

The Historic Environment Consultancy



CONSERVATION OF BUILDINGS RESEARCH ANALYSIS

For

48 Amwell St, Islington, London, EC1R 1XS

Planning Ref P072699

Listed Building Consent Ref P072723

Appeal Ref No App/V5570/E/08/2065168/WF

Appeal Ref No App/V5570/E/08/2065165/WF

Dr Peter Wardle

4/04/2008

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*A Conservation of Buildings Research Analysis:
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*In connection with planning application reference number:
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*by
Dr Peter Wardle
4/April/2008*

Contents

1. PART 1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	10
1.1 The Basis of The Report.	10
2. Introduction	11
2.1 The Client	11
2.2 Location	11
2.3 Short Description of the Development	11
2.4 Site Visit	11
3. Historic Environment Planning History & Background.	13
3.1 Introduction.....	13
3.2 Archaeological Significance.....	13
3.3 Listed Buildings.	13
3.4 Conservation Area.....	13
4. Conservation Planning Policy Context	15
4.1 Planning Policy Guidance 15 - The Historic Environment.	15
4.2 Unitary Development Plan	16
4.3 Conservation Area Design Guidelines - A Supplement to the UDP. 2002 Chapter 2 New River Conservation Area	16
5. Historic Background.	17
5.1 The New River Estate	17
5.2 The Lloyd Baker Estate	24
5.3 The Blitz.	24
6. The Conservation Area - Introduction	25

6.1	New River Design Guide Definition of the Character of the Conservation Area	25
6.2	The Character of the Conservation Area.....	25
6.3	The Street Scene	26
6.4	Architectural Styles & Dates of Buildings Present.	28
6.5	Architectural Characteristics & Key Features.....	28
6.6	Post Georgian Contributions to the Character of The Conservation Area...32	
6.6.1	Conversion of Ground floor to Shops	32
6.6.2	Roof Gardens & Other Amenity Space.....	33
	Myddleton Square	36
	New River Head.....	36
6.7	Detractors from The Character of the Conservation Area.....	38
7.	THE EXISTING BUILDING.....	39
7.1	Abridged Listed Building Description	39
7.2	Description Of Building	40
7.3	West Elevation Front Elevation	42
7.4	The Rear (East Elevation)	46
7.5	The Rear Extensions	47
7.6	Basement	47
7.7	Ground Floor.	50
7.8	First Floor	52
7.9	Second Floor.	52
7.10	Importance of Building & Contribution to the Conservation Area	53
8.	The Condition of the Building.....	54
8.1	Buildings At Risk, Monuments and Buildings capable of Beneficial Use	54
	English Heritage Definitions of Condition.....	54
	English Heritage Risk Scale.....	57
9.	Use of the Building & Re-ordering.....	58
10.	Amended Proposals.....	59
11.	Conservation Reasons for Refusal	59
11.1	Loss of basement commercial space. It is essential that the shops/businesses on Amwell Street have adequate ancillary space.	59
11.2	Basement front light well distances the shop front from the street. None of this row of shops have front railings or areas.....	59
	<i>Basement front light well distances the shop front from the street. None of this row of shops have front railings or areas.</i>	61
11.3	3. Internal alterations to basement are fundamentally unacceptable -loss of plan form and loss of fabric, including chimney stack.....	66
11.4	4. Full width rear extension with roof terrace is considered excessive. .66	

11.5 5. Alteration of first floor sash to door unacceptable - loss of historic fabric and design.67

12. Conclusions69

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Table of Figures

Figure 1: The Front Elevation as existing Scale 1:100 8
Figure 2: General Location Plan.12
Figure 3: The Extent of the Conservation Area14
Figure 4: Phased plan showing the development of the New River conservation area
.....18
Figure 5: Plan of New River Head area, 174119
Figure 6: Modern plan of the New River and Lloyd Baker estates20
Figure 7: Architects section for the refurbishment of Claremont Square.....22
Figure 8: Distribution of roof gardens and similar.....37
Figure 9: Phased plan, 48 Amwell Street @ 1:10041
Figure 10: The Distribution of Current Light well Arrangements of Shops Only in
Amwell Street. Scale 1:50063

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Table of Plates

Plate1 Shops with Light wells in Amwell St.	7
Plate 2 Roof Garden Claremont Square	23
Plate 3 Amwell Street and the junction with River St	26
Plate 4 Types of Building in Amwell St	27
Plate 5: New River Estate Houses Architectural Features.....	29
Plate 6: Roof Forms	30
Plate 7 Terrace Houses of the New River Estate - Amwell St.....	31
Plate8 Detached House in Neo-classical style of the LLOYD Baker Estate.....	31
Plate 9: 42 Amwell St - Historic Shop front with retained light well and railings ...	32
Plate 10: Wharton Street Roof Garden.....	33
Plate 11: A hedge has been used as a boundary at third floor level Wharton Street	33
Plate12: Roof Gardens: Roof Gardens.....	34
Plate13 Roof Gardens.....	35
Plate14 The Front Elevation	42
Plate15 Modern C20 Door Arrangement.....	43
Plate16 The Covered Front Light well.....	43
Plate17 Original Light well looking North.....	44
Plate18 Light well looking South.....	44
Plate19 Original Basement Window	45
Plate20 The rear Elevation	46
Plate21 Showing the use of plastic and iron rainwater goods	47
Plate22 Victorian Rain water goods.	47
Plate 23 Rear Extensions	47
Plate24 The Basement.....	49
Plate25 The Ground Floor Looking to the rear of the property	50
Plate26 Ground Floor Photographs	51
Plate27 Structural Instability rear extension.....	55
Plate28 Structural Instability Rear Extension	56
Plate29 Missing Floor boards etc ground floor	56
Plate30 Shops with lightwells in Amwell St - Note the use of metal grills in the middle shop	61
Plate31 Shop Fronts Light Wells & Railings Amwell St East Side	64
Plate32 13 Amwell St -South Of Application Area	64
Plate33 Shop Fronts Light Wells & Railings Amwell St West Side	65
Plate34 The First Floor Kitchen Window clearly a none Georgian Form.	68
Plate35 Doors to Balcony River Street.	69

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SUMMARY

1. The building is a late Georgian Terraced house (1828) constructed as part of the New River Estate - a planned Georgian development. The ground floor was converted into a shop in the Victorian Period. The basement has in the past been used as living accommodation.
2. It is emphasised that the basement and ground floor building cannot be used in any event without substantial repairs. In English Heritage terms this building is "at risk"
3. The fundamental issue is if it is appropriate for a shop within the New River Conservation area to have an existing light well and railings re-instated. Clearly it is and this is supported by Islington UDP Policy **D31**
*"The Council wishes to see the preservation, retention **and reinstatement** of front boundary railings, boundary walls and traditional iron work in conservation areas."*
4. Over half of the shops and all houses in this part of Amwell Street retain their light well. They are an integral part of the design of the original buildings.



Plate1 Shops with Light wells in Amwell St.

5. The original basement frontage survives sealed beneath a relatively recent concrete slab.

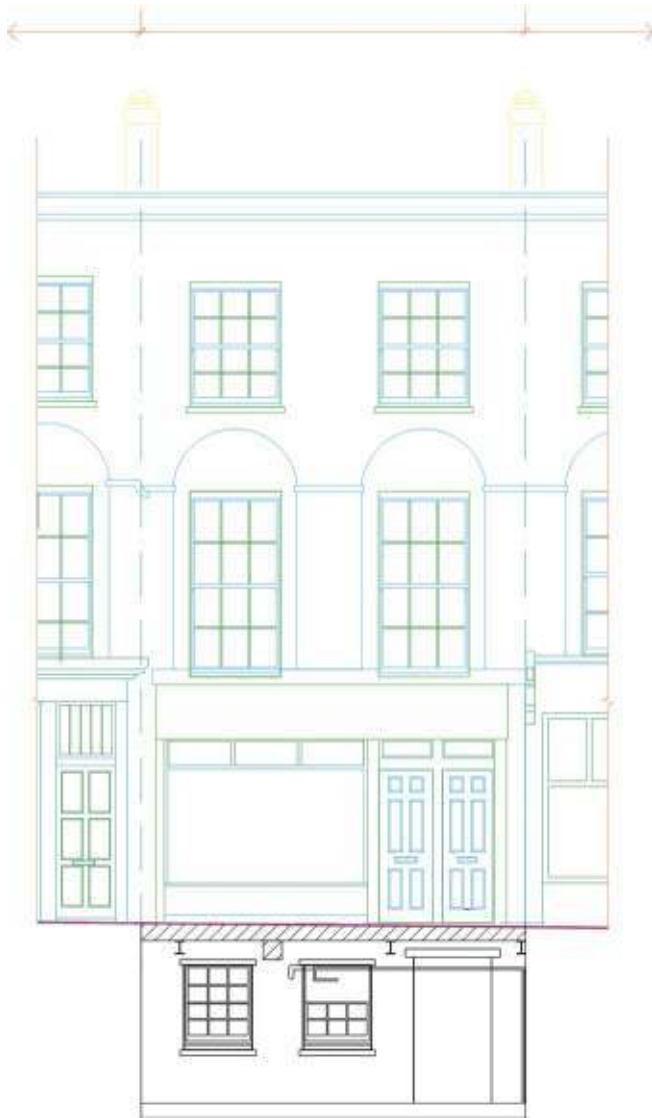


Figure 1: The Front Elevation as existing Scale 1:100

6. Re-instatement of the original form can only be considered to be an enhancement and a reduction of the detracting Victorian and Modern shop front arrangement to an elegant Georgian Street Scene. The re-instatement of the light well would allow the basement to be brought into beneficial use.
7. There are difficulties in using the basement as ancillary space to retail premises because the stairs are too narrow.
8. The re-instatement of the light well is supported by:
- a. Islington 2002 UDP
 - b. The Principles of PPG 15
 - c. English Heritage Policy on Buildings at Risk
 - d. English Heritage Policy on Sustaining the Historic Environment

9. It is thus an absurdity that conservation policy is being used to stop the saving of a listed building "At Risk" from further decay. Ultimately the other conservation matters are matters of detail about what precisely is the best way to re-order this building.
10. The presence of roof gardens is an integral and important characteristic of the New River Conservation Area. Indeed when the New River Estate was refurbished by the local authority in 1975 roof gardens were created in as many places as possible.
11. At present there is a detracting full width extension consisting of a lean to structure and an earlier extension which has structural difficulties. Its replacement will be an improvement of the visual appearance.

