

NICHOLAS JAMIESON ARCHITECT

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94 AGAMEMNON ROAD, NW6 1EH – DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

The existing property and context

The existing property is a semi-detached four-bedroom two-storey Victorian house. The house is located on a tight, end-of-terrace site. Although the terrace as a whole faces south, onto Agamemnon Road, the front of the property faces east, onto Ajax Road. Directly across Ajax Road from the property is a play park, located in the northwest corner of Fortune Green.

The existing property is neither listed, nor in a conservation area, nor visible from a conservation area.

The external walls of the property are constructed of brickwork decorated with painted lintels, capitals and mouldings cast in artificial stone, and with terracotta stringcourses. The windows have sliding sashes. The roofing is of artificial slating, with ridge and hip tiles, and lead sheet flashings and valleys.

The principal elevation (see Photo 1) is composed of two wings. To the south is a principal wing and to the north is a subordinate wing, or 'closet extension'.

The principal wing comprises a two-storey bay to the south, an arch to the north, forming the main entrance, and a hipped roof.

The closet extension is two-storey, is recessed behind the principal wing, has plain walls without applied decorative features, and has a mono-pitch roof covered in artificial slates.

There is a small yard to the north of the closet wing. At the north end of the yard is a single-storey garage, of unsympathetic modern construction (see Photo 2).

There is an existing coal cellar located at the southwest corner of the site. As the garage is too small to accommodate a modern car the property has no facilities for off-street parking.

Across Agamemnon Road to the south, at 3 Ajax Road, is a house the principal elevation of which also faces Fortune Green. The two houses are of similar design, except that the principal elevation of the house to the south has two bays, one on each side of the main entrance arch (see Photo 3).

Although the house is in generally sound structural condition it has been unoccupied for a number of years and there are a number of features that need to be addressed before it can be used satisfactorily as a contemporary family home:

- The relationship between the living spaces and the garden is poor
- The kitchen and dining room are separated from each other by the entrance hall and stair – which makes it impossible to live a contemporary family lifestyle of cooking, eating and sitting in a single space, with access to the garden
- The existing bedrooms are of awkward proportions and sizes that do not allow comfortable arrangements of beds and other furniture - and the fourth bedroom is of area less than 8m² and width less than 2.4m
- An arrangement of a single bathroom without a WC, and a separate WC without a basin, which is unhygienic, serve the four bedrooms
- There is potential for using the loft space which is currently not exploited - and therefore wasteful of the materials incorporated into the building
- A large number of repairs are needed to the building fabric. Internal services and finishes have been neglected for many years and need to be entirely replaced. The building has no central heating or insulation.
- The existing garage is too small to accommodate a car, is unsuitable for any other use and is therefore wasteful of the space it occupies. The roof of the garage is in a deteriorated condition and is about to collapse.

Externally, although the house is generally attractive, there are a number of features that if addressed could improve the appearance of the house, the relationship of the house to its surroundings, and the appearance of the local townscape:

- The west elevation does not confidently address Fortune Green, which is the major public space adjoining the site
- The design of the east and north elevations is marred by a high level tank-housing
- The design of the east and north elevations makes the pattern of the north elevation of the terrace as a whole look as if it has been arbitrarily cut, without a properly designed termination
- The existing garage is unattractive and out of keeping with the style of the main house.

The applicant wishes to use the house as a family home for himself, his partner and three children, and as a place from which to work as an author. The applicant has a background in architectural history, writing books on the subject and advising building owners on the restoration of historic buildings. The applicant is keen to care for and respect the historic qualities of the site.

Design principles and concepts

The proposals address the above matters by means of four main elements:

- The addition of a second bay, to the north of the main entrance, that externally exactly replicates the existing bay to the south of the main entrance, arranged symmetrically about the centre line of the main entrance.

The internal space thereby added to the ground floor allows the location of a generous family cooking, eating and sitting space on the garden side of the house. The space added to the first floor allows the smallest bedroom to be increased to that of a generous single bedroom, and enables the provision of two bathrooms, each with a WC.

Externally, the proportions, features and materials of the extension replicate those of the existing construction. The extension therefore looks as if it has always been there, as part of the original design (see drawing no L(--07).

