

April 2024

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# Heritage Statement Addendum

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1 Montpelier Square

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1. This addendum has been prepared to accompany a Section 73 application and listed building consent application to amend the basement design at No. 1 Montpelier Square. It follows the granting of consent for the refurbishment and extension of the property as per application refs. 23/03312/FULL and 23/03313/LBC.
- 1.2. The scheme amendment proposed seeks to level the floor plate across the proposed basement. This will have the secondary change in increasing the ceiling void in some areas, as the floor to ceiling height remains consistent. In doing so it seeks approval for an element of the original scheme that was amended over the course of the determination period following concerns raised by officers on the impact of the proposed ceiling void on the significance of the building. The plans were duly superseded to achieve a consent, however this aspect of the scheme has since been reviewed and it is considered there is good justification to revert to the original proposal.
- 1.3. The purpose of this addendum is to consider specifically the heritage impacts of this proposal on the significance of the listed building. A statement of significance is set out in the original Heritage Statement (May 2023) that accompanies this addendum and satisfies the requirement at paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023).

## **2.0 The Proposed Development**

- 2.1. A key objective of this wider refurbishment project is to make No. 1 Montpelier Square more accessible to ensure it can remain a suitable home over the duration of the applicant's lifetime and those of future owners. The new basement will be accessible via the extended lift thereby avoiding stair access, however the approved plans would not deliver a level floorplate thus requiring the current and any future occupant to navigate a set of steps in order to access the rear part of the basement level (Fig. 1). This is a constraint at the proposed basement level as the gym will be located within the rear room and is a proposed facility within the house that should be accessible to all.
- 2.2. These steps are made necessary by the stepped profile of the floorplates through the building with the closet wing set at a lower level from the principal volume of the house. The proposal seeks to deliver a level floor plate across the basement level by increasing the floor to ceiling height in the front part of the basement to accommodate the change in levels. This increased depth would be concealed through the insertion of a dropped ceiling, creating a disguised deeper service void in the front part of the basement (Fig. 1).
- 2.3. Another driver for the proposals is the need to meet the servicing requirements for the basement level. As detailed in the accompanying Design and Access Statement, the service void would allow for better mechanical ventilation necessary at basement level, and also avoid the need for any pumping of rainwater and foul water inside the property, where a system failure could cause damage to internal fabric.

