

Planning Services
Camden Town Hall
Argyle Street
London
WC1H 8EQ

Submitted via The Planning Portal

Wednesday 28th March 2012

Dear Sirs

63 PRINCESS ROAD, LONDON NW1
Extension and Refurbishment

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT 120328

BACKGROUND

63 Princess Road was built in the mid C19th as a four-storey, terraced, London yellow stock brick house in Primrose Hill. The property is now situated in a vibrant mixed residential / commercial / retail area of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area and is not listed. It appears that the adjacent 65 Princess Road to the east was built a little earlier in a different form with decorative brickwork to the front and is set around 1.75m back from the line of the terrace to the rear. The neighbouring no. 65 is in commercial use on all levels (a physical therapy clinic) and further to the east where Princess Road meets Gloucester Avenue many of the properties are mixed use with commercial / retail use at lower and upper ground floor levels and two storeys of residential above, some of which are accessed off an external rear staircase up to first floor level. All properties to the west of 63 are more similar to 63, being standard four-storey plain-fronted mid C19th terraced houses with three-storey rear outriggers, some of which have terraces above the outriggers as does no. 63 itself. It appears the rear outrigger of 63 was rebuilt in the 1950s or 60s with inappropriate red bricks, small timber casement windows and concrete lintels, and was painted magnolia some years ago to provide some unity. All windows to the house are single glazed, except those to the top floor front that were replaced in 2005 when a major refurbishment was undertaken to the upper three floors of the property. The lower ground floor was converted to separate use in 1978 but has since been brought back into use with the main house.

The houses backing onto the property along Edis Street are virtually identical to those on Princess Road and are also mainly in residential use (C3).

Many of the houses to the west have conservatory-type infill extensions beside their rear outriggers including adjacent nos. 61 and 59, which also have white painted bricks over the lower two floors. All houses (including 63) have two front vaults under the pavement, some of which are open to the lightwell and some have been enclosed and inhabited. Some have one vault open and one vault enclosed as a

store, and many have a staircase down from pavement level to the lower ground floor; indeed all properties have a unique combination of all these variants at the front.



-----61-----|-----63 Princess Road (House)-----|-----65 Princess Road (Physical Therapy Clinic)-----|-----67 Gloucester Av--
-----WEST-----|-----EAST-----

PROPOSAL – EXTENSION AND ALTERATIONS

The proposal is to refurbish and extend the lower ground floor to bring it into more comfortable use with the rest of the house, consisting of changes in the following areas:

VAULTS

The vaults are currently not inhabited; one is sealed off completely and needs to be opened up before the extent of structural and/or weatherproofing works required is known in full, and the other is used as an external store with a circa 1950s rendered masonry wall infilling the front elevation. It is proposed to make good structurally, insulate and dry line both vaults internally and form a lower floor level to provide height to stand up properly in a new laundry / utility room and bathroom. New painted fine metal framed double glazed windows and doors will provide natural light whilst maintaining privacy to the bathroom. These changes will not be visible from the street due to their location under the pavement.

FRONT WINDOW / DOORS

Most of the natural light to the lower ground floor comes from the direct sun shining through the south-east facing front façade, so it is proposed to slightly enlarge this existing window to allow more light to penetrate. It is also proposed to lower the cill to become sliding doors so that it is possible to access the area underneath the front external stairs, which can then be turned into a garden with shade-loving 'forest floor' plants. Currently, the area under the stairs is inaccessible so it tends to trap litter and leaves blown down off the street. The new glazed doors will be have fine painted metal frames to match the

delicate detailing of the timber sashes above. The glass will be specially toughened for additional security in this vulnerable position so it won't be necessary to obscure the view to the garden with an internal security grille. These changes will be hard to see from the street because the existing black painted cast iron railings surround the lightwell and obscure the view.

It is also proposed to enlarge the entry hall space at this level, to make it a possible to bring a bike down and round the corner into the utility room. To facilitate this, the doorway will be moved eastwards to the furthest point of the existing roof/step over. No changes are proposed to the front steps, other than works to the underside to improve the weathered envelope in this extended area.

