

PD10200/MT

email: max.taylor@montagu-evans.co.uk

29 August 2019

Development Control Manager (Planning)
Camden Council
Camden Town Hall
London
WC1H 8ND

Dear Sir,

**1-7 WOBURN WALK, LONDON, WC1H 0JJ
APPLICATION FOR PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT**

PLANNING STATEMENT

On behalf of our client, Instrumel Limited, we have been instructed to submit this application at 1-7 Woburn Walk, for the following development:

"Internal and external alterations associated with the conversion of the first, second and third floor offices (B1a) to 4 residential flats."

We have been instructed to re-submit the proposals of the approved extant permission to convert the upper floors to 2 x 1 bedroom flats and 2 x 2 bedroom flat with associated internal and external alterations. This application has been submitted alongside appropriate listed building consent.

This planning statement sets out details of the site and surrounding area (including extant permission and further planning history) together with the application proposals. It then provides justification for such a proposal in line with national and local planning policy. It is to be read in conjunction with the following documents which form the planning application:

- Application Forms;
- Ownership Certificate B;
- Site Location Plan;
- Existing Plans/ Elevations and Sections – Drawing Nos: 15/262/20; 21; 22; 23; 24 and 25
- Proposed Plans/ Elevations and Sections – Drawing Nos: 15/262/13 Rev D; 15/262/14 Rev G; 15/262/15 Rev D; 15/262/16 Rev B; 15/262/17 Rev B and 15/262/18 Rev A
- Design and Access Statement – Prepared by Martin Ralph Group; and
- Heritage Statement – Prepared by The Heritage Advisory
- The associated fee of £1,848.00

Site and Surrounding Area

The application site comprises 1-7 Woburn Walk. It is located within Bloomsbury approximately 250m south of Euston Station and 500m from Kings Cross and St Pancras Stations.

The site is positioned on the north of side of Woburn Walk which is a pedestrianised street located between Upper Woburn Place and Dukes Road. The building is arranged in a terrace which dates from 1822 and comprises basement, ground floor and three upper floors. It forms part of a purposefully designed small scale shopping street at Woburn Walk and Dukes Road.

The application site is grade II* listed and lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The list description for Nos 1-9 and 9A reads:

'Terrace of 6 shops with accommodation over. C1822. Built by Thomas Cubitt, restored late C20. Stucco with wooden shopfronts. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys and cellars. 1 window each. Part walls of upper floors articulated by narrow recessed bays. Wooden shopfronts, much restored, with pilasters carrying continuous entablature with anthemion and palmette ornament to architrave; projecting, bracketed shop windows with rounded angles and small panes flanked by panelled and half-glazed doors with overlights. Upper floors have segmental-arched windows having plain architraves studded with paterae; 1st floor, 4 lights with cast-iron balconies, 2nd floor tripartite. Parapets with plain bands, Nos 3 & 5 having shallow scrolled pediments above.
INTERIORS: not inspected. HISTORICAL NOTE: No.5 was the home of William Butler Yeats, Irish poet and dramatist (plaque). Thomas Cubitt was responsible for the development of the Bedford Estate north and east of Russell Square. The coherently designed group of original shopfronts in Woburn Walk and Duke's Road (gv) is an exceptional architectural composition and survival.'

The original building was designed with shop units on the ground floor and residential accommodation above. This arrangement is still evident on the south side of Woburn Walk (Nos 4-18). The ground floor shop units accommodate a mix of A1 and A3 occupiers on long term leases. The upper floor accommodation over three levels provides B1 office accommodation occupied under short term agreements. The conversion to offices took place in the early 1980s when access was provided via a stair core constructed north of the original structure. This has enabled the upper floors to operate independently of the ground floor shops.

The upper floor accommodation provides poor quality office space and is in need of refurbishment. In order to secure a more viable use for the upper floor accommodation that would support significant improvements to the building and reinstate the original residential function, planning and listed building consent was granted on 14 December 2015 to convert the first, second and third floor offices to 2 x 2 bedroom flats and 1 x 1 bedroom flat, accessible from the existing communal stairway (LPA Ref 2015/4272/P and 2015/4576/L). Planning and listed building consent was also granted for the same change of use to provide 2 x 1 bedroom flats and 2 x 2 bedroom flat (LPA ref 2016/3342/P and 2016/3620/L).

The site is within Central London within easy walking distance of major transport hubs and other public transport services including bus routes and Underground stations. It has a Public Transport Accessibility Level of 6b which is excellent. The site lies adjacent to the New Ambassadors Hotel (west); Central House (a UCL building) is located to the rear (southwest) and upper level residential accommodation is situated at 9 Woburn Walk and 2-12 Duke's Road to the side (east) and rear (northeast).

