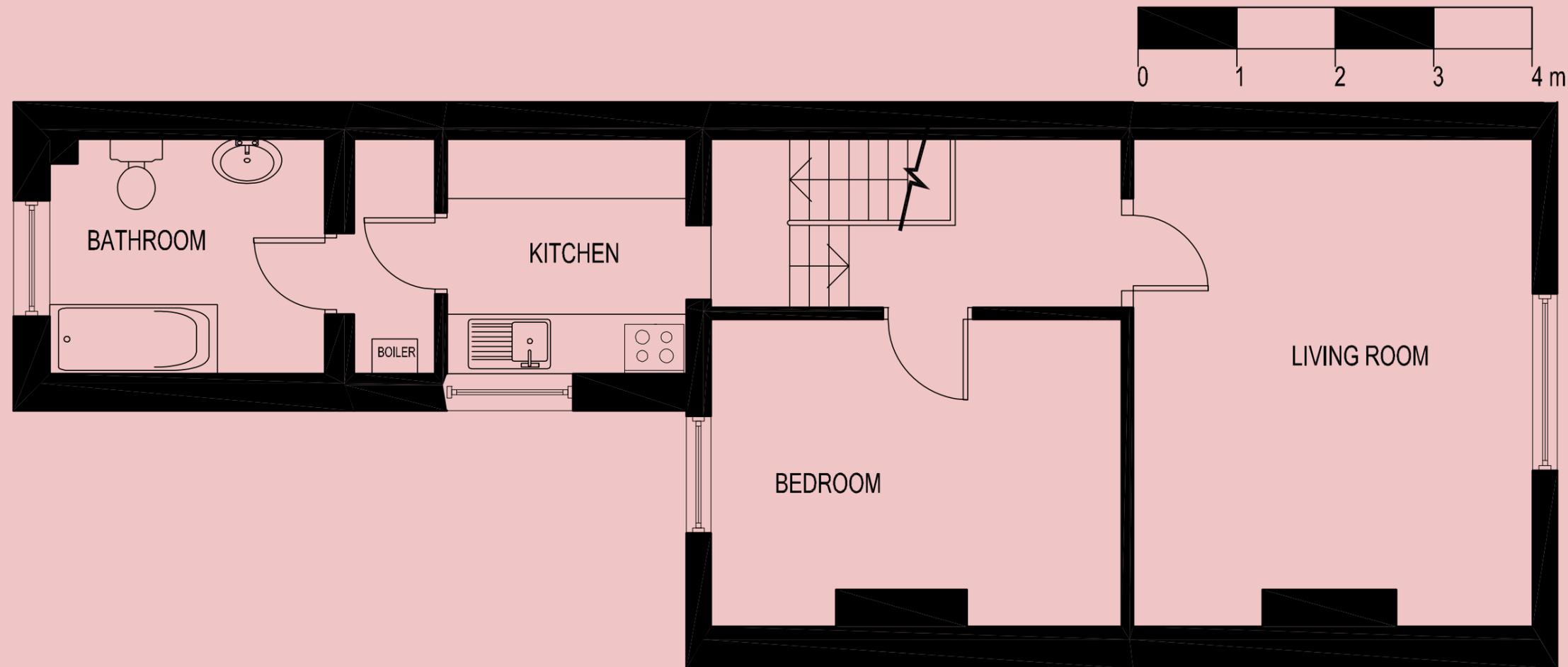


The flat is in the parish of St Pauls, Bristol. The area has had a large ethnic black population since the 1950s. During the 1980s racial tensions in the city led to riots, causing the area to become further marginalised.

Recent local property investment has been mainly for students & single people. The locals that achieve modest success would likely feel the need to move away, due to lack of good quality family homes. This compounds the problem of polarisation & the related stigma that dogs the area. It provides minimal social development.

The flat was originally the upper floor of a family house, which was likely altered in the 1980s. Nothing indicates this was done with the authorities permission.

Residents of the flat have typically been young or single people with limited incomes who enjoy an active social life. As they mature, they move on & move out, their energy goes with them, the flat, like the district, becomes tired & eventually fully depleted.



## FIRST FLOOR PLAN

# First Floor Flat Refurbishment

## Before

### Kitchen



As well as the kitchen being in generally poor condition, the floor had 2 quite dangerous holes (circled in red). These were the result of water damage & poor choice of floorboard.

