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**PLANNING & COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004  
TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT  
PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) ORDER 2010**

**DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT**

**in respect of**

**PLANNING APPLICATION FOR ALTERATION OF ROOF TO MANSARD  
ROOF FORM TO CONTAIN ONE THREE-BEDROOM DWELLING**

**at**

**9-13 GRAPE STREET, LONDON WC2**

**Prepared by**

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**September 2012**

**Ref: R12046.a**

# **DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT**

## **APPLICATION AT 9-13 GRAPE STREET, LONDON WC2**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Design & Access Statement is submitted to meet the general requirements of the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 as they relate to the proposed development at 9-13 Grape Street involving alterations at roof level to provide a mansard roof to contain a three bedroom dwelling.
- 1.2 The Design & Access Statement explains the principles and concepts which have been applied to ensure a satisfactory scheme which complies with all local policy and is also in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This statement is set out by reference to the following:-
- **Context**
    - a) Physical Context
    - b) Policy Context
  - **Design Principles**
    - a) Amount of Development
    - b) Layout
    - c) Scale and Appearance
  - **Statement of Significance**

### **2.0 CONTEXT**

- 2.1 Context is considered under two headings; the first relates to the physical context of the development (the site and its surroundings) and the second the policy background as set out in national policy (NPPF) and local policies (Camden Core Strategy 2010 and Camden Development Policies).

#### **2.2 Physical Context**

- 2.2.1 9-13 Grape Street is a four-storey early Edwardian property currently in use for business (Class B1) purposes on the east side of Grape Street approximately midway between High Holborn and Shaftesbury Avenue. The building is generally of red brick with some ornate features and has been refurbished internally in recent years. The building is in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area but is not listed, unlike some of the buildings in Grape Street.

- 2.2.2 The proposal is to utilise a much altered roof to create a mansard structure behind an appropriate parapet containing a three bedroom dwelling. At present the building has a pitched tiled roof with a heavy parapet-like eaves detailing onto the Grape Street frontage. This roof is difficult, if not impossible to see from road level for reasons that will be explained but has two ridge heights with the northern end of the building (No. 9) having a ridge 1.2m higher than the remainder (Nos. 11 and 19). Furthermore, much of the rear roof area is currently cluttered with an array of steel work supporting air conditioning units in a very visually distracting manner, although again, not visible from Grape Street.
- 2.2.3 Grape Street itself is a very narrow (4.1m) single carriageway road with one-way traffic running north to south and with buildings of generally similar age on either side. The application building, at four floors, is lower than the vast majority of the other buildings fronting Grape Street which are either five or six storeys high, albeit generally of the same age as the subject building. No. 7 to the north of the subject site, although a listed building has at some time in the past been much extended at roof level with what can only be described as an unfortunately designed mansard roof of two storeys height and with a character and appearance somewhat at odds with the remainder of the building. This unfortunate addition, carried out some years ago, also creates a bland end elevational appearance above the roof line of 9-13 Grape Street.
- 2.2.4 In terms of the visual impact of the existing edge treatment of the roof of 9-13 Grape Street, the narrowness of the road and the height of the building means that none of the existing roof is exposed to view from Grape Street and the building appears more subdued than its neighbours.
- 2.2.5 9-13 Grape Street appears to occupy 100% of its curtilage and although of attractive design on the Grape Street frontage itself, the rear elevation, which can be seen from West Central Street to the east is bland in the extreme (as is the rear elevation of the adjoining No. 7 Grape Street) and the array of steelwork supporting the air conditioning units is clearly visible from this street behind the multi-storey car park on the adjoining land.

## **2.3 Policy Context**

- 2.3.1 Policy is set out through national policy (the NPPF) and local policy which, in this instance, consists of the Camden Core Strategy 2010, and the Development Policies Document, which together constituting a major part of Camden's Local Development Framework. In addition to adopted policy documentation the development has also been assessed against Supplementary Planning Guidance documents in respect of Design, Housing and Sustainability. Finally with the site in

the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, the character and management appraisal for the Conservation Area has also been considered.

