

# HW Planning Ltd

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## **PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT** INCORPORATING AN ASSESSMENT OF HISTORIC ASSETS

In Support of a Planning Application for:

**Altered fenestration and a rear roof extension**

To

Flat 3, 137 Grays Inn Road  
London

September 2012

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## 1.0 **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 HW Planning Ltd has been instructed by Ms A Jose to prepare a Planning, Design and Access Statement (DAS) in support of her planning application to alter and extend her home at Flat 3, 137 Grays Inn Road, London.
- 1.2 This document details the design process through which the scheme has evolved and explains the design rationale having regard to the previous proposal which was dismissed at appeal. That appeal was rejected due to the impact it would have had on the amenities of adjoining residents; however, the Inspector considered that the proposal was acceptable in respect of its design and the character of the Conservation Area.
- 1.3 The site lies within a conservation area which, along with the relevant development plan policies and the recent appeal decision, has influenced the plan preparation and discussions between the architect, the client and HW Planning Ltd as has the character of the wider area as recommended in the advice from CABE.
- 1.4 The proposal has been informed and led by an **assessment of heritage assets**. Full account has been given to understanding, respecting and enhancing the historic asset. That process is referred to throughout this document, which should be read as a whole.
- 1.5 Brief informal pre-application discussion has taken place with the Council who were provided with a set of the proposed plans. The verbal response received from Fergus Freeney following internal discussions was that the Council had no adverse comments to make. He therefore suggested that an

## 2.0 **SITE AND AREA APPRAISAL**

- 2.1 Flat 3, 137 Grays Inn Road is a third floor flat (with a 4th floor attic) to the western side of Grays Inn Road and to the south of its junction with Guilford Street. Access to the flat is gained through the building from its eastern side on Grays Inn Road. The area is mixed in character comprising residential and commercial uses.
- 2.2 The front elevation of the property to Grays Inn Road is the primary elevation of the building. No changes are proposed to that front elevation of the building. The rear of the property looks over Brownlow Mews from which it is largely hidden by adjacent structures.
- 2.3 Brownlow Mews is a narrow road with a strong sense of enclosure. Its greatest charm, in the vicinity of the appeal site, is its cobbled surface. Buildings to either side are of varied scales, ages, designs and forms. Materials vary with yellow (including some glazed) and red brick as well as render and slate to the elevations. Buildings are typically set very close to the road frontage with Brownlow Mews. At its northern end the road passes under the buildings to the southern side of Guilford Street via an arch in the four storey building. The application site is set back from this frontage being the rear of a building on Grays Inn Road rather than part of the buildings that front directly on to Brownlow Mews.
- 2.4 Part of the eastern side of the mews, to the south of the appeal site, has been rebuilt with a three storey building in a 1980's style, the top floor of which is served by a steeply pitched mansard roof with dormer windows as may be seen in photograph 6 on page 8 of this statement.
- 2.5 To the western side are more traditional two storey mews buildings with access doors at first floor level. Uses along the mews vary with some being in residential use and others in office use with a pub being located just to the southwest of the appeal site, on the eastern side of Brownlow Mews.
- 2.6 The rear elevation of the application site is largely hidden from public views on Brownlow Mews, by virtue of the adjoining structures. Views are only available of the site from a short section of the road immediately south of the arch at the northern end of Brownlow Mews, those views being over the wall to a garage. From further south, buildings on Brownlow Mews block views to the northwest and the appeal site cannot be seen as shown in the images on the following pages.
- 2.7 Where the site is visible it is seen in the context of a galvanised flue that runs up the rear of a building on Guilford Street, the slate covered vertical mansard / wall to the top floor of the building to the north of the appeal site, the parapet wall that serves the terrace in front of the flat which partially screens the site from view and the lower roof terrace with a wooden trellis fence around it that serves a flat below the appeal. Photographs 2 and 3 show these views.
- 2.8 The scale and design of the buildings that surround the application site varies as does the nature of window placement and the use of materials. There is no consistent approach to window and door placements on this property; fenestration patterns on rear of adjacent buildings do not follow a regimented pattern either.
- 2.9 The site lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, this part of which is characterised by 3 and 4 storey terraces.

