

Planning Application Stage

Design and Access Statement – Second Issue

**Flat 2, Great Russell Mansions 59-61, Great Russell Street,
WC1B 3BE**

On Behalf of

The London Borough of Camden

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1 Application Address

1.1 Flat 2, Great Russell Mansions 59-61, Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3BE.

2 Site Description

2.1 Great Russell Mansions is a Victorian Mansion Block of five storeys plus basement, located on the southern side of Great Russell Street. The existing property is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

2.2 The subject of this application is located within the basement of the property, currently classed as a B8 'Storage' usage, although historically it appears to have been a residential apartment.

2.3 The property is in the ownership of the London Borough of Camden, with the upper floors in residential use with the exception of a dental practice located at ground and basement level.

3 Overview of Proposal

3.1 It is proposed to convert the existing basement storage area back into a self-contained dwelling. The dwelling will largely maintain the existing floorplan, however in some areas to create a more efficient layout there will be a few minor alterations to remove non-structural partitions.

3.2 The proposed dwelling will be accessed via the communal entrance door at ground level on Great Russell Street. This entrance door leads to the communal lift and staircase which connect all floors of the building.

3.3 The proposed dwelling faces onto a lightwell facing north to Great Russell Street. The layout will benefit from removing a small internal wall within the kitchen to create a more efficient layout. Replacing some existing windows facing the lightwell will greatly increase the light received by the rooms on this side of the building without making new structural openings. The kitchen window will be replaced with a folding / sliding patio door and the hall window will be replaced with a new pair of French doors. The rear bedroom window will be replaced to create a window and door screen, allowing access to the rear terrace.

3.4 Within lightwell A, a new fence will be constructed creating more privacy to Flat Two. A gate will also be inserted into the fence, fitted with emergency exit devices to provide a secondary means of escape from the dwelling out towards Gilbert Place to the south.

4 Existing Condition

4.1 The property is constructed from traditional load bearing masonry with presumed pot and beam type floor slabs. The mansion block has a mansard style roof clad in slate. The building

is arranged around two internal lightwells, each clad in white glazed brick. One of the lightwells gives light to the rear of the proposed dwelling. The existing property provides self-contained residential flats on each of the upper floors which are accessed from a central staircase and passenger lift. A separate escape staircase from the basement exits at street level directly onto Gilbert Place to the South.

- 4.2 The basement is in a poor decorative condition with all the fittings and the majority of surface finishes have been previously removed exposing brickwork structure. Many original features have been previously removed or damaged by previous work, although most of the doors and surrounds appear to be original.
- 4.3 In summary the property has evidently been extremely poorly maintained for numerous years, therefore all the finishes will require to be renewed. The existing services, electric, gas and water overground drainage goods, all require to be replaced.

5 Planning Policy

- 5.1 The development will consider policies which cover the following issues:

Provision of Housing, Residential Standards and Amenity, Listed buildings and impact on the Conservation Area, Transport.

- 5.2 Policy DP2, Making full use of Camden's capacity for housing

The proposal brings into use an unused space which historically appears to have been a dwelling. The dwelling created is of a high quality dwelling in a central location.

- 5.4 Policy DP4, Minimising the loss of affordable housing

The property is currently designated as use class B8, storage. The space is un-used thus makes no contribution to the supply of housing in the borough, as such no affordable residential floor space has been lost.

- 5.5 Policy DP5, Homes of different sizes

The internal layout of the property lends itself to a three bedroomed dwelling with room sizes in excess of the requirements of the London Residential Design Standards.

- 5.6 Policy DP6, Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Housing

The design achieves as many of the lifetime homes targets as possible within the constraints of an existing property. The existing main entrance on Great Russell Street has four steps up to the external entrance door, the rear entrance to Gilbert Place has only one step, however this presents one constraint to creating fully accessible housing. From the entrance level, all floors of the building are accessible by lift and stair. All spaces within the dwelling are on a single level. It is not intended to create the dwelling specifically as a wheelchair standard dwelling, however, the dwelling will be spacious and adaptations could be made if required to improve access for future residents.

Compliance with LTH Standards:

Standard 1: Parking- No parking is provided by the existing building and no parking is intended to be created as a part of this application. The neighbouring streets have single or double yellow lines, red routes or have other parking restrictions limiting the potential to park close to the property.

