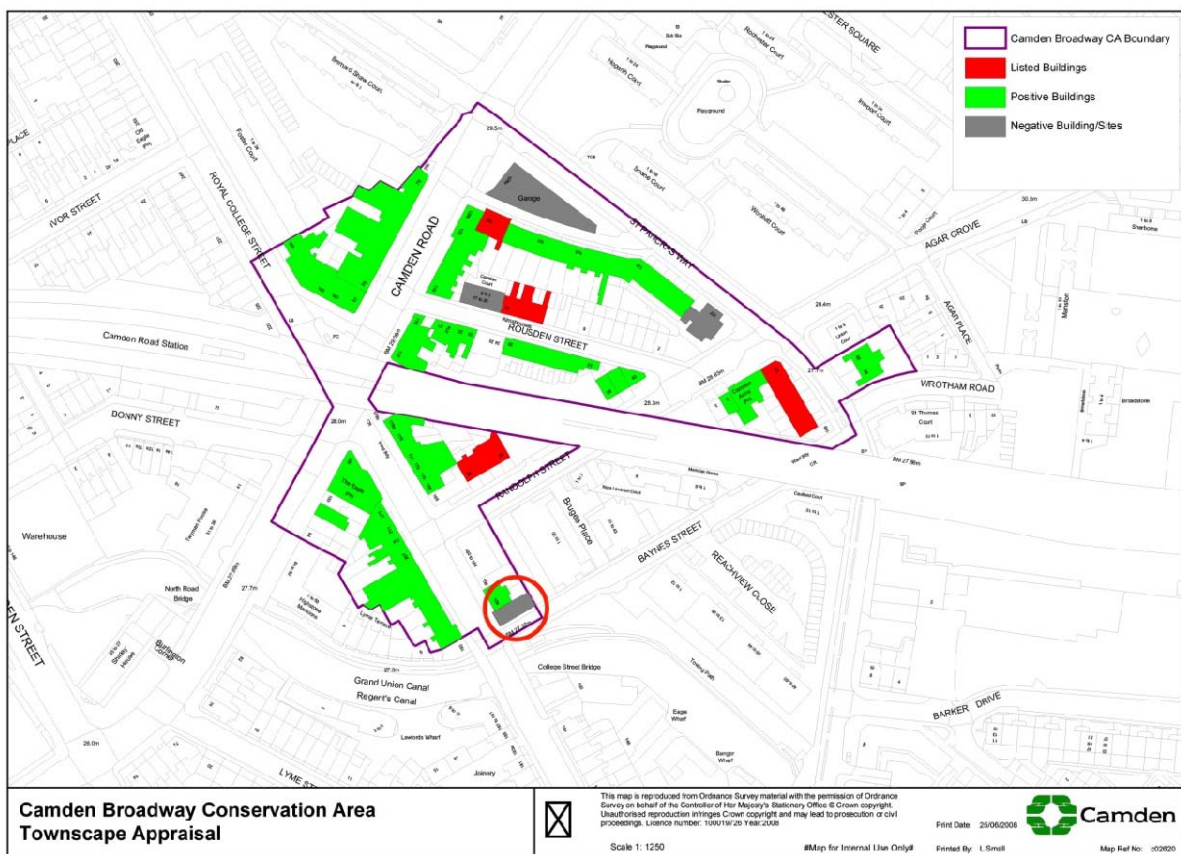


Commentary on application 2015/4396/P: 152 Royal College Street, Camden Broadway Conservation Area

Camden Broadway Conservation Area Advisory Committee
28th September 2015

Site

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 site itself as a 'negative site' and the adjacent building (no 154) as a 'positive building'. The site is located in a prominent position, at the intersection of Royal College Street, Baynes Street and the Regents Canal, and marks one of the entry points into Camden Broadway Conservation Area. It also sits at the beginning of a parade of shops that has seen an increase in investment and new businesses in recent years.



Application History

There have been two previous applications for this site over the last two years:

[2013/5689/P](#) (Withdrawn Decision): Construction of a four storey building including basement excavation balconies to rear at 1st, 2nd & third floor levels. Office (B1) & retail (A1) use at ground floor & basement level, x3 dwellings (C3) on upper floors.

