Case Study: Belsize Park Mews

Belsize Park Mews, London NW3

Demolition of existing mews and new build mews house within three party walls. The new scheme incorporated previous garage space into the main house extending the habitable space and creating a new facade.

Key Data:

Begun (design work): September 2017
Begun (construction): June 2018
Completed: January 2019
Floor Area: 78m² / 839 sq.ft
Construction Budget: £220k +VAT

Introduction

MATA Architects were appointed in September 2017 to develop designs for a vacant and disused 1970's mews house. The main component of the brief was to incorporate the existing garage into habitable space, adding circa 12m², and, in so doing, find opportunities to re-organise the plan/ layout.

RIBA Chartered Practice

MATA ARCHITECTS

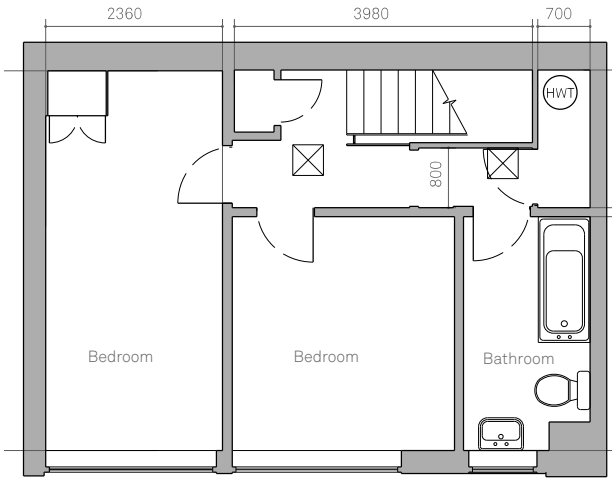
Key Challenges & Opportunities

- Converting the garage into habitable space and it's integration into the main body of the house.
- As a result of the above garage integration, the facade would need to be modified. This was an opportunity to revisit the facade design in it's entirety to reflect internal reconfiguration.
- The mews was in a state of disrepair. This, coupled with an extensive reconfiguration of the layout (born out of the garage integration) meant that we were effectivey looking at a new build mews. However, due to the sensitivity of demolition in a conservation area, from a planning perspective, the scheme was framed as '*Alterations to the front elevation of the building to include new brickwork to the front facade, replacement windows and front entrance door, conversion of garage to habitable room with new garage door, and insertion of two new roof lights'. In effect this was a new facade and everything behind it (including the roof) was new too. The only constant were the 3 party walls that define the site boundaries.*

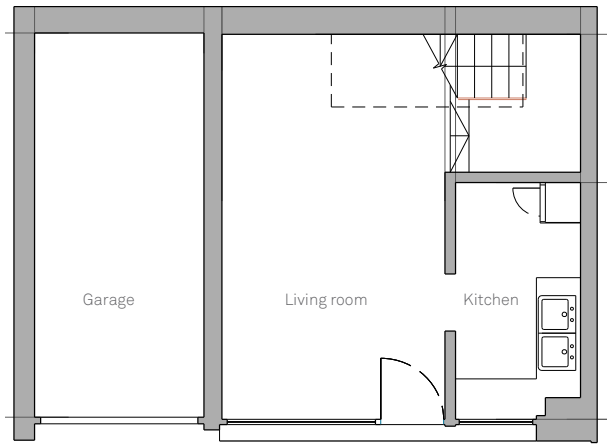
Concept Design

In addition to integrating the garage into the ground floor of the house, our main strategic move was relocating the stair from the back wall to the centre of the plan. This had a number of positive effects:

- It reduced the amount of unnecessary circulation space at first floor, thereby facilitating larger bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms.
- Insertion of a new linear rooflight above the stair and mirroring its footprint created a double height lightwell bringing natural light down to the ground floor. As the building is surrounded on 3 sides making it single aspect (East facing) this was key to enhancing levels of natural light.

