

Full Planning Application: 34 Kingstown Street

London, NW1 8JP

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Design and Access Statement

MSA Ltd.
Design and Access Statement - 34 Kingstown Street
July 2008

Introduction

1. This statement supports a full planning application for the construction of a new single family dwelling and the demolition of the existing single family dwelling on the same site
2. The document illustrates the current status of the proposed scheme along with providing supporting planning policy and design statements. This document is to be read in conjunction with the planning application drawings and supporting presentation material.
3. The scheme is described in detail and relevant planning policies are considered. This submission demonstrates that, in land use terms, the submitted scheme complies with the relevant policies of the adopted Unitary Development Plan.
4. This Statement deals with the key development issues including the design philosophy for the building and assesses the implications of the scheme in relation to the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of this part of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area and residential properties in the vicinity of the site.
5. Techniker (Consulting Engineers) provide a short report (copy provided as Appendix 1 to this statement) confirming the feasibility of the proposed development in structural terms.
6. Wassells Arboricultural Ltd have undertaken a Tree Survey and provide a separate report as well as a Tree Protection Method Statement (reproduced as Appendix 2). Their conclusion is that it is possible to achieve the successful integration of structures into the landscape avoiding lasting damage to retained trees and preserving amenity to the local landscape.
7. Other material considerations are addressed, as necessary.
8. We consider that planning permission should be granted subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions.

Contextual background

The site lies within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area which is divided into a number of sub areas. The application site lies within Sub Area 2 which is located at the centre of the Conservation Area. It is largely flat with a slight incline from south-east to North-West. It is defined to the north by the railway line and to the south-east by Regent’s Canal.

The area is urban in character with a highly density of development with sporadic areas of greenery. It is dominated by long terraces of mid-nineteenth century houses set back from the pavement with small lightwells and railings to basement areas, although there are some earlier and later buildings within the area.

The Conservation Area Statement refers to the Primrose Hill Studios as a group of 12 buildings clustered around a quiet courtyard to the centre of a block. These buildings are constructed in the Arts and Crafts style with hipped roofs and are modest in scale, being a maximum of two stories in height.

In relation to the topography and character of the Sub-area, the Conservation statement comments that there are only a few street trees to the principal and secondary roads, and private trees are limited mainly to rear gardens.

The Conservation Area Statement refers to existing Mews Developments as follows:

“Albert Terrace Mews, Kingstown Street and Regal Lane provide a contrast to the wide roads and the villa style properties that dominate this Sub area. These narrow mews roads originally provided servicing to the rear gardens of the villas. They are accessed from the principal roads via gaps between buildings and gardens, and are shaped to accord with the land ownership within the block.

Sporadic development of the mews began late in the 19th century and has continued to the present day, encompassing a wide range of architectural styles. These small mews buildings are generally located directly abutting or close to the highway are two storey in height, with flat fronts and strum power-packed lines. Other features of the mews include small vegetated

areas, york stone paving, small set paving to Highways and granite set side and central gutters. Views of the backs of the Villa properties, rear gardens and boundary walls are also important and create a high degree of enclosure and privacy to some parts, which is punctuated by areas of relative openness and vegetation.”

In particular the eastern end of Kingstown Street is defined by an eclectic mix of post 1960’s single dwelling homes and social housing.

Planning Policy Considerations

PPG15 - Planning and the historic environment

Use of planning powers in conservation areas

I note the advice in paragraph 4.14 which states inter alia:

“4.14 Section 72 of the Act requires that special attention shall be paid in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. This requirement extends to all powers under the Planning Acts, not only those which relate directly to historic buildings. The desirability of preserving or enhancing the area should also, in the Secretary of State’s view, be a material consideration in the planning authority’s handling of development proposals which are outside the conservation area but would affect its setting, or views into or out of the area…….”

Paragraphs 4.16, 4.17 and 4.18 offer advice on the approach to be adopted when assessing new development in Conservation Areas as follows:

“4.16…….While conservation (whether by preservation or enhancement) of their character or appearance must be a major consideration, this cannot realistically take the form of preventing all new development: the emphasis will generally need to be on controlled and positive management of change. Policies will need to be designed to allow the area to remain alive and prosperous, and to avoid unnecessarily detailed controls over businesses and householders, but at the same time to ensure that any new development accords with the area’s special architectural and historic interest.”

