

11-12 GREAT JAMES STREET, LONDON, WC1N 3DR

PLANNING STATEMENT

February 2008

CONTENTS

- 1.00 Introduction
- 2.00 Site and surroundings
- 3.00 Planning history
- 4.00 Background to the proposals
- 5.00 The proposed development
- 6.00 Planning policy background
- 7.00 Planning justification

1.00 INTRODUCTION

- 1.01 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of the applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent on behalf of Ambleglade Property Holdings Limited for the change of use from offices to residential at 11-12 Great James Street, London, WC1N 3DR.
- 1.02 Both the properties are Listed Grade II* and fall within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The buildings were constructed as single residences in the 1720s although they have been in office use for many years. The proposal to return the properties to two single family dwellings will ensure that the original character of the listed properties is maintained and restored and the proposals have been developed with detailed input from Camden's Senior Conservation and Urban Design Officer and English Heritage's Senior Historic Buildings Advisor.
- 1.03 The reports which form part of the application submission provide a full description of the site and surroundings; the details of the proposed development and the justification for the proposed scheme. The purpose of this planning statement is to provide a summary of the applicable planning policies and a justification in planning policy terms for the proposed development. A much more detailed site description and description of proposed works is produced by the scheme architects, Marcus Beale Architects, who have produced a very detailed assessment of the existing properties which is accompanied by a detailed photographic survey.

2.00 THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.01 The application site is located on the east side of Great James Street with a terrace of Grade II* listed buildings. The buildings are arranged over basement, raised ground and three upper floors and are interconnecting at most levels due to their use by a firm of solicitors who have occupied the building since the 1970's.
- 2.02 The Design and Access Statement provides a detailed chronology of the two buildings including information relating to the development of the road, the listing description, the historic occupation of the buildings and a detailed assessment of the interior and exteriors. There are modern rear extensions to both No. 11 and No. 12 and the statement together with the photographic study provides a complete assessment of the existing features and changes made in the 1970's and onwards to facilitate the office use. These changes include raised floors, subdivision of rooms, rear extensions and installation of plant and ducting, although it is evident that many original features remain intact including the wood panelling to many of the principal rooms, staircases and the arched window to No. 12.
- 2.03 In terms of planning considerations, our review of neighbouring land uses reveals that a number of properties have been in long term residential use and several of the properties which were in office use have been converted back to residential use including Nos. 10, 27, 28, 29, 36, 37, 38 and 39 over the last ten to fifteen years. Of the remaining properties, a number appear to be in mixed office and residential use and others continue to be in current B1 (a) use.
- 2.04 The use of the road is therefore mainly restricted to solicitors' offices and residential flats and dwelling houses.
- 2.05 The site is highly accessible to public transport and local services being located just off Theobald Road, to the north of Lincoln Inn Fields.

3.00 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.01 Our view of the planning history for the properties identifies the following approvals of planning permission and listed building consent.

- Alterations to internal partitions and walls at Nos 11/12 Great James Street, Camden. Permission granted on 31st July 1969
- Internal alterations, as shown on drawing numbers MAH/PH01 & PH02, 1641/01A & 02, MAH-L(--)/01B, 02B & 03B, MAH/S01-S06 & S011. Listed Building Consent Grant with Conditions

3.02 As mentioned above, there have been previous permissions for change of use from offices to residential to a number of other properties in Great James Street. The most recent permissions are summarised below:

- Planning permission (2003/2111/P) and listed building permission (2003/2242/L) was approved on the 22nd December 2003 for the change of use from office to a single dwelling house together with associated works of alterations, including the formation of terraces at ground and first floor levels and minor demolition to wall and steps at the rear at no. 10 Great James Street.
- Planning permission (2005/0265/P) and listed building permission (2005/0266/L) was gained on the 14th March 2005 for the change of use from office (Class B1) and residential use (Class C3) to a single family dwelling house (Class C3), together with associated works including the erection of a 2 storey rear extension, creation of new stairs in front area and basement opening and alterations to existing front railings at 36 Great James Street.
- Planning permission (2004/0157/P) and listed building permission (2004/0158/L) was gained on the 14th March 2005 for the The change of use from office use (Class B1) to single dwelling house (Class C3) at 37 Great James Street.

4.0 BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSALS

4.01 Since our appointment in June 2007, we have been working closely with the architects to produce a scheme which sensitively reinstates the single family residential use of the properties.

4.02 We have liaised closely with planning officers, principally Ms Joanna Ecclestone of the Conservation and Urban Design Department and Ms Claire Brady from English Heritage. We have undertaken site visits with both officers and have developed various versions of the scheme to take on board their views to sensitively reinstate the two properties to two single family dwellings.

4.03 The concept on the rear part of both buildings has been to demolish the 1970s rear extensions to the properties and replace them with structures more sympathetic to the listed buildings and produce layouts which whilst respecting the existing buildings, produce workable family accommodation for future occupiers.