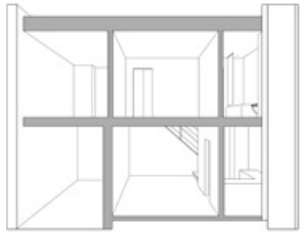


Existing First Floor Plan (NTS)

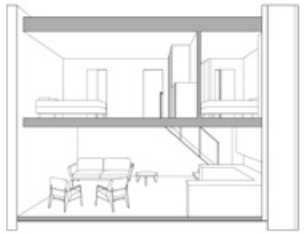


Existing Ground Floor Plan (NTS)

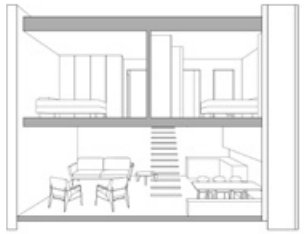
3D layout studies



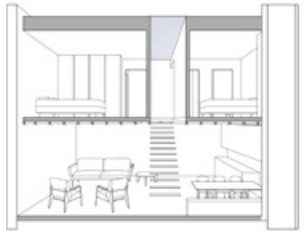
0. Existing



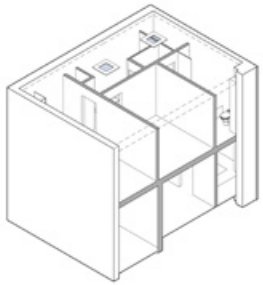
01. Garage incorporated

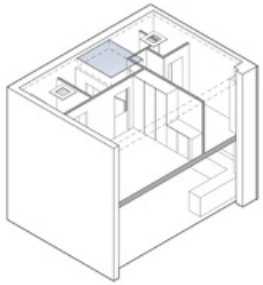


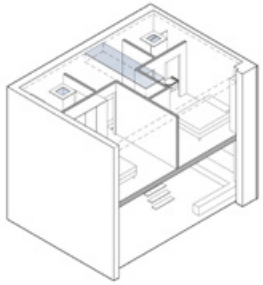
02. Stair relocated centrally

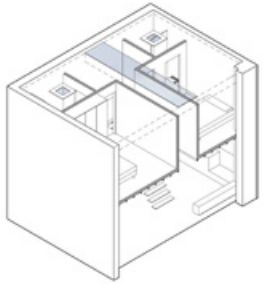


03. Large rooflight inserted above stair

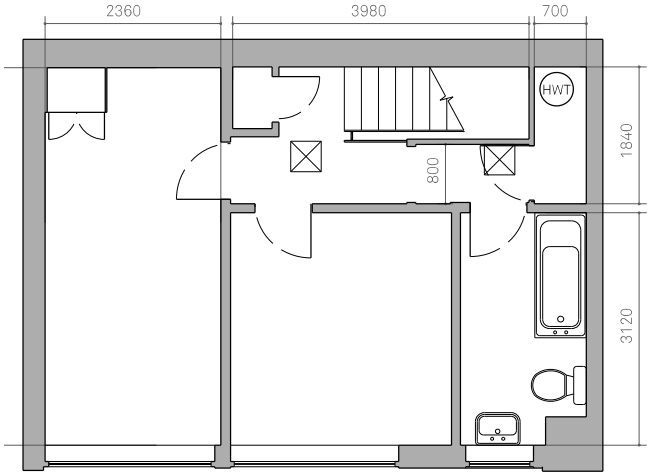








Concept Design Cont.



