

August 2016

Planning Statement

27 John's Mews, London, WC1N 2NS



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1. Introduction

1.1 This statement has been produced on behalf of the Mr and Mrs O'Toole to accompany an application submission for the following development at 27 John's Mews:

“Demolition of the existing storey dwelling and its replacement with a new dwelling behind retained facade”

1.2 This statement provides the background information on the site, and a detailed consideration of the proposals in relation to planning policy and other material considerations.

1.3 The proposals have been the subject of pre-application discussions with the council's planning officers and the proposals have been amended following their feedback.

1.4 This statement has been set out under the following headings:

- **Section 2** outlines the site and its context within the surrounding area
- **Section 3** provides an overview of the planning history
- **Section 4** examines the main planning considerations
- **Section 5** draws our conclusions in respect of the proposals

2. Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The site is located on the eastern side of John's Mews at its southern end (John's Mews is bi-sected by Northington Street creating two distinct sections; north and south). As set out in the accompanying Heritage Statement, both sections of the mews are varied in character. A large modern three storey building runs along much of the western side of the mews at the southern end which reduces down to two storeys only at its most southerly point. This building comprises the Assembly Hall which was constructed in the 1930's.
- 2.2 The eastern side of the mews at the southern end is more varied with a run of three two storey mews style properties at the very southern end (one of these being a modern reconstruction). Nos. 29-31 John's Mews, immediately adjacent to the site, comprises a three storey building with a double mansard, the flank wall of which is prominent in views of the application site.
- 2.3 The application site itself, comprises a 19th century reconstruction of an original mews property that has been heavily altered. The most significant alteration is the provision of an additional floor which is clearly visible in street views of the property (planning permission granted in 1995). The existing building comprises a storage area and utility room on the ground floor, three bedrooms on the first floor and a living room and kitchen on the second floor. Due to the layout of the existing dwelling, the quality of the accommodation is compromised.

Below: Street view including application site



- 2.4 Adjacent to the application site is a Grade II listed building, no. 13 Northington Street; an ornate two storey building which was constructed as brewery stables in 1903.
- 2.5 In the north section of the mews, there is a primary school which runs the whole length of the western side of the street. The eastern side of the street comprises a mix of mews style properties and more modern buildings of larger scale.

2.6 Along with the building styles, the uses of the buildings also vary somewhat. Many of the buildings are in residential use, others in employment use whilst the Assembly rooms is a social enterprise and business incubator for crafts people.

Below: Birdseye view of application site from south

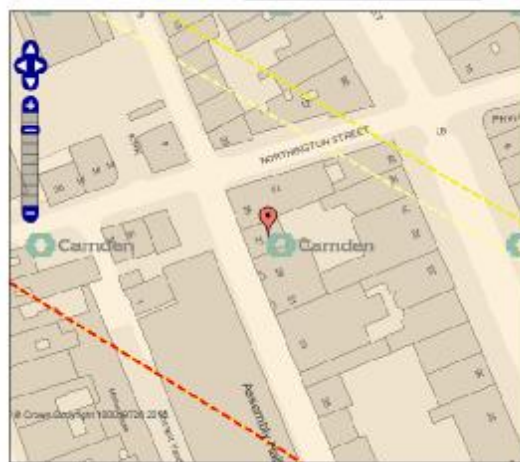


Below: Birdseye view of application site from north









2.7 The site designations are shown in the map below.

Below: Extract from Planning Policy Map



Map key

-  Designated View
-  4A.1 Primrose Hill summit to St Paul's Cathedral - Right Lateral Assessment Area
-  Central London Area
-  Central London Area (Clear Zone Region) CLA
-  Conservation Area
-  Bloomsbury

For more information, or if you are unable to view the map, please contact the [Forward Planning and Projects Team](#)

2.8 The site is located within a designated viewing corridor from Primrose Hill to St Paul's Cathedral and in the Central London Area.