- 2.3.2 In order to assess the development for compliance with policy, it is necessary to note in particular the new NPPF and how it impacts upon consideration of the scheme. The NPPF was published by the government this year and has promptly become national planning policy to be applied to all development proposals from the date of publication. The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which is emphasised at paragraph 14 as follows:-

*At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.*

As will be demonstrated by this statement, the proposal now submitted is sustainable bearing in mind the location of the premises in an area of mixed development within the Tottenham Court Road Growth Area as identified in the Core Strategy.

- 2.3.3 The NPPF continues to advise in paragraph 14 that for decision-taking the presumption in favour means:-

- *Approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay; and*
- *Where the Development Plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting planning permission unless:*

*Any adverse impact of so doing would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessing against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or*

*Specific policies of this Framework indicate development should be resisted.*

The full content of this Design & Access Statement will demonstrate there is policy compliance in the particular circumstances justifying the application of the presumption in favour of development.

- 2.3.4 The NPPF also promotes the delivery of a wide choice of high quality homes. Section 6 of the NPPF sets out the approach that local planning authorities should adopt to the provision of new homes, including expectation for windfall sites (i.e. those sites which come forward during the plan period but which were not identified within the site proposals document) and, at paragraph 48 states that:-

*Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.*

- 2.3.5 Section 7 of the NPPF requires good design, which is considered a key aspect of sustainable development and indivisible from good planning. In the context of the development proposed paragraphs 60 and 61 appear relevant as follows:-

*60: Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.*

*61: Although visual appearance in the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic consideration. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.*

- 2.3.6 Section 12 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. On the basis that the application premises are in a Conservation Area paragraph 128 of the NPPF is relevant both to the applicants and to the Council. This states:-

*In determining applications (in Conservation Areas) local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage asset affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.*

The importance of this particular matter is fully analysed later in this statement.

- 2.3.7 Turning now to more local policy, the scheme has been assessed against the following policies of the Core Strategy:-

- Policy CS1 – Distribution of Growth – This policy has a number of criteria through which the Council intends to promote efficient use of land and buildings. This indicates that the Tottenham Court Road

area is a Growth Area and, in this respect, criterion d) requires full use of a site taking into account various issues such as sustainability and heritage, Criterion g) anticipates high density development in Central London and other locations well served by public transport while Criterion h) anticipates the provision of a mix of uses “including an element of housing where possible”.

- Policy CS2 – Growth Areas – This policy together with its related plans, etc. indicate that the application site is within the Tottenham Court Road Growth Area where there is anticipation that site opportunities will be maximised. The section of the Core Strategy dealing with the Tottenham Court Road Growth Area generally promotes residential use where appropriate maximising densities compatible with the local context sustainable design principles and public transport capacity. Whilst the scheme involves but one dwelling, it is nevertheless a useful contribution in a location which is highly sustainable. Furthermore care has been taken to ensure that the design proposed will be in keeping generally with the character and appearance of the immediate area, always bearing in mind that an addition is being proposed to an older building.
- Policy CS5 – Managing the Impact of Growth and Development – There are again a number of criteria to this policy which generally promote development where possible, subject to reasonable safeguards in respect of the impact of development upon neighbours and upon the character and appearance of the area.
- Policy CS6 – Providing Quality Homes – This policy promotes full use of Camden's capacity for housing which includes regarding housing as the priority land-use of Camden's Local Development Framework.
- Policy CS14 – Promoting High Quality Places and Conserving our Heritage – This policy is relevant insofar as the premises are in a Conservation Area albeit the building itself is not listed. Nevertheless, the applicant is aware that any development within such an area will need to preserve or enhance the heritage asset (i.e. the Bloomsbury Conservation Area).

2.3.8 Assessment is also required of relevant policies within the Development Policies Document as follows:-

- Policy DP1 – Mixed Use Development – At present 9-13 Grape Street is in full commercial use (Class B1) but the opportunity here exists to create a building of more mixed use with the additional habitable storey containing a three bedroom dwelling accessed by lift and stairs from the ground floor.
- Policy DP2 – Making full Use of Camden's Capacity for Housing – This policy again promotes new residential development wherever

possible with the expectation that the maximum appropriate contribution to the supply of housing will be provided on sites that are under-used or vacant. The opportunity here is to provide one family-sized dwelling in an appropriate location.

