

Planning, Heritage, Design and Access Statement

Site at:

7-10 Charlotte Mews

London

W1T 4EE

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1. Introduction

1.1 This statement is submitted on behalf of the owners of the land, Newforge Holdings Ltd, in support of a detailed planning application for:

- i) Replacement of window with doors in side elevation of No.9-10
- ii) Installation of steps from No.9-10 onto the roof of 7-8 Charlotte Mews
- iii) Erection of roof extension to provide staircase
- iv) Removal of 14 air conditioning units, relocating 2 existing units and installing 4 air conditioning units (net reduction of 10 units)
- v) Erection of acoustic screening and balustrading/guard rails on roof of 7-8 Charlotte Mews
- vi) Provision of a landscaped terrace on roof of No.7-8 Charlotte Mews

1.2 This statement describes the proposal in Section 2 and the site and surrounding area in Section 3. The Planning History of the site is briefly set out in Section 4 and Section 5 sets out the planning policy context. Section 6 assesses the planning merits of the proposal. A brief conclusion is included in Section 7.

2. Proposal

2.1 The application is being made as the property has recently been acquired by the applicant who wishes to undertake a co-ordinated upgrading of the building, making it fit for purpose and compliant with Building Control legislation. The objective behind the refurbishment is to attract tenants through comprehensive improvements to the building, both internally and externally. The building is currently vacant, as the previous tenants have vacated the building at the end of their leases.

2.2 There are a number of components to the proposal, as set out as follows:

New External Stairs and Staircase

- 2.3 The proposed stairs comprise a metal frame, with decking boards. It will have a small platform outside a set of doors that will replace existing windows in the side elevation of the third floor of No.9-10. The stairs will be located on top of the roof of No.7-8.
- 2.4 The existing windows are 'cittal' in their design and use of black coloured, metal material. These will be replaced with double doors using a matching 'cittal'-type design and use of materials.
- 2.5 In addition, the existing staircase within the building that leads to the top floor of No.7-8 will be increased by a flight of stairs so that there is a more appropriate and formalised access and egress to and from the roof. This area replaces the roof hatch and steps from the second floor. The staircase will have an enclosure which will appear as an extension to the roof and have a floor area of some 12 sq m. This will be finished in render painted dark blue.

Replacing air conditioning units

- 2.6 There are currently 18 air conditioning units on the top and side of the roof of No.7-8. These are mostly located towards the rear section of the building.
- 2.7 Two of the existing air conditioning units, located on the roof adjacent to the rear elevation will be retained, two units located on the roof towards the side elevation of No.9-10 will be set back closer towards the rear elevation and 14 other air conditioning units will be removed. In their place, 4 new air conditioning units, including acoustic enclosures/screens, will be located on the roof towards the rear elevation of the building.

- 2.8 The new air conditioning units will be manufactured by Daikin (or an equivalent spec). Details of the specification of the Daikin units are included with the application.

Erection of acoustic screening and balustrading/guard rails

- 2.9 The roof area is intended to be used as an outdoor, garden space for the occupiers of Nos.7-8 and the occupiers of the top floor of no.9-10. To help facilitate this, curved screening is proposed set in from the edges of three sides of the roof. This screening will take two forms: firstly, it will mostly comprise a metal 'mesh' type, curved screen of varying height; secondly, a 1.8m high solid metal privacy screen is proposed in a short section of the south west corner of the roof, which is intended to prevent intervisibility with windows in the nearby properties, in particularly those windows in No.26A Tottenham Street – which serves 3 flats. The screen will be coloured dark brass.
- 2.10 The guardrails located to the front and part side of the roof will be replaced with metal, black coloured, vertical rails. The remaining guardrails along the side and rear will be retained. These new guardrails will have a height of 1.1m above the level of the roof.

