

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet	Expiry Date:	26/12/2016
		N/A	Consultation Expiry Date:	24/11/2016
Officer			Application Number(s)	
Tony Young			2016/5857/P 2016/5867/L	
Application Address			Drawing Numbers	
57-58 Birkenhead Street LONDON WC1H 8BB			See decision notice	
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature	
Proposal(s)				
Installation of sliding iron gates at pavement level in front of existing access steps to nos. 57 and 58.				
Recommendation(s):		1. Refuse planning permission 2. Refuse listed building consent		
Application Type(s):		Full Planning Permission Listed Building Consent		

Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:	Refer to Draft Decision Notice
Informatives:	
Consultations	
Consultation summary (adjoining occupiers / local residents):	<p>The application was advertised in the local press on 03/11/2016 (expiring 24/11/2016) and a site notice was displayed between 01/11/2016 and 22/11/2016.</p> <p>There were no consultation responses received from adjoining occupiers or local residents.</p>
CAAC/Local groups* comments: <small>*Please Specify</small>	<p><u>Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee</u> and <u>Friends of Argyle Square</u>: responses summarised as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong opposition due to the precedent it would set for listed buildings in a Conservation Area. <i>Officer response: see Design section in the main body of the report.</i> 2. An alternative approach would be to install movement-sensitive lights. These could be installed so as to respect the buildings in a way that the gates cannot. <i>Officer response: following discussions between the Council's Planning and Community Safety Teams, as well as, the Metropolitan Police, the applicant has been provided with advice concerning possible alternative options that might provide a solution to the ongoing anti-social behaviour.</i> 3. If the authorities can't control the anti-social behaviour such that the residents feel safe and a strong need was demonstrated, then gates must be installed temporarily, must not open outwards, and must be exact replicas of original railings (not thin, cheap copies). <i>Officer response: Planning regulations do not allow for the granting of temporary planning permission or listed building consent.</i>

Site Description

The site comprises of two 3-storey terraced properties plus basement and mansard located on the western side of Birkenhead Street. The proposed works relate to the front of the properties at street level.

The properties are both Grade II listed buildings and are located within a listed terrace in the Bloomsbury conservation area.

The cast-iron railings with bud and other finials to the front of the properties are included within the listing and are a characteristic feature of all properties in the surrounding terrace.

Relevant History

TP/4509/19/12/62 - To use the premises at No. 57, Birkenhead Street, St. Pancras, as a private residential hotel. Planning permission was refused dated 14/02/1963

CA/2020 - At 58 Birkenhead Street, W.C.1, an internally illuminated projecting box sign with PETER BOEHLER HOUSE in black letters on yellow perspex panels. Dimensions:- Projection 3'0" (0.914m) Height 2'0" (0.610m) Overall height 13'6" (4.115m). Advertisement consent granted 07/06/1972

CTP/L14/9/A/15528 - The erection of a rear extension on basement, ground, first and second floors, to the rear of 57/58 Birkenhead Street WC1, and the formation of a vehicular access on the Methodist Church frontage. Planning permission was refused 28/03/1973

8400308 / 8470051 - Works of conversion to provide 6 self-contained residential flats including remodelling of the roof envelope. Planning permission and listed building consent was granted 04/07/1984

8800124 / 8870056 - Amendments to the planning permission granted on 25th July 1984 (PL/8400308 / HB/8470051) for works of conversion to provide 6 self-contained flats including remodelling of the roof envelope. Planning permission and listed building consent was granted 13/09/1989

Relevant policies

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Paragraphs 14, 17, 56 -67, 126 -141

London Plan 2016

Policies 7.4, 7.6 and 7.8

LDF Core Strategy and Development Policies 2010

CS5 (Managing the impact of growth and development)

CS9 (Achieving a successful Central London Borough of Camden)

CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage)

DP24 (Securing high quality design)

DP25 (Conserving Camden's heritage)

DP26 (Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours)

Submission Draft Local Plan 2016*

A1 (Managing the impact of development)

D1 (Design)

D2 (Heritage)

* The emerging Local Plan is now reaching the final stages of its examination. It is a material consideration; however, until the publication of the Inspector's report (expected April 2017), Local Plan policies should be given limited weight.

Camden Planning Guidance

CPG1 (Design) 2015 – chapters 2 (Design excellence) and 3 (Heritage)

CPG6 (Amenity) 2013 – chapters 6 (Daylight and sunlight), 7 (Overlooking, privacy and outlook) and 9 (Access for all)

Bloomsbury conservation area appraisal and management strategy, paragraph 5.4, 5.6 and 5.40 (adopted April 2011)

Assessment

Proposal

1. Planning permission is sought for the installation of 2 sliding iron gates at pavement level in front of the existing access steps to nos. 57 and 58 Birkenhead Street. There is currently an issue with anti-social behaviour outside these properties caused by people congregating on the stairs to both entrances. These proposals are put forward as a possible solution to the problem.
2. The gates would be black in colour and would match the appearance of existing railings.

Main planning considerations

3. The main issues to be considered are:
 - impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the listed buildings, listed terrace, and conservation area; and
 - impact of the proposal on neighbouring amenity.