Standard 2: Approach to dwelling from parking- The existing building entrances are close to the pavement, with four existing steps to the front door. This application does not propose to alter this arrangement.

Standard 3: Approach to entrances- The existing building is set close to the pavement; the existing approach route is not being altered. The pavements approaching the property are generally level or gently sloping.

Standard 4: Entrances- The existing entrance is illuminated by the existing street lighting, a column is located on the pavement close to the entrance. The existing door is up a short flight of stairs, but the door is a double door which would be useful for deliveries etc. The existing building has no canopy over the entrance; it is not proposed to add one as this would affect the appearance of the building in the context of the conservation area.

Standard 5: Communal Stairways and Lifts- It is not proposed to alter the existing stair which accesses the proposed basement dwelling, however it has a gradual gradient, (250mm goings), handrails and closed risers. The existing lift which serves the building will be retained and will be available to the future residents.

Standard 6: Internal doorways and hallways. The proposed dwelling will retain all existing openings for internal doors which dictate the potential clear opening width; however habitable rooms have door leaf widths in the region of 800mm. The existing building dictates corridor widths, but all measure over 900mm in width.

Standard 7: Circulation space- It is possible to achieve a 1500mm turning circle in all rooms, and in the entrance area of the flat. The kitchen has in excess of 1200mm between runs of units, and additional manoeuvring space. The bedrooms all have in excess of 750mm to each side of the bed. The living rooms have good circulation spaces, space for furniture and 750mm clear routes between furniture.

Standard 8: Entrance level living space. By virtue of being a flat, all rooms are located at entrance level.

Standard 9: Entrance level bedroom- all bedrooms are at entrance level.

Standard 10: Entrance level WC and shower- both bathrooms are at entrance level, providing sufficient manoeuvring space, and opportunities where required to provide level shower spaces, (subject to assessing construction of the existing floor, drainage routes etc).

Standard 11: WC and Bathroom Walls- All walls within the dwelling will be existing structures, a mixture of brick or studwork. If necessary pattressing could be introduced for future adaptations.

Standard 12: Stairs & potential through floor lifts- The proposed dwelling will be all on one floor, therefore a through floor lift will not be required.

Standard 13: Potential for fitting hoists- Any such fittings would need to be mobile or be suspended from the original ceiling slab above. The feasibility of doing this would be dictated by the suitability of the existing structure. This could be assessed should a hoist be required in the future.

Standard 14: Bathrooms- The room is generously sized and it is possible to achieve the clear dimensions and circulation spaces required by this standard.

Standard 15: Glazing and window heights: The existing windows are being retained (and overhauled) hence the heights of the glazing above floor level, and the handles etc. will be dictated by the existing structural sill heights.

Standard 16: Location of service controls- the mechanical and electrical services to the property will be renewed throughout, thus it will be possible to locate all service controls within the zone of 450-12—mm above floor level.

5.7 Policies DP16-21 Promoting Sustainable and Efficient Transport.

The site location has excellent connections to public transport being opposite the British Museum. It is within a 10 minute walk radius of Tottenham Court Road, Holborn, Goodge Street, Russell Square and Covent Garden Tube Stations, furthermore numerous bus routes run directly past the property, connecting across London.

5.8 Policy DP 22 Promoting sustainable design and construction

Whilst the development falls below the thresholds set out in this policy, the aim would be to improve the thermal and energy performance of the property by higher levels of insulation and airtightness, and more efficient space and water heating equipment. Low energy lighting, water efficient sanitary and kitchen fittings will also improve the performance of the property.

5.9 DP25 Conserving Camden's heritage

The proposal works hard to restore the appearance of the building from Great Russell Street. Very minor internal remodelling will be required to bring the property up to the standards required, but the essential form of the original building will be maintained.

5.10 Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours

The completed project will have no negative impact on the neighbours privacy, outlook, access to sunlight and daylight. It will create no significant impact on noise, pollution and waste. The quality of accommodation will be high, working closely with the London Housing Design Standards and Camden Council Standards.