Landscaping and the use of the roof as a terrace

- 2.11 The roof area will have an area of decking, comprising composite boarding material. The area mostly on the outer sides of the screen will have landscaping – to provide biodiversity measures, to promote ecology, and to provide an appropriate setting for the roof terrace.
- 2.12 There will be some seating provided within the structures of the staircase and screens along with other areas of planting.
- 2.13 Submitted with the planning application are the following drawings and documents:

- X001-P02 - Site Location Plan
- X002-P02 - Existing Second Floor Plan
- X003-P03 - Existing Third Floor Plan
- X004-P02 - Existing Front Elevation
- X005-P03 - Existing Side Elevation
- X006-P02 - Existing Rear Elevation
- P001-P02 - Proposed Second Floor Plan
- P002-P02 - Proposed Third Floor Plan
- P003-P02 - Proposed Roof Plan
- P004-P02 - Proposed Section AA
- P005-P02 - Proposed Front Elevation
- P006-P01 - Proposed Side Elevation
- P007-P01 - Proposed Rear Elevation
- P008-P02 - Proposed Section BB
- P009-P02 - Proposed Section CC
- Noise Assessment
- Specifications of the Air Conditioning Units: 2No Daikin REYQ96MTJU (1242+1242 x D767 x H1694) and 2No Daikin REYQ72MTJU (920+920 x D767 x H1694)
- Photograph of the Air Conditioning Unit
- Picture of the Air Conditioning Unit Screen
- Fire Strategy – Reasonable Exemption Statement
- Site Photographs

3. Site and Surrounding Area

3.1 The application site comprises two adjoining buildings Nos.7-8 and Nos.9-10 Charlotte Mews. Up until recently these buildings have been subdivided vertically and horizontally into office/studio space. The buildings are now vacant. They both have 'industrial' appearances and were probably built in the late mid-late 19th

Century. There is a central door at ground level leading to a core stairwell serving both properties.

- 3.2 No.7-8 is a three storey building. It has a ground floor window display either side of a central entrance, with the two upper floors finished in brick, with crittal-type windows, and a flat roof. On the roof and side elevation of the roof (i.e. above floor 2nd level) there are two roof lanterns, a roof hatch (providing ladder access to the roof from the stairwell in No.7-8), an enclosed water tank, t.v. aerial, satellite dish, guardrails along the roof parapet and 18 No. air conditioning units. On the side elevation of the roof (in addition to the units) there is a metal external staircase.
- 3.3 No.9-10 is a four storey building. It has a street level window display either side of a main entrance, with the upper floors finished in painted brickwork. It too has 'crittal-type' windows, set within the reveal. It has a gently sloping roof behind parapets to the front and side. At third storey level, two windows are located in its side elevation that look onto the roof of No.7-8.
- 3.4 Views of the roof of 7-8 Charlotte Mews are hidden from street level and public vantage points. This is due to the limited width of the Mews, the height of the building, the heights of surrounding buildings and the narrow and covered entrances at either end of Charlotte Mews – with access from Tottenham Street and Chitty Street.
- 3.5 The buildings to the south (fronting Tottenham Street) and east (fronting Whitfield Street) rise above the application property and are mostly in use as offices. No.26A Tottenham Street is located to the south-west of the application site, at the end of these office buildings and this accommodates 3 flats. Opposite, on the other side of Charlotte Mews, are a combination of 2, 3 and 4 story buildings in use for offices and residential purposes.
- 3.6 From the roof of No.7-8 the roofs of other nearby buildings are visible. There is an eclectic mix of air conditioning units, private gardens/terraces, balustrades, and

different roof treatments visible, which combine to make up the prevailing roof scape of the immediate area. Photographs are included with this submission to show the roof areas of the application roof and the roofs of a number of these other buildings.

