

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2020/4303/P	M Walker	26/11/2020 16:50:05	OBJ	<p>I would like to object to this planning application, both as a resident of St. Martin's Close and as the householder of one of the two houses that immediately adjoin the applicant's house.</p> <p>1 The application fails to consider the heritage asset's significance, as an individual property, within the Close itself and as part of a group of buildings surrounding St. Martin's Gardens that are included in Camden's local list.</p> <p>The applicant wishes to add a fourth floor to their three-storey Victorian house. This means removing their traditional butterfly-form roof with a central valley running from the front of the house (where it is masked by a flat-topped rendered parapet) to the rear (where its end can be seen in an original V-shaped London brick parapet). They intend to replace it with a tiled mansard style roof extension with front and back windows. At the front it would rise behind but far above the terrace's front parapet. At the back it fills in the rear V-shaped parapet and extends up well beyond it.</p> <p>From the street side:</p> <p>The street's 14 Victorian three-storey houses are arranged in two terraces that face each other. Without exception, they are the same height and have the same flat-topped parapets that mask the roofs - whether viewed from street level or the upper windows of houses on the street. As a result, the street has a relatively low-rise, symmetrical and harmonious roof scape on both sides. This frames the public view as they enter St. Martin's gardens from the Close and along the full length of the street to into the Gardens towards St. Martins Almshouses.</p> <p>Approval would destroy the character and harmony of the house in the context of street's terraces. The fourth floor extension would rise obtrusively above number 13's flat parapet. It would create an abrupt interruption to the terrace's roofline. It would create an imbalance between the two terraces. And it would disrupt the street's historic roof scape.</p> <p>The proposed extension's flat tiled walls and 2 additional windows would also be clearly visible above the terrace's flat parapet when viewed at pavement level whether from the Close or from parts of St. Martin's Gardens and Camden Street.</p> <p>In addition, these windows will enable occupants to look into the first and second floor rooms in the houses opposite.</p> <p>The plans are not clear whether windows or glass doors would be fitted and, whichever, whether they would prevent access to the narrow external gap behind the parapet. Given this lack of clarity, any permission should include an explicit planning requirement to physically prevent access to what could otherwise be exploited as an informal balcony.</p> <p>At the rear:</p> <p>At present the houses on both sides of St. Martin's Close retain their original, distinctive V-shaped brick parapets. These create a strong and repeated rhythm along the terraces and are an important feature of the appearance and character of the houses, street and area more generally.</p>

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These distinctive parapets at the rear of numbers 1-7 are viewed from St. Martin's Gardens. Number 8, the final house on this terrace, never had a butterfly roof and the park's 1894 OS map shows a distinctively different rear profile to the rest of the houses. However, its flat roof is below parapet level so continues the unbroken line of the terrace even without the butterfly parapet.

On the other side of the street, the applicant's house backs on to houses in Pratt Street. Every one of the 6 houses (numbers 14-9) in this terrace retains its original butterfly parapet. Were the application approved, number 13's rear V-shaped parapet would be filled with a tiled wall that extends well above the roofline of the rest of the houses. This would not only create a discordant and visually intrusive feature at the property but would also destroy this important feature of the terrace's appearance and character.

The application's plans show that three new windows would be installed at the rear of the roof extension. This is to provide windows to the new stairs, a new toilet/sink room and a second window to the new "Bedroom 02". As with the proposed front windows, they will overlook the homes on Pratt Street. But, at number 13 and every other house on the terrace, there are two windows on the first and second floors of the back wall. So a successful application would further disrupt the appearance and character of the house and terrace.

This is completely unnecessary. If the proposed "WC room" were shifted to the back of "Bedroom 02" the third window would be redundant. Everyone in the flat could still access the WC room. As the bedroom is intended to run the full depth of the house front to back, it would not compromise its size. Whatever the applicant's decision, the Council should prevent installation of 3 windows at this level.

More generally:

When the applicant submitted what was substantially the same planning application in 2003 and an amended application with a smaller extension in 2004, the applicant argued that there was a wide range of heights, sizes and styles of buildings in the vicinity of the application site.

That could and can be observed in some local streets, but it does not apply to St. Martin's Close.

Today, as then, the street is "generally unaltered and retains a high degree of architectural coherence" *; the houses are individually "of modest scale" *; and there are no fourth floors or mansard type roofs to interrupt the street's harmonious roof scape and frame the views into St. Martin's Gardens at the top and at the bottom of the Close.

The sole modern house in the Close is towards the closed end of the street on excess 'builder's yard' land adjoining the park. Critically, its scale is in proportion with houses on its side of the street and its roof is capped front and back at the level of the street's terraces and masked by its flat parapet at the front.

2 Materials & build

If this application is approved it would be important for the Council to avoid compounding the inevitable obtrusive impact and discordant nature of this development by failing to specify wholly appropriate materials

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and ensure close management of the build. This might avoid damage to the physical integrity of the terrace and encourage the applicant to avoid the kind of compromises that led to the kitchen and bathroom to share the same window when the second floor was first converted into a flat.

With regard to the materials, the application limits its proposal to match materials to colour and texture. This means that it is not intended to match the existing Victorian brickwork (for instance by using readily available reclaimed bricks routinely required on other conversions). The current roof tiles cannot be seen at ground level at present and so it is not known whether they would be a suitable material or of appropriate dimension and colour for such an obtrusive extension. And the application proposal to use UPVC doors/windows on the new extension to match the current windows at the property is misleading. For the most part, number 13's doors and windows are wooden. The only UPVC glazing in the property is at the back wall/door of the rear left ground floor extension that was installed when the house was split to create a ground/1st floor maisonette.

3 Intensity of occupation

Number 13 was split into two residential units some time after 2004 in order to create a maisonette on the ground/first floor and a flat on the second floor. Since then, both units have been let as student rentals.

As an HMO, the ground/1st floor maisonette is licenced for 5 occupants while the 2nd floor flat has been let with two bedrooms.

If this application is approved, the 2nd floor flat would be converted into an upper maisonette with two further bedrooms, including one which runs the full depth of the house and has windows at both ends so could easily be split into two during or after the build. The fact that an additional "WC room" is included in the plans for the additional floor suggests the applicant is planning to increase occupation to the maximum.

If this application is approved, occupancy in the upper maisonette would be determined by HMO licensing. Nevertheless, approval would significantly increase the intensity of occupation on top of the already high number.

Besides the sheer number of people who will be occupying what is a narrow house with Victorian solid brick walls, there is the pressure that this property creates within the terrace and street.

There is, for instance, nothing in the planning application to mitigate noise and vibration between the houses and to the outside, the management of rubbish or parking.

Finally, as one of the two householders adjoining the application property, I seriously question whether the Council should approve an application that is designed to increase the property's large number of tenants and the already challenging environmental pressures that it creates.

* Dismissed appeal decision December 2004