HERITAGE, PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

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Project Address:
85 London Road
Reading
RG1 5BY

Clients:
Tom Dodsworth & Alison Ryder

Date:
Revision E - December 2023

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1.0 PLANNING STATEMENT

This Heritage, Planning, Design & Access Statement has been prepared in support of the application for the replacement and repositioning of the Lower Ground Floor to Ground Floor staircase and removal of parts of 2 subdividing walls on the Lower Ground Floor.

In addition, less significant proposed works will be carried out at the same time, including the fitting of a new kitchen layout to complement the proposed layout change, and like-for-like repairs to the 3 smaller roofs, including 2 flat roofs and a lean-to, to eliminate rainwater leaks.

This document is to be read in conjunction with the submitted planning drawings and Schedule of Works, which contains a full breakdown of items.

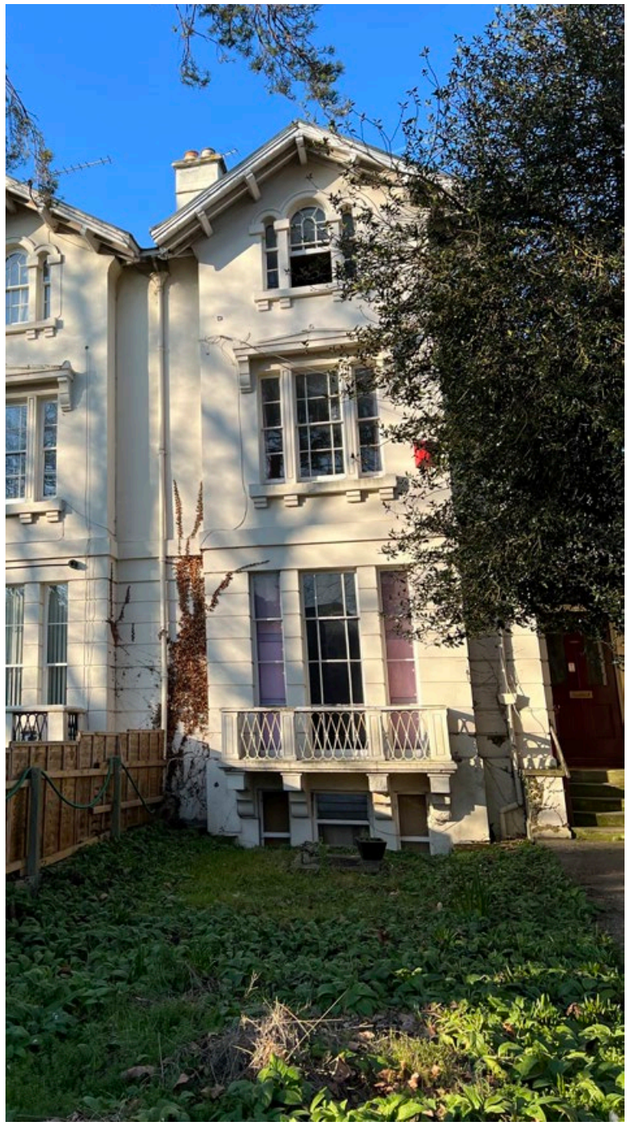
This report has been prepared by LSD architects as the agent for the Freeholder applicants, Tom Dodsworth & Alison Ryder, who took possession of the 5-storey property in March 2023.

1.1 Location

The site is located approximately 1 mile to the east of Reading town centre on the main A4 part of the one-way traffic system into the town. No. 85 London Road has a reasonably long garden with a rear access entered from Eldon Road. The application site sits outside the boundary to Eldon Square Conservation Area. To the West of the site is the car park serving the adjacent Polish Club (81 London Road) and to the East, beyond a site with a garage serving no. 87 London Road, is a single block of semi-detached Victorian houses.

The house itself has similar stylings to the many of the buildings within the Eldon Square Conservation Area, mid 19th century late-Georgian period in character. Due to the proximity to the conservation area these proposals have been conceived as sensitive and proportionate and are consistent with the aims and provisions of national and local planning policy and will enhance the property's contribution to the area, whilst functioning to restore and enhance one of the last remaining intact family houses through into the 21st century.

Fig. 1



View of no. 85 from the front garden

2.0 SCHEDULE OF WORKS

2.1 Schedule of Works 1 of 3

Floor Level	Reference Code (refer to drawings)	What it is	Where it is	Description	Material change	Photo Reference
Exterior	A	Repair render	-	Where necessary	-	-
Exterior	B	Repaint existing colour	-	Exterior to receive new breathable matt masonry paint white / off white coat, replacing existing none breathable paint of same colour	-	-
Exterior	C	New drainpipes /guttering, replace plastic gutters	-	Plastic gutters to be replaced with traditional metal	-	-
GF exterior	D	Painting iron balusters	Front elevation	Black gloss paint to match adjoining property	-	Fig. 2
GF exterior	E	Back door	Rear entrance	Replace with traditional timber door	Timber, painted	-
LGF exterior	F	Drain on door threshold	Rear entrance	ACO drain to deal with rainwater ingress	Galvanised steel	-
Exterior	G	Eaves	-	Repair wooden soffits	Filled, waterproof treatment and repainted	-
1	H	Flat roof	Above front entrance	Repair flat roof, flashings, DPCs etc. Replace felting with traditional leadwork	Lead	-
1, 2, roof	I	Slate tile roofs	Lean-tos and main cross-gabled roof	Repairs/ replacement of modern construction roof; wood frame, Slate tile, plasterboard & Gypsum plaster. Re-instatement of conservation breathable materials. No change to exterior presentation	Conservation material re-instated: wood wool boards, Breathable insulation (ThermaFleece) & Lime plaster	-
GF front garden	J	Front iron gate	Front garden wall	Black gloss paint	-	Fig. 4
Interior	K	Full rewire & new lighting	-	-	-	-
Interior	L	Replumb	-	-	-	-
Interior	M	New boiler & heating system	-	Gas combi boiler to go in existing position, utilising existing flue position. Under floor heating in Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3. New radiators on Level 4	Water under floor heating system installed within the limecrete floor. Water under floor heating installed in Level 02 & 03 using under hung system suspended between floor joists	-

2.1 Schedule of Works 2 of 3

Floor Level	Reference Code (refer to drawings)	What it is	Where it is	Description	Material change	Photo Reference
Interior	N	Insulate/ acoustic insulation	-	Insulate between joist on all levels, using breathable conservation style materials	Insulation materials: Wood fibre & Thermafleece	-
Interior	O	Gypsum plaster to be removed	-	Where used	Reinstate lime plaster	-
Interior	P	Repair coving and architraves	-	Repair to stuccowork where necessary	-	-
Interior	Q	Internal doors	-	Repair doors, locks and timber panels where necessary	-	Fig. 7
LGF	R	Replace and move staircase	Between LGF and GF	New timber stair to be built to combat safety concerns, existing stairs have been significantly altered using modern materials	-	Fig. 35
LGF	S	Opening supports	LGF shear walls	Addition of 2 concealed steel beams	Boxed-out in wood wool boards with lime plaster skim	-
LGF	T	Wall openings	LGF shear walls	Creation of 2 wall openings	-	-
LGF	U	Natural stone flooring	LGF	Natural stone flooring to cover new Limecrete floor	Natural stone tiles replacing floor tiles	-
LGF	V	Limecrete flooring	LGF flooring	Remove existing concrete floor which is likely causing damp issues on walls and replace with limecrete flooring finished with natural stone tiles	-	Fig. 26
LGF	W	Hot water tank	LGF side wing	Remove	-	Fig. 9
LGF	X	External door	LGF side wing	New external door leading to the vaults	-	-
LGF	Y	Bath to be removed	LGF side wing	Space to be converted into utility room and WC	-	Fig. 10
LGF	Z	Pantry wall	LGF side wing	Replace with conventional stud wall with full height timber door	Timber clad to wood wool boards with lime plaster skim	Fig. 10

2.1 Schedule of Works 3 of 3

Floor Level	Reference Code (refer to drawings)	What it is	Where it is	Description	Material change	Photo Reference
GF	AA	Door to	LGF side wing	Pocket door to LGF WC and pantry	-	-
GF	BB	Wood burning stove	LFG dinning room	Open back up dining room fire place using existing stone hearth, no other historical features exist and instate wood burning stove	-	-
GF	CC	Door leading to rear door steps	Entrance hall	Replace wire mesh glazing with clear glass	Clear glazing	-
GF	DD	Hearth tile	Study	Broken glazed tiles to be replaced with similar alternatives	-	-
GF	EE	Stair balustrade	-	Reinstate missing spinal at bottom of staircase	-	Fig. 8
GF	FF	Stained glass window	Study	Repair broken panes	-	Fig. 18, 19, 20
1	GG	Door to room	Walk-in wardrobe/ en-suite (proposed)	Door, frame and architrave to be moved to new location on wall, keeping existing materials	-	Fig. 12, 33
1	HH	En-suite fixtures	-	Converted wardrobe into en-suite with shower using existing extractor outlet	-	Fig. 13
1	II	Bathroom door	Bathroom	Replace timber door	-	Fig. 14
1	JJ	New bathroom	Bathroom	Replace fixtures and fittings	TBC	-
2	KK	Enlarge room	Shower room	Extend walls into rear bedroom	Wooden stud wall, wood wool boards with lime plaster skim, painted white	Fig. 15, 34
2	LL	Toilet and fan	Shower room	Add in toilet and extractor outlet		-
3	MM	Timber truss cladding	Attic	Remove wooden cladding covering roof trusses	-	Fig. 17
3	NN	Insulation	Attic	Wood fibre and Thermafleece insulation between roof trusses and plaster over	Wood wool boards with lime plaster skim	-
3	OO	Guarding	Attic	Reinstate timber balusters and balustrading at the top of the steps as protection from falling	-	Fig. 16

