

#### 4.0 Scheme Assessment and Justification

##### General Description of Proposals and Scheme Benefits

The proposals are for the conversion of the former bell tower into a single dwelling, as set out in the application description of development. As part of the necessary building works the tower will be repaired and cleaned in places. Openings will be given a more considered and appropriate treatment, and the applicant has agreed to the lighting of the tall, unusually shaped finials that crown the tower.

Giving such a structure a new purpose - be it residential or office - necessarily entails a range of changes, insertions for services, systems to combat fire, access improvements, and so on.

It is considered that the scale and configuration of the tower, as well as its location, effectively rules out any other use. Residential is highly desirable, in heritage terms, because it avoids the need for full access and minimises servicing requirements. Single residential use also maintains the structure overall as an entity, and the particular scheme by bringing into that use every available part of the tower makes it more likely that the building as a whole will be maintained and kept sound and secure.

The consequent requirements for this new use are:

- Changes to the treatment of existing opening;
- Need for alternative means of escape;
- Need for efficient and relatively easy vertical circulation by means of new stairs and a lift (given the considerable height of the tower);
- The insertion of new floors and creation of new spaces;
- The insertion of building services;
- A new interface with the public realm (bin stores, for example);
- Measures to protect the amenity of the residents, taking into account the largely commercial character of the surroundings (see following paragraph) and the noise of traffic along Lower Thames Street.

There is a particular UDP policy issue with the provision of residential accommodation in this location, noted in policy HOUS1. This states that whilst new residential accommodation is desirable, its location should not prejudice the City's commercial role.

Whilst the tower is located in a predominantly commercial area, it is not immediately proximate to these uses. It is further insulated from surrounding businesses by the small park that forms the structure's immediate setting, an attractively laid out space. This garden, equally, provides a buffer for the future occupants of the tower.

We consider, notwithstanding the above points, that any potential conflict with HOUS1 needs to be set against the Unitary Development Plan's policies on preserving listed buildings and PPG15's emphasis on the need to find the best optimum viable use for a listed building that is consistent with its special interest. In sum, we consider that more weight needs to be accorded to heritage planning policies to find such a use, in consideration of the considerable architectural and historical interest of the tower, reflected in its high grade, resulting not least from its association with Sir Christopher Wren.

##### Note on Archaeology

This is discussed in section 3.0 above and in the cover note accompanying the application. As stated the City archaeologist is content for the archaeological potential of the site to be handled by means of a standard condition on the grant of planning permission, requiring an archaeological method statement to be implemented during the construction procurement phase of the project.

##### Methodology for Bringing Forward the Current Proposals

The proposals have been developed on the basis of the fabric and condition (both architectural and structural) consulting engineers Alan Baxter & Associates).

The team have also carried out an exhaustive investigation of the tower, to understand its place in Wren's œuvre.

Officers from the City Corporation and English Heritage have reviewed the results of these investigations through the design and application meetings held over the autumn/winter period. These comments reflect comments from these professional officers detailed.

##### Special Architectural and Historic Interest of the Tower

PPG15 states that an understanding of special interest is essential for the assessment of development proposals affecting a listed building.

Here, in the case of a tower, that special interest can be seen in the building, with its tall pinnacles, unusual among towers, overall proportions and materials. The proportions, particularly the uniform stonework is also an aspect of the structure.

Internally, apart from surviving historic fabric, there are some distinctive features. These include a domical vault to the ground floor, timber in the upper areas of the tower, as well as a staircase with timber boarding at level seven. The robustly detailed timber appears to be to an authentic late seventeenth-century design.

The first-floor structure would appear to be later, an addition made in the early nineteenth century. The roof was reconstructed in the late nineteenth century. The parts of the tower would not appear to be original. Most of the tower is built of brick.

In townscape terms the Tower adds to the visual interest of the City, dominated by the machinery of the road. From the longer views, and from certain areas to the south - in particular Tate Modern - can be seen against the backdrop of the tower.

The distinctive silhouette enlivens more local views.

##### Scheme Description and Benefits: Building Fabric

As it stands the tower has a number of defects and shortcomings. The most prominent is the general air of dereliction it projects, which, in combination with its position, combine to create the sense of it being somewhat undesirable.

