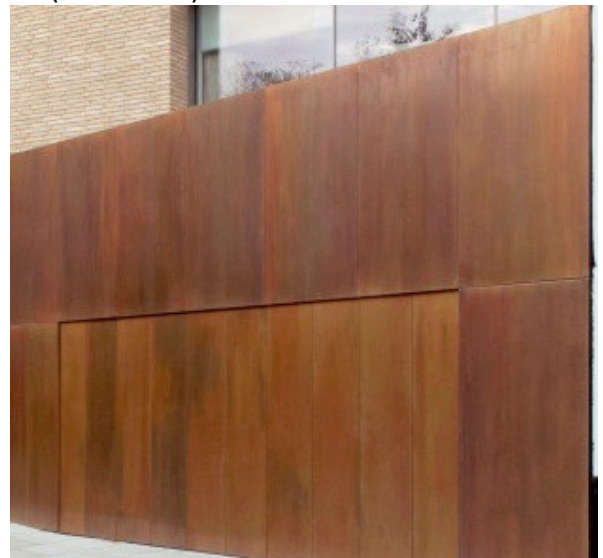


Planning Request Nr. 2017/4021/P - 32 Laurier Road, NW5.

Comments submitted by Monica Threlfall, joint leaseholder of Flat 1.

- 1) **Introductory comments:** Given the nondescript appearance of this house, a proposal for conversion and remodelling of the outside is welcome. But as it was built in the 1930s and is surrounded by Victorian houses, there are no clear pointers to what style it should be renovated to, eg. imitating the Victorian era of architecture previous to its construction? Trying to resurrect it to the style it was built in, following the available historic sketches and a few remnants of these such as its door and shape of windows? Or design something original that will bring interest to a crossroads made dull by this style-free building? The architect Richard Keep has chosen the latter, and succeeds to a considerable extent.
- 2) **The bronze cladding:** The new bronze-clad top elevation slopes back from the top front edge of its roof which takes away from the 'block' effect that a new floor topped by a flat roof would create. It also echoes traditional pitched Victorian roofs, and creates visual interest. At the same time the 'gallery' of vertical bronze panels in a row along the top reflects the roof lines of the neighbouring houses. This 'gallery' taken as a whole, emphasises a horizontal line that matches the house's horizontal windows and the street's horizontal rooflines. All in all, this elevation remains lower than its neighbouring house, signalling that it is not trying to compete with the older pair of Victorian buildings.
- 3) As to the colour of the bronze panels, we are now told that they would be of a bronze colour similar to several existing examples on various buildings (See a) below) . We are told bronze starts off pinky-brown at the beginning (see below: found online to match sample) but ages towards various shades of yellowy brown and medium brown (see below).



a) building selected by the architect as an example of bronze cladding with beige brick; b) Close-up of varying shades of bronze.



c) eg of new/young bronze colour similar to Architect's sample

This would be far from the deep chocolate brown colour of the CAD illustrations circulated to us by email.

- 4) The second, side piece of cladding looks to be suitably far from the new roof elevation, but is taller/higher. It looks rather too big. One objection is that this second piece of cladding begins at too low a level, and takes up rather too much of the whole space on the left-hand side (York Rise) of the house. In addition, the size of this piece of bronze makes the lower ground floor window and door beneath it look pressed down as if it were just a basement. The architect has agreed verbally to start the cladding higher up, at the level of the white concrete support bar above Flat 1's corner room window, to the extent of 20cm higher up.
- 5) The new windows for the new 2nd floor rooms behind the cladding could be made to stand out more clearly, with light seen to be filtering through from the new side or back windows. Then the bronze cladding would look lighter, less heavy, with more visible window panes, which will make the whole exterior look lighter. The bronze vertical window pane supports could then look as if they are shedding light outwards, rather than sucking it inwards (based on CAD illustrations).
- 6) The brick walls. After looking long and hard at the whole house from the front, I feel that the worst part is the bricks. The colour is unusual for the street, being neither reddish nor greyish, nor mustardy yellow - instead oscillating from greyy-beige to yellowy-beige, as well as being both discoloured, stained, and dirty. In addition the reddish mortar serves to emphasize the bricks' irregularities and worn quality.



- 7) Furthermore, there is nothing attractive about the concrete off-white joists over the windows and across the middle of the house, nor does the wide stripe of beige render help on its own. I am aware the architect plans to re move and clean it all up, but I am convinced this cannot be done satisfactorily, as the original colour of the beigey-yellow bricks is not attractive, so there is nothing

about the exterior one would wish to keep in the name of 'conservation'.



As to colours, with 3 big **bronze** pieces of cladding on the new second floor, across the top and on the new side elevation, plus the proposed **brown** Crittall frames to all windows and the cleaned-up **yellowy-beige** bricks, there is too much brown - the effect is monotone. I would not want it to become known as "the brown house".

- 8) The answer in my view is to hide all this unsightly brick, mortar, render, and PVC under a coat of something white and bright, such as new-style white render, or miracle new surface, in brilliant white or cream. The classiest houses in London do this. White smooths out bulges, odd angles and rough surfaces and it makes them unobtrusive. The use of white on this house front would show off the architect's work with the cladding and the Crittall windows. I am informed that cleaning brickwork is extremely laborious and expensive. By contrast, adding render is cheap (and easy to patch up in future) so I would wish to consult with the architect about this.



An example of white rendered walls with bronze features

- 9) The existing and new windows. The architect plans to replace all with new steel Crittall double-glazed windows, quite rightly in my view. Remaining queries are A. The shape of the windows: They are currently rectangular in the front – mainly horizontal, with some verticals and near verticals at the side. In the original house, which the architect may be thinking of reflecting in some respects, the panes are small and horizontal, too small in my view. If the layout of the panes were copied exactly, they would probably look distinctly *odd*, especially from the inside. But there are a number of possible shapes and sizes of panes that could be used as a reminder of window panes of the 30s. It would be good to hear from the architect on this. B. The colour of the windows: If the render on the front is creamy-beige, the window frames should be brilliant white; if the render is white, the windows should have creamy-beige frames as a mild contrast – but definitely not brown.

- 10) The garden wall and 2nd entrance door: the proposed treatment of these is very good: the idea of a level-height hedge all around will introduce harmony and privacy, while the separate entrance is essential to give Flat 2 enough space to get into the house comfortably, which is not the case at the moment.
- 11) I am not commenting on the floor plans nor the back rooms and back patio as these seem satisfactory as to issues of light and possible overlooking for Flat 2 leaseholders. All the greenery on the new upper terrace will also improve the side and back visually.
- 12) All in all I think the whole crossroads of Laurier Rd with York Rise will benefit from a new bright white house of original design – and Richard Keep’s proposals could well deliver this as long as the dreadful brickwork is brushed out – but with my suggested alterations to prevent it from becoming known as “the brown house”, and hopefully be referred to as “the modern white house with the bronze top”. A light, modern look would still sit well with its surroundings. There is no sense in trying to make the house look Victorian nor to recreate a fully 30s look. I see Richard Keep’s design could create a striking, even elegant house that retains some modesty in relation to its surroundings by *not* shouting “look at me!” in a neighborhood where homeowners put a lot of effort into keeping up and enhancing their already handsome homes.

I would be thankful if the Planning Department would take this detailed submission into account. As one of the leaseholders of Flat 1, I am keen to find a solution to the critical comments coming from various other stakeholders, so that a goodlooking result can be achieved. It would be a great shame to leave it as it is.

Monica Threlfall, joint leaseholder (non-resident), Flat 1, 32 Laurier Rd, NW5.