

Flask Walk Garden Rooms

Number 37 is a two-storey cottage forming part of a Grade II listed terrace with stepped front and rear gardens. The ground floor is open plan with kitchen, dining and living areas, while the first floor is split level with a bathroom and study on the lower portion, and two bedrooms on the upper portion. The cottage was built between 1770 and 1810, but its internal arrangement and rear elevation have been substantially altered over its lifetime.

The client has instructed 51 architecture to rework the rear of the property to create two garden rooms - a glazed, single-storey wintergarden extension to the main cottage, and a remodelled writing studio at the end of the garden.

The project proposes a small, 2.5 m deep single storey garden extension to the cottage and the upgrade of an existing outbuilding as a poets writing studio. The cottage extension is in two parts, a timber framed, glazed wintergarden and a small W.C. with a rooflight. The W.C. is clad in standing seam zinc on both its roof and facade. The W.C. is not visible to the garden or neighbours as it is set in a niche formed by an existing and retained timber garden fence.

The cottage has a small but vibrant front garden, a characteristic of the terrace, as well as a rear garden containing some mature planting. This is a thriving natural habitat which beautifully complements the house. At the end of the back garden there is a small outbuilding. Its current iteration dates to 1969 however records show that a structure (which was likely an outhouse originally) was first erected at this spot at least 150 years ago.

The client is a poet and will use the garden room as a studio once it has been transformed into a comfortable workspace. Retrofit is preferred over replacement in order to minimise carbon emissions and disruption to the garden, and thereby the local ecology, caused by the works.

The ground-floor wintergarden extension to the main cottage will respect and conserve the historic fabric of the Georgian cottage while drawing more light into the existing rooms and adding utility. It will incorporate a small W.C., providing easy access from the writing studio while improving the cottage's livability as a long-term home.

The wintergarden is designed so that it requires no irreversible connections to the original building, junctions are demountable and do not damage the Georgian brickwork. The extension itself will be a lightweight, glazed timber frame which allows the original rear line of the cottage to remain visible.

A light-touch approach has been applied to all aspects of the scheme, prioritising sustainability. Existing, non-original elements have been assessed for their suitability for retention and possible repurposing, while existing structural openings will be retained and reused, reducing the need for additional engineering. This process keeps the carbon cost associated with the project low by minimising the need for new materials to be brought to the site.

The existing 1960s fabric of the garden studio will be retained, with a layer of internal wall insulation made from cork added to improve the room's year-round usability.

The slate flagstones forming the existing rear patio will be reused as a floor surface for the proposed wintergarden, while other existing elements such as the current garden room door will be dismantled and redeployed elsewhere in the scheme.

Both the wintergarden and garden studio will be highly insulated to a standard exceeding building regulations requirements, with the extension improving the overall thermal performance of the cottage. An heavy, architectural curtain will be installed along the original rear line of the cottage, offering the option of separation between the inner cottage and wintergarden while adding a layer of insulation.

New windows will be installed in the rear elevation at first floor level, these will replace the existing, non-original lights which have rotten frames and cannot be retained. The replacement glazing will match the historic mouldings in the front elevation. They will be fitted in the existing openings to the rear wall mechanically, so as to be demountable. Natural ventilation will be used throughout the scheme.

The garden will be subtly reworked to create a more intimate relationship with the garden rooms; all major plants, including the purple plum tree, jasmine, wisteria, camellia and bee bush will be retained.