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11 West Street

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Introduction

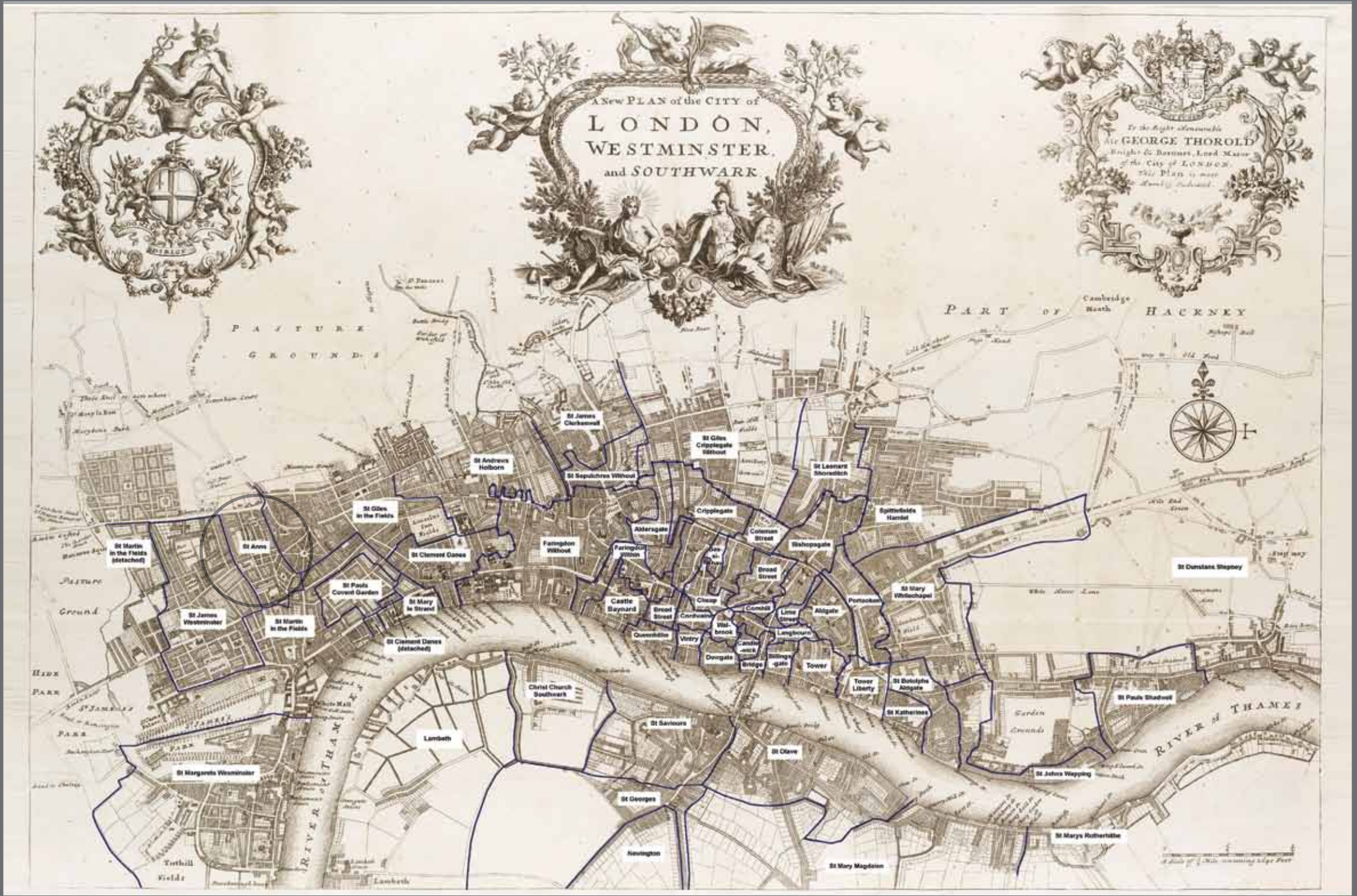


United House Group has earned a reputation for delivering high quality innovative solutions for challenging projects across London and the south east. With over 45 years experience we have combined our unique skills in undertaking complex projects, harnessing the potential to acquire and develop buildings to produce exceptional results. This case study demonstrates United House Group working together in close collaboration with our extensive and capable supply chain to maximise the potential of a small footprint building in the heart of the city.

