



**Boyer**  
PLANNING

167A FINCHLEY ROAD, LONDON, NW3

**Planning, Design & Access Statement**

Prepared by Boyer Planning on behalf of Fairfax Mansions LLP

December 2013



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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement is prepared in support of an application by Fairfax Mansions Limited to convert the upper floors of 167A Finchley Road to 3 x self-contained flats, with an associated extension at first floor level.
- 1.2 The proposed conversion to flats would enable the property to be brought back into permanent residential use providing much-needed homes for the borough.
- 1.3 The upper floors and ground floor entrance lobby would be converted from a vacant dwelling house to 3 x self-contained flats. The new dwellings created would be:
  - 2 x studios (1<sup>st</sup> floor)
  - 1 x two-bedroom flat (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors)
- 1.4 The ground floor entrance lobby would provide a secure storage cupboard for each of the upper floor dwellings, which could be used for bicycle storage.
- 1.5 A small extension is proposed to the rear addition at first floor level. The extension would provide a stair link enabling the rear room at first floor level to be connected to the main habitable space. Without the link the rear room at first floor level would be cut off from the rest of the building.
- 1.6 The exterior wall of the proposed first floor extension would be designed to match the existing brickwork and window design
- 1.7 Further details of the proposals can be found in the accompanying scheme drawings by Simmons Taylor Hall.
- 1.8 This Statement assesses the proposals against the policies in the Development Plan and other material considerations, which are relevant to the determination of the application. The Statement is structured as follows:
  - Section 2 – describes the site and surrounding context;
  - Section 3 – provides an overview of regional and local planning policy and guidance relevant to the Proposed Development.
  - Section 4 – provides an assessment of the proposal against the provisions of the Development Plan and other material considerations
  - Section 5 – provides the Design and Access Statement and Lifetime Homes Assessment

## 2. SITE AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

- 2.1 The application relates to 167A Finchley Road, which is a four-storey mid-terrace property with attic storey and basement situated on the south-west side of Finchley Road near its junction with Fairfax Road. The building is part of a block of similar properties collectively known as Fairfax Mansions which extend from 167-175 Finchley Road. 167A Finchley Road is also known as “Block 2, Fairfax Mansions” but like each other property in the block is entirely self-contained, and is in a separate title to the other properties in Fairfax Mansions. All properties in Fairfax Mansions are in the same ownership.
- 2.2 The ground and basement floors of 167A Finchley Road are occupied by a retail unit (Class A1) fronting Finchley Road. The shop unit is not affected by this planning application. Due to the slope from Finchley Road to the southwest, the basement opens out to a parking and servicing area to the rear of the property.
- 2.3 To the rear, the ground floor is elevated on an access podium that provides access to the residential properties in the upper floors via an entrance lobby at ground floor level. There is no garden space or ground floor amenity space on the site.
- 2.4 The building was originally built as a single dwelling but has not been in that use for several decades. The property was in its current layout when it was purchased by the applicant in 1984. The property remained in informal residential use until 1996 when it was vacated, and has been vacant since.
- 2.5 An email from Camden Council’s Empty Homes Officer, Joyce Amoateng, that confirms the property’s vacancy since 1996 accompanies this application. This email demonstrates the long-term vacancy of the property.
- 2.6 The site is within the Finchley Road Town Centre but does not have any other policy designations. It is not within a conservation area, and the buildings are not listed.
- 2.7 Finchley Road is a TLRN route and carries a heavy volume of traffic. In the Finchley Town Centre properties are typically shops on the ground floor with flats and some other secondary commercial uses on the upper floors.
- 2.8 The site has an excellent PTAL rating of 6b, putting it among the most accessible locations in London. The high PTAL is owed to the proximity to Finchley Road Underground Station (Jubilee Line, 250m), Finchley and Frognal Overground Station (500m) and numerous bus routes that travel along Finchley Road and nearby streets.
- 2.9 There are 20 unallocated car parking spaces to the rear of the site. No change to the parking area is proposed.

## 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 This This Section outlines the relevant planning policy context which will be considered in the determination of the application proposals. Section 5 assesses the application proposal against the Development Plan documents which currently comprises the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPDs (both adopted November 2010).

### National Planning Policies

- 3.2 In March 2012, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published by the Department of Communities and Local Government. The NPPF sets out the Government's economic, environmental, and social planning policies for England; it states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of development management, the NPPF advises that the primary objective of development management is to foster the delivery of sustainable development, not to hinder or prevent development.
- 3.3 The NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making; however, it constitutes guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers both in drawing up plans as a material consideration in determining applications.
- 3.4 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF identifies the core planning principles which should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking; these include:
- Finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;
  - Proactively driving and supporting sustainable economic development to deliver homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places;
  - Seeking to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
  - Taking account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of urban areas;
  - Encouraging the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land);
  - Actively managing pattern of growth to make the fullest use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be sustainable.
- 3.5 The overarching national planning policy theme evident from the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which the Government have advised should be at the heart of the planning system and, which should be seen as a "golden thread" running through both plan making and decision taking.

