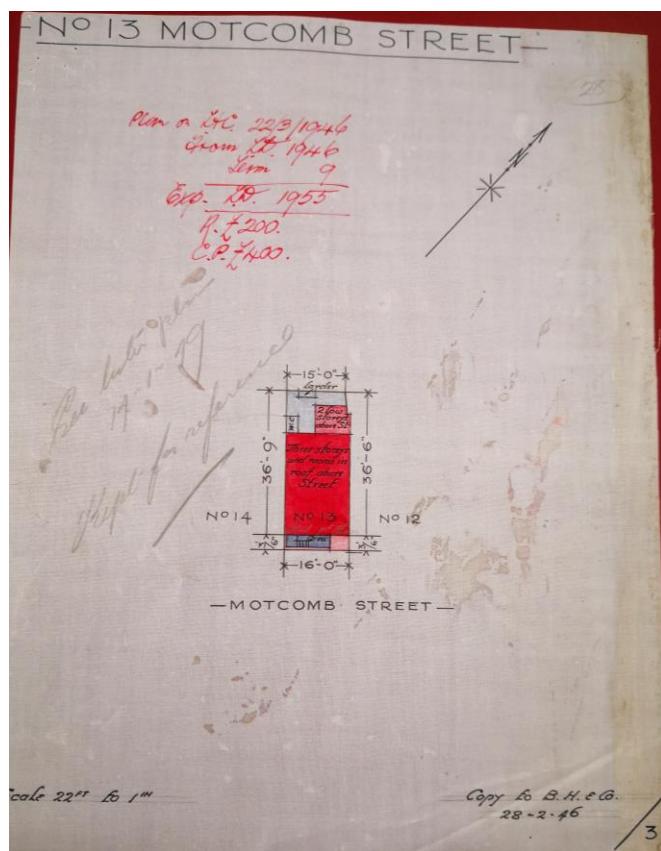
Extract from drainage plans, 1919 (Source: Westminster Archives)

16. A further plan from 1919 shows a slightly amended layout to the rear of the property, with a different arrangement for the closet wing and confirmation that there was originally an opening between the front and rear room at first floor:



Drainage plan, 1919 (Source: Westminster Archive)

17. It appears this slightly later plan was followed, as a lease plan from 1945 shows an arrangement of the property with a conventional layout of the main building and a small closet wing to the rear:



Lease plan 1946 (Source: Westminster Archives)

18. The form and layout of the terrace appears to have remained the same through the mid part of the 20th Century. To the rear of the terrace – on the north western side of Motcomb Street – was a collection of commercial buildings accessed via a yard opening under No. 18. The OS mapping from 1951 shows this area, and the original rear building line of the terrace, which still shows the same line as the 1896 mapping:



19. However, there was major redevelopment of the area in the early 1970s. The collection of commercial buildings to the rear of Motcomb Street and fronting Kinnerton Street were demolished and the new Halkin Arcade built. This saw the demolition of projections to the rear of the terrace of 11-18 Motcomb Street and the erection of a new two-storey extension, with basement and service yard, to provide the commercial space fronting the Halkin Arcade and the Square behind.
 20. This was part of the wider scheme for the area that saw underground parking, commercial properties fronting Kinnerton Street and Greville House. Photographs from the Metropolitan Archives show this under construction:



Rear of terrace of 11-18 Motcomb Street, seen from Kinnerton Street, showing extent of demolition to the area and the new two storey (with basement) addition to the terrace (Photo taken 1970. Source: London Metropolitan Archive)



The extension to the rear of the terrace, showing reinforced concrete construction for the two storey and basement addition to the terrace. (Photo taken 1970. Source: London Metropolitan Archive)



Front of terrace of 11-18 Motcomb Street. All properties in commercial use at that time with modern shopfronts, including No. 13 (marked). The former access to the rear commercial yard that went through No. 18 is in the process of being converted to part of that building, which became a restaurant (Photo taken 1970. Source: London Metropolitan Archive)

