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PROJECT: THE OLD COTTAGE, HAMPSTEAD, NW3

DATE: December 2020

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

REF: TOC - DS

## LOCATION & PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The property known as The Old Cottage is Grade 2 listed and sits in the heart of the Vale of Health, an Outlying Sub Area within the Hampstead Conservation Area, London, NW3 within the L.B. of Camden.

The Old Cottage makes for an unusual plan over its 2 storeys, front garden and rear courtyard - refer Location Plan 'red line' - a three winged shape tucked into a boundary shaped by some half dozen adjacent properties, yet at the same time on many accounts appearing to be seemingly independent and self contained.

The unusual footprint is the consequence of an evolving organic growth of the property over the centuries starting with St Ann's Cottage (c1795) up to the more recent times Kitchen extension (c1980) and with other alterations, additions and removals in between. The property as a result, compromises some 'historic' (old) elements sitting along side with and often closely integrated with more 'modern' 20C elements - in both fabric and in character.

## THE BREIF

The brief is given by the current home owner-occupier of The Old Cottage. The works we have been asked to consider are all to do with the client's desire to improve and enhance the performance of the property as a home and place for a family to live - to continue to evolve as it always has done - and in a mindful and meaningful way. The brief can be broken down into a number of independent and discrete elements:

- 1) To further open up the existing partially opened up walls between Kitchen and Dining rooms.
- 2) To replace the existing flimsy Front Door with a new partially glazed secure front door.
- 3) To Front Room Snug, replace a single glazed metal framed side window with a double glazed timber window
- 4) To First Floor side windows above Front Room Snug, retain but retrofit single glazed timber windows with double glazed units.
- 5) To combine First Floor existing Front Bedroom with a new En-suite and Wardrobe.
- 6) To insert a Roof Light so as to bring daylight down the staircase into Ground Floor Hall ways.
- 7) To Living Room facing the Rear Courtyard, remove existing window and enlarge opening to form bay windowed patio doors opening directly onto the Rear Courtyard.
- 8) To Front Room Snug and Bedroom above, design a Balcony Verandah of traditional design based upon the original 1920's design since removed.

## DESIGN PROPOSALS

The designs proposed have evolved out of the Architect's regular design meetings and discussion with the Client (applicant) and along side the Client's appointed Heritage Consultant, Josie Roscoe (Fuller Long) making informed contributions with regards to relevant Heritage Assets, Grade 2 Listing and Conservation Area. The design descriptions follow numberings as listed in 'The Brief' :

- 1) The design approach seeks to bring to conclusion a process of opening up between Kitchen and Dining first instigated in 1980 when the current Kitchen was built into the then back yard. The awkwardly compromised connection across the spaces would by removal of the wall below the window opening and adjacent pier, become a much enhanced visually and physically open connection - enabling a much enhanced flow of use and a much enhanced quality of daylight across the spaces.
- 2) The existing front door though not completely uninteresting is really rather lightweight and flimsy. It is not contemporary with the original structure into which it is framed. The proposed door would be to an enhanced standard of security and would be of 'traditional' design to be in keeping with much of the character apparent to that front of the property.
- 3) The metal framed side window to Front Room Snug is an oddity - all other windows to this oldest part of the house are timber casements. It suffers the usual problems associated with such thin metal framing - cold bridging and condensation. The proposed 'Slimlite' type double glazing (as slim as 10/12mm o/a ) is oft regarded by Historic England and other Heritage organisations as an 'environmentally responsible' approach to the refurbishment and replacement of historic window glazing. The proposed traditional timber window would in its detail be gleaned from the adjacent upper floor windows. The overall appearance of that side elevation would become more consistent in character and thereby enhanced.
- 4) These three first floor windows are the windows to the proposed Front Bedroom Ensuite. They are timber windows and single glazed. One window will become the window to the Ensuite Shower Room. Single glazing to such a room will suffer similar problems as to the (item3) Front Room Snug single glazed window, and for that same reason, 'Slimlite' retrofit double glazing into the existing timber windows is proposed - and in order to further enhance consistency to this side elevation, 'Slimlite' retrofit is proposed for all of these first floor side elevation timber windows.
- 5) At first floor, there is just the one Family Bathroom serving all 4 Bedrooms. It is just so that these days a family enjoys in addition, at least one bedroom (normally the main/master bedroom) ensuite. It is more often than not a practical issue - as is the case for the client family in this application. Adjacent to the Front Bedroom is an unused Study which lends itself perfectly to the making of a compact shower room. The existing built-in wardrobes are proposed rebuilt conveniently between bedroom and ensuite, a walk-in area with its own window daylight open to the otherwise dark linking corridor space.
- 6) There are other 'corridor' linking spaces at ground and first floor - the meandering Hall and Landing spaces. These spaces also suffer a degree of inadequate daylight - a consequence of the enclosing proximity and privacy to and from the many adjacent and abutting properties. The 'darkest' area is at ground floor at the foot of the stairs to first floor. There is however a good

sized picture window alongside the stairs. This rather contradictory state of affairs has come about because of that need for privacy - resulting in the building (1920's) of large vertical angled external privacy baffles which cut out much of the light this large window would otherwise afford. Hence the proposed rooflight, located above the staircase so that light can drop down to ground floor, but geometrically aligned in symmetry with the window. The roof to this part of the property is flat to falls and finished in proprietary built-up bituminous felt. The proposed rooflight would be a regular contemporary style well insulated high quality product.

- 7) The Living Room, the largest room, is at the rear (so to speak) of the house, facing south with a door and window on to the Rear Courtyard. The brief for patio doors is simply to enhance this one connection between inside and outdoor space, between the main family room and the external (garden) courtyard. The proposed design - to incorporate patio doors into a projecting bay is a well understood traditional inside/outside architectural device. There happens to be a bay windowed patio door to the neighbouring house Milton Cottage - however we would not propose an appearance the same as that at all - our design takes its materials, details and proportions from the existing (retained) side door to courtyard and is capped with an elegant traditional sheet shallow metal roof in zinc or lead (to be agreed), same as for the proposed balcony verandah sheet metal roof.
- 8) Within the Client's property archive is a b&w photo-print of the front of the house.....and attached to the front is a rather magnificent timber constructed balcony verandah - estimated date 1920's. The balcony verandah unfortunately no longer exists. However, the property Rose Cottage, two doors down does retain a very similar balcony verandah, and judging from the photo-print, contemporary with that missing from The Old Cottage. The proposed design uses this photographic evidence plus also that standing at Rose Cottage to glean a correct choice of material, structure, joinery, detail, proportions, roofing and finish. We have chosen to design a slimmer (less wide) version to the original for reason that we feel a full width reinstatement would overwhelm the existing familiar appearance of the front of the house taken within its current familiar streetscape. As proposed, we find the design a balanced reinstatement of a feature which was and surely would again be a delightful enhancement of the property.

#### ACCESS

The proposals have no negative impact upon means of access into and around the property. Access to The Old Cottage remains the same as existing.

#### CONCLUSION

We do not believe that the proposed works will have any negative impact upon the Grade 2 listing of The Old Cottage. Quite the contrary - we believe that the proposed range of works, each in their own right, are carefully considerate of the properties particular historic assets - and will also contribute towards an improved quality to the property's prime function as a family home.

In that overriding sense, we would like the works to be understood as a substantial enhancement to The Old Cottage - both in its interior and exterior aspects, its historic context and Grade 2 Listing and to its wider status within the Hampstead Conservation Area.

Prepared by  
Peter Bernamont Architect  
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