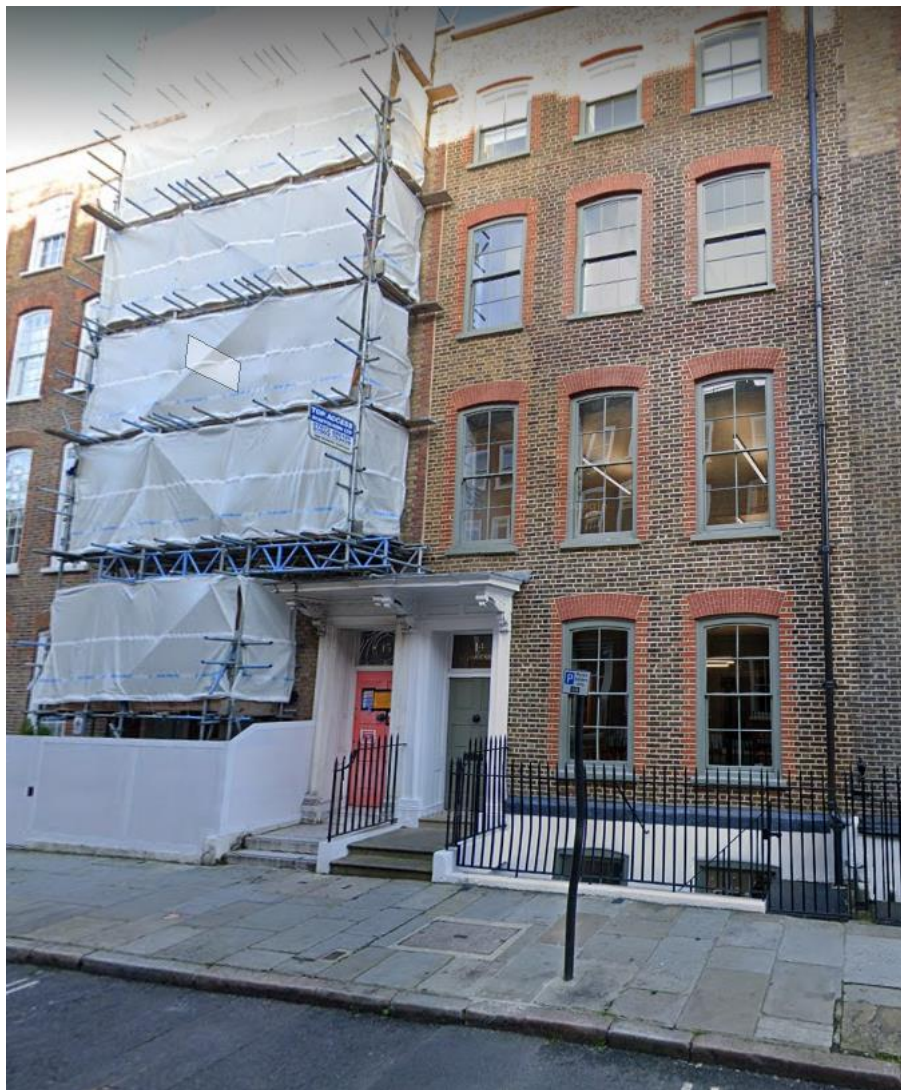


Planning and Heritage Statement

14 Great James Street, London W8C1N 3DP



Planning Statement

14 Great James Street, London WC1N 3DP



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the following development at 14 Great James Street, London WC1N 3DP.

“Change of use from Use Class E Commercial, Business and Service use to single residential dwelling (Use Class C3)”

- 1.2. This statement provides the background information on the site and an assessment of the proposals in relation to planning policy and other material considerations, and is set out under the following sections

- 1.3. This Statement is divided into the following sections:

- **Section 2** describes the existing site and surrounding area;
- **Section 3** outlines the planning history of the site;
- **Section 4** provides a description of the proposed development;
- **Section 5** outlines the relevant Planning Policy Framework and Planning Considerations;
- **Section 6** draws together our conclusions in respect of the overall proposals.

- 1.4. This statement should be read in conjunction with the following documents submitted in support of the application:

- Proposed plans prepared by Peek Architects
- Design and Access Statement prepared by Peek Architects;

- 1.5. A listed building consent application (awaiting validation) has previously been submitted for internal alterations to this property.