21. The terrace was listed Grade II at this time, in February 1970. The list description reads as follows:

*TQ 2879 SW CITY OF WESTMINSTER
MOTCOMB STREET, SW1 (north side)
97/6*

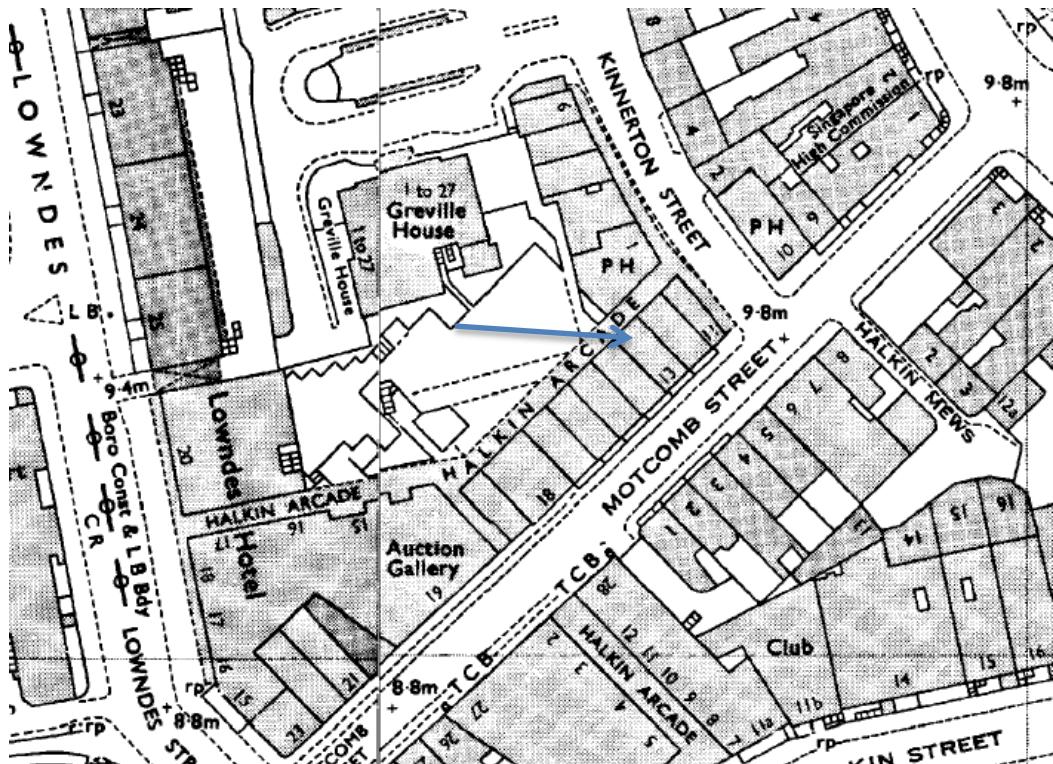
Nos 11 to 18 (consec) 5.2.70 including 17a

GV II

Terrace of houses. Circa 1829 - 30, altered. Yellow brick. Stucco to No 14.

3 storeys plus attic, each house 2 windows wide. Ground floors altered, C19 to C20 shopfronts; except No 14, which retains something of the original arrangement, with square headed door and channelling. Balconies to first floor, those to 14 and 16 to 19 probably not original. Square gauged headed windows, sashed, retaining glazing bars. No 11 largely reconstructed. Stucco cornice surviving to Nos 14, 16 and 17; otherwise rebuilt parapets.

