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DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

For

PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE GROUND FLOOR & BASEMENT

68 Charlotte Street, London W1T 4QE

Building Description.

The mid 19C building is of traditional brick construction and consists of five stories with a double pitched tiled roof with a transverse valley gutter to the main front building. There is a flat roofed single storey rear addition half a level down to the rear occupying 80% of the rear yard.

The building is surrounded by a mix of 19C buildings of various but similar scales of mixed business use with some upper floor flats.

The building has been much altered over the years especially at ground floor and basement where "modernisation" had taken place and this meant that the front light well had been covered with a raised and tiled deck and the railings removed. The front basement area therefore has no light well access or any openings that would allow natural light in.

As a consequence the basement front rooms have been used for storage and for telecommunications equipment and cabling by the last business tenant.

The building retains few original features and even the original staircase and stairwell has been much altered over the years. The building is "tired" and in need of refurbishment and upgrading.

Existing Use.

The use of the building is for 3 self contained residential flats on the upper floors with office use on the ground floor rear, ground floor front with basement under.

The property lies within the Charlotte Street Conservation Area. The building is not listed but a building of similar scale, number 72 lies in the same terrace of buildings, retains many original facade features and is listed Grade II.

The application property currently consists of business use offices on the ground floor front rear and basement. Since the relocation of the last tenant who occupied the whole of the business area it has proved impossible to rent out the whole of the ground floor and basement. Both the basement and rear extension have remained empty in spite of considerable marketing over some months. The reasons given by prospective tenants for not taking up the whole area are a combination of factors.

- Most have stated the shape and positioning of the facilities are not suitable as there is only a limited street frontage.
- The basement area is considered to be not suitable due lack of light and is in need of upgrading.
- The rear addition is considered too remote from the street.
- Most prospective tenants require less space and that should be directly opening onto the street.
- Generally the ground and basement is considered to have a somewhat convoluted layout because it was originally a 19C domestic premises and does not offer value for money.

The ground floor shop frontage has been let but only that area opening directly on to the street. This is on a monthly tenancy while plans are formulated to change the building.

The Design Proposals.

It is proposed that the front section of the ground floor be retained as business use, be upgraded and WC facilities be retained on the ground/first half landing for that office use. This office would access directly off the front lobby.

The rear of the ground floor, the rear addition and basement to be combined into one residential 3 bedroom unit accessed via the ground floor common hall behind the front lobby.

To form this maisonette, the front deck over the original light well would be removed and the railings reinstated. This would allow natural light and ventilation back into the front basement rooms. Windows and a door would be inserted basement front and a secondary metal stair there would offer an alternate means of escape from the basement area.

A structural bridge across the light well would be maintained to the ground floor main entrance similar to that in #70 and #72.

It is intended that the existing three upper flats would be upgraded in sequence and the final layout of the building would be 20m² Office front ground with a family maisonette ground and basement and 3 flats on the upper floors as existing.

It is considered that removal of the contemporary tile front deck and the re-instatement of the light well and railings in sympathy with those in the adjacent properties to the north would enhance the integrity of the three building terrace and provide a positive contribution to retaining the character of the Conservation Area.

Planning Considerations.

There would be a partial loss of business use but Camden planning guidelines recognise that buildings such as this, originally conceived as housing are not that suitable for modern business use and that if they require refurbishment it is acceptable to have a change of use provided that change of use is to community or housing use. Planning Policy CPG5 – Para 6-3 applies in this case.

It should be noted that this application also complies with the factors to be taken into account when assessing suitability for conversion to housing from office use as set out in planning Policy CPG5 – Para 6.4.

This proposal would retain the best area for business use while providing an additional large family unit in the area.

The proposed maisonette would be a 3 bedroom, 4 person dwelling. The net floor area including internal circulation space but excluding stair area totals 89m². This more than

adequately complies with the minimum 75m² new dwelling space standards under CPG1 Housing – Para 4.14 for a 4 person dwelling.

The individual bedrooms also exceed the minimum space standards set out in CPG1 Housing -Para 4.16.

Access.

Access to the upper flats and front office use would be unchanged. Access to the ground/basement maisonette would be via the common parts flats hallway with a secondary exit via the light well.

Supporting Information.

Attached are a number of photographs showing the existing façade and frontage areas as well as the street context and adjacent terraced properties.

Enclosed supporting documentation regarding the status of the recent lease history of the building and the difficulties of the previous tenants was prepared by Braham Gold Surveyors.

They have also attached comparative data of properties in the area regarding the general poor lettability of business premises of this type and age.

Conclusions.

The loss of part of the ground floor and basement is reasonable as the business use facing on to the street will be retained.

The rehabilitation of the rear ground and basement section of the building will provide residential accommodation which will be a positive contribution to local housing need.

The alterations to open up the front light well will also make a positive contribution to the visual amenity of this part of the Conservation Area.

We therefore feel that the case for changing part of this building back into permanent self-contained residential accommodation is a strong one and ask it be approved.

68 CHARLOTTE STREET, LONDON W1T 4QE – GENERAL VIEWS



#68 FRONT ELEVATION



#66 to #72 FRONT FACADES



#68 FORECOURT



#70 FORECOURT



#72 FORECOURT