# Armenian House

25 Cheniston Gardens, London, W8 6TG

Planning and Design and Access Statement

July 2024

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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Project Background

In the 1960s, an Armenian Community in London purchased 25 Cheniston Gardens to create a Community centre that would provide meeting spaces for their religious, social, cultural and educational work. The purchase of this property was partly driven by the proximity to St Sarkis Church (Grade II Listed) on Iverna Gardens, which was built in 1922. At that time, the church had limited public space, and the Community Centre has been able to provided the necessary facilities for thriving community activities for years.

When Armenia gained independence in 1991, the Armenian Embassy was provided space in the building a year later. They occupied part of the ground floor for 30 years and have recently moved out to other premises as they have outgrown their space.

It has been 50 years since the last refurbishment of the building. The relocation of the Armenian Embassy provides an opportunity to stabilise and secure the building for the next 50 years or more. Although the building has remained a key hub for the community and the event space has been a very successful part of the programme, most of the building's interior remains dysfunctional as a community centre.

Armenian House (www.armenianhouse.co.uk) is a registered charity and community centre.

The primary areas that don't work for the building are as follows:

- Access to the building is restrictive and very awkward, particularly for the elderly and less able
- The vertical circulation does not allow all members of our community to access the building
- The building includes an apartment on the top floor. Visitors to the community centre share the same circulation to the flat bathroom.
- The bathrooms and kitchen need to be updated to be appropriate for a community centre.
- The building has an outdated heating system, the windows need refurbishment, and the building fabric requires remedial work. The poor fabric creates energy consumption that is inappropriate for our time.

The refurbishment aims to bring the building up to modern standards and make it more open and accessible to the community and a place where Armenian culture can be showcased. The main areas are:

- We will improve the building entrance to allow visitors unimpeded access to the building.
- A new lift, staircase, and rooftop extension allow visitors to achieve access to all building floors
- Self-enclosed apartment
- Refurbishment of the interior to modernise
- A refurbished building fabric and windows and a new heating, cooling and ventilation system to improve the energy efficiency of the building.