22. The result of this redevelopment in the early 1970s can be seen in the OS mapping for 1972, which shows the Halkin Arcade to the rear with the new flat building line to the Motcomb Street terrace:



OS map, 1972

23. In 2002 planning permission and listed building consent were approved for a rear ground floor extension to the terrace of 11-18 Motcomb Street (ref. 02/04971/FULL & 02/04972/LBC). This proposed the removal of the rear elevation built as part of the 1970 scheme and a rearward projection with an overhanging canopy. This was part of a wider scheme to redevelop and upgrade the Halkin Arcade commercial area.
24. The property has evidently been altered in the past, though the consent for any such approvals is not clear. The earlier 1970 photograph showed a full-width front dormer window. In 2007 consent was given for the replacement of this dormer and replacement of two windows in the rear elevation (ref. 07/09396/LBC). But far more alteration has occurred to the property at some time in the past: attached to this Statement are photos of the interior and exterior which show the non-original windows, floors and internal works to the property.

Appraisal of property

Exterior of property

25. The property lies within a terrace of early 19th Century houses, built by Seth Smith, that are important to the Conservation Area due to their representation of domestic buildings of that time in a good state of preservation at upper floors. The front elevation of these buildings still displays the architecture and character that are set out in the list description. This exterior is an important part of the character and appearance of the Belgravia Conservation Area. The quality of the architecture contributes to the Area, and they form a good foil to the exuberance of the Pantchnicon that adjoins and dominates the street.
26. The positive role the building plays in views along the street are being emphasised by the context is supported by the Council's own appraisal of the Area. The Belgravia Conservation Area Audit identifies the terrace of buildings as having a positive contribution to the Area (marked in pink):



27. However, the quality played by No. 13 is diminished by the alterations to the windows on the front elevation. They are all modern replacements, being uncharacteristic 16 over 16 sash at first floor, and casement windows at second floor. With no parallel to these windows in the terrace, these windows detract from the character of the group of buildings and the wider Conservation Area.
28. The rear of the two properties, and the terrace of Motcomb Street, are of less significance. As can be seen in the map extract above, the Square behind the terrace lies outside the Conservation Area. The area to the north west, outside that Conservation Area, has been redeveloped in the past as evidenced earlier and the rear of the terrace is seen in this context. The rear of the property is entirely modern, following the 1970s redevelopment.

Interior of property

29. The interior of the property has been heavily modified from the original form. As noted earlier from the plans in 1919, the first floor originally had an opening between front and rear rooms, whilst second and third floors had two rooms. All floors saw access off the landing to the front room. The current situation is that the first floor sees a semi-blocked in opening between front and rear rooms, with a non-original lobby area.
30. This is repeated at second floor, whilst at third floor there is an opening between the main rooms. Limited investigation works has been carried out to the internal walls of the property that shows they are modern blockwork (see attached photos).
31. Original ornamentation has been largely removed from the property, with just a simple cornice remaining to the front rooms at first and second floor. The property is in a poor condition. The recent low-scale investigative works undertaken as part of an asbestos survey for the vacant property show modern floorboards to the property and modern walls, doors and closing of openings.
32. This layout and the condition of the rooms mean that the interior is of limited significance to the property as a heritage asset.

