

Design and Access Statement:

Flats 1 & 2, 68 Neal Street, London WC2H 9PA

1. Proposal and Planning Statement

This proposal is for the conversion of an existing flat roof into a roof terrace for the private residential use of the existing owners/occupants of Flats 1 and 2 of 68 Neal Street.

The proposed terrace is to be finished with traditional pavers and black metal railings, and filled with container plants. Access is proposed via a new door opening in the location of an existing rear window together with the installation of new open-tread black steel steps down to the terrace floor level. A new black metal balustrade (to match the existing black metal balustrade at third floor level) is proposed to run along the length of the existing parapets. A large existing roof light is to be replaced with a smaller roof light in the same location. This proposal also includes the removal of existing black metal metal stairs that will be redundant with the new door and steps, and the installation of a black metal wall-fixed ladder.

Camden's Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area Statement 1998 has been reviewed prior to this planning proposal and has informed the design and choice of materials. This proposal can be seen as a suitable and modest response to the need for external space. Although not visible from the street, the intent is for it to provide visual amenity from the flat interior as well for its neighbouring properties, and it aims to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the diverse roof-scape found in this part of the Seven Dials Conservation Area.

This Design and Access statement is to be read in conjunction with the following drawings:

179/PP/100	Location Plan / Site Plan
179/PP/101	Existing First Floor Plan
179/PP/102	Existing Second Floor Plan
179/PP/103	Existing Third Floor Plan
179/PP/111	Proposed Section A-A
179/PP/112	Proposed Section B-B and C-C
179/PP/201	Proposed First Floor Plan
179/PP/202	Proposed Second Floor Plan
179/PP/203	Proposed Third Floor Plan
179/PP/204	Proposed Roof Plan Plan
179/PP/211	Proposed Section A-A
179/PP/212	Proposed Section B-B and C-C

2. Existing Site Features

The existing site is a four storey mixed-use building with residential units occupying the 1st to 3rd floors and a retail unit at ground and basement levels. The proposed roof terrace is at the rear of the building, above the existing flat roof area of an existing first floor extension (which covers the footprint of the original rear yard of the building) and will be accessible via the second floor. The site plot (shape, width & depth) is that of the original 1690s plot as laid out by the Thomas Neal development. The existing building however is a 19th Century reconstruction of the original building.

The existing site area is 60.5 sqm (4.6 sqm width by 13.8sqm length) and rectangular in shape with the building covering the entire site boundary. In addition to the visible four storeys, the building also contains an attic and basement/cellar.

The style of the existing building is typical of the terrace housing in the area from the late 17th century onward with its yellow stock brick and tiled roof. Apparently the only design stipulation which Thomas Neal gave each individual house builder was that the house be built of brick, with a tiled roof and 'proper' windows.

The later addition of the timber shopfront at ground is also typical of the area with the brickwork remaining visible on the upper floors, for both front and rear elevations. Although the Neal Street elevation is four storeys high, the rear elevation appears to be three storeys with a mansard roof at the fourth storey level. It is not known whether this slightly unusual difference in the treatment of the front and back elevation at roof level is an original feature.

A very small roof terrace (4.3sqm) exists at this top level and currently there are steel 'fire escape' style stairs down to the lower roof which are used for maintenance. However due to its small size, this terrace is of limited use as a functional amenity space. These stairs, together with the existing flat roof at 2nd floor level and brick parapets, are in need of and scheduled for repair (note: this repair work is not the subject of this planning application).

The house currently sits in the middle of the terrace on the east side of Neal Street and is flanked by a late 20th century mixed-use (six flats & two shops) brick development (70-74 Neal Street) on its north side and a similar sized building to itself (66 Neal Street) on the south side (which has had its front brickwork covered in painted plaster with channeling).

2. Access

Access to the site is via a shared door to an external (open air) corridor. This entrance is shared with a commercial office building (68A Neal Street) which has been built in the infill space behind the terrace houses on the east side of Neal street. Entrance to the residential floors (1st to 3rd) of 68 Neal Street is situated off this corridor and access is via a communal staircase (for the two flats only). Unfortunately, there is no wheelchair access and the steps are relatively narrow due to existing site constraints.

