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291  
Flat 8, Queen Alexandra Mansions  
3 Grape Street . London . WC2H 8DX

date.

Design & Access Statement including Heritage Statement

January 2023 updated June 2023

f.a.o.

Planning & Development Control . Camden Council  
Camden Town Hall . London . WC1H 8ND

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Queen Alexandra Mansions, 3 Grape Street is a Grade II listed building which forms a pair with the similarly designed King Edward Mansions on the opposite side of Grape Street. Both King Edward and Queen Alexandra Mansions sit at the north end of Grape Street. Queen Alexandra Mansions consists of commercial units at ground floor level with the upper floors used as residential accommodation. Grape Street sits within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The site of the proposal is Flat 8, Queen Alexandra Mansions which sits on the fourth floor of the building. Both the fourth and fifth floor accommodation sitting behind the artificial slate mansard roof along Grape Street are not original to the building having been added in two stages, the first in 1961 (fourth floor) and the second addition in 1984 (fifth floor and mansard roof).

## 2.0 Heritage

### 2.1 Historical Detail & Context

Queen Alexandra Mansions forms part of an architectural composition at the north end of Grape Street along with two further adjacent Grade II listed buildings. The architectural language, materiality and decorative detail runs through the facades of King Edward Mansions, Queen Alexandra Mansions and the public house The Bloomsbury. King Edward Mansions is sited on the north-west corner of Grape Street facing Queen Alexandra Mansions on the north-east corner. Both mansion blocks have facades onto Grape Street but also facades that address Shaftesbury Avenue. The Shaftesbury Avenue facade of Queen Alexandra Mansions terminates at fifth floor level with a decorative terracotta casellated parapet. Queen Alexandra Mansions terminates along Shaftesbury Avenue with a further bartizan corner detail sitting adjacent raised chimney stacks where it meets the facade of The Bloomsbury public house sitting on the corner of West Central Street. The buildings seen together form a highly ornamented roofscape leading on to Grape Street.

The building is a 5-storey mansion block with a number of late-20th century roof extensions. Its principal frontages demonstrate a High Victorian mix of historical revival styles, including

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neo-Georgian, Tudor and Baroque. The red brick with stone dressings, mullioned windows, balconies and conical turrets are typical of the early building style along Shaftesbury Avenue, which the Survey of London has described. It is also typical of the 'mansion flat' typology, which developed from the mid-19th century and commonly adopted an elaborate red brick style with ornamented roofs and flourishes. The eclectic design is characteristic of the late-Victorian and Edwardian period and also of the architect Charles Fitzroy Doll, who is described in the building's list entry description as having a 'bombastic idiom'.

The Survey of London (Volumes 31 and 32, St James Westminster, Part 2. 1963) is detailed in its assessment of Shaftesbury Avenue, and says of the road:

*"By the 1880's ... the discipline of architectural uniformity had been relaxed in favour of liberty of architectural expression, declaring the taste of the architect or his client. Generally, the fronts were of red brick, dressed with terra-cotta or red sandstone or Portland stone, the heights varying from three to five storeys with a skyline of gables or turrets of French or Flemish Renaissance derivation."*

The style described is certainly accurate for QAM; however, the Survey of London neglects to mention the building specifically, whilst *The Buildings of England* volume also overlooks the building, referring only very briefly to King Edward Mansions. It describes that King Edward Mansions dates from c. 1902-8, with a series of 'jolly' terracotta tourelles, probably by C Fitzroy Doll.

## 2.1a Historic Information

Queen Alexandra Mansions (QAM) is of architectural interest as a good example of a block of private mansion flats with lively, high quality street facades, dating from the early 20th century.

There are no original plans available in public archives for Queen Alexandra Mansions, however Camden's local studies and archive does hold what are thought to be original plans for the twin site at Kind Edward Mansions. The roof plan is included in the Heritage Statement as part of this submission.

Plans dated 1961 of Queen Alexandra Mansions are available at Camden's archives. These suggest that little or nothing had been altered up to this point, as they show that the roof of the section fronting Grape Street remained a slate pitch, with flat asphalt-covered portions elsewhere. It was at this time that the first comprehensive alterations and extensions to the roof form were made.

Between 1961 and 1978 it can be seen that the roof form (photograph from 1978 below) had been extended to form a single storey mansard with a series of square-headed dormer windows and door onto the small balcony area at the head of the Grape Street bay centred on the new mansard roof.

By 1984, a two-storey mansard addition with pitched dormers was made to the elevation along Grape Street in order to provide three extra residential units. To the rear towards West Central Street the mansard extension was continued to a similar design and also the stair / lift cores extended upwards in solid masonry.

The two-storey mansard roof extension of 1984 with pitched dormer windows, doors and Velux roof windows is the roof form present today.