Assessment of proposed works

33. The proposed works would see linking of the rooms at each floor, in order to provide improved office accommodation for occupiers. The current layout is evidently problematic in providing a series of small rooms, with wasted circulation space to access facilities such as WCs and kitchenette.
34. The opening up between the front and rear rooms at first floor would be similar to the layout which existed prior to changes in the early 20th Century, as evidence by the plans from the Archives. By keeping nibs to the walls there would remain the evidence of that original dividing wall, and a downstand would be retained in the ceiling between the rooms. As noted in the attached photographs, preliminary investigative works on site indicate that this is modern work in this area. To enable flexibility in the use of this space for future occupiers a pocket door is shown, which is a suitably unobtrusive element for the room
35. At second floor there has already been an opening formed in the wall, which is off-centre and, together with the lobby area, harmful to the layout and appearance of the building. An opening between the rooms would be created with the proposed works and, again with the retention of the nibs, be a change that is acceptable to the building.
36. At third floor there is again already an existing opening between the front and rear rooms. This would be widened in the proposals to provide the improved space for the office and, again, the original floor plan would be retained through the retention of nibs.
37. At all levels of the property there would be the removal of non-original doors and, where new internal doors are proposed, doors of appropriate traditional design. The new works would see appropriate skirting and architrave reintroduced to the building, with the existing cornice restored where it exists. The proposals show thermal upgrading of the property, in line with the Grosvenor Estate's current programme for energy improvements across its estate. The absence of ornamentation within rooms and current modern materials in the building mean these changes would not have any effect upon the interest of the property. Service runs in the building would be utilising existing service runs.
38. Alterations to the layout of the rear of the property have no effect on the significance of the building, as they are contained within the entirely modern 1970s extension to the property.
39. The exterior of the buildings would be enhanced through the replacement of the modern casement windows and inappropriate heavily-mullioned windows with new windows of appropriate glazing pattern. This would be an enhancement to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The poor quality and condition of the windows also leads to issues of thermal insulation, and the proposed works would improve this matter.
40. The proposals include the installation of new a/c condenser units to the rear of the property, which is within the existing subterranean service yard of the building. This is part of the modern construction of the Halkin Arcade development and there are currently a/c units to be removed. This has no effect on the building or wider area.
41. The works to the interior of the building are considered to not be harmful to the significance of the listed buildings as a heritage asset. The significance of the buildings

has been identified as their contribution to the Conservation Area and their appearance as original dwellings in the street, albeit modified to commercial premises at ground floor. The exterior works would be an enhancement to the property.

42. The works to buildings are therefore considered to not cause any harm to significance: as defined by paragraph 017 of the Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. There are also clear public benefits arising from the proposed works through the improvements to the external appearance of the building with the new windows, by reintroducing internal doors and ornamentation of traditional design, by improving the quality of the office accommodation in the building so leading to an active and viable commercial use. There are clear sustainability benefits from improved insulation of the building and the upgrading of windows and modern services within the building.