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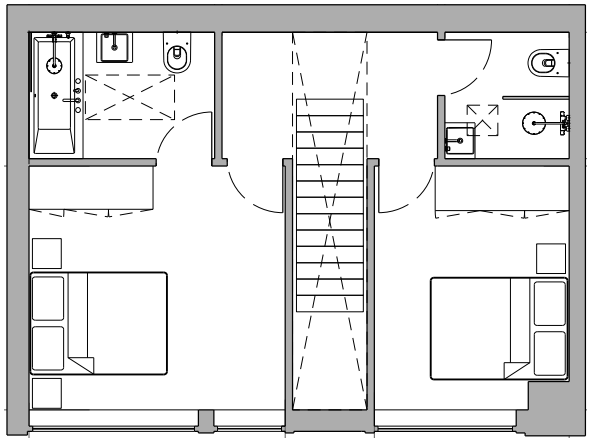
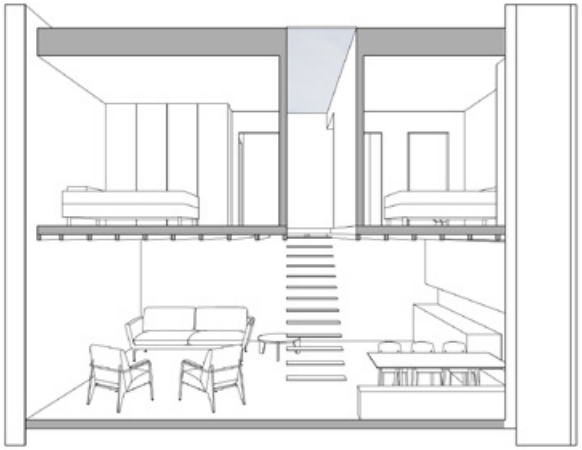
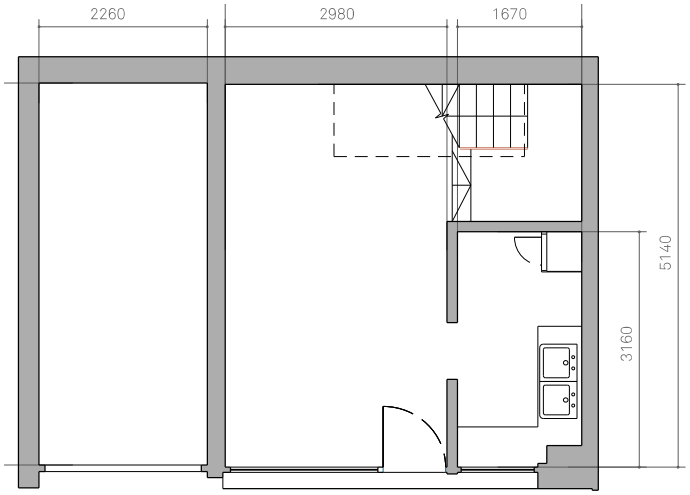


Proposed First Floor Plan (NTS)



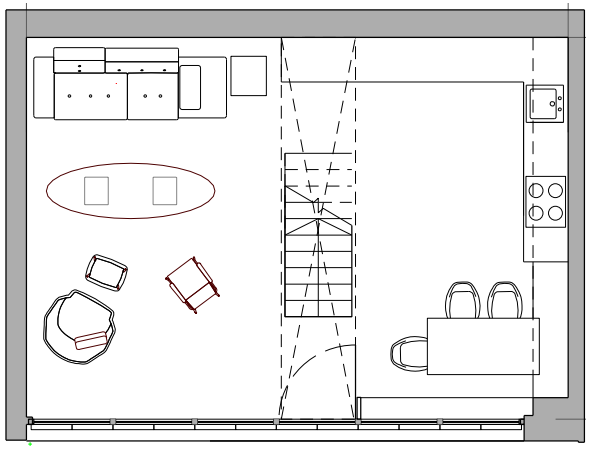
Proposed section view- Stair relocated centrally with rooflight above mirroring it's footrint

EXISTING



Existing Ground Floor Plan (NTS)

PROPOSED



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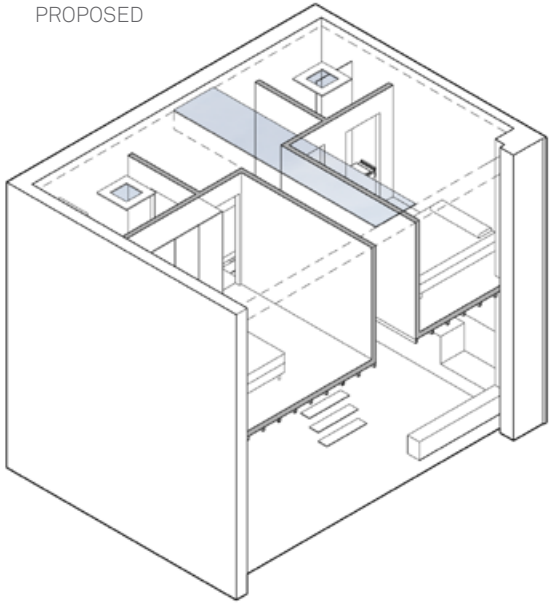


