

The Poplars, Montpelier Grove

Design and Access Statement

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1.0 Introduction

In April 2012, Edward Carter Design was appointed by the residents of The Poplars, Montpelier Grove to develop proposals for the extension of their block of flats. The residents of the building have been working together for some time to find a creative way to increase space in their currently overcrowded flats. Their space needs have changed over the last few years for various reasons including the arrival of new babies and changing lifestyles. While extra space is urgently needed, none of the residents wishes to leave The Poplars and this part of Kentish Town, from where they can easily reach their places of work, family and friends.

A planning application was originally submitted to London Borough of Camden in January 2013 under application reference number 2013/0325/P. Permission was sought to extend The Poplars building with an additional 90m² gross internal area between the four flats and a roof terrace accessed from the upper floor of the top storey flat. A decision notice dated 7 May 2013 was issued by Camden, giving the following reasons for refusal: 'The proposed extension, by reason of its height, size, bulk and detailed design, would not be subordinate and sympathetic to the host property, would be unduly prominent in the streetscene and would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the host building and wider area, contrary to policy CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy and policy DP24 (Securing high quality design) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework.'

The Poplars residents and the design team have reviewed all these comments and have revised the scheme to reflect the concerns raised. The original proposal was for an additional four storey structure that would have the same eaves height as the main building. This has now been reduced in plan area, height and massing to a three-storey extension with pitched roof, following advice from Camden Planning and to more closely reflect the borough's planning policies on the design of extensions while still providing additional space for each additional unit.

We see this as an exemplary project, which demonstrates how existing blocks of flats can be improved in a way that is economically and environmentally sustainable. The residents of The Poplars have worked together to agree a scheme that satisfies their requirements and makes best use of available space while meeting Camden's aspirations for high quality design and sensitive development.

Edward Carter Design is an architectural design and development consultancy established in London in 2009. The practice has been involved in commercial development projects as well as residential projects for individual owners. We enjoy collaborative working with our clients and, on this project, the evening meetings we have had with the group of residents have been useful for understanding the specific requirements of the users and looking together at proposals to produce the building needed.



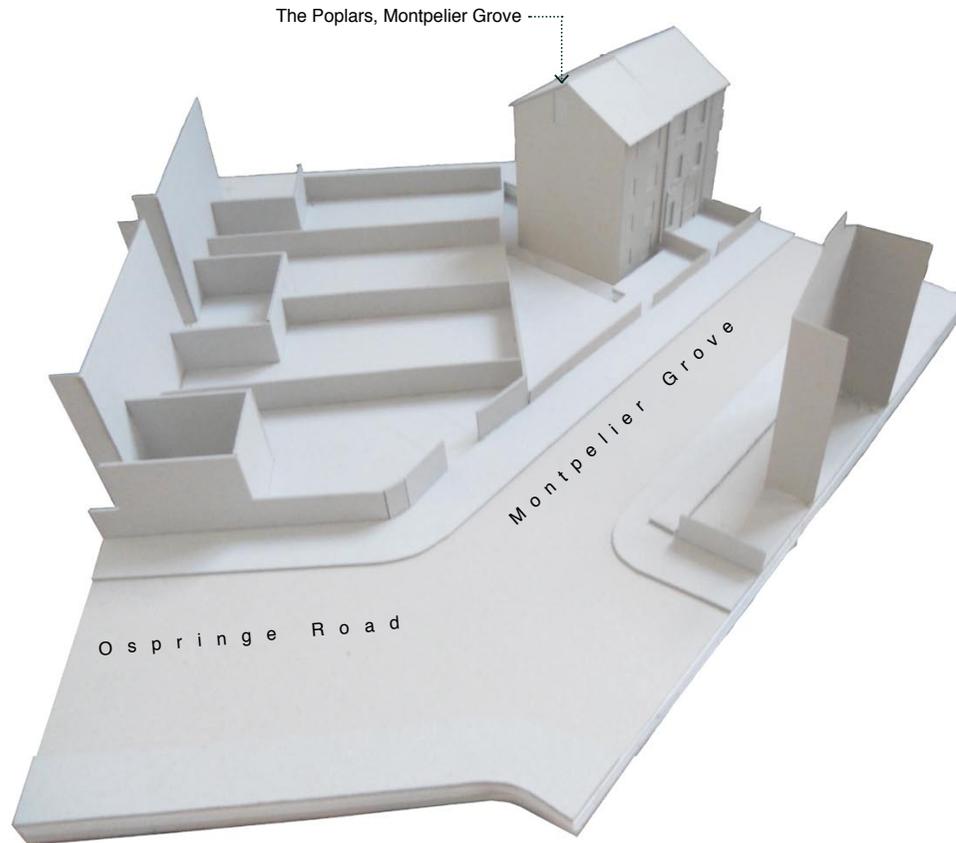
Aerial views of The Poplars at the end of Montpelier Grove terrace.

