5th July 2018

115 Albert Street, NW1 7NB

Planning & Listed Building Application

Introduction

Ben Smith Architecture have been appointed by the owners of 115 Albert Street to refurbish the property and adapt it to their updated needs.

The Building

The terraced property at 115 Albert Street is grade II listed and is included within the Camden Town Conservation Area. The house is built over five compact floors including a basement level, among a row of dwellings built in the late 19th century with raised entrances and regular separation across two bay windows.

Onto Albert Street, the terraces have rendered ground floors with stock brick above and with articulation of ground floor and first floor with traditional metal railings. Additionally, the majority of dwellings on the terrace, including no.115, have a mansard roofs with two dormer windows at third floor level.

The rear elevation has been altered over the years, and currently illustrates an irregular fenestration with an off-center dormer extension and more recent glazed extensions at basement and ground floor level, functioning as living space.

Listing

The English Heritage London terrace houses 1660-1860 listing section guide highlights that frequently a house may have been altered or acquired later additions which can have a damaging impact. Additionally, the guidance highlights the need to weigh the case for retaining alterations against the benefits of reinstating the overall integrity and the wider group as a whole.

Conversely, some of the alterations carried out to 115 Albert Street over the years, in particular the rear ground floor extension and basement level adaptation are of poor quality and damaging to the character and appearance of the building, being in a state of disrepair with poor quality glazing systems.

The works

We would highlight that the optimal approach toward preservation of a listed building is one that keeps it in use, which has inspired our approach toward the proposal. The existing front elevation remains unchanged while the rear alterations are replaced with high-quality extensions with minor amendments to the interior, to upgrade the use of the dwelling in line with the client's requirements.

The brief requires the re-configuration of the basement into a self-contained flat, with creation of a new ensuite and replacement of the existing rear glazing in very poor condition with a new wall. Additionally, it is proposed to remove the existing stepped access to garden level and create a larger garden at ground level with separation between the self-contained flat and main house above. This self-contained flat intends to create flexibility for the family, as their child grows up and is granted greater independence.

At ground floor level, the scheme proposes to remove the non-original arched opening between the kitchen and dining/living and upgrade the kitchen in its current central location on the plan. The currently poorly-performing glazed sliding windows from the rear extension onto the terrace and garden will be replaced with a new thermally efficient glazing system. The existing steps leading from the terrace into the garden will be reconfigured and considered to improve flow through the ground floor into the garden.

At first floor level, the existing bathroom is relocated to create an L-shaped living room that visually connects the front and rear of the property and creates a study/snug room at the back. The scheme proposes to install a green roof over the ground floor extension roof, accessible through a new window/door, for maintenance purposes only. The dimensions of the existing window are retained in width and we would look to re-use existing or matching bricks to make good the opening.

At second floor level, the scheme proposes to reconfigure the partitions to remove the landing/lobby, and instead give this space to create a spacious en-suite and utility room.

The scheme proposes that the two existing storage spaces: one accessible from second-to-third floor stairs, and the other accessible from the third-floor terrace, are combined to create a compact WC/shower room to serve the third-floor bedrooms.

Finally, at third floor level, the scheme proposes to omit the glazed doors and balcony, and create a single dormer window to the rear, to match the one at the front, to create a large bedroom able to be split into two through a series of lightweight sliding screens.

Alongside these alterations, a full refurbishment is proposed for the existing dwelling, including a complete overhaul and refurbishment of the existing windows. The floors through the house will be refurbished, and any new timber flooring will be made to match the existing.

Services

Currently, all the incoming supplies (electricity, water and gas) are located at basement level, with a boiler located in the utility room at 1st floor level, and a water tank at third floor level.

As part of the works we propose to split the services into the property, so that the self-contained flat and upper floors are run separately, as means of futureproofing the house.

We propose one of the vaults at the front of the property is conditioned to become a utility room to serve the self-contained flat. The utility room for the main house would be located at second floor level, in a specially designated service cupboard in the en-suite bathroom.

Materials

Externally, the scheme proposes to create a new dormer to the rear, replace the ground floor extension, and replace and fill the basement glazing and courtyard. The roof and walls will be built to match the existing, in colour, texture and materiality. We would propose to use traditional techniques such as soot washing to tone down the new brick work on the extension and match the overall muted appearance of the existing building where the brickwork has acquired a patina of age. The dormer windows will be made to match the existing at the front of the property; the new glazing of the rear ground floor extension and basement courtyard will be new timber double glazed folding sliding units.

Internally, we propose to retain the existing timber floors wherever possible. Where new partitions are put in and rooms are enlarged/partitioned, we propose to replace the floors completely, with new reclaimed timber floor boards to match the existing as much as possible, to ensure a consistent look throughout the room. Any cornices and skirtings will be retained, or new will be installed to match the existing where required.

Amount

The existing dwelling has an internal floor area of approximately 244 sqm. The works proposed, with the minor extension at basement level and the dormer addition at third floor level would increase the area by 11 sqm, to create a total area of approximately 255 sqm.

Landscaping

It is proposed to replace the asphalt roof on the existing extension with a visually appealing and environmentally considered green roof. Additionally, the steps toward the garden are reconfigured to improve access with the omission of a courtyard below and the opportunity of further planting.

Access

Access to the main house and the basement is from Albert Street. There is currently a separate access from the street to the basement and to the main house; these entrances will remain unchanged.