

Design and access statement

Flat 1D King Edward Mansions, 8 Grape Street, London WC2H 8DY

This design and access statement has been prepared in support of an application for replacing and fitting new joinery in one of the bedrooms of a flat.



The property is a five storey, grade II listed building, which lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The building was constructed c.1900 in brick with exuberant terracotta dressings and decorations. The facades are heavily fenestrated, particularly on the first floor where the decorative columns between the windows also continue inside the flats and are capped by decorative mouldings at ceiling level. The rear of the property overlooks a central courtyard within the block. The common areas of the building retain some of the original design elements, including a dark wood front door and bronze/copper light fixtures.

The design process – This application proposes the erection of new joinery in a bedroom/study at the rear of the flat including replacing an existing fitted cupboard, and encasing some existing plain cornice on the back wall and on a structural beam (see photograph above).

Use – The flat is currently a residential property with the second bedroom being used as a study area. This use will not change, but the intention is to improve the arrangement of joinery in the room for more effective use.

Appearance – At present the rear bedroom/study lacks any character. It is a largely bare room with inconsistent corncicing that runs along part of the back wall and the structural beam only. The cornice on the back wall is partly encased within a floor-to-ceiling plywood cupboard. No other walls have any corncicing.

The new joinery is made of dark stained wood (walnut and eucalyptus) with antique brass detailing that matches the original dark wood and bronze/copper detailing of the common areas of the building. It is considered that the proposed design better reflects the style and character of the original building while maximising the use of available space.

Approach – As explained in the heritage statement below, in previous renovations the cornice in question was hidden/encased by suspended ceilings and floor-to-ceiling cupboards. This approach is also proposed for the new joinery design. Specifically, the old cornice running along part of the back of the room is encased behind the replacement cupboards. To encase the cornice on the beam, the beam is slightly widened on either side (by 60mm) with stud walls that stop at the bottom of the cornice; the outer plasterboard continues up slightly higher before reaching the cornice. As shown in the related drawing numbered C-44-16-027WAT-44466-C, new wooden cornice is then attached to the ceiling and plasterboard thereby encasing the old cornice and leaving it preserved intact. At the join where the shelves on the back wall meet the beam, the wooden cornice on the shelves is mitred with the wood cornice on the beam to create a neat finish and without touching/affecting the encased old cornice.

Access – The proposed works are to an existing residential property and access to the site, and through the building, will remain unaltered.

Heritage Statement

The building was constructed c.1900 with shops on the ground floor, former showrooms and offices on the first floor, and flats on the remaining floors.

In c.1960 Camden Council converted the first floor to residential flats, installing false ceilings (and possibly also boxing for the pillars) thereby hiding the original decorative mouldings and all cornice.¹

On 27 Nov 2001 an application for change of layout to Flat 1D including partial demolition of non-load-bearing walls was approved.² The false ceilings were removed except for in the bathrooms, and where floor-to-ceiling cupboards were installed they were designed to encase the existing cornice.

The listing notes for the building state it is “included primarily for the quality of its street facades” and that the internal elements were never inspected. In comparison to the ornate moldings and corncing in the front of the building, the plain cornice in question does not appear to contribute in any meaningful way to the character of the building and it therefore seems unlikely that anyone would ever wish to display this cornice (particularly as it is only present on parts of back wall). However, the cornice may be original (and therefore historic) fabric of the building, and so the proposal preserves it perfectly in situ for the benefit of any future owner that wishes to uncover and display it.

¹ The following archived sales brochure includes photographs of another first floor flat in the building that retains the reduced-height rooms:

<http://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-for-sale/property-51191855.html>

² Application number LSX0105183