

# PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

Development Management Service  
Planning and Development Division  
Environment and Regeneration Department  
PO Box 333  
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LONDON N1 1YA

<b>PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE B</b>		<b>AGENDA ITEM NO:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2014		

Application number	P2013/4624/FUL
Application type	Full
Ward	Bunhill
Listed building	Not listed
Conservation area	Not in a conservation area
Development Plan Context	
Licensing Implications	N/A
Site Address	1-115 Gambier House, Mora Street, London EC1V 8EJ.
Proposal	The overcladding of the external walls with a rainscreen cladding system.

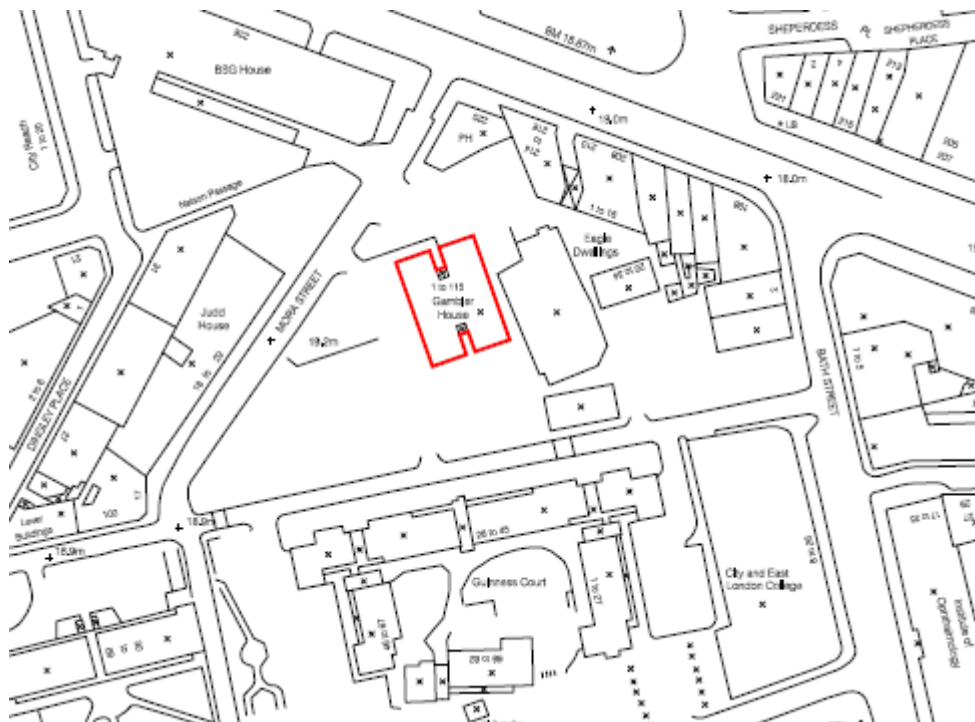
Case Officer	Ashley Niman
Applicant	London Borough of Islington
Agent	Islington Council Architects

## 1. RECOMMENDATION

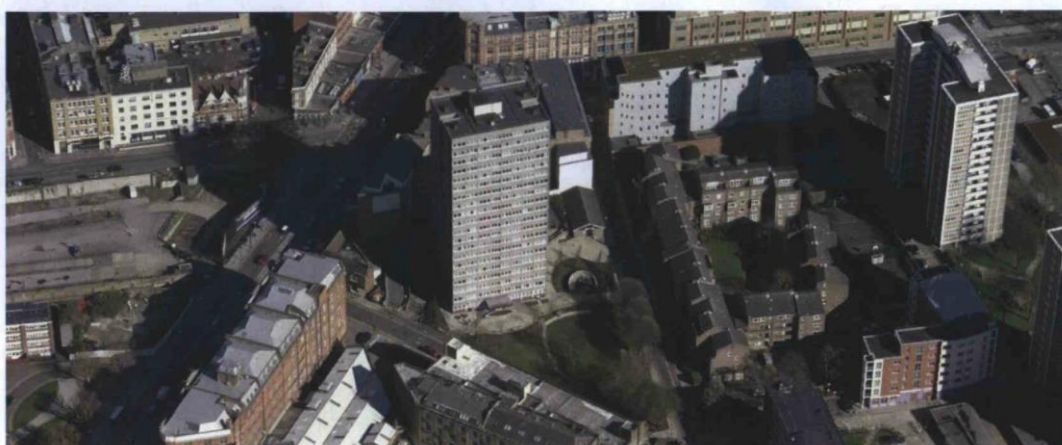
The Committee is asked to resolve to **GRANT** planning permission:

