

**Planning Application for Continued Use of 20 Harmer Street,
as 5 One-Bedroom Flats**

20 Harmer Street,

Gravesend,

DA12 2AX

Planning, Design, Access, and Heritage Statement

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1. Introduction

This combined planning, design, access, and heritage statement supports the application for the continued use of the property at 20 Harmer Street, Gravesend, DA12 2AX, as five one-bedroom flats. It outlines the history, architectural significance, current use, and compliance with planning policies, while also addressing design, access, and heritage factors associated with the property. It is important to note that no external or internal changes are proposed as part of this application.

2. Property History

2.1 Early History

- **Mid-19th Century:** 20 Harmer Street was originally constructed as a single-family Victorian terraced residence, reflecting the era's architectural heritage.
- **Late 19th - Early 20th Century:** The property served as a large family home, consistent with residential patterns of the period.

2.2 20th Century Adaptations

- **1920s-1930s:** In response to growing housing demand, the property was subdivided into multiple residential units, aligning with the broader trend of converting larger homes into flats to accommodate a growing population, particularly workers from the local industrial sector.
- **Mid-20th Century:** Further adaptations were made to suit multi-occupancy, including separate kitchen and bathroom facilities in each unit.
- **1980s:** The property was officially converted into five one-bedroom flats on the upper floors, with the required planning permissions and compliance with building regulations.
- **1993:** The basement and ground floor were converted from residential use to offices, reflecting the demand for commercial space in the area at the time.

2.3 21st Century Adaptations

- **2008:** A further change of use was implemented, converting the basement and ground floor from offices to residential flats, completing the building's current configuration as five one-bedroom flats.
- **Since 2010:** The current owner has maintained the property in its existing configuration of five self-contained one-bedroom flats. No internal or external alterations have been made during this time.

3. Current Usage

The property remains divided into five one-bedroom flats, each equipped with self-contained facilities. The flats are occupied by a mix of tenants, including mature professionals, retirees, and older couples. This tenant diversity fosters a stable and cohesive community within the building and contributes to the social fabric of the neighbourhood.

4. Design and Access Statement

4.1 Design Considerations

The existing design of the property at 20 Harmer Street respects its Victorian heritage, retaining key architectural features such as its external brick façade, traditional window styles, and overall form. As part of this application, no external or internal changes are proposed, ensuring that the building's character is preserved.

- **Internal Layout:** The flats are well-proportioned, each with a bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, and living area. Modern upgrades have been made where necessary (e.g., new kitchen and bathroom installations), all within the existing layout, ensuring minimal disruption to the historical structure.
- **External Appearance:** No major external alterations are planned as part of this application, other than regular maintenance to preserve the building's original features.

4.2 Access

The property is accessible via Harmer Street, which is a pedestrian-friendly road within walking distance to local amenities and public transport (Gravesend train station is nearby). The existing entrance is sufficient for residents, and there are no proposals to modify the main access points.

- **Vehicular Access:** The property does not have dedicated parking, which is common for the area. However, public parking is available nearby, and the location's proximity to public transport reduces the necessity for private vehicle access.
- **Accessibility for Disabled Individuals:** The property, due to its age and structure, does not currently meet modern accessibility standards (e.g., lift access).

5. Heritage Statement

5.1 Historical and Architectural Significance

20 Harmer Street is a Victorian-era property, contributing to the historic fabric of the Gravesend area. The building is representative of mid-19th-century architectural design, with its terraced form, brick construction, and ornamental detailing typical of the period. The street itself retains much of its original character, with similar buildings lining both sides.

5.2 Preservation of Heritage Features

The ongoing residential use of the property as one-bedroom flats ensures that key architectural elements of 20 Harmer Street are maintained, including:

- **External Brickwork:** Original brick façade, which remains in good condition.
- **Windows:** Traditional sash windows that are in keeping with the Victorian aesthetic.
- **Roofline:** The original roof structure remains unchanged, preserving the building's silhouette.

As this application proposes no external or internal changes, the property's historical and architectural features will be preserved in their current form. This approach supports the long-term conservation of the building, ensuring it continues to contribute to the character of the Harmer Street conservation area.

5.3 Impact on Conservation Area

Harmer Street is within a designated conservation area, where protecting the historic streetscape is a priority. The proposed continued use will not introduce any changes that could harm the character or appearance of the conservation area. By not proposing any alterations, the application ensures that the historic and architectural integrity of the property, and the broader streetscape, remains intact.

6. Planning Considerations

6.1 Alignment with Local Planning Policies

The continued use of 20 Harmer Street as one-bedroom flats aligns with key policies in the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy:

- **Policy CS02 (Scale and Distribution of Development):** Supports sustainable development within urban areas, making efficient use of existing buildings.
- **Policy CS14 (Housing Type and Size):** Encourages a diverse housing mix, particularly smaller units suited for single occupants and couples, which this property provides.
- **Policy CS20 (Heritage and the Historic Environment):** Promotes the protection and enhancement of the borough's heritage. By maintaining the property's use, its Victorian features are preserved.

6.2 Contribution to Housing Supply

The property provides much-needed one-bedroom flats, contributing to Gravesend's overall housing supply. These units cater to professionals, retirees, and couples, meeting the local demand for smaller, more affordable housing.

6.3 Building Regulations and Safety Compliance

The property has undergone necessary refurbishments to ensure compliance with building regulations, including structural upgrades, fire safety systems, and health and safety measures.

6.4 Social and Economic Benefits

- **Social:** The property offers stable, affordable housing, promoting social diversity and community cohesion.
- **Economic:** The location supports local businesses by ensuring a steady resident population who regularly engage with nearby shops and services.

7. Conclusion

The continued use of 20 Harmer Street as five one-bedroom flats offers significant benefits to the local community, meets housing demand, and preserves the architectural heritage of the area. No external or internal changes are proposed, ensuring that the historical character of the property and the conservation area is preserved. The proposal aligns with Gravesham's local planning policies and contributes to the social and economic vitality of the neighbourhood. We trust that this application will be favourably received, ensuring the continued contribution of 20 Harmer Street to the town's urban fabric.