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## LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN



*A Heritage Appeal Statement following the Refusal of Listed Building Consent by LB Camden for a rear elevation basement extension. ( Ref 2014/7251/L)*

*July 2015 (Rev4)*

# 1 PURPOSE & SCOPE OF THIS STATEMENT

1.01 This statement sets out the case for why this current appeal should be allowed as the local planning authority wrongly refused the application for Listed Building Consent for a rear ground floor extension.

1.02 The statement should be read alongside the document “An Appraisal of the Heritage Asset and the Possible Impact of the Proposals - November 2014” which was submitted as part of the suite of documents with the application for Listed Building Consent. That document describes the heritage significance, policy context and the likely impact of the proposed works. It is therefore considered unnecessary to repeat that information here.

1.03 This report is focussed on the actual reasons for refusal of the application and seeks to demonstrate that the proposed design is not only an appropriate extension of the listed building but is a distinct improvement on the previously-approved rear extension design (see Appendix A)

1.04 In the local authority’s refusal decision (28 May 2015), an informative is given that Reason 2 could be overcome by supplying a further window plan, giving details of all windows to be retained or replaced. As this is a matter that could be resolved with the submission of further information rather than an issue of disagreement on principle or policy, this question will not form part of the discussion within this statement. It is recommended that should this appeal be allowed, an appropriate condition concerning window repair or replacement should be attached.

## 2 THE CONTENT OF THE APPEAL

2.01 The reason stated for refusal by the local authority is:

*The proposed extension, by reason of inappropriate detailed design, would be detrimental to the special architectural and*

*historic interest of the grade II listed building, contrary to policy C14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy and policies DP24 (Securing high quality design) and DP25 (Conserving Camden's heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Development Policies.*

2.02 Policy C14 - This policy aims to protect Camden's rich and diverse built environment and aims to secure high quality contextual design in new developments.

Policy DP24 - This policy seeks to secure from all developments a high design quality that respects the character and setting of its location.

Policy DP25 - This policy seeks to ensure that development affecting heritage assets preserves or enhances those assets.

### 3 COMMENTARY ON THE REASON FOR REFUSAL

3.01 The appeal scheme was preceded by a scheme for full width rear extension (Appendix A). Both schemes were designed by HUT Architects. During discussions over the first scheme, local authority officers asserted that the single storey existing brick extension on the left hand side of the garden elevation was of heritage interest, and referred to it as "a closet wing". As a result, the architects revised their design to retain the brick extension (albeit in a rebuilt and taller form) beside a frankly modern glazed structure.

3.02 This produced a visually hybrid scheme with an uncomfortable and unresolved relationship between the existing brick extension and the new glazed structure. In an effort to retain the brick extension (or something roughly like it), neither the character of the listed building nor the interests of good modern contextual design were well served.

3.03 This somewhat confused proposal (Appendix A) was approved by the local authority.

3.04 The appeal scheme was developed in an effort to resolve the confused appearance of the first proposal, which markedly fails to preserve or enhance the character of the listed building.

3.05 The first question was to ascertain to what extent does the single storey brick extension have heritage significance? On examination, this small simple building is clearly not part of the original fabric of the house. There is a straight joint between the extension and the main house elevation indicating that the extension was added later. The extension is built in yellow London stocks, rather than the brown stock bricks of the main house. Rather than a pitched slate roof typical of original extensions, this structure has a flat roof. Concrete foundations are clearly visible on the front left hand corner of the extension. An extension contemporary with the main house, or nearly so, would have been built on stepped brick footings. It is notable that the approved scheme involves the rebuilding of the brick extension in a different taller form, so that it would then only exist as a somewhat attenuated conceptual historic idea.

3.06 The assertion by the local authority that this later extension is “a closet wing” is erroneous. Closet wings are a characteristic of late 17<sup>th</sup> century and early 18<sup>th</sup> century houses. By the later 18<sup>th</sup> century this feature was no longer present in terrace house design. Not uncommonly, later 18<sup>th</sup> century or early 19<sup>th</sup> century terrace houses may have original wash house extensions with pitched roofs and walls built in brick to match the main house. Simply detailed extensions, where they exist, typically form part of the composition and structure of the main house.

