

HERITAGE STATEMENT

In support of an application for interior alterations and external repairs.

Flat 3,
Balmore House,
Newlands Avenue,
Caversham,
Reading,
RG4 8PU



Architect: PNW Studios Ltd
34 Campbell Road
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Middlesex
TW2 5BY

Date: July 2025

1.0 Introduction

Balmore House is a Grade II Listed Building.

The listed building details are as follows:-

Grade Grade: II

Date Listed 14-Dec-1978

Description

NEWLANDS AVENUE

1. 5128 Caversham Balmore SU 7175 10/536 II

2. Circa 1860s, suburban villa of considerable size. 2 storeys, attic and basement. Stucco on stone basement, Moulded stone quoins and string over ground floor. Moulded cornice. Hipped slate roof with 2x3 gabled dormers. Stone architraves and, on ground floor, panels between cill brackets. 2:3:2 bays, glazing bar sashes, middle of centre 1st floor a narrow window, and ground floor centre a large 3 window angled bay. To left segmental headed altered entrance reached by steps. 4 bay return to left with large full length verandah to ground floor with barley sugar cast iron supports, reached by steps at rear.

Interior: large hall with mouldings to plastered beams and columned screen to stair hall. 2 principal rooms off stair hall with moulded cornices.

Listing NGR: SU7150875434

1.1 The house was converted into 11 flats in 1991.

1.2 Not much exterior alteration has been carried out since the house was first completed. There is evidence of a conservatory at the rear terrace being demolished at some point.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1** Earliest planning application available upon the Reading planning website is from 1991 to convert the house internally into 11 flats and replace the external door.
- 2.2** Planning approval was issued in 1992 to alter basement layout to provide an extra 1 bedroom flat.
- 2.3** Planning approval was issued in 2011 to erect six cycle storage sheds in the garden.
- 2.4** In 2017 two trees on the grounds were approved to be felled.
- 2.5** In 2019 two trees on the grounds were approved to be felled.

Flat 3 has never applied for planning since its conception in 1991.

3.0 Local History Research

3.1 Building History

Henry Robinson purchased the land around 1882 and built on the site Balmore House in an Italianate style. It was set on a bed of concrete on top of chalk, its walls were double thickness and a ventilation shaft was connected to all the rooms. It was abundantly supplied with spring water and there was a liquid-manure tank.

There is no evidence of its designer or builder.

Originally on the ground floor were: entrance hall, three reception rooms, boudoir, study, pantry etc. Above that were four bedrooms, two dressing rooms and a bathroom, with another four bedrooms and a store room on a second floor. A servants' hall, kitchen and domestic offices were in the basement.

Outside on the grounds were coach house and stables, cowsheds and other offices. A carriage driveway led to a turning circle at the front of the house.

The building was completed in late 1855.

As a result of his divorce Henry Robinson put Balmore House on the market for sale by auction in London on 26 June 1861 by local agents Haslam and Buckland.

The kitchen garden to the right of the house looking from the front was fully established and laid out in formal plots with paths between and was fully enclosed by high walls. There were orchards of fruit trees below the house and kitchen garden. The decorations of the bedrooms on the second floor (attic bedrooms for servants) were still not completed at this point.

By 1865 the house (and its grounds and outhouses) were sold as multiple lots.

Around 1920-1930, the house was a boarding school "Balmore School".

The house was converted into flats in 1991.

3.2 Historical images



Early image of Balmore House shows now demolished glazed conservatory at rear of ground floor terrace.

Staircase down from ground floor verandah also removed at some point.

