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New Rear Extension & Internal Alterations
64 Gloucester Crescent
London NW1 7EG

Design & Access/Heritage Statement

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BHA

Burd Haward Architects
United House
North Road
London N7 9DP
020 7267 9815
www.burdhaward.com

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1.0 Introduction

Planning and listed building consent are being sought for a new rear extension and minor internal and external alterations to number 64 Gloucester Crescent, London, NW1 7EG. The property is Grade II listed.

The proposals have been refined following detailed pre-application consultation with Camden's conservation design team. This Design, Access & Heritage Statement describes the proposed application in detail and should be read in conjunction with:

- Sunlight / Daylight Report (appendix I)
- Arboricultural Report (appendix II)
- Structural Report & Basement Impact Assessment Screening ((appendix III)
- Drawings & photographs as listed in the Drawing Issue Sheet (appendix IV)

2.0 Site & Surroundings

Gloucester Crescent is a residential street located in Camden, between Oval Road and Arlington Road. It is located within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area (Area 4).

The Crescent is made up of a variety of period houses. No 64 Gloucester Crescent is situated on the west side (facing east), and is fairly typical of the period, in terms of its form, detailing and embellishment. It is 4 storeys high, including a lower ground floor (basement), and is set back from the street with a front garden. The house is an integral part of the terrace, forming one half of a symmetrical pair with no. 65 adjacent to the south.

3.0 Building Description

The building is arranged as a single family dwelling. It is two bays wide and 3 storeys high when viewed from the street, with a lower ground (basement) level below and a pitched roof. The building is constructed in London stock brick. The front elevation has a stucco cornice at roof level, and painted stucco surrounds to the front door and windows. There is a projecting balcony at first floor level with ornate painted metalwork.

The ground floor is raised approx 1.5m above pavement level and is accessed by a flight of steps. A narrow flight of steps leads down to the lower ground floor. The front door is panelled with an overlight, and windows are white painted single glazed sash windows.

The house has a four-storey offshoot extension at the rear. The internal floor to ceiling levels of this element are lower than the main body of the house, with floors above ground level accessed from stair landings. This offshoot currently houses a bathroom at lower ground floor level and the family kitchen at ground floor.

There is a significant level change in the rear garden, which rises from lower ground floor level, where it is adjacent to the house, up by approx 3m at the far end of the garden. The garden also tapers, reflecting the radius of the crescent. There are two hard landscaped patios adjacent to the house, with steps leading to a grassed upper level that slopes up towards the rear boundary.

The main access into the garden is currently from the existing ground floor kitchen via a small metalwork terrace and staircase down to the upper patio area. The metalwork is in extremely poor repair and is dangerous to use. There is access onto the lower patio level from the lower ground floor bedroom and utility/bathroom, and the patios are connected by steps.

The interior of no 64 is well maintained. The house was substantially remodelled in the early 1970's, and many of the internal period features were lost. The main living accommodation is located on the ground and first floors, with bedroom and bathrooms above. The lower ground floor currently houses a family utility room/bathroom and a small bedroom for the applicant's son and a separate living/bedroom and bathroom for his dedicated live-in carer.

4.0 Scheme Proposals

The proposal is to add an extension to the rear of the property at lower ground and ground floor levels. At lower ground floor this will extend into the garden patio area by approx. 3.5m. At ground floor it comprises a small lightweight glazed conservatory that will sit adjacent to the existing brick offshoot extension. It will be slightly set back from the rear of the adjacent extension, and open onto a terrace formed on the roof of the extension below. New steps will connect down to the rear garden.

Internally, the kitchen will be relocated into the rear room of the main body of the house, with a small study in the former kitchen. It is proposed that existing window openings are enlarged to connect the new kitchen and study with the new conservatory. It is also proposed to close up the (more recently formed) existing hatch opening in the rear wall that connects the new kitchen with the study.

At lower ground floor, the layout at the rear of the house will be reconfigured to provide a small kitchen/dining area in the former utility/bathroom, a new living space in the main part of the extension, a small sleeping area below the conservatory and a new bathroom and utility room in the former bedroom. A second WC is proposed under the stairs. In addition it is proposed to form a small new lobby to the lower ground floor entrance by enclosing the space under the front steps and adding a new glazed entrance door. This will enable the space under the steps to be used as secure, dry storage and will improve thermal comfort at the entrance to the lower ground floor.

The purpose of the alterations is specifically to provide semi-independent living space for the applicant's eldest son, who is profoundly autistic with specialist needs that require 24-hour care. The proposed arrangement will enable him to remain at home as he grows up, with space for his live-in carer (as well as space for an occasional additional carer) and will give him some degree of autonomy, whilst still living with his family. The small conservatory extension and associated alterations will improve circulation, flexibility and the quality of the main family living spaces on the ground floor, and will enhance connection with the garden.