Structurally it would appear to be sound, except for the effects of expanding, internal iron cramps. The extent of these needs to be determined by a detailed survey once the tower is converted.

In many areas inappropriate repair techniques have been used. The current treatment of many openings is capable of causing further damage. Cementitious not lime-based mortar has been used in several locations, and former window and door frames have been replaced with merely expedient materials (brickwork and timber).

Internally, whilst the masonry (stone and brick) is in reasonable condition, much of the stonework has a soft, crumbly surface, which is inappropriate in a new residential setting.

The proposals will result in the repair of these defects and faults identified by the consulting engineers, according to be agreed subject to relevant conditions on the grant of listed building consent.

# St. Marys, Somerset - Lambeth Hill

## 4.0 Conclusions

### *Methodology for Bringing Forward the Current Proposals*

The proposals have been developed on the basis of a detailed analysis of the buildings fabric and condition (both architectural and structural - see statement prepared by consulting engineers Alan Baxter & Associates).

The team have also carried out an exhaustive investigation into the documentary history of the tower, to understand its place in Wren's oeuvre and the changes to it over time.

Officers from the City Corporation and English Heritage have been briefed on the results of these investigations through the design process, at a series of detailed pre-application meetings held over the autumn/winter of 2004-05. The current proposals reflect comments from these professional officers, resulting in a scheme that is fully detailed.

### *Special Architectural and Historic Interest of the Tower*

PPG15 states that an understanding of special interest is essential to judging the effects of development proposals affecting a listed building.

Here, in the case of a tower, that special interest can be said to consist of the crown of the building, with its tall pinnacles, unusual amongst Wren's City Churches, and in its overall proportions and materials. The proportions and treatments of openings within the uniform stonework is also an aspect of the structure's special interest.

Internally, apart from surviving historic fabric, there are a limited number of special features. These include a domical vault to the ground floor and surviving structural timber in the upper areas of the tower, as well as an area of apparently original oak boarding at level seven. The robustly detailed timber door in the east elevation also appears to be to an authentic late seventeenth-century design.

The first-floor structure would appear to be later, and there is good evidence that the roof was reconstructed in the late nineteenth century. The timber joinery in the lower parts of the tower would not appear to be original. Many of the stone bell stage louvers are, however.

In townscape terms the Tower adds to the visual interest of an otherwise bland part of the City, dominated by the machinery of the road. It contributes to several local and longer views, and from certain areas to the south - notably the public viewing points in Tate Modern - can be seen against the backdrop of St. Paul's.

The distinctive silhouette enlivens more local views.

### *Scheme Description and Benefits: Building Fabric*

As it stands the tower has a number of defects and unattractive features. First and foremost is the general air of dereliction it projects, which taken in association with its position, combine to create the sense of it being something sad and almost left behind.

Structurally it would appear to be sound, except for the pinnacles that may be suffering the effects of expanding, internal iron cramps. The exact condition of the pinnacles needs to be determined by a detailed survey once the scaffolding has been erected.

In many areas inappropriate repair techniques have been applied in the past and the current treatment of many openings is capable of improvement. For instance, cementitious not lime-based mortar has been used for repointed and rendering in several locations, and former window and doors have been infilled for reasons of security with merely expedient materials (brickwork and chicken wire).

Internally, whilst the masonry (stone and brick) is in reasonable structural condition, much of the stonework has a soft crumbly surface that is both unattractive and inappropriate in a new residential setting.

The proposals will result in the repair of these defects and the rectification of structural faults identified by the consulting engineers, according to detailed method statements to be agreed subject to relevant conditions on the grant of planning permission and listed building consent.

Insofar as possible the proposals do not disturb historic fabric. Such fabric as it is proposed to remove (the tower roof and the first floor structure) are of late nineteenth- or even twentieth-century origins and deemed not to have special interest as historic fabric.

It is required, however, to remove several joists forming part of an original, late seventeenth-century structural floor frame in an upper part of the tower. An original oak boarded floor at level system needs also to be partly removed.

