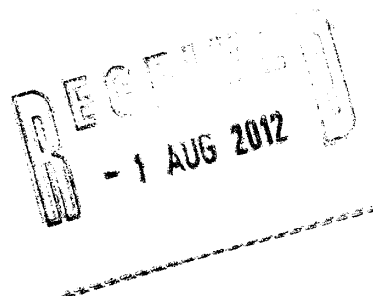


**DESIGN, ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT**

44 and 45 Great Russell Street  
London  
WC1B 3PA



**Rev A 01 August 2011**

**Section on "change of use added"**  
**Reference to sources consulted added**  
**References to PPS 5 removed**

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## INTRODUCTION

The application involves work to both the following properties, though the majority of work is in connection with the property at number 44.

44 and 45 Great Russell Street  
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The properties are both Listed. 44 Great Russell Street is currently used by a coin dealer, who has a shop in the front space of the Ground Floor. The rooms behind the front space, the accommodation in the Basement below and on the floors above are used as offices by the coin dealer.

Appendix 1 of this document contains as existing photographs of the building. These are numbered and the locations of each numbered photograph are located on the as existing plan drawings submitted as part of this application. Because of the large amount of material stored in the interior by the current occupants it has not been possible to undertake a full investigation of all aspects of the interior.

The coin dealer also occupies the Ground Floor of the neighbouring building at 45 Great Russell Street.

The application is made by the owners of 44 Great Russell Street and involves reconfiguring the ground floor spaces of numbers 44 and 45, and converting the First, Second and Third floors of number 44 to residential use.

The building dates from the mid-nineteenth century and is located on the south side of Great Russell Street opposite the frontage of the British Museum. The building is Grade II listed and was listed on 9 December 1977. The entire terrace (numbers 43-48) that forms the block between Coptic Street and Museum is listed Grade II and described together as part of the same listing. The terrace of shops and houses was designed by the architect William Finch Hill, circa 1855-64, and in urban terms read as a single composition forming the block between Museum and Coptic Streets.

The area is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The surrounding area is characterised by a diverse range of uses. South of the museum, particularly along Museum Street, Bloomsbury Street and Great Russell Street there is a concentration of specialist retail uses dealing in collectible items such as antiquarian books, coins and prints. The Ground floor use of number 44 fits into this use pattern. There are a number of cafés and restaurants in this area alongside some historic public houses.

The building is arranged over five floors, Basement, Ground, First, Second and Third. Each floor is broadly to the same layout. Within the main volume of the building the plan is arranged with a larger room to the front of the plan, with a smaller room and staircase to the rear. The rear elevation of the main building is rendered. The render appears to be in poor condition. A small rear addition runs the entire height of the building and is accessed from the rear room on each floor.

The front rooms cover the whole width of the building. Existing cornices are present. Each front room has a large fireplace located centrally within the room against the Party wall with number 45. Both the rear room and room in the rear addition have corner fireplaces on either side of the rear wall of the main building.

Behind the main entrance at Ground floor level there is an internal lobby. There are two doors leading from this lobby, one forms the entrance to the shop the other gives access to the stair.

At Second and Third floor the floorboards have been left bare. At Second Floor level all floorboards run front to back, indicating that joists run between the Party Walls. At Third floor level the floorboards runs side to side, indicating that the joists run front to back spanning between external walls and the spine wall.

The existing staircase is present together with original detail and panelling. A stair leads up from the Third floor. This gives access to the roof via a dormer type access hatch.

There is a small lightwell to the rear of the property. This is accessed from a corridor to the rear of the staircase at ground floor level. Within this lightwell there is a timber structure that appears to function as some sort of store. On the wall above some air-handling units are mounted on brackets. The lightwell also gives access to a separate rear building/ room which has a large duo pitched rooflight. In addition there is a small lightwell at Basement level that sits between the rear additions.

In preparing the application the following documents have been consulted.