# 2.0 Planning Statement

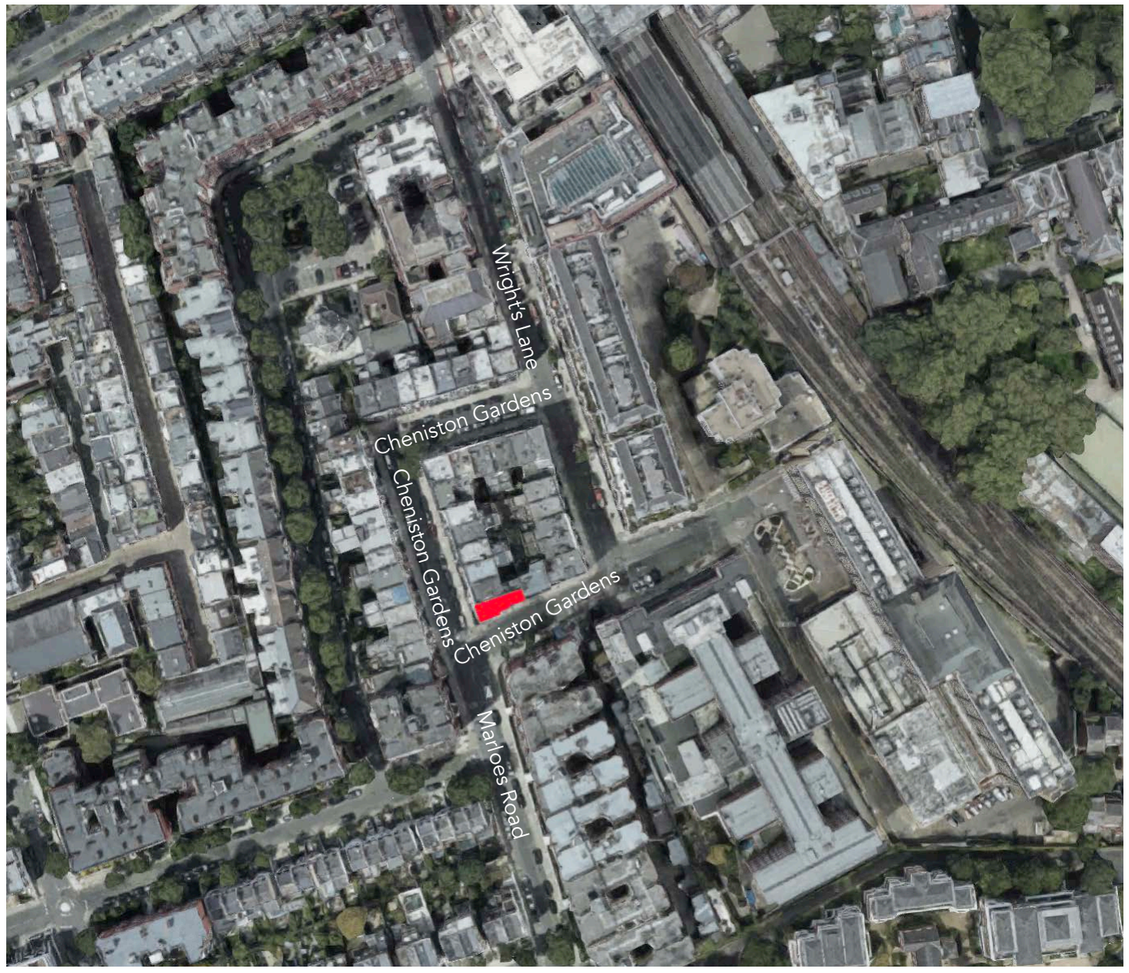
## 2.1 Site and surroundings

The property is a four-storey end-of-terrace building with a footprint of 85m2. It is located on the southern end of Cheniston Gardens with it's main entrances to the secondary facade. Overall the gross internal floor area is approximately 356m2 with approximately 70m2 GIA per floor. The site has a PTAL rating of 5. It lies outside Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3 and outside the Council's identified Critical Drainage Areas.

The property is not listed but it lies within the recently extended Edwardes Square, Scarsdale and Abingdon Conservation Area. It's primary use is as a Community Centre and it accommodates an Embassy at Upper Ground Floor and a flat on the third floor.

The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies the building as a 'Positive Building and states that *"These buildings make a positive contribution to the historic and architectural character and appearance of the conservation area. They are a key reason for the designation and significant of the conservation area".*

The building sits within a speculatively built late Victorian terraced development completed between 1879-1882. The terraces have five floors to the street front, including a basement and four floors in the rear closet wings on split levels.



# 2.0 Planning Statement

## 2.2 Streetscape and architectural detail

The finishes to the principal facades of Cheniston Gardens are stock brick in an Italianate style in brick and stucco. They feature raised entrance porches below a pared-back portico with a balcony above and double-storey bay windows. While the mid terrace buildings have their closet wings concealed from the street, the end of terrace buildings feature their closet wings on the elevations. The end of terrace facades are less formal and feature less ornamentation.

**Location plan key**
1. 25 Cheniston Gardens in red
2. Dark Grey indicates development of Cheniston Gardens
2. Zigzag red line indicates principal facades of Cheniston Gardens.

# 2.0 Planning Statement

## 2.3 Key photographs

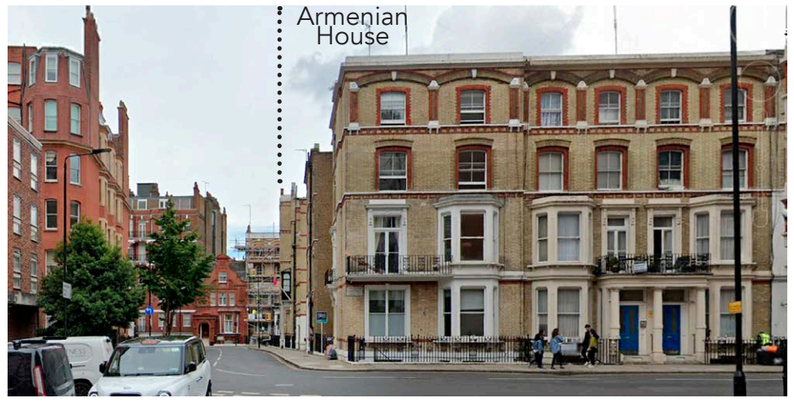
View 2

View 3

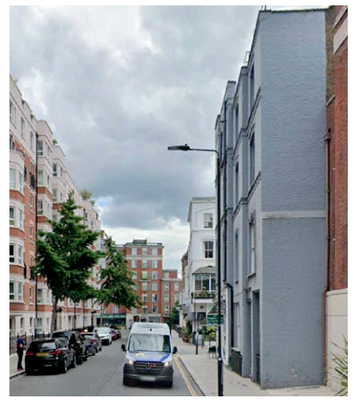
View 4

View 5

View 6




View 7



View 8

View 9

View 10

# 2.0 Planning Statement

## 2.4 Building use

The properties on Cheniston Gardens are primarily residential. Two ground-floor properties on Cheniston Gardens and Wrights Lane corner have commercial use.

