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Planning Services
London Borough of Camden
Town Hall
Argyle Street
London WCH 8ND

23rd August 2006

Fao: Ms Marilet Swanepoel

6105/2

Dear Sirs,

ST LUKES HAMPSTEAD- DISABLED ACCESS

On behalf of our client we apply for Planning Permission to allow the construction of this access. The application comprises:-

- 5 copies of the application form
- 5 copies of the drawings listed on the application form.
- 5 copies of this letter and the additional drawings and photograph to which it refers.
- the Access Agenda

This application follows the withdrawal of an earlier application on 16 August 2006. The first application was withdrawn because we were informed that you intended to recommend refusal. In phone conversations with your planning officer, Mr Leo Hammond (conversations between Tim Tasker and LH 14/08/06 and Russell Taylor and LH 15/08/06) the intended grounds for refusal were said to be that the proposal were "over-engineered", "too visible", "too heavy" and took up "too much floor plan". We understood these grounds had been formulated by a more senior planning officer who had not visited the site. We were told that we should follow the step by step analysis set out on pages 16 and 17 of the EH document "Easy Access to Historic Buildings". We pointed out that this part of the document is designed to demonstrate the reasonableness of provision under the Disability Discrimination Act not the Town and Country Planning Acts but were told that if we did not carry out such an analysis our application would be refused. It was also stated that we should investigate other possibilities and it was suggested that replacing the ramp with a chair lift might be a more favourably received proposal.

AIM OF THE PROPOSALS

This project is called "Disabled Access" but of course the aim is to provide much more than that. An analysis of what is required is given in the Access Agenda copies of which are enclosed. There is a small need for wheelchair access but a much greater need for access by:-

- parents with buggies and prams
- the elderly and infirm who have difficulty with the present access.

It is stating the obvious to say the existing access does not comply with Part M of the Building Regulations. It also does not comply with Part K, which allows a maximum gradient of 1 in 12, the existing is 1 in 9.5.

The existing approach to the entrance portals is not original. An earlier, perhaps the original, arrangement is shown on the enclosed photo: a wooden fence on the front boundary. The arrangements behind the fence are not known.

We therefore have an approach and access which is:-

- not original,
- cannot be used independently by those in wheelchairs,
- cannot be used independently by those with buggies and prams,
- unsafe to use by those who are elderly and infirm,
- substandard in all respects when, measured against current standards of design and construction.

ALTERNATIVE DESIGNS

As required we have investigated other possibilities:-

6105/2/Sk1 & Sk2: shows the ramp omitted and a chairlift put in its place. This certainly has a smaller "floor plan" but is otherwise unacceptable:-

- i) It is not what our client wants.
- ii) It does not give access to those with buggies and prams.
- iii) Access for the elderly and infirm is made unnecessarily complicated.
- iv) There is no safe emergency means of escape for wheelchair users, the elderly and the infirm (unless a stand-by generator is installed to ensure the chairlift can be used).
- v) It is more visually intrusive.

The EH document “ Easy Access to Historic Buildings” says “stair lifts are intrinsically visually intrusive” (page 13), also “ Ramps are often preferable to platform lifts because they do not break down and can also be used by ambulant disabled people, the elderly and people with pushchairs” (page 33).

6105/2/Sk2 & Sk5: shows a narrower flight of steps. This is unacceptable because:-

- i) It does not relate well to the entrance portal.
- ii) An unsatisfactory space is left on the E side adjacent to the Vicarage.

6105/2/Sk3 & Sk6: shows a shorter but steeper ramp but complying with Part M. The proposed ramp at 1 in 21 was a specific design aspiration because 1 in 21 is, as far as the Building Regulations are concerned, not a ramp, there are therefore no limits on its length and no requirement for a handrail on each side, It is inherently far less visually intrusive. A shorter, steeper ramp is unacceptable because:-

- i) It is more visually intrusive because handrails are required on both sides.
- ii) It does not relate well to the second, unused portal
- iii) It is more “over-engineered” because the levels in the ramp are more unlike the existing, surrounding ground levels. More extensive retaining structures are required.

