DAVID CORLEY ARCHITECT

David Corley BA (Hons) BArch RIBA

6 Woodford Mill
Mill Street
Witney
Oxfordshire OX28 6DE
Tel: 01993 775671
Mobile: 07889 774987
E-mail: dc@davidcorley.co.uk

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29 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3AS

Proposed Extension and Conversion of Existing Dwelling to Create 2 x 1 bedroom Apartments & 1 x 2 bed (3 bedspace) Apartment

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND LIFETIME HOMES ASSESSMENTS.

The Existing Building:

1. 29 Old Gloucester Street is located on the west side of the road. Its lawful use is as a single family dwelling house, with accommodation at basement and ground to third floors above. **(photo 1)** It forms part of a continuous built up frontage extending from Theobald's Road to the south to St. George the Martyr's Church to the North. On the opposite side of the street are the similarly planar elevations of 24 Old Gloucester Street and the Mary Ward Centre, forming part of a group of Grade II listed buildings which includes the Italian Hospital on Boswell Street. The immediately adjoining buildings at Number 30 **(photo 2)** and Number 28 **(photo 3)** are of similar architectural character and divided into flats.

2. In the wider context of the street frontage Number 29 is lower than both its immediate neighbours and other properties extending north and south from the site **Photos 5& 6).**

3. The rear boundary is enclosed by commercial premises of 2 to 3 floors in height, located around a small courtyard with access between 27 and 28 Old Gloucester Street **(photo 7).** Rising over these commercial buildings to the south west are the rear elevations of the flats in Ormonde Mansions. The separation between the rear elevations of the mansion block and the windows of Number 29 is 23 metres.

4. The rear elevations of the house are only visible from the yard to the commercial properties **(photo 4).**

5. The plan form of the house is traditional, with a closet wing set against the flank wall of Number 30 behind the principal front part of the plan.

6. The bay width of the house is fairly typical at approximately 5.5m. However, it is unusually shallow, with the front part, measured to its external wall faces, no more than 6 metres deep. With the staircase in the rear wing, accommodation is effectively one principal room per floor.

7. The overall site area is 55 sq.m, with a small external courtyard at the rear as the only external space within the site, a poor provision for a large family dwelling. The total gross internal floor area of the house is 170.25 sq.m.

Planning History:

8. Camden's planning website shows little planning history for the property. It records two planning refusals: an application registered on the 26th of May 1982, for change of use of ground to third floors into offices with a basement flat, and an application registered on the 2nd of August 1982 for change of use of basement, ground and first floors to a medical surgery with a residential maisonette above.

Architectural Appraisal:

9. In its appearance the building is a typical 19th century town house, retaining its original pattern of fenestration, with flat arched window heads and traditional brick bonding. It is of similar scale to Number 28.although the latter may have been reconstructed as fenestration is modern, installed flush with the outer face of the brickwork and with concrete lintols over the heads. Number 30 and other properties both to the north and south are of a grander scale, many with modern roof extensions and terraces added to the original buildings.

10. However, detailed inspection of the building reveals that major reconstruction has taken place in relatively modern times. The internal floors, staircase and roof structure, including the dormer windows at third floor are all of reinforced concrete construction. As it is also evident from the front elevation of Number 30 that this has been reconstructed from first floor upwards, with poorly detailed soldier brick heads over the upper floor windows, it is probable that the properties have suffered severe damage. A search of websites recording the location of bombing in the Blitz does indicate that a high explosive bomb fell close to Devonshire Court, located some 40 metres to the east. However, no other corroborative evidence has been found for the cause of the reconstruction.

11. Other than the crude and heavily framed concrete dormer windows, the building does respect an contribute positively to the prevailing architectural character of the surrounding area.

The Proposal:

12. The proposal is to remove the existing concrete roof and unsympathetic dormer windows, raising the brickwork at the front and rear of the property to form a full third floor. Above, a new fourth floor is added, raised vertically in brickwork at the rear, and enclosed by a true mansard face, traditionally clad in natural grey slates and incorporating timber framed dormer windows of a more sympathetic design, maintaining the rhythm and proportions of the street elevation.

