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# Planning statement

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6 Coptic Street, London, WC1A 1NH



## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This planning statement has been produced on behalf of our client to support a planning application for development at 6 Coptic Street, London, WC1A 1NH.
- 1.2. The planning application proposes a series of minor external alterations to enhance the quality and appearance of the existing building including the removal of the modern closet addition to the rear, addition of rooflights to the rear ground floor element, replacement of openings with dormers at roof level, replacement of openings throughout and replacement of pavement light to the front elevation.
- 1.3. This planning statement provides background information relating to the site, details of the proposal, and addresses the key planning considerations including impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and impact of the proposal on surrounding residential amenity. This statement has been set out under the following headings:
  - Section 2 – Site Background
  - Section 3 – Proposal;
  - Section 4 – Planning Policy Framework;
  - Section 5 – Planning Considerations;
  - Section 6 – Conclusions.
- 1.4. This statement should be read in conjunction with the architectural drawings and Design and Access Statement prepared by HUT Architecture.

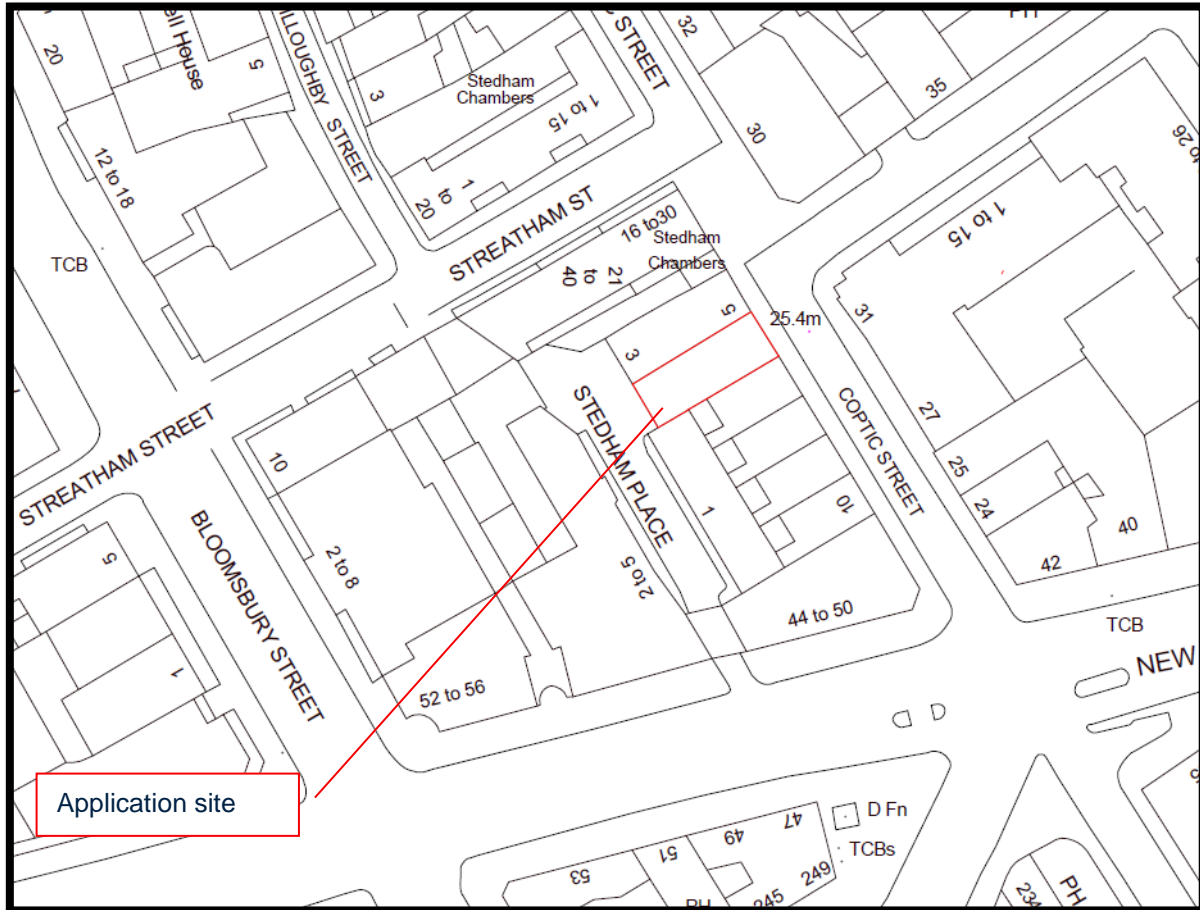
## 2. Site Background

2.1. The application site lies on the western side of Coptic Street, within the London Borough of Camden.



***The image above shows the front (left) and rear (right) elevations of the building at 6 Coptic Street.***

- 2.2. The site contains a four storey (plus basement) building which has most recently been used as offices but is now vacant. The building was constructed in the 19th century and was originally built as a town house.
- 2.3. The building is of brick construction and has an M-shape roof form with a central and lateral valley gutter (although this is limited from public view by the parapet). The building features traditional timber framed sliding windows to the front elevation (with the exception of the ground floor). The building features a single storey ground floor extension at the rear and a projecting closet wing on the south side of the building at first floor level. The rear elevation features a mix of traditional and more modern windows.
- 2.4. The building forms part of a wider terrace which includes 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 Coptic Street. There is a differentiation in building elements along this terrace including fenestration alignment, parapet line, terminating height, number of internal storeys and roof form.

