

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS & HERITAGE

IMPACT STATEMENT

for

3 BELSIZE CRESCENT

LONDON

NW3 5QY

March 2016

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CONTENTS PAGE

- 1.0 Introduction
 - Application Site & its context
 - Planning History
 - Schedule of works
- 2.0 Design & Access Component
- 3.0 Planning Policy
- 4.0 The Heritage Asset & Assessment
- 5.0 Planning Policy Compliance
 - NPPF
 - Design/CPG1 Roof Extensions
 - Heritage Impact Assessment
 - Housing
 - Impact on Residential Amenities
 - Basement Impact
 - Flood Risk
 - Highways & Parking
- 6.0 Conclusions

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Statement has been prepared and submitted in support of a planning application for the change of use of the basement, ground and first floor from B1 Office to C3 Use comprising 2no. dwellings with associated excavation works to the existing basement level accommodation together with external changes include the formation of a small window on the front elevation and enlarging an existing window on the rear elevation at ground floor level (“the Proposal”), all at 3 Belsize Crescent, NW3 5QY (“the Site”).

The Application Site and its Context

1.2 The Site comprises an attached property and lies on the southern side of Belsize Crescent. The property currently provides office accommodation at basement, ground and first floor level, with a residential use at 2nd floor. The existing flat at second floor level is accessible via the main front entrance and communal hall/stairs.

1.3 Prior approval has been granted for the conversion of the basement, ground and first floor accommodation to C3 use to provide 2no. flats with cycle storage and ancillary space, subject to conditions. This approval is highly material and represents a realistic fall-back position.

1.4 Planning permission has been granted for the formation of a mansard roof extension which would increase the size of the existing 2nd floor flat. This has not, to date, been implemented and the works the subject of this application do not impact on this.

1.5 The building extends up to the back edge of the pavement and is attached to the arch of Burdett Mews to the south east and 5 Belsize Crescent to the north west. The front elevation retains much of its original architectural integrity and is defined by London stock brick and stucco detailing. The rear elevation has been

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subject to alterations over the years and does not benefit from the architectural detailing evident on the front façade. The building currently benefits from a raised front and rear parapet, behind which is a flat roof.

- 1.6 The site lies within the Belsize Park Conservation Area (CA) and specifically within Sub Area 2, Belsize Village. The property is not listed.
- 1.7 The immediate area is predominantly residential in character and comprises a range of mid to late C19th buildings. The levels along Belsize Crescent fall from west to east.
- 1.8 The properties along the Crescent are typically grand in scale and extend to three and four storeys. The terrace to the west (5 – 19 Belsize Crescent, odds) is stepped back from the back edge of the pavement and many of the properties benefit from roof extensions and other alterations. Burdett Mews lies to the east and is attached to the application site by an arch that leads through to the Mews at the rear, the latter of which is also partially attached to the application property. A mansard roof is located over the arch that forms part of Burdett Mews.
- 1.9 A more detailed analysis of the CA and its significance is provided in Section 4 below.

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Planning History

1.10 The planning history for the site is summarised in Table 1 below.

Application Number	Development	Decision
2015/6826/P	Mansard roof extension and additional window at 2 nd floor	Approved
2015/6811/P	Prior Approval for C3 use at basement, ground and first floor level.	Approved
P9602335	Metal staircase to link 2 nd floor with roof and use of the roof as a terrace.	Refused

Schedule of Works

- 1.11 Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the basement, ground and first floor level to provide 2no. 1 bedroom units (as per the prior approval).
- 1.12 It is proposed to increase the internal ceiling height of the basement from 2.1m to 3.1m. The basement would form part of the ground floor unit.
- 1.13 The proposal also seeks to install a modest window on the front elevation at pavement level, similar to that which already exists.
- 1.14 An existing window on the rear elevation at ground floor level would be increased in size.
- 1.15 Full details of the proposal are shown on the submitted drawings that comprise part of this submission.

