

CITY OF WESTMINSTER			
PLANNING APPLICATIONS SUB COMMITTEE	Date 19 January 2021	Classification For General Release	
Report of Director of Place Shaping and Town Planning		Ward(s) involved Marylebone High Street	
Subject of Report	15 Wimpole Street, London, W1G 9SU		
Proposal	Installation of a lift from lower ground floor to second floor in the stairwell		
Agent	Mr Pasquale Amodio, Map Projects Ltd		
On behalf of	Partners FC Inc, 15 Wimpole Street		
Registered Number	20/04173/LBC	Date amended/ completed	20 July 2020
Date Application Received	3 July 2020		
Historic Building Grade	2		
Conservation Area	Harley Street		

1. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse listed building consent

2. SUMMARY

No. 15 Wimpole Street is a grade 2 listed building in the Harley Street Conservation Area. It is a relatively rare house, dating from the 1760's, a period of relatively low rate of development. It has an important interior with a fine mid-18th century stone staircase. The proposed installation of a lift shaft in the stairwell would have a significant harmful impact on the architectural integrity of the staircase, and would harm the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building.

The agent states that the lift is required by the applicant for medical reasons, and it would be removed if the applicant vacates the building. However, whilst this might mean that some of the harm caused by the lift itself is temporary, there is also permanent harm caused to the stair by cutting away the staircase balustrades to give access to the lift. It is considered that there are alternative measures which could be taken to make the building more usable by the applicant, without the level of harm caused by the proposed lift.

4. PHOTOGRAPHS



Above: view of staircase from the first floor to the ground floor

Left: View looking upwards from first floor level.



Front façade of 15 Wimpole Street

5. CONSULTATIONS

National Amenity Societies – no replies

6. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6.1 The Application Site

No. 15 Wimpole Street is a grade 2 listed building in the Harley Street Conservation Area. It is a relatively rare house, dating from the 1760's, a period of relatively low rate of development. The unusual 'L' shaped plan form of the interior is of significance, especially at ground and first floor levels. There are significant elements of original historic fabric internally too which are important, including the stone staircase.

6.2 Recent Relevant History

On 11 September 2020 listed building consent was refused for the installation of a lift from lower ground floor to second floor and alterations to stairs. The reason for refusal was:

Because of location, detailed design the lift and associated works would harm the planform, fabric and special interest of this grade II listed building. This would be against the advice set out in S25 and S28 of Westminster's City Plan (November 2016) and DES 1 of our Unitary Development Plan that we adopted in January 2007 and the advice set out in paragraph 2.4 of our 'Supplementary Planning Guidance: Repairs and Alterations to Listed Buildings'.
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An informative was added to the decision letter:

The applicant is advised that because of the particular layout and special interest of this Grade II listed building, it is not considered suitable for a lift. The proposals to reverse unsympathetic works to the stairs would probably be acceptable if applied for separately and would likely be welcomed.

7. THE PROPOSAL

Installation of a lift from lower ground floor to second floor in the stairwell.

8. DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Listed building issues

The key legislative requirements in respect to designated heritage assets are as follows:

Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that:

"In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the

desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

Furthermore Chapters 12 and 16 of the NPPF require great weight be placed on design quality and the preservation of designated heritage assets including their setting. Chapter 16 of the NPPF clarifies that harmful proposals should only be approved where the harm caused would be clearly outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme, taking into account the statutory duty to have special regard or pay special attention, as relevant. This should also take into account the relative significance of the affected asset and the severity of the harm caused.

The applicant’s historic building report states:

Despite its irregularities, the building is of high significance as a surviving mid-18th century townhouse and as part of the original development of the Howard De Walden Estate, which was one of the primary estates of London.

Of the primary significance and particularly sensitive to change are:

- The front elevation, not including the 1898 fourth floor mansard, central downpipes and late-19th century sash windows;
- The original plan form which survives largely intact at basement, ground and first floor level;
- The original mid-18th century fittings including the stone-cantilevered staircase, marble chimneypieces at ground, first and second floor and the original joinery comprising of decorative architraves.

In 2017 the applicant sought pre-application advice with respect to the installation of a lift. Officers visited the building and considered three options for the location of a lift shaft. These were:

1. Installing the lift on the south party wall in the front room. The lift shaft would project beyond the face of the chimney stack. It would also involve removal of historic fabric, including parts of the ceiling and cornice. This would have an intrusive, harmful impact on the plan form and fabric of the principal room.
2. Installing the lift shaft externally, between the window openings on the rear facade. It would not serve the first floor level or second floor level. This would harm the appearance of the rear facade of the building, which is relatively unaltered, and, again, harm its plan form.
3. Installing the lift within the open well of the staircase. This is the approach taken in the two recent listed building consent applications, including this application under consideration.