Conclusions

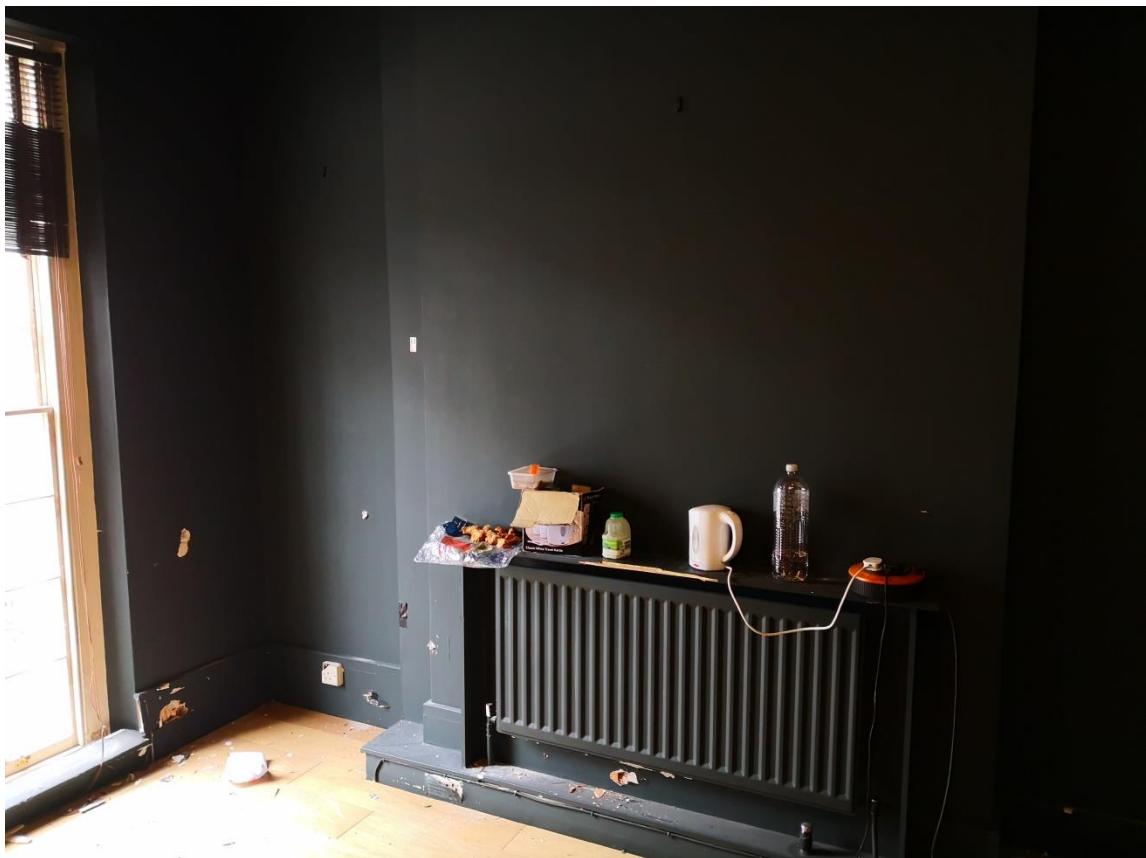
43. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 contains the statutory duty in relation to heritage assets that, '*In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.*'
44. In conservation areas, the statutory duty is set out in Section 72(1) that '*In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any functions under or by virtue of any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2)3, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.*'
45. The National Planning Policy Framework says that the strategy for plans should take into account '*the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation*' (paragraph 185). Paragraph 193 advises that '*great weight should be given to the [designated heritage] asset's conservation*' and that '*the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be*'.
46. The heritage significance of the property stems from the exterior and contribution in the group value to the Conservation Area. This has been diminished by the modern windows to the building. The interior of the property at upper levels floors has been heavily modified through past changes to layout and the removal of original features, and as a consequence display limited features that contribute to the significance as a heritage asset. The alterations proposed in this application would not harm the recognised significance of the property. There would be public benefits arising from the exterior changes, which would represent an enhancement to the Conservation Area, and improved viable business accommodation. The works to the building also see upgrading of thermal performance, which is a substantial public benefit.
47. These matters therefore satisfy the test of paragraph 020 of the PPG, in that the significance of the heritage asset would be sustained and enhanced and the use would support the long term conservation. Thus, in accordance with the guidance at paragraph 202 of the NPPF, there are benefits that outweigh any harm.
48. It is therefore concluded the works would be consistent with the NPPF. There would consequently be no conflict with Policies 38 and 29 of the City Plan, and so listed building consent and planning permission can be granted.