2.2 Schedule of Works photos

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

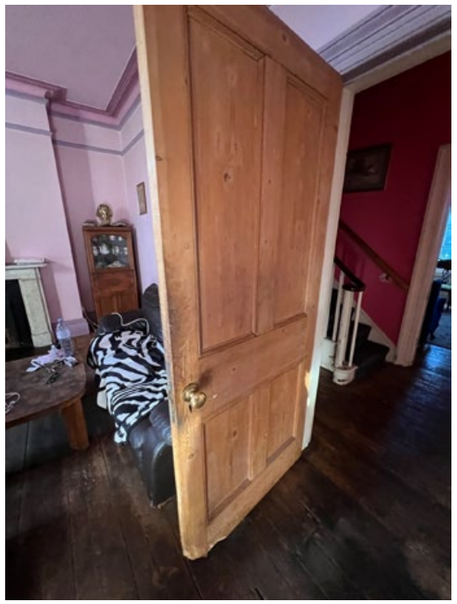


Fig. 7

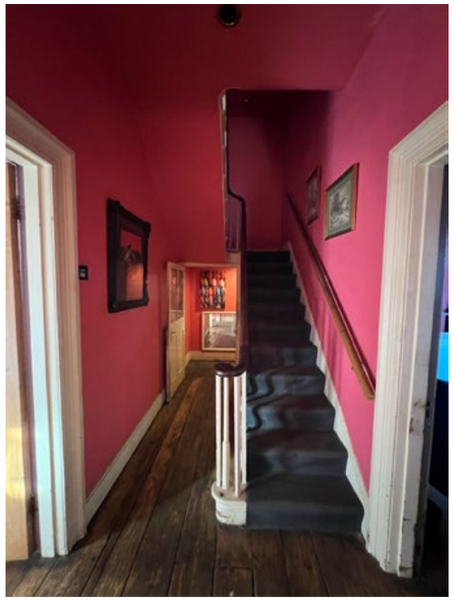


Fig. 8

Fig. 9

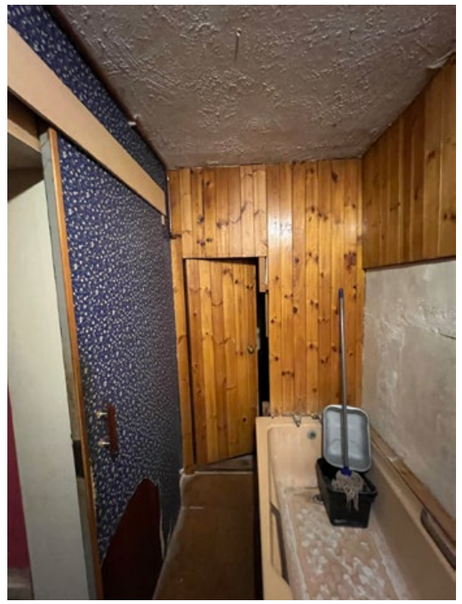


Fig. 10

2.2 Schedule of Works photos

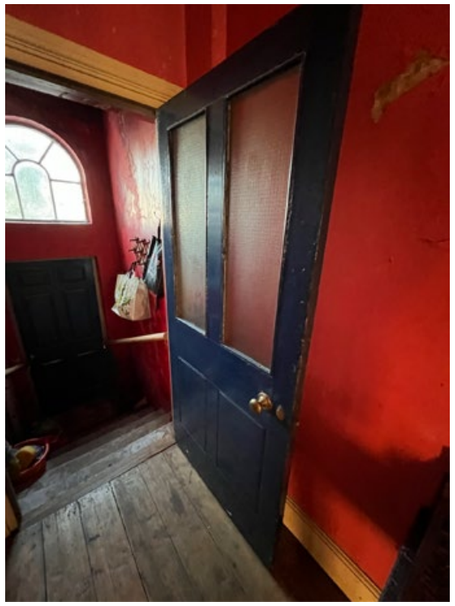


Fig. 11

Fig. 12

Fig. 13

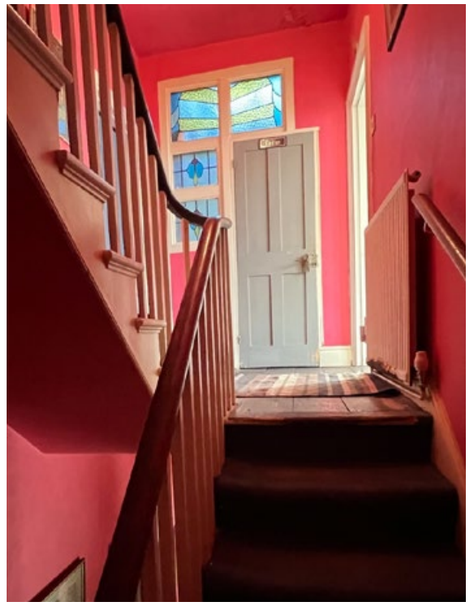


Fig. 14

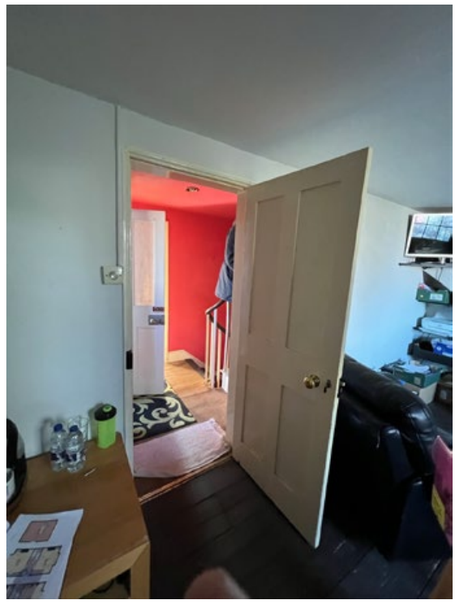


Fig. 15

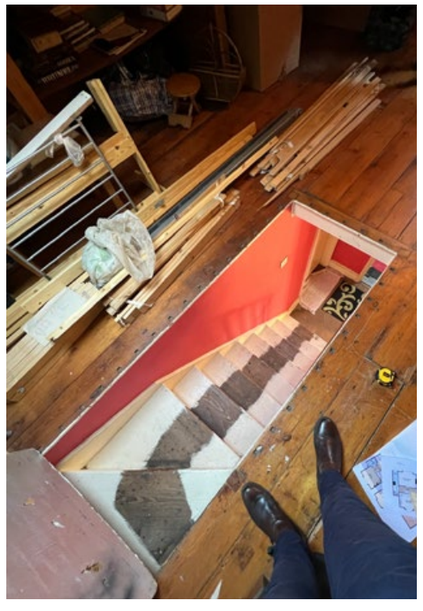


Fig. 16

Fig. 17

2.2 Schedule of Works photos

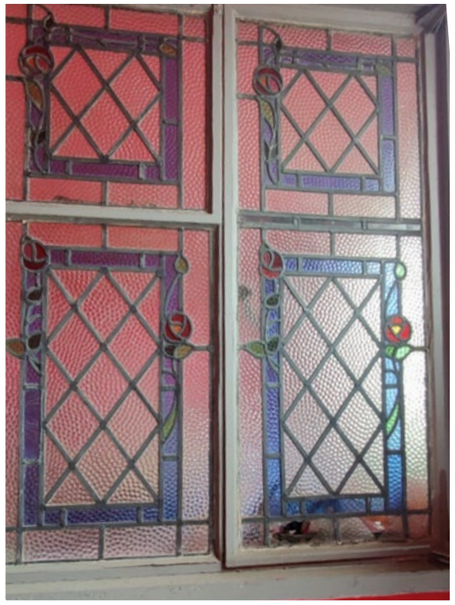


Fig. 18

Fig. 19

Fig. 20

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 Planning Applications pertaining to no. 85 London Road

- Permission granted for the double garage in 1961, 8941/32448.
- Permission granted for Demolition to create new door opening at rear basement. Refurbishment of rear entrance and internal alterations, 1989, reference: 880330.
- Planning permission refused for a two-story pitched roof dwelling, 2012, reference: 110797
- Planning permission granted for the repair original windows and replace no.2 windows and skylights to conservation style double glazed alternatives. New double door opening to Lower Ground Floor (north), reference: 230615

3.2 Relevant local Planning Applications for amendments to Lower Ground Floor stairs

Examples of Reading council planning approvals where a Listed building has had its staircase altered so removing the existing 'period' staircase. Details of these are given below. Examples were also found where considerations were made to the head height of the staircase allowing works to raise the ceiling of the staircase, an option that isn't open to us with the location of the main staircase. In addition these are all cases where the period property has been changed into multiple residences (HMO), in contravention to Reading policy:

- 32 Russell Street, Reading – (Listed Number: 1113568) – Planning Number: 130384 (2013) – Conversion of a dwelling into three flats. The lower ground floor basement has been converted into a self contained flat, removed existing internal staircase and built a new internal/external staircase. Significant internal and external layout changes, removal and addition of new walls.
- Gullane Court, 107 London Road Reading – (Listing Number : 1303076) – Planning Number: 050731 (2005) – Amended description: Conversion of existing lower ground floor into 2 no. 1 bed flats with internal and external alterations. Complete removal of basement staircase, new entrance at front of property and internal walls added and removed. Separation of two new basement flats from main property.
- Turnberry Court, 105 London Road Reading – (Listed Number: 1321927) – Planning Number: 060956 (2006) – Conversion of existing lower ground floor level into 2 no 1-bed flats including reinstating blocked window openings, extending well and railings to rear and creating light wells, including railing to front. Complete removal of basement staircase, new entrance at front of property and internal walls added and removed. Separation of two new basement flats from main property.
- 114 London Street – (Listing Number: 1113530 – Shared 110 London Street) – Planning number: 021418 (2002) –Urgent and overdue repairs to damp basement, vault and ground floor. Removal of stud wall. Installation of Lantern. Re-open the original doorway. This plan allowed alterations to the stairway to increase head height and removal of wall adjoining staircase. In addition to rear extension and removal of existing wall.