BASEMENT FLOOR LEVEL

It is proposed to lower the finished floor level of the lower ground floor by around 250mm, which will necessitate a new concrete slab and insulation. It is hoped this work can be done without the need to underpin, but this is subject to structural investigation not yet completed. The appropriate party wall agreements and licences will be agreed before this work is commenced.



Photograph of existing rear outrigger, looking west



Photo-collage of proposed rear outrigger

REAR WALLS AT LOWER GROUND FLOOR

The house currently has three small-ish rooms with small dark windows at the lower ground floor level; it is proposed to open up this floor as much as possible to form a generous family living space with larger windows to receive the late afternoon and early evening sunlight from the west and to make a more direct connection with the garden. Window technology has advanced considerably in recent years making it possible to have large areas of glazing without significant heat loss (or gain). Only the lower ground floor rear will have fully glazed elevations. Full Part L calculations will be submitted to Building Control showing this design complies comfortably.

REAR GLAZED EXTENSION

It is proposed to form a substantially glazed infill extension next to the rear outrigger. This additional area of living room is important to make a good connection with the existing area in the rear outrigger. A similar proposal was approved in September 2011, at no. 55 (2011/4493/P) that also has a fully glazed, full width garden elevation at lower ground floor with a glazed roof to the infill in a contemporary design.

It should be noted that the house immediately behind no. 63 (15 Edis Street) was granted planning permission in 2010 (2010/2422/P) for a single storey garden room measuring approximately 3.2m x 3.1m x 3.0m high against the boundary with 63 Princess Road. The approved roof of this building is corrugated polycarbonate sheet.

AMEND POST-WAR WINDOW OPENINGS

The existing window openings in the rear outrigger are typically-detailed 1950s openings with concrete lintels, angled brick cills and squat proportions. The side-hung window casements are believed to be from 1999 with timber frames and double glazing. It is proposed to amend the upper level openings to follow a more traditional, vertical proportion in line with those further down the terrace, and to carefully position the opening at upper ground floor level against the eastern wall in order to reflect the westerly sunlight directly into the room. The frosting of the glass serves to 'catch' and distribute the light more evenly across the room, giving the appearance from within of something very bright, more bright in fact than clear glass. To maximise the effect of this brightness, it is proposed to set the windows flush with the surface of the render to reduce the shadow normally produced by setting back the frame into the depth of the brick. This traditional detail emerged because of the need to protect timber frames from rotting by giving a little protection, but the frameless glass panels proposed here do not need such protection so can benefit from maximum sunlight. The overall appearance of the outrigger in the daytime will therefore be of a high-quality, flush white box, echoing in contemporary style the white box outriggers further down the terrace. At night the traditional size and proportions of the upper level windows will merge seamlessly into their neighbours.

The floor structure of upper ground floor room will be removed to form a double-height space to the living room below allowing sunlight to penetrate directly where it is most needed without compromising privacy. The lower ground floor will be mainly glazed as detailed above.

INSULATE

It is proposed to externally insulate and render the existing single skin brick rear outrigger for three reasons:

- i) To mask the existing poor quality building materials including post-war bricks and mortar, window openings and concrete lintels without the need to entirely rebuild, thus saving environmental cost.
- ii) Provide significantly improved thermal performance without losing valuable internal space in these already small rooms
- iii) Form a deliberate relationship with the other white painted outriggers to the east (nos. 61, 59 and 57). No. 55 also has a white painted rendered outrigger, approved in 2011 (2011/4493/P).

The western wall, facing no. 61 will remain as existing because it has been used by neighbours to build a conservatory against at lower ground floor level. Since my clients do not wish to disturb them, the wall on this side will be insulated internally and this external face of wall will remain as existing.

SASH WINDOWS

All but two of the existing sash windows are timber framed with single glazing, which lose vast amounts of heat. It is therefore proposed to replace these with new timber framed double glazed units with traditional sash cords and details to closely match the original windows. There is a clear precedent for this approach in London Conservation Areas.