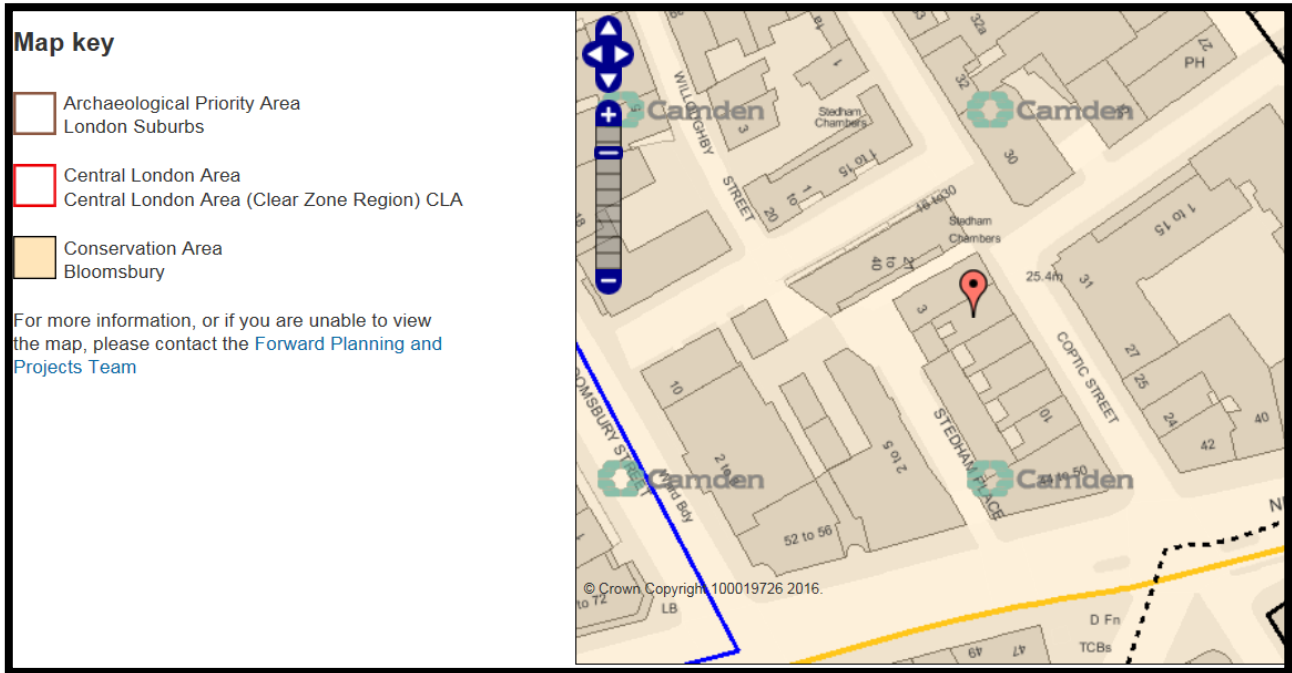


*The image above shows the site within the context of the surrounding area.*

- 2.5. The surrounding buildings are varied in form and appearance, and contain a mix of land uses. It is understood that the adjoining buildings at 7, 8 and 9 Coptic Street are in residential use. 5 Coptic Street is occupied by a restaurant at basement and ground floor level, office accommodation at first floor level (described as 3 Stedham Place) and residential above. 10 Coptic Street contains commercial uses at street level with residential use above. At the rear of the site, 1 and 2-5 Stedham Place are predominantly in office use. Stedham Chambers, which is a purpose built residential building, is located to the north of the site.
- 2.6. According to Camden's policy map, the site is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. This Conservation Area was originally designated to preserve elements of Georgian townscape within the Borough; and then later, Victorian, Edwardian and 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture when the Conservation Area boundary was extended (the application site/building is not Georgian but forms a varied terrace of later Victorian properties). The application site is located within sub area 7 - Museum Street/Great Russell Street - of the Conservation Area.
- 2.7. The application site/building is not statutorily listed; but is identified as an unlisted building which adds special interest to the Conservation Area (along with 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 Coptic Street).



2.8. According to the policy map, the site is also located within the Central London Area and the Archaeological Priority Area.



*Above: Camden Policy Map Extract*

