

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:		17/05/2017	
		N/A / attached		Consultation Expiry Date:			
Officer				Application Number(s)			
Nick Baxter				2017/1658/L			
Application Address				Drawing Numbers			
53-54 Carey Street London WC2A 2JB				Design and access statement, A1212, A1211, Seven Stars stair nosing, heritage statement (supplied subsequent to site visit)			
PO 3/4		Area Team Signature		C&UD		Authorised Officer Signature	
Proposal(s)							
Replace existing staircase with new one							
Recommendation(s):		Refused					
Application Type:		Listed Building Consent					
Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:		Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:							
Consultations							
Adjoining Occupiers:		No. notified	00	No. of responses	00	No. of objections	00
				No. electronic	00		
Summary of consultation responses:		Historic England gave consent to determine according to policy, although it expressed concern regarding the loss of the historic stair. No response was received from the Georgian Group or the Victorian Society.					
CAAC/Local groups* comments: *Please Specify		NA					

Site Description

The site is a grade-II-listed pub with painted brickwork cladding a partial timber frame dating, in part, from 1602 (listed 1974). The “narrow stair to upper floors set behind main bar” is mentioned in the list description. In the list description, some of the interior is said to date from the 19th century. It backs on to grade-II*-listed New Square and makes a positive contribution to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Relevant History

NA

Relevant policies

LDF Core Strategy and Development Policies

DP25 (Conserving Camden’s Heritage)

CS14 (Promoting High-Quality Places and Conserving our Heritage)

NPPF

Assessment

Proposal

The applicant contends that the current staircase is hazardous. He proposes to demolish the staircase and replace it with a modern copy.

History

The staircase has been partially concealed from view by having had boards and vinyl attached to it, apparently to level its treads. However, during the site visit, by standing beneath the staircase, it was clear that the upper section was probably 19th century, while the lower stairs were far older, being made from crude, unmachined timbers resting on stone blocks.

It was explained that the loss of this staircase was unacceptable in terms of loss of historic fabric. It was suggested to the applicant that he might instead reclad the staircase, as has already happened. This would have the effect of exactly reproducing the existing staircase, albeit an inch or so above and in front of its current position, while preserving the historic fabric, which is visible from below.

The applicant then submitted a heritage statement, written by himself, in which he concedes that the upper part of the staircase might date from the 19th-century. He suggests that that portion of the staircase might be removed, while the older, lower stairs could remain, but should have “their upper surfaces chiselled down” to allow the insertion of new steps.

It was pointed out that this too was unacceptable in terms of loss of historic fabric and consequent harm to the special interest of the building.

Observations

In the design and access statement, the staircase was described as “dating back no more than four or five decades and of amateur construction”, that is, it was represented as being a 1970s insertion. No heritage statement was initially supplied.

The majority of the existing staircase is probably Victorian, that is to say, it is at least 117 years old (the building was listed in 1974). If it is significantly newer than that, it is difficult to understand why it has been worn to the extent of needing to be overclad.

The bottom three or four steps are made from unmachined timber and are clearly older, and possibly contemporary with the building's date of construction.

The applicant wishes to justify replacing the historic staircase by saying that it is narrow and steep and therefore hazardous. However, the design and access statement allows that the proposed staircase will have the same number of stairs, and will "exactly maintain the historic configuration of the staircase", while the heritage statement says "in the narrow and steep staircase of The Seven Stars, there is no question about the stair being rebuilt to conform to modern regulations that would increase its width and reduce its pitch". It is therefore impossible to see any worthwhile benefit to safety.

There is a clear alternative to the loss of the staircase, namely to rework the overtreeds on top of the historic treads. If there are inconsistencies in the heights of the historic treads they can be evened up by using overtreeds of different thicknesses. Improvements in the provision of handrails would also help.

Consultation

Loss of a staircase is considered by Historic England to constitute substantial demolition of an interior. (The regulations for applications requiring consultation and notification with HE (April 2015) state that: "a proposal to demolish any principal internal element of the structure, including any staircase... is treated as a proposal for the demolition of a substantial part of the interior.")

Historic England was therefore consulted and expressed concern over the total loss of the stair.

Conclusion

The replacement of the staircase will lead to significant loss of historic fabric which will harm the special interest of the listed building.

The justification given for the loss does not constitute a substantial public benefit because the like-for-like replacement of the staircase will not make it significantly safer.

Furthermore, repair of the existing staircase is possible.

The proposal is therefore unacceptable.