

MRPP

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**PLANNING AND HERITAGE
STATEMENT**

**RETENTION OF GLASS AND
STEEL ENCLOSURE**

10B WARREN MEWS, LONDON

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement is submitted in support of a retrospective planning application for the retention of a glass and steel enclosure at 10B Warren Mews.
- 1.2 The enclosure was erected to provide greater security for the building and to create a safer access. The enclosure also provides an effective barrier against water ingress during poor weather conditions and signals the arrival to a building in commercial use. Less effective and attractive measures have been implemented in the past which this enclosure has replaced.
- 1.3 This Statement will firstly describe the property and local context as well as the enclosure and reasons for its installation and retention. This is followed by an appraisal of the relevant decision-taking framework. The merits of the proposal are then considered in the context of relevant policy and other material considerations. Conclusions are then drawn.

2. CONTEXT AND PROPOSAL

- 2.1 10B Warren Mews comprises the rear component of 106 Cleveland and is formed of two-storey, flat-roofed extension to the main property. The building, and indeed all of Warren Mews is located within the Fitzroy Square Conservation Area. Various photos of the mews, subject property and enclosure can be found at Appendix 1. Access to the property is gained via Warren Mews, an attractive, cobbled street set between both Cleveland Street and Conway Street, and accessed via an undercroft from Warren Street.
- 2.2 Because of the gradual reduction in the street level of Warren Mews relative to Cleveland Street, the rear projection of the subject property reads from Warren Mews as upper and lower ground floors, with split stairs providing access to each level from the mews.
- 2.3 This application seeks the retention of a glass and steel enclosure over these split stairs. The enclosure has a ridge height of 2.95m and an eaves height of 2.25m and is positioned at the top of the steps leading to the lower ground floor and the foot of the steps leading to the ground floor. The enclosure has a mono-pitched roof and is constructed from painted steel frames with glazed infill panels.
- 2.4 The enclosure infills the corner between 10B Warren Mews and a more recent extension to the rear of 108 Cleveland Street. This extension forms the entrance to a contemporary mews house, constructed from grey brickwork, steel frame, glazing and zinc panelling. The extension extends the width of the rear of 108 Cleveland Street and measures approximately 5.6m in height. This extension is an example of some of the more recent change that has occurred in the mews.
- 2.5 Buildings on the eastern side of the mews have a continuous roofline and are constructed from yellow brick with redbrick arches above windows. The rhythm

of openings is consistent throughout this terrace and, overall, the eastern side of Warren Mews has a uniform, repetitive appearance.

- 2.6 The western side is distinctively different and has undergone significant change, through extensions and alterations, some of which deviate radically from Warren Mews' original character and display disordered charm. The roofline fluctuates between one and two storeys and there are gaps in places between buildings opening views to the rear of buildings on Cleveland Street. The style of roofs here also varies between flat roofs, gabled and mono-pitched roofs. Fenestration here is also irregular, whilst colour and texture of material also vary, including a white-rendered building and a building with a duck-egg blue painted facade.
- 2.7 Overall, the character of Warren Mews varies considerably, particularly on the western side where rear extensions to properties on Cleveland Street show eclectic form and design. A series of photos are provided in appendix 1.
- 2.8 This mixed character is recognised in Paragraph 6.31 of the Fitzroy Square CAA (2010) which confirms that Warren Mews *"has been substantially redeveloped along its eastern side"*, whereas the western side comprises *"historic mews buildings... of small scale... a low roofline, varying in height between one and two storeys"*. The CAA also confirm that the rear of buildings on Cleveland Street are *"less ordered than its more classical front and therefore has an intrinsic charm"*. Paragraph 6.51 comments that *"views through the archway (ie, from Warren Street into the mews) are terminated by No. 10 Warren Mews, a solid 19th century stock brick mews property"*.¹
- 2.9 The subject property at 10B Warren Mews nestles between the solidity of 8/9 Warren Mews and the variation of rear extensions to the rear of properties on Cleveland Street. From the archway, it manifests merely as a sliver, 1.5 storeys

¹ There appears to be an error in the CAA here. The building terminating Warren Mews (i.e. as its far southern end) is 8/9 Warren Mews)

high relative to 'street level' with its flat roof quite obvious to views down the mews. The building does not contribute positively to the character of the mews. From the archway, part of the building is now blocked from view by the rear extension at 108 Cleveland Street.

