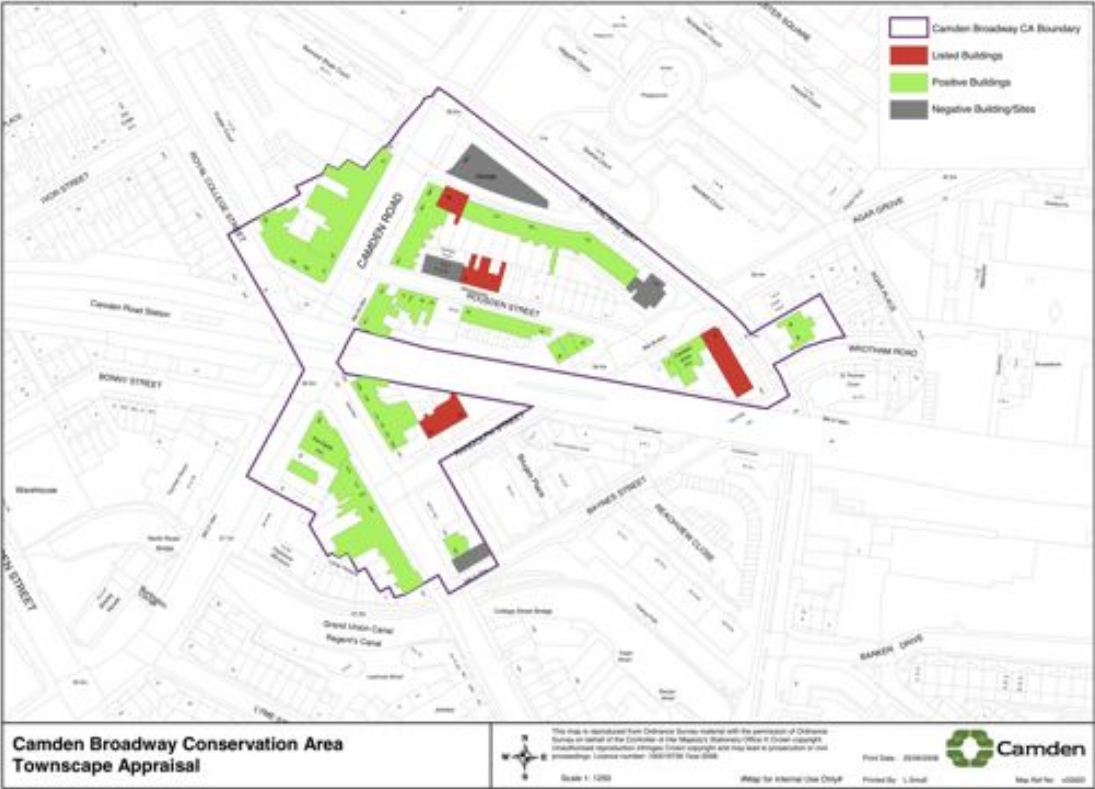


Commentary / objection to proposal 2013/5689/P

The site, 152 Royal College Street, is located within Camden Broadway Conservation Area. The map below shows the boundaries of the conservation area, and highlights the adjacent building (no 154) as a 'positive building'.



Conservation Area Appraisal

The adjacent building on Royal College Street (no 154) has been designated under "BUILDINGS WHICH MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION" and "HISTORIC SHOPFRONTS".

Royal College Street and Camden Road were laid out in c.1820 and, with the exception of the north side of Camden Road, a map of 1832 shows that the conservation area's street pattern and built environment was complete by that date. The whole of the area bounded by Randolph Street, St Pancras Way, Camden Road and Royal College Street was built by 1832, giving the area a distinct architectural unity.

Management Strategy

New Development

It is clear from the conservation area appraisal that a key element of the distinctive character and appearance of the Camden Broadway Conservation Area is the area's broadly consistent architectural style, scale, form and materials.

High quality design, appropriate scale, form and materials and high quality execution will be required of all new development, including smaller alterations such as shop fronts, signage, and extensions which can harm the character and appearance of the area to an extent belied by their individual scale. The Council will particularly encourage proposals which seek to enhance or, where appropriate, redevelop those buildings and spaces, which are considered to have a negative impact on the special character or the appearance of the conservation area (see Appendix 3).

