

HERITAGE & DESIGN STATEMENT

363 Wilmslow Road

by
Jane
Leach



Preface



Who on earth is Jane Leach and iarchitect limited anyway?

Jane Leach is an award-winning chartered architect, with over 20 years' experience of housing and public sector, particularly education, projects valued between £50K to £38m. She has designed more than 100 house extensions since founding iarchitect Ltd in 2009. Many of these have been in conservation areas, have been within the context of listed buildings, or have been themselves historically sensitive.

Growing up in an eight-bed Victorian villa, so cold that in winter frozen condensation decorated the windows, gave Jane a love of characterful period property and a desire to make them suit modern lives comfortably.

Designing eco homes worldwide for homeowners wanting to create more space in a planet-friendly way, Jane uses her 'EAGLE Method' and innovative online design techniques to empower her clients in collaborative sessions.

Listed on the RIBA Conservation Register and the Green Register for her specialities of eco refurbishing and sensitively redesigning older property, Jane has appeared on BBC Radio Manchester, the BBC Research & Development (R&D) podcast and has been featured in Ideal Home magazine.

Some past projects involving listed and historic buildings that Jane has been involved in include:

William Hulme's Grammar School Grade II listed, refurbishment and extension of buildings within the curtilage of the original listed building in 2007, as project architect within the education team at Aedas.

St Luke's "Bombed Out Church" Liverpool Grade II listed, client advisor for strategic project planning and connecting English Heritage, Liverpool City Council and Urban Strawberry Lunch, in 2014, in order to repair and protect this listed building that was on the at risk register.

Granby Four Streets, Liverpool, client advisor for strategic briefing development, 2014.

72 Thorley Lane, a private house extension within the context of Christ Church Grade II listed ecclesiastical building. Project architect 2017.

Old Laws Cottage, Chorley, private house extension to 18th Century "Lancashire Long" Farmhouse, project architect 2017.

The Heathers, project architect for a private house extension within the context of Sawley Abbey, Grade I listed Cistercian Abbey ruin, 2021.

Heritage and Design Statement

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1.0 What is this report?

1.1 Heritage and its preservation is a philosophical debate that has no right or wrong answers. Ultimately it is a matter of opinion. What should be preserved? What should be replaced? What should be replicated? What should be innovated? These are all questions that you will get different answers to depending on who you ask. The difficulty is that each individual's opinion is valid, and no one person has the ultimate best judgement. We can all agree that there is value in our heritage. How much value and which historical artefact or place holds that value is debatable and agreement can only be reached through discussion and consideration by multiple people with different perspectives, with the understanding that over time this value may change.

1.2 Many people have given much thought to these questions over the years, and in the UK this is particularly true for architectural works since around the 1970's, following the post war era which saw the destruction of much of our traditional urban and suburban streetscapes. Many years of debate and philosophising have culminated in a way of establishing heritage and architectural importance and several key organisations have come to considered conclusions that are relevant to this property: Historic England, The Society for the Protection Of Ancient Buildings and The Victorian Society.

1.3 The fact is that buildings have always grown, been changed and adapted to suit our changing culture and population demands. Even archaeological remains of our earliest palaeolithic huts show us cycles of abandonment, reuse, repair and rebuilding. History is not a static snapshot but a fluid and constantly evolving story. So we need to consider our heritage places in terms of constructive conservation, rather than rigid preservation.

1.4 It is also important to prevent the confusion of replication or restoration. The original fabric of a building that has undergone changes over time is evidence of its history. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings recommends that damaged or missing elements of a building do not necessarily need to be replaced, nor repaired "where the problem has no major effect on use or conservation, an old building is best left alone and simply enjoyed. Problems need to be tackled, but the Society encourages work which is no more – but no less – than is essential." Turning back time to reinstate design details can be destructive and lose evidence of a building's history rather than creating a beneficial historic outcome.

1.5 Since there are only so many museums necessary to inform us of our past, we need to make sure that our buildings can continue to be used. If we don't there is a danger that we simply surround ourselves with picturesque dereliction, while people who need homes struggle to find a place to live. Rather than abandon our built heritage for fear of damage, the best way to preserve historic buildings for the future is by sensitively reusing them. Sometimes this means making changes to those buildings and this is where judgement calls need to be made to determine what is essential to preserve and what is less important than the needs of the future use.

1.6 This report is a design and heritage statement. It is intended to consider the design quality of this building, 363 Wilmslow Road, both past, present and future potential. It reviews what is important about this building, so needs to be preserved, plus what is necessary for future use. It looks at how the proposals to bring this once fine home back into residential use can be carried out beautifully in both an economically viable as well as historically sensitive way.

2.0 What is architectural conservation and why is it important?

2.1 There are different definitions of conservation.

Historic England defines Conservation as: “The process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations.”

2.2 The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) does not consider any one time or style to be more important than another and seeks protection of historic fabric, while valuing the visible changes that occur in a building over the passage of time. They place an emphasis on protection over restoration so that there is no disguise or removal of the evidence and record of a building's history over time. The SPAB focuses on protecting the fabric of the building including apparent wear and tear where the deterioration is not a practical problem.

By conservation SPAB does not mean recreating the past. SPAB “stands against Restorationist arguments that it is possible and worthwhile to return a building to its original – or imagined original – form.”

2.3 The Victorian Society does not define conservation specifically but recognises Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which defines conservation areas as any “areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.”

2.4 It is commonly accepted that it is important to protect our heritage as this helps us understand ourselves and the history of our culture and technological achievements. However, how we carry out conservation is not agreed on by the organisations relevant to the conservation of this property nor the planning legislation.

These three conservation approaches outlined above, reveal some fundamental differences as well as agreements. They also raise further questions.

Historic England advocates managing change through sustaining and if possible revealing and reinforcing those values.

Planning legislation requires the character or appearance to be preserved or enhanced.