2.0 Existing building and site

The Poplars, Montpelier Grove is a four-story end of terrace building containing four flats. Planning permission for its construction was granted in 1960. The site is 111 M2 in area and the existing building contains 169 m2 of accommodation.

Few alterations have been made to the buildings since its construction, other than the conversion of the attic to provide additional accommodation to Flat 4 with new roof lights in 2006.

The entrance to The Poplars is located on Montpelier Grove. From the street, there are six steps down to access the entrance to the building, which is located below street level on the north facade of the building next to the garden.



Model of existing site showing relationship to neighbouring houses and gardens on Montpelier Grove, Ospringe Road and Brecknock Road



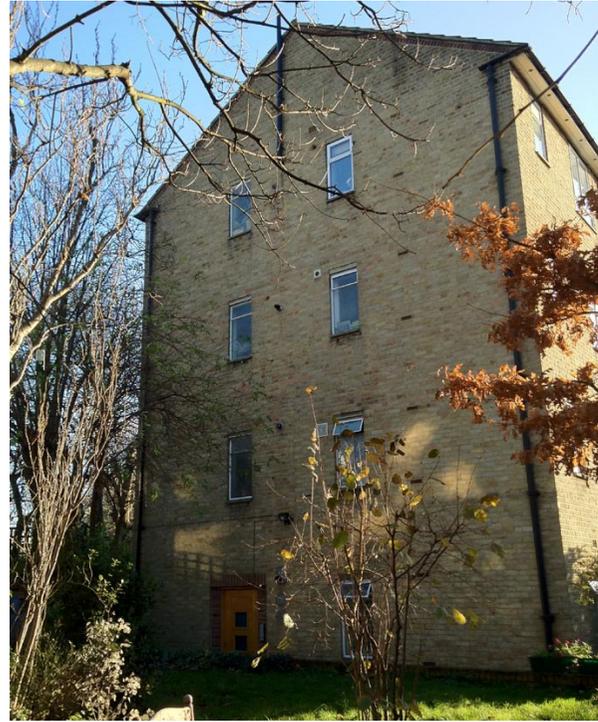
The Poplars building was designed to fit in as another house in the terrace, a brick building the same width as adjoining properties. It is clad in buff coloured brick and has a pitched roof consistent with its neighbours. Windows to the living rooms and kitchens of each flat are arranged in a pattern similar to the houses next door.



View of The Poplars and garden at the end of Montpelier Grove looking south east.



The west facade of The Poplars faces Montpelier Grove and follows the rhythm of the terrace in its scale and in the arrangement of windows to living spaces. The block is clad with yellow bricks to match the rest of the terrace, though the bricks of the Victorian terrace have weathered and stained to a darker colour.



The north facade of The Poplars faces the garden. It was designed almost as a rear facade and small windows to bathrooms and the stair well are located here. This facade is actually very prominent on the corner of Montpelier Grove and Ospringe Road.