Photographs of property

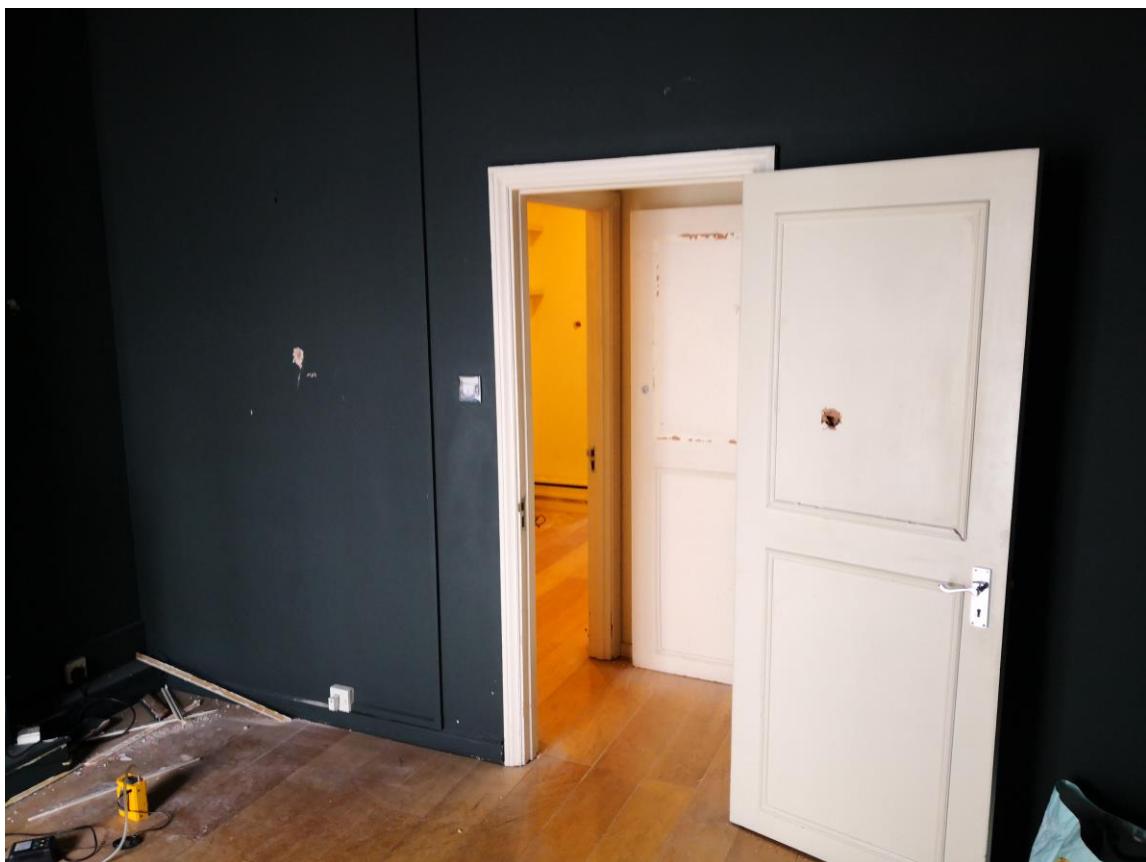


Front of property, showing non-original windows at upper floors

First floor



Absence of original ornamentation, and works to interior



Modern door inserted into wall, and lobby behind into rear room



Services attached to walls, with evidence of original modest cornice to ceiling



Modern windows to front of building



Investigative work at front room showing modern block work closing off opening



Investigative work in rear room



Rear rom, showing absence of original ornamentation and modern insertions to room