11 West Street is an excellent example of how we spot the potential to fund, develop and construct building projects in high profile inner city locations. When we acquired the building it was in poor condition suffering from previous neglect, caused originally by a fire in the 1970's. Following initial appraisals, we assembled a design team to undertake

the task of maximising the opportunity to salvage parts of the existing structure to enable us to remodel the building in its entirety. In doing so we have maximised the use of space and increased the overall usable floor area by 50%. This has involved plotting a path through planning constraints together with taking into account neighbourly matters to enable us to complement and enhance the existing street scene. This feature will give you an insight into the journey establishing the building as a structure of importance.

The project has encapsulated all the complications and difficulties normally associated with projects many times this scale, demanding all the skills of the project team to overcome constraints relating to building conditions, planning, building regulations, means of escape, party wall and 'city centre' construction issues together with restricted access and difficult working conditions.



Parishes in London & Westminster, 1720.

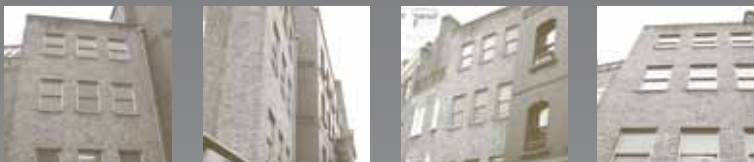
Part One: History, Location and People



Investigation

A map regression exercise was undertaken in order to find out how long there had been a building on the site of 11 West Street. We started with the present day street map and worked our way backwards in time at the Westminster Archive Centre and on the Web until we found the oldest records.

The map regression provided a fascinating insight into the development of London as we know it today. The area around West Street is clearly documented from 1658 to the present day. In 1666 the area was largely destroyed by fire in the Great Fire of London.