3.3 Relevant local Planning Applications for amendments to internal layouts

Examples of Reading council planning approvals where Listed buildings have been allowed to make significant internal layout changes. Often removing full walls leaving no presence of the original building layout:

- 27 Eldon Square –(Listing Number: 1321945) – Planning number: 110972(2011) Change of use of lower ground floor from office to 1x One-bed flat. Includes additional walls on the ground floor, lower ground floor removal of internal walls and moving an internal door.
- 25 Eldon Square – (Listing Number: 1321945 – Shared with 27 Eldon Road) – Planning number: 211828 (2021) – Change of use from 2 Flats to a single dwelling including internal alteration, alterations to fenestration and erection of single storey rear extension. This includes, re-configuration of the main staircase, addition of new windows. Including extensive changes to include a new opening to internal walls. Adding new partition walls, new door openings and amending a staircase. – Planning number: 150339 (2015) – Removal of internal partition wall between dining room and kitchen. – Planning number: 011268 (2001) – Opening up of basement area below staircase to upper flat to form new bedroom. New room to have sash window to rear elevation into shallow light-well. Existing internal staircase to be altered.
- 30 Eldon Road – (Listing Number : 1113465 – Shared with 28 Eldon Road) – Planning number: 200312 (2020) internal alternation to form 2nd floor WC and basement shower, single rear extension and rear veranda. – This has 2nd floor changes to remove a wall and add a new entrance way to an internal room. Has basement changes that include removing internal walls, relocating door openings, extending a existing internal opening , addition of windows.
- 4 Eldon Road – (Listing Number: 1113462 – Shared with 6 Eldon Road) – Planning number: 071059 (2007) – Change of use and conversion of existing building from existing 8 bed sits too 4 self-contained flats (1NO 2Bed 3NO 1Bed) – Removal of multiple internal walls, removing all trace, combining rooms into larger rooms, adding additional internal entrances.
- 114 London Street – (Listing Number: 1113530 – Shared 110 London Street) – Planning number: 021418 (2002) – Urgent and overdue repairs to damp basement, vault and ground floor. Removal of stud wall. Installation of a lantern. Re-open the original doorway. This plan allowed alterations to the stairway to increase head height and removal of wall adjoining the staircase. In addition to rear extension and removal of existing wall.
- 17 Eldon Square – (Listed Number: 1113469) – Planning number: 121220 (2012) – Conversion of therapeutic centre to 4 x 1 bed flats and 1 x 2 bed flat with associated parking, secure cycle storage and amenity area. Internal alterations including removal of internal walls and addition of new walls and internal openings.

4.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT

4.1 Grade II Listed Buildings

- Built in 1833
- Grade II Listed
- English Heritage Legacy ID: 39007
- Source ID: 1156006
- Listing Date: 14 December 1978
- Entry Name: 83 and 85, London Road
- Description: Mid C19 pair in the Eldon Square style. 3 storeys. Stucco, ground floor channelled 2 gabled breaks with tripartite windows glazing bar sashes, balconies ground floor, pediments 1st floor. 2 storey set back porch bays at each end. Slate roof with projecting eaves, central chimney. End gables have oculi to 2nd floor. Bath ashlar street wall with cross gabled gate piers.

https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1156006

4.2 Character of the area

Eldon Terrace and the adjacent Montague Street are part of the Eldon Square Conservation Area, which in this part is characterised by two storey terraced properties and to the east of the application site at Alderney Court is a block of flats.

Construction of No. 75-77 London Road in much more recent times does probably the most damage to the setting due to its size, design & materials used (yellow brick, UPVC).

Most neighbouring properties have been converted into HMOs/flats, very few intact family houses of this style remain in the vicinity. The HMO/flats are poorly looked after and are in appear to be in degrading condition.

Fig. 21

Eaves also typical of the Eldon Square Conservation Area

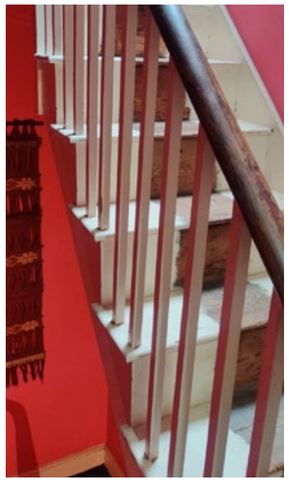
Fig. 22

Ground Floor study

Fig. 23

Ground Floor living room

Fig. 24



Balustrade/ banisters

Fig. 25

Damage to original lime plaster

4.3 Analysis of the impact on the Heritage Asset

Respecting the limitations placed by the design guidance the proposal seeks to add only internal features that are either subservient or use modern features in-keeping with buildings built in the 19th century.

As the premier public advisory body to the government and official record keepers of Listed Buildings it's perhaps most relevant to analyse how the proposals compare with Historic England's policy statements:

4.4 Historic England

https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/your-home/improvement/change-internal-layout/

'Layout tells the story of a house'

'The layout of a historic house is valuable because it tells the history of how the house was used when first built, and how it might have changed over time, because of fashion and as living standards improved.'

Historic buildings have always been subject to layout changes to reflect the changes in fashion and reflect improving living standards. 85 London Road is no different as the evidence of more contemporary additions such as the shower room, new skylights and evidence of alterations to the existing Lower Ground Floor staircase are clear. The proposal retains enough of the existing main wall divisions to indicate where the walls of the Georgian layout would have been, say nothing of these walls staying untouched on all other floors, whilst providing the open plan living space key to modern fashions and improved natural daylight demanded by modern living standards.

'Your house's original plan'

'It may be possible to remove internal walls to make larger rooms or to divide a large room to make smaller spaces. In most cases - and usually in listed buildings - you will be expected to keep old walls, or at least enough to show where they were.'

Historically, these lower ground floor rooms would not have had great importance to family life. Removal of these walls would provide cross ventilation of the lower ground floor, which is partially subterranean by nature, which would help counteract the dampness that brings and help stop further deterioration to the building fabric.

'Knock-on effects of layout changes'

'If you alter the internal layout you will need to think about how this will affect the decorations and fittings of the rooms – features such as plaster cornices and door frames.'

The proposed extension of the Level 2 shower room will not impact any original decorative feature as the rear bedroom wall and ceiling terminate simply, without a cornice. Likewise, the conversion of the modern Level 1 walk-in wardrobe into an en-suite will not result in any loss of internal decorative features. It is proposed that the existing door, door frame and architrave would be reused and the door relocated to accommodate the conversion.

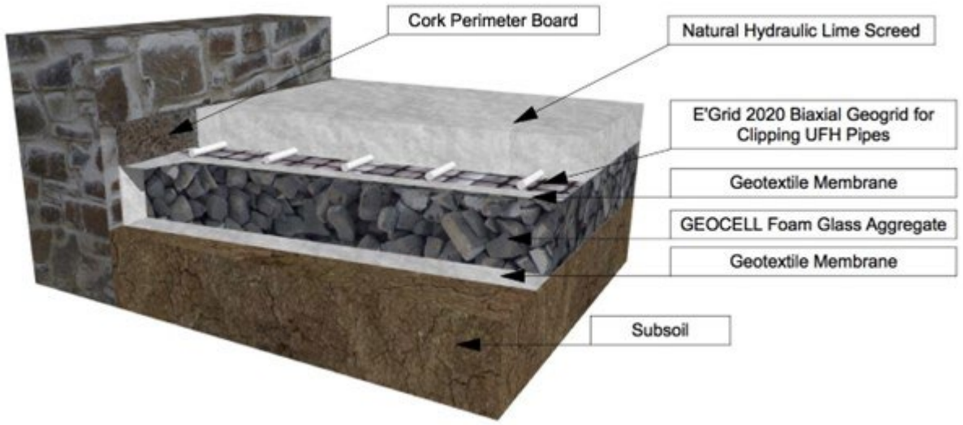
On the Ground Floor the only visual change would bring the top of the landing and flight to the stairs leading down further into the hallway space to increase the headroom available underneath the half landing above. Other than floorboards, no original features would be removed in the process - this stair proposal is covered in a later section of this document.

4.5 Lower Ground Floor

The condition of the Lower Ground Floor of the building shows little, if not, none of the original feature one might expect of a property from the Georgian period. Showing signs of extensive renovation through the 1960's to 1990's culminating in the planning approval in 1988 and the works approved. The alterations that have been made are unsympathetic to the properties history or the condition. Extensive use of gypsum plaster and the poured concrete floor present damp issues, the proposed works will look to use conservation approved material in preserving the condition of the building.

Furthermore there are no period features remaining, no fireplaces/halves, cornicing or historical plasterwork, no original flooring or tiles. All windows and doors on this floor have been replaced with modern examples already.

