

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:	02/11/2021
		N/A		Consultation Expiry Date:	26/12/2021
Officer			Application Number(s)		
Kristina Smith			1. 2021/4313/P 2. 2021/5359/L		
Application Address			Drawing Numbers		
26A Argyle Square London WC1H 8AP			<i>Refer to Draft Decision Notice</i>		
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature		
Proposal(s)					
1. Conversion of the property from 2 residential units to 4 units, and rear infill extension at ground and first floor level 2. Internal alterations and rear infill extension in association with conversion of property from 2 to 4 residential units					
Recommendation(s):		1. Refuse planning permission 2. Refuse Listed Building Consent			
Application Type:		1. Full Planning Permission 2. Listed Building Consent			

Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:	Refer to Draft Decision Notice			
Informatives:				
Consultations				
Adjoining Occupiers:	No. of responses	00	No. of objections	00
Summary of consultation responses:	<p><u>Planning permission</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A site notice was displayed between 26/11/2021 and 20/12/2021 • A press advert was published on 02/12/2021 <p><u>Listed Building Consent</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A site notice was displayed between 08/12/2021 and 01/01/2022 • A press advert was published on 09/12/2021 <p>No objections were received</p>			
CAAC / Local Groups response:	No objections were received			

Site Description

The site is a four storey grade-II-listed mid-19th-century townhouse at the end of a terrace of 10 situated at the junction between Argyle Square and Loxham Street. The site is situated in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It comprises a very substantial 1960s rear extension, which does not form part of the listing. It is in residential use and its street number is no.26 Argyle Square.

Relevant History

2021/4312/P - Conversion of property from 3 residential units to 5 units. **Pending decision**

2014/2594/P - Change of use and works of conversion from an art gallery and commercial space (D1 and B1) and 2 residential units into 5 residential units (3 x 2 bed, 2 x 3 bed) including roof extension and roof terrace at rear 2nd floor level, new entrance portico and windows. **Granted Subject to a Section 106 Legal Agreement 24/11/2014**

2005/3077/P - Conversion into 2 self contained units comprising basement studio flat and 3-bedroom unit on upper floors with associated internal and external alterations. **Granted 30/09/2005**

Relevant policies

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

London Plan 2021

Camden Local Plan 2017

A1 Managing the impact of development

H1 Maximising housing supply

H4 Maximising the supply of affordable housing

H6 Housing choice and mix

H7 Large and small homes

D1 Design

D2 Heritage

T1 Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport

T2 Parking and car-free development

DM1 Monitoring

Camden Planning Guidance

CPG Design 2021

CPG Home Improvements 2021

CPG Amenity 2021

CPG Housing 2021

CPG Transport 2021

CPG Developer's contributions 2019

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (2011)

Assessment

1 Proposal

1.1 The application seeks planning permission for the following works in association with the conversion of 2 residential units (1x2-bed, 1x3-bed) to 4 residential units (1x1-bed, 1x2-bed, 2xstudio):

- Internal alterations at all levels
- Rear lightwell infill extension at ground and first floors

2 Assessment

2.1 The main considerations in the determination of the application are:

- Land use
- Housing
- Design and Heritage
- Amenity of neighbouring occupiers
- Transport considerations

2.2 As the application site is situated within a Conservation Area and the building is Grade II listed, the following statutory provisions are relevant to the determination of these applications are Section 16, 72 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013.

2.3 Section 16 requires that in considering whether to grant listed building consent for development which affects a listed building, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building, its setting and its features of special architectural or historic interest.

2.4 Section 66 of the Act requires that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building, its setting and its features of special architectural or historic interest.

2.5 The NPPF terms listed buildings designated heritage assets. Section 12 of the NPPF provides guidance on managing change to designated heritage assets through the planning system, including avoiding or justifying harm to the special architectural or historic interest of listed buildings. Paragraph 134 states that “less-than-substantial harm” to a designated heritage asset must be outweighed by the public benefits secured by the proposals, including heritage benefits to the assets.

3 Land use

3.1 Self-contained housing is regarded as the priority land-use of the Camden Local Plan and Policy H1 states that the Council will make housing its top priority when considering the future of unused and underused land and buildings. The proposal would increase the floorspace slightly via the extension but this is a relatively minor uplift. The reconfiguration of the building would effectively result in the loss of a 3-bed unit and see it replaced with a 1-bed and 2 studio units.

3.2 Policy H7 seeks to provide a range of unit sizes to meet demand across the borough and regards 2 and 3 bed units as high priority whilst 1-bed and studios are identified as lower priority. The proposal would therefore lose a high priority unit and gain three lower priority units. Whilst the loss of the larger unit is regrettable the lack of access to outside amenity space makes it less ideally suited to the range of household types such a unit would otherwise cater for; and set against the

increased residential provision including the extended floorspace is on balance not considered harmful enough to constitute a reason for refusing the application.

4 Housing

Quality of residential accommodation

4.1 CPG Housing requires development to provide high quality housing that meets space standards, provides secure, well-lit accommodation that has well-designed layouts and rooms. All habitable rooms should have access to natural daylight and the strong preference is for dual aspect units.

