Architecture
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Above:
Aerial image showing the street frontage of 18 Bedford Row

Above, right:
Aerial image showing the rear of 18 Bedford Row.

Introduction

This Design, Access and Heritage Statement is submitted in support of the planning application for alterations to No. 18 Bedford Row, London.

In drawing up this proposal we have analysed and responded to relevant national and local planning policy in addition to the site's unique built and historic context. We feel the resulting proposals is appropriate for its location and sensitive to its surroundings.

Site Context

Location
The building is located mid-terrace on Bedford Row, in Bloomsbury within the Borough of Camden, London.

Current Use and History
The building is currently used as an office, set over basement, ground and 4 upper floors.

18 Bedford Row and many of the surrounding buildings have been converted into offices over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries.

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Top right:
Image of lantern rooflight

Top Right:
Image of existing air conditioning units on main roof (fifth floor)

Bottom Left:
Image of existing windows, SVP and water pipes.

Bottom, right:
Image of existing air conditioning ducting to extension roof

Built Context

To comply with NPPF paragraph 128 The proposal must take account of Heritage Assets, their significance and the contribution of their setting. As the site lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, the design must take account of the significance of this asset and the effect it will have on it. The Conservation Area Appraisal summarises the nature of the area thus:

"The historic built form comprises townhouses built in long terraces."

"The townhouses, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, are either of three or four storeys raised on basements fronted by cast-iron railings. Their vertically proportioned frontages adhere to classical architectural principles; they have three windows per floor establishing a repeated rhythm of window and door openings along each terrace. Common details are wooden architraved door cases, timber panelled doors, fanlights, flat roofed porches or small porticos above."

Existing Building

The existing building was rebuilt in 1955 with a reinstated georgian frontage. The rear garden/courtyard of this building has been infilled with a two storey extension at the basement and ground floor. The surrounding buildings have constructed infill extensions in a similar manner. Within this existing two storey extension the only source of natural light is a lantern rooflight positioned close to the existing building. The existing rooflight is in poor condition and requires extensive repairs.

The extension has a flat roof, with paving slabs and gravel, that houses some of the plant equipment for the heating/cooling system. The rest of the equipment is on the main roof. This equipment is now out of date, inefficient and needs to be replaced. Access to the first floor roof, for maintaining the plant equipment, is currently unsafe. Accessing the plant on the existing roof involves climbing out of an openable window and, with the use of some grab rails, edge along the side of the lantern rooflight to the main section of the roof (refer to drawings PL-102 for more details). This access route is dangerous as there is a high risk of a person falling through the existing rooflight.

Access

Access to the building exists from Bedford Row only.

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EXISTING

PROPOSED

Above:
Existing and proposed rear elevation

The Proposals in Context

Proposed Alterations
The proposals are informed by two important aims: firstly to improve the level of natural light within the rear ground floor; and secondly to improve the maintenance access to the extension roof and replace the existing plant on both roofs.

Three new flat glass rooflights to the roof of the existing extension are proposed. This should significantly increase the amount of light at ground floor level.

The existing lantern rooflight above the ground floor is currently in poor condition. It will therefore be refurbished as part of the proposed works.

To improve the access to the plant equipment on the first floor roof, two existing windows to the rear of the building are going to be removed and a new opening formed to accommodate a outward opening window. This outward opening window will then become the point of access to the roof and will be large enough for someone to step through safely. Internally steps will be formed to this window ensure safe access to the roof.

As part of this work the existing SVP and water pipes will be re-located.

New air conditioning units will be installed on the main roof. The details of these are included in the application.

There will also be some minor internal alterations and internal refurbishment work.

Proposed Use
It is not proposed to change the use of the building.

Environmental Context
Energy Efficient Design and Use of Materials
The alterations are designed to improve the current energy efficiency, by installing more energy efficient heating/cooling equipment.

Acoustics
An acoustic report has been commissioned to ensure that the new air conditioning units do not increase the level of noise within the existing office and surrounding area. This report is included within the application documents.

