



Lady Somerset Rd Application for conversion and associated alterations

1	Summary
1.1	The application is for reconfiguration and alterations to an existing terraced property, currently arranged as 6no. self-contained units.
1.2	The applicant has recently purchased the property. They are seeking to vastly improve the standard of accommodation and provide additional amenity space.
1.3	The application also seeks to improve the external appearance of the property to the front and rear elevations.
2	Site
2.1	The site consists of a terraced property to the northern side of Lady Somerset Rd. It currently consists of a separate basement flat (in separate ownership), and 6no. self-contained studio flats to the floors above. To the rear is a narrow communal garden accessed from a concrete staircase.
2.2	Each studio flat has its own entrance , and kitchen and bathroom facilities. These units are extremely small, falling far below the nationally described space standards. They are all single aspect.
2.3	The front elevation has seen its original timber sash windows replaced with uPVC casements. To the top floor two more windows have been formed , also with uPVC windows. These dormer are poorly proportioned and poorly constructed, and do not relate to the elevation below.
2.4	The rear elevation has similarly been heavily modified, with the loss of the original fenestration layout as well as original timber sash windows. New windows openings have been formed in several locations, and window framing is generally uPVC as well. Dormer windows have been poorly constructed and proportioned, and feature uPVC windows as well. As such this rear elevation in particular presents no heritage interest.
2.5	To the west, the property adjoins 20 Lady Somerset Rd. This is a modern block of flats, featuring regular window layout , and is taller than the application site. To the east the property adjoins 16 Lady Somerset Rd. This property is of similar age and design to the application site, albeit has also been heavily modified over time. To the rear this property features several non original window openings, and generally windows have been replaced with uPVC in several locations.



- 2.6 The property is not listed, and is not in a conservation area. It is not locally listed, nor is it a non-designated heritage asset.
- 2.7 The Planning Portal defines the HMO use Class C4 as "Small shared houses occupied by between three and six unrelated individuals, as their only or main residence, who share basic amenities such as a kitchen or bathroom." There are no shared kitchen or bathroom facilities for any occupants and so the site does not appear to have any of the characteristics of an HMO. Per section 4 below there is also no planning history permitting change to this use class.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 The property is to be reconfigured to provide 3no. self-contained residential units.
- 3.2 To the front elevation, non-original uPVC windows are to be replaced with timber sashes. The dormer windows are to be rebuilt and reshaped to better relate to the fenestration patterns below.
- 3.3 Floor levels to the rear half of the property are to be altered, and a new staircase provided to suit.
- 3.4 To the rear elevation, glazing layouts ought to be realigned to reinstate a more regular appearance. Proportions of this glazing how to arrive from original openings.
- 3.5 To the top floor area section of roof is to be removed, to provide a private roof terrace for the top flat.
- 3.6 Existing thermal elements are to be upgraded and each flat is to be served by an air source heat pump which will provide heating and hot water with no external condenser unit.

4 Relevant history

- 4.1 Application 9140021, registered 23.08.91, approved in 1991 - "Works of conversion in association with the change of use to two self-contained maisonettes as shown on drawing nos. LMR/1 2 3."
- 4.2 Application 100587/28871, registered 24.03.60 - "The Conversion of 18 Lady Somerset Road, St. Pancras, into four self-contained dwelling units."

- 4.3 There does not appear to be any relevant planning approval for the current layout. It is not clear when this layout was implemented, albeit the interior is extremely dated and in a poor state.

5 Relevant policies

5.1 Camden Local Plan (2017)

Policy H3 – Protecting Existing Homes
Policy D1 – Design

Camden Planning Guidance – Home Improvements (2021)

6 Assessment - design

6.1 Policy H3 of the Local Plan looks to resist the loss of residential units unless this will “enable sub-standard units to be enlarged to meet residential space standards.” The existing units vary in size from 21m² to 27m². This is far below the minimum space standard of 37m².

6.2 In addition, all units are single aspect which gives poor cross ventilation. The communal areas at the top level are cramped and do not have a smoke vent to evacuate smoke in the event of fire.

6.3 The existing units are substandard in space and layout terms and therefore the proposal meets the requirements of this policy.

6.4 The proposed area schedule is

Unit 01 – 59.5m² (2b3p)
Unit 02 – 55.5m² (2b3p)
Unit 03 – 77m² (2b3p over two floors)

Whilst units 01 & 02 are marginally below the 61m² set out in the Nationally Described Space Standards, they are highly efficient due to minimal circulation space. Layouts have been shown with furniture to demonstrate that

the accommodation is of a comfortable and functional standard.

- 6.5 Policy D1 (and also the Home Improvement SPD) generally looks to ensure designs are contextual, use details and materials of high quality, and incorporate outdoor amenity space.
- 6.6 The proposals seek to refurbish the front elevation, removing and replacing non-original elements to provide a building which is far more sympathetic to its context, and which will enhance the street scene.
- 6.7 To the rear, the existing jumble of fenestration design is to be reconfigured to provide a more sympathetic and orderly elevation. This has been developed with close study of the properties either side and therefore meets the guidance in Policy D1 paragraph (a) which states that proposals should "respect local context and character"
- 6.8 Whilst the proposed rear elevation is not a complete reinstatement of the original design, it is highly contextual given the contemporary property to the west, and the highly modified property to the east.
- 6.9 The proposed layouts provide good quality private amenity space to the larger units.
- 6.10 The new units will be required to meet Building Regulation standards in terms of energy usage. Flats are to be served by air source heat pumps which require no external condenser. The works will therefore result in far more energy-efficient dwellings, in line with the requirements of Policy D1 paragraph (c), requiring that proposals are
- '... sustainable in design and construction, incorporating best practice in resource management and climate change mitigation and adaptation.'
- locations for the heat pumps have been designed in from the outset. This is therefore in line with Policy D1 paragraph (o) which requires that development 'carefully integrates building services equipment'

7	Assessment - amenity
7.1	There are no extensions beyond the existing built form proposed, and therefore the proposals will not lead to a loss of daylight or outlook to any neighbouring properties.
7.2	A modest roof terrace is proposed to the top floor flat, to the rear of the property. This is enclosed on two sides by the existing brick party walls . Given the layouts of and distance to properties to the rear the proposed terrace will not present any overlooking issues. Similar views are currently achievable from the dormer windows located at the rear of this property.

8	Conclusion
8.1	The proposals provide high-quality accommodation and layouts with improved amenity spaces.
8.2	They do so whilst restoring original features to greatly improve the appearance of the property and the streetscene.
8.3	We respectfully therefore request that the proposals are granted approval.