

**HERITAGE, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**



**External alterations involving the relocation of front entrance door, installation of internal access ramp, new glazing to frontage and associated works to**

**Baird House, 15-17 St. Cross Street, Hatton Garden, Camden, London**

Prepared by: William Martin Property Consultants Ltd

75 King William Street

London

EC4N 7BE

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of section 42 of the Town and Country Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the guidance set out in Circular 01/2006. Paragraph 77 of Circular 01/2006 states Design and Access Statements should be concise and their length and context should be directly proportional to the scale and complexity of the proposal. This document also incorporates a Heritage Statement. This Statement seeks to explain;

- (a) The design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development; and
- (b) Demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development, and how the design of the development has taken that context into account.

### **Background To Current Application**

This application is a revised response to a previously submitted planning application REF: 2014/3254/P that was submitted in May 2014 and subsequently withdrawn following advice from the case officer.

The applicant has subsequently sought advice from new architectural advisors who were not involved in the previously withdrawn scheme to obtain a fresh perspective.

This revised proposal seeks to improve the appearance, layout, design and scale and appearance of the application building and ensure the heritage asset continued to be protected. Changes have been made to this current application to reflect the observations of the Planning Officer and the Heritage Officer, previously given.

### **Application Premises and Site**

The property is located in the Hatton Garden Conservation Area. The application premises currently forms a five-storied commercial property with a separate basement. Various separate office occupants occupy the building. The immediately surrounding area contains a mix of building styles and there is a mix of commercial land uses in the local area.

### **The Proposal**

The original proposal involved an external ramp; this proposal is a revised submission that seeks to carry out alterations to the front of the building. The extent of proposed works is limited to the installation a new internal ramp and level platform with associated external alterations to the front entrance of the building all designed to provide access to assist people with disabilities.

The alterations proposed include the following:

- The creation of an internal ramp to provide improved access for people with disabilities, this would be served by a 1.1m high glass balustrade platform to ensure the safety of the ramp users;
- A new glazed panel frontage would be repositioned to the front of the property with a new single glazed door entrance.

## **Policy Context**

In dealing with Heritage related matters, “Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance” sets out the following six high level principles;

- The historic environment is a shared resource
- Everyone should be able to participate
- Understanding the significance of place is vital
- Significant places should be managed to sustain their values
- Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent
- Documenting and learning from decisions is essential

### **i) National Planning Policy Framework**

In the ministerial forward it states development that is sustainable should go ahead, without delay – a presumption in favour of sustainable development is the basis for every plan, and every decision.

Paragraph 128 states that in determining applications, affecting heritage matters, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted.

The guidance further advises that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be.

### **ii) London Plan – Draft Further Alterations (January 2017)**

The Plan requires all new development in London to achieve the highest standards of accessible and inclusive design and supports the principles of inclusive design which seek to ensure that developments:

- a) Can be used safely, easily and with dignity by all regardless of disability, age, gender, ethnicity or economic circumstances;
- b) Are convenient and welcoming with no disabling barriers, so everyone can use them independently without undue effort, separation or special treatment;
- c) Are flexible and responsive taking account of what different people say they need and want, so people can use them in different ways;
- d) Are realistic, offering more than one solution to help balance everyone’s needs, recognising that one solution may not work for all.

Policy 7.2 supports an inclusive environment incorporating principles of inclusive design that seek to ensure that developments can be used safely, easily and with dignity by all regardless of disability circumstances. Developments are expected to be convenient and welcoming with no disabling barriers, so everyone can use them independently without undue effort, separation or special treatment.

Policy 7.3 Designing out crime seeks to create, safe, secure and appropriately accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. Development should reduce opportunities for criminal behaviour and contribute to a sense of security without being overbearing or intimidating. Design should encourage a level of human activity that is appropriate to the location, incorporating a mix of uses where appropriate, to maximize activity throughout the day and night, creating a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times places should be well designed to promote a sense of ownership and respect. Measures to design out crime should be integral to development proposals. Buildings and spaces should be designed in a way that clearly defines whether they are public, semi-public or private, and provides opportunities for activity and casual surveillance of publicly accessible spaces.

Policy 7.4 With regard to the impact on Local Character affirms that a development should consider the surrounding environment of the site.

Policy 7.7 seeks to achieve the highest standards of accessible and inclusive design in all new developments in London. Inclusive design is a process to ensure the diverse needs of all Londoners are integrated into development proposals from the outset. This is key to ensuring that the built environment is safe, accessible and convenient and enables everyone to access jobs, opportunities and facilities. It is fundamental to improving the quality of life for all Londoners, and particularly for disabled and older people who, despite progress in building a more accessible city in the last decade, still experience considerable barriers to living independent and dignified lives as a result of the way the built environment is designed, built and managed.

On the Historic Environment Policy 7.8 states London's heritage assets and historic Environment should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be taken into account. Development should identify value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate. Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.

### **iii) Camden Council Core Strategy 2010 - 2025**

Policy CS14 Promotes high quality place and conserving heritage at the core of making development attractive which is safe and easy to use. The local context and character must be respected, and the conservations areas assets and settings must be preserved and enhanced. The Council expects the schemes to be well designed and to be accessible.

