

## Basement flat 9 St Georges Terrace, London NW1

### Heritage, planning and context of proposals

In respect of proposals by Michael D Morris Architects for:

*Extension at basement level with garden reinstated over, new room in garden with green roof and walls. Removal of modern conservatory and modern balustrade to garden, internal alterations and refurbishment of existing flat.*

September 2014



Front Elevation (street)



Rear Elevation



Garden

## 1.0 Introduction and location

- 1.1 The basement flat 9 St Georges Terrace is a converted house which is part of a Grade II listed terrace situated in the Primrose Hill Conservation Area. The terrace consists of 11 buildings originally built as town houses in the mid 1850s the listing stating 1852. St Georges Terrace appears on the OS maps of 1851 as a road; but we believe the terrace, the mews and streets to the north were completed over the next 10-12 years, St Georges Terrace being one of the 1st. The terrace climbs on the lower slope of Primrose Hill set back behind a gated garden running between St Georges Terrace and Primrose Hill Road. The terrace looks out over the park and is a prominent structure that is an important element of the street scape of the conservation area.
- 1.2 This report accompanies an application for listed building consent and planning permission. The details of which are outlined in this report.

## 2.0 The Historic Development of the Site and Building Description.

- 2.1 In 1827, Eton College sort to develop their property holding, obtaining an Act of Parliament (7 Geo. IV. c. 25, private), enabling them to grant leases of land in the parishes of Hampstead and Marylebone. After the accession of Queen Victoria (1836), Primrose Hill was obtained by the Crown, and a public act was passed (5 and 6 Vict., c. 78), for effecting an exchange between Her Majesty and the Provost and college of Eton. This was fundamentally a land swop where Eton College received property at Eton in Berkshire, and gave up all their rights to the Hill and other principle land marks in the vicinity of Primrose Hill. The retained Eton property is now largely built upon, developed by Eton themselves or sold to others to do so. Hence the numerous roads and streets that bear names such as College, King Henry's, Provost, Fellows', Oppidans', and Merton, all on the north, south, and east of the Hill. The Hill was seen by the Crown as an extension to Regents Park hence the important grander structures which surround the Hill including St Georges Terrace. The houses in the terrace were built as grand houses for the upper middle class and minor gentry with residents such as the Byron family. In the 1930s-1980s the fortunes of St Georges Terrace along with Primrose Hill took a downward turn with many of the house being used as lodging houses etc. We believe the railings were removed during the war years with only the ones to the main steps retained. St Georges Terrace fell into a state of poor repair with many of the houses empty by the 1960s. The terrace was squatted in the 1970s with a number of the buildings eventually becoming owned by the groups that were part of this movement, after this there were a number of unorthodox divisions of the buildings, we are aware that part of the basement of number 9 used to contain the bathroom to number 10 with reference to 9 being access through the common parts of 10. There is evidence of ill matched budget driven repairs having taken place to the rear during this period. This would also account for the lack of historic internal features within number 9 and the original plan form being altered with much of the internal walls having been replaced. In later years the downward trend in fortunes has reversed with the Terrace being listed in 1997, an extract from the list is shown below.

*Ref- (798-1) 1245862 Terrace of 11 houses. c1852. Pale yellow stock brick with channelled stucco ground floors and quoins and dressings. 3 storeys and basements. Nos 3 & 9 slightly recessed and originally of 2 storeys. 1 window each. Ground floor tripartite sashes mostly with enriched cast-iron window guards. Each house has a prostyle Doric porch (Nos 5 & 6 paired) supporting a continuous stuccoed balustrade to tripartite 1st floor window with screen of 4 half-columns with enriched capitals supporting an entablature the cornice of which supports a balustraded window guard to tripartite 2nd floor window with pilaster screen and entablature. 3rd floor windows tripartite architraved round-arched with keystones. Heavy bracketed and enriched stucco cornice. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with spearhead finials to areas.*

In recent years much restoration work has taken place to the terrace as a whole many of the houses have had their railings reinstated and this work is ongoing with as houses are renovated in the terrace missing historical features have been reinstated.

