

# DESIGN & ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

54-55 Birkenhead Street  
London  
WC1H 8BB

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# 54-55 Birkenhead Street, London

**Client:** Institute of Our Lady of Mercy

**Our Ref:** MJD/sp/IOLM/KingsCross/PLA

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared in support of an application, submitted by The JTS Partnership LLP on behalf of the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy, concerning 54 – 55 Birkenhead Street, London. It seeks planning and listed building consent to:-
- Replace one uPVC window at second floor level with bespoke timber glazed doors, to raise the existing parapet wall by 150mm and fit a new stone coping, and to fix a 1450mm obscure glazed panel attached to black painted metal railings, to create a roof terrace to the second floor rear elevation.
- 1.2 54–55 Birkenhead Street, is a Grade II listed building. Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that when determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of the heritage asset(s), including its setting, and assess the potential impacts.
- 1.3 This Statement, describes the proposed works. It identifies the important features of the building and assesses the impact(s) upon its architectural and historic importance.

## 2. CONTEXT

- 2.1 The site is located within Camden Town, approximately 180 metres from Kings Cross Station.
- 2.2 54–55 Birkenhead Street forms part of a group of five Grade II listed buildings and is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the King’s Cross Neighbourhood Renewal Area.
- 2.3 Listed building entry:-

*TQ3082NW BIRKENHEAD STREET  
798-1/90/94 (West side)  
14/05/74 Nos.54-58 (Consecutive) and attached railings*

*GV II*

*Terrace of 5 houses, Nos 54-56 now hotels. c1834-49. Built by W Forrester Bray, restored late C20. Yellow stock brick with later patching. Nos 54 & 55, red brick parapets. No.56 painted. Stucco ground floors to Nos 54-56. Plain stucco 1<sup>st</sup> floor sill bands. Slated mansard roofs with dormers. Round-arched ground floor openings. No.54, single storey, stucco portico extension on return; round-arched doorway with fluted Doric three-quarter columns carrying cornice-head; fanlight and panelled door. Nos 55-57, architrave doorways with pilaster-jambs carrying cornice-heads with fanlights (No.57 patterned); panelled doors (No.56 C20). No.58, doorway with fluted Doric quarter columns carrying cornice; patterned fanlight and panelled door. Gauged-brick flat arches to recessed sashes; 1st floor in shallow arched recesses. Cast-iron balconies to 1st floor windows. Parapets.*

*INTERIORS: not inspected.*

*SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with bud and other finials to areas.*

*(Survey of London: Vol. XXIV, King's Cross Neighbourhood, Parish of St Pancras IV: London: -1952: 109).*

2.4 Location of the property is shown on the enclosed drawing:-

- JTS/IOLM/KingsCross/PLA/01

### **3. PLANNING HISTORY**

3.1 An application for planning permission and listed building consent was submitted in February 2013 for the replacement of two uPVC windows with timber glazed doors at rear first floor and rear second floor level within rear wing extensions. The proposals included the installation of 1.1 metre high black metal railings, with willow screens at first and second floor level, in order to create two roof terraces around the full extent of the flat roof areas. It was also proposed to install a hand rail at the rear basement floor level, in order to provide assistance for people climbing the stairs from the basement level up to the rear yard area.

3.2 Both applications were refused on 28th March 2013 for the following reasons:-

1. *The proposed roof terraces, by reason of their position and proximity to neighbouring residential accommodation at no.1 Crestfield Street, would lead to a harmful degree of overlooking to habitable rooms and the amenity space of*

*that property. The application is therefore contrary to policy CS5 (Managing the impact of growth and development) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy and policy DP26 (Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Development Policies.*

*2. The proposed railings and screens for the roof terraces, by virtue of their form and prominent location, would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the host building and of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The application is therefore contrary to policy CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy and to policies DP24 (Securing high quality design) and DP25 (Conserving Camden's heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Development Policies.*

- 3.3 The Planning Officer and Conservation Officer considered that the design of the railings were overly stylised for the age and style of the building and would “*result in undue prominence of the new roof terraces*”. It was also considered that the finials and circular motifs would not complement the listed buildings.
- 3.4 The Officer also referred to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy in relation to inappropriate materials that have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area.
- 3.5 It was considered that a screen, by its purpose, would be overly solid and appear more obtrusive and out of character for the building and surrounding area.
- 3.6 There were no objections in design terms to the appearance of the proposed timber glazed doors at rear first floor and second floor level.
- 3.7 A second application for planning permission and listed building consent was submitted in February 2014 for the replacement of two UPVC windows with timber glazed doors and the erection of obscure glazed balustrades to create terraces at the first and second floor rear elevation. As part of the terraces the proposals included removing the current open railings and erecting a new 0.8 metre parapet with an additional 1 metre obscure glazed screening above.

