

FAO Camden Borough Council Planning Department

Representations regarding planning application 2018/1696/P

Submitted by:



Encs: Pictures annexed

The application describes itself as “part retrospective”, but there are two issues with this. Firstly, the plans submitted by the developer do not match the staircase as built. Secondly, the staircase is currently in an unfinished state.

Because of this, it is not clear whether the developer:

- is seeking permission to leave the staircase as it is but has submitted inaccurate plans; or
- intends to amend the staircase to match the plans.

And it is further unclear whether the developer has any intention to rectify the unfinished aspects of the staircase.

The differences between the plans and the built staircase are described below, followed by a description of the current state of the staircase.

Difference 1

The two flights of stairs are shown on the plans as 9 steps west + 9 steps north.

What has actually been built is 6 steps west + 11 steps north.

The key effect of this difference is that the end point of the second flight projects significantly further into the courtyard than is shown on the plans: Drawing P-14-1 (bottom left) shows the last step being 3200mm off the wall of the front block. It has been built as 3821mm – over two feet further into the courtyard space. The full potential impact of this is described later.

Difference 2

Drawing P-14-1 (top right) states that the staircase should be polyester powder coated in RAL9011 (graphite black).

What has actually been built is uncoated galvanised steel. Obviously this is a much less attractive finish than is described in the plans, is inconsistent with the finish used on other metal surfaces in the development, and creates an unfinished “industrial” feel.

Difference 3

Drawing P-14-1 (top right) shows the presence of 20mm safety rods, which have not been included in the built staircase.

State of Completion

There are issues of quality and safety with the current state of the staircase. It appears to have been constructed with the paving bedded into sand and cement rather than a waterproof epoxy. The additional failure to use any kind of waterproof grouting has resulted in the cement leaching out of

the render. This can clearly be seen in the formation of streaking and “stalactites” and has already resulted (after less than two years) in some of the paving becoming loose. As this situation continues to deteriorate, the staircase will become increasingly hazardous.

Another failure of quality and potential safety issue is the electric lighting cable which in some places has just been taped onto the staircase (which of course is made of metal!) and left exposed to the elements.

A further safety failing is that the first step is a different height to all of the others, which constitutes a trip hazard.

Request to Refuse Permission

We request that the council should not grant permission, on the basis that the submitted plans do not match the actual built staircase, i.e. retrospective permission is being sought for something which is very different from what has actually been built.

At the very least, we would ask that the council requires the submission of new drawings, and a clear statement of the works intended, together with an extension of the period for public consultation to allow comments on the amended application.

However, if the council is minded to grant permission, then we ask that the impact of the differences between the drawings and the built staircase be carefully considered, and that appropriate conditions should be imposed before permission is granted.

Since this application is a precursor to the further development of the site, we would also ask that the council consider imposing conditions that the developer should satisfactorily remedy existing breaches before permission is granted.

Comments on the impact of the discrepancies follow – there are two sections because of the lack of clarity over whether or not the staircase will be rebuilt to match the plans.

Impact of Discrepancies (If staircase to be left as-is)

If the developer's intention is to leave the staircase as-is, we feel that a number of considerations are important.

Most significantly, the increased length of the second flight of stairs brings the end of that flight further into the courtyard than shown on the drawings. It is important to appreciate that the end of the existing flight of stairs will become the beginning of the extended staircase to reach the additional roof extension unit, for which permission was granted on appeal under application 2016/4687/P.

The access staircase for the roof extension will involve an additional four flights of stairs to gain two full stories in height (see 2016/4687/P drawing P-07-1 Proposed East Elevation). This extension of the staircase will dominate much of the view from the lounges and bedrooms of the existing apartments in the back block. Clearly it is therefore important that the staircase is positioned as close to the wall of the front block as possible, to minimise the intrusion into these apartments'

aspects. The two feet of difference between the built staircase and the plans will have a significant impact if allowed to extend over four flights of stairs.

The failure to install the staircase with the promised powder coated finish becomes very significant when it is considered that the staircase will grow by a further four flights and an extra full landing in order to reach the roof extension unit, all of which will be highly visible from the units of the back block and also from neighbouring properties.