While SPAB advocates for protection of original fabric and for new additions to be made only where essential, and when carried out to be in effect celebrated as different and new rather than replications of the old.

2.5 While Historic England’s approach to revealing and reinforcing seems to have similar meanings to the planning legislations preservation or enhancement. The SPAB stance appears to be strongly against the ideas to enhance or reinforce and instead is specific about not attempting to recreate the past. Where SPAB is in agreement with planning legislation is in preservation of original fabric.

Character and appearance referred to by planning legislation is much more focused on aesthetics whereas Historic England and SPAB are less focused only on this aspect of historic buildings as on the evidential and historic value.

2.6 The reason for the SPAB focus on protecting original fabric is to preserve the evidential and historic value since once gone these cannot be replicated without damaging and confusing the significance of the original. Also because aesthetics are very much more subjective – beauty is in the eye of the beholder – so whilst some find Brutalist architecture to be exciting, bold and attractive and the decorative styles like Art Nouveau to be fussy, fanciful and unpleasant, the reverse can also be true.

2.7 In practice Historic England also does not consider any particular style or period of architecture to be better aesthetically. However, planning negotiations and decisions can often seem to be in favour of the historic aesthetics over contemporary. This is where there can be some tension between interpretation of planning legislation and best practice in management and reuse of historic buildings.

This tension is apparent in the appeal decisions dealt with jointly in May 2019 relating to 363 Wilmslow Road.

3.0 What are we trying to achieve?

3.1 The utility or function of a building is an integral part of its success. Some architectural critics consider a work of architecture to be successful only if it continues in use for the purpose for which it was first designed. I disagree with this stance and consider a work of architecture to be successful if it is capable of being adapted to our changing cultures, demographic pressures and environmental priorities. If you take the first stance or share my opinion will determine your view of if Norton Terrace as a building was successful or not as a work of architecture.

3.2 Designed originally as a single family dwelling, 363 Wilmslow Road failed in it's original intended purpose. The reasons for this are multiple. I suggest that the main reason for this is because it is a large and thermally inefficient property that relied on the technology of coal for heating. The scale of this property and difficulty in maintaining this as a comfortable home for a family has played a large part in this property's inability to function in the way that it was originally designed. This failing in scale and thermal inefficiency along with its location, which is not particularly desirable for the psycho-graphics of the type of families who would have the economic ability to purchase and heat such a house effectively, have been it's downfall as a successful work of architecture when considered against its ability to retain it's original design function.

3.3 When the current owner purchased this property in May 2008, 363 Wilmslow Road was in use as a medical practice, a use which continued until approximately May 2009. It was then empty for about 18 months before being occupied by a school. It was successfully adapted for these different uses and operated for approximately 50 years as a medical practice, roughly a third of the lifetime so far of this building. During this time the internal spaces were altered significantly, with internal partitions added and new openings made to existing walls, both internally and externally. The medical centre created a window in the side elevation and they had planning approval for a ramp to the side along with a new side entrance in July 2008. The period of use by the medical centre was characterised by general insensitivity to the historic fabric of the building and lack of maintenance.

3.4 Now it is proposed to return this building to residential use. This is a return to the original purpose for this building, but in a way that suits a different demographic and culture. Modern expectations for domestic comfort are very different to those of the Victorians who built this property. The demographics of people seeking housing in this area have also changed. These changes require an adaptation of this building in a way that respects the original quality of the building and that makes this proposal both economically viable as well as robust for the future. Works to return this property back to residential use have been done, although some of this work was unauthorised and regularisation was not approved. The building was fully tenanted and those tenants had to move out since residential use had to cease. Those tenants enjoyed their homes in this property and the full tenancy of the building proves that there is demand and that the building functions well as high quality multi-unit accommodation.

3.5 In summary this report seeks to amend elements of the planning permission and listed building consent which limit the building owner from finishing this build project successfully. A successful outcome will be a residential property which protects architectural heritage while meeting modern demands of comfort, requirements for environmental sustainability and business demands of economic viability.

3.6 Currently there is Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent to extend and convert this building into 9 residential units. There are a number of design requirements specified in the consent conditions which make it difficult to achieve a successful and robust material outcome, and this makes sensitive reuse of this building difficult. Some specific requirements in the consent conditions are particularly onerous and cannot be justified if taking a constructive conservation approach to this property. This report seeks to highlight these and have these conditions varied to enable completion of this build project.

The specific conditions and design details which we are seeking amendments to are as follows:

3.7 Staged Completion

This building has been sitting empty since July 2019. In this time there has been some internal flooding which has caused minor damage. Although the owners have taken steps to prevent vandalism and degradation of the building while it sits empty by employing a caretaker, the flooding example would have been spotted earlier and fixed sooner had the property been occupied. It would also be possible to carry out the works in stages to achieve a successful outcome if there was an allowance for staged occupation in the consent given, but occupation of the building is restricted to having all works completed in accordance with the consent first.

A large proportion of business success is in maintaining cash flow. Being able to partially complete this build project in a way that would enable the letting of a portion of the building would enable cash flow for this project. The high costs associated with working with listed buildings makes projects involving them a lot less desirable for most developers and is part of the reason for so many listed buildings to be sitting on at risk registers with little interest from investors in rescuing them.

An adjustment to the planning permission and listed building consent to enable a staged approach and partial occupation prior to completion of all works would go a long way towards making this project reach a successful conclusion.

3.8 Works to Ground Floor Ceilings

The listed building consent conditions require these to be removed and the ceilings and cornices to be repaired and then for a suspended ceiling to be reinstalled slightly higher and a replica cornice installed.

There are several arguments against removing the now existing suspended ceiling, repairing the original ceiling and cornices above, as well as installing a replica cornice below a new but slightly higher suspended ceiling. These are explored in more detail later.

