



TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 AS AMENDED

**PLANNING (LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION
AREAS) ACT 1990**

**71 GREAT RUSSELL STREET
LONDON WC1B 3BP**

**PREPARED IN SUPPORT OF PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDING
CONSENT APPLICATION FOR PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE
FROM OFFICES (CLASS B1 (a)) TO SINGLE RESIDENTIAL
DWELLING HOUSE (CLASS C3) AND ASSOCIATED WORKS**

ON BEHALF OF

WIGMORE INVESTMENTS LTD

**DESIGN AND ACCESS
STATEMENT**

BY

**PAUL DICKINSON & ASSOCIATES
TOWN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS**

JUNE 2007

1.00 INTRODUCTION

- 1.01 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared to support a planning application and related listed building consent application in respect of a proposed change of use from offices (Class B1 (a)) to a single residential dwelling house (Class C3) together with associated works at 71 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3BP. The Statement is prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) (England) Order 2006, Section 6 (GDPO).
- 1.02 The GDPO does not require a Design and Access Statement where the application is for planning permission for a material change in the use of land or buildings. However the proposals also include minor external and internal works associated with the proposed change of use. For completeness therefore this statement has been prepared to explain and describe the proposals.
- 1.03 We have also taken the opportunity to set out the policy justification for the proposed change of use from offices to residential dwelling house. The statement takes into account advice in 'Design and Access Statements; How to Write, Read and Use them', CABE, 2006.

2.00 CONTENTS OF THE APPLICATIONS

2.01 The contents of the two applications comprise:-

Planning Application

3 copies of planning application form and ownership certificates

3 copies of Location Plan (1:1250)

3 sets of planning application drawings (details listed in the drawings and plans schedule attached to the completed application form)

3 copies of Design and Access Statement

Cheque for planning application fee of £265.00

Application for Listed Building Consent

3 copies of planning application form and ownership certificates

3 copies of Location Plan (1:1250)

3 sets of planning application drawings (details listed in the drawings and plans schedule attached to the completed application form)

3 copies of Design and Access Statement

In accordance with the Regulations no fee is submitted for the application for Listed Building Consent.

3.00 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.01 The application site comprises a mid terrace property situated on the southeast side of Great Russell Street. The site is situated in the section of Great Russell Street that lies between Bury Place and Bloomsbury Square.
- 3.02 The building is Grade III listed and lies within the Museum Street Local Area and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.
- 3.03 The property comprises basement, ground floor and three floors above given a total of 5 floors of accommodation. There is an existing lightwell area to the boiler room and vault. To the rear there is a terrace area at lower ground floor level that is accessed via escape stairs from Pied Bull Yard.
- 3.04 The proposal involves change of use of the whole building from offices (Class B1 (a)) to a single residential dwelling house (Class C3). The proposals include only two minor external works:-
- (1) Replacement of existing window at rear basement level with a new door to provide access to existing terrace (proposed garden area).
 - (2) Alterations to existing escape stairs at rear of the property leading onto Pied Bull Yard.
- 3.05 There are no other material changes to the external appearance of the building.
- 3.06 There are minor internal alterations associated with the proposed change of use. However these have been kept to an absolute minimum and involve either the removal of exiting modern stud partitions or the creation of new partitions to provide, for example, bathrooms and cloakrooms associated with the proposed residential use. These are described further below.

4.00 USE

- 4.01 The permitted use of the building is as offices (Class B1 (a)). The property is rated as a single unit for 'offices and premises'. There is no parking.
- 4.02 The building was leased to Laurence King Publishing on a lease that expired in December 2006. The building has been vacant since that time.
- 4.03 The proposal is for a change of use to a single residential dwelling house (Class C3).
- 4.04 UDP Policy E2 states that when a site is not suitable for continuation of any business use other than B1 (a) offices, the Council may allow change of use to other uses and in particular will encourage a change of permanent residential use.
- 4.05 I consider that the property is not suitable for continuation of the former office use for the following reasons:-
- (1) The building was originally residential and is not purpose built office floorspace. The proposal would return it to its former residential use.
 - (2) There is currently and over supply of office space in the Borough and there is much better quality modern office space available within the immediately locality.
 - (3) A copy of a letter from Aston Rose, Chartered Surveyors, dated 22 May 2007 to the Applicant is attached to this Statement. This confirms the efforts made by Aston Rose to market the building between November 2006 and February 2007 and notes that only three viewings were conducted during this period. The letter also highlights the inherent problems of use of the property for offices due to the period character of the building, including the lack of a lift, narrowness of the stairs, small rooms and inability to provide appropriate facilities for disabled access.