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1. PART 1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 The Basis of The Report.

This is a document describing and discussing all aspects of the historic environment (Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Ancient Monuments and archaeological sites) in relation to the development proposal at 48 Amwell St.

This follows the principles set out in:
Clark, K., 2001, *Informed Conservation*, English Heritage, London.

The basic premise of this is that:

- All conservation decisions should be based upon research and information.
- Conservation is about managing change not fossilisation of buildings, land or landscapes.

Other key methodological documents are:
English Heritage: *Sustaining the Historic Environment*

In particular in the document "Sustaining the Historic Environment" historic "assets" are to be graded as follows:

Critical
Constant
Tradeable

2. Introduction

2.1 The Client

This report was commissioned by Paul Woods of ESA planning for the appellant Mr N Koulouras Ltd who is the landowners. This document accompanies and should be read in conjunction with the appeal statements by ESA planning.

2.2 Location

Site Address: 48 Amwell St
Borough: Islington
County: London
Post Code EC1R 1XS

The site is located on the east side of Amwell Street. The general location is shown in the following plans.

2.3 Short Description of the Development

Insertion of railings to the front elevation at the ground floor level, opening up of the front light well, excavation of the rear garden to allow for a rear extension at the basement and ground floor level, replacement of window at the first floor level to the rear elevation with a door to allow access onto the roof of the rear extension, railings to the outside of the proposed rear extension (demolition of the existing rear extension) and the conversion of the basement into a self contained flat.

Modifications to the original proposal have been made following a detailed conservation survey of the building and in order to simplify this appeal.

2.4 Site Visit

The site was visited on 17/3/2008 and on subsequent dates.

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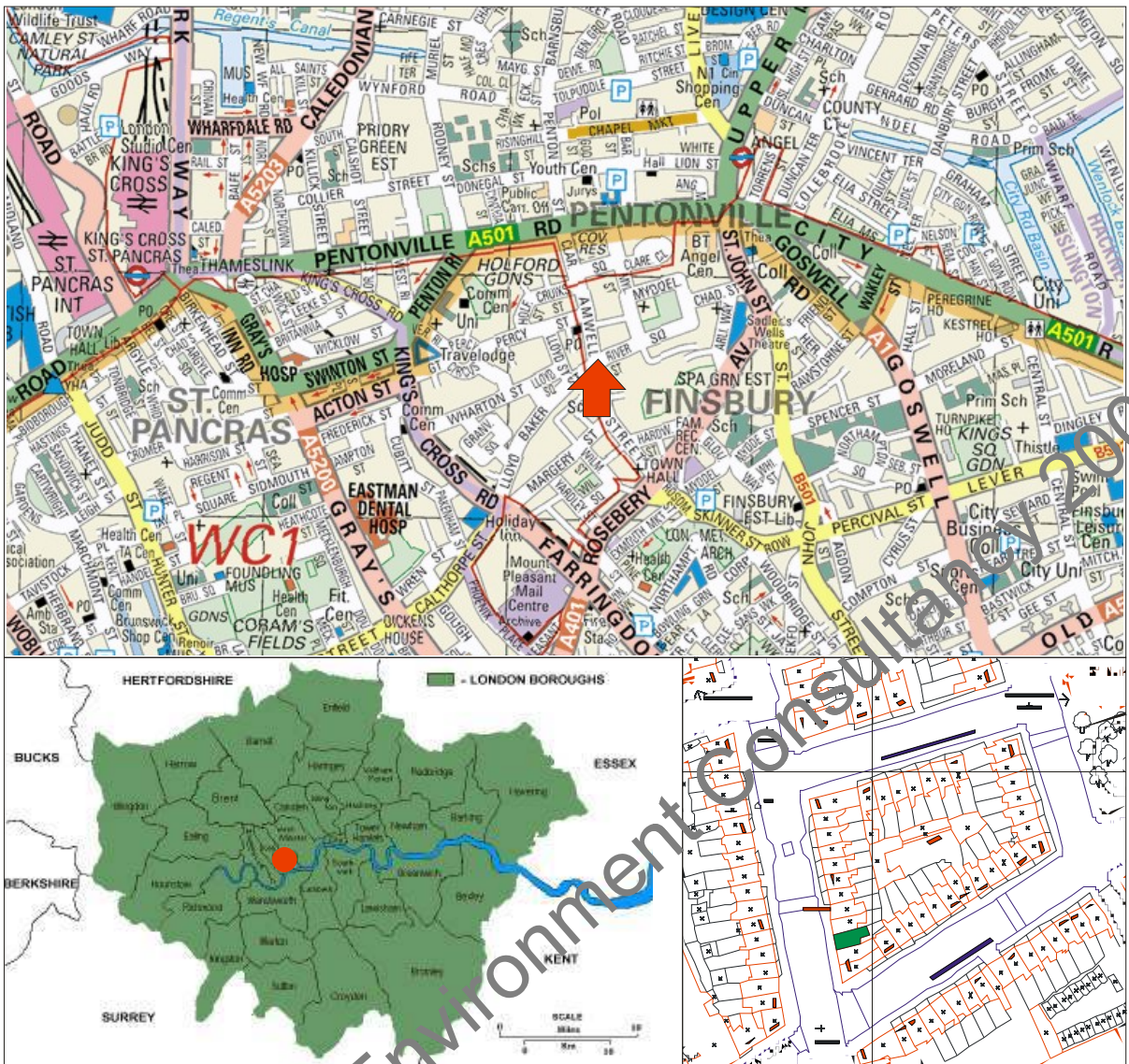


Figure 2: General Location Plan.

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3. Historic Environment Planning History & Background.

3.1 Introduction

Table 1 Historic Environment Designations.

Constraint	Details
World Heritage Site	No
Scheduled Ancient Monument	No
Area of Archaeological Importance	No
Mentioned in Local Plan	No
Site of Archaeological Interest (mentioned in the Sites and Monuments Record)	
Sites and Monuments Record Numbers	
Conservation Area	Yes – New River Conservation Area
Listed Building	Yes – Grade II as part of a Terrace
Building Mentioned in Local Plan	Amwell St is mentioned

3.2 Archaeological Significance

None

3.3 Listed Buildings.

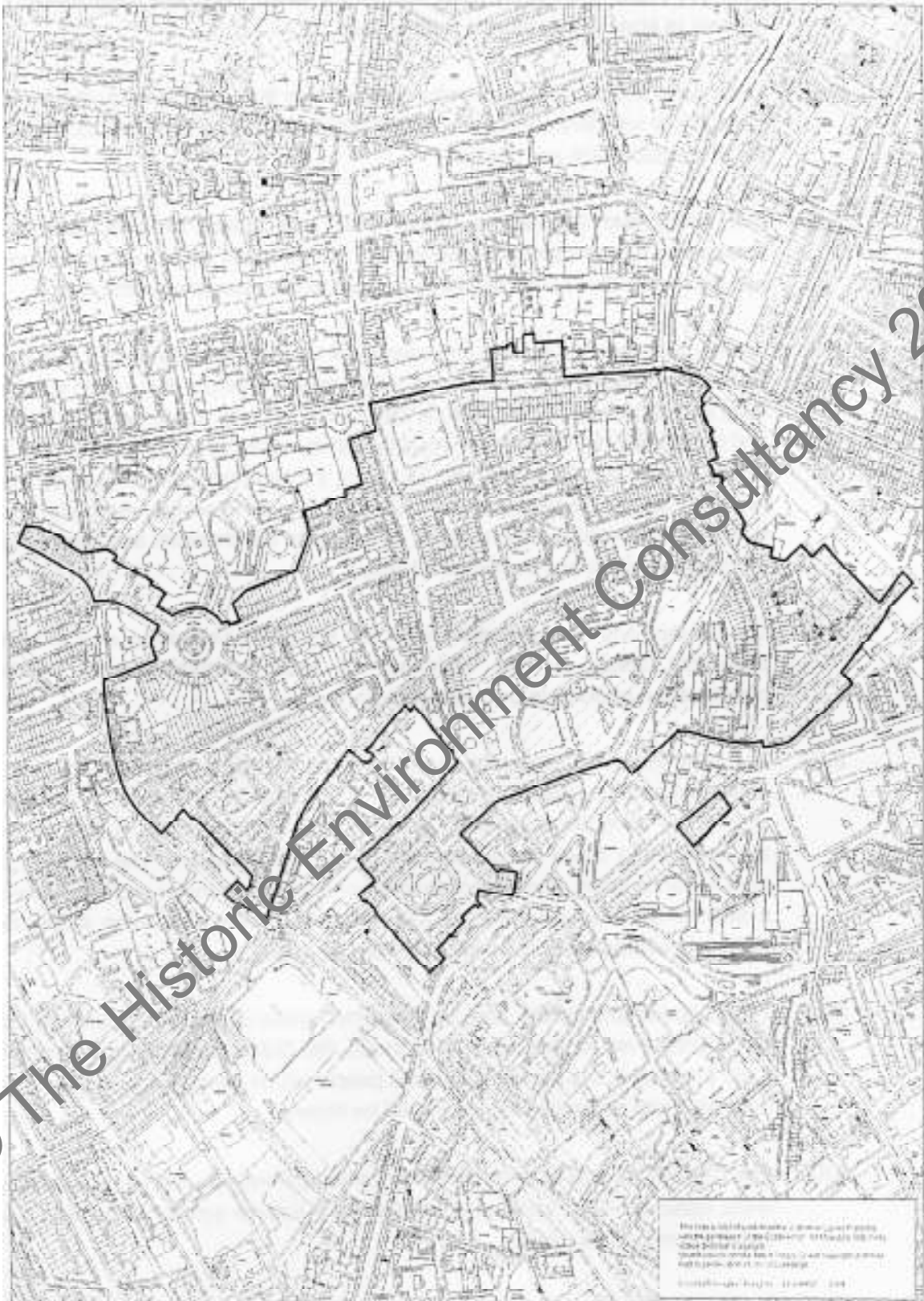
Many of the nearby buildings are listed - these are detailed in appended.