- 2.9. A number of planning applications have been made on the site. The property was originally in use as a fur workshop from 1968 (Ref.5816) with this use extended in 1972 (Ref.13896) and 1975 (Ref.21592). An application was approved in 1998 for the conversion of the property to self contained flats (Ref.PS9804181) however the building has retained it's use as offices. The ground floor modern rear extension was granted in 1984 (Ref.8400744), since then a number of applications have been submitted to extend the property further, most of these either being refused or withdrawn.

## 3. Proposal

3.1. This planning application proposes sensitive alterations to the existing building to provide enhanced commercial floorspace and improve the appearance of the existing building. It is proposed to reconfigure the existing office space internally to provide an enhanced working environment. As a result of this, this application seeks a number of external alterations including the removal of the modern closet addition to the rear, addition of rooflights to the rear ground floor element, replacement of openings with dormers at roof level, replacement of openings throughout and replacement of pavement light to the front elevation.

3.2. The external alterations are detailed below:

### **Ground floor**

- Replacement pavement light to the front;
- Replacement of modern window to front with traditional timber-framed sash window;
- Refurbishment of existing foot to the front;
- Replacement double doors to the rear;
- Replacement of windows to the rear with traditional timber-framed sash window;
- Three replacement rooflights plus addition of a new rooflight in place of existing closet addition at first floor level.

### **First Floor**

- Removal of closet wing addition on rear elevation (adjacent to 7 Coptic Street);
- Addition of new traditional timber-framed window in place of closet wing addition.