Design

4. Development Policy DP24 (Securing high quality design) of the LDF Core Strategy and Development Policies 2010 establishes that careful consideration of the characteristics of a site, features of local distinctiveness, and the wider context is needed in order to achieve high quality development in Camden which integrates into its surroundings. It advises that “*Designs for new buildings, and alterations and extensions, should respect the character and appearance of the local area and neighbouring buildings. Within areas of distinctive character, development should reinforce those elements which create the character*”.
5. More specifically with regard to boundary treatments around listed buildings or in conservation areas, the Camden Planning Guidance (CPG1 – Design) expects that any alterations should replicate the original design and detailing with the same materials as the original features, and states that “*works should preserve and enhance the existing qualities and context of the site and surrounding area*”.
6. The host properties sit within a terrace of 5 properties (nos. 54-58) with attached front railings which were listed as Grade II in May 1974, the list description explicitly referring to the ‘*attached cast-iron railings with bud and other finials to areas*’. The terrace is typical of many early Victorian terraces within Bloomsbury in so far as it tends to adhere to a similar pattern of 3/4 storeys with basements set back from the pavement edge behind lightwells with railings to the front. Most of Birkenhead Street is characterised by properties similar to this on both sides of the street and which do not have front gates (apart from a small number of properties such as the adjoining church and Zenith House). The character and quality of the street varies but it does have a generally consistent building line defined by front boundary railings on both sides of the street, an important distinguishing and established pattern of which is the absence of front gates and uncluttered front entrances.
7. It is therefore considered that the introduction of the proposed sliding gates, or indeed any type

of front gate, would have a detrimental impact on the open character of the listed buildings by enclosing the front of properties and by virtue of the incongruous appearance that this would bring to the wider terrace and street that mainly have no gates in front of their entrances and access steps. Proposals to install both sets of sliding gates at street level, slightly further forward from the bottom of each set of entrance steps, and supported by 3 piers per gate set into the public highway is also considered to be entirely inappropriate for these buildings by virtue of the detailed design and position. Moreover, the alterations would be especially noticeable given that the proposals relate to the front of the properties, and in a prominent location, widely visible from within the street. Therefore rather than reinforcing the elements which help to create the distinctive character of the host buildings and wider terrace and street as required by DP24, it is felt that the introduction of gates would be harmful and out of character, so having a detrimental impact on the special architectural or historic interest of the listed buildings and conservation area.

8. This view is supported by the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (paragraph 5.40) which recognises that “*railings and basements along the majority of frontages are an important facet of the character of the area*”, and particularly with regard to building frontages, pavements and squares that they are “*all important elements of the public realm and the cumulative impact of small scale additions can have an overall detrimental impact on the character of the area*” (paragraph 5.6).
9. With this in mind, and paying particular attention to the practical purpose attached to these proposals (namely, to address anti-social behaviour concerns), it is considered that should these proposals be allowed, they would likely lead to other front steps being used in the same way (i.e. anti-social behaviour would simply be transferred from the host properties to other properties further along or across the street). This would almost certainly set a precedent for future alterations, encouraging further applications for the installation of similar gates along Birkenhead Street, so worsening the character and appearance of this listed terrace and street even further by virtue of the adverse cumulative impact that these additions would have along the lines expressed above.
10. Notwithstanding the inappropriateness of the proposed railings, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee and the Friends of Argyle Square have both expressed concerns also with regard to the detailed design for the gates. The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (paragraph 5.4) states that the use of inappropriate materials can have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposed drawings and design & access statement refer to the material to be used as both metal and iron and don't provide any details of the finials, buds or piers. It would therefore also be inappropriate to grant planning permission or listed building consent in the absence of this detailed information.
11. Therefore, it is considered that the proposals do not comply with Camden Planning Guidance with regard to the detailed design, visual prominence and location in so far as this would create incongruous additions, out of keeping with the host buildings, and detrimental to the established character and appearance of the listed terraced buildings, neighbouring properties, and wider Bloomsbury conservation area. This is contrary to policies DP24 and DP25 of the LDF and the design guidance as set out in CPG1.

Amenity

12. LDF Core Strategy and Development Policy CS5 (Managing the impact of growth and development) seeks to protect the amenity of Camden's residents by ensuring the impact of development is fully considered. Furthermore, Development Policy DP26 (Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours) seeks to ensure that development protects the quality of life of occupiers and neighbours by only granting permission to development that would not harm the amenity of neighbouring residents. This includes privacy, overlooking,

outlook and implications on daylight and sunlight.

13. The new gates are not considered to impact adversely on the amenity of adjoining occupiers in terms of loss of privacy, sunlight, daylight or outlook.

Other matters

14. Consideration has been given throughout the application process to the practical purpose attached to these proposals, namely, the need to address anti-social behaviour concerns experienced by tenants at the property. Following discussions between the Council's Planning and Community Safety Teams, as well as, the Metropolitan Police, the applicant has been provided with advice concerning possible alternative options that might provide a solution to the ongoing problems. It is recommended that an informative be added to any decision notice advising the applicant to seek further advice as necessary from the relevant Council services in this regard.

Conclusions

15. The proposed sliding front gates by reason of their detailed design, visual prominence and position would create incongruous additions harmful to the established pattern of boundary treatments of the surrounding terrace of Listed Buildings. The gates are out of character with the host building and surrounding area and are considered to harm the special architectural and historic interest and setting of the Grade II Listed Buildings, the visual harmony of the wider streetscene, and the character and appearance of this part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2010; policies DP24 (Securing high quality design) and DP25 (Conserving Camden's Heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Development Policies 2010; and policies D1 (Design) and D2 (Heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Submission Draft Local Plan 2016.

Recommendation

1. Refuse Full Planning Permission
2. Refuse Listed Building Consent