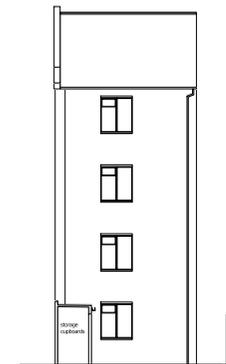
The existing bedroom windows located on the east facade facing the gardens of Brecknock Road. The original windows and doors are W20 Crittall windows with fine steel frames.



Measured survey of existing west elevation



Measured survey of existing north elevation



Measured survey of existing east elevation

3.0 Design principles and concepts behind the proposed development

3.1 London Plan and Camden Core Strategy

The proposals for this site have been informed, shaped and tested against relevant planning policies and guides (The London Plan, Camden Core Strategy and the Interim London Housing Design Guide) in order to achieve a proposal that contributes positively to the local and wider context, and offers a comfortable, safe and high quality place to live for residents.

The applicable policies of the London Plan and Camden Core Strategy are listed below together with our commentary in relation to this project.

London Plan (July 2011)

- 3.1 Ensuring equal life chances for all.
- 3.4 Optimising housing potential
- 3.5 Quality and design of housing developments
- 3.8 Housing choice
- 5.2 Minimising carbon dioxide emissions
- 5.3 Sustainable design and construction
- 5.10 Urban greening
- 5.11 Green roofs and development site environs.
- 6.9 Cycling
- 6.10 Walking
- 7.1 Building London's neighbourhoods and communities
- 7.2 An inclusive environment
- 7.4 Local character
- 7.5 Public realm
- 7.6 Architecture
- 7.19 Biodiversity and access to nature
- 8.2 Planning obligations

London Borough of Camden Core Strategy

- CS6 Providing quality homes
- CS13 Tackling climate change through promoting higher environmental standards.
- CS14 Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage.
- CS15 Protecting and improving our parks and open spaces and encouraging biodiversity
- CS18 Dealing with our waste and encouraging recycling

Camden Local Development Strategy

Throughout the design process we have referred to the Camden Development Policies which contribute towards delivering the Core Strategy by setting out detailed planning policies that the Council use when determining applications for planning permission in the borough. The key policies in relation to this application are:

DP5 Homes of different sizes

Policy DP5 sets out Camden's objective to create an increased number of 3-bedroom housing units, which are designated as high priority on the 'Dwelling Size Priorities Table'. In constructing additional bedrooms for each flat, this development would enable sub-standard units to be enlarged to be closer to current residential space standards. Increasing the size of these flats has a positive effect on the density of child-friendly housing in the Borough and will enable an improved quality of life for residents.

DP23 Water

The amount and rate of run-off and waste water entering the combined storm water and sewer network will be limited in this development by increasing the depth of soil and planting new trees in the garden, which was formerly a hard-standing area for car parking.

DP24 Securing high quality design

The extension to the Poplars will be of the highest standard of design. It will be appropriate to its context and will take opportunities to improve the character and quality of an area and the way that it is used by residents.

The development is designed not to undermine the existing uniformity of the street and respects existing patterns of development. The extension will be subordinate to the original building in terms of scale and situation. The new extension is set back from the building line on Montpelier Grove and below the existing eaves line. It is clad in a complementary brick to the existing building and new windows are fine steel windows similar to the existing Crit-tall windows. The Poplars site is unique on Montpelier Grove, formed by the geometry of the junction at Ospringe Road - it is at the end of the terrace so has different size and shape to other plots on the street.

DP25 Conserving Camden's heritage

The site of The Poplars is not located in a conservation area but we have designed the building in a way that is sensitive to the beautiful Victorian houses in the area.

DP26 Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours.

The Poplars residents have begun consulting with their neighbours to let them know what the proposal looks like and why they feel it is necessary to extend their property. We are proposing to improve the appearance of The Poplars building by making a good north facing elevation, which is a prominent facade on to the corner with Ospringe Road.