3.07 The existing brick rear extension is a later addition of low heritage significance. Achieving an appropriate balance between meeting new requirements and respecting the special historic character of this listed building does not require the “retention” of this small later addition in a rebuilt and altered form.

3.08 It is notable that the rear elevations of the neighbouring houses in this terrace have a variety of treatments, either original

or due to change. In particular, the house to the right hand side has an extremely large extension, highly visible from surrounding gardens. Considering change to the rear elevation of this building does not involve maintaining an unspoilt or uniform treatment evident throughout the terrace. Within well-judged limits, a variety of treatments may be considered without harming any features or historic character of acknowledged importance.

3.09 It is not necessary to retain the brick extension to preserve the historic character of the building. The approved back extension scheme has characteristics which are common with the appeal scheme:

- The extension is full width.
- The structure is framed in brick.
- There is a considerable amount of glazing.

3.10 The appeal scheme, however, has a number of advantages over the previously-approved design. By designing the extension as a simple low brick box, mostly glazed to the garden elevation, a compact and transparent structure is achieved which has more visual repose than the restlessness of the approved scheme. The simple geometry of the proposal is a contextual design, a sensitive modern response to the informal grid of windows in the house rear elevation.

## 4 POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

4.01 The three Camden policies quoted in the reason for refusal concern the protection of the built environment quality and the protection of heritage assets. The policy aspirations are all met in a positive manner by the appeal scheme. No historic fabric or features of heritage significance would be lost. The proposed design is superior in its simplicity and repose to the agitated and unresolved appearance of the approved scheme.

4.02 The local authority does not appear to have taken into account other relevant policy considerations. Firstly, Heritage England has produced guidance on the maintenance and alteration of London terrace houses (London Terrace Houses 1660-1860 -a guide to alteration and extension). Under the section on “Extensions”, it is advised:

*The balance between preservation and change may not always be easy to strike. The aim should be to minimise the impact on the building while helping the owner to adapt the property to suit reasonable needs.*

It is also advised that the proposals should be:

*Integrated harmoniously with the character of the building as a whole.*

The appeal proposals would be harmonious with the host building and would have a minimum of impact on the historic character.

Factors to take into account include:

- *Original closet wings and rear extensions or later extensions or features of interest.....*
- *Full width extensions should not usually be allowed, except in some cases at basement level.....*

The single storey ground floor rear extension was due to be rebuilt in the previously approved scheme. It is a poor quality later extension of low significance which does not meet the standard implied by the H.E. advice. Both the approved scheme and the appeal scheme are full width, but the appeal scheme is lower in height, which is an improvement, reducing the impact of the new extension.

4.03 The National Planning Policy Framework gives Government advice on the management of the historic environment. In Section 12 “Conserving and enhancing the historic environment”, paragraph

131, it states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

*The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

The reticent and simple design of the appeal proposal is an example of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, especially when compared with the poorly resolved previously approved scheme and the low heritage value of the existing extension.

Paragraph 132 of the NPPF states:

*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be.*

In this case, it is clearly necessary to judge the degree of heritage significance to be attributed to a rebuilt brick extension whose form would be changed from the existing. To what extent does this feature have any heritage significance? The Government's Planning Practice Guidance advises:

*How to assess if there is substantial harm?*

*.....In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so that it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitutes harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed.....Similarly, works that are moderate or minor in scale are likely to cause less than substantial harm or no harm at all.*

The appeal scheme causes no harm at all to the special interest of the building and the existing rear extension is a later addition of

low significance whose residual interest would be further eroded by rebuilding in an altered form, as proposed in the approved scheme.

## 5 CONCLUSION

5.01 The appeal scheme is a carefully designed and sympathetic contextual design which meets the requirements and aspirations of both local and national policies for the management of change in the historic environment. It is a simple, low in height and does not have any detrimental effects on the heritage significance of the listed building. It also has a number of improvements, described above, over the previously approved scheme shown in Appendix A.

