

Nick Baxter
Senior Conservation Officer
London Borough of Camden

27 May 2020

Dear Mr Baxter

Applications relating to 14 Monmouth Street, London WC2H 9HB – Revised Scheme.

Background

Planning and listed building applications (2020/0623/P and 2020/1607/L) have been submitted for:

“Minor alterations to the plan to rear rooms on second and third floor, resulting in no loss of historic fabric, re-introduce timber wall panelling throughout, extend existing staircase to give access to the roof terrace, replace modern roof light with openable roof light, move railing at roof level to not be visible from street.”

Revisions have been requested to the scheme proposals and revised drawings have been submitted. The following comments are the response to the requested revisions.

Panelling

The proposals for full height panelling have been amended and it is now proposed that only half height panelling to the dado rail be added, principally to the rooms facing onto Monmouth Street. Whilst this would be a modern insertion, there is some evidence to suggest that half height panelling could well have existed originally and panelling is certainly common in nearby buildings of this age and style as has been shown on the Heritage Statement submitted.

Whilst it is accepted that it would be poor conservation practice to add features of inappropriate or an incompatible style and design to a listed building, in this case half height panelling would not be inappropriate. The reinstatement of missing features can be supported in listed building terms if they are clearly discernible from the original features and are designed to preserve and enhance the existing original features, and for example the reinstatement of missing fire surrounds in other parts of the house is being proposed (and we understand supported).

This building is not a pristine, unaltered Georgian house (if it was we would not support the addition of panelling), but rather it has been considerably altered in several phases such that the proposed panelling would restore coherence to the interiors without harming its authenticity.

The panelling could be designed so that it is clearly a modern addition but which reflects on the early Georgian heritage of the building.

Flooring

All previously existing carpets and floor coverings have now been removed (see appendix 1 – photos of flooring, below). It is evident that the existing boards in all but one room are more modern / Victorian floorboards rather than characteristic wide Georgian boards. There are some more historic and probably original boards in the front room at second floor level, although these are in poor condition and a minority have been replaced in recent times.

In many areas the floorboards are in a poor condition, uneven and missing the odd board. There is no particular consistency throughout the building. There are no floorboards at all in the first floor rooms which have been floored in modern chipboard.

The clients have accepted the use of timber boards as more appropriate rather than a stone floor within the ground floor hall and the plans have been amended to show this. The existing flooring on the ground floor again appear to be narrow and relatively modern replacements and modern chipboard.

Given the poor quality of the existing boards throughout the building, repairing and leaving the existing boards on show is not a viable option. In addition the existing doors appear to have been cut down slightly in the past and there is now an obvious gap where the existing carpets have been removed. It is proposed that all the existing floor boards are retained and a new wide board Georgian style floorboards laid on top of these boards, separated by a protective layer. The existing doors have already been cut down in the past so no further alterations would be required to the doors. The new flooring would abut the skirting without damaging them.

This approach would give a suitable wide-boarded character to the interiors, without harming any historic fabric. The new floors would fit well with the present historic doors, which would not need to be built up at the base to hide the present notable gaps and achieve a reasonable appearance.

Plaster work

The D & A statement has been amended. It is not proposed to re-skim all the ceilings and walls. There is no consistency in the plasterwork generally. Some areas are of traditional construction and materials whilst other areas are more modern. Any patch repairs will be carried out on a like for like basis to match the existing material of those surfaces. The architects have confirmed that any rectification work to the historic fabric shall be undertaken by a specialist heritage contractor using traditional materials and techniques in keeping with the period property. This includes the use of lime plaster where applicable.

A condition attached to any permission to this effect would be acceptable to the clients.

Air Conditioning

External units

In accordance with the relevant planning policies an Environmental Noise Survey and Noise Assessment Report as well as the Building Performance & Thermal Comfort Report have been completed. The Building performance and thermal Comfort Report addresses the hierarchy requirements as requested, please see letter from the Architects.

Internal units.

The drawings have been amended to show freestanding unenclosed AC units. These AC units have been specifically located so to minimise the disruption to the existing fabric and make use of existing central heating pipe runs through the existing walls and floors.

The clients have accepted that the housing units may not be appropriate and these have been removed from the proposals. However we are still of the opinion that the units' positions in the front rooms on each floor, set into the recess one side of the chimneybreast, is the most appropriate. The existing service runs which are hidden within the cupboards in the staircase compartment can then be utilised with negligible impact on any historic fabric and less impact on both the rooms and staircase area. This would also allow for furniture to be positioned along the cross wall.

The unit within the second floor bedroom has been relocated to within the newly proposed bathroom wall.

Fire Surrounds

Missing fire surrounds in the first floor kitchen and third floor bathroom will be replaced with appropriate new surrounds in a style appropriate for the age of the building. The exact details of these surrounds can be controlled by condition.

Kitchen Extract

The kitchen extract will be installed with a recirculating system and will therefore not require a duct or vents to the exterior.

Door to second floor bedroom and bathroom

The door from the landing is now retained in its existing original location and the plans have been amended to show this and a new door added to separate the bathroom from the bedroom.

Second floor Bathroom

The existence of a dividing wall separating the shower room from the bedroom has been accepted in principle. The original room volume has thus already been divided up and its character has changed. A slightly larger shower room would have a negligible impact on the current significance of this space and the house as a whole, and indeed its character would be enhanced in comparison to what current exists. The new wall will be plain and scribed around the existing skirting and cornice of the room without damage to them or loss of historic fabric, and will be clearly distinguishable from the historic elements in the room as a modern addition.