Department for Communities and Local Government: *National Planning Policy Framework* (March 2012)

London Borough of Camden: *Local Development Framework Camden Development Policies 2010-2025* (Adopted November 2010)

London Borough of Camden: *Camden 2010-2025: Local Development Framework* (Adopted November 2010)

London Borough of Camden: *Camden Planning Guidance 1: Design (CPG1)*

London Borough of Camden: *Camden Planning Guidance 3: Housing (CPG3)*

London Borough of Camden: *Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy* Adopted 2011

English Heritage: *London terrace houses 1660-1860: A guide to alterations and extensions*

## **DESIGN PROPOSAL IN OUTLINE**

There is an individual top-lit studio to the rear of both numbers 44 and 45. Currently access to the number 44's studio is via the external rear courtyard. It is proposed that the studio of number 44 be connected to that of number 45 by making an opening in the party wall between them. Access to the studio at the rear of number 44 would then be cut off, with access solely being through number 45. Number 44's rear top-lit studio would become part of Number 45's property. The connection of the studios is the only element of the application that involves the building at Number 45.

There would be a degree of reconfiguration of the Ground and Basement spaces. Principally this involves the insertion of a new internal stair to the rear of the unit within the space of the existing rear addition to link the Ground and Basement accommodation.

In addition there is a small enclosed, external courtyard to the rear of number 44. This is quite a messy space (see photographs) and currently contains an accumulation of outbuildings. It is proposed to rearrange the rear courtyard through the creation of a single storey addition to the rear façade of the main building. This would be a cleaner solution and would house a new accessible WC compartment for the ground floor unit with a roof terrace for use of the First Floor flat above.

In terms of the proposed flats above each is of a similar layout. Again the main plan form has been maintained together with the original volumes. The front room becomes a kitchen/ living

space and the rear room a bedroom. The bathroom would be located within the space of the existing rear addition, accessed from the bedroom.

In terms of services the bathrooms in the rear addition are well located to access a soil stack on the rear of the main building. The drainage for the kitchen would need to run through the stair enclosure against the Party Wall. Extract ventilation for the kitchen would be run in a new riser running up from First floor in a location by the kitchen. All runs would be located to take account of cornices.

The proposed layout of the flats maintains the original plan form of the building and is therefore maintained that this is an appropriate response to the conversion of the building. Alan Wito noted this in his pre-application advice. This is also supported by advice in the English Heritage in their publication on London terrace houses.

*The domestic plan form of the London terrace houses is an important part of their character and special interest. As a general rule the character, proportion and integrity of the principal rooms at ground and first floor levels, together with the primary and secondary staircase compartments should be preserved.*

As part of the change of use we would seek to upgrade the fire performance of the partition walls forming the stair. It is proposed to achieve this through the use of Enviograp paint applied to the room side of the partition to improve its fire rating to 60 minutes.

The fire separation and acoustic performance of the existing floors would be upgraded through the use of mineral wool installed inbetween the existing joists. This work would be carried out from above with any existing lath and plaster ceilings being retained. This would involve the careful removal and reinstallation of the existing floor boards. The application drawings include a detail of how this is achieved.

## **PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE**

Two pre-application submissions have been made, and in both cases advice has been given by Alan Wito of Senior Planner (Conservation) and Hugh Miller of Camden Development Control Planning Service under the reference ENQ/02811.

### **First pre-application submission**

The initial pre-application submission was made on 1 July 2011. Copies of these drawings are included in Appendix 2 of this document.

In summary the initial pre-application scheme proposed a layout of one flat per floor on each of the First, Second and Third floors. The proposed layout of each was broadly the same as the application scheme.

It was also proposed to extend to the rear across the full width of the rear elevation to Ground Floor level. A new stair was proposed and the rear addition was extended to accommodate this.

A site visit was made with Hugh Miller and Alan Wito on 25 August 2011. Comments on the Conservation issues were issued on 25 October 2011, with comments on the planning issues being issued on 23 November 2011.

A copy of the written advice provided is contained in Appendix 2 of this document, and is summarised below.