Further details of the site and its surroundings are set out within the Design and Access and Heritage Statements.

Application Proposals

The proposal for which planning and listed building consent is sought comprises the following:

- Conversion of first floor to comprise 2 x 1 bedroom flats of 47.9sqm and 55.2sqm respectively;
- Conversion of second floor to comprise 1 x 2 bedroom flats of 117sqm;
- Conversion of third floor to comprise 1 x 2 bedroom flat of 80sqm;
- Associated internal alterations which follow the principles established by the extant listed building consent;
- External alterations to include extension of the front elevation of the access core over the existing entrance; and
- Removal of firescape on rear elevation and replacement with 2 x metal balconies.

The principle of converting the upper floor accommodation from office to residential has been established by an extant permission and further (now expired) permission both of which were not implemented.

The proposal seeks to make more efficient use of the floorspace by forming 2 x 1 bedroom flats at first and second floors (as previously approved) and formation of 2 x 2 bedroom flat at third floor (as previously approved).

The relevant planning history, most recently of which was approved on 15 December 2016 (ref: 2016/3342/P) sought permission for the same development as is proposed in this application: *"Conversion of first, second and third floors from offices (B1a) to 4 x self-contained residential flats (2x1 bed and 2x2 bed) (C3) with associated alterations including 2 storey front infill extension and creation of 2 rear Juliet balconies."* For clarity, no part of the proposals made differ from that which was approved in 2016.

The principle of this development is further illustrated as acceptable by application (ref: 2015/4272/P) where under separate ownership, permission was obtained for the change of use of the first, second and third floors from B1 to C3 at 1-7 Woburn Walk, granted 14 December 2015.

The applicant requires further time in which to begin development works. As such, this application seeks to provide further time for implementation. Full details are set out within the Design, Access and Heritage Statement.

Planning Policy Considerations

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with a statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is also necessary to consider proposed development in the context of national policy which is a material consideration.

The relevant policy framework concerning the application proposal is summarised below:

National Policy

The NPPF published in February 2019 establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development as a thread running through the decision making.

The NPPF seeks to support high quality housing through sustainable forms of development.

In respect of heritage matters Policy 192 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- 1) The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

- 2) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- 3) The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The Technical Housing Standards provide minimum requirements for residential development and conversions to be applied nationally. 1 bedroom flats providing accommodation for 1 person should be at least 39sqm with 1.0sqm storage. 1 bedroom flats providing accommodation for 2 persons should be at least 50sqm with 1.5sqm storage. 2 bedroom flats for 3 persons should be minimum 61sqm with 2sqm storage.

Strategic Policy

The revised London Plan was adopted in March 2016 and forms part of the statutory development plan.

Policy 7.4 supports the provision of high quality housing in London which has regard to the pattern of the existing urban area; makes a positive contribution to local character and is informed by the surrounding historic environment.

Policy 7.8 concerns London's heritage assets and historic environment including conservation areas. It states that development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate. Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.

Local Policy

The following documents form part of the statutory development plan:

- Camden Core Strategy
- Camden Development Planning Policies
- Camden Planning Guidance

The relevant policies in respect of the revised proposals are as follows:

- H1 Maximising Housing Supply
- H6 Housing Choice and Mix
- E2 Employment premises and sites
- D1 Design
- D2 Heritage
- T1 Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport
- T2 Parking and car-free development
- CPG 2 Housing (Updated March 2019)

Planning Justification

The principle of converting the upper floor accommodation at the application site from office to residential use has been established by the extant permissions. These approvals are a significant material consideration in relation to this proposal. However, we set out below the planning justification for this proposal with regard to the above policy consideration.

Principle of Residential Use

The application site occupies a highly accessible Central London location where residential use is encouraged in principle by national, strategic and local planning policies.

There is an extant planning permission for residential use of the upper floors, in which the specific proposals are identical to those proposed in this statement and accords with the provisions of policy H1 and H6.

Accordingly, the proposed residential use accords with national planning policy and statutory development plan as a matter of principle.

Housing Matters

The proposal seeks to make the most efficient use of the available floorspace by forming 4 flats. This will maximise the opportunity to provide housing at the site and make a greater contribution to the Borough's strategic housing target than the extant permission.

The extant permission as established that the application premises is capable of providing an acceptable standard of housing having regard to access, layout and amenity. Equally, the scheme exceeds the minimum nationally prescribed space standards and will provide high quality housing.

