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**Neighbours' Objections to No. 29 Great James Street - Planning Application No: 2021/5551/P**

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022

**Erection of Two Storey Rear Addition to No. 29 Great James Street to accommodate a roof terrace, glass extension (the "Glass Extension") and access stairs**

**Introduction**

We are the owners of neighbouring and adjacent properties to No. 29 Great James Street (the "**Application Site**"), the owners of which have submitted a planning application (Application No. 2021/5551/P) to Camden Council to carry out extensive refurbishment and alteration to the Application Site. Our properties are those most affected by this Planning Application.

We are pleased that it is proposed that the Application Site will be restored to its original purpose as a residential dwelling. However, we consider that the construction of the rear infill addition and the Glass Extension are over-extensive for the space available and overly intrusive and incongruous for the early 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> - century setting of these buildings. These additions will have a material detrimental impact on adjacent and neighbouring properties.

We are dismayed that the owners of the Application Site have proceeded with this Planning Application for the Glass Extension notwithstanding the significant protest to this aspect of the development expressed by the owners of No. 28 Great James Street in four consultation meetings with the owners of the Application Site as noted in paragraph 3.5 (Consultation) of the Planning Statement dated November 2021 submitted with the Planning Application. These objections, which were first made in June 2021, were clearly expressed in discussion meetings as well as in an email to the owners of the Application Site.

This document sets out our principal objections to the Planning Application in its current form.

**Heritage Appraisal**

We also have a number of detailed comments on the Heritage Appraisal that accompanies the Planning Application. We have set these out in a separate document to which we draw your attention.

### **Deficiencies in Comment Procedure**

In addition, we want to draw your attention to our serious concerns about the way that this application has been handled by the Council, in particular the limited time that has been allowed for comment.

The Planning Application is dated 31 December 2021, but notice of this does not appear to have been posted in Great James Street outside the Application Site until 12 January 2022. On the hard copy street notice which was (as is normal) fixed to a lamppost in Great James Street (a copy of which is attached as Appendix A), the deadline for comments was stated to be 12 February 2022. On the Planning Application website, the deadline for comments was 30 January 2022, which (obviously) has now passed. When this issue was raised with the Council, a Council officer told one of the neighbours on the telephone that the Council would in practice allow comments on the Planning Application to be submitted until 10 February 2022.

The confusion regarding the deadline for comments on the Planning Application is misleading and, in our view, completely unacceptable.

This is an unusually complex application that proposes the most extensive interior and exterior alterations of any building in Great James Street that we are aware of in the more than 25 years that we have been resident-owners of houses in the street. We consider that the application is fundamentally in breach of a material number of the Council's planning rules (as set out in this document). Yet it was submitted to the Council at the beginning of an extended holiday period. By the time it was publicly notified in the street, only 12 business days remained for comment. And, when this issue was raised with the Council, instead of lengthening the period for comment the Council officer led us to believe that the period would actually be shortened, from 12 February to 10 February. Interested parties have not been given sufficient time to consider the application properly, seek the professional advice which is necessary given the technical complexity of the issues and frame and submit their comments. Nor has there been time to discuss the application with interested bodies such as English Heritage, the Georgian Society and the Rugby and Harpur Residents' Association which we would expect to do in the case of any planning application of this complexity and with such serious implications for the fabric of a Grade II\* listed building.

We think that this situation materially compromises the transparency and integrity of the planning process and we wish to place on record that we are seriously concerned by it.

### **Summary of Principal Objections**

- A. Infill rear addition occupies too much space to the rear of the building to be compatible with Planning Guidelines (see paragraph 1 below).
- B. Glass Extension not in character with surrounding buildings (see paragraph 2 below).
- C. Glass Extension will have a disproportionate detrimental effect on outlook and setting of buildings in street (see paragraph 3 below).
- D. Glass Extension lacks architectural merit (see paragraph 4 below).
- E. Glass Extension lacks sufficient purpose (see paragraph 7 below).

