

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:	09/05/2012
		N/A		Consultation Expiry Date:	19/04/2012
Officer			Application Number		
John Sheehy			2012/1401/P		
Application Address			Drawing Numbers		
15 Prince Albert Road London NW1 7SR			Refer to draft decision notice		
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature		
Proposal					
Erection of a part single-storey, part two-storey side extension at ground and lower ground floor levels involving additional excavation, following demolition of existing garden room, and alterations to windows/doors on west elevation and associated landscaping, all in connection with the existing dwellinghouse.					
Recommendation:		Refuse Planning permission and Listed Building Consent			
Application Type:		Householder Application			

Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:	Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:						
Consultations						
Adjoining Occupiers:	No. notified	17	No. of responses No. electronic	4 3	No. of objections	4
Summary of consultation responses:	<p>Site and Press Notices displayed for 3 weeks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed two storey extension to the side of no 15 is wholly inappropriate to the shape and architecture of the grade 2 listed house. It bears no resonance with its existing nineteenth century style. It will gravely affect the view from nos. 31 and 33 Regent's Park Road; Side extension to canal not in keeping with prevailing design, very contemporary and will not reference Nash design; Two-storey side extension has no cornicing, shapes etc, does not pick up on prevailing design; Will spoil views from canal bridges, Prince Albert Road and Regent's Park Road, plus the view from the canal towpath; Side windows on west façade will destroy the simple lines of the building; Loss of sunlight and daylight to 31 and 33 Regent's Park Road and The proposed large plate glass windows to the rear will compromise the privacy of both these properties at 1st floor and ground level. A considerable diminution of the green space in 15 Albert Rd's unusually large garden; Considerable impact on character and appearance of the Conservation Area; Proposal would block long-established views of Regents Park for residents of 31 and 33 Regents Park Road; Something sympathetic could be designed which increases the useable floor area of No 15 Prince Albert Road but does not conflict with tradition and green space. 					
CAAC/Local groups comments:	<p>Primrose Hill CAAC strong objection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main issues are the impact of the proposals on the character and appearance of the conservation area, their effect on the Listed Building no. 15 Prince Albert Road itself, their effect on the setting of St Mark's Church, which is located directly opposite the application site, also Listed; The major significance of this location in the conservation area is formally recognized in several parts of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement, formally adopted by the Council after full consultation and with strong local support, and currently part of the LDF. The application site forms an important element in the stretch of the Regent's Canal which is at this point characterized by the dominance of the varied banks and of the planting on both sides. This is formally recognized in the designation of the Canal as a Public Open Space, a Site of Nature Conservation Importance, and as part of the Green Chain. (Statement p. 11); The visual importance of the Canal at this point is of special significance. As the Statement notes '... a number of buildings are designed to appear attractive when viewed from the Canal with applied decoration to rear elevations. Many side and back gardens face onto the Canal ... forming a long green corridor through the Conservation Area.' (p. 11); Views along the Canal are specifically recognized (p. 12), while the role of the Canal as part of the landscape of St Mark's Square, and of the setting of St Mark's Church is also formally recognized, including the formal statement of significance about the churchyard, which lies directly opposite the application site. Recognizing the relation to the Canal, the Statement records 'The yard is a peaceful green space that links well to the surrounding garden spaces to give the square a predominantly green character.' We would add that the churchyard and its gardens are publicly accessible and provide important views, including views across the Canal of the application site. These views are also important because they are characteristic of both sides of the Canal at this point. Public views are also 					

of great importance from the canal towpath, both public and designated as Public Open Space;

- The Committee's advice is that the proposals would do significant harm to the landscape as formally recognized as part of the conservation area and to the setting of the Listed Buildings;
- It is in these views from the publicly accessible churchyard and the towpath across the Canal that the proposals are most harmful. They would introduce alien and dominant built forms into the landscape, diminishing and degrading the sense of green, informal, landscape character when seen from the public space. The dominance of the landscape is made clear in the side elevation drawing (260 PD021) where the 'garden room' is shown to be a double height construction, massive in comparison with the human scale, unlike a traditional garden building, subordinate to its setting. The 'garden room' would replace the very modest present building, which is low with a horizontal emphasis, with an abrupt verticality intruding into the green landscape. It is mirrored, and its damaging effect reinforced, by the two-storey side extension to the house which is excessive in mass and height in terms of the landscape and the transition between the landscape and the Listed House;
- These harmful intrusions would also harm the existing balance between the 2 sides of the Canal, both parts of which form elements of the setting of the Listed Church;
- We are also concerned that the extent of paving and built construction in the garden area is excessive, both in ecological terms, but especially in terms of diminishing the sense of informal green space;
- The proposed two-storey side extension is harmful to the special significance of the Listed Building, which in this case must include its location within its setting. The side elevation drawings (260 PD018 and PD021) show clearly how it would diminish the finely detailed forms of the existing side elevation;
- The proposals do serious harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area: they certainly neither preserve nor enhance it. They are contrary to Camden's Core Strategy, to the LDF and to its supporting policy guidance. There is no counterbalancing public benefit which might outweigh this harm.