The proposed terrace will be accessed via a new second floor door onto a landing which will sit flush with the internal floor level. Three wide shallow steps will lead down to the terrace (the level change is 600mm) and a hand rail will be attached to the external wall to provide stability and support. Treads are to be of black open steel work. For the proposed terrace, weather proof, slip-resistant paver tiles similar to those used for the roof terraces of 66 Neal Street and 70-74 Neal Street will be used and laid to create a uniform even surface.

Means of escape from the terrace will be via the existing protected corridor and stairs of the house. The proposed work will also be checked for Part M compliance when all drawings and information regarding the proposed works are submitted to Building Control for approval of all building regulations.

If scaffolding is deemed necessary for the proposals the relevant license will be sought and all scaffolding will be temporary and erected and maintained according to HSE's regulations and guidance.

3. Layout of the Proposed Development

All drawings listed above should be referred to for details of the layout.

First Floor: the existing roof light will be replaced by a narrower flat roof light in the same position.

Second Floor: There is already a window in the position of the proposed new door to the terrace. The new terrace will be treated as one open space with no divisions or partitioning.

The installation of the balustrade/rail above the parapet will be set back from the parapet edge (with a detail to match the existing balustrade on the third floor). This balustrade will be installed for safety reasons, however it will also serve the function of stopping the users of the terrace from leaning out over the parapet to help avoid overlooking any neighbouring properties. It is intended that the balustrade will also provide support for terracotta pots with plantings which will also serve to enhance the privacy of the roof terrace and that of its neighbours.

The balustrade which runs along the east parapet will stop short of the neighbouring commercial building's wall by 1200mm where it will end in a curved gate which directly sits on the terrace and avoids affecting the neighbouring office's window as well as maintaining space between the occupants of the roof terrace and the window to help further protect privacy.

This last extent of the existing parapet behind the curved gate, will remain bare as is. It is the intention to place a tall container planting within this gated corner of the terrace just behind the curved section to further block the view into the office space.

The purpose of the openable gate is to allow access to the existing rooftop drain in the corner of the roof for clearing the regularly accumulated debris as well as for maintenance access. The drain in this corner of the roof often needs clearing as it serves both the rooftop run-off from 68A Neal Street as well as the flat roof of 68 Neal Street and would otherwise be prone to flooding.

4. Scale and Appearance

The scale of the building will be unaffected by the proposed works. A metal balustrade (made up of vertical bars spaced at 100mm apart) is proposed to run along the parapet on both sides of the terrace, however the actual building will remain the same size, shape and proportion.

Although there is existing uniformity in the timber sash windows fronting Neal Street, there is quite a variation at the rear on this building as is the case for all the neighbouring buildings. However, the new door opening will be in the precise location of the existing window opening and all glazing detailing will adhere to the predominant style of the timber window immediately above at third floor level in terms of spacing of panes and width of glazing bars, etc. The door will be made of white painted timber to match the window immediately above as well as the windows on the front (west) and side (north) elevations. Slim double-glazed panes may be used in the new door to reduce heat loss and inhibit external noise from entering the building.

The existing brick arch head of the window will be retained with the width and top height of the window brick opening also kept at the same level. Brass ironmongery will be specified to match existing ironmongery.

The existing redundant steel stairs will be removed and instead a new steel ladder will be installed and fixed to the wall. The removal of these stairs will help make the roof garden appear larger and easier to manoeuvre around. The removal of the stairs should have a favourable impact on the neighbours and should help to give a more unobstructed view of the open sky.

From an aerial view, the only noticeable change will be the new steps, the thin railings and new pavers, and the new steel ladder rather than the existing stairs. The reduced size roof light will not be visible beneath the new steel steps but the openings between (open riser) and in the treads should allow some extra sunlight/daylight through diagonally from the side of the new steps into the corner of the bedroom. Note the bedroom below receives its main source of daylight and sunlight into the centre of the room from an existing large window on the north facade. The steps are to be of an open steel grillwork. (see drawing no 179/PA/100, 201 – 204, 211 & 212).

5. Landscaping

Although the garden or 'landscaping' aspect of this proposal will be limited to container planting, the intention of this proposal is to fit out the terrace as a private external amenity space for the occupants to enjoy as a place for relaxation and retreat, including for gardening. As the London Plan 2021 states a need for new homes to maximise the usability of outside amenity space, this proposal aims to achieve this in an existing home by fitting out an empty unused flat roof space to become a roof garden.

