

# ET Planning

## Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement

Client:

Mr E Natt

### Flats 3 and 19 Alexandra Mansions

347 West End Lane, London NW6 1LU

*Replacement of balconies at Flat 3 and Flat 19*

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the replacement of two balconies; at flat 3 and flat 19, Alexandra Mansions, West End Lane, London NW6 1LU.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents prepared by Hardcastle Architects:
  - 1:1250 Site Location Plan
  - 330-EX-01 Flat 3 Existing Balcony
  - 330-PR-01 Flat 3 Proposed Balcony
  - 330-EX-02 Flat 19 Existing Balcony
  - 330-PR-02 Flat 19 Proposed Balcony
- 1.4 The relevant application fee of £407 will be submitted by the applicant separately.

## **2. Site Location and Description**

- 2.1 Alexandra Mansions fronts West End Lane and runs along the Alexandra Mansions footpath, alongside West End Green. It is a prominent four storey corner mansion block, constructed of red brick with stone detailing. Flat 3 is within the western block overlooking West End Green; and Flat 19 is in the southern block fronting on to West End Lane.
- 2.2 The site is within the West End Green Conservation Area. The area is predominantly residential and mansion blocks are prolific in the locality, on West End Lane, Finchley Road and Lyncroft Gardens.

## **3. Planning History**

- 3.1 There is no relevant planning history to the site.

## **4. Development Proposals**

- 4.1 The National Design Guide (2019) identifies that “well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them. They meet the needs of a diverse range of users, taking into account factors such as the ageing population and cultural differences. They are adequate in size, fit for purpose and are adaptable to the changing needs of their occupants over time” (para 120-121).

- 4.2 Regarding the requirements of NPPG Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 14-029-20140306 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:
- 4.3 **Use and Amount:** The proposal is for the replacement of two balconies in residential use at numbers 3 and 19 Alexandra Mansions. The balconies are being replaced due to the collapse of the original balconies.
- 4.4 **Layout and Scale:** The proposals propose no amendments to the layout and scale of the existing balconies as they will be replaced like for like.
- 4.5 **Scale Height & Mass:** The balconies will be replaced to have the same scale, height and mass as the original balconies. The only minor amendment is that the concrete balcony platform will be replaced with a reinforced steel concrete balcony platform which will be marginally thicker than the original. This is to meet modern building regulations and safety standards.
- 4.6 **Landscaping:** The proposals will not impact on existing landscaping.
- 4.7 **Appearance:** The replacement balconies will re-use the existing decorative metal balustrades and handrails to ensure that the appearance of the original balconies is retained. The corbel below the balcony will be replaced with a fibreglass corbel to match the existing. The overall appearance will be identical to the original balconies.
- 4.8 **Access & Parking:** The proposals have no access or parking implications.

## 5. Policy Assessment

- 5.1 **National Guidance:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a relevant material consideration to the application.
- 5.2 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 38 of the NPPF states that “Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way” and “at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”. Paragraph 117 of the NPPF comments that planning should “make effective use of land” in “meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions”.
- 5.3 Paragraph 60 confirms the Government’s objective to boost the supply of housing, and paragraph 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.
- 5.4 Paragraph 126 identifies that “Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities”, whilst paragraph 134 states that “In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.”
- 5.5 The National Design Guide builds on the above, and clarifies that “well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market

demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use" (para 109).

- 5.6 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The site is within the settlement boundary and comprises replacement balconies to an existing building only. As such, the principle of development is acceptable.
- 5.7 **Sustainable Development:** The replacement balconies will reuse the decorative balustrades and the metal handrails, therefore comprising the sustainable re-use of materials.
- 5.8 **Heritage Implications - Impact on the Conservation Area:** Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to designate "areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" as Conservation Areas.
- 5.9 Section 72(1) of the Act sets out the Local Authority's statutory duty that "with respect of any building or other land in a Conservation Area [...] special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area".
- 5.10 The NPPF, at paragraph 194, sets out that "in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient