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Fall Back Position

- 1.16 The residential use of the basement, ground and first floor has been established under 15/6811/P as has the formation of 2no. 1 bedroom units. This is highly material.
- 1.17 It is also important to note that the layout herein proposed could be subject to an alternative prior approval submission. The existing basement has an internal ceiling height of 2.1m and is usable as accommodation. It is noted that this internal ceiling height accords with the Council's advice offered in CPG2'Housing'.
- 1.18 The modest works to the basement therefore seek to enhance the value of the existing space rather than render it usable.
- 1.19 It is suggested that with the benefit of the Flood Risk Assessment there would be no basis to withhold prior approval for the layout herein promoted.

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2.0 DESIGN & ACCESS COMPONENT

Amount

- 2.1 The basement, ground and first floor provides 122sqm (approx.) of floor space and the conversion would create 2no. properties. The proposal would not result in an increase in footprint or floorspace. The internal ceiling height of the basement would be increased from 2.1m to 3.1m.
- 2.2 Each property would comprise a 1 bedroom unit.

Scale and Appearance

- 2.3 The internal works to the existing basement would not have any external manifestation.
- 2.4 It is proposed to form a modest window on the front elevation, below the main ground floor window. This would replicate that which currently at this level on the front elevation. Obscure glazing would be installed.
- 2.5 An existing window on the rear elevation at ground floor level would be increased in size. This would be timber framed and painted white. It would be finished with clear obscure glass.

Use

- 2.5 The Site is currently in B1 Office Use. The residential use (C3) of the basement, ground and first floors has been established under prior approval (2015/6811/P) for 2no. 1 bedroom dwellings with associated cycle storage. This application seeks consent for 2no. 1 bedroom dwellings. The residential use of the premises has therefore been established as has the provision of 2no. 1 bedroom units.

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Access

- 2.6 No change is proposed to the main pedestrian access to the site from the main entrance from Belsize Crescent.

Layout

- 2.7 Access to each property would be from the communal hall, as per the prior approval details.

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3.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development which lies at the heart of decision making. Paragraph 14 makes it clear that development that accords with an up to date Local Plan should be approved without delay and where the development plan is absent, silent or out of date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impact of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits or specific NPPF policies indicate development should be restricted.
- 3.2 Housing applications should be considered in the context of a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 3.3 Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is indivisible from good planning. Paragraph 58 requires development to respond to local character, reflecting the identity of local surroundings and materials whilst not preventing or discouraging innovation.
- 3.4 The NPPF specifically states that design policies should avoid unnecessary detail and not be unduly prescriptive. Paragraph 60 goes on to state that *"Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles."*
- 3.5 The NPPF encourages design to secure the optimal and efficient use of a site whilst responding to local character and history.
- 3.6 Paragraph 126 recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and seeks to conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. It is appropriate to consider the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness.

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Development Plan

- 3.7 The relevant policies of the Core Strategy & Development Policies include:
- CS1 Distribution of growth
 - CS5 Managing the implication of growth and development
 - CS8 Promoting a successful and inclusive Camden economy
 - CS11 Promoting sustainable and efficient travel
 - CS14 Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage
- 3.8 The relevant policies from Camden's Development Policies document include:
- DP5 Homes of different sizes
 - DP6 Lifetime homes and wheelchair homes
 - DP13 Employment sites and premises
 - DP18 Parking standards and limiting the availability of car parking
 - DP22 Promoting sustainable design and construction
 - DP23 Water
 - DP24 Securing high quality design
 - DP25 Securing Camden's Heritage
 - DP26 Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours
 - DP27 Basements and lightwells
- 3.9 Camden Planning Guidance, updated in 2013, is also relevant and in particular CPG1 'Design', CPG2 'Housing' and CCPG4 'Basement and Lightwells'.
- 3.10 The Belsize Conservation Area Statement is also a material consideration in respect of this proposal.