The end wall between the kitchen & bedroom was damp. Building settlement had caused a gap at roof level. This, together with cracked render & poor detailing allowed water & sediment to enter the room as seen on the cooker hood.

The area around the sink was a problem because the window cill was lower than the worktop, not only making it difficult to reach/clean, but easy to lose items behind the (remains of) the cabinet.

The floor structure had to be adapted to fit new boards. The bottom right photo shows part of hole (1) in the floor. The small hole in the photo, was aligned with the edge of the old vinyl (removed), so may have been caused by mice, which had also damaged much of the electric cabling beneath the floor. For this reason copper pipes were used for the new water supply.

# First Floor Flat Refurbishment

## Before

### Bathroom

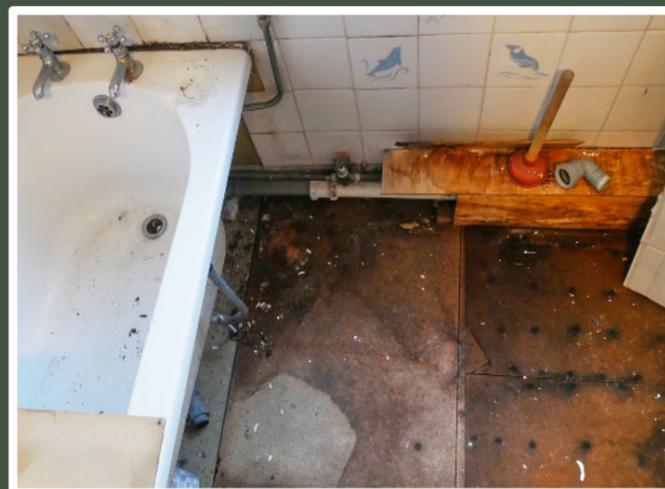
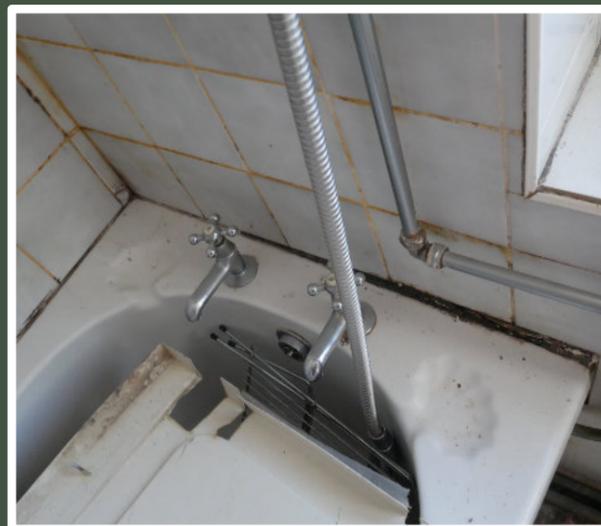
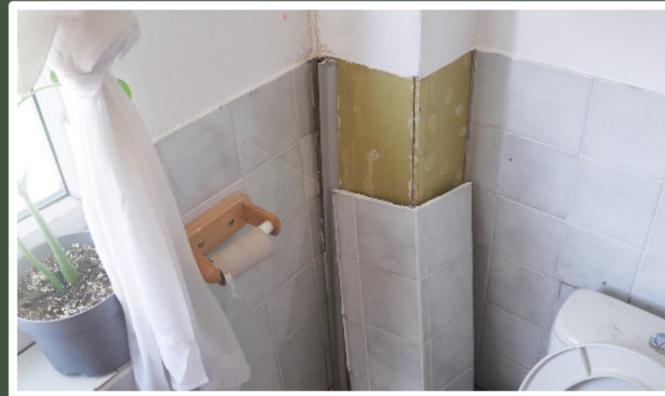
The bathroom had evidence of bodged repairs over the years. These may have taken their toll on the effort that went in to further basic maintenance.

The shower plumbing was a hodgepodge of odd pipes & connections, the shower bracket was broken & the curtain rail bent. Limescale had built up on the tiles & taps & the seal around the edge was mouldy & leaking water into the flat below.

The plumbing of the basin & toilet left quite a lot to be desired, most of the pipes were not boxed in, making them difficult to clean. The pan waste was misaligned & the cistern wobbled, because it was glued to a plastic angle that was becoming unstuck from the wall.