2. Site and Surroundings

- 2.1. This report was prepared in support of a planning application at 14 Great James Street, an 18th century four storey over basement property situated on the east side of Great James Street. The property faces west onto Great James Street. The building was originally built as a town house but has been in commercial use over the years. It is currently unoccupied but was last in use as offices.



Fig. 1 – Site Location (outlined in red)

- 2.2. The property forms part of a Grade II* listed terrace (Nos. 3-16 inclusive). The listing describes the buildings being constructed from brown brick with some later refacing in multi-coloured stock brick. The terrace comprises of four storey properties with three windows per floor across the front elevation which establishes a rhythm along the terrace of repeated window and door openings. The buildings on the opposite side of Great James Street are a mix of both Grade II and Grade II* listed. The property also benefits from elements such as architraved door cases and a timber panelled front door which is found in other properties along the street.
- 2.3. The site is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Great James Street and Bedford Row are a sub-area within the wider conservation area which is noted for townhouses being built in long terraces with rear mews. This fine grain remains an important characteristic and the continuous building frontage created by the terraces creates a strong sense of enclosure. Although Great James Street shares many of the characteristics of the main streets (Great Bedford Street John Street etc.), it is generally narrower and less grand in nature. The townhouses in Great James Street are

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particularly well preserved which is acknowledged by the Grade II* listing. The conservation area appraisal notes that whilst the properties were once all in residential use the area is now mixed with both residential and commercial uses.

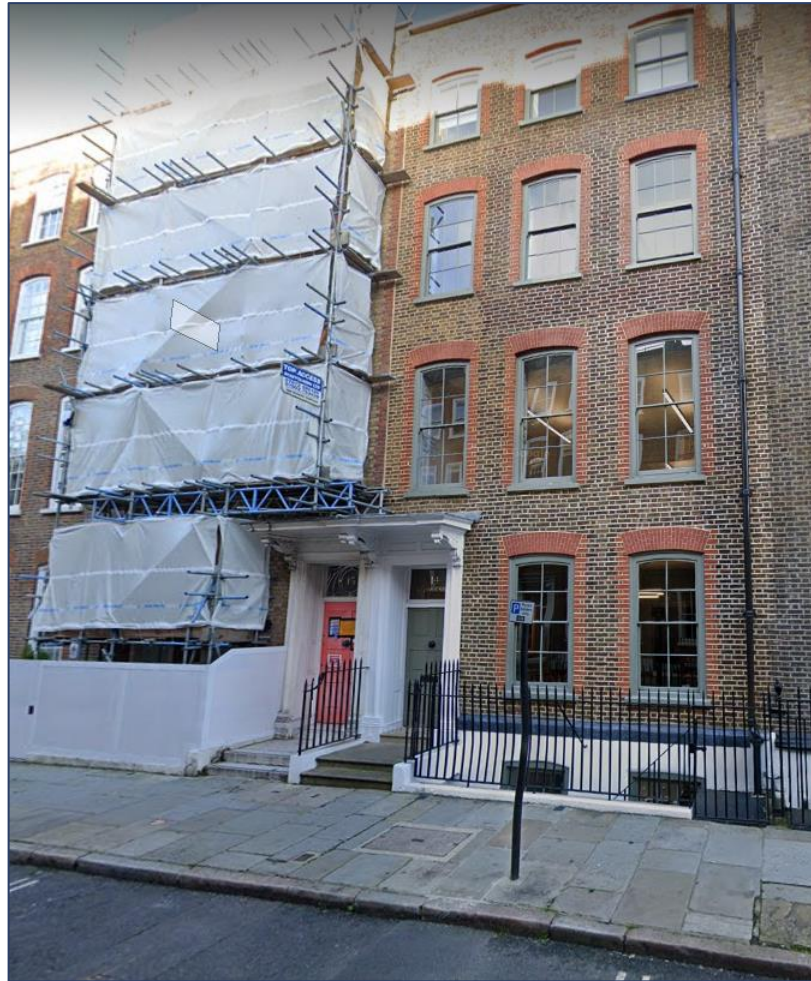


Fig. 2 – Front elevation of property

- 2.4. The site is located just to the north of Theobalds Road. Theobalds Road is noted as being an east-west thoroughfare which was originally built as a royal route. The road maintains its important function as a main thoroughfare within modern London it is characterised by mainly commercial uses in former residential properties alongside some large institutional building such as Holborn Library.