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4.0 THE HERITAGE ASSET AND ASSESSMENT

Belsize Conservation Area

- 4.1 The application site forms part of a row of terraced properties on the southern side of the road and within the Belsize Conservation Area (CA). The CA was designated in 1973 and subsequently extended in 1984, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994 and most recently in 2002. The CA Statement states the development of the Belsize area as a residential suburb began in the mid C19th and its Italianate villas dating from this period are most commonly associated with it and from which its character derives.
- 4.2 The Site lies within Sub Area 2 of the CA, known as Belsize Village. The CA Statement notes that this is typically defined by 3 and 4 storey terraces, built to the back edge of the pavement and giving a strong sense of enclosure. The vertical proportions of the windows with their diminishing height on successive upper floors and classical ornamentation contribute to the character and appearance of the area.
- 4.3 With regard to Belsize Crescent, the CA Statement notes that this differs slightly in that it is an entirely residential street, with terraces set back from the road. The properties are finished in London stock brick with Stucco and banding. It goes on to note there is considerable visual consistency, with pitched slate roofs and barell topped dormers some of the key architectural detailing evident.
- 4.4 No.3 Belsize Crescent is noted as making a positive contribution to the character of the area.

Significance Findings

- 4.5 The significant findings are;
- No.3 Belsize Crescent is recognised as a building that makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA;

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- Belsize Crescent is almost entirely residential with considerable visual consistency;
- The overall character of the area is defined by the height of properties, the relationship between the buildings and the road and the visual consistency that exists.

Significant Issues

- 4.6 The significant issue is therefore whether the proposed change of use and external changes to the property (a modest window at pavement level on the front elevation and enlarged window on the rear elevation) would preserve or enhance the identified significance (paragraph 4.5) of the CA.
- 4.7 The impact of the works on the significance of the designated heritage asset is considered in section 5 below.

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5.0 PLANNING POLICY COMPLIANCE

NPPF

- 5.1 The NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development and this proposal falls squarely within the parameters of such.
- 5.2 The NPPF notes that good design is a key component of sustainable development and that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. As demonstrated in detail below, the proposal is based on principles of good design, would not harm the significance of the CA or the integrity of the built form as viewed from any public vantage point and relies on using traditional materials. The proposal is well designed and would not harm the significance of the conservation area, in full compliance with the requirements of the NPPF.
- 5.3 In addition to the above, the proposal would optimise the use and function of the property without compromising the ability of future generations to come. The proposal therefore comprises sustainable development, consistent with the NPPF and for which there is a presumption in favour.

Development Plan

- 5.4 Consideration has been given to the prevailing development plan policies. Every effort has been made to ensure the proposals, whilst meeting the expectations of modern day living, do not harm the architectural quality and integrity of the existing building, ensure that the significance of the conservation area is not compromised and provide a good standard of amenity for future occupiers whilst protecting that of neighbouring residents.
- 5.5 To that end, the proposed development would be executed to a very high standard as part of a comprehensive programme of works to upgrade the function of the property, respecting townscape character and local distinctiveness, in accordance with policies Core Strategy and Development

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Policies, the Council's Planning Guidance and the objectives of the CA Appraisal and Management Strategy.

PRINCIPLE – CHANGE OF USE

- 5.6 Policy CS8 of the Core Strategy seeks to support Camden's industries by safeguarding existing employment sites and premises in the Borough that meet the modern needs of modern industry and other employers (criterion b). Paragraph 8.8 of the supporting text for this policy acknowledges that the future supply of office space in the Borough can meet projected demand by virtue of the extent of modern purpose built office space that has been granted consent at Kings Cross and other sites. In view of this, paragraph 8.8 goes on to state:

"Consequently, the Council will consider proposals for other uses of older office premises if they involve the provision of permanent housing...Please refer to Policy DP13 in Camden Development Policies for more detail on our approach"

- 5.7 Policy DP13 states:

"Where it can be demonstrated that a site is not suitable for any business use other than B1(a) offices, the Council may allow a change to permanent residential uses or community uses..."

- 5.8 The site lies within a residential area and any alternative business use is not appropriate or compatible with surrounding land uses. The planning policy framework is thus supportive of the principle of converting the premises into permanent residential use.
- 5.9 Notwithstanding the above, prior approval has been granted for the change of use of the basement, ground and first floor to residential (C3) use, comprising 2no. units. This represents a realistic fall-back position which is highly material and should be afforded due weight.
- 5.10 The principle of the change of use complies with policy and no objections can be raised in this regard.

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HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.11 Section 4 of this statement provides a heritage appraisal and identifies the significance of the CA.
- 5.12 In summary, whilst no.3 Belsize Crescent is noted as making a positive contribution to the character of the CA, the significance of this part of the CA lies with the scale and relationship of buildings to each other and to the road and the consistency in their appearance, as recognised within the CA Statement.