1. for the reasons for approval;
2. subject to the conditions set out in Appendix 1;

**2. SITE PLAN (site outlined in bold)**



**3. AERIAL SHOT/PHOTOS OF SITE/STREET AT MORA STREET**



Aerial View



## **4. SUMMARY**

- 4.1 The proposal forms part of a borough-wide programme to install various energy saving measures across all housing tenure in order to help overcome fuel poverty.
- 4.2 The principal issues arising from the programmed relate to, firstly, the appearance of the building following the insulation measures, and secondly, the effectiveness of the measures to overcome a number of problems residents currently face, in particular, damp, condensation and lack of insulation in winter, and summertime overheating.
- 4.3 The new cladding system has been developed to ensure that its appearance enhances the building, provides visual interest, integrity and quality, and covers up numerous previous unsightly repairs and cables. The system is designed to ensure that services remain accessible behind the panels.
- 4.4 The introduction of a new cladding system will bring a range of benefits to residents including a reduction in fuel bills, a healthier internal residential environment with a reduction in damp and mould, and a warmer room environment in winter and a cooler room environment in summer.
- 4.5 It is recommended that the application is approved subject to conditions.

## **5. SITE AND SURROUNDING**

- 5.1 Gambier House was constructed in 1968 and is a 20 storey tower block, comprising 115 flats. The block is located on a triangular site between Mora Street and Lever Street. A small park is immediately adjacent to the south whilst surrounding properties, of between two and seven storeys, are in both commercial and residential uses.
- 5.2 Gambier House is constructed using the Bison panel wall frame system developed in the early 1960s for blocks of up to 24 storeys. The system comprises load bearing storey-height precast reinforced concrete flank wall and cross wall panels.
- 5.3 The block itself is currently clad in structural concrete sandwich panels, which are faced with exposed aggregate concrete.
- 5.4 The residential block is not listed nor is it in a conservation area.

## **6. PROPOSAL (IN DETAIL)**

- 6.1 The overcladding of the external walls from first floor upwards with a rainscreen cladding system to improve the thermal performance of the existing building. The proposal would use an Eternit Equitone cladding panel

system, from the Tectiva range. The ground floor elevations will remain as is with brick panels retained.

- 6.2 **Revisions.** Following the submission of the applications in November 2013, there has been a series of discussions and meeting between the architects and planning and design officers with recommendations made to improve the appearance of the proposal.
- 6.3 The particular kind of material, the cladding arrangement, colour, texture and fixings have all been examined and developed to produce a more coherent, calmer and integrated approach and design, than originally proposed. This has ensured that the recommended scheme is more sympathetic to the original building design intent.

## **7. RELEVANT HISTORY:**

- 7.1 The 20 storey residential block was constructed in the late 1960s using the Bison wall system which was commonly used for this form of development across the UK.

### **PLANNING APPLICATIONS:**

- 7.2 P030056. The replacement of the existing windows with white powder coated aluminium pivot and casement double glazed windows to all elevations. Approved 05/03/2003.
- 7.3 P070187. Replacement of single glazed windows with double glazed units in UPVC frames incorporating tilt and turn casements. Approved 28/04/2007.
- 7.4 P080687. Landscape improvements to Gambier House. Approved 14/05/2008.
- 7.5 P101338. Change of use of caretaker's room to tenant management office. Approved 27/09/2010.

### **ENFORCEMENT:**

- 7.6 There has been no relevant enforcement action relating to the property.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

### **Public Consultation**

- 8.1 Letters were sent to occupants of 389 adjoining and nearby properties at Lever Street, Mora Street, Dingley Place, Dingley Road, Bath Street and City Road on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014. A site notice was displayed on 1<sup>st</sup> August and a press notice posted. The public consultation of the application therefore expired on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2014; however it is the Council's practice to continue to consider representations made up until the date of a decision.

- 8.2 At the time of the writing of this report one response had been received from a member of the public, living in Dingley Place, with regard to the application. This is not an objection per se but a reservation in regard to the proposed colour scheme for Gambier House, in the light of a recently completed project on City Road close to the Eagle public house. This issue is covered in paragraph 10.9 of the report.