Change in the residential part of the area will be more narrowly defined in terms of use but in parts of this area the pressure to increase the capital's housing stock may produce proposals for new development of a greater scale. Again, high quality design and execution will be paramount and the design statements supporting such applications will be expected specifically to address the particular characteristics identified in the appraisal including the formality and regularity of the streets within the conservation area.

Proposal - Design and Access Statement

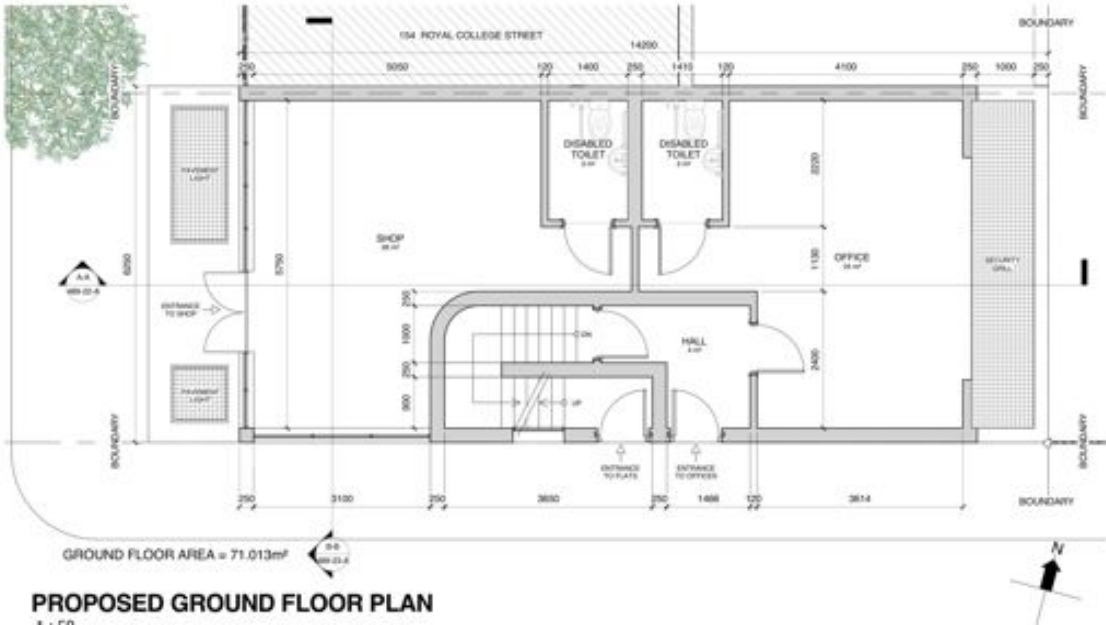
The proposal is to build a 4-storey+basement building on a currently open space, comprised of retail and office use as well as three residential apartments.

1. Layout and Access

The elevational treatment focuses the front of the building on Royal Colege Street, whilst the ground floor plan locates the building's main entrances (residential and office) on Baynes Street. This unclarity is amplified by the side elevation's lack to address the site's corner location and its failing to address the prominent view from canal entrance.



Instead of 'turning the corner', the building only addresses Royal College Street with a front, and treats Baynes Street like an insignificant side regardless of the two entrances located there. The residential entrance (the building's main access point for all residents) isn't designed as such, and looks both in plan and elevation like a secondary entrance. Further to that, it lacks an entrance hall such as the one provided for the adjacent office entrance. This raises questions such as the location of mailboxes and residential waste storage.



The proposal should address both streets in a clear, coherent way, providing the office and residential entrances with the status and architectural expression worthy of a building's main access point. Equally, the design of the Baynes street facade needs to be coherent and in keeping with the features of the Royal College Street facade. Whilst the Design and Access Statement claims *"But for reasons of space provision it is not practical to set back the side elevations at this level. This is a very narrow corner site. Further cut backs in the floor space for the residential floors will seriously negate the amenity currently afforded."*, the currently proposed 1-bedroom apartment is with 60sqm rather large, and a more refined designed response will find ways of both integrating a setback (however small) in the massing of the building and providing a suitable apartment on the 3rd floor. If this is not possible, then the suitability of the fourth storey or the unit mix ought to be questioned, rather than compromising the massing and appearance of the proposed building.