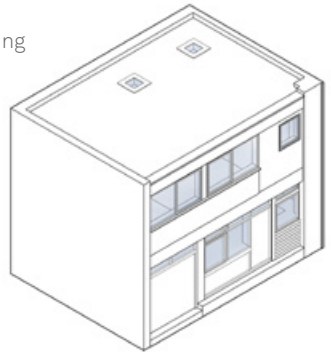
Proposed axonometric view- Stair in new central location

Facade Design

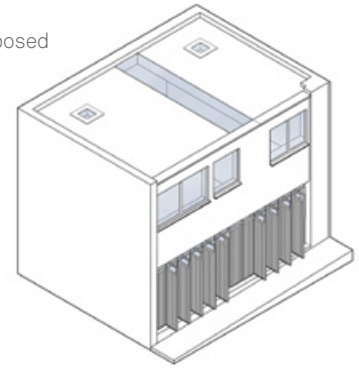
Belsize Park Mews is varied in character. Whilst it is an integral part of the Belsize Village conservation area, the street itself suffered extensive bomb damage in WWII and was redeveloped in the 1970's, resulting in a non uniform street that for the most part is not in keeping with or contributing positively to the conservation area.

We carried out a rigorous analysis of neighbouring mews house facades in order to propose a contemporary interpretation of the mews facade. We looked to reinforce the horizontal ground floor band often expressed in traditional mews facades by large timber barn style doors.

Existing



Proposed



Existing

Facade Studies

Project site

Belsize Park Mews - South Side (existing)

Belsize Park Mews - North Side (existing)

Facade Design Cont.

We experimented with the colour of the bricks for the facade given the variety of coloured facades along the Mews. We felt a more neutral black/grey brick colour better complimented the warm natural shades of the Iroko and Corten at ground floor.

Scheme submitted for planning

Corten shutters fully closed

Corten shutters partly open

Corten shutters fully open

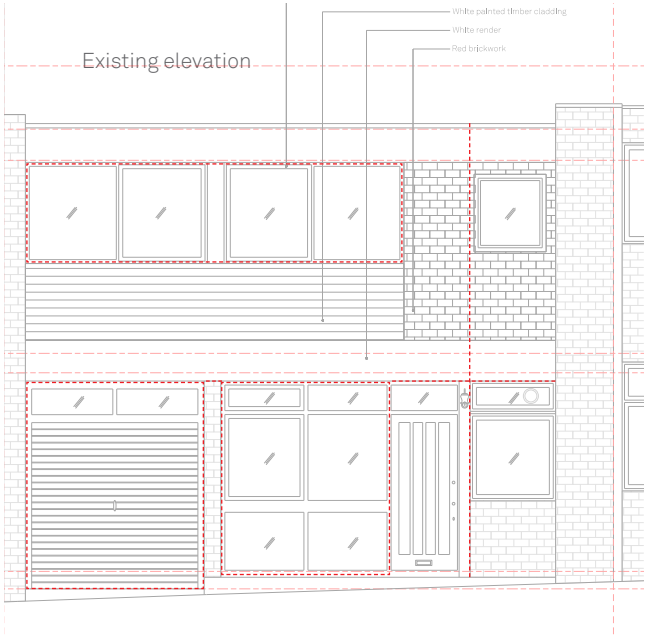
Planning negotiaitions

Camden objected to the facade design as submitted, arguing that although the application mews was not historic, they wanted to retain the pattern of the garage as part of the facade.

We worked with Camden to develop an elevation that was ultimately approved. Below are some of the iterations that led to the planning approval. The approved elevation retains a memory of the existing facade's proportions, fenestration and garage.

We secured planning for the updated scheme in March 2018.

Existing elevation



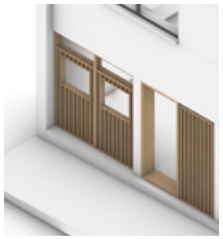
Discussed with planners

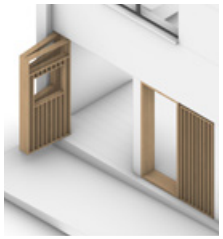
Approved elevation

Stage 3 / Developed Design + Interiors

Whilst we would normally prefer to remain involved throughout detailed design and construction stages, our client chose an alternative route of Design & Build, whereby an appointed contractor assumed ultimate responsibility for detailing and delivering the scheme without our involvement.

