

**STRATAGEM  
PLANNING  
CONSULTANTS\_**

# **Pre-application Planning Statement\_**

**Proposed rooftop extension at Embassy  
House, West End Lane, West Hampstead  
NW6 2NA**

March 2024

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicant, Joe Griffin of London Penthouse Ltd, in support of his application for a proposed scheme of development ("the Proposal") at Embassy House, West Hampstead ("the Site").
- 1.2 This document should be read in conjunction with the drawings and Design and Access Statement produced by Douglas and King Architects.
- 1.3 Stratagem Planning Consultants have been appointed by Mr Griffin to work with Douglas and King in the preparation of this application.
- 1.4 Stratagem principal, Dr Mark Matheson, M.A. (Planning and Sustainability), MRTPI, is a Chartered Town Planner with extensive experience of development management gained through working at three London local planning authorities and for over 10 years in private practice as a planning consultant.

## 2. Site Description

- 2.1 The Site is situated on the corner of West End Lane and Cleve Road, just south of West Hampstead station and designated Town Centre.
- 2.2 The Existing Building is a brick 1930s apartment block surrounded by Victorian and Edwardian housing of various typologies. The buildings on the opposite side of West End Lane are predominantly four storey Victorian terraces. Directly opposite the Site is St James Mansions, a distinguished Edwardian mansion block over four storeys. Adjacent are Victorian houses over 2/3 storeys. In keeping with the nature of the major road on which they are sited, all of the buildings are imposing in scale.
- 2.3 On Cleve Road, the substantial houses are detached and up to four storeys, often with attics and some raised basements.
- 2.4 The Existing Building houses 71 flats over five storeys, with four stair cores and three lifts. It sits within communal gardens and an area of plantings and has a flat roof and raised parapet.
- 2.5 The Existing Building is not listed but is within the South Hampstead Conservation Area ("the CA"). The CA's Character Appraisal and Management Strategy dated February 2011 assesses Embassy House as a neutral building thus making neither a positive nor negative contribution to the CA. The document's section 5.9 (Mansion Blocks) makes no reference to Embassy House although it does identify and discuss other mansion blocks on West End Lane.
- 2.6 The PTAL rating is 6a meaning that public transport provision is excellent.

- 2.7 The Site is located within the Fortune Green and West Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan (“the Neighbourhood Plan”) area. The Neighbourhood Plan does not mention Embassy House. The Neighbourhood Plan endorses broad principles of good contextual design and notes that mansion blocks within the Neighbourhood Plan area “*tend to be four, five or six storeys in height*”.
- 2.8 The Site is close to, but not within, the West Hampstead “Town Centre’ and West Hampstead ‘Growth Area’.

### 3. Planning History

- 3.1 There are various planning applications relating to trees and minor alterations.
- 3.2 It is noted that permission has been granted for flats to alter windows and update with new uPVC window of a different style to the original.
- 3.3 It was noted in an Officer’s Report dated 3 March 2016 (2015/6486/P) that 50% of the windows had been replaced with uPVC windows and that as a result this particular application for such windows was granted.
- 3.4 The applicant submitted an application for pre-application advice and received a written response dated 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022. Subsequently, the scheme was taken to Design Review. Following site and round table meetings on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2023, written feedback was received from the Design Review panel. Both the pre-app response and Design Review report have informed significant amendments to the scheme.

### 4. The Proposal

- 4.1 The Applicant’s Proposal is to construct a rooftop extension to provide an additional storey.
- 4.2 The Proposal would provide six residential units on the additional floor each having two bedrooms. Each apartment would benefit from a private outdoor terrace.
- 4.3 The existing lifts would be extended to reach the new floor.
- 4.4 The Proposal is set out in detail in the Design and Access Statement submitted in support of this application.
- 4.5 In addition to the above works, substantial works are proposed to renovate and enhance the existing building, which is now around 90 years old and requiring considerable investment.
- 4.6 The precise details of the works carried out will be agreed in consultation with the leaseholders. The applicants wrote to all leaseholders setting out suggested works. A

copy of this letter is submitted in support of this application. Where planning permission is required for these works it will be applied for separately.

- 4.7 Five responses were received to the leaseholder engagement exercise. These focused on requests for clarification that the applicant would be paying for the proposed works (which they will be) and some requests for additional items not included in the list on the letter.

## 5. Planning Policy Context

- 5.1 There is a suite of planning policy documents against which the application will be assessed.
- 5.2 At national level the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023)** sets out the key strategic policies against which development management decisions must be made.
- 5.3 At regional level the policies in the **London Plan 2021** and supporting guidance documentation are a material consideration.
- 5.4 At local level, relevant policy is contained in the **Camden Local Plan 2017**.
- 5.5 There are also several Camden Planning Guidance documents relevant to this application.

