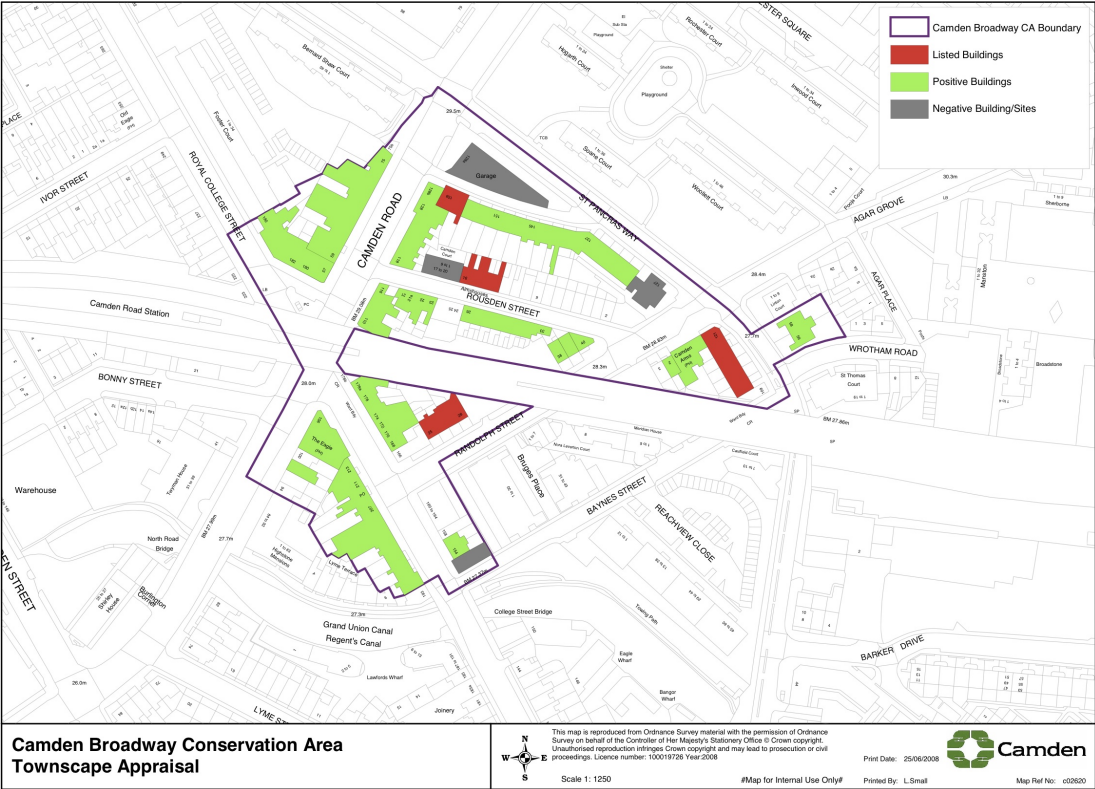


Commentary / objection to proposal 2014/5476/P and 2014/5486/P

The site, 152 Royal College Street, is located within Camden Broadway Conservation Area. The map below shows the boundaries of the conservation area, and highlights the adjacent building (no 154) as a 'positive building'.



Conservation Area Appraisal

The adjacent building on Royal College Street (no 154) has been designated under "BUILDINGS WHICH MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION" and "HISTORIC SHOPFRONTS".

Royal College Street and Camden Road were laid out in c.1820 and, with the exception of the north side of Camden Road, a map of 1832 shows that the conservation area's street pattern and built environment was complete by that date. The whole of the area bounded by Randolph Street, St Pancras Way, Camden Road and Royal College Street was built by 1832, giving the area a distinct architectural unity.

Management Strategy

New Development

It is clear from the conservation area appraisal that a key element of the distinctive character and appearance of the Camden Broadway Conservation Area is the area's broadly consistent architectural style, scale, form and materials.

High quality design, appropriate scale, form and materials and high quality execution will be required of all new development, including smaller alterations such as shop fronts, signage, and extensions which can harm the character and appearance of the area to an extent belied by their individual scale. The Council will particularly encourage proposals which seek to enhance or, where appropriate, redevelop those buildings and spaces, which are considered to have a negative impact on the special character or the appearance of the conservation area (see Appendix 3).