### **Second Floor**

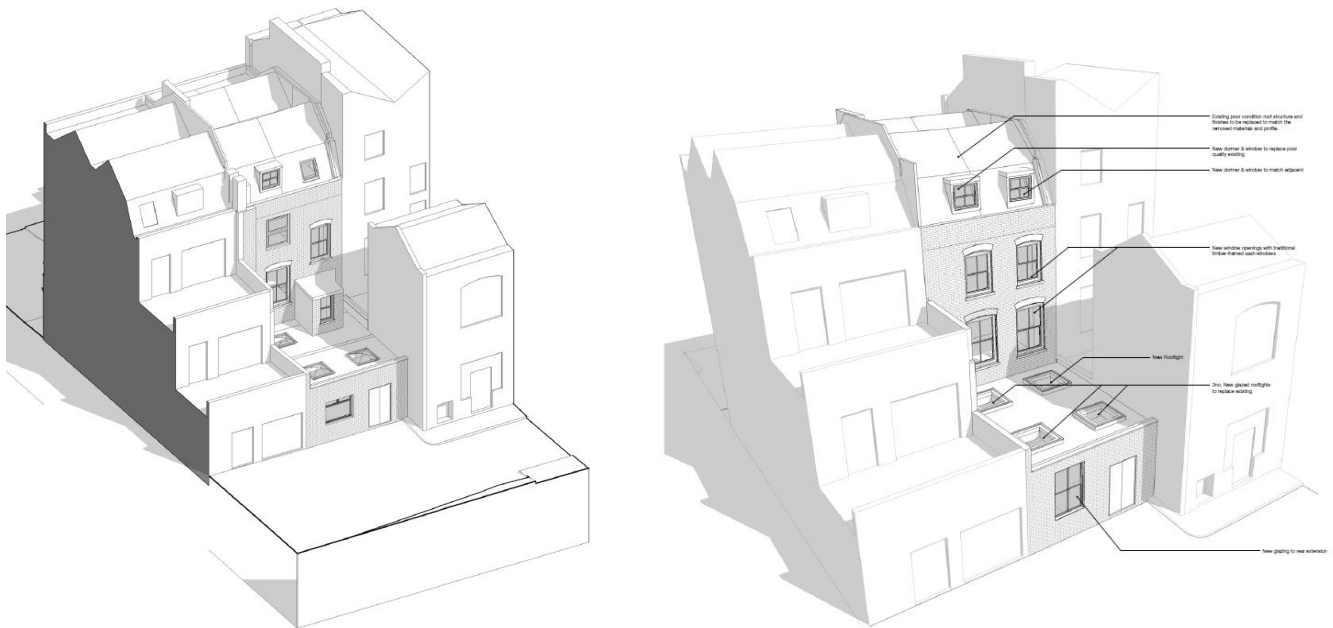
- Realignment of existing windows to the rear and replacement with traditional timber-framed sash windows.

### **Third Floor (roof)**

- Replacement and realignment of existing windows to the rear with traditional dormer windows;
- Replacement of existing roof like for like.



***Above: Existing and Proposed Front Elevation***



***Above: Existing and Proposed 3D Visual***



## 4. Planning Policy Framework

4.1. The following national and local planning policies are relevant to the proposal.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

4.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and is a material consideration in determining planning applications.

### **Local Planning Policy**

4.3. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan for the area unless any material considerations indicate otherwise. For the purposes of S. 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, the 'Development Plan' now comprises the:

- London Plan;
- Camden Local Plan (June 2017).

4.4. The following documents are also relevant to the proposal:

- Bloomsbury Conservation Area Statement/Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Strategy (2011);
- Camden Planning Guidance SPD.

## 5. Planning considerations

5.1. The primary planning considerations of this application are:

- Design and heritage including impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing building, and Bloomsbury Conservation Area;
- Amenity including impact of the proposal on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties;

### Design and heritage

5.2. Camden's Policies D1 and D2 provide overall direction on heritage assets and design quality within the Borough.

- Policy D1 Design – Seek high quality design in development. Including ensuring development respects the local context and character, preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets. Whilst resisting development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.
- Policy D2 Heritage – The Council will preserve and where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas. The Council will not permit the loss or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss. Specifically, the Council will require that development within conservation areas persevere, or where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area.