- Policy DP5 – Homes of Different Sizes – In this case, a three bedroom market dwelling is proposed where demand is said to be “medium”. This would not be inappropriate bearing in mind the comments in paragraph 5.5 of the Development Policies Document.
- Policy DP6 – Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Housing – In this instance the new dwelling will be constructed to meet all the requirements of Lifetime Homes Standards. It will be noted that, although this new dwelling will be on the fifth floor of the building, it will be served by a lift for the exclusive use of the occupants of the dwelling.
- Policy DP18 – Parking Standards and Limiting the Availability of Car Parking – The applicant accepts that the development will be “car-free” and it is anticipated that a legal agreement to this effect will be necessary. Cycle storage has been considered but there is not space at ground floor level and it is not considered practical for bicycles to be taken up to the apartment. However a bike stand associated with the Mayor’s Barclay Bike Hire Scheme is in proximity to the premises.
- Policy DP21 – Promoting Sustainable Design and Construction – The scheme will utilise the following methods in order to reduce the amount of energy utilised:-
  - Photovoltaic Panels fitted on the flat roof.
  - Solar water heating.
  - Air-tight envelope – preventing draughts and loss of heat
  - Condensing/Low NOx boiler – causing less pollution, and using less energy to run due to its high efficiency
  - Energy Efficient Appliances – installing A rated (or better) appliances where possible, reducing energy needs
  - Low U-Value roof, windows, external walls and exposed floors – preventing or minimising heat loss
  - Super Insulated Structure – to negate or at least reduce the need for space heating
  - Low Energy Lighting

- Policy DP23 – Water –The proposal aims to significantly cut the average water consumption per person. These objectives will be achieved by installing devices such as:
  - Low/Dual flush WCs – reducing the need for mains water top-up
  - Water Efficient Shower/Taps – a normal shower uses around 30 litres but power showers can use much more, approximately 60 – 100 litres per use
- Policy DP24 – Securing High Quality Design – The detail of the design is set out in the next section of this statement where it will be demonstrated that what is proposed is appropriate in the location, will improve the appearance of the building, particularly from viewing from the east, but will be little visible if at all from Grape Street itself. The policy assesses the appropriateness of services equipment and it is intended that the new development will allow this to be more effectively consolidated and appropriately sited in a balanced manner on the mansard roof rather than the unfortunate array of units currently fully visible from the east.
- Policy DP25 – Conserving Camden’s Heritage – As will be demonstrated through the assessment of the development in the Statement of Significance following later in this statement, it is considered that the development will preserve the character and appearance of the area and will result in a much improved appearance, particularly when viewed from West Central Street to the east.
- Policy DP26 – Managing the Impact of Development on Occupiers and Neighbours – The scheme balances the appearance of the building against the general juxtaposition of other buildings, some with residential accommodation so as to ensure that the scheme overall has no adverse impact upon the quality of life of occupiers and neighbours. The development follows the building line, etc. established in Grape Street and the proposed dwelling has more than sufficient space to provide a good internal living environment for the occupants.

2.3.9 In addition to the formally adopted policy documents described above, the applicants and the architects have also considered Supplementary Planning Guidance as described in the three documents, Design, Housing and Sustainability. In this context, the most appropriate guidance is that within the design document relating to roofs, terraces and balconies. The detailed advice applied has been carefully assessed and the development designed accordingly. Paragraph 5.8 states that:-



*A roof alteration or addition is likely to be **unacceptable** in the following circumstances where there is likely to be an adverse affect on the skyline, appearance of the building or the surrounding street scene.*

The details of the criteria involved here will be assessed later in this statement under the heading "Scale and Appearance".

- 2.3.10 Finally, in respect of policy and design criteria matters, due consideration has been given to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy and it is noted that Grape Street is referred to in Sub-Area 8, paragraph 5.130, indicating the form of development along both sides of the narrow thoroughfare. The architects have also carefully assessed the section in the document relating to management of change as the proposal has evolved.