Officers concluded that all of these options would be harmful to the special interest of the listed building in one way or another.

In 2020 two applications were submitted for a lift shaft within the stairwell. One of these applications was refused under delegated powers. The current application is similar to that refused, except in the current proposal the lift is clad in bronze metal mesh, while the refused lift was to be clad in mirror glass.

The proposal involves the installation of an independent, self-supporting lift in the stairwell, which does not rely on support from the upper floor plates. On the first floor and second floor landings the balustrade would be cut away to provide access to the lift. The lift would have a very significant impact on this important historic staircase, by largely infilling the stairwell, changing the appearance and plan form of the staircase. It would be an incongruous and harmful addition.

The applicant states that lift access to the upper floors is required by the occupier for medical reasons but, although they have submitted some information about these reasons, they do not wish for it to be made public and so it cannot be included in this report. This issue is not referred to in the documents submitted with the 2020 applications. It has only been raised subsequently. The Design and Access Statement submitted with the application states:

Internally, the proposed configuration of the stairs will be less constrained than the existing one and the new lift can become an integral part of the reinstated circulation area. Its introduction will ensure a more inclusive and accessible domestic environment for the current owners and aid them with unhindered access to all parts of the house for the years to come.

In turn, this will ensure that the optimal and historically significant use of this building as a single dwelling is retained and becomes available for future multi-generational family use.

It is considered that there are alternative approaches which might address this issue without such significant harm. These could include the installation of a stair lift or reconsideration of the way the house is used.

The application proposes that the lift is a temporary measure which could be removed once the applicant ceased to occupy the building, and that after the lift was removed some restoration works would be carried out to restore the appearance of the stair. In addition at ground floor level the later timber stair and toilet would be removed and the panelling under the stair would be restored. This latter work is considered acceptable.

At second floor it is proposed to replace an existing flight of timber steps with stone, to match the remainder of the stair below. Similar works are proposed between ground floor and basement. These alterations are considered acceptable.

This is an important grade 2 listed building with a particularly good interior from the 1760's. The proposed lift will cause harm to one of the key features of the interior, the original staircase. This is true even if the lift were to be installed temporarily for the benefit of this applicant. The works are not wholly reversible given that sections of the existing balustrade would be removed. They could be reinstated but damage would have been done to the balustrade.

The harm caused by the lift would not be outweighed by any public benefits and so the application does not meet the tests set out with respect to heritage assets in the NPPF. The recommendation to refuse listed building consent is compliant with the City Council's listed building policies, including S25 of the City Plan and DES 10 of the Unitary Development Plan, the requirements of the NPPF and the statutory duties of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

8.2 Westminster City Plan

The City Council is currently working on a complete review of its City Plan. Formal consultation on Westminster's City Plan 2019-2040 was carried out under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 between Wednesday 19 June 2019 and Wednesday 31 July 2019 and on the 19 November 2019 the plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination. The Examination in Public took place between 28 September and 2 October and 12 October and 16 October. Having regard to the tests set out in paragraph 48 of the NPPF, whilst the draft City Plan has now been through an Examination in Public, it will continue to attract very limited weight at this present time prior to the publication of the Inspector's report.

8.3 London Plan

This application raises no strategic issues.