2.9 However, of greater relevance to this application is its location within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, within Sub Area 10 which is named Great James St, Bedford Row. Within the schedule on p. 143 of this document the building is documented as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area along with all the properties in the southern arm of St John's Mews. There are a number of listed buildings in the vicinity of the site which are shown in the Heritage Statement. The most relevant to this site are no. 13 Northington St and a run of Georgian terraces on the western side of John St, no. 30 John St backing onto the subject site.

3. Planning History and Proposals

- 3.1. The only relevant planning application history to this site relates to the approval in 1995 of a roof extension in connection with the use of the building as a single family dwellinghouse (ref. no. 9501043).
- 3.2. The applicant undertook pre-application discussions with the council recently (2016/0118/PRE) regarding the total demolition of the existing building and its replacement with a new building providing an larger, better quality residential unit.

Below: Pre-application scheme to demolish and replace existing building:



Below: Rear façade of pre-application scheme to demolish and replace existing building:



- 3.3. Whilst the pre-application response letter advised that the demolition of the entirety of the existing building was considered unacceptable on the basis that it would mean the loss of a positive contributor to a conservation area, it was noted in the letter that “other aspects or the design are positive”. The letter goes on to state that:

“The innovative roof form will be scarcely visible from surrounding streets, conserving the character and appearance of the conservation area, and concealing the additional internal space effectively. The same can be said of the glazed section to the rear of the house: the existing mews, as viewed from the rears of John Street houses, appears as a characterful modern building, while the proposed would add some architectural interest while still reading as a surviving mews-scale building”.

- 3.4. It was stated in the letter that design revisions could mitigate the harm caused by the loss of the building by ensuring the retention of as much of the building's positive contribution. The content of the letter suggests that it is the front façade of the building only that is considered to make a positive contribution to the conservation area.
- 3.5. The pre-application response raised specifically states that the development would not harm the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- 3.6. Key aspects of the proposals were therefore considered acceptable and the letter went as far as to say that “this proposal promises a high quality design replacement building”. On this basis, this application seeks to demolish all but the front façade of the building and replace it with a new building with retained façade. Other than the provision of the retained façade, the proposals remain the same as those presented at pre-application stage given the positive feedback provided by the council with regard to the design.

4. Planning Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and has replaced the majority of the existing Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) and Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs) with immediate effect. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions
- 4.2. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 14). It states, at paragraph 17, that planning should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, businesses and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs.
- 4.3. The NPPF states that *“good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people”* (para. 56). It goes on to state that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure, amongst other things that developments *“respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation”*.
- 4.4. Other policies contained within the NPPF relating to heritage the impact of development on designated heritage assets is set out in the Heritage Statement.

Local Policy

- 4.5. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that any planning application must be determined in accordance with the development plan for the area, unless any material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.6. The development plan comprises the London Plan (adopted March 2015), the Camden Core Strategy adopted November 2010 and the Development Policies Document adopted November 2010.

Considerations:

Design and Scale

- 4.7. Policy DM01 requires all development to be of high quality design and should seek to preserve or enhance local character and respect the appearance, scale, mass, height and pattern of surrounding buildings, spaces and streets.
- 4.8. Policy DP24 is entitled Securing High Quality Design and states that the Council will require all developments including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, to be of the highest standard of design. Amongst other things, they will be expected to consider character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings; the character and proportions of the existing building, where alterations and extensions are proposed.

- 4.9. Policy DP25 is entitled 'Conserving Camden's Heritage' and states that the Council will only permit development in conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area. Also of particular relevance to this application, the policy states that the Council will prevent the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area **where this harms** (my emphasis) the character or appearance of the conservation area, unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention.
- 4.10. A Heritage Statement prepared by The Heritage Practice has been submitted with this application. This statement assesses the significance of the application site and a number of Grade II and II* listed buildings in the vicinity. The Heritage Statement advises of the application site that:

"Certainly in form, appearance and detailing of its street elevation the building is redolent of the former character of the mews. Beyond the façade, the whole building has been altered with a new stair, new windows, floor layout and roof structure. To all intents and purposes there is a modern family house behind the street façade that is of greater scale and footprint than the more traditional mews dwellings".