3.8 These applications were also refused on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2014 for the following reasons:-

1. *The proposed roof terraces, by reason of their position and proximity to neighbouring residential accommodation at no.1 Crestfield Street, would lead to a harmful degree of overlooking to habitable rooms and the amenity space of that property. The application is therefore contrary to policy CS5 (Managing the impact of growth and development) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy and policy DP26 (Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Development Policies.*
2. *The proposed increased in height of the parapet wall and screens for the roof terraces, by virtue of their over dominant form and prominent location, would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the host building and of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The application is therefore contrary to policy CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy and to policies DP24 (Securing high quality design) and DP25 (Conserving Camden's heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Development Policies.*
3. *The proposed increased in height of the parapet and screens, by virtue of their form, design and prominent position, would detract from the external appearance of the listed building to the detriment of its special character and architectural interest contrary to policy CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy and to policy DP25 (Conserving Camden's heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Development Policies.*

3.9 It was considered that the proposed increase in height of the parapet walls and screens for the roof terraces would increase the bulk and height of the rear additions and result in undue prominence of the new roof terraces, therefore, failing to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the listed building.

3.10 The Council's design guidance policy CPG1, states that proposed terraces should not provide views into habitable rooms, or the garden area, closest to the dwellinghouse. Policy CPG6 says that development should be designed to protect the privacy of existing dwellings to a reasonable degree.

- 3.11 From the site plan it would appear that there is approximately 10 metres between the rear of the proposed roof terrace at first floor level and a bedroom window at 1 Crestfield Street. For this reason it was considered by the Planning Officer that a roof terrace at first floor level would not be acceptable, however, the creation of a terrace at second floor level was considered to be acceptable.
- 3.12 A third application for planning and listed building consent was submitted in June 2014 for the replacement of one uPVC window with a bespoke timber glazed door, and the erection of black balustrade railings to create a terrace area to the second floor rear elevation.
- 3.13 To overcome the second and third reasons for refusal in the February 2014 scheme, to prevent over-dominance by their increase in height, the proposed railings were to be 1.1m in height.
- 3.14 The black metal railings were designed with detailing to match those at the front of the property. Planning and conservation officers requested during the application process that the finials and roundels between the vertical bars be removed to create a simpler design, after which the council would be in a position to support planning and listed building consent. Revised Drawings I109\_206\_01 and I109\_207\_02 were sent to the Council with the requested amendments.
- 3.15 On 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2014 Listed Building Consent was granted, however planning permission was refused, for the following reason:-

*“The proposed second floor level rear roof terrace, by reason of its position and proximity to neighbouring residential accommodation at No.1 Crestfield Street, would result in a harmful degree of overlooking, contrary to policy CS5 (Managing the impact of growth and development) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy and policy DP26 (Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours) of the London Borough of Camden.”*

#### **4. 7 ARGYLE SQUARE**

- 4.1 In June 2011 Planning and Listed Building Consent were granted (ref: 2011/1652/P and 2011/1660/L) for the *“Retention of roof terrace, door and balustrade and extension to part of the existing balustrade to the rear first floor level of Hotel (Class C1)”* at 7 Argyle Square, London.



4.2 In similar circumstances to the application site, the site in Argyle Square comprises a Grade II listed end of terrace property, located on the corner between Argyle Square and St. Chad's Street within Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

4.3 Listed building had previously been approved for the retention of a door allowing access onto the roof terrace as it was considered that the addition did not harm the special interest of the listed building.

4.4 The application sought the retention and extension of obscure glazed balustrade, of a similar design to that sought at 54-55 Birkenhead Street.

