

Ossulston Estate

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Introduction

In the London area the switch from terrestrial to digital TV transmissions is scheduled to take place in the year 2012. To meet its obligations to its tenants, the London Borough of Camden has embarked on a programme of replacing the reception equipment on its residential properties.

The programme of work has been divided into three phases. In considering the buildings in the programmes it was noted that some of these lie within Conservation Areas and would, therefore, require a Planning Consent for work outside the scope of permitted development. A few, including this estate, are also Listed, requiring a Listed Building Consent.

The buildings to which the current applications relate are blocks where several dwellings share a communal aerial system. In accordance with advice from the duty Planning Officer we have made one application for each Estate where work is to take place.

We visited the buildings with LB Camden's Conservation officer and their comments were central to the development of the proposals.

Detail of Listing

The Ossulston Estate comprises of several blocks, two of which have separate listings. These are:

- Levita House including attached shops and Somers Town Coffee House 6A-76A, Chalton Street and Ossulston Street, List Entry Number: 1113232
- Chamberlain House Including Shops, 44-58, Pheonix Road, Chamberlain House, 86-100, Chalton Street and Chamberlain House, Ossulston Street, List Entry Number: 1139057

Both these blocks are Grade 2.

This complex forms a group with the southern block of Walker House, Phoenix Road including The Cock Tavern, and was built 1927-9 to the designs of the LCC Architect's department under G Topham Forrest. The Ossulston Estate is the most important inner-city estate of the inter-war period, representing the most considered attempt by the LCC to inject new thinking into inner-city housing estates. It was influenced in particular by Viennese housing models and was innovative in terms of layout and elevation. The foundation stone of Chamberlain House was laid by Neville Chamberlain, then Minister of Health.

The buildings are quite pleasant, with some interesting render detailing at parapet level, but their main interest is historic, as they illustrate an aspect of the nation's social, economic, cultural or military history.

Siting of Equipment

The IRS (Integrated Reception System) includes one aerial and two satellite dishes per block. These have been sited discreetly, on the roofs where they are not easily seen from street level, while meeting the technical requirement to get a clear line of sight to the satellites and transmitter avoiding obstructions such as mature trees and taller adjacent buildings. The siting of the aeriels and satellite dishes shown on the attached drawings and annotated photographs is a best compromise between the technical requirements

and the need to minimise the visual appearance of the equipment and its impact on the building and its environment.

The installation also includes an external cabinet/junction box, located on the roof. These have been sited to be as discreet as possible, not visible from ground level, while also reflecting the chosen cable routing as discussed below.

In considering the locations of equipment we have had to be cognisant of the requirements of safe access for repair and maintenance. In general 'active equipment' must be accessible by one man using a ladder only (10m reach) i.e. using no specialist access equipment. 'Active equipment' includes relays within the cabinets and the LNB's at the focus of the satellite dishes. Aerials are considered non-active but the satellite dishes sometimes need realigning which requires the operative to manhandle them so provision has to be made for this to be done safely.

Routing of Cables

Each property is connected to the Junction Box by two cables, and the routing of these has been carefully considered in relation to each property. Each of the properties was visited to establish whether a viable internal route existing for the cable runs.

There was no viable internal route so the cables have been routed to ensure they are as discreet as possible. Cables have not been shown on the street elevation of the properties wherever possible. However, the cables enter directly to the Living Rooms of each dwelling to avoid major works and disruption within the dwelling and so where Living Rooms are located on the street elevation of the property then the cables must also be run on this same elevation.

External cable runs are being run in white cabling as this blends with the render of the wall behind.

Cable runs have also been positioned to take account of the need to be a minimum arm's length from balconies to avoid tampering.

Cables are bunched together in 'looms' and the loom sizes depend on the number of properties being served. At the start of the run there 2 cables x number dwellings on run (e.g. 4 flats would start at 8 cables thick) but diminishes in size as the run passes each property, getting two cables less each time, until just two cables remain to serve the last property. The numbers of cables applicable to particular blocks are marked on the elevation drawings and indicative sizes are given in the table at the side of the elevation drawings, with the maximum dimension being approximately 305mm.

The cables have to be fixed to elevations that are very high or difficult to access safely, and so are fixed on to a 'catenary wire'. This is a discrete, stainless steel cable stretched between fixings at the top and bottom of the building, which provides a support for the aerial cables.

Existing Equipment

The new IRS installation will provide an opportunity to remove existing unsightly satellite dishes that have been haphazardly installed with little respect for the building or area in which they are located. It is understood that a separate contract will be let by London Borough of Camden to remove individual satellite dishes and return these to residents where these duplicate the service being offered by the IRS. This is likely to take place after the switchover in 2012.

Many of the blocks are also served by cable TV, originally installed by Cable London but now owned by Virgin Media and maintained by them. This equipment and cabling is providing an alternative service to residents and is not under the direct control of the London Borough of Camden. For these reasons it is not possible to remove the equipment and cabling and it will remain in-situ alongside the new IRS Installation.

Summary

These works are required due to the change to digital transmission. All reasonable steps have been explored to minimise the impact of these works on the building, while giving due consideration to the health & safety risks of installing and maintaining the equipment, and reducing the disruption for the tenants.

The proposals contained in this application have the best balance between the competing requirements, while ensuring the building is preserved in use as originally designed, which will underpin its future viability and ensure its preservation.