



Planning Regeneration and Development

**Application for the installation of blank window boards  
to the front façade**

**At**

**41 Highgate West Hill**

**London**

**N6 6LS**

**January 2014**

## Introduction

- 1.1 This application seeks listed building consent for the installation of 3 no. blank window boards to the front façade of the House at 41 Highgate West Hill. Permission has previously been granted for the restoration of the Grade II\* House as a single family dwelling and this proposal forms part of this ongoing process of restoration. The site is located within the Highgate Conservation Area

## Pre-Application Advice

- 1.2 Pre-application advice on the proposals has been sought from Charles Rose, Heritage and Conservation Officer at Camden Council (letter dated 14<sup>th</sup> August 2013). The advice confirmed the acceptability of the principle of the proposals and that an application for listed building consent would be required.

## Planning History

- 1.3 Appeal ref. APP/X5210/E/09/2119331 / 2 granted planning permission and listed building consent for the removal of the service wing and consequential remodelling of the front façade of the House and the construction of an Orangery building. These works have now been implemented with the resultant façade as shown in Figure 1 below.
- 1.4 As can be seen, the front façade of the House has three blind window openings on the left-hand-side at first floor level. These blind window openings face the main stair internally and are treated architecturally in the same manner as the adjoining windows externally. The blind windows have a Portland stone window surround and curved hoods, with Portland stone ashlar as a backing which is set marginally further back than the existing window line in adjacent windows.



Figure 1: Front façade following removal of service wing and remodelling

- 1.5 The removal of the service wing and remodelling of the front façade has better revealed and emphasised the central section of the façade. In order to provide balance to the remodelled façade, it is proposed to install three blank window boards to the blind openings. It is proposed to enhance the appearance of the front façade without causing any harm to the character of the House as listed building.

#### Proposal Description

- 1.6 The installation of the blank window boards (see mock-up in Figures 2 and 3 below) has been designed to be entirely reversible and may be removed at any point in the future to reveal the blind windows behind. The blank window joinery profiles are identical to the original windows immediately adjacent and follow the same arrangement of vertical sliding sashes with dividing glazing bars. The blank windows are proposed to be constructed out of materials and finishes to match the existing windows in terms of detail, colour and finish. The timber board behind the blank window panes is to be painted dark blue to match the daytime 'reflected' appearance of the other windows and allow interplay with daylight to give a realistic aesthetic.



Figure 2: Blank window board mock-up



Figure 3: Blank window board mock-up



- 1.7 The glazing transoms and mullions are to be built into the edge of the frame of the window and the frame will be fitted tightly and then carefully screwed into the masonry window surround. A marine ply backboard will be attached to the back of the window reveal and painted midnight blue eggshell. The blank window elements will be fixed to this board, as opposed to the façade of the House.
- 1.8 The existing blind window has an ashlar lining with two horizontal joints and one vertical joint bisecting the lower band. It is proposed to fit hardwood battens over a resilient foam strip along this line, with locating screws and plugs carefully located in the mortar joints. The base board will be scribed to the opening forming a neat fit, but with a gap that reflects the normal joint between a timber frame and the masonry surround. The baseboard will bear on the sill and so is self-supporting, with the locating screws into the battens being solely to retain the panel in position and prevent wind-suction removing the panel from the opening. The battens are also intended to allow ventilation to the rear of the board and allow any ingress of moisture to exist and drain via the sill in the normal fashion.

#### Planning Policy

- 1.9 Paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires that, in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable use consistent with their conservation;
  - the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability; and
  - the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

- 1.10 Paragraph 137 states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance.
- 1.11 Camden Core Strategy Policy CS14 promotes high quality places and seeks to conserve Camden's heritage. The policy requires development of a high standard of design that respects local context and character and seeks to preserve and enhance Camden's heritage assets and their settings.
- 1.12 Camden Development Policy DP24 seeks to secure high quality design and requires developments to consider the character and proportions of existing buildings and the quality of materials to be used.
- 1.13 Policy DP25 seeks to conserve the Borough's heritage assets. The policy seeks the maintenance of the character of Conservation Areas, through only permitting development within Conservation Areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area.
- 1.14 With respect to Listed buildings, the policy seeks to preserve and enhance Listed buildings through only granting consent for development where it is considered that this would not cause harm to the setting of a Listed building.

#### Assessment of Proposals

- 1.15 The character of the House at 41 Highgate West Hill as a building of special architectural or historic interest is considered to consist of its location in Highgate and prominence at the top of West Hill and the substantial scale and impressive series of main entertaining rooms that make the House a rare example of its type. The architecture and external detailing in a twentieth century Queen Anne Revival style is a good example of a House built for the purpose of entertainment on the grandest scale. The current form of the building is largely the result of the work and extensive remodelling of George Hubbard designed in the classical tradition, as employed by Arthur Crosfield. Since the early part of the twentieth century the property has developed from a modest townhouse to a grand building that is, essentially, on the scale of a palace and its main significance lies in

the scale of the work, making it an elaborate and relatively intact example of its type.

- 1.16 The character of the building as a House designed for elaborate entertaining on a substantial scale is not considered to be affected by the installation of three blank window boards to the front façade as described above. Notwithstanding the fact that these works are entirely reversible and will not permanently alter the building, the proposals are not considered to alter this character of the building of special interest. The intention of the proposals is to sensitively provide balance to the front façade and will not alter the character and interest of the building as a grand example of the wealth and expansion of London and architecture designed for impressive entertaining.
- 1.17 As shown on drawing no. 363-MH-917\_P00 enclosed, the existing blank windows return to the existing internal staircase. It is not therefore possible to open up the windows and so the proposed exterior window boards are considered the most appropriate solution to balance the restored front façade, preserving and enhancing the character, appearance and setting of the listed building and conservation area. Notwithstanding the fact that the method of fixing for the installation of the window boards allows for their removal without any harm to the building, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the relevant planning policy, sustaining and enhancing the significance of the heritage assets and putting the House to viable use consistent with its conservation.
- 1.18 We therefore respectfully request that listed building consent be granted.