Fig. 26



4.6 Flooring condition

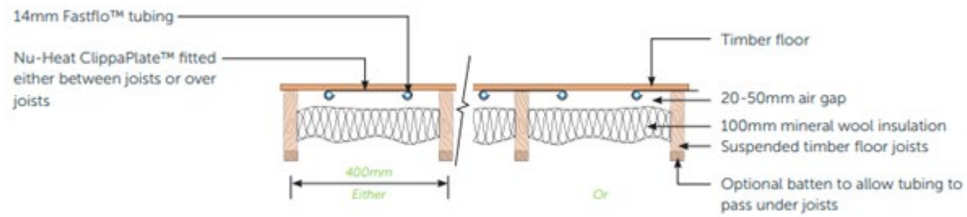
Below the existing tiles in the LGF there is a non-structural in-situ poured concrete slab, between 100mm and 150mm deep, on a base of loose hardcore onto the subsoil layer. The concrete floor is not period appropriate to the property as would have likely had suspended timber floorboards and strip foundation footings. Furthermore, this type of building material is unsympathetic to the properties condition and is likely causing rising damp on exterior walls.

The proposal seeks to remove the concrete floor throughout the Lower Ground Floor and replace with a limecrete floor. As illustrated in Fig. 26 the limecrete floor is constructed using a foamglass aggregate to provide insulation from the soil before laying a natural hydraulic lime screed and using a cork perimeter boarder. The materials used here sympathetic to a conservation style re-instatement of a more period appropriate flooring.

Furthermore, this proposal seeks to incorporate a water under floor heating system into the lime screed. This presents an element of future proofing the house with modern UFH systems being more efficient than traditional radiators with minimal disturbance to the historical fabric of the property.

With modern systems such as illustrated in Fig. 27 they enable instillation from above and are underslung to the suspended timber floor. This means that there is no disturbance of the lathe and plaster ceilings and no visual impact of these heating solutions, allowing the timber flooring to remain part of the historic fabric of the buildings.

Fig. 27



5.0 THE PRE-APPLICATION

A Pre-Application for the proposal, ref: 230837/PREAPP, has been undertaken to gain an understanding of the council's potential stance on renovations to the internal layout changes.

Based on the council's feedback some minor tweaks have been made to the design reflected in the proposal, in what was a generally well-received set of proposed ideas. However, it had been noted that resistance to the replacement staircase would likely be felt if indeed a planning proposal was made.

The following pages seek to provide the necessary evidence that the Lower Ground Floor staircase is of less architectural and historic significance and therefore the 'harm' of replacing it is outweighed by the 'risks' to health its continued use would pose.

5.1 The Pre-Application appraisal response conclusions

The following is the Planning Officer's closing statement in the response, dated 16 August 2023, to the Pre Planning Application enquiry which preceded this application:

'Overall, the majority of the proposed works would be considered a welcome development to ensure the repair and extending the longevity of this heritage asset, however, any future submission should be accompanied by detailed surveys to assess the extent of damage to the roofs and a full schedule of works. The proposed refurbishment of the Lower Ground Floor are the most extensive works proposed to the dwelling, and the relocation of the staircase is not likely to be considered acceptable.'

5.2 Pre-Application stair example

The Planning Officer responsible for the enquiry response informally provided an example of a similar proposed project in London which also wanted to replace an original staircase - however one which had a decision to reject the scheme upheld on appeal to the Secretary of State.

'I also attach below an appeal decision with similar context for your reference.

The replacement of a secondary staircase in a mid-19th century townhouse in a central London conservation area was denied permission in Westminster 18/06/2013 DCS No 400-001-110, an inspector finding that it was an important record of the way people organised their lives. The staircase was originally constructed as a secondary stair for access to the lesser spaces at the top of the building usually occupied by servants, the inspector noted. She remarked that its steepness, narrow width and largely plain design pointed to the secondary nature of the stair and its role within the overall hierarchy of spaces. She held that it was an important record of the building's history. She considered that altering the pitch of the stair and the height of the balustrading as proposed would diminish part of the building's interest, which depended to some extent on original features remaining in place and retaining their original forms. Although the proposal would make the stairs easier to use, the steepness of the existing stair did not appear to have affected the amount or standard of accommodation proposed for the fourth floor, she noted. Furthermore, there was no evidence to suggest that retaining the original staircase would compromise the viability or liveability of the property. It might not meet modern day standards of convenience, she accepted, but it was not inherently unsafe.'

If this was to form the basis for a rejection of this proposal there would be a few reasons why it is our belief that it would be an unsatisfactory comparison:

- Many examples of Listed Buildings in Reading have had original staircases replaced after being approved by Reading Council in recent years (see 2.0 Planning History)
- Despite also pertaining to a Listed Building, projects based outside the purview of the Borough aren't necessarily good comparisons or precedents for determination.
- The example Westminster staircase was situated on the 4th floor of that particular building. Since the stair for the proposed building leads directly to the kitchen it is anticipated that the frequency of use will be far greater by comparison.
- If a comparison is to be made between the proposal however the summarising statement is perhaps crucial. It is arguable that the 'viability or livability' as they have put it, would be compromised in the case of 85 London Road, Reading due in no small part to the health and safety concerns posed by using the stairs Having to stoop when using the staircase - is unquestionably 'inherently unsafe' and would pose a major risk of falling at some point during its use.

Rather than form a basis for this proposal to be rejected this example shows the opposite. The proposed replacement has not been conceived for aesthetic purposes or to meet 'modern standards of convenience' but is in principle designed to reduce the safety risks, whilst maintaining as far as plausible, the period features of the house.

5.3 Roof survey

It was suggested in the Pre-Application appraisal that owing to the visible deterioration of the roof and the proposal to fix the source of rainwater damage a survey would be required.

A survey conducted by RICS accredited Allen & Smith Chartered Surveyors, dated 17th January 2023, concluded that the roof structure and coverings require 'urgent attention' and 'attention' respectively. However, it was noted that the felt construction of the flat roof above the front porch had visible pooling on which may be a large contributing factor in the very visible water damage to the ground floor hall ceiling, particularly to the side of the building. The surveyor also flagged repair and redecoration of the parapet wall surrounding this area of roofing, this may be a contributing factor to water ingress also.

The survey notes that the flat roof above the rear entrance has an internal box gutter which is defective and is causing damp through the wall and the ceiling below and requires further investigations.

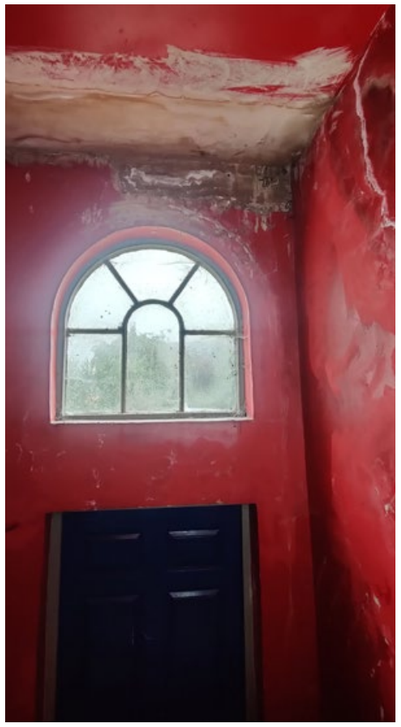
Defects have been detected on the roof above the properties main bathroom, cracks are also visible to the skylight (to be replaced) and the parapet wall which have together caused damage to the ceiling in this room.

5.4 Roof materials

The existing materials used on the flat roofs are relatively modern felting suggesting that the originals have long since been replaced, it is therefore unlikely that longer lasting materials such as lead would have been used for example, whereas roof tiles would naturally be unsuitable for flat roof construction.

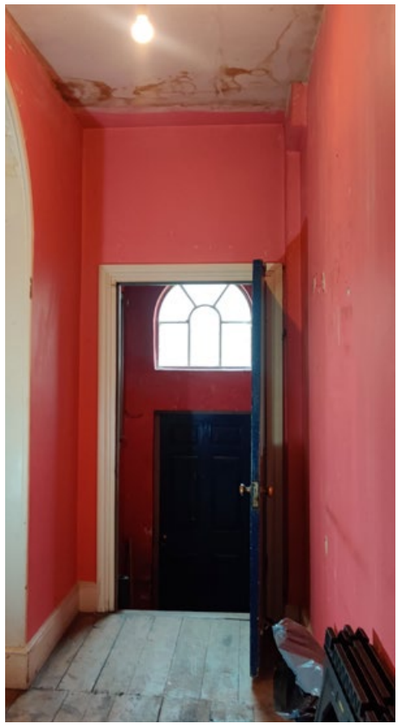
Rather than patching over the existing felt roof it is proposed that traditional lead roofs will replace the defective roofs. As per Historic England guidance, this may prove the most hostorially appropriate material for the period of the building. Furthermore it should be detailed to include a min. 150mm upstand against, and chased into, the inner parapet wall, with the necessary filets to aid in effective run-off.