The extension also increases to a more appropriate level the confidence with which the building addresses the public space of Fortune Green. Furthermore, the extension makes the principal elevation of the property almost identical to that of 3 Ajax Road, creating a symmetrical arrangement about an axis along the centre of Agamemnon Road (see drawing no L(--08). The creation of the symmetrical arrangement further reinforces the impression that the Agamemnon Road extension has always been there, and further increases the confidence with which both buildings address Fortune Green. The value of the two buildings combined thereby becomes, in urban design terms, more than the sum of their individual parts.

- The rearrangement of the ground floor plan and north elevation at ground floor level so that the family cooking, eating and sitting space is better connected to the garden. Wide sliding glass doors connect the internal space visually to the garden throughout the year, and enable internal spaces and garden to be used as a single space during warm weather.
- The extension of the existing pitched roof over the new bay to the north of the main entrance; and the addition of a flat roofed extension in the crook formed between original and new pitched roof elements.

Internally, the additional space thereby enclosed allows the loft space to be used for a playroom, or potential guest bedroom, and for plant.

Externally, the extended pitched roof unifies the original bay to the south of the main entrance and the new bay to the north of the main entrance, and provides a much-needed termination to the terrace when viewed from the rear (see drawings nos L(--07 and L(--09/2). The flat roofed extension is in keeping with the variety of existing extensions which liberally decorate the rear roofscape of the terrace (see drawing no L(--09), but is hidden from the highway and from Fortune Green by the pitched roof extension (see drawing no L(--10). The ugly existing tank housing is removed.

All existing artificial slates are to be replaced with new natural slates to match the original slates.

- The demolition of the existing garage and its replacement with a more attractive, slightly taller structure, more in keeping with, but still subsidiary to the main building. The structure is to be used to accommodate the applicant's study and large collection of books.

The combination of the above addresses the problem of adapting the house to modern family life, while maintaining and improving the character of the original design and townscape.

Policies and guidance that have been taken into account when designing the proposals

Pre-application advice provided by Camden Advice and Consultation Team, Ref 2017/0176/PRE

National Planning Policy Framework, 2012

- 6. Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
- 7. Requiring good design
- 12. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

The London Plan, 2016

Policy 7.4 Local character

Policy 7.6 Architecture

Camden Local Plan 2017

Policy A1 Managing the impact of development

Policy A2 Open Space

Policy D1 Design

Policy D2 Heritage

Camden Planning Guidance CPG 1

2 Design Excellence

3 Heritage

4 Extensions, alterations and conservatories

5 Roofs, terraces and balconies

Policy considerations that have informed specific design features

The proposals generally

'National Planning Policy Framework, 2016 – 6. Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes' is aimed primarily at increasing the supply of new homes. However, its implicit emphasis on the need to make the use of housing land as efficient as possible, and its explicit emphasis in paragraph 50 on the provision of "housing based on current market trends and the needs [...] of families with children" and in paragraph 51 on bringing "back into residential use empty housing" very much support the proposals.

'The London Plan, 2016 - Policy 7.4 Local character' paragraph 7.13 states that:

"Based on an understanding of the character of a place, new development should [...] reflect the function of the place both locally and as part of a complex urban city region, and the physical, economic, environmental and social forces that have shaped it over time and are likely to influence it in the future [...]."

Paragraph 7.14 states that:

"Through characterisation studies, character can be identified and valued, and used to inform a strategy for improving the place."

The proposals respond to the requirements of paragraphs 7.13 and 7.14 by being based on a careful study of the character of the place in which the site is located (see, for example, drawing no L(--))09). The conclusion reached was that the surrounding urban fabric is indeed complex. It comprises three elements, each of which need to be addressed in a different way:

- To the south and southeast the site forms the corner by which the north side of Agamemnon Road meets Ajax Road. The southeast corner of the building as existing performs the job in a handsome manner and is not to be altered.
- The east elevation faces Fortune Green, a large open public space. Although the main entrance is located within the elevation, the design of the elevation as existing is timid in relation to the prominent position it occupies. The addition of the second bay overcomes this timidity.
- The rear of the terrace, facing north, of which the site forms the end has a totally different character to the south and east frontages.

At ground floor level the parade of back-to-back closet wing gable ends remains largely unaltered, although at the next wing down from the site, at nos. 88 and 90, the pitched roofs have been removed from both sides and replaced with flat roofs used as terraces.

