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AMENITY GROUP CONSULTATION COMMENTS

Date 27 March 2015

Planning Application Number
2015/0594/L

Planning Application Address
24 Betterton Street WC2H 9BU

Proposal

Proposed restoration of 24 Betterton Street. Repairs to be carried out to the external envelop of the building. Internal alterations of spaces and reinstatement of original features.

COMMENTS

We object to the application (please state reasons below) ✓

The CGCA strongly objects to the proposed changes to this listed building in the Covent Garden Conservation Area. It is essential to preserve the original features in this Grade II* listed building.

First, the application has been validated without the supporting information required for such changes to a listed building. The application gives no indications as to the materials and methods that would be used to make the proposed changes. This information is required for any listed building application. Additionally, the only documents available are floor plans – there are no drawings specific to the proposed changes. The result is that the application is vague and misleading regarding the extent of the proposed changes. For example, the application vaguely discusses reinstating elements of the building, when in fact the proposals do not call for reinstating the original bespoke elements, but rather replacing the existing with modern copies of what would have existed.

Additionally, the CGCA is also concerned about the proposed new openings between rooms and blocking off of existing doorways and the removal of the existing fireplaces, which are clearly very old, with nothing to suggest they were added in modern times. The resizing of two rear windows, which along with the panelling are quite old. However, the applicant provides no details of neither what they will be replaced with nor details about the materials to be used. Knowing this is essential before a decision to grant permission can be made. Further, previous owners in the 1960s unearthed the very old alcove in the bathroom. Losing this would be a tragedy.

The CGCA objects to the following proposed changes, none of which are substantiated by the required documentation:

Ground floor

- According to the drawings, the applicant is proposing to install a new fireplace to the side of the existing chimney.
- The current door from the lobby to hall is being replaced with a non-original half-glazed, making this new door more modern than the door it is replacing (which although non-original, is older).
- The existing doorway would be blocked.

Covent Garden Community Association, continued...

- The new shutters are not in keeping with the listed-building status.

Stairway

- The application proposes removing the existing oil and replacing it with new and existing panelling. However, the existing dates to pre-listing and is extremely old.

First floor

- In the dining room to TV room, the CGCA objects to the use of a non-original cupboard.
- The non-original fireplaces have been in place since at least the Victorian era.
- Proposed new openings into rooms and blocking of original bespoke doorways are not appropriate changes to this listed building.
- With previous listed-building applications for this site, the Council's Conservation and design department required that the fireplace was retained at the time of the last application to renew, so a unit was made to cover it (ref no: LSX0205284). The applicant's proposal to remove the old fireplace and replace it with new one is in violation of this.

Second floor

- The break-through to the bathroom, as well as the break-through from the new dressing room to the adjoining bedroom through an original wall is inappropriate in a listed building.
- The new doorway to the rear dressing room is inappropriate.
- The original bespoke doorway from the rear dressing room to landing would be blocked.
- The entrance to the bathroom via landing will be blocked by a new door.

Third floor

- The new doorway between new bedroom 3 to the dressing room will not preserve an old alcove in this wall.
- The proposals would remove many of the features that existed at the time of listing and instead replace them with new, modern elements.

Drawings and details of the new proposed features (doors, fireplaces, panelling), including new secondary glazing, have not been supplied with the application, but must be provided for consultees such as the CGCA to examine, as well as for the Council's conservation officer to accurately advise planning officers.

The CGCA requests that these required documents be provided, and that the applicant provide assurance that they are indeed replacing for improvement of this Grade II* listed building. Until then, this application should be declared invalid and no decision should be made.

Comments submitted by

Meredith Whitten on behalf of the Covent Garden Community Association

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