Impact on the Conservation Area

- 5.13 The proposed change of use would respect the prevailing land use within Belsize Crescent and would not cause harm to the established character of the area in this regard.
- 5.14 The area is characterised by properties with basement level accommodation and the application site is not different in this regard. The excavation works relate to enhancing an existing basement level and have no external manifestation. In this regard, there is no impact on the character, appearance or significance of the CA.
- 5.15 The property benefits from an existing window on the front elevation that sit below the cill height of the main ground floor windows. It is proposed to form a further small window at this level. There are similar properties on the other side of Belsize Crescent that benefit from similar sized/located windows. The formation of an additional small window would not cause harm to the significance, character or appearance of the CA.
- 5.15 The enlargement of the existing window on the rear elevation at ground floor level would not cause harm to the character or appearance of the CA.

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- 5.16 For the reasons provided above, the modest external works associated with the proposal would not cause harm to the significance of the CA and are in compliance with the NPPF and Core Strategy policies designed to protect the area.

HOUSING

- 5.17 The proposal provides for the formation of 2no. 1 bedroom units, one located at first floor level and the other across basement and ground level. The size of the properties (1 bedroom) reflects the fall-back position secured via prior approval and in this regard no objection can be raised or sustained in terms of housing size/mix.

Amenity Standards for future occupants

First Floor Flat

- 5.18 The proposed unit at first floor would be a 1-2person property. Its size/layout is as per the details agreed under the prior approval process. This fall-back position is highly material and should be afforded significant weight.
- 5.19 Under the prior approval scheme, the first floor unit benefitted from cycle storage at basement level. Under this scheme, the cycle storage has been re-sited to the communal hall at ground floor level which offers a more practical solution. The first floor flat would continue to be served by cycle storage and an appropriate extent of storage.

Ground & Basement Flat

- 5.20 The flat proposed over the ground floor and basement would continue to comprise a 1 bedroom unit, as per the scheme that benefits from prior approval.
- 5.21 As part of this planning application, the basement would provide a kitchen, storage area, utility, bathroom (in addition to the shower that is only accessible

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- via the bedroom at ground floor level) and an occasional small study/home office area.
- 5.22 The kitchen is modest in size and would not comprise 'habitable' accommodation in this regard. In any event, the residential use (C3) at basement level has been agreed under the prior approval process and it benefits from an internal ceiling height of 2.1m (in accordance with the requirements of CPG4).
- 5.23 An alternative prior approval application could be made for the layout herein proposed. In view of the Flood Risk Assessment that has now been prepared there would be no basis on which to withhold prior approval for the layout now proposed. This is highly material.
- 5.24 There can be no objection to the use of the basement level for residential purposes having regard to the fall-back positions.
- 5.25 The primary living space at ground floor level (living room and bedroom) would be served by existing windows on the front elevation of the property and would benefit from good daylight and ventilation.
- 5.26 The Proposals allow for the creation of two 'voids' at ground floor. These would enable light to flood down from the large ground floor windows (at the front and rear) to the basement level. One void would be directly above the kitchen area and the other over the home office. These voids would be 'open' and as such the openable windows at ground floor level would also provide a means of natural ventilation at basement level (in addition to the mechanical ventilation associated with the bathroom).
- 5.27 Having regard to the non-habitable nature of rooms at basement level and the clever design of voids and sources of daylight, the basement would be served by appropriate levels of natural light and ventilation. The accommodation would provide a good standard of amenity for future occupants.

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5.28 The internal size of the properties are commensurate with the scale of properties in the area and would meet the size thresholds for bedrooms and ceiling heights as set out in CPG2 'Housing' and the Nationally Described Space Standards.

5.29 The building is not served by any external amenity space and none is proposed. In view of the fall-back position (2no. dwellings via the prior approval process) and the non-family size of accommodation proposed, the lack of amenity space should not be weighed against this proposal. Future occupants would rely on recreational areas within the vicinity.