At first floor level, however, the roofscape has over recent decades been almost entirely reshaped so that its character has been radically changed. It is now an interesting jumble of different roof forms each responding to the “physical, economic, environmental and social forces” that have influenced them and will continue to do so.

The proposed roof extensions successfully connect the alternative characters of east elevation and rear of terrace: the pitched roof extension presents a unified façade to the public space of Fortune Green, hides from Fortune Green the modest flat roofed extension that is in keeping with the rear of the terrace, and provides a proper termination to the rear of the terrace.

The addition of a second bay

Paragraph 58 of ‘National Planning Policy Framework, 2016 - 7. Requiring good design’ states that developments should “establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit”. The improvement in the relationship between surrounding buildings and Fortune Green achieved by adding the second bay is a direct response to the requirements of paragraph 58.

The pre-application advice provided by Camden Advice and Consultation Team, Ref 2017/0176/PRE, concluded with:

“[Adding a second bay] seems to offer a chance to create additional space. Your design investigations so far have rightly aspired to add to the building in a way which completes the whole. This seems a good path on which to proceed.”

The rearrangement of the ground floor and north elevation

'Camden Local Plan 2017 - Policy D1 Design' paragraph 7.8 states that:

"Design should be durable in construction and where appropriate should be flexible and adaptable for a range of uses over time, a quality known as robustness. Robustness is influenced by factors including the size and shape of rooms, points of access and the depth of floorplates."

The proposed alterations to the ground floor plan and elevations are intended to adapt the building to suit it to contemporary family life and allow its use to continue into the foreseeable future.

The extension of the existing roof across the new bay and the addition of a flat roofed extension in the crook

Paragraph 58 of 'National Planning Policy Framework, 2016 - 7. Requiring good design' states that developments should "optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development". The proposed roof extensions enable the loft space to be used as habitable accommodation, thereby optimising the use of both land and materials.

Paragraph 58 also requires that developments "respond to local character and history, and reflect the local surroundings and materials". The proposed roof extensions have been developed in accordance with the policy: the pitched roof extension responds to the character of the buildings facing Fortune Green, and properly terminates the rear elevation of the terrace; the flat roofed extension, invisible from Fortune Green, responds to the more recent history of lively development dominating the roofscape to the rear of the terrace.

'The London Plan, 2016 - Policy 7.6 Architecture' paragraph 7.21 states that new buildings should "reference but not necessarily replicate, the scale, mass and detail of the predominant built form surrounding them". The proposed pitched roof extension references the predominantly urbane nature of the surrounding buildings in Agamemnon Road and around Fortune Green, while the flat roofed extension at the rear references the predominantly heterogeneous character of the existing rear terrace roofscape.

'Camden Local Plan 2017 - Policy D1 Design' paragraph 7.4 reiterates the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and the London Plan:

"Careful consideration of the characteristics of the site, features of local distinctiveness and the wider context is needed in order to achieve high quality development which integrates into its surroundings [...] How places have evolved historically and the functions they support are key to understanding character."

The analysis of the site and its surroundings, the identification of the different character required of each aspect of the site, and the resulting design proposals accord with paragraph 7.4.

'Camden Planning Guidance CPG 1 - 5 Roofs, terraces and balconies' provides guidance specific to roof extensions. Paragraph 5.7 states that:

"[...] roof alterations are likely to be acceptable where [...] there are a variety of additions or alterations to roofs which create an established pattern and where further development of a similar nature would not cause additional harm."

As explained above, there are indeed “a variety of additions or alterations to roofs which create an established pattern”: in the context of which the proposals will actually make an improvement, rather than cause harm.

Paragraph 5.11 provides guidance on dormer design and states that “usually a 500mm gap is required between the dormer and the ridge”. Although the proposed flat roofed extension is not a dormer it has been designed to follow the spirit of the guidance and leaves a 500mm gap between it and the ridge. It further accords with Figure 4 in that its cheek is located 600mm from the party wall, 100mm beyond the 500mm minimum shown.

The replacement of the existing garage

Paragraph 58 of ‘National Planning Policy Framework, 2016 - 7. Requiring good design’ states that developments should “optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development”. The proposed garage replacement enables the space previously occupied by the unusable garage to be used as habitable accommodation, thereby optimising the use of the site.

Access

Access to the property will remain as existing, via the front door. It is not proposed to provide parking facilities within the property.