3.9 Design details to the Rear Extension

Several design details to the fenestration and façades of the rear elevations have been specified. While the overall design of the new-build extension initially proposed could be improved, in terms of its design language and how it relates to the historic design language of the original building, the specific requirements approved are not all based on the original design language of this building. In addition there are well established arguments against making new-build elements replicate historic buildings, in the light of which these details need to be reviewed.

3.10 Specification for details to the Front Elevation and landscape

There are two elements to the front elevation and in the front landscape of this scheme which have been specified in the consents. These elements are the entrance steps and the rainwater goods. Since the front elevation is the most significant historically these are important to get right in a way that can be delivered in accordance with current health and safety requirements as well as creating a better long term durability that will ensure a positive result for the future. The detailed specification of these needs to be assessed in the light of durability, current health and safety standards and sensitive aesthetics.

3.11 In addition to historic conservation needs it is important that we consider environmental sustainability. Our built environment is significant in its impact on the UK's carbon footprint and it is a UK government and global requirement that we reduce the negative impacts that buildings have on climate change. For this reason we need to be effective stewards of the resources that we have available, in particular; materials, energy, and water. New construction uses a lot of resources often unnecessarily. Where buildings are in existence we must use them and seek to minimise further harm to the environment. In the case of 363 Wilmslow Road there have been significant amounts of building work carried out. While there is an enforcement order to return the building to its original state, there is also a planning approval for a nearly equal amount of building. It would be ludicrous to demolish what has been built, wasting all the resources that have gone into that, rather than adapt what is there to suit as closely as possible the requirements of the planning approval. Many of the minor design alterations proposed to the rear extension would require significant rebuilding work with no historic benefit, such as the addition of dummy windows and swept arch heads to windows. Whilst nobody denies that mistakes were made in the rear extension that was built in relation to historic sensitivity, it does not make it right to cause extensive use of our precious resources to rebuild large portions of that extension in order to add superfluous details that are of no benefit. Less major alterations can be made to the in-situ rear extension that will provide greater benefits in relation to historic architectural sensitivity as well as helping us better meet environmental sustainability requirements.

4.0 How significant is this building historically and architecturally?

4.1 363 Wilmslow Road is a beautiful residential property with a chequered history.

4.2 Originally built as a private residence it has gone through many transformations in its approximately 150 years life span. During this time changes have knocked the building about a lot internally, which has led to a loss of some historic fabric. These changes were necessitated by the changes in use as a medical centre. It is now going through the labour pains of a new rebirth into another stage of building-life. This rebirth is what this report is intended to ease, so that we can experience this building in its next guise.

4.3 363 Wilmslow Road is a Grade II listed building. The listing is not just about this individual property but quite specifically relates to it within the context of its adjoining terrace sisters. As a terrace of three this building holds an attractive and imposing presence on Wilmslow Road.

4.4 Grade II listing indicates that it is of special interest and warrants every effort to preserve it. The listing is explicit about not including either internal nor rear features, since these were not inspected. The original intention of the listing was to protect the terrace as a whole and the external Italianate design features specifically. Although protection by listing applies to the whole of the building and not just its exterior, the original listing clearly does not expressly relate to any interior quality or to the rear of the building and states that these were not surveyed.

4.5 The criteria for architectural and historic interest in relation to listed buildings are set out in the Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings, by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, as follows:

4.6 Architectural Interest: To be of special architectural interest a building must be of importance in its design, decoration or craftsmanship. Special interest may also apply to particularly significant examples of building types or techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms. Engineering and technological interest can be an important consideration for some buildings. For more recent buildings in particular, the functioning of the building (to the extent that this reflects on its original design and planned use, where known) will also be a consideration. Artistic distinction can also be a factor relevant to the architectural interest of buildings and objects and structures fixed to them.

4.7 Historic Interest: To be able to justify special historic interest a building must illustrate important aspects of the nation's history and / or have closely substantiated historical associations with nationally important individuals, groups or events; and the building itself in its current form will afford a strong connection with the valued aspect of history.

4.8 363 Wilmslow Road is of architectural interest largely due to its Italianate decorative style and being part of a larger terrace of three, as is visible externally. However, it doesn't meet most of the listing criteria typically required:

- It is not a design by a major architect nor an important example of the work of a local architect of known merit, as the architect is unknown.

- It is not within a conservation area, which indicates that this is not an especially sensitive streetscape architecturally, although it is part of a terrace built to a single design style.
- Although fairly complete it is not an early example of this building type, nor is it built with any pioneering form of construction.
- It does have some architectural quality, but it does not express any technical or social innovation of the period.
- The craftsmanship evident in this building was standard at the time of its construction and many examples of this type and quality of craftsmanship can be seen throughout the country.
- The floor plan of this building is not exceptional or unusual, rather it is typical of Victorian Villas of which there are many similar properties and better examples in existence throughout the UK.
- The Italianate decoration is similar to the stucco frontages of many classically inspired Victorian properties throughout the UK, and although this is a good example of this style it is far from unique.
- There is no known connection between this building and any nationally important individuals, groups or events.

4.9 Although this is not an exceptional example of this style nor a unique example, nor does it hold any unusual nor special historic interest, it is attractively designed and executed and does have architectural merit and aesthetic significance as part of a visually imposing terrace on Wilmslow Road. It is this attractive presence as a terrace that is expressed in the listing of this building and it is this aspect that is most important to protect.

4.10 Listing protects the building as it was at the time it was added to the list. At the time of listing this property had been functioning as a medical centre for approximately 4 years, but since the interior was not surveyed for the purposes of listing it is impossible to know what if anything should be considered protected. If the partitions and openings that were made in order for the medical centre to function were in existence at that time then these elements of the building would have been protected, but these are now all lost. The only remnants that hint at where these alterations with partitions sat is within the cornices that are now concealed above the suspended ceilings to the principal rooms on the ground floors.