### **3.0 DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1 The design principles are considered under the three headings referred to in paragraph 1.2 above and follow the general advice issued by the government in respect of the information which should be included in a Design & Access Statement.

#### **3.2 Amount of Development**

- 3.2.1 The scheme consists simply of an additional storey within a newly created roof space, following removal or material alteration of the existing roof. A residential unit with a gross internal floor area of 180 sq. m. is to be provided. There will be three bedrooms, two with ensuite facilities together with a large open plan living/kitchen/dining area. The development also involves provision of a lift from the ground floor at the southern end of the building utilising the existing secondary access.

#### **3.3 Layout**

- 3.3.1 The scheme envisages the overall removal of the existing low pitched slate roofs behind the Grape Street heavily detailed eaves which reflects the detailed horizontal banding at each floor level on the front elevation and their replacement with a mansard roof structure containing a proposed three bedroom dwelling. Due to existing ceiling heights within the lower floors of the building, the northern end of the proposed new dwelling (above No. 9) is raised a little over a metre in terms of its floor level above the remainder of the apartment.
- 3.3.2 The proposed dwelling is accessed from the door and hallway at the southern end of the existing building where there is currently also a staircase to the upper floors. This staircase will be extended to the new space in the proposed mansard roof and will supplement the new

lift which will be provided within the building and served from this hallway. It will be for the exclusive use of the occupants of the proposed apartment.

- 3.3.3 The layout of the apartment itself will provide the access (via lift and stairs) at the southern end of the building where cloakroom and utility services will be provided. A hallway will then run along the east elevation serving the three bedrooms which will be on the Grape Street frontage. As already indicated, due to the ceiling height of the floor below, the northern end of the apartment will have a floor level approximately 1m higher than the remainder of the apartment and this will give accommodation for a large open plan kitchen/dining/living room area.
- 3.3.4 In terms of the layout of the roof, whereas hitherto there have been pitched and hipped slate roofs with, to the rear, an area of flat roof containing a steel frame structure supporting the air conditioning units, a full mansard roof will be provided with the air conditioning units re-sited in the centre of the flat roof section of the mansard in a position probably less visible (albeit from a distance) than the existing steel structure containing the air conditioning units as from West Central Street.

### **3.4 Scale and Appearance**

- 3.4.1 Before assessing the impact of the proposed development it is necessary to establish the scale and appearance of the existing building and its relationship to its neighbours. Paragraph 5.130 of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal document indicates that most properties in Grape Street, which is fairly short and exceedingly narrow, were constructed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Whilst the actual detail of design varies from building to building, there is an established theme. It is noted that whilst a number of buildings in Grape Street are listed, the subject premises at 9-13 Grape Street are not. Nevertheless, the presence within the Conservation Area indicates the degree of importance of the street scene and, as later set out in this statement the need for a short Statement of Significance to deal with the Conservation Area issues.
- 3.4.2 Perhaps the most important point to note in terms of scale and appearance is that 9-13 Grape Street (and 15) are between one and two storeys lower than all other properties in Grape Street. This is most apparent in terms of the adjoining property No. 7 Grape Street (which is listed) which rises two full storeys above No. 9 in a mansard roof form which appears a later addition to the building but nevertheless creates a high blank wall which is visible from Grape Street between Nos. 7 and 9. The street has a mix of uses and, although Nos. 9-13 are in full commercial use, a number of properties, with, in the main, erstwhile retail premises at ground floor level, contain residential accommodation in the upper floors.

