

ALTERATIONS AND REPAIRS TO FLAT 1 AND BASEMENT, CHEQUERS HOUSE 1-5 PARK STREET HATFIELD AL9 5AT (RETROSPECTIVE APPLICATION)

HERITAGE, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENTS

1. HERITAGE AND EXISTING BUILDING

- 1.1. Chequers House is a Grade II* listed building in the Old Hatfield Conservation Area. It is divided into four self contained dwellings, of which Flat 1, on the ground floor at the south end, is the subject of this application, together with the basement, which is used for storage.
- 1.2. The general context is of a mixture of small shops, flats and terraced houses. Many of the properties, including Chequers House, were constructed in the 17th and early 18th centuries. Significant local buildings include the Horse and Groom pub, also in Park Street, the nearby Hatfield House, built in 1611, and St. Etheldreda's Church, parts of which date from the 13th century.
- 1.3. The architecture of the conservation area is characterised by white rendered walls, red brickwork, red clay tiled pitch roofs and white painted vertical sliding sash windows.
- 1.4. Chequers House was originally constructed as an inn, was converted into offices in the 20th century and in 2019 the offices were converted into the four self contained dwellings. Flat 1, on the south east corner, has retained the large glass windows from its previous use, which now serve the kitchen and living room.
- 1.5. On its first floor, chequers house has some well preserved 17th century wall paintings, which have been retained as important original features. Within Flat 1, the subject of this application, there are no equivalent original features. However, there are two long timber beams exposed in the ceiling of the main bedroom, and two niches in the north wall of the same room, which retain their original timber lintels and red brick quoins.
- 1.6. The layout of Flat 1 as converted in 2019 was problematic, in that the route from the second bedroom to the front door was through the main bedroom, which in turn was open to the kitchen. Apart from making the dwelling difficult to use, this arrangement could also have been a means of escape issue in case of fire.
- 1.7. as part of the approved conversion in 2019, various partitions were added within the property, and approved provided that they did not necessitate removal of any important historic features.
- 1.8. The basement is simply used for storage and has no particular distinguishing features. There were signs of rot and mould in the timbers and damp in the walls, which could threaten the building above. In particular, one of the occupants suffers from asthma, which could be affected by mould.

2.0. DESIGN

- 2.1. For the ground floor, a simple stud partition has been installed, with a fire resisting door. This provides a separation of the two bedrooms and a means of escape from each bedroom, without the main bedroom being open to the kitchen. It is also a better design for the flat as a whole.
- 2.2. The existing original features, as listed in item 1.5 above, have been carefully preserved and are still fully visible, as can be seen from the photos included with this application.
- 2.3. The waterproofing works to the basement were considered a matter of urgency to protect the building as a whole. The walls and floor have been finished in cementitious tanking, applied without damaging the existing fabric, and the building is now properly protected from future damage, with an appropriate long term guarantee.
- 2.4. The overall accommodation would therefore include four double bedrooms, two bathrooms and a shower room.

3. ACCESS

- 3.1. The broad steps from the kitchen into the new lobby will be easier than before to navigate, and handrails can be fitted both sides if necessary.
- 3.3. New door handle is lever type.
- 3.4. The revised design would not reduce the existing accessibility of the building.