25 Cheniston Gardens  was originally designed as residential accommodation. According to census information, it was in residential use between 1884 and 1940. The 1910 Valuation Office Survey describes the layout as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Third floor: | 3 rooms and box room |
| Second floor: | 2 rooms, ante room and bathroom fitted with bath, W.C and sink |
| First Floor: | Double drawing room, ante room and conservatory |
| Ground Floor: | 2 rooms, ante room, vestibule with tiled floor and down 2 steps to morning room and W.C with fitted lavatory basin. |
| Basement: | Kitchen, scullery, 2 pantries et., WC., area entrance. |

The house was empty for some time and was requisitioned in 1941 by the London County Council and used by the National Fire Service. In 1944 it was taken over by Kensington Borough Council to house destitute women bombed out of their homes. Much of Cheniston Gardens had now transformed into small flats to accommodate severe housing crisis after the war.

The Armenian Community purchased the building in 1960 and converted it into a Community Centre. When Armenia gained independence in 1991, the Armenian Embassy was provided space in the building a year later. They have occupied part of the ground floor for 30 years and have recently moved out as they have outgrown the space. The retained Community Centre accommodates an event space, library and meeting rooms. These spaces are used as a community and cultural centre and also hired out to the community and general public.

## 2.5 Relevant planning history

1961 - Planning permission granted to convert the building to a Community Centre with the top floor to remain as residential. (no reference number)

1962 - Alteration to the ground floor to provide a new entrance as the main entrance leads directly to the principal room. The entry is retained as an emergency exit. (no. reference number)

1992 - Permission granted to use part of the premises (59m2) for the Armenian Embassy with a flagpole and coat of arms (TP/92/0656)

1992 - Continuation granted to use the building as a Community Centre to support cultural and education work as the original application was considered temporary. (TP/92/0873)

2005 - Installation of an air conditioning unit at basement level (PP/05/0376)

## 2.6 Design process with RBKC Pre Application Advice

In June 2023 we engaged with RBKC in Pre Application Advise Level 2. RBKC were mostly supportive of the proposal but expressed concerns with proposed changes. A follow up Level 2FU advice was submitted in September 2023 to address these concerns and the RBKC Level 2FU advice supported the changes made.

The Planning Application has a few minor amendments internally but follows the proposal submitted for RBKC supported Level 2FU advice.

The option for the rental office at Lower Ground Floor submitted in Level 2FU has not been included as it was not supported by RBKC.

The proposal includes a small terrace area. RBKC advised that it may be supported but required further detail. This detail has now been included in the proposal.

The following key points describe the proposal.

1. The project is to create a contemporary Community Centre that will be fit for purpose for modern standards.

2. The embassy is relocating and a change of use is required to create a cafe for the community centre within the spaces that the embassy occupied.

3. In order to create access to all levels, a lift is required to all floors. This requires an extension above the closet wing to allow the lift to travel to the third floor. It will be set back from the elevation.

4. Relocation of the existing flat from Third Floor to Lower Ground Floor. This will allow it to have its own entrance rather than mixed circulation within the Community Centre.

5. New windows to flank facade to allow additional daylight to internal spaces

6. Relocation of second entrance to enable the vertical circulation route.

# 2.0 Planning Statement

## 2.7 Planning policy context

The main planning policy applying to the site consist of the following documents:

Conservation Area CL11 (London Plan 2019)

General townscape CL1,2,3 and 9 (London Plan 2019)

Living conditions CL5 and CE6 (London Plan 2019)

Housing CH1 and CH3 (London Plan 2019)

Retail/Business CF1 and CF5 (London Plan 2019)

Transport/Waste CT1 and CE3 (London Plan 2019)

Transport and Streets (Supplementary Planning Document)

Noise (Supplementary Planning Document)

Edwardes Square, Scarsdale & Abingdon Conservation Area Appraisal

The emerging Local Plan will also have material consideration but has limited weight at this stage.

## 2.8 Planning assessment

The key planning issues to assess are as follows:

1. Principle of Change of Use.
2. What impact will the volumetric additions have on the Conservation Area
3. How do the new windows to the flank facade impact the Conservation Area
4. What impact does the plant on the roof create
5. Is there any impact on the amenity of the neighbouring properties
6. Relocation of the flat to the Lower Ground Floor.
7. Small terrace above closet wing

# 2.0 Planning Statement

## 2.8.1 Change of use

**Design Proposal**

The Embassy of Armenia has occupied part of the Upper Ground Floor since 1992. They have recently moved to new premises. We have proposed to change the use from Sui Generis (Embassy) to Class E (Cafe). It is envisaged that the cafe would provide Armenian food and be an extension to the offer that the Community Centre provides wherein it provides a sense of Armenian culture to Armenians and visitors alike.

**Pre App Response**

The Local Plan seeks to ensure that retail is retained in the town centre. Armenian House lies just outside this zone but since the cafe (49.5m2) and associated kitchen (12m2) in the Lower Ground Floors amount to 61.5m2. It is in essence a small scale retain unit and as per paragraph 1.9.3.8 of the Local Plan, units of this scale will not have a detrimental impact on the health of adjoining town centre. Therefore, the cafe space would meet policy CF1 of the London Plan 2019

**Revised Design Proposal ( Supported in Level 2FU Pre App advice)**

The proposal retains the cafe but allows half of it to be used for exhibition space associated with the  Community Centre.