### **Internal Consultees**

- 8.3 Design and Conservation Officer: The Design and Conservation Officer who has been involved in discussions from first submission and following a series of meetings exploring design composition, material and examples of their application, is now satisfied with the submitted proposals.

Energy Conservation Officer: The proposals have been reviewed and all align with the aims laid out in Islington's Core Strategy and Environmental Design SPD (see p2-3 for example), to address fuel poverty, carbon emissions and the associated health impacts that these and buildings with poor thermal performance can have. The proposals also align with Islington's policies around sustainable construction. Specific comments are made about particular aspects of the programme and these are discussed in the assessment section.

## **9. RELEVANT POLICIES**

Details of all relevant policies and guidance notes are attached in Appendix 2. This report considers the proposal against the following development plan documents.

### **National Guidance**

- 9.1 The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 seeks to secure positive growth in a way that effectively balances economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations. The NPPF is a material consideration and has been taken into account as part of the assessment of these proposals.

### **Development Plan**

- 9.2 The Development Plan is comprised of the London Plan 2011, Islington Core Strategy 2011, Development Management Policies 2013, Finsbury Local Plan 2013 and Site Allocations 2013. The policies of the Development Plan are considered relevant to this application and are listed at Appendix 2 to this report.

### **Designations**

9.3 The site has the following designations under the London Plan 2011, Islington Core Strategy 2011, Development Management Policies 2013, Finsbury Local Plan 2013 and Site Allocations 2013:

none

#### **Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) / Document (SPD)**

9.4 The following SPGs and/or SPDs which are considered relevant are listed in Appendix 2.

### **10. ASSESSMENT**

10.1 The main issues arising from this proposal relate to:

- The design and the impact of the proposed cladding system on the appearance of the building and the wider neighbourhood.
- Energy efficiency and benefits of proposed cladding for residents.

#### **Design and the proposed appearance of the building**

10.2 Gambier House is constructed using the Bison panel wall frame system. The block itself is currently clad in structural concrete sandwich panels, which are faced with exposed aggregate concrete.

10.3 Gambier House is a prominent structure within the townscape of City Road and Lever Street and the changes to the external cladding system will be very visible over a wide area. Reflective of this there has been an extensive consultation period between the Council's planning and design officers, and the architects. The scheme as now presented represents the results of these discussions and recommendations.

10.4 From the outset it has been important that the ordered and rational 1960's façade should be reflected in the proposed cladding system. An ordered design rather than a random pattern was therefore required. The proposal now reflects this without copying the original design.

10.5 In terms of the material itself, four simple panel types are proposed from the Eternit Equitone cladding panel system. The Tectiva range has been selected for its modelled surface, matt colours and variation in texture.

10.6 The principal material for the cladding to the main elevations to the front and rear will be the Linear Tectiva panels, which offer a grooved texture that strongly suggests the ribbed effect of concrete as well as an emphasis on the vertical.

10.7 Verticality has always been an important part of the requirements of the new design. The introduction of thin, dark coloured Tectiva Mineral Black vertical

panels between the main Linear Tectiva panels, with their vertical grooves, to the front and rear elevations, and the use of Tectiva Pebble panels to the recessed central sections of the flank elevations between the Tectiva Calico cream panels will help achieve this vertical emphasis, as will the framing of the main elevations with additional slim panels from the Calico cream range.