4.2 In this instance, all units meet minimum space standards. The two studio units would be single aspect due to the windowless infill extension that removes aspect to the rear. Whilst not ideal, this is acceptable for smaller units as the large windows to the front of the property would provide sufficient daylight and outlook. Whilst the 1-bed unit at lower ground floor level would be dual aspect, its outlook and daylight would be compromised by the close lightwell walls at a distance of 1-1.7m away. This is regarded as poor quality residential accommodation and will constitute a reason for refusal.

Affordable housing

4.3 Policy H4 expects a contribution to affordable housing from all developments that provide one or more additional homes and involve a total addition to the residential floorspace of 100sqm GIA or more. The proposal involves an uplift of less than 100sqm and therefore no contribution is required.

5 Design and Heritage

5.1 Policy D1 of the Local Plan requires all developments to be of the highest standard of design and will expect development to consider:

- Character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings and constraints of its site;
- The prevailing pattern, density and scale of surrounding development;
- The impact on existing rhythms, symmetries and uniformities in the townscape

5.2 Policy D2 (Heritage) relates to designated heritage assets including conservation areas and listed buildings. The Council will not permit development that results in harm that is less than substantial to the significance of a designated heritage asset unless the public benefits of the proposal convincingly outweigh that harm.

External works

5.3 Externally, the infilling of the light well to first-floor level would create an atypical deep-plan layout, would result in the internalisation and demolition of two windows and would internalise and obscure much of the rear elevation of the listed building. This is a feature that remains open and legible across the listed terrace.

Internal works

5.4 At lower-ground-floor level, the partition between the front and back rooms will be removed, harming plan form and possibly removing historic fabric.

5.5 At ground and first floor levels, the infilling of the light well will result in the conversion of a window to a doorway, harming plan form and historic fabric.

5.6 At second-floor level, the remains of the original cellular plan form survive between the front and back rooms. The proposal involves removing a nib which in turn would remove this vestige.

5.7 On two levels, central straddle bathrooms are removed, which could be considered a heritage benefit. However, in each case, the bathroom is re-provided as infill in the light well, so this benefit is negated.

5.8 Overall, there is heritage harm to the listed building resulting from the internal works and the infilling of the lightwell. Given the works are not readily perceptible from anywhere in the public realm, the character and appearance of the conservation area would be preserved.

6 Impact on the amenity of surrounding occupiers

6.1 The infill extension of the lightwell would retain a smaller lightwell between the adjacent windows of no.26. The extension may well reduce the level of light received by the north facing window/door that currently looks out into the lightwell; however, this is not the only opening that serves this room and therefore sufficient daylight and outlook would continue to be received.

7 Transport Considerations

7.1 In line with Policy T1 of the Local Plan, the Council expect cycle parking at new developments to be provided in accordance with the standards set out within the London Plan (1 space for 1 studio and 1b1p units; 1.5 spaces for 1b2p units and 2 spaces for 2-bed units and larger). For the proposed mix, 5.5 spaces would be required but the proposals do not show these incorporated into the design nor does there appear to be scope to include them within the site boundary. Were the application to be supported, a financial contribution to on-street provision would have been sought and secured by s106 legal agreement. The absence of such an agreement at this stage is considered to justify a reason for refusal.

7.2 Policy T2 requires all redevelopment schemes to be car-free in order to reduce air pollution and congestion and improve the attractiveness of an area for local walking and cycling. In this instance that would mean all 4 reconfigured units should be car free. In the absence of a finalised legal agreement being in place at the time of determination, the lack of such agreement shall constitute a reason for refusal.

8 Planning balance

8.1 It is recognised that the proposal would bring about harm to the significance of the listed building. In order to support 'less than substantial' heritage harm, the Council has to identify tangible public benefits arising from the scheme that would outweigh the harm. There are very limited benefits in the conversion to an increased number of residential units and small increase in floorspace on the site, and in any event the benefit is negated by the fact that the units are lower priority size-wise and a high priority unit is being lost. Also one of the units would offer a poor standard of amenity due to poor natural daylight and outlook. If planning permission were to be granted and a legal agreement in place, there would be a small benefit to be found in all units becoming car-free. However, this benefit is not considered to justify or outweigh the heritage harm.

9 Recommendation

9.1 Refuse Planning Permission on the following grounds:

- The rear infill extension would result in 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of the listed building as a designated heritage asset which is not outweighed by any planning benefits, contrary to policies D1 (Design) and D2 (Heritage) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

- The proposed reconfiguration would result in a lower ground floor unit with compromised levels of daylight and outlook to the detriment of future occupiers, contrary to policies D1 (Design), A1 (Managing the impact of development) and H6 (Housing choice) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.
- The proposed development, in the absence of a legal agreement to secure a contribution to cycle parking, would fail to promote cycling as a sustainable transport choice, contrary to policy T1 (Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.
- The proposed development, in the absence of a legal agreement to secure car-free housing, would be likely to contribute unacceptably to parking stress and congestion in the surrounding area and fail to promote healthy or sustainable transport choices, contrary to policy T2 (Parking and car-free development) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

9.2 Refuse Listed Building Consent on the following grounds:

- The proposed rear infill extension and alterations, by reason of loss of historic fabric and plan-form, would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building, contrary to policy D2 (Heritage) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.