



PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Proposed Development on Land Adjoining 148 Fellows Road Camden, London NW3 3JH

by Peter Cook Dipl Arch RIBA

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In April 2007 (ref: 2007/2202/P) a planning application was made for a 3-storey house where, although 2-storeys are above ground, the bulk of the building is below ground level. This application was approved and there is no doubt that the scheme maintains the gap between Winchester Street and the terraces of Fellows Road.
- 1.2 Fellows Road is lined with trees and has a pleasant leafy feel despite the multi-storey development (generally 5-storeys). From the street can be seen trees at the back of Eden Avenue. These views are maintained by the approved scheme. However, it is not a good design layout and too much of the accommodation is below ground. The house, to be a sensible place to live needs a little more accommodation above ground. The principle of such development is clearly established as this is a built-up residential area. In practice however, there is a need to ensure that any design proposed for new accommodation has no significant impact on the green gap. It is that which has informed the design of our proposal.
- 1.3 The scheme, the subject of this application comprises some amendments to the external appearance of the 3-storey part of the dwelling and a ground floor side extension.

2 ALTERATIONS

- 2.1 We are generally altering the layout. The existing approved scheme was in our opinion anomalous. It had limited above ground spaces and then sacrificed these to a cinema room, child playroom, a study and a void. The kitchen was through corridor - a health and safety hazard and a not very pleasant way of getting from the front of the house to the leisure area.

- 2.2 We have re-designed the interior to reduce the space given over to fitness and we have created a guest room. The kitchen is now at ground floor level where it has a view of the garden and connects to the outside. The upper floor no longer has a void and has become the living room. We have replaced the 2 sets of stairs with one single staircase with a bigger entrance hall - the last was hemmed in by stairs and had an open very small living room off. We have created a cloakroom at this level. All these changes are internal.
- 2.3 However, we also propose an external change which is a ground floor side extension. The site had a boundary wall and fence at the front of similar height to that next door. It totalled a little over 1800 mm in height and that is the height of the proposed new boundary although there will be planting behind which should grow 2.5 m in height and which will match similar hedging along Fellows Road.
- 2.4 Because the proposed ground floor extension is single storey it will not be visible from the street as it will be hidden from view. Moreover the roof will be a green roof with planting and the front structural walls will be hidden behind a green planted banking which will link, and be contiguous with, the green roof. This means that anyone looking down on to the site from surrounding buildings will see a low level area, as they would have seen with the approved scheme. The key element of the gap is that there is no full visible structure between the tall buildings of Fellows Road and Winchester Street. These buildings are much taller than even the 3-storey (2-storey above ground) part of the house approved on this site. Between them can be seen trees at the rear. It is this volumetric space that is key. The building of a ground floor extension hidden behind a front wall, also hidden by an embankment planted bund and with a planted green roof will not intrude into that space to any significant degree and so the relevance and importance of the gap will not be compromised. The gap is important at first, second and third floor levels. It is here that the space is available and noticeable because to view the gap either one is in the street or adjoining garden and one is looking up at the space (necessitated by boundary walls and planting and was always the case), or one is looking out at first, second or third floor window level from adjoining properties. It is at this height therefore that one sees the space.

- 2.5 The ground level is not important or relevant because as a garden area it could always have been paved or occupied by garden paraphernalia. Also it was and is not visible from the street and, as referred to above, from the upper levels of the buildings around one is still looking down on green planting. Therefore the integrity and viability of the gap is maintained and on that basis the design must be deemed unobjectionable.
- 2.6 The extension is designed with a retaining wall to the front elevation such that earth can be placed against it to form a sloping bank that can be planted. This bank will be contained at either end by stone gabion walls. The roof will be a green roof as originally intended although previously at ground level. The rear elevation will be fully glazed for transparency and to create a connection with the out drop - important in a house that is largely underground, that above ground spaces are open and transparent as possible and this importance is reflected in our design amendments.
- 2.7 The original scheme made much of a void at the front of the building, going through to full 3-storeys with a light well in front of it. One might have expected a fully glazed transparent curtain wall to the side of that void, but instead there was a solid wall with slotted window openings as though there was a need to create privacy screening despite the void not being an activity zone. We are replacing the void with a stair and, in front of this, to maximise daylight and also reduce impact from the build we are proposing to amend the façade by replacing the solid wall with a glazed curtain wall. This will not impact on the amenities of occupants as the area behind is a stairway and in any event privacy can be obtained by use of an applied window film which allows views out but not in, in effect it creates one-way vision but crucially allows the passage of daylight.

3 AMENITIES

- 3.1 The amenities of this are not affected by this proposal. A line drawn at 25° from the ground floor window of adjoining properties is not subtended by the ground floor extension. Therefore there is no impact on daylight.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The application consists of a ground floor extension that will have no significant detrimental impact on the gap between Fellows Road housing and Winchester Street housing. The extension will have a significant impact on the viability and amenities of future residents of the house which is currently under construction.
- 4.2 The application seeks approval for a revised elevation to the 3-storey element already approved. The revision consists of making the front elevation more transparent. This transparency will reduce the physical impact of the building thereby enhancing the gap. It will increase levels of natural light within the property.

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