5.02 It is therefore concluded that this appeal against the refusal of Listed Building Consent by the London Borough of Camden should be allowed.



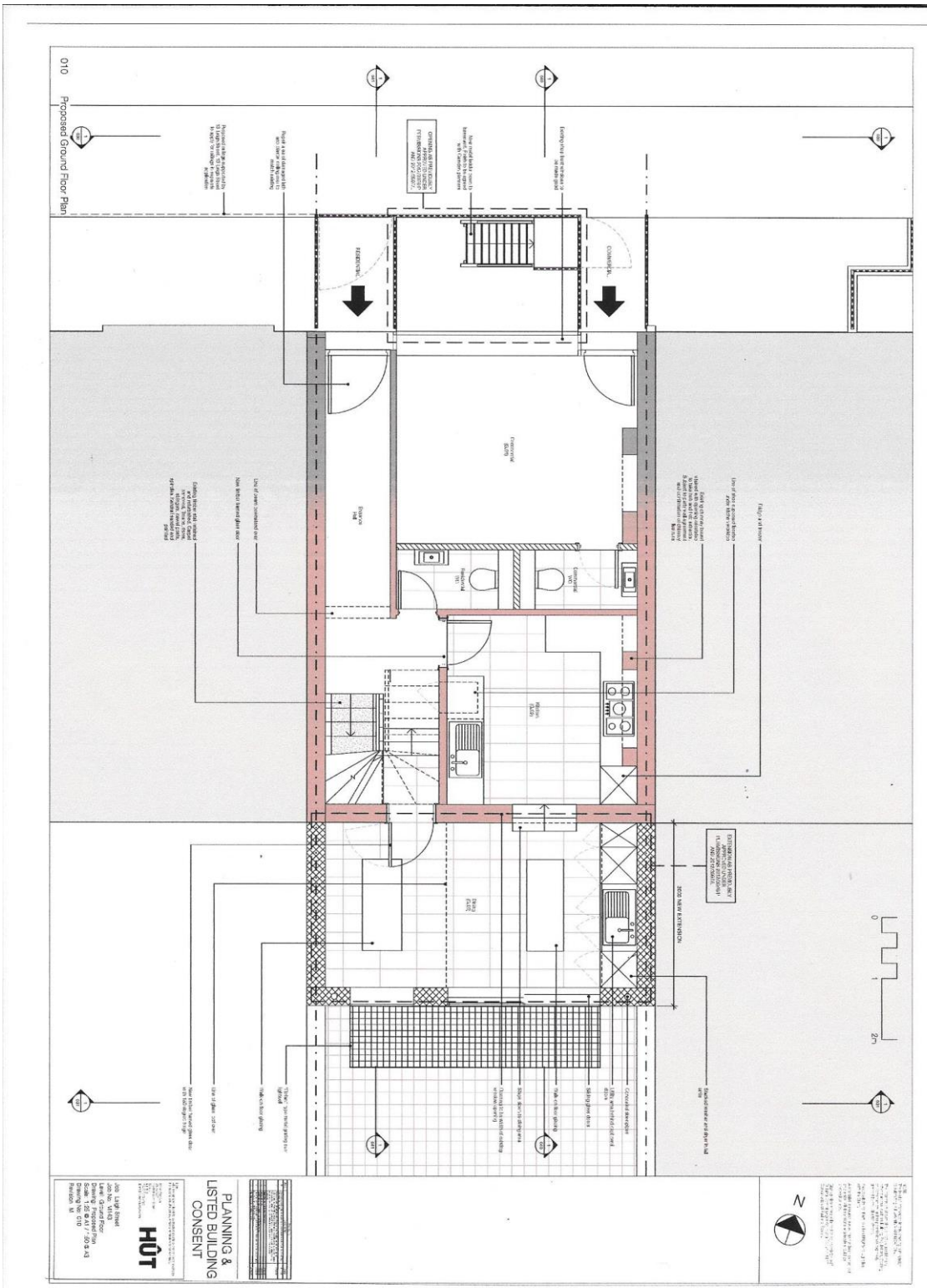
# APPENDIX A

The Approved scheme for a rear extension at 14 Leigh Street.

