

| | | | |
|--|---|---|------------------|
| CITY OF WESTMINSTER | | | |
| PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE | Date 31 May 2016 | Classification For General Release | |
| Report of Director of Planning | | Ward(s) involved Marylebone High Street | |
| Subject of Report | 41 Harley Street, London, W1G 8QH | | |
| Proposal | Removal of the existing steps to the front entrance, to install a new ramp to provide level access including alteration to the front doorway. | | |
| Agent | CBRE | | |
| On behalf of | Howard de Walden Management Limited | | |
| Registered Number | 15/11921/FULL | Date amended/ completed | 22 December 2015 |
| Date Application Received | 22 December 2015 | | |
| Historic Building Grade | Unlisted | | |
| Conservation Area | Harley Street | | |

1. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse permission – harmful to the appearance of the conservation area

2. SUMMARY

The building is an unlisted building of merit in the Harley Street conservation area. It makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and there is a strong presumption to maintain that contribution.

The proposal seeks the removal of the entrance steps to create level access from the street. The potential occupier of the building is Moorfields Eye Hospital. The applicant states that the potential tenant of the building requires level access into the building so that their patients do not have to negotiate the entrance steps.

Raised entrances are a very important and significant part of the character and appearance of the Harley Street conservation area, and indeed most of the conservation areas in the City of Westminster, since most traditional buildings are raised above street level. The removal of entrance steps has consistently been resisted by the City Council on the grounds that the loss of stepped entrances would harm the appearance of buildings and harm the character and appearance of conservation areas.

Where access is an issue in traditional buildings in the Harley Street conservation area the

City Council has approved the use of the 'Sesame' style lift which when not in use takes the form of traditional steps. When access is required the steps slide away to reveal a small platform lift. This is an ingenious mechanism which has been used on many of the buildings in the Harley Street conservation area. It enhances access whilst preserving the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The applicants have stated that level access is required for the proposed operator of the eye hospital. Whilst it may be the ideal solution for the occupier, this has to be weighed against the harm it would cause to the building and the conservation area. There are a number of other eye hospitals in the area which do not have level access and therefore it appears that it is not an essential requirement. These include the following buildings: 25 Queen Anne Street (which has just undergone a major refurbishment and has a 'Sesame' lift), 4 Harley Street, 86 Harley Street and 119 Harley Street.

Councillor Scarborough has raised concerns that if planning permission is not granted for level access the tenant will not take the building. This is noted, but not a planning matter and it is considered that the appearance of the building takes preference over the potential tenant.

The Marylebone Association object to the proposal on the grounds that it will be detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area. They state: 'While we appreciate the desire to achieve level access in the interests of inclusivity, steps between pavement and entrance doors along Harley Street are an integral element in the character of the area and their removal in this instance would set a dangerous precedent for others'.

It is considered that the proposal would be harmful to heritage assets but that there are no public benefits which outweigh that harm. There is a danger that if planning permission were to be granted in this case many other occupiers would also seek planning permission for similar harmful alterations, and the cumulative harm of such works would be very damaging to the street scene in the conservation area. It is recommended that this application be refused and an informative is recommended advising that a 'Sesame' style lift would be acceptable.

3. LOCATION PLAN



This production includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office (C) Crown Copyright and /or database rights 2013.
All rights reserved License Number LA 100019597

4. PHOTOGRAPHS



5. CONSULTATIONS

COUNCILLOR SCARBOROUGH

Concerned that if planning permission is not granted for the level access, the tenants will not move into the building.

MARYLEBONE ASSOCIATION

Objection – removal of stepped entrance would be detrimental to the character of the conservation area.

ADJOINING OWNERS/OCCUPIERS AND OTHER REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

