

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

No. 4 COUNTESS ROAD. LONDON NW5 2NT



Ariel View of location with No 4 Countess Road





View of the front of No4 Countess Road from the street.

INTRODUCTION

Countess Road is located in the residential area between Kentish Town and Tufnell Park Tube Stations in the North London Borough of Camden. The Street is made up of predominantly three storey medium sized Victorian terraced houses built during the development of this area in the nineteenth century.

During the early 1960s many of the houses were converted into flats some of which were bought by the local authority. No 4 was one such property being subsequently divided into a single bedroom ground floor flat, 4A and a two-storey maisonette, 4B on the 1st and 2nd floors with a small terrace on the 1st floor, at the rear above the projecting closet wing.

The maisonette, 4B was purchased under the right to buy policy by the tenants in the 1990s and the current owners purchased it from them in 2011. The property was at the time ideal with a second bedroom to start a family and planning permission to extend into the loft and above the closet wing at second floor level. Before they raised enough funds however to carry this out the permission expired. The ground floor flat subsequently became vacant following a fatal fire in which the council tenant at the time lost her life.





Fire damage to the ground floor flat bathroom and kitchen prior to conversion back to a family dwelling

PREVIOUS PLANNING PERMISSION

The owners of 4B looked at reinstating or reapplying for planning to convert the roof as they were established in the area and therefore reluctant to move. At the same time however following the near miss with the fire they had serious concerns about the risks involved with separate properties within a building originally built as a single dwelling. Therefore, with the ground floor flat vacant they negotiated with Camden Council and specifically purchased a one-bedroom flat to exchange for the burnt-out ground floor and in so doing became the freehold owners. In January 2015 planning permission was granted for change of use back to a family dwelling. This included:

- Access from the terrace to the garden a priority for the family having been present when the fire occurred
- A side extension to provide a family kitchen dining space.
- Converting the current bathroom into a study
- Turning the back 1st floor bedroom into a bathroom and a separate ensuite.

Whilst the major work in converting the property back to a family house was carried out in 2015/16 the items listed above were left until further funds became available.



Fire damage to the sitting room and bedroom prior to fire damage.





Kitchen and dining area currently.



Sitting room following conversion back to a family dwelling.



Area where side extension is intended.



Rear elevation with dormer at No2 visible on the left

THE BRIEF:

As a result of the pandemic starting last spring the owners have found that their use of the property has had to adapt in a way they could not have predicted when they carried out the 1st phase of the planning permission. They have like many others had to adjust to home schooling with a combination of home and office working. However, in their case two separate adult working spaces are required as one owner is part of long term hybrid working model and is currently directly involved with government covid legal negotiations which are sensitive and therefore require a high degree of privacy for security reasons. The result is they now believe the side extension is less of a priority and the additional space a loft conversion would provide is more important. Our brief is therefore to convert the loft for use as:

- A second study
- A play room
- For home schooling
- The use of gym equipment
- As additional accomodation for guests.

The brief also specifically requested that the extension into the roof feels part of the house as a whole following on from the existing stairs rather than a cramped tight loft staircase.



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Mansard roofs at rear terrace to Leverton Street from Countess Road.



Loft conversions with in the conservation area.

DESIGN

Different types of roof conversion were explored including a rear mansard roof the full width of the property several of which have been carried out in properties on Leverton Street. As well as extensions with rear terraces that have the advantage of a further external space.

It was felt that however that a dormer window in the new loft space with a roof light over the open stairs up to the loft would be both more in keeping with Countess Road, give a better continuation of the existing stairwell and be a more economical solution in both space and monetary terms.

The addition of a second bathroom/shower room has also been incorporated to allow the conversion of the existing bathroom to take place without the need for the family to temporarily move out when further funds become available in addition to giving independence to anyone using the room.





Rear view of terrace. No4 is second one in on the Left-hand side with a dormer to the loft at No2



Corner of Countess Road with side view of No2 at left side

ACCESS

The proposals have very little effect on access within or to the property for disabled, elderly and small children's use. The new loft however has a more spacious generous staircase than required making access easier. The addition of an ensuite shower room also makes the chance of accidents on staircases in the night or disturbing the rest of the household less likely therefore improving the situation for the young, older occupants and guests.

CONCLUSION

The proposals allow the current owners to continue to live in their home and adjust to the new ways of life that have occurred as the result of the pandemic. It seems in their case that part time or home working may remain part of life for the foreseeable future if not a permanent change to life.

The proposals themselves have a minimal impact on the area, can only be viewed from the rear of properties on the Northern side of Ascham Road and are more discrete and in keeping with the scale of the property than many recent local loft conversions within the conservation area.