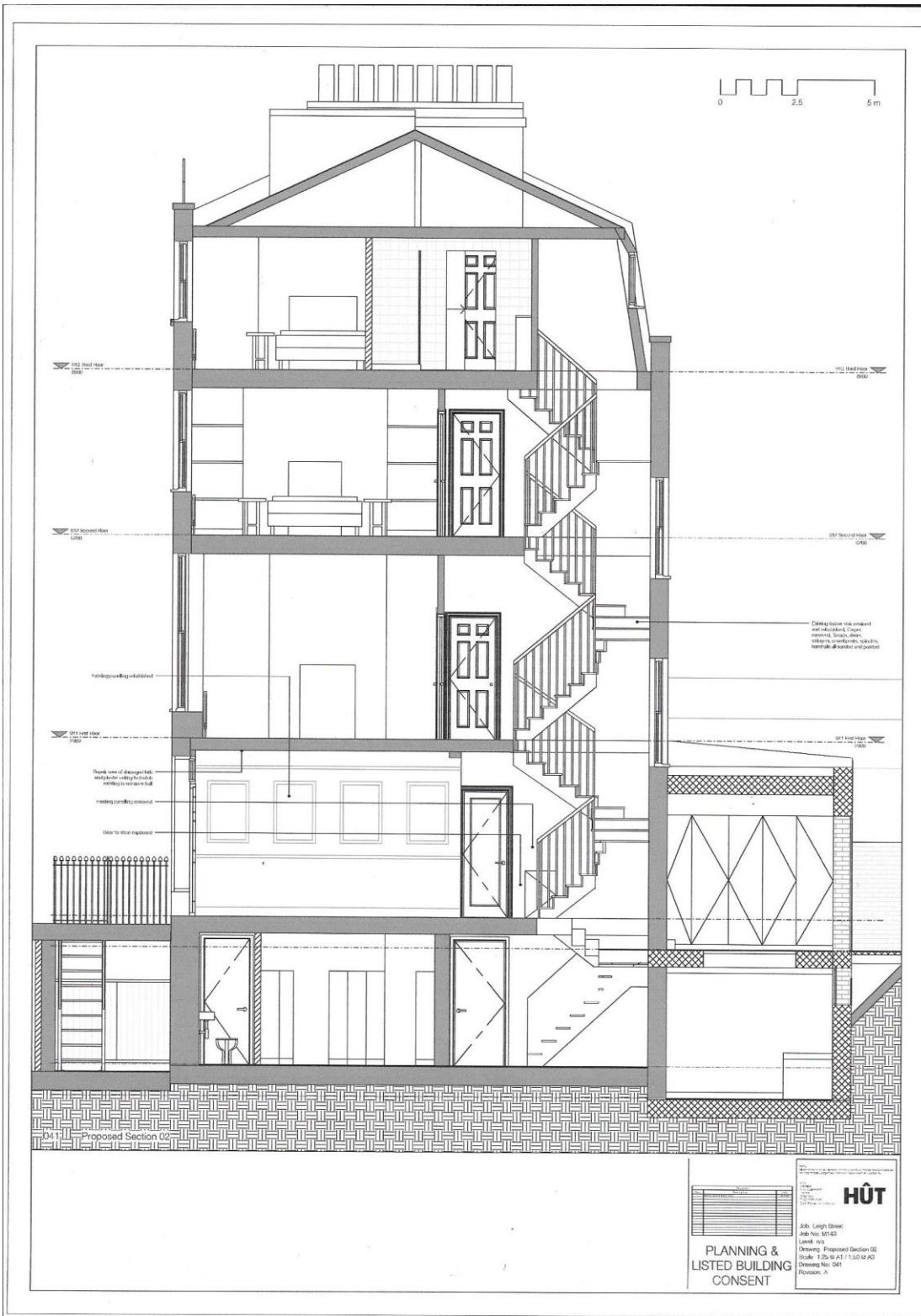
- 1) Rear Elevation
- 2) Basement Plan
- 3) Section



Approved Rear Elevation



Approved Plan



Approved Section