

The Planning Inspectorate
3D Eagle Wing
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol BS1 6PN

PINS Ref: APP/X5210/W/21/3285984

Camden Ref: 2021/3190/P

21st March 2022

**Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Town and Country
Planning Act 1990**

Appeal by The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn

Site Address: Flat 3rd Floor South, 3 Gray's Inn Square, London WC1R 5AH

RESPONSE TO LPA STATEMENT OF CASE & THIRD-PARTY COMMENTS

- 1.0** The LPA, in their letter to PINS dated 21/01/2022, state as their main reason for refusal (if the application had been determined) that:

The size, scale and location of the proposed roof terrace and associated railings would represent incongruous additions that would cause harm to the original character and setting of the host building, adjoining terrace and wider conservation area.

The proposals do not involve the creation of a roof terrace. The application is for the creation of a flat within an existing roof void including 3 new dormer windows to the rear elevation. (It is assumed that the LPA incorrectly selected / failed to amend the refusal reason).

- 2.0** It is noted that the LPA accept the principle of conversion, stating that it will *provide a well-proportioned, 2-bedroom residential unit for which there is a need in the Borough and would be welcomed in line with Local Plan policies H1 and H6.*

It is noted that a third-party objector states:

There would in fact be no public benefit at all as, by longstanding custom and policy, Gray's Inn residential flats are let only to members of Gray's Inn and not to the general public.

This is incorrect. Whilst flats are indeed marketed within the Inn, occupation is not limited to members of the Inn and a number are occupied by non-members. Importantly, in selecting residential tenants, the Inn favours those that will make the flat their principal private residence and thus contribute to the life and community of the Inn. The creation of additional flats is adding to the Borough's housing stock irrespective of whether it is occupied by a member or non-member.

3.0 The LPA state at Appendix B, that the proposal would *...by reason of the proposed dormers be detrimental to the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings contrary to policies D1 (Design) and D2 (Heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.*

The go on to state: *The appearance of sporadic additions would disrupt the uniformity and detract from the symmetry and order which makes up an important part of these building's contribution.*

As indicated in the Design & Access Statement, it is accepted that the introduction of dormers will interrupt the existing unbroken roof plane. However, as also noted, this elevation is somewhat utilitarian. Whilst it provides a 'polite' backdrop to The Walks, it does not rely on the unbroken roofline as part of a considered architectural composition and we remain of the view that the addition of dormers will enliven the composition and indeed the intention is to convert similar roofspaces in the remainder of the terrace as flats fall vacant so in the longer term these dormers will not be seen as isolated elements in an otherwise unbroken roofline.

It should be noted that the Raymond Buildings Terrace to the west side of the Walks exhibits a variety of roof forms and dormers which one would expect to see to the rear elevation of a terrace with a uniform front façade. Other building at the Inn of a similar style & age and by the same architect, Sir Edward Maufe, have dormers as part of their original design.

In the context of the size and bulk of the existing Gray's Inn Square terrace rear elevation, the addition of dormers to the roof will have little impact and at the very least will maintain the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings. We would go further and state that the addition of dormers to the terrace will improve the appearance and thus enhance the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings.

4.0 The LPA refer to the absence of a section 106 legal agreement providing for cycle parking and car-free housing.

It should be noted that the proposed flat is situated within the wider Gray's Inn Estate which provides extensive on-site Cycle and Car parking including electric charge points as follows:

- 200 secure cycle parking spaces
- 240 car parking spaces (including currently 36 electric charge points; to be increased)
- Dedicated Motorbike parking areas

In respect of the 60+ current units of residential accommodation, only 12 Inn parking permits have been issued indicating a very low level of car ownership amongst residential lessees.

In respect of commercial tenants, only 3 parking permits have been issued for Motorcycles and 36 for Cars, indicating a very low level of motor vehicle use for regular commuting. Day parking is also available but usage of the both the Cycle and Car parking facilities remains well below the available capacity.

The overall Estate already provides acceptable provision for cycle parking and thus no specific further provision or Section 106 contribution is required in connection with the proposed flat.

A section 106 agreement to make the unit exempt from an entitlement to an on-street residents' car-parking permit issued by the Council in line with Local Plan policy T2 could be secured by Condition although it is noted that the LPA do not suggest such a condition at Appendix A of their response and given the on-site facilities, it is not considered it necessary.

5.0 Other Third Party Objections

A number of third-party comments cite and concur with the LPA Suggested Reason for Refusal in the LPA letter dated 21/02/22 that:

‘The size, scale and location of the proposed roof terrace and associated railings would represent incongruous additions that would cause harm to the original character and setting of the host building, adjoining terrace and wider conservation area.’

As noted earlier, the proposal incorporates neither a terrace nor railings. This would have been obvious to anyone viewing the proposal drawings and associated documents.

It can only be assumed that these third parties have not personally viewed the proposal drawings and documentation and therefore little weight can be given to their objections.

Summary

- The LPA should have determined the application by the 25th August 2021.
- The roof voids within the terrace provide significant but currently unused and unusable space. The addition of dormer windows to the rear elevation will allow use as residential accommodation and provides a highly sustainable way of increasing the Borough's housing stock for which there is an acknowledged need.
- The addition of dormer windows will have no adverse impact on the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings
- Notwithstanding the subsequent recommendation from the LPA that the application be refused, for the reasons set out in the original Design and Access Statement and this response to the LPA Appeal Statement and Third-Party Comments, it is respectfully requested that this Appeal against non-determination should be allowed and permission granted.

Response prepared by:
Richard Young Architect RIBA