

105 Windmill Street

Gravesend

Kent

DA12 1BW

9th March 2022

The Planning Officer

Gravesham Borough Council

Civic Centre, Windmill St, Gravesend

DA12 1AU

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Application 196-197 Parrock Street DA12 1EW

In the response to the Pre-Planning Application, the officer suggested that the top two floors be combined to one flat as an alternative to a flat on each floor as submitted.

Accordingly we have submitted a design which fulfils this and have also submitted two alternative layouts with a flat on each floor. There are thus three options on offer. The pros and cons of each are discussed below.* We invite you to select your preferred option and we will accept your choice.

Options 1 and 2 have a separate flat on each floor. Option 1 has a better layout and flow, and has less adverse impact on the landing and communal staircase, about which the Conservation Officer expressed concern. If the fire exit on Option 1 is acceptable, there is little advantage in Option 2.

The second floor flat, under Options 1 and 2, has a floor area of 35m² (including the cupboard under the stairs but excluding the chimney breasts). Although this is below the recommended

minimum of 37m², it does have good flow, three good sized windows and in our opinion, is a more pleasing and workable space than many flats which exceed the minimum recommended floor area.

The top flat for these options has a living room in the front, and as such can benefit from the construction of a gallery making use of the existing dormer window in the loft. This would be large enough to accommodate a w.c. and a workstation, and in the view of the applicants create a unique and desirable apartment. If the two floors were combined into a single flat as in Option 3, the top front room would be a bedroom, and the added benefit of a gallery to a bedroom would not be sufficient to warrant the expense. The dormer window would open into the ceiling void and offer no benefit to the occupants.

Option 3 entails boarding off the staircase at first floor level with loss of light to the entrance and stairs. This would be unfortunate since the staircase is an original and attractive feature of the property and it is obviously desirable that it be enjoyed by as many of the residents as possible.

But, our main concern about a single flat spanning the top two floors is the limited range of tenants or owners to whom it would appeal. In our experience as developers, second floor flats of two or more bedrooms in buildings without a lift, do not appeal to first time buyers starting a family and tend to be purchased by landlords.

As landlords ourselves we have experience of owning such a flat, also in a town centre listed building with no outdoor space. The current benefits system provides tenants with enhanced cash flow if they live in properties with less than the prescribed number of rooms for their family size. We find that we need to ensure that we do not end up with large families that have put beds in the living room, caused discord with buggies etc left about in communal areas, obstructed fire exits and generally detracted from the appeal to other tenants - as well as

placing greater stress on our listed building. We would guard against owning a similar flat in the future.

We trust you will give all of these options due consideration and look forward to your choice.

Yours faithfully

Donald Holden.

Donald Holden

*This discussion is repeated in the Design and Access Statement.