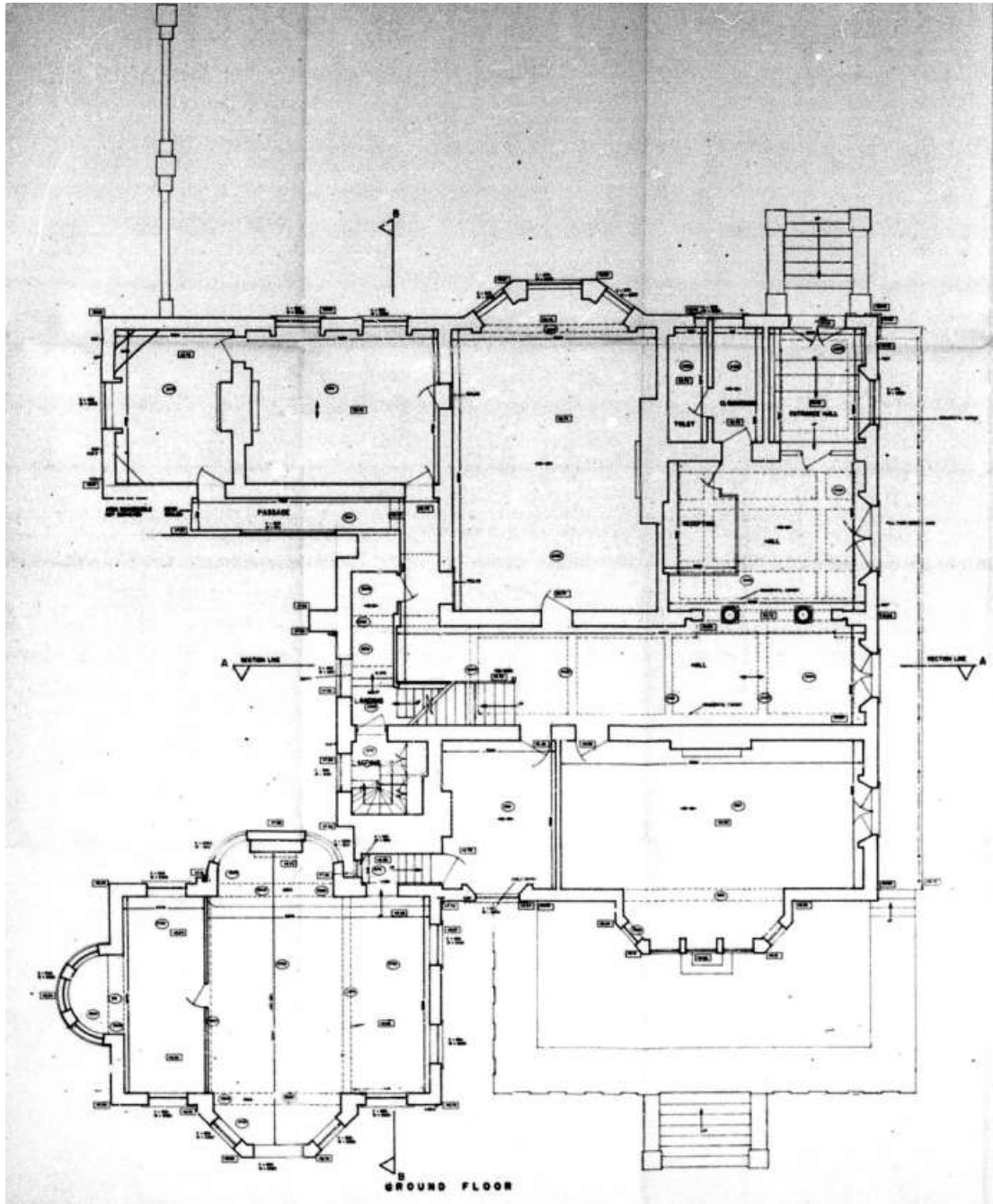


Stone quoins and string to rear elevation of ground floor evidently scribed around the now demolished conservatory.