5.11 DP 27 Basements and Lightwells

The development re-develops the existing basement with few external changes other than the replacement of windows and the construction of a new fence within Lightwell A to provide private amenity space to Flat Two. This will be sympathetic with the surrounding context and will create a positive aesthetic addition to the lightwell.

6 Existing Provision of Housing

- 6.1 The existing basement is disused although historically the layout of the space suggests it the proposed area formerly provided a single three bedroomed dwelling.

7 Proposed Provision of Housing

- 7.1 The proposed dwelling mix is as follows:

1 No. 3 bed unit.

- 7.2 One dwelling is gained in the proposed redevelopment, furthermore there is a net gain of four habitable rooms.

8.0 Residential Amenity

- 8.1 Flat 2 will benefit from full use of the existing lightwells to the front, (Great Russell Street) and to the rear. The rear elevation of Flat 2 faces on to lightwell A, therefore it has been proposed to erect a small fence and gate to provide more privacy to this flat and create some private outdoor amenity space to the dwelling.

9 Residential Standards

The proposed development has been designed with reference wherever possible to the London Housing Design Guide, Lifetime Homes Standards and the Camden Council Standards.

9.1 Flat 2

The three bed apartment has a total internal floor area of 137.3m². The proposal strives to exceed the areas recommended by the London Residential Design Guide.

The access to this dwelling from street level is via the front entrance on Great Russell Street, approached by four existing steps. An internal stair and lift access all levels of the property from the ground floor circulation space.

The apartment comprises of a large kitchen and dining room, living room, three double bedrooms and two bathrooms all on the same level.

9.2 Summary

In summary, the residential amenity of the proposed dwelling is of a high standard. The proposed dwelling total internal floor areas are in line with the expectations of the London Housing Design Standards, furthermore exceeds the expectations of Camden Council Standards (Policy CPG2).

10 Design Principles

The main principle adopted in the redevelopment of this property is to strip back the additions and adaptations which have been made to the building and to understand the historic volume of the dwelling, restoring the original layout and retaining original fabric where possible, whilst upgrading where possible to improve fire, thermal and acoustic insulation.

11 Proposed Works

11.1 Flat 2

There is little to no original fabric remaining at the basement level of any architectural importance or that isn't defective and requiring renewal.

The proposal is to overhaul all existing windows and restore them to match the rest of the building. Some new windows will replace existing windows in the courtyard elevation. This will help to flood the flat with natural light from the lightwells and provide access to the terrace.

The small WC (understood to be a modern addition) with a couple of partitions, will be replaced with a more open plan bathroom.

The existing kitchen area and storage room will become an open plan kitchen and dining area. The front three rooms will be refurbished retaining anything of architectural importance to become the two new double bedrooms and a large living room.

The dwelling will benefit greatly from construction of new bi-folding doors to the kitchen, and a new exterior door to the bedroom facing the interior lightwell.

11.2 General Works

The property will receive new plumbing, central heating and the drainage will be rationalized to minimize the external pipework. Any flues will be positioned discretely to the rear of the property.

The electrics will be renewed throughout.

Where possible without harming original features, the external walls will receive a thermal lining internally.

Party walls and floors will be upgraded with acoustic linings to prevent passage of sound and where necessary will be upgraded to provide fire resistance between different compartments within the building.

The external windows will be overhauled or where beyond economic repair replaced with new timber sliding sashes to match the design of the original property.

The external fabric of the property will be renovated in keeping with the original building- brickwork cleaned and repaired where necessary, render renovated and redecorated, flashings replaced in lead.

12 Impact on Neighbours

The proposed works will benefit the neighbouring properties on all sides by fully renovating and bringing back into use this left over space. The building should have no negative impact on the neighbouring dwellings.

13 Conclusion

This proposed redevelopment will restore a semi derelict, empty, storage space sensitively, retaining as many of the existing architectural features as possible.

These proposals create much needed new residential accommodation within an existing building with no visible impact on the appearance of the building viewed from the street.

The building causes neither loss of affordable housing nor any loss of spaces or uses which benefit to the borough.

The proposal causes no harm to the neighbouring residents or their properties. It is fully expected that the completed development will benefit Great Russell Mansions and will have a positive impact on the appearance of this significant building within this historic setting.