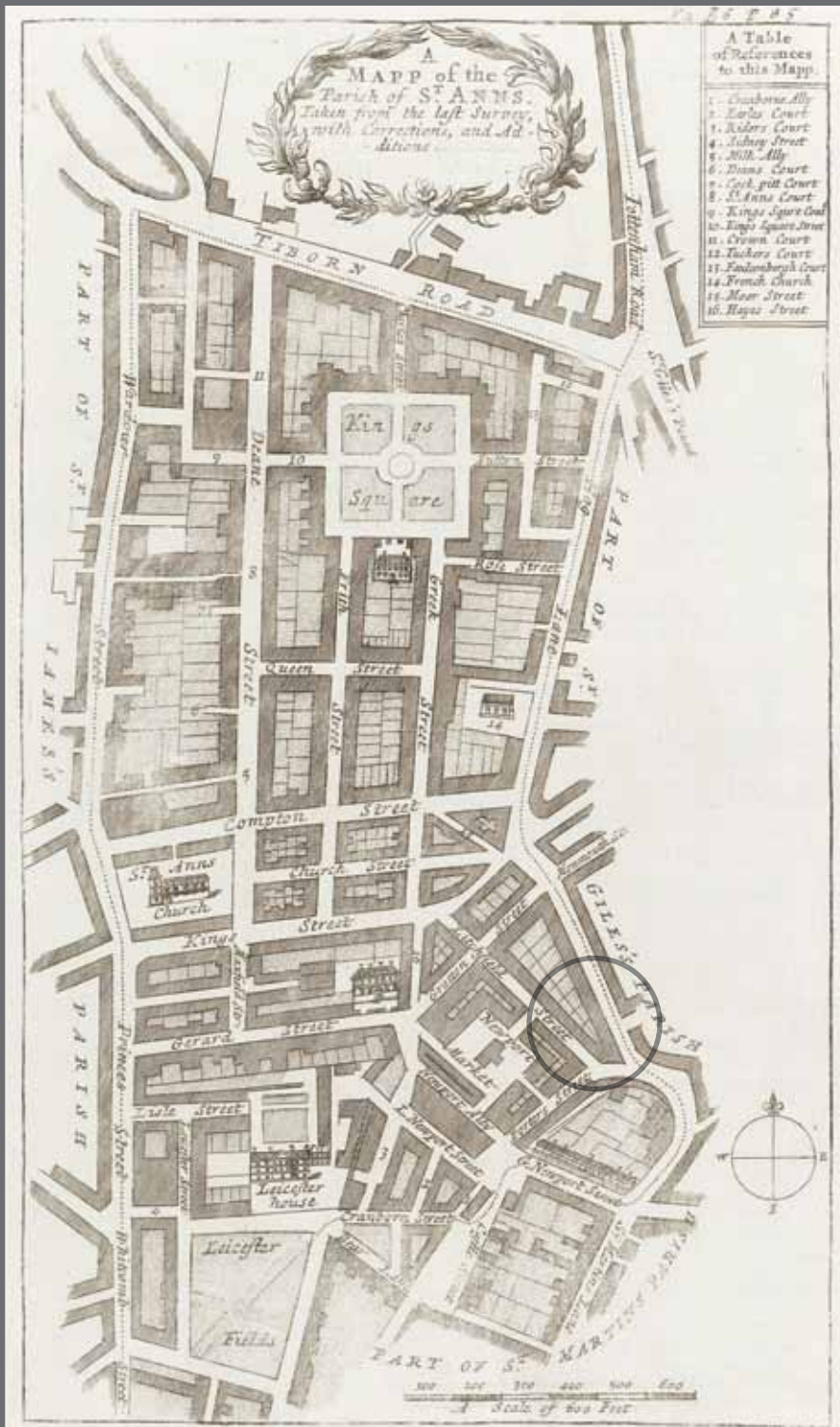


The timber framed buildings set gable end on towards the streets disappeared, as did most of the street pattern. Rebuilding work, in brick, took place in areas around West Street in the 1670's and 1680's and we can assume that West Street was included.

Brick was expensive so normally only the external walls were built in brickwork, to prevent fire spread, the internal structure was made up of lath and plaster with large supporting timbers. 11 West Street is no exception, during demolition several large timbers were found which have been carefully recycled into the boardroom panelling. It is interesting to note that these had been previously recycled as was usual in those days from timbers salvaged when ships were dismantled in breakers yards down on the Thames.



Royal Mews, 1658. Detail of Pall Mall, Whitehall, Scotland Yard, Charing Cross and St Giles' Fields.



The map to the far left shows The Parish of St Ann's Soho, where West Street was situated. This church was consecrated in 1686 and this map is from Strype's 1720 edition of Stow's Survey of London & Westminster. West Street is at the lower right hand side of the map on the boundary with the Parish of St Giles in the Fields (shown left) and in those days it was called Hog Lane.

This boundary still exists today as the borough boundary between the City of Westminster and the London Borough of Camden.

Over a century later, this is the present day street map. All the roads have familiar names. The industry has disappeared and 11 West Street is in the heart of 21st century Theatreland.





Covent Garden Market, 1811.

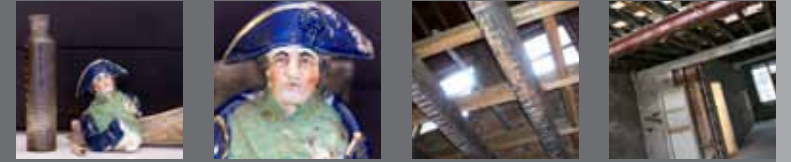


In 1871 all buildings in West Street would have been inhabited by several entire families as well as being used as workshops. Industrial and residential uses were mixed and the whole area had become a slum. During recent works in number 9 a cobbled surface was found when they dug out the lift well, this indicates that there could have been stabling for animals somewhere to the rear, or given the vicinity of the coachworks it could have been a farriers, or another trade linked to coach making.



Top Left: The National Gallery, church of Saint Martin-in-the-Fields and Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, London, 1875.

Left: Nelson's Column during construction in 1844.



When the basement floor surface was lowered various artefacts were discovered, these have provided some clues as to the activities and lifestyles of some of the former occupants.

The census returns and parish records also gave us some indications of who lived in the property and what they did for a living. This includes Henry Allbout a shagreen case maker, John Arnold a brewer, Peter Clark a hatter and Joel Grantham, a carpenter.

The property was modernised at some stage during the 1920/1930 and became used as business premises.

Early in the 1970's the property was once again damaged by fire. It remained unlet and derelict for over 30 years until we recognised the potential that it offered due to its location and scope for improvement.

The purchase of the building was concluded in 2008 and plans were set in motion for the complete refurbishment and modernisation of the plot to provide a central London office for our expanding development business.



