# THE ELMS FITZROY PARK LONDON N6 6HS

# PRELIMNARY DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

# FOR THE REINSTATEMENT WORKS

**FINAL VERSION**

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## 4 REVIEW OF WORK ALREADY UNDERTAKEN

4.01 This review does not address the matter of the dealings with the LPA and English Heritage during the course of the works, but addresses with the design and heritage issues raised by the LPA and English Heritage subsequently. Reference will be made to the letter dated 21 April 2011 from English Heritage to the LPA, and disclosed to the applicant's representatives in August 2012.

4.02 The design of the Winter Garden

a) The original design intent for the Winter Garden was for a simple glass enclosure with minimal supports, taking account of the spans involved.

b) The enclosure was to sit as a largely transparent element between the original listed elements and the new extension to the north, allowing, in contrast to the previous consents of 1997 and 2000 the original listed elements to be read clearly in the new development.

c) The original footprint of the Winter Garden sat between the monolithic roof over the listed elements and the new east 'wing' and the new extension to the north.

d) When details were subsequently being developed for the project, and in consultation with English Heritage and Camden, the monolithic roof was reviewed. This was seen as being a hangover from earlier consented schemes (see Section 3) and it was considered desirable to improve on this, and to make the original listed elements more legible in the overall development.

e) Consequently, what has become to be referred to as the tri-partite roof was developed. This replaced the monolithic roof with three separate roofs: a double hipped roof over the west, listed side; a double pitched roof over the new 'wing' and a flat roof between them on the south side, over the south entrance.

f) This created a new void at the centre of the building, and it was agreed that it would be appropriate to extent the Winter Garden into this area.

g) An initial design for the enlarged area of the Winter Garden showed a shallow double pitched glazed roof; it was felt that, because the ridge of this roof sat slightly above the eaves line of the listed elements, it should be reviewed and a design developed whereby the Winter Garden was subservient to, and sit below, the eaves to the listed elements.

h) A wholly glass solution was discussed, but the depth of the glass beams would have resulted in a restricted headroom below the roof at first floor. In addition, the overall appearance and size of the glass beams required, together with the need for extensive metal connections and bolts, mitigated against producing a lightweight roof.

i) Consequently, the structural engineers were asked to look at alternatives, to create a roof profile that was as shallow as possible,

with as minimal structural depth as possible, whilst at the same time taking into account the need for minimal falls for rainwater runoff

j) The solution adopted was an elegant diagrid of 60 mm diameter circular steel sections, on a diagonal grid of 1.35m centres, off which was supported the structural glass of the roof enclosure itself. In order to ensure that the perimeter of the glass sat clear of the projecting eaves of the listed elements, a perimeter steel beam was installed; this also provided the zone for the perimeter rainwater gutter, as well as offering the opportunity for a enclosure below to house recessed lights that would wash the walls of the Winter Garden.

k) The early and final versions of the new tri-partite roof and the extended area of the Winter Garden were discussed with EH and the LPA and had their support. These were incorporated into a detailed set of drawings annotated 'Existing House Tender Set' (EHTS), which were issued to EH and Camden in March 2004, along with structural engineering drawings prepared by Elliott Wood and a Bill of Quantities prepared by D A Hammond & Co. Subsequent amendments and up-dated were also issued to EH and Camden.

l) In 2011, EH subsequently wrote to Camden (their letter dated 21 April 2011 refers) and commented that the design of the Winter Garden appeared to be "over-engineered". No further explanation is given for this blanket statement, and it is noted that the person who wrote the letter, Richard Parrish, is not a structural engineer, and has no specialist structural engineering knowledge.

m) In the absence of any further clarification from EH on their comments regarding the engineering of the Winter Garden, the applicant has commissioned structural engineers Price & Myers to assess the design of the Winter Garden. Price & Myers are a highly accomplished firm of structural engineers, with a large portfolio of innovative structural designs to their name, and they are ideally qualified to comment on the engineering aspects of the Winter Garden.

n) The 2011 EH letter also refers to the Winter Garden extending further south than consented. The letter makes no reference to the development of the design in 2004 and 2005 in consultation with EH, and the writer does not appear to be aware of the benefits that we deemed to have accrued to the listed of elements of the building by replacing the consented monolithic roof with the subtler tri-partite roof.

o) EH also make reference to the effect of the Winter Garden on the original building. One assumes they mean from this the internal relationship between the Winter Garden and the east wall of the Basevi building, and the eaves along this east wall. They do not seem to have realised that the 2003 consent would have obliterated this eaves with the new monolithic roof, and there would have been no part of the listed building roof visible: the whole of the central area would have been a completely internal space, with no clear relationship with the listed building.

p) We contend that the new arrangement of the tripartite roof, together with the internal extension of the Winter Garden in an elegant diagrid

and structural glass form, is a considerable improvement over the monolithic roof consented in 2003. In this new arrangement, the listed elements are far more legible, both externally, and from within the new house.

