

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:		12/10/2007	
Members' Briefing		N/A / attached		Consultation Expiry Date:		01/10/2007	
Officer				Application Number(s)			
Elaine Quigley				(i) 2007/3742/P (ii) 2007/3743/L			
Application Address				Drawing Numbers			
34 & 35 John Street London WC1N 2AT							
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature				
Proposal(s)							
(i) Change of use of the premises from office use (B1) to residential use (C3) to form two single family dwellinghouses with basement extension. (ii) Internal and external works including change of use of the premises from office use (B1) to residential use (C3) to form two single family dwellinghouses with basement extension.							
Recommendation(s):		(i) Grant planning permission subject to S106 agreement (ii) Grant listed building consent subject to conditions					
Application Type:		Full Planning Permission Listed Building Consent					
Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:		Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:							
Consultations							
Adjoining Occupiers:		No. notified	09	No. of responses	01	No. of objections	01
				No. electronic	00		
Summary of consultation responses:		No letters received from third party representations					
CAAC/Local groups* comments: <small>*Please Specify</small>		Bloomsbury CAAC – objects to original proposal Proposals would inflict further undesirable damage; in particular the basement extensions, removal of rear canted bay at no. 35 and extension and the new openings.					

Site Description

The application site lies to the west of John Street in close proximity to the junction with Theobalds Road that lies to the south. It relates to two buildings that are internally linked at basement, ground, second and third floor levels. The building is vacant and has been occupied as office accommodation for over 10 years. The buildings are Grade II listed buildings and they form part of an original terrace of 8 houses, dating from c.1754-59. The buildings stand 4 storeys tall with basements and are constructed of multi coloured stock brick. The site is bounded to the west by the rear boundaries of residential properties fronting John's Mews. The site is mainly surrounded by a mix of commercial and residential units.

The site is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

A detailed architectural and historic assessment has been submitted with this application. It is clear from this that the buildings have been significantly altered in the later 20th century, following bomb damage during WWII. This included the rebuilding of the front elevation at 2nd and 3rd floor levels, the significant remodelling of the rear elevations and the substantial rebuilding of the interior of the 3rd floor and parts of the 2nd floor. In addition, a new spine wall has been inserted into no.34, reducing the size of the rear room, with smaller spaces created between this new wall and the original spine wall. This has had a fairly significant impact on the plan form of the building, as well as its internal appearance with new cornicing and joinery installed into non-original spaces. The least altered spaces are at ground and 1st floor levels within both properties.

Relevant History

2007/1923/P and 2007/1924/L

Planning and listed building consent were refused for the erection of a roof extension at fourth floor level to accommodate additional office space.

8701067

Planning permission was granted on 06/08/1987 for the erection of a single storey conservatory at the rear of the basement.

8770176

Listed building consent was granted on 06/08/1987 for the demolition of brick store at rear and garden wall at rear of no. 34 erection of a single-storey conservatory at the rear of nos.34 & 35 together with internal alterations/refurbishment

Relevant policies

Adopted Unitary Development Plan 2006

SD2: Planning Obligations; SD6: Amenity for occupiers and neighbours; SD9: Resources and energy; H1: Housing; B1: General design principles; B3: Alterations and extensions; B6: Listed buildings; B7: Conservation areas; E2: Retention of existing business uses; T3: Pedestrians and cycling; T8: Car-free housing.

Camden Planning Guidance 2006

Car free and car capped housing; Conservation areas; Extensions, alterations and conservatories; Landscaping and trees; Lifetime homes and wheelchair housing; Overlooking and privacy; Parking stress – residents' parking on-street; Residential development standards.

Assessment

Planning and listed building consent is sought for internal and external works including change of use of the premises from office use (B1) to residential use (C3) to form two single family dwellinghouses with basement extension and demolition of existing single storey rear extension. It is proposed to create 5 bedrooms from first to third floors at each property with living rooms on the ground floor and kitchen and ancillary staff accommodation at basement level. Alterations to the buildings will mainly be restricted to the internal parts of the buildings. External alterations will include the installation of slightly projecting area of glazing at ground floor level at the end of the garden of no. 35 to provide an area of lighting to the basement extension. This will measure 21 sq.m. Other external alterations include the replacement of the existing windows on the ground floor rear elevations of both properties with French doors. It is proposed also seeks to remove the trees from the garden of no. 35. The largest tree, an ash, is in poor health. It is proposed to provide refuse and recycling storage within the vaults of the basement lightwell.