The intention is that a row of terracotta pots with evergreen plantings will be placed alongside both balustrades. Further rows of pots, also with evergreen plantings, would be located immediately below the interior parapet edge at the terrace floor level. This would be similar to the landscaping of the existing 3rd floor roof terrace although the larger size of the 2nd floor space and wider parapets at 2nd floor level allow for continuous rows of larger pots (as opposed to a limited number of such pots on the 3rd floor space) at the base of the balustrades on top of the parapets. As is the case at 3rd floor level, the plantings would be predominantly bushy evergreen, flowering succulents which have limited watering needs as well as other bushy evergreen drought resistant plants such as rosemary and lavender. It is intended that several larger pots with taller plantings will be placed directly on the stone pavers at the edges of the roof terrace, most containing smaller trees including fruit trees. The plantings should provide a welcoming space for local wildlife and also absorb some of the water that would otherwise run off the roof during rainstorms. The plantings will also enhance the privacy of the roof terrace and that of its neighbours by providing an attractive natural 'green' screen between them. The intention is to use the abundance of greenery to keep the functional amenity space to the centre of the terraced area.

The neighbouring properties on both sides have roof terraces with well tended container gardens and this terrace would read as a continuation of this pocket of green space (see photos of neighbouring rooftops).

6. Heritage Assets

Neal Street is located in the Seven Dials Conservation Area and is referenced in the Seven Dials Conservation Area Statement. The nearest listed buildings to the proposed site are numbers 64, 78 and 80 on the east side of Neal Street and 61 on the west side of Neal Street. The significance of this historical asset is predominantly from its adherence to the original plot size and scale and to a lesser degree from its use of materials and finish, particularly in the elevation fronting Neal Street. The proposal is for limited development at the rear of the building and it will thus have no impact on the street scene nor on the nearby listed buildings. This proposal aims to enhance and be consistent with the conservation of this building and site. The creation of an easily accessible roof terrace garden can only encourage the occupants/users to maintain the roof area and the adjacent brick walls of the house as it will be beneficial to themselves as well as their neighbours.

7. Planning Considerations

This proposal has been developed with the following planning policies relevant to the site and the proposal in mind:

Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area Statement 1998

Camden Planning Guidance January 2021

Camden Local Plan 2017

London Plan 2021

National Planning Policy Framework 2019

The principal considerations relevant to the proposed roof terrace relate to: design and heritage (in particular given its location within the Seven Dials Conservation Area); and overlooking, privacy and outlook.

The Camden Local Plan states that “the Council will seek to secure high quality design in development” including “that development: a. respects local context and character; b. preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2 Heritage; . . . e. comprises details and materials that are of high quality and complement the local character; . . . k. incorporates high quality landscape design . . . and maximises opportunities for greening for example through planting of trees and other soft landscaping, . . . l. incorporates outdoor amenity space; . . . n. for housing, provides a high standard of accommodation . . .” (Policy D1).

With respect to heritage, the Camden Local Plan states that “the Council will: . . . e. require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area; . . .” (Policy D2) and that “where alterations are proposed they should be undertaken in a material of a similar appearance to the original. Traditional features should be retained or reinstated where they have been lost, using examples on neighbouring houses and streets to inform the restoration” (7.54).

The Camden Local Plan states that “all new homes should have access to some form of private outdoor amenity space, e.g. balconies, roof terraces or communal gardens. Existing gardens and green space should be retained. New homes should meet the open space standard of 9sqm per resident” (Policy A1). While the Camden Local Plan recognises that “private outdoor amenity space including gardens, balconies and roof terraces, can add significantly to resident’s quality of life and applicants are therefore encouraged to explore all options for the provision of new private outdoor space” (7.23) it also requires that “the residential amenity of neighbours be considered in accordance with Policy A1 Managing the impact of development” (7.23), more specifically the relevant Camden Planning Guidance (2.11) which provides that “although balconies and roof terraces can provide amenity space for flats that would otherwise have little or no exterior space, they also have the potential to increase opportunities for overlooking”.

The Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area Statement (SD26) states that “the formation of roof gardens can be an opportunity for external space. Due to the dense character of the area, the provision of roof gardens with extensive planting can provide visual amenity to neighbouring properties. However care should be given to locating gardens so that they do not have a detrimental impact on the street scene or on the architectural quality of the building. They can be successfully concealed, for example behind parapet walls. Consideration should be given to overlooking and the impact on long views in particular gardens should not be located on mansard roofs.”