### **iv) Camden Council – Emerging Development Plan Policies**

Good design is seen as essential to create beautiful, sustainable and inclusive places. The Council wants new development to be of the highest quality, respecting and contributing to Camden's rich architectural heritage with its many special places and buildings from throughout the Borough's history.

Policy DP24 Securing high quality design, asserts that developments should take into account the "character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings". The quality of materials to be used will be assessed in the planning application process. The proposed alterations to existing buildings are expected to improve accessibility.

Policy DP25 Conserving Camden's heritage states that conservation area appraisals are a material consideration in the planning application process. Alterations will only be permitted if they preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area.

Policy DP29 improving access enhances the importance of removing "the barriers that prevent from accessing facilities". The Council expects all buildings to "meet the highest practicable standards of access and inclusion" and accessible design to be incorporated to the scheme.

### **Impact on Heritage Asset**

The premises are unlisted and lie within the Hatton Garden Conservation Area. The Conservation Area is located within the Southern part of the Borough. Hatton has a long history of development dating from the mediaeval period. The area has endured successive waves of change resulting in a built environment dating back from different periods of time. A large number of buildings of national, local and historical importance are found within the Conservation Area. The modern character and appearance of the conservation area has been affected by its underlying topography.

This character varies considerably within the Conservation Area. The emphasis is on streetscape. Most buildings directly front along the highway this includes St. Cross St as such there is subsequently a degree of enclosure in most streets and the appearance of high urban density. The area is also recognised for containing a complex network of streets varying in character and appearance, different scales, width and functions. The character and appearance of the locality also relates significantly to the topography and development of the area as well as the predominant uses.

The Hatton Garden Conservation Area Management Plan sets out the special historic and architectural interest that makes the character and appearance of the locality worthy of protection. . It identifies the special interest of the conservation area to give a definition of its character. It also considers the degree of damage to that special interest and thus opportunities for future enhancement. It provides a guide to help shape the form and style of future development within the context of the historic character of the area. This document is used by the Authority when making professional judgements on the merits of individual development applications.

Hatton Garden was first identified for its special character in 1976 by the Greater London Development Plan because it was considered to be of "metropolitan importance" within the Hatton Garden is a district steeped in history and derives its name from Sir Christopher Hatton. Hatton Garden was built up in the 1680's as a district where the Smiths associated with Goldsmiths Hall lived and worked. Today the area remains one of the busiest diamond trading centres in the World.

The Hatton Estate was largely constructed during the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries on a grid pattern with intersecting roads. These streets are distinguished by being generally wider and straighter than the earlier medieval streets. This was in order to accommodate front basement light wells. St. Cross St was built at this particular time period.

Whilst it is noted that some buildings are seen as having a negative impact upon the character and appearance of the conservation area which includes 26 – 29 St. Cross St, multi storey car park. Other properties which include Nos.5-7, 9-12, 18, 19, 22 and 25 St. Cross St are unlisted buildings but are recognised for making a positive contribution to the special character and appearance of the area. The character and special interest of the conservation area is defined by the quality and variety of buildings and uses as well as the unique pattern of streets. The character is not dominated by one particular period or style of building but rather the combination of styles that make the area of special interest.



## **2. AMOUNT**

The proposal seeks to demonstrate that the amount of development needed is the minimum required for feasibility purposes. The proposal alterations have been designed so as not to visually dominate the significance of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposed external alterations to the front elevation will be inconspicuous and would blend in with the existing building façade.

## **3. LAYOUT**

The submitted application plans illustrate the proposed layout has been designed to be sympathetic to the character of the conservation area. The public interface located at the front of the premises would be retained and improved. The proposed layout involves minimal external changes to its surrounding area maintaining a safe vibrant space. The proposal would result in an improved layout being provided. In concluding, the proposals have been designed so as not to dominate the significance of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposed alterations would not visually dominate the locality.

## **4. SCALE**

This proposal respects the scale and proportion of the existing building. The proposed works have been designed to respect the appearance, scale and character of the building. The scale and proportion of the alterations safeguard the visual impact its surroundings and has a subservient function.

## **5. LANDSCAPING**

This issue is not considered to be of direct relevance in the consideration of this application.

## **6. APPEARANCE**

The composition of the building would not be altered. The proposed materials would match with the character of the application property. The alterations would respect their surrounding context and has been designed to enhance the visual amenities of the area and to respect its surrounding context. The visual impact of the proposed alterations would be very minimal and would not be detrimental to the character of the building and the conservation area. The entrance has no significant architectural features of interest and the proposed alterations are small in scale and well proportioned. There is currently no uniformity in the streetscape; therefore the proposed development will not have negative impacts to the appearance of the area.

It is concluded that the visual impression of the Heritage Asset would be enhanced.

## **7 USE**

The property is a five storey office-building site set along the street frontage of St. Cross Street along an established building line.