A fourth alternative which cannot really be drawn is to provide temporary ramps. The EH document “Easy Access to Historic Buildings” says they are unacceptable because:-

- i) “The preferred aim in term of access is to make a building’s main entrance accessible to everyone on a permanent basis” (page 19).
- ii) “Temporary ramps can have a detrimental visual impact and are unlikely to provide a satisfactory long-term solution to access problems” (page 33).

And then of course there is the problem of where the temporary ramp would be kept!

The failings of these four alternatives seemed so self evident that, until required to do so we did not draw them, if you think others merit further investigations please say so.

THE PROPOSED DESIGN

The proposed design is a carefully considered proposal which:

- respects the existing architecture

- radically improves the appearance of the front of the building
- provides ramped access in the most simple, straight-forward way.

Respect for the existing architecture: is achieved by the use of matching materials: brick, Bath stone and York stone and matching mouldings which are in the same relative locations on the new work as they are on the existing building. Wherever possible the existing steps will be re-used. The new work is aligned with existing features: steps aligned on the entrance portal and the half landing aligned with the now unused portal. (the sign board is also aligned with this portal). In between is planting which will very much replicate the existing planting.

The new designs grow out of what exists and are not markedly different from what is there already.

“Easy Access to Historic Buildings” says “Composition in Gothic and less formal architecture does not usually involve symmetry. Proportion and balance will still be important, but greater flexibility may exist and allow, for example, the insertion of a single asymmetrical ramp” (page 21).

Improvement of the Appearance: is achieved by replacing the present rather ad hoc arrangements with something more designed using better materials. Surely replacing the present tarmac with sealed gravel must be an improvement?

Ramped Access provided in the most simple way: is achieved by rejecting the alternatives as noted above. The proposals for which approval is sought:-

- are less visible,
 - require less engineering
 - are more functional, and
 - more satisfactorily meet the requirements of the Building Regulations
- than any alternative

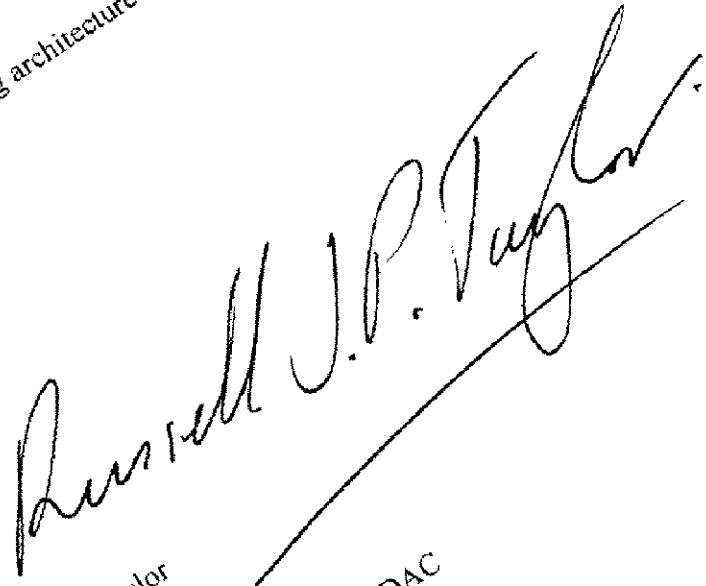
CONCLUSION

The proposed access:

- i) Is wholly in accordance with the guidance given in the EH document “Easy Access to Historic Buildings”
- ii) Does not affect any part of the Listed Building which can be said to comprise the building’s special interest.
- iii) Is the most minimal intervention possible complying with Part M of the Building Regulations.

- iv) Respects the existing architecture and improves the appearance of the approach to the entrance.

Yours faithfully



Russell J P Taylor

Encls.
c.c.

Andrew Curry
Charles Smith- London DAC

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