## **Planning advice**

In terms of land use policy it was advised that the proposal was broadly in line with Camden Planning Policy. It was stated that the proposal should include a mix of unit types and sizes or a justification provided as to why this was not possible. It was stated that the flats should comply with Lifetime Homes Standards or a justification provided as to why this was not possible. Within the context of a Listed Building it is maintained that these criteria are not achievable in full. Justifications are outlined in the text below in the following section of this document.

Observations were made with regards to Storage and Utility spaces, bicycle and refuse storage and notes on the drawings indicate how the design addresses these points.

## **Conservation advice**

Advice was that the general arrangement proposed for each flat was reasonable and maintained the original plan form of the building. Concern was raised over alterations necessary to satisfy building regulations requirements particularly in terms of means of escape, fire separation and acoustic separation.

The applicant has appointed Salus Building Control to advise on alternative means of complying with the Building Regulations and these measures are outlined in the text below in the following section of this document.

Further details of the required access to the roof terrace proposed above the closet wing were required to advise on this aspect. Structural details of the proposed walkway are included in the drawings submitted as part of this application.

Concerns were raised about the extension of the existing closet wing. Advice was also that the proposed extension at ground level would not be acceptable because it would cover the ground floor elevation and internalise the rear room.

## **Second pre-application submission**

A second pre-application submission was made on 7 March 2012. The design was revised to take account of the advice given in response to the initial pre-application submission. Copies of these drawings are included in Appendix 3 of this document.

It was still proposed to create a stair from Ground to Basement in the closet wing, so that the two floors of the shop space can be linked internally within the commercial unit. The proposed stair was now to be located within the space of the existing closet wing.

The drawings had also been revised to show the enclosure being made through the use of a fixed frameless glass panel with associated roof panel above. The intention behind this is to allow the forms of the existing rear additions to remain visually prominent and to allow the rear elevation of the main building to be seen through the glass.

Advice in response to this submission was given by e-mail dated 24 May a copy of that advice is included in Appendix 3 of this document.

Comments provided in connection with this second pre-application submission were principally in connection with the conservation aspects of the design.

Alan Wito still had concerns regarding the proposed installation of the stair within the closet wing which he felt harmed the character of this space.

Advice was that a small glazed infill extension at ground floor level might be acceptable as it would read as a lightweight structure and external to the main body of the house and that

there was not an objection in principle to the use of the roof of this as a terrace combined with the space above the rear wing, though concerns would be the alterations of the windows to doors to access these.

## **DESIGN PROPOSAL IN DETAIL**

### **General**

The application proposal has been developed in response to the comments of the two pre-application submissions. Detailed information on the Planning and Conservation issues is outlined below.

### **Planning Issues**

#### **Change of use**

The proposal is for a partial change of use within the single planning unit to create a mixed-use scheme. Commercial usage will be retained at Basement and Ground floor levels and in the rear studio with the existing shopfront being retained. There is no reduction in the number of individual commercial units.

In addition the proposal improves the quality of the retained commercial space provided. This is supported by paragraph 13.6 of DP 13, which acknowledges that commercial spaces need to meet the needs of the end user.

The retained commercial areas are provided with improved kitchen and WC facilities improving the commercial space and increasing the ability of the existing commercial space to meet the needs of the end user.

The proposal also brings the space contained in the rear studio of number 44 into use as a significantly more useable area of commercial space through the proposed internal connection to the property at number 45. Currently the rear studio can only be accessed from the external rear courtyard of number 44, and only through a small external space behind the existing rear addition. The access to the studio is then through a narrow doorway and via several steps up. See Figure 17. Poor access arrangements are specifically mentioned in paragraph 13.6 of DP13 as a characteristic of poorer quality office space that often fails to attract occupiers. It is maintained that, by incorporating this space into number 45 by a new internal connection, the proposal liberates this space to become a significantly higher quality and more useful commercial space. In all practical terms this effectively constitutes the provision of additional commercial space of an appropriate quality.

Policy CS8 of the Camden Core Strategy 2010 seeks to support Camden's industries by safeguarding existing employment sites and premises in the borough and meeting the needs of modern industry and other employers.

