EXECUTIVE MEMBER – DESIGN OF THE YEAR 2026

HEROIC DEVELOPMENTS – OVERVIEW

Executive Member: Daryl Rugless

Property Name: Cecil Street, Watford

Address: 113 Cecil Street, WD24 5AS

How many units was the project? 4 units

What was the total GDV of the project? £990,000

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Please share why you feel this project qualifies for design of the year?

This project converted a redundant office building on Cecil Street, Watford, into three homes: a four-bedroom house, a three-bedroom house and a one-bedroom house. Looking at the original building, few people would have thought it could become three homes with this much space and light.

The design works with the existing structure rather than against it. Rather than demolishing and rebuilding, we planned each layout around the walls, roof and footprint already in place. This kept costs and embodied carbon down while getting the most out of every square metre.

The courtyards are the key innovation. Long, deep office buildings are often dark in the middle. Cutting courtyards into the plan brings daylight and fresh air into the heart of each home. They also give each house its own outdoor space and a separate front door.

The interiors include Harry Potter-inspired features, a nod to the Warner Bros. Studio Tour London in nearby Leavesden. There is a Great Hall-style enchanted ceiling with stormy cloud effects and a Diagon Alley-themed hallway. This gives the houses a distinct identity and a clear audience: families and fans visiting the studios. Since completion, the properties have performed strongly on Airbnb. That shows the design works commercially as well as visually.

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Please provide additional information about the design?

Layout and use of space. The building is long and narrow, so it was divided into three homes along its length. Each has its own entrance and living space. Ground floors are open-plan living, kitchen and dining areas; the largest is about 24.5 sqm. Bedrooms sit above, with shower rooms and an en-suite. Utility rooms and built-in storage keep the living areas clear.

Courtyards and natural light. A shared courtyard between the homes brings light into what would otherwise be the darkest part of the building. It also gives secure cycle storage and a pleasant arrival space. Rooflights over the upper floors add daylight from above, so rooms away from the street-facing windows still feel bright.

Making the most of the roof space. The second floor of the largest house uses the roof space to add two further bedrooms. Eaves storage is built into the sloping ceilings, so awkward low-height areas become useful storage rather than wasted space.

Working with the existing building. The conversion keeps the existing structure and external envelope wherever possible. This approach reduced construction waste and programme time, and it keeps the building's character on the street.

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Please provide additional information about the design?

Themed interiors. The interiors draw on the Wizarding World, inspired by the nearby Warner Bros. Studio Tour. The headline feature is an enchanted ceiling with stormy cloud effects, recreating the famous Great Hall from Harry Potter. The hallway is styled as Diagon Alley, so arriving at the property feels like stepping onto the famous wizarding street. Gothic mirrors and lighting carry the theme throughout. The themed elements are built into the fabric of the house rather than added as decoration. Guests get an immersive stay that no standard holiday let can offer, and the property stands out in a crowded short-let market.

Outcome. The result is three high-quality homes from a building that was no longer fit for purpose. Each has its own character, good natural light and well-planned space. Strong guest demand on Airbnb since completion shows the design delivers for the people who stay there as well as for the investment.

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HEROIC DEVELOPMENTS – BEFORE