These alterations have been kept to the minimum necessary to enable the installation of a lift mechanism. Every effort has been made on the part of the architects to source a reliable lift of the smallest dimensions practicable. It is argued that this intervention, whilst it does disturb authentic Wren-period fabric, is necessary to install a lift, without which the residential use of the entire tower - with the consequent benefits of this outlined elsewhere - would not be possible.

#### Scheme Benefits: Use

The principal conservation challenge, then, is finding a viable new use for a structure whose original purpose - bell ringing ancillary to a church, demolished more than a century ago - has no prospect ever of being reinstated.

Residential use would appear to be both the optimum viable use - because of the unusual configuration of the structure, its modest size and setting amidst the dead commercial frontages of large-floor plate office buildings. Residential use also presents certain advantages in the sense that it generally requires a lower degree of servicing than other uses.

#### Necessary and Desirable Alterations and Insertions

In order to provide easy vertical circulation in the lower stages of the tower, which includes a surviving and elegantly detailed domical porch, the proposals call for the construction of a stair to the north elevation, formed within a solid Portland stone wall which is a masonry bearing structure supported off its own foundations.

This principle of such a side piece has long been accepted (and approved, albeit now lapsed) by the planning authority and English Heritage, in the context of earlier discussions over proposed residential use (for another prospective owner). The advantages of such a new structure are:

- It enables vertical access to the upper stages of the tower without compromising the spatial form of the domical vaulted entrance spaces.
- It enables separate and more convenient access from the higher ground to the north, direct from the back edge of the existing pavement, helping in the transition of levels;
- It pushes vertical circulation space in the lower levels outside the critical interior and at upper levels provides essential space for kitchen, WCs and baths on levels 4 through 6.

This side extension relieves pressure on historic fabric and will reduce the subdivision of the new rooms on upper floors to the minimum, essentially a small lift enclosure. The parvise stair is able to function as a protected means of escape subject to detailed design measures agreed with the District Surveyor already.

This side piece is fixed to the north elevation of the tower, at the point where it formerly attached to the church. The facing here is relatively modern render.

The design of the side piece has been carefully considered and a suitable construction methodology agreed in order to ensure that it will weather in a way that is consonant with the adjacent tower. The jointing and configuration of blocks has also now been agreed, to ensure that these read as traditional masonry. The design of the new entrance is worked into the proposed stone jointing, ensuring a neat solution to this most important feature.

Elevationally the side piece represents a roundel surmounted by a roundel; however, understated and contemporary, kept visually distinct from the adjacent glazed slot. The height of the side piece is similar to a mid-level storey band conjunction than a slightly lower s

There are two further external changes to spotlight the pinnacled top of the tower's mid point; however, underlined by conditions, but suitable, visual agreed. This external lighting is, proposals, for in townscape terms, from a rather dull, uninflected foreground same as providing a visual link to

New external joinery will be of high detailed configuration to the subj

The other potential risk when considering the proposed alterations is that new inserted floors will ride on the architectural composition of the upper dome, and identified on the application with the lower roundels on the tower room positions and tower openings proposed Level 6.

Level 6, identified as a bedroom, is located at the tower's mid point; however, the compass potential angle of opening will be a process, thus avoiding visual disruption.

Alterations to the roof structure of the nineteenth century or later - enable discrete positioned well below the be interrupted or changed.

The proposals have been designed by engineer who has confirmed, in a safe manner, any structural risks.

To ensure the safe cleaning of windows, the proposed a bespoke solution. It is glazing at two levels in the tower condition on the listed building cons

An unusual feature of the original tower is the upper stage. It is the intention to retain a more suitable material to achieve this to more detailed survey information a determination phase due to access worded condition on the listed building treatment.

#### Summary

The proposals, then, are compliant with the environment, and have the added benefit which is supported at both national and local

This proposed use will in no way affect the surrounding the office buildings.

In this instance, given the location and orientation of the residential dwelling with scope for an secure and certain future for a building maintenance to preserve its special interest.

# St. Marys, Somerset - Lambeth Hill

## 4.0 Conclusions

Elevationally the side piece reproduces the pattern and configuration of openings (a roundel surmounted by a round-arched light). The overall architectural expression is, however, understated and contemporary, and to ensure that the building archaeology is kept visually distinct from the addition the join between the two is treated as a narrow glazed slot. The height of the side piece's parapet has been carefully considered, and is similar to a mid-level storey band on the tower, resulting in a more harmonious visual conjunction than a slightly lower structure would.

