

**Planning Application Stage**

**Design and Access Statement – Second Issue**

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

**On Behalf of**

**The London Borough of Camden**

**jm**architects

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## Document tracking

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## **1 Application Address**

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

## **2 Site Description**

2.1 Great Russell Mansions is a five storey plus basement mansion block, located on the southern side of the Great Russell Street. The existing property is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

2.2 The application property is located within the basement of Great Russell Mansions, and is understood to be classified as use class B8, storage. The space is largely derelict, uninhabited, although the layout suggests the space was formerly used as a dwelling

2.3 The property is in the ownership of the London Borough of Camden. With the exception of a dentists surgery at part ground and basement level, and the storage spaces at basement level, the entire building is in residential use.

## **3 Overview of Proposal**

3.1 It is proposed to convert an existing storage space in the basement area into a self-contained dwelling. The dwelling will largely maintain the existing floorplan, however in some areas to create a more efficient layout there has been a few minor alterations.

3.2 The original street entrance door on Great Russell Street leads to the existing staircase and hallway serving the new flat.

3.3 The proposed dwelling faces towards Gilbert Place although has a lightwell to the rear of the property. The layout will benefit from the removal of two internal walls to create a more open and efficient layout. Furthermore the existing windows which face Gilbert Place will be replaced, their sills lowered and the lightwells refurbished. In addition to this, the replacement of the existing glass block pavement lights with steel gratings will greatly increase the light levels in all of the rooms on the Gilbert Place elevation. New windows will be provided with high transmittance glazing providing increased daylight into the rooms.

3.4 Within lightwell A, a new fence will be constructed creating more privacy between Flat Two and Three, and creating a private terrace for this dwelling. A gate with escape mechanism will also be constructed thus in the case of a fire, the occupants of the dwelling would still be able to escape.

## **4 Existing Condition**

4.1 The property is constructed from traditional load bearing masonry with presumed pot and beam floor slabs enclosed under a mansard style roof set around two lightwells. The

property provides self-contained residential flats on each of the upper floors which are accessed from a central staircase and passenger lift, both of which serve the basement. A separate escape staircase from the basement exits at street level directly onto Gilbert Place.

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.

4.3 In summary the property has evidently been extremely poorly maintained for numerous years, therefore all the finishes 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 requires the change of use of the existing disused and semi derelict storage space, into a residential use class. The dwelling created is of a high quality, and exceeds the space standards of the London Housing Design Standards.

5.3 Policy DP4, Minimising the loss of affordable housing

The property is currently uninhabitable thus makes no contribution to the supply of housing in the borough. No space has been lost to other use classes.

5.4 Policy DP5, Homes of different sizes

The Dwelling Size Priorities Table identifies the demand for housing in the area. This development will result in the creation of 1 no. 2 bedroomed, four person flat.

5.5 Policy DP6, Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Housing

The design achieves as many of the lifetime homes targets as possible. Wheelchair standard housing isn't proposed within this development, although adaptations would be possible to apply improving access. There is lift access to the dwelling from entrance level.

5.6 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 is Tottenham Court Road, Holborn, Goodge Street, Russell Square and Covent Garden Tube Stations, furthermore numerous bus routes.

5.7 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.

#### 5.8 DP25 Conserving Camden's heritage

The proposal works hard to retain the appearance of the building from Gilbert Place. Very minor internal remodelling will be required to bring the property up to the space standards required, but the essential form of the original building will be maintained.

#### 5.9 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, daylight, it will create equal or less noise, pollution and waste than the existing property would have when occupied. The quality of accommodation will be high, working closely with the London Housing Design Standards and Camden Council Standards.

#### 5.10 DP 27 Basements and Lightwells

The development re-develops the existing basement with minor external impact on the surroundings, with the exception of the inclusion of new fence proposed within Lightwell A to provide privacy to Flat Three. This will match with the surrounding context and will be a positive aesthetic addition to the lightwell.

### **6 Existing Provision of Housing**

- 6.1 It is understood that the basement is not in a residential use class. The space is largely unused however part used by the caretaker as storage. The layout of the space suggests that historically the space was used as a two bedroom apartment.

### **7 Proposed Provision of Housing**

- 7.1 The proposed dwelling mix is as follows:

1 No. 2 bed, 4 person dwelling.

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

## **8.0 Residential Amenity**

- 8.1 Flat 3 will benefit from full use of a private area of the existing lightwell. Flat 3 faces on to lightwell A, therefore it has been proposed to erect a small fence and gate to provide more privacy to this flat.

## **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 3**

No extensions are proposed to the existing building, the existing space will be reconfigured to create this new dwelling, which will have a total internal floor area of 92.2m<sup>2</sup>. The proposed apartment comprises of a large kitchen, dining and living room, two double or twin bedrooms and one bathroom. Each bedroom measures in excess of 15m<sup>2</sup> and the living / dining / kitchen space will measure in excess of 35m<sup>2</sup>, thus the proposal exceeds the areas recommended by the London Residential Design Guide. An external terrace will be created within the light well / courtyard in the centre of the building.

The access to this dwelling is primarily via the front entrance on Great Russell Street, although a secondary entrance /exit is available from Gilbert Place, the small street to the rear of the building. From Great Russell Street, a short flight of external stairs leads to the main entrance door leading to the entrance level of the building. From this level a stair and lift provide access to all floors of the building, including basement where the proposed dwelling is situated. A further entrance door is situated at Gilbert Place directly at ground level. From this door, a flight of internal stairs leads directly to basement level. This route also serves as a means of escape from the upper floors of the building, using an escape stair in the central light well / courtyard of the building.

### **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), and the retained main volume of the combined living space relates closely with the original volume of this important space in the house.

## **10 Design Principles**

The main principle adopted in the redevelopment of this property is to strip back the decades of adaptations to understand the historic volume of the building before fully

refurbishing the space to create a new dwelling. Minor alterations to the layout are proposed to improve the functioning of the dwelling and make best use of available daylight.

## **11 Proposed Works**

### **11.1 Flat 3**

There is little original fabric remaining at the basement level of any architectural importance or that isn't defective and requiring renewal, however every effort will be made to preserve features which will benefit the quality of the final development.

The proposal is to remove the all existing defective windows and to either overhaul them or where they cannot be feasibly repaired, they will be replaced with windows of similar design. The proposal will also to open windows which have been closed up, to bring as much natural light into the dwelling from the lightwells.

The existing kitchen area, storage room and living area will be knocked through to become an open plan kitchen, dining and living area, gaining light from two aspects of the room. The first front two rooms will stripped out, retaining anything of architectural importance to become the two new double bedrooms. Within the hallway there is a large expanse of unused space which will be redesigned to create a storage cupboard and bathroom. The addition of new horizontal iron grates to replace existing glass block pavement will greatly increase the light levels in all of the main living spaces. The windows cill heights in this elevation will be lowered and the windows replaced with new windows with high light transmittance glazing. A sunlight and daylight assessment in support of the proposals will accompany the application to demonstrate the benefit of this.

### **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.

External walls will receive a thermal lining internally, it is not expected that there will be historic features which would prevent this work.

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 replaced with new timber double glazed 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 where relevant, will be 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 redundant space.

## **13 Conclusion**

The storage space which is the subject of this application is in a very poor state of repair. The proposed redevelopment will restore a semi derelict space sensitively, retaining as many of the existing architectural features as possible, in the conservation area while also providing much needed high quality housing in Camden.