[2014/5486/P](#) (Non-Determination: would have refused): Erection of four storey building plus basement to provide 5 x1 bed apartments and a Class A1 retail unit at ground floor level comprising 39sqm.

Camden Broadway Conservation Area Advisory Committee objected to application 2014/5486/P. Application 2013/5689/P was made before Camden Broadway Conservation Area Advisory Committee was established, but members of the CAAC objected to this application as individual local residents.

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy

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.

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

Consultation

The applicant, Henning Stummel, contacted Camden Broadway CAAC on 1st June 2015 to discuss ideas and outline proposals with the members. He presented work-in-progress designs at two CAAC meetings (1st June and 1st July 2015) through drawings and models, and kept the CAAC informed of any changes and news in relation to the proposed application. The consultation was a positive process welcomed by the CAAC members, and many of our thoughts and concerns raised with the applicant were picked up in the emerging design.

Proposal

The proposal of a three-bedroom dwelling above the office/ shop space is an improvement from previous applications that proposed 3+ very small dwellings to maximise profit. Camden Broadway CAAC is committed to support long-term residents, and values larger homes that are able to accommodate evolving households over long periods of time, rather than small flats that only serve a transient population. The potential of the office/ shop space to be detachable from the residential accommodation offers much needed flexibility for a range of occupiers.

The amenity space provision, through a terrace at the rear, seems appropriate and is an improvement compared to previous applications with little or no private amenity. The compliance with Lifetime Homes Standards is also welcomed by the CAAC.

As set out in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy, the development of this empty site is, in principle, welcome by the CAAC. This commentary explores how the proposal meets the criteria set out for new developments in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy.

Architectural style

The proposal is not in keeping with the architectural style of the conservation area. However, considering that the proposal is not a replacement for a historic terrace (i.e. it does not demolish an existing building in its place), but an infill of a currently empty, and unsightly, site, an appreciating that the post-modern rebuilding of past architectural styles isn't necessarily right either, we have assessed the proposal according to its merits as an addition of a different age and background.

Scale

Whilst the parapet line is in keeping with the neighbouring building, and additional, if semi-concealed, storey set back from the facade results in the proposal being taller than its neighbours. However, the corner location could be seen as a justification for the increase in height. Historically, a residential entrance on the side of a Georgian terrace is also not unusual.

Form and design

A key element of the proposal is how window proportions, floor levels and shuttering lines pick up proportions of the historic neighbour. These details can integrate two buildings of such differing architectural styles, if executed to the highest quality standards.

Through conversation with the applicant, the removal of previously proposed railings from the design proposal outside the shopfront was a positive development welcomed by the CAAC. Equally, the evolving design of the side entrance, now more welcoming and enhanced in materiality, has improved the proposal.

Materials

The proposed tinted concrete is not in keeping with the the brick-dominated context of the conservation area. In conversation with the applicant, members opened up to this unusual idea, but expressed that the proposed shade of pink may not be the ideal match with the yellow/ brown London Stock brick of adjacent number 154.

The proposed rhythm of vertical breaks helps integrate the new building with the vertical arrangement of the historic terraces.

The use of bronze for the gates, doors and handrails is unusual in the area, but given the building's prominent location at the entrance to the canal, could be appropriate if executed to the highest quality standards.

High quality execution

Camden Broadway CAAC members felt that the quality of the finishes and detail design will determine whether or not this contemporary addition to the historic fabric will succeed or fail. In order to safeguard quality, we recommend the council to insist on a sample panel from which to benchmark the quality of the finishes. Further to this, the imposition of conditions to safeguard the quality of the development may be advisable.

Summary

In isolation, the proposal is a compelling, interesting and well thought-through design of a contemporary home, flexible enough to accommodate a variety of occupants. However, within its context, it isn't very generous to the conservation area, and could have done more to acknowledge its role within this historic urban area. Considering the application history for this site, the current proposals are an improvement in massing, design and accommodation terms.

A majority of members commented that whilst their first impression of the scheme was 'not suitable for our area', their opinion changed during the conversations with the applicant, and with this greater understanding of the scheme they now support it as a very simple and contemporary, but not out of place, proposal.