1 + 1A Cobham Mews, Agar Grove, London NW1 9SB

Design and Access Statement —revision 19.11.2024

Location

1 + 1A Cobham Mews is a Category E office building located within the Camden Square Conservation Area (CA6). The building is placed on a triangular site at the north end of Cobham Mews, a short cobbled cul-de-sac that leads off the north side of Agar Grove, just south of the junction with Murray Street.

The triangular site is surrounded by the rear gardens of 4 storey 19th century terraced houses and their rear extensions off Stratford Villas on its north-west side, the rear yards of similarly terraced shops and houses on Murray Street on its north-east side and the large gardens of the terraced semi-detached 19th century villas on Agar Grove to the south.

View of the Central Block's courtyard and south entrances split by the central spine wall

View of the small East Block with its south elevation on Cobham Mews


View of the West Block's south elevation facing its courtyard

Description
The building was designed by David Chipperfield Architects and construction was completed in 1989 and was home to his practice for a number of years. The current studio office building has three distinct elements comprising a rectangular two storey central entrance block, a smaller two storey block on axis with the mews to the east and a one storey triangular block hidden from view to the west.

The majority of the building is placed on the boundaries of the rear garden walls requiring the majority of interior spaces to be lit from above by large roof lights. Leaving the south entrance and west elevations as the location for external courtyard spaces from which steel glazed walls can take advantage of daylight and horizontal views.

The central block is divided into two by a central in-situ fair-faced concrete spine wall that splits the building into two self-contained office units. These are entered through large oak doors placed within a double height recessed steel framed glazed wall between two distinctive steel framed glass block walls. Each unit has a concrete stair that leads up to a mezzanine level below which are reception, kitchen and w.c. facilities.

The east side of the central block access's a small two storey block at both ground and first floor levels. This block's is placed forward of the main blocks entrance elevation, contains its own stair and encloses a courtyard on its west side and presents an elevation with windows to Cobham Mews.

The west side of the central block access's the large one storey triangular office space that is placed behind garden walls and has no elevations apart from windows to a small terrace with access to the buildings plant room.

Apart from the concrete spine wall, the remainder of the building is constructed using in-situ concrete column and beam frames, infilled with concrete block, single glazed steel screen, or glass blocks walls. Externally the concrete frame is left exposed whilst the block work has a coat of self-coloured render to match the concrete.

Condition
The building is in relatively good condition, however its EPC rating is low due to having relatively minimal insulation through its wall, glass block and single glazed construction. The

flat roofs which do have minimal insulation, have had to be repeatedly re-surfaced in recent years to minimise the ingress of water. The current source of heating and hot water is a gas fired boiler.

View of the entrance hall to the Central Block showing the in-situ concrete stair and spine wall

Proposal

Given the residential character of the area in which the building is placed and the need to bring the building up to current standards of insulation and carbon free heating, it has been decided to apply for a change of use from Category E office use to Category C3 dwelling house use, for which the buildings form and character is eminently suited and requires very little change in its external appearance.

The central block is split in two by the spine wall and can easily be separated from the small east block and single storey triangular block by the addition of internal walls placed within the concrete column and beam frame, matching the current form of construction. This would create four self-contained dwellings of three different scales, with their own external courtyard garden spaces.

The one storey west block will provide a spacious four bedroom house (1), entered from a new front door set into its existing south courtyard elevation. The position of the existing upgraded rooflights will be retained to light the ground floor bedroom and living spaces. The kitchen / dining area will open up to a second courtyard to the west.

The two-storey central block would provide two spacious two bedroom houses (2 + 3). The entrance into each house maintains the same layout and character as the current office building. The entrance through the large oak doors will lead into a two storey roof-lit hall, with the existing in-situ concrete stair leading up to the mezzanine level. The position of the existing upgraded rooflights will be retained to light the ground floor living spaces. The existing glass block walls will provide daylight to the bedrooms on the ground and first floors.

The two-storey east block will provide a spacious one bedroom house (4), entered from an existing door on the south elevation. The existing in-situ concrete stair will be retained to access a first floor bedroom and bathroom above the ground floor kitchen / living area.

All the existing windows will require upgrading to either incorporate double-glazing, or be fitted with internal secondary glazing so as to minimise the impact on the existing steel window frames and external character of the building. The interior spaces will require all external walls and roof construction to be upgraded to provide sufficient levels of insulation to meet current standards.

The current gravel and paved exterior surfaces will be replaced by planted gardens and multi-stem trees where there is adequate space to do so. The entrance routes to all front doors will be raised by gradients of less than 5% in order to remove the need for stepped access into all four houses.