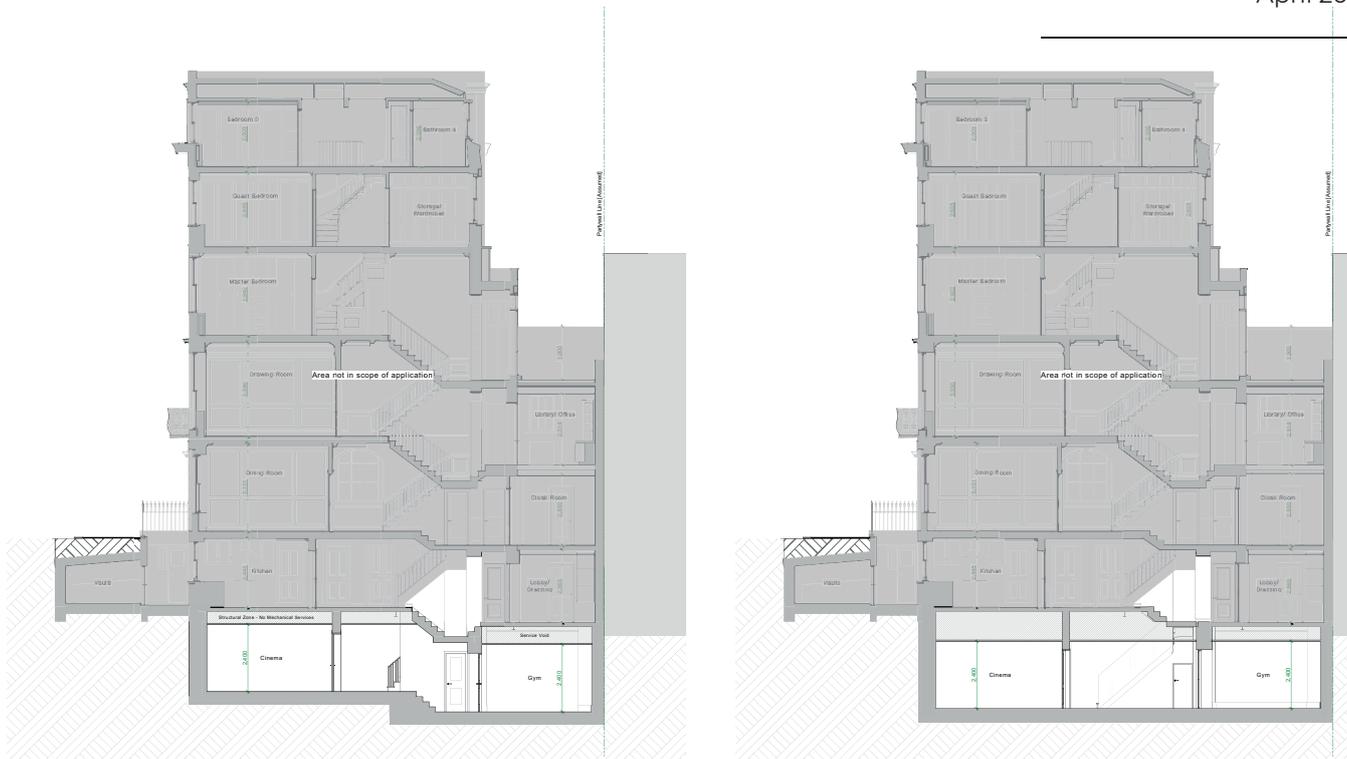


Fig. 1. Approved (left hand side) and proposed (right hand side) section

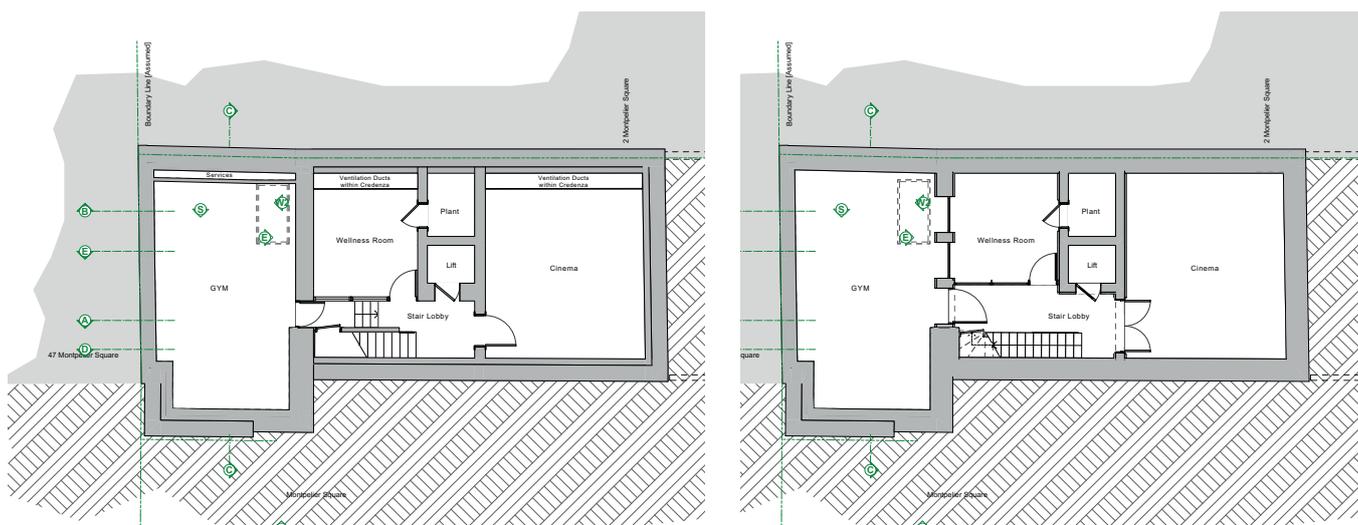


Fig. 2. Approved (left hand side) and proposed (right hand side) basement floor plan

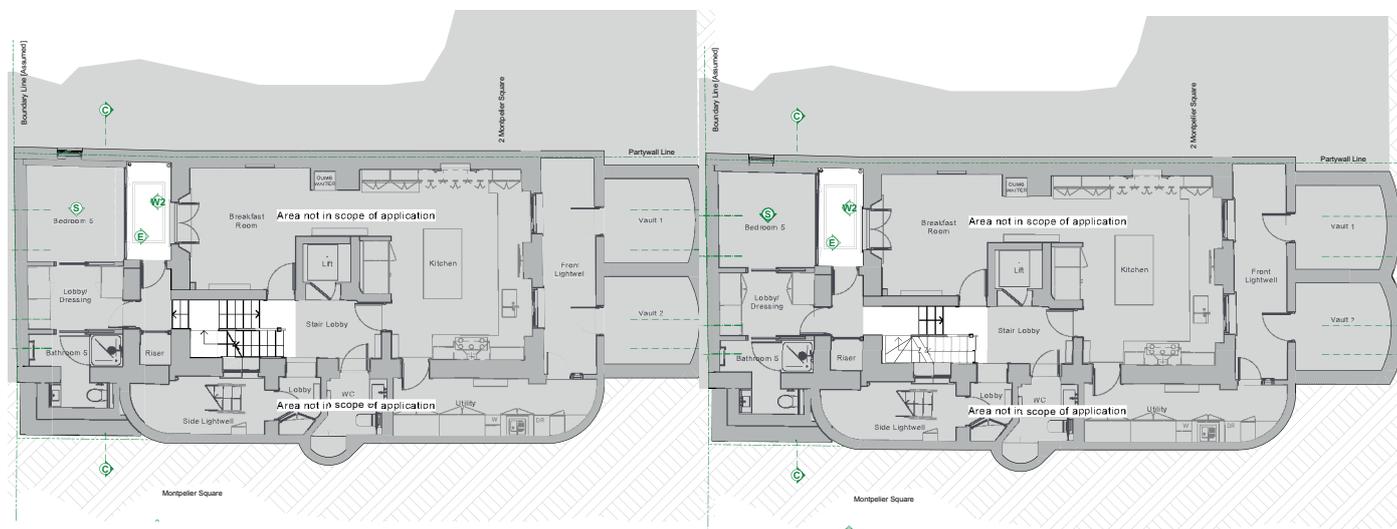


Fig. 3. Approved (left hand side) and proposed (right hand side) lower ground floor plan

### **3.0 NPPF Updates**

- 3.1. Since preparing the May 2023 Heritage Statement the NPPF has been revised and republished (December 2023). There are no material changes to Chapter 16 although the paragraph numbers have since changed. It does not affect the statement of significance set out in the May 2023 document.