- 2.10 Buildings generally have similar widths and typically abut or are sited close to the back edge of the footway creating a sense of enclosure along the roads and a continuity in the character and appearance of the streetscene. However, as recognised by the Inspector in determining the recent appeal, there are variations including roof forms, alterations at ground floor level, infill development within the terraces and significant alterations to the rear of properties.
- 2.11 The Inspector went on to describe the building's mansard roof as being asymmetrical with different pitches to the front and rear and stating that the building, when viewed from the Brownlow Mews to the rear, does not contribute to a terrace of properties with uniform roof forms. He went on to state that "By reason of additions, inconsistent fenestration details and other alterations, there is only a limited degree of uniformity between the character and appearance of the building and its neighbouring properties".
- 2.12 Images of the application site and adjoining properties are provided on the following 3 pages of this document.



Photograph 1

This image shows the view looking up Brownlow Mews, from the south, towards the appeal site which is located behind rendered side wall to The Blue Lion to the left hand side of the image.

Photograph 2

This photograph shows the view looking towards the site from the southwest on Brownlow Mews. The northern element of the site is just visible in this image





Photograph 3

This image shows the view from Brownlow Mews taken from slightly further north than was the case with photograph 2 on the previous page and south of the position from which photograph 4 below was taken.



Photograph 4

View looking east towards the site from Brownlow Mews





Photograph 5

This image shows a view of the application site looking up from Brownlow Mews. Lower level terraces and walls may be seen in the image which also demonstrates the degree to which the existing parapet wall screens the lower element of the application site.



Photograph 6

This image shows the view looking south along the eastern side of Brownlow Mews.



### 3.0 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 The site is located within a Conservation Area within which there is a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area. Policy DP25 of the Camden Development Policies along with elements of policies CS14 and CS5 of the Council's Core Strategy echo the need to preserve or enhance the character / appearance of the area.
- 3.2 "Camden Planning Guidance 1: Design" along with "The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy" provide guidance on alterations to roofs.
- 3.3 In respect of the previous proposal, the Inspector considered the impact of the proposal on the character of the area. Elements of his description of the character of the area and Conservation Area have been provided above. In respect of that proposal, he stated that the proposed development would neither increase the height nor width of the building and he considered that the building's contribution to the streetscene along Grays Inn Road would remain unaltered.
- 3.4 With regard to the rear of the building, as seen from Brownlow Mews, the Inspector outlined that the proposal comprised the erection of a glass balustrade above the existing parapet wall, the provision of sliding doors, the resiting of part of the rear elevation and the provision of a steeper pitch to the mansard roof which, he commented, would obscure part of the chimney. With regard to those aspects, he stated that whether considered individually or cumulatively none of the alterations would appear so conspicuous as to cause material harm to the character and appearance of the area
- 3.5 Having regard to the proposed windows on the rear roofslope,

the Inspector stated that they would not be an incongruous form of development but would reflect dormer windows and other openings at roof level within the Conservation Area. He went on to state that when viewed from the rear, the siting of the proposed dormer window and rooflight would not unacceptably disrupt the appearance of the altered mansard roof and would not cause material harm to the already generally inconsistent fenestration details of the building and its neighbouring properties. The Inspector further confirmed that the size of the dormer window would not be disproportionate to the scale of the mansard roof and that the rooflight would retain the appearance and form of the altered mansard and would not be an unduly prominent addition.

- 3.6 Having regard to the above, the Inspector concluded, in respect of the design of the proposal and the character of the building and the Conservation Area, that the proposal met the high quality design aspirations of policies CPG1, CS policies CS14 and CS5 and CDP Policy DP24 as well as the good design requirements of the Framework.
- 3.7 Notwithstanding his findings in respect of the character of the area, the Inspector dismissed the appeal based upon the impact of the proposal on the amenities of adjoining residents. Paragraph 11 of the decision letter confirms that the Inspector saw no objection to the proposed dormer window and rooflight. It was the increase in size of the terrace and its potential use that was of concern to him.
- 3.8 Having regard to the Inspector's decision letter, the proposal was seen to be acceptable in respect of design and character and attention was focused upon addressing the concern relating to the impact of neighbour amenity. To this end the size of the terrace has not been increased from

that which currently exists and fenestration levels have been minimised with the sliding doors now being omitted from the revised scheme.

### **ASSESSMENT - SOCIAL, ECONOMIC**

- 3.9 The principle of an extension to the dwelling is seen to have little impact on the social and economic wellbeing of the area, although it would provide employment during construction and would meet the accommodation needs of the applicant.

### **HERITAGE ASSETS**

- 3.10 Having regard to the location of the site within a Conservation Area, full consideration has been given to the heritage asset both in respect of this proposal and the previous scheme. In respect of the Conservation Area, the Inspector considered the proposal to be acceptable. The elements which have changed between this scheme and the previous proposal result in no adverse impact of the Conservation Area, rather they address part of the previous concerns raised by the Council, albeit that those concerns were not supported by the Inspector.

