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Refurbishment and repairs at
45 Great Ormond Street, London WC1N 3HZ

Design and Access Statement



SUMMARY

This application seeks permission for Refurbishment and repairs of a listed house which has suffered neglect for several years.

The 3 flats had been leased from 1974 to a 3rd party as private residential and the Charity acquired the leases in 2017 when the occupant died. The Charity already owned the freehold and already occupied and used the ground floor and basement for quite some time. The flats were used as private residential to 2017, but were then purchased by the charity with the intention of using as either staff or parent accommodation, but have been uninhabited for the last 7 years, since 2017.

SETTING

The house is a four-storey building with a basement within a continuous Georgian terrace and sits within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area established in 1984. The house is Grade II listed, part of a group of terraced houses (Nos.41-61 (Odd) and attached railings) built between c1704-08.

The front elevation is of brick construction with rendered ground floor. The windows are painted timber sashes. The earlier C19 shopfront features Corinthian pilasters carrying entablature with dentil cornice. The rear elevation features plain brickwork with painted timber sashes. The rear four-storey closet is original to the building and is finished with a flat roof terrace accessed from the top floor back room. The mansard roof is covered with clay tiles. There are two small dormers at the front (not visible from the street) and a larger dormer at the rear with a set of windows and doors opening onto the rear terrace.

Internally, the building retains much of its original features and layout and the original floor plan is still legible.

No 45 is currently arranged as offices on the basement and ground floor levels with individual one-bed flats on the first, second and third floor levels.

The house has been vacant for several years and is now in need of repairs, general refurbishment and thermal efficiency upgrade. The intention is to bring the property back in use, restore its original appearance and interior features and improve the overall carbon footprint.



Aerial view

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

2018/2036/L Refurbishment of common areas and flats on first, second and third floors including fire protection upgrades, WITHDRAWN

This application was on hold for some time (and later withdrawn) as the Local Authority Conservation team had reservations on the insertion of proposed lobbies and the proposed fire precautions. Roger Mears Architects were appointed after this and we worked with the client to develop a fire strategy which is now more in keeping with the heritage of the building.

RELEVANT POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023

Development Plan

The Development Plan is comprised of the London Plan 2021 and Camden Local Plan 2017. The following policies of the Development Plan are considered relevant to this application:

The London Plan 2021

- Policy GC2 Making the best use of land
- Policy GC4 Delivering the homes Londoners need
- Policy D1 London forms, character and capacity for growth
- Policy D3 Optimising site capacity through the design-led approach
- Policy D4 Delivering good design
- Policy D5 Inclusive design

Camden Local Plan 2017

- Policy D1 Design
- Policy D2 Heritage
- Policy CC1 Climate change mitigation
- Policy CC2 Adapting to climate change

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) or Documents (SPD)

For ease of reference a list of the currently adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance / Documents (SPGs / SPDs) to the Development Plan and also council guidance notes which are relevant to this site is provided below:

- * Camden Planning Guidance (CPG)
- * Bloomsbury Conservation Area appraisal and management strategy
- * Planning frameworks and briefs

PROPOSED ALTERATIONS

Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in everyday use and as yet undiscovered, undesignated buried remains of archaeological interest.

In the case of buildings, generally, the risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time. In the case of archaeological sites, many have no active use, and so for those kinds of sites, periodic changes may not be necessary, though ongoing management remains important.

Where changes are proposed, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out a clear framework for both plan-making and decision-making in respect of applications for planning permission and listed building consent to ensure that heritage assets are conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner that is consistent with their significance and thereby achieving sustainable development. Part of the public value of heritage assets is the contribution that they can make to understanding and interpreting our past.

The property is a Grade II listed building within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. In considering whether to grant planning permission or listed building consent, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires decision-makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building, its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses; and to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

The proposed external alterations are very limited and are considered to have a neutral to low beneficial impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. These include:

- 1) Local repairs to the front parapet, which appears to be leaning inwards, on a like-for-like basis and to the existing roof on a like-for-like basis.