4.11 Later assessment during the appeal in 2019 considered some internal elements to be aesthetically significant such as mouldings, panelling to bay windows and the staircase. As a result of the works carried out recently to convert this building back into residential use, many of the later additions that were considered by the appeal decision to be detrimental to the visual understanding of these internal features were removed. This work has made it possible to better appreciate some features of the property in their original form, such as the staircase. However, these works have removed features which the medical centres use added and perhaps should in theory have also been protected by the listing. There is an emphasis in the appeal decision on

returning the building aesthetically to its original form both internally and externally, but this goes against best heritage practice since it does not take into account the evidential heritage value of the changes of use during the passage of time and how these have left their marks on the building.

4.12 In Purcell's historic evaluation of the building they made the following assessments about its significance:

aesthetic value: medium, largely due to the front elevation

evidential value: medium, due to its age, group value and surviving fabric and largely due to the front elevation

historic value: low to medium, largely due to the intact nature of the front elevation

communal value: low, as it was built as a private residential property

Purcell's report also considered the proposed works to represent no harm to the significance of the heritage asset, since this significance is largely derived from the front elevation of the building and its grouping with attached neighbours.

4.13 The main historic value of this group of residences is in the street presence of the terrace and their details to the main street facing elevation and what can be seen from the street of the rear elevations. Although internally there is some historic value, this is as much in the scars present from the passage of time as in the original features themselves.

4.14 During the process of converting this property, from medical centre and school back into residential use with multiple units, there have been many errors made in terms of heritage preservation. Much of the original fabric has been lost, as well as the evidence of the changes of use that may have also been in place at the time of listing. Since the interior was not surveyed at the time of listing we will never truly know what should have been considered protected internally. Since the listing is not specific about the potential significance of the interior we do not know if it was not surveyed and therefore not described in the listing because it was not considered to be sufficiently significant, or if there simply wasn't enough time to survey it, or for any other reason.

Most of the evidence of the medical centres use has been lost, along with the adaptation of the spaces and their subdivisions. While the Appeal Inspector considered it to be an enhancement to lose the evidence of the medical centres use through the removal of the internal partitions and other changes they had made, this does not make it of heritage benefit to return the building back to its original interior configuration and detailing. It is clear that it is from the front façade of this building that the majority of its significance derives and while the original interior was aesthetically a continuation inside of the front elevation, this original interior has not been apparent without alterations for over 50 years, possibly since before the building was listed.

4.15 The approved scheme for the building includes raising the ground floor level by 215mm and the addition of individual stairs and entrance lobbies within flat units. These changes have fundamentally removed the ability to appreciate the original plaster moulding and the proportions of the principle rooms. Raising the now existing suspended ceiling by a mere 80mm and adding a replica cornice will never replicate the ability to appreciate the space in the same way as was intended in the original design and the addition of a replacement cornice would instead confuse the heritage value. However, since it is the external façade that is most significant in terms of this buildings listing and heritage value, the Appeal Inspector made the point that these internal

changes are not enough to be considered to be of substantial harm or to equate to total loss of significance of the building.

4.16 The skirting was lost as a consequence of raising the floor level. This also affected doorways, frames and picture rail height. The choices now are to either try to replicate original features, or to maintain the now modern interior finishes. Replication of original features would not be supported by heritage best practice principles since they cannot be enjoyed in their original configuration, and mimicking original features would confuse historical evidential value. Retaining the new modern interiors is a better approach if you take the SPAB point of view of making it clear what is a modern addition and what is original.

4.17 It is regrettable when beautiful original features are lost from buildings. However, the push to try to replicate the original interior design of this building and the idea that enhancement of this property can only be achieved by reinstating the interior to look like it did when the building was first built ignores the heritage principles of appreciating the passage of time, as well as not considering any one style to be more important than another.

4.18 The only place in the building where the original internal layout and proportion is still apparent is in the hallway. Although the floor level is raised as you move into the hall, the initial entrance area retains the same head height as the original principal rooms. This is the place that also has a more direct aesthetic connection with the most significant part of the building – the façade. Since it is the aesthetics of the group of buildings that is of the main significance it does make sense to seek to continue the language of the original design into the hall. Perhaps here it could be argued to be worthwhile replicating the original cornicing and bracket details since it is both able to be better appreciated here due to its retained proportions as well as its visual sequence connection with the entrance façade. The hallway also shows the Victorian hierarchical approach to spatial interior design in that the upper floors have lower ceiling heights and a change from elaborate to simpler detailing is typical. Again it could be argued that replicating a simpler cornice to the hallway to the first floor would maintain this aesthetic language and maintain this design story into the building.

4.19 The approved designs include for a new cornice to be installed to the first floor rooms. This is ill considered in terms of both the extent of the cornice, and the fact that these are modern spaces that have been reconfigured and neither retain the same original uses nor design styles. Replicating a cornice in these spaces would again confuse the heritage value of this building by adding a new and non historical detail that does not contain any evidential or historic value and is simply a near replication of the original design style but without any of the historical meaning behind it. From a heritage point of view, given that the original features have been lost, it is better to maintain the modern interior that is clearly not original rather than attempt to conceal the alterations by application of fake history.

4.20 The street frontage of the building is undoubtedly the most important element of this building in terms of its historic significance and this is mainly due to its aesthetic quality. Since this is the case the design details to the front of the building are the most sensitive. There are several design and construction decisions that were made here, as part of the conversion works, that detract from the building and if they were addressed would provide an enhancement rather than create a negative impact. Like with the interior, replications of the original are not necessarily the best solution but sensitively designed alterations to some of these recent alterations would

remove the detracting and enhance the original beauty of the façade and street view.

4.21 The steps to the entrance whilst a modern material are complimentary to the elevation in terms of colour and texture. However, as the Appeal Inspector pointed out, the configuration of the steps with the many joints does cause some visual distraction. A simplification of this with a single step style, with a joint running up each side in a line with the handrail and a single straight step piece between would remove this visual clutter and enable the eye to focus on the front elevation.