2. Appearance

The Design and Access Statement details the proposed external finish as render rather than brick:

" The external finish to the proposed building is render rather than brick. The view has been taken that any building occupying this corner site needs to offer a contrast to the dominating brick monologue of the attached terrace. A continuity of scale and form is offered with the proposed building but an absolute imitation of adjacent properties would not be a fitting conclusion to this terrace. There are new buildings with a render finish across the canal and elements of the facade across the street have a white render finish. The new development behind Royal College Street is aggressively brick in finish. The proposed building needs to act as a foil to this dominating brick environment. The render finish coupled with green spaces to terraces and selected walls will soften the immediate environment and offer a new focal point in the streetscape."



This statement is in conflict with the Camden Broadway Conservation Area Management Strategy: *"It is clear from the conservation area appraisal that a key element of the distinctive character and appearance of the Camden Broadway Conservation Area is the area's broadly consistent architectural style, scale, form and materials."*

The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies the area's architectural unity as a positive characteristic, rather than 'aggressive', 'dominating' and in need of 'contrasting' or 'softening' as described in the proposal's Design and Access Statement. Rather than standing out by contrasting the adjacent

buildings (as proposed), any building on this site should enhance the coherence of the street by using solid brick materials. Brick can be used in a variety of ways, and can easily provide a suitable 'corner location appearance' without detracting from the street as a whole.

3. Layout and Outdoor Space Provision

The Design and Access Statement declares:

"The terracing is a key design feature of the proposed development and the lead for this was taken from the adjacent properties.

The terracing to the rear produces a staggered affect and creates the subordination required of the upper floors. This has to be carefully balanced with the provision of both outdoor terrace space and internal floor space at each level. If the resultant set-back is too great at the third floor level it may leave an unviable apartment space."

The balconies are at the most 100cm, at the least 65cm deep. The floor plans indicate a small plant pot as their only use, as they are too narrow to accommodate any type of seating or other outdoor use furniture.

It seems that in order to make a fourth floor viable, the proposal has compromised the outdoor space provision to the extent that the balconies are rendered near unusable. The proposal needs to provide high-quality homes, and it seems that the ambition of 2x 2-bed and 1x 1-bed apartments is too much for this site. An arrangement of 1x 2-bed (first floor) and 1x duplex 3 or 4-bed (second and third floors) apartments would allow for better quality homes, and (as per 1.) improved massing and appearance.

4. Level of detail

The Design and Access Statement needs to provide further detail to prove its compliance with the Conservation Area Management Strategy. No mention is currently made of the quality of facade materials, the treatment of features such as the balconies, the detailing of the shopfront (given its adjacency to the 'historic shopfront' of no 154 etc.

Vague reference can be found in the Sustainable Design Statement to a Green Wall, but no further detail can be found on any of the plans, sections or views, even though a Green Wall would be a major feature (including its maintenance requirements).

Proposal - Access Statement and Lifetime Homes

Point 5 a) of the access statement declares:

"Access between floors is via a communal staircase suitable for persons with impaired sight. There is the opportunity for a lift in the future should it be necessary."

Point 5 of the Lifetime Homes Statement declares:

"It is not proposed at this stage to install a lift in this development, however provision can be made for the inclusion of a passenger lift to serve the three apartments."

It is not clear from the ground plan where this opportunity could be, given the already minimal entrance arrangement for the residential floors. Further detail is required to ensure DDA and Lifetime Homes compliance.

Summary

In light of the significant shortcomings of the proposal, I object to the planning application. A brick end-of-terrace building, that address both Royal College Street and Baynes Street positively and equally, with well-articulated entrances, matching in character and consistent in footprint with the adjacent two Conservation Area Georgian houses and their back gardens would be much more suitable for this significant location.