7.1 Design and Heritage

The Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area Statement has been reviewed prior to this planning proposal and has informed the design and choice of materials. Although the Seven Dials Conservation Area Statement states that “the special character of the Conservation Area is found in the range and mix of building types and uses and the street layout. The character is not dominated by one particular period or style of building but rather it is their combination that is of special interest”, as part of the proposal original, traditional materials and existing architectural features will be retained and/or newly specified wherever possible. The proposed terrace is to be finished with traditional pavers and black metal railings, and filled with container plants, and it would restore a rear ‘yard’ to 68 Neal Street, albeit one at the 2nd storey.

The pavers will be similar to those used for the roof terraces of 66 Neal Street and 70-74 Neal Street so that the roof terrace will be visually harmonious with its neighbours to either side and also more in sympathy with the brickwork and other traditional materials used in the surrounding buildings than the current bare flat roof.

The black metal railings and steps also have a traditional feel and are designed to match the existing railings and stairs at the 3rd floor level of 68 Neal Street. They also relate well to black metal balconies to the rear of the neighbouring flats at 70-74 Neal Street.

Although the garden or 'landscaping' aspect of this proposal will be limited to container planting, as mentioned above the roof terraces of the neighbouring properties on both sides (the first and third floor flats of 66 Neal Street and first/second floor flats of 70-74 Neal Street) have well tended container gardens that greatly enhance the views from the flats that overlook them. There is also a ‘green roof’ as part of the Latchford’s Yard infill development immediately behind 70-74 Neal Street. The proposed roof terrace would both fill in and read as a continuation of this pocket of green space to the rear of the buildings on the east side of Neal Street. The Seven Dials Conservation Area Statement recognises the benefits of plantings, including for example when it states that “window boxes above shop fronts were a 19th century feature in the area and are an additional way of providing a greener environment in an appropriate way” (SD 26). It also notes that “planting on the front of buildings was a traditional means of providing vegetation that is still popular and provides a welcome foil to the hard materials of this densely developed area”. This is true as well at the rear of buildings and, in addition to the benefits of this proposal to the residents of 68 Neal Street itself, the plantings will bring a greener visual amenity to the neighbouring properties as well. When filled with container plants, the proposed roof terrace should appear much more appealing to its neighbours than in its current form as a bare flat roof which interrupts the row of rooftop gardens.

The traditional materials and design, in keeping with the character of the existing features of 68 Neal Street and its neighbours, and the colours and natural forms of the plants and flowers should provide visual amenity to neighbouring properties as well as the property itself and should thus enhance the character of the Seven Dials Conservation Area.

It should also be noted that the location of this proposal at the rear of the building and the use of traditional materials similar to the existing features at the rear of the building will have “no detrimental impact on the street scene or on the architectural quality of the building”. More specifically, the historical significance of Neal Street with its small narrow width houses with early 19th Century shop fronts at ground and residential spaces above will remain unaffected by this proposal. With the proposed addition of the roof terrace, 68 Neal Street will continue to make a positive contribution in terms of safeguarding its residential community as well as to the character and appearance of the Seven Dials Conservation Area.

According to the National Planning Policy Framework (Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment: item 185), this proposal will ensure the continued use and enjoyment of the residential property as was intended upon its original construction. The proposed alterations are to allow the property to be occupied (and enjoyed) all year round and provide respite from the dense urban environment and promote the continued presence of a residential population in the area.

7.2 Overlooking, Privacy and Outlook

Overlook, privacy and outlook concerns principally relate to the neighbouring roof terrace of the first floor flat of 66 Neal Street as well as the window of the commercial premises at 68A Neal Street that is at the rear of the flat roof of 68 Neal Street. As this roof terrace and window are already overlooked from the 3rd floor roof terrace and rear and side windows of 68 Neal Street, there would be no significant increase in overlooking due to an additional 2nd floor roof terrace above and beyond that which is currently experienced. Elements of the proposed design are, however, intended to increase privacy both for the roof terrace itself and for its

neighbours, and to prevent overlooking, as well as to make a positive contribution to the outlook of its neighbours by generally improving the visual amenity.