**Retained Spaces (No change of use and supported in Level 2FU Pre App advice)**

The Community Centre currently accommodates an Event Space, Meeting Rooms, Library and Office. These spaces will be retained, but moved within the building to (storage/ former lounge) to make best use of the new layout.

## 2.8.2 New extension to third floor above closet wing

**Design Proposal**

A new glazed vertical extension above closet wing in order to create accessible building on all floors.

**Pre App Response**

Degree of concern over the provision of an additional level over the entire footprint as it will detract from the identity of the neighbouring building and not be read as subservient to the main building. Concerns that the glazing will be inappropriate and when lit up and draw attention to the high level areas of the building. A suggested option might be to set the extension back and clad it in a more contextual material such as slate or lead

**Revised Proposal ( Supported in Level 2FU Pre App advice)**

The proposal has the extension back to the minimum to achieve the vertical connection to the third floor. The glazing has been omitted and now clad with slate and lead clad roof will site quietly within the roof scape  and barely be visible from street level. The adjoining property of 27 Cheniston Gardens retains it's identity in height and forward projection as the connection between 25 and 27 is no longer blurred.

The proposal now falls in line with Policy CL9 (Extensions and Modifications where it remains subordinate to the original building, to allow the form of the original building to be clearly understood, and to reinforce the character and integrity of the original building, or group of buildings. The proposal also complies with Policy CL11 (Views) as it respects the character and quality of the area.

# 2.0 Planning Statement

## 2.8.3 Additional windows to elevation

**Design Proposal**

The pre application design proposal created windows at Upper Ground Floor to allow for more direct contact between the cafe and street. It also introduced additional windows to the upper levels.

**Pre Application Response**

Concerns that the extent of the  window on the secondary elevation will detract from the wider composition where the primary elevations that feature more openings. It was accepted that there was scope to open up blank windows and introduce a new second floor level window directly above the main entrance door. If additional windows were to be added to the UGF, that these should be directly below the windows above and be no wider with the same detailing.

**Revised Design Proposal ( Supported in Level 2FU Pre App advice)**

The revised proposal follows the advice above and introduced new windows to match the windows above in width and detail. The proposal also opens the blank window and introduces a new window above the main entrance door. All changes have followed the pre application response and comply with Policy CL6 (Small-scale Alterations and Additions). The windows will be built to match the existing windows of high quality materials and do not detract from the principal facade.

## 2.8.4 Impact of plant on roof

**Design Proposal**

In order to reduce the building energy consumption, and MVHR unit will be placed on the roof to supply and extract air from the building alongside new condensing units. All plant is concealed from street view by high parapets and will be designed by a mechanical engineer to comply with standards and not cause any material harm in appearance, noise, vibration or odour.

**Pre Application Response**

There was no comment to this within the Pre Application Process

**Revised Proposal ( Supported in Level 2FU Pre App advice)**

The MVHR has been reduced in size as the design proposal evolved and will be designed to comply with standards and not cause any material harm in appearance, noise, vibration odour. It will comply with SPD Noise of 2009 and Policy CE6

## 2.8.5 Neighbour amenity

A BRE Daylight Sunlight Report completed by Right of Light Consulting concludes that the proposal does not materially impact on the existing daylight and sunlight levels achieved within neighbouring properties. There are no new windows overlooking neighbouring properties. There is minor increase to the sense of enclosure to a kitchenette at high level by the increase in the existing parapet wall.

## 2.8.6 Relocation of flat to Lower Ground Floor

**Design Proposal**

The current flat at 3rd floor level is not functional. The bathroom is on the community stairwell and there is a crossover with community spaces to reach the bathroom. The proposal seeks to relocate flat to the Lower Ground Floor where it will be served by a private street access.

**Pre Application Response**

The relocation of the flat to the lower ground floor is supported, subject to demonstrating that it would meet the minimum required floorspace standards. The loss of flat would also be acceptable if it was being replaced by additional social and community floorspace according to Local Policy CH1(e) Criterion (v).

**Revised Proposal ( Supported in Level 2FU Pre App advice)**

The flat to the Lower Ground Floor now meets the Nationally Described Space Standards.  The single storey studio, containing a shower room, is 37m2.

## 2.8.7 Small terrace above closet wing

**Design Proposal**

During the Level 2 FU pre application process, a small terrace was proposed above the closet wing. The existing parapet is 1.4m above the terrace floor level and forms a balustrade to the terrace. There is no overlooking onto any property except for across the street. Windows from 25 Cheniston Gardens already have this view.

**Pre Application Response ( Level 2FU Pre App advice required further detail)**

The Level 2FU advice required further detail to option. We have now provided this within the drawing pack and as per the information above.

