

Church House, St John's House, St John's Road, Great Clacton, Essex.  
Historic Impact Justification Report on proposal to alter the interior layout of Flat 2a  
and Flat 2b on the first and second floors of Church House.



Church House from the SE. Flat 2a occupies the near bay and range on the two upper floors. Flat 2b occupies most of the rest of the two upper floors.

### **General Description.**

Church House is a Grade II Listed Building known variously as Nos. 2, 4 and 6, Church House, St. John's House and Terrys D.I.Y. Shop. (Formerly listed as Church House, St. John's House and Revell's Stores). Today the building consists of three ground floor retail units two of which are empty. The other is known as Avalon and is a 'Natural Health and Therapy Centre'.

The remaining parts of the first and second floors are divided into two self-contained flats, each on two levels. These are Flats 2a and 2b which are reached from separate staircases to ground level at the back of the property. They are interconnected on the second floor by a glass panelled door.

### **Listing and Images of England Reference**

CLACTON-ON-SEA ST. JOHN'S ROAD, TM 1716 GREAT CLACTON (north side) 13/25 Nos. 2, 4 and 6, Church House, St. John's House 26.10.73s and Terrys D.I.Y. Shop.

IoE Number: 119885

A complete description is provided in the report - 'Church House, St John's House, St John's Road, Great Clacton, Essex. Description and analysis of the historic fabric of the house recorded on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2009.' (Hillman-Crouch. B, 2009).

In summary, the house began life as a long-walled jetty timber-framed house of the late C15th or early C16th and was heavily modified and enlarged in the mid C19th in the style of a Regency town house with three shops below and a Post Office in an outshot now removed.

Map evidence strongly suggests that this was done between 1840 and 1874. The style of the interior fittings, in particular the winding stair with stick balusters, the elegant hob grates remaining in some of the fireplaces, the curved door heads on the landing and some deep skirtings all point to a date nearer 1840 than 1874.



First and second floor plans showing the division of the property into Flats 2a and 2b.

Today the house is divided on the ground floor into three retail units while there are two flats above. Flat 2a occupies the end bay and eastern range on two floors while Flat 2b is much larger and occupies most of the rest of the house.

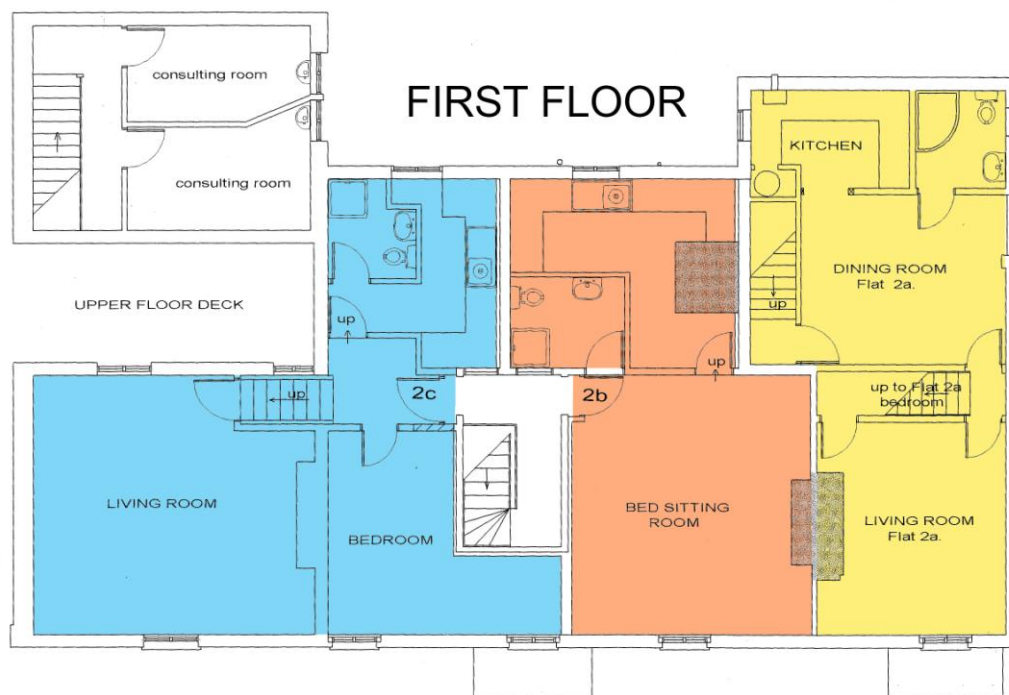
The proposals made by Scott and Jaques Planning and Design of 4 St John's Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 3PE seek to further divide the two flats to create four flats. This is mostly to be achieved by inserting fire doors and lightweight fire retardant studwork wall panels. None of the historic furniture is to be affected and there are proposals to blank off some of the internal doorways and create only two new openings.

The rest of this report examines these changes in detail.

### The Ground Floor.

No changes are proposed to the ground Floor layout. The floor between the Eastern Retail Unit and Flat 2a above would benefit from acoustic and thermal insulation because at present the floor is only the thickness of the floor boards and cannot be conducive to healthy living or fire safety.

### The First Floor.



The First Floor as divided up into three flats in the proposed scheme.

In this proposal the layout of Flat 2a remains unchanged. Flat 2b is reduced to form a Bedsit with kitchen and en-suite shower room.

To achieve this, a lightweight studwork division has been placed at the front of the house between the former Living Room and Dining Room. Historically, this is a reinstatement of one of the partitions that would have been here when the house was converted to the Regency style in the mid C19th. It is normal in houses of this layout for there to be central rooms over the porch which were often dressing or sewing rooms.