The roof terrace of the first floor flat of 66 Neal Street is one floor lower in level and, as a result, the angle caused by the differing elevations shields that roof terrace from being overlooked from much of the main space of the proposed new terrace at the second floor level, with the main risk of overlooking being closest to the parapets and the balustrades (overlooking is more of an issue from the existing 3rd floor roof terrace due to its smaller size as there is not much space away from the parapets and balustrades which affords the necessary angle for overlooking). As mentioned above, the installation of the balustrade/rail above the parapet will be set back from the parapet edge which will help keep users away from the edge and it is intended that the balustrade and parapets of the proposed roof terrace will provide support for terracotta pots with plantings providing a further shield to help prevent overlooking. We note that informal consultation has been made to address any concerns of the owner of the first floor flat of 66 Neal Street and the owner of flat 3 of 70-74 Neal Street. Early on during feasibility the use of screening was considered, however, the owner of the first floor flat at 66 Neal Street and the owner of 70-74 Neal Street were each in favour of the open rail design, where plantings will provide a 'green' screen thus keeping a continuity of green spaces along the rooftops to the rear of this segment of Neal Street and contributing to improved outlook through the provision of visual amenity to the neighbouring properties.

The window to the commercial premises at 68A Neal Street at the rear of the flat roof of 68 Neal Street is glazed with obscured glass which prevents overlooking and preserves the privacy of the occupants within. It should be noted here that the planning application (PL/9200360, August 1992) for the required approval of the design of the windows of 68A Neal Street contains a condition that the windows facing this proposed roof terrace (and all windows of 68A Neal Street facing 62-68 Neal Street) are to be glazed with obscured glass to preserve privacy of the residential properties on Neal Street. The obscured glass which has been installed throughout does not allow views into the office space. The balustrade which runs along the east parapet will stop short of the neighbouring commercial building's wall by 1200mm where it will end in a curved gate which directly sits on the terrace. This has been designed to avoid affecting the window of the offices at 68A Neal Street, as well to maintaining space between the occupants of the roof terrace and the window to further preserve privacy. As mentioned above, it is the intention to place a tall container planting within this gated corner of the terrace just behind the gate to further block the view into the office space.



Image 01 Street view – Neal Street



Image 02 Front Elevation



Image 03 Aerial view showing neighbouring roof top terrace gardens

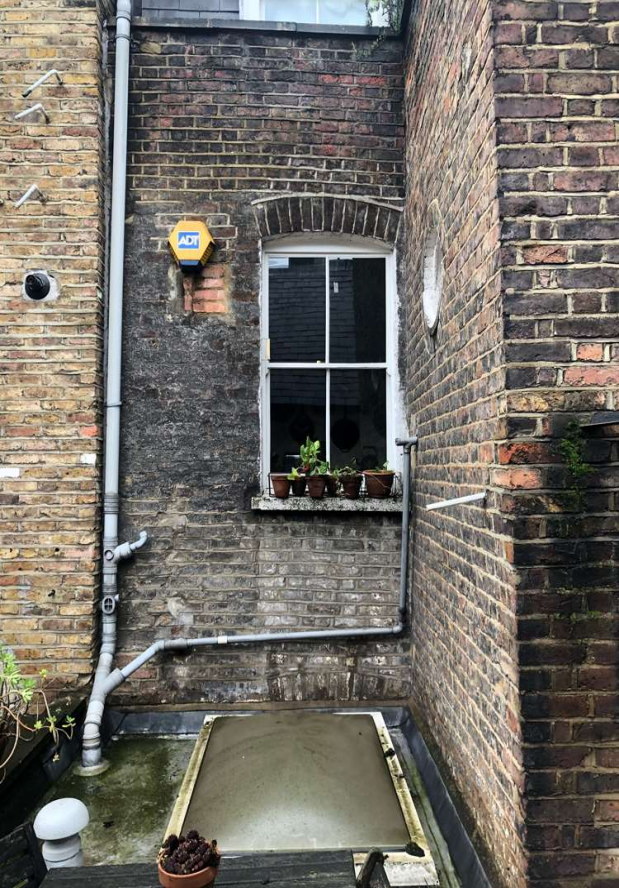


Image 04 Proposed door location



Image 05 view of existing roof



Image 06 view looking down on redundant steel stair



Image 07 Existing 3rd floor terrace with planting, similar planting to proposed terrace



Image 08 Neighbouring rooftop at 66 Neal Street



Image 09 Neighbouring rooftop at 70-74 Neal Street