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THE MORTON PARTNERSHIP LTD.
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Our ref: AC / AC / 15458~01

27th February 2014

Ms Lisa Shell
Lisa Shell Architects Ltd
1 A John Campbell Road
London N16 8JY

by email only

Dear Lisa

RE: Nos. 48-58& 66-76 DALSTON LANE, LONDON E8 3AH

You have approached my practice to provide advice concerning the structural condition of the above properties with particular concern for their masonry facades, in connection with a planning application for their demolition and reconstruction.

The Morton Partnership Ltd have been involved with numerous similar terraced buildings, in Conservation Areas, listed and unlisted, in London and elsewhere. I am an Engineer accredited in Conservation (CARE), I sit on the IHBC Technical Sub-committee, and have worked for over 30 Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) on conservation related projects. I often provide advice to LPA's about historic buildings that are proposed to be demolished, where the LPA is not convinced about the need for such demolition based on the information provided in Applications.

As you know, my particular expertise and experience for over twenty years relates to historic buildings and particularly those in poor condition. Brian, my father, was involved in the original campaign to save many of the properties in Spitalfields, and we still work regularly in the area. Our main office is in Shoreditch, so much of our work is in London.

For your information I enclose my CV which sets out some of my experience.

Abbas Contractor, an engineer from my office, carried out the inspection of the above properties on 21st February 2014. Abbas has in excess of 25 years' experience, much of which has been involving listed and historic buildings. I provide the following advice as requested. Incidentally, Abbas also carried out more detailed inspection of some of the above mentioned properties in June of 2007 as part of the specialist team commissioned by Heritage of London Operations Ltd on the request of Hackney Council to identify a viable future for the whole terrace.

The purpose of the inspection of the properties last week was to determine their current condition with particular reference to that of the front masonry elevations. We understand that the London Borough of Hackney are currently considering a planning application for the demolition and rebuilding of the facades in connection with the implementation of an earlier consented redevelopment scheme which had included façade retention. The original proposal was based on an options appraisal report provide by Peter Dann Ltd which offered façade retention.

The new application for demolition and rebuilding, has been submitted on the basis of a further report provided by Peter Dann Ltd Consulting Engineers which conclude that façade retention is not now feasible in the light of further investigation; Alan Baxter Associates concur in this, but suggesting that the structural alterations required in the creation of the open plan shop units at ground floor level could easily escalate in practice to include the total reconstruction of the facades. However Baxter does indicate that the less degraded elevations could withstand a scheme of repair but not without 'significant intervention and cost'.

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You have provided us with the following documents for our consideration:

- Documents as part of Approved Planning Application 2012/1739 (façade retention);
- Documents as part of Discharged Condition 3 and current Planning Application 2014/0323 (façade demolition and re-build);
- Drawings of current proposals (whether or not with façade retention)

I have been able to inspect the elevations externally of the subject properties from Dalston Lane, whilst Abbas inspected most of the above mentioned properties and reported his findings to me.

The subject buildings are two and three storeys of masonry construction, with external load bearing walls and party walls. Timber floors and partitions subdivide the properties internally to differing layouts. On the front of the properties are deep single story additions which have accommodated shops, most of which are no longer trading. It is clear that there has been a significant amount of water ingress to some of the properties which will have led to severe decay of the timber structures. However, most of the buildings were deemed safe enough to enter and carry out inspections, although the internal floors in some instances were in very poor condition with extensive timber decay.

From Abbas Contractors' previous inspection in 2007 it is apparent that many of the properties are now in a much worse condition due to neglect and lack of occupation. However, with a carefully planned and methodical approach, it should be possible to retain much of the structure in a scheme of repair. In relation to the option of retaining the front façades only I have set out my proposed outline approach in relation to each of the groups of buildings as follows. This option anticipates the retention of the existing masonry with a new framed structure behind; a restraining scaffold provided externally would be employed to help stabilise the front elevation during the works.

No.s 48-58 and 66.

For buildings above, I consider the frontage of the buildings to be in not an unreasonable condition considering the age of the property. The existing fabric could be retained by devising a structural layout that would not impose any loadings from the new floor and the roof. The outer brick façade would need to be consolidated and strengthened prior to carrying out any work of demolition or alteration in order to safeguard its retention.

The use of Helibar repairs would allow the wall to be propped both vertically and laterally where the ground floor walls are proposed to be removed to achieve the open plan shops in the new development. Lateral and vertical propping would need to remain in place until all parts of the new framed construction is completed and tied to the original front wall at the floors, including new mansard floor, and roof level. The use of Helibar reinforcement or similar approved method would also need to be implemented prior to the removal of the existing floors, main roofs, party walls and any other parts of the structure on which the front facades rely for stability.

The strapping between the existing wall and the new framed structure would be achieved with the use of resin bolt fixings to ensure that the soft London Stock bricks are not torqued to any great force. Sequencing these works would be vital in this operation.

The above is a broad brush approach and recommendation on how the front façade could be saved and adapted within the new proposed development; in practice a much more detailed proposal would be devised following very careful inspections.

No.s 68 to 72

The front elevation walls of the above properties are in poor condition. There has been distortion to the front walls, in particular to no. 66. Whilst it may be possible to retain these walls within the framework of the proposed new development a greater degree of initial strengthening works may need to be carried out for number 66. But given that these buildings are only two storeys the lighter load eases the propping requirements. The same procedure would need to be followed for these buildings as described above.

The exception is number 70, which we think is beyond repairs as the degree of re-building required would point towards a complete reconstruction of the façade.

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No74 to 78

These properties are in a similar condition to 68-72; with the exception of number 70 as noted above.

I might add that the proposed technique of masonry consolidation could be significantly minimised if the existing masonry structures and footings were retained within the ground floor shop units; local structural openings could still be considered.

Shopfronts

Inspections of the shopfront bressumers will need to be carried out due to the likely incidence of decay. We can assume that, in the absence of any propping installed to present, most will not require replacement.

Brickwork

The analysis and report on the strength and quality of the brickwork is not a cause for concern as there should be no loadings applied to the retained masonry; all floors and roof will be supported on a new framework.

In my view, these buildings do provide a significant enhancement to the Conservation Area, which merits retention of their frontages at the very least, a process which we believe to be feasible in almost all buildings.

In my opinion, buildings 48 to 58 and 66 still have a very good potential to be retained in their entirety, and brought back into use with sympathetic restoration and repairs. With the correct professional advice and appropriate contractors with conservation experience otherwise relatively high costs can be minimised in such a scheme of repair: it would be irresponsible not to commission a report detailing their condition, proposed repairs and associated costs.

That stated, the prime objective here is to consider the retention of the front façade of these buildings which contribute great value in terms of the character of the conservation area.

I have enclosed some examples of similar restoration projects involving buildings in similarly conditions, for reference.

I hope this note is useful, but please do not hesitate to call me.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

FOR THE MORTON PARTNERSHIP LIMITED,



EDWARD MORTON B.Eng(Hons), C.Eng, MICE, IHBC
Engineer Accredited in Conservation

Encl: EJM C.V. + Example Project Photographs