Fig. 28



GF hallway ceiling water damage

Fig. 29



GF hallway ceiling water damage

Fig. 30

GF hallway ceiling water damage

Fig. 31

Level 1 bathroom ceiling water damage

Fig. 32

Level 1 bathroom ceiling water damage

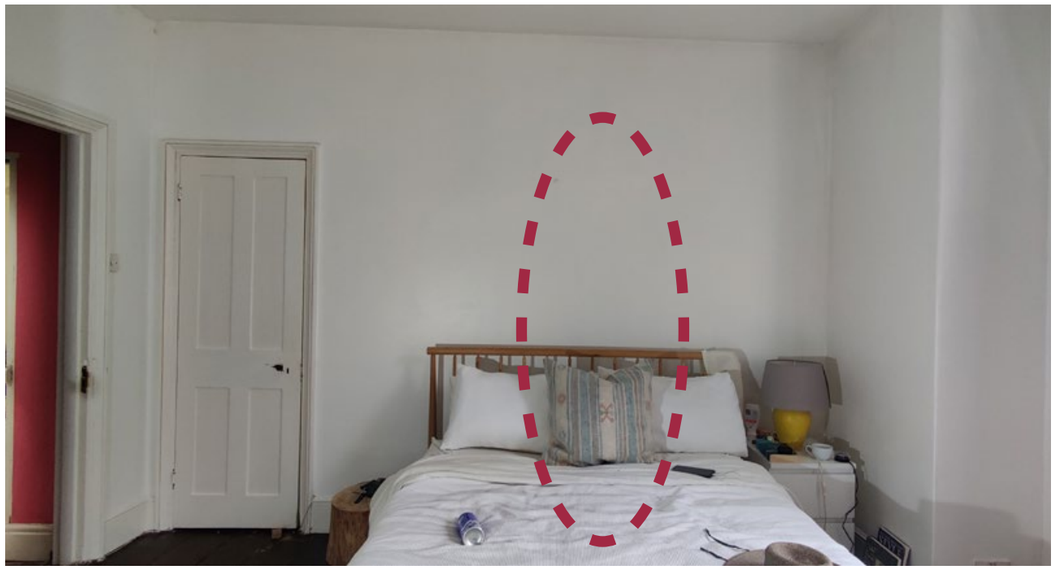
5.5 Level 01 and Level 02 internal layout changes

Level 01 and Level 02 will have sight alterations to the internal spaces. On Level 01 it is proposed that a doorway is to move to allow for the installation of a new en-suite to replace a walk-in wardrobe/ cupboard. All the visible elements of the existing door will be maintained for the new opening, door panel, architraves etc, with new ironmongery to cover for what is already missing.

Two new walls will be used to extend the size of the shower room on Level 02. The bedroom where these proposed walls enter into are void of decorative features as only the Study and Living room on the Ground Floor have ornate cornices.

The new sections of walls will be created using timber studwork, wood wool boards and lime plaster skim.

Fig. 33



Approx. location of move Level 01 door

Fig. 34

Space on Level 02 where shower room extension will be

6.0 THE PROPOSAL

6.1 Existing stair photos

Fig. 35

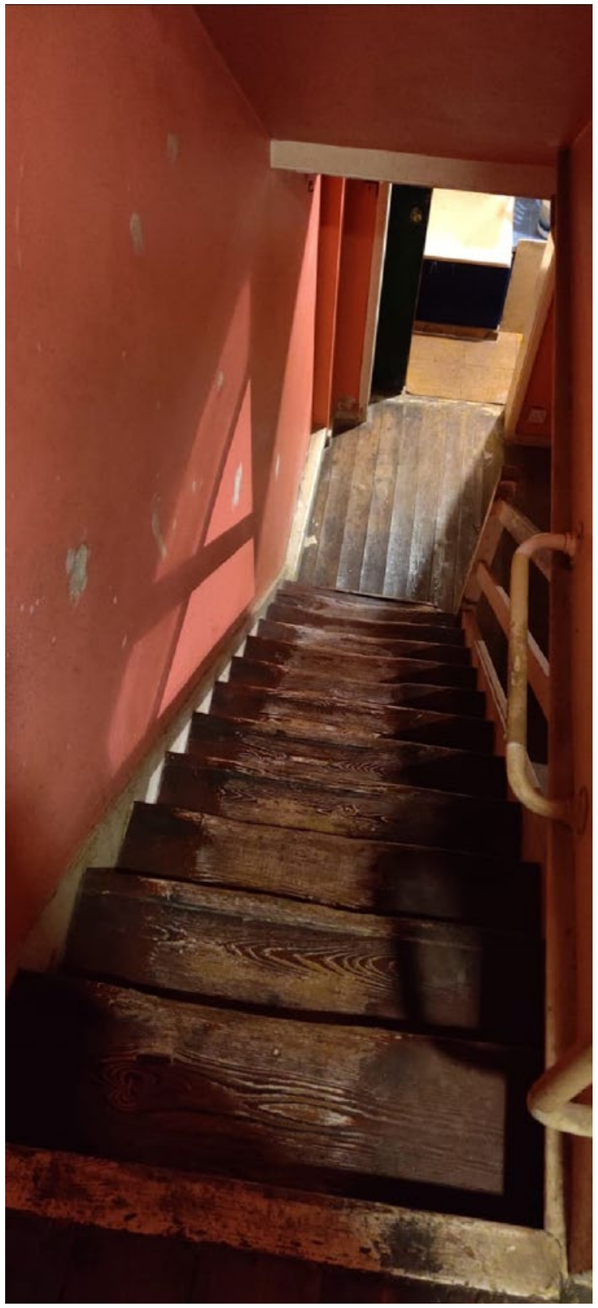


Fig. 36

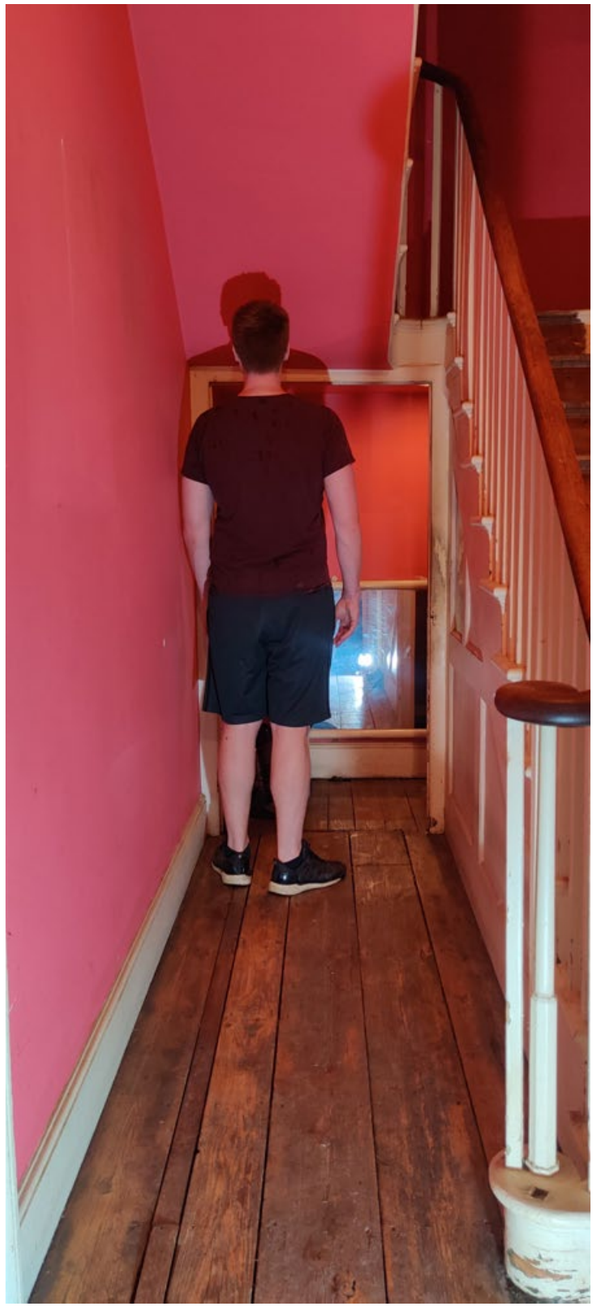


Fig. 37

6.2 The purpose of the staircase

In the period that this family house would've been constructed the Lower Ground Floor would likely have been reserved as living and working quarters for the servants in the employment of the owning family. It's likely 2 rooms on the lowest level of this property were used as a bedroom and a kitchen where all the meals would be prepared. Those cooked for the employer would've brought upstairs to the family dining room.

In Georgian and Victorian times, it was customary for the rooms and circulation spaces dedicated to the servants to be much more austere and cut-off than the family spaces. It may have been rare for the employer to have to enter the servants' space and therefore expensive decoration would be harder to come by in the Lower Ground Floor. The staircase would likely have been simply designed to reflect this.

The proposal seeks to make more use of the Lower Ground Floor to reflect changing attitudes, without servants being part of the average everyday life anymore a new staircase and updated plan will bring a use back to these dark and neglected rooms. By making the staircase wider and adopting traditional wood panelling into the design of the stair joinery the staircase will become more akin to the stairs in the rest of the house but stay subservient in grandeur as a nod to the history of the building. It would allow the incorporation of the kitchen-living-dining space, the heart of the modern home, safely into the house with more ease, allowing the grander rooms of the rest of the house to remain in-tact.

Fig. 38

On the inside of the staircase concrete blocks and offcuts of floor lino used to pack between 4x2 timber and support the base transom of the stair.

Fig. 39

Base supports and timber columns do not look contemporaneous with the age of the building as they have not aged at the same rate as timber elsewhere i.e. the treads, and methods of construction seem at odds with the era. This suggests that the either the staircase itself has at some point moved away from its original, undergone alterations or entirely replaced. Certainly, the balustrade guarding on one side of the staircase is typical with an epoch much more recent than that expected in Georgian times.

6.3 Condition of the staircase

The current condition of the staircase shows significant signs of wear and prior alteration as evidenced in Fig. 40.