3.7 The application site falls within the Charlotte Street Conservation Area, although the building itself is not a designated heritage asset. There are two listed buildings close to the application site:

- i) Nos.24-26 Tottenham Street are Grade II listed. They are former terraced houses (now offices) constructed in the late 18th Century. They are 4 storeys in height with a basement, and constructed using multi coloured stock brick and stucco ground and first floors on their front elevation.
- ii) No.28 Tottenham Street is Grade II listed. It is a 4 storey terraced house (now offices) constructed using yellow stock brick.

3.8 As set out in the Conservation Area Appraisal, the conservation area's spatial character derives from the densely developed grid pattern of streets and limited open space. Development is predominantly four storeys and set back from the street by a small basement area creating a strong sense of enclosure. The sense of enclosure is intensified on narrower streets.

3.9 The general street pattern within the area stems from the mid to late 18th Century with long streets and shorter cross streets. Underlying this pattern is a secondary system of narrower mews streets where the scale of buildings tends to drop providing a more intimate, close knit urban grain and context. The Appraisal makes reference to the Mews as *"quiet streets characterised by narrow entrances, sometimes beneath buildings, shared, generally cobbled surfaces and a range of commercial uses within former mews properties or subsequent 19th century workshop buildings"*.

3.10 The application site is located on one of these Mews Streets, which has a combination of 2, 3 and 4 storey buildings. These buildings appear to have been constructed in piecemeal fashion, they are located at the back edge of the highway. The street is surfaced mostly with cobbles and stone setts. The significance of this part of the conservation area derives from the more intimate, close knit urban grain, with buildings of a lesser scale than the surrounding streets, on plots that would have functioned as secondary 'backland' locations for the residential and commercial uses on the primary roads along Whitfield Street and Charlotte Street. No.9-10 is considered within the Appraisal as making a positive contribution towards the significance of the conservation area. No.7-8 has a more diminutive scale than No.9-10, but by reason of its scale, location, design and appearance it has a neutral-positive impact upon the significance of the conservation area.

4. Planning History

4.1 Planning permission was granted in 1997 (under ref: PS9704248R1) for a third floor extension to the roof of 7-8 Charlotte Mews, to add an additional storey to the building for office purposes. The extension was designed with a mansard roof.

5. Planning Policy Context

5.1 The Development Plan comprises the Camden Local Plan 2017 and the London Plan 2021.

5.2 The application site falls within the Charlotte Street Conservation Area. The Charlotte Street Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan was adopted in 2008.

5.3 Policies in Chapter 6 of the Local Plan set out the Council's approach towards 'Amenity'. Chapter 7 of the Local Plan applies to design and heritage. Section 8 seeks to encourage development to adopt sustainable design and the principles of adapting to climate change.

- 5.4 Policy E1 of the Local Plan seeks to support the provision of additional employment and other benefits.
- 5.5 The application site also falls within the Charlotte Street Character Area of the Fitzrovia Area Action Plan 2014.
- 5.6 Camden Planning Guidance (CPG) on Design, Amenity and Energy Efficiency and Adaptation (2021) sets out the local planning authority's approach to new design, the provision of roof terraces and building services equipment.
- 5.7 The application site is within the "Parliament Hill oak tree to Palace of Westminster" Protected Vista.
- 5.8 The application site falls within the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) as set out in the London Plan 2021.
- 5.9 Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the (listed) building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses.
- 5.10 Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the decision maker to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.11 Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to achieve good design in new development. Paragraph 130 sets out the components of good design.

5.12 Section 16 of the NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment. Paragraph 199 requires the decision maker to consider the significance of a designated heritage asset and to give great weight to the asset's conservation.

6. Planning Merits

6.1 The key issues to consider are:

- i) the principle of the proposed development
- ii) the impact of the development on the designated heritage assets
- iii) the impact upon residential and local amenity
- iv) sustainable design/sustainability and climate change
- v) conclusion

i) Principle of development

6.2 Under current market conditions, the application has been submitted to seek to improve the existing working and operational environment for new tenants - by providing refurbished and up-to-date floorspace, layouts and working environments. Such investment and up-dating working environments have become key factors in post-COVID commercial property.

