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Project: 1604
11 Prince Albert Road

Design & Access Statement

Background

11 Prince Albert Road is a semi-detached mid-nineteenth-century Victorian villa, one of street of similar properties, probably built by J Guerrier and P Pearse, and currently used as a private family home.

It was entered on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural & Historic Interest at Grade II in 1974, and sits in the Primrose Hill conservation area, overlooking the Regent's Park in Camden. It was owned by the Crown Estate for many years, and the Estate still has some controls over the property by means of a covenant.

Externally the building appears a fine period property -albeit in need of some attention- but internally very few period features have survived: notably the primary & secondary structure, floorboards, staircase, and the windows and their surrounds. Further information is included in the Heritage Statement.

The building sits in a respectable garden with several mature trees. An arboricultural survey has been undertaken and forms part of this application. Root protection areas have been noted on the drawings.

Permissions were previously granted for works to the property:

- October 2015: Permissions 2015/4843/L & 2015/4670/P granted for 'erection of a lower ground floor extension and internal alterations namely the formation of a small opening to the side wall to connect to the lower ground floor extension, the removal of non-original partitions, repairs to structural walls and the renewal of internal fixtures and fittings'.

  The extent of these existing permissions and their implementation is shown on the accompanying 'As Existing' Drawings.

Design Proposals

As shown on the drawings, this application seeks approval for the following primary items:

- Design changes to new side extension, and associated works at the rear of the property, involving the light-wells, stepped access and landscaping
- Internal layout changes to those previously approved for the listed building including lowering of the lower ground floor slab level.
- Detailed remedial and upgrade works to the fabric of the listed building.
- Assorted other changes as shown on the drawings.

These are described below in more detail. Please refer also to the accompanying Proposal Drawings and the Heritage Statement for more details, and analysis of their impact on the listed building.

Design changes to the new side extension

To the rear of the new side extension, the 2015 permission featured a deep narrow lightwell, which would be very dark. Instead a series of stepped planters are proposed, to form a better connection between the new space and the garden. By centralising the external doors from the new gym, it is proposed to create a better flow of external spaces, with new external stepped access between the dining room door and gym lightwell. The conversion of the existing dining room window to a door is unchanged from the existing permission.

The external balustrades to the rear of the house would be of a contemporary glass design, reflecting the aesthetic of the new extension, and contrasting well with the black metal balustrades at the front of the property, which would be extended along the line indicated on the drawings.

There would be no change to the proposed amount of floor space created by the new proposals. The scale of the works remains similar to that previously proposed. The minor changes to the facades and form of the extension do not have a significantly different impact on the environment, existing buildings, or neighbours, than those already approved.

The excavation works proposed have been carefully set out to follow the arboriculturalist's recommendations and avoid the root protection areas designated. The roof of the side extension remains a 'green roof' as the 2015 permission, enabling the landscaping to the middle garden to be maintained.

Internal layout changes

A few minor adjustments are proposed, to make best use of the available space. These are clearly shown on the drawings.

It is proposed to alter the location of the new steps between the existing building and the new extension, away from a corner position, instead re-using an existing window, lowering the cill to form the required opening. This reduces the structural impact of the works on the listed building, since a new opening is not required, and the corner of the structure remains intact. It also improves the resultant room layout.

It is proposed to lower the lower ground floor slab of the main house, to improve headroom in the spaces there, and also to change an existing window to the rear into a door, which greatly improves the connection between the home and garden. The impact of these works on the listed building is considered in the Heritage Statement. The new floor slab would be insulated to modern standards.

Remedial works to the listed building

The building is currently suffering from a number of structural problems, including cracks of varying severity to the principle walls and facades, failing window lintols, and a sagging internal historic staircase. It also reportedly has suffered from moisture accumulation in the existing built fabric, believed to be a result of the breathability of the facades having been impeded by inappropriate twentieth century materials. The brickwork rear façade is proposed for full repointing following full remedial work.

Structural crack running full height of the building.

Poor modern repointing previously undertaken.

The visible defects are marked on the existing drawings, and a full schedule of identified defects and proposed remedial works and rationale is provided in the Heritage Statement. These have been developed in conjunction with our structural engineer, whose drawings form part of this application pack.

The leadwork to the main roof also requires attention, which to ensure proper details can be formed requires that the slate roof be carefully lifted and re-laid. We understand the property was previously re-roofed in the 1980s. Alongside our roof works, it is proposed to take the opportunity to make an alteration to the roof structure to improve third floor headroom by raising the existing modern bracing elements and modern ceiling joists, as shown on the drawings. It is proposed to remove the existing modern plasterboard ceilings to the third floor to allow these works.

The asphalt to existing roofs is also failing and would be replaced with lead.

The main staircase is proposed to have remedial work undertaken as shown on the drawings.

As a listed building, there is an expectation that, all being well, the building will continue to exist for a very long time to come. The remedial works would not adversely affect the appearance of the building: the upgrade works include re-rendering the facades with a breathable lime render and breathable paint finish; this represents a technical performance change (improvement), but not a change to the building appearance. Some roofing materials to the rear are proposed to change from asphalt to lead, which should represent an aesthetic improvement. Repointing to the rear façade will improve the aesthetic.

Upgrade works to the listed building

In order to reduce the building's carbon footprint over its (likely long) lifespan, it is proposed to take the opportunity offered by the absence of any historic wall finishes, and introduce breathable internal wall insulation to the building.

Typical slim secondary glazing added to period sash windows.

It is also proposed to introduce breathable roof insulation between the rafters, and slim secondary glazing inside the existing windows, greatly improving the whole building's thermal performance, as far as possible given the heritage considerations.

As shown on the drawings, there is currently an inaccessible vault (of uncertain size), under the front steps, currently visible only through a small hole. It is proposed to reopen the doorway to this, and if possible (subject to inspections) bring this back into use as storage and for access to the small isolated front lightwell and incoming utility meters. It is proposed to install a waterproofing system to the existing vaults, and any sections of wall to the Lower Ground Floor which are below external ground level, to prevent and manage the ingress of groundwater – refer to the heritage statement.

Other changes

The approved side extension separates the front lightwell from its current access via the rear. Alternative access was not explicitly provided in the approved scheme, but remains necessary for maintenance and to access the incoming utility meters.

It is proposed to locate a mechanical condenser unit to the rear of the property, in a location currently occupied by a corrugated iron roofed shed. This is far from the main house and neighbouring houses, and would be acoustically attenuated so as to not exceed background noise when operating. It would be concealed by a metal louvre, shown on the drawings. A second mechanical condenser unit is proposed to be located in the front vault, with the existing painted door changed to a suitable metal louvre (coloured to match the external joinery). This would be would be acoustically attenuated so as to not exceed background noise when operating. The equipment would all operate as part of the building HVAC system. Specialist information has been prepared detailing this mechanical services proposal and forms part of this application.

Shed at rear of the site.

Where changes are being made to existing historic fabric, like materials and construction methods will be employed in accordance with good conservation practice. However, where entirely new partitions or elements are to be formed, these would be of modern material, either blockwork or metal studwork construction, with modern lining materials, to avoid any future confusion about their age and sequence of construction (and so aid future conservators), and also ensure modern performance standards e.g. for fire

and acoustic compartmentation are achieved where possible. New openings through existing masonry walls will feature modern lintols. New acoustic insulation would be inserted between floor joists.

In line with the 2015 permission, it is proposed to repair and make good the front boundary wall and metal gates.

Access

No changes are proposed to the access *strategy* for the Listed Building. The access at the side and rear via the new steps are proposed to be slightly adjusted in form from the permitted design. However this will remain a dwelling approached by stepped access.