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Direct Dial: 020 7973 3763

Our ref: PA00464955

17 January 2017

Dear Ms Shelley

Pre-application Advice

40 GREAT JAMES STREET, CAMDEN, LONDON, WC1N 3HB

Thank you for contacting Historic England last month regarding pre-application proposals for the Grade II* listed 40 Great James Street in Bloomsbury. It was a pleasure meeting you and the development team at our site visit last Wednesday.

As you know, both my colleague Claire Brady and I have had been involved in discussions regarding proposals for this highly significant and largely intact London terrace house, and these current plans seek various changes to the approved scheme. I set out below our key areas of interest and recommendations which I hope you will find helpful.

Service Runs

As part of these proposals, it is proposed to accommodate the service runs within the closet wing. This would involve relocating sections of joinery, and boxing in the serving which would result in a change to the room proportions throughout. The new openings to create the service void would also require the removal of historic fabric at each floor level, although it is understood that no floor joists would be disturbed.

The historic floor plan is unusual, particularly the positioning of the rear chimney stack, and the projecting nib in the closet wing which appears to relate to the neighbouring external wall. We would therefore conclude that the small projection into the closet wing space to accommodate the service runs would not significantly impact on the room proportions. However, the removal of historic fabric throughout to accommodate the service void, and the relocating of historic panelling and cornicing would, in our view, cause some harm to the historic and aesthetic values of the listed building.

The rear elevation has undergone various changes over the years, and is hidden from public views due to the large scale of the buildings along Emerald Street. We



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therefore consider that a service stack, as approved, would be a more sensitive solution for this particular listed building. If the internal servicing is pursued further, 'clear and convincing justification' should be provided with the application for this change to the approved scheme, in accordance with Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Air Conditioning / Heating Systems

An air sourced heating system is proposed as an alternative to a conventional central heating system. Within the office space, ASHP units are to be located below the windows and boxed in with panelling to match the existing. A trench heating system is proposed for the front rooms of the residential accommodation, involving the removal of sections of floor boards below the windows.

Whilst we have no in principle objection to the installation of an ASHP system in this building, we consider that the concealing of the ASHP units and blending with new joinery would compromise the authenticity of the historic panelling and impact negatively on the proportions of the highly significant front rooms at ground and first floor. We would strongly advise that any proposed concealing of the units should not attempt to blend in with the historic joinery. Perhaps the units could be disguised as freestanding pieces of furniture.

Regarding the heating system for the residential flat, the desire to minimise the appearance of the heating units is welcomed. However, the removal of historic fabric required is undesirable. As part of your justification, it would be helpful to understand whether alternative discrete floor mounted units are available, as well as the extent of fabric required to accommodate the trench system.

Rear Alterations and Extension

As previously mentioned, the incremental alterations and extensions to the rear elevation, and large-scale developments along Emerald Street have compromised the integrity and setting of the rear parts of 40 Great James Street. We therefore have no significant concerns with the proposed glazing over of the rear lightwell to create a winter garden.

This intervention would involve the demolition of two vaults to the rear and the bridge link above. On the basis of our site inspection, it would appear that these vaults have been unsympathetically altered. With this in mind, and on the understanding that the remaining vaults to the rear will be retained and revealed, we consider a case could be made for the proposed demolition. Prior to any approved demolition, we would recommend that a photographic record is undertaken.

Basement Alterations



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Although the basement has been much altered, its contribution to the overall plan form of the building remains legible due to the presence of the modern staircase, which is located in the position of the original. Therefore, whilst we have no objection to the proposed demolition of the staircase, we recommend that some connectivity to the ground floor remains in this location, potentially by installing a retractable staircase.

Partitioning to the Staircase

The scheme involves the installation of a new door and glazed screen within the stairwell at second floor level to comply with fire regulations. This intervention would be harmful to the plan form of the building and to the aesthetic value of the original staircase in our opinion. In accordance with Paragraph 132 of the NPPF, clear and convincing justification for this intervention is required. This should include a precedent for this intervention in other Grade II* listed terraced houses. We also recommend that you engage in discussions with the Local Authority's Building Control Officer. If the principle of the screen is accepted, the harm will need to be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme in accordance with Paragraph 134 of the NPPF. We would also recommend that samples of the proposed materials are provided at an early stage. It would also be helpful to understand the full fire strategy for the building, including any changes to doors and other joinery.

Opening up of Roof Void

It is also proposed to improve the floor to ceiling height within the front room at third floor level. This would involve removing the timbers between the third floor and roof void to create a lofty double-height space. Whilst we acknowledge the restricted head height, this intervention would impact on the considered hierarchical proportions of the terrace house. Again, it would be helpful if comparative examples could be provided to support this element of the proposals. We also recommend that a timber survey of the joists to be removed is provided to determine what original fabric remains. If it can be demonstrated that the work would result in minimal disruption to the original roof timbers, we would be open to further discussions regarding this element of the scheme.

Next Steps

I hope this advice is helpful, and I would be happy to provide further pre-application advice once the issues set out in this letter have been addressed. In the meantime, please do contact me if you require clarification on any of the points raised.

Yours sincerely



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