4.5 The officer's report stated:-

*"It is considered that the obscure glazed balustrade around the roof terrace, positioned to the rear of the recently constructed extension does not harm the special interest of the listed building or the character and appearance of the wider conservation area. It is considered the proposed extension to the glass balustrade on the rear elevation would also be acceptable and raises no design concerns."*

4.6 In addition, when considering the impact on the amenity, the officer stated:-

*"Permission is sought to retain the existing obscure glazed balustrade affixed above the parapet wall and to extend the height along the rear elevation to 1.8m from the floor level of the terrace. It is considered that the balustrade and the proposed extension to the rear would be sufficient to prevent overlooking and loss of privacy to the occupiers of no. 26 St. Chad's Street. A condition would be attached to the decision notice to require the installation of the extension to the balustrade along the rear elevation prior to the use of the terrace and the ongoing retention of the balustrade."*

## 5. USE

5.1 54–55 Birkenhead Street is a mixed use, comprising non self-contained residential accommodation (Sui Generis), training/meeting rooms (Class D1), offices (Class B1) and associated functions for a charity.

- 5.2 The property is currently used jointly by Women @ the Well (Registered Charity no. 1118613) as training rooms, meeting rooms, administrative offices and overnight accommodation for field charity workers; and as residential convent accommodation by Mercy Sisters of the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy.

## **6. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

### **Single Door**

- 6.1 At second floor level, is an existing shower room with w/c. The rear elevation of shower room is an existing small uPVC window. The window will be removed to allow for a bespoke timber door which will be glazed and painted, colour to be agreed.
- 6.2 The proposed single timber door will open out onto the proposed amenity areas, having been designed, to a traditional style, to be in keeping with the host building and will not adversely affect the special character and appearance of this Grade II listed building or adjoining buildings.

### **Amenity Area including Railings**

- 6.3 As previously stated, the property is currently used jointly by Women @ the Well, overnight accommodation for field charity workers, and as residential convent accommodation by Mercy Sisters of the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy.
- 6.4 At present the property has little or no useable external amenity space. The flat roof, located on the left hand side of the rear elevation, would make suitable outdoor amenity space for the building.
- 6.5 A terrace area at second floor level was considered acceptable by the Planning Officer for the previous scheme.
- 6.6 Overall the external works at second floor level, will not adversely affect the special character of the listed building, and will enhance the character and appearance of the building.
- 6.7 As the Council will be aware, the Greater London Authority has for many years promoted living roofs as being an improvement on our quality of life. In fact their website states that roof terraces and roof gardens can play a key part in improving the environment and quality of life in the city.

- 6.8 The use of a roof top space, such as this, is actively encouraged by the London Plan under Policy 5.11. Furthermore, the All London Green Grid Supplementary Guidance published in March 2012 highlights the importance to promote healthy living. Paragraph 4.11 states that the deficiencies in open spaces can be addressed through more innovative solutions, such as the provision of green roofs.
- 6.9 What is intended here is a recreational living roof, providing an amenity benefit to the mixed use of the building.
- 6.10 It is not considered that the proposals would impact on any key public viewpoints and that the character of the conservation area can be maintained.
- 6.11 The proposals put forward as part of this application include the removal of the white steel open railings at second floor level to be replaced with obscure glazed screens with black metal railings.
- 6.12 Unlike the February 2014 scheme, which sought to raise the existing 150mm parapet wall to 1m high before fixing a 0.8m obscure glazed panel on top, this scheme seeks to raise to parapet wall by only another 150mm before fitting a new stone coping of 50mm to the head of the parapet wall and fixing a 1450mm obscure glazed panel attached to black painted metal railings.
- 6.13 The overall height of the screening is, therefore, 1.8m, removing the prospect of overlooking onto properties at the rear, particularly 1 Crestfield Street and thereby eliminating the reason for refusal of the previous scheme.
- 6.14 The black metal railings, which were considered acceptable in design in the June 2014 scheme, will be on the outside of the glass, and will therefore be the more prominent feature of the balustrade.
- 6.15 Against the railings, it is unlikely that the obscure glass behind would be noticeable from the street and would prove as an effective way to prevent any overlooking to neighbouring properties. Additionally, the obscured glass element will help to create a private usable balcony space.
- 6.16 The proposed obscure glazed screen does not harm the special interest of the listed building or the character and appearance of the wider conservation area and will prevent overlooking to any neighbouring properties. The flat roof area will be paved in order to create suitable and useable amenity area.