- 3.4.3 Also of relevance is the ability to view the roof form on the premises from Grape Street. That roof form consists of a pitched full width roof behind a parapet for No. 9 Grape Street with a hipped end towards No. 7 and a pitched slate roof also for Nos. 11 and 13 but this finishes short of the rear elevation where a flat roofed area exists, cluttered with an array of steel work supporting the air conditioning units. Notwithstanding the fact that the ridge on No. 9 is approximately ...m higher than the ridge on the remainder of the building, due to the generally higher ceilings, particularly in the third floor of No. 9, none of the roof of 9-13 is visible behind the parapet on the Grape Street frontage. Indeed, neither are the chimneys which are 1m and 3.5m higher than the ridge of the roof on Nos. 11 and 13.
- 3.4.4 Whilst the Grape Street frontage is attractive and generally in keeping with the overall design theme of adjoining properties, the rear elevation leaves a lot to be desired. In fact the area immediately to the rear of the premises represents an island of properties between two Conservation Areas but excluded from both due to the lower quality of the environment created, in particular, by the multi-storey car park immediately to the east of the subject premises. From this street the premises can be viewed quite easily and presents a bland rendered wall with the air conditioning units in full view and just a glimpse of the higher roof line with the chimney standing proud almost incongruous in its situation surrounded by blandness and poor built form.
- 3.4.5 Turning now to the proposal, the policy background has been carefully set out already and, in this respect, the most appropriate assessment that can be made is in respect of the Council's Design Planning Guidance. In particular Section 5 of the Design Guidance deals with roofs, terraces and balconies and sets out criteria where alterations or additional storeys will and will not be acceptable. An assessment against all these criteria will inform upon the acceptable nature of the scheme in relation to policy issues and this will then be followed by a short Statement of Significance bearing in mind the fact that the subject premises are in a conservation area and adjacent to listed buildings.
- 3.4.6 Before assessing the scheme against the various criteria referred to above, it is appropriate to describe in a little more detail the scheme and its "visibility" from Grape Street and also from West Central Street. The scheme envisages the removal of the existing roof forms and the provision of a single-storey mansard roof with steeply pitched front and rear elevations and a predominantly flat central roof area. The overall height is raised 1m but the view particularly from Grape Street will in effect be little changed with a parapet on the Grape Street frontage of the same detail as the horizontal bands across the front elevation being raised proportionately to balance and in the main hide the mansard roof structure. As with the existing roofs, the height of the mansard roof over No. 9 is 1m above that of 11 and 13 which is the same amount as the existing roof structures.

- 3.4.7 To the rear of the building it is considered that the development will create a better appearance particularly as it would result in the removal of the steel structures containing the air conditioning units. Nevertheless, the units have to be retained and the intention is to place these centrally on the flat roof of the mansard where they will have far less visual impact than at present when viewed from the east.
- 3.4.8 The plans submitted clearly show the detail of the mansard together with the matching detail on the raised parapet area to the existing facade of the building on Grape Street. The design is intended to reflect traditional mansard roof detailing and use of materials (slate, lead, etc.) whilst at the same time presenting a simpler unified contemporary style more fitting to the building than the two-storey mansard at No. 7. Whilst there is little that can be done to the rear elevation of the building up to parapet height as viewed from West Central Street, the new mansard will present a much better appearance than hitherto and it will be noted that the existing chimneys will be retained and incorporated properly into the roof scape creating, overall, a good balanced appearance less cluttered than hitherto.
- 3.4.9 Turning now to the Council's design criteria for roofs, terraces and balconies as set out in Section 5 of the Design Guidance document, it will be appreciated that there are particular and unusual circumstances applying to this development. This can best be described by assessment against the criteria set out in paragraph 5.7 where additional storeys and roof alterations are considered likely to be acceptable. There are three criteria as follows:-
- *There is an established form of roof addition or alteration to a terrace or group of similar buildings and where continuing the pattern of development would help to re-unite a group of buildings and townscape.*

Because of the narrowness of Grape Street it is difficult to view the roof form of most of the buildings, including the subject site, with the possible exception of No. 7 where the two-storey mansard roof form is more obvious due primarily to the fact that the subject site is two-storeys lower than No. 7. The development on the west side of Grape Street has an additional storey within the facade and also pitched roof with dormer windows above but again not visible due to the parapets along the frontages and the difficulty of viewing the roof form caused by the sharp angle of view obtainable from ground level. However, what is quite clear is that Nos. 9-13 are lower generally than adjoining properties and that an additional storey as proposed would balance the appearance of the building by raising the front elevation in an appropriate manner on the Grape Street frontage with the parapet area detailing following the detailing on the principal facade. Raising the floor space one storey and incorporating onto the roof of the building a mansard roof proposal will not in any way detract from the character

and appearance of the building nor over-dominate the existing built form immediately in the area. It will instead balance better with development in the street generally.