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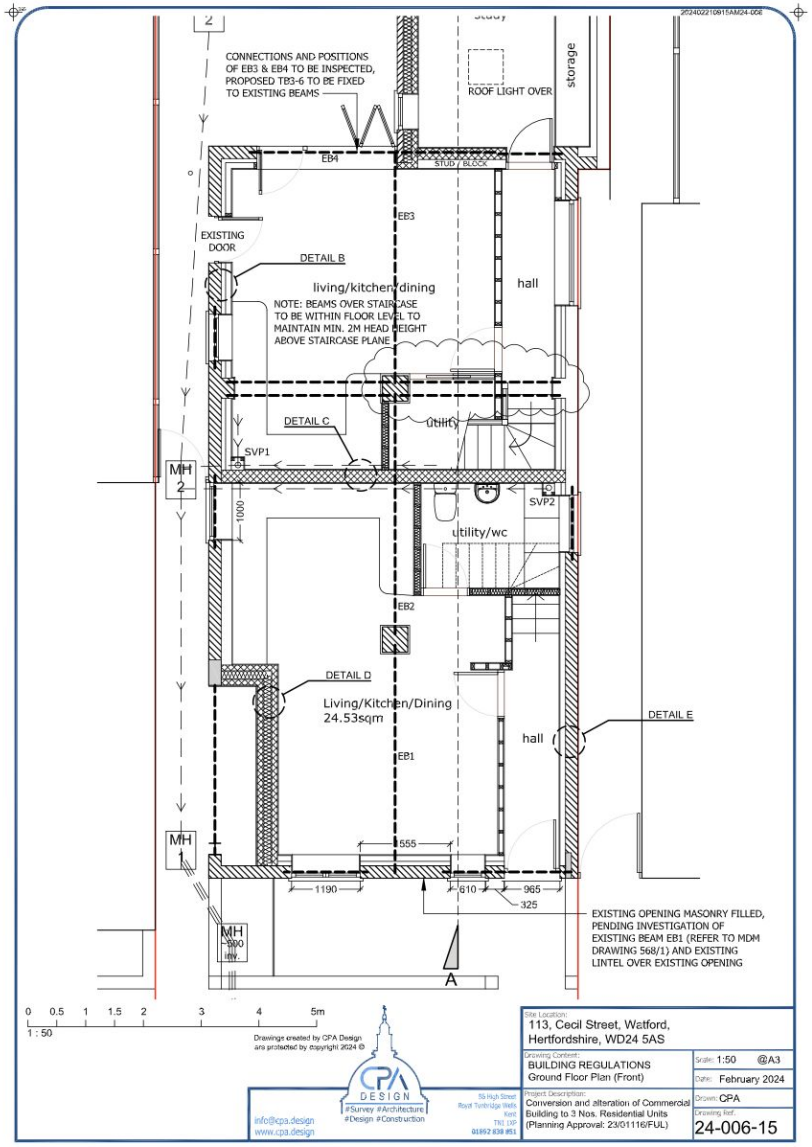
HEROIC DEVELOPMENTS – AFTER