Tiles around the soil stack had come off & there was dampness in the floor in the general area.

The window catch had corroded preventing the window closing properly. Plants had begun growing in. Though what came first I don't know, plants or rust.



# First Floor Flat Refurbishment

Before

## Bedroom



Part of the external wall looks to have been rebuilt in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are signs of movement between the kitchen extension & the main house & similar movement can be seen in the neighbours.

The window surround had obvious signs of damp. The casement & glazed unit seals had failed & the frame/wall seals were also defective. The window itself, undersized for the opening, was set too far forward (it can only be partially opened). It narrowly straddles the line between the external render & brickwork. The cracked render was thus another source of damp as rain could trickle behind the render & track into the room once it reached the frame.



The radiator was in an inconvenient place & only held up by the connecting pipes, because whoever installed them (1970s/80s) skimped by sawing each bracket in half & only securing the upper cleat to the wall. They had worked loose over the years.

The floor too needed extensive repair.

# First Floor Flat Refurbishment

Before

## Hallway & Staircase

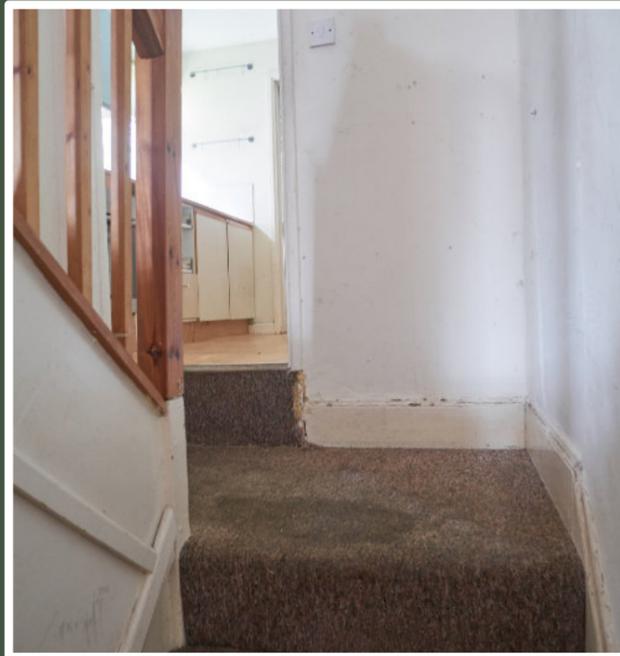
The staircase & hallway have good natural light, together with the high ceilings, give the flat a spacious & airy feeling.

However the floor & treads were creaky & the newel post wobbled at the slightest touch. Combined with the lack of handrail on the main flight, it posed risk to anyone less able bodied.

The layout was awkward at the half landing. A very high, single step up into the kitchen, after a step down, from the living room side, was annoying.

The external wall adjoining the kitchen was damp, so too was the flanking/party wall between the next door neighbour. The source was likely to be as mentioned previously.

The window is nothing more than a piece of glass set into the external render. On inspection there was insufficient evidence to determine if it was a source of damp but advice was given to install a more conventional window.



# First Floor Flat Refurbishment

Before

## Living Room



The living room was relatively less trouble. There was water staining in the ceiling from a previous leak, a broken pane of glass in the door, some redundant telephone extension cabling & a loose electrical socket.

Old Blu-tac & picture hooks littered the large walls that needed painting. The only other items were sash windows, which still need their weights adjusting & an annoying rattle in the floor from sudden movement, such as standing up too quickly. The rattle was caused by unsupported copper pipes beneath the floor. If the floor flexed suddenly they would rattle against adjacent hard surfaces.

# First Floor Flat Refurbishment

Before

## Floors

Many of the floors in the flat had problems.

With the bathroom/kitchen extension the cause was moisture & choice of wrong materials. In the other areas the problems were less accidental.

When the house had central heating fitted, quite possibly in the 1970s/80s the floors were carelessly damaged to make way for the pipes. Whether this was done out of ignorance or lack of respect is unclear. I believe the house was once in council ownership so possibly subject to their TLC.

Whilst there were many different construction 'errors', in this example the top photo shows the support that was used, laying on top of the floorboards. It had been nailed in the manner shown in Diagram 1, you may see the nail holes that are still visible. With typical domestic use, the support was destined to fail in a way shown in Diagram 2.