5.0 Form, Detail and Materials

The new extension is designed as two distinct but related elements: a base 'plinth' that is the lower ground floor extension and, sitting above, a lightweight timber framed glazed conservatory.

The lower level 'plinth' extension will be contained within the existing lowered garden level, which means excavations will be minimal. The topography of the garden means the roof level will be only slightly higher than the existing upper garden level, and thus its impact on the surroundings will also be minimal.

The extension will make better use of the dark overgrown space between garden wall and offshoot and the patio beyond. Existing party wall brickwork will be retained, strengthened and extended upwards as necessary and insulated internally. At lower level all brickwork and pipework will be boxed in, and new cupboards and shelves formed in existing openings. In contrast with this the existing brickwork and pipework at upper level enclosed by the conservatory will be kept exposed and painted, so the original form and materiality of the building is retained and clearly legible when viewed from the garden.

The wall facing the garden at lower ground floor level will be fully glazed to provide maximum light internally and views out. The conservatory will be fully glazed, with triple glazed units on a simple steel roof structure, and with full height painted steel glazed doors. Balustrading will be minimally and robustly detailed in open mesh metalwork to provide protection from falling and screening to neighbours (see Dwg P26).

6.0 Impact on Historic Building Fabric

The works have been carefully designed to minimise impact on the historic building fabric, to ensure they are sympathetic in terms of detail and layout, and to enable the original form and character of the building to be clearly understood.

At ground floor the conservatory will be set back from the rear wall of the offshoot extension and will be delicately and carefully detailed, so the existing form and massing of the rear elevation remain clearly legible both internally and externally. Similarly the offshoot structure is fully retained at lower ground floor, the only structural alteration being a new opening at the rear, below the existing doors above. Window openings in the flank elevation at lower level will be infilled and adapted to form alcoves and shelving.

At ground floor, the existing window in the flank wall of the offshoot will be enlarged to make a new opening through to the new conservatory. The existing rear window to the new kitchen will be extended down to floor level to form a new opening into the conservatory. Its brick surround, lintol, timber lining and architrave, which extends to ground level, will be retained and matched in as necessary. The internal large hatch opening adjacent, formed in the 1970s, will be infilled. Although the lowering of the cill involves a small amount of removal of existing fabric, there is already a recess to ground level below the window, and this small loss of fabric is considered acceptable when seen in conjunction with the closing up of the more recently formed hatch opening. On balance, it is considered preferable to do this rather than extend the hatch opening to ground level. Not only will it be more practical spatially, it is more historically accurate, and will enable the original floor plan to be better understood.

The enclosure of the area under the front entrance steps to form a new entrance lobby to the lower ground floor will be carefully detailed with a timber framed glazed door, much as at the door/ enclosure to no 65 Gloucester Crescent adjacent and similar to several other properties in the Crescent (see dwg P24A).

7.0 Access

There are no significant access implications, beyond the provision of new well designed family accommodation. The new external terrace and stairs will provide improved access to the garden from the main living areas of the house, which is currently limited by the existing terrace and external stairs. The new entrance lobby at lower ground floor will improve access at this point.

8.0 Impact on Neighbour Amenity

8.1 Daylight & Sunlight

A Daylight and Sunlight Report has been prepared to examine the impact that the proposed rear extension will have on the daylight and sunlight amenity to the neighbouring property, 65 Gloucester Crescent, see Appendix I.

As the extension is limited to basement and ground floor level, only the rear basement and ground floor windows and rooms in 65 Gloucester Crescent could potentially be impacted. Waterslade's survey and report examines the effect the proposed development will have on Vertical Sky Component, No-Sky Line and Average Daylight Factor in line with BRE measures for Daylight and Sunlight for this property.

The report finds the impact of the proposed development will be minor. As 64 Gloucester Crescent is located to the north of 65, sunlight will not be an issue. Considering daylight, it concludes that there will be no material impact. Whilst there will be some impact to the double doors at lower ground floor level, the overall reduction to the kitchen/dining room they serve will not be material.

It is concluded that the proposed extension accords with the daylight and sunlight guidance provided by both the BRE and Camden Council.

8.2 *Overlooking*

There is potential for overlooking to the neighbours' gardens on both sides from the extended roof terrace. However it is considered that there will be no significant change as substantial overlooking already exists from the existing rear glazed door, roof terrace and staircase. In any case, the proposal is to extend the party brickwork up to 300mm on both party walls, and to provide semi open planted mesh trellis up to 1.8m above terrace level (or similar mutually acceptable suitable fence/ screening detail.) NB - the daylight sunlight report and calculations have assumed screening being solid up to 1800mm, so, although already deemed acceptable in terms of daylight / sunlight levels, a more open mesh will further reduce any loss of light.