## 6. Land use and Principle of Development

- 6.1 The Site is and always has been in a C3 Residential Use Class.
- 6.2 Given the severe and long-standing shortage of housing in London, which has now developed into a severe housing crisis, planning policy at all levels seeks to promote and support housing development.
- 6.3 **Paragraph 38 of the NPPF** states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 6.4 **Paragraph 60 of the NPPF** says that to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can "come forward where it is needed".
- 6.5 **LB Camden Local Plan 2017's Policy H1 Maximising housing supply** aims to exceed a target of 11,130 additional homes from 2016/17 - 2030/31.

- 6.6 **Policy H1 of the London Plan 'Increasing Housing Supply'** sets new targets for individual London boroughs. The target set by the London Plan 2021 for Camden is 10,380 homes per year to 2028/29.
- 6.7 In order to achieve this target, the council expects maximum provision of housing on underused sites. This site has the potential to provide more residential accommodation and is appropriate for increased density given its location and the character of the area.
- 6.8 Camden's **Local Plan Policy H7 Large and Small Homes** discusses dwelling size priorities and notes that for market housing the highest priority units are 2- and 3-bedroom units. All the proposed units have two bedrooms and therefore fall within one of the highest priority dwelling sizes.
- 6.9 According to the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) data published January 2022 Camden had met only 76% of its housing requirement during the year 2021. As a result, the borough was required to identify a buffer of additional sites for housing. The most recent HDT data, published December 2023, indicated that the borough met only 69% of its housing target during the year 2022 which means that the borough is subject to the most severe penalty of being in "presumption".

## 7. Design and Heritage

- 7.1 **Policy H2 Small Sites of the London Plan 2021** states that:

*Boroughs should (inter alia) recognise in their Development Plans that local character evolves over time and will need to change in appropriate locations to accommodate additional housing on small sites.*

- 7.2 The existing building is identified as being of 'neutral' value to the Conservation Area, in contrast with the vast majority of buildings in the CA and all of the buildings immediately surrounding the existing building, which are identified as 'positive'. It is further noted that, despite being uncharacteristic, approximately 50% of the windows in the Existing Building have been allowed to be altered to uPVC, either expressly through the grant of planning permission, or by a failure to take enforcement action.
- 7.3 LB Camden's **Policy D1 Design** seeks to ensure the highest standards of development in Camden, and this Proposal introduces an attractive new element to the Existing Building.
- 7.4 The design of the scheme has undergone a number of iterations. The current scheme has been informed by advice received both at pre-app and at Design Review. The architects have aimed to create a scheme which is understated, reticent, and which reflects both the materiality and articulation of the host building.
- 7.5 The principal material of the extension will be brick, laid in a Flemish bond. The windows have a horizontal emphasis, reflecting those of the host building.

- 7.6 Access decks have been introduced on the courtyard side of the building, allowing an enhanced internal layout and reducing the visual bulk of the new storey. The treatment of the balcony enclosures has been amended to provide attractive, but understated, metal detailing.
- 7.7 The architectural approach is set out in detail in the Design and Access Statement.

## 8.0 Amenity and impact of the development

- 8.1 The apartments comply with Nationally Described Space Standards and with the guidance in paragraph **7.32 of the Local Plan** under **Design of housing**.
- 8.2 **Paragraph 135 (f) of the NPPF** requires that planning decisions should ensure that developments “*create places...with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users*”. The new apartments will benefit from panoramic views, particularly towards the south, and abundant light. The orientation of the building is such that all flats would benefit from sunlight and this proposed new top floor would enjoy abundant and unimpeded natural light. All units will be dual aspect.
- 8.3 A daylight and sunlight study has been carried out to assess the impact of the development on neighbouring occupiers. This is submitted in support of this application and concludes that the proposed development is compliant with both the BRE guidance and with the Council’s policy in relation to daylight and sunlight.
- 8.4 The sustainable location and high PTAL mean that the transport impacts are negligible. No parking is proposed on site, and the development would be car free.
- 8.5 No impacts in relation to privacy are anticipated.
- 8.6 The applicant notes the requirement in Policy A2 concerning provision and enhancement in relation to open space in the borough. It would not be possible to provide public open space within the site and accordingly the applicant is in agreement to providing a financial contribution in relation to open space enhancements.
- 8.6 This is an ideal development site in the terms set out in **Policy A1 Managing the impact of development**.

## 9.0 Sustainability

- 9.1 Douglas and King Architects place sustainability at the heart of their design approach, reflecting its emphasis within the planning system.

- 9.2 The materials used would as far as possible be obtained from sustainable sources and would be durable, minimising the need for replacement and repair.
- 9.3 The envelope of the extension would be highly insulated thereby minimising the energy consumption of the building.
- 9.4 An Energy and Sustainability Statement dated 31.1.24 has been prepared by Stroma and is submitted in support of this application.

## **10. Conclusion**

- 10.1 This Planning Statement has set out the ways in which the principle and design of the proposed development has been informed by reference to relevant planning policy and a careful analysis of the existing built context. The design of this building is sympathetic and attractive.
- 10.2 Through pre-application and Design Review the applicant has sought to engage constructively with the LPA in order to produce the current scheme which is the culmination of a long process of engagement and design development.