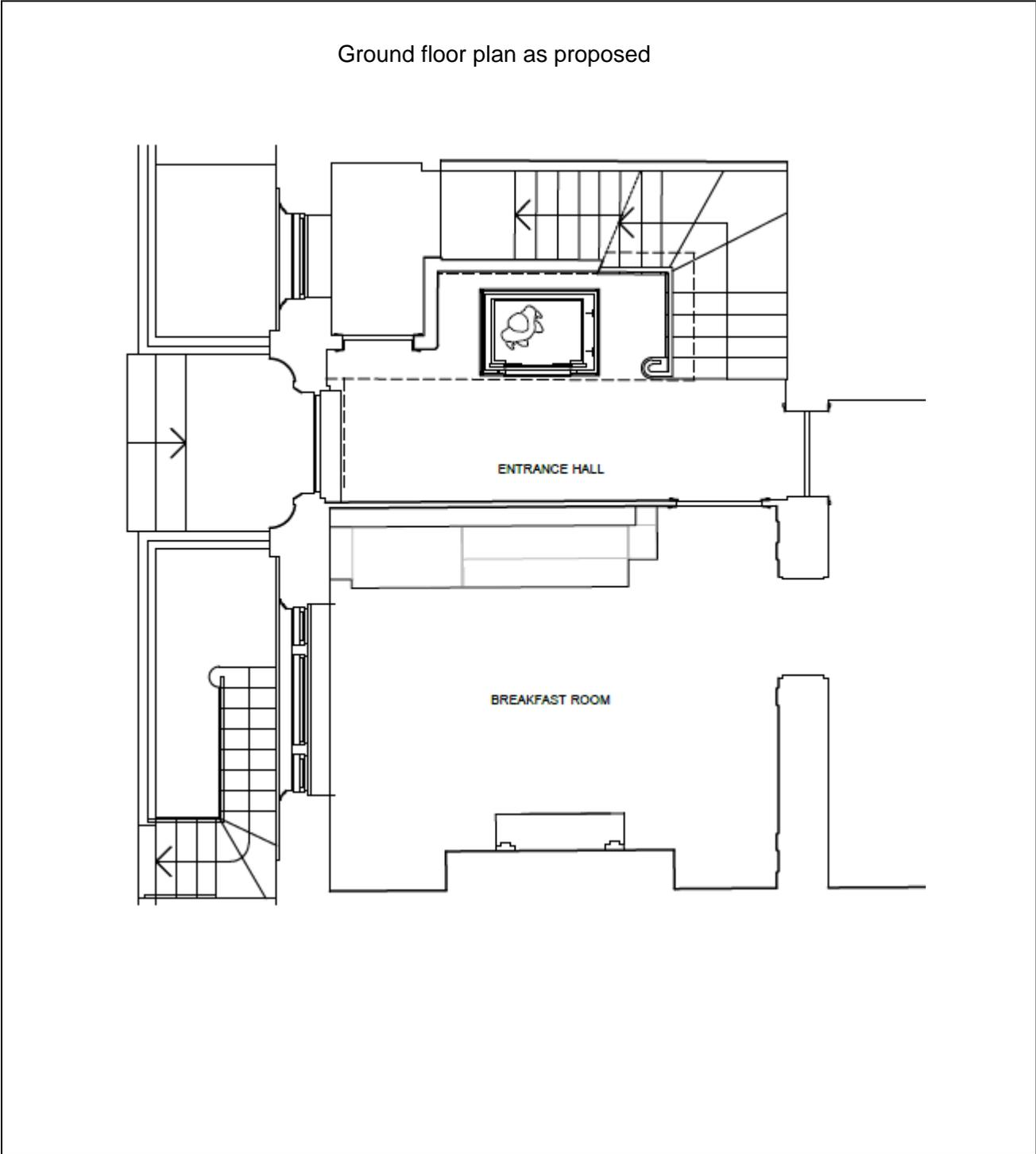
8.4 National Policy/Guidance Considerations

The City Plan and UDP policies referred to in the consideration of this application are considered to be consistent with the NPPF unless stated otherwise.

(Please note: All the application drawings and other relevant documents and Background Papers are available to view on the Council's website)

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES ABOUT THIS REPORT PLEASE CONTACT THE PRESENTING OFFICER: SUSANNA MILLER BY EMAIL AT smiller3@westminster.gov.uk

9. KEY DRAWINGS



Section through the stairwell



DRAFT DECISION LETTER

Address: 15 Wimpole Street, London, W1G 9SU

Proposal: Installation of lift from lower ground floor to second floor in the stairwell

Reference: 20/04173/LBC

Plan Nos: 15WS-N099, N100, N101, N102; 15WS-P099, P100, P101, P102; 15WS-A01, A02, A03, A04, A05, A06, A07, A08, A09, A10, A11; 15WS-PD01; 15WS-PS01/Rev 1; 2 un-numbered drawings (visualisations);

Case Officer: Robert Ayton **Direct Tel. No.** 07866039806

Reason for refusal

Because of its location and design, the proposed lift and associated works would harm the plan form, fabric and special interest of this grade II listed building. This would be against the advice set out in S25 and S28 of Westminster's City Plan (November 2016) and DES 1 and 10 of our Unitary Development Plan that we adopted in January 2007 and the advice set out in paragraph 2.4 of our 'Supplementary Planning Guidance: Repairs and Alterations to Listed Buildings'.
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Please note: the full text for informatives can be found in the Council's Conditions, Reasons & Policies handbook, copies of which can be found in the Committee Room whilst the meeting is in progress, and on the Council's website.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS - 15 Wimpole Street, London, W1G 9SU 20/04173/LBC

1. Application form