

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:	17/10/2011		
		N/A / attached		Consultation Expiry Date:	06/10/2011		
Officer			Application Number(s)				
Neil McDonald			2011/4199/P				
Application Address			Drawing Numbers				
32 Coptic Street London WC1A 1NP							
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature				
Proposal(s)							
Additions and alterations including erection of a roof extension with associated terrace; and a part-two, part-four storey rear extension incorporating a platform lift, covered link and additional living accommodation for the existing dwelling house (Class C3).							
Recommendation(s):		Refused					
Application Type:		Householder Application					
Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:		Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:							
Consultations							
Adjoining Occupiers:		No. notified	51	No. of responses	02	No. of objections	00
				No. electronic	00		
Summary of consultation responses:		Site notice displayed 07/09/11 – 28/09/11; Press advertisement – 15/09/11 – 06/10/11. 1 support from 51 Coptic Street – “This is a well thought through plan that will be of benefit to the streetscape and enhance the neighbourhood.” 1 comment received from a resident of Stedham Chambers on opposite side of Coptic Street citing “Disruption and increase in rodents and overlooking from the proposed development”.					
CAAC/Local groups* comments: *Please Specify		Bloomsbury CAAC – no objection					

Site Description

The site is an early 19th century (c1820) terraced house located on the east side of Coptic Street. The house is arranged over three storeys plus basement and has a former shopfront and archway at ground level leading to a courtyard at the rear. The complex is believed to have formerly comprised a dairy but is now wholly in use as a single dwelling. The site now also includes an artist's studio occupying part of the original site of the adjacent former dairy (now converted to a block of flats). This is accessed via an external bridge link over the large lightwell/courtyard to the rear of the house. Adjoining the site to the rear is a mix of commercial and residential properties with those to the east fronting Museum Street and those to the north fronting Great Russell Street being grade II listed. The application site itself is not listed but forms part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area to which it is identified as making a positive contribution. It is also located within the Central London Area and Clear Zone.

Relevant History

36796 - Change of use of the ground floor at 32 Coptic Street, WC1 from antique bookshop and cafe to artist's studio and the basement to ancillary storage – Granted 20/12/1983

8501908 - The erection of an additional floor at first floor level with access stairs and lifts to be used as an artists studio ancillary to the residential use of the remainder of the building – Granted 18/02/1986

8900345 - Alterations to the existing studio involving the creation of a new courtyard the erection of a link between house and studio and the construction of a new roof – Granted 16/01/1990

Relevant policies

LDF Core Strategy and Development Policies

CS5 – managing impact of growth, CS9 – achieving a successful Central London, CS11- sustainable travel, CS13 – tackling climate change, CS14 – high quality places and conserving heritage, CS17 – safer places, DP18 – parking standards, DP21 – development connecting to the highway, DP22 – sustainable design and construction, DP24 – high quality design, DP25 - conserving Camden's heritage, DP26 – impact on occupiers and neighbours, DP27 – basements and lightwells, DP29 – improving access, DP32 – air quality and clear zone.

Camden Planning Guidance 2011

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal, April 2011.

Assessment

The Proposal

The proposal is to provide additional living accommodation and amenity space along with provision for improved access and mobility within the property to accommodate the needs of the existing occupiers.

The additional accommodation would be in the form of a part width roof extension on top of the main part of the house with the remainder of the roof to be converted into a roof terrace; and further accommodation being provided in a rear extension at basement to first floor level including provision for an ancillary one-bedroom flat for a full-time carer/assistant. The rear extension would continue full height to adjoin with the roof extension incorporating a platform lift serving all levels of the house. A new glazed link at ground floor level is proposed to provide covered access from the house to the artist's studio at the rear. A new external stairway is proposed from the ground floor walkway to the basement level of the courtyard for access to the ancillary flat.

Further proposed alterations comprise replacement of the existing timber coach doors, shopfronts and existing pavement lights to be replaced with grilles.

Design and conservation

The application property is a late Georgian terraced house (c. 1820), 5 bays wide and one room deep, arranged over three storeys and a basement. The artist's studio at the rear is currently accessed via an external pedestrian bridge over a large lightwell/ courtyard separating the dwelling and studio. The studio has no internal link from the main house. The objective of improving access for the existing occupier within the building and internally linking the artist's studio is supported in principle.

Roof extension

The extension at roof level would be built on only part of the roof. It is considered that this would unbalance the building which has been designed as a complete composition. This unbalancing of the front façade unduly impacts on the composition of elevation, existing rhythms, symmetries and uniformity of the dwelling and thus the townscape.

The existing building is typical of Georgian architecture in terms of the proportion of elements making up the front façade. The composition results in a reduction of the length of the windows on each floor. However the proposed scheme fails to respond to these characteristics resulting in windows of equal size than those on the floor below. This impacts on the hierarchy and composition of the Georgian façade contrary to policy DP24 which states "detailing should be carefully considered so that it conveys quality of design and creates an attractive and interesting building."

Moreover the façade is broken down into very subtle elements. It is 5 windows wide but spaced as 4 and 1 with the alignment of 1 bay being above the coach entrance. The ground floor can on the other hand be described as split into 3 bays -coach entrance/shopfront and shopfront, whereas the existing roof is formed of two equally sized 2-hipped roof profiles. The width of the extension at roof level fails to align with any of these existing aspects of the building thus further harming the integrity and architectural composition of the dwelling. This fails to comply with policy DP24 which states, "Architectural detailing should be carefully integrated into a building" (paragraph 24.15).