West Street - Sketch Perspective



West Street Elevation



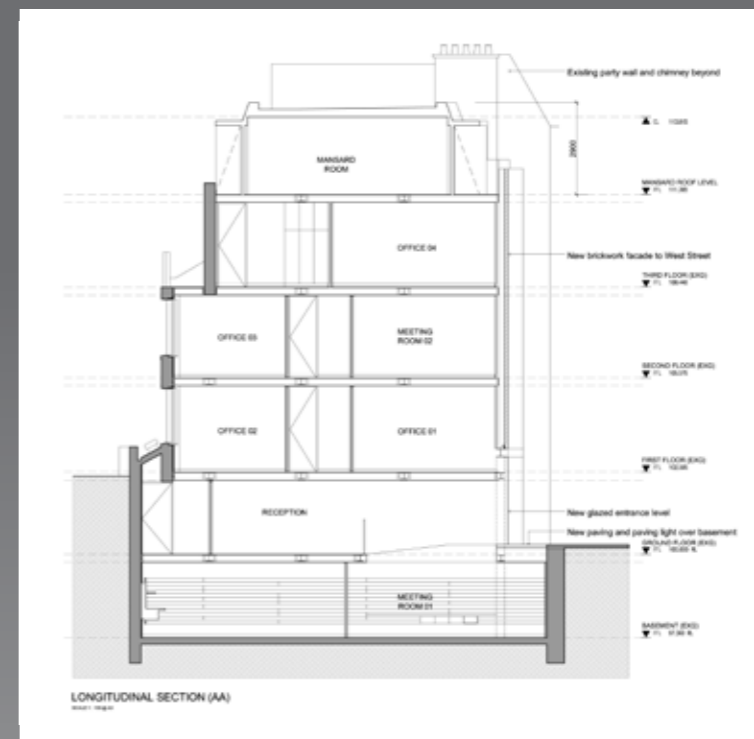
Part Two: The Architect's Vision

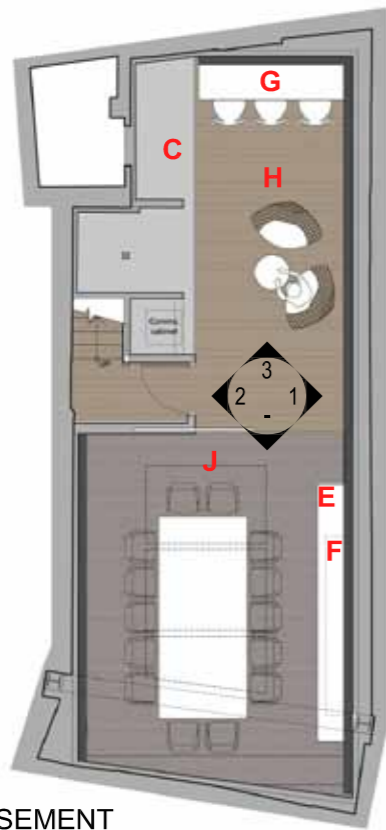
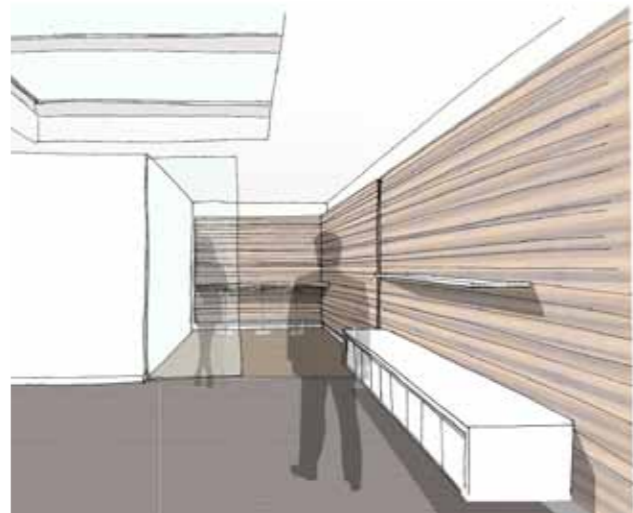
From an initial walk around, it became clear that the building had endured two centuries of neglect and piecemeal repair, including a poorly constructed and utilitarian rebuild of the front facade. Given this dismal condition and the fact that the built footprint occupied the entire site, the project clearly represented an interesting challenge.

At the same time a vision emerged of what the building could become – a small townhouse headquarters building with an interior clear of unwanted partition walls, crisp and modern in appearance, behind a new facade that would be both sympathetic to the street yet self-evidently contemporary. A rare opportunity in the historic Covent Garden area.

It was the client's wish that the building would remain unbranded on the outside and be a discreet and subtle London headquarters on the inside: neither lavish nor ostentatious but well-designed with simple, high quality workmanship, materials and finishes that could quietly showcase United House's own skills and values.