To the rear (West Central Street elevation) however, the intended matching design of pitched mansard incorporating dormer windows was either not implemented in accordance with this design or was later remodelled. The photograph below shows a much more utilitarian rear

elevation, with sheer slate clad elevation incorporating modern casement windows and the service cores both now full height and cement rendered.



*1978 Photograph (City of London, London Metropolitan Archives)*



*Current rear elevation towards West Central Street*

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## 2.2 Listing

The Grade II listed building was designed by C Fitzroy Doll and built between 1902-1908 for the Bloomsbury Estate of the Bedford family.

Queen Alexandra Mansions was included in the national statutory list of building of special architectural or historic interest in January 1999 as Grade II and is described as such:

"Includes: Nos. 1-7 Queen Alexandra Mansions GRAPE STREET. Shops with mansion flats over. 1902-8. Almost certainly by C Fitzroy Doll. Red brick with exuberant terracotta dressings, slate roof with tall stacks.

PLAN/EXTERIOR: asymmetrical L-shaped plan, with 5-window range to Shaftesbury Avenue and eight windows to Grape Street. 5 Storeys, with 2-storey attic remodelled along Grape Street late C20. Massive corner bartizan which rises from a single ground floor column with foliate capital to form tourelle with panels of moulded heads on giant modillion frieze. This is answered by corner tourelle rising from third floor at junction fronting New Oxford Street. 2 more regular square 3-storey oriels face Shaftesbury Avenue, with 2 likewise to Grape Street, all with machiolated frieze. All linked by parapets, modillion cornice and many bands. The main corner bartizan with balconies either side, with terracotta balustrading and behind which the windows have segmental-arched transoms. The other windows are mullion and transom casements in moulded terracotta surrounds with notched lintels that continue as bands across the composition. Shopfronts to Shaftesbury Avenue C20, those to Grape Street to consistent design, all set between moulded terracotta pilasters. INTERIORS not inspected. Included primarily for the quality of its street facades, an exceptionally powerful work in Doll's typically bombastic idiom using fine terracotta."

## 2.3 Historic Development of Rooftop

In 1961 Planning consent was gained for a rooftop extension consisting of a single-storey mansard along the wing of the building facing onto Grape Street and West Central Street to the rear. Dormer casement windows were added to the front facade with a series of casement to the rear. This forms Flat 8.

Following planning consent in 1984 a further rooftop extension was added creating residential accommodation at fifth floor level. A two storey slate mansard was created along the Grape Street Facade with a further layer of dormer windows. The dormer windows to Grape Street were adjusted to incorporate a pitched roof capping. To the rear of the building facing West Central Street the services and circulation cores were continued up to the new floor level.

## 2.4 Planning Designations

Grape Street sits within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.  
Queen Alexandra Mansions is Grade II Listed.

### 3.0 Design

#### 3.1 The Proposal

The proposal is for the replacement of the current timber casement windows along the Grape Street mansard roof with closely matching timber double-glazed windows. The windows will be the same size and fit into the existing openings.

The windows sit in a series of pitched dormers and the existing timber facings are to be repaired and replaced as necessary and finished with exterior grade gloss paint to match the current finish.

The pair of glazed doors leading onto the balcony area at the top of the Grape Street bay are to be replaced. The proposed doors are to be widened and to include double-glazed sidelights to provide the appearance of a wider opening onto the balcony area. The dormer housing the doorway is to be rebuilt in matching materials and widened to accommodate the increased opening. A metal balustrade is to be installed inside the bay parapet to provide a 1.1m high fall restraint to the balcony.

An existing Velux roof window within the Grape Street mansard roof is to be replaced with a new matching Velux unit.

The existing casement windows to the West Central Street facing facade are to be replaced with closely matching double-glazed windows and fit into existing openings.

None of the adjustments are to areas of original building fabric. Flat 8 was a later extension to the building as described in 1.1 above.

#### 3.2 Existing Fenestration

The installation date of the current casement windows is not known but they match those installed at fifth floor level. As described in 2.3 above the fifth floor was added to the building in 1984 and the windows could date from this point onwards.

The windows and surrounding dormers are in a poor state of repair with a number of windows relying upon secondary glazing to the interior for weathertightness. The timber, particularly cills are deteriorating, and the window units are coming to the end of their lifespan despite continued redecoration works over the years.

The windows are not original to the building and relatively modern in relation to the historic fabric below.





Grape Street pitched dormer window





West Central Street casement windows (Fifth and Fourth Floor)

#### 4.0 Access

Access arrangements to Flat 8 remain as existing. There is a small passenger lift which gives access to the fourth floor accommodation.





View North along Grape Street with view of Mansard Roof and Dormer windows





View of Grape Street façade with bay on right-hand side

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View of West Central Street façade

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View of existing double-glazed casement window to be replaced





View of existing double-glazed doors to be replaced