4.03 The infilling of the bays on the south-east corner:

a) These bays in the south-east corner do not date from the original Basevi building, and indeed it is now considered that the whole of the south-east corner may have been added, or reconfigured, after Basevi died. The propping of the bays off columns contributes to this sense of something added on, as an after thought.

b) The bays were propped up off cast iron columns; spanning between these columns were timber bressumers, off which was supported the brickwork over. This arrangement, under any circumstances, is potentially highly unstable, and more so when utilising materials that are liable to degrade and rot, as is the case with timber and cast iron.

c) When the structure of the bays was opened up after the works commenced in 2003, it was discovered that the bressumers were completely rotten, and the tops of the cast iron columns were very corroded. Both elements had to be replaced in their entirety.

d) The structural advice at the time was that retention of the propped column and bressummer arrangement was not an advisable arrangement in modern terms, and the long-term stability of such an arrangement could not be guaranteed. We have been advised by the client's then Clerk of Works that this issue was discussed with the Council, and it was agreed as part of the general stabilisation of the brickwork throughout that an appropriate solution would be to extend the bays down to the basement, on new footings.

e) In their letter to Camden dated 21 April 2011, EH commented that the propped column arrangement of the bays should be reinstated, "*or a full justification including engineers calculations justifying their removal shall be submitted.*" This suggests that EH are aware that the arrangement of the bays whereby brickwork is propped off timber and cast iron has structural issues long-term.

f) Price & Myers are preparing a report on the remedial works to the bays in the south-east corner and this forms part of the pre-application submission to the LPA.

g) The applicant has now asked Price & Myers to revisit their review of the structure around the south-corner bays, and in relation to the concrete floors in this area.

h) P&M's conclusion in respect to the concrete floors is included with this second pre-application submission. P&M say that the new concrete floor in the south-east corner stabilises the bay projections in that area, which was one of the key intents, particularly given the unstable structural condition exposed to both the bays once opening up on site.

i) On the assumption that the concrete floor in this area has now provided stability to the two projecting bays, and with regard to the infilling of the bays at basement level, and, on a without prejudice basis, and in the interests of agreeing a final scope of works for all areas of the listed building, to allow the work to proceed on site, the applicant is proposing to remove the bay infills, and either reinstating the original columns, or providing alternative supports, subject to a detailed structural design.

j) The original window position on the east elevation at basement level will also be reinstated on the main line of that elevation.

4.04 The concrete floor in the south-east corner at ground floor

a) The replacement of the defective timber floor in the two rooms in the south-east corner formed part of the stabilisation work referred to in 4.04 above.

b) As has been stated elsewhere here, after the initial opening up at the commencement of the works, defective brickwork, defective and under-sized floor joists and rotten bressummers were exposed in the south-east corner around the bays. At the time the Existing House Tender Set (EHTS) was being developed, it was proposed to stabilise the south-east corner with a concrete floor; this proposal was included in the EHTS issued to, and discussed with, the LPA and English Heritage in 2004, with subsequent up-dates.

c) P&M give a summary of the structural role the concrete floor plays in this area, including the stability provided to the two projecting bays, and also the lateral restraint provided to the whole of the south-east corner of the building, including the perimeter walls.

d) The principal of concrete floors within the listed elements has already been accepted by the LPA, and was established with the consent granted on appeal for the new basement below the west side of the listed building, which extended 3m into the garden beyond the main west façade (excluding the bay).

e) Although this proposal was allowed on appeal, following a refusal of planning permission and Listed Building Consent by the LPA, the LPA were originally prepared to allow the new basement, provided it was contained within the footprint of the listed building – i.e., provided it did not extend beyond the west façade. The LPA were therefore prepared to allow a concrete floor in the main reception rooms, arguably the two most important rooms in the entire house.