- F. Glass Extension and rear addition terrace overlook adjoining and adjacent properties (see paragraph 8 below).
- G. Noise and disturbance likely to be caused through entertaining activities on roof terrace (see paragraph 9 below).
- H. Removal of existing trellis between Application Site and No. 30 and replacement with “hit and miss” fence will block light (see paragraph 11 below).
- I. Insertion of new windows in closet wing is in breach of Camden Planning Guidelines; and
- J. Replacement of existing window in rear of first floor closet wing with door to roof terrace is in breach of Camden Planning Guidelines (see paragraph 13 below).

**1. *Infill rear addition occupies too much space in to the rear of the building to be compatible with planning guidelines:*** the proposed rear infill addition occupies nearly all of the garden space behind the Application Site and the Planning Application does not indicate that a “garden” of any sort will be built either on the proposed roof terrace or elsewhere.

**Relevant Planning Issues:**

CPG Home Improvements at page 40 states that “Rear extensions should: Allow for the retention of a reasonably sized garden”. The proposed rear infill addition does not do this and therefore appears to be in breach of this guideline.

**2. *Glass Extension not in character with surrounding buildings:*** the design of the proposed Glass Extension is inappropriate in context and completely different in character to the existing rhythms, symmetries and uniformities of the rear of the buildings on the west side of Great James Street. The materials, their quality, texture, tone and colour and the composition of the elevations of the structure are incompatible with the existing historic buildings.

**Relevant Planning Issues:**

This appears to be in breach of Camden’s Local Plan Policy D1 Design paragraph 7.2 and paragraph 7.3.

**3. *Glass Extension will have a disproportionate detrimental effect on outlook and setting of buildings in street:*** it would have a severely disproportionate and detrimental aesthetic effect on the rear outlook from, and cause harm to the setting of, all of the adjoining and adjacent properties to the Application Site (which are all in a homogenous architectural style). The Glass Extension would be visible from almost every property on the west side of Great James Street. Please see our Sight Line Diagram at Appendix B which shows the visibility of the Glass Extension from the rear of the properties on the west side of Great James Street.

**Relevant Planning Issues:**

This appears to be in breach of Camden’s Local Plan Policy D1 Design at paragraph 7.3. in that contemporary design is unwelcome in an area of homogenous architectural style, such as the rear of Great James Street.

- a. This also appears to be in breach of Camden's Local Plan Policy D2 Heritage at paragraph (k) of the introduction, which states that "the Council will resist development that would cause harm to significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting."
- b. This also appears to be in breach of Camden's Local Plan Policy D2 Heritage at paragraph 7.60, which states that "the setting of a listed building is of great importance and should not be harmed by unsympathetic neighbouring development".

4. ***Glass Extension lacks architectural merit:*** the proposed Glass Extension lacks any significant architectural merit such as to warrant planning permission to the rear of a terrace of Grade II\* listed properties as it would so clearly harm the setting, sight lines and outlook of those properties. It appears to be a simple wood-framed box, with sides made from standard aluminium-framed glass doors with a flat roof to be covered in sedum. Its appearance appears to be more that of a "shed" than a "pavilion", as it is described in the Planning Application.

**Relevant Planning Issues:**

- a. This appears to be in breach of Camden's Local Plan Policy D1 Design paragraph 7.2 which states that "the Council will require all developments, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings to be of the highest standard of design".

5. ***Rear setting of Great James Street should be protected as much as the front streetscape:*** it is extremely doubtful that Camden Council would permit a two-storey glass box to be built at the front of the properties in Great James Street (if such were possible), so equally Camden Council should not permit the construction of the Glass Extension at the rear so as to maintain the homogeneous architectural style of the rear of these properties which is little changed since Victorian times. The harmonious setting of the rear of the houses to the west of Great James Street, backing on to an unaltered line of Victorian buildings to the rear should be protected and not disrupted by the intrusive construction of the Glass Extension.

**Relevant Planning Issues:**

CPG Home Improvements at page 40 states that "Depending on where your home is located, there are times when the rear of a building may be architecturally distinguished, either forming a harmonious composition, or visually contributing to the townscape. Where architectural merit exists, the Council will seek to preserve it when it is considered appropriate".

6. ***Sedum roof inappropriate in context of surrounding buildings:*** the proposed sedum roof for the Glass Extension is an entirely inappropriate material for the roof of an extension of a building in this setting of unique and well-preserved early 18<sup>th</sup> - century and 19<sup>th</sup> - century buildings where the roofs of the buildings are made of a limited range of materials, being mainly tiles, slate, lead, asphalt and felt.

