



PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

36-37 GREAT RUSSELL STREET WC1B 3PP | October 2018

On behalf of Searchgrade Limited

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement (the 'Statement') is prepared by SF Planning Limited on behalf of Searchgrade Limited, to support a planning application regarding the proposed alterations and extensions to nos. 36-37 Great Russell Street, Camden.
- 1.2 The works include, rear extensions to facilitate providing additional office floor space to complement the existing 1st and 2nd floor offices, alterations at roof level to provide a new terrace and the enlarged basement and ground floor retail space. The "physical" works for this scheme have already been approved via planning permission 2017/2149/P (see Section 3 for full planning history).
- 1.3 The applicant's description of proposed development is set out below;

"Alterations and extensions to the existing building to provide enlarged retail space at basement and ground floor, enlarged office space at part first, part second floor level, roof terrace for reconfigured top floor flat and associated works."

- 1.4 Nos. 36 and 37 are located on the south side of the Great Russell Street, close to the junction with Bloomsbury Street and to the south of the British Museum.

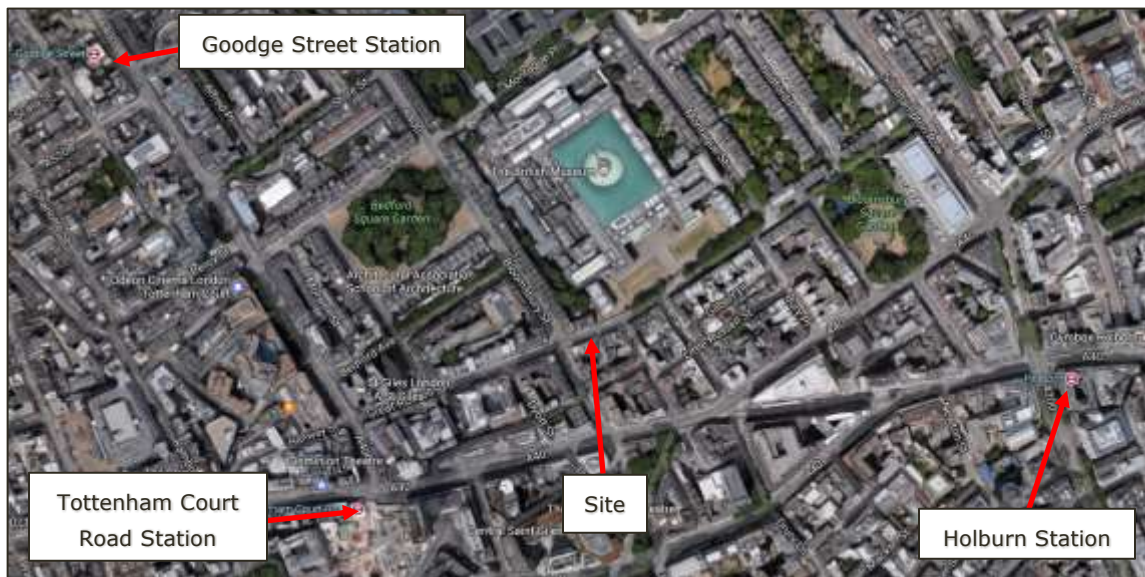


Site Location Plan

- 1.5 This Statement considers the application site, its context, relevant planning history and previous pre-application discussions with the London Borough of Camden in relation to the proposals.
- 1.6 The scheme is considered against relevant local and national level planning policy, which generally supports economic development in appropriate and sustainable locations.
- 1.7 The Statement then goes on to fully justify the proposals in planning terms and highlights the key benefits of the proposals and should be considered alongside the architectural drawings submitted with the scheme, produced by PAPA Architects.

2.0 The Site

- 2.1 The site is located in an area of mixed character with the property itself on the south side of the Great Russell Street, close to the junction with Bloomsbury Street and to the south of the British Museum.
- 2.2 The site is in close proximity to three London Underground Stations including Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Road and Holburn.



Aerial photograph of site & context

- 2.3 Nos. 36 and 37 Great Russell Street are buildings of five floors, currently containing a retail use at ground floor level (with associated storage in the basement), offices at first and second floor levels, and residential accommodation at third floor level, current configured as two flats. The existing flats do not meet London Plan internal space standards.

