

Design & Access and Planning Statement

Site: 36-37 Great Russell St, London WC1B 3PP

Proposal: *Erection of rear extensions at basement to 2nd floor levels to provide enlarged retail space at basement and ground floor (as approved on 23/08/2016 ref 2016/2795/P) and two new self contained 1 bedroom flats at first and second floors with associated new internal lift; provision of communal cycle and refuse stores at ground floor; conversion of two 1 bed flats to one 2 bedroom flat on third floor; retention of existing office use at part 1st and part 2nd floors; creation of new roof terrace at rear 1st floor; replacement of staircase hatch by larger one to existing main roof terrace; and associated external fenestration alterations"*

1.0 Application Site and Location

The site is located in a mixed used area with shops, workplaces, entertainment and leisure facilities and other local amenities nearby which will reduce the need for travel.

The ground and basement levels are retail (A1) use; the first and second floors consist of B1 floorspace the third floor is residential.

The property lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The site has a PTAL rating of 6b, with excellent access to public transport facilities (PTAL 6a), including three London Underground Stations in close proximity (Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Road and Holborn) as well as numerous bus routes

The site is located within an area where controlled parking measures are in place.

The site is located in a low flood risk zone.

2.0 Relevant planning history

Planning Permission (Ref: 2017/2149/P) was granted on 19/07/2018, for: *"Erection of rear extensions at basement to 2nd floor levels to provide enlarged retail space at basement and ground floor (as approved on 23/08/2016 ref 2016/2795/P) and two new self contained 1 bedroom flats at first and second floors with associated new internal lift; provision of communal cycle and refuse stores at ground floor; conversion of two 1 bed flats to one 2 bedroom flat on third floor; retention of existing office use at part 1st and part 2nd floors; creation of new roof terrace at rear 1st floor; replacement of staircase hatch by larger one to existing main roof terrace; and associated external fenestration alterations"*

3.0 Planning Proposal

This application is identical to the previously approved scheme.

As such, the application involves the following:

- Erection of an infill rear extension at basement and ground floors to provide enlarged retail space;
- Erection of a rear extension at 1st and 2nd floors to provide 2 one-bedroom flats, one with roof terrace at side 1st floor;
- Conversion of 3rd floor from 2 one bed flats to 1 two-bedroom flat, with access to existing roof terrace;
- Internal alterations to provide separate lift access on all floors;
- Internal alterations to provide cycle and refuse storage at ground floor;
- Retention of existing office use at part 1st and part 2nd floors;
- Replacement staircase hatch and new lift overrun to existing main roof terrace
- Associated external alterations to windows, etc.

4.0 Relevant Planning Policies

Paragraph 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework Document (NPPF) (2019) states; *“So sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).”*

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states; *“Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.”*

Paragraph 111 states: *“Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.”*

Paragraph 130 of the NPPF (2019) states: *“Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development...”*

Sections 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (“the Listed Buildings Act”) requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area when considering applications relating to land or buildings within that Area. The effect of this sections of the Conservation Area Act is that there is a statutory presumption in favour of the preservation of the character and appearance of Conservation Areas. A proposal which would cause harm should only be permitted where there are strong countervailing planning considerations which sufficiently outweigh the harm caused.

The London Plan was adopted March 2021. The relevant policies for this application include:

GG2 - Making the best use of land. Part c of the policy states: *“Proactively explore the potential to intensify the use of land to support additional homes and workspaces, promoting higher density development, particularly in locations that are well-connected to jobs, services, infrastructure and amenities by public transport, walking and cycling.”*

GG4 - Delivering the homes Londoners need. This policy reinforces the need to delivery more homes because the delivery of more homes is a strategic priority.

Policy SD6 - Town centres and high streets. This policy seeks to strengthen the viability and function of town centres. The policy promotes housing growth in such areas to help strengthen the viability and function of town centres.

Policy D3 - Optimising site capacity through the design-led approach. This policy seeks design led higher density development in sustainable locations.

Policy D4 - Delivering good design.

Policy D6 - Housing quality and standards

Policy H1 - Increasing housing supply. This policy sets new housing delivery targets for all London Boroughs. The annualised target for housing completions in Camden has been increased to 1,380.

Policy - H2 Small sites. This policy states that small site housing developments will be the strategic priority to deliver housing. Part A of the policy states that *“small sites should play a much greater role in housing delivery...”* Part B, 1, recognises that planning decisions should accept that local character evolves over time and will need to change in appropriate locations to accommodate additional housing provision and increases in residential density through small housing developments. The policy also includes a new housing delivery target solely for the number of dwellings approved for applications of small sites. The annualised target for housing completions set for Camden is 328 dwellings per annum.

The London Plan Housing SPG (2016) is also a material consideration.

Camden’s Local Plan was adopted 2017. The **relevant policies within Camden Councils adopted Local Plan include:**

A1 – Managing the impact of development

D1 – Design

D2 – Heritage

G1 – Delivery and location of growth

H1 – Maximising housing supply

H4 – Maximising the supply of affordable housing

H6 – Housing choice and mix

H7 – Large and small homes

T1 – Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport

T2 – Car-free development and limiting the availability of parking.