### **ACCESS**

- 3.11 No changes are required to the existing access.

### **POLICY — CENTRAL GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE**

- 3.12 The NPPF was published in March 2012, replacing previous guidance within the PPGs and PPSs. It must be read alongside the policies from the Local Plan which are detailed overleaf.

### **LDF**

- 3.13 The Council's decision notice refers to policies CS5, CS14, DP24, DP25 and DP26 of the London Borough of

Camden's Local Development Framework, the adopted version of which was published in 2010.

- 3.14 Policy CS5 of the Council's Core Strategy relates to "Managing the impact of growth and development". It seeks, among other things, to provide sustainable buildings and spaces of the highest quality; to protect and enhance the environment and heritage and balance the needs of development with the needs and characteristics of the local area.

- 3.15 Policy CS14 seeks to promote high quality spaces and conserve the heritage. It seeks high quality design, the preservation and enhancement of heritage assets. Paragraph 14.4 of the Core Strategy states that "Development schemes should improve the quality of buildings, landscaping and the street environment"

- 3.16 Policy DP24 relates to securing high quality design; it is a criterion based policy which relates to matters including character; setting; context; the form, proportion and scale of neighbouring buildings; and, the quality of materials to be used.

- 3.17 The wording after the policy outlines, at paragraph 24.7, that development should consider matters including: the prevailing pattern, density and scale of surrounding development, impact on rhythm, symmetry and uniformity in townscape; the compatibility of materials and the composition of elevations.

- 3.18 Policy DP 25 relates to Conserving Camden's Heritage. It refers to Conservation Area Statements and includes requirements that only development which preserve and enhance the character of the area will be permitted.

- 3.19 Policy DP26 relates to managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours and addresses matters including privacy, overshadowing and outlook, light, noise, odour and fumes.

**SPG**

- 3.20 Camden Planning Guidance states that alterations should take into account the character and design of the property and its surroundings. Windows doors and materials should complement the existing building and rear extensions should be secondary to the building being extended.

#### 4.0 **DESIGN AND ACCESS SOLUTION**

- 4.1 Having regard to the considerations outlined in section 3 of this statement, the design and scale of the previous scheme was seen to be acceptable with a single issue remaining to be considered; that issue relating to the amenity of the neighbouring residents having regard to the enlarged terrace.
- 4.2 The straightforward solution was to remove the terrace from the scheme and retain the third floor rear wall of the resultant building where it currently stands. This approach would avoid increasing the size of the terrace from that which exists and as such prevent greater use of the terrace, thereby protecting the amenities of adjoining residents. Associated with that reduction in size, the sliding doors were also omitted from the scheme such that the relationship between the third floor of the application site and the adjoining properties remains almost identical to that which exists.
- 4.3 Having regard to the 4th floor of the building, the Inspector raised no concerns in respect of the relationship with adjoining properties stating at paragraph 11 of his decision letter that ***“By reason of their siting and oblique angles of view, it is judged that the proposed dormer window and roof-light would not materially change the existing relationship with the windows adjacent to the terrace and cause unacceptable harm to the privacy of the occupiers of these neighbouring properties.”***
- 4.4 The removal of the increased terraced area has dispensed with the need for the provision of sliding doors on to the terrace. Those doors have now been replaced with traditional window openings which have been designed and located to respect the fenestration detailing of the building and that of adjoining buildings.
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## 5.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The proposal represents an opportunity to improve the appearance of this area as well as the living accommodation available at Flat 3, 137 Grays Inn Road. The proposal retains the existing rear wall to the terrace and enhances the general appearance of the rear of this flat which will, in turn, improve the appearance of the building and that of the wider area.
- 5.2 The alterations at third floor level will be largely hidden from the limited views that are available from the northern end of Brownlow Mews due to the screening affect of the wall to the terrace, the position of the site relative to Brownlow Mews and the screening affect arising from adjoining buildings. The alterations will not be visible from Grays Inn Road or Guilford Street.
- 5.3 In respect of Brownlow Mews, the proposals where visible will improve the appearance of the rear of these buildings thus enhancing the character of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.
- 5.4 The proposed alterations and additions will not adversely affect the amenities of adjoining neighbours in respect of privacy, overlooking or a sense of enclosure having regard to the nature of the existing roof and terrace and the juxtaposition of the proposal with adjoining properties.
- 5.5 This revised proposal addresses the concerns raised by the Inspector in respect of the previous proposal by ensuring that the amenities of adjoining residents are not affected by the works at third floor level.