

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

283 GRAYS INN ROAD LONDON WC1

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Image 1 – Aerial view of the site and surrounding area



1. Introduction

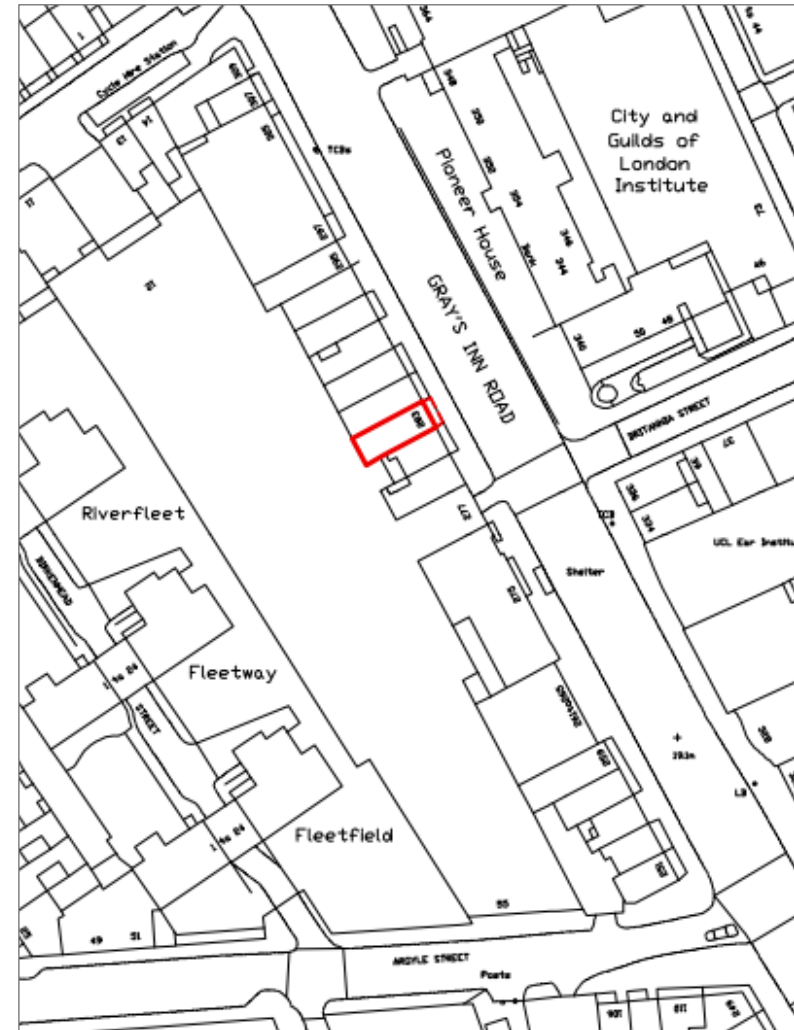
Background

The site is on the west side to the northern end of Grays Inn Road – a main thoroughfare connecting Kings Cross to the City. It comprises a single property within a larger matching terrace of nine. There are five storeys (including the ground floor and basement) and the site occupies approximately 74sqm gross external area. The property has an historic classically styled front façade. It is bounded in on both longer/party-wall sides and has a partially enclosed and staggered rear elevation. The surrounding area is a vast mixture of different sized and styled building types – the building within this application being at the smallest end of the scale. It is neither Listed nor does it lie within a Conservation Area.

Proposal

The proposal is to reconfigure the internal arrangement of the property, to allow for new residential units within the upper floors. At the same time, the mansard roof will be converted to become usable space with the addition of 2no. windows similar to the neighbouring properties in the same terrace and to make a concealed extension behind an existing boundary wall at the rear. Shopfront alterations to the front elevation and addition of windows to the rear elevation are to be made, appropriate to the original age and style. The opportunity has also been taken to install a new shopfront. The commercial space is to be retained in the ground floor and basement following internal alterations and infilling of light well.

Further details are to be found in the proceeding document alongside the drawings submitted as part of the application.