The bottom photo shows additional floor structure I built to support the floorboards. It gives the floor enough support & they no longer squeak.



Diagram 1

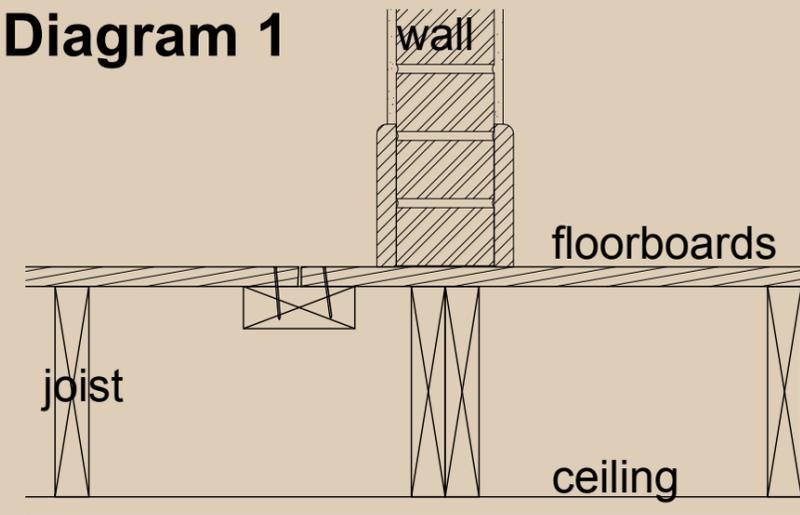
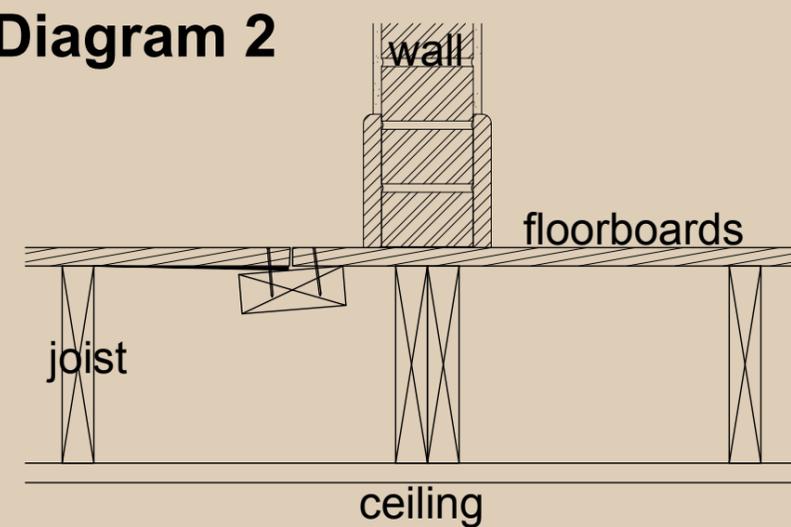


Diagram 2





The layout has only changed slightly. The hob moved to give space on either side & so legalises the switch position. The window cill raised to make cleaning easier. A dedicated cupboard was built to house the fridge & prevent as much dirt collecting beneath.

Serviceable appliances were reused for cost & environmental reasons. Sink, cooker hood, oven & even some tiles were also salvaged & reused.

A new water supply was installed in the flat so the plumbing had to be re-jigged. A 22mm copper pipe was built behind the units. To avoid ripping them out, should the gas boiler need replacing. The floor perimeter was sealed to help mitigate potential flood damage below.

The gap at ceiling level was filled & sealed with PU sealant & coving added to neaten the appearance. The external leak was subsequently fixed, after this project was completed.



The bathroom suite was removed, repairs made & plumbing reconfigured for neatness, ease of maintenance & not least, to accommodate the new water supply. Waste pipes for the toilet & sink were also replaced with appropriate fittings so should function better. The toilet cistern is now fixed, conventionally, to the wall.

A new bath panel was needed & the shower bracket & curtain rail were replaced. Taps & tiles were descaled & loose tiles reattached.

The floor perimeter was sealed similar to the kitchen to mitigate water damage below.

The corner was modified so that the gap between the bath & tiles reduced. A good seal was made & then finished with plastic trim to look neater.

All pipes were fully boxed in at floor level, with access points given for isolation valves. Again, this should make maintenance & cleaning easier.