9.0 **Trees**

A report has been prepared by Simon Pryce Arboriculture (report dated 20th January 2016) that identifies the existing trees on and around the site, assesses and the potential impact of the proposed works on these, and proposes protective measures. See appendix II attached.

The report notes the only significant tree within no.64 is a middle aged Norway maple growing in the front garden. Others nearby are a Ceanothus in the rear garden of 65, to the south and a weeping willow and magnolia, both in the rear garden of no.63, to the north.

The report concludes

- The only significant tree at no.64 is the Norway maple at the front. No work takes place near it and it can be safeguarded against incidental damage by fencing the soft ground round its base.
- To the rear only two trees and a large shrub might be affected by the work; all of these are in adjacent gardens, although they could have made some root growth into no.64.
- Some work takes place within their potential rooting areas, but the amounts concerned are small and actual root growth there is likely to be less than the circular RPAs might suggest. As a result any direct root disturbance will be well within what they will tolerate.
- Some additional work space will be needed near the ceanothus and willow, but they can be safeguarded with basic lightweight ground protection and fencing.

The structural scheme incorporates the use of mini pile foundations to minimise impact on any roots and to ensure stability of the new structure in relation to the trees and associated potential ground movement.

10.0 **Structural Scheme & Basement Impact Screening**

Price & Myers Consulting Engineers have prepared a structural scheme, and because the works involves minor excavations, have carried out a basement impact screening assessment. Following the screening it is concluded that a formal BIA is not required for the project.

The presence of a Weeping Willow in the garden of no. 63, in combination with the clay strata beneath the site, means that a piled slab will be used to support the new structure. Underpinning will be needed to the existing rear elevation of the house, and the garden walls either side of the extension will re-supported on the new piled reinforced concrete slab. The superstructure will consist of masonry walls supporting timber joists and steel beams.

It is proposed that some of the rear garden will be slightly lowered. Currently the garden level to no.64 is higher than the levels in No.63 and 65, and the new lowered ground level will not be reduced below the level of the adjacent gardens to ensure that the garden walls are not required to retain earth pressures.

Refer to Appendix III.

10.0 Pre-Application Consultation

10.1 Consultation with Neighbours

The applicants have been keen from the outset that their extension is designed to have minimum impact on the immediate neighbours and that existing amenity and long-term good relations are maintained. The applicants have been in touch with both sets of neighbours to describe the proposals, and will ensure the works are carried out in a manner that minimises disruption and noise during construction.

10.2 Consultation with LBC - Pre Application Advice

The scheme was submitted for pre-application advice in November 2014 (reference no. 2014/7400/PRE). A site meeting was held with Victoria Pound, Planner (Conservation) on 23rd January 2015 at which scheme proposals discussed, and her email dated 17th March confirmed in principle support for the proposals as follows:

"The proposed internal reconfiguration is primarily confined to the lower ground level, and I consider this aspect of the work to be acceptable as it will not have a detrimental impact on the building's original plan form at this level.

The lightweight, minimally framed rear extension is proposed at lower ground level across the width of the house, and at upper ground level adjacent to the existing closet wing. The refined design approach will allow for the rear elevation of the host building to be appreciated, and in combination with its scale and position, this aspect of the proposal considered to be appropriately subordinate to the main building."

... I have concerns over the acceptability of the removal of the rear room window at the upper ground level ...(and consider) the loss of this window and formation of a doorway between this principal room and the rear extension will have a harmful impact upon the building's special architectural and historic interest."

It is noted that the pre-application scheme proposed that the two existing openings from the new kitchen - the original rear window, and the more recently formed internal hatch - were both taken down to floor level. This was discussed on site. At that time the client was keen to retain the opening directly into the study.

Following the above feedback, the design has been reviewed and adapted. It has been decided, rather than extending it, it would be more historically accurate to close the 1970's hatch opening entirely. Seen in this context, it is considered that the small loss of fabric below the window, provided it is done carefully, with the existing architrave (which extends to floor level already) retained, will be outweighed by the improvement gained by closing up the non-original hatch opening in the corner of the room. This will have the effect of reinforcing the generally symmetrical ordering principles in the property and make better sense of the new conservatory space. It is a detail we have successfully implemented at properties of a similar period nearby in Camden.

11.0 Conclusion

The proposal is a sensitive and appropriate addition to no.64 Gloucester Crescent, and will provide much needed additional family living accommodation, designed to suit the specific needs of the family and carers. The design of the extension has been carefully considered to appear subordinate to the listed building and to allow its form and massing to remain clearly legible. The proposal involves minimal loss of existing fabric, and all new elements, externally and internally, will be carefully detailed and constructed in order to respect the existing historic context. There is no material impact on the amenity of the neighbouring properties. The existing trees will not be affected and will be protected during the course of the works.

The design has been reviewed and endorsed in principle by the Camden Conservation design team as part of a detailed pre-application consultation process.

We trust the scheme will be recommended for approval.