The proposal provides a mix of units in accordance with local planning policy by providing 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation.

The proposal therefore accords with the provisions of national, strategic and local policy in terms of making most efficient use of a sustainable site to provide housing. The quality and mix of accommodation also accords with the National Technical Standards and the requirements of policies H1, H6 and CPG2.

Affordable Housing

The constraints of the listed building in association with the developments renovation (which is required to secure its future ensure its viability) is a material consideration.

Due regard has been taken to the London Plan (policy 3.13 'Affordable Housing Thresholds') which states "*Planning decisions and LDF preparation A Boroughs should normally require affordable housing provision on a site which has capacity to provide 10 or more homes,*"

Consideration has also been given to Policy H4 of the Local Plan, however, this application does not propose any additional residential floorspace, or additional residential dwellings than has already been approved by the extant permission for the same no. of homes within the same residential floorspace. This is also a material consideration in respect of the threshold requirement for the provision of affordable housing.

Heritage Matters

The extant listed building consent has established that certain internal alterations are acceptable where the historic fabric of the building is retained. The approved flat layouts therefore are dictated by location of original dividing walls, original features including fireplaces and window openings. Any further subdivision is provided by new stud partitioning which is reversible and does not affect the historic fabric. Poor quality later additions, such as UPVC windows within the third floor dormers and poor quality suspended ceilings are replaced with more appropriate materials. Return of the upper floor accommodation to a residential function was also determined to be a heritage benefit, representing the optimum viable use.

The proposal follows the above principles in terms of layout and beneficial improvements. Additionally it is proposed to remove the metal fire escape to the rear elevation and replace with sensitively designed metal balconies. The unsightly recess above the ground floor entrance will be improved by extending the front elevation of the modern stairwell forward. These are further beneficial improvements to the heritage asset that will not give rise to any significant impacts.

The above matters are further assessed with the Heritage Statement, which, in accordance Paragraph 189 of the NPPF, describes the significance of the heritage asset to be affected in a manner proportionate to both the asset's importance, and an understanding of the potential impact of proposals upon that significance. It demonstrates that the proposals will not give rise to any significant impacts and identifies the clear heritage benefits.

Accordingly, this application, like the extant permission, does not conflict with national, strategic or local planning policies concerning the protection of heritage and will give rise to beneficial improvements.

Accessibility

The proposals accessibility in terms of its current and proposed form is a constrained one. Due to the building's grade II* listed status, many of the methods in which to increase a building's accessibility are not possible.

The significance of this building and therefore the care which must be given to it does not allow for infrastructure such as lifts to be introduced without causing harm to the fabric of the building, which is fundamentally protected by the II* status.

The Building Regulations 2010 recognises that requirements for accessibility should be balanced against preserving historic buildings or environments. The building is limited in the modifications that can be implemented in which to improve the accessibility of the building.

Transport

As previously stated, the site is within a highly accessible Central London location located close to sustainable modes of transport. It is therefore a sustainable location for mixed use development including residential.

Like the current permission, the proposal will enable suitable provision for cycle parking (1 space per unit). Furthermore, the applicant is willing to enter into a Section 106 agreement to preclude future residents from obtaining parking permits.

The proposal therefore accords with policies T1 and T2 of the Local Plan.

Conclusion

The application is seeking planning permission and listed building consent in respect of a proposal to convert the upper floors of 1-7 Woburn Walk to residential to comprise 2 x 1 bed and 2 x 2 bed flats, for which planning permission was obtained both in December 2015 and October 2016.

Having regard to this site, the planning history and the relevant planning policy considerations, we have demonstrated that the proposals are acceptable in planning terms as follows:

- The proposals seek to make most efficient use of the site to provide housing in a highly sustainable location;

- The principle of returning the upper floors to residential use has already been established to be acceptable and beneficial and has been approved in two recent instances specific to the application site;
- High quality residential accommodation will be provided on the upper floors in line with the relevant planning standards;
- The proposed alterations to the building and residential function are acceptable and beneficial in terms of the architectural and historic merit of the building; and
- The proposal will comply with sustainable transport aspirations.

Accordingly, this proposal is a re-submission of an approved extant planning permission, which was supported in principle and as such accords with the NPPF and the statutory development plan. We respectfully request that planning and listed building consent are approved.

We trust that you find the application documents in order and look forward to receiving the validation notice in due course.

Yours Faithfully,

MAX TAYLOR
Planner
Montagu Evans LLP

E-mail: max.taylor@montagu-evans.co.uk