The front entrance to the application has an existing step that forms a barrier. This proposal seeks to improve the accessibility for the users and visitors of the office building. The application property is utilised for visitors, members of the public, however there is no convenient access for people with disabilities. This proposal aims to remove the existing barrier and deliver an equality of access to the application property.

The external alterations to the ground floor have been kept to a minimum to protect the integrity of the heritage asset. The proposed works would not detract from the surrounding uses and would be in keeping in the locality. The proposed development would help to secure the long-term future and the continued use of the building in an inclusive manner.

## **8. ACCESS**

Providing access to all is a key objective as an improvement to the existing building. The application property is accessed from St. Cross St. There is an existing step to access the building that acts an obstacle to visitors and particularly impede wheelchair access to the building without assistance.

This proposal seeks to create a step-free access to the building. The proposed alterations would prevent an obstruction to pedestrian movement. The proposed internal ramp is a practical solution to provide an equality of access to the application building. The proposed scheme would allow everyone to access the building without the need for intervention. The gradient of the proposed disabled ramp and the dimensions and materials of the associated balustrade would be compliant with the relevant building regulations.

The existing recessed main entrance cannot accommodate a ramp and other alternatives have been considered and rejected as being impractical. The proposal includes a level platform to create a safe and convenient access for all users. The existing entrance would be repositioned and is considered conducive to create an area that meets with the best practical requirements. The proposed ramp would provide a comfortable access for users of mobility equipment. The proposed development provides a level platform at the bottom of the proposed ramp for convenient manoeuvres to be carried out. The proposal includes the relocation of the entrance door off centre to create a landing space. These measures are required to meet the standards regarding the gradient of the ramp. No assistance would be required to access the building.

It is concluded that all relevant access issues have been considered.

## **Conclusion**

The proposed alterations would respect the application property as well the surrounding street and its special character. The proposed development would positively preserve and enhance the visual character and appearance of St. Cross St and the Hatton Garden Conservation Area. It is considered that all the surrounding buildings make a strongly positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Hatton Garden Conservation Area. Given the different architectural styles and the scale of the surrounding buildings, these factors are identified as the strongest unifying feature, and absolutely critical to the character and appearance of the Hatton Garden Conservation Area.

The application property being a five-storied property would early absorb the scale of the proposed alterations limiting their impact on the wider street scene. The proposed alterations are relatively low key. The proposed scale of development would not harm its setting or the character and appearance of the Hatton Garden Conservation Area. The proposed alterations would not adversely affect the overall architectural aesthetic of the application premises.

This proposal has been particularly designed to be sympathetic to its surroundings and protect its integrity. The proposal demonstrates that the amount of development needed is the minimum required for its purposes. The submitted details illustrate that the heritage value of the site would not be undermined but positively enhanced by the proposed development. The integrity of the existing surroundings would not be compromised. The character and appearance of the conservation area would not be harmed. The visual impact of the revised works is an improvement on the previous scheme. The overall changes are a positive addition to the character of the locality.

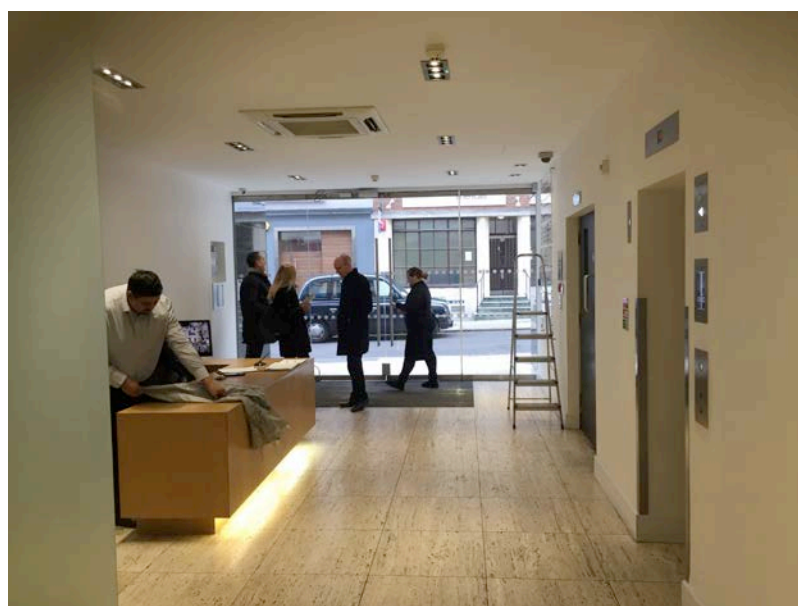


The proposal enhances and preserves the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposal would not result in any demonstrable harm to merit withholding of planning permission. The proposed development would not have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and is a neighbourly form of development. The proposal is fit for purpose, sustainable, efficient, coherent, flexible and responsive to its heritage context. This revised proposal is modest in scale and is in keeping in the context of its surroundings. The proposal would comply with National Planning Policy Framework and the relevant local planning policies set out above.

### Appendix A – Site Photographs



**Photograph 2 - Entrance to Baird House foyer via manual & push-button operated swing doors**



**Photograph 3 - Foyer to Baird House looking back towards entrance doors**