To assist this method of procurement we agreed a number of key items that we would develop in sufficient detail to communicate design intent to the contractor, who would then take responsibility for fully detailing. The following pages outline these, starting with the facade and barn style pivoting doors. We call this work stage 3+.



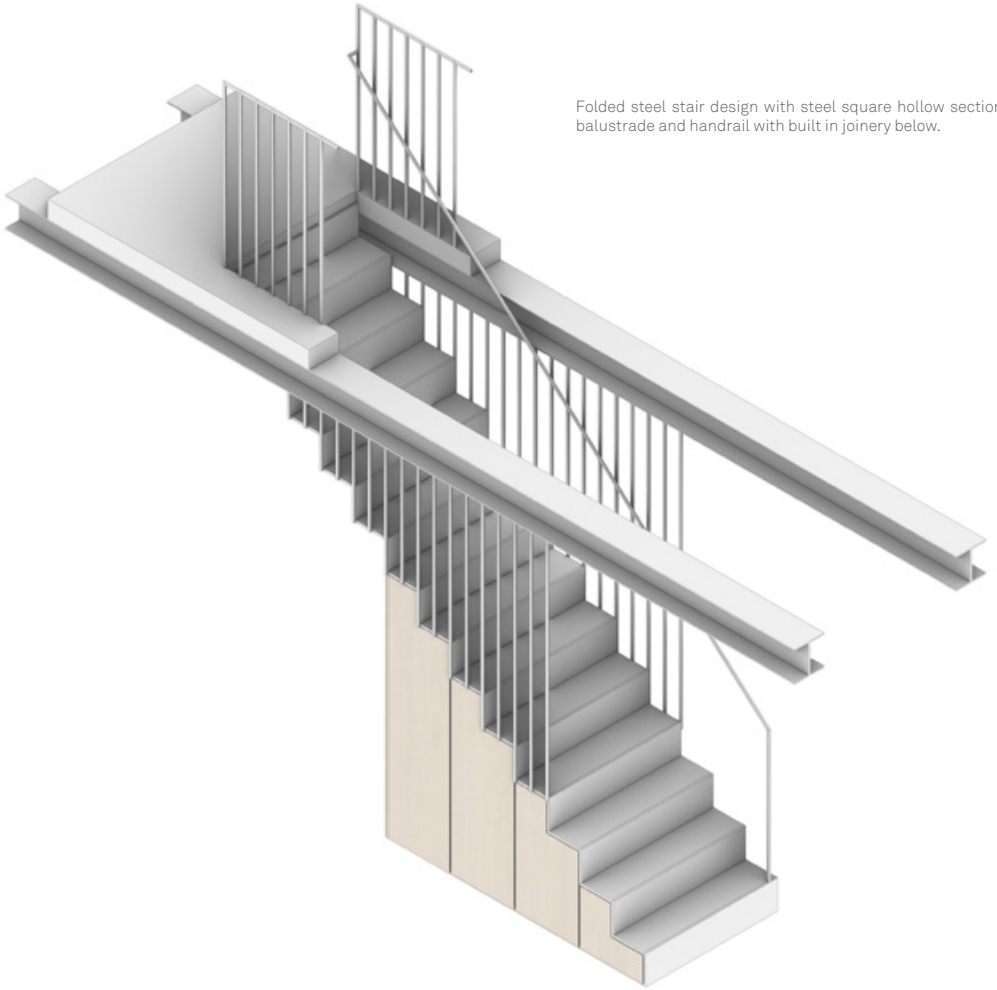


BEFORE

AFTER

Work Stage 3+

We developed the design of a lightweight folded steel stair in coordination with structural engineer. The stair interfaces with and partially hangs of the steel frame structure that supports the first floor.