- 6.17 It is accepted that the existing building is Grade II listed and is not of a modern design. It is considered that the proposed metal railings, the design of which was supported by planning and conservation officers in the previous application, would be the more dominant feature of the balustrade and the obscure glazed element will have minimal effect on the appearance of the listed building and conservation area.

## 7. AMOUNT

- 7.1 Not applicable to this application.

## 8. LAYOUT

- 8.1 The replacement single door to the second floor, and additional external alterations, will not result in any changes to the overall layout of the building.

## 9. SCALE

- 9.1 No changes are proposed to the scale, massing or height of the building.

### **Bespoke Timber Doors**

- 9.2 The single timber door at second floor level measures 2.04 metres in height and 0.87 metres in width.

## 10. LANDSCAPING

- 10.1 Not applicable to this application.

## 11. APPEARANCE

- 11.1 The proposed new door to rear of the building at second floor level will be of a traditional style and appearance, similar to that of the basement doors. The doors and frames will be hardwood, all finished in 3 coat micro-porous paint, colour to be agreed. The proposed railings for the flat roof will be of a contemporary design; however, it is considered that these will not impact on the character of the Grade II listed building.
- 11.2 It is unlikely that the obscure glass behind the railings would be noticeable from the street.

- 11.3 The slight raise in parapet wall will reduce the appearance of the height of the railings.
- 11.4 Overall, it is considered that the above external works at second floor level will not adversely affect the special character of the Listed Building, and will enhance the character and appearance of the building.

## **12. ACCESS**

- 12.1 The proposed door openings will allow direct access onto flat roof amenity areas from shower room at second floor level.
- 12.2 The proposed works are relatively minor and will have no impact on the access once works are completed. Access to the front and the rear of the building will remain as existing and approved under listed building consents 2006/0039/L and 2006/4251/L.

## **13. HERITAGE IMPACT**

- 13.1 In order to determine the application, it is necessary to assess the impact of the application proposals on the special architectural or historical interest of the building and other listed buildings in the surrounding environment.
- 13.2 The building is Grade II listed. The Women @ the Well charity is fully aware of its architectural and historic importance and has sought to ensure that any alterations to the property, both internally and externally, have no adverse impact upon any key features or the fabric of the building.
- 13.3 The application proposes to replace one uPVC window at second floor level, on the rear elevation, with timber hardwood doors. The single door will create access onto the flat roof area, which will form amenity areas for the building. The balustrades around the flat roof would make the amenity areas safe and secure without compromising the special architectural character of the building.
- 13.4 The proposed changes to the building are designed to create useable amenity space for the Women @ the Well, and for the elderly Sisters to have a safe environment in which to carry out their charity work.

- 13.5 On consideration of the above, it is held that the impact of the application proposals is minimal. Replacing the rear uPVC window at second floor level will not result in the loss of original materials. The uPVC windows are not in keeping with 18th Century building and are positioned on later elements of the Grade II listed building. The timber doors and inclusion of the balustrades do not jeopardise the special architectural or historic interest of the building and will make a positive contribution to the listed building.
- 13.6 It is unlikely that the obscure glass element of the balcony will be noticeable, particularly against the metal railings and therefore will have minimal impact on the setting of the listed building. An obscured glass balustrade, similar to what is proposed in this application, has been considered acceptable elsewhere in the conservation area, only a short distance from the Women @ the Well site at 7 Argyle Square. As a result the impact on the conservation area is minimal, and certainly no more than those balconies at 7 Argyle Street.

## **14. CONCLUSION**

- 14.1 This listed building and planning application seeks permission to replace one uPVC window at second floor level with bespoke timber glazed doors, to raise the existing parapet wall by 150mm and fit a new stone coping, and to fix a 1450mm obscure glazed panel attached to black painted metal railings, to create a roof terrace to the second floor rear elevation.
- 14.2 Having considered the impact of the proposed works to rear of the application building, it is apparent that the proposals would have a negligible impact on the special architectural and historic interest of the building. The insertion of the doors, and an obscure glazed balustrade, are minimal consideration in the context of the building and do not have any implications for the historic or architectural integrity of the property.
- 14.3 It is asserted that the scheme proposed should be considered acceptable and that planning and listed building consent should be granted.