

**EXPLANATORY STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF A FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE
CONVERSION AND CHANGE OF USE OF THE REAR OF NO.26 ARGYLE SQUARE, LONDON WC1
FROM B1 / D1 USE TO USE CLASS C3, COMPRISING THREE RESIDENTIAL UNITS INCLUDING AN
EXTENSION AT ROOF LEVEL, AND RETAINING 120SQ.M OF B1 USE**

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

3.1 Overall Development Objective and Design Approach

As explained in Section 1.6 above, the large office/exhibition space in the rear extension to No.26 has been on the market for over 3 years but has not attracted any potential occupiers, despite being ready to move into.

The existing extension, because of its rather utilitarian 'blockhouse-type' appearance, is not visually complementary to the Georgian listed building - the only redeeming feature that acknowledges the Georgian building is the matching facing bricks that have been used. Therefore, a design which improves the visual appearance of the existing elevations would be desirable.

Although somewhat ungainly, the extension was well-built and is very solid. Accordingly, it would be more economical to convert the existing building rather than demolish it and build from scratch (as has happened in the case of Tankerton House). This approach, which is environmentally sustainable, also satisfies the Council's policy to enhance the setting of a listed building, and at the same time increases the number of dwellings in the borough.

A variety of design options were devised as part of the development process and it was concluded that it was necessary to develop on the flat roof of the extension. One and two-storey extensions were investigated and a two-storey version was submitted to the Council as part of the pre-application submission. In the event, a single storey scheme has been proposed, one that will merge visually with the existing building so it looks a natural extension of it.

The other key aspect of the design is the location, size, configuration and material/colour of the new windows and external doors in the building. The current windows resemble what might be found at an industrial store and this image had to be changed to one that is more residential in character. In parallel, the windows and doors had to compliment the listed building. In assessing the visual impact of the proposed changes, the view looking north from Loxham Street towards Argyle Square was judged as being the most significant and therefore a photomontage has been prepared to illustrate the 'before' and 'after' view of the building (see Fig. MU-EX11 Existing View Looking North-west and Fig. MU-PR14 Proposed View Looking North-west). There is no doubt that the proposed development is a significant improvement on what is there at present.

The overall objective of the proposed development, therefore, is to convert this vacant space into a mixed-use development comprising a small suite of offices (121sq.m gross external / 98sq.m net), and three self-contained residential units (1 x 1-bedroomed unit and 2 x 2-bedroomed units), one of which is accommodated in a new single-storey roof extension.

The majority of the construction work will be internal subdivision of the existing large volumes. Where appropriate, the existing ground floor and roof slab will need to be penetrated to allow vertical access. With regard to the outside of the property, the existing external brickwork will be cleaned and new windows will be inserted, as illustrated in the accompanying drawings. A new front entrance door providing access to the proposed 3 new flats will be inserted in the Loxham Street elevation.

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3.2 Proposed Residential (C3) Accommodation

The proposed development comprises:

Two duplexes within the proposed conversion of the existing extension building at Lower Ground and Ground Floor levels (Unit 1 and Unit 2). These two conversion units are accessed from the proposed new front entrance that accesses directly onto Loxham Street.

The two existing fire escape doors on the south elevation will be blocked up. Some of the existing window openings will be kept in-situ on the rear but more windows will be inserted to match the layout of the proposed dwellings.

A detailed floor area schedule is provided in Table 1: Floor Area Schedule.

Unit 1 2-bedroomed duplex: 106sq.m (gross external):

Accommodation:

Shared Ground Floor Entrance leading to own front door and
Ground floor Open plan Living/Dining/Kitchen; and stairs to Lower Ground: two bedrooms, 2 bathrooms/W.C. (1 ensuite), store and laundry rooms.

Unit 2 1-bedroomed duplex: 98sq.m (gross external)

Accommodation:

Shared Ground Floor Entrance leading to own front door and
Ground floor Open-plan Living/Dining/Kitchen; and stairs to Basement: one bedroom, 1 bathroom/W.C., store and laundry rooms.

Unit 3 Roof Extension (New Build): duplex at Ground and First Floor (roof) levels to provide one dwelling unit (138sq.m gross external and 71sq.m of private amenity space):

Accommodation:

Shared Ground Floor Entrance leading to own front door, Ground Floor laundry and guest cloakroom; stairs to first floor roof extension: open-plan Living/dining room and Kitchen; two Bedrooms, 1 ensuite Bathroom/W.C., 1 ensuite shower room/W.C. and study.

