Dear James and Bianca,

## 47 Albert Street, NW1 7LX

Thank you for submitting a pre-planning application enquiry for the above property with the required fee of £1,200.

Proposal

Various internal and external alterations are proposed including:

* erection of a mansard roof addition;
* extension of the existing basement beneath the front garden; and
* demolition and relocation of the existing 2 storey rear closet wing.

Site constraints

* Grade II listed
* Camden Town Conservation Area

The principle considerations are discussed below.

Basement extension

It is proposed to extend the existing lower-ground floor accommodation in the vaults to the front of the property.

The Council’s preferred approach is for basement developments not to extend beyond the footprint of the original building. However, in this instance, the proposal is likely to be considered acceptable in planning terms as it would extend at most 1.2 metres beyond the footprint of the existing property by excavating largely within the structure of the historic vaults. The volume and fabric of the vaults is part of the significance of the listed building, but in this case, the extent of excavation proposed is limited and existing tanking obscures the historic form of two sections of the three vaults. Removal of the tanking and c. 50cm of additional excavation is likely to be acceptable, but a design will be required which does as much as possible to enhance and reveal the historic form of the vaults, e.g.: by adding minimal build-up to the walls, reconstructing the concave forms of the end walls, and retaining a nib to demarcate the two historic volumes.

Given the very limited excavation work it is unlikely that a full BIA would be required, however all basement proposals should be subjected to the screening stage of a BIA to identify the matters relevant to assessment of local flooding and/or neighbour amenity and structural risks. At the screening stage you will clearly need to set out why or why not a full BIA is required, for further guidance please see chapter 2 of CPG4-Basements and lightwells.

We will also seek the submission of a management plan for demolition and/or construction where basement works are proposed in conservation areas or adjacent to a listed building.

As the excavation work would be close to the public highway, the Council’s Highway Department require an approval in principle (AIP) to ensure the basement would not damage the footpath and road. The AIP (including the required fee) would be secured by legal agreement.

The x2 opaque rooflights have been omitted from the revised scheme. These were not considered to be part of the established street character and would not be suitable in this location.

The proposed enlarged casement window (revised option) would not be visible in either public or private views; as such this aspect of the proposal is likely to receive Council support. In the retained opening to the surviving, unlined vault a fixed, opaque glazed pane would be preferable to the recessed brick infill proposed – noting the difficulty of arranging the bathroom fittings internally – and would have the advantage of allowing some natural light into the proposed en suite.

A daylight sunlight report would not be required in this instance.

Extending the rear courtyard

The application includes proposals to relocate and extend the rear courtyard by 1.8 metres; these works are likely to be acceptable subject to detailed design considerations. Again, it is unlikely that a BIA would be required given the limited nature of the proposed excavation works.

Demolition and partial reconstruction of existing rear closet wing and addition of new rear extension

Policy CS14, seeks to ensure that development respects local character and context and preserves and enhances the boroughs rich character. Policy DP24 requires all development, to be of the highest standard of design and considers the setting, character, and form of the building.

It is proposed to reconstruct the closet wing, reduced in size at lower-ground level, and add a large extension to its north. The Council would not object to the demolition and erection of a replacement two storey closet wing, as the existing rear projection is not historic. The historic pattern of closet wings along the terrace, evident in historic mapping, has been lost through reconstruction and extension. The existing does, however, stand in the typical location for a closet wing, opening off the stair compartment. The proposal is likely to be acceptable if a design can be found which makes the historic arrangement appreciable alongside recent extensions, all with minimal loss of historic fabric and dilution of historic form.

Given the expected arrangement for the closet wing, it might be better for the integrity of the building’s historic plan-form were the two masses proposed for addition to the rear of the building reversed in position. However, we acknowledge the poor-quality of the basement-level accommodation that would result, due to reduced daylight. If the smaller of the proposed rear projections – the ‘closet wing’ – were to be constructed in a high-quality stock brick, this could ensure that it would recede visually and still express the historic arrangement of the house. We note and welcome the way the proposed fixed-glazed window would replicated the alignment and proportions of those above, but in a modern idiom.

The height of any new extension and the increased overall footprint risk overwhelming the host building and obscuring the special interest of its plan-form and rear elevation. Nonetheless, we agree that, of the design proposals submitted, the first is the more elegant, and that the reduced height proposed in the revised option is in fact less complementary to the historic proportions and fabric of the rear elevation. The proposed use of a high-quality and complementary but modern brick could help the extension to read as a new addition.