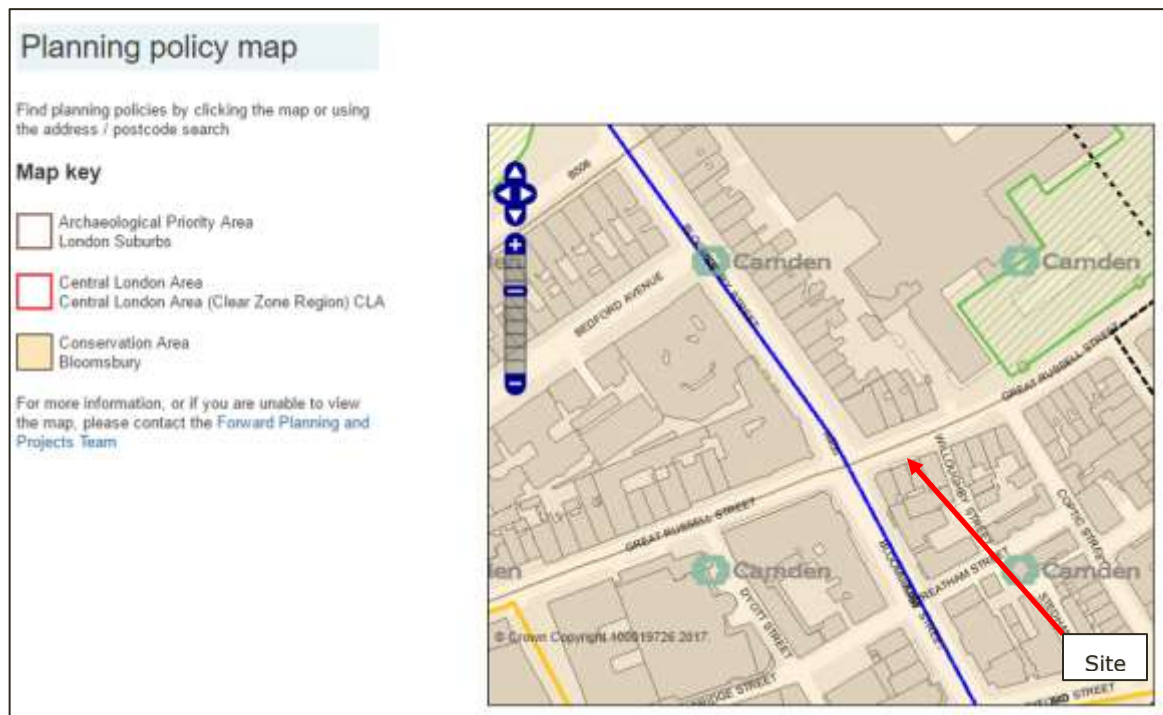


Photograph of the site from Great Russell Street / Bloomsbury Street junction



Aerial photograph of site & context

- 2.4 There are a variety of uses within the vicinity of the site including retail units at ground floor level, commercial and residential largely on the upper floors of buildings and cultural uses in close proximity.
- 2.5 In terms of planning designations, the site is located the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and an Archaeological Priority Area as well as being within the London Plan Central Activities Zone (CAZ) as set out on the Council's Proposals Map.



Camden's Local Plan Proposals Map

- 2.6 The site has a very high public transport accessibility level (PTAL) of 6b with many London Underground Stations in close proximity and is within Flood Zone 1 (low risk).

3.0 Planning History & Pre-Application Discussion

3.1 The planning history in relation to this site is provided within the table below, with a recently approved schemes in 2016 and 2018 particularly relevant.

Reference	Description	Decision
N14/26/5/79590/NW	<i>The use, for a limited period, of the third floor of No. 36 for office purposes</i>	Granted 09/11/1956
TP/79590/NW	<i>The continued use for a limited period only of the third floor at No. 36 Great Russell Street, Holborn for office purposes</i>	Granted 02/01/1961
TP79590/02/12/60	<i>continued use for a limited period only of the third floor at No.36, Great Russell Street, Holborn for office purposes</i>	Granted 02/01/1961
N14/26/5/31223	<i>Continued use of the third floor as offices</i>	Granted 13/11/1980
85/00706	<i>Continued use of the third floor as offices</i>	Granted 03/07/1985
2016/2795/P	<i>Infill extension at basement and ground floor level to the rear (Use Class A1).</i>	Granted 23/08/2016
2017/2149/P	<i>Erection of rear extensions at basement to 2nd floor levels to provide enlarged retail space at basement and ground floor (as approved on 23/08/2016 ref 2016/2795/P) and two new 1 bedroom flats at first and second floors with associated new internal lift; provision of communal cycle and refuse stores at ground floor; conversion of two existing 1 bedroom flats to one 2 bedroom flat on third floor; retention of existing office use at part 1st and part 2nd floors; creation of new roof terrace at rear 1st floor; replacement of staircase hatch by larger one to existing main roof terrace; and associated external fenestration alterations.</i>	Granted 19/07/2018

3.2 These proposals follow the approved envelope of the scheme permitted in 2018, which the main changes relating to the internal uses within the building.