### Local Planning Policies

#### *Local Development Framework*

- 3.6 The Core Strategy and Development Management Policies documents were adopted by the Council in November 2010, replacing the majority of policies of the 2006 Unitary Development Plan. The Development Management Policies DPD sits beneath the Core Strategy in the hierarchy of the Local Development Framework. The policies within the Development Management document set

out the detailed borough-wide implementation planning policies for development and forms the basis for local planning authority decision making.

- 3.7 The relevant policies contained within the policy documents outlined above are considered in respect of the application in Section 4 of this Statement.



## 4. ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 This section demonstrates that the development complies with the Development Plan. It assesses the principle of the development and its potential impacts against the aims and objectives of the Development Plan.

### Planning Considerations

- 4.2 The priority use of the Local Development Framework is housing; specifically to make full use of the borough's capacity for housing. This property has been vacant for 15 years, which is an unsustainable use of land that has the potential for use as housing. The proposals would bring the floorspace back into residential use, providing four new dwellings. The proposals therefore are in accordance with the Development Plan, in particular policies CS6 and DP2.
- 4.3 The proposed dwelling mix does not accord with the Council's adopted policy DP5. However the mix of dwellings is constrained by the layout of the building and the site's characteristics.
- 4.4 No large family homes are proposed in the development. DP5 states the Council will consider features that make a development particularly suitable for large dwellings. These features include space for children to play either on-site or nearby, direct access to the street, no direct access to a major road, a limited number of homes served from each internal corridor and the potential to provide a broad range of dwelling sizes appropriate for families with children, young and older.
- 4.5 There is very limited for play space or amenity space in the development. There is no direct access to the street, but there is a very busy road (Finchley Road) nearby. All homes provided would be served from the internal corridor and very limited potential to provide a broad range of dwelling sizes. Overall, the environment is not considered suitable for families with children. The non-provision of family-sized dwellings is therefore considered reasonable under policy DP5.
- 4.6 Camden's CPG2 (Housing) sets out residential development standards that apply to new residential developments. The CPG is a guide to ensuring that policy CS6 (Providing quality homes) is complied with.
- 4.7 The residential development standards include a series of general principles, which the development complies with, and residential space standards. The space standards set out the amount of internal floorspace a dwelling should have. The proposed dwellings all comply with the minimum space standard set out in CPG2. Each dwelling also has private storage in the ground floor entrance lobby.
- 4.8 None of the proposed dwellings would be offered as affordable housing.
- 4.9 Policy DP3 seeks a contribution to the supply of affordable housing on developments with a capacity for 10 dwellings or more to provide affordable housing. The development clearly does not have the potential to provide that amount of housing.
- 4.10 We are aware from discussions with officers that should other properties within Fairfax Mansions come forward for conversion in future, that the Council would consider them as a single development, and the overall number of dwellings created would be considered against policy DP3. That is, if more than 10 dwellings came forward in total, a contribution to affordable housing would be sought.

- 4.11 We acknowledge that Policy DP3 seeks to ensure that where two or more development sites are adjacent and related, or where development sites are split or phased, the appropriate affordable housing is comprehensively assessed for all the sites together. Paragraphs 3.10 and 3.11 explain that the policy is intended to prevent a succession of developments from a single developer where the number of dwellings is just below the 10-unit threshold. Such a tactic, if unabated, could result in dozens of dwellings being developed without any contribution to affordable housing.
- 4.12 The situation here is very different. That the sites are in the same ownership and adjoin each other is not a relevant consideration. Each is in a separate title. The properties have not been split or the development phased to avoid contributions. The proposals in this instance are akin to a series of houses in a terrace applying to be converted; in such an instance there would be no requirement that they be considered as a single development, regardless of their ownership.

### **Design and Access**

- 4.13 The proposals involve a small extension at first floor level to the rear addition. The extension is necessary to provide a link between the rear addition and the main building. The rear addition is currently isolated from the main building by a stair case.
- 4.14 The new extension would be the minimum size necessary to enable the link to be formed. It would not protrude from the line of the existing rear addition and would be made from materials – including window design – to match the existing building.
- 4.15 Access to the property by public transport is excellent. No new car parking would be proposed.
- 4.16 All of the proposed flats are located on the first floor or higher, and only accessible by stairs. It would not be practicable or reasonable to provide new disabled access.