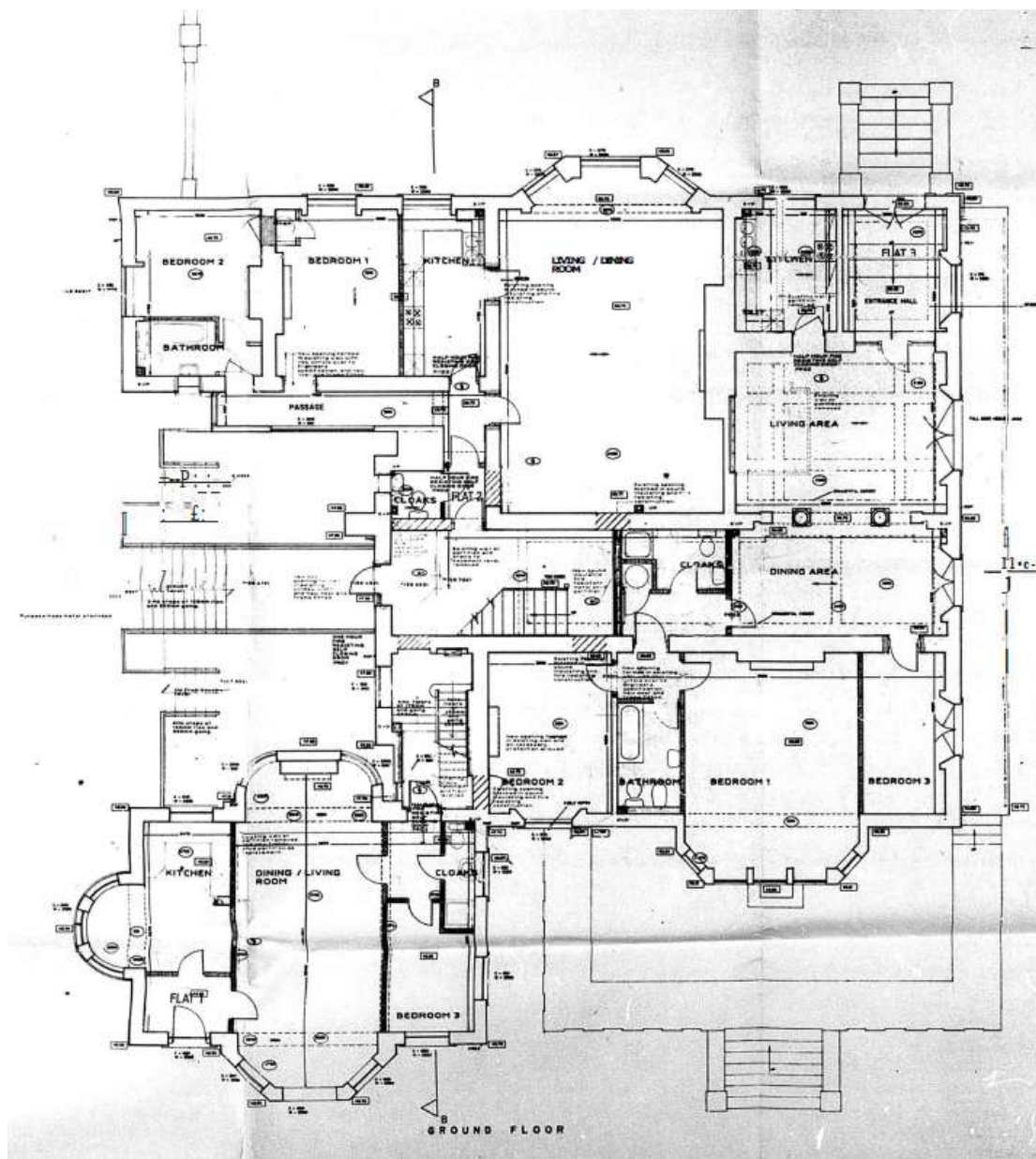


Verandah staircase removed and cast iron balustrade repaired.

3.2 Historical plans



Ground Floor plan "As Existing" included in 1991 planning application.



Ground Floor plan "As Proposed" included in 1991 planning application.

The rear conservatory and staircase to the verandah were removed well before 1991.

There are some minor discrepancies between the planning drawing and the current existing internal layout.

All proposed layout alterations would only affect modern partitions introduced in the 90s, and the original building fabric would not be affected.

4.0 Proposals & Assessment of Impact

4.1 Reconfigure modern internal partitions



Partitions to each side of main bedroom to be repositioned to extend neighbouring bathroom and bedroom.

These partitions were introduced in the 90s and not original to the building. Original ceiling cornice and skirting board were reproduced. The proposed partitions would reproduce the same original ceiling cornice and skirting board. In situ castings of the cornice profile and detail to be taken to repair the cornice.