*to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance”.*

- 5.11 The statutory test that should be considered when determining an application within a conservation area can be found within paragraph 202 of the NPPF. This states *“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use”.*
- 5.12 The Planning Practice Guidance (2014) provides further clarity regarding the importance of significance, stating that *“heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset, and the contribution of its setting, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals”.*
- 5.13 The site falls within the West End Green Conservation Area. London Plan Policy HC1 seeks to conserve the significance of heritage assets through development proposals being sympathetic to their significance and appreciation within their surroundings.
- 5.14 Local Plan Policy D2 seeks to preserve and enhance the Borough’s heritage assets, including conservation areas. The West End Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy refers to the monumental mansion blocks as forming part of the Conservation Area’s special character. Alexandra Mansions is cited as a building that makes a positive contribution to the area. The site is therefore significant in its contribution to the Conservation Area, and is described as one of the buildings that relates *‘to the core reason for the conservation area designation and significance’.* The



Conservation Area Appraisal also refers to balconies within the Conservation Area as 'inventive'.

- 5.15 In recognition of the important contribution that Alexandra Mansions makes to the significance of the Conservation Area, the replacement balconies have been carefully designed to replicate the previous balconies. The decorative metal balustrades and handrails have been refurbished and reused in both replacement balconies in order to preserve the detailed appearance of the balcony and ensuring continuity with the previous balcony and the rest of the building. The only very minor changes are that the concrete balcony platform has been replaced with a steel reinforced concrete balcony platform. This is in order to comply with modern building regulations. Accordingly, the corbels below the balcony have been replaced with fibreglass corbels to match the existing in appearance.
- 5.16 The replacement of the balconies allows the building to continue in its existing arrangement, allowing the occupants to continue to enjoy outside amenity space and ultimately, therefore, securing the continued use of the flats, while retaining the integrity of the building. The appearance and detailing of the building have been preserved, re-using the materials and decorative features where possible. As such, the proposed repair of the collapsed balconies represents a preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area as the balconies have been careful replaced as existing with very minor structural changes to meet modern building regulations, allowing the appearance of the building to go unchanged.
- 5.17 For these reasons, the replacement balconies result in less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area and represent an enhancement of the Conservation Area through the retention of important features on a building that makes an important contribution to it, while meeting current building regulations and

safety standards. The proposal is therefore in full accordance with national, London and local aspirations regarding heritage assets.

- 5.18 **Listed Buildings:** Alexandra Mansions is not a Listed Building. The drinking fountain on West End Green in Grade II Listed and is opposite 1-9 Alexandra Mansions (the westernmost block). As detailed above, the replacement balconies will be identical in appearance to the original balconies and therefore the proposal will result in less than substantial harm on the setting of the Listed drinking fountain.
- 5.19 The Emmanuel Church to the rear of the site is also Grade II Listed. However, as the balconies are on the front elevation of Alexandra Mansions, they will not be visible from this building and there will be no impact on the Emmanuel Church. As such, the proposal will result in less than substantial harm on the setting of the surrounding Listed Buildings and will result in the preservation and enhancement of their setting through retaining the appearance of a building of special character in the Conservation Area.
- 5.20 **Archaeology:** The site falls within an archaeology priority area. However, as the proposals relate only to replacement balconies and do not include the breaking of ground, the proposals will not impact on archaeology.
- 5.21 **Character and appearance of the area:** Policy D1 of the local plan requires a high quality of design. Of particular relevance, it requires development to respect local context and character and to use details and materials that are of high quality and that complement the local character.
- 5.22 As detailed above, there is only one very minor amendment in appearance from the existing balconies as a result of the proposals, which is the provision of a steel reinforced concrete balcony platform

to replace the existing concrete balcony platform. This will be very marginally thicker than the existing balcony to meet current building regulation and safety standards. However, this will be negligible and the re-use of the existing balustrades and handrails will ensure that the replacement balconies match the existing balconies on the building in terms of appearance and materials. The character and appearance of the area will therefore be retained and enhanced through the refurbishment of the balustrades and handrails and the replacement of collapsed balconies.

- 5.23 **Residential Amenity:** The proposals relate to a like for like replacement of existing balconies so will not impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties. The replacement of the balconies will, however, allow the private residential amenity space currently enjoyed by the residents of the properties to continue safely.
- 5.24 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** The proposal does not include the creation of any new floorspace and relates to the replacement balconies only. As such, the proposal is not CIL liable.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would allow the continued use of the balconies and the flats while retaining the important contribution that the building makes to the Conservation Area.

6.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

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