Background

- 2.10 In the past, the steps down to the lower ground floor of 10B Warren Mews had become an unpleasant trap for wet leaves, rainwater and litter, blocking drains and creating a slippery and unsafe access to 10B Warren Mews. Due to the property's location by several pubs and bars, and given the enclosed character of Warren Mews, this location has also witnessed antisocial behaviour, including urinating, defecating and the discarding of drug paraphernalia.
- 2.11 For practical reasons (primarily safety and security) the owner of 10B Warren Mews erected in 1992 a 'cage' structure around the steps, (see photo at Appendix 2). However, constructed from black-painted steel mesh, the cage was unattractive and somewhat at odds with the charm of the mews. The cage did not appear to benefit from planning permission though would have been immune from enforcement action by virtue of its existence since 1992.
- 2.12 The cage was replaced with a glass and steel enclosure that supports the ongoing beneficial occupation of the property. It serves as a more effective and attractive measure for counteracting the issues that the property has previously faced, primarily by providing a weather-proof entry to the property.
- 2.13 The building has been the subject of a number of planning applications, all of which occurred during the 1980s and involved various extensions and alterations to the property. These were all granted.

3. DECISION TAKING FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 It is instructive to determine whether the proposal constitutes 'development', defined by Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as "*the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land*"). As a building operation, the enclosure to the rear of Warren Mews appears to satisfy the definition.
- 3.2 It is then necessary to assess whether any permitted development rights exist. This can be complicated by conditions imposed on previous grants of planning permission, the particular use of the building, the Conservation Area status of the Mews and possible Article 4 Directions. Given the Council's position relating to the enclosure, this application is submitted purely for expediency and without prejudice to whether in fact, permitted development right may exist.
- 3.3 The following section reviews the policy and related environment in which a decision must be taken here. The Camden Local Plan was adopted in 2017 and ought therefore, to be in general conformity with the NPPF and London Plan (ie, having been adopted following publication of these documents). However, the NPPF has subsequently been twice re-visited, whilst the new London Plan will be adopted imminently. It may be that policy and the decision-making environment need to be subsequently reviewed in the determination of this application.

Design

- 3.4 Policy D1 of the adopted Camden Local Plan sets out the Council's primary decision taking policy on design of new development. It sets out no less than 20 criteria, though only several are relevant to the proposed retention of the enclosure at 10B Warren Mews, as follows:

- a. respects local context and character;
 - b. preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2;
 - d. is of sustainable and durable construction and adoptable to different activities and land uses;
 - e. comprises details and materials that one of high quantity and complement local character;
 - g. is inclusive and accessible for all;
 - i. is secure and designed to minimise crime and antisocial behaviour.
- 3.5 Consistent with the NPPF, Policy D1 also confirms that the Council will “*resist development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way its functions*”.
- 3.6 These criteria are given further consideration at Paragraphs 7.2 to 7.38 of the Local Plan and again, not all sections are relevant, particularly having regard to the very minor nature of the development. However, within ‘Local Context and Character’, is the need for development to consider “*character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings*”, and the “*character and proportions of the existing building where alterations and extensions are proposed*”. This is of particular importance here, bearing mind the purpose of the enclosure is the need to consider “*the sustainability of the proposed design to its intended use*”.

Employment

- 3.7 The entirety of 10B Warren Mews is in commercial use, primarily by small businesses. Policy E1 of the Local Plan confirms the Council will “*support businesses of all sizes, in particular start-ups, small and medium sized enterprises*”. Policy E2 expressly “*protects premises or sites that are suitable for continued business use, in particular for small business, businesses and services that provide employment for Camden residents...*” whilst there are no

policies relating specifically to alterations and additions to commercial properties, there is evidently implicit support for development which helps maintain and/or enhance the operation of buildings currently in commercial use; which is consistent with the NPPF's acknowledgement that "*significant weight should be placed upon the need to support economic growth and productivity*".