Hugh Miller specifically commented on the scheme in relation to Policy CS8 in his in his pre-application comments. Full details are included in Appendix 2 of this document. Hugh Miller stated:

*The supporting text indicates that the projected demand for office B1 floorspace can be met at the King's Cross & Euston growth areas and therefore there is potential for change of use of older office premises to provide housing and community uses as discussed in policy DP13. It is considered that this building falls within this category.*

Policy DP13 makes clear that consideration will be given to redevelopment proposals for mixed use schemes including priority uses such as housing, that premises for small and medium enterprises are provided and that the proposed non employment uses will not prejudice continued industrial use in the surrounding area.

The upper floors of commercial space that are being lost through conversion do not provide commercial space of a good quality. Paragraph 13.4 of policy DP 13 outlines some typical design criteria that enable flexible commercial use. These include:

- clear and flexible space with few supporting columns;
- adequate floor to ceiling heights;
- wide doors/corridors;
- loading facilities;
- large amounts of natural light;
- availability of a range of units sizes; and
- space for servicing by/parking of commercial vehicles

The upper floors of the application building do not provide spaces that meet any of the above criteria. The spaces are typical of the London terraced house type that evolved over the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The terraced townhouse is the predominant typology through the area of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. An additional constraint is imposed by the building's listed status. The ability to alter layouts, incorporate a lift or increase the structural strength of floors is limited by the historic importance of the plan form and existing fabric.

As the building was originally built as a dwelling, the conversion to residential is the most appropriate use, and the scale and arrangement of the rooms is broadly suited to that use. The approach to the conservation issues in connection with a residential conversion is outlined in the text below. In summary pre-application advice from Alan Wito was, that in Conservation terms, the proposal was appropriate in maintaining the original plan form of the building and allowing original features to be maintained.

As well as being a priority use as defined by DP13, it is maintained that the provision of housing within a mixed-use scheme is appropriate within the context of the surrounding area.

Great Russell Street connects the Tottenham Court Road and Holborn Growth Areas. In the Camden Core Strategy the document states that the aspiration for both these areas is a balanced mix of uses with housing as a predominant use alongside offices.

In a wider sense Policy DP1 of the Camden Development Policies states that:

*The council will require a mix of uses where appropriate in all parts of the borough, including a contribution towards the supply of housing.*

The lease is coming to an end later this year and the risk is that the upper parts will become vacant. The risk of poorer quality office space often failing to attract occupiers and becoming vacant is specifically mentioned in paragraph DP 13.6. Vacancy is one of the biggest risks to a historic building, where the consensus is that the best way to preserve historic buildings is through continued viable economic uses. With the provision of large amounts of new modern, flexible office space in the Kings Cross and Euston growth areas, now is an appropriate time to redevelop the site. This application proposal does that through the provision of a mixed-use scheme that maintains a commercial use on the site, with a minimal reduction in commercial floor area. The commercial areas that are lost are not of good quality. The commercial space that is retained will provide a significantly higher quality than that currently available at the site. The commercial floor space that is lost is to be replaced with housing which is a priority use in Camden Planning policy.

In his assessment of the proposal in planning terms as part of his pre-application comments Hugh Miller stated that.

*...it is considered that the principle of loss of employment floor space plus provision of additional residential floor space is welcomed as per LDF policies CS8 and DP 13.*



## **Lifetime Homes**

The fact that much of the design is based around an existing building, and that the existing building's listed status limits the scope for significant interventions in many cases, means that it is not possible to achieve in full the Lifetime Homes Criteria.

For example where there is an existing original stair throughout the building it is a Conservation requirement to retain this stair. It is not possible to amend the dimensions of the rise and going so that it complies with the requirements of Lifetime Homes Criteria 5. Equally the position and width of existing doorways is not possible to alter and most of these do not comply with Lifetime Homes Criteria 6. Other standards are not relevant to this particular scheme.

The drawings include some information on the various Lifetime Homes requirements; they can be read in conjunction with the Lifetime Homes Assessment spreadsheet in Appendix 4 of this Statement.

## **Unit mix and storage**

The drawings contain a key with full details of the means, amount and area of storage provided in each flat.