4.04 Pre-application discussions have particularly focused on the proposed servicing associated with the introduction of bathrooms and wcs to upper floors. Several amendments have been made, particularly at second and third floor levels to incorporate the views of the two officers and the proposed layouts mainly reflect the existing arrangement in terms of room proportions and positioning or enhance the original features of the properties. Full details and justification is provided in the Design and

Access Statement.

5.00 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 5.01 The proposal seeks planning permission for the change of use of the properties from Offices (B1) to two single family dwelling houses (C3), together with remodelling of the rear office extensions to provide suitable living accommodation.
- 5.02 Listed Building Consent is sought for all works to the buildings which impact upon their historic and architectural significance. Due to the level of work which is required to convert the properties back to residential use, which includes infilling the openings to the common party wall which were created in conjunction with the combined office use of the buildings, together with works associated with use by a single family including the reintroduction of kitchens and bathrooms, the architects have produced a full schedule of works (11.2 – 11.4 of the Design and Access Statement).
- 5.03 Full details of the work are not repeated in the planning statement, however, we summarise the key components below:-
- no alterations are proposed to the front elevations of the properties;
 - access will remain as existing, with each property having independent access to Great James Street;
 - the unsympathetic 1970's rear office extensions are to be removed and sensitive rebuilding, albeit to a lesser extent will take its place;
 - the design of the replaced rear extensions will be of a much higher design quality which will relate well to the listed buildings whilst not competing with them;
 - principal rooms on the ground and first floor are to be reinstated through the removal of non-original partitions;
 - the quality and abundance of original panelling within the building is good particularly on the ground and first floors and the proposal includes the reinstatement of lost panelling in connection with reinstating original room proportions;
 - the original arched window to the principal stairs in No. 11 is to be reinstated to match that existing in No. 12 which will greatly enhance this part of the building;
 - careful consideration has been given to bathroom and servicing including the appointment of mechanical and electrical engineers to fully consider the implications and detail of the proposals. The design of the proposed bathrooms ensures that sanitary-ware is not fixed to panelled walls and that it is sensitively incorporated into the building.

6.00 PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

- 6.01 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.02 In this case the development plan comprises the London Plan - Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London consolidated with alterations since 2004 (February 2008) and The London Borough of Camden Replacement Unitary Development Plan (adopted June 2006).

The London Plan (February 2008)

- 6.03 Policies in relation to economic growth include 3B.1 Developing London's Economy and 3B.2 Office Demand and Supply. These policies seek a range of workspaces to meet the needs of different sectors, an increase to current stock, the renovation and renewal of existing stock to increase London's office market offer.
- 6.04 Policy 3A.1 seeks to increase the supply of housing, Policies 4B.1 and 4B.2 relate to design considerations.
- 6.05 Heritage Conservation is considered in Policies 4B.11, 4B.12, 4B.13. They advise that policies should seek to maintain and increase the contribution of the built heritage whilst allowing London to accommodate growth in a sustainable manner. Boroughs should ensure that the protection and enhancement of historic assets are based on an understanding of their special character. Boroughs should support schemes that make use of historic assets and simulate regeneration. The explanatory paragraphs note that designation of historic buildings is not enough. Sensitive management requires clear details of what needs to be protected, how and why

Camden Replacement UDP (2006)

- 6.06 The key policies to consider in this case are those relating to employment use and listed buildings. In terms of the change of use aspect, the relevant policy is Policy E2 which relates to the retention of existing business use. The policy advises against the loss of business use where there is potential for the use to continue. Various factors are set out which will be given consideration including size, suitability of site, accessibility, relationships to nearby uses, demand, supply and variety of sites for employment uses and design features which enable flexible use. Where a site is not suitable for continuation of any business use other than B1 (a) offices, as an exception to the general approach, the Council may allow a change to other uses. In such cases, the Council will seek a change of use to permanent residential uses (in particular, affordable housing) or community uses.
- 6.07 The explanatory paragraphs advise that the proximity of a site to residential uses and the possibility of disturbance to residents will be a consideration in assessing the suitability for business use. In relation to the exception to the policy, it advises that proposals for other uses of older office premises will be encouraged in appropriate cases if they involve the provision of permanent housing. The application of the exception to this policy will depend on the merits of individual cases.
- 6.08 The relevant policies seek to preserve and enhance the character of listed buildings (Policy B6) and preserve and enhance Conservation Areas (Policy B7). Policy B6 refers to the need for the Council to ensure that alterations and extensions do not cause harm to the special interest of the building. Planning permission will not be granted for work

considered to harm the setting of listed buildings.

- 6.09 The explanatory paragraphs of Policy B6 recognise that the best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings is to keep them in active use. The best use for a historic building is usually the use for which the building was originally designed, and wherever possible, this should continue or be reintroduced if at all possible. Proposals that would cause harm to the special interests of a building, for example, through the loss of important architectural features, changes to the original plan form, layout or structural integrity of the building will be resisted, unless there are other overriding considerations.
- 6.10 Residential development should not cause harm to the amenity of occupiers and neighbours (SD6). New housing is encouraged particularly utilising vacant and underused sites (H1).
- 6.11 Design criteria are set out in Policy B1 and guidance for alterations and extensions in policy B3.