Structural repairs will be carried out as per structural engineer design and specifications. Proposed repairs are overall considered to have a positive impact on the significance of the listed building and on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The interior retains much of the original features. However, the rooms are in a poor state with old finishes and fittings, redundant wiring and plumbing. The original joinery, where surviving, requires repair and redecoration. Proposed internal works will mostly involve an overall refurbishment and upgrade of the existing building at all levels.

- 2) Structural repairs to the existing floor structure and staircase

The building is generally in sound condition, however, some settlement of the staircase core and sagging to some of the floor structure have been observed and require further investigation. Any work required to repair and strengthen the existing floor and stairs

structure will be carried out as per structural engineer design and specifications (see specialist report and drawings for more information)

3) Fire strategy

A preliminary fire strategy has been prepared and agreed in principle with Building Control at this stage: all walls, doors, and ceilings will be upgraded as noted on the drawings.

4) Thermal upgrade

The buildings is of traditional masonry and timber construction, with solid brick walls and foundations, single-glazed sash windows, timber-framed cold roofs with lead and tiled roofs. There is no wall insulation and it is likely there is no ground-floor insulation. If there is attic insulation it is likely to be significantly below modern standards. The winter thermal performance of the building as existing is likely to be poor, with high heat loss and correspondingly high utility bills and carbon footprint. The building is considered at lower risk of overheating.

No internal or external insulation is proposed to the walls to avoid any loss of architectural details.

Sound insulation will be installed between ceiling joists to improve acoustic and thermal performance.

The roof will be insulated at attic level and ventilation provided through vent tiles. These will be similar in size, materials and colours to the original roof tiles, minimising any potential visual impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset and on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Existing windows are of historic and architectural significance and highly contribute to the significance of the designated heritage asset. All the windows will therefore be retained, repaired and draught proofed and sympathetically designed operable secondary glazing will be installed internally.

5) New services throughout

New heating system will consist of a heat source pump installed within the rear courtyard, with no impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and a minimum impact on the significance of the listed building. The noise has been assessed and the equipment will be enclosed in a suitable acoustic enclosure. This is likely to result in a very low level of less than substantial harm due to the visual impact on the listed building. This solution, however, is completely reversible and would considerably reduce the carbon footprint of the building, resulting in some public benefit. Internal units will consist of either traditional radiators or fan-driven radiators as per specialist design, fitted in discreet locations.

The building will be rewired and new consumer units and meters will be located within cupboards inside the flats, with new circuits to new accessories (sockets etc.) and high-efficiency LED lighting which meets the requirements of the refurbishment. Emergency lighting is proposed throughout.

6) Conservation

All the original features, including panelling, cornices, skirting boards, historic doors and cupboards, floorboards, staircase, balusters and railing, will be retained and sympathetically repaired or reinstated where missing or heavily altered.

Joinery will be repaired on a like-for-like basis as required. Modern doors will be replaced with new fire-rated doors as per the door schedule report and specification, of a traditional design appropriate to the age of the property.

7) New fittings

New sanitaryware and kitchen units will be installed within the existing connections. Floor and wall finishes will be installed. Existing panelling, where existing, will be retained behind the new finishes.

RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES

The proposals will not affect the neighbours residential amenities.

PRIVACY

The flat roof at third floor is already in use as a terrace. No change is proposed to current arrangement.

SUSTAINABILITY

Section 2 and 14 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 state that 'The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

The design also adopts measures for energy efficiency and carbon reduction as per policies CC1 Climate change mitigation and CC2 Adapting to climate change of the Camden Local Plan.

- The existing windows will be overhauled, repaired and draught-proofed and fitted with secondary glazing to improve energy efficiency.
- Breathable insulation will be added wherever possible.
- New efficiently improved heating system will be installed to each residential unit.
- New energy efficient LED lights will be installed as part of the works to the electric system.