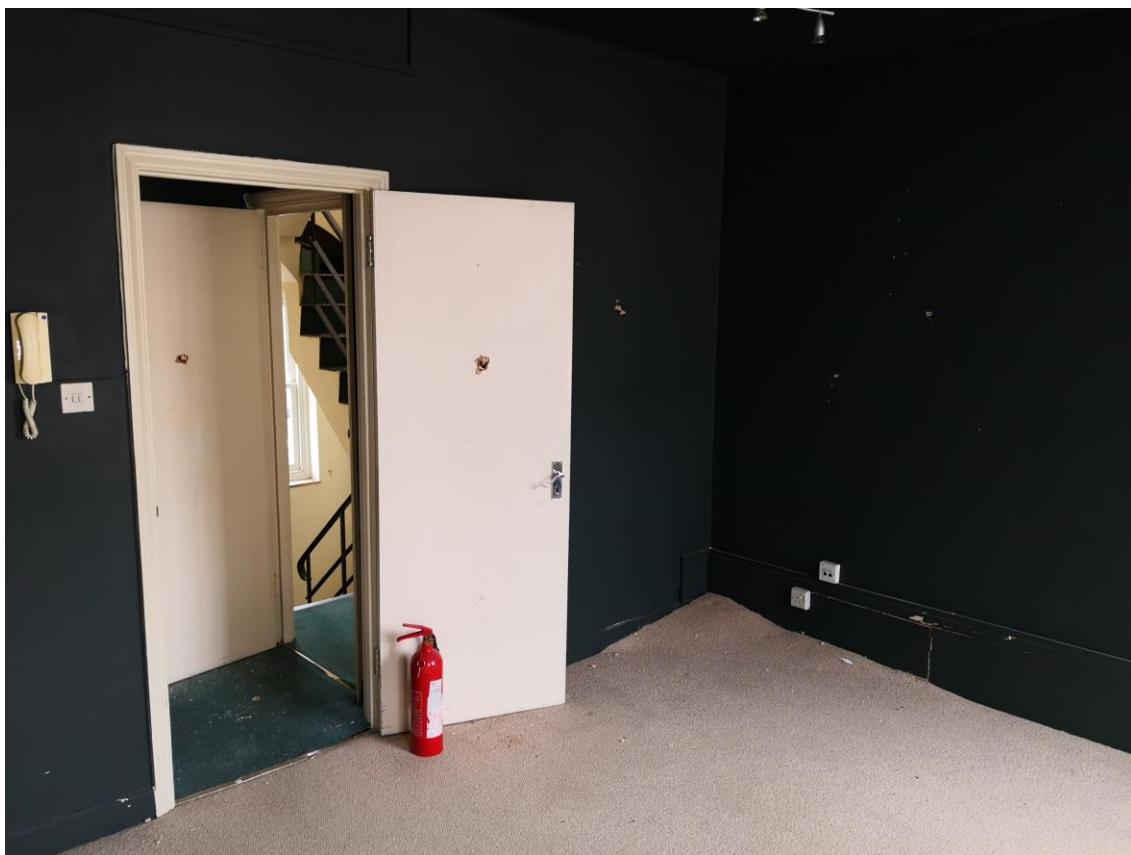


Rear WC and kitchen area, in 1970s addition to building

Second floor



Front room of property, with services to wall and absence of fireplace, etc



Modern door to rear room, with lobby visible behind



Modern casement window to front, second floor



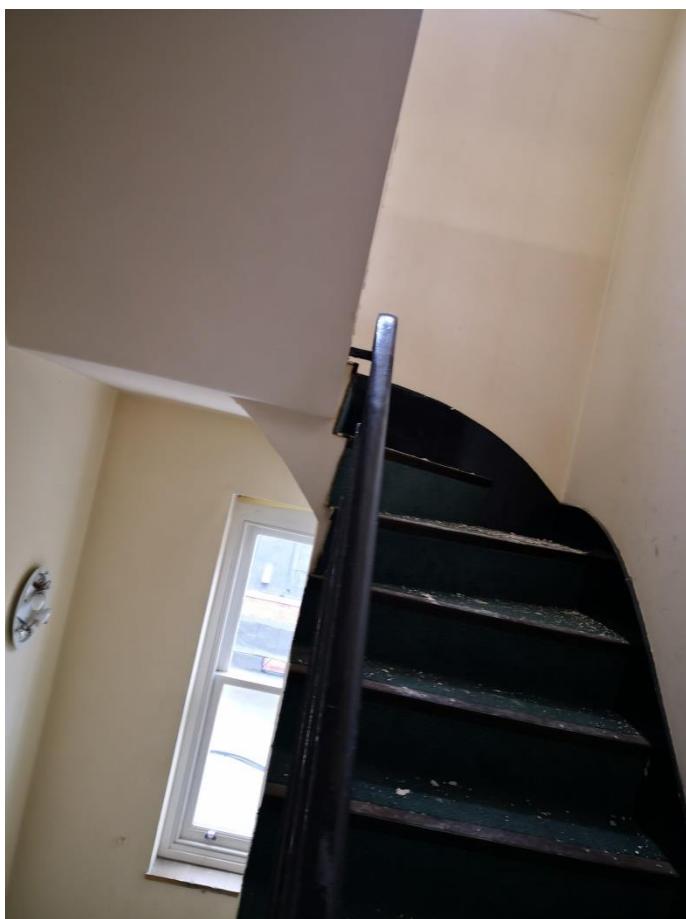
Modern floorboards to property, revealed after initial asbestos investigative works

Third floor



Modern windows and absence of original features evident

Staircase



Original staircase form, with later balustrade. Staircase to be unaltered in this submission