

Design, Access and Amenity Statement

This statement should be read in conjunction with the illustrated gazetteer which has been prepared for this building and which forms part of this application.



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1 Introduction

Project brief

We have been invited by our Client to review the future of their building at 11 Doughty Street.

Scope and intent of the application

The application relates to the former townhouse at 11 Doughty Street and its curtilage. It identifies the important elements of the heritage asset and explores ways in which the building could be returned to its intended use.

Should this application be successful it is envisaged that the property will pass into the hands of new owners who will value it as a town house, writing the next chapter in its life, and that future owners would submit further applications detailing their own aspirations for the property.

The application seeks to identify and ensure the preservation of the most important late 18th and 19th century features of the original building and to enshrine, especially in conservation and heritage terms, the interventions necessary to return the property into residential use.

2 The site and subject building

Background

Number 11 Doughty Street is listed Grade II in conjunction with the neighbouring terraced properties and lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It was constructed in approximately 1799 as a handsome townhouse as which it functioned, no doubt excellently, until the decline of domestic service after the First World War.

Subsequently professional occupations including the legal profession, began to expand within the centre of London. Proximity to the Inns of Court and the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand rendered houses in this area especially attractive as Barristers' Chambers, a use which has continued until the present day.

A fuller history is given in the heritage statement.

Reasons for the proposed applications

Immediate history

Legal chambers are evolving as less traditional organisations seeking a more contemporary, less cellular working environment. This cultural change coupled with more home working and the availability of attractive collaborative space in the area has seen a decline in the popularity of such properties as Chambers and other professional offices.

The subject building

The subject building has been recorded in a gazetteer which forms part of this application and with which this statement should be read.

Number 11 Doughty Street has been in office use for many decades. Nevertheless, it remains largely in its original condition.

Substantial alterations have been limited to:

- The reconstruction of the closet wing
- The construction of a large flat roofed ground floor extension to the rear
- The removal of several walls within the basement

There have been other superficial alterations, including the introduction of false ceilings and new cornice work, and some new joinery on upper floors.

The alterations have been made relatively sensitively, and the house retains much of its 19thC character on the ground and upper floors.

Conversion of the building back into a house represents a splendid opportunity to reverse many of these interventions.

Proposed future use

It is widely acknowledged that the best use for any historic building is that for which it was designed. The changing work practices to which we have alluded has led to the decline in popularity of these properties as office accommodation and offers the opportunity to return this house to residential use.

3 Design statement

Sensitivity to the existing building

Notation on the drawings

The drawings have been annotated to ensure that no fabric of importance is lost or damaged during conversion works.

The impact of the proposed alterations is explored further in the heritage statement.

Architectural interventions within the original buildings

Planform

Where possible within the application, rooms have been left in the original configuration and are allocated traditional uses on the principal floors.

Rear elevation and the lightwell

The rear lightwell to the basement would be reopened to establish the original integrity of the rear elevation and create a clear articulation between the original building and subsequent extensions. Importantly the intervention would reintroduce natural light and air to the basement as originally intended.

20th Century interventions

20th Century accretions will be removed including false ceilings and sanitary arrangements.

Removal of 20th Century finishes

Provision is made on the drawings for removing recent finishes, but also for identifying and retaining original finishes when discovered, and restoring where possible.

Chimney pieces

Unfortunately, most of the chimney pieces have been removed. The surviving example is identified within the gazetteer. The applications do not include proposals for the installation of replacement pieces which would be subject to future applications.

Doors, windows, and joinery generally

The application drawings prescribe that new joinery within the original building would be made in facsimile of existing work on a floor-by-floor basis ensuring the hierarchy of detailing would be observed.

Ceilings

Many original ceilings have survived at the principal floor levels. These are identified on the drawings for retention and restoration.

Fire precautions

The elegant incorporation of fire precautions into period properties is a well-practiced art.

The height and single-staircase configuration of the house dictates that a sprinkler system must be introduced to satisfy Building Regulations. We propose using agile misting systems which can be wall mounted (typically above doors) and are less intrusive and cause less water damage than conventional systems.

The application drawings state that existing original doors to the staircase, which will be required to offer fire protection, should not be replaced but be upgraded using intumescent systems.

Services generally

The evolution of this building is at an early stage, and it is inevitable that future owners would then submit further applications for more detail proposals which would include the resolution of services.

Sanitation

Inevitably, more extensive bathroom accommodation than was ever imagined in Georgian England has been included as sensitively as possible, and configured such that the new bedrooms are never more than half a level away from a bathroom.

Fitting out

Kitchens, bathrooms, and some furnishing is shown notionally on the application drawings and would of course be subject to the requirements of the house's eventual owners.

The garden building

Articulation from the original house.

The re-introduction of the rear lightwell assists in differentiating between old and new.

Treatment of the existing single-story structure

The existing garden building is reasonably sized, though the detailing of doors, windows and rooflights is clumsy. Within the proposals these elements would be replaced with elegant contemporary elements, differentiating between the original house and the later extension.

Proposed use of the garden building

Given the wealth of formal rooms within the original house, combined with the current appetite for horizontal living, this application contains proposals to convert the garden structure into contemporary flexible living space, opening directly onto the existing attractive garden to the rear.

Such conversions are not unprecedented in the area and are explored further in the planning statement.

4 Access and amenity statements

Access statement

Unfortunately, within such a relatively small and delicate property the provision of large accessible areas of living space, especially on upper and basement floors, would unreasonably compromise the heritage value of the heritage asset.

The provision on the ground floor of spacious living areas, a small garden together with areas which have the potential for conversion into accessible bathrooms, and the relative ease of installing temporary ramps to the front steps greatly enhances the potential for future occupancy by those less mobile.

Amenity statement

In general terms a reversion to residential use should entail no loss of amenity to residential or office neighbours of the subject property.

5 Authorship

This statement was prepared by Tony Miller of Trehearne Architects who is accredited as a Conservation Architect by the Royal Institute of British Architects.

6 Concluding statement

As the subject property nears the end of its 20th Century life as Barristers' Chambers, the opportunity exists to undertake essential restoration of the building and return it to its original form and use. The proposals will not only enhance the heritage value of the house but return yet more residential life to this extraordinarily well-preserved network of streets on the eastern boundary of the Bloomsbury conservation area.

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