Other Relevant Policy

- 6.12 In addition to the development plan policies, applicable Supplementary Planning Guidance from Camden is provided in the Camden Planning Guidance document (CPG) and consideration has been given to this advice, particularly Section 26 on Listed Buildings.
- 6.13 PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994). This Guidance sets out the statutory requirements to protect listed buildings and buildings within conservation areas and provides detailed guidance on issues affecting the historic environment.
- 6.14 Proposals for alterations to listed buildings (including demolition) are to be assessed against the criteria in paragraph 3.5 and the guidance acknowledges that the best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings is to keep them in active use and the best possible use for a building is often the use for which it was originally intended. However it acknowledges that as the nature of uses change over time and to ensure that the use remains economically viable, it will often necessitate some degree of adaptation or alteration (Paragraphs 3.8 / 3.10 PPG15).
- 6.15 With regard to Conservation Areas, paragraph 4.14 emphasises that special attention will be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of a conservation area.
- 6.16 PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development and PPS3 Housing are also relevant. The principles of these guidance documents are incorporated in the Camden and London Plan policies.
- 6.17 Further advice on listed buildings is provided in English Heritage publications, particularly 'The Repair of Historic Buildings: Advice on Principles and Methods' (1995).

7.00 PLANNING JUSTIFICATION

- 7.01 The employment policies seek to retain employment floorspace where it is considered suitable for continued employment use, however, flexibility is provided to allow change of use from office to residential. Other relevant policies include those relating to residential and heritage conservation which seek to make full use of suitable and under utilised buildings for residential purposes and which recognise that the best use for a historic building is the use for which it was designed.
- 7.02 A balanced application of the policies in other cases affecting listed buildings in Great James Street has concluded that proposals to revert from office to single residential dwellings is welcomed by the listed building policies and is consistent with employment and residential policies.
- 7.03 The fact that the proposal is for a single dwelling (in this case, one dwelling per property) is further supported by policy and is the most sensible proposition given the crucial need to respect the historic fabric of the building. The provision of a large family sized unit therefore relates well to listed building and residential policies.
- 7.04 The impact that commercial use has on the properties and on the long term fabric of the Grade II* listed building is highly relevant and there are a number of reasons which make this site less suitable for long term high quality office accommodation and which have contributed to the buildings currently being unoccupied. The lack of air conditioning, flexible office space, ability to incorporate modern IT cabling and servicing all contribute to the long term unsuitability for office use. Clearly, it is entirely unsuitable for other B1 uses.
- 7.05 As well as reinstating the original use, the proposal will enable the buildings to make a more positive contribution to the character of the area and the considerable investment in the long term upkeep of the buildings are of benefit to the Conservation Area.

Design of Rear Additions

- 7.06 The proposals to replace the unsympathetic modern extensions which have been added to both properties have been welcomed by both Camden and English Heritage. The design and extent of the replacement accommodation is sensitive to the listed buildings and is combined with the reinstatement of key features such as the arched window to No. 11.
- 7.07 Detailed design and extensive pre-application discussions with Officers has shaped the proposals and includes best practice methods to respect the original features and the character of the properties which include reinstating original windows such that the rear elevation, which although not particularly visible from the area or neighbouring buildings, will be considerably enhanced. The scale and bulk of the replacement extensions are appropriate and sensitive and will not detract from the listed buildings, but rather will complement them.

Improvements to the Listed Building

- 7.08 The proposals to reinstate the residential use of the buildings also involve the undertaking of extensive repair work to both properties which in listed building terms should be given significant weight in the decision making process. We have referred to the components in earlier sections and they are obviously explained in the accompanying papers, however, these include everything from removing unsympathetic partitions (as much as the design can facilitate), reinstating wood panelling to a number of primary rooms, removing unsympathetic ducting and plant and modern raised floors,

together with the infilling of the various openings in the party walls and reinstating doors and windows.

- 7.09 There obviously needs to be a balancing exercise in that to facilitate the use of a dwelling house, additional bathrooms and associated servicing is required, however, the detailed design of this aspect is now considered to be the most sensitive which can be facilitated whilst providing high quality residential accommodation with en-suite facilities which is an essential resale requirement for houses of this nature. Servicing follows existing channels where this is most appropriate and seeks to avoid harmful damage to rooms with panelling. Further justifications for the exact nature of servicing proposed is provided in the annotations on the plans, the photographs and the Design and Access Statement.

Conservation Area Considerations

- 7.10 The character and appearance of the Conservation Area will not be adversely affected by the proposal and we are of the view that the works will enhance the area through the level of investment proposed and the long term contribution that the work will make to the listed buildings and their future within the Conservation Area.

Other Issues

- 7.11 We do not consider the proposal to adversely affect residential amenity. The proposed land use is well established in this road and has been supported on numerous occasions and the design is appropriate in terms of impact on neighbouring residential amenity.
- 7.12 We therefore consider that the scheme complies with the London Plan and Camden UDP and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss any specific points with Officers, particularly in relation to the detailed design and listed building considerations such that the scheme can meet with Officers' approval.