To achieve this vision the building had to be reduced to a hollow shell, leaving only the party walls (relieved of their chimney breasts), a rickety staircase and the rear wall remaining. The building was then to be completely re-constructed with new clear-spanning floors to existing levels; non load-bearing partition walls; a new mansard storey and roof; a fully habitable lower ground floor with pavement vault cellar. This structural approach would enable the building easily to be re-planned internally at any future date or be able to accommodate a change of use to residential without any significant structural alterations.





BASEMENT
PLAN



ELEVATION 01



ELEVATION 02



ELEVATION 03

A = Reclaimed timber wall (from timber structure removed from West Street). Planked timber in random widths and lengths with stainless steel angle edge surround and s.s. plate inserts to vertical joints. Note - should reclaimed timber not be suitable, new timber to match to be used in lieu.

B = Painted (white) plasterboard with skim coat wall. Note B* is wall allocated to projector display

C = Lacquered (2 coat) MDF flush panel joinery (on push release) - colour to match wall

D = Concealed uplighting washing light over upper painted plasterboard wall

E = Wall hung lacquered (2 coat) MDF credenza unit (white)

F = Concealed fixed lacquered (2 coat) MDF shelf unit (white)

G = Concealed fixed lacquered (2 coat) MDF bar/bench unit (white)

H = Oak timber floor boards (secret nailed) - smoked and naturally oiled

J = Broadloom carpet (final selection TBA)

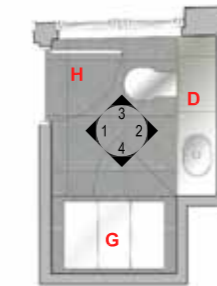
Note: Furniture selection by client

The minimalist architectural treatment at ground floor level, expressed as a grey steel channel portal surrounding a flush-glazed facade, serves to announce that this is a contemporary building in commercial use, rather than a residential one. It also hides the fact that the first floor level is unusually low, when viewed externally. A modern backlit art glass triptych lies behind this facade, screening direct views of the interior space, providing the discreet street presence that the client required, while in quality of design, detail and finish it is able to sit comfortably alongside the Ivy Club and restaurant adjacent.

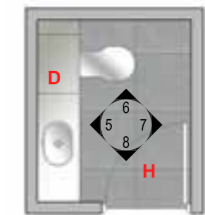
Internally the challenge was to produce uncluttered and legible interiors, admitting as much natural daylight as possible. To this end the glass floor in the reception area allows daylight into the boardroom below, directly over the board table, while the white walls throughout the building serve to reflect and amplify the daylight. In the reception area a glass wall flanks the entrance ramp and reveals as a word collage that the building is occupied by United House, without resorting to the usual device of a logo or nameplate behind the desk.



Within the boardroom, the ancient ship's timbers that formed the original floor beams, have been salvaged and then carefully planked, stained and refinished to provide a sleek panelled wall that holds the memory of what was once there.