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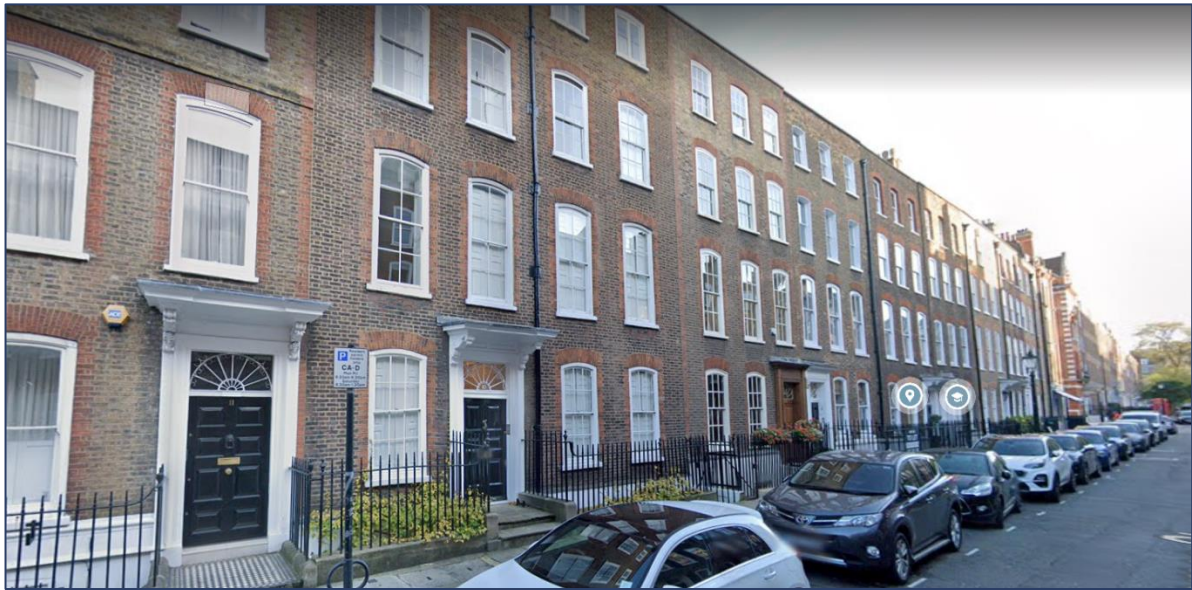


Fig. 3 – Surrounding area

3. Planning History

3.1 A search of the Council's website was conducted to determine any relevant planning history relating to the subject site.

Reference	Description of Development	Decision
00229	Erection of extension of basement, ground and three floors over, for office use.	Granted 12/07/1965
29432(R)	Change of use of the ground floor from offices to use for educational purposes.	Granted 14/12/1979
8703721 & 870535	Alterations and rear extension to accommodate new lift and toilets.	Granted 05/05/1988
2006/2587/A & 2006/2588/L	Installation of a bracket and pole for the display of a flag to the front elevation between ground and 1st floor levels of the office building (Class B1).	Refused 14/08/2006
2013/3114/P	Change of use of existing office building (Class B1a) to single family dwelling (Class C3), to include the erection of a two-storey rear extension at lower ground and ground floor level with terraces at ground and first floor level following demolition of existing two storey extension, alterations to rear facade, and erection of dormer and terrace at rear roof level.	Granted 10/01/2014
2015/3046/P	Erection of a two storey rear extension at lower and ground floor level with a terrace and meeting room at first floor level following demolition of the existing two storey extensions, alterations to rear façade including extension at 1 st to 3 rd floor level, associated internal restoration and erection of a dormer and terrace at rear roof level and installation of 3 rooflights.	Granted 08/2010 This permission has been implemented and built out on site

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<i>15 Great James Street</i>		
2013/3404/L	External alterations to include rebuilding rear building elevation following demolition of existing rear extensions, dormer roof extension and associated internal alterations in association with the conversion of existing office (Class B1a) into single family dwelling (Class C3)	Granted 22 January 2014

