**9 Gainsborough Gardens, Hampstead**

**Obote Hope**

**Proposal**

*Internal refurbishment of a Grade II listed building, together with the creation of a garden pavilion, and retrofitting of all existing original window frames with Histoglass Monolaminate.*

**Site and significance**

Number 9 Gainsborough Gardens is a late C19th semi-detached house in a Queen Anne Revival style. It was built c.1895 by CB King, a local builder. It was built speculatively as part of the development of Gainsborough Gardens, which was partly inspired by the success of the ‘artistic’ middle class suburbs in places such as Bedford Park. Virtually all of the houses in Gainsborough Gardens are listed at GII. Numbers 9 and 10 were listed jointly in 2008 and the list description notes that the interior of Number 9 is particularly well preserved (Number 10 underwent more alteration prior to statutory designation. The site is within the Hampstead Conservation Area. The list description is quite detailed and summarises the significance of both properties as follows: “Quality of design and materials \* Survival of internal plan and features of note, particularly No. 9 \* Strong group value with other houses in Gainsborough Gardens \* Strong contribution to the overall planning interest of Gainsborough Gardens, with particular importance as a screen building”.

The key elements of the significance of Number 9 includes its architectural design and materials, evidential value as a late C19th house, its historic fabric and plan-form, and its townscape contribution, including their strongly positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of neighbouring listed buildings, especially the C19th houses in the Gardens. The optimum viable use of the building is as a domestic dwelling (the purpose for which it was built, and the use in which it currently exists).

**Impact of proposals on significance**

The assessment of the proposed works is applied to the impact on the significance of the listed building and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

**General fabric and repairs**

The house has undergone periods of renewal, alteration and repair over the past century. All works of like-for-like repair and sympathetic renewal and upgrading are supported, The reinstatement of timber picture rails will return the walls to their original, and very typically 1890s, appearance.

Several doors are proposed to be rehung to swing to the wall instead of to the room. While this is historically very uncharacteristic, it is a reversible alteration and is supported given that all historic doors and hinges are retained in the process.

Repairs to windows are supported, and where windows have been replaced in clearly modern detail (such as the basement French windows) it is acceptable to change the frame to a more correct design for the 1890s. There is no objection to the proposals to change existing late C20th glass within the larger panes of the property to a single pane thermal laminate glass (i.e. Histoglass Monolaminate).

The repointing of any brickwork in a suitable mortar mix is supported.

**External works**

Aside from potential repairs the chief external alterations relate to new soil pipes and a new garden room.

All new soil pipes are proposed to be located on the side elevation. There is an opportunity to resolve the issue of redundant pipework and to replace plastic pipework with metal pipes. The introduction of new pipes on the side elevation (to serve the new bathroom fittings) is acceptable.

In heritage terms the property can accommodate a garden room without harm to the setting of the listed building. The design and materials (and general location) of the proposed garden room is acceptable in terms of its impact on the setting of the listed building and it reads as a traditional garden structure set relatively well-away from the elevations of the house.

**Alterations by floor**

*Basement level*

Of all the floors in the property the basement level has undergone the most alteration, presumably prior to statutory designation. Having said that, these changes have chiefly related to the more minor internal walls and the essential elements of the planform survive. There is some uncertainty regarding the date of the chimneypiece in the front room (presumably the former servants’ hall) but it is not proposed to remove it and this decision is supported. The cornices to the main rooms seem to be in quite short runs and were presumably added in the 1990s.

The largest proposed alteration, by extent, is the lowering of the floor level across the basement. The application documents state that a lowering of around 150mm would occur and that none of the historic fabric of the floor would be lost because the joists allow for this drop within the existing void. This also means that no underpinning would be required. Given the comparatively modest extent of the lowering, the fact the skirting is not original, and the fact that it can accomplished while retaining all of the structural historic fabric there is no objection in principle to this as it would not radically alter the proportions of the room.

There is no objection to locating a fitted kitchen in the front basement room as the services do not require any new breaches in the main (entrance) façade of the house or ventilation grilles within window panes etc.

*Ground floor*

It is proposed to create a draft door in the existing opening between the vestibule and the stair hall. The application presents three designs (Options 1, 2 and 3) any of which would be appropriate to the character of the space they would occupy.

The W.C. seems likely to have been purpose built as a W.C., or at least as a cloakroom with basin. Moving or replicating the existing partition wall can be supported as the character and essential planform of the space would not be radically altered.

*First floor*

The biggest change on this floor is the proposal to turn the former master bedroom into a bathroom and to connect the rear room to it via a new doorway in the north-south spine wall.

The proposed connection of the rear bedroom to the rear dressing room appears to be historic and would be acceptable. The likely original circulation of this space was probably two main bedrooms each separately connected to a smaller dressing room/bathroom.

The proposed opening in the spine wall changes this circulation into more a modern “suite” arrangement. However, there is no reason why the principle of a modest opening would be particularly harmful in the sense that all of the rooms would retain their original form and historic doors.

The shower and proposed dry sauna are easily reversible and don’t require servicing beyond normal domestic plumbing and electrics, and are therefore acceptable. Removable joinery in the form of wardrobes etc is proposed. This would visually obscure historic detail but it is free-standing and would not technically fall within the requirement for listed building consent.

*Second floor*

At second floor it is proposed to create an opening between the rear room and the dressing room. While it seems clear that there was never an opening in this location (unlike at first floor) the creation of a door is acceptable.

It is proposed to create a stair from the rear room to the attic. Usually this would be quite difficult to support but in this case the loss of historic fabric is neutral as it replaces a ladder off the landing and sits within a partition/alcove which already exists and can be covered by new doors to read as a wardrobe.

*Attic (roof void) floor*

It is proposed to create a smaller central room by means of stud walls. The planform of the attic is currently one open space and the creation of stud walls within this is not considered to cause harm given the very ancillary nature of the space and the lightweight nature of the proposed construction. Replacing the rooflight with a conservation rooflight is acceptable.

**Summary**

The repair of historic fabric is welcomed and it is accepted that the proposals will repair much of the fabric of the building. The internal changes on balance have a neutral impact, and certain elements provide some mild enhancement.

The proposed works do not involve the loss of historic fabric beyond what would be reasonable for works of this nature and no fabric of a high-level of significance would be lost. The alterations to planform/circulation occur only in spaces of lesser significance and are reversible. The special architectural and historic interest of the listed building would be preserved and its positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area would be enhanced. The proposals do not conflict with the requirements of the the NPPF in respect of heritage assets and are therefore recommended for consent and planning permission.

David McKinstry

08/12/23