Existing ceiling cornice in the main bedroom to be repaired like for like.



Utility cupboard to be removed and modern partition infilled to extend existing neighbouring bathroom.

The partition, architrave and door were introduced in the 90s and are not original to the building.

4.2 Remove false ceilings to bathrooms and corridor



The existing corridor and bathroom would have been part of the original hallway with the same ceiling height, ceiling beds and cornices as the current living room.

The false ceiling was introduced in the 90s and has a simple ceiling cornice.



Original ceiling beds and cornices in the living room.

Proposed ceiling in existing corridor to be raised – allowing for existing services – and original ceiling cornice to be partially reproduced.



The false ceiling was introduced in the 90s and has a simple ceiling cornice.

Proposed ceiling in reconfigured bathroom to be raised – allowing for existing services – and original ceiling cornice to be partially reproduced.



False ceiling and access hatch to existing bathroom was introduced in the 90s. The ceiling currently has a simple cornice.

The bathroom would have been part of the original main room (now main bedroom) with the beam running through it.

Proposed removal of false ceiling to expose original beam above and repair existing ceiling cornices.

4.3 Relocate existing boiler



Existing boiler in kitchen

Proposed new boiler to be installed in entrance lobby instead and housed in a cupboard.



Existing entrance lobby on other side of kitchen.



Proposed new boiler to be rerouted to existing flue position at front elevation. There will be no impact to the front elevation.

4.4 Install new wood burner



Proposed new wood burner to be installed within original marble fire surround.

A flue liner to the chimney is likely needed and may entail a scaffold on the outside of the building in order to install. Proposed wood burner to be compatible with existing marble fire surround.

4.5 Install new engineered timber flooring and incorporate heating and insulation



The existing floor boards appear to be simple Victorian floor boards. They do not reflect the grandeur that you would expect within these rooms? This suggests that the original floors have been replaced or that these simple boards have been laid for purposes of economy.

New underfloor heating to be installed to all floor areas.



Existing modern radiators to be removed.

4.6 Refurbishment of kitchen and bathrooms fitting out





Existing fitting out in kitchen and bathrooms are modern additions and contain no original fixtures to be retained.

4.7 Internal rewiring works and new lighting fixtures



There are some existing light fixtures wired through original ceiling and walls.

New fixtures to be rewired through new internal partitions if possible.

4.8 Replace internal doors with new solid core doors

There are no existing original internal doors. Existing internal doors to be replaced with solid core doors with 6 panels. See accompanying detailed drawings.

4.9 Repair and redecorate existing windows and shutters



Existing windows and shutters are in good condition. Proposed repairs like for like if necessary and redecorated.

4.10 Repair bay window joinery, roof, gutter and downpipe



Existing bay window with felt roof and UPVC down pipe to be replaced with slate roof and cast iron down pipe.



Window joinery to be repaired like for like.

4.11 External terrace to be refurbished



Existing plinth in position of demolished conservatory is painted with bitumen.

Proposed Installation of new decking to external terrace outside bay window.

4.12 Entrance doors to be repaired and redecorated and fitted with new locks



Existing doors to be refurbished.

5.0 Conclusions in relation to the proposed works.

The internal layout of the flat is a modern alteration to the original building and the proposed works would not affect the original building fabric. Original fixtures are to be retained or reproduced like for like.

The removal of the existing floor boards is proposed and their replacement with TOR floor underfloor heating system. This would cause minor harm to the existing fabric of the building. The mitigating factors are that the existing floor boards are of a low economic quality in comparison to the finishing of the rest of the rooms. The replacement of the floor boards with an underfloor heating system will allow the introduction of better acoustic and thermal insulation within the floor. It will also allow the removal of the unsightly existing wall mounted radiators, that detract from the appearance of the rooms currently. On balance the introduction of underfloor heating will be an improvement to the aesthetic appearance of the interior of the listed building.

There are no major alterations to the external elevations of the building. The proposed works are repairs and redecoration to refresh the external appearance of the building.