4.0 Relevant Planning Policy

- 4.1 The development of the site is proposed in the context of national, regional and local housing and design objectives as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2018), The London Plan as well the London Borough of Camden's Local Plan adopted November 2017.
- 4.2 In general, both local and national planning policy seek to support economic development and the provision of new housing in sustainable locations. Much of the policy context has already been considered as part of the previous permissions on the site.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF - 2018)

- 4.3 At the heart of the policy objectives is to seek to achieve sustainable development, with the planning system required to perform economic, social and environmental roles.
- 4.4 The scheme would deliver on the economic objective and help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by enhancing local employment opportunities on the site and supporting economic growth through the additional proposed office and retail accommodation.
- 4.5 On the social side the proposals would provide improved residential accommodation within the building and on the environmental side, the scheme would optimise the use of this sustainably located and previously developed site.

London Plan (2016)

- 4.6 The London Plan is the overall Strategic Plan for London, setting out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for development up to 2036.
- 4.7 The Mayor published the Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP) as formal alterations to the London Plan on the 10th March 2015. These were prepared primarily to address key housing and employment issues emerging from an analysis of census data released since the publication of the latest revisions to the London Plan in July 2012, which indicate a substantial increase in the capital's population. Further minor amendments to the plan were also adopted in March 2016.

- 4.8 London Plan policy 4.2 relates to offices and states that Boroughs should support the management and mixed use development and redevelopment of office provision to improve London's competitiveness. Part (c) of the policy also encourages renewal and modernisation of the existing office stock in viable locations such as this to improve its quality and flexibility, which these proposals will help to deliver.
- 4.9 Policy 3.5 endorses a range of minimum unit sizes for new residential development in London, with details set out at Table 3.3. The new top floor flat has been designed to meet and exceed these internal space standards, providing a better standard of accommodation than the existing accommodation.
- 4.10 Policy 7.6B relates to good design, stating that architecture should make a positive contribution and incorporate high quality materials and overall design. Buildings and structures should:
- *Be of the highest architectural quality;*
 - *Be of a proportion, composition, scale and orientation that enhances, activates and appropriately defines the public realm;*
 - *Comprise details and materials that complement, not necessarily replicate, the local architectural character;*
 - *Not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of surrounding land and buildings, particularly residential buildings, in relation to privacy, overshadowing, wind and microclimate;*
 - *Provide high quality indoor and outdoor spaces and integrate well with the surrounding streets and open spaces;*
 - *Be adaptable to different activities and land uses;*
 - *Meet the principles of inclusive design; and*
 - *Optimise the potential of sites.*
- 4.11 The application proposals have been considered in the context of policies which seek to promote housing delivery and high quality design, whilst protecting the amenity of neighbouring residents. The physical external works have also been previously approved as set out within Section 3 of this statement.
- 4.12 As the submitted suite of documents demonstrate, the proposed extensions are wholly compatible with the location, which includes a significant proportion of residential properties on the upper floors of neighbouring buildings as well as commercial uses.

Camden's Local Plan (2017)

- 4.13 The Local Plan was adopted by Council on 3rd July 2017 and replaced the Core Strategy and Camden Development Policies documents as the basis for planning decisions and future development in the borough.
- 4.14 In terms of relevant policies to these proposals, Policy H1 relates to maximising housing supply and sets out the Council will aim to secure a sufficient supply of homes to meet the needs of existing and future households including regarding self-contained housing as the priority land-use of the Local Plan.
- 4.15 Policy H3 is also relevant to these proposals since although it relates to protecting existing homes, part c) of the policy effectively confirms merging two flats into a single larger flat is acceptable (and in some cases not development), as is proposed here.
- 4.16 Paragraph 3.74 in the subtext of the policy confirms that the Council recognises that there are situations where the "loss" of individual homes may be justified including confirmation the "net loss of one home is acceptable when two dwellings are being combined into a single dwelling."
- 4.17 The justification for the policy further supports such developments which can help families to deal with overcrowding, to grow without moving home and that within a block of flats or apartments, such a change may not constitute development, which are relevant considerations to these proposals.
- 4.18 Policy E1 is relevant since it relates to economic development with the Council setting out it will support businesses of all sizes, in particular start-ups, small and medium-sized enterprises.
- 4.19 Part b) of the policy is particularly relevant for these proposals for improvements to premises which would be suitable for smaller businesses.
- 4.20 Part g) supports these proposals also, since it seeks to safeguard existing employment sites and premises in the borough that meet the needs of industry and other employers and supports proposals for the intensification of employment sites and premises.