**Relevant Planning Issues:**

- a. The materials for the roof of the Glass Extension appear to be in breach of Camden's Local Plan Policy D1 Design paragraph 7.1, which states that "the Council will require that development respect local context and character "and "comprise details and materials that are of high quality and complement the local character".
- b. The sedum roof does not appear to follow Camden Council's advice on page 40 of its planning guidance on Home Improvements 2021 ("CPG Home Improvements") where it states that "biodiverse green roofs with a substrate depth of 100mm are preferred rather than sedum roofs, as they provide a greater biodiversity value."

7. ***Glass extension lacks sufficient purpose:*** the proposed Glass Extension is described in the Planning Application as a "study" but would seem to lack any of the qualities necessary for a study. It appears that it is really only a weather cover for the proposed internal stairway from the proposed kitchen to the above terrace. The Application Site already proposes to have a large "office" on the first floor and therefore it is hardly necessary for this tiny unsuitable "study" to be constructed on the Application Site particularly given points 2, 3 and 5 above. In addition, the Application Site proposes to have a doorway made from the existing rear closet wing window onto the terrace from the first floor "bar". It would seem completely disproportionate to sacrifice the unchanged historical rear outlook of the houses on the west side of Great James Street in order to construct a mere "weather cover".

**Relevant Planning Issues:**

This appears to be in breach of Camden's Local Plan Policy D1 Design at paragraph 7.2 which states that: "all developments to consider the suitability of the proposed design to its intended use".

8. ***Glass Extension and rear addition terrace overlooks adjoining and adjacent properties:*** the proposed Glass Extension would be about 5 to 10 metres from the first floor living rooms and bathrooms of the adjoining and adjacent family houses and would give the residents of the Application Site sitting in their "study" completely unrestricted direct views into the adjoining and adjacent properties to the detriment of the privacy of the residents of those properties. It would also significantly directly overlook the gardens of adjacent properties to the detriment of the privacy and quality of life of the residents and users of those gardens. Also, the rear addition terrace would be no more than 1.5 m from the bathroom window in the rear closet wing of No. 28 Great James Street and would enable occupiers and visitors standing on the roof terrace to look directly into that bathroom, which are frequently used both by adults and young children who are residents of, and visitors to, No. 28. This would cause significant loss of privacy to the occupiers of No. 28. Please see Appendix C which is a plan showing the distance between this bathroom window and the edge of the proposed terrace.

**Relevant Planning Issues:**

- a. The rear addition and the Glass Extension, appear to be in breach of the CPG Home Improvements at page 30 which states that "when designing your home

improvement you need to consider the impact that this will have on your adjoining neighbours in relation to the following key considerations:

**Daylight and Sunlight**

**Outlook**

**Overlooking/Privacy**

**Noise”**

- b. CPG Home Improvements at page 30 also states: “There are some basic principles that you should consider - Ensure any opportunities for overlooking into or from your neighbour’s property are removed and privacy for all properties is maintained”.
- c. CPG Home Improvements at page 40 in section 2.1.1 on Rear Extensions also states: “Rear extensions should: Respect and duly consider the amenity of adjacent occupiers with regard to daylight, sunlight, outlook, light pollution/spillage and privacy”. It also states, “Ensure the extension does not cause undue overlooking to neighbouring properties and cause a loss of privacy”.

9. **Noise and disturbance likely to be caused through entertaining activities on roof terrace:** the proposed rear addition seems to be designed to be used for large-scale entertaining on the terrace over the rear addition as it is proposed that the first floor closet wing room be converted into a “bar” from which easy access can be had to the terrace through the proposed new doorway. As that closet wing room is rather small, it cannot be intended that guests would gather in that room, but outside on the terrace as well. There is therefore a risk that the creation of this roof terrace with its easy access from the main house would enable potentially noisy and disturbing activities on the roof of a building which is very close to many other buildings for the sole benefit of the residents of the Application Site. This would be to the significant detriment of many people living in the area and would breach the privacy of the owners and occupiers of adjoining and adjacent buildings.