3.4 Conservation Area

The development area is located within the New River conservation area.

The extent of the conservation area is shown in the following figure.

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Map Scale 1:6000

Figure 3: The Extent of the Conservation Area

4. Conservation Planning Policy Context

4.1 Planning Policy Guidance 15 – The Historic Environment.

Some of the Provisions and Objectives which are relevant to this appeal are highlighted below:

Paragraph 3.8

“Generally the best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings and areas is to keep them in active use.”

Paragraph 3.10

“The best use will very often be the use for which the building was originally designed, and the continuation or reinstatement of that use should certainly be the first option when the future of a building is considered”

Paragraph 3.13

“Many listed buildings can sustain some degree of sensitive alteration or extension to accommodate continuing or new uses.”

Paragraph 3.15

“Achieving a proper balance between the special interest of a listed building and proposals for alterations or extensions is demanding and should always be based on specialist expertise; but it is rarely impossible, if reasonable flexibility and imagination are shown by all parties involved. Thus, a better solution may be possible if a local planning authority is prepared to apply normal development control policies flexibly.”

Section 4 Conservation Areas

Paragraph 5.1

“Street Furniture

Even the smallest towns contain a wealth of street furniture of historic or architectural interest, such as pillar boxes, telephone kiosks, drinking fountains, railings, clocks and many others, often of local distinctiveness. The appearance of historic streets can be improved by preserving or reinstating such items where appropriate (see Street Improvements in Historic Areas).”

Section 7. The Upkeep and Repair of Historic Buildings

Annex Guidance on Alterations to Listed Buildings

“Annex C C.6 In general the wholesale reinstatement of lost, destroyed or superseded elements of a building or an interior is not appropriate, although, where a building has largely retained the integrity of its design, the reinstatement of lost or destroyed elements of that design could be considered. In such cases there should always be adequate information confirming the detailed historical authenticity of the work proposed.”

4.2 Unitary Development Plan

The following policies of the Islington Unitary Development Plan (2002) were considered relevant, as noted in the planning officer's report, to this application:

D1 (Overall Design)
D3 (Site Planning)
D4 (Designing in Context)
D8 (Boundary Walls, Paving, and Street Furniture)
D11 (Alterations and Extensions)
D22 (New Development)
D25 (Roof Extensions)
D28 (Rear Extensions)
S16 (Protected Shopping Centres)
S18 (Changes of use from Retail)
Env17 (Protecting Amenity)

The Following UDP policies were cited as conservation reasons for refusal.

D1 (Overall Design),
D3 (Site Planning),
D4 (Designing in Context),
D8 (Boundary Walls, Paving, and Street Furniture),
D11 (Alterations and Extensions),
D22 (New Development),
D25 (Roof Extensions),
D28 (Rear Extensions)

In addition the following policies are also considered relevant.

D31 Boundaries

The wording of these policies is appended.

4.3 Conservation Area Design Guidelines – A Supplement to the UDP. 2002 Chapter 2 New River Conservation Area

© This is appended.

5. Historic Background.

5.1 The New River Estate

From the time of the first Queen Elizabeth the area is known to have been agricultural land adjacent to a road which leads from the City of London to Islington Hill, until the current buildings were constructed in 1828. (See appended map regression exercise)

In 1602 Islington hill was selected by Sir Hugh Myddleton as the location for a conduit and reservoir for the “New River Project”. This was an ambitious project to construct a new river from Amwell and Chadwell near Ware in Hertfordshire, some 20 miles away, to provide fresh water for the rapidly expanding capital city of London. This involved the digging of a channel 38.75 miles long following the 100’ foot contour.

The project was officially opened in 1623 by the current monarch King James I and the water supply is still in use today. The main reservoir, filter beds, and associated building were constructed 200m to the south of 48 Amwell St and are called the “New River Head”.

The construction of houses on higher ground in the West End meant that a second, higher, upper reservoir was added in 1708 in what is now Claremont Square 100 m to the North of 48 Amwell St. This was converted into a covered reservoir in 1856.

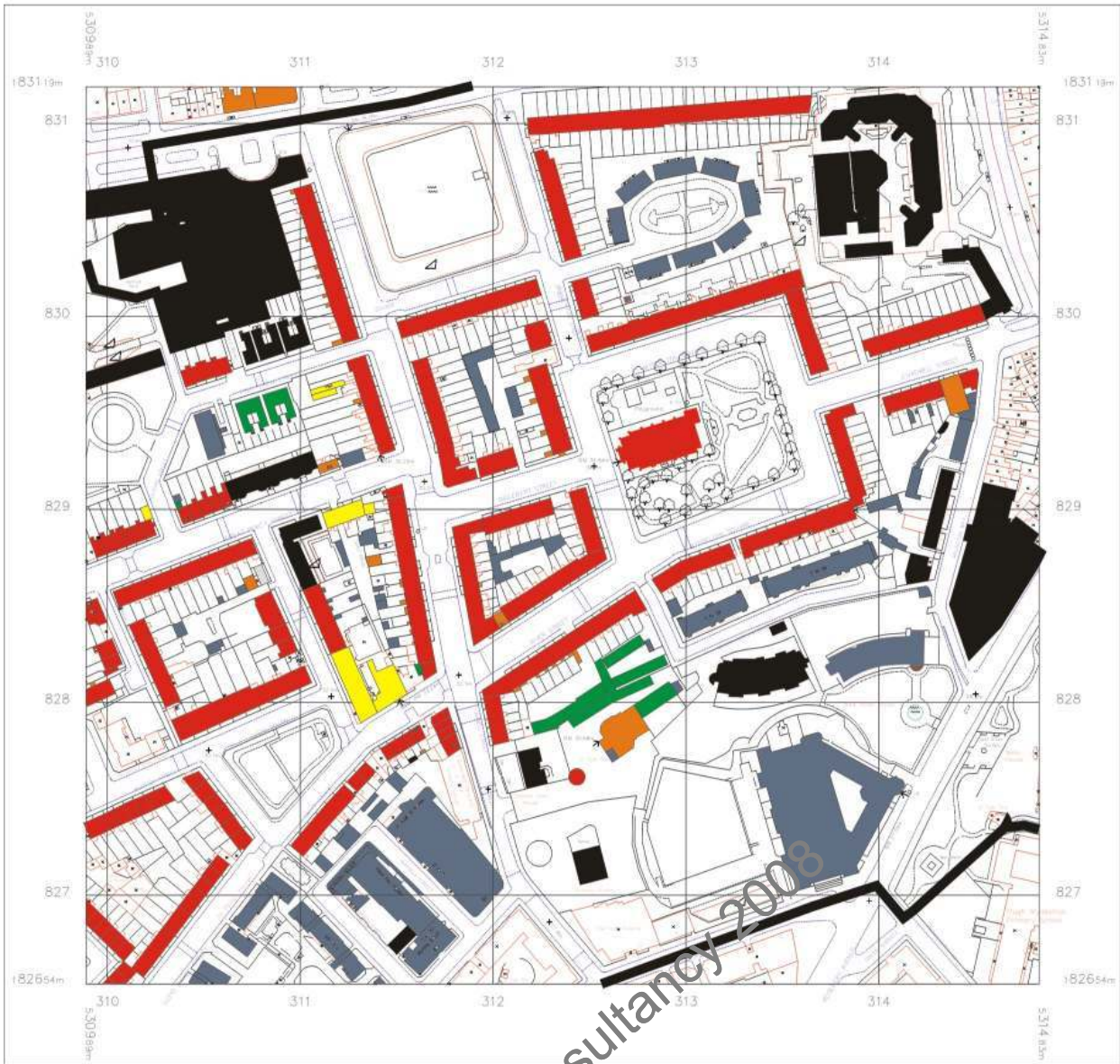
The New River Company had purchased 40 acres of land following law suits in the 1730s and by the end of the seventeenth century their estate was some 45 acres in total. Amwell Street was the principal North South route through the estate which is bounded by Penton Rd in the North and St John St in the east.

This land was used as agricultural land, principally cattle grazing - cattle were driven from all over the country on the hoof for slaughter and butchering at Smithfield market which is less than a mile from the estate. The River head estate therefore provided the ideal location for drovers to fatten up their beasts immediately before sale.

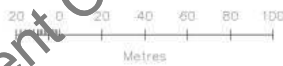
The New Inn public house was built in the early C18 to cater for the drovers.

By 1800 the conditions at Smithfield were far from satisfactory and the Corporation of London began to consider alternative sites and the New Inn Farm on the estate was considered.

Originally the water from the New River Head was distributed by wooden pipes, made of elm, from the River Head to London itself. The network of wooden pipes radiated out from the reservoirs and thus prevented the building of houses in the area surrounding the river head and thus the area was not developed unlike many arterial roads from the city. They were described as being like “threads of a garment” by William Chadwell Mylne, surveyor of the New River Company.