“4.17 Many conservation areas include gap sites, or buildings that make no positive contribution to, or indeed detract from, the character or appearance of the area; their replacement should be a stimulus to imaginative, high quality design, and seen as an opportunity to enhance the area. What is important is not that new buildings should directly imitate earlier styles, but that they should be designed with respect for their context, as part of a larger whole which has a well-established character and appearance of its own.” (our emphasis)

“4.18…….Special regard should be had for such matters as scale, height, form, massing, respect for the traditional pattern of frontages, vertical or horizontal emphasis, and detailed design (our emphasis) *(eg. the scale and spacing of window openings, and the nature and quality of materials). General planning standards should be applied sensitively in the interests of harmonising the new development with its neighbours in the conservation area.”*

I note that in paragraph 4.19 it is stated that the Courts have confirmed that planning decisions in respect of development proposed to be carried out in a conservation area must give a high priority to the objective of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area. If any proposed development would conflict with that objective, there will be a strong presumption against the grant of planning permission, though in exceptional cases the presumption may be overridden in favour of development which is desirable on the ground of some other public interest.

Conservation area control over demolition

Paragraphs 4.26 and 4.27 advise in respect of the approach to be followed when decision makers are considering the demolition of an unlisted building in a Conservation Area. In exercising conservation area controls, local planning authorities are required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area in question; and, as with listed building controls, this should be the prime consideration in determining a consent application. In the case of conservation area controls, however, account should clearly be taken of the part played in the architectural or historic interest of the area by the building for which demolition is proposed, and in particular of the wider effects of demolition on the building’s surroundings and on the conservation area as a whole.

The general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area. Proposals to demolish such buildings should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings. In less clear-cut cases - for instance, where a building makes little or no such contribution - the local planning authority will need to have full information about what is proposed for the site after demolition. Consent

for demolition should not be given unless there are acceptable and detailed plans for any redevelopment. It has been held that the decision-maker is entitled to consider the merits of any proposed development in determining whether consent should be given for the demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area.

Camden Replacement Unitary Development Plan

The UDP comments that Camden is a densely built-up borough where most development involves the replacement, extension or conversion of existing buildings. As a result, careful consideration of the characteristics of a site, features of local distinctiveness, and the wider context is needed to achieve high quality development which integrates into its surroundings. Designs should respond creatively to the site and its context within the policy framework set by this Plan. Policy B1 sets out the criteria against which proposals will be assessed:

B1 - General design principles

The Council will grant planning permission for development that is designed to a high standard. Development should:

- a) respect its site and setting;
- b) be safe and accessible to all;
- c) improve the spaces around and between buildings, particularly public areas;
- d) be sustainable by promoting energy efficiency and efficient use of resources;
- e) be easily adaptable to changing economic and social requirements;
- f) provide appropriate high quality landscaping and boundary treatments; and
- g) seek to improve the attractiveness of an area and not harm its appearance or amenity.

In assessing how the design of a development has taken these principles into account, the Council will consider:

- h) building lines and plot sizes in the surrounding area;
- i) the existing pattern of routes and spaces;

- j) the height, bulk and scale of neighbouring buildings;
- k) existing natural features, such as topography and trees;
- l) the design of neighbouring buildings;
- m) the quality and appropriateness of detailing and materials used;
- n) the provision of visually interesting frontages at street level; and
- o) the impact on views and skylines.

B7 - Conservation areas

A - Character and appearance

The Council will only grant consent for development in a conservation area that preserves or enhances the special character or appearance of the area. The Council will not grant planning permission for development outside of a conservation area that it considers would cause harm to the conservation area’s character, appearance or setting.

B - Demolition of unlisted buildings

The Council will not grant conservation area consent for the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area, unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention.

Design Process

The design process begun with an evaluation of the existing character of Kingstown Street, a collection of two to three storey mews houses exhibiting a range of contemporary architectural styles. Consideration was taken to ensure that the new design integrates itself well into the existing streetscape – to be respectful of its mass, character and aesthetic.

The practice has previously built a property within the street, 45 Kingstown Street, which has been the recipient of several national awards, including the Camden Design Awards 2004.

We have met with the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Committee for a walk around on-site on 2nd April 2008. The committee gave a positive response to the proposals while raising some queries and making suggestions which have been reflected in the submitted design.