The chimney is being removed contrary to adopted Camden Planning Guidance on design (CPG1) which states extensions should "respect and preserve existing architectural features, such as projecting bays, decorative balconies or chimney stacks." With this in mind any full width extension is more likely to be acceptable in a mansard form, being more in sympathy with the age, character and overall integrity and built form of the building if such were proposed.

In streetscape terms although this side of Coptic Street is acknowledged to be formed of buildings with differing heights resulting in a varied roofscape, the addition of an extension over only part of the application site building (together with the balustrade of the proposed terrace) would be considered to

impact negatively on this aspect of the streetscape. Moreover, roof extensions that currently exist in this area complete the buildings upon which they sit. The part width roof extension proposed for the application property would contradict this established pattern including the ratio of built to unbuilt space thereby failing to respect and preserve the historic townscape of the surrounding area.

Ground floor

There is no objection in design terms to the pavement lights or timber coach door being replaced or the right hand shopfront. The left hand shopfront appears to have fine elegant transom and transom glazing bars but has been altered. As such there is no objection to a suitable replacement. The detailed design of the proposed shopfront should be dealt with by way of condition in a scheme which were in all other ways considered to be acceptable.

Rear extension

At the rear there is no objection to the enlarged extension at lower ground level or installation of the new stair from the courtyard.

However the height and position of the new extension is considered to distort the original form of the dwelling; this is particularly apparent at upper levels. The position of the new lift cuts across the existing projecting stair enclosure and results in what is considered to be an awkward opening at the junction of the projection at each level. The extension comes uncomfortably close to the rear windows and continues up and over the building to join with the extension at roof level. This remaining parapet is also raised resulting in loss of the roof line at the rear and a generally uncomfortable relationship and loss of existing rhythms, symmetries and uniformity as at the front of the building.

The extension is therefore contrary to CPG1 which states that extensions should, “respect and preserve the original design and proportions of the building, including its architectural period and style.”

It is considered that the rear extension would be less obtrusive if it was clad in a contrasting material to allow the form of the original dwelling to be more easily recognisable. In this respect it should be noted that the Council does not preclude different materials but only seeks that they ‘should be chosen that are sympathetic to the existing building’ wherever possible.’ However this is still unlikely to address the concerns in this instance which are as much related to the height, form and position of the extension as to its solidity of appearance.

Conclusion on design issues

In conclusion it is considered that the proposal has failed to appropriately consider the characteristics of its site and surroundings and is unacceptable. It is noted that a platform lift is required for access to all floors given the special circumstances of the occupier. Unfortunately however this is not considered to outweigh irreversible harm which would be caused to the quality of the existing building and its contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and therefore is not considered reasonable in this instance.

Impacts on amenity

The existing house and the extensions proposed to it would not give rise to any harmful overlooking of premises to the rear as these are either non-residential or located at distance beyond the artist’s studio and rear yards and structures of properties fronting Museum Street. The proposed steps down to the basement courtyard would pass an existing window in the basement of 33 Coptic Street. This window last served as a kitchen to the hostel formerly occupying the building. While the building has recently been the subject of an appeal decision granting approval for change of use as a single dwelling, it is considered that the privacy of this basement window is already compromised by virtue of it opening onto the basement courtyard at No. 32. The additional impact from the steps is therefore considered not unduly harmful.

The proposed roof extension and terrace would face existing residential properties (Stedham Chambers) on the opposite side of the street. This relationship is not considered unreasonable for this

high density urban location, in terms of overlooking and noise disturbance matters.

In terms of impact on outlook and daylight to adjacent properties the most likely affected residential windows would be those at the rear of the former dairy (32 Coptic Street) adjacent the southern boundary. The first floor element of the proposed extension would abut the existing boundary wall and exceed it in height by a storey. However the distance of the nearest windows from this boundary (approx 4.5m) and the oblique angle onto which they face it, are considered sufficient to negate any likely impact on their available daylight from arising.

The proposed development would therefore be considered acceptable from an amenity point of view.

Transport

The creation of a new self contained flat in this location would have the potential to generate additional traffic and car parking pressures which would be contrary to LDF parking (DP18) and Clear Zone (DP32) policies. However since the proposals are only for extensions to an existing dwelling with the new basement flat being ancillary accommodation, it would be unreasonable to insist on a car-capping agreement which could only be applied to the site as a whole. However in the event that the proposed development were to be considered acceptable in all other respects it would be necessary to attach a condition ensuring that the proposed basement flat always remained ancillary to the main dwelling.

The existing pavement lights just inside the southern edge of the property boundary are proposed to be replaced with a pavement grill. This is not acceptable due to conflicts that would be likely to arise with pedestrian safety due to the grill being uncomfortable and potentially hazardous to walk on.

A new public entrance is also proposed from Coptic Street, the design on the ground floor plan identifies the entrance as recessed with the doors shown opening outwards. Doors that open outwards onto the highway are not acceptable as they can impede pedestrian movements. To overcome this issue, the designs indicate that the doors have been recessed and this again is unacceptable as this introduces community safety issues that must also be considered. Both of these concerns would be contrary to LDF Policy DP21 which requires developments connecting to the highway network to avoid causing harm to highway safety or hinder pedestrian movement and avoid unnecessary street clutter.

Sustainability

The green roof proposed on top of the first floor rear extension is acceptable in principle and considered to provide reasonable measures for offsetting the effects of the development on the environment and climate change in this instance for meeting policies CS13 and DP22. The details in this regard would need to be secured by condition in a scheme which were in all other ways considered acceptable.

Recommendation: Refuse planning permission

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