THIRD FLOOR WC PLAN



FIRST + SECOND FLOOR WC PLAN



ELEVATION 01



ELEVATION 05



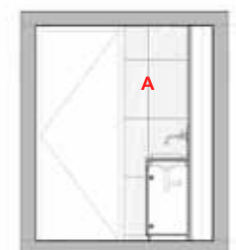
ELEVATION 02



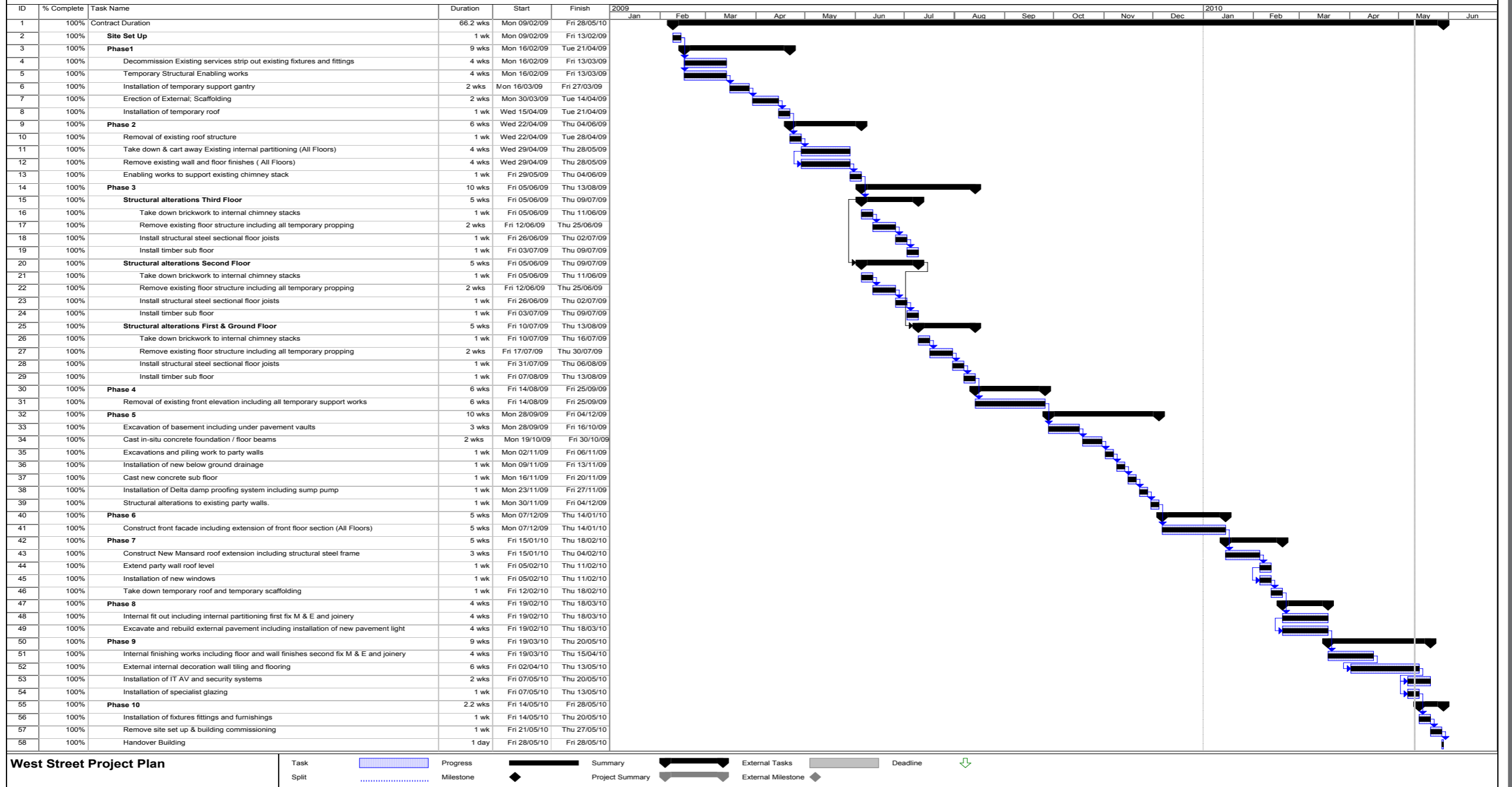
ELEVATION 06



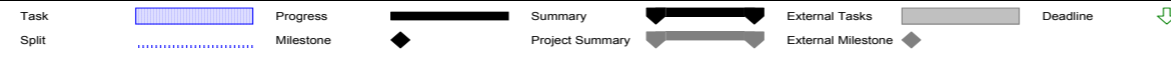
ELEVATION 03



ELEVATION 08



West Street Project Plan





Part Three: The Works

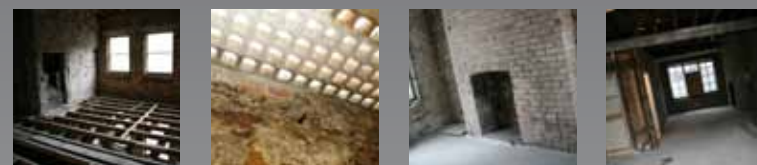
The works involved painstaking deconstruction of the original building requiring complex structural engineering solutions taking into account the surroundings. The footprint is surrounded on all sides with neighbouring buildings and is sited on a narrow street in central London.



Enabling works

To enable the works to be undertaken a temporary gantry was constructed, capable of supporting scaffolding together with a temporary roof structure. The structural steel temporary gantry was supported by pad stone foundations excavated through the existing pavement outside the building sited in the sub-floor of the basement area. Due to restrictions in place for the service road at the front, these works were completed out of hours utilising specialist lifting equipment to avoid the use of heavy crane.