13. The extended accommodation enables the building to be converted to create three flats. As already referred to, the existing house, while of significant floor area, has poor amenity provision for family occupation, with minimal external space at the rear. The shallow depth of the existing building, with an area (excluding the staircase) of no more than 28 sq.m per floor is insufficient for conversion on a floor by floor basis. The extension of the existing third floor and the addition of a fourth floor, providing a total of 6 levels of accommodation, allow subdivision to provide three new duplex apartments. The existing concrete staircase in the rear closet wing is retained unchanged, with the addition of a new timber staircase within the top flat to give access to the new fourth floor.

14. While the building evidently becomes taller, it remains in scale with the neighbouring and nearby properties, with new windows and brickwork matching the existing building and a more traditionally designed mansard roof setting back from the street elevation, maintaining the positive contribution that the building makes to its surroundings.

Design and Access Considerations:

Use:

15. The proposal retains the building in residential use, extending and dividing the existing accommodation to provide small apartments more suited to central urban non family occupation,

Amount:

16. The gross internal floor areas of the proposed apartments are:

    - Apartment 1 (basement and ground floor) - 74.0 sq.m
    - Apartment 2 (first and second floors) - 55.0 sq.m
    - Apartment 3 (third and fourth floors) - 68.2 sq.m

    Apartments 1 and 2 are one bedroom dwellings. Apartment 3 provides 2 bedrooms (one double and one single).

    The bedroom sizes are:

    - Apartment 1: 12.9 sq.m
    - Apartment 2: 15.5 sq.m
    - Apartment 3: 12.2 sq.m (double); 7.9 sq.m (single)

Design and Appearance:

17. The design of the alterations to the front elevation of the building is carefully considered to retain, and in respect of the dormer windows, to improve the appearance of the building in its context. While the height does increase, the overall scale of the front elevation is retained in its relationship with the varying patterns of the other buildings in the street, both to the north and south.

18. At the rear the existing brickwork is simply raised, aligned at the rear of the closet wing with the existing parapet height of No 30 adjoining. The head of the new staircase to the fourth floor is formed in a lead clad sloping roof incorporating a roof window over the staircase. New fenestration matches the pattern and arrangement of the existing fenestration.

Internal Layouts:

19. **Apartment 1 (basement and ground floors):**

    The bedroom is placed at ground floor, with an ensuite shower room. At the rear the existing courtyard is roofed with walk on glass panels set at ground floor level, providing useful external amenity space for the dwelling. This has been successfully used by this practice elsewhere in central London to combine amenity with high standards of natural light to a basement below. The existing

staircase, enclosed with fire resisting construction, is retained to give access to the basement.

The basement is retained as a single spacious living room (with the exception of a lower level wc compartment and enclosed utility room at the front of the property). In addition to the large glazed walk on ceiling at the rear, the front light well is enclosed by a glass laylight. The high sky factor of the horizontal glazing provides high levels of natural light to the accommodation.

In order to comply with Building regulations requirements for habitable basements, a Systemair permanent ventilation system will be installed, incorporating an efficient heat exchanger, ensuring controllable comfort conditions while minimising heat losses.

20. **Apartment 2 (first and second floors):**

    This one bedroom dwelling is entered at first floor. The living spaces are located at this level with the bedroom at second floor above. The large bedroom has an ensuite bathroom through which an alternative direct means of escape to the common staircase is provided.

    This allows the new staircase connecting the floors to be open within the living room, maximising the openness of the plan.

21. **Apartment 3 (third and fourth floors):**

    The bedrooms for this apartment are placed at the third floor level providing direct escape in case of fire. An en suite bathroom is provided for the double bedroom with a separate shower room for general use.

    At fourth floor the whole floor is open, with the kitchen facing south west at the rear. A wc compartment is provided at the head of the stairs.

22. **Summary:**

    The unusually small floor plate of the existing building dictates the duplex arrangements for the proposed apartments. Each is reasonably spacious with high standards of sanitary accommodation. The furniture layouts shown on the plans indicate that the normal requirements for domestic furniture are provided with the necessary circulation space around the dwellings.

Refuse/Recycling:

23. A pair of enclosed refuse/recycling cupboards is located adjacent to the existing front entrance to the building, integrated with the existing front railings. Each is capable of accommodating a 240 litre BS EN 840: 1997 wheeled bin.