# 2.0 Planning Statement

## 2.9 Community engagement

Armenian House and Pierre Maré Architects arranged two events on Saturday 23rd March (2pm-5pm) and Tuesday 26th March (5.30pm-8.30pm) to engage with the community on the forth-coming plans. Approximately 50 leaflets were dropped to all properties on Cheniston Gardens. On Wright's Lane we dropped leaflets to the buildings that back onto Cheniston Gardens. We also reached out to the Cheniston Residents Association via their website and posted a leaflet on their site.

We had a selection of engaged and interested visitors from neighbouring properties attend, including one that provided us with their own interesting history of Cheniston Gardens. There were some questions around some of the specifics of the scheme, but in general the sense was one of enthusiasm and positivity that an important historical and community asset is being rein-vigorated.

A separate event was held for the wider Armenian Community where the project vision was pre-sented in further detail.

In 20th June we met with Ward Councillors at 25 Cheniston Gardens to review the proposal. They were excited and supportive of the proposal.

## 2.10 Waste

There is limited storage area for waste bins. The commercial waste sack system will be im-plemented to collect blue and yellow waste bags on a daily basis on either the morning 7am or 2pm. The cafe area is small so this will be limited. The waste from the events and meeting spaces will be integrated into the daily collection system to minimise highway impact. A refuse store is located on the Lower Ground Floor to manage any waste that is collected between daily collections.

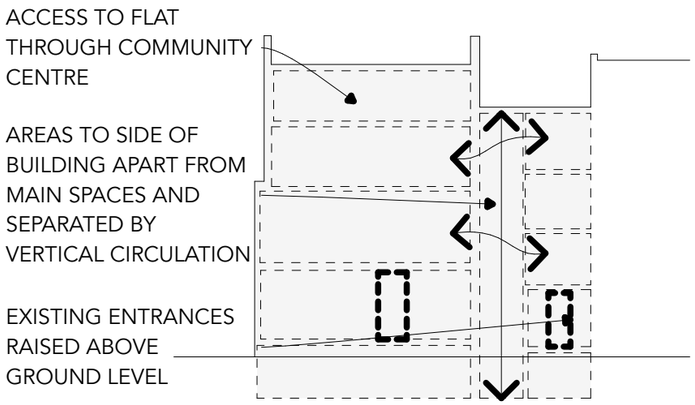
Refuse and recycling from the residential unit will be collected separately under the household waste system and will be left on the kerbside on the day of collection.

# 3.0 Design and Access Statement

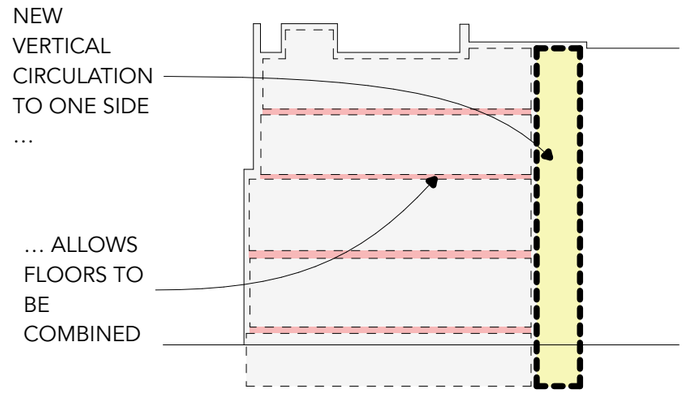
## 3.1 Key design and planning issues

The key design an planning issues are demonstrated in the diagrams below. RBKC level 2 and Level 2FU advice support these design and planning changes.