Amenity

3.8 Within a narrow mews, the impact of the development on surrounding properties must be carefully assessed. Policy A1 of the Camden Local Plan is concerned with "*managing the impact of development*" and the following factors, which form part of the Council's decision-making process are relevant to this development:

- e) visual privacy, outlook;
- f) sunlight, daylight and overshadowing;

Heritage

3.9 The property is located within the Fitzroy Square Conservation Area. Policy D2 of the Camden's Local Plan sets out the Council's policy on designated heritage assets, with an overall objective to:

"preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens and locally listed heritage assets."

3.10 Policy D2 continues, stating that the Council will "*require that development within Conservation Areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area*".

4. APPRAISAL

Design

- 4.1 In terms of counteracting the issues that have affected the property in the past, the glass and steel enclosure provides a more effective measure than its predecessor, the cage. Firstly, the weather-proof enclosure prevents the build-up of leaves, rainwater and litter from forming on the steps to the lower ground floor. This is contrasted with the penetrable cage, which provided an ineffective barrier, meaning that the steps would become hazardous. In accordance with the “principles of high-quality design”, set out in Camden’s Planning Guidance on Design, the current enclosure ensures that routes to 10B Warren Mews are safe and easily accessible.
- 4.2 Furthermore, regarding the standard and use of materials, the glass and steel enclosure represents a design of higher quality and sustainability than the cage. The materials are durable, and the steel frames provide a sense of solidity which compares well with the metal framed glazing on the lower floor of 10B Warren Mews and the robust and ‘chunky’ steel columns and beams of the extension to 108 Cleveland Street.
- 4.3 The use of glass also maximises sunlight reaching the lower ground floor of the property and offers clear visibility of the steps for those approaching the building. Thus, in compliance with the Borough’s Planning Guidance on Design and the ‘principles of high-quality design’, the glass and steel enclosure has been more effective in ensuring clear legibility of routes to 10B Warren Mews as well as improving the use of the property for commercial purposes.
- 4.4 In terms of appearance, while the cage was able to provide safety and security, it did so by unattractive and utilitarian means. In creating a glass buffer between the street and the doorway to 10B Warren Mews, the enclosure can subtly maintain the safety and security of the property. Complying with Policy D1 of

the Camden Local Plan, the enclosure has therefore been designed to minimise crime and antisocial behaviour, “*without appearing overbearing or intimidating*”.

4.5 Through attractive design, the glass and steel enclosure are able to integrate with its immediate surroundings. The enclosure is aligned with the adjoining extension at 108 Cleveland Street, (granted approval in 2012 REF:2012/5388/P), which was deemed by the Case Officer to “*preserve the character and appearance of the main building and would not cause harm to the Conservation Area*”. Like the adjacent extension, the enclosure has a mono-pitched roof and is constructed using glazing. Similarly, the steel frames painted in charcoal grey reflect the dark painted steel beams of next door. The use of exposed steel across the two enclosures has a subtle and modern appearance, much like lightweight construction. The enclosure respects local context and therefore, satisfies Policy D1 of the Local Plan. Conversely, the utilitarian design of the cage failed to form any architectural relationship with its surroundings.

4.6 The use of glass and steel creates an attractive enclosure, acting as an appropriate entrance to a business operating from 10B Warren Mews. In contrast, the appearance if the ‘cage’, which was constructed from black-painted steel mesh, represented an uninviting structure that failed to signal the entrance to a commercial business. Consequently, the development satisfies policy E1 of the Borough’s Local Plan, creating an environment in which a small enterprise can attract and retain clients and therefore grow. The enclosure is of an appropriate scale fulfilling this purpose.