5.3. The Bloomsbury Conservation Area extends from Euston Road in the north to High Holborn and Lincoln's Inn Fields in the south; and from Tottenham Court Road in the west to King's Cross Road in the east. Development within the area occurred from the 17th century. The Conservation Area is characterised by planned residential streets in a grid like pattern, enclosed by mainly three and four storey development, which is interspersed by formal squares. The predominant type of buildings within the Conservation Area is terraced townhouses; there are also shops and public houses, some landmark buildings such as churches and cultural buildings, and a number of mansion blocks. Brick is the predominant building material within the area, and this is often complemented by different colours of brickwork, terracotta, stone and stucco render.

5.4. Sub area 7 of the Conservation Area, Museum Street/Great Russell Street, is characterised by a distinctive grain and street pattern, with tight streets containing small blocks of development. The predominant form of development is terraces, originally developed in the 17th century, and redeveloped in the 19th century. Buildings within the sub area usually have consistent widths, with two or three bays, and typically comprise three or four storeys with continuous parapet lines. Building materials are generally stock brick with rubbed brick and stucco detailing, with the mid-19th century terraces featuring stucco facing with classically influenced ornamentation. The north-south routes, including Coptic Street, are defined by a mix of shopping and residential uses. There are a variety of roof forms through the sub area, and many examples of later alterations to traditional roof forms.

- 5.5. 6 Coptic Street comprises four storeys with basement. It sits within a wider terrace of six properties comprising 5 to 10 Coptic Street. The building was constructed during the 19th century replacing development from the 17th century. It was originally built as a townhouse and later adapted for modern use. The building was subject to consequential enhancements during the 19th and 20th centuries including a single storey extension and projecting wing extension at the rear.
- 5.6. The principle elevation retains much of its original features, with the exception of unsympathetic windows at ground level. The front parapet sits below 7 to 10 Coptic Street, creating a differentiation in levels and visual variation to the street frontage of the wider terrace. The rear elevation is seen from more limited views (Stedham Place only). It consists of four storeys with a single extension at ground floor level and a projecting closet window at first floor level; and features a mix of traditional and more modern windows. The rear view of the building is dominated by the rear extensions to the adjoining property at 5 Coptic Street (ground and first/second floor levels), and also by the balconied elevation of Stedham Chambers to the north.
- 5.7. The significance of the building within the context of the Conservation Area can be summarised as follows –
- 6 Coptic Street makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.
  - The front of the building makes the most valuable/significant contribution to the Conservation Area as the majority of its original features are retained.
  - The rear of the building makes a lesser contribution to the Conservation Area. Overtime, there has been a loss of original form and appearance due to later alterations resulting in an informal arrangement. The rear of the building can be viewed from properties situated along Stedham Place only. Stedham Place is not open to the general public.

*Demolition of Closet Wing Addition and Ancillary Alterations*

- 5.8. With regards to the existing position of the property and surrounding area, the rear elevation of 6 Coptic Street has been previously altered with piecemeal development such as the infill of the historic rear garden space (extension at ground floor level) and a closet wing extension at first floor level. It is proposed to remove this unsympathetic addition to the property and restore the rear elevation to a more traditional form and design. As a result of the removal of the addition it is proposed to introduce a new window opening and realign the windows at first and second floors to match the symmetry of the front façade and create a more uniform appearance to the rear façade. These windows will be of traditional timber-framed sash window design, in-keeping with the existing property and the surrounding conservation area.
- 5.9. At first floor level it is proposed to incorporate a further rooflight in place of where the closet wing addition currently stands on the ground floor modern addition. It is also proposed to replace the existing three rooflights at this level, slightly enlarged to those existing, with the additional rooflight also reflecting this design. This will enhance the quality of the internal space providing additional daylight and sunlight.
- 5.10. Overall, the removal of the unsightly closet addition will facilitate alterations to the rear elevation which will improve the appearance of the property and restore a more traditional design with materials appropriate to the character and appearance of the property. As such the significance of the conservation area will be preserved and enhanced by this proposal.