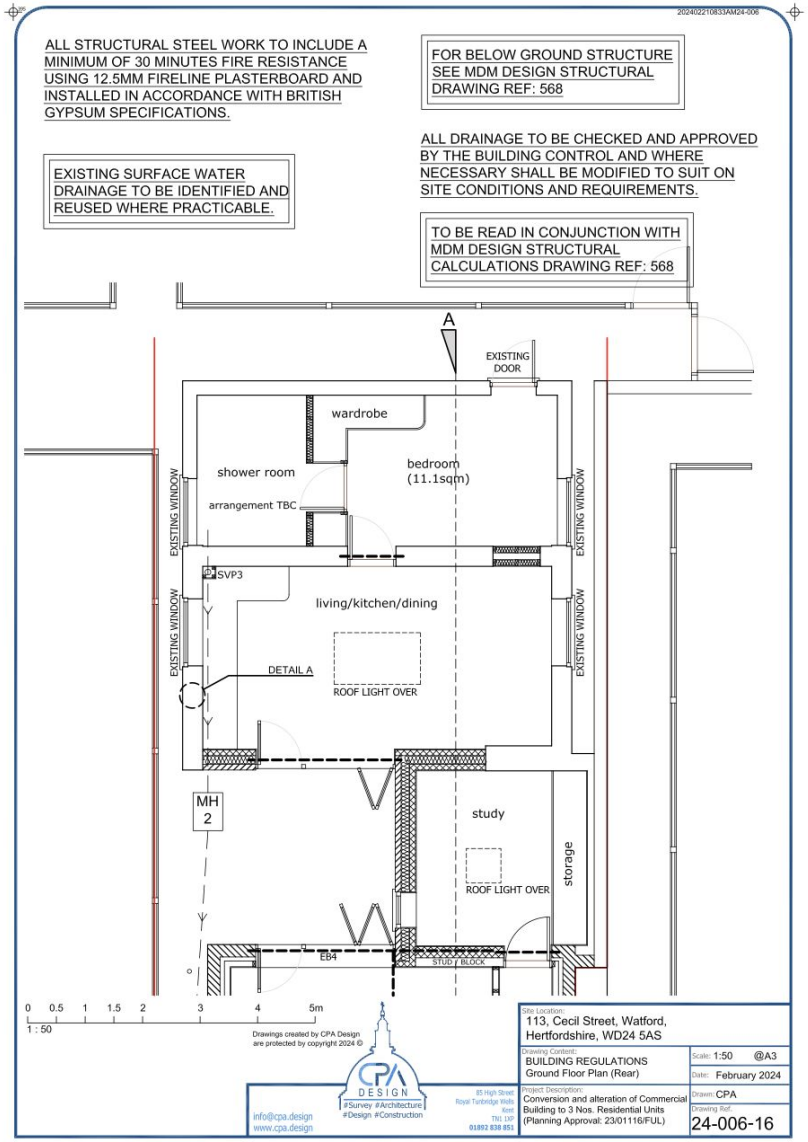




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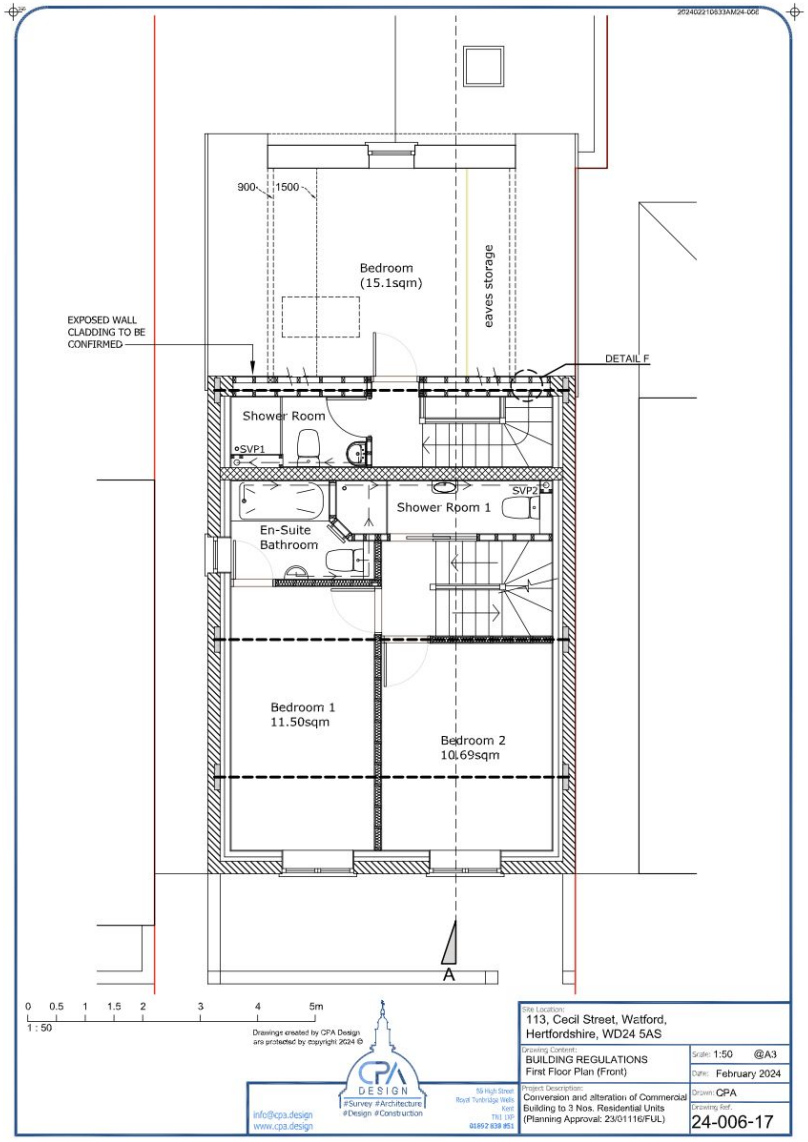
HEROIC DEVELOPMENTS – FLOOR PLAN