In considering construction systems for the new development, we are proposing to use a traditional brick-clad cavity wall system with timber framed roof structure which will not require a crane or complicated materials delivery arrangements, thereby limiting any nuisance to surrounding properties.

The design of the proposed extension means that it will be possible for occupiers to have access to their flats during construction i.e. the existing staircase access will be kept in place until the new stairs has been completed.

3.2 Camden Planning Guidance 1 Design

Chapter 4 Design - Extensions, alterations and conservatories

We set out below how the revised design for the side extension to The Poplars takes in to consideration the key aspects of Camden's guidance on design.

Alterations should always take into account the character and design of the property and its surroundings. Windows, doors and materials should complement the existing building:

New painted steel Crittall windows are proposed to complement the windows of the existing block of flats. These windows are an important part of the heritage of mid-20th century British architecture. Camden's planning policies state *'Where it is necessary to alter or replace windows that are original or in the style of the originals, they should be replaced like with like wherever possible in order to preserve the character of the property and the surrounding area. New windows should match the originals as closely as possible in terms of type, glazing patterns and proportions (including the shape, size and placement of glazing bars), opening method, materials and finishes, detailing and the overall size of the window opening.'*

Bricks for the facade will be carefully chosen to complement the colour and texture of the existing 1960s brick building and the Victorian clay bricks of the surrounding terraces. Brick is suitable for a residential housing block in this location because it will not require very much maintenance and as per Camden's guidance, *'Materials for alterations should weather well, so their ageing process contributes positively to the character of the building, and the site's wider context'*, as it weathers and ages it will become more similar to the brick houses in the area.

Extensions should be secondary to the building being extended:

The new extension will be three storeys tall with pitched roof to accommodate additional rooms for the top floor flat. It will be set back from the street and clearly secondary in terms of hierarchy to the existing building in line with Camden's design guidance on scale *'Extensions should be subordinate to the original building in terms of scale and situation unless the specific circumstances of the site, such as the context of the property or its particular design, would enable an exception to this approach.'*

In designing the new extension to The Poplars, we have closely followed Camden's recommendations on the design of extensions to ensure compliance with planning policy for this type of development. The proposed development will:

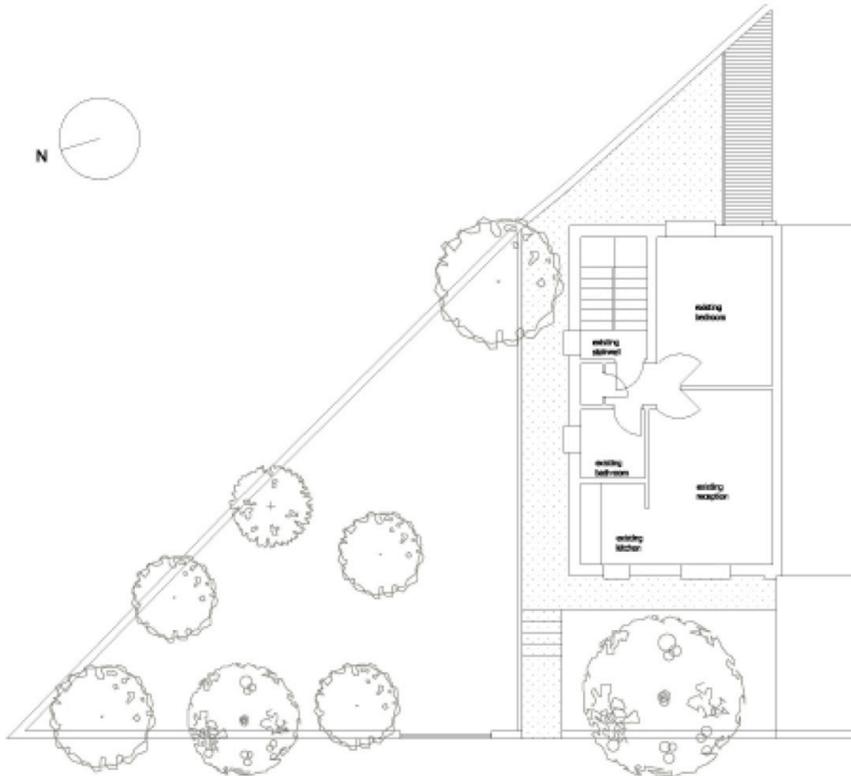
- be secondary to the building being extended, in terms of location, form, scale, proportions, dimensions and detailing;
- respect and preserve the original design and proportions of the building, including its architectural period and style;
- respect and preserve existing architectural features, such as projecting bays, decorative balconies or chimney stacks;