**Relevant Planning Issues**

- a. The Council will recall its refusal of Planning Application No. 2013/3662/P by 20 Emerald Street to convert the roof of the building immediately adjoining and to the rear of the Application Site into an entertaining space on the grounds that this might give rise to noisy and disturbing activities affecting the rights of those living and working in the area.
  - b. The construction of the rear addition with the evident intention that its purpose be for large-scale entertaining activities does not appear to respect the guidelines set out in CPG Home Improvements at page 30 regarding noise which is referred to in paragraph 8(a) above.
10. **Construction of boundary walls to rear addition:** (1) Drawing A101D states in note 12 that there will be constructed an “in-situ cast concrete wall”. It is not clear how high this would be, but it would be completely out of keeping with the architectural setting if it rose above the height of the current brick party wall with No. 30. Also, consideration would need to be given to preventing the ingress of water between that wall and the current brick party wall which may not be able to evaporate due to the close proximity of the new concrete wall. (2) Drawing A101D also states in note 13 that the party wall between the Application Site and No. 28 will be replaced with a “new rendered masonry wall”. We

would wish to be certain that the rendering will only be on the Application Site side of the wall and a traditional London Stock brick wall to match the current party wall will be constructed on the No. 28 side of that wall.

11. **Removal of existing trellis between Application Site and No. 30 and replacement with “hit and miss” fence:** Drawing A051D states that the “Existing trellis replaced, subject to negotiation”. Obviously, the consent of the owners of No. 30 will be required to remove the existing trellis. The Planning Application proposes that this existing trellis be replaced with a “hit and miss” timber trellis which is a fully filled-in form of trellis allowing no light or air through it. We would object to the installation of such a style of trellis either between the Application Site and No. 30 or between the Application Site and No. 28.

**Relevant Planning Issues:**

- a. The replacement of the existing open lattice trellis with a “hit and miss” fence between the Application Site and No. 28 would, during winter months, block almost completely the low levels of sunshine coming from the southern end of Great James Street to the garden spaces at Nos. 28 and 27. This would therefore appear to be in clear breach of the CPG Home Improvements planning guidelines, paragraph 2.1.1 on Rear Extensions at page 18 which states “Rear extensions should: Respect and duly consider the amenity of adjacent occupiers with regard to daylight, sunlight, outlook...etc.”

12. **Insertion of new windows in flank of closet wing:** the Planning Application proposes that four new windows be inserted in the flank wall of the closet wing where none existed before. This seems to be a highly questionable alteration to the Application Site which the Council should not permit. Historically, no such windows would have existed so as to retain the privacy of occupants using the facilities in the closet wing and to ensure that occupants of adjacent properties could not look into the closet wing.

**Relevant Planning Issues:**

- a. The insertion of these new windows would give rise to the same issues as referred to in paragraph 8 concerning undue outlook over adjoining properties, especially over the terrace and garden of No. 30 and would therefore appear to be in clear breach of the CPG Home Improvements planning guidelines.
- b. These new windows would also appear to breach the Camden Planning Guidance Design at paragraph 3.28 for Heritage buildings which states, “we will expect original or historic features to be retained and repairs to be in matching material. Proposals should seek to respond to the special historic and architectural constraints of the listed building, rather than significantly change them”.

13. **Replacement of existing window in rear of first floor closet wing with door to roof terrace:** The Planning Application proposes that the existing window to the rear of the closet wing on the first floor be replaced with a door, thus enabling easy access from the proposed bar in the closet wing to the roof terrace. This seems to be a highly questionable alteration to the Application Site which the Council should not permit.

**Relevant Planning Issues:**

- a. The replacement of this window with a door would appear to breach the Camden Planning Guidance Design at paragraph 3.28 for Heritage buildings which states, “we will expect original or historic features to be retained and repairs to be in matching material. Proposals should seek to respond to the special historic and architectural constraints of the listed building, rather than significantly change them”.
- b. The Council will recall its refusal to allow an existing widow to be removed and a door to be inserted in the same position in No. 30 Great James Street. All that was permitted was a “walk under window”. Please see the diagram at Appendix D as part of Planning Application No. 2014/1571/P.