No. Consulted: 60

Total No. of replies: 0

PRESS ADVERTISEMENT / SITE NOTICE: Yes

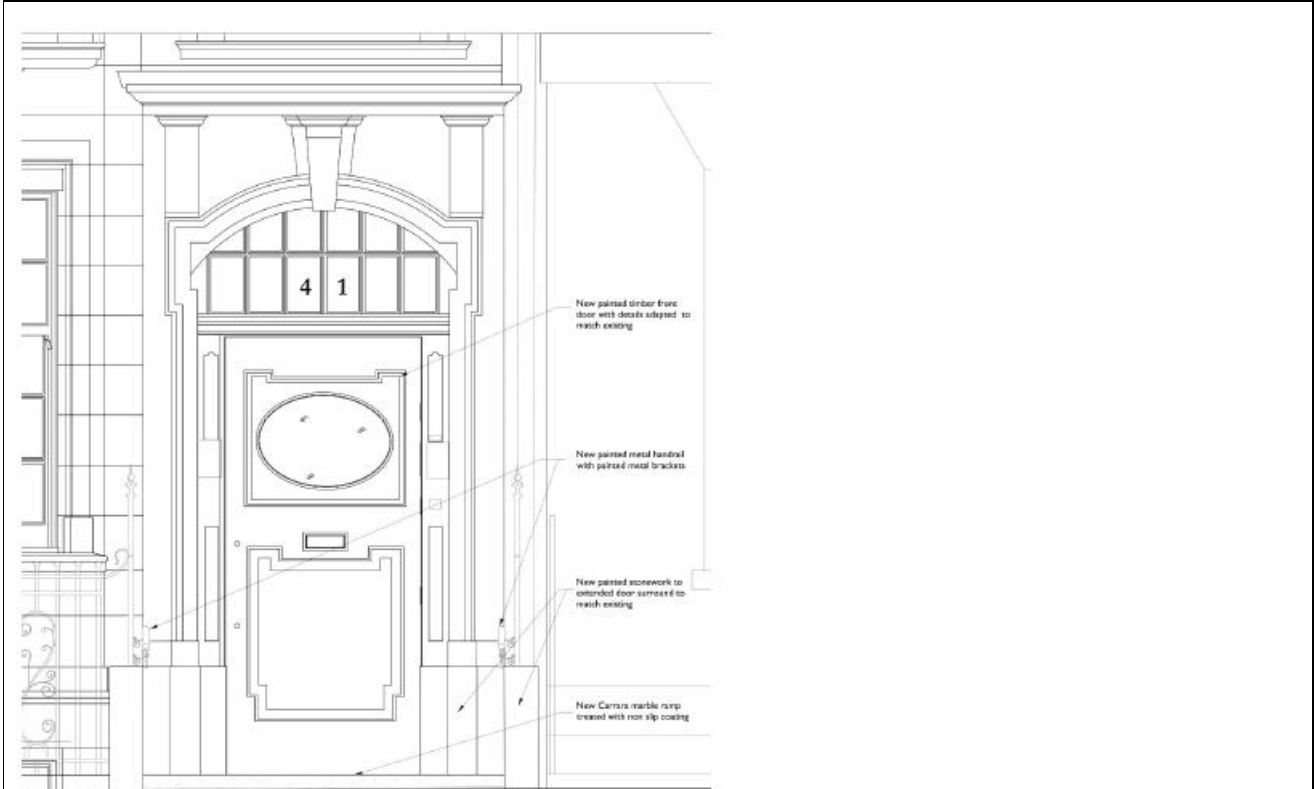
6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Application form
2. Response from the Marylebone Association dated 15 March 2016

(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 ROBERT AYTON ON 020 7641 2978 OR BY EMAIL AT CentralPlanningTeam@westminster.gov.uk

7. KEY DRAWINGS



Proposed front elevation with new ramp



PHOTOGRAPH OF EXISTING FRONT ENTRANCE

NTS



PROPOSED FRONT ENTRANCE WITH LEVEL ACCESS (COMPUTER IMAGE)

NTS

DRAFT DECISION LETTER

Address: 41 Harley Street, London, W1G 8QH,

Proposal: Removal of the existing steps to the front entrance, to install a new ramp to provide level access including alteration to the front doorway.

Reference: 15/11921/FULL

Plan Nos: 15C PL / PRO 200-, 201-; DEM 200-, 201-

Case Officer: Robert Ayton

Direct Tel. No. 020 7641 2978

Recommended Condition(s) and Reason(s):

Reason:

- 1 Because of the demolition of the existing steps and associated works, the proposed alterations would harm the appearance of this building and fail to maintain or improve (preserve or enhance) the character and appearance of the Harley Street Conservation Area. This would not meet S25 and S28 of Westminster's City Plan: Strategic Policies adopted November 2013 and DES 5, DES 1 and paras 10.108 to 10.128 of our Unitary Development Plan that we adopted in January 2007. (X16AC)

Informative(s):

- 1 Stepped entrances are key characteristic of buildings in the Harley Street Conservation Area and make a considerable contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The removal of such steps is considered unacceptable in principle.
- 2 In dealing with this application the City Council has implemented the requirement in the National Planning Policy Framework to work with the applicant in a positive and proactive way so far as practicable. We have made available detailed advice in the form of our statutory policies in Westminster's City Plan: Strategic Policies adopted November 2013, Unitary Development Plan, Supplementary Planning documents, planning briefs and other informal written guidance, as well as offering a full pre application advice service. However, we have been unable to seek solutions to problems as the principle of the proposal is clearly contrary to our statutory policies and negotiation could not overcome the reasons for refusal.

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.

| |
|----------|
| Item No. |
|----------|

| |
|-----------|
| 11 |
|-----------|