- (4) The office use extends over all floors with a total gross floor area for the building of 467.5 sq m. Policy E2 seeks to retain opportunities for small firms where offices are below 300 sq m. Clearly the building does not fall within the category of being suitable for small firms.
 - (5) The Council approved a similar proposal involving change of use of first, second and third floors from B1 (a) offices to residential use in the adjacent property of Nos. 66-70 Great Russell Street (planning permission ref 2006/2292/L) granted 4 August 2006.
- 4.06 I therefore conclude that the proposal for conversion to a single residential dwelling house would meet the requirements of UDP Policy E2 and would accord with the Council's objective to encourage a change to permanent residential use in such circumstances.
- 4.07 I have carried out pre-application consultation with the Council regarding the proposed change of use. I attach a copy of a letter from Jenny Fisher, Team Leader, South Area Team, dated 21 March 2007 confirming that in principle the proposed use would accord with relevant UDP policies.

5.00 AMOUNT

- 5.01 The proposal involves change of use of the whole of the building to a single residential dwelling house.
- 5.02 I note that the UDP Policy H8 seeks to encourage a mix of unit sizes. In this context the planning permission ref 2006/2292/L involved the creation of 5 x 1 bed and 1 x 2 two bed flats within the adjacent property at Nos. 66-70. In my opinion the creation of a single residential dwelling at No. 71 would compliment the smaller units next door and overall would provide a mix of unit sizes within this terrace block.
- 5.03 UDP Policy H8 welcomes schemes that include family sized accommodation (3 bedrooms or more). This is confirmed by the letter from the Council dated 21 March 2007. I note that the property is within 400 metres of public open space at Bloomsbury Square and Russell Square.

6.00 LAYOUT

- 6.01 The existing layout of the building is considered much more contusive for residential use than the former office use (see problems identified in the Aston Rose letter dated 22 May 2007). This reflects the original residential use of the building. The alterations that are therefore required to facilitate residential use are minimal.

External

- (1) Replacement of existing window in rear basement elevation with a new door to the rear garden area. This will also provide an improved emergency access via the escape stairs to Pied Bull Yard.
- (2) Alterations to the escape stairs onto to Pied Bull Yard

Internal

- (1) Removal of existing wall to rear room at basement level.
- (2) Provision of new stud partition to front room and other alterations to create cloakroom and shower room.
- (3) Removal of existing stud partition between rear rooms at ground floor level.
- (4) Repositioning of door to main reception room at ground floor level.
- (5) Removal of existing stud partition between rear rooms at first floor level and creation of new stud partition for proposed WC.
- (6) Alterations to existing stud partition to rear rooms at second floor level to create dressing room and master en suite.
- (7) Provision of new partitions at third floor level to create three bedrooms and bathroom areas.

- 6.02 It is not considered that any of these minor internal proposals will have any detrimental effect on the listed building. The quality of the interior has already been significantly affected by works by previous owners/occupiers including those undertaken to create the existing commercial office space. This includes the provision of a number of existing partitions. There are a few attractive features including the staircase, cornicing and some fireplaces. All of these will be retained and will not be affected by any of the current proposals.
- 6.03 It is considered that the proposed minor alterations will enhance the interior of the listed building. The removal of existing partition walls at ground and first floor level will re-instate the original larger rooms on these important floors. The majority of the proposed partitioning is at third floor level; however, this floor appears to have been created in recent times and has no historic features. All partitioning is designed so that it can be easily removed to reinstate the original fabric.

7.00 SCALE

- 7.01 The existing building comprises basement, ground floor and three floors above. The total gross floor area is 467.5 sq m. There is no proposal to increase the floorspace or to alter the external appearance or size of the building.

8.00 LANDSCAPING

- 8.01 Given the nature and status of the existing building and limited curtilage there are restricted opportunities for new landscaping. However there is an existing terraced area to the rear of the property which is currently unused. The proposals include the improvements to access to this area both from within the property and from Pied Bull Yard. The intention is that this can become a useable amenity area for occupiers of the residential dwelling and it is likely that this will be enhanced by the eventual occupier through provision of container plants and appropriate garden furniture.