Site Description

A large site located on the northern side of Prince Albert Road containing a semi-detached villa dating from the mid 19th century which is in use as a dwellinghouse. The house has views to Regents Park to the south. The site has a large side garden on its western side which slopes down to the Regents Canal. There is a small pavilion building between the side of the main building and the canal.

The application building is Grade II listed and forms part of a group of related detached houses. The house forms a semi-detached pair with no.14, having an irregular façade of 3 storeys with a basement and attics. The building is stucco fronted with a corner tower.

The Grade II listed St Mark's church is located on the western side of the canal. The site is located in Primrose Hill Conservation Area. The canal is designated as public open space

Relevant History

September 1985 Planning permission and listed building consent granted for External alterations including the construction of a rear extension together with alterations to the boundary wall fronting Prince Albert Road including new openings and the construction of new means of access, ref. 8500711.

September 1986 Planning permission and listed building consent granted for the construction of a pavilion with terrace and the erection of a pergola in the side garden, refs. 8600831 and 8670177.

December 1988 Planning permission and listed building consent granted for Construction of glazed link between main house and garden pavilion as an amendment to the scheme approved for the construction of a pavilion with terrace and the erection of a pergola, refs. 8802404 and 8870367.

Relevant policies

LDF Core Strategy and Development Policies

CS5 Managing the impact of growth and development

CS14 Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage

CS15 Protecting and improving our parks and open spaces and encouraging biodiversity

DP21 Development Connecting to the Highway Network

DP22 Promoting sustainable design and construction

DP23 Water

DP24 Securing high quality design

DP25 Conserving Camden's Heritage

DP26 Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours

DP27 Basements and Lightwells

Camden Planning Guidance 2011

Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement

National Planning Policy Framework

London Plan 2011

Assessment

Proposal: erection of a part single-storey, part two-storey side extension at ground and lower ground floor levels involving additional excavation, following demolition of existing garden room, and alterations to windows/doors on west elevation and associated landscaping, all in connection with the existing dwellinghouse.

Assessment

The principal considerations material to the determination of this application are:

- impact on the special architectural and historic character of the listed building and on the character and appearance of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area;
- impact of basement excavation;
- impact on neighbour amenity; and
- impact on trees.

Impact on the listed building and on the character and appearance of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area

Background

The Council's design policies are aimed at achieving the highest standard of design in all developments, including where alterations and extensions to existing buildings are proposed. The following considerations contained within policy DP24 are relevant to the application:

- development should consider the character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings;
- development should consider the character and proportions of the existing building, where extensions and alterations are proposed;
- developments should consider the quality of materials to be used.

Policy DP25 'Conserving Camden's Heritage' states that within Conservation Areas, the Council will only grant permission for development that preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Policy DP25 also states that the Council will only grant permission for alterations to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building.

Site and context

The context of the building is of high historic and architectural significance. To the west, the Regent's Canal runs directly adjacent to the site, running under the Water Meeting Bridge and widening to form the Cumberland Basin. Further to the west and on the opposite bank of the canal is the Grade II listed St Mark's Church. Views are available through the site from Prince Albert Road to the Grade II listed Grafton Bridge beyond, with the terrace of Grade II listed buildings at 5-11 St Mark's Square and the rear of the mid 19th century villas at 29-33 Regent's Park Road in the background. The site is also located within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area.

The group of listed buildings at nos. 1-15 Prince Albert Road share similarities of age, scale and architectural character. However, whilst its neighbours are relatively closely spaced, with side elevations that are less prominent within the streetscene, no.15 is atypical in that its side garden is wider and of a much more open quality. Furthermore, the canal, whilst not visible in views from the front of the building, creates a sense of spaciousness to the side of the building and affords views into the site from the towpath. As a consequence of its unique position, the flank wall of the building is highly visible from Prince Albert Road, St Mark's Bridge across the canal to the SW, the canal towpath to the west of the site, the churchyard of St Marks Church and from Grafton Bridge which crosses the canal to the NW of the site.

The Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement (2000) has several relevant paragraphs:

Page 11 *"The canal is a significant feature of the Conservation Area and has been accommodated well in the layout and planning of the estate. For example, a number of buildings are designed to appear attractive when viewed from the canal....Many side and back gardens face onto the canal and have numerous mature trees, forming a long green corridor through the Conservation Area."*

Policy PH27 – *"Extensions should be in harmony with the original form and character of the house and the historic pattern of extensions within the terrace or group of buildings. The acceptability of larger extensions depends on the particular site and circumstances."*

Policy PH29 – *"Side extensions will not be acceptable where they are unduly prominent, unbalance the composition of a building group, or where they compromise gaps between buildings through which views are afforded of other properties, rear gardens, mature trees, or the Regent's Canal."*

External works

The key element in this scheme is the proposal to extend the property to the side at both basement and ground floor levels. At present there is a garden room to the SW of the site, adjacent to the boundary with the canal. This was constructed in 1986 and is a modest single storey structure, of painted stucco with a slate clad pitched roof. It is proposed to demolish this ancillary building and extend the property at basement level, encompassing some of the footprint of the former garden room and linking back to the main building. I have no objection in principle to this element of the scheme. Although the basement extension is relatively large in views from the front it would be concealed within the gradient of the garden, which slopes steeply back from

Prince Albert Road and towards the canal – the high boundary wall to the front would also restrict views of it. The basement accommodation would be externally expressed with fenestration along its northern elevation. However, this glazing is set behind timber slats and overall the extension would be relatively unobtrusive and only visible from elevated vantage points outside the site. Landscaping would be reinstated to the roof of the basement extension thus further minimising its impact. Adjacent to the main building is a more conventional basement extension, with masonry walls and glazing. However, once again this would not be visible in views from the front of the building, either within or outside the site. When viewed from the rear the extension would be sited at a sufficiently low level and would not be harmful given the overall height and scale of the listed building.

Concerns are raised regarding the appearance of the western end of the basement extension, adjacent to the site boundary with the canal. This element would be primarily glazed, and due to the topography of the garden, more exposed both from within the site and from the canal towpath. At present the garden room's pitched roof and traditional appearance allow it to blend into its verdant garden and canal setting, as well as its surrounding historic context. By contrast, although the proposed extension would be lower in height overall, its rectilinear profile, high proportion of glazing and contemporary design would result in a more prominent and jarring structure, intruding into the green and informal character of the garden and adjoining canal banks. Revisions to the design of this part of the extension could help to ameliorate this impact and would also improve views of the structure from the Water Meeting Bridge on Prince Albert Road where the high front boundary wall turns to follow the canal and reduces rapidly in height.

It is also proposed to extend the building to the side at ground floor level. In my view this element of the scheme is unacceptable in principle. Several other properties within the group along Prince Albert Road have been extended in similar locations with no detrimental impact on the host building. However, this building has a unique context, with a particularly prominent flank elevation, unusual sense of spaciousness around the building and long distance public views of all its elevations. When viewed from the front, the ground floor element of the scheme would be clearly visible above the high front boundary wall and its contemporary appearance would appear discordant – the other ground floor side extensions within the group are all of a traditional character. From the side and the rear the extension would appear as a two storey addition. Whilst the extent of glazing may be appropriate for a 'garden room' that sits comfortably within its setting, when applied to a structure on this scale the large panes of glass (particularly on the side elevation where they run the full height of the extension) contributes to its over dominance and visual intrusiveness. In views from the canal towpath, the impression of excessive bulk would detract from the green and spacious garden setting of the listed building and intrude into this sensitive historic environment. Consequently, the proposal is considered to harm the significance of the listed building which is at least in part derived from its setting and relationship with the surrounding built context. As a consequence, this would also harm the character and appearance of this part of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paras 132, 134 and 137 are particularly relevant. Para 134 is clear that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Furthermore, para 137 outlines that proposals that preserve those elements of the setting of a heritage asset that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably. Given that there are few demonstrable wider public benefits accruing from this application and that the proposal is considered to detract from the significance of the listed building as demonstrated above, the application is not considered to comply with the NPPF. Furthermore, given the harm to the external appearance of the listed building and its failure to preserve and enhance the conservation area, the scheme also fails to comply with policies CS14, DP25 and DP25 of the LDF.