- 10.8 The overcladding will give depth to the façades. The proposed design creates depth by framing the main elevations and forming deep window reveals, and producing shadow lines.
- 10.9 A letter from a nearby resident expresses concerns over rainscreen cladding following a new development (in Hackney) where bright coloured panels have been fixed adjacent to black panels to 'disastrous effect'. The resident seeks assurance that officers will give careful consideration to the choice of colours for Gambier House and suggests shades of white. Officers are acutely aware of the new development to which the resident refers and have taken considerable steps to avoid such a finish being replicated.
- 10.10 The careful detailing of rainscreen cladding is important in achieving a satisfactory appearance. Wherever possible, cladding panels will be fixed by a concealed fixing structural bonding system. The only exception will be where existing gas services are fixed to the façade. The gas risers can be enclosed with perforated cladding panels but these must be easily removable and will therefore be surface fixed with small screw fixings, powder coated to match the colour of the cladding. They will be almost invisible to the naked eye when viewed from ground level. Surface fixed panels represent a very small part of the surface area of the entire block.
- 10.11 The proposal for the new cladding system does not affect other parts of the building and there is no proposal at present to change either the entrance doors or the fenestration systems, although window cills will be renewed. The retention of the existing brick panels and Bison concrete panels at ground floor level does not detract from the overall design composition.
- 10.12 The combination of the carefully selected materials, their colours, and their application to the building in terms of the arrangement of the different colours and positions, to ensure verticality, order and depth to the façade and an attention to the detailing of fixings, will result in a well designed set of elevations respectful to the integrity of the original building.
- 10.13 The proposed design is considered to comply with policy CS9 which seeks high quality architecture that enhances Islington's built environment and policy DM2.1 in demonstrating architectural design quality and detailing.

#### **Energy Efficiency and the benefits of the new cladding system to the environment and to the residents**

- 10.14 The proposed external insulation works to Gambier House are part of an initiative by Islington Council aimed at reducing fuel poverty, providing improved insulation and reducing CO2 emissions. The project will improve the affordability of housing by reducing heating bills, and the quality of housing by



reducing damp, mould and condensation. The works will also reduce health inequality and health outcomes for residents as a result of the improved internal environment and resultant reductions in fuel consumption and fuel bills.

- 10.15 The original method of construction using large concrete panels has meant that the external sandwich panels that make up the external walls have poor thermal insulation properties, and the thin sheets of insulation that were cast into the solid concrete external walls are inadequate by modern standards. In addition the Bison system has several uninsulated junctions, which form cold bridges through the external envelope. The result is high U values and very poor thermal insulation.
- 10.16 The proposed rainscreen cladding is a form of double wall construction that uses an outer layer to keep the rain out and an inner layer to provide thermal insulation, prevent excessive air leakage and carry wind loading. The structural frame of the building is kept absolutely dry as water never reaches it or the thermal insulation. The insulation will reduce the capacity of heat to pass through the external wall. In winter this will mean that heat within the dwelling will not disperse through the wall to the (colder) outside air. In summer the opposite effect will prevail: heat from the sun will less easily pass through the insulation and external wall into the dwelling and therefore reducing instances of overheating. An estimated 5282 kWh annual energy saving per property would be made using the national Carbon Emissions Reduction Target figures published by OFGEM and applied to this specific Islington Council owned stock type.
- 10.17 It is estimated that the project will save approximately £245 per year from each households heating bills. The system is low maintenance and has an expected life span of at least 50 years.
- 10.18 Potential summertime overheating happens as the flats currently gain heat through solar gains via the concrete walls. This effect is greatest for the taller blocks, which experience more exposure to sunlight and whose walls are highly absorbent of solar radiation. This heat collected is then transferred to the properties inside. The presence of external insulation should reduce summer heat gains through two means. Firstly, the new surfaces of the weatherproof rainscreen will absorb much less solar heat than the current walls do. Secondly, the insulating layer will reduce the passage of heat from the weatherproof rainscreen through the walls to the interior of the flats. The properties themselves have significant thermal mass (from the concrete structure) and ventilation available (through background ventilation and openable windows). Therefore, the external insulation systems can make a significant contribution to reducing summer overheating within the blocks. The increase in depth of windows reveals would also make a small contribution to reducing solar gain through the building's windows.
- 10.19 The particular system proposed, the Equitone system, is robust, non-reactive and self cleaning. This low maintenance system is well suited to tall building overcladding design.

- 10.20 The application does not propose measures that will create emissions through direct energy use, so no assessment of emissions or offset is required in this case
- 10.21 For an application of this type, assessment of the properties using either the BREEAM or Code for Sustainable Homes methodologies is not required.
- 10.22 The proposed work is considered to comply with policy CS10 which seeks to minimise Islington's contribution to climate change, and policies DM7.1, DM7.2 and DM7.5 which seek to integrate best practice sustainable design standards, best practice energy efficiency standards and maximise passive design measures to control heat gain and deliver passive cooling.