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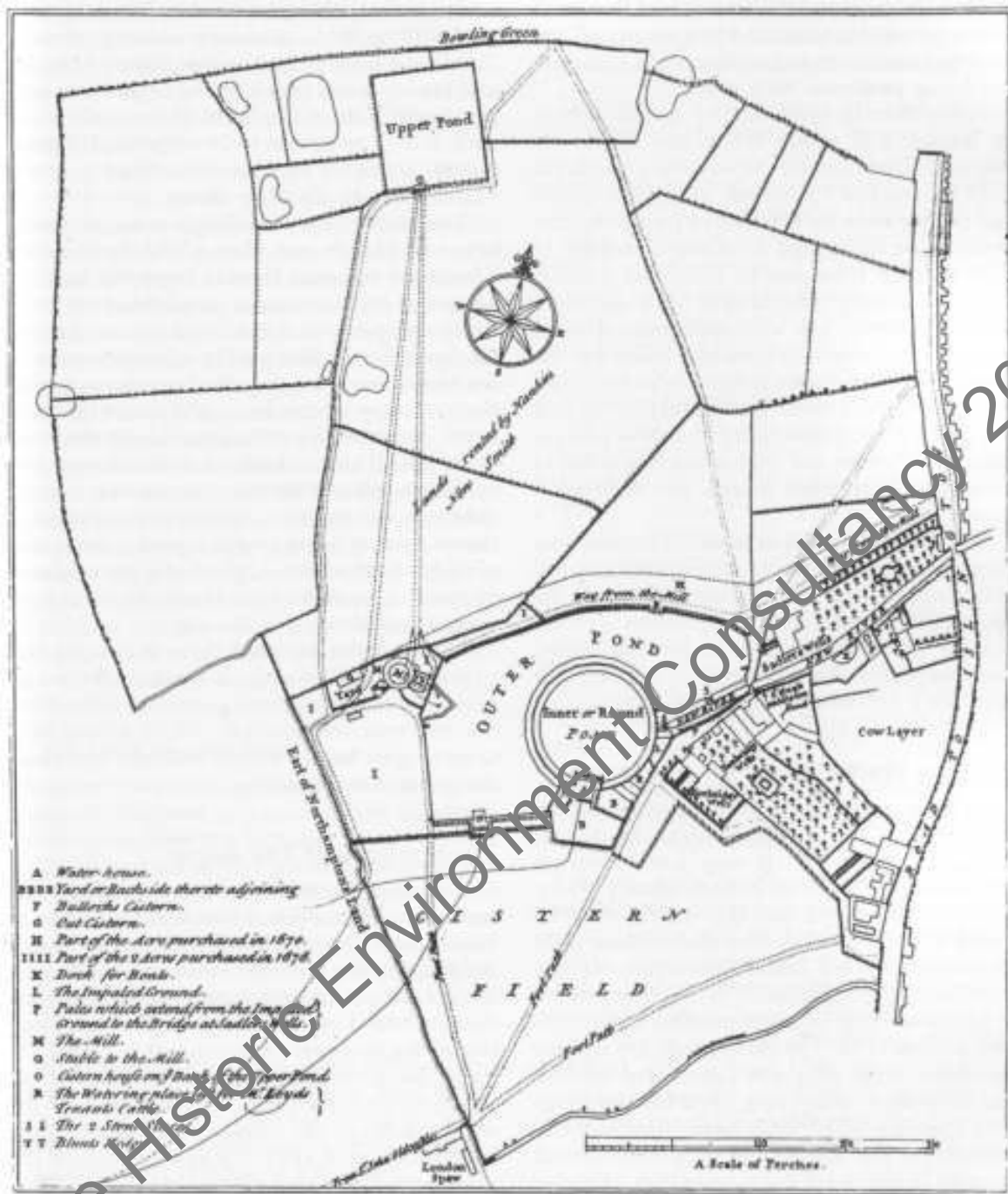
Key Date of Buildings

- Georgian
- Pre-1872
- 1872-1894
- 1894-1914
- 1914-1952
- 1952-2008

Figure 4: Phased plan showing the development of the New River conservation area



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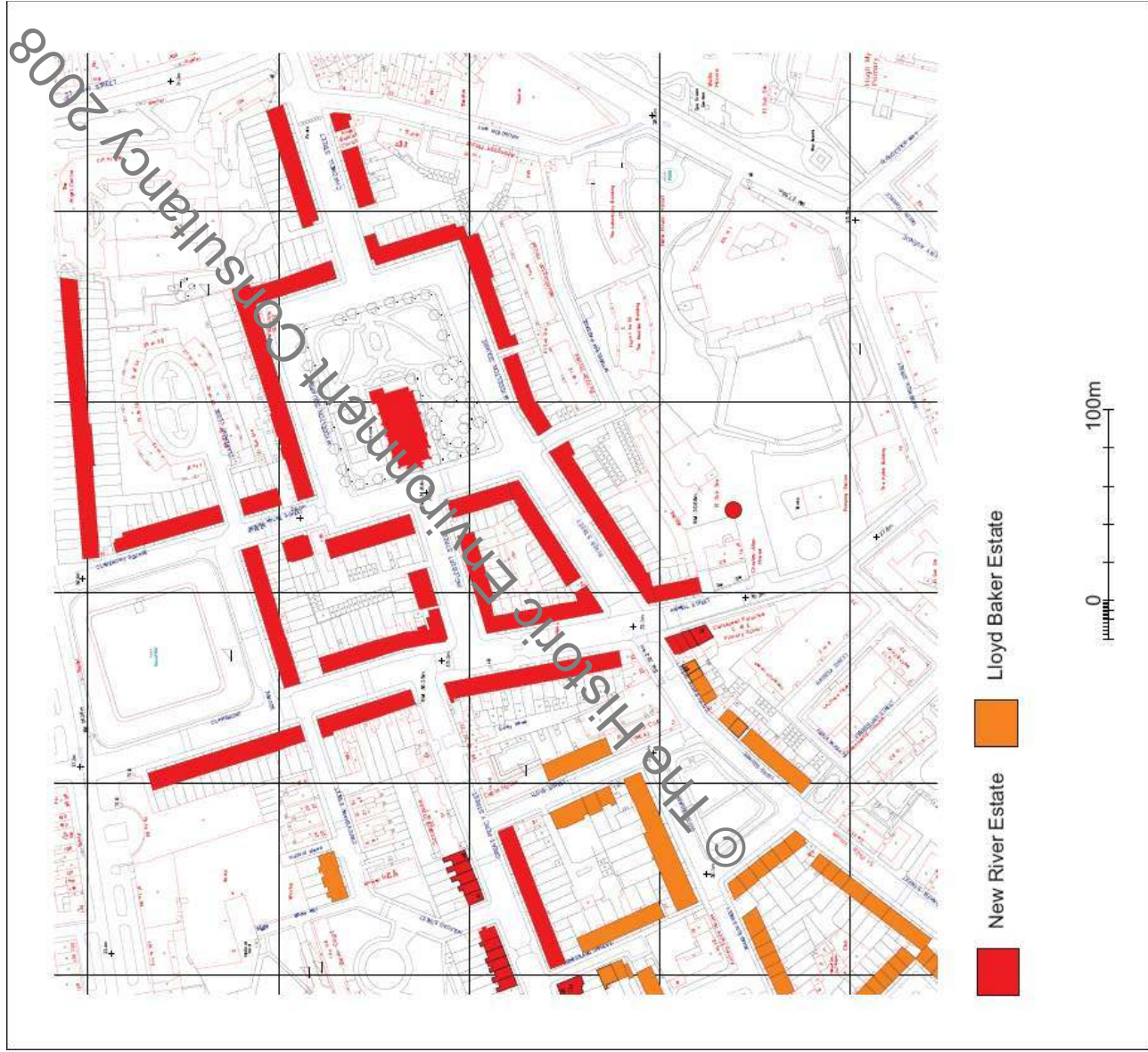


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Figure 5: Plan of New River Head area, 1741

Figure 6: Modern plan of the New River and Lloyd Baker estates

Scale - 1:2500



The manufacture of iron pipes began in the middle of the 17th century. The New River Company decided a modernisation was necessary and the elm pipes were replaced. This in turn made the construction of houses around the river head possible in due course. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was decided that the only solution was to plan where streets would eventually be needed and to replace all the wooden pipes with iron pipes located along the streets.

In 1810 plans were drawn up for the development of the area on the land owned by the New River Company. A list of the streets in the New River Estate is appended.

The development followed a standard form for the Georgian Period in that the land owners sold a lease to a builder who had to construct the buildings to a particular design. The builder then leased the completed buildings on a shorter term lease for a much higher rent.

William Chadwell Mylne drew up the master plan for 600 houses to house 5000 people. He also included shops and public houses as well as a Church and a School. The plan was a regular grid pattern of streets and squares; the streets were wider than normal. Some streets were grander than others. The construction of all the houses was done under the supervision of William Chadwell Mylne to his design. The intention was plain Gothic Design.

At the time the 47 acres of land which were to be built upon were surrounded by buildings already. The area is thus a rare example of a large group of buildings built in a coherent way at the very end of the Georgian Period.

Within sixty years (1880) of the construction of the estate the character of the estate had changed. The universal use of coal as a fuel created a grimy and dirty atmosphere and caused incessant "smogs" (a mixture of fog and smoke) some of which lasted for up to 4 months. Whoever could afford it moved further out from central London to the new suburbs served by the new commuter railways and the underground railways. Thus by this date many houses were in multiple occupation and the houses were old, unfashionable and black from pollution. By 1896 13 of the 47 buildings in Myddleton Square had been converted into apartments. (Tames p135)

By this time a number of ground floors had been converted into shops and the light wells paved over.

In 1904 The New River Company's water assets were taken over by the Metropolitan Water Board but the estate remained in the hands of the Company.