A detailed traffic management plan was put in place to ensure safe working access together with the unrestricted movement of vehicles and pedestrians. Once the temporary works were in place, a phased demolition programme allowed us to remove the existing roof structure together with all its supporting sub-structure. We also removed the existing chimney stacks which necessitated temporary propping and support of the adjoining chimney stacks at roof level along the party wall.







Demolition

Demolition followed on a floor by floor basis de-constructing each section whilst supporting the party walls to either side of the building. Whilst these works were in progress the existing staircase and rear elevation were adapted in-situ to take into account the new floor plan.

Each floor was reinstated with structural sectional steel floor joists, spliced and bolted together using specialist assembly techniques to avoid traditional lifting methods due to the restricted working space.

The existing party walls were surveyed and repaired to remove existing structural defects to neighbouring buildings. This necessitated underpinning at basement level.

Once the new structure was completed to ground floor level the existing brick façade was taken down floor by floor whilst we supported the neighbouring buildings at all levels.



The next phase involved excavating the existing basement by hand. This required complex propping to be put in place. The finished work provided a larger basement footprint to accommodate the new boardroom. Once excavation was complete we removed the existing pavement together with the decayed pavement lights at street level. The basement was then encased in a modern damp proof system to allow the occupation of previously unusable space.





Re-construction

The front section of the building is supported on an in-situ concrete reinforced steel frame set out between the party walls of the neighbouring buildings. With the new supporting steel structure in place we rebuilt the front façade and tied it into neighbouring buildings on a floor by floor basis. This allowed sectional completion of the sub-floors from the bottom approach to roof level. The unique top down, not bottom up construction technique allowed continuity of the build process whilst taking into account the complex engineering requirements. This created more flexibility and continuity in the project programme.

Salvaged ships timbers were taken away from site to be drilled, planked and transformed into the board room panelling in the basement of the building.



Modern building techniques combined with traditional skills enabled delivery of a high performance building blending into traditional surroundings. Once the building was reconstructed to existing roof level, we utilised the opportunity to extend the building forming a mansard roof. We extended the partition walls, erecting a structural steel frame to support the mansard extension. A high performance roofing system was installed encompassing a combination of new and old building materials, with lead lined mansard, stone copings and high performance roof covering.

Set behind parapet walls there is a balcony overlooking the street form, blending into its surroundings with local level mansard, stone copings and high performance roof covering.





Finishing works

With the new structure in place each floor was designed to the highest standards with a plasterboard skim finish, timber sub-floor with acoustic boarding, high performance high quality timber double glazed windows, oak joinery, together with oak flooring. Particular attention was paid to the ecological and sustainable ethos of the company.

Through wall insulation, sustainably resourced materials, high quality internal finishes were all a feature of the quality plan for the project.

The existing staircase was adapted, introducing bespoke floor to ceiling glazing scribed and lined oak joinery.

Each floor has sophisticated equipment including on demand tea station facilities, cloakrooms, seamless wet areas and showering facilities.