- *Alterations are architecturally sympathetic to the age and character of the building and retain the overall integrity of the roof form.*

In terms of the Grape Street elevation, the roof form, as at present, will be virtually invisible from any public vantage point. However, the scheme involves raising the parapet and in so doing all details incorporated into the facade of the building are continued upwards onto the new parapet area. Behind that parapet a traditional form of mansard roof structure using appropriate materials will be provided. This structure will have a far less dominant appearance than what has been added to the adjoining building and will allow a balanced and effective contemporary design befitting the location and having no material impact upon the established Edwardian character and appearance.

To the rear of the building an entirely different scenario greets the eye with the well balanced proportionate mansard roof appearing above the bland blank wall of the rear elevation and providing much visual improvement. The steel framework and the air conditioning units would be removed with the air conditioning units replaced centrally on the lower part of the roof where their visibility would be much reduced. As with the front elevation, the rear parapet is raised but in order for the elevation to retain visual continuity, it will have to be rendered. Above that the slate mansard roof with the dormers inset will be visible with, above this, the retained chimney stacks. Overall, the appearance of the application premises will be improved substantially.

- *There are a variety of additions or alterations to roofs which create an established pattern and where further development of a similar form would not cause additional harm.*

Although it is difficult in the extreme to view the roof forms of the properties in Grape Street there is a variety with either traditional pitched roofs or mansard designs, all with dormer windows. Thus the proposal for the subject site is not out of keeping albeit, so far as the Grape Street elevation is concerned, it will hardly be noticed. Nevertheless, the raising of the parapet on the Grape Street frontage and the incorporation of detailing into that parapet following the detailing on the facade of the building as a whole will create a better balance of built form between Nos. 9-13 and the neighbouring properties.

3.4.10 Having discussed the proposal in relation to situations which the Council consider acceptable for roof alterations, etc., it is also

reasonable to consider the criteria set out in paragraph 5.8 of the Design Guidance document where it is considered unlikely that a roof alteration or addition will be acceptable. The scheme needs to be assessed against the various criteria as follows:-

- *There is an unbroken run of valley roofs.*

Clearly this is not applicable in this instance.

- *Complete terraces or groups of buildings have a roof line that is largely unimpaired by alterations or extensions, even when a proposal involves adding to the whole terrace or group as a co-ordinated design.*

Although the original roof is retained on 9-13 (and 15) Grape Street, it does not represent a significant element in the character and appearance of the building and, of course, to the rear the roof line is seriously impaired by the steel structure and air conditioning units.

- *Buildings or terraces which already have an additional storey or mansard.*

Whilst the adjoining listed building has two storeys of mansard roof added to it sometime in the past, the subject premises are in their original form in terms of roofscape and does not at present have an additional storey or mansard.

- *Buildings already higher than neighbouring properties where an additional storey would add significantly to the bulk or unbalance the architectural composition.*

In fact, in this instance the reverse is true, the subject building is lower than neighbouring properties and an additional storey, including the raising of the parapet on the Grape Street elevation would improve the architectural composition by creating balance in a more sympathetic manner than at present.

- *Buildings or terraces which have a roof line that is exposed to important London-wide and local views from public spaces.*

In fact, in this instance, the roof line is hardly exposed to view at all particularly insofar as the Grape Street elevation is concerned and where it is exposed to view to the rear, it does not present an attractive feature in the townscape.

- *Buildings whose roof construction or form are unsuitable for roof additions such as shallow pitched roofs with eaves.*

In this case the front elevation has heavy eaves details masking the roof and giving the impression of a parapet although the existing roof structures behind is shallow pitched, for reasons already described it would be perfectly acceptable to remove the original roof form and provide the mansard as proposed.

- *The building is designed as a complete composition where its architectural style would be undermined by any additional roof level.*

In the light of comments already made in terms of the appearance of the existing building, it is clear that the existing roof plays little or no part in establishing the character and appearance of the building. In preparing the scheme the architects have been careful to retain the architectural style on the Grape Street elevation and have endeavoured to improve the appearance on the rear elevation where the unfortunate existing roof structures can be seen from the public vantage point of West Central Street.