f) In the event, the owner decided that he required the basement to be as proposed, and the matter went to appeal. At a site visit held with the Appeal Inspector and the LPA in early 2006, the Inspector, in a walk-around on site, saw the new concrete floors being installed elsewhere. In considering the appeal, his appeal decision[1] refers to the

[1] Appeal reference APP/X5210/A/05/1193175 dated 21 March 2006

there being "*…much physical disturbance to the building…*"[2] underway on site at the time of his visit, and that "*I have also taken account of the degree of physical change the building is now undergoing…*"

g) On this basis, we would assert that the concrete floor in this area has at least an in-principle approval from the LPA, and was accepted by the Appeal Inspector as being appropriate.

h) Nevertheless, the applicant did ask Price & Myers to consider the effect of any removal of the concrete slab. They conclude:

*"The steelwork supporting the bays that has been cast into the slab will require re-supporting by a similarly robust structure to basement level, likely requiring new foundations that may be liable to settlement and possibly cause movement damage to the existing building above.*

*Replacement of the eastern slab will require a new system of lateral restraint to be provided to the existing perimeter walls of the east and south facades, as the concrete behaves as a stiff horizontal diaphragm. Although creation of a new diaphragm may be achieved in the permanent case by a new floor structure, there is a significant risk of instability during demolition and in the temporary construction case and so the slab could not be removed without an alternate system of horizontal support to prevent movement of the exterior walls."*

i) Price & Myers make clear that a "*…a similarly robust structure..*" would be required as a replacement, and the risk in removing the concrete floor and installing a"*…a similarly robust structure..*" is for a substantial de-stablisation of the south-east corner of the building.

j) Building Control issues: we have now met with Albert Grant from Camden Building Control on site to discuss Mr Grant's office assessing the works under the Building Regulations. As part of this, we discussed the position with regard to any potential replacement of the concrete floor in the south-east corner. Mr Grant has asked for an appraisal to be submitted, setting out the works involved, together with any alternative diaphragm floor arrangement, to enable his office to consider this. He did, however, express concern at the damage that would be caused to the building in undertaking such work, and questioned why it should be necessary to replace one floor structure with another that serves exactly the same purpose.

k) The architectural historian Dan Cruickshank has indicated his support for the retention of the concrete floors, and has said he is happy to attend the next meeting with the LPA to discuss this.

4.05 The central circulation space and staircase

a) The reason why the LPA requires the removal of the concrete staircase between the basement and ground floor together with the removal of

[2] This work included the new concrete floor being installed in the south-east corner, as shown on the 2004 EHTS documents

associated and adjacent concrete floors is not understood. Demolition of these areas was allowed under the 2003 consent, and new staircases were shown on the consented drawings. Details of these were subsequently given in the 'Existing House Tender Set' issued in March 2004.

b) The requirement for the reinstatement of the original staircase from basement to ground floor is similarly not understood, as the removal of this staircase was allowed under the 2003 consent.

c) Also, as set out in 4.06 above, the LPA accepted the in-principle use of concrete for floors in the building.

4.06 The timber stair up to the second floor

a) The staircase in place at the time of the commencement of the works in 2003 was very dilapidated, and was comprised of more than element, installed at different times.

b) The staircase does not appear to have been original to the Basevi era: its location at the first floor landing disrupts what was clearly intended to be a symmetrically positioned high-level curved arch window to light the main staircase.

4.07 Internal blockwork walls: removal of blockwork walls under the following EN items will be undertaken as part of the reinstatement works:

4.08 External Windows and Doors:

a) These items of work are considered in detail by Paul Velluet in his Heritage Statement.

b) Reference should also be made to report on the joinery prepared by Luard Conservation Ltd: this examines in detail the condition of the windows and French doors, and established the extent to which these items were dilapidated and beyond reasonable repair.