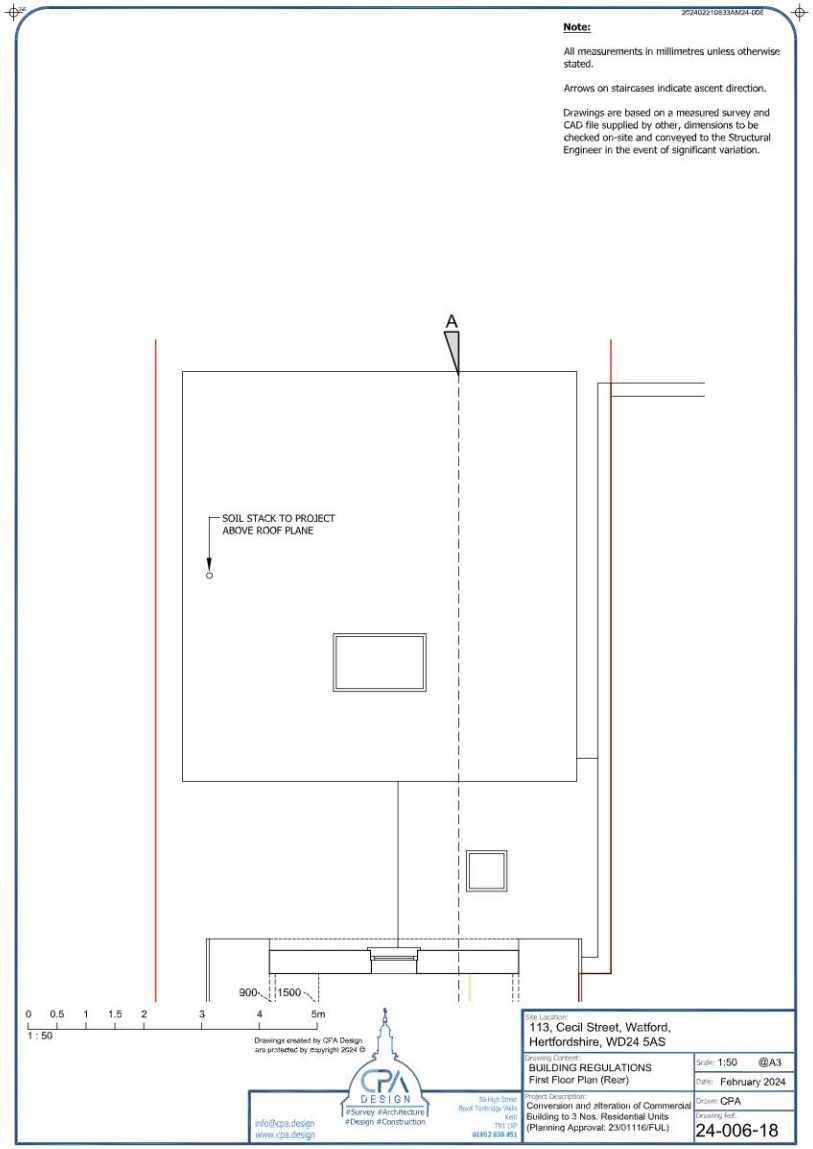




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HEROIC DEVELOPMENTS – FLOOR PLAN





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