

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT.

Mullion Court, 112 – 114 Finchley Road, NW3 5HT.

The Application:

Erection of an additional floor, at roof level, comprising two 2-bedroom flats with a roof garden above.

This application seeks permission to construct an additional floor at the existing apartment block in order to provide two additional flats. It is also proposed to utilise the resulting flat roof to provide a roof garden.

The proposed flats and the roof garden would be reached via an extension to the existing lift and stair well. Both flats would be of good size and each would have one double and one single bedroom. Within one of the flats, the proposed layout would enable en-suite facilities to be provided for the double bedroom.

Location:

Mullion Court is a substantial apartment building with shops on the ground floor and five floors of residential flats over.

The building is located on the eastern side of Finchley Road, opposite its junction with Goldhurst Terrace and close to Finchley Road Underground Station.

It lies between two other apartment blocks, both of which are taller than the application building.

To the north, is 116 – 118 Finchley Road, a building with the same mix of uses and with the same number of floors, but slightly higher. To the south is 108 – 110 Finchley Road, again a building comprising ground floor shops with residential over. This building, however, has an additional floor, making it significantly higher than Mullion Court.

Design:

As noted above, the existing building is significantly lower than one of the building adjacent to it (No. 108 – 110) and slightly lower than the other adjacent building (No. 116 – 118). It was therefore considered that an additional floor could be added, without causing harm to neighbouring buildings or to the visual amenity of the locality.

Having identified the potential for more floor space and therefore, additional flats, the design evolved on the basis of the following aims:-

1. That the extension should blend well with the existing building.

2. That the increased height and bulk of the extended building should not harm the visual relationship of the building with its neighbours or the street scene.
3. That the scheme should not cause harm to the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring flats.
4. That the resulting flats should provide good quality, accessible, accommodation.

The proposal has been designed to reflect the existing architecture of Mullion Court. On the front elevation the roof would be extended, in the same plane, and an additional row of windows, identical to those existing within the roof slope, would be installed. All materials on the front elevation would match those used on the existing building.

On the rear elevation the new wall would be set back approximately 20cms from the existing plant room wall and would be timber clad to provide a contrast with and accentuate the existing central access core feature. The extended stair well/lift shaft would be clad with metal panels of an appropriate colour. The decision was made not to use brickwork for this access core extension as, to do so, would detract from the prominent existing feature.

As noted above, Mullion Court is a lower building than either of its neighbours. We believe that the provision of an additional floor to Mullion Court would assist its relationship with its neighbours, allowing a progressive stepping down from the significantly taller 108 – 110 to 116 – 118. The present relationship, quite a severe step down and then a step back up, represents something of a discordant feature within the street scene.

Accordingly, we believe that the proposed extension would be consistent with, and enhance the local street scene, and would represent an entirely appropriate form of development.

The roof garden has been included to provide outdoor amenity space for the flats since such amenity space is at a premium in city centre locations such as this. For security, a safety barrier, comprising toughened glass panels supported by stainless steel railings, is proposed on the front and rear elevations. These materials have been chosen because of their lightweight appearance, in order to minimise any visual impact.

The potential for overlooking of neighbouring properties from the roof garden has been considered. This is not felt to be a problem to the front, across the busy Finchley Road, and, to the rear, the backs of the houses on Maresfield Gardens are some 40m away. Even the rear gardens of these properties are at least 22m distant. It is not therefore considered that the proposed roof garden represents any material threat to privacy.

The proposed two flats would be of good size and quality and would be built to Lifetime Homes standard. The extension is designed, and would be

constructed to meet modern standards in respect of efficiency, sustainability and access.

In all, this proposal offers an excellent opportunity to provide additional two bedroom residential accommodation, which is very much needed in this area and indeed in London as a whole. The proposed development would realise that opportunity and enable a full and sustainable use of this town centre site, without causing any harm to neighbours or to the local street scene.

Access:

The application building is in a very accessible location, well-served by the Underground railway system and by bus routes. Additionally the area has good access to a wide range of shops and other services.

No off-street car parking is proposed but, in this Central London location, which is very well served by public transport, this is not considered to be a determining issue.

The new floor and the roof garden would be accessed by extending the existing stairway and lift, making them as accessible as the existing flats.

The internal layout of the flats has been designed to provide ample circulation space and room sizes to meet the Lifetime Homes standard, indeed, with very little modification, the flats could, if required in the future, be made to meet the Wheelchair Standard.

Within the flats, doorways and circulation space would be spacious enough to accommodate a wheelchair. The kitchen/lounge/dining areas would be open plan to maximise the circulation space and therefore, their accessibility to wheelchair users. In this context, it is noted that kitchen areas will be designed so that a lower level work surface can be installed, if required, at any time in the future.

Throughout the flats, power sockets, light switches and other controls, such as for central heating, will be placed at a convenient height (between 450 and 1200mm from floor level) for wheelchair users. Door handles too will be set at a convenient height and will be of a design to facilitate operation by people with limited manual dexterity. Existing walls and new stud walling will be reinforced, as appropriate and necessary, so that grab rails and hoists could be installed if required.

We have been guided in this by reference to Camden's Planning Guidance documents, particularly Guidance note 24, "Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Housing" and by knowledge of Part M of the Building Regulations.

Conclusions:

This proposal offers an excellent opportunity to provide two additional flats of good quality. Such flats are very much needed in this area and indeed in London as a whole. The proposed development would realise that opportunity and enable a full and sustainable use of this town centre site, without causing any harm to neighbours or to the local street scene.

The proposed extension has been designed to reflect the architectural character of the existing building and it would not cause any material harm to neighbours' living conditions. Additionally, it is considered that inserting an additional floor, giving more height to the building, would assist the present, rather awkward relationship between Mullion Court and neighbouring buildings, allowing a progressive stepping down from the significantly taller 108 – 110 to 116 – 118.

In its scale and appearance within the local environment, we believe that the proposed extension is compatible and would, we believe ensure that Mullion Court relates better to neighbouring buildings and the local street scene than it does at present. The overall effect would be to enhance the appearance of this part of Finchley Road

Furthermore, the provision of two additional flats in this location, which has excellent access to public transport and is well-served by shops and other town centre services is considered to be an appropriate development, entirely consistent with current sustainable planning aims, to make full use of existing developed land in urban areas, as promoted by central and regional Government as well as by the local planning authority.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need any further information.

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