The proposal involves basement accommodation and we have engaged with a structural engineer, Techniker, to evaluate the requirements of the basement design - ensuring that the ground conditions are suitable and determining the potential acceptable volume within the constraints of the site boundary. The engineers report accompanies this document.

Throughout the design process physical scale models and 3D computer models have been utilised to demonstrate the external massing / composition and evaluate light penetration within the building.

It was also identified that a tree specimen adjacent to the property could potentially be affected by the development and a tree survey and protection report was prepared by Wassells Arboricultural Ltd. The report identifies the quality of the existing tree specimen and the protection methodology to ensure that the tree survives through the construction phase.

Use

The building has been designed as a new residence for the current occupier and will therefore maintain the existing residential use as a single property.

Amount

The brief, determined by the current occupier of the site, has evolved from the burgeoning requirements for space of a young growing family and the current accommodation no longer sustains these living needs. The scheme requires that the existing building is demolished and reconfigured internally to better fulfil these requirements, with additional accommodation provided below ground. Importantly, the new building has been designed to ensure that it does not exceed the massing and volume of the current building above ground floor level.

The existing building provides 180 m2 habitable accommodation and the new building will provide 310 m2, reflecting the requirements of the client’s brief (these areas exclude external amenity ie. courtyard and terrace which remain the same within the new proposal).

The additional living spaces are to be satisfied by creating two levels below the current ground level, described within the drawings as:

- Lower ground level, accommodating the primary living spaces: dining; kitchen; lounge and external courtyard.
- Basement level, accommodating sundry facilities; WC serving the main living level; boiler and household storage. The available area at the basement level is resultant of the required piling strategy to the lower ground’s perimeter that has created available accommodation to be used as extra storage.

We note that precedent exists within the street for basement accommodation as can be seen with successfully secured planning permission for 55 Kingstown St (application no. 2006/2919/P), which is now nearing completion.

In addressing issues raised from the pre-application advice consideration has been taken with the proximity of the building relative to Primrose Hill Studios which are listed. As the building has been determined not to exceed the existing mass of the building on-site we expect no additional impact upon views within the Primrose Hill Studios mews. The Primrose Hill Studios buildings are not visible from Kingstown Street, so we do not expect the new building to be detrimental to the setting of the listed buildings. Additionally the new building is intended to be structurally independent of the adjacent properties - as appears the current situation with demolition anticipated to leave the boundary unaffected, as detailed within the accompanying structural report.

The design can thus be seen to reflect the requirements of section B1 - General Design Principles of the UDP in being respectful of its site, setting and design and bulk of its neighbouring buildings while not impacting upon views or skylines.

Layout

The building is located on a tight urban “corner” site, bordered to the north by a listed building, to the west a plot encompassing an open ‘yard’ and garage, and to the south and east by Kingstown Street.

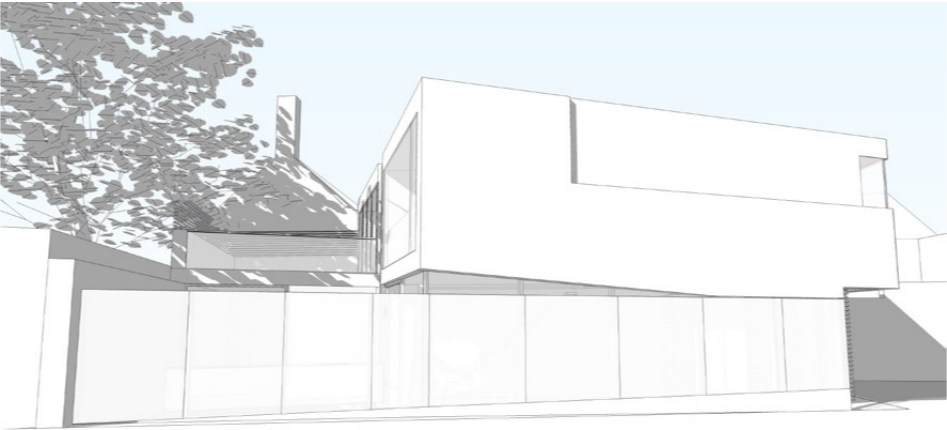
In order to provide the accommodation required within the brief, it has been necessary to expand upon the existing floor area of the building, due to the growing needs and requirements of the family unit. Due to the massing and siting of the existing structure within the street it has been determined that the logical means of accommodating the additional floor area has been to explore subterranean levels, as opposed to greater mass above ground floor level which has the potential of encroaching upon the neighbouring properties.