4.22 Finally, as the Appeal Inspector reported, the rear extension is largely problematic due to its scale. A lesser height, scale and overall more diminutive appearance would reduce the dominance of the extension and allow the front and side elevations to be more fully appreciated without distraction. The Appeal Inspector was also not against the contemporary styling of the 2015 design.

4.23 The Appeal Inspector wanted more attention to be given to a more sensitive detailed design and protection of original features. A sensitive detailed design for this extension does not need to mean a replica of the historic style, nor does it need to mean additional superfluous details, such as the recessed false blank windows. It is better to follow principles of simple, restrained, subservient rear elevation design as seen in Victorian buildings, evidenced in the existing building and its neighbours, to provide a sensitive design, rather than to attempt to create a Disneyland-type version of Victoriana.

4.24 To summarise. There is a need to protect and enhance the significance of the most important aspect of this listed building which is the front elevation. The current distractions from this externally to the front are mainly the existing UPVC rainwater goods and entrance stair material configuration.

4.25 The interior design in as much as it relates to the façade is best appreciated, and can only be appreciated in its original proportion, within the entrance hall and stairway. By replicating original cornice detailing within the hallway at the entrance this connects with the façade externally and continues the design story inside the building. Much of what was technically protected by the listing internally is not known and has been lost already. It is a false interpretation of historical preservation to seek to return the building to its first built appearance. Attempting to reinstate original details is confusing and more damaging to the historic significance than enhancing. Removing all traces of the changes of use and configuration over time is a removal of the evidence of this building's history, and it is important to preserve what remains in order for future generations to be able to understand this without confusion.

4.26 The rear extension was erroneously built larger than the approved design. By reducing the scale of this extension and making simple alterations to the windows to enhance the overall aesthetics of the design this extension can be made less visually dominant and more sensitive to the original building, within the ethos of the Victorian design but without faking history.

5.0 What is important about the external street facing details?

5.1 As has been described in earlier sections of this report the street elevation and the grouping of the terrace is what is most significant for this buildings listing, as well as heritage and architectural importance. Therefore these elements are important to get right. However, there are some requirements in the planning and listed consent conditions which make specifications which are not entirely appropriate, particularly with regards to current health and safety requirements as well as best practice in architectural conservation.

5.2 Rainwater Goods

The listed building consent requires cast iron be used for the rainwater goods. However, the designs submitted specify aluminium. Aluminium is widely available in heritage styles made to resemble cast iron. It has the advantages of requiring much less ongoing maintenance than cast iron since it is not susceptible to corrosion. Aluminium is also much more light weight than cast iron.

Since aesthetically aluminium rainwater goods are capable of resembling cast iron so well there is no architectural design reason for the specification of the rainwater goods to be cast iron instead of aluminium. As we have also established, historically there is no reason to replicate original materials as this can simply confuse our heritage understanding.

In terms of health and safety there are greater risks associated with the use of cast iron since the additional weight represents more of a hazard for installation as well as the higher risk of injury should fixings fail and the gutters and piping fall. The corrosion and increased maintenance requirements of cast iron also make it a higher risk than aluminium since there is more need for works to be carried out to regularly repaint and clear gutters and pipes. This can mean more need for people working at height which is a high risk activity that designers are obliged to minimise.

For these reasons the condition requiring the rainwater goods to be cast iron should be modified to allow aluminium rainwater goods with a heritage style and finish to resemble cast iron.

In addition it is worth noting that when this property was purchased in May 2008 the rainwater goods were all plastic on this and each of the adjoining terraced properties. Even when this property's gutters and downpipes are replaced with aluminium the adjoining properties will still be plastic.

5.3 Entrance Steps

The entrance steps have been replaced with stone effect concrete in small slabs with staggered joints. The consent requires these steps to be replaced with natural stone using whole slabs for each step. The Appeal Inspector commented on the staggered joints, which are visually distracting to the elevation.

The listed building consent conditions the replacement of these steps with natural stone. However, this attempt to replicate the original material is not necessary in order to protect the heritage significance of this building. The same stone effect concrete has been used for coping stones to the

front of the building, specifically around the low walls to the boundary, to the basement lightwells, and the gate posts. Using the same material on the steps as elsewhere retains a more coherent design across the façade, and while this is a modern material insertion it is, in colour and texture, visually complimentary to the white stucco of the façade.

The visually distracting aspect of the new entrance steps are the staggered joints. There is a limit to the size of each piece that can be manufactured and safely handled on site, and this means that it is not possible to have a single piece for each step. However, it would be possible to simplify the joints and make them less visually obvious. This can be done by having a joint to each side in line with the handrail and a single straight stair section so that there are no material joints in the stair within the area that people largely walk and rest their eyes. This more controlled and considered approach to joint placement will remove the visual distraction that the joints create.

6.0 What is important about the external rear details?

6.1 “Generally, modest, sympathetic new works allow continuing life for old buildings and can contribute positively to their interest and story. Further alterations and additions, the Society believes, are best when they complement what exists. They should not compete unduly with the old building in form or position; nor should they mimic the original or pretend to be historic. They should fulfil modern needs in a way that respects both the old building form and context.”

This is the SPAB approach and as the society is considered to be the fount of conservation thinking for built heritage, it is worth keeping this in mind when considering the rear extension.

6.2 The planning approval that was reached in 2019 was the conclusion of much discussion between the planning department and the appellant's design team. This committee approach to design is contrary to the original Victorian model of a design architect creating their vision. This has led to a similarly contrary resulting approved design that instead of being rational and beautiful, led by an over-riding design idea as can be seen in the original building, is instead illogical, ill-considered and clumsy in both design and historical sensitivity. This was a necessary process to go through in order to get an approved design and a benchmark position. However, we are now in the position of being able to review this design and propose another approach, which is more rational and sympathetic to the original design as well as being more historically sensitive without trying to “mimic the original or pretend to be historic”.

