

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT TO ACCOMPANY PLANNING APPLICATION

7 CHALCOT SQUARE, LONDON, NW1 8YB.

SITE & SURROUNDINGS

The site is located on the south west side of Chalcot Square between Sharpleshall Street and Fitzroy Road within the Primrose Hill conservation area. The subject property is situated towards the middle of a terrace of eleven houses and is 5 storeys high. One storey is at lower ground floor level whilst the roof is formed of a true mansard clad in slate with 2 dormers on frontage and 1 dormer to the rear. According to planning records the buildings were listed Grade II on May 14th 1974 and are described as stucco with rusticated ground floors, mostly painted. In elevation they are typified at ground floor level by Doric stucco porticoes to doorways with cornice-heads, fanlights, side lights and panelled doors. Single tripartite sashes to ground floors complete this level. First and second floor levels are typified by 3 lugged architrave sashes with margin glazing. The first floor sashes are joined by a continuous cornice with keystones above, console-brackets between and pediments over the central windows. The second floor sashes, though smaller, are similar with central keystones projecting into the architrave above. At roof level there are 2 lead clad dormers set within the mansard roof behind a parapet gutter with decorative stone corning on frontage.

THE SURROUNDING AREA

Although the immediate area is dominated by late Georgian and early Victorian architecture there is a diversity of styles in the surrounding area which, in my opinion, enriches rather than detracts from the overall visual impact which is one of cohesion and broad conformity.

ACCESS

As this is an existing building there has been no opportunity for conversion for those with disabilities. The front path however has a shallow ramp leading to the main entrance which has only four stairs in order to reach the ground floor therefore the ambulant disabled can reasonably gain access. The ground floor also has w.c. provision whilst the staircase to the first floor has a relatively shallow pitch thus allowing internal manoeuvrability once access is gained.

PARKING

There are no parking issues.

THE PROPOSAL

Overall the property, in its current condition, could only be described as tired and requiring updating. Through the proposed works it is our intention to bring the property up to 21st century living standards, as enjoyed by most residents throughout the Borough, whilst respecting the historic listing and surrounding conservation area. Through working with the Authority's planning and conservation officers, Neil Zaayman and Charlie Rose, to whom we are grateful for their constructive input the proposals can be set out as follows:

Third Floor:

Internal remodelling forming 2 no single bedrooms to the front and guest bedroom to the rear. Removal of rear dormer and installation 2 no lead clad dormers into existing mansard.

Bedrooms 2 & 3, being children's rooms would share access to a newly formed common bathroom whilst bedroom 4 would have private access to an en suite shower room. The proposed rear dormers would replace the existing unsightly large dormer to provide a much more balanced and elegant rear elevation in keeping with the surrounding properties.

Second Floor:

Rationalisation of existing layout.

At present the rear of the property is split into an en suite bathroom and dressing room which can be accessed from the master bedroom but also from the landing. This has clearly been poorly designed and is unsatisfactory from a privacy point of view. It is our intention to block the landing access to a new larger en suite bathroom, accessed only from the master bedroom, whilst retaining the door on the landing side. The existing door will be carefully covered on the bathroom side should future occupiers wish to restore this layout.

First Floor:

No proposed alterations.

Ground Floor:

Since the majority of the proposals take place on the ground and lower ground floor levels the following shall be numbered and, for clarity, be dealt with in corresponding order.

1: Internal remodelling to include formation of new wc and cloakroom to existing rear addition.

At present the rear addition contains a small shower room and a spiral staircase leading to the lower ground floor. The shower room is superfluous to requirements however a wc will be formed elsewhere in this area as this is considered necessary to the ground floor layout. The existing spiral staircase has been poorly located as it lands in a dead area below, wasting space that could otherwise be effectively used.

2: Removal of existing spiral staircase and installation of new stairs from ground to lower ground floor level.

New stairs will be formed under the existing thereby restoring the original historic layout whilst facilitating improved circulation.

3: Replacement of doors and transom lights to existing kitchen with new softwood timber doors and transoms to match existing elevation throughout.

The replacement doors will match the style of sash windows used predominantly throughout the rear elevation.

