

**Belvard Point, 17 Murray Street, NW1**

**Planning Statement to accompany application  
for proposed rooftop apartment**

**August 2015**

Prepared by: Mark Matheson, Stratagem Planning Consultants

Prepared for: Martin Lerner, Beach Holdings London PLC

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicant, Mr Martin Lerner, in support of his application for a new residential unit atop Belvard Point, 17 Murray Street, NW1.
- 1.2 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Design and Access Statement produced by Waind Gohil Architects.
- 1.3 Stratagem Planning Consultants have been appointed by the client to work with Waind Gohil Architects in preparation of this application.
- 1.4 Stratagem principal, Dr Mark Matheson, M.A. (Planning and Sustainability), MRTPI, is a Chartered Town Planner with extensive experience of development management gained through working at three London local planning authorities as well as in private consultancy.

## **2.0 Site description and planning history**

- 2.1 The site is located on the corner of Murray Street and Murray Mews. It is occupied by a three storey plus basement mixed use development containing offices (B1), storage and distribution (B8) and residential (C3).
- 2.2 The site is located within the Camden Square Conservation Area.
- 2.3 The site has an extensive planning history. There have been a number of withdrawn and refused applications as well as dismissed appeals. Details of all previous application are provided in the Design and Access Statement. Of greatest current relevance is the most recent application (2012/6510/P) which was refused planning permission by Camden Council, this decision being upheld at appeal. The details of this application will be discussed below.

## **3.0 Proposed development**

- 3.1 The proposed development is the creation of an additional residential unit within a new storey above the existing building.
- 3.2 The proposed design differs radically from the earlier refused schemes, submitted by a previous owner of the property. The new owner, Mr Lerner, recognises that the previous proposals were unsuitable for this building and has appointed Waind Gohil Architects, in consultation with ourselves as planning consultants, to develop an entirely new proposal which responds to the reason for refusal of the previous schemes.
- 3.3 The most significant change in the design from the previous proposal is the reduction in scale. The previous proposal was for a three bedroom

apartment with a GIA of 100 square metres. This has been reduced to a one bedroom apartment with a GIA of 60 square metres. This represents a substantial 40% reduction in the scale of the proposed development.

- 3.4 The architectural language of the development is also different from the previous application. Whereas the previous proposal was for a traditional mansard-type extension, the current proposal is for a more visually lightweight contemporary extension.

## **4.0 Land use**

- 4.1 In common with all London boroughs, there is an urgent need in Camden to create additional residential accommodation. LDF policies CS6 (Providing quality homes) and DP2 (Making full use of Camden's capacity for housing) both seek to maximise the creation of additional housing units within the Borough.
- 4.2 The host building currently consists of 1 x 3 bedroom apartment, 4 x 2 bedroom apartments and 1 x studio apartment together with B1 and B8 space on the ground and lower ground floors. As the primary use of the building is residential and these occupy the upper floors, the proposed residential unit would be entirely compatible with the existing use.
- 4.3 In terms of dwelling mix, as there are no existing one bedroom apartments within the building, the creation of a unit of this size would add to the dwelling mix.
- 4.4 The officer's report for the previous application clearly states that the principle of creating a new residential unit in this location is acceptable.

## **5.0 Design**

- 5.1 The previous application was refused on the following grounds:

*The proposed mansard roof extension, by virtue of its bulk, scale, form and massing would be harmful to the appearance of the building, to the streetscape in this part of Murray Mews and Murray Street and would fail to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Camden Square Conservation Area.*

- 5.2 In developing a new proposal for this site Waind Gohil Architects have sought specifically to address this reason for refusal. To this end, the bulk and scale of the proposal has been reduced by almost half. This has meant that instead of the previously proposed three bedroom unit it is now proposed to create a one bedroom unit. The reduction in size has allowed the bulk to be pulled back significantly from the Murray Street elevation. This has resulted in the proposal being only minimally visible from only a few points on Murray Street. This is illustrated by Figures 7 and 8 of the

Design and Access Statement which show how setting the extension back from the front façade has resulted in it being almost invisible from the street. This is also illustrated by Proposed Section A-A which demonstrates the way in which the angle of sight from a pedestrian across the street is such that they would not be able to see the extension.

- 5.3 In the previous application concern was raised about the fact that the extension did not occupy any of the Southern end of the roof area and the resultant lopsided appearance of the extension. While it remains the case with this application that the extension would not occupy the Southern end of the roof, because it has been well set back from the street façade it would not be possible to obtain views from Murray Street in which this characteristic of the proposal would be seen.
- 5.4 Moreover, because the extension is set far back from the Southern tip of the roof looking Northwards up Murray Street the extension would be hidden by the existing roof (see Design and Access Statement Figure 7).
- 5.5 The mature trees that are immediately adjacent to the host building obscure the building to a significant degree. Even at close proximity it is difficult to see the building clearly as illustrated by the photograph below. These trees will further reduce any visibility of the extension on the Murray Street elevation.



- 5.6 Turning to the rear elevation facing the railway line, any suggestion that the additional bulk resulting from this modest extension would be over dominant would seem misplaced. Unlike from Murray Street, from the rear the building is not viewed in the context of a street of lower buildings and

so would not appear excessively large. Most views from the rear are from some distance across the railway cutting.

