

# PLANNING STATEMENT

**7 John Street, London WC1N 2ES**

Planning permission is sought for the change of use of a Grade II listed building from office (B1) and residential flat (C3) on the top floor to its original use as a single family dwelling house (C3)

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December 2019

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

**1.1.** Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the listed building from office (B1) and residential flat (C3) on the top floor to its original use as a dwelling house (C3). This application solely relates to the principle of the change of use and no building works are proposed. Any resultant physical internal alterations necessary will be dealt with under a separation cover by submission of a listed building application.

**1.2.** The proposal has been designed to fully comply with the National Planning Policy Framework 2019, The London Plan (adopted and draft), The Camden Plan 2017, The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2011, and Camden Planning Guidance Amenity March 2018.

## **2. SITE DESCRIPTION**

**2.1.** The existing property comprises a Grade II listed building, which forms part of a Neo-Georgian terrace dating from 1754-59. The property is a 4 storey mid terrace building comprised of multi-coloured stock brick. The majority of its neighbours are in residential use, with the exception of a diplomatic mission at No. 8 and the Lady Ottoline public house on the corner, fronting Northington Street.

**2.2.** The building benefits from a mixed use permission for offices at basement, ground, first and second floors with a residential flat on the top floor.

**2.3.** The site is allocated within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area (Sub Area 10 – Great James Street / Bedford Row) and Central London Area. Paragraph 5.182 refers to John Street - “The town houses along John Street, Doughty Street and Guilford Street are of significance as they are almost complete Georgian streets, lined with terraces. John Street dates from the mid 18th century”.

**2.4.** The area benefits from controlled parking (Camden Zone CA -D) residents permit holders only between the hours of Monday to Friday 8.30am to 6.30pm and Saturdays 8.30 am to 1.30 pm. The occupiers would have a right to residential parking permit(s) in line with Council parking policies.

2.5. The building is rated as a mixed use building by the Valuation Office as follows: Extract from valuation office web site (<https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/business-rates-find/summary/19334777000?uarn=9838062000>)

**PARTS OF THE PROPERTY**

Basement	Office	33.9	£175.00	£5,933
Basement	Office	37.1	£175.00	£6,493
Ground	Office	58.1	£350.00	£20,335
First	Office	33.9	£350.00	£11,865
First	Office	38.9	£350.00	£13,615
Second	Office	36.6	£332.50	£12,170
Second	Office	35.7	£332.50	£11,870

Extract from Council Tax Register of the Valuation Office  
<http://cti.voa.gov.uk/cti/BandDetail.asp?lcn=0>

Flat at 3rd Floor, 7 John Street, London WC1N 2ES – LA reference number 5152492; Band F.

2.6. It is clear from public records that a mixed use comprising of office at basement, ground, first and second floors and a residential flat at third floor level has persisted for more than 10 years.

2.7. The relevant planning decisions are as follows:

- 17/03/1978 – Planning permission for the erection of a new portico and conversion works to provide office accommodation on basement, ground, first and second floors and flat on the third floor Ref 6221.
- 17/03/1978 – Listed Building Consent for internal alterations to offices on basement, ground, first and second floor levels and to provide flat on the third floor. Removal of render on front elevation and formation of new portico. Ref. B1874

### **3. PROPOSAL OVERVIEW**

**3.1.** Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the existing listed building from office (B1) at basement, ground, first and second floors (B1) and third floor residential flat (C3) to a single family dwelling house (C3). This application solely relates to the principle of the change of use and no building works are proposed at this stage.

**3.2.** The use of the building was originally built as a Georgian terrace house and has been converted in more recent history to an office use. The proposal restores the original use and layout of the listed building.

### **4. PRINCIPLE OF REDEVELOPMENT**

**4.1.** This application relates solely to returning the use back to its original residential use. The property is currently being used for office use with residential on the top floor. Modern office accommodation seeks more open plan accommodation, rather than various smaller rooms on various floors. These Georgian properties were not constructed for commercial use and are not suitable to provide modern amenities required by tenants, such as Information Technology, raised floors, air conditioning/comfort cooling, lifts. As the property has 5 floors including the basement, it makes it difficult for office users to work between floors. Importantly employers need to provide DDA compliant work spaces and with no lifts between the 5 floors and a staircase to access the property, and these historic properties do not comply with legal requirements for businesses. Due to its Listed status, internal alterations to the historic plan form are unlikely to be acceptable. Therefore, the proposal restores its original residential use class and brings it back into viable use. This accords with Policy D2, which seeks to secure a viable use for the heritage asset and to preserve the heritage asset for future generations. It also avoids any harmful alterations associated with providing modern office facilities.

**4.2.** The existing residential use has to be accessed through the shared common parts – this is clearly not ideal and will concern any incoming office users in terms of security.

**4.3.** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraph 184 states “Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation”

**4.4.** The proposal ensures this dwelling house is restored to its original use and not neglected. The proposal is now the only viable use consistent with its original use of the building as originally constructed.

**4.5.** The National Planning Policy Framework also seeks “To support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay”. This proposal provides a large family dwelling house for the borough. Policy H1 of Camden’s Local Plan also seeks to maximize the housing supply. Policy H1 seeks to return vacant homes to use and ensure homes are occupied, this site returns vacant office to its original residential use. Policy H7 seeks to provides a range of large and small homes, this provides for the latter and provides an additional family dwelling.