Amenity

4.7 A letter from the Council dated 23rd October 2019 claimed that the enclosure “*blocks a window to no.10a (Warren Mews)*”. However, as demonstrated in Appendix 3, this statement gives a misleading representation of the circumstances. Firstly, half of the subject opening is covered by opaque zinc

panelling. Secondly, this window is largely blocked from the inside by a spiral staircase within 10A Warren Mews, which leaves only a small opening of unobstructed glazing. It is therefore evident that this corner of the building was not designed to be 10A Warren Mews' main source of sunlight and outlook.

- 4.8 It is significant to point out that sunlight does not struggle to reach the interior of 10A Warren Mews. The drawings and photos at Appendix 3 shows that the building was designed to maximise sunlight entering the building. Indeed, there is a significant band of glazing which extends from the ground floor of the front elevation to the roofline, allowing sunlight into the property. This glazing continues to run across the roof of 10A Warren Mews and the property also benefits from open lightwells to the front, which extend from the basement floor to the roof. Any minor obstruction of the subject window is by a glass enclosure. Therefore, light is still able to reach the property and outlook is maintained. The enclosure does not pose any risk to the privacy enjoyed by residents of 10A Warren Mews. For the above reasons, retention of the enclosure is then compliant with Policy A1 of the Camden Local Plan.

Heritage

- 4.9 As previously described, the western side of the mews displays great irregularity of design, owing to its variety of colour, materials, textures and building heights and styles. The Fitzroy Square CAA, identifies the western side of the mews has "*less ordered*" charm, allowing for larger developments such as that of 10A Warren Mews subtle developments such as the glass and steel enclosure discussed. Before, the cage was neither an original mews structure nor of a high-quality design that integrated with the character of the mews. In this context, complying with Policy D2 of the Borough's Local Plan, the development does not impact on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

- 4.10 As a heritage asset, the significance of Fitzroy Square should be sustained. The enclosure's use of glass allows for the building behind it to continue to be 'read' and thus protects details of the Conservation Area. For example, the Fitzroy Square CAA refers to the London stock brick facades or granite setts, typical of the area's mews, which continue to be visible as a result the use of glass. The glass also provides reading of the stone beam across the basement door and the change in relief between 8/9 Warren Mews and 10B Warren Mews. In accordance with Policy D2 of the Borough's Local Plan, the enclosure attached at the rear, protects the appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 4.11 The frames of the enclosure are painted charcoal grey, a colour that is widely noticed throughout Warren Mews. Indeed, a number of building facades, rear extensions, window frames and doors within the mews, are painted this colour. The choice of colour is therefore in accordance with Policy D2 of the Borough's Local Plan, seeking to enhance the character of the Conservation Area.
- 4.12 It is acknowledged that 10B Warren Mews forms part of the truncation of views down the mews, when views from the ordinary at 31/33 Warren Street. However, the use of glass allows the form of 10B to continue to be read, whilst in their distant views, the lightweight steel frame blends into the general paraphernalia present in the street. That view cannot be said to be hammered by retention of the enclosure.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This statement accompanies and application for the permanent retention of a glass and steel enclosure at 10B Warren Mews. This replaced the previous metal mesh 'cage'. The enclosure is of great importance to the ongoing beneficial occupation of the property, signalling the arrival to the premises, providing shelter from the elements, enhancing safety and improving the security of the building. It is superior in all respects to that which it replaced.
- 5.2 The enclosure is modest and of a scale which is entirely proportionate to the building to which it is attached. It is subservient to that property and constructed from materials, and is in such a way, as to minimise its effect on the host building and the character of the mews. The use of glass and steel is common in the mews, partially at the adjacent buildings. Views down the mews are unaffected, both because of the enclosure's scale and transparency. It is seen as part of the paraphernalia of the mews and adds to its eclectic charm.
- 5.3 There is no negative impact on local amenity. The window to the adjoining property is, in fact, part zinc (ie, opaque) and part glazed, and when viewed internally is comprised of a small opening, largely blocked by an internal staircase. The adjoining property has many other windows and in any event, the enclosure is constructed of glass and continues to facilitate views.
- 5.4 The retention of the enclosure would meet relevant policy tests and will preserve and enhance the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area. We respectfully ask that planning permission is granted.