If the council is minded to grant permission and the staircase will remain structurally as-is, then we would ask that conditions be imposed such that – **before permission is granted** – the developer must:

- Correct the finish of the existing staircase to meet that specified in the drawings, namely PPC RAL9011;
- Submit for approval drawings of the subsequent extension of the staircase to provide evidence that the extended staircase will be built in such a way as to minimise the impact on the view from existing dwellings in the back block;
- Take up and re-lay the paving in such a way that it is properly waterproofed and doesn't present a future safety issue;
- Properly box in and protect the electrical cables.

In summary, we would ask that the council does not grant permission until the staircase has been brought up to a decent standard, and a proper opportunity has been created to analyse the impact of the subsequent extension. Without conditions being imposed to this end, there is a risk that when the developer extends the staircase he will do so to the same poor standard, failing to give due consideration to residents of the development or of neighbouring buildings.

Impact of Discrepancies (If staircase to be rebuilt)

If the developer intends to demolish the staircase and rebuild it in accordance with the plans, then there are different considerations.

An obvious concern is how access will be maintained for residents of the upper maisonettes of the back block during the rebuilding of the staircase.

The plans show the entrance to the cycle store being sited on the east wall of the front block. However, the entrance is currently on the north wall, and the start of the staircase is immediately adjacent to it. If the developer intends to rebuild the staircase in accordance with the plans, this will require the cycle store entrance to be changed. A condition of the grant of planning permission on the original development application (2013/1614/P condition 7) was that this facility be completed and made available to residents before the building was occupied, and permanently maintained thereafter. It is therefore incumbent on the developer to ensure uninterrupted access to this facility during any works. (Notwithstanding the fact that the facility still cannot be described as properly completed at the time of writing.)

If the council is minded to grant permission and the staircase will be removed and rebuilt, then we would ask that conditions be imposed such that – **before permission is granted** – the developer must:

- Submit, and receive approval for, a method statement describing how residents' access to the upper maisonettes of the back block will be maintained uninterrupted throughout the works;
- Submit, and receive approval for, a method statement describing how residents' access to the cycle store will be maintained uninterrupted throughout the works;

Rectify Existing Breaches

The council has been made aware of a number of areas in which the conditions of the original planning application have not been properly complied with.

Since the current application is a precursor to the further development of the site, we ask that would ask that conditions be imposed such that – **before permission is granted** – the developer must rectify the following breaches:

- 2013/1614/P condition 7 (Cycle store to be operational before residential occupancy). Thanks largely to the efforts of the council, racking has recently been installed in the cycle store. However, it remains unpainted, with a hole in the floor and unboxed high voltage cables hanging off screws. It therefore cannot be described as "completed", and the developer should be required to rectify this breach before being granted permission.
- 2013/1614/P condition 6 (Details of waste storage). The plans submitted by the developer with this application – specifically *T 1 482 101 J proposed ground floor plan* – show an enclosure designated as the "office refuse store". This was in fact converted – by the developer himself – into a toilet. The commercial unit has since been sharing the residential refuse store, having no replacement facility of its own, and doesn't even seem to have its own refuse bins (for which there is barely space in any case). In parallel with this reduction in overall refuse capacity, the developer has been making his application for permission to increase the number of residential units and the consequent residential refuse requirements. With the development at only 50% of potential occupancy, it is not at all clear that sufficient refuse capacity exists. The developer should be required to rectify this breach, or at least submit new calculations demonstrating that sufficient capacity exists, before being granted permission.
- 2013/1614/P condition 12 (Details of obscure glazing). This has never been discharged. The developer should be required to rectify this breach before being granted permission.

2018/1696/P Representations – Annex

The built staircase.



The two flights are 6 and 11 steps instead of 9 and 9. The finish is uncoated galvanised steel. Safety rods not in evidence.



Illustrating the degree to which the staircase, when extended, will dominate the view from the maisonettes.



"Industrial" finish (or unfinished?)

Does anyone really want another four flights plus a landing that looks like this??

Staircase – State of Completion/Poor Standard

Streaking and stalactites caused by leaching.



Unboxed cables, unlagged pipes, unprotected wood.



Cycle Store – Unfinished and Unsafe

Hole in the floor, unboxed high voltage cables hanging on screws.



Unpainted, racking not screwed to wall.



Refuse Store Capacity

Where the office's refuse store should be, according to the plans.



Commercial waste sometimes requires significant space. Black sacks on floor because office doesn't have a refuse bin of its own.



Residential waste already seems close to capacity on occasion.