In order to avoid the responsibilities of the rent acts passed after the Great War, houses were frequently allowed to deteriorate until the tenants moved out. Often the houses were then converted into business premises and let for a premium rent.

The dilapidation of the estate continued into the twentieth century and the insanitary conditions of part of the estate were the subject of a report on bad housing.

In 1974 the Company sold off many of the houses including No 48 to Islington Council. The architects Andrew Sherlock & Partners were commissioned in 1975 to refurbish the properties:

“And so the big houses of the New Estate, and the even bigger Victorian villas built a generation later, were deserted by their well-heeled occupiers and were divided up into tenements: many of which in due course deteriorated into slums, and remained as such until they were rescued in The 1970s.”

Sherlock, H.,

Their idealised design for Claremont Square was to divide the houses into two flats with a separate entrance for the lower flat at basement level which has a garden at basement level.

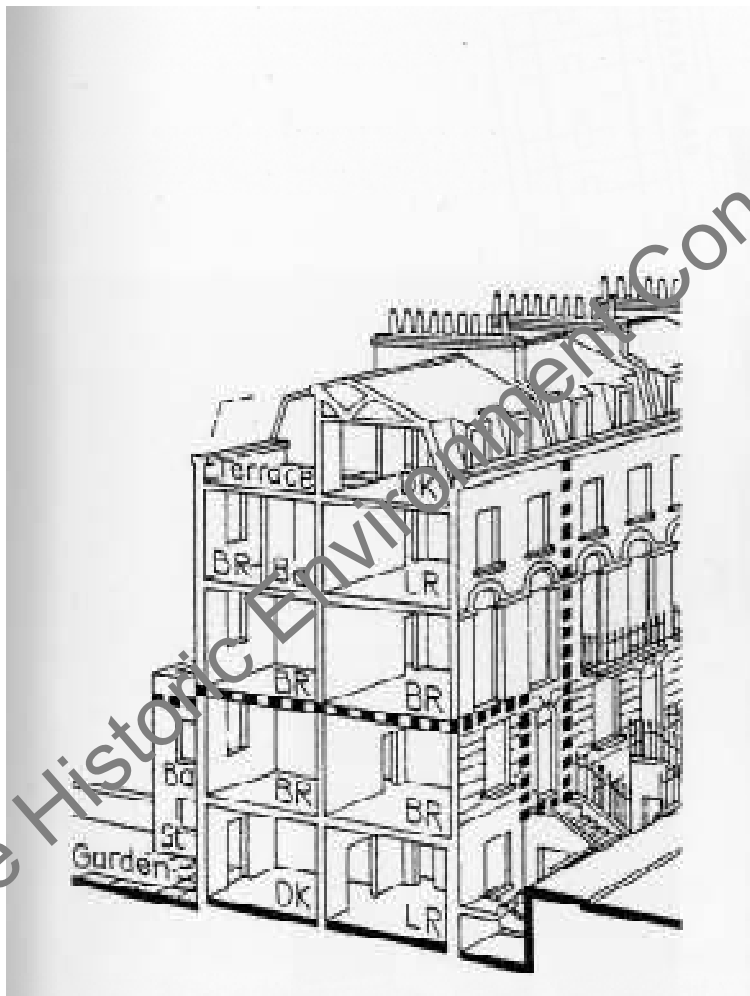


Figure 7: Architects section for the refurbishment of Claremont Square

In addition the architects were given a free hand at what they could do above parapet level and they pursued a policy of giving as many people as possible a roof - garden. Unusually the flats were designed so the bedrooms of each flat were immediately above each other. (Sherlock 2006)



Plate 2 Roof Garden Claremont Square

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5.2 The Lloyd Baker Estate

Land between the present Amwell Street and King's Cross Road, once part of the Knights Hospitallers' 'Commandery Mantells', passed in time to one of James II's 'Seven Bishops', Dr William Lloyd, Bishop of St Asaph's. It formed the dowry of his great-granddaughter Mary, who in 1775 married the Revd William Baker, of Gloucestershire.

From 1819 the old clergyman and their son, Thomas Lloyd Baker, developed two of the steep fields for building, with layout and extraordinarily individual houses designed by father and son John and William Joseph Booth, of the Drapers Company.

The work was attended by fierce disputes with the builders, with neighbouring landowners - the New River Company and Lord Northampton, and with Randell, owner of the large tile-kilns in 'Black Mary's', the lower field.

The houses were built as:

1. Detached Villas
2. Pairs of villas
3. Short Terraces

in a neo-classical style.

Unusually for London, the estate remained in the family's hands until the death of Miss Olive Lloyd Baker in 1975 when it was worth £2 million. Half the property was put up for sale including much of Granville Square, Wharton and Lloyd Baker Streets (but not Lloyd Square), and acquired in 1978 by Islington Council, which refurbished many properties and again substantially reconstructed Granville Square.

5.3 The Blitz.

It is noted that 9105 of the 9899 houses in the Clerkenwell borough were damaged during the blitz. (Tame p150).

For this reason many upper storeys of the buildings in the conservation area have been rebuilt.

PART THREE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

6. The Conservation Area - Introduction

The New River Conservation area is defined by the surviving elements of the Late Georgian New River Estate, the Lloyd Baker Estate and other contemporary buildings. It is to be contrasted with the surrounding streets which have a lack of uniformity and far more recent buildings.

As such the essential characteristics are those of Georgian Town planning and the architecture is characterized by proportion and balance; simple mathematical ratios were used to determine the height of a window in relation to its width or the shape of a room as a double cube.

6.1 New River Design Guide Definition of the Character of the Conservation Area

The Design Guide for the New River Conservation Area published by Islington Borough Council paragraph 2.4 describes the character of the conservation area as follows:

“The predominant character of the New River Conservation Area is residential, although permission will not be granted for the over intensification of residential use in conversion schemes. There are shopping frontages on, for example, Amwell Street, St John Street, Arlington Way and King’s Cross Road which provide local services and are an important contribution to the character of the area. Generally, the Council recognises that often the best use for a building is that which it was designed for and will seek to retain public houses, shops and workshops in appropriate uses which will not diminish their special interest. The removal of individual established uses within the conservation area will not be permitted where they contribute to its character.”

6.2 The Character of the Conservation Area

The modern character of the conservation area is defined by the historical evolution described above. In particular that nearly all the historic buildings were constructed at the same time on a slope surrounding the Reservoirs of the New River Company in a particular design to a set master plan.

In essence it is a planned coherent Late Georgian area where some of the buildings have been modified in the Victorian Period. However, many of the buildings are heavily re-built and restored in an imitation of the original style. There are also a few Victorian Buildings and numerous more modern buildings.

The Streets are wide and also straight except Amwell St which followed a pre-existing road.

6.3 The Street Scene

The main thoroughfare is Amwell St which is characterised by the range of buildings present including:

1. Houses
2. Industrial & Other Utilitarian Buildings historic and modern
3. Public Houses
4. Houses whose ground floors have been converted into shops.
5. A school

Many commentators suggest the range of shops present give a village feel to the area. Amwell St is therefore to be contrasted with the other historic streets in the conservation area for its diversity of building types and the conversion of houses into shops. (See appended Street Scenes).



Plate 3 Amwell Street and the junction with River St

Plate 4 Types of Building in Amwell St

6.4 Architectural Styles & Dates of Buildings Present.

It is clear that the character of the conservation area derives from the History of the New River Company and the survival of the buildings constructed by it and the adjoining land owners principally the Lloyd Baker Estate, and its subsequent evolution. Thus the buildings and spaces can be classed as follows:

1. The buildings relating to the water based activities of the New River Company
2. The houses built by the New River Company in the early C19
3. Shops built by the New River Company
4. Other Buildings built by the New River Company
5. Houses built by the Lloyd Baker Estate in the early C19
6. Modern Replacement Buildings
7. Modern Garages and other buildings replacing the stabling at the centre of each block.

6.5 Architectural Characteristics & Key Features

The buildings of the New River Company are characterised by the following features:

1. Built of brick from brick earth extracted from the company's land
2. Of 2-3 Storeys usually plus a basement and an attic
3. With the provision of a light well to the basement
4. The frontage size varies from 15-20 ft wide with the same number of windows thus mixing grander with more modest houses
5. Features which followed the Building Acts following the Great Fire including all wooden parts set back 4 inches into the brickwork
6. Cast iron balconies
7. String courses
8. Distinctive feature in the form of Semi circular 'eyebrow' panels in the brick work over the first floor window.

The buildings of the Baker estate can be contrasted by their more classical design.



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Plate 5: New River Estate Houses Architectural Features



Mansard Roof



Flat



Valley Roof



Valley Roof

Plate 6: Roof Forms



Plate 7 Terrace Houses of the New River Estate - Anwell St



Plate 8 Detached House in Neo-classical style of the LLOYD Baker Estate

6.6 Post Georgian Contributions to the Character of The Conservation Area.

6.6.1 Conversion of Ground floor to Shops

Many commentators suggest that the New River conservation area has a village feel particularly with the shops on Amwell St. Many were converted in the Victorian period and retain Victorian Shop historic frontages.

Of particular relevance to this appeal is the treatment given to light wells and the railings surrounding them when the ground floors were converted into shops.



Plate 9: 42 Amwell St - Historic Shop front with retained light well and railings

6.6.2 Roof Gardens & Other Amenity Space

An unusual characteristic of the conservation area is the presence of amenity space and roof gardens on flat roofs on the first floors and higher. Flat areas adjoining mansard roofs or extensions have been utilised. There can be no doubt that the degree to which these roof spaces are utilised is a modern phenomenon. This was a deliberate policy of the architects when the New River Estate was refurbished in 1975. There is even one example of a box hedge being used as a boundary between two properties on the third floor.