4.09 External Windows and Doors - Finishes:

a) At the first pre-application meeting with officers in March 2013, the Conservation Area officer stated that Camden expected sash windows in conservation areas to be painted white, and questioned the historical appropriateness of a timber finish to the windows (or words to that effect).

b) The Heritage Statement refers to the appropriateness of a timber finish to the windows, taking account of the tendency at the time the building was commenced in the 1840's to recreate a timber effect on sashes windows with graining; it is therefore argued that the current finish on the windows is entirely appropriate and acceptable. The Heritage Consultant reiterated this view at the pre-application meeting.

c) There is some evidence of the original windows having been grained on some of sashes still stored on site.

d) To be clear as to the history of the finishes to the windows, samples were taken and analysed by Catherine Hassall, an expert in the analysis of historical finishes. Ms Hassall's report concluded that, for most of the 19th century the windows at The Elms were either grained to simulate hardwood, or they were painted black.

e) Ms Hassall's report forms part of this second pre-application submission.

f) As regards the assertion that Camden expects sash windows in conservation areas to be painted white, this has no basis in policy or historical precedent. We looked for an example of a residential building dating from a similar period in Camden where consent was given recently for external alterations, including to windows, and where the windows were not painted white.

g) A Grade II listed house at 56 Doughty Street London WC1N 2LL was granted planning permission and Listed Building Consent September 2009 by Camden for alterations and extensions including some new replacement windows, which were painted black, as were all the windows, as this was considered to be the historically correct finish to a house thought to have been constructed at the turn of the 19th century. The front elevation of 56 Doughty Street is shown at illustration 4.01

*Illustration 4.01 the front elevation of 56 Doughty Street London WC1N 2LL*

4.10 External Repairs:

a) The contractor who undertook this work, Pavehall plc, has confirmed the following:

"The stucco render restoration and renewal works were all carried in accordance with the attached approved specification:

***English Heritage Technical Publication – Practical Building Specification (Mortars, Renders & Plasters)***

***Mix Type A (Cement / Lime / Sand) ('Compo')***

***RC 1.1.5 cement, lime, sand***
***FC 1.1.6 cement, lime, sand***
***TC 1.2.9 cement, lime, sand***

The existing mouldings were retained and repaired locally *insitu* with reverse horse moulds to the existing profile.

The existing projecting band course and cill detail were all retained and locally repaired *insitu* to existing profile.

All new stucco was set to the existing profile and depth with Ashlar coursing to the original setting out of the retained fenestration.

The repair specification is also approved on the George Basevi / Thomas Cubitt portfolio buildings in Belgrave Square and Eaton Square."

b) The extract from English Heritage's Technical Publication (Gower, Aldershot 1998) referred to by Pavehall plc is attached here as Appendix IV.

c) It should be noted that the first of the two specifications under 'Type A' shown on the EH technical sheet has been used at The Elms, because that is the specification known to have been used on buildings in the Grosvenor Estate, where there are several buildings either designed or re-modelled by George Basevi.

4.11 External Rainwater Goods

a) The original rainwater goods on the building were a mixture of plastic and cast iron, all of which was very dilapidated, and this contributed to the overall deterioration of the exterior of the building.

b) The rainwater goods installed as part of the present works were aluminium heritage style profiles that are generally acceptable for conservation areas and listed buildings: the system used was the 'Heritage Cast Aluminium' manufactured by Alumasc.

c) The applicant is of the view that downpipes as installed are keeping with generally accepted practice elsewhere and are entirely acceptable.

d) However, on a without prejudice basis, and in the interests of reaching an agreement with the LPA on all the works going forward the applicant is proposing that all the aluminium gutters and DP's on the exterior of the building be replaced with spun cast iron rainwater goods – Alumasc, or similar approved.

4.12 Dormer windows at second floor: it is proposed to replace the sash windows currently installed in the dormers with HW casement windows to match elsewhere. The format for each window is a triple panel casement with central glazing bar, as shown on drawing no. 492/212.

4.13 The dual pitched roof on the south elevation:

a) As has been set out elsewhere here, the 2003 consent allowed for all the roofs to be replaced by a monolithic roof. Consequently, there can be no requirement to reinstate the small section of pitched roof on the south side, because its removal has consent.

b) The new tri-partite roof proposed in 2004 initially envisaged a short section of pitched roof between the original villa and the newly extended 'east wing'.

c) As part of the continual drive to refine the roof-scape, to allow the original villa form to be read as clearly as possible, probably for the first time since the 1840's, it was felt that the pitched roof compromised this intent, and this small section of roof was left as a flat roof, with a parapet.

d) This new arrangement not only allowed for the greatest legibility in external views, but it also created a legible form for the original villa when viewed internally, from the glazed Winter Garden.