# First Floor Flat Refurbishment

After

## Bedroom



There were many loose & broken floorboards in the bedroom, these were replaced with sheet material which should make for a stiffer & quieter floor & may improve acoustic performance between the flats. Mineral wool was placed in the voids for the same reason.

The window did not get replaced, rather a shame because the seals are still broken & the top light cannot be opened. That said, I believe the damp problem is fixed.

In the 'before' photo you may see the remains of 'Sticky Fixers'. These were used to mount acoustic foam to the walls & ceiling (the previous occupant was a professional music producer). These remains could not be over-painted so each one had to be abraded to remove it & the surface re-primed before painting.

The radiator was removed, serviced & relocated to a better position, giving just enough space to place a double bed against the wall & gain access to either side.

# First Floor Flat Refurbishment

After

## Living Room

Removing the living room carpet gave me the opportunity to take up the floorboards & prevent the copper heating pipes from rattling.

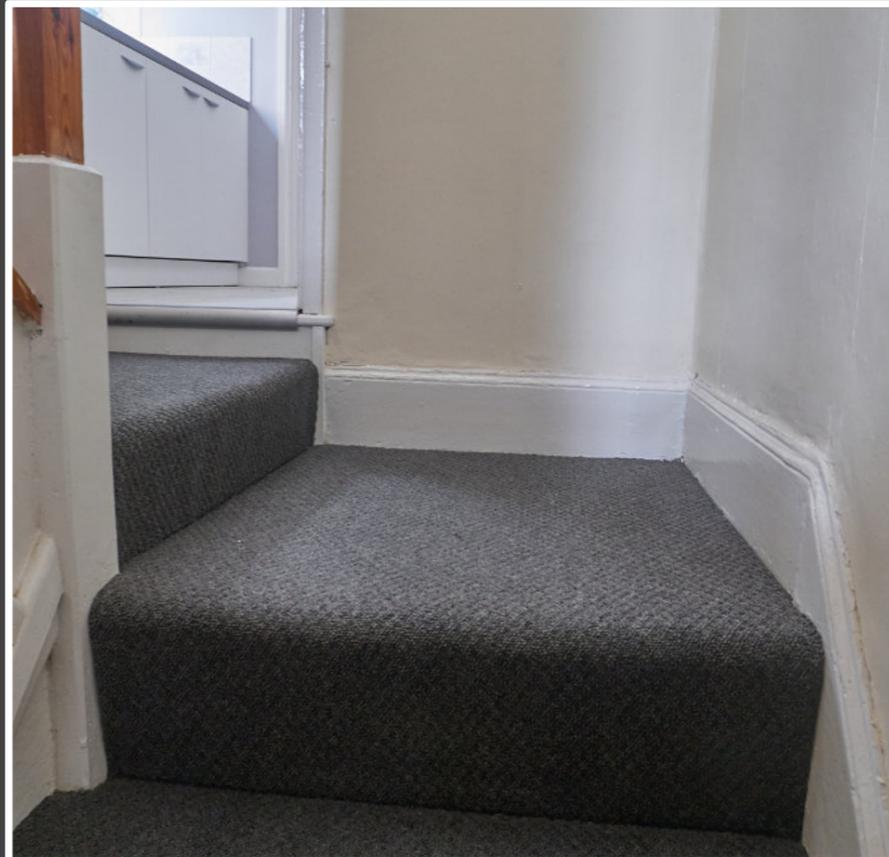
A few minor repairs were made but preparing & painting the walls & ceiling was quite an undertaking because of the size of the room.



# First Floor Flat Refurbishment

After

## Staircase & Hallway



The staircase & hallway floor renovation, included adding a quarter landing & handrail.

The new landing is at the same height as the existing bottom step of the top flight, so walking up or down seems natural.

A metal nosing was fitted to the kitchen step to protect what otherwise would have been painted wood. A shallow piece of skirting protects the bottom of the wall adjacent to the bedroom & gives a neat appearance.

The newel post was reinforced with a steel dowel, good glue, timber & screws & no longer wobbles.

Several damaged stair treads were repaired with timber salvaged from the bedroom floor.

All carpets were supplied & fitted by Carpets Direct Bristol Ltd. Which they did at very short notice. All other work in the project, is my own.

The project took 4 months from start to finished photos. At the end I was physically & mentally exhausted but pleased with the achievement .