Location Plan showing site in red

2. Context

Locality

The area sits between Clerkenwell, Pentonville and St Pancras – the main urban feature being the collection of large railway termini and the various associated amenities that act to pull and polarise the surrounding arteries. Whilst the stations have undergone various master planned developments, the area to the south has to some extent been neglected. Grays Inn Road forms the main north-south route (with smaller side streets made up of low-rise but high density stock) and does not form a destination in itself. The transitory nature of the road is at odds with the static nature of the architecture, which has not attracted a considerable amount of investment. Whilst the small scope of this application does not seek to address any fundamental issues in the locale, it is hoped instead that some simple improvements to clean, repair, redecorate, de-clutter, match and rationalise the smaller properties would contribute to the quality of the area nonetheless.



Above: Street views looking south then north respectively.

Below: Front elevation photo.

Buildings

Grays Inn Road has little uniformity other than some shared materiality, a fairly continuous building-pavement line and a tendency for small to medium sized buildings in a loosely traditional style. The application site as pictured on the right within the white dashed rectangles is one of the earlier and smaller properties. Other than its collective value as part of the wider terrace, it has little architectural merit.

The neighbouring properties house a mix of different uses – the masonry and timber construction being very flexible to adapt and serve changing requirements. The application seeks to work wholly with what is already physically present. By introducing a mixed use into the site the property will be revitalised, as it has stood vacant for some time.



3. Design

Usage

The existing building is made up of commercial floor space throughout. The proposed scheme contains a commercial unit at ground floor and basement, a studio flat at first floor and a two bedroom duplex flat at second and third floors. The resulting changes in floor areas from this and the roof and rear extensions/lightwells are outlined in the table below:

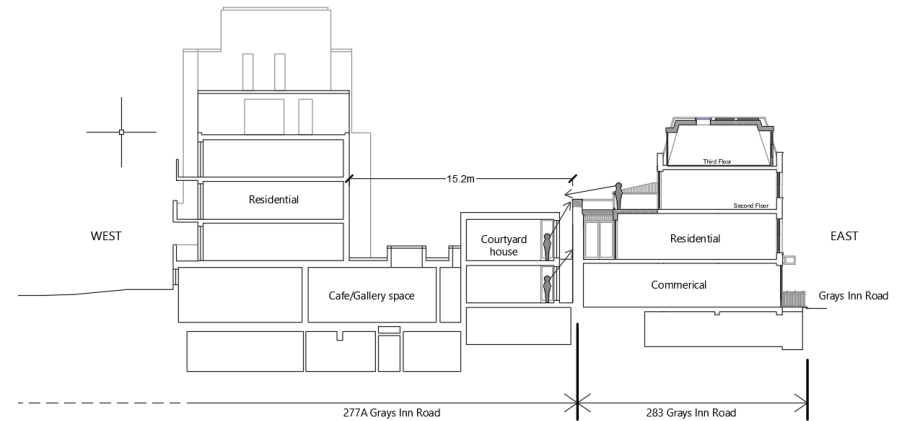
Floor	Existing (GIA)	Proposed (GIA)	Change (GIA)
Basement	39.5sqm	48.7sqm	+9.2sqm commercial
Ground	60.2sqm	49.9sqm	-10.3sqm commercial +11.1sqm resi
		11.1sqm (resi stairs)	=+0.8sqm total
First	58.8sqm	56.3sqm	-58.8sqm commercial +56.3sqm resi =-2.5sqm total
Second	35.7sqm	37.1sqm	-35.7sqm commercial +37.1sqm resi =+1.4sqm total
Third	29.6sqm	33.3sqm	-29.6sqm commercial +33.3sqm resi =+3.7sqm total
TOTAL	223.8sqm	236.4sqm	-125.2sqm commercial +137.8sqm resi +12.6sqm total

Form and Scale

The design of the new flats has been based on the footprint of the current properties, predominantly around the upgraded staircase and the positions of the front and rear windows. The limited floor areas have further dictated the size of the proposed units.