- respect and preserve the historic pattern and established townscape of the surrounding area, including the ratio of built to unbuilt space;
- not cause a loss of amenity to adjacent properties with regard to sunlight, daylight, outlook, overshadowing, light pollution/spillage, privacy/overlooking, and sense of enclosure;
- allow for the retention of a reasonable sized garden; and
- retain the open character of existing natural landscaping and garden amenity, including that of neighbouring properties, proportionate to that of the surrounding area.

4.0 Intended use of the development

The building will continue in residential use - the extension will improve living and access arrangements. The flats are currently overcrowded - each of the apartments currently accommodates one bedroom, a kitchen, living room, bathroom and boiler room cupboard. Refer to existing plan drawings included as part of this submission for details.

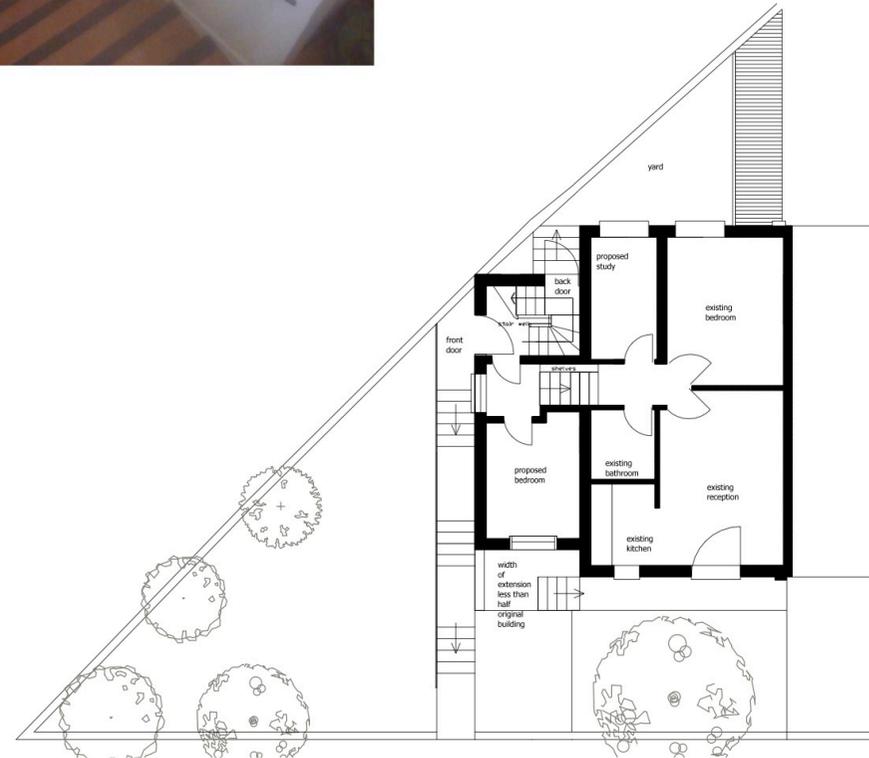
The drawings below illustrate the current use of the building and how this can be improved by extending. We propose to increase the size of each of the four flats in the building by adding an additional bedroom and re-using the stair core so that it can be used as a child's bedroom or study room.