### **4.0 Heritage Impact Assessment**

- 4.1. This proposal affects only the proposed (and approved) basement level and fabric already consented for removal. A section of the lower ground floor which does form part of the original property is shown within the proposed works (Fig. 3); this reflects the amended resolution to the change in levels between the closet wing and main volume of the building. Approval was given to lower the floor plate to the rear of the building at lower ground floor level and insert two sets of steps to navigate the level change. This has been reduced to a single set of steps replicating the arrangement above. This element of the proposal thus affects fabric already consented for alteration and will have no impact over and above what has already been consented. Arguably it will deliver betterment over the approved scheme by better reflecting the traditional arrangement as per the floors above.
- 4.2. The main change is located at basement level. Here the new stair giving access to the basement extension from the lower ground floor level will be extended and a deeper service void is proposed to be inserted above the ceiling in the front part of the building. The floor level within the front part of the building will be lowered to match the level at the rear, allowing the steps between the front and rear to be removed and thereby providing level access to the gym (Fig. 2). A dropped ceiling will be inserted to conceal the service void such that it will not be visually/appreciably apparent as part of the basement room proportions.
- 4.3. Feedback on the application stated that as the building is listed, the floor to ceiling height of the basement level should be no greater than that of the existing lower ground floor (email from WCC case officer dated 17 August 2023). In order to maintain the building hierarchy, the applicant was advised to reduce the service depth within the front part of the building (above the cinema room). This revision was duly made.
- 4.4. The proposed amendment reintroduces a service void using a dropped ceiling. Crucially the appreciable floor to ceiling height to all users of the building will be the height of the dropped ceiling, and not the floor plate above. For users experiencing the listed building and its significance, the floor to ceiling height proportions of the rooms within the basement level will not appreciably exceed those of the lower ground floor above. The experience of and an ability to interpret the hierarchy of the floor levels across the building will thus be sustained.
- 4.5. The removal of the dropped ceiling would require listed building consent. Similarly, any forthcoming permission would include a condition setting out the approved plans, meaning that any further changes would require an amendment to the planning consent. Consequently, no future changes can occur without express permission from the local planning authority.
- 4.6. The City of Westminster City Plan 2019-2040 (adopted 2021) includes Policy 45 Basement developments. Criterion A.3 states that basement developments should '*protect heritage assets, and in the case of listed buildings, not unbalance the building's original hierarchy of spaces where this contributes to its significance*'. The supporting text at paragraph 45.9 guides that the most appropriate form of basement will be approximately 2.7m floor to ceiling height. It does not specify that any service voids need to be accommodated within this volume.
- 4.7. The proposed amendment will not unbalance the building's original hierarchy of spaces by virtue of the increased depth being concealed within the service void with the use a dropped ceiling. The appreciable floor to ceiling height will be 2.4m, well within the suggested 2.7m range.
- 4.8. For the same reasons, the proposed amendment is not considered to have any adverse impact on the

special interest of the listed building by virtue of sustaining the hierarchies of the floor levels in all but as seen on architectural section drawings; this is not how the building's significance will be experienced in reality. Policy 39 of the City Plan is thereby met, including Criterion B.2 which seeks to secure the conservation and continued beneficial use of heritage assets through sensitive adaptation that allows them to meet changing needs.

- 4.9. Other changes to the basement level are minor, including widening the doors to the cinema room and gym, and introducing two windows between the gym and wellness room to allow natural light into the latter. Given the modest nature of the changes that affect an entirely new construction these elements of the proposals will not affect the special interest of the building.
- 4.10. For the avoidance of any doubt given the internal nature of the proposed works there will be no impact on the conservation area.

## **5.0 Conclusions**

- 5.1. This Addendum has considered the impact of the revised proposal on the special interest of the listed building. The basement level will be an entirely modern addition to the building. Providing a level access across the basement level can be achieved with no additional impact on historic fabric, and delivered in such a way that sustains the character of the proportions of the spaces. This pragmatic solution avoids building in an accessibility constraint to current and future occupiers. It also facilitates better delivery of the basement level, including improved services and lighting that will enhance the environmental conditions for current and future occupiers. On balance, there is good justification for reverting to the original proposal which is considered to meet local heritage planning policies and the objectives of Chapter 16 of the NPPF with the benefit of ensuring the long term accessibility of the full basement level area for current and future occupiers. On this basis, sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 can be duly discharged, along with section 72.