Whilst the front elevation remains significantly and deliberately unaltered, the roof has been made slightly steeper to incorporate two new dormer windows. These shall match those which exist already next door. The shopfront has been tidied and made symmetrical with the introduction of a secondary door as required and the front lightwell infilled to improve accessibility and increase the commercial floor space (which has little need of natural light.) Each of the new window and door openings has been designed in scale and proportion to the rest of the façade. Other than this there are no changes to the form of the frontage.





The rear has some more noticeable alterations to facilitate the scheme. The existing oddly formed mansard roof has been replaced with a more traditional version in keeping with the rest of the property. This too has new dormer windows, but with French style doors to enable access to a small adjacent terrace. Part of the flat roof at second floor level is decked for use as a terrace, providing amenity space for the second and third floor duplex. The extent of this terrace and new timber screening to either side prevent it from overlooking adjacent properties. Below this, a small new lightwell is introduced to the rear of the first floor, giving this unit some natural light through vertical windows – rather than just being confined to skylights. The existing boundary wall and new parapet wall serve as separation to the new mixed-use scheme behind. Whilst the rear windows (all in a similar style) are generously glazed, they are kept simple in profile and in a straightforward layout so as to not draw attention.

In terms of overall height and massing, the proposals follow and respect the scale of the surrounding buildings, which are for the most part much larger.

Layout

Internally the scheme consists of one commercial unit at ground floor and basement; a one bedroom studio flat at first floor; a two bedroom flat split over second and third floors. These have been designed to meet the accommodation sizes in accordance with Policy 3.8 of the London Plan. They are largely open-plan, with simple easily navigable layouts. Generous kitchen and storage spaces have been indicated such that the main rooms are freed up for practical use. Large openable windows have also been incorporated at the rear, to provide plenty of natural light and fresh air.

Materiality

The scheme is expressed in a traditional palette of materials, reflecting those that already exist nearby. This includes brickwork, rendered masonry walls, 6-over-6 sash windows, pitched slate roofs and iron railings. This will ensure that there is a strong link to the surrounding built environment. The resulting expression aims to be of a high quality, with robust traditional details. Further details of the specification/materiality of particular elements are shown opposite.



Brickwork

1bstock or similar yellow stock brick, to match the existing brickwork present. Render repairs to be made to front elevation.



Roof Tiles

Slates to visible pitched areas – single ply membrane elsewhere, to crown and terrace sections.



Doors and Windows

Timber framed sash windows to match the front and aluminium casements to the rear.

4. Access

Entrance and Circulation

The approach from the pavement is the same in both the existing and proposed schemes, except that the front lightwell is to be infilled as per the other properties in the area, providing a wider path up to the entrance doors.

This approach is to be well lit so that occupants and visitors feel secure and are able to see and negotiate entry easily. The lighting shall be on a timer and/or motion sensor and an entry phone system will ensure secure access.

The new shopfront door is 1000mm wide and the residential door is 900mm wide. The staircases beyond these are 1000mm wide overall, with risers of 150-170mm and goings of at least 250mm. Handrails to either side of appropriate sizes and heights are to be fixed robustly in accordance with Approved Document Part M and to Life Time Homes standards.

Internal Layouts

The new flats have simple layouts allowing clear movement between rooms. This includes 800mm wide door openings throughout, open plan living/kitchen, bathrooms and en-suites directly adjacent to bedrooms and large easy to operate windows. Corridors are a minimum of 1000mm wide and rooms have manoeuvring space to allow for wheelchair turning circles.

New internal construction in demountable studwork partitions is to be of a type that can be altered relatively easily, should new openings be required. Furthermore, within the bathrooms, the partitions will be lined with additional ply sheets to allow for the fixing of handles/grab rails should this provision become necessary in the future.

Other fixtures and fittings such as electrical switches and sockets will be installed at heights recommended within the Approved Documents, between 450 and 1200mm above the finished floor level.

Transport

The application site is very well connected, by public transport specifically.

There are bus stops within about 50m in either direction with a number of regular routes providing transportation to local areas and further connections.

Kings Cross tube and railway station is approximately 350m to the north, with lines in several directions.

The nearest TFL bicycle docking station is about 160m south and there are existing racks almost directly opposite the property.