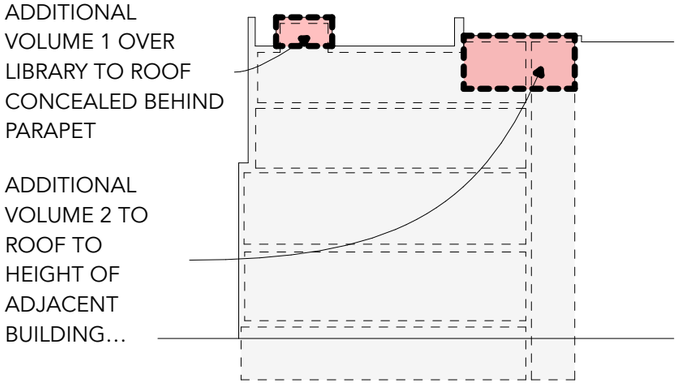
EXISTING ELEVATION



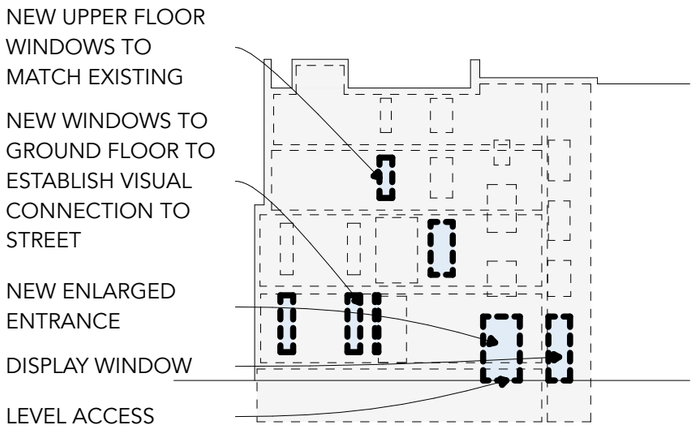

EXISTING CONDITIONS



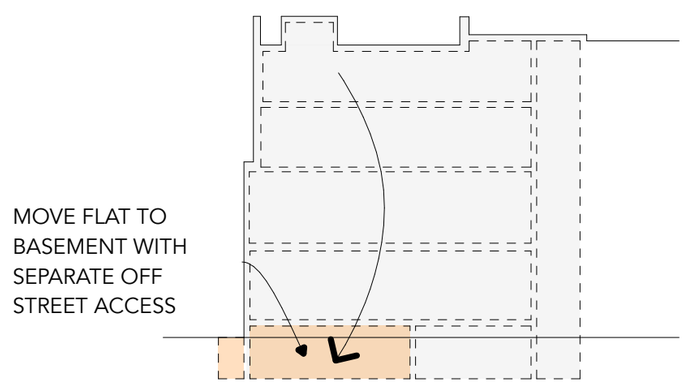

DESIGN PROPOSAL




PLANNING ISSUE 1 - ADDITIONAL VOLUME




PLANNING ISSUE 2 - NEW OPENINGS




PLANNING ISSUE 3 - RELOCATION OF FLAT

# 3.0 Design & Access Statement

## 3.2 Existing and proposed building sections

The existing and proposed sections below indicate the redistribution of spaces throughout the building.

Existing building section

Proposed building section

# 3.0 Design & Access Statement

## 3.3 Existing and proposed areas

The existing building GIA is 368m2. Once the floors are aligned and vertical  circulation is in place, this figure reduces to 359m2. The reduction in floor is of 9m2 is due to the set-backs created on third floor.

The reduction in GIA does not reflect the increased usability of the floor areas by the alignment of the floors.

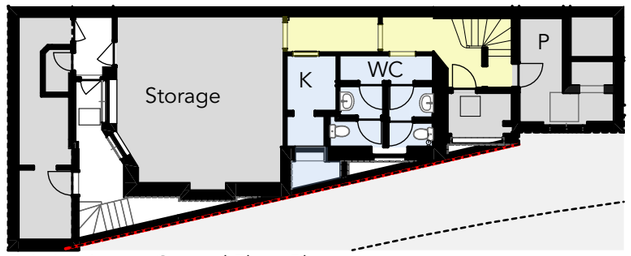
## 3.4 Access

Since there is no change of use to the Community Centre as it stands, there are no access requirements by the Building Regulations. We are however seeking to improve the access conditions to the building by the following means.

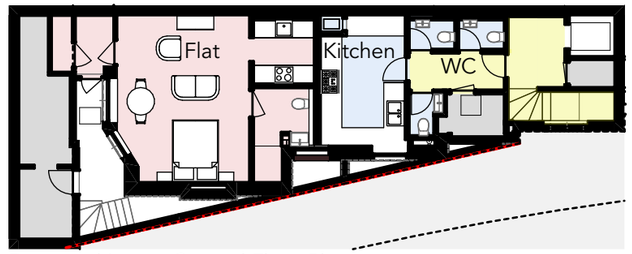
Currently, access is only achievable by few steps at the entrance door to reach the internal level at 500mm above pavement level. The proposal creates a level platform of 2.1m wide and 1.5m deep at pavement level for people to enter the building at that level before rising up 800mm to the Upper Ground Level. The level change is achieved with a broad staircase or a recessed platform lift to carry wheelchairs or less able bodied. Building users who are not able to ascend the cafe entrance directly, can ascend through the main entrance and access the building through this entrance. From Upper Ground Floor, a new staircase or lift will provide access to all floors.

Building Entrance

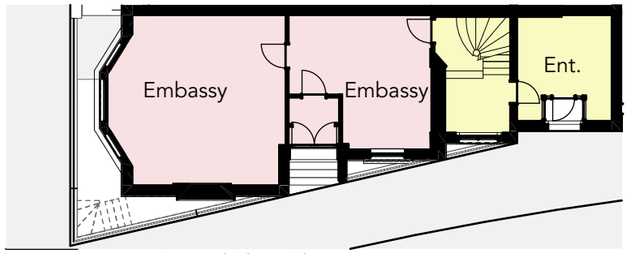
The existing building is entered through the original portico entrance or though a side entrance that was created when the Embassy occupied part of the Upper Ground Floor. We propose to retain two entrances to facilitate access but propose to move the access within the closet wing to the adjacent bay.