Below: Existing front elevation



Below: Existing rear elevation



Below: Birdseye of rear elevation



- 4.11. On this basis, it is for the principal elevation only that the building can be considered to be a positive contributor. The statement goes on to conclude that the building's contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area is positive but the level of contribution is limited. This assertion is made on the basis that the alterations, reconfigurations and extensions that have been undertaken have resulted in a building that is no longer of a mews quality or character behind the façade. Therefore, as an independent building it has lost much of its original integrity and authenticity.
- 4.12. Whilst the development does involve substantial demolition of a building that is considered to be a positive contributor within the conservation area, the scheme is now a façade retention scheme retaining the only element of the building that is positive, albeit limited, and only the fabric behind this façade is lost; fabric that does not make a positive contribution to the conservation area. As the only positive element of the building is being retained the proposal would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area and therefore accords with Policy DP25.

- 4.13. In our view the proposals result in a significant improvement to the street scene and the conservation area. The existing roof extension on the property is of poor design with shallow proportions and an awkward roof overhang. The proposed design results in a contemporary roof addition on a traditional façade. The roof addition is a significant improvement in comparison to the existing with the use of high quality materials, an innovative design and with proportions that are more in keeping with the property itself.
- 4.14. Whilst the volume of the roof would be increased, the innovative, angled design means that much of the additional volume would be hidden. The visuals of the front of the building show that the roof would not be overdominant in relation to the remainder of the façade and the street scene. In fact, the new building provides a very suitable transition between the two storey building at no. 27 John's Mews and the five storey building at 29-31 John's Mews.
- 4.15. The rear of the building is also greatly improved, transforming what is currently a poorly designed rear elevation and transforming it into an elevation of high architectural quality and interest that constitutes good modern design.
- 4.16. The Heritage Statement sets out that the proposed design would provide a significantly improved building, architecturally – the existing interior roof structure and rear elevation are currently of average to poor quality and contribute very little to the surrounding area. With regard to the changes at roof level beyond the main elevation, it is concluded that through innovative design the building would still continue to read as a modest mews structure. The proposed additional height, concealed within the new roof form, would not be overly dominant to the proposed building or its neighbours and the clever design ensures that its visual impact is significantly reduced.

Below: Proposed front elevation



Below: Proposed rear elevation



- 4.17. As the principal elevation and focus of the building's positive contribution is retained (the main interest being in its brickwork and openings in this principal elevation that relate to the mews typology), the Heritage Statement concludes that the proposed development does not cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Indeed, *"through the retention of the main elevation and a high quality and innovative design to the rear"* the proposal would enhance the conservation area and setting of nearby listed buildings.

Quality of Accommodation

- 4.18. It is recognised in the council's pre-application response in relation to the demolition of the entire building that

"the proposal promises a high quality design replacement building and could be an enhancement upon the quality of accommodation offered by the existing, much compromised mews house".

- 4.19. The proposal would result in a much higher standard of accommodation than existing by enabling the provision of house with a rationalised layout, a larger living area and a much needed additional fourth bedroom.
- 4.20. The unit would accord with the internal space standards set out in the Mayor's Draft Interim Housing SPG relating to unit sizes. The unit would have 4 bedrooms and therefore is required to be 103 sq m. The proposed floor area is 215 sq m.
- 4.21. With regard to outdoor amenity space provision, Camden Planning Guidance 'Housing' sets out that 'all new dwellings should provide access to some form of private amenity space, e.g. balconies, roof terraces or communal gardens'.
- 4.22. Whilst the proposal does not incorporate an area of conventional outdoor amenity space, fully openable bifold doors are proposed at second floor level providing access to the outdoors and effectively, a winter garden. This provides greater flexibility for the occupant as it means that they can experience the outdoors in good weather but can also use the internal space when the weather is poor and the bifold doors are shut. Given the tight nature of the site, it would be difficult to provide conventional outdoor amenity space without compromising the quality of the design.
- 4.23. The Mayor's Draft Interim Housing SPG states that:

“in exceptional circumstances, where site conditions make it impossible to provide private open space for all dwellings, up to 5% of dwellings in a development may instead be provided with additional internal living space equivalent to the private open space requirement, added to the minimum GIA and the minimum combined living area of the dwelling.”