Typical existing floor plan. At 36 m2, the area of each flat is significantly below current London Plan / London Housing design guide space standards.



The existing staircase is narrow and makes accessing the flats difficult for residents and visitors



Typical proposed new floor plan. There will be an improved stair case arrangement that is spatially more generous and that has risers that are in accordance with Lifetime Homes standards. The new double bedroom's size is in line with London Plan / London Housing Design guide. Making more space in each flat increases its potential flexibility. Residents can have different arrangements of furniture and uses to suit their individual requirements i.e. the existing bedroom could be used as an extension of the living area the flats was to be occupied by a family of three.

6.0 Layout of the proposed development

Daylight and avoidance of overlooking

We have shaped the proposed extension so that it would not have an adverse impact on day lighting to neighbouring properties. Should a detailed report on adequacy of daylight and sunlight levels to neighbouring properties be required, we would request that this is be made a condition of planning permission.

The rooms of the proposed new extension are laid out to maximise sunlight to habitable rooms. This arrangement also allows for the avoidance of any potential overlooking problems. New bedrooms are oriented towards the street facing the blind side elevation of No. 1 Ospringe Road. Windows at the rear of The Poplars will be a minimum of 18m from neighbouring properties in line with requirements of 'Camden Planning Guidance 6' for windows of habitable rooms that face each other.

The privacy of both new and existing dwelling spaces will be protected using obscure glass windows where necessary.



Existing garden at The Poplars. The low brick wall separates the entrance from the garden. This situation will be improved by the new entrance arrangement, making the garden more accessible.

7.0 Landscaping of shared spaces of the development

In line with the proposed contextually sensitive attitude to the design of the extension, a number of landscape and planting improvements are proposed as part of this scheme. There is currently a brick wall between the entrance to the Poplars and the garden area. We are proposing to make the garden more accessible as it will be level with the entrance rather than having to climb over the wall as present. A new more accessible bin store is also included as part of improvements to the garden.

The extension has been designed so that no existing trees would be removed.

New planting of Robinia pseudo Frisia Acacia tree on the boundary with Montpelier Grove to help add to the quiet, domestic nature of these streets. This species has pale green foliage that is light reflective and suitable next to the windows of the extension.



Robinia Pseudo Acacia foliage, suitable for domestic garden situations

8.0 Appearance and scale of the proposed development

General arrangement of facades:

The three facades of the proposed extension are designed to highlight the site's location between Montpellier Grove and Ospringe Road, as well as contributing to the setting of the shared garden.

The west facade is understood as a 'street facade' and picks up on the rhythm of windows in the Victorian terraced houses. This facade is set back from the main building and is clad with brick with large metal frame windows to the new bedrooms. At ground floor there are openable 'french' doors with painted fine metal frames, similar to the original Crittall windows of the existing Poplars buildings. The new double doors will have little impact on the existing street elevation since they are below ground level and concealed behind existing trees and shrubs but will allow the occupants of Flat 1 to have a more direct relationship and sense of ownership over the front garden on to the street.

The north facade faces the garden. There are at second and third floor level to the new internal lobbies. The glass in these windows can be translucent so there will be no increase in overlooking of neighbouring properties. At ground floor, the main entrance to the building has a painted metal door and is sheltered by a canopy. This specific treatment of openings at ground floor gives a sense of it being the base of the building, just as the ground floor is signified through use of different materials in the Victorian houses next door. The eaves height on the north facade is a storey lower than the parapet height of the main building. The pitched roof, which contains additional accommodation for the top storey flat, will be clad with natural slates.

The east facade has windows to new single bedroom and existing double bedroom. Access to the storage sheds at the rear will be maintained through the entrance hall.