### **Lifetime Homes**

- 4.17 There are 16 design features that are considered under Lifetime Homes.

#### *Parking*

- 4.18 No parking is currently allocated to any of the units in Fairfax Mansions. The units are intended to be car free to encourage cycling and other means of transport than the private car.

#### *Approach to dwelling from Parking*

- 4.19 As there are no parking spaces allocated to the premises the approach to the dwelling from the parking area is not considered to be a relevant consideration.

#### *Approach to all entrances*

- 4.20 There is only one entrance to the flats which is via the elevated walkway to the rear of the building. The entrance lobby would contain storage space and then approximately 20 steps separated by mini landings to the entrance of the first floor studio flats. Once inside the flats there are no changes of level. The other flats have more steps from the entrance. Whilst these 20 steps are not ideal, the development represents the conversion of an existing building with an existing ground floor commercial use and therefore ground floor accommodation is not available.

### ***Entrances***

- 4.21 The entrance hall will be well illuminated and have adequate weather protection. It is not possible to create a level access to the entrance due to the constraints of the existing building. All flats would have doors of a minimum of 900mm width and level access.

### ***Communal Stairs and Lifts***

- 4.22 The communal stairs consist of small flights of steps separated by regular landings. This together with hand rails will give easy access to the upper floors.

### ***Internal Doorways and Hallways***

- 4.23 Wheelchair access is not possible due to the stairs. However doorways throughout the studio flat are all at least 0.9m wide giving easy access through the unit. The ground floor main entrance doors are wider for easy access for deliveries.

### ***Circulation Space***

- 4.24 Wheelchair access is not possible to flats due to the stairs. However all flats have generously-sized living areas of approximately to enable convenient movement around the room. The bathroom contains a bath and adequate circulation space around.

### ***Entrance level living space***

- 4.25 None of the flats have entrance level living space.

### ***Potential for entrance level bed-space***

- 4.26 The flats are unable to comply with this design feature as they are on upper floors.

### ***Entrance level toilet and shower drainage***

- 4.27 There would be no ground floor toilet and shower space as there would be no ground floor living space.

### ***Toilet and bathroom walls***

- 4.28 The inability to access the property by wheelchair means the need for load bearing walls is not relevant.

### ***Stairs and potential through-floor lift in dwelling***

- 4.29 This design feature relates to a dwelling of two or more storeys rather than individual flats and is therefore not applicable. The stairs to the building feature several small flights of steps and therefore would not be suitable for a chair lift. There is not the potential for a lift from entrance level to bedroom and bathroom level.

### ***Potential for fitting of hoists and bedroom / bathroom relationship***

- 4.30 It is unlikely the ceiling would be strong enough to support ceiling hoists and alterations would not be possible as works to the ceiling of one flat may affect the flat above. Therefore it may not be possible to comply with this design feature.

### *Bathrooms*

- 4.31 The proposed bathrooms are spaciouly laid out with space in front of the WC, basin and the bath to ensure easy access.

### *Glazing and window handle heights*

- 4.32 Each of the flats has a good outlook from the living rooms. The windows are existing and therefore the window heights cannot be amended.

### *Location of service controls*

- 4.33 The location of service controls of the flats could be altered to be within 450mm to 1200mm from the floor if not already

### *Conclusions*

- 4.34 The proposed scheme does not fully comply with the 16 criteria for Lifetime Homes. However it should be recognised that the existing building dates back to 1911 and relies of stair access to all dwellings. The building is not readily convertible for disabled access, but those Lifetime Homes features that can be incorporated will be.
- 4.35 We therefore consider that within the constraints of the building, the proposal meets with Lifetime Homes requirements as far as is practicable.

## Grant Leggett

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**From:** Amoateng, Joyce <Joyce.Amoateng@camden.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 05 January 2012 13:27  
**To:** Grant Leggett  
**Subject:** Fairfax Mansions

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

Hi Grant,

I have looked at Council tax records, originally they had the properties listed as Flats 1-9 self-contained dwellings. It is only when I advised them that there were multiple dwellings that they changed their records. There are no records held by environmental health either as to the use of the units. I had a meeting back in 2010 with Robert Farnsworth and Jeremy Howell about the proposed plans. It was suggested that details of long-term vacancy history should be included with the planning application.

Block 2 Vacant since 1996  
Block 3 Vacant since 1996  
Block 5 Vacant since 2006  
Block 6 Vacant since 1998  
Block 7 Partly occupied by 1 tenant only  
Block 9 was partly occupied by 3 tenants.

Hope this helps. I would appreciate it, if you could keep me update so I can update my case notes.

Regards  
Joyce Amoateng  
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