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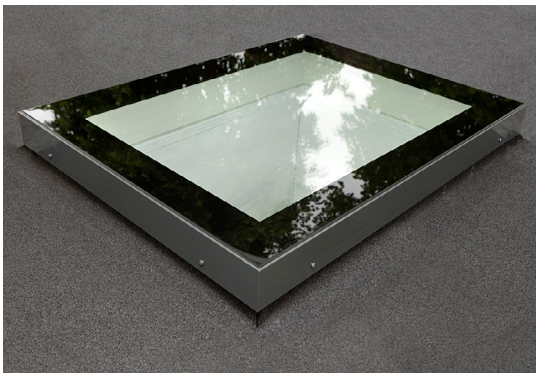

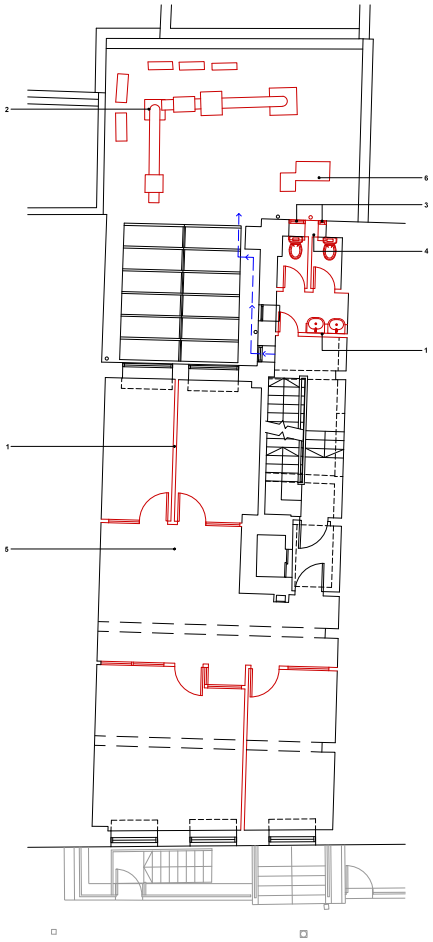

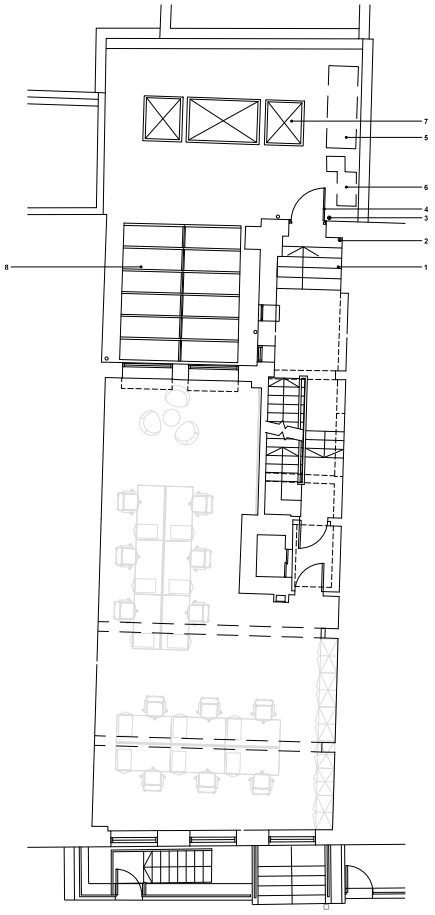

Left:
Image of new flat glass rooflight

Right:
Existing and proposed first floor plan

Response to Built Contexts
Scale and Location
The proposed alterations are at the rear of the building and are not visible from the street.

Appearance and Materials
The new rooflights will be flat low profile rooflights to reduce their visual impact.
The new windows will be aluminium framed double glazed to match the existing windows to the rear elevation.
The new SVP will be cast iron to match the existing pipework to the rear of the building.

Heritage
This proposal is designed to improve and preserve the character of the existing building, and neighbouring properties.
In terms of paragraph 128 of the NPPF, the proposal seeks to preserve the character of the Conservation Area through its high quality contemporary design, which will read distinctly and correctly as modern elements set against a traditional building.

Access
Access to the property from Bedford Row will remain unchanged.

Conclusions

It is our belief that the alterations are a necessary and justifiable improvement to an existing office.
The location of the proposed rooflights and air conditioning units are not visible from any viewpoint on the street. It therefore doesn't raise any adverse amenity impact for any of the surrounding residents, nor would it detract from the character and setting of the conservation area.
It is our belief that the proposed works are sensitive to the conservation area and positively contribute to the existing property.

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