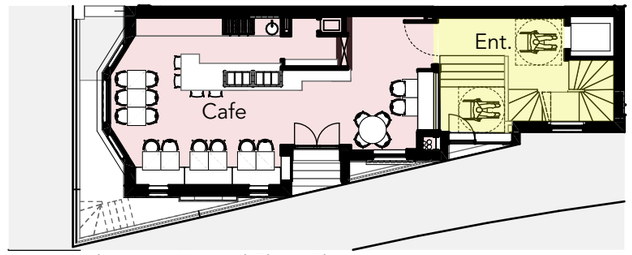
Existing Lower Ground Floor Plan



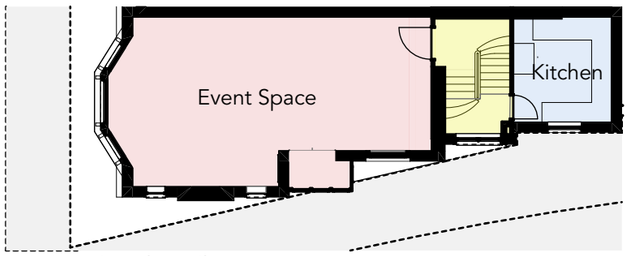
Proposed Lower Ground Floor Plan



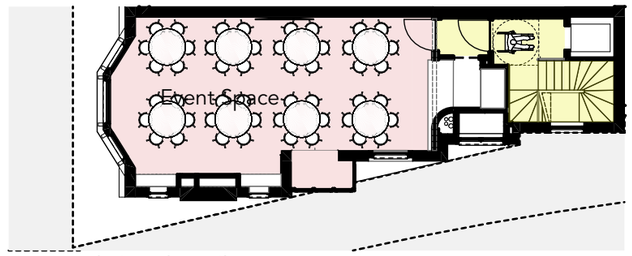
Existing Upper Ground Floor Plan



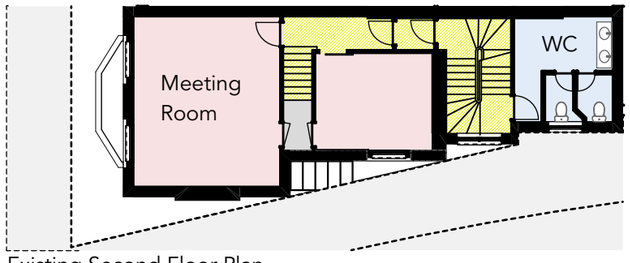
Proposed Upper Ground Floor Plan



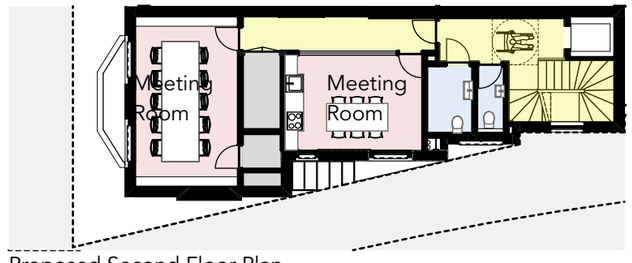
Existing First Floor Plan



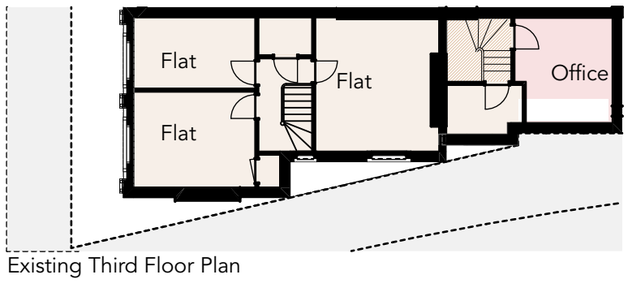
Proposed First Floor Plan



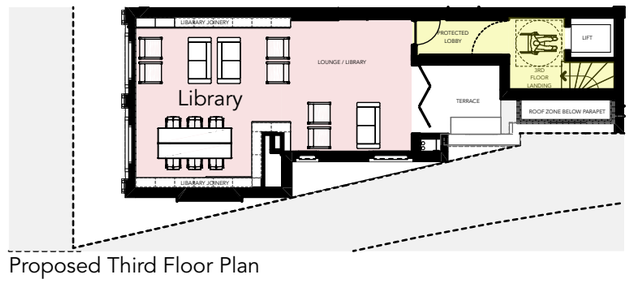
Existing Second Floor Plan



Proposed Second Floor Plan



Existing Third Floor Plan



Proposed Third Floor Plan

# 3.0 Design & Access Statement

## 3.5 Existing materials and appearance

1. London  stock brick
2. Red brick
3. Render
4. Painted brick
5. Timber window and door frames

# 3.0 Design & Access Statement

## 3.6 Proposed materials and appearance

1. London  stock brick
2. Red brick
3. Render
4. Painted brick
5. Timber window and door frames
6.Slate roof with lead flashing