The accommodation is to be divided as follows:

- First floor level - Children’s bedrooms; family bathroom; hall and external terrace (terrace as per current location).
- Ground floor level - Entrance lobby; garage; bicycle storage; bin store; master bedroom / bathroom and void space to the living accommodation below.
- Lower ground level - Kitchen; dining area; lounge; home office and external courtyard.
- Basement level - WC; boiler; courtyard ‘planter’ zone, storage and ancillary spaces.

With principal living accommodation located at lower ground floor level, providing a large open-plan social space, the volume will require good levels of natural light, compliant with the Camden Design Guidelines. The cross-section through the building (*Drawing 087-302-P*) reveals how the ground floor floorplate has been cut back to enable sunlight to penetrate directly to the lower ground level. The large double-height glazing to the courtyard provides generous light levels to the lower ground floorplate and is further supplemented by the translucent rainscreen which runs the length of the south facade.

The windows to the children’s bedrooms have been located, facing predominantly east and west, to ensure that overlooking issues are not created across Kingstown Street.



Proposed southern facade with translucent rainscreen.

Scale

The new building has been designed to conform with the mass and setting of the existing property. It has been determined that the new building will not exceed the building mass of the existing structure above ground, thus posing no detrimental effect to the existing character of the street. The approach would therefore fit appropriately within the aims of the UDP, as outlined in *section B1- General Design Principles*.



Mass of the existing property.

Landscaping

The current on-site external amenity to the property is provided by a first floor terrace and ground floor patio. It is the intention that the new scheme will maintain the first floor terrace (as spill-out from the children’s music / playroom area) and that the ground floor external patio area will be retained at lower ground level providing level access to the primary living areas. A new ornamental tree and ‘green wall’ will form new landscaping features within the courtyard, replacing the existing ornamental specimen.

The design demonstrates how the good quality of the natural environment within the building’s immediate vicinity will be maintained.



Trees surrounding the existing property to be maintained.

Appearance

The construction and finish of the external components is to be of a high-quality, sharp and refined detailing and offer a marked improvement over the existing building envelope. The anticipated high-quality and crisp detailing is best represented by the practice’s previous design within Kingstown Street at No. 45 - recipient of national and local awards including Camden’s own Design Awards in 2005.

The proposal requires the existing building to be demolished and in doing so consideration must be taken over the quality and appearance of the current architecture. The existing building consists of predominantly brick and render elements with windows and venting placed inconsistently within the facade, without rhythm or suitable composition. The quality of the existing external building fabric can be seen to be of a low quality and poor detailing. We thus anticipate that no detrimental loss will be felt within the street or the wider conservation area by the loss of this building and the urban environment will be improved by the addition of the new building - in accordance with the criteria outlined in *B7 - Conservation Areas, Camden UDP*.

The southern building facade is comprised of two key components – a lower horizontal band of obscured glazing, facilitating light penetration into the living areas and an upper section composed of a precast concrete rainscreen – see *drawing 087-400-P*.

The east building facade comprises a continuation of the precast concrete rainscreen with inset, recessed glazing to the children’s bedrooms and at ground level a full-height glazed entrance doorway and metal louvred doors to the bin store and garage – see *drawing 087-401-P*.

The west building facade faces the lower ground courtyard and first floor terrace. This facade is comprised of full-height glazing with openable portions as shown on the drawings – see *087-302-P and GA plans 087-200-P to 087-203-P*.

The design can be seen to reflect the requirements of section *B1 - General Design Principles* of the UDP by: providing high-quality boundary treatments; providing visually interesting frontages at street level; appropriately utilising materials, detailed to a high-quality and improving the attractiveness of the area.



