



Chartered Architects Interior and Urban Designers

17a/2 West Crosscauseway

EDINBURGH EH8 9JW

tel: 0131 668 1536

e-mail: StudioDuB@mac.com

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Grounds of Appeal – Application ref. 2014/3077/P

Decision Notice-3462763 of 21st August

Reasons for refusal

1.

“Glazed screening bars...would be visually intrusive” There are no bars proposed. Clear glazing, as proposed, is less visually intrusive than the metal or plastic bars to nos. 11 and 13 Lancaster Grove which Mr Hope suggested as an alternative design proposal.

“external staircase and enclosure” There is no enclosure proposed. We have proposed a straight flight of stairs here simply to replicate the external stair type of the local Conservation Area. A spiral stair is not seen in the vernacular. Please note that the spiral stair suggested by Mr Hope as an alternative design to the straight stair proposed would take up more width in plan. A spiral stair as an access stair to the garden would have to be a minimum of 1.9 metres in diameter (as confirmed by Camden Building Control to Studio DuB in respect of this proposal), yet the straight stair as proposed is only 0.9 metre width, less than half the “bulk” of Mr Hope’s suggested design solution.

Delegated Report – Application ref. 2014/3077/P

Proposal(s) “....installation of glazed screening bars” There are no bars proposed.

Site Description...

The property is divided into three self-contained flats” It is actually divided into 5 flats, and this proposal originates from flats B and C.

“...unity”, in this street elevation alone there is a mixture of semi-detached stucco buildings, bare-faced brick detached buildings, semi-detached brick buildings and even two 20th Century apartment blocks.

“...inappropriate replacement windows, loss of detailing” there are no inappropriate replacement windows in flats 17B or 17C, which form the subject of this application. Rather, these two flats have participated in common repairs to reinstate original detailing which had been lost over time, including the column capitals and cornice to the portico which have been recently re-instated.

“Dormer windows” Please note there is only one dormer window at 17 Lancaster Grove, and it is on the rear roof slope to flat 17E

Relevant History...

“Other relevant works... 1A Belsize Park Gardens replacement single storey side extension” is cited by Mr Hope, but since 1A is a corner property it has a different rear garden condition so arguably cannot be held as directly relevant to a mid-street property such as no.17 Lancaster Grove which has gardens on both sides. Furthermore, since 1A Belsize Park had a pre-existing single-storey side extension and the subject of this application does not have a side extension the comparison of the external stairs to garden is arguably irrelevant.

Assessment/ Proposal...

1.1 “new timber sash window to the flank elevation” The proposal is for a casement window as the opening would be too small to install sliding sashes.

“1.1 contd...glazed screening bars” [sic] There are no bars in the proposal which is actually for a glazed panel

“1.1 contd... new external stair enclosure” [sic] There is no enclosure proposed.

Rear elevation 1.3.4 “new staircase enclosure”, as above. “the stair well”, the proposal does not form a “stairwell” in the conventional use of the term.

“1.3.7...stair well”, as above. “The property is read as a pair”, yet in the adjacent pair of nos. 13 and 15 Lancaster Grove one has a stair to the garden and (to the best of our knowledge) the other one does not. “The proposed staircase enclose [sic] is considered to be a bulky addition”. But as demonstrated, a width of 1.9 metres of spiral stair according to Mr Hope’s suggested solution would have more than double the “bulk” of the 0.9 metre width stair as proposed.

“1.3.9 ...the majority are hidden by planters to limit the visual impact”, actually, surrounding plants have grown over time around the other existing garden stairs. The proposal of timber screening here instead of a solid wall is designed to encourage this to happen here too.

“Planning history suggest that majority of the properties on Lancaster Grove were built with an external staircase.”, this sounds like a glowing endorsement of the proposal.

“...it is considered that this addition would dominate the rear elevation”. Please note that many buildings, (both detached and semi-detached) in this Conservation Area have steps at the rear from the raised ground floor to the garden. In all these examples the garden wall increases to at least 1.8metres high, if not more, to rise above head-height and screen the steps from the neighbouring property, (as surveyed and documented in photographs forwarded to Mr Hope). These tall walls are sloped according to the gradient of the stair and are solid brick, sometimes rendered according to the treatment of the property. Given that the neighbouring examples are quite prominent, Studio DuB have suggested a less bulky arrangement for no.17, entirely supported from within the curtilage of the property, with the intention of being less obtrusive than the surrounding examples.

“...a detrimental addition to...the neighbouring building” On the contrary, whilst no. 17 has been regularly renovated to ensure its upkeep, the neighbouring building, no.19, has been poorly maintained by the owner for decades. It is run as an HMO with a total of 27 entry bells at the front door (an unsightly replacement door nothing like the original design). The rear patio area of no.19 has been fenced off by the landlord and has become a rubbish tip for items thrown out by the tenants. The same landlord has made numerous unsympathetic works and has allowed no.19 to drift into a very poor state of repair which is well documented in complaints to Camden Council over the past decades.

“1.4.1 Front elevation...new work...may lead to long term structural and decorative damage” Contrary to this, the proposed glazed panel would actually serve a dual purpose as a safety screen for open French doors and as a barrier against wind-driven rain which currently adversely affects the floor of the bay window area and ceiling of the room underneath. Therefore in this respect it is hoped that the proposal would actively enhance the decorative condition of the property by eliminating the need for repeated repairs owing to water ingress.

1.4.1 contd...“new work...maybe extremely difficult if not impossible to reverse once completed” The proposed addition of glazed panels would be completely reversible at no detriment to the existing fabric. “...the agent made reference to a recent planning permission that includes a obscured [sic] glazing bar [sic] to the front elevation”, yet this is the same application to which Mr Hope made reference as a good example of recent amendments granted. It is hard to understand how the glazing panels (not bars) at no1 Belsize Park Gardens (which are not obscure but are clear), are incongruous since they have been given permission and they are transparent therefore only marginally visible. Also it could be argued that this solution has now become common to the area, since similar glazed panels have also been installed on two other properties in the neighbourhood, as substantiated by photographs supplied by Studio DuB on 26th August at no.5 Belsize Park and no. 41 Belsize Park Gardens.

Lastly, it should be noted that neither the neighbours nor the Belsize CAAC made any objection to the application.