

Design and Access Statement

Project: 170 Camden Road, London NW1 9HJ
Project Ref: 2405
Client: Emma Stockton & Matthew Shaw
Issued: Patrick Bankhead, Founder / Director, 24.12.2024

1.0 Introduction

Bankhead + Partners are commissioned to prepare a design proposal for the refurbishment of 170 Camden Road, an unlisted Victorian house within the Camden Square Conservation Area. This semi-detached house had previously been organised as an HMO, with the original layout significantly altered to maximise provision of bedrooms and bathrooms, with limited communal space provided.

The owners are a family with three teenage children. The proposals aim to adapt the current layout to better suit their needs, in particular to provide more natural light and sense of space, as well as better connections to the garden areas. Changes are predominantly internal, with external alterations limited to a general rationalisation for improved utility and aesthetic appearance.

2.0 Site, Context & Conservation

The site is located on Camden Road, the main arterial road running North from Camden Town towards Holloway. Positioned on the East side of the road, no.170 backs onto Camden Mews, which would once have provided stables and servants quarters for the main house. The property is stucco fronted with an entrance portico in a loosely Italianate style, one of a pair with no.168. Whilst both frontages are largely intact, there have been a number of extensions and alterations to the rear and rooftop areas, generally ad-hoc and expedient in nature.

Camden Road is characterised by larger villas, generally semi-detached or terraced, and built during the mid-Victorian era (c.1840 - 1880). Since the original development, the area has become noted for the quality of its modern architecture, from Listed mews infills to

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extensions and adaptations of the original housing stock. The Camden Square Conservation Area is a cohesive exemplar of how period and contemporary architecture can combine to create a vibrant neighbourhood.

3.0 Scale & Appearance

The proposals do not create any additional floor space, indeed GIA is reduced by the introduction of a double-height space on the lower floors. Minor additions to volume or form being an extended side dormer window, and a new spiral staircase to access the garden. A number of functional and aesthetic issues have been identified, which the project seeks to address.

As a consequence of being adapted for multiple occupancy, the external appearance has been negatively impacted by misc. soil pipes, vents, cables, aerials etc. One aim of the project is to rationalise and remove such accretions where possible, as well as the making good of render work and brick pointing.

The current rear extension is set over two levels in a brick finish, neither original to the building or attractive in terms of materials or proportion. Facing the side passageway, the lower ground floor windows have clearly been added at a later date, and are poorly proportioned with rudimentary lintels. The front light-well is narrow, and along with the adjacent vault is only accessible via a sash window. The light-well retaining wall is not structurally stable, being braced off the main building via a temporary steel frame. To the rear, connections with the garden and lower patio area are poor, with an overbearing impact on the lower ground floor rooms which already have a reduced ceiling height.

In terms of appearance, the proposals cover the following aspects:

1. Adapt the front light-well with a new retaining wall set back 1.0m from the line of the existing, structurally unstable wall, to be finished in white render to match the main front facade. The light-well and vault under the main entrance are currently only accessible via a sash window in the front living room. The proposal is to open this window out via French doors to provide safe access, a change that will not be visible from the public realm due to the front garden being elevated from the pavement, and by the depth of the light-well itself. The doors will be carefully

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detailed to ensure they have an equivalent proportion to the currently installed window, or similar approved.

2. Rationalise the glazing configuration to the existing front-facing dormer as three equal sized panels. The face and cheeks of the dormer will be finished in anthracite zinc sheeting.
3. Extend the side dormer to sit on the axis with the ridge, providing sufficient headspace for the reconfigured stair. New glazing is to be configured in two equal sized panels, of similar proportions to the front dormer. The face and cheeks of the dormer will be finished in anthracite zinc sheeting.
4. Retain the volume of the existing rear dormer, with a new inset roof terrace formed into the adjacent rear roof slope*. The terrace will be accessed via bi-fold doors from the main bedroom space, and finished with a painted metal handrail on metal uprights at 100mm spacing. The lower section of roof slope and eaves will be retained in their existing configuration, while the face and cheeks of the dormer will be finished in dark stained timber cladding strips to match the rear extension.

** The principle of an inset terrace is noted in the Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy: (7.8 Alterations to Roofs and Dormers: "...dormer windows and inset roof terraces may be allowed to the rear roof slope.")*

5. Reconfigure the side elevation glazing at upper and lower ground floor levels to better meet functional requirements, and be more aesthetically pleasing. Currently there is a run of high-level windows against the side passageway, none of which are understood to be original and are likely to be ad-hoc consequences of the HMO configuration. The proposal is to rationalise the four lower ground floor windows into two smaller openings towards the front, providing natural light to the WC and Utility Room. To bring natural light to the Kitchen, via the double-height space, a new window is proposed at upper ground floor level. This is arranged as a tall 'slot', with head and sill levels to align with the main rear facing sash window in the double-height space. This will be clearly detailed as a contemporary window, with a minimally framed glazing unit set flush with the face of the brickwork.

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6. Adapted and reclad rear extension, with a new spiral stair providing linking access to the main garden and lower patio areas. The rear extension will be re-engineered to provide extensive glazing at both levels, with a bespoke spiral staircase formed in painted metal. On the upper level a home workspace will have good natural light and views to the garden, while below the kitchen will be similar in terms of light and openness, with glazing 'wrapping' around the extension and the main rear elevation. To unify this element and to clearly differentiate it from the host building, the finish will be a cladding of vertical timber strips, finished in a dark stain or charred effect. This will also allow a zone of insulation to improve thermal performance. The glazing will be headed by an expressed steel beam running from main house to extension elements. The aim is to create a modern counter-point to the original Victorian architecture, both in terms of materials and fenestration, with the line of structural intervention clearly defined.

4.0 Amount / Access / Layout

Amount

The proposal is essentially a reconfiguration to the original volume, with improvements achieved via better, more rational organisation of internal space and adjacencies. The impact on neighbouring properties will be positive in terms of creating more clearly defined elevational treatments, with original and non-original fabric better differentiated.

Access

Whilst the potential to improve access is limited by both the stepped street approach and the split level ground floor, there will be a modest upgrade achieved via the proposals. Firstly the top floor will be reached via a new, wider stair set at a gentler pitch, and secondly the new external staircase will give better linkage between ground floor levels and rear garden and patio areas.

Layout

The proposed reconfiguration is a conscious attempt to maximise from within, rather than to create new space at a considerable environmental premium. Bedrooms and bath / shower rooms on the top two floors are carefully sized for utility, with a realigned linking stair allowing the top floor to become a more flexible space. This level will be enhanced in

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utility by the rear inset terrace, allowing good natural light and views whilst not interfering with the general massing and eaves of the roof element.

The lower floors will be reorganised around the creation of a double-height space at the rear, with linkage from the side gallery / internal bridge and balcony from the retained front reception room at upper ground level. This focal space will counter-act the low ceiling heights at lower ground level, along with the extensive glazing bringing strong natural light and views to the garden.

5.0 Conclusion

The proposals for 170 Camden Road have been carefully considered to work within, and make best use of the existing volume and external treatments. By understanding the original fabric and arrangement of rooms, a contemporary programme of spaces can be inserted into the original Victorian architecture, responding to the requirements of a 21st century lifestyle. The external expression is rationalised and repaired with improved fenestration, with new and original elements clearly differentiated.