Plate 10: Wharton Street Roof Garden



Plate 11: A hedge has been used as a boundary at third floor level Wharton Street

Roof Gardens

			
			
<p>River St</p>	<p>Amwell St</p>	<p>River St Mylne St</p>	<p>Wharton Street</p>

Plate12: Roof Gardens: Roof Gardens



Claremont St East



Claremont Square South



Chadwell St



Amwell St



Wharton



Plate13 Roof Gardens

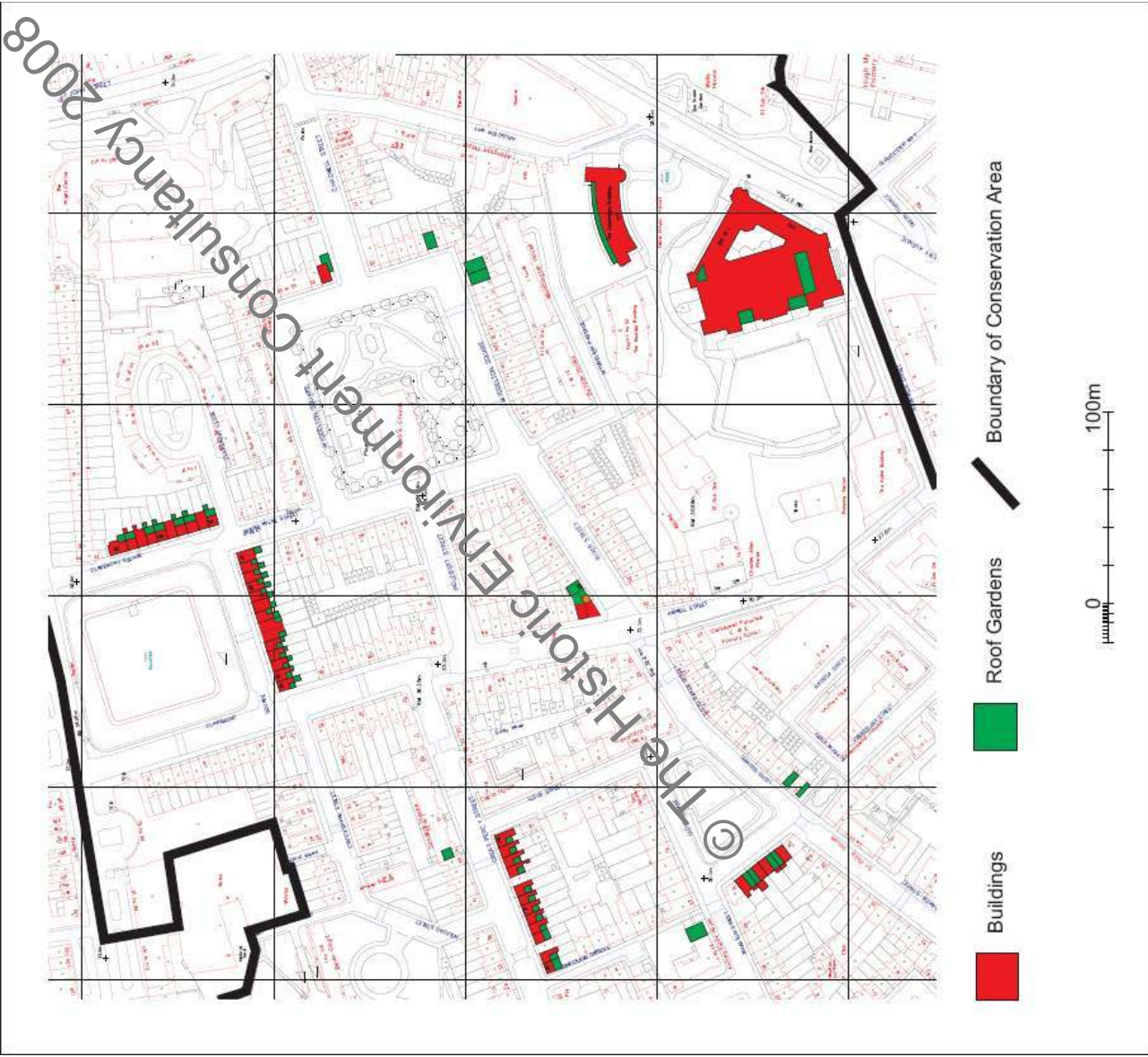


Myddleton Square



© **New River Head**

Figure 8: Distribution of roof gardens and similar
 Scale - 1:2500



6.7 Detractors from The Character of the Conservation Area.

The things which detract from the special character of the conservation area are as follows.

1. Recent Utilitarian Buildings & Modern Housing
2. Gaps
3. Inappropriate signage
4. Infilled Light Wells

The infilling of light wells and the removal of surrounding railings jars with the intended regularity of the buildings and street scenes. It is noted that the railings are mentioned in the listing descriptions and local plan policy protects them and encourages their re-instatement.

It is clear from the historic maps that these started to disappear in the Victorian Period particularly towards the end of streets. It is suggested that in part this is related to the conversion of the properties to business premises in the Victorian era.

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7. THE EXISTING BUILDING

7.1 Abridged Listed Building Description

Below is the listed building description for the building with descriptions of elements not present removed.

“GV II

Twelve terraced houses. 1828-1829.

C19 shop fronts (altered C20 to nos. 44-52 and 66.

By William Chadwell Mylne, Surveyor for the New River Estate.

Yellow stock brick set in Flemish bond.

wooden shop fronts to others and stucco dressings; roofs obscured, party-wall brick stacks.

Ground-floor shop and side-hall entrance plan leading to upper floors to nos. 44-52 and 66.

Three storeys with basement; 2 windows each

Other shopfronts extensively altered C20 Gauged-brick flat arches with predominantly 6/6 sashes to upper floors; 1st floor stucco sill band beneath full-length sashes set in arched brick recesses linked by stucco impost band with individual cast-iron balconies to nos. 54-64 with Vitruvian scroll and anthemion pattern to railings.

Some rebuilding to upper floors. Plain brick parapet with brick string course and stone coping.

The Full listed description is appended.

7.2 Description Of Building

The building is a house constructed as part of the New River Estate to Chadwell Mylne's designs in 1828-1829 with a light well to both front and rear. As such it has all the characteristic architectural features of these buildings including:

1. Front light well (now covered)
2. Rear Light well (now covered)
3. Valley roof which is not symmetrical to the building
4. Built of brick from brick earth extracted from the company's land
5. Usually 3 Storeys plus a basement
6. Including all wooden parts set back 4 inches into the brickwork
7. Cast iron balconies
8. String courses
9. Distinctive feature in the form of Semi circular 'eyebrow' panels in the brick work over the first floor window.
10. Window Shutters
11. Sash windows (although few are original)

The building consists of the following elements:

1. The original House constructed in 1828-29 to Chadwell Mylne designs
2. A Victorian Extension
3. Victorian Modifications eg the Shopfront and covering over of the Light well
4. Repairs as a result of bomb damage
5. A Modern lean to structure and other modern elements.

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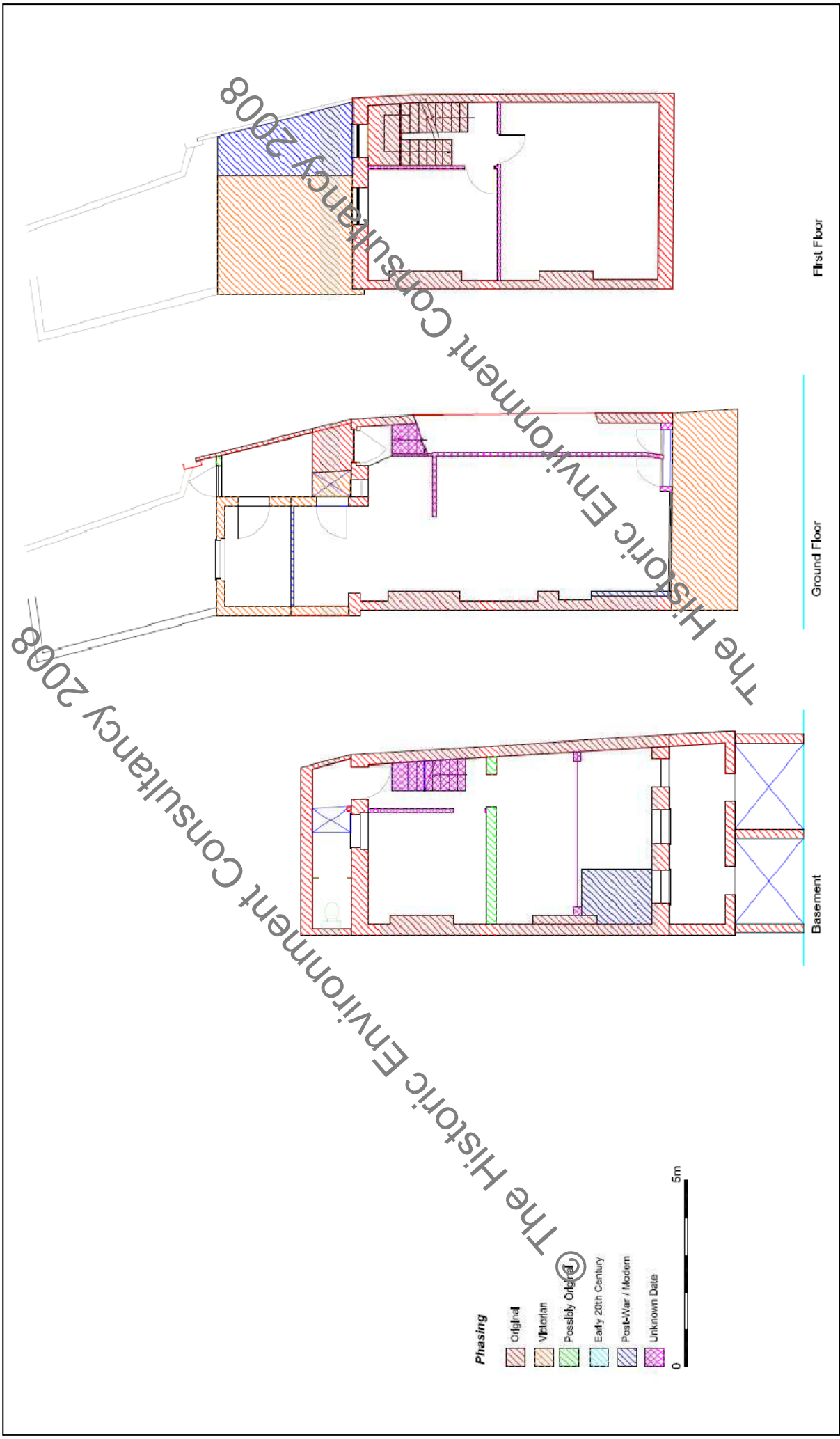


Figure 9: Phased plan, 48 Amwell Street @ 1:100

7.3 West Elevation Front Elevation

The front elevation shows that a modern shop front has been added and the windows are late Victorian (or later) horned sash windows.