The new Bed Sitting room is then connected to the kitchen and shower room through two new proposed openings through the studwork wall to the north while closing the present C20th doorway. This wall is composed of part of the timber frame of the early house and the

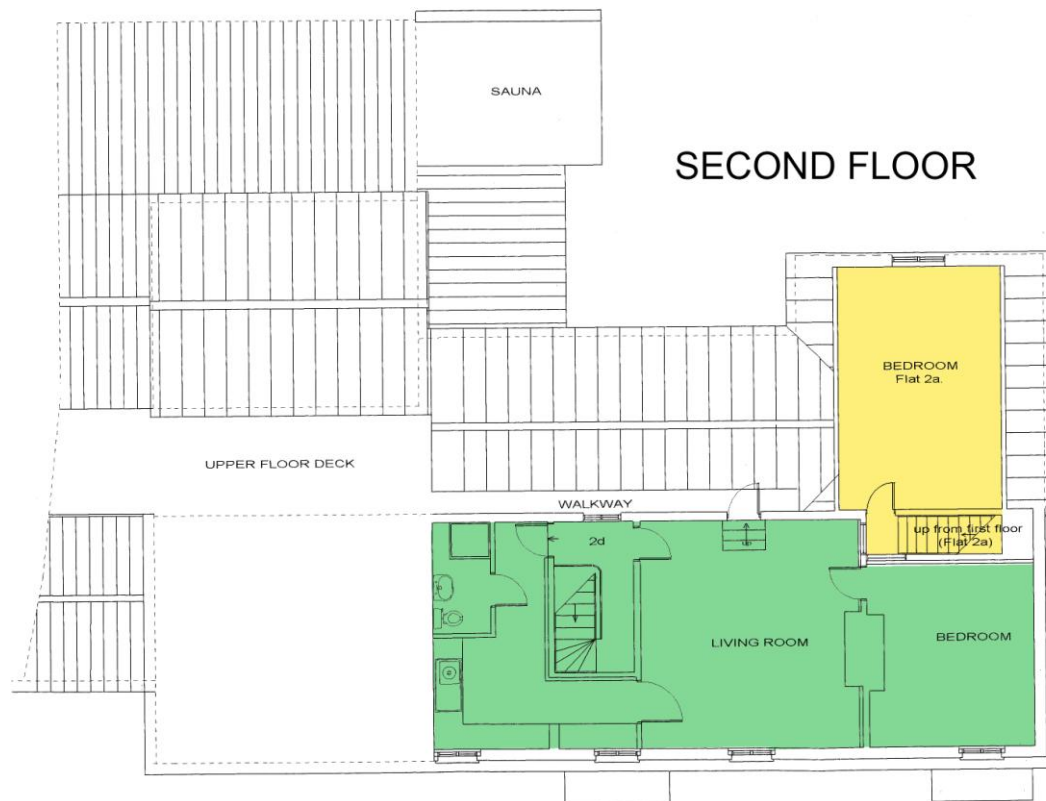
wall plate can still be seen. However the partition appears recently refurbished with plasterboard and it is likely the studwork has already been altered if only to get in the enormous sunken bath that is currently in place. If not, the best place for the doorways can be assessed on opening up.

There is also a late C20th studwork partition to be removed which was put in by the previous owner. The handsome arch headed openings from the stairwell are to be untouched and the new entrance doors recessed to create small entrance alcoves.

Flat 2c is created from the remaining larger portion of the original Flat 2b with the only material alteration being the blocking of the current doorway into the former Dining Room and a new opening placed further to the west in a more convenient and unobstructed position. The doorcase, which appears to be from the mid C19th could either be left in situ as a feature or re-used in the new opening. In either case the fabric is retained.

The current doorway into the original Kitchen is to be blocked and a new one opened in the studwork wall to the western end of the corridor. This is an inserted partition and may be entirely C20th.

### Second Floor



Second floor showing the creation of Flat 2d and the diminution of Flat 2a.

## Second Floor

The proposed scheme seeks to create another self-contained flat on the second floor by dividing it off from the first floor and borrowing a room from the current Flat 2a. At present Flat 2a is connected to the rest of the house by a glass panelled door at the top of the stairs. This opening is to be blocked off giving added security from fire and unwanted entrance.

The current doorway into the south-easternmost bedroom is also to be blocked off and a new doorway proposed into the new living room of Flat 2d. The wall here is a thin studwork partition in place of the early timber-frame and could be remodelled without loss of fabric.

The area that is now a pine-clad fitness room with shower and built-in full size sauna is to be divided into a kitchen and shower room and connected to the new living room by a door through the studwork partition. It is likely that if this partition is not C20th that there is already a doorway there.

The removal of the sauna from this house is highly desirable as the heat and moisture that a sauna generates is highly detrimental to the timber-frame encouraging damp, mould and wood boring beetles.

## Summary

The building today is a mixture of disparate styles internally but some respect has been paid to the finer features. Nearly all the windows are replaced with comparable C20th timber units or re-used period sashes.

The division of the house into smaller units is not without precedent as many houses of this period were divided up into small tenencies. In this proposal all the historic features (i.e pre C20th) are to remain untouched with the exception of one doorcase which can be retained or re-used within the fabric.

Where new openings are proposed they are through lightweight stud walls which can be carefully assessed and remodelled with the minimum of disturbance to the historic fabric.

The house would benefit from acoustic and thermal insulation and from improved fire safety measures none of which would impinge on the fabric of the historic building.

The fitness room and sauna are out of keeping with the historic fabric of the house and were they to continue in use would promote its rapid decline through damp and beetle infestation.

Barry Hillman-Crouch 28 02 2009.