Following discussions with the Council the scheme has been amended in the following ways:

- Removal of the single storey rear extension at no. 35 and the glazed roof terrace above.
- Reduction in the width of the basement extension at no. 35 that has been set in 1.3m from the boundary in order to provide a tree pit area.
- Reconfiguration of the internal layout of the master bedroom in the front room at first floor level including removal of partition walls
- Redesign of proposed modern French doors on ground floor rear elevation of nos. 34 and 35 with more traditional configuration reflecting the existing subdivided fenestration pattern on the rear elevation

The principal consideration material to the determination of this application are summarised as follows:

- Loss of office accommodation/provision of residential
- Mix of units
- Standard of accommodation
- Lifetime homes standards
- Sustainability
- Amenity
- Highway issues
- Cycle and bin storage
- Tree issues
- Historic building issues

Loss of office accommodation/provision of residential

The loss of the employment floor space from basement to third floor levels is considered acceptable. The existing office floorspace is not flexible space given the buildings listed status and it would be difficult for it to be adapted for the needs of light industry (B1c) or storage and distribution purposes (B8). Given that the building is unlikely to be suitable for continuation of any business use other than B1(a) offices, the loss is acceptable subject to a suitable use being proposed. The reinstatement of residential accommodation is welcomed and would comply with Policy E2 and H1 of the adopted Replacement UDP.

Mix of units

It is proposed to create 2 single family dwellings that would include 5 bedrooms within each new unit. The buildings would provide adequate accommodation for larger family units and would be considered acceptable in this location. The mix of dwellings would be considered acceptable in this location and complies with policy H8.

Standard of accommodation

The proposal will comprise a 2 x 5 bed units. Each of the dwellinghouses will measure approximately 537 sq.m and 650 sq.m (nos. 34 and 35 respectively) and will substantially exceed the minimum overall floor area requirement for five bedroom units (85 sqm).

The proposal will create an acceptable standard of accommodation in terms of natural lighting to each of the habitable rooms of the flats.

Lifetime homes standards

Policy H7 requires all new dwellings, including conversions, to be built to lifetime homes standards wherever possible. The adopted CPG advises that listed buildings should incorporate accessible features. Given the architectural significance of the building, as a Grade II listed building it will not be feasible to make alterations to the internal arrangement of the floors to ensure compliance with all lifetime homes. This would harm the historic fabric of the building. However, it is recommended that an informative should be attached encouraging them to meet the standards where possible.

Sustainability

All proposed developments, including conversions, are expected to incorporate sustainability principles in accordance with guidance in the adopted CPG. The proposal mainly relates to the internal refurbishment of the building. As the building is a Grade II listed building, the introduction of sustainability measures into the development is limited. Measures that would not harm the fabric of the listed building could include the incorporation of mechanisms for conservation of energy and water resources. The applicant is encouraged by informative to examine and maximise the function and performance of the building with regards to the sustainability of the development.

Amenity

Camden Planning Guidance states that, wherever practical, all new dwellings should have access to private outdoor amenity space. It is proposed to reinstate an area of private outdoor amenity space at no. 34 with a lower ground floor courtyard area measuring approximately 45 sq.m. The garden area at no. 35 will be extended to provide 109 sq.m of private amenity space. This would be considered an acceptable standard of amenity space for family accommodation within a Central London location.

The upper windows of the adjoining properties overlook the garden areas and oblique views will be possible of the private amenity space from these windows. The residential properties at nos. 33 and 35 John's Mews will directly overlook the garden areas. This would be considered acceptable in a Central London location. It must be noted that the surrounding uses are mainly commercial in nature therefore any overlooking will be restricted mainly to daytime hours.

Highway issues

Given the site's location in the Central London area and its accessibility to good transport links, it is considered that a car free scheme should be secured through a S106 agreement in accordance with Policy T8. The applicant has confirmed in writing that this is acceptable.