## 11. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### Summary

- 11.1 The proposal is welcome as part of the Council's programme to reduce fuel poverty across the Borough.
- 11.2 The proposed external insulation works will improve the affordability of housing by reducing heating bills, and the quality of housing by reducing damp, mould and condensation, but will also help reduce summer overheating. The works will also reduce health inequality and health outcomes for residents as a result of the improved internal environment and resultant reductions in fuel consumption and fuel bills, and reduced CO2 emissions will serve a wider environmental benefit.
- 11.3 The design, material and texture of the proposed cladding system will ensure that the integrity and character of the original concrete façade is retained whilst providing a modern, dignified and attractive appearance that will enhance the building.

### Conclusion

- 11.4 It is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to conditions for the reasons and details as set out in Appendix 1 - RECOMMENDATIONS.

## APPENDIX 1 – RECOMMENDATIONS

### RECOMMENDATION A

That the grant of planning permission be subject to **conditions** to secure the following:

### List of Conditions:

1	<b>3 Year Consent Period</b>
	<p>CONDITION: The development hereby permitted shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.</p> <p>REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Chapter 5).</p>
2	<b>Approved plans list</b>
	<p>CONDITION: The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:</p> <p>GH-00, GH-01, GH-02, GH-03, GH-04, GH-05, GH-06 revA, GH-07 revA, GH-08 revA, GH-09 revA, GH-10 revA, GH-11 revA, GH-12, Design and Access Statement rev A (July 2014).</p> <p>REASON: To comply with Section 70(1)(a) of the Town and Country Act 1990 as amended and also for the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning.</p>

### List of Informatives:

1	<b>Positive Statement</b>
	<p>To assist applicants in a positive manner, the Local Planning Authority has produced policies and written guidance, all of which is available on the Council's website.</p> <p>A pre-application advice service is also offered and encouraged. Whilst no substantive pre-application discussions were entered into, the applicant worked in a proactive manner with the Local Planning Authority, taking into consideration the policies and guidance available to them, and therefore the LPA delivered a positive decision in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF.</p>

## APPENDIX 2: RELEVANT POLICIES

This appendix lists all relevant development plan policies and guidance notes pertinent to the determination of this planning application.

### 1 National Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 seeks to secure positive growth in a way that effectively balances economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations. The NPPF is a material consideration and has been taken into account as part of the assessment of these proposals.

### 2. Development Plan

The Development Plan is comprised of the London Plan 2011, Islington Core Strategy 2011, Development Management Policies 2013, Finsbury Local Plan 2013 and Site Allocations 2013. The following policies of the Development Plan are considered relevant to this application:

#### **A) The London Plan 2011 - Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London**

##### **1 Context and strategy**

Policy 1.1 Delivering the strategic vision and objectives for London

##### **3 London's people**

Policy 3.1 Ensuring equal life chances for all

Policy 3.2 Improving health and addressing health inequalities

Policy 3.5 Quality and design of housing developments

##### **5 London's response to climate change**

Policy 5.1 Climate change mitigation

Policy 5.2 Minimising carbon dioxide emissions

Policy 5.3 Sustainable design and construction

Policy 5.9 Overheating and cooling

##### **7 London's living places and spaces**

Policy 7.1 Building London's neighbourhoods and communities

Policy 7.4 Local character

Policy 7.6 Architecture

#### **B) Islington Core Strategy 2011**

##### **Spatial Strategy**

Policy CS8 (Enhancing Islington's Character)

Policy CS10 (Sustainable Design)

##### **Strategic Policies**

Policy CS9 (Protecting and Enhancing Islington's Built and Historic Environment)

## C) Development Management Policies June 2013

### Design and Heritage

**DM2.1** Design

### Health and open space

**DM6.1** Healthy development

### Housing

**DM3.2** Existing housing

**DM3.4** Housing standards

### Energy and Environmental Standards

**DM7.2** Energy efficiency and carbon reduction in minor schemes

**DM7.4** Sustainable design standards

**DM7.5** Heating and cooling

## 3. Designations

The site has the following designations under the London Plan 2011, Islington Core Strategy 2011, Development Management Policies 2013, Finsbury Local Plan 2013 and Site Allocations 2013:

- none

- none

## 4. Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) / Document (SPD)

The following SPGs and/or SPDs are relevant:

### **Islington UDP**

Environmental Design

- Urban Design Guide

### **London Plan**

- Housing

- Sustainable Design & Construction