- *Buildings are part of a group where differing heights add visual interest and where a roof extension would detract from this variety of form.*

As already described the general storey height of development fronting Grape Street is one or two above that at the application premises. It thus has a somewhat diminutive impact slightly devaluing the contribution that the building can make to the overall character of Grape Street. Increasing the storey height by one floor, providing a mansard roof structure behind a raised parapet will retain and improve the visual appearance of the relationship of one building to another and would thus not impair in any way the balance of appearance in the street.

- *Where the scale and proportions of the building would be overwhelmed by additional extension.*

The scale and proportions of the building overall will be little affected by the additional storey behind the proposed parapet which will embody the features included in the front elevation as a whole. Accordingly, so far as the appearance from Grape Street is concerned the scale and proportions of the building would be retained and the new addition at roof level will have no impact and certainly will not overwhelm the existing building. To the rear, the scale and proportions of the building would be improved with the structure “capped” appropriately by a new mansard roof of balanced and appropriate appearance deflecting some attention from the unfortunate appearance of the rear elevation of No. 7 Grape Street.

3.4.11 The Design Guidance then makes reference to the Conservation Area Statements, Appraisals and Management Plans which it is stated set

out the Council's approach to preserving and enhancing the Conservation Areas. This matter is dealt with in the next section of this statement but, nevertheless, the appraisal as set out above indicates that great care has been given to the character and appearance of the premises and the relative importance in terms of Grape Street in particular. The design features of the building have been assessed and the scheme proposed has evolved to produce a development of appropriate scale and design and with minimal visual impact on the primary elevation but resulting in improvements to the appearance of the rear of the property. As indicated in this statement opportunities are taken to provide a sustainable form of construction taking full note of the Council's policies in regard to such matters and climate change.

### **3.5 Statement of Significance**

- 3.5.1 Nos. 9-13 Grape Street are within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and it is noted from the Appraisal document that the building is not listed but is recognised as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. It is also noted that Nos. 1-7 (odd) and 2-20 (even) Grape Street are Grade II listed buildings. In these circumstances paragraph 128 of the NPPF requires a Statement of Significance as follows:-

*In determining applications, local planning authorities shall require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.*

Paragraph 132 then continues:-

*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the assets' conservation. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting.*

- 3.5.2 Accordingly, it is necessary to establish what heritage assets are involved in this development and what is the significance in terms of the development. It is also necessary to establish the importance of the heritage asset and, of course, how the development affects that importance. For this purpose it is necessary to refer to Annex 2 which is the glossary of the NPPF. Within this glossary a "heritage asset" is described as follows:-



*A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designation heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including locally listed buildings).*

- 3.5.3 It is reasonable to assume that the Bloomsbury Conservation Area within which the site is located is an asset of some weight in determining new development within it. In addition, with the potential for the development to impact upon the street scene (albeit in a very limited manner as already described) it is necessary also to assess whether or not the scheme will impact upon the listed buildings at 1-7 Grape Street and 2-20 Grape Street. The former lies immediately to the north and adjacent to No. 9 Grape Street while the latter is the building opposite the application site. Finally in respect of the definition of an asset in these circumstances, it may be that 9-13 can be considered as such on the basis that it makes a positive contribution to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area as indicated in the Appraisal document.

- 3.5.4 Finally in respect of policy in the NPPF paragraphs 137 directs that:-

*Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas... and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.*

These comments are significant in terms of interpretation of the scheme for a mansard roof at 9-13 Grape Street, there being a need to balance carefully the impact, if any, of the proposed mansard roof upon the historic character of Grape Street and, perhaps to a lesser degree upon the building itself which is not listed.

- 3.5.5 In this case, perhaps unusually, in terms of the overall character and appearance of Grape Street as perceived by the public the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is insignificant. Little, if any, of the actual roof of the building can be seen at present and the same will apply in the event of the mansard roof construction being carried out. The only difference will be that the front facade will be extended higher but will still present a building lower than its neighbours. The important factor in terms of the increase in height of the facade is that the detailing on this elevation of the subject property will be repeated in the new section of facade and parapet proposed.