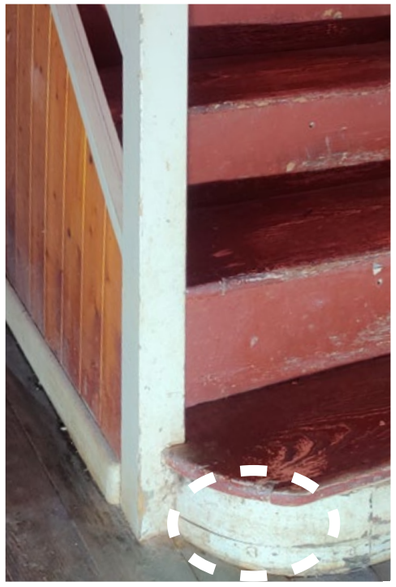
The base of the existing staircase has been significantly altered in the past when the concrete floor was poured sometime between 1960 & 1990. The new Lower Ground floor resulted in a change in finished floor level and the bottom step being cut to fit that new floor height. Furthermore, the current supporting system of the stairs is providing safety concerns as that the staircase is now only supported on concrete blocks and loose linoleum packing and unfixed timbers.

A further consideration of access to the floor needs to be considered, with the proposal to remove the concrete floor and replace with limecrete flooring for the purpose of restoring more period appropriate and breathable material back into the property. The removal of the concrete floor currently used as the base to the staircase may cause issues with staircase integrity. Compounded by any removal of modern alterations to the staircase, wooden columns and boxing which are providing structural support off from the concrete floor.

Fig. 40

Worn down treads

Fig. 41



Smaller rise on bottom step

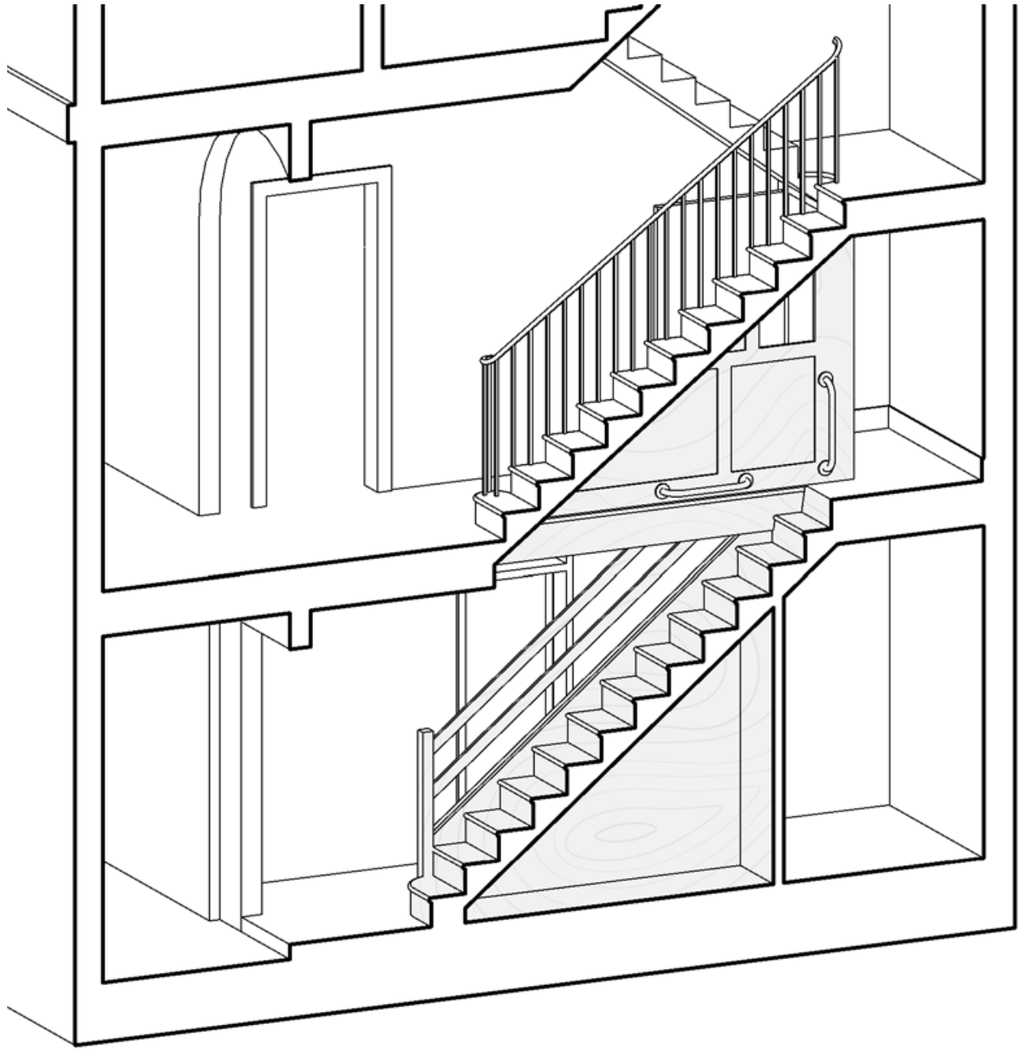
Fig. 42

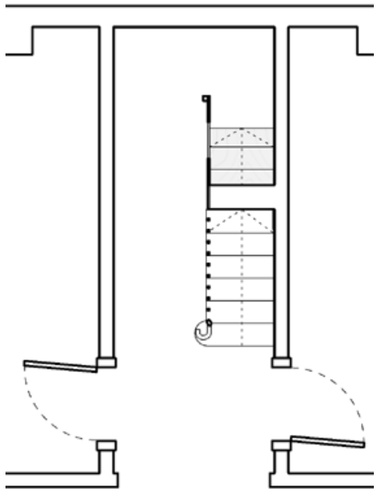
Evidentally new support structure cladding for staircase

Fig. 43

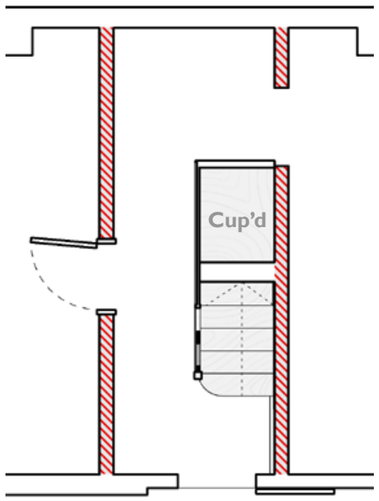
Non-period understair cupboard door

6.3 Existing stair in situ



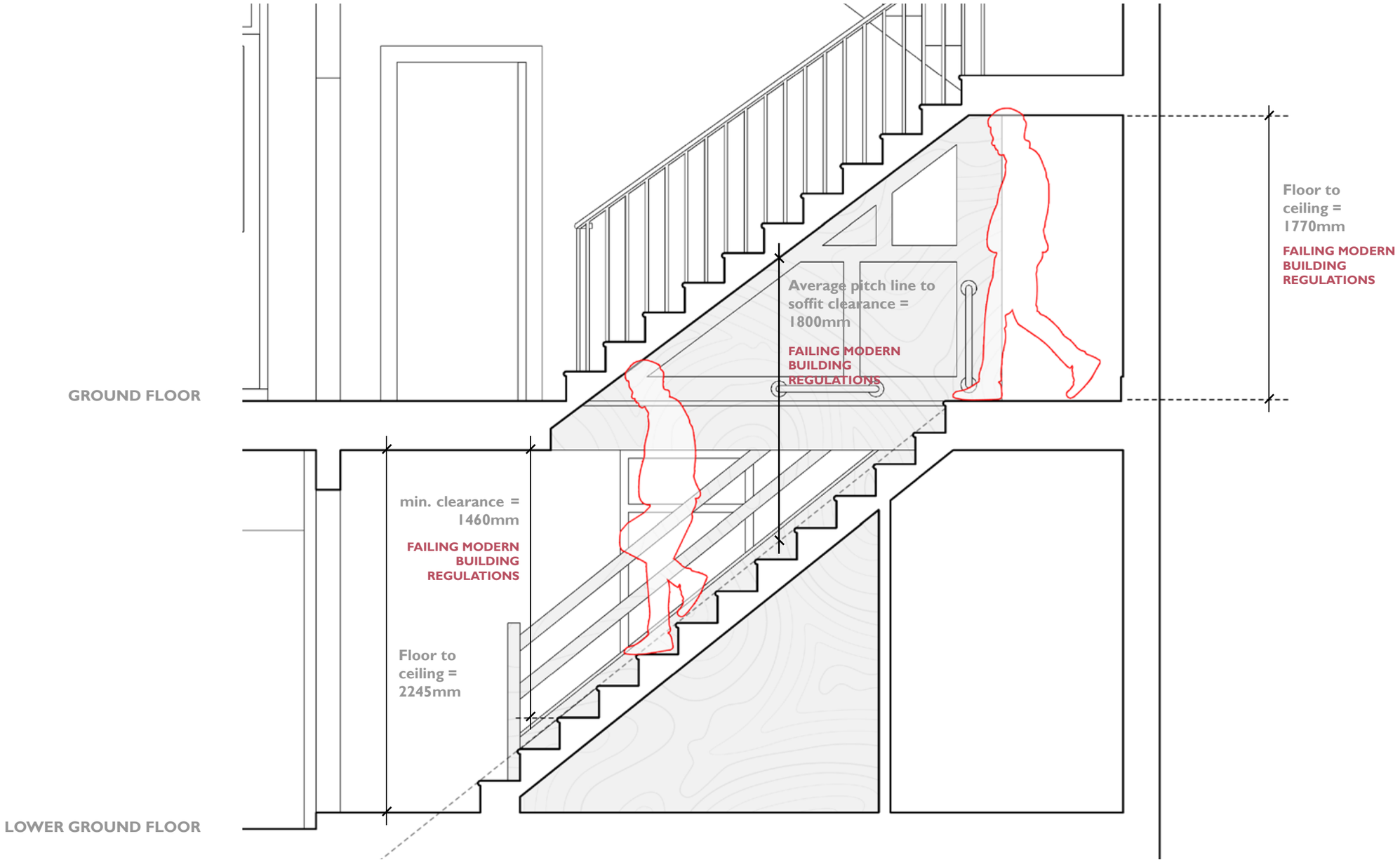


Ground floor



Lower ground floor with dividing walls highlighted

6.4 Existing stair section



6.5 The replacement of the Lower Ground Floor to Ground Floor staircase

It is difficult to establish whether the timber screen between the upper part of the staircase and the hallway is original, however it is beyond despite that this has been subsequently modified in an attempt to make the stair safer to use.