With regards to the approach taken to the mix of units it is maintained that the building's listed status would restrict the ability to combine floors to form larger flats. The current proposal has one flat per floor. The existing room configuration and overall size is appropriate for conversion to a one bedroom flat. Making a larger flat would involve combining two floors into one unit. This would obviously include the incorporation of an internal stair within the enlarged unit. Incorporating such a stair would not be acceptable in terms of listed building requirements. At the upper level a lobby would need to be made to separate the head of the stair from the bedrooms so that the stair didn't arrive directly in one of the bedrooms. This would have a significant effect on the plan form of the existing building and the existing spaces. The insertion of a stair would also require a significant amount of modification to the existing structure with the potential loss of large areas of original fabric.

## **Conservation Issues**

### **Stair within commercial unit**

It is still proposed to install a connecting stair between the Ground and Basement floors within the commercial unit. Careful consideration has been given to the option of not having a connecting stair within the unit, and using the existing basement to ground stair for the day to day connection between the basement and ground floor levels for the occupants of the commercial unit.

However it is strongly felt that this does not represent a practical option for the efficient operation of the commercial unit. In addition it would result in the mixing of the commercial and residential occupants of the scheme in the ground floor lobby. As proposed the occupants of the commercial scheme would not mix with the residential occupiers except at the main entrance lobby of the building.

The importance of this element of a mixed-use scheme is acknowledged by Camden Policy DP13, which, in relation to mixed-use schemes, states in paragraph 13.6.

*Clear separation of the residential element and effective management of the business space will also be important.*

In terms of the proposed stair within the commercial unit, it is a solution that requires only limited intervention within the fabric of the building, through the removal of a few joists. The

proposal has been amended to take account of the pre-application advice received and now sits within the existing volume of the space in the rear addition. The solution is also reversible, in that the stair will be constructed of timber making it relatively simple to remove and reinstall the joists and floor.

The importance of a proposal being reversible is acknowledged by English Heritage guidance on London Terraced houses.

### **Rear extension and roof terrace**

The proposed glass infill and roof to extend the space at ground level and create a terrace at First floor level have been designed to minimise the visual impact on the rear elevation and enable the existing elevation to remain evident and readable. The space within the extension creates the necessary access to the toilet within the commercial unit. To access this space, and the terrace above, it will be necessary to modify the window openings to create doors. The width of the existing openings is maintained.

The existing first floor addition is removed as part of these proposals. It contains the communal toilet accessed from the stairs. It is not original and is unsympathetic to the existing building as its flank wall subdivides a window on the rear elevation. See Figure 12.

### **Means of escape**

In a single stair building of this size, an Approved Document solution to meeting Part B of the Building Regulations would involve the provision of lobbies between each separate accommodation unit and the stair. In the context of this proposal this is not possible. The options are compromised due to the fact that this is an existing property. There is not sufficient space to accommodate lobbies. Furthermore the introduction of lobbies would have a fundamental effect on the layout of the plan form and would not be acceptable from a Conservation point of view.

However there are alternative solutions to those contained in the Approved Documents. It is proposed to install a mechanical smoke extraction system, which will operate in the event of fire and keep the stairwell free of smoke. Such solutions have been accepted in previous projects in lieu of smoke lobbies.

Advanced smoke have provided an assessment of the scheme and developed an initial schematic design and calculations for a smoke dilution system. A summary of this information is included on the drawing ASG12103.1.SK.1.Issue 1 in Appendix 6 of this document. In essence W1.4 would act as an inlet for air in the event of operation of the system. The smoke would then be extracted at the top of the stair into a fire rated plenum and through fire rated ductwork and out through the roof. The fan and all ductwork would be located above the ceiling level concealed within the roof void. The extract would be located in the centre of the side slope of the roof where it will not be visible from the street.

Advanced Smoke has in the past successfully designed smoke dilution systems to similar buildings. Such systems, when designed properly, will provide and maintain tenable conditions within the staircore allowing safe means of escape and fire-fighting operations.