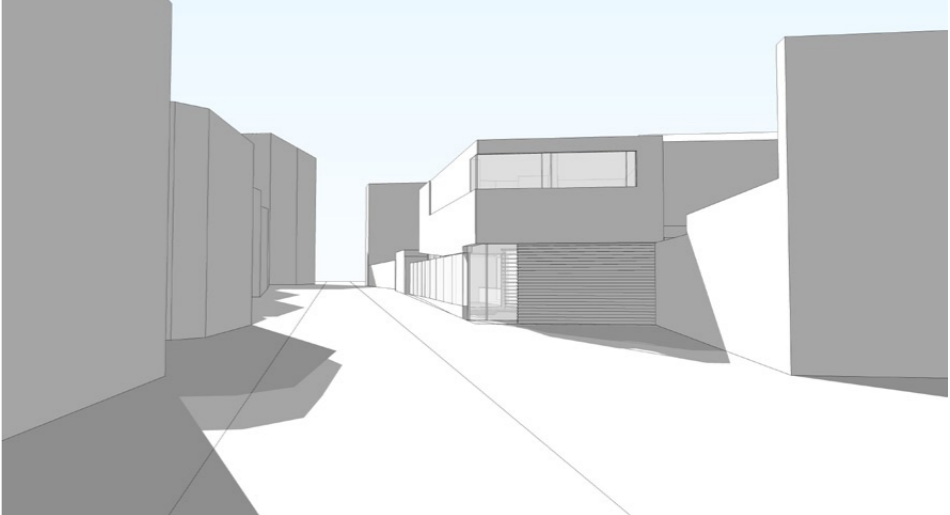
45 Kingstown Street.



Southern facade of the existing property.



Eastern facade of the existing property.



Proposed eastern facade.

Access

Principal access to the existing property is maintained via two steps leading to the front door at the south east end of the building and additionally a gate to the courtyard. It is intended to improve the current access provision to the building by providing ‘at-grade’ access via a level threshold through the main door.

The new ground floor entrance has been orientated to reflect the current location at the south east corner of the site. This has been considered to utilise the ‘off-street’ paved area to enable safe entry and exit to the building for the family. In response to comments from the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Committee we have recessed the entrance door to the building to further provide a safe protected zone for the family to assemble upon entering and exiting.

Immediately adjacent to the entrance door we have located internal bicycle storage and externally bin storage for convenient access to the street and to be easily filled from the principal circulation route through the property.

The principal storey will additionally provide for potential of future adaption for compatibility with wheelchair users. The master bathroom will have the capacity to be converted in the future to enable fully accessible facilities.

Vehicular access to the property is maintained with off-street parking located and enlarged in its existing location. Current household storage provision will be enhanced within the property, alleviating the need to utilise the garage for this purpose, thus ensuring that the occupant’s car is kept off the street and releasing on-street car parking pressure.

The space provision within the garage has been designed as generous and can be further expanded to accommodate a larger volume, in-line with the Lifetime Home guidelines.

The design approach can be seen to provide safe and accessible entrance and exit to the property with adaptability to differing future social requirements, as required with the UDP.

Other Material Considerations

Sustainability

The building has been designed to provide an effective passive servicing strategy, utilising the high voids and large thermal mass of the concrete frame to enable natural cooling and ventilation through the property. It is anticipated that no rooftop plant will be required and all necessary services located within the basement boiler room.

Lifetime Homes

The design process has also ensured that consideration has been taken to develop a design which, in addition to complying with statutory guidance relating to DDA, provides for the evolving needs of the building’s occupants. The building has been designed to enable future adaptation to fulfil the criteria outlined with the Lifetime Home Standards, inclusive of: expandable parking; location of bathroom facilities on the primary entrance storey and widths of corridors and doors to allow wheelchair access.

Conclusions

1. The creation of a replacement residential unit is in line with Central Government Guidance and the strategic policies of the UDP, which encourage more efficient use of urban land.
2. The provision of accommodation below ground enables the formation of considerable additional floorspace without any adverse effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area or residential amenity. The living space below ground will be well lit utilising natural light.
3. The proposal will enable better use of urban land and be environmentally friendly providing better insulation, reducing dust and carbon dioxide and retaining higher humidity levels.
4. The proposals will not detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and will have no adverse effect on the amenities of the occupiers of adjoining properties. The scheme has been developed having regard to the comments and input from the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Advisory Panel.
5. As regards off-street parking, the appeal proposal will provide one off street apace, which will be of benefit to general parking in the immediate area.
6. The development is well designed and will be constructed in good quality materials throughout to ensure a high quality appearance and finish. The existing tree will be retained and appropriately protected during the building works.
7. On the basis of the above we conclude there will be no conflict with the relevant UDP policies and it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.

Appendix

1. Structural Executive Summary, produced by Techniker, consulting structural engineers
2. Tree Survey & Protection Report, produced by Wassells Arboricultural Ltd, arboriculturalists
3. Drawing Register + Scheme Drawings