- 3.2 As the above list indicates, previous applications for change of use from commercial (Use Class E) to residential (Use Class C3) have been approved for the site and its neighbour at no. 15.
- 3.3 There have also been numerous permissions granted for similar applications in the immediate vicinity including at nos. 11-12 and 31 Great James Street, 16, 20 and 27 John Street and 25 John's Mews. All of these have been listed buildings being restored to their original residential use, as is the case with this proposal.
- 3.4 The officer's report for the 2013 application (ref: 2013/3114/P) advised that the loss of business / office floorspace was appropriate at this location as the building was not fit for current purposes and would not be suitable for any other business uses. It was also acknowledged that the provision of office space around the Kings Cross and Euston area would provide surplus office space within the borough therefore the loss of employment floorspace is considered to be acceptable in this instance, and would not be contrary to the adopted local plan.

4. Proposed Development

- 4.1. The development proposes the change of use from office (Use Class E) to a single residential dwelling (Use Class C3). The proposed alterations required to create the residential dwelling are covered under a separated listed building consent application which has been submitted under planning portal reference **PP-XXX** which has been submitted to the London Borough of Camden and is awaiting validation.
- 4.2. The proposals seek to convert the existing inefficient office floorspace back to a single family residential dwelling. This will be carried out by restoring a more traditional floorplan whilst incorporating a variety of heritage benefits. This will result in the provision of an additional family sized dwelling within this part of the Borough.
- 4.3. Where possible the proposed residential conversion will restore many of the original features and will remove unsympathetic modern features which were required whilst the building was in use as an office. The scheme will provide a sympathetic restoration of the property whilst providing a 4 bedroom family sized unit for the owner of the property whilst contributing to the wider Borough housing targets.

5. Planning Policy Assessment

- 5.1. This section outlines the relevant national and local planning and listed building policies against which the proposals are considered.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 5.3. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 10). Paragraph 7 notes that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the future. Paragraph 9 goes on to say that planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions but in doing so should take local circumstances into account and reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.
- 5.4. The NPPF provides the Government's national planning policy on the conservation of the historic environment. Paragraph 190 states that:

'Local Planning Authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal'.

- 5.5. The NPPF at paragraph 192 advises that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
- The desirability and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability; and
 - The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 5.6. The NPPG chapter on the historic environment advises at paragraph 16 that where a heritage asset is capable of having a use, then securing its optimum viable use should be taken into account in assessing the public benefits of a proposed development. In respect of what constitutes the optimum viable use of a heritage asset and how it is taken into account in planning decisions, paragraph 15 advises that it is important that any use is viable not just for the owner but for the future conservation of the asset. If there are a range of economically viable uses, the optimum viable use is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset, not just through necessary initial changes but also as a result of wear and tear and likely future changes.

- 5.7. Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies.

Local and Regional Policy

- 5.8. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that any planning application must be determined in accordance with the development plan for the area unless any material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.9. For the purposes of section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, the 'Development Plan' comprises the London Plan 2021 and the Camden Local Plan (2017).
- 5.10. The London Plan and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area appraisal are also material considerations.
- 5.11. The following section sets out the considerations of the proposed development in relation to planning policy and guidance under the following headings:
- Land use;
 - Affordable Housing;
 - Heritage Assets
 - Residential Standards.

Land use

- 5.12. This application proposes the conversion of the existing Use Class E office floorspace back to its original use as a single family dwelling. The property was originally built as a single family dwelling as part of the wider terrace along Great James Street.
- 5.13. The restoration of the building back to its original residential use is considered to represent the optimum viable use of this Grade II* heritage asset. As set out later in this report, this is considered to represent a significant heritage benefit and is a use that will secure the long term future conservation of this asset and also is the most appropriate use for the building in terms of its significance as a Grade II* listed building, one that in the future will require the least changes to the building. As working environments change, the pressure to adapt buildings and make them more suitable and accessible for workplace expectations and technological requirements will grow. The ability of what was originally an 18th Century townhouse to meet future workspace requirements without internal change is limited. The building is far more suitable for residential use and by turning it back to a single dwellinghouse restores its original use and purpose. The use as a single dwellinghouse represents long term security for the property and the ability for it be carefully and properly maintained, far more so than as office space.
- 5.14. Policy E2 of the Camden Local Plan states that the Council will development of business premises and sites for non-business use unless it is demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction:
- a. the site or building is no longer suitable for its existing business use; and

b. that the possibility of retaining, reusing or redeveloping the site or building for similar or alternative type and size of business use has been fully explored over an appropriate period of time.