6.3 Although the appeal decision states that the rear of Norton Place is an integral part of the architectural interest and heritage significance, it was made clear that it plays only a modest part in this significance. While Historic England's response to the consultation was that the rear outrigger has only marginal contribution to the site.

6.4 The main criticism of the rear extension as built was that its bulk and presence erode the dominance and primacy of the front and side elevations by creating an unusual visual distraction. This scale also obscured the original form of the rear because of its scale, and was a contrast to the original gable and ridge roof design of the terrace. More than the overall shape of the built extension, it was the detailing that was criticised as being at odds with the traditional simplicity and utilitarian appearance of the rear of the original building.

6.5 The approved roof design for the rear extension has a very awkward form. The appeal decision was interpreted as a requirement to mimic the original rear outrigger and reinstate this form as part of the rear extension. However the appeal also states that a contrast to the existing design is not unacceptable in principle, and there is no statement in the appeal decision report that puts forward the requirement to mimic the original outrigger.

6.6 As it stands the complex geometry of the approved alterations to the rear extension roof introduce vulnerability to the structure. This is at odds with the desire to create a robust and long term sustainable building that protects this listed building for the future. Multiple junctions and changes in materials, with areas of flat roof, are all places where faults can easily occur and will require regular maintenance at height. From a health and safety perspective, it is the designers duty to design out the requirement for high risk activities and working at height is one such activity that should be avoided where possible. If the original rear outrigger was still in existence then it

would be preferable to preserve this and form the new roof around it. However, there are not even remnants of the original outrigger left, so a replacement construction would be an attempt to mimic the original and therefore have the potential to confuse the historical evidence of the building. It would be preferable to replace the complex roof form with a simpler dual pitch that reflects the design of the roof to the main body of the original building. By dropping the eaves lower the overall scale of the rear extension would be reduced, minimising its visual dominance especially from the side and front perspective, and overall this would create a more attractive result.

6.7 The element of the rear extension design that was most heavily criticised in the appeal report was the detailing. The detailing was described as being crude and ill-considered and lacking sensitivity to the original building, and this largely relates to the design of the fenestration. There are several aspects to these details. These were addressed and altered in the subsequent approved designs but the resulting design is equally ill-considered. Although intended to be sympathetic to the original design it does this by attempting to mimic the original design style, and does this in a way that is not historically accurate and cannot be supported by a true desire to constructively conserve this building. It is an attempt to replicate an imaginary original design rather than to create a more appropriate sympathetic modern extension. Attempted replication of imagined design details is not the same as sympathetic detailed design.

6.8 swept arch heads to windows

The original building did not have all swept head arches to the rear facing windows. Not only is there evidence that this was not the only style of window head that was used, but since this is a new-build extension there is no need to mimic the original nor pretend to be historic. From the adjacent terrace properties it can be seen that there is a mix of window head styles, many of which are straight heads. Rebuilding the extension windows with a swept head does not make architectural, heritage nor economic sense.

6.9 reduction in size of windows

The direction from the planning department has been to change the fenestration pattern to provide a more vertical appearance. The latest approved plans show reduced window sizes to achieve this. An alternative approach is to drop the cill levels so that all four windows to the rear are the same size and provide a more vertical sympathetic design layout for the windows. This both provides an adequate level of natural light internally as well as creating an elevation that is more sensitive to the original design, without attempting to mimic the original.

If this were an original Victorian extension and these rooms within the rear extension were for primary living purposes, as is proposed within the extension, the Victorians would have used a larger format window. They used smaller windows only for more utilitarian and secondary spaces, which was the purpose of the spaces in the original outriggers. The tall vertical windows used by Victorians was driven by the technology behind the structure and by the desire to gain natural light deeper into the room. This design intent is important as this is characteristic of Victorian architecture, so if we were trying to accurately mimic the historical character of the Victorian architecture (which we've already established is not actually desirable nor a requirement in order to protect the historical significance of this building) then it would be more historically accurate to use a larger window such as those on the principal front and the side elevation to provide a higher level of natural light to these rooms while creating a vertical fenestration pattern.

6.10 dummy windows

The requirement to add a dummy window to the side elevation facing the adjoining terrace is senseless. There are no dummy windows evident in the original property and there is no architectural design need to add such a feature in order to complement the existing. Although there is some precedent in Victorian architecture to add decorative detail to large areas of brick wall this was not typically the case to rear utilitarian elevations and this treatment can only be seen in places where the wall was visually significant and formed part of a principal elevation. That is not the case here.

Presumably the addition of these dummy windows was intended to help overcome the visual scale of the rear extension as built, however the proposal to reduce the overall scale of the rear extension will minimise this area of blank brick wall, and therefore there is no need to add further detail for either a historical stylistic addition nor a visual minimisation or added interest purpose. There is nothing inherently wrong with an area of brick wall.

6.11 Stone sill replacements

The rear extension was built with concrete sills to the windows. While there is no reason to use natural stone sills as a material copy of the original, the new sills are in two pieces with a split in the centre. The sills to the original building are painted so instead of replacing the new-build sills the proposal is to fill the gap and paint them black. This will then give a better finish that is very similar to the original building and more unified and in keeping aesthetically.

6.12 Window materials and details

All the new build windows are UPVc and the approved plans show these being replaced with timber sash windows, or glazed doors. While there is no intention to alter this material change from what was built, the proposal to alter the fenestration pattern to create 4 tall timber framed windows will create two pairs of patio doors to the ground floor with floor length 4 panel timber framed windows to the first floor with a fixed bottom panel and a top panel sliding sash.