Plate 14 The Front Elevation



Plate15 Modern C20 Door Arrangement

The shop front is relatively recent and is not considered worthy of retention (see Conservation Area Design Guide 2.23). When the shop front was added a double door arrangement was constructed in order to allow access to a self contained dwelling on the first and second floors. The light well has been covered by a concrete slab.



Plate16 The Covered Front Light well.

The original form of the front elevation is still visible in the basement and consisted of a lightwell and two vaults as well as the original door and window arrangement.



Plate17 Original Light well looking North



Plate18 Light well looking South



Plate19 Original Basement Window

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7.4 The Rear (East Elevation)



Plate20 The rear Elevation

The following architectural features are present

1. Both Modern plastic and old cast iron rain water goods are present.
2. A mix of horned and unhorned sash windows
3. Chimney stack
4. Evidence of rebuilding of the adjoining property.
5. Evidence of rebuilding of the second floor of the building.
6. The addition of a light well to the adjoining property on the left of the photograph.

A number of structural elements can be observed

1. The original building at first floor level
2. An extension at ground floor level on the right of the photograph
3. A lean to structure on the left of the photograph



There is some evidence to suggest that the uppermost storey has been re-built - the brick work is cleaner and the windows are not original.

7.5 The Rear Extensions



Plate 23 Rear Extensions

On the left is a recent lean to structure consisting of a make shift roof and the addition of a door. The extension on the right is of Victorian or later date.

7.6 Basement

It is unclear what the original internal form of the basement actually was.

The normal arrangement for a Georgian Building of this date would be a single large basement used as a kitchen with pantries and similar.

In broad terms the arrangement was a light well to both front and rear with a door to the front. The form of the rear door suggests that it **may** be a later addition. It is likely that the central wall may be an original wall.

The stairs to the ground floor lead to an external door and as well as an opening to the ground floor.

Two fireplaces are present - one made of marble and the other fitted with a later cast iron fire surround. Neither are therefore characteristic of a usual basement arrangement and are more characteristic of living accommodation.

It is suggested therefore that in pre-modern times the basement was used as accommodation. It is considered likely that this function ceased when the light wells were covered in the Victorian period.

There are recent additions such as

1. RSJ
2. Block work to support the floor above.
3. Conversion of rear light well to a toilet.
4. Services and similar

These more recent additions reflect the basement's use as a plant room for the laundrette.

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	<p>Basement Front Room - external door and window to front Elevation</p>		<p>Front Room Looking to Rear of Building</p>		<p>Rear Room looking towards the rear of the building The wall on the right is a later partition</p>		<p>Basement Front Room - Marble Fireplace</p>		<p>Wooden Fire surround with cast iron grate</p>		<p>Outside toilet</p>
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Plate24 The Basement

7.7 Ground Floor.

The Ground Floor retains little of historic interest with the following having been removed:

- Windows
- Front Door
- Internal walls
- Skirting boards
- Ceiling Rose
- Plasterwork
- Internal wall arrangement

The internal arrangement can be suggested by comparison with other buildings and remnant structural features. It is also possible that the position of the stair case to the first floor was moved from the north to the south walls.



Plate 25 The Ground Floor Looking to the rear of the property

©



Front Room looking towards the rear of the building



Front room looking North -



Front and back room looking to Front of building



Rear Victorian Extension



Opening to lean to



The Lean To Extension

Plate26 Ground Floor Photographs

7.8 First Floor

The first floor retains its original room lay out but virtually no original features remain except:

1. Shutters to front windows
2. Skirting board to part of the front room.
3. Chimney Breast

The rear bedroom has been converted to a kitchen

7.9 Second Floor.

The second floor retains its original room lay out but no original features remain.

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7.10 Importance of Building & Contribution to the Conservation Area

Clearly the late Georgian buildings of the New River Estate are of considerable architectural and historic interest both individually and collectively. There can be no doubt that the building as a whole makes a positive contribution to the conservation area.

The importance of the group of buildings is lessened by the following:

1. The degree of alteration of the upper storeys
2. The high degree of internal alteration.

The importance of 48 Amwell St is diminished and indeed detracts from the special character of the conservation area by the presence of the following:

1. The presence of a C20 shop front
2. The covering of the light well and the removal of the railing.
3. The rear lean to extension.

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8. The Condition of the Building

It is emphasised that the basement and ground floor building cannot be used in any event without substantial repairs. Some of these repairs will require listed building consent in any event.

In summary the following repairs are necessary before the ground floor and basement can be used for any purposes.

1. Upper Floors
 - a. Stop ingress of water on top floor.
 - b. Repair Sash windows
2. Ground Floor:
 - a. Replacement of floor timber
 - b. Securing back door
 - c. Replacement of Louvre windows
 - d. Remedy structural failure in the extension
 - e. Replacement roof
 - f. Replace girder which supports cover to front light well
3. Basement
 - a. Modernise toilet facilities
 - b. stop ingress of water
 - c. replacement ceilings
 - d. remedial action to wall finishes
 - e. make safe services

8.1 Buildings At Risk, Monuments and Buildings capable of Beneficial Use

In 1998 English Heritage launched a new strategy for dealing with Listed Buildings which were at Risk in "***Buildings at Risk - A new Strategy***". This document sets out how the degree of risk that a building is subject to can be analysed. In every case a "vacant" building is the high risk category for each condition stage.

English Heritage Definitions of Condition

English Heritage in "***Buildings at Risk - A new Strategy***" define the following categories of condition. The following table compares the current situation at 48 Amwell St:

Very Bad means a building where there has been:

Criterion	Current Situation
structural failure or instability (where applicable)	Some structural instability to the rear extension.
a loss of significant areas of roof covering - leading to major deterioration of the interior	In part of extension No
or where there has been a major fire or other disaster affecting most of the building.	No No

Poor means a building or structure with

deteriorating masonry	Yes
and/or leaking roof	Yes
and/or defective rainwater goods,	Yes
accompanied by rot outbreaks within the building	Yes
General deterioration of most elements of the building fabric	Yes on ground floor and basement, to a degree on the 1 st and 2 nd floors
including external joinery	Yes

Fair means

Structurally Sound	No
Minor Repairs required	Yes
Shows signs of a lack of general maintenance	Yes

Good means

Structurally Sound	No
Weathertight	No
No Significant Repairs Needed	No



Plate27 Structural Instability rear extension



Plate28 Structural Instability Rear Extension



Plate29 Missing Floor boards etc ground floor

Thus the condition of the building is **therefore** at best poor decaying into very bad and has clearly gone beyond the fair stage.

The following chart shows how the different risk categories are defined.

English Heritage Risk Scale

CONDITION	OCCUPANCY	RISK CATEGORY	
VERY BAD	VACANT	BUILDINGS AT RISK 1 EXTREME RISK	
	PARTIALLY OCCUPIED		2 GRAVE RISK
	OCCUPIED		3 AT RISK
POOR	VACANT	4	
	PARTIALLY OCCUPIED		
FAIR	OCCUPIED	5	
	VACANT		
GOOD	PARTIALLY OCCUPIED	6	
	OCCUPIED		
	VACANT		

As the building is only partially occupied the building, in English Heritage terms, is at best vulnerable or at risk and certainly is becoming at risk. The building is therefore at Risk. English Heritage also suggest that the rate of decay must be considered. In this case there is a real risk if rapid decay and in particular vandalism occurs.

It is noted that the purpose of the designation system is to protect buildings of special historic and architectural interest in the long term, not to create museums consisting of buildings where no change is made.

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□. Use of the Building & Re-ordering

The building was constructed as a house.

The function of the building as a laundrette has ceased and it is clear that this function could not continue because of the condition of the floor without major repairs. Formally the planning function of the ground floor is a retail function with the use being something normally located with other shops.

There are no good conservation reasons why any functions other than the historic ones are necessary for the long term survival of the building ie as a dwelling or dwelling and shop.

The basement is clearly a domestic arrangement given the presence of fire places and it is noted that these are bedroom rather than kitchen in character which is unusual for a building of this period.

The staircase from the ground floor to the basement is steep and narrow which precludes a retail use even as a store room. This inevitably means that there is a risk that the basement will not be used which is not regarded as beneficial.

Similarly the lack of daylight and the stairs make the basement of limited use within a dwelling.

It is therefore suggested that the basement cannot be beneficially used for either a retail or domestic function without a re-ordering of the property.

A key requirement to bring the basement into use is the provision of daylight and in fact a return to the original arrangement and the re-instatement of the light well and a separate entrance which are in fact key elements in the character of the New River Conservation Area and in particular the houses of the New River Estate.

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10. Amended Proposals

It is noted in the main appeal statement that the proposals have been amended because:

1. To simplify this appeal.
2. Following detailed study of the building and inspection of the basement following the removal of plant associated with the laundrette.
3. To clarify what exactly will be retained

Nevertheless comment is made on these matters in the following section.