- 5.15. The justification to the policy explains that in considering whether or not the loss of a business use is acceptable, a number of matters will be considered. The suitability of the location for any business use and whether business use is well related to the nearby land uses. Whether the premises are in a condition to allow the use to continue and the flexibility of the space to allow for a range of unit sizes and suitability for small businesses.
- 5.16. Great James Street and the surrounding streets are relatively quiet streets and have a strong residential character and feel to them. Business use that does exist is primarily office and is interspersed amongst the residential. A number of offices in former town houses have been converted back to residential use. The return of the property back to residential use would be entirely in keeping with the character of the area and the nearby land uses.
- 5.17. The existing office space is currently laid out in an inefficient manner due to the constraints imposed by being a Grade II* listed building that was built as a town house. This has led to a number of small rooms, narrow circulation spaces with numerous modern partitions incorporated to provide these spaces and accompanying W.C. facilities. The building is not suitable for meeting future office requirements where there will be greater expectations on accessibility, space and internal environmental conditions. Other commercial uses would not be suitable in this property without significant alterations that would be undesirable in heritage terms and preserving the special architectural and historic interest of this listed building.
- 5.18. The property was originally built as a residential dwelling. It is proposed to provide a family sized unit within this central location amongst a mix of other uses. The Council has witnessed a loss of family-sized properties due to conversion and the change of use back to a residential dwelling would aid in providing a home for a family wishing to live in the central Camden area. The proposals would result in the loss of inefficient office space and the re-provision of a family sized-unit within this central location.
- 5.19. As highlighted in Section 3 above, permission was granted in 2013 for the change of use of the property from office to residential. The Council acknowledged that the loss of business / office floorspace was appropriate at this location as the building was not fit for current purposes and would not be suitable for any other business uses. It was also acknowledged that the provision of office space around the Kings Cross and Euston area would provide surplus office space within the borough therefore the loss of employment floorspace is considered to be acceptable in this instance, and would not be contrary to the adopted local plan.
- 5.20. This continues to be the case with the current property. The office floorspace is inappropriate for continued use as a business premises due to accessibility, technological and internal environmental conditions issues which are a key concern for all business operators. In the light of the Covid-19 pandemic employers are looking for more flexible office space with good ventilation and good areas for circulation and space. Due to the space constraints of this Grade II* listed building refurbishments which would update the office floorspace to meet occupier requirements would be limited and potentially negatively impactful for the property.

- 5.21. It is considered that the loss of office (Use Class E) floorspace continues to be appropriate at this location. The building cannot meet modern requirements for heritage reasons and would not be viable in the long term for business use. It is regarded that the heritage benefits in addition to the provision of a family sized unit within this location overcome the loss of office space within this property. Ultimately, the proposal to restore the property back to its original single dwellinghouse use, which has to be considered the optimum viable use that will secure the future conservation of the heritage asset, is of very significant weight in the assessment of the proposals and in terms of planning balance can be considered to outweigh any dis-benefit of losing vacant commercial floorspace in this particular area, that is not necessarily fit for purpose in the future. For this reason the proposals are not considered to be contrary to adopted policy.
- 5.22. Whilst the building will not benefit from the new Class MA Permitted Development Right that comes into force on 1st August 2021 relating to the change of use from any use within Class E business, commercial and service to residential due to its listed status, the sentiment behind the introduction of the Right is considered to be pertinent. The Right is being brought in to support the Government's commitment to boost the supply of homes by allowing for more mixed and flexible high streets and commercial areas. This will not only stimulate the economic recovery post Covid 19 pandemic but also deliver additional homes more easily. This arises from the commitment in the June 2020 Build, Build, Build statement that a wider range of commercial premises will be allowed to change to residential use. This building is empty, was originally residential and is proposed to be returned to residential from a now gone business use, all of which sits within the Government's aspirations to boost the supply of housing, one way being the change of use of redundant commercial buildings.