The impact on significance of these measures is discussed in the heritage impact statement.

Please also see the sustainability section in the Heritage report. Please also see the attached sustainability consultant's report.

ACCESS STATEMENT

No change is proposed to the current access to the building.

PLANNING BALANCE FOR PROPOSED ALTERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework

In considering proposals, the local authority has a duty to take into account the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 and 66 require the local authority to have special regard to the preservation of listed buildings, including their settings.

The Courts have held that harm to listed buildings should be given great weight and importance in planning decisions. This is supported by national policy in the NPPF that requires that 'great weight' be given to the preservation of listed buildings, including their setting. Where harm is found to be caused by a development proposal affecting a listed building or its setting, planning permission / listed building consent is granted if the development's public benefits would significantly and demonstrably outweigh that harm.

The NPPF differentiates between what is known as “substantial harm” (which would completely remove the reason for designation or come very close to doing so – paragraph 207) and “less than substantial harm” (any harm below the “substantial” threshold). Paragraph 208 relates to “less than substantial harm”. This requires any harm identified to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Paragraph 212 of NPPF is also relevant because it encourages local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas to enhance or better reveal the significance of heritage assets.

Section 72 of the Act also requires that for development proposals within conservation areas, special attention be paid to the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of that conservation area. As the proposed development is within a conservation area, this statutory provision is engaged. The legislation and NPPF also require that ‘great weight’ be given to the preservation of conservation areas, including their setting.

A clear assessment of significance of each area undergoing change and the impact of proposals is included in the Heritage Impact statement.

Heritage Benefits

Heritage Impact statement clearly demonstrates that most of the proposals range from a neutral impact to medium/ High Beneficial impact. A summary is given below.

- The most important public benefits are the retention of the listed building in its historic residential use and the reinstatement of its original state but with improvement.
- The proposed conservation to the front parapet and roof and the sash window repairs are all clear benefits. The front elevation to the Site is of particular significance, and these works will each contribute to preserve the special interest of the listed building and enhance the character and appearance the Conservation Area.
- This work will result in bringing a derelict property into good repair, and back into its original use.

Internally, numerous benefits are proposed, many conserving and repairing damaged heritage value items, and some minor alterations which have the over-arching benefit of ensuring that the building remains suitable for modern living. Listed buildings need to be respected when undergoing such adaptation and a conservation approach is proposed. The proposed alterations are proportionate, careful and in keeping with the building’s character and special interest.

- Inappropriate past alterations are identified, and new sympathetic proposals introduced which are more in keeping with the historic building.
- Many repairs are proposed, to ensure building is structurally sound. The proposals also improve the condition of the building by addressing issues of damp and by ensuring the roofs are sound (and continue to be so). This is particularly important in ensuring the long term preservation of the building.
- The above benefits all engage Section 16 of the Act and therefore must be given special regard in the decision-making process.
- Finally, the proposed improvements to the thermal efficiency of the building will contribute to the energy performance of this historic building, ensuring it continues to function at minimum adverse cost to climate considerations and achieves net-zero. This is also a public benefit as it helps mitigate climate change.

Cumulatively, therefore, the proposals can be seen to possess numerous benefits which are advantageous to the preservation and enjoyment of this historic building.

The Proposals and Heritage Balance

As set out above, any proposals that affect a building of special architectural and historic interest need to be approached with care to ensure that their cumulative impact is acceptable. They need to be weighed against the benefits and a conclusion reached as to whether they fall on the right side of the heritage balance. A summary is given below, extracted from the Heritage Impact Statement.

The proposal would not result in any loss of historic fabric and would not adversely impact the significance of the designated heritage asset and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Should any of the proposals be considered to result in any harm to the significance of the listed building, this would be at the lower end of less than substantial and would be far outweighed by the numerous benefits proposed in this application, complying with Paragraph 208 of the NPPF (2023).

Roger Mears Architects
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