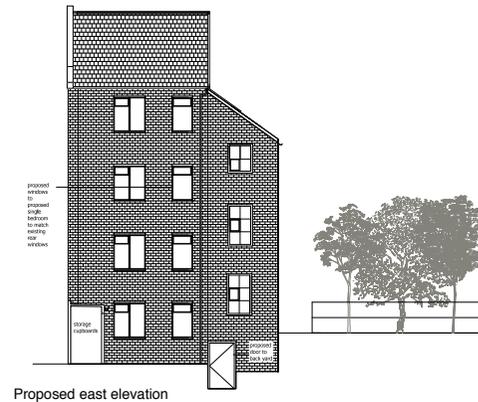
View of model showing north and west facades of proposed new extension. The viewpoint is from outside No. 2-4 Ospringe Road.



Proposed west elevation



Proposed north elevation



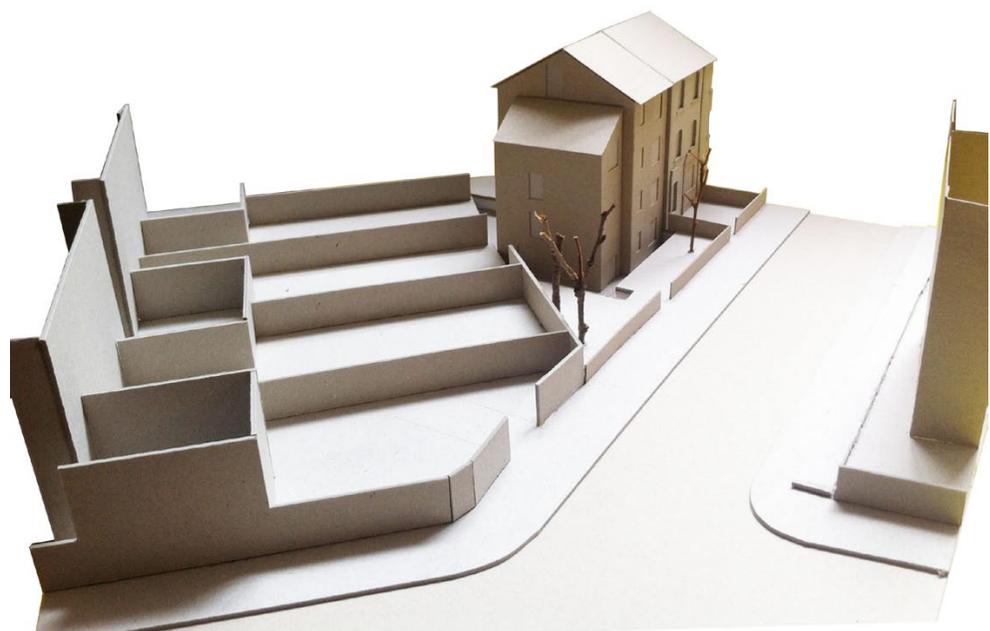
Proposed east elevation

Precedents - brick extensions:

We have looked at a number of other extension projects in considering cladding materials and architectural languages that are suitable in the context of Victorian London brick houses. We propose to clad the new extension in brick. The colour and texture of the brick will be complementary to the existing Poplars building and the surrounding Victorian terraces.

Influence of the local context:

The appearance of the new extension is designed to be appropriate in this context. We have looked carefully at the surrounding buildings and landscapes and made study models to test proposals for this site. The proposed elevations pick up on details of nearby buildings.



Throughout the design process, proposals have been developed in the context of surrounding buildings and tested through models.



End of terrace house on the corner of Dunollie Road and Montpelier Grove. This language of windows on the end-of-terrace gable elevation is picked up on the proposed north facade.



New brick work will be selected to be suitable next to the existing Poplars building and the terraced houses on Montpelier Grove.



The proposed extension will have a similar form to this apartment building extension in Shoreditch and a similar relationship to the main building in terms of height.



Brick extension to terrace on Old Nichol Street, Shoreditch.