Access:

24. The location and size of the site realistically inhibit the use of private cars. However, there is comprehensive access to public transport facilities, with Russell Square Underground station a short walk to the north, and Holborn Station slightly further away to the south. Numerous bus services, both north/south and east west are within easy walking distance.

25. While it would be desirable to provide secure storage for bicycles, the small size of the site, with minimal space at the front of the building makes this realistically impossible.

Lifetime Homes Standards:

26. Given the nature of the existing building it is not possible to meet in full the advisory criteria without full redevelopment of the site, which would not be a sustainable solution to the beneficial use of the building for residential purposes. Criteria 1 and 2 (parking and access from parking spaces) self evidently cannot be satisfied. Criterion 3, the approach to the building entrance, is also compromised by the ground floor entrance being raised above pavement level. However, it could be possible to store internally within the entrance lobby a short ramp to give assisted access

    Criterion 4 – This is met with a wide space on the pull side of the street entrance door. The individual entrance doors to each flat do meet this requirement with a minimum of 300mm clear margin on the pull side of the door.

    Criterion 5 - communal stairs and lifts: the existing staircase does not comply with Criterion 5a - communal stairs, in terms of tread and riser dimensions, although it could be possible, if required, to provide a folding chair lift to each flight from ground to second floors. The relatively small size of the existing house precludes the installation of a lift.

    Criterion 6 - internal doors and hallways: the internal hallways are 900mm wide, with 900mm door sets shown for the habitable rooms. The constraints of the plan and the existing staircase preclude the provision of 1200mm landings in front of flat entrances.

    Criterion 7 - circulation space: the requirement for wheelchair turning within living rooms can be met, as can the requirement for a clear width of 750mm around a standard double bed in the principal bedrooms. Within the kitchens, 1200mm between kitchen fronts is provided.

    Criterion 8 – for practical and means of escape reasons arising from the constraints of the existing building, entrance level living space can only be met in respect of Apartment 2.

    Criterion 9 – this is technically met in respect of Apartments 1 and 3 where there are entrance level bedrooms.

    Criterion 10 - An accessible bathroom is provided for apartments 1 and 3.

    Criterion 11 – bathroom walls: ply sheathing of studwork partitions between 300mm and 1800 above floor level will be provided.

    Criterion 12 - hoists and bedroom/bathroom relationship is met or could be met.

    Criterion 13 – The concrete floor structures of the building enable compliance.

    Criterion 14 - the bathrooms as shown, particularly with the possible removal of the bath can comply.

Criterion 15 - Glazing and window handle heights: within reason the existing double hung sash windows meet these requirements, although only for the lower sash elements.

Criterion 16 - location of service controls: within the conversion this criterion can be met.

Conclusion: within the flats themselves, the simple and relatively spacious layouts are accessible and can meet the majority of Lifetime Homes Criteria. There are limitations imposed by the characteristics of the existing building which cannot be overcome without redevelopment. However, it is the applicant's view that the benefits provided by conversion of the existing building outweigh these shortcomings.

Sustainability Measures:

27. The proposal is for the conversion and extension of the existing building. Building regulations requirements in respect of thermal insulation of external walls and the new roof construction will markedly reduce the overall energy demands of the building in respect of space heating. The flats will not be air conditioned, as the existing proportions of room depths to window openings will provide sufficient natural ventilation, and in many instances, cross ventilation, to all parts of the dwellings. The exception of the basement will be provided with a proven and energy efficient permanent ventilation system, further reducing heat losses from the proposed development. The limited size of the site precludes the economic installation of ground source heat pump installations. Air source heat pump installations are not seen to be practical as there is no discrete location for external fan units which would not cause nuisance and disturbance both to the occupiers of the new flats and those in neighbouring properties. Installation of units on the front elevations would not be appropriate nor likely to be permitted.

    Measures that will be incorporated will include:

    - Mechanical heat recovery extract ventilation system (Nu-Aire MVHR or similar) from bathroom and kitchen extracts.
    - High performance gas fired condensing boilers for space and water heating.
    - Restricted flow showers and aerating taps.
    - Low volume baths
    - Dual flush wcs.
    - Energy saving LED lighting installations.
    - Low energy and water use appliances.

David Corley Architect

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