

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF A PROPOSED EXTENSION TO
NO. 39c BURTON STREET, LONDON WC1H 9AL. 25th SEPTEMBER 2007.

BACKGROUND AND CONSULTATION

39 Burton Street was built in about 1927 at the same time that the original Georgian mews behind was redeveloped into a new garage building. Number 39 itself was built as a block of 3 flats over a vehicular and pedestrian entrance to the garage behind. There was a separate entrance to the upper flats. 39C is one of these flats, situated on the top (third) floor.

The design of the building is quite different to the adjacent Georgian terrace (see photograph 1), although it is almost the same height and is the same number of stories. It is built of red brick with a semi-castellated parapet, heavy stone cornicing at high level, and full height doors and windows onto stone balconies at second and third floor levels. The windows were originally steel "Crittall" windows, but have over the years been replaced with timber and powder coated aluminium. Neither the fenestration nor the floor levels line through with the adjacent terrace, although the two different styles sit quite happily alongside one another.

The flank wall is a blank wall with a single chimney stack up the side. The brickwork reverts to London Stock bricks on this elevation.

The property has a large, original, flat roof, extending to the full footprint of the property. The adjacent Georgian properties would probably have had mansard roofs, although these have been stripped off sometime in the past and replaced with large flat roofs. The parapets between the properties have been retained to the original profiles (see photographs 2 and 3).

We wish to extend the top floor flat onto part of the roof, retaining a large roof terrace as part of the proposal. We discussed this at an early stage with The Duty Planning Officer, who commented that if the proposal was not able to be seen from street level in Burton Street, it might be acceptable. We left some sketch proposals which were to be discussed at one of the internal design meetings to get initial feedback. We spoke to the Planning Officer after their meeting, and were told that subject to the proposal not being visible from "long views" from Burton Street there was no reason why it should not meet with approval. We further suggested that the parapet on the flank wall be built up to match the profile of the remainder of the terrace (photographs 2 and 3); again the Planning Officer we had been in discussion with felt that this was a good idea and might be acceptable.

After receiving a positive response to these initial discussions we produced a set of proposal drawings which are for a refurbished third floor level, and a new partial fourth floor extension, and roof terrace. The proposal could not be seen from street level in Burton Street, and so did not have any adverse affect on the unbroken view of the Georgian terrace. This was physically checked by mocking up the superstructure in timber on the roof of the existing property. These proposals were submitted for planning in March 2007, but were refused on the grounds that both the raising of the parapet wall and the rooftop extension would be detrimental to the setting of the adjoining Grade II listed terrace and would have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

We are currently appealing this decision, but have in the meantime looked at a reduced proposal with less accommodation at roof level to minimise the impact on the surrounding streets (there being no impact on Burton Street anyway). These revised proposals form the basis of this application.

THE PROPOSAL

The existing flank gable wall facing the rear of properties on Burton Place is proposed to be built up in a manner similar to the opposite end of the Georgian terrace which it abuts, in stock bricks to match the existing, but without the raking parapets which characterise the Georgian gables (see drawing 0607(P)03A). We do not believe that this would be detrimental to the setting of the adjacent listed terrace or be harmful to the character and appearance of the conservation area, as it is a completely different building to the terrace it adjoins already. We do not accept the implied argument that because it is not there already it must be inherently wrong, out of character and harmful. It would be an equally appropriate parapet form for a building of this age and character as the one it currently has, or possibly more so as the existing gable end appears somewhat unfinished or truncated. We believe a gable end to match the other end of the Georgian terrace would also appear perfectly consistent, but have bowed to the view of the Conservation Officer that this building should be treated differently.

With respect to the rooftop extension, this has been reduced so that it only provides a bedroom and bathroom at fourth floor level. These are completely concealed from view from Burton Street by the existing parapet and the built up flank walls, and largely concealed from Burton Place by the built up flank wall and by being set back from the rear façade of the building (see drawing 0607(P)06 for before and after perspective views showing how much is visible through the gap in the existing buildings when viewed from Burton Place). The rooftop extension is also completely invisible from Flaxman Terrace by virtue of being set back from the rear façade of the property. This was an issue with our previous application even though it could only be glimpsed through the trees for a few strides along Flaxman Terrace.

We understand that the local Conservation Group were concerned about the relationship between the previous proposed extension and the bow fronted rear extension of the property on the corner of Burton Place. We would like to reassure them that neither the previous proposal nor the current one can be seen from this bow fronted rear extension, and that from street level there is no impact of the one on the other as the proposed rooftop extensions, both previous and current, are not visible. The gap between these properties, created by the single storey bookshop, ensures that the existing building is not crowded or overwhelmed by the raised parapet wall of our proposal.

The existing parapet wall between the application site and No 40 Burton Street will not now be altered. Instead the flank wall of the rooftop extension will be built inside the line of the existing parapet and supported from the new floor below at fourth floor level. From street level this will be completely invisible, but the historic fabric of the existing parapet wall will remain intact. This was also raised as a concern with our previous application, and has therefore been addressed. The rear parapet wall of 39 Burton Street will be built up to be the same height as the existing parapet walls on the other sides of this property as shown.

There are no windows facing the rear of the properties in Burton Place, (see drawing no. 0607 (P) 03A), and there can be no overlooking from the proposed new roof terrace since the parapet obscures the sight lines. There is no overlooking from the rear windows of the proposed new top floor since the rear of Cartwright Crescent is more than 23m away, and the terraces to the recently developed Tiger House to the rear are protected by obscure glass screens.

The proposed new extension does not overshadow the properties in Burton Place since it lies to the North of these properties.

We have taken considerable care to ensure that the proposed new extension does not adversely affect the adjoining buildings. We hope that as number 39 is so clearly different in design and intent from the remainder of the terrace, that an extension at roof level, invisible from Burton Street and Flaxman Terrace, will be acceptable. We believe this is a proposal which should be supported as it manages to increase the amount of residential floorspace (in accordance with Policy B3 para 3.31 of the current UDP) in a highly sensitive part of the city with negligible impact on either its neighbours or the surrounding streetscape. If this

establishes a precedent this is surely a good thing provided these stringent criteria can be met. The proposal will also result in the removal of the very high and prominent telecommunication mast, which is in accordance with policy B5 of the current UDP.

ACCESS

The proposal is for an extension to an existing second floor flat to enlarge it from a one bedroom to a two bedroom flat with roof terrace. The existing flat is accessible via a front door, hallway and communal staircase from street level. It is proposed that this access will not change. The Council's website requires that "All new housing (including changes of use and conversions) needs to be accessible to all." As this application is not for new housing (including neither change of use nor conversion), but merely alterations to an existing residential property which is not accessible to wheelchair users or ambulant disabled at present, we do not believe that this condition applies.