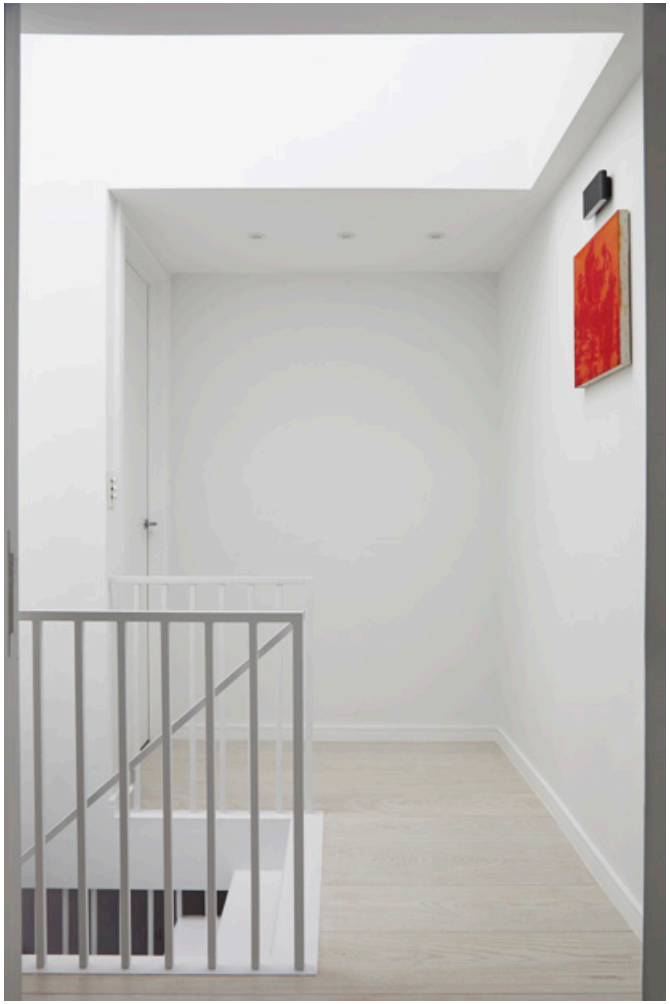
Folded steel stair design with steel square hollow section balustrade and handrail with built in joinery below.

Work Stage 3+

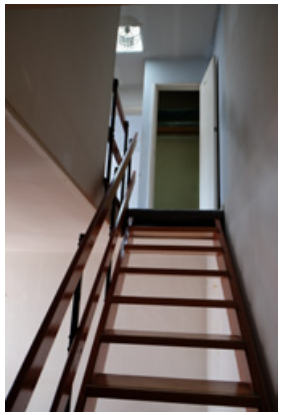
We developed visuals illustrating design intent for the living room & kitchen, exploring different material palettes that our client could then use to work with the contractor to finalise the design.

Left: Existing stair as found

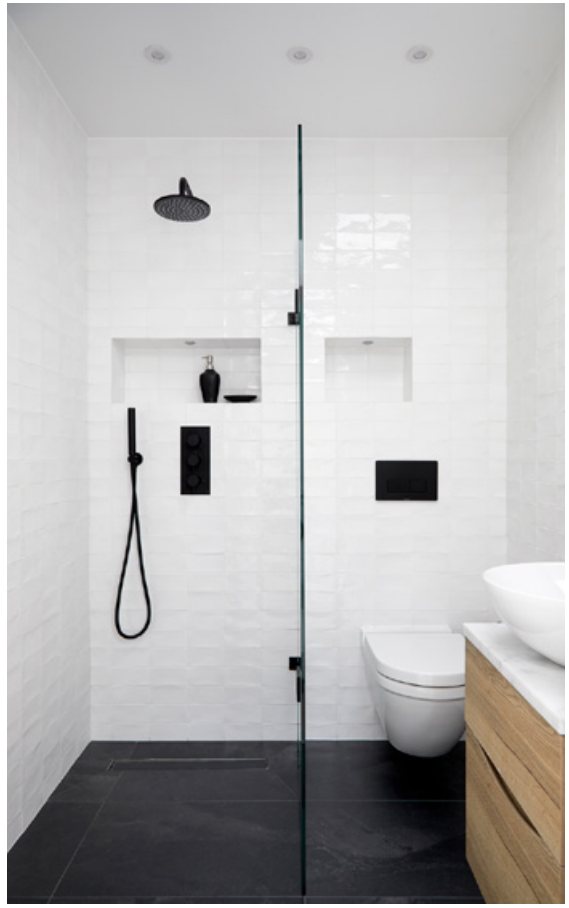
Views of and from the first floor landing flooded with natural light by the large rooflight above the stair.



Below: Photo of existing stair and landing as found



Visuals illustrating design intent for bathrooms with client/ contractor interpretation.



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