- 5.7 The rear of the building is of plain and unattractive appearance. On account of the open space resulting from the railway cutting this elevation of the building is visible from a number of vantage points. In its existing form it does not enhance the townscape. The high-quality addition proposed would, through providing visual interest to the façade, reduce the existing bulky, utilitarian appearance.
- 5.8 There are two vacant plots within close proximity of, and visible from, the site, the first immediately across the railway line (3 St Augustine's Road) and the second being the triangular site between St Augustine's Road and Agar Grove (4 St Augustine's Road). Both of these sites have complex planning histories, but significantly both have planning permission for residential developments of substantial scale.

### 3 St Augustine's Road

- 5.9 Below is the south elevation of a scheme for this site which was granted planning permission in 2008 with the permission being renewed in 2011 (2011/1817/P). The lowest floor appears to be partially below street level. There are a further three storeys and a pitched roof above this lowest storey. This elevation would overlook the railway line and is a highly prominent location in common with Belvard Point.
- 5.10 This sets a very clear precedent for the acceptability of a modest increase in the height of Belvard Point as viewed from the rear. 3 St Augustine's Road is very close by, in a similarly prominent location, and has a similar size of footprint and therefore is a building of broadly the same scale. Planning permission was granted without any concerns being raised as regards bulk, scale, form and massing.



5.12 This scheme was recommended for approval by officers but was refused by committee. This decision was subsequently overturned at appeal when permission was granted. Again this development is of a similar scale to that of 3 St Augustine's Road.

5.13 This is another example of a development of substantial scale in a very similar context to Belvard Point having recently been granted planning permission. This provides a further precedent for the acceptability of the addition of a modest addition visible to the rear of host building.

5.14 It should be emphasised there is an existing access stair and lift overrun at roof level. This occupies some of the volume which the proposed extension would occupy. The *additional* bulk would be correspondingly reduced by these existing structures. These are illustrated in the photograph below looking Northwards.



5.15 In light of the above, it is argued that the proposed extension would meet the requirements of Policy CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage) as well as Policies DP24 (Securing high quality design) and DP25 (Conserving Camden's Heritage) of Camden's Development Policies.

## 6.0 Amenity

6.1 Turning first to the impact of the development on neighbouring occupiers, Policies CS5 and DP26 aim to safeguard the amenity of residents from any negative impacts of development within the Borough.

6.2 It is noted that the officer's report for the previous application states that that proposal, which was substantially larger than the current proposal, would not give rise to negative impacts on neighbours in terms of outlook,



daylight and sunlight, overlooking, privacy or noise. As well as having been reduced in scale, the current application has been carefully designed so as to protect the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. No negative impacts are accordingly anticipated as a result of this development.

- 6.3 The proposed residential unit would provide an exceptional standard of residential accommodation. The design has been developed with careful reference to CPG2 in order to ensure that all criteria are met.
- 6.4 With regards to space standards CPG2 requires that a two person unit should be a minimum of 48 square meters. The proposed apartment at 60 square meters is well in excess of this standard. The sizes of rooms also meet the standards in CPG2 as well as the Mayor's space standards.
- 6.5 Being at the top of the building the quality of light enjoyed by the occupants of the apartment would be exceptional. In the summer solar gain would be reduced by the proximity of the large mature trees on Murray Street, which would also have significant amenity value to the occupants.
- 6.6 The design provides for two terrace areas both set well back from the Murray Street elevation of the building. These will provide outdoor amenity space for the occupants of the unit.
- 6.7 In accordance with Policy DP6 (Lifetime Homes and wheelchair housing) the new unit must where applicable meet the requirements of Lifetime Homes. These are set out in the Design and Access Statement. Again, it is noted that the previous proposal was considered acceptable in this regard by the case officer's report.

## **7.0 Transport**

- 7.1 The site has a PTAL value of 3, indicating moderate accessibility to public transport. The site is within a short walk of Camden Road Overground station, Camden Town underground station and the many buses which pass through Camden Town.
- 7.2 In accordance with Policy DP18 (Parking standards) no off-street parking is proposed. The local parking zone is not stressed having an overnight occupancy rate of 74%. Accordingly, the case officer in his report for the previous application did not consider that it would be necessary for the developer to enter into a S106 car-free legal agreement.
- 7.3 In accordance with DP18 one secure cycle storage space has been provided.

## **8.0 Conclusion**



- 8.1 The previous proposal for a rooftop extension on this building was found to be acceptable in all respects except in terms of the impact on the appearance of the host building and the street scene.
- 8.2 Concern was raised by the previous case officer and by the Inspector that an additional storey would be out of scale with the adjacent properties and would result in Belvard Point being over-dominant within the streetscene. By significantly reducing the scale of the bulk of the proposal and setting it well back from the Murray Street elevation it has been possible to position the extension so that it will at most be minimally visible from Murray Street.
- 8.3 The existing building has a rather blank and utilitarian appearance from the rear. The attractiveness of this elevation will be significantly enhanced by the proposed extension which will add much-needed visual interest.
- 8.4 It is noted that there are two clear precedents for developments of substantial scale very close to the application site. The context of each of these consented schemes is very similar to that of Belvard Point in being highly prominent sites visible across the open space created by the railway cutting.
- 8.5 There is an extremely urgent need for housing in Camden, in common with other London boroughs. While modest in scale, the current proposal presents an opportunity to create a new residential unit of high quality in a highly sustainable location.
- 8.6 **Paragraph 12 of the NPPF** states that “Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved” while **Paragraph 14** states that there should be a “presumption in favour of sustainable development” which local planning authorities should apply in determining development proposals. This document has demonstrated that the proposed development is consistent with all the relevant policies in the Local Plan and as such it is respectfully requested that permission be granted without delay.