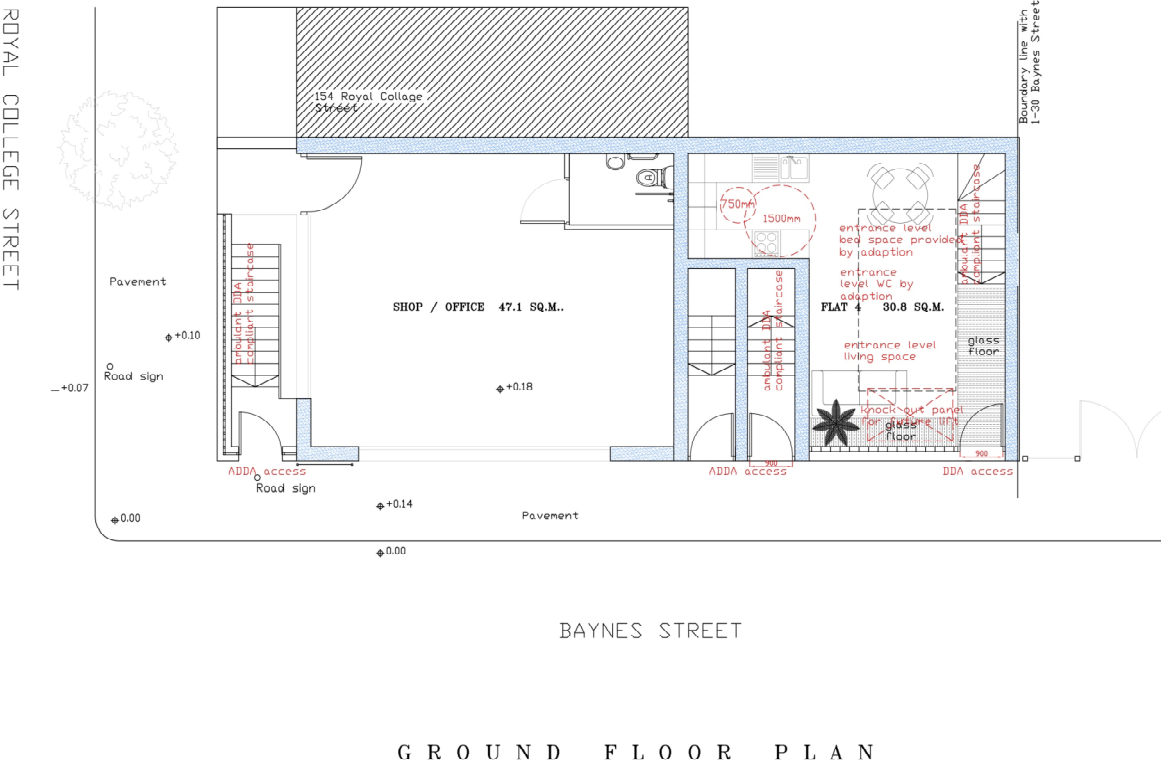
Change in the residential part of the area will be more narrowly defined in terms of use but in parts of this area the pressure to increase the capital's housing stock may produce proposals for new development of a greater scale. Again, high quality design and execution will be paramount and the design statements supporting such applications will be expected specifically to address the particular characteristics identified in the appraisal including the formality and regularity of the streets within the conservation area.

Proposal - Design and Access Statement

The proposal is to build a 4-storey+basement building on a currently open space, comprised of retail use as well as five residential apartments.

1. Layout and Access

The retail unit is accessed off Royal College Street, while the five residential units are accessed from Bayned Street; the two Basement/ Ground Floor Maisonettes are directly accessed whilst the three upper flats jave a seperate entrance directly adjacent to the bin storage access.



The Basement/ Ground Floor Maisonette located at the front of the building is accessed via an external staircase off Baynes Road, but running parallel to Royal College Street, along the front of the retail unit. This arrangement is out of keeping with the adjacent 'positive' building, and takes its reference from the less attractive replacement building on the corner of Randolph Street and Royal College Street. It therefore doesn't contribute in a positive way to the character of the area, and detracts from the 'positive' building next door.