6.13 The combination of reduced overall scale, simplicity of roof geometry, and a more balanced and unified aesthetic, especially with the fenestration pattern, will make the rear extension more sympathetic to the original building and visually subordinate.

7.0 What is important about the internal details?

7.1 As has been established elsewhere in this report, the interior of this building was not surveyed as part of the listing. The protection in the listing which would have been automatically applied to additions made during its time as a medical centre, in particular during the first 4 years of use prior to the listing, cannot be assessed as there is no record of what was in place and most of those additions are now mostly erased.

7.2 While the appeal decision states that some of the internal alterations which removed traces of the medical centres alterations could be considered beneficial and of heritage benefit, this is only true if those elements of the medical centres interventions can be considered harmful and not protected by its listing. The fact is that some and perhaps all of those elements may have been protected by the listed status. Heritage protection is not only about affording protection to a specific period or style, but about protecting the whole story of the building – its evolution and the evidence of that in its fabric.

7.3 Whilst it is true that there has been a cumulative impact of minor changes that have significantly eroded the character of the original building internally, and that the ability to appreciate the character of the higher status rooms within the overall hierarchy of room proportions and decoration has been considerably weakened, we need to reconsider the starting point for these judgements. It is important to note that the internal alterations that the medical centre made changed these spaces, and these changes may in theory have been made prior to the listing and therefore protected, so it is not necessarily a case of considering the building as first built to be the state that we should be seeking to protect. Since evidence at the time of listing for the interior is lacking, we have no way of knowing what was in place and should be considered protected internally. We cannot assume that we are starting from a base point of what we would like this building to be like had the medical centre not made alterations.

7.4 We need to take an approach that truly conserves the heritage of the building. The “harmful elements” that the internal alterations removed as well as the “beneficial” repairs of original features like the staircase and its balustrade, could be considered to actually be harmful to the heritage of the building in as much as they may well have been in place when the building was listed. If they were in place then they had an equal requirement to be protected as older elements of the building. Repair of original features is not necessarily a positive in architectural conservation since it can remove the natural ageing of the material and disguise or remove heritage value. The attitude taken to consider restoring and replicating the original aesthetics of the building as a priority does not protect the evidential and heritage value of the property in terms of making it clear what is original, and disguises the history of the building in terms of its change of use over time. This approach goes against fundamental best practice heritage conservation, and even though it appears to be what the planning legislation requires with respect to enhance and protect, the planning legislation also requires us to take into account the evidential historic value rather than treat any one particular style of design preferentially and replicate it.

7.5 We need to take a more pragmatic approach to what we actually have in place right now and what is moving forward the logical and consistent application of best conservation practice. While we may regret the mistakes that have been made, attempts to replicate what is now lost will not bring back the past. We need to prevent further damage and limit the ability for our

interventions to cloud the historical evidence retained in the building as it is now.

7.6 Ground Floor Interior

The floor has been raised by 215mm, which results in a change in ceiling height, so changing the proportion of the room. It has been proven by environmental psychologists that a change in ceiling height, even of only 100mm, fundamentally changes the way that we feel, behave and experience a space. The original coving is very large and has complex detailing. When seen within the original room proportions this was beautiful and finely balanced. However, with the current lower ceiling height, even if the suspended ceiling were raised marginally from its current position, the size and complexity of the original coving will be overbearing and oversized. With the raised floor level and therefore lower ceiling height creating such a change in proportions of the room it will never be possible to appreciate the original coving design in the same way as it was originally intended. It is also not in accordance with best practice in architectural conservation to install a replication of the original coving below the suspended ceiling. Replicating original details confuses the history of the building, meaning that in future it will be more difficult to understand the historical evidence that the buildings fabric contains.

7.7 The listed building consent has a condition requiring removal of the suspended ceiling in order to repair the ceiling and coving above. Removing the suspended ceiling that is now in place will cause further damage to the original lathe and plaster ceiling above, necessitating additional repair which will add no value to the historic or architectural appreciation of the building.

7.8 The damage to the original ceiling and coving is in part due to the previous partitions installed during the medical centres use, some of which may have been protected by the listed status, and therefore the only evidence of these is within the damage to original coving and ceilings. By repairing these all remaining evidence of those partitions would be destroyed. This damage is part of the history of the building and erasing this would prevent future understanding of the changes that this building has gone through.

7.9 It is better to preserve the current existing suspended ceiling in place in order to prevent further additional and unnecessary damage, since repairs to the ceiling and coving are not necessary from any technical perspective and would be more harmful than beneficial from the point of view of preserving historical evidence. Taking the terrace as a whole into consideration, the adjacent terrace properties still retain the original cornices, which are of the same design, so they can be seen and appreciated in their original context there.

7.8 Also as a result of raising the floor level, and in line with the planning approval, much of the original timber work was necessarily removed, such as the skirting and doorways with associated framing. While it would have been possible to install a traditional look interior with timber details using more complex profiles, the decision was to install very modern, minimally profiled timber work for skirting, frames and architraves. This is an appropriate approach to detailing a now modern interior and it respects the history of the building by not attempting to replicate and confuse it, but by making a clear distinction between what is modern and what is original. Since the details are simple they do not draw attention to themselves and instead allow what is left of the original to be better appreciated.

7.9 In undertaking work to the ground floor interior, the original window shutters to the three bay windows were removed. The side of the bays were single leaf brickwork only, so required insulation and an inner leaf of brickwork to be installed to meet building regulations. Although this could hypothetically have been waived due to the heritage value of this property, this was not explored at the time. At that time, it seemed more appropriate to manage the heat loss and comply with building regulations than to retain the shutters. The current listed building consent includes a condition to install shutters and panelling fixed to the face of the wall, as an imitation of the original. This would not authentically reproduce the original shutters because of the works to the bays to provide necessary insulation. The argument throughout this document is that the replication of period details with fake history is not consistent with architectural conservation best practice. This is true for the window shutters, in the same way that it is true for the cornices and the skirting.

