

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:		20/08/2009	
		Attached		Consultation Expiry Date:		14/08/2009	
Officer				Application Number(s)			
Michelle O'Doherty				2009/3005/L			
Application Address				Drawing Numbers			
41 Marchmont Street London WC1N 1AP				Refer to decision notice			
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature				
Proposal(s)							
Installation of a commemorative plaque at first floor level (front elevation).							
Recommendation(s):		Grant listed building consent					
Application Type:		Listed Building Consent					
Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:		Refer to Decision Notice					
Informatives:							
Consultations							
Adjoining Occupiers:	No. notified	00	No. of responses	00	No. of objections	00	
			No. electronic	00			
Summary of consultation responses:	A site notice was erected but no response was received.						
CAAC/Local groups* comments: *Please Specify	N/A						

Site Description

The subject building at 41 Marchmont Street is a grade II listed building located in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It forms part of a terrace of 18 houses with shops at ground floor. This building is four storeys over a basement with two windows on each, gauged arches and built of London stock brick.

Relevant History

There is no relevant history.

Relevant policies

This application has been assessed against UDP policy B6 concerning listed buildings.

Assessment

Background

The application is for the installation of a commemorative plaque on the front elevation at first floor level. The proposed blue plaque is similar in colour, material, design and appearance to the ones installed by English Heritage through its commemorative blue plaque program. However, this plaque has been put forth by a private local association, the Marchmont Association to celebrate the painter, William Henry Hunt.

Fixing Method

The only difference with this plaque and the ones championed through EH's program is the method of fixing them to the building. English Heritage affixes the plaques so they are flush with the face of the wall in which they sit. This appearance is achieved by removing the masonry of the exact diameter of the plaque to slot it into the wall.

The plaque being proposed in this application will differ from that method because it will be mounted to the wall directly. Initially the application made, cited that the proposed ceramic plaque would be fixed to the façade using quick drying cement.

From a conservation perspective, this approach is not considered to be the best one given cement could damage the bricks and is not a sensitive material for historic fabric. Cement is a compound that is not suited to use in masonry walls because it is not porous, not allowing for the natural expansion and contraction movement of masonry walls with seasonal temperatures fluctuations. Because of its properties and strength, it could cause spalling of the brick face, damaging brick permanently and requiring replacement in future.

Further because it was proposed that the cement would be adhered to the brick directly, if for any reason the plaque would be removed in the future, its permanent hard surface would leave an unsightly appearance on the façade of the building. Its removal would require hacking off either with mechanical or hand tools, thereby also causing damage to the building fabric and leaving permanent scarring.

The craftsman responsible for making and installing the proposed plaque is the same person who does so for English Heritage. He is aware of the concerns about using cement versus lime as well as about weathering and the overall appearance of the plaque once installed. Because of the concern about using cement, he advocates the use of lime mortar as a fixing agent. The application has been modified to reflect its use to mount the plaque.

As reflected in the email sent to support the application using lime (and replacing the initial instructions using cement), the potential problem of water ingress and erosion of the lime resulting in loosening of the plaque has been resolved by the use of a mechanical fixing of an aluminium extrusion, which is attached to the wall using one or two screws inserted into a mortar joint. It is entirely concealed behind the plaque and made from aluminium and nylon and will not degrade. This approach is deemed to be a practical and sensitive one that will not affect the special interest of the listed building.

Appearance

This plaque will also differ very subtly from English Heritage's version because it will protrude off the face of the wall slightly. EH's plaques even though domed in the same manner as this one to allow for water run off do not protrude because they are mounted flush with the face of the wall. However, this one once set on to the wall will only project by 20mm on the perimeter and a maximum of 25 mm at the centre because it is made to dome slightly. This projection will be negligible and not impact the appearance of the building in a negative manner.

Conclusion

This proposal has been assessed in the context of its impact to the listed building both to its fabric and physical appearance. With the modification made to mount the plaque using lime rather than the cement, this method is now considered appropriate and a sensitive approach, thereby not harming the fabric of the building. In addition, this method will ensure that the works done to the building are minimal and reversible only creating minor holes for support screws.

Visually the addition of the plaque will not detract from the special interest of the building or the terrace because it is a minimal physical intervention. Its size and design will not compete with the overall appearance and details of the listed building's façade.

Recommendation to grant listed building consent to mount the blue plaque on the front elevation to 41 Marchmont Street as it complies with UDP policy B6 and would not affect the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building.

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