- 4.21 Policy E2 relates to employment premises and offers support for the works which are the subject of the application, since it encourages the provision of employment premises and sites in the borough, particular premises for small businesses.
- 4.22 Policy A1 of the Local Plan relates to managing the impact of development and therefore is also a relevant consideration, although the external and physical works which are the subject of this scheme have already been approved.

5.0 Planning Justification

Principle of Development

- 5.1 A large proportion of the works have already been approved via applications 2016/2795/P & 2017/2149/P since these proposals follow the approved envelope of the scheme permitted in 2018. The main changes relating to the internal uses within the building, namely the proposed additional office floor space in place of two residential flats at part first and part second floor level.
- 5.2 The proposal additional office accommodation in CAZ is generally supported within the Local Plan by Policy E1 (Economic Development) and Policy E2 (Employment Premises) as well as the NPPF and London Plan policies relating to economic development.
- 5.3 Both Local Plan policies support these proposals for the enhancement of the existing office accommodation and provision of additional office floor space, since they encourage the provision of employment premises, particular premises for small businesses which these offices would serve.
- 5.4 In relation to the reconfiguration of the existing residential accommodation on the top floor of the building Local Plan Policy H3 is supportive with part c) of the policy confirming merging two flats into a single larger flat is acceptable, as is proposed here.
- 5.5 Both existing flats fall below minimum London Plan internal space standards for one bed units and these proposals will allow the provision of a more generous two bed flat, which would comply with the relevant internal space standards. In addition, the accommodation would be upgraded to provide an external roof terrace to improve the standard of living for residents.
- 5.6 The basement and ground floor of the property have a lawful retail use which would be enhanced as part of the proposals. In addition, the enlarged basement and ground floor retail space has already been approved previously under reference 2016/2795/P and therefore the works in this regard should be considered entirely acceptable.

Design

- 5.7 The proposals are accompanied by a comprehensive set of existing and proposed drawings from PAPA Architects which outline the proposed design and complementary materials in the context of the areas prevailing mixed character. As noted, the external works already have approval via applications 2016/2795/P & 2017/2149/P.
- 5.8 The rear of the existing site is enclosed on three sides and is largely not visible from the public realm with limited views of the area from the upper floors of adjoining buildings.



Rear of application site from Willoughby Street (left) and aerial photograph (right)



Rear of application site from main building

- 5.9 These proposals would enhance the appearance of the rear of the building through the additional of windows and a fenestration pattern, rather than the high blank party walls on two sides.

- 5.10 It is considered therefore, that the scheme represents an entirely appropriate form of development in this area, with the use of good quality materials and the proposed extensions are of a scale which wholly respects the scale and appearance of neighbouring buildings and wider street scene.

Layout

- 5.11 PAPA Architects have prepared drawings to fully illustrate the layout proposals for the new accommodation within the building. The approved extension would complement the layout of the uses within the building whilst improving facilities with the addition of a lift and WC's for the offices at first and second floor level.
- 5.12 The proposed development has been designed to provide a dual aspect residential unit with access to a roof terrace, to ensure the scheme would provide a good standard of accommodation.
- 5.13 The layout and form of the scheme would ensure the amenities of neighbouring residents would be protected, since the site is flanked by high blank walls on two sides.

Unit Size

- 5.14 The scheme would provide 1no unit (replacing 2no units which do not meet minimum internal space standards). The new unit has been designed to meet the space standards set out in the London Plan and national space standards to ensure the new residential unit offer a good standards of accommodation to future occupiers.

Accessibility, Parking & Servicing

- 5.15 The site is located within a highly sustainable location with excellent access to public transport facilities (PTAL 6a), including three London Underground Stations in close proximity (Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Road and Holborn) as well as numerous bus routes. In addition there isn't a net increase in residential floor space on the site and therefore the proposals should be considered entirely acceptable in this regard.

Access

- 5.16 Access to the site and the residential unit on the upper floors from the street would be improved with one central core served by a lift.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 In conclusion, it is considered that the application scheme fully accords with the latest national planning policy objectives within the NPPF, as well as those at a local level which support economic development and improvements to existing residential accommodation. The proposed development will make efficient and positive use of an under-utilised site within the London Borough of Camden.
- 6.2 Given the prevailing context within the vicinity of the application site, the proposed additional office accommodation should be considered to be acceptable in principle and the retention of the 1st and 2nd floor offices and upgrading of the ground floor and basement retail unit would provide a truly mixed use development.
- 6.3 The proposed form of the development (already approved earlier in 2018), designed in a style to complement the existing building, would be consistent and complementary to the prevailing character and appearance of the area and in terms of height and scale.
- 6.4 Based upon the detailed technical design and planning assessment justification case presented in support of the scheme the applicant contends that the case in support of the redevelopment of this underutilised site is compelling and that Officers and Members should support the scheme.



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