## 3.7 Proposed changes to elevations

A. New set back extension over closet wing
B. New entrance door
C. New display window
D. Painted brick height increased to allow entrance
E. Refurbished winter garden
F. New windows
G. Refurbished doors and windows

# 3.0 Design & Access Statement

## 3.8 Signage proposal

**1. Projecting signage**
As the building is approached primarily along it's facade, we have proposed 2 small projected signs to indicate the extremities of the building. These will bear only the name 'Armenian House'. The signs hang below first floor level, and are coordinated with the overall colour and design. They are sized at 600x400mm and 3.4m above pavement level with an overall projection of 800mm from the wall.

**2. Door Signage**
Each entrance door will have it's own signage within the glazing above the door.

**3. Primary Signage**
Letters projecting from the facade above the main entrance door will form the primary building signage. These will be illuminated individual letters with concealed wiring and associated parts.

# 3.0 Design & Access Statement

## 3.9 Existing and proposed views

**1. Extension over Closet Wing**
The extension is set back and finished in slate and lead flashing. It is only visible from a few angles and blends in with other rooftop.

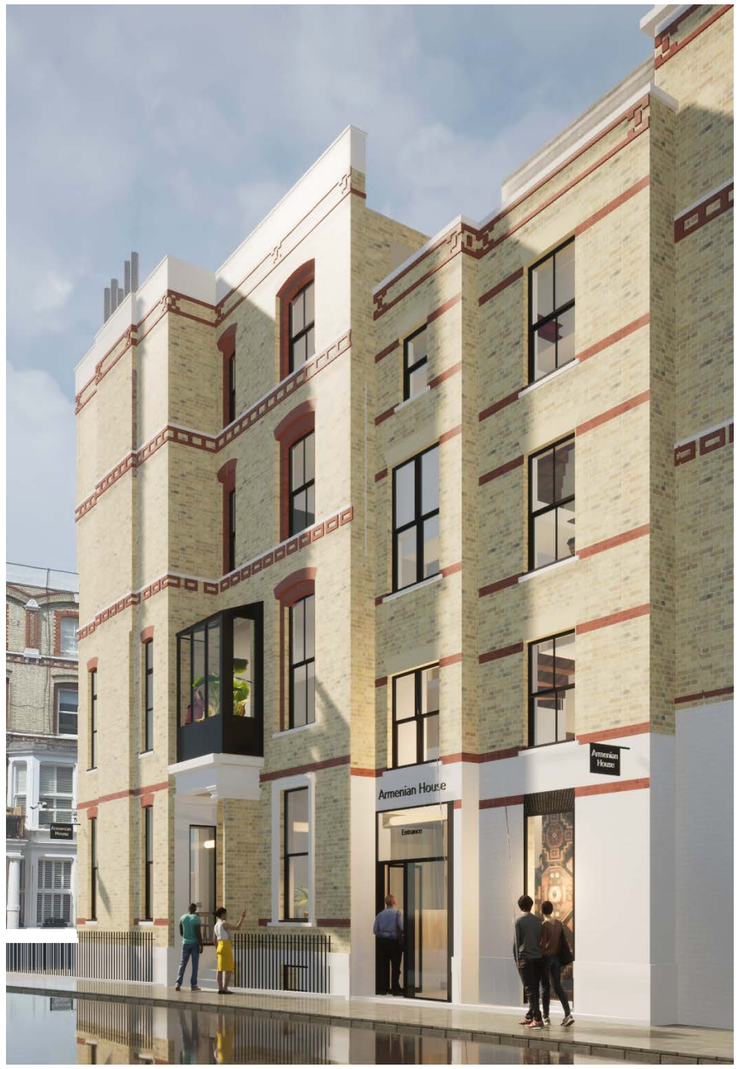
**2. New Windows**
New windows on the flank facade do not compete with the open principal facade.

**3. Rooftop plant**
All new rooftop plant is concealed behind the existing parapets

**4. New Entrance**
The new entrance is aligned with the windows above and framed in painted brick to provide sufficient visibility

**5.Cafe Entrance**
The cafe door is glazed and has a sidelight to allow visual connection to the street. The sidelight is similar (but smaller in scale) as one side only to the one that exists on the entrance to 25 Cheniston Gardens, and is only visible from the street acute angle (see elevations)

**6. Downpipes**
All external downpipes will be removed and placed internally



# 3.0 Design & Access Statement

## 3.10 Proposed views

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