The Design and Access Statement details on page "The conservation area appraisal refers to consistency of materials and character which clearly relates to original buildings and not the more modern insertions and replacements.", only to then use such a replacement as its main reference for the front facade design of the proposal.

Considering Appendix 3, page 19 and pages 23-29 of the Appraisal and Management strategy, which give clear guidance on how new developments should enhance the area, it is evident that this design

doesn't meet the defined criteria for new developments and should therefore be rejected.

Further to that, the quality of light and especially ventilation is questionable in both Basement/ Ground Floor Maisonettes.

The entrance to the three upper flats lacks an entrance hall, raising questions such as the location of mailboxes.

2. Appearance

The Design and Access Statement declares:

"Externally the existing building will be constructed in facing brickwork and render with high performance aluminum framed windows to provide high levels of acoustic isolation and thermal performance."

This statement is too vague, leaving it unclear where the proposal will be rendered, and where brick will be used. Considering the proposal's Conservation Area location, such information is vital to assess the proposal. Without such information provided, the proposal can only be rejected.

3. Layout and Outdoor Space Provision

The Design and Access Statement declares:

" There is no external amenity space provided on site. The potential for the creation of balconies was explored at the pre application stage and advice received that these would not be acceptable to the LA.

The location provides for many and varied publicly accessible amenity spaces including the Grand Union Canal and Camden and St Martins Gardens"

The lack of any private outdoor space is regrettable, and does not contribute to the quality standard of homes in the Conservation Area. The above excerpt suggests that the site is over-developed if no solution to provide adequate private outdoor space could be found.

4. Level of detail

The Design and Access Statement needs to provide further detail to prove its compliance with the Conservation Area Management Strategy. No mention is currently made of the quality of facade materials, the treatment of features such as the balconies, the detailing of the shopfront (given its adjacency to the 'historic shopfront' of no 154 etc. Detailed coloured bay studies and a proposed material palette should also be included.

5. Quality Guides: London Housing Design Guide and Lifetime Homes

The proposal doesn't meet either the LHDG or Lifetime Homes on a number of technical issues eg. doors need a 300mm nib to the opening side.

6. General Design Quality

The site sits at a prominent corner of the Camden Broadway Conservation Area. The proposal to infill this currently empty site is welcome as the site has been empty for some time after the closure of the e-bike retailer. However the proposed scheme is so poor in both quality and composition that it will actually cause more material harm than the current empty site.

Camden's planning policy makes it very clear that new proposals within a conservation area should 'enhance' the character and setting. This application suggests however that simply by using the empty site it will be an enhancement.

Specifically the general arrangement of the residential units are extremely poor with basement habitable rooms with no direct daylight, poorly arranged non 'lifetime home' compliant tiny units and no amenity space provided for any of the apartments?

The façade is bland in the extreme with window openings lacking any of the finesse of Victorian neighbours. The application lacks clarity of what type of brick will be used and is very vague generally about materials, this is particularly poor considering the location within a conservation area.

The set back roof is again extremely crude seeming to take it's cue from the particularly bad modern buildings consented within the same block adjacent to Randolph Street.

We at the CAAC suggest the scheme is comprehensively redesigned to address some of these most basic design points. This proposal is a missed opportunity to enhance a precious piece of Camden townscape and turn the corner with an attractive and elegant building.

7. Consultation

The applicant refers to a consultation of local Conservation Area groups, having distributed draft drawings. Camden Broadway CAAC regrets not having been contacted as part of this consultation, as we would have welcomed any pre-application involvement given the proposal's location within our conservation area.

Summary

In light of the significant shortcomings of the proposal, I object to the planning application. A brick end-of-terrace building, that address both Royal College Street and Baynes Street positively and equally, matching in character and consistent in footprint with the adjacent two Conservation Area Georgian houses and their back gardens would be much more suitable for this significant location.

The current proposal certainly doesn't enhance the Conservation Area; the empty site does less damage to the streetscape.