

Heritage Statement

Site Address: 74 Marchmont Street, London WC1N 1AB

1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement accompanies the planning application for proposed works at 74 Marchmont Street, London WC1N 1AB. The application pertains exclusively to the commercial (Class A3) use of the ground and basement levels of the property.

The proposed works involve:

1. Removing the existing wall-mounted louvre situated on the north side elevation of the building.
2. Relocating the louvre to the roof, where it will be installed horizontally.
3. Integrating a flue system into the roof to meet the ventilation requirements of the existing restaurant.
4. **Replacing the existing air filtration system:** The current filtration system is considered insufficient. A new, fully compliant system will be installed in line with EMAQ+ guidance to support effective odour abatement and ventilation.

This statement assesses the impact of the proposed works on the heritage significance of the building and its context within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It ensures compliance with local and national planning policies for heritage conservation.

2. Site Context and Historical Background

2.1 Building Overview

The site comprises a five-storey (plus basement) terraced property. The ground and basement levels are used for commercial purposes (a restaurant), while the upper floors are designated residential (Class C3).

2.2 Conservation Area Context

74 Marchmont Street is situated in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, a historically significant zone renowned for its Georgian and Victorian architecture, cultural history, and associations with the literary and intellectual movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area is characterized by:

- Uniform architecture: Brick facades, timber sash windows, and decorative detailing reflecting Georgian and Victorian styles.
- Historic integrity: A well-preserved streetscape that has retained much of its original charm.
- Cultural connections: Associations with notable authors, artists, and academics, reinforcing its identity as a hub of intellectual and creative activity.

2.3 Contribution of 74 Marchmont Street

While not a listed building, 74 Marchmont Street is considered a positive contributor to the conservation area due to its architectural coherence and position within the historic streetscape. Its north elevation, which currently hosts the wall-mounted louvre, is partially visible from adjacent streets.

3. Description of Proposed Works

The application seeks permission to:

1. Remove the existing louvre: The current wall-mounted louvre on the north side elevation detracts from the building's historic character and creates visual clutter.
2. Install a roof-mounted louvre: The new louvre will be positioned horizontally on the roof, reducing its visibility and preserving the visual integrity of the facade.

3. Integrate a flue system: A discreetly installed flue system will support the ventilation requirements of the restaurant while minimizing structural and visual impacts on the building.
4. **Replace the existing air filtration system:** The current filtration system is considered insufficient. A new, fully compliant system will be installed in line with EMAQ+ guidance to support effective odour abatement and ventilation.

The proposed works have been designed to respect the conservation area's character while addressing the practical needs of the commercial property.

5. Assessment of Significance

The heritage significance of the building and its surroundings is rooted in:

1. Architectural Value:

- Contribution to the coherent streetscape of Marchmont Street.
- Retention of historic materials and design elements, including brick facades and timber sash windows.

2. Historic and Cultural Value:

- Association with the Bloomsbury area's literary and academic history.
- Connection to the broader architectural and urban development of late 19th-century London.

3. Aesthetic Value:

- The uniform and harmonious appearance of the streetscape, which the building helps sustain.
- Visual cohesion achieved through consistent building heights, materials, and decorative features.

Although the building is not listed, its contribution to the conservation area amplifies its local heritage value.

5. Impact of Proposed Works

The proposed works have been carefully considered to minimize any adverse effects on the conservation area:

5.1 Visual Impact

- Enhancement of the facade: Removing the wall-mounted louvre will eliminate a visually intrusive element, restoring the architectural integrity of the building's north elevation.
- Minimal rooftop visibility: The repositioned louvre and flue system will be installed at roof level, where visibility from the street will be minimal.

5.2 Preservation of Historic Fabric

- Reversible changes: The works are designed to be fully reversible, allowing future restoration to the building's original form if required.

5.3 Functional Compatibility

- Support for existing use: The addition of the flue system ensures the continued operation of the restaurant, an essential component of the site's commercial character.
- **The proposed works also include the replacement of the existing extract and air filtration system, ensuring effective mitigation of cooking odours and compliance with current environmental standards.**

The proposed works align with best practices in heritage conservation, striking a balance between preserving historic character and meeting functional needs.

6. Policy Compliance

The proposed development complies with the following planning policies:

6.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The proposal seeks to preserve the conservation area's significance by improving the building's appearance and maintaining its functionality.

6.2 Camden Local Plan

- Policy D2 (Heritage): The proposed works respect the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, enhancing the historic environment through sensitive interventions.
- Policy C3 (Cultural and Community Uses): The proposal supports the restaurant's viability, contributing to the area's vibrancy and character.

7. Justification and Mitigation

The proposed works offer several heritage benefits, including:

- Improved visual coherence: By removing the wall-mounted louvre, the building's facade will be restored to a cleaner and more harmonious state.
- Discreet installation: The new rooftop features have been designed to minimize visibility, ensuring they do not detract from the conservation area's aesthetic value.
- Reversibility: All interventions are non-permanent and can be undone without damaging the building's historic fabric.
- **Replacement of outdated systems:** The installation of a new extract and air filtration system addresses previous inadequacies and aligns with modern environmental and amenity standards.

8. Conclusion

The proposed works at 74 Marchmont Street represent a sensitive and well-considered intervention within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. By removing the intrusive wall-mounted louvre and integrating a more discreet rooftop ventilation system, the proposal enhances the building's appearance while ensuring its continued use as a commercial space. The development aligns with national and local heritage policies and will preserve the character and significance of the conservation area. The proposal demonstrates a balanced approach to heritage conservation and functional adaptation, ensuring the building remains an asset to the area's historic and cultural fabric.