At basement-level, we have concerns about the loss of historic fabric in the removal of the historic sash window, dropping of the sill and unnecessary widening of the adjacent opening. The scale of the extension at this point and the size of the hard-surface of the terrace above both also threaten appreciation of the historic scale and quality of the rear of the house. The extension and excavation should be kept as small as feasible and as transparent as other design considerations allow.

Overall the proposed design is considered to be of a high quality and has been sympathetically organised so as not to impact upon the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers. We welcome the incorporation of a green roof.

The Council has doubts about the quality of accommodation proposed at lower-ground floor, and concerns about the total impact of the extension and rearrangements at lower-ground floor on the special interest of the listed building, by substantial alteration of the historic footprint and dilution of the basic plan-form. Revisions to size and layout to address these concerns would be welcome.

Third floor roof extension

The existing property has a butterfly roof; the applicant proposes to extend the house at third floor level with a flat roofed mansard.

In assessing the proposal, consideration has been given to the number of surviving original butterfly roofs in this part of the listed terrace, and their collective and individual contribution to special interest and to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposed third floor addition at No. 47 is considered unacceptable in principle as it would result in the loss of significant historic fabric as well as the loss of one of the few remaining original roof-forms in the listed terraces on Albert Street in an area with several other survivors.

The mansard roof extension at no. 61 Albert Street was approved as it did not result in the loss of historic fabric or the original roof form. The original butterfly roof and rear butterfly parapet had been removed as part of approved works to add a second storey rear extension with a roof terrace in 1978.

Were the development acceptable in principle, it should observe the following amendments:

* Mansard roofs should not exceed the height stated in Figure 5 so as to avoid excessive additional height to the host building, see CPG1 Design (section 5.15 on mansard roofs).
* On buildings with a butterfly roof, if a mansard extension is proposed terraces and additional railings will not usually be acceptable, see CPG1 Design (section 5.19 on butterfly roofs).
* At the rear of the property the new roof should start from behind the parapet at existing hopper-head level, forming a continuous slope of up to a maximum of 70°. In this context, it is usually more appropriate to introduce conservation style roof lights, which are flush with the roof slope. On the front elevation dormers maybe more appropriate, as per the neighbouring property.
* The proposed front dormer windows should be of a size that is clearly subordinate to the windows below and should match as closely as possible in terms of type, glazing patterns and proportions (including the shape, size and placement of glazing bars), opening method, materials and finishes, detailing and window openings. The proposed windows do not complement the main building or the wider townscape.
* The proposed rooflight should be in the conservation style i.e. fitted flush with the roof profile.

Other external changes

The Council encourage the restoration of the existing timber sash windows; otherwise you will need to demonstrate to the Council’s satisfaction that they are beyond repair. Double-glazed replacements will not normally be acceptable in historic window openings.

The existing railings at the front of the house appear likely to be original; they should be repaired where necessary, not replaced.

Internal alterations

In general, your proposed internal alterations are likely to be acceptable. At first-floor level, your revised proposed arrangement for the master en suite improves on the first proposal. By investigation of the floor structure, you should still work to avoid insertion of a platform which could disrupt historic volumes. Breaking-through the spine wall on the second-floor to provide a shared bathroom is unlikely to be acceptable. This facility could be provided in a single existing room on either the first or second floors, if a master en suite were not proposed.

Where replacement flooring is proposed, the application should justify this with reference to the existing; historic floorboards (even if non-original) should generally be preserved. Detailed sections and moulding profiles at 1:1, and where relevant plans and elevations at 1:10, showing new decorative details and fireplaces to be installed (even where these are intended to match existing) should be submitted with the application, or otherwise will need to be secured by condition.

Other considerations

Given the nature of the surrounding area, with busy streets, a construction management plan would be required.

Planning Obligations

Community infrastructure levy (CIL)

Proposals where the additional floor space created exceeds 100sqm GIA are liable for the Mayoral CIL and Camden CIL.

S106 contribution

A S106 legal agreement would be required which is likely to cover the following heads of terms:

* Construction management plan
* BIA screening report
* AIP (as discussed above)

**This document represents an initial informal officer view of your proposals based on the information available to us at this stage and would not be binding upon the Council, nor prejudice any future planning application decisions made by the Council.**

If you have any queries about the above letter or the attached document please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for using Camden’s pre-application advice service.

Kind regards

Anna Roe (Planning Officer)

Alfie Stroud (Senior Conservation Officer)