APPENDIX 1

Glass and steel enclosure to 10B Warren Mews



Extension at 10A Warren Mews.



Eastern side of Warren Mews



Western side of Warren Mews.



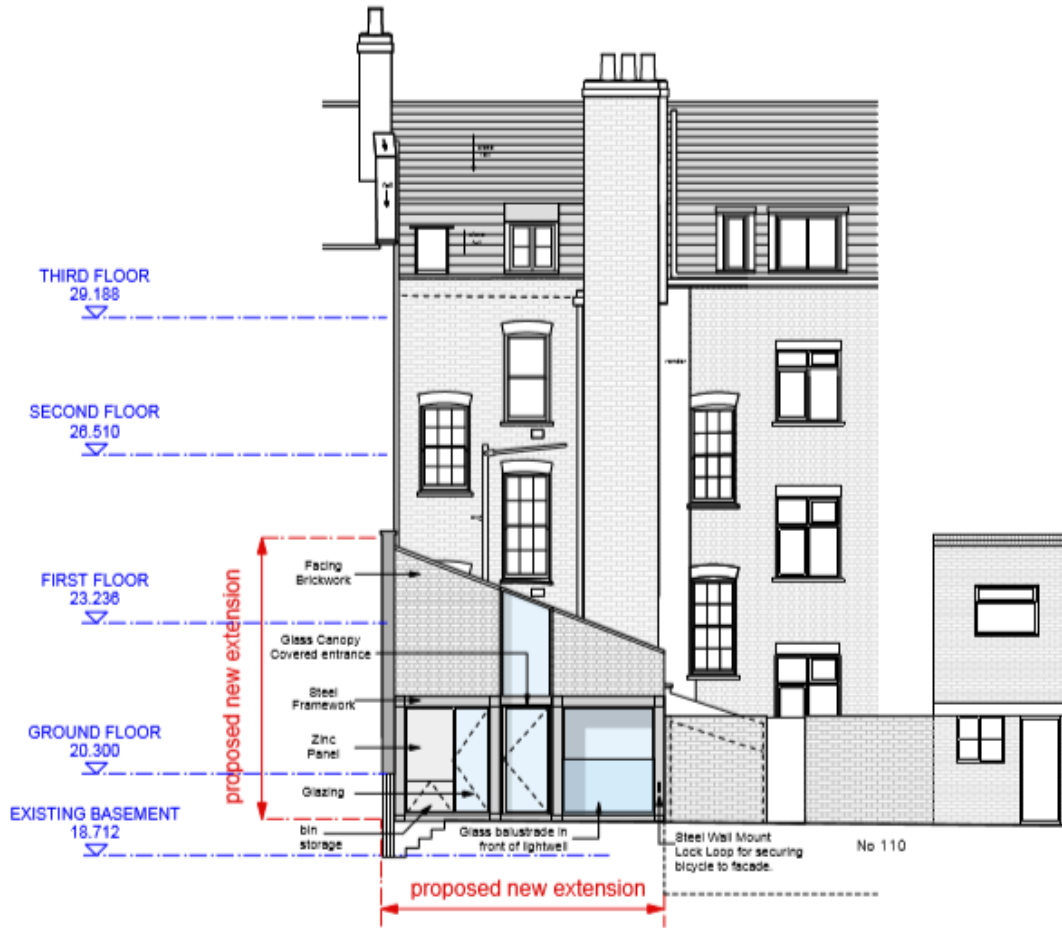
APPENDIX 2

Photo of the 'cage', prior to the erection of the glass and steel enclosure.



APPENDIX 3

Approved drawing of 10A Warren Mews (Norton Ellis Architects)



Proposed Rear Elevation (Warren Mews)

Image taken from Dexter's' property brochure for 10A Warren Mews, showing wide openings facing out towards the mews and the small opening obscured by the staircase serving the mezzanine study.