It is also proposed to introduce a window at 1st floor level into the side elevation of the building, replicating the balcony and cast iron railings from the front elevation. In my view this would detract from the original character of the flank elevation, the legibility of which would be undermined by the incorporation of fenestration. Whilst windows were inserted into the flank wall at 3rd floor level in 1985, these sit comfortably as part of the tower feature which projects above cornice level. It is worth noting that no.6 has a similar flank elevation arrangement. Furthermore, the continuation of the balcony and railings round onto the side elevation would appear incongruous given that these features are normally associated with the front elevation of a building.

Internal alterations

Nos. 14 and 15 were converted into flats, including lateral conversion through the party wall, in the mid 20th century. The staircase was removed from no.15 and a corridor inserted through the rear rooms. In 1985 the two houses were restored to separate single family dwellings, with significant work to the fabric and layout of

the building. Given the history of internal alterations, the proposed works are considered relatively minor in scope and are in keeping with the overall internal aesthetic quality of the listed building. Officers would not be supportive of is the proposed glass balustrade to the top of the newly configured ground to basement staircase which would appear incongruous given the harmonious internal historic appearance of the building.

Impact on Neighbour amenity

The application building and its neighbours are located on large plots and, while they are substantial properties, they are generously spaced. The application property has no immediate neighbours to the front or to the western side. The proposed side extension would be on the western side of the building and would be lower and narrower than the house; it would not project beyond the front or rear building line.

Given the layout and spacing of the properties on this site and neighbouring sites there would be no impact on neighbouring occupiers in terms of loss of sunlight, daylight or privacy, or light pollution.

Neighbours residing in properties on Regents Parks Road raised concerns that the proposal would impact harmfully on views of Regents Park from the upper floors of their properties. While this concern is recognised, views of the park would not be completely eliminated and some views of the Park would be retained. On the basis that these properties would continue to enjoy good outlook onto gardens and the Regents Canal it would not be reasonable or justifiable to refuse the application on the basis of the impact of these views.

The application is consistent with policies CS5 and DP26.

Structural and groundwater considerations

In order to respond to the requirements of policy DP27 the application documents include the following

- Basement Impact Assessment by Milk Consultants dated March 2012.

This includes:

- Site investigations (soil and water); and
- Construction methodology.

The Site Investigation Report refers to a borehole investigation (x 1), window sampler borehole investigations (x2) which were carried out within the site as well as trial pit investigations (x4).

The borehole investigation was to a depth of 25m.

The window-sampler boreholes were to depth of 4.8m and 6m

These invasive investigations were to a depth greater than the deepest point of the proposed excavation.

Samples gathered as part of these investigations were subjected to laboratory testing. The results of this testing demonstrate that the soil is made up of a layer of made ground between 1 - 2.8m in depth, beneath which is a layer of clay. The clay becomes fissured at ca. 10m depth and claystone was encountered at depths of 10.4m and 13.5m. The highest level at which groundwater was found was at a depth of 2.7m.

Map 5 of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy does not identify Prince Albert Road or the immediately surrounding area as being within an area with potential to be at risk of surface water flooding. A report in 2003 to the Council Floods Scrutiny Panels states that the street did not flood in 1975 or 2002, the two most recent incidents of substantial flooding.

The proposed excavation is limited to a single level of basement accommodation within the side garden, much of which is already excavated - the proposed excavated area would not be beneath any existing buildings.

The survey information and analysis provided in the Basement Impact Assessment is sufficiently detailed to demonstrate that any impact of the additional excavation on stability of local buildings and the water environment would be limited and controllable within the bounds of the proposals. Overall, the proposal is acceptable in terms of DP27.

Trees

A Tree Survey and Arboricultural Method Statement submitted with the application indicates that the all but one of the trees on site are to be retained and protected. The tree protection plan is in line with BS5837:2012 and is therefore acceptable. The tree which is scheduled for removal has low visibility from the public realm and should not represent a constraint on the development. If it was recommended to grant permission a condition would be added requiring photographic evidence that the tree protection has been implemented prior to the commencement of works on site.

The proposal allows the retention of an acceptable amount of existing soft landscaping however details of hard and soft landscaping are vague and if it was recommended to grant permission details of hard and soft landscaping would be conditioned.

Recommendation: refuse permission/ listed building consent.

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