**4.6.** The proposed change of use to residential is part of the established character of John Street and its neighbouring streets. The following planning applications have been granted in the last 10 years for conversions from office to residential and it is clear that the principle of restoring the original residential use has been accepted.

**4.7.** Planning applications in John Street approved for change of use to residential use class:

- 2017/0002/P - 19 John Street London WC1N 2DL
- 2015/2037/P - 10 John Street London WC1N 2EB
- 2013/7509/P - 12 John Street London WC1N 2EB
- 2013/3923/P - 15 John Street London WC1N 2EB
- 2013/1479/P - 20 John Street London WC1N 2DR
- 2012/2735/P - 27 John Street London WC1N 2BX

- 2012/5456/P - 16 John Street London WC1N 2DL
- 2011/4196/P - John Kirk House 31 - 32 John Street London WC1N 2AT
- 2011/2832/P - Conquest House 37-38 John Street London WC1N 2BQ

## **5. LOSS OF OFFICE SPACE**

**5.1.** Policy E2 seeks to protect sites suitable for continued business use, unless the site is no longer suitable for its existing business use. As explained above, the site is no longer suitable for modern office use, due to the limitations placed by the need to protect and /or enhance heritage assets. The site was vacated by a previous law firm earlier this year and it is temporarily occupied in the interim. There is a supply of modern office accommodation in Camden better suited for modern businesses as demonstrated in Appendix 1. Appendix 1 lists 100 properties in the postcode WC1 which are vacant serviced offices, including many nearby and on John Street. The office lettings market for secondary/tertiary offices has completely faltered with many landlords and tenants being unable to let office space for any money. Jones Lang Le Salle brought to the market numerous units in Chancery House at nil rent to just cover their overheads. These offices are fully fitted.

**5.2.** At Euston Tower on the 26th floor with panoramic views the office space is offered at £4 per sq ft - clearly an unviable rent.

**5.3.** The nearest comparables for self-contained office buildings in the vicinity are:-

- 8 & 9 Montague Street, WC1 - Restored self-contained office buildings on one of the best Bloomsbury thoroughfares. Both buildings have been on the market since June and are offering significant rental incentives to affect a letting and to date there is no interest.
- 12 John Street - This property has been available since March 2019 and still has not let.
- 101 St John Street - A self-contained warehouse style office has been available since October with no lettings yet and not much interest.

**5.4.** It is clear therefore that there is an oversupply of office space in the immediate area and therefore there is no reason why a new business would choose to occupy this listed building

with its lack of DDA compliance and lack of ability to alter or adapt the premises for modern business needs.

## **6. DESIGN**

**6.1.** There are no physical alterations proposed at this stage. No external changes are proposed. Any internal alterations required will be subject of a separate listed building application.

### **QUALITY OF ACCOMODATION**

**6.2.** This application is solely for change of use. However, the size of the property will allow for a very generous sized residential property in excess of the minimum Technical Housing standards. Any necessary internal alterations will be subject of a separate listed building application. The proposal is simply to establish that reverting the building back to it's original residential use would be acceptable and will accord with the development plan policies. The proposed house would have a large rear garden of 137 sq. providing outdoor amenity space for any future residents.

### **IMPACT ON THE RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES OF ADJOINING PROPERTIES**

**6.3.** There are no external changes proposed. The existing property has good proportioned Georgian windows providing a good level of daylight and sunlight to all rooms. All rooms have a good outlook and properties are spaced sufficiently to ensure there is no loss of privacy involved in the change of use. John Street is a wide road allowing sufficient window to window distance with neighbours.

## **7. TRANSPORT AND CYCLE SPACES**

**7.1.** The site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 6A and is well served by public transport. There are 8 nearby bus stops and Chancery Lane underground station is under 10 minutes walk away. There are no off street spaces. The site is situated within a controlled parking zone CA-D, with spaces outside the site are for a car club, diplomatic spaces and also for residential permit holders. There would be less parking associated with a residential property

rather than a commercial use of the site. Cycle spaces would be provided in the rear garden of the property to meet the Council's bicycle standards.

## **8. REFUSE**

**8.1.** Refuse collection and servicing will continue as per the existing arrangement, from the street. The proposal, if approved, will operate the Council recycling scheme. It is envisaged refuse will be brought out on day of collection and empty bins taken back straight after collection.

## **9. ACCESS**

**9.1.** There are no changes to the existing access arrangements to the front of the property.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

**10.1.** Planning permission is sought for the change of use of a Grade II listed building from office (B1) and residential flat (C3) on the top floor to its original use as a single family dwelling house (C3).

**10.2.** This application solely relates to the principle of the change of use and no building works are proposed at this stage. No external works are required. If any internal works are necessary a separate listed building application will be submitted in due course.

**10.3.** The proposal returns a listed building back to its original use and preserves a heritage asset for future generations. It provides a new large dwelling in accordance with the Camden Development Plan and NPPF seeking to provide more homes.

**10.4.** The proposal fully complies with the National Planning Policy Framework 2019, National Planning Policy Framework 2019, The London Plan (adopted and draft), The Camden Plan 2017, The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2011, and Camden Planning Guidance Amenity March 2018.

**10.5.** For these reasons it considered planning permission should be granted for the proposed change of use.



Appendix 1 - Map from Estates Gazette Property Link website showing 102 offices to rent in the post code WC1

