

Sylvan Court, 145a Abbey Road, London

Roof Extension and New External Cladding for Existing Block of Flats

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT – PART 1



1. INTRODUCTION + DESIGN BRIEF

Living Architects have prepared this Design and Access Statement as part of a Planning Application submission on behalf of Apex Abbey Road Limited. Apex Abbey Road Limited have an agreement with the freeholders and leaseholders of Sylvan Court to submit a Planning application for a rooftop extension and other improvements including new insulated cladding and windows to be applied to the outside of the existing building.

The freehold of Sylvan Court is owned by SC Abbey Road Freehold Limited. There are three directors of the Company. Living Architects held a meeting with Apex and with the Directors to discuss the proposals. The plans were subsequently circulated to all the leaseholders.

An EGM of SC Abbey Road Freehold Ltd was held on 15th October 2015. At this meeting it was agreed that reconfiguration of the location of one of the bathrooms should be implemented by the architects in response to the objections of one of the residents. Subject to this reconfiguration, it was agreed that Apex should progress the application with the Council.

A pre-application submission was made in November 2015. This included a Design and Access Statement, Plans, Elevations and a 3-D CGI of the proposed design. The drawings are shown in Part 2 of this Design & Access Statement.



PHOTO 1. Sylvan Court

2. THE EXISTING BUILDING & THE URBAN DESIGN CONTEXT

Sylvan Court consists of 8 flats on 4 floors. These are 2-bedroom flats. There are also 7 garages associated with the property. Each garage is owned by a different leaseholder.

The property appears to have been designed and built not long after the Second World War in a "modernist" style with a flat roof, stone cladding on the ground floor and brickwork on upper floors. It has prominent window surrounds.



PHOTO 2. Sylvan Court showing the lock-up garages.

The proposed site is in the Priory Road Conservation Area. The Priory Road Conservation Area Statement summarises the essential character in the introduction with the following words:- This "is a small pocket of the Victorian, Italianate style inspired by the palaces of Renaissance Ital" "Variety of detail is inherent to the style, added to this area by the numbers of builders involved. The style gave the opportunity for either elaborate or little decoration. Semi-detached villas predominate, mostly with three stories and a basement."

The Priory Road Conservation Area Statement makes the following comment about the site:-

"The Victorian character of the south side is interrupted by Sylvan Court. A four-storey block that has a simple use of brick and stucco that does not detract from the conservation area. However there is a negative impact of the lock up garages of Sylvan Court that lie adjacent to the flats and face the pavement. The rears of Nos. 145-151 Abbey Road are highly visible from Abbot's Place".

Paragraph P15 of the Conservation Area Statement makes the following policy statement:-

"Planning Permission is required for alterations to the roof, at the front, rear and side, within the Conservation area. Some extensions at the rear and side of properties have also been detrimental. Any further extensions in the roof space

should respect the integrity of the existing roof form. Existing original details should be precisely matched".

The building is located on the corner Abbey Road and Priory Road. This is a prominent crossroads which is dominated by the church of St Mary by FJ and Horace Herbert Francis in the gothic style. On the opposite corner of the crossroads (photo 3).



PHOTO 3. St Mary's Church looking north along Priory Road

The conservation area is characterised by large 19th century mansion blocks varying in height but mostly between 3 or 4 stories in height. Immediately to the south of Sylvan Court there is a mansion block which is typical for the area (photo 1). Whilst the initial impression is that it is three stories in height, it does in fact have 5 floors of accommodation. The main "piano nobile" floor is accessed by external stairs covered by a prominent portico. Below this there is a lower ground floor. Above the piano nobile there are two floors of accommodation with windows on the brick facades. These reduce in height in accordance with classical Italianate design principles. There is also accommodation in the roof. This is probably a later conversion. A dormer window can be seen from the street on photo 2.



PHOTO 4. Mansion block on the corner of Abbey Road and Priory Road



PHOTO 5. Mansion block on Abbey Road adjacent to the garages

Further south along Priory Road the mansion blocks on the west side of the street have prominent towers, dutch gables, and dormers giving a varied roof roofline. The height at the roof eaves or parapet level varies from 3 to 5 storeys. The varied roofline is further emphasised by large chimneys. The tower on the corner of Priory Road and Abbot's Place (photo 6) forms a visual "stop end" and acts as a "counterpoint" to the church steeple.



PHOTO 6. View along Priory Road looking north towards Sylvan Court

3. MODERN BUILDINGS – DESIGN PRECEDENTS

Apart from Sylvan Court there are several modern blocks of flats in the vicinity varying in height from 3 to 5 storeys.



PHOTO 7. View along Priory Road looking south towards Sylvan Court

Very close to Sylvan Court is a 5 storey block of flats on Priory Road (photo 7). This appears to have been built about the 1960s. The top storey is set back, and this serves to reduce the prominence of the building relative to the mansion blocks on both sides.

A little further north along Priory Road at the junction with Goldhurst Terrace is a recently completed refurbishment (photos 8 & 9) which bears many similarities to what we are proposing. The building is however located in the South Hampstead Conservation Area where the buildings have a more domestic (less palatial) character.



PHOTO 8. Contemporary block of flats on Goldhurst Terrace

Like the scheme we are proposing, the building involved the re-cladding of an existing building to improve thermal insulation and improve the appearance. Seen from Goldhurst Terrace (photo 8) the set-back of the top floor helps to reduce the apparent height of the building. The very prominent roof and glass balcony balustrading are however clearly visible from the more distant view (photo 9) from Alcol Road. From this view the top floor addition adds visual interest to what would otherwise be a very bland mass of red brickwork.



PHOTO 9. Block of flats on Goldhurst Terrace seen from Alcol Road



PHOTO 10.. Mansion block on Abbey Road and Priory Road viewed from roof



PHOTO 11. Dormer window on adjacent property.

4. INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO HEIGHT AND MASSING

The existing building is 4 stories high. The parapet is roughly at the same height as the eaves of the adjacent 19th century mansion block on Priory Road. It is however lower than the mansion block on the corner (photo 4) and this is illustrated by the rooftop view (photo 10). It is proposed to increase the height of Sylvan Court to 5 stories, so the total height would be similar to the eaves of this corner building.

Whilst the Conservation Area Statement says that Sylvan Court “does not detract from the conservation area” it is a visually weak element on a very prominent street corner where the church and the corner mansion block (photo 4) are very strong visual elements. This is partly illustrated by the view in photo 7 where the chimneys of the neighbouring mansion can be seen above the roofline of Sylvan Court.

There is therefore a strong argument in favour of proposed alterations to the design which create a more prominent building, and a stronger design statement in this location.

We believe that the proposed grey cladding materials of the additional storey will better relate the building to the grey slate roofs in the conservation area. We

believe that pitched roofs or mansard roofs added to the existing building would not be appropriate, and that a rectilinear flat roof is appropriate. We believe that the new flats on Goldhurst Terrace provide a precedent that illustrates how a modern building with a flat roof can enhance a conservation area.