Cycle and bin storage

It is proposed to utilise the space within the basement vaults for cycle and bin storage. The principle of locating the cycles and bin storage in the vaults is considered acceptable. The details relating to the specific locations of the cycle racks and the bins are not illustrated on the drawings however it is considered that the vaults can successfully accommodate 1 cycle rack and a domestic bin for each of the properties.

Tree issues

It is proposed to remove three medium-sized trees and three smaller trees. The Council's Tree Officer visited the site and advised that none of the trees in the garden are worthy of retention. The retention of the trees could not be insisted upon and their loss is therefore considered acceptable.

The width of the basement extension at no. 35 has been revised and has been set in by 1.3m on each of the side boundaries to enable natural processes to occur and for vegetation to grow naturally. This is considered acceptable and would comply with guidance contained in the CPG.

Listed Building Issues

Basement

The building has been significantly altered at basement level and retains little historic character. Modern partitions are to be removed from both properties and a more open plan arrangement created. This will result in a minimal loss of fabric and is considered acceptable given the denuded appearance at this floor level. The

courtyard space to no.34 is to be rationalized with modern metal framed folding doors inserted. This is considered acceptable in this concealed location and within the context of the character of this part of the building. A relatively large basement excavation is proposed for no.35, under the existing garden. This is considered to have little impact on the special interest of the listed building due to the lack of historic character at this floor level. The proposal would also have a limited impact on the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, being concealed below ground level. The only external manifestation of the basement excavation will be a slightly projecting area of glazing at the far end of the garden so as to light the space below.

Ground Floor

The application originally included a large extension to the rear of no.35. This was not considered acceptable due to its scale and bulk, as well as its impact on the prevailing rear building line of the terrace. The proposed roof terrace with its wall and glazed privacy screen were also considered inappropriate and incongruous. These proposals have now been omitted.

In no.35 the ground to basement staircase is to be reinstated in its original position. This was removed during the 1970s. The existing windows and a door in the rear elevation are to be modified to form full height doors. This is considered acceptable.

In no.34 the modern partition to the rear room is to be removed, improving its spatial quality. Modifications are proposed to the internal modern spaces at this floor level that are all considered acceptable. The existing lateral opening between the two properties is also to be infilled which is beneficial in listed building terms.

1st Floor

To no.34 it is proposed to remove the modern partition in the rear room. This will improve its spatial quality. As at ground floor level, modifications are proposed to the modern internal spaces and are considered acceptable. A door-sized opening is to be made through the original spine wall of the building. This is considered a relatively minor and acceptable degree of intervention.

A bathroom is proposed for the front room at this floor level. Amendments have been sought to the layout of the proposed bathroom as this is one of the building's principal spaces. The originally proposed partition walls have been replaced with freestanding units and a 2.2m high freestanding shower enclosure. This will improve the appearance, proportions and spatial quality of the room and will preserve its special interest.

To no. 35, non-contentious modifications are proposed for the small room accessed from the landing. Two door-sized openings are proposed for the spine walls that are considered modest and acceptable interventions. Concerns were also raised about the layout of the master bathroom in the front room at this floor level. This has now been reconfigured and the unacceptable partitions omitted.

2nd Floor

Modern partitions are to be removed at this floor level that which will improve the spatial quality of the building. The modern staircase to 3rd floor level is to be replaced, a small number of new door openings created and some of the modern internal spaces between the spine walls of no.34 reconfigured. These proposals are all considered acceptable at this floor level and given the extent of rebuilding.

3rd Floor

The proposals at this floor level are considered acceptable given the extent of rebuilding and will have a minimal impact on historic fabric. The interventions into the spatial quality of the rooms within no.35 are considered acceptable given that these spaces are already subdivided with modern office partitions.

Rear elevation

It is proposed to replace the existing fenestration to both properties at ground floor level with new French doors. These were originally to have been of a modern design. However, revisions were requested so that the new doors are of a more traditional configuration that reflects the existing subdivided fenestration pattern on the rear elevation.

Conclusion

The proposal is considered acceptable in terms of the loss of office floorspace, the introduction of new housing, the standard of accommodation provided and its amenity and its impact on the special architectural and historic interest and of the listed building and would be recommended for approval subject to the signing of a section 106 agreement for car-free development.