8.0 When designing a coherent building, regardless of style, it is important to maintain the same language throughout. When you are dealing with a heritage building it is better to protect the original fabric of the building and add new in a clearly different if sensitive way, rather than introduce inauthentic pseudo historic details, which simply serve to confuse our understanding and the legibility of the building. While the interior of each accommodation unit is contemporary and minimally styled, the heritage cues are elsewhere, in the hallway and the front elevation.

8.1 The entrance hall is a direct continuation inside from the street and the design story of the front elevation. Here there are more original features visible, such as the staircase and the proportions of the space. There is no suspended ceiling installed and although the floor level has been raised further along the hallway, at the entrance it is possible to appreciate the original ceiling height. If replication is appropriate anywhere in order to see more elements of the original design then this is the space where a copy of original cornice could be appreciated within its original space height proportions. As you walk through the hall and up the stairs you get the full story of the design and see the handling of hierarchy with the change of detail moving from principal ground floor to secondary upper floors. In order to help describe this better the addition of the simple cornice to the landing area to upper floors, instead of to the principle rooms, will continue this design language throughout the building.

9.0 Summary of the Design Philosophy

9.1 These are the four main principles, the design philosophy, that form the basis for the design revisions proposed:

1. avoid replication of the historical details that have been lost, in the interests of maintaining clarity in the understanding and evidential historic value of the building.
2. improve the modern design elements to be more sympathetic to the original, without attempting to mimic the original or introduce fake historic detail.
3. remove distractions from the most significant heritage element of this building - the front façade, with the side elevation as a secondary part of that, including minimising the apparent scale of the rear extension.
4. prevent further damage to the original building.

9.2 These design principles are rooted in best practice architectural heritage approaches and are based on Historic England and the Society For the Protection of Ancient Buildings definitions and guidelines for conservation and the reuse of historic buildings. These principles are intended to take a pragmatic approach to the reality of what is now existing and to create a consistent reasoning behind design choices made for changes.

10. Summary of the proposed changes and related policy considerations

The proposed changes to the approved designs are as follows and can be seen in the submitted amended proposal drawings:

10.1 Complete the works in a two-staged approach with partial occupation prior to completion of the second stage.

10.2 Replace the buff concrete steps with new concrete steps in a configuration that minimises the distracting joints by having a joint to each side of the step running up in line with the handrail, and with the central piece as a single piece with no vertical jointing between the handrails in the line of sight.

10.3 Replace the plastic rainwater goods and brackets with aluminium using a heritage profile and with a finish that resembles cast iron.

10.4 Replace all UPVc windows with timber frame sash, fixed panel or glazed doors.

10.5 Retain the flat window heads to the rear of the main body of the building, as they were originally, as well as form flat heads to the windows to the new extension.

10.6 Fill joints to the window sills and paint black to echo the black painted sills to the main building.

10.7 Omit the dummy windows to the side elevation of the rear extension.

10.8 Drop the window sill levels to the rear facing elevation of the extension to create a vertical format fenestration pattern, to echo the main building, with timber framed patio doors to the ground floor and double floor to ceiling sash-top windows to the first floor.

10.9 Retain the suspended ceilings to the ground floor in place, with no further works to the concealed original ceiling and cornice. Omitting a replica cornice below the suspended ceiling.

10.10 Omit the installation of additional profiled timber to skirting and architraves, and replica window shutters to ground floor flats.

10.11 Add a swan neck cornice to the first floor landing within the hallway.

CONCLUSION

10.16 The principal significance of this building is in the group aspect of Norton Terrace from the street. As stated in Purcell's report, this is primarily of aesthetic and evidential value. While the rear and the interior were considered, by the Historic England appeal consultation response, to have only marginal and minor significance, rather than fundamental significance. As a result the alterations proposed focus on enhancing and protecting the elements of most significance – the front elevation, while preventing further detriment to those less significant – the interior and rear of the building.

10.17 While the appeal decision in 2019 advocated for the original form of the building interior to be repaired and protected, the fact that the listing was made several years following conversion for use as a medical centre did not appear to be recognised at the time of the appeal, along with the potential requirement for any interventions that had already been made at the time of listing to also be legally protected. This new understanding requires the significance of the listing in relation to the interiors to be reconsidered. Although there is a difficulty in assessing this due to lack of evidence of the interior condition at the time of listing, we have to assume that what little evidence remains of these alterations for medical centre use should be preserved. The proposals take a pragmatic approach to conserving and protecting the evidential value that is now present in the materiality of the original building by retaining the in-situ suspended ceiling to the ground floor. They also seek to enhance the aesthetic and evidential value and legibility of the design of the building particularly within the hall and stairwell, where there is a more direct relationship between the interior and the front elevation.

10.18 The main design changes proposed to the rear are to the windows, both with the fenestration pattern of actual and dummy windows, along with the details to the heads and sills. Since the extension is a modern addition to the original building there is a need to be sympathetic to the original but not to mimic nor attempt to replicate the historic style. The appeal report in 2019 was clear that a contrasting design is not unacceptable in principle, and although the design details need to respond to the character and architectural finesse of the host building they are not required to introduce replica historical details or use identical materials to the original. This is particularly true where there is evidence that the original building had different details to those previously proposed, such as the flat heads to the windows to the rear of the main body of the building, which were proposed to be rebuilt with swept arch heads.

10.19 In conclusion what we are proposing will both better protect this buildings heritage value for the future and make it possible to complete the building works in a timely and economically viable way. The intention behind the four design principles that are foundational to these proposals, is to provide a greater protection of historic evidential value by minimising unnecessary and potentially harmful repairs and limiting confusion that could arise by attempting to replicate the historic with new interventions. Finally we also keep in mind a duty to conserve our environment with these proposals and to be good stewards of the material resources which the existing building with its modern in-situ elements represents.