6.3 Retaining small to medium sized floor space has Development Plan support. The existing floor space is vacant and is important therefore for the applicant to ensure that the building and the individual letting areas meet the current and future requirements of new potential tenants.

6.4 The proposed roof terrace area, the air conditioning units and the associated development required to provide this amenity and function for the buildings will result in an important contribution towards enhancing the existing working environment. This will help to promote the employment and additional employment benefits sought under Policy E1 of the Local Plan. In addition, the provision of

landscaping and measures to enhance biodiversity are supported, as are the benefits of the scheme to remove outdated and inefficient air conditioning units and to replace them with more energy efficient and less polluting alternatives.

6.5 As such, there is 'in principle' policy support for the proposal. The key issues are the effects and impacts of the proposal.

ii) Impact upon the designated heritage assets

6.6 It is important to give great weight to conserving the designated heritage assets. The application buildings are not listed. The nearest listed buildings are located at Nos.24 and 26 Tottenham Street and No.28 Tottenham Street.

6.7 The proposal will lead to a net reduction in the number of air conditioning units on the roof (from 18 to 8). The location of the new units will be further from the street level of Charlotte Mews and further from the nearest listed building in Tottenham Street. The new units will be positioned towards the rear of the roof area, screened and within a discreet location. The scale and extent of the proposed plant would appear as subordinate to the host building.

6.8 The proposed staircase extension and the new external stairs would be some distance from the listed buildings; and, in addition, the proposed acoustic covers, the privacy screens along with the intended landscaping on and around them would provide a more pleasing intervisibility between the windows of the listed buildings and the existing air conditioning units and the other building services' paraphernalia located on the existing roof.

6.9 The submitted drawings demonstrate that there will be a suitable separation and orientation between the proposed units and the nearest listed building to avoid being overbearing or having any other dominant or intrusive impacts. In view of the scale, location, screening and landscaping it is considered that there will be a neutral/enhancing impact upon the setting of the nearest listed buildings.

- 6.10 The proposed mechanical plant and their screens would not be visible from the street, as demonstrated by the submitted Section Drawings. The top section of the staircase extension, landscaping and the replacement balustrade railings could be visible from the street – although these would only be glimpsed and would not appear prominent or otherwise conspicuous in the street scene.
- 6.11 It is considered that the proposal would not affect the form, design and appearance of the application property, it would preserve the visual quality of the street scene and the prevailing character and appearance of the Charlotte Street Conservation Area, and would have a neutral impact upon the setting of the nearest listed buildings.
- 6.12 As such, the proposal is considered to meet the statutory requirements of the Principal 1990 Act.
- 6.13 As an additional consideration, the approved mansard roof on top of No.7-8 was granted at a time when Sections 66 and 72 of the Principal 1990 Act were statutorily required to be taken into account by the decision-maker. In other words, the impact of that development needed to have been assessed against the significance of the conservation area and listed buildings. This required level of assessment has not changed over the intervening years. It is considered that the current proposal is a significant improvement and would have a far less of an impact than the 1997 approved scheme.
- iii) Residential and local amenity
- 6.14 The application is accompanied by an acoustic report that demonstrates the proposed units/plant along with the acoustic screens will comply with Camden Council's noise standards. As a safeguard, a condition can be attached to ensure that the external noise emitted from the proposed machinery shall be lower than the lowest background level to ensure that there would be no adverse impacts to

adjoining residential occupiers. At present, the existing air conditioning units are not restricted by planning conditions, and so it is considered that the proposal would result in a net benefit (in terms of noise rating levels and in the number and type of units) to those occupiers of surrounding buildings.

6.15 It is demonstrated that the proposed air conditioning units will not only be sensitive to the proximity of the nearest residential units at 26a Tottenham Street, but would also be sensitive to those offices to the south and east of the roof of the application building. In addition, the proposed screens, privacy screens and landscaping will prevent the visibility of these new units.