Salus Building Control Approved Inspectors would be appointed as Approved Inspectors for the project to carry out Building Control duties. Salus have provided an initial assessment of the scheme and of Advanced Smoke's design and confirmed that the proposal would be acceptable in meeting Part B of the Building Regulations.

This approach enables the building to be converted to a mixed commercial residential scheme through meeting the Means of Escape regulations in an alternative manner to the standard solutions to compliance shown in the Approved Documents. This alternative approach means that it is possible to avoid the necessity for smoke lobbies to the stair.

## **Roof insulation**

The exact details of the roof construction are not known. Based on the survey information undertaken it is likely to be possible to incorporate some insulation between the roof joists at ceiling level. This would also involve replacing a few slates with in line ventilators to provide ventilation to the roof space and avoid a risk of condensation. Details are shown on drawing 178.502.

## **Upgrading fabric (sound and fire)**

The existing building fabric will be upgraded in terms of both acoustics and fire separation.

Envirograf intumescent paint will be used to upgrade the fire resistance of ceilings, stair partitions and existing retained doors. Explanatory notes are included on the drawings and product details included in Appendix 5.

Dense mineral wool will be inserted into the floor voids throughout. This solution will improve the fire resistance of the floor and the acoustic performance. This work will be undertaken from above, meaning that existing lath and plaster ceilings need not be disturbed. The mineral wool slabs are supported on mesh. The dense mineral wool improves the fire and acoustic resistance of the floor. A new engineered timber floor will be laid on an acoustic separating layer over the existing floorboards. The proposed solution is shown in drawing 178.500. The same solution was recently approved on a scheme for a listed building at 93 Judd Street in Camden, which has now been successfully completed.

## **Roof walkway**

It is intended to use the roof of the rear addition as a small terrace. A new walkway would be installed to provide a safe and level access from the dormer hatch to the proposed terrace. The walkway would be installed to occupy a position above the slope of the existing pitched roof.

There is an existing solid masonry balustrade, approximately 1200mm in height. The structural supports for the walkway would be positioned below the level of the walkway and the existing masonry balustrade. The walkway would sit inside the balustrade, with a lightweight handrail. On the terrace itself the existing balustrade would be of sufficient height to act as a balustrade.

Therefore the walkway and handrail have been designed to sit behind the existing balustrade and will not be visible for the street. The structural engineers Michael Barclay Partnership have prepared designs and calculations for the walkway element of the proposal. See drawing MBP 4983-300.

## **CONCLUSION**

The applicant has given careful consideration to the design of the application proposal. This is evidenced by the fact that two pre-application enquiries have been undertaken. A lot of detailed information has been included on the drawings and within this document in an attempt to address the issues raised by the officers in the pre-application process, particularly with regards to means of escape and Lifetime Homes requirements.

It is acknowledged that the incorporation of the stair within the commercial unit is a departure from the advice given in the pre-application process. However the applicant feels that such a stair is essential to the practical operation of the commercial unit in that it avoids the need for residential and commercial occupants to mix day to day. In response to pre-application advice the design for the stair has been reduced in size so that it occupies a space within the existing rear addition and the proposed solution is easily reversible.

A successful conversion would provide much needed housing to the borough's stock. In doing so it helps preserve an existing listed building through the creation of an economically viable use. This view is supported in national planning policy. National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 126 refers to putting heritage assets;

*...to viable uses consistent with their conservation.*

Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework refers to securing the optimum viable use for a heritage asset as a public benefit.

The proposal does represent a small reduction in commercial space but the space being lost is not of good quality. The proposal creates improved quality of commercial space, with the existing shopfront retained as part of the streetscape. Housing is a priority use within the borough of Camden and the provision of mixed-use housing/ office schemes is consistent with the aspirations for the borough and the immediate area. Therefore the replacement of poorer quality office space with housing is appropriate in planning policy terms.

The conversion of such an existing listed building to a mixed use with a residential component does raise many design issues. It is maintained that the application proposal represents allows a conversion that maintains the existing character of the building while achieving modern building regulations and a workable mixed-use scheme.