9.00 APPEARANCE

- 9.01 The proposal does not include any major changes to the external appearance of the property.
- 9.02 Previous sections of this Statement explain the proposal for a new door to replace an existing window in the rear elevation at basement level. This will provide a direct access to the rear terrace garden area and also enhanced emergency access via the stairs to Pied Bull Yard.
- 9.03 The proposal is to provide a four panel hardwood conservation type door painted black to match existing. This is shown on drawing no. 2007/62/10.
- 9.04 The existing escape stairs to Pied Bull Yard are to be repositioned as shown on drawing no. 2007/62/7 to provide better circulation and use of the garden area. It is acknowledged that there are inherent disadvantages within the existing building in terms of access for persons with disabilities. This is one of the reasons why the property is considered unattractive for commercial office use. The existing fabric imposes limitations on the ability to significantly improve access, for example, it is impractical to install a lift.
- 9.05 However where possible the opportunities have been taken to open up rooms and ensure that corridors are provided to accessibility dimensions whilst recognising the limitations because of the small size of the building and listed fabric.
- 9.06 UDP Policy T8 seeks to encourage car free housing in areas within controlled parking zones that are easily accessible by public transport. The building does not have any existing parking. No new provision is proposed. The Applicant is aware of the need to enter into a legal agreement with the Council to secure the development as car free if considered appropriate.

Paul Dickinson
6 June 2007

Our ref : TR

22 May 2007

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Dear Richard

71 Great Russell Street, London WC1

I understand that you intend applying for planning consent for a change of use of the above and a letter is required to present to the Planning Authority. I am happy for this letter to be passed to them.

On behalf of our client, Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society, we managed a large UK property portfolio. 71 Great Russell Street was owned on a freehold basis and let as a whole to Laurence King Publishing on a lease to expire in December 2006.

The tenant indicated that they intended to vacate the property so we were instructed to market a new leasehold interest in the whole building. We erected a "To Let" board in November 2006 and produced details. We distributed the details to 500 agents and surveyors across London and also included the property on our web site.

During the period from November 2006 and February 2007 we only conducted 3 viewings. All three parties felt the property was unsuitable owing mostly to the period character of the building. Of particular concern was the lack of a lift, narrowness of the staircase, smallness of rooms and inability to provide any decent facilities for the disabled.

Small period buildings are becoming increasingly unsuitable for use by office occupiers. In an era of concern over Health and Safety and Disabled Access, it is almost impossible for an employer to look after the needs of staff and comply with statutory requirements in a building of this nature.

In February 2007 we were instructed to sell as there had been so little interest in leasing.

I hope this helps.

Yours sincerely


Tim Richards

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Your Ref:
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Date: 21/03/2007

Mr. P. Dickinson
PDA
Sunbury International Business Centre,
Brooklands Close,
Windmill Road,
Sunbury-on-Thames
Middx. TW16 7DX

Dear Mr. Dickinson

Town and Country Planning Act 2000 as amended
Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 amended
71 Great Russell Street WC1B 3BP

I refer to your letter dated 13/03/2007 concerning the above premises.

The building is grade II listed and falls within the Museum Street Local Area and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

I would confirm that the loss of a business use is covered by policy E2 which states that when a site is unsuitable for continuation of any business use other than B1(a) office, 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 to permanent residential or community uses.

You describe the building as originally residential and therefore not purpose-built office floor space. I would confirm that there is currently an oversupply of office space in the Borough, and good quality office available within the area. If the floor space is over 300m² it would not fall within the category of being suitable for small firms, and there could also be constraints as a consequence of the building's listed status.

An increase in residential accommodation is generally welcome. Policy H8 welcomes schemes that include family sized accommodation (3 bedrooms or more). Your client would be required to enter into a legal agreement to secure the development as car free. An education contribution may also be required and a financial contribution in lieu of the direct provision of open space.

The advice in this letter is my opinion and is without prejudice to further consideration of this matter by the Development Control Section or to the Council's formal decision. You may wish to submit an application for a Lawful Development certificate if you would like a legal determination as to the requirement for planning permission. Application forms are available from the Department's One Stop Reception (Tel: 0207-974-5611)

Yours sincerely

Jenny Fisher
South Area Team; Development Control
Culture and Environment Directorate



RF 28/3