6.16 The proposed works also create the opportunity to provide a pleasant garden environment for the occupiers of the buildings. It is important that the privacy screens prevent intervisibility. These are designed well and located inside the edges of the roof to avoid bearing overbearing and to help provide a visual amenity and benefit to those adjacent occupiers. A section of the privacy screen is proposed to be solid to remove any opportunities of intervisibility with the flats in Tottenham Street located to the south west. The submitted Section Drawings demonstrate that people on the roof and within the garden area will not be visible. As a result there will not be any adverse levels of overlooking or loss of privacy for the occupiers of adjacent properties.

iv) Sustainable Design/Sustainability and Climate Change

6.17 In carrying out a refurbishment of the buildings, in bringing the buildings up to the standards of achieving market-leading working accommodation and to meet the latest building and fire regulations, the proposal includes a positive approach towards sustainability and climate change, as set out below.

6.18 The proposal would result in a net reduction of 10 air conditioning units on the roof. The proposed units will be new, more efficient (they are Daikin R32s) and less noisy.

- 6.19 The refurbishment of the building includes the removal of all gas installations
- 6.20 The current EPC rating is C6 – with the proposed EPC rating being the top end of B, and maybe an A rating.
- 6.21 All lighting is to be replaced with LED lights.
- 6.22 Hot water will be provided through localised water ‘instantaneous’ heaters.
- 6.23 The flat roof of No.7-8 is to be insulated.
- 6.24 Landscaping is proposed on the roof through potted plants and climbers – which would provide a net gain in biodiversity and provide opportunities for improving the local ecology.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 No.7-8 Charlotte Mews is not recognised as a building of individual merit within the conservation area (whereas No.9-10 is recognised as such). The proposal seeks to make changes to the existing fabric of the building and will remove some poorly designed and ad hoc additions to the roof of No.7-8 to replace these with a roof garden and fewer, more efficient and more discreet air conditioning units.
- 7.2 The proposal is well designed and seeks to provide a new access to the roof via a set of stairs leading from the top floor of no.9-10 and to replace the existing access at the top of the stairs of no.7-8 through the provision of a new flight of stairs and an extension to the roof. Other elements are proposed including screening, balustrades and landscaping to provide a garden area for the occupiers of the offices/studios within the buildings.
- 7.3 The proposal has been carefully considered and proposed to take into account the sensitivity of the location in the conservation area and close to listed buildings,

residential units and offices. Considerable weight should be given to the desire to preserve the special interest of heritage assets. It is considered that the application proposal has a neutral effect on the setting of the Grade II listed buildings and thus meets the statutory requirement of Section 66 of the Above 1990 Act. It is also considered that the application proposal has components that enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and other components that preserve. As such, it is considered that the statutory requirements of S72 of the above 1990 Act are met.

- 7.4 Should officers of the local planning authority consider that there is less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets, it is considered that the combination of the positive and public benefits of the proposal should be considered to outweigh the level of harm, assessed in the planning balance.
- 7.5 The proposal addresses the likely impact upon the occupiers of the immediate living and working environments through safeguarding against noise impacts, intervisibility, overlooking and loss of privacy – whilst at the same time providing a landscaped setting to development on the roof, and its use.
- 7.6 It is considered that the proposal would meet the employment, sustainability and biodiversity objectives of the development plan and associated guidance, whilst safeguarding the immediate built, living and working environments.
- 7.7 The application proposal seeks to deliver a number of benefits to new tenants including refurbished working areas, energy efficiency, safer working environments and heat saving measures for better and safer working conditions, and overall, a more attractive working location.
- 7.8 The proposal represents a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to improving and retaining the attractiveness of the internal working areas and the external appearance of the building.

7.9 The proposed works will improve the working environments of the occupiers of the application building and enable them to be more 'fit for purpose' especially with the change in demand for working areas, in the post COVID restrictions era.