EXTERNAL STAIRCASES AND LANDING

There are currently two external staircases in black painted metal, both installed following planning permission in 1999 (PE9900666): One at the front in the lightwell connecting the pavement to the lower ground floor, and one at the rear connecting the kitchen at upper ground floor level via a landing down to the garden level. There is also an existing terrace on top of the rear outrigger, also regularised by the same planning permission in 1999. There are many other balconies and terraces at high level in the surrounding area, including those above the outriggers of nos. 59, 57 and 55, and also on the roof-top of no. 55 (permitted 2011 2011/4493/P). There are also metal balconies at raised first floor level to the rear of properties on Gloucester Avenue, including nos 67, 69, 71 and 75. Immediately behind no. 63 are nos. 15 and 16 Edis Street; no. 16 has a large terrace at first floor level and no. 15 was granted planning permission for another large first floor roof terrace in 2008 (2008/4490/P as yet unbuilt), both these terraces look directly down onto no. 63, thereby establishing a clear precedent for terraces at this

level. Indeed, external terraces and balconies overlooking the rear gardens seem to be a characteristic feature of this part of Primrose Hill and foster a sense of secluded 'back yard' community.

It is now proposed to remake the existing stairs in more refined materials and in slightly different configurations. The stair at the front remains pretty much where it is currently, but will be made in steel plate to cantilever out from the new masonry wall, in order to appear far more delicate and visually appealing from inside than it is now. The appearance from the street will be virtually unchanged, being concealed by the existing railings around the lightwell.

The stair down to the back garden also remains in roughly the same position, but moved 1.2m away from the outrigger to allow the glazed extension to be formed below. The materials and detailing will be the same as proposed at the front, cantilevering delicately off a new masonry wall. The black metal railings around the landing will be replaced with obscured glass up to 1100mm in height to improve the appearance and transmission of light, as will the railings around the terrace at the top of the outrigger.

LIGHT AND PRIVACY

When living in such close proximity to others in this dense corner of London, the privacy of occupants to carry out their indoor activities undisturbed by neighbours is very important, and the design of this proposal takes privacy into account in various ways:

- i) The boundary with no. 65 adjacent to the new glazed extension and external staircase will be protected with a 3m-high painted rendered wall, the same length as the rear outrigger, formed in such a way as if it were a solid full-width extension thus allowing the east-facing windows at the lower ground floor level to be of clear glass, facing onto a new garden planted under the stairs with shade-loving plants.
- ii) The glazing in the top two floors of the new outrigger facing north will be obscured.
- iii) The new clear glass window facing east towards Gloucester Avenue at upper ground floor level is smaller than the existing window in a similar position, and it will also not be possible to look through it in any case because the floor is removed at this level.
- iv) The replacement of the black railings around the top terrace with obscured glass provides a greater degree of privacy to occupants and neighbours without reducing light.

ACCESS

The main access to the front of the house from the pavement remains unaltered externally, and internally it is proposed to move the wall between hall and front room to allow more space in what is now a very tight entry space. The access through the hallway and down the stairs to the lower ground floor will also be eased through restructuring this area. A loo will be retained at this floor, and indeed new washroom facilities will be installed at lower ground floor level and also at first floor (mezzanine) level making close access to washing facilities easier for those in all parts of the house. The nature of a four/five storey house does of course make it unsuitable for those with mobility difficulties, but my client is keen to do what they can given the situation.

The external ancillary staircases at front and rear will be reconfigured to improve their appearance whilst maintaining current tread/riser proportions.

I trust you will be happy to support this application to extend, refurbish and environmentally upgrade 63 Princess Road to provide high quality family accommodation suitable for contemporary living.

I look forward to meeting you on site at your convenience, and would be glad to answer any questions you have in the meantime.

As part of an on-going commitment to a low-carbon economy I would prefer all correspondence to be electronic; you can email me directly at sam@samcauser.com.

Yours sincerely

Sam Causer RIBA