- 2.2 The Terrace was designed in a classical palazzo style with details mixing classical orders. The overall form follows classical proportion but has both Doric and Corinthian elements, square and round pilasters, corbelled and cater levered cornices with a variety of friezes, dental moulding etc. It is almost a symmetrical composition as designed but the last house on the western end has an extra minor bay, where the surplus triangle of land has been used. As the village of Primrose hill grew in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the public house on Regents Park Road was added connecting to the eastern end of the terrace. This building although connected to the terrace uses different materials, scale of elements and forms meaning the terrace can still be read as a distinct composition. The terrace although important in townscape terms was certainly built as a speculative series of grand town houses although carefully considered; it is fundamentally based on the pattern books common at the time which put contemporary taste over scholarly rigour. As is usual the rear of the terrace is a more pragmatic composition with little consistency or real architectural merit. We have been unable to find the details of a particular Architect who design the terrace and it is possible that only the principle elevation to the park was designed as an entity with the buildings behind created by separate owners/builders which was common at the time which could explain the variety of treatments of the rear, there is also evidence of later additions and alterations since the terrace was built. It has been speculated that the Mews houses to the rear were once part of the terrace. We can find no evidence to support this, in fact there is evidence to the contri. As the party wall module of each differs, as indicated on historical and current OS maps. The garden levels are higher than the floor levels of the mews buildings which is what one would expect as the gardens would have been built up with the spoil from the basement excavations from the town houses. There is evidence of openings to the rear on a small number of the mews buildings but these share no common location or feature, we suspect these were added after construction and do not indicate any shared use. Numbers 9 and 3 in the terrace are set back and lower in height with a broken cornice in the centre; we suspect these would have originally had mansards to the upper level but these have been built up in rendered masonry on the line of the elevation. These are a device to enable the terrace to deal with the change in level while maintaining a continuous cornice line.
- 2.3 The setting and town scape has changed little since the terrace was built the only changes being to the west where a block of flats and an estate of town houses have been built in the 1970s, They make little to no relationship with the terrace, but are at a distance where their alien order and form have minor impact on it.
- 2.4 The site is located in the Primrose Hill Conservation Area facing the hill and is a prominent feature in the townscape.
- 2.5 In terms of historical features within the basement area little remains, of the elements that do exist such as the sash windows these are not original fabric having been renewed within the last few years. The majority of the internal walls have been renewed in modern stud and plasterboard and the original plan form altered. The living room does have a fireplace but the surround is a modern timber reproduction. The internal and external doors and joinery again are modern with fire doors etc. The openings on the kitchen (west) to the light well (at present partially filled in with the conservatory) are original fabric but the windows and doors are modern. The other openings to the rear are new with full height glazed doors.

### 3.0 Architectural features within the flat



Living room fireplace



External Joinery and modern conservatory



Kitchen showing doors to garden



Railings only present on steps



Partition replaced with stud and plaster



Modern conservatory filling in part of light well

## **4.0 The Proposals**

- 4.1 These are to extend the flat at basement level to provide a 2 bedroom family unit with amenity space, the garden will be reinstated over the new habitable space. An addition room is proposed at the end of the garden to access the garden level with planted walls and roof as a habitat for insects and wildlife, but also to soften the impact of this structure within the garden. The stainless balustrade to the higher level of the garden will be replaced with a brick planter to protect against overlooking back to the rear windows in the terrace, but again to give a softer more natural feel to the garden and rear of the terrace as a whole.
- 4.2 There will be a clear distinction between the new works and the existing fabric of the original building to protect the integrity of the listed building. The clear distinction will be carried through into the material and forms used to give a defined juxtaposition between each. The junction of the old and new will introduce a lead roof with seamed junctions between the panels. Lead is a quality material used in buildings of the time but detailed in a clean ordered way to mark the transition between the periods
- 4.3 The modern conservatory that partially fills the rear light well will be removed to reinstate the original profile of the rear of the terrace. The modern French doors will be replaced with painted timber double doors glazed in a pattern that matches the scale and detail of the original windows in the terrace.
- 4.4 The existing flat will be renovated and the rear room and hall plan form reinstated. As previously stated the external joinery to the original fabric will be in a style form and proportion of the original building.
- 4.5 The new works enable the building to be more sustainable with high levels of insulation, high performance glazing systems and spaces better suited to contemporary living without the need to compromise the heritage asset. In fact it gives us the opportunity to restore the plan form and order of spaces nearer to its historic state.

## **5.0 Impact of the proposals**

- 5.1 There is no impact on the conservation area as all the changes cannot be seen from the public realm as they happen at the rear. Further to this the majority of the space is beneath the garden. The works that are above the garden level will be green roof and wall structures with soft forms that will become part of the landscape.
- 5.2 As stated the proposals enable us to restore the original form of the Listed Building and provide a clear distinction between the two thus reinforcing the original form and presence of the terrace.
- 5.3 The completed works will be more sustainable and provide a more energy efficient family housing unit that meets contemporary needs while enhancing the Listed Building.

## **6.0 Assessment and Justification**

- 6.1 Our scheme seeks to conserve the special architectural and historic interest of St Georges Terrace by making a clear distinction between the new works under the garden and the original building. This is done while addressing the policies of sustainability, energy conservation and need for quality family housing.
- 6.2 The original building will be enhanced by reinstating of the original plan form of the rear room and the form of the stair well. The removal of the modern conservatory will

restore the original foot print of the house. All proposals have been carefully considered by assessing their impact on the significance of the listed building, its setting and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

- 6.3 There are no public views of the rear of the site and the proposed extension is mostly located at lower ground floor level as such has no impact on the conservation area. It is our view the principle reason for listing the terrace is its presence and impact on Primrose Hill the proposed scheme protects this.
- 6.4 In our considered view, the proposals accord with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, national planning guidance as contained in National Planning Policy Framework and the Camden's Core Strategy Policy Planning Framework Document and Unitary Development Plan.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

- 7.1 The scheme conserves the special architectural nature of St Georges Terrace; it further offers to opportunity to restore parts of the Listed Building; the new works upgrade the whole giving it a sustainable future.