4: Removal of existing window to rear addition and installation of new door in connection with erection of new wrought iron deck and stairs to facilitate garden access.

As the existing deck and stairs are being replaced (see 5 below) rear garden access from the ground floor has been cut off. Replacing the existing casement window with a new door to match the aforementioned will enhance the elevation whilst allowing more subtle and private access to this area. A new wrought iron deck and stairs are proposed, set against the existing high level party wall, to further complement the historical context.

5: Removal of existing concrete deck and timber stairs and installation of new steel and timber deck.

The current deck is formed of a pre-cast concrete slab with obscure Luxcrete paving lights. A timber balustrade and handrail surround the perimeter while timber stairs allow access to the garden. These elements are outdated, unsafe and clearly do not compliment the property thus it is our intention to install a new steel and timber deck and remove the stairs. Access to the garden from this level will now be via the method as described in point 4 above. A small area of the boundary wall will need to be raised to accommodate the proposal which will provide enhanced privacy to the neighbouring property.

6: Finally, on this level, it is our intention to block external access to the current dining area whilst retaining the door on the entrance hall side. Once again the door will be carefully covered on the kitchen side should future occupiers wish to restore the layout. A new kitchen will be installed at the front of the property designed to avoid fouling the existing window facing Chalcot Square.

Lower Ground Floor:

7: Installation of new sliding folding doors with glazed roof over existing rear lightwell and excavation of part rear garden to provide new patio, planting beds and stairs.

A new set of sliding folding doors and glazed roof, set back from the rear addition, will be installed over the rear lightwell to form a new playroom. Beyond this the garden will be excavated some 2.5 metres from the rear addition to form a new patio area. The doors and glazed roof will provide much needed light into this already dark space while the patio and planting will give a softened edge to this urban landscape.

8: Removal of rear and side walls to rear lightwell.

In connection with item 7 above, it is proposed to remove the rear and side walls around the rear lightwell to form a new music room. The new doors and glazed roof will help to light this space while the removal of the walls will provide an unobstructed area that has little impact on the rear elevation.

9: Internal remodelling to main body of property to provide staff accommodation.

The current layout bears the hallmarks of being a basement flat at some point in the past, poorly arranged and unsuitable to the current proposals. Our intention is to provide a staff bedroom with associated facilities whilst maintaining a private entrance from the front lightwell.

10: Replacement of existing window to proposed staff bedroom.

The current window at this level is a large seventies style casement which, although not visible from street level, denigrates the historic elevation. Our intention is to replace it with softwood timber sliding box sashes to match those above at ground floor level.

11: Formation of and renovation to vaults under front garden.

As with most vaults attached to this type of property they have been left to the mercy of the elements and have consequently succumbed to dampness and degradation. It is our intention to bring these back into use by employing modern construction methods. A tanking system by John Newton & Co, or similar approved, will be installed to facilitate this resulting in a new storage area being formed under the main path with a plant area adjacent and another deeper storage area beside the external stairs to the lower ground floor entrance.

FENESTRATION

As indicated at the beginning and throughout this statement it is our intention to preserve and restore the historic elements during the course of the refurbishment whilst bringing the property up to 21st century living standards. The fenestration is simple, uncluttered and care has been taken to integrate the proposal into the body of the overall property. Architectural interventions are modest in scale and the majority of details are traditional incorporating a familiar palette of materials sympathetic to the property.

CONCLUSION

I am of the opinion that this application and accompanying documentation addresses the requirements of the Authority. The report commissioned and written by Purcell highlights the improvement or the minor impact we are aiming to make to the property including the window to the front at lower ground floor, the side extension and the opening up of the lower ground floor, the re-opening up of the second floor room to the rear. In many parts we are proposing to reinstate the historic form of the building, including the removal of the spiral staircase on the ground floor, and likewise we are proposing to make changes which are reversible in the future such as closing off doors. This is summed up when they report that in their view the overall impact upon the heritage asset is considered to be slight.

We have aimed to provide a proposal that is conservative, is in keeping with the character of the listing and conservation area and further enhances the quality of the environment. For all of the above reasons, it is requested that planning permission be granted for the proposal.