The existing toilet is ventilated by means of an extract fan located in the modern drop-down ceiling. The extract fan is ducted to the existing riser located in the south east corner of the bathroom. The existing ductwork vents at roof level. The existing ventilation route shall be used to ventilate the bathroom with a new extract fan concealed in the new drop down ceiling.

As advised, the AC unit has been relocated within the proposed modern wall separating the bedroom from the altered end-suite.

Third Floor Bathroom

The previously proposed subdivision of the room has been revised. The chimneybreast will now be exposed and the fireplace and a new fire surround added to restore this missing architectural feature. The ventilation to the shower and bathroom generally shall be achieved by means of an extract fan connected to the existing ductwork to the south west corner of the bathroom. The shower screen does not extend to ceiling level allowing any moisture to be extracted. Access to the window will also be available to ventilate the space if necessary.

The underfloor heating will provide a gentle warmth to the tiles. The electric underfloor heating will be installed between the tile and protection board so to not affect the existing floor boards retained below the protection board.

The replacement of the modern window to a much more suitable design, along with the exposure and addition of a new appropriate fire surround, would provide heritage benefits and would enhance both the listed building and views of the rear elevation of the building in the wider conservation area. Any minor perceived harm that the proposals for the bathroom may have would be more than outweighed by the new window and fire surround.

Roof

The railings have been set back from the front parapet wall as requested to reduce visibility from street level.

Unauthorised existing double glazed windows to the front elevation

The existing double glazed windows to front elevation have been described as unauthorised. The clients are prepared to replace these existing windows with single glazed windows of an appropriate style. It is recognised that the replacement of these windows with single glazed windows to match the original design would offer both listed building and conservation area enhancement benefits and the client is keen that the building should be restored properly.

I trust that these revisions address your concerns about the original scheme. If you have any further questions we would be happy to answer them.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Adamson

Appendix 1 – Photos of flooring



Third floor front room - 19th or 20th century narrow boards throughout



Third floor front room.



Third floor landing – 19th or 20th century narrow boards.



Third floor bathroom – a few possibly original boards but mixed with modern boards and 19th or 20th century boards.



Second floor front room - possibly original Georgian boards but in poor condition. A small section of modern boards towards the windows on the front elevation.



Second floor front



Second floor rear bedroom - narrow 19th / 20th century boards, a few wider, possibly Georgian boards at entrance to room, see below.



Second floor landing looking towards rear room.



First floor kitchen – whole room is chipboard. No boards retained beneath.



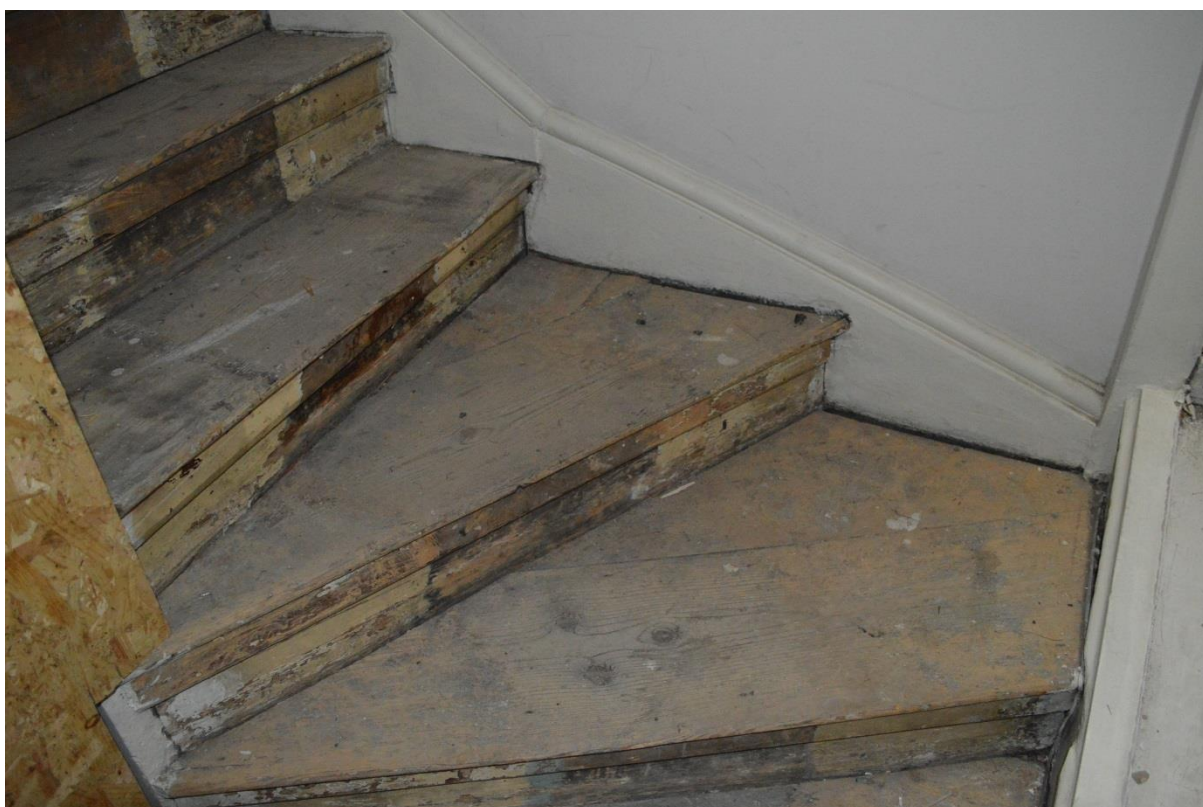
First floor hall - chipboard



First floor front room- chipboard. No boards retained beneath.



Staircase leading from ground floor entrance hall.





Entrance hall - modern narrow boards.