

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee objects to this application for numerous reasons.

The drawings are inadequate. The existing front door and “garage” doors are wrongly drawn with horizontal stripes, not vertical. How do we know other drawings are accurate? The rear elevation drawing is obscured by the rear garden wall. The section drawing shows the raised garden level does not continue to the back of the house, so why doesn’t the application show the entire rear elevation?

Insufficient historical background is provided. No date of construction is mentioned. No detail is given about which elements are original nor about features which might be worth retaining.

This house was built as the coach house for the larger house next door, with the unusually large “garage door” presumably being where the coach entered. This might also explain the odd shape of the front garden. The proposals need to be seen in context with the main house but no drawings show both houses together.



Windows and doors

The Design and Access Statement says that:

"Many of the windows have been modified over the years and are now a combination of original timber sash, modern timber and modern Aluminium.

All of the doors have been replaced, modified or repair to a greater or lesser extent and are a mixture of timber and aluminium."

No photos are provided of any surviving original windows. Neither are any old photographs or illustrations provided of this house or the main house next door which show the original window pattern.

Would the coach house originally have had 6 pane windows on the top floor but only 4 pane windows on the lower floors with a 6 pane panel above the door between them? The replacement windows and doors on the coach house should not copy obviously inaccurate replacements on the main house.

The elevation drawings show thin glazing bars on many windows suggesting that they will be wood framed but with fake glazing bars. Also the applicant states the replacements will be "like for like" casement windows. Many of the existing windows are sash windows. Needlessly replacing them with casement windows rather than new sash windows or refurbishing the original sash windows is unacceptable.

The elevation drawing of the side of the house shows existing aluminium windows being replaced by timber but aluminium doors being replaced with new aluminium doors. Section 1.0 of the D&A is inconsistent with this, saying *"Replace existing anodized aluminium patio doors with timber french doors."*

The applicant should provide a schedule of windows and doors showing close-up photos of each window or door to be replaced and 1:2 details of the existing and proposed, along with details from the manufacturer, plus U values demonstrating that the replacements will meet sustainability standards.

Photo taken on 6th August 2021:



The existing ground floor front door appears to be fairly old, with an interesting 3 panel window above it (see photo above). Is that original to the house?

The applicant proposes to decrease the size of the coach door on the right, increase the size of the window on the left and replace the interesting front door above with a more imposing portico, turning the house into a more symmetric building.

Why is the smaller opening which replaces the coach entrance described as “a screen” rather than a door or window? The D&A lists “*Replacement of existing garage doors with new timber doors*”. The full proposals appear far more complicated than that.

If the garage is being turned into something else (no details of any internal alterations are provided), where will the applicants park? Will the front yard be adequate or are these changes likely to result in greater parking pressure in a busy area near the heath?

Addition of portico

The application proposes replacing the existing front door and the door above with a portico which broadly copies the style of the “main” house, but on a smaller scale. Combined with the alterations to the openings on either side, this will significantly alter the composition of the house. It will no longer retain any hint of its original purpose or its historic relationship with the main house.

Further, the proposed portico may not sit well next to the main house. The front door of the main house is on the raised ground floor with steps leading up to it whereas the proposed smaller copy sits at ground level. The proposed timber and glass front door almost copies that of the main house, but not quite. This may look quite odd.

Other points

The very high wall on the west side of the front garden appears to date from the time the coach house was built, some time in the 19th century. Could it be older? Does it contribute to the character of the conservation area? Should the applicants be allowed to reduce the height of this wall?

Is the interesting herringbone pattern driveway in the photo above original? Will it be retained or recycled? What will it be replaced with? Will any replacement meet SUDS requirements?

We would also be interested to hear the history behind the flat roof. Was it built like this or has it been changed at some stage? If it is not original, maybe replacing one flat roof with another covered in sedum is not the best option.

The Design and Access Statement lists two planning applications that were granted previously: 2014/3501/P and 2015/4364/P. However the “existing” photos of the house for application 2014/3501/P appear to be identical to the way the house looks now. Were these permissions ever built? The D&A does not mention this.

More detailed drawings should be supplied demonstrating how the EWI will marry up with the elevations of the main house so there is no “step” between the two. More detail should be supplied about exactly what type of insulation is proposed, its energy performance, how it will look etc.

The level of the path around the side and back of the house is being lowered and flattened. The house sits just outside one of Camden’s archaeological priority areas, so perhaps recording anything interesting would be useful.

The plans for new spiral stairs and balconies should consider the impact on neighbours.

Summary

Overall the intent seems to be to alter both the proportions and character of the house so that it no longer looks like a former coach house, subordinate to the main house, but rather becomes more symmetric and ornate, effectively a smaller pastiche of the main house next door. We are not sure this will be to the benefit of the conservation area.

Far too little detail has been provided to determine how much damage various aspects of these proposals will do to the conservation area, and some of the details are wrong or inconsistent between the drawings and D&A.

For all of the above reasons we feel this application should be refused.