

Design and Access and Heritage Statement for a planning permission and Listed Building Consent application for the change of use of the first floor of 161 Whitfield Street, London, W1T 5ET, from Class E to C3.

Heritage

161 Whitfield Street was built around 1780 and formed part of the Fitzroy Market. The building was listed Grade II in 1974 for group value with 159 Whitfield Street and 15 Warren Street. Fitzroy Market comprised of a run of houses and shopfronts from 135 to 161 Whitfield Street. Many of the shop fronts in the Fitzroy Market had no glass. Timber panels were folded down during opening hours to create display tables.

By the 1960's the buildings that made up the west side of Whitfield Street between Grafton Way and Warren Street were in poor condition. In the 1960's and early 1970's the older houses in Fitzrovia were being demolished to make way for new office developments. The conservation lobby were keen to preserve as many of the older houses as possible to retain the character of the area. Listing buildings for group value preserved the facades and prevented demolition without consent.

The original buildings from 131 to 161 Whitfield Street were listed in 1974. The buildings were in a bad state of repair. Following the collapse of a facade in the 1970's the Council granted consent for the demolition of 139 to 157 Whitfield Street. In the 1980's the former houses at 139 and 141 were redeveloped as a private block of flats and 143 to 157 was redeveloped as flats for the Circle 33 housing association.

The mock Georgian facades of 139 to 157 Whitfield Street have lost the originality of the former buildings. The later redevelopment of the north side of Warren Street in the late 1980's for the housing association is much better, the original facades having been retained and repaired.

161 Whitfield Street has original repaired and extended front and back facades, a C20 ground and basement rear extension, replacement sashes and a C20 roof addition. There is no original plaster work or period detail.

The granting of planning permission for a hairdressing salon on the first floor of the building resulted in alterations to the staircase. The hairdresser required the street door to the building to be left open during the day. To preserve some security for the flats on the second and third floors a door and partition was installed at first floor level on the staircase.

## Planning history

In 1962 permission was refused for the change of use of the first floor to a hairdressing salon. Although there is no reference on the data base, this decision was later changed, and the hairdressing use permitted. A local barber who had had a salon on Tottenham Court Road had been evicted. The local community were keen to help him find an alternative premises. Although not very suitable he set up shop on the first floor of 161 Whitfield Street.

In 1963 permission was granted for use of the basement for storage and in 1967 permission was granted for a rear addition. In 1989 the hairdresser retired, and the freeholder sought permission for a change of use of the first floor from A1 to B1. This was refused.

In 1990 permission was granted for new railings at street level and a new door to 161. The new door and entrance railings were installed. In 1997 and 1998 applications were made for a roof addition to 161, both applications were refused, but permission was granted on appeal and the extension was built.

In 2008, following the residential leaseholder's buyout of the freehold, a planning application was made to reinstate 159 and 161 Whitfield Street and 15 Warren Street as three separate buildings. Permission was granted but the agreement of the ground floor tenant, who has floor space in all three buildings, was not forthcoming and this permission was not implemented.

## Access

The first floor of 161 Whitfield Street is accessed by the common single stair that serves the second floor flat and the third floor maisonette. This compromises the means of escape from the upper floors. The change of use of the first floor to residential will comply with building regulation means of escape requirements. No physical alterations are proposed to the existing access to the building.

## Change of use of the first floor from Class E to C3.

The change of use of the first floor to residential will correct the unusual first floor shop/commercial use and normalise the arrangement to match the buildings at 159 Whitfield Street and 15 Warren Street. No physical changes to the first floor layout are proposed, the existing layout having an adequate shower room and kitchen.

Steven Pollock Architects

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