Affordable Housing

- 5.23. Policy H4 of the Local Plan expect a contribution to affordable housing from all developments that provide one or more additional homes and involve a total addition to residential floorspace of 100sqm GIA or more. The policy goes on to advise that where affordable housing cannot practically be provided on site, the Council may accept a payment-in-lieu.
- 5.24. The proposals will create a single family dwelling which cannot practically provide affordable housing on-site. As the likely off-set for this development would be a single affordable unit it is not appropriate to provide this unit elsewhere in the surrounding area, therefore a payment-in-lieu would be the most suitable way to comply with policy H4. The payment-in-lieu will be calculated using the guidance provided in the Council's Housing Planning Guidance document prepared by January 2021.

Heritage Assets

- 5.25. The site lies within Bloomsbury Conservation Area, however, any proposed change of works and concurrent listed building application for internal works would not impact the character and appearance of the conservation area. Policy D2 states that the Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings.

- 5.26. It is considered that reinstating 14 Great James Street back into residential use can be seen to be as a significant heritage benefit. The NPPF states that proposals should seek to secure the optimum viable use for heritage assets even if some harm occurs. The proposals seek to provide a single family dwelling returning the property to its original use. The change of use would preserve the property in a more appropriate manner and ensure its maintenance in the future. The residential use is considered to be more appropriate for the building and would not result in inappropriate interventions which may be required to ensure it complies with modern office standards as time goes on.
- 5.27. The proposals have been driven by improving the current plan form. The proposals would also include the careful removal of the late 20th century interventions which have been made to the building over the course of its use as an office/commercial premises. The application also seeks to where possible replace internal details such as historically accurate fireplaces and detailing within the rooms. Alongside the restoration of the use, these internal changes are also considered to be of significant benefit.
- 5.28. It is important to note that the proposed alteration to this property have been designed carefully with due regard to the special historic interest of the property to ensure its preservation and enhancement. The proposed works would reinstate the original architectural detailing which will add to the overall significance of the building. The modern alterations currently detract from the building's historic significance. The proposed works to the building would ensure its preservation which is considered to be a substantial heritage benefit to the conversion of the property and these are in accordance with Policy D2.

Residential amenity

- 5.29. It is not considered that there will be any material harm to the amenity of adjacent occupiers as a result of the proposals. The proposals do not seek any substantial external alterations to the front or rear elevations of the property and as such the bulk of the building will remain the same as existing. The relationship between the properties neighbouring and to the rear would also remain acceptable and typical of a secondary street environment in this part of the Borough.
- 5.30. The internal quality of the proposed residential dwelling is designed to achieve a high standard in terms of layout, outlook, sunlight and daylight. Internally the property will provide good room sizes and all habitable rooms will benefit from natural light and a good outlook. The property does not benefit from a back garden but this is typical of central commercial properties. The property will have a rear terrace which will provide good useable amenity space for future occupiers.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1. The proposals seek to restore this Grade II* building back to a family-sized residential dwelling.
- 6.2. The proposals for this site present a great opportunity to secure the refurbishment and enhancement of the Grade II* Listed Building alongside the creation of high quality residential accommodation. The restoration of the original single dwellinghouse use is considered to be of significant heritage benefit and weighs heavily in favour of the proposals in terms of the planning balance. The existing office building currently provides inefficient floorspace with cramped circulation spaces and is not fit for purpose in terms of providing space that will be flexible and suitable for a range of users. The existing building has been the subject of significant alteration over the years in relation to its use as offices, which are insensitive to the historic integrity of the building. The change of use and internal alterations have been designed as sensitive alterations that better respect the character and history of the building.
- 6.3. The proposals represent the optimum viable use of this important heritage asset, defined by its Grade II* status. It is the use that is not only the original use of the building but also the one that will cause the least harm to the significance of the heritage asset. Indeed, it is a use that will greatly enhance the significance of this building alongside the proposed improvements to internal layout and features. All of which can be considered as public benefit by securing the long term future conservation of the building. Any conflict with policy that may exist is outweighed by the public benefit of securing the future use and conservation of this heritage asset.