*Roof Level Alterations*

5.11. This planning application seeks the replacement of the existing roof, like for like, due to the existing poor condition. The application also seeks to replace the existing poor quality dormer at roof level and to replace the existing rooflight adjacent with a dormer to match. The proposals will therefore improve the existing roof structure, ensuring its longevity. The removal of the poor quality dormer and replacement of rooflight will enhance the quality and appearance of the roof level, creating a more uniform appearance and with materials more suitable to the historic setting of the existing building and will be complimentary to the buildings within the wider conservation area.

*Minor External Alterations*

5.12. The proposals also put forward minor alterations to the property to both enhance the existing front and rear elevation and to create a better internal environment with regards to daylight and sunlight for future users of the office space. The proposals seek to replace the current unsympathetic windows to both the front and rear elevations with traditional timber-framed sash windows. The application additionally seeks to replace the existing pavement light to the front of the property. The proposals are careful to employ traditional design and materials. The proposals also seek to refurbish existing doors and to re-render the outside of the property, simultaneously enhancing the existing appearance of the building.

5.13. Consequently, the proposed development will result in both heritage and amenity benefits in terms of the quality of the internal working space, whilst continuing to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole.



***Above: Existing and Proposed Rear Elevation***

### **Amenity**

- 5.14. Camden's Local Plan Policy A1 notes that the Council will seek to protect the quality of life of occupiers and neighbours by only granted permission for development that does not cause harm to amenity. The Council will do this by making sure the impact of developments on their occupiers and neighbours is fully considered, seek to ensure development contributes towards strong and successful communities by balancing the need of development with the needs and characteristics of local area and communities and through requiring mitigation measures where necessary.
- 5.15. In terms of privacy and overlooking, the proposal retains the same number of windows as that existing, with some of these marginally enlarged in area and an additional rooflight is proposed to the ground floor rear addition. It is not expected that the increase in size and position of these windows to the rear elevation will impact on residential amenity. There is already a degree of mutual overlooking between properties across Steadham Place and to adjacent Coptic Street properties, there is a sufficient separation distance between buildings, and the majority of adjacent buildings are occupied by commercial uses along Steadham Place.
- 5.16. No additional massing is proposed to the property. With the removal of the existing small closet wing addition it is expected that sunlight and daylight in addition to outlook and sense of enclosure will improve for the neighbouring residential properties, particularly that of 7 Coptic Street.
- 5.17. No additional floorspace is proposed as part of this application and therefore the noise related to the office use will not increase as part of this development.
- 5.18. We believe that the proposed development is an acceptable outcome at the site, and comply with Camden's Local Plan Policy.

## 6. Conclusions

- 6.1. 6 Coptic Street is located within the Central London Area of the London Borough of Camden. The existing building is currently vacant, but has been most recently arranged for office (Class B1) use. Internally, the existing building is in a poor condition and requires significant investment to bring it to a habitable standard.
- 6.2. This planning application is being lodged to enhance and improve the current state of the building. The proposed development will provide enhanced office space within a highly accessible location. To facilitate this office space, alterations are proposed including removal of the modern closet addition to the rear, addition of rooflights to the rear ground floor element, replacement of openings with dormers at roof level, replacement of openings throughout and replacement of pavement light to the front elevation.
- 6.3. A thorough assessment of the proposed development has been carried out. On balance, it is concluded that the proposed development accords with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework and Camden's Local Plan.
- 6.4. The provision of better quality office space is beneficial in that it assists Camden to maintain and promote a successful economy in its central London Area. It also responds positively to the NPPF which advocates sustainable economic development and growth and the delivery of business units which are critical to economy.
- 6.5. In addition, the proposed development will provide heritage benefits, in that it will remove existing unsympathetic additions and replace existing unsympathetic windows with traditional timber sash windows both on the front and rear elevations. This substantially enhances the appearance of the building and improves its contribution to the Conservation Area. Additionally, the proposals will preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole. This designated heritage asset will be conserved and its significance sustained.
- 6.6. The proposed alterations will have no impact in terms of amenity on neighbouring properties.
- 6.7. As such, we see no reason why the planning application should not be granted.