Camden Council have also adopted the following planning guidance:

- Design (2019)
- Amenity (2019)
- Housing (2019)
- Transport (2019)
- Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy

5.0 Planning Assessment

Layout

The proposal aims to provide 2no. residential units on the site as well as replacing the existing substandard flats at third floor level, which do not meet the national space standards for accommodation. The internal layouts were designed in a rational and logical way to achieve good living standards throughout. The proposed flats comply with the minimum areas as per London Plan in terms of G.I.A. and are dual aspect, with no single aspect north facing units and access to outdoor amenity space where possible.

The proposed extension would complement the layout of the uses within the building, with separate access cores provided for the residential and commercial uses.

Scale

As indicated in the proposed drawings, the proposal maintains the predominant style of the area and matches the character of surrounding properties in terms of scale, heights and materials. The proposed scheme was designed in a sensitive manner, with the aim of forming an integral and proportional appearance which complements the conservation area while at the same time not affecting the privacy and daylight of the surrounding residential properties.

The rear of the existing site is enclosed on three sides and is largely not visible from the public realm with limited views of the area from the upper floors of adjoining buildings.

The proposal would enhance the appearance of the rear of the building with the addition of windows and a fenestration pattern that will add visual interest and natural surveillance to the host building.

Materials

The development proposes the use of high quality and durable materials to match the palette in the vicinity of the site and ensure that the scheme enhances the appearance of the building overall.

It is proposed the use of matching window designs and materials to the rear elevation.

Appearance

The property lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

External appearance is to match the predominantly style in the area and the host building in terms of materials, detailing and design.

The new two storey rear extension will be sited as a corner infill between two large blank walls of adjoining building and against part of the rear facade of the host building. It remains essentially subservient to the host building by means of setbacks in elevation and plan form. It will be visible from Willoughby Street but well set back from the street and read against the bulk of the higher flank walls behind, so that it will not appear as an overly bulky or obtrusive addition in the streetscene.

The proposed lift overrun will be set back from both front and rear and will be below the perimeter parapet heights, thus it will be not visible at all from the street due to sightlines.

Use

The existing offices (Class E) at upper 1st and 2nd floors will be retained although a small amount (approx. 5sqm) will be lost on each floor to accommodate a new lift for the new flats at the rear; The office rooms will be reconfigured in layout. The loss of floorspace is minimal and the new layout will continue to provide adequate and acceptable accommodation.

The existing retail units (Class E) at ground and basement floors will be retained and enlarged by the rear extension. A new refuse and recycling store has been provided at ground floor for the new flats. The proposed refuse storage will be in accordance with the CPG1 DESIGN Storage and collection of recycling and waste, as indicated in the table below.

COMMUNAL REFUSE / RECYCLING STORAGE		
	Contained Flats	Proposed storage
General Waste	3 Dwellings	1 x 240L + 1 x 140L Wheeled Containers
Mixed Recycling	3 Dwellings	1 x 240L + 1 x 140L Wheeled Containers
Food Waste	3 Dwellings	3 x 23L Caddy

The existing two flats on the 3rd floor are lawful by virtue of being there for over 4 years and since the late 1980's. These two substandard units will be converted into a family size 2bedroom/4people flat. The rear extension at first and second floors will provide two additional 1bed/2people units.

Neighbour amenity

The rear extension is sited against two blank flank walls of adjoining properties and well set back from the side street frontage, so it will not result in any loss of light or outlook to neighbours to the side, rear or opposite. The new flat windows are over 18m away from the existing flats opposite in 2-4 Willoughby Street, thus will not affect privacy in accordance with CPG recommendations.

The new terrace at first floor will have a privacy screen, to ensure there is no further overlooking as this element will be only 16m away. Given the size of the terrace, its distance from flats opposite and the solid nature of the perimeter screen, it is unlikely to create any noise nuisance to neighbours. There will be no direct overlooking between flats and offices on the site itself.

The main building's roof terrace is existing and accessed by a narrow steep staircase hatch. This will be replaced by a proper staircase within a longer hatch to meet building regulations and to make the terrace more accessible. The parapets are high enough to not require additional perimeter enclosures. There will be no increase in overlooking from this retained terrace.

Access

The site is located in a mixed used area with shops, workplaces, entertainment and leisure facilities and other local amenities nearby which will reduce the need for travel.

The site has a PTAL rating of 6b, with excellent access to public transport facilities (PTAL 6a), including three London Underground Stations in close proximity (Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Road and Holborn) as well as numerous bus routes.

The development (which would result in the net increase of one residential property within the building) is therefore proposed to be "car free" with a restriction of future residents applying for parking permits, which can be secured via S106 legal agreement.

The design will retain the existing access for Emergency Services from Bloomsbury and Great Russell Street.

Access to the site and the residential units on the upper floors from the street would be improved with one central residential core served by a lift.

Affordable housing

The proposal will provide affordable housing contributions in compliance with the Councils planning policies.

Energy.

Refer to submitted energy report.

6.0 Conclusion

The proposal is identical to the previously approved (Ref: 2017/2149/P), granted on 19/07/2018 and recently lapsed.