11. Conservation Reasons for Refusal

The views and the reasons for refusal of the conservation officer are reported in the Officers Report and are:

- “1. Loss of basement commercial space. It is essential that the shops/businesses on Amwell Street have adequate ancillary space.
2. Basement front light well distances the shopfront from the street. None of this row of shops have front railings or areas.
3. Internal alterations to basement are fundamentally unacceptable -loss of plan form and loss of fabric, including chimney stack.
4. Full width rear extension with roof terrace is considered excessive.
5. Alteration of first floor sash to door unacceptable - loss of historic fabric and design.***

11.1 Loss of basement commercial space. It is essential that the shops/businesses on Amwell Street have adequate ancillary space.

There are difficulties in using the basement as ancillary space to retail premises because the stairs are too narrow.

I am unclear why there is a conservation objection on this basis. Clearly regard has to be given to the viability of a building but in fact the character of the basement is domestic not commercial. As noted above the stairs in effect preclude the use of the basement for commercial purposes without re-ordering.

11.2 Basement front light well distances the shop front from the street. None of this row of shops have front railings or areas.

Virtually all the buildings of the New River Estate retain their light wells and surrounding railings - the exception being some shops. The origin of the shops in the Victorian period has been discussed in the history of the conservation area and in particular the removal of railings by 1871. The form of the arrangements of light wells which are present today can be summarised as follows

Arrangement	Number	Percentage
With Railings and Light wells present	10	32%
Light wells present with no railings	7	23%
Permanent cover to Light wells.	14	45%

Which shops have railings and/or light wells is haphazard - due to the piece meal conversion of individual houses in the Victorian Period.

Clearly the presence of the light wells is a key and attractive characteristic of the New River Estate buildings. The irregularity of the arrangements of light wells in Amwell St jars with the deliberate regularity of these buildings as originally planned.

Of Key Importance is Current Unitary Development Plan policy 29 which is as follows:

"The Council will not normally permit the filling in or covering over of front basement areas, or the widening of front entrance steps, or the construction of dustbin or meter enclosures."

Similarly the Conservation Area Design Guidelines - A Supplement to the UDP. 2002 Chapter 2 New River Conservation Area section 2.18 repeats this statement.

The Supporting Text States:

"The majority of the properties in the conservation area have front basement areas, protected by cast iron railings, which are important to the character of the area. The filling in or covering over of these areas prejudices light to the basements and spoils the appearance of the front elevation."

In addition Policy D31 states:

"D31 The Council wishes to see the preservation, retention and reinstatement of front boundary railings, boundary walls and traditional iron work in conservation areas."

This statement clearly points to the lack of a light well and railings on a particular building as detracting from the character of the conservation area.

The current application is seeking in effect to remove a relatively recent covering of the light well and to:

1. Re-instate the railing which accords with policy D31.
2. Reveal the original form of the facade, few of which remain.

Re-instatement of the original form can only be considered to be an enhancement and a reduction of the detracting Modern shop front arrangement and a return to an elegant Georgian Street Scene in both conservation and UDP terms. The re-instatement of the light well would allow the basement to be brought into beneficial use.

I am thus unclear why the officer's report based upon "conservation's" comments did not contain statements to this effect. Instead the following statement was made:

Basement front light well distances the shop front from the street. None of this row of shops have front railings or areas.

At best the second part of this statement is an over simplification. The first part could be taken to suggest that it would be beneficial to the conservation area to have the light wells removed from the 17 shops that possess them in Amwell St. Therefore this statement goes against what policy 29 is trying to achieve.

In conservation terms it is an absurdity to suggest the light wells should be removed and lessen the usefulness of an original planned Georgian Design of occupied basements.



Plate30 Shops with lightwells in Amwell St - Note the use of metal grills in the middle shop

It is also noted that only the florist on the corner makes use of its shop window to display goods.

Table of Shops and Light well Arrangements

Address	Side	Use	Light well	Date
44 Amwell St	East	Florist		Pre 1871
46 Amwell St	East	Curtains & Interiors		Pre 1871
48 Amwell St	East	Vacant		Pre 1871
50 Amwell St	East	Newsagents		Pre 1871
52 Amwell St	East	Vets		Pre 1871
66 Amwell St	East	Off Licence		Pre 1871
25 Lloyd Baker St	West	Deli		1871-1894

33 Amwell St	West	Clothes		1871-1894
35 Amwell St	West	Chemist		Pre 1871
53 Amwell St	West	Bookshop		Pre 1871
65 Amwell St	West	Lighting Shop		Pre 1871
70 Amwell St	East	Hairdresser	Light well grill	
37 Amwell St	West		Light Well & Railing	
72 Amwell St	East	Vacant	Light well & Railings	
31 Amwell St	West	Clocks	Light well & Railings	
41 Amwell St	West	Dry Cleaners	Light well & Railings	
61 Amwell St	West	Vacant	Light well & railings	
13 Amwell St	West		Light well & Railings	
57 Amwell St	West	Vacant Former Post Office	Light well & railings	
39 Amwell St	West	Vacant	Light well and Railings	
24 Lloyd Baker St (corner with Awell St)	West		Light well covered with metal cover	
59 Amwell St	West	Antiques	Light well Metal cover	
63 Amwell St	West	Florist	Light well metal grill	
67 Amwell St	West	Betting Office	Light well & Railings Part	
42 Amwell St	East	Dairy Produce	Light well & Railings	

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Key

■ Light wells & Railings Present	■ Light wells Present No Railings	■ No Light Well Present
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Figure 10: The Distribution of Current Light well Arrangements of Shops Only in Anwell Street. Scale 1:500

©

Plate 31 Shop Fronts Light Wells & Railings Amwell St East Side

				
72 Amwell St Vacant Light well & Railings	70 Amwell St Hairdresser Lightwell	68 Amwell St Public House	66 Amwell St Off Licence	52 Amwell St Vets
52				
				
50 Amwell St Newsagents	48 Amwell St Vacant	46 Amwell St Curtains & Interiors	44 Amwell St Florist	42 Amwell St Dairy Produce

Plate 32 13 Amwell St - South Of Application Area


Lightwell & Railings Present

Plate 33 Shop Fronts Light Wells & Railings Amwell St West Side

				
31 Amwell St Clocks Light well & Railings	24 Lloyd Baker St (corner with Amwell St) Light well covered with metal cover	25 Lloyd Baker St Deli	33 Amwell St Clothes	35 Amwell St Chemist
				
37 Amwell St Light Well & Railing	39 Amwell St Vacant Light well and Railings	41 Amwell St Dry Cleaners Light well & Railings	53 Book Shop	57 Amwell St Vacant Former Post Office Lightwell & railings
				
59 Amwell St Antiques Light well Metal cover	61 Amwell St Vacant Light well & railings	63 Amwell St Florist	65 Amwell St Lighting Shop	67 Amwell St Betting Office Part Lightwell & Railings

11.3 3. Internal alterations to basement are fundamentally unacceptable -loss of plan form and loss of fabric, including chimney stack.

It is noted that it is not intended and, never was intended, to remove the chimney stack.

Notwithstanding the fact that the proposals are amended I am unclear as to why there is such a fundamental objection to the re-ordering of the basement which in its current form is virtually unusable particularly for retail use. The arrangement of the basement is clearly for domestic occupation which is the proposed function.

The plan form of the basement is not the original one given the following factors:

1. The covering of the light well to the front and use of the light well as an internal space.
2. Covering of the rear light well and the erection of partitions so that the light well area can be used as a toilet.
3. Insertion of modern block work to reinforce the floor.
4. Insertion of a partition wall to form a corridor.
5. Insertion of a door to the external light well
6. Insertion of structural strengthening

The proposed re-ordering of the basement utilises much of the original plan form with the re-instatement of the front lightwell.

In order for the basement to be successfully converted the re-introduction of natural day light is important.

The location of a bathroom is dictated by building regulations and the fact that it is the least important room to have natural day light in. The location of the bathroom is therefore ideally located at the centre of the basement.

11.4 4. Full width rear extension with roof terrace is considered excessive.

At present there is a full width extension at the rear of the building.

It is noted that a key characteristic of the rear of the buildings is their irregularity in contrast to the order of the frontages.

The replacement of the lean to structure which has a plastic sheet roof will therefore be an enhancement.

It is clear that there are irregular arrangements of abutting structures to the rear of the buildings and this irregularity is characteristic of the conservation area. There are other properties with full width extensions including the adjoining two properties to the south.

It is noted that policy 28 of the UDP and para 2.1.8 of the design guide - height of extensions - suggests that full width extensions should be single storey. The context of this policy makes the intent clear - extensions should be to the level of the ground floor plus roof. This is also inferred in the design guide.

11.5 5. Alteration of first floor sash to door unacceptable - loss of historic fabric and design.

While this alteration is no longer proposed the following comments are made.

1. The window is not an original feature. The presence of horns demonstrates that it is not Georgian in form. Horned sash windows were first introduced in about 1875 and was the usual form until sash windows ceased to be used. Many of the windows in the area are horned and it is unclear if these relate to post war bomb damage replacement or are late Victorian replacements.
2. Doors on upper storeys are common to give access to balconies, roof gardens and other external amenity space.
3. It is on the rear not front elevation.

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Plate34 The First Floor Kitchen Window clearly a none Georgian Form.



Plate35 Doors to Balcony River Street.

12. Conclusions

It is suggested that the key part of this application, the revealing of a light well, is a major enhancement of the special character of both the building and the conservation and is supported by UDP policy 31.

At a stroke the basement can be brought into beneficial use and the building fully repaired and thus the building will no longer “be at risk”.

From a conservation point of view this proposal has much to recommend it.

Dr Peter Wardle
9/4/2008