Access to Unit 3 is from Loxham Street and is shared with Units 1 and 2. It is proposed that the roof extension will be of light-weight construction, set back behind an extension of the existing parapet wall. The roof and walls of the new extension will be rendered and painted in a light colour.

The total amount of open space, in the form of a patio and a terrace, is 71sq.m. It is proposed that the parapet wall that forms the edge of the terrace of the new extension will be surmounted by a screen so that the view from the terrace will preserve the privacy of the neighbouring buildings.

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3.3 Proposed Office (B1) Accommodation

The intention is to reduce the size of the existing office/exhibition space from 353sq.m, down to a total gross floor area of 121sq.m, to create a two-storey office unit with its own dedicated access from Loxham Street. This scale of office is considered by local property agents to be much more in demand in this area than larger office units.

As regards the net internal floor area, the B1 accommodation comprises:

Employment space and store:	71sq.m
Circulation/reception:	10sq.m
Kitchen:	12sq.m
WC (x2):	6sq.m

Total Net Floor Area: 89sq.m

3.4 Proposed Facing Materials

The choice of facing materials are shown on the elevational drawings: Fig.MU-PR 5 Rev.B, Fig.MU-PR 6 Rev.B and Fig.MU-PR 7 Rev.B and are as follows:

Ground and Lower Ground:	
Walls:	Brick to be retained and cleaned, but where infilling is required, (e.g. blocking in the existing emergency doors), the brick and mortar colour will match existing;
Windows:	Dark grey coloured steel window frames and security bars;
Entrance doors:	Wooden door and frame, painted dark grey;
Steps to entrance:	Polished concrete.
First Floor	
Roof:	Light grey coloured zinc;
Walls of Extension:	Facing Loxham Street: brick to match existing; Other elevations: light-weight concrete block, rendered and painted a light colour
Windows:	Dark grey coloured steel window frames;
Balcony railings:	Dark grey coloured steel railings and infill mesh.

3.5 Sunlight, Privacy and Overlooking

The design of the proposed development is such that it does not impinge on the neighbours' right to light (sunlight and daylight). The set-backs on the western side of the proposed development makes allowance for Tankerton House, the new residential development that is nearing completion. Similarly, the set-back on the southern boundary makes allowance for the windows in the northern elevation of Loxham House.

On Loxham Street, to provide segregation of the public space from the private space, street-level landscaping will be introduced along the eastern boundary. This will help prevent the public from looking directly through the lower ground floor windows when they are left ajar, although it is proposed that these windows should have horizontal security bars.

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As there are already windows which are clear-glazed on the south and east elevations of the existing buildings, the introduction of living accommodation within the existing levels will not have any adverse influence on the future situation. On the northern side of the unit on the roof, the flank wall will be without windows in order to prevent overlooking from the occupiers of the upper levels of the Argyle Square buildings.

The terraces that are proposed to be built will be surrounded by railings for safety and security reasons.

The railings on the western side will be infilled by either opaque glass panels or metallic mesh so that no overlooking of the adjoining property is possible.

3.6 Habitable Rooms / Density

The proposed development results in an additional 8 habitable rooms. The footprint of the building is 216sq.m, so the density would be 370 habitable rooms per hectare.

3.7 Access and Servicing

As already described, access to the offices is via an existing entrance reached from Loxham Street via a short ramp which is suitable for wheelchairs. The base of the ramp is at-grade with the entrance hall. Wheelchair lifts could be fitted to the short flight of stairs that lead to the two office floors (lower ground floor and ground floor).

Emergency access for the two duplexes (Units 1 and 2) can be incorporated via 'knock-out' windows in the lower ground floor bedrooms. Unit 3 has a large terrace to act as a refuge in case of fire.

Servicing is proposed to be as existing - refuse and recycling bins will be put out on collection days, close to the respective entrance doors.

The existing building is already served by mains services (water, electricity and foul water drainage) and these services will be used for the proposed new accommodation.

3.9 Landscaping

Planning permission already exists for building planters along the eastern elevation of the building. In this application, the location of the planters, which are to be of brick to match the existing bricks, have been slightly altered to allow for the inclusion of the new entrance door to the flats.

3.10 Security

Planning permission already exists for a CCTV camera to be installed above, and covering, the eastern elevation of the building. As already described, steel grills will be fitted to the outside window openings.