- 4.24. The proposal accords with this standard as the dwelling is 212 sq m over the required floor area.

Residential Amenity

- 4.25. Development policy DP26 outlines that the Council will protect the quality of life of occupiers and neighbours by only granting permission for development that does not cause harm to amenity. The factors that Camden will consider as part of any new development include:

- a) Visual privacy and overlooking
- b) Overshadowing and outlook
- c) Sunlight, daylight and artificial light levels.

- 4.26. The proposed development would not have a harmful impact on neighbouring residents by way of loss of light, outlook or sense of enclosure.

- 4.27. The property immediately behind the site (no.30 John Street) is in use as offices. The rear windows in this property are located approximately 17m away from the application building. Although the building would increase in height by 1.7m at its highest point, as the roof would be angled away from this property, and given the distances involved coupled with the use of this building as offices, it is not considered that any loss of outlook would result.

- 4.28. As the rear building line would be the same as existing, there would be no loss of outlook to either no. 25 or no. 27 John's Mews.

- 4.29. With regard to privacy, the proposal does not result in a significant increase in the amount of glazing on the rear elevation and as such there would be no material increase in overlooking to neighbouring residents.

- 4.30. Given the relationship of the building to neighbouring residents, it is not considered that the proposal would result in a material loss of daylight and sunlight to adjoining properties.

Energy and Sustainability

- 4.31. Policies CS13, DP22 and DP23 are relevant to the consideration of the application and relate to sustainability. Policy CS13 promotes higher environmental standards to tackle climate change whilst Policy DP22 promotes sustainable design and construction and DP23 relates specifically to reducing water consumption.

- 4.32. The envelope of the house will be insulated to surpass current building regulations. All materials for the development will be responsibly sourced.

- 4.33. The design of the development will incorporate a range of energy efficiency measures for water consumption. To maximise energy efficiency and thus reduce energy demands, the development will follow certain design principles such as providing efficient space and water heating services, ventilation and control systems and energy efficient lighting.

4.34. The site will sign up to the Considerate Constructors Scheme (or equivalent) to ensure it adheres with construction best practice and highlight where the site goes beyond statutory requirements. Areas assessed under the current Considerate Constructors Scheme (launched January 2013) include:

- Enhancing appearance
- Respecting community
- Protecting the environment
- Ensuring everyone's safety
- Caring for workforce

Car Parking

4.35. There is no off-street car parking space in association with the existing unit and none is proposed as part of this development.

Access

4.36. The development will comply with Part M of building regulations with regard to access.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. The proposal seeks to provide a new replacement dwelling of high quality modern design whilst retaining the existing façade which the council considers makes a positive contribution to the conservation area.
- 5.2. The proposals are an innovative response to providing a better quality residential unit on what is a relatively constrained site and successfully blends the old (the front façade) with the new (the remainder of the new building). In design terms, the proposal is considered to enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area by retaining the existing principal façade while developing a high quality building and a positive architectural addition to the conservation area.
- 5.3. The new dwelling will provide a much needed larger family home for the occupants and also better quality living accommodation. However, in seeking to realise this objective, the proposals have also been designed to ensure that they do not cause harm to neighbouring residential amenity in terms of privacy, outlook and daylight and sunlight.
- 5.4. Overall, it is considered that the development enhances the character and appearance of the street scene and the conservation area whilst successfully optimising the use of the site to improve the quality of residential accommodation. On this basis, the proposals are considered to accord with national, regional and local guidance.