



Historic England

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Ms Colette Hatton
London Borough of Camden
Development Management
Town Hall
Judd Street
London
WC1H 9JE



11 December 2018

Dear Ms Hatton

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015

8 WOBURN WALK LONDON WC1H 0JL
Application No. 2018/4722/L

Thank you for your letter of 21 November 2018 regarding the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

Significance

Woburn Walk is a terrace of 8 shops with accommodation above. It was built circa 1822 by Thomas Cubitt, who became the established architect and master builder for the expanding Bedford Estate in the early 19th century. The shops on Woburn Walk were built on the border of the estate so as not to infringe on the prime residential areas. The whole terrace was restored in the late 20th century. The high significance of Woburn Walk, including No. 4, derives from the group value of the terrace as an exceptional surviving example of architecturally coherent shopfronts and the well-executed facades to the upper storeys. The interiors have been subject to alterations during the 20th century but do retain significant historic features such as lath and plaster walls and ceilings.

The high significance of 4 Woburn Walk is reflected in its listing at Grade II*.

Impact

A recent damp survey has identified damp damage to internal wall faces at basement level, as detailed in the Investigation Report and Recommendations for Damp Proofing (August 2018) produced by Tapco, included with the application. The survey states



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that damp is being drawn up through the masonry of the internal basement walls through capillary action, but that some damp has also likely resulted from rain ingress due to external building defects. The proposals involve the removal of contaminated plaster and loose debris from the basement walls, pattern drilling into mortar joints to facilitate the injection of damp proof courses into the walls, the application of a damp proof plastering system to the same walls, plus tanking to two walls in the basement store.

We are concerned that the proposed method of damp proofing at basement level is a permanent approach that is likely to result in long-term damage to the building's historic fabric. The use of cementitious materials (tanking) to prevent water from reaching the interior of the building is likely to trap moisture within the brick walls and displace water elsewhere around the property or into neighbouring properties. Traditionally constructed walls like these need to be able to 'breathe', and the need to avoid trapping water within them is key to continued preservation of their historic fabric. Management of moisture ingress is an essential part of good maintenance, and in this instance the application identifies the rain penetration through building defects. These defects should be investigated and repaired where possible in order to address one of the root causes of moisture ingress into the basement.

We are also concerned that the application acknowledges the presence of historic (possibly original) lath and plaster in the property but it is not clear from the information provided where this fabric is located in the building and how it will be impacted by the proposals.

Policy

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) sets out the obligation on local planning authorities to pay special regard to safeguarding the special interest of listed buildings and their settings.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies for decision making on development proposals. At the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of 'sustainable development'. Protecting and enhancing our historic environment is identified within the key environmental objective which delivers sustainable development.

Paragraph 189 states that local planning authorities should require the applicant to describe the significance of an affected heritage asset in a level of detail proportionate to the building's significance and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal's on the asset's significance. In this case, the building in question is of more than special interest and is listed Grade II*.

Paragraph 193 states that 'great weight should be given' to conserving heritage assets



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in a manner appropriate to their significance, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss, or less than substantial harm to its significance. The more significant the asset is, the greater that weight should be. In this instance the asset in question is highly listed at Grade II*.

Paragraph 194 requires that any harm to a designated heritage asset should require 'clear and convincing justification' and that substantial harm should be exceptional. Paragraph 195 sets out the tests that must be applied in such cases.

Paragraph 196 states that in cases where proposals would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm needs to be weighed against public benefits and, where appropriate, securing the optimum viable use.

Position

At present we are unable to support this application because of the negative impact the proposed method of damp proofing is likely to have on condition of the Grade II* listed building. We recognise that the applicant would like to address the damp problems in the property and we would welcome the opportunity to advise on an amended scheme which addresses the root causes of these problems and proposes to manage them in a way that is sympathetic to the traditional construction of the Grade II* listed building. The applicant may benefit from employing a conservation-accredited professional with experience of working with historic buildings to assess the damp problems in the property and make recommendations to address those problems.

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds.

We consider that the issues outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 189 and 193-196 of the NPPF. Whilst we are unable to support the application at this stage, we would be happy to discuss amendments to these proposals.

This response relates to designated heritage assets only. If the proposals meet the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service's published consultation criteria we recommend that you seek their view as specialist archaeological adviser to the local planning authority.

The full GLAAS consultation criteria are on our webpage at the following link:

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/our-planning-services/greater->



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[london-archaeology-advisory-service/our-advice/](https://www.historicengland.org.uk/london-archaeology-advisory-service/our-advice/)

Yours sincerely



Alasdair Young

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas



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