The screen has been altered to remove a solid panel so that people using the stair don't collide with each other on the top landing and so that a small amount of daylight from the Ground Floor can overspill to illuminate the steps.

Grab handles have also been installed by previous owners to support the body weight of the user, which reduce the usable width of the stairs further. These must have been deemed necessary as, provided that a user is not several inches below the national average height, it is impossible to use the stair without distorting the natural gate, particularly whilst walking down these stairs. A user of average UK height or above must decide to either unnaturally lean backwards or crouch forwards during daily use.

Perhaps most dangerous it the seriously inhibited head height at the bottom of the stairs were a pinch point of 1.7m means any user no matter how tall need to stoop to avoid whilst also looking to step off the staircase.

If we compare these to modern safety standards set out in the Approved Documents for the design of stairs there almost no single aspect which would today be accepted; the combination of which make for an unnecessary risk to health and safety in an ever increasingly important part of the family home.

6.6 Comparing the existing stairs to Building Regulations for new stairs

Approved Document K: Protection from falling, collision and impact

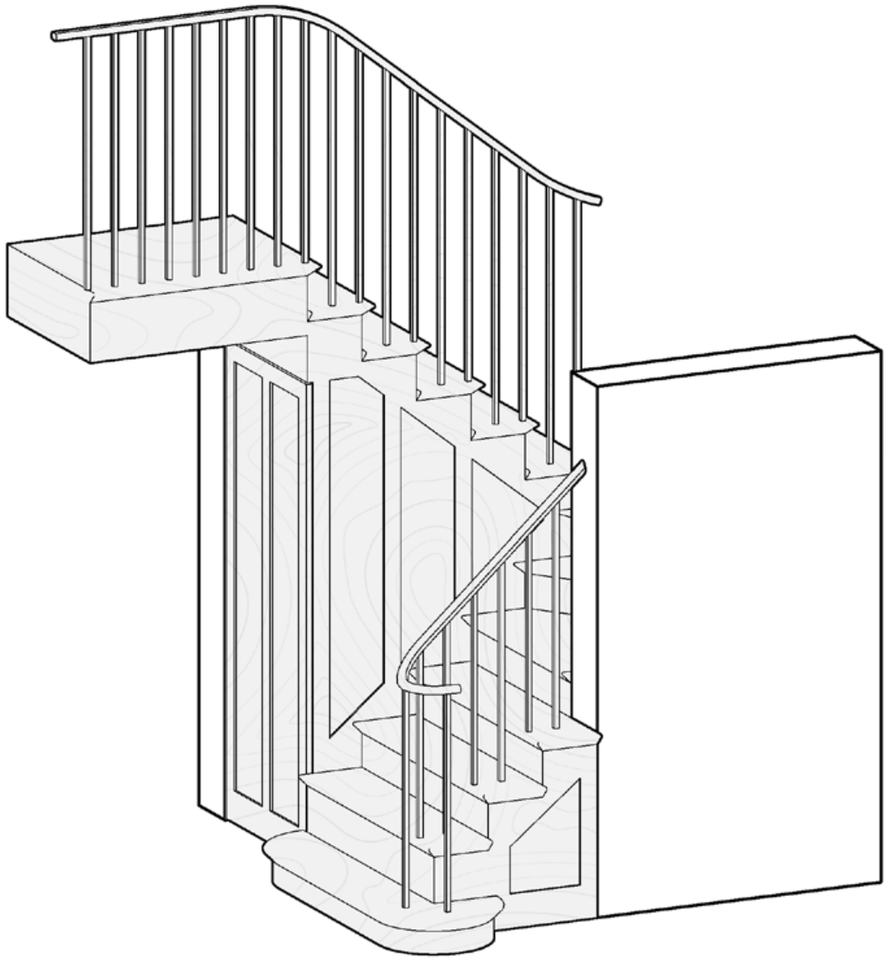
Stairs:

- Maximum pitch of stair 42°, actual = **37°**
- Maximum/ minimum going 300-220mm, actual = **250mm**
- Maximum/ minimum rise 220-150mm, actual = **190mm**
- Minimum head height of stair landings 2000m, actual = **1770mm**
- Minimum dimension from pitch line to soffit above 2000mm, actual = **1800mm (average), 1700mm (worst)**

Guarding:

- Railings height from pitch line 1100-900mm, actual = **710mm**
- Gap between balusters/ guarding <100mm, actual gap = **155mm**
- **No handrail provided to the top 5 steps**

6.7 Proposed stair axo



6.8 Comparing the existing stairs to Building Regulations for new stairs

Approved Document K: Protection from falling, collision and impact

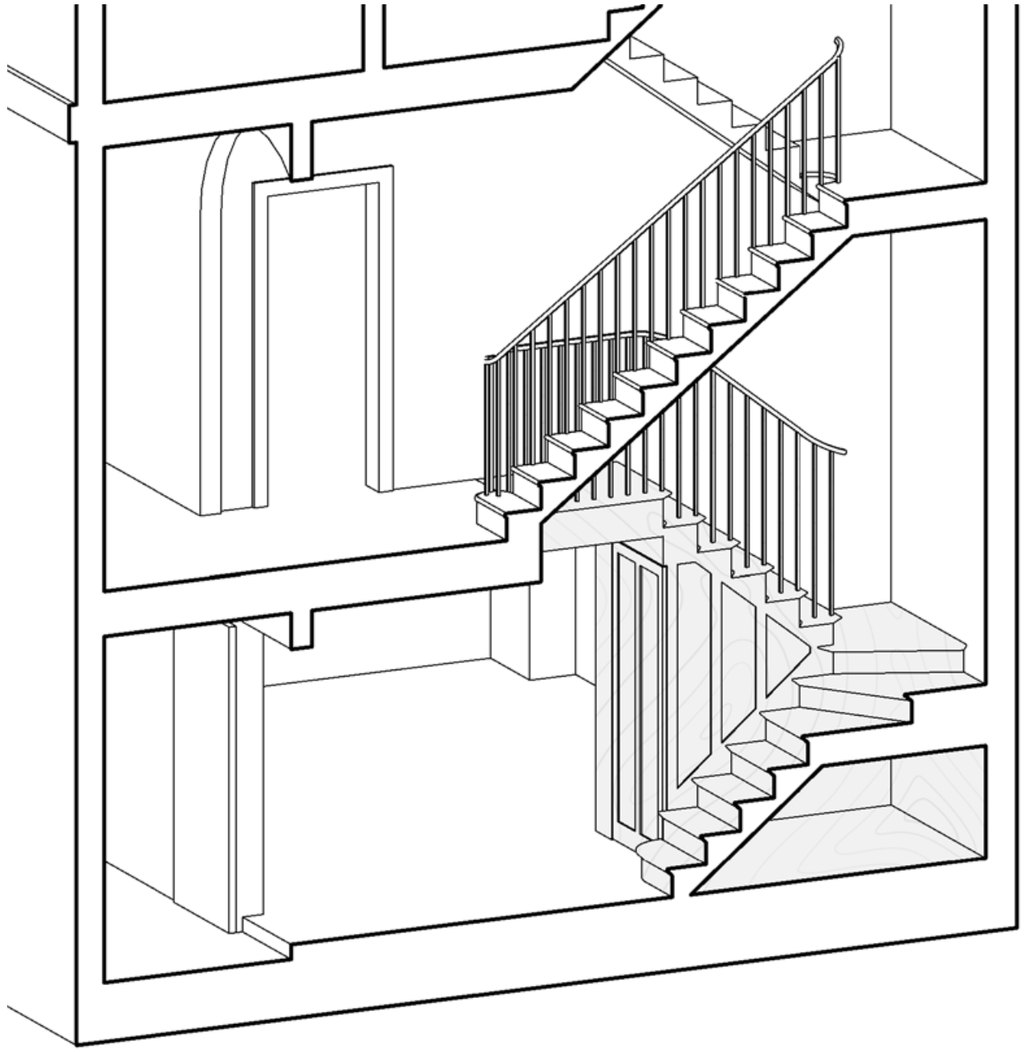
Stairs:

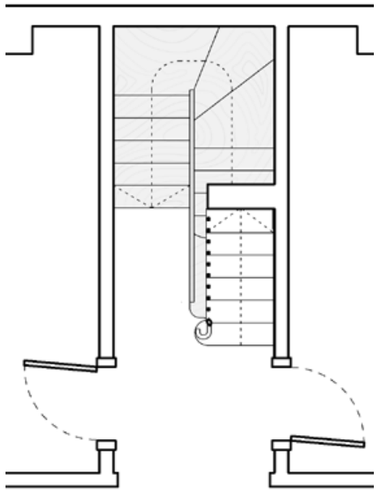
- Maximum pitch of stair 42°, actual = **37°**
- Maximum/ minimum going 300-220mm, actual = **250mm**
- Maximum/ minimum rise 220-150mm, actual = **190mm**
- Minimum head height of stair landings 2000m, actual = **2555mm**
- Minimum dimension from pitch line to soffit above 2000mm, actual = **2245mm (worst)**