- 3.5.6 Insofar as the listed buildings adjoining and opposite the property are concerned, the impact of the new mansard roof will not adversely affect the setting of these buildings but may, in one instance in particular, slightly improve the overall situation. Whilst No. 7 Grape Street is listed, at some time in the past it has been extended with a two-storey mansard roof structure which cannot really be considered of appropriate design as an addition to this particular listed building and can be said to rather over-dominates the street scene, albeit the narrowness of Grape Street still restricts full view of what has occurred. However, the end flank wall above the current roof/parapet of No. 9 is unfortunately clearly visible and accentuates the inappropriateness of the termination of the roof structure on No. 7. The raising of the front elevation of Nos. 9-13, more so perhaps than the new roof itself, will reduce the poor visual impact of the unfortunate appearance of the flank wall of No. 7. Thus there is merit in assessing the new development as improving to a minor degree the setting of the listed building and also the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 3.5.7 Whilst the new roof form proposed will be visible from the upper floors of 2-20 Grape Street, it will not impact upon the setting of this particular listed building and will certainly not become over-dominant bearing in mind the proximity to taller buildings both adjacent to and beyond (to the east) of the subject site.
- 3.5.8 Although outside a Conservation Area, the “view” from West Central Street is of some importance insofar as that view takes in the rear elevation of the buildings in Grape Street and thus within the Conservation Area. Furthermore it is only from this position in West Central Street that the juxtaposition of Nos. 9-13 with No. 7, the listed building, can be seen clearly. From this location neither building presents anything other than a poor appearance. The rear elevation of No. 7 shows in even greater contrast than its front elevation the inappropriateness of the roof additions applied some years ago which accentuate the overall blandness of the rear elevation detracting substantially from the character and appearance of the listed building and thereby to a degree not presenting the Bloomsbury Conservation Area character in a particularly good light. So far as Nos. 9-13 Grape Street is concerned the rear view of this property from the same location is currently probably as bad as that at No. 7. The rear wall is of poor quality render from ground to parapet level and the steel structure supporting the air conditioning units and the units themselves all detract from the character and appearance of the building. The proposed mansard roof structure will represent a unifying feature on 9-13 balancing well with surrounding buildings and greatly improving the character and appearance of the building when viewed from West Central Street.
- 3.5.9 Taking matters overall, whilst it is intended to replace the original roof with an alternative structure, this will not be damaging to the character

or appearance of the existing building in any way and will from certain directions improve appearance quite substantially. Furthermore, the change of the roof will not impact materially upon the setting of adjoining listed buildings and will, in one particular instance, result in a better balanced appearance to a currently unfortunately poorly designed end elevation above the current roof line of No. 9.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The scheme the subject of the planning application envisages the removal of the roofs over Nos. 9-13 Grape Street and their replacement with a mansard roof of sufficient size to allow inclusion of a three bedroom apartment.
- 4.2 The existing structure is not visible from Grape Street due to the angle of view and the narrowness of the road itself but is viewable from the rear in West Central Street where the poor quality of the existing roof and the array of steel work and air conditioning units is visible.
- 4.3 The replacement roof will be designed to compliment roofs on adjoining properties in a sensible appropriate manner reflecting a style of mansard roof typical of the area clad in suitable materials and behind extended parapet walls to ensure that the overall character and appearance of the building, which is stated to make a positive contribution to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, is maintained. Indeed, to the rear the new roof structure will enable the building to have upgraded appearance more befitting its location in the Conservation Area and its position adjacent to listed buildings.
- 4.4 The scheme has been carefully assessed in terms of its immediate physical impact and against all national and local policy and design guidance, including reference to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area document.
- 4.5 A Statement of Significance has been included in accordance with policy set out in the NPPF demonstrating that various local heritage assets which might be considered to be affected by the development are not harmed either directly or through their setting and that overall the scheme will, on balance, enhance the character and appearance of the immediate area without resulting in an over-dominant structure anymore prominent to view on 9-13 Grape Street than exists at present.
- 4.6 The Council is requested to grant planning permission for the proposed mansard roof at 9-13 Grape Street including a three bedroom apartment.