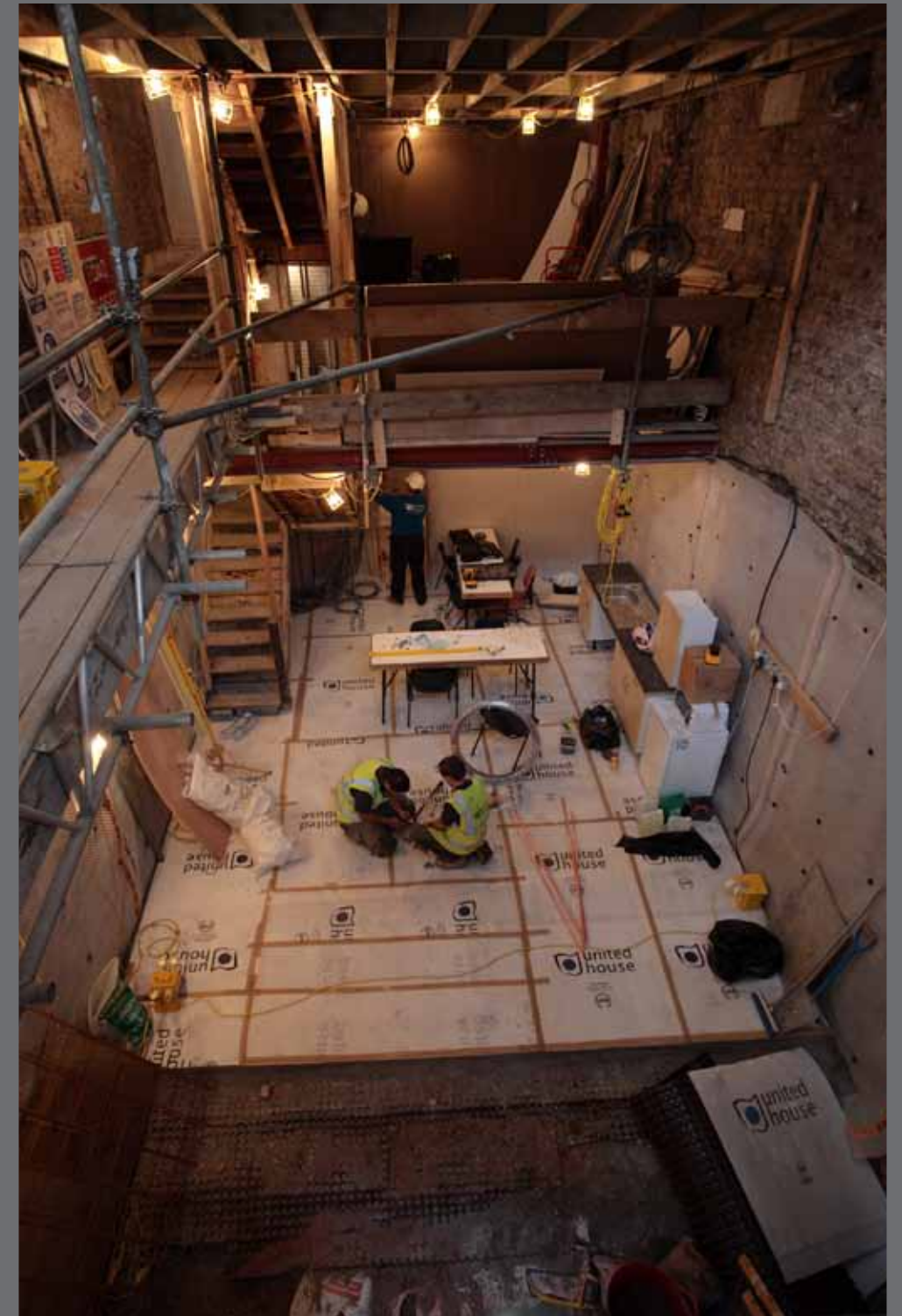
The reception entrance to the front of the building features the installation of a structural glass floor to enable light to the boardroom in the basement. This also has a modern lighting system allowing wash colours to light both the reception area and the boardroom.

Feature glass panelling was installed etched with the United House symbol to provide a personalised identity to the building.

Specialist M & E involved air source heat pump which are environmentally friendly and efficient, specialist task and background lighting throughout the floors and high specification cabling for the Information technology requirements. These includes AVIT throughout the building, featured state of the art monitoring equipment, television, audio visual displays and IT cabling. Security measures including CCTV surveillance, remote monitoring and sophisticated fire alarms.

A bespoke glass frontage entrance together with specially commissioned artisan stained glass feature as a one off commission for West Street. This sets the building aside and is further enhanced by the buildings energy efficient lighting systems.

The completed project showcases the skills of the United House Group.



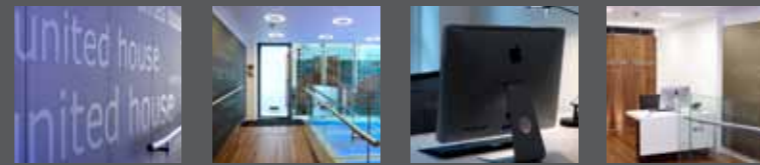


Part Four: The Completed Project



United House has created a new high profile central London office fit for the twenty first century inside the shell of a building approximately three hundred and fifty years old.

This renovation has encapsulated all the complications and difficulties normally associated with much larger scale projects. However, they were all overcome even though the space is comparatively restricted. The team responsible for delivery brought a wide range of skills and specialisms to the task and with close collaborative working practices they were able to produce the smart, professionally presented building which is now occupied.







Technology

The state-of-the-art controllable heating and cooling technology now incorporated into the fabric of the building is designed to provide all users with an optimum environment in which to work, as well as an eye catching space in which to entertain clients.

The latest developments in information technology now allow real time meetings via video conferencing facilities with colleagues, clients and associates in any part of the world without leaving the UK base.