There are two further external changes that warrant comment. The first is the proposal to spotlight the pinnacled top of the tower. The details of the fixtures will be the subject of conditions, but suitable, visually unobtrusive positions have been identified and agreed. This external lighting is, in our judgment, a very considerable benefit of the proposals, for in townscape terms the views of this part of the City from the south suffer from a rather dull, uninflamed foreground. The lit tower will enliven this riverscape at the same as providing a visual link to Wren's great dome behind.

New external joinery will be of high quality materials and simple, self-effacing design, its detailed configuration to the subject to condition on the listed building consent.

The other potential risk when converting such a structure to residential accommodation is that new inserted floors will ride across window openings and disrupt the balanced architectural composition of the whole. The new space at Level 4, the first above the dome, and identified on the application drawings as a family room, corresponds exactly with the lower roundels on the tower faces. There is a similar consonance between new room positions and tower openings throughout the rest of the proposals except for the proposed Level 6.

Level 6, identified as a bedroom, cuts across a round-arched opening roughly at the tower's mid point; however, the corresponding tall opening will have new louvers, whose potential angle of opening will be restricted to limits agreed during the construction process, thus avoiding visual disruption.

Alterations to the roof structure of the tower - an area disturbed and rebuilt in the late nineteenth century or later - enable easy access by a new stair, and provides seating discretely positioned well below the parapet, so that the silhouette of the tower will not be interrupted or changed.

The proposals have been designed in consultation with a specialist historic buildings engineer who has confirmed, in a separate note, that nothing which is proposed poses any structural risks.

To ensure the safe cleaning of windows in the new side piece, the architects have proposed a bespoke solution. It is expected that the refurbishment of the roundel glazing at two levels in the tower will be the subject of detailed designs subject to condition on the listed building consent.

An unusual feature of the original tower are the largely undisturbed bell louvers in the upper stage. It is the intention to retain and repair these, replacing modern insertions in a more suitable material to achieve a better visual blend. These proposals are subject to more detailed survey information and design work, which was not possible in the pre-determination phase due to access difficulties. We suggest that here too a suitably worded condition on the listed building consent would secure their appropriate treatment.

### Summary

The proposals, then, are compliant with national and local planning policy on the historic environment, and have the added benefit of providing new residential accommodation, which is supported at both national and local levels equally.

This proposed use will in no way prejudice the commercial operations of the surrounding office buildings.

In this instance, given the location and configuration of the property, reuse as a single residential dwelling with scope for ancillary office, the proposed use, provides the most secure and certain future for a building that needs repair and requires ongoing, regular maintenance to preserve its special interest.

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*In line with this policy context, the proposals have been developed on the basis of a full understanding of the listed structure's history and condition, established through careful visual/physical and documentary analysis.*

*The proposals have also been developed through detailed discussions with the planning authority's conservation advisors and with English Heritage.*

*Broadly speaking, the works are the minimum necessary to secure the most viable and least damaging solution to the long-term conservation needs of this tower, a structure which otherwise has no prospect of long-term beneficial use. The lack of such a use inevitably puts any historic building at risk, and the proposals are to be welcomed for this reason, as a matter of principle.*

*The approach to the new side piece - to do something in the manner of traditional building, but to interpret its character in a contemporary way - is also consistent with policy guidance and best practice, which takes a circumspect view towards ersatz or pastiche design. The piece is proposed on the elevation which has already been compromised, where the tower attached originally to the body of the long-demolished church.*

*The proposals to light the top part of the tower at night, whilst not necessary are certainly desirable and will have the effect of improving the appearance of an otherwise ordinary part of the City, as well as enhancing the group value with the lit dome of St. Paul's which forms the backdrop to the Tower in certain views.*

*The archaeological impacts have been considered, and the City archaeologist is content to handle them by means of a standard condition.*

*For the above reasons, we consider the proposals respect the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade I listed Tower and are therefore in accordance with statutory planning policy and other material considerations.*