IMPACT ON RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES

5.30 The change of use is compatible with neighbouring residential uses.

5.31 The enlarged window on the rear elevation at ground floor level would serve the internal lightwell only. The enlargement of this window and the layout proposed would preclude any loss of privacy or overlooking for occupiers of Burdett Mews.

5.32 The modest works at basement level would not compromise residential amenity. The proposal complies with Policy DP26 and the NPPF in this regard.

BASEMENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.33 The property benefits from an existing basement which is accessible and functional, benefitting from an internal ceiling height of 2.1m (in compliance with CPG2 'Housing'). The proposal seeks consent to excavate 1000mm to provide an internal ceiling height of 3.1m.

5.34 This application is accompanied by a BIA Screening Report and Ground Investigation report. These highlight no issues that need attention, with Building Control and the Party Wall Act providing further legislative frameworks that would need to be complied with.

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FLOOD RISK

- 5.35 The site lies within Flood Zone 1 and is at low risk of flooding. Given the scheme involves a 1000mm approx. reduction in slab level at basement level a Surface Water Flow and Flood Risk Assessment have been prepared in support of this application.
- 5.36 This report concludes that the risk of groundwater flooding at the surface is low and that the development will not increase surface water runoff rates from the site post development. It further concludes that the basement extension is at low risk of flooding from all sources and is considered acceptable in the context of flood risk, provided the recommended mitigation measures are incorporated. This can be secured by way of condition. Ultimately, the report concludes that:

“Despite an increase in vulnerability classification post development, there is not considered to be any risk to future residents of the site. The proposed development does not result in any increase in the risk of flooding to the site or elsewhere.”

- 5.37 The Proposal complies with development plan policy and the advice of the NPPF in this regard.

HIGHWAYS AND PARKING

- 5.38 The site has a PTAL rating of 4 meaning it has good access to public transport. This does not take into consideration the excellent walking and cycling links or the proximity of local facilities and services. Indeed, a range of local services and facilities are accessible by a number of travel modes which in turn means future occupants would not be reliant upon a private car. The loss of an office use will remove a number of servicing requirements.

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- 5.39 In approving prior approval 15/6811 for 2no. dwellings, a Section 106 was entered into to secure a 'car free' development whereby future occupants were precluded from applying for a parking permit. The number of units remains as previously accepted and the applicant is willing to enter into such an agreement in relation to this scheme.
- 5.40 Bin storage is currently provided in the brick enclosures adjacent to the property (under the arch). This arrangement would continue as part of the proposal and was agreed under 15/6811/P.
- 5.41 The Council's parking standards require 1 secure bicycle parking space per unit. The Proposal allows for secure cycle parking for 2 bicycles in the communal hall at ground floor level. This complies with the parking standards.
- 5.42 In view of the above, the Proposal would not prejudice highway safety or generate additional pressure for on-street parking. The proposal complies with development plan policies and the move towards more sustainable transport patterns.

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6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The loss of office space is permissible under adopted policy with the principle of residential use at basement, ground and first floor level already secured under prior approval.
- 6.2 The Proposal would deliver high quality housing within the Borough. It embodies the principles of good design protects the significance of the CA. The proposal thus comprises sustainable development consistent with the NPPF and for which there is a presumption in favour.
- 6.3 Externally, the only manifestations of the proposal relate to a modest window on the front elevation and an enlarged window on the rear elevation at ground floor level. These have been sensitively proportioned and detailed to ensure no harm to the architectural integrity, character or appearance of the host property or the wider area.
- 6.4 The Proposal provides a good standard of amenity for future occupants and protects that of neighbouring occupiers.
- 6.5 The dwellings would not be at risk from flooding and would not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.
- 6.6 Prior approval has already been granted for the first floor flat herein proposed. The ground floor unit has also been secured under prior approval as has the C3 use at basement level. These factors are highly material and represent a realistic fall- back position which must be given due weight in the decision making process. It remains open to revert to the layout herein proposed under a further prior approval application – this would not require the excavation of the basement and would be supported by the FRA. This is highly material.
- 6.7 The proposal complies with relevant development plan policies and with central government advice. In our judgment no other material considerations weigh against it.

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6.8 Accordingly we trust the Council will determine that the application for planning permission can be approved.

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