Guarding:

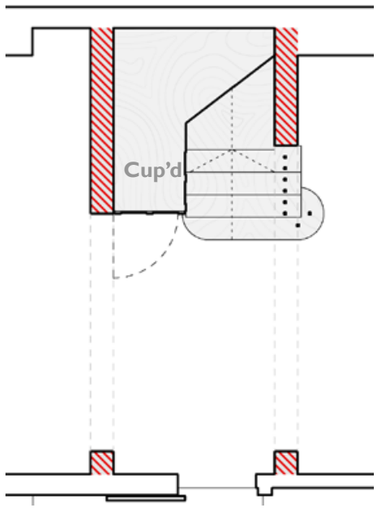
- Railings height from pitch line 1100-900mm, actual = **1000mm**
- Gap between balusters/ guarding <100mm, actual gap = **92.5mm**

6.9 Proposed stair in situ



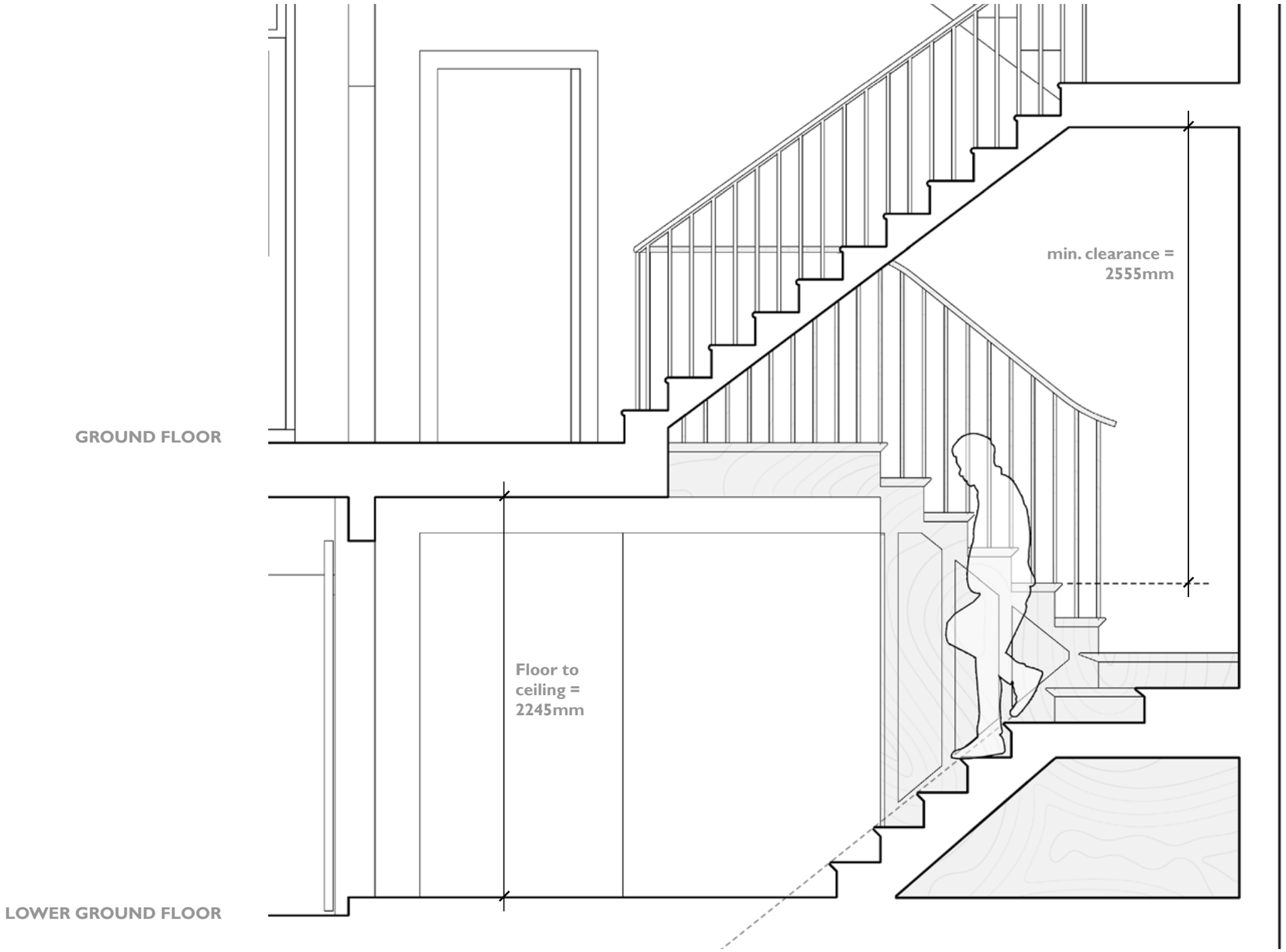


Ground floor

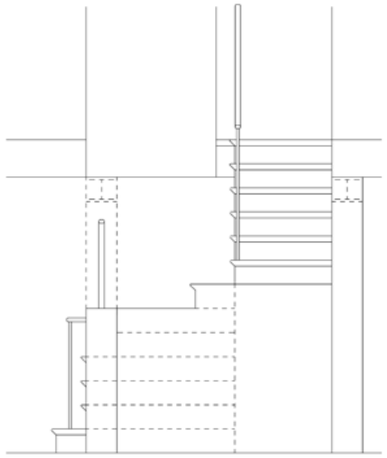


Lower ground floor with retained parts of dividing walls highlighted totalling 43% of the existing footprint.

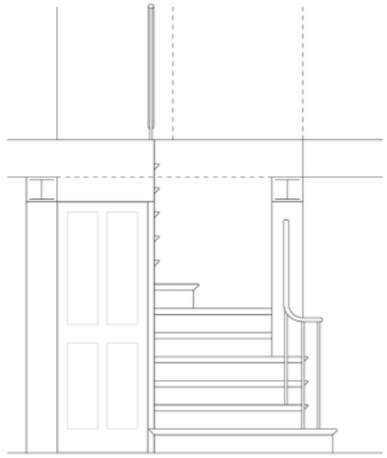
6.10 Proposed stair section



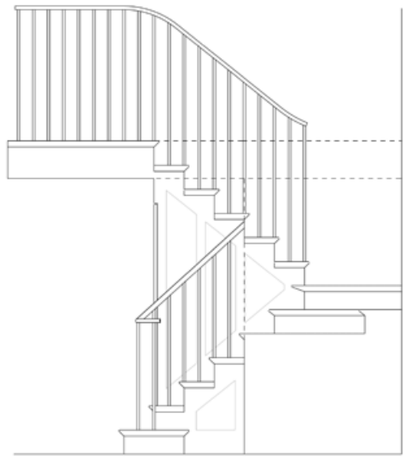
6.11 Proposed stair elevations



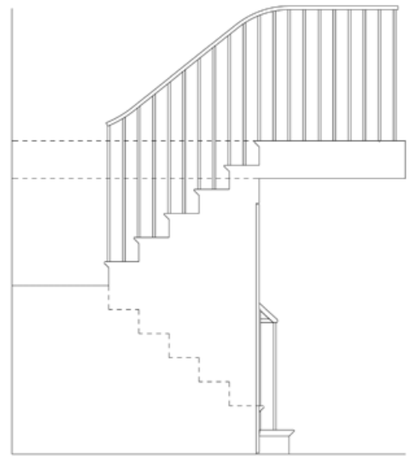
East



West

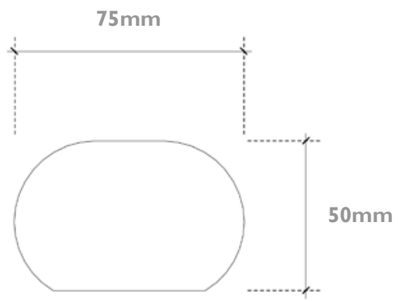


South

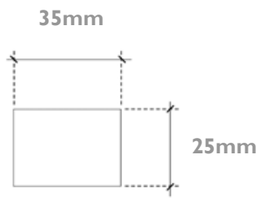


North

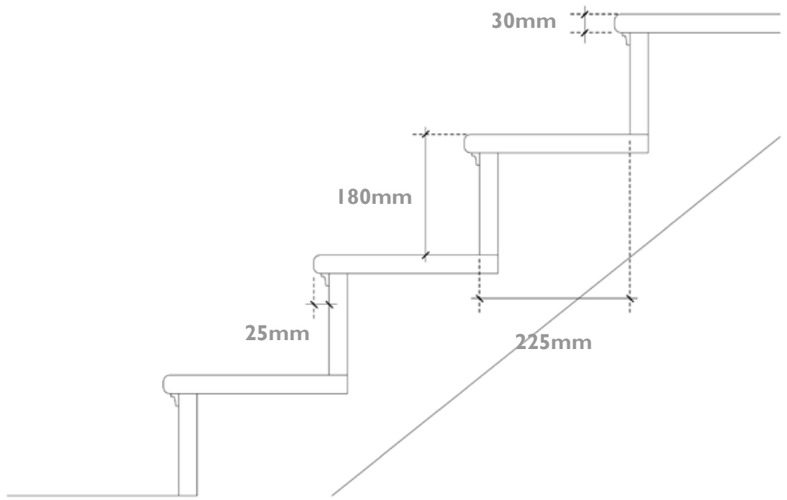
6.12 Stair details



Existing and proposed balustrade profile



Existing and proposed baluster profile



Existing and proposed tread profile