

Tillman Architects



8 Sandwell Crescent

A Design and Access Statement October 2022

Alterations, conversion and additions to 8 Sandwell Crescent London NW6 1PB



Introduction

Planning consent is sought for proposed alterations, extension and the re-conversion of the building to form a single family dwelling situated in the West End Green Conservation Area.

The proposal is to retain all the architectural features of the existing front elevation of the building and to extend the rear of the existing building at ground floor and at roof level in a sensitive and sympathetic manner.

Heritage Statement

The West End Green was designated a Conservation Area in 1993.

We have referred to the Appraisal and Management Strategy for the Conservation Area which was adopted by Council in February 2011.

Sandwell Crescent has been described as making a positive contribution to the CA and in the CA appraisal specific mention is made of the Crescent remaining original roofscape curve forming an interesting view seen from West End Lane.

Immediately to the North of the site is the grand grade II* listed Hampstead Synagogue.

Mention is made in the CA appraisal of Article 4 directions however the document does not specifically state that any such constraints apply to Sandwell Crescent at present.

The Site

Sandwell Crescent comprises 10 terraced houses arranged in a radial pattern built on the side of a hill which descends to the South-West.

The rear of each house in the terrace has been modified and extended over time in a variety of different styles. The appearance of the front elevations remains consistent and the buildings can clearly be read as a group.

The houses occupy unusually shaped building plots - the party walls fan-out from the front towards the rear resulting in rear plot widths being much greater than at the front.



Sandwell Crescent is set on a fairly steep hill, No 8 is situated towards the top. The rear gardens of the houses fall away as a series of terraces to the south west. The ground floor to No 9 (to the left of fig 2) sits approximately 500mm above the ground floor level of No 8, the level of the rear garden of no 7 is 1860mm below that of no 8.

Fig 2



To the rear of the site is a 5 storey block of flats (fig 3) which heavily overlooks the rear garden of No8.

Fig 3

Planning History

Planning permission was granted (ref 2004/0691/P) on 28/01/2005 for conversion of No 8 into 2 self-contained flats and 1 self-contained maisonette, including lowering of basement floor and external alterations including installation of a basement window and door on the front elevation and excavation for lightwell in the front garden and installation of a basement window and excavation for a lightwell in the rear garden.

Whilst building works in relation to the 3 flat conversion was carried out, the works were not fully completed. The basement accommodation includes a kitchen and bathroom and is capable of being used as a self-contained studio dwelling, it also retains a communicating stair with the 'main' dwelling making it more akin to a granny annexe. Given there is no resulting loss of residential floor space and that there is a need for large family homes, the 'de-conversion' is considered acceptable in accordance with policy H3.

An application for pre-planning advice was submitted in August 2021 (ref 2021/4028/PRE). Our initial proposals have been revised following receipt of advice in March 22 (initially drafted in December 21) together with subsequent advice received from the Planning Officer Nathaniel Young issued by email on 14th April 22.

Neighbouring properties

5 Sandwell Crescent

Planning permission was granted (ref 2015/4129/P) on 14/09/2015 for erection of rear dormer window to an existing flat.

7 Sandwell Crescent

Planning permission was granted (ref 2014/5152/P) on 10/11/2014 for erection of a single storey replacement extension at basement level. Increase in height to existing rear closet wing extension. Enlargement of existing rear dormer and construction of additional dormer window with Juliet balcony. Repositioning the existing roof-lights on the front elevation. Lowering of the floor level in the existing light-well and front basement room and installation of new stairs/steps to pavement level. Repositioning of existing front windows at basement level, with associated works to outside spaces. These works have been carried out.

1 Dennington Park Road / Kingdon Road (Hampstead (Junior) Synagogue) Planning permission and listed building consent were granted (ref 2004/3864/P and 2004/3865/L) on 08/12/2004 for demolition of the Junior synagogue and ancillary accommodation in Kingdon Road and erection of a five storey building comprised 11 residential units with many windows overlooking the back garden and rear elevation of No 8.

Design

Rear extension - design considerations

The family are in need of additional open-plan living, kitchen and dining space.

A full-width wrap-around rear extension at existing ground floor level to provide the required accommodation was considered but was thought to have the following significant disadvantages;

- All glazed doors to the new extension would face directly towards the numerous windows of the block of flats to the rear greatly increasing overlooking (in both directions).
- Daylight and sunlight to the extension would be greatly curtailed by the large block of flats to the rear.
- The remaining garden would be concentrated toward the end of the site adjacent to the bedroom windows of the flats; residents of the flats have already complained of being disturbed by my clients children playing in the garden and there is a growing sense of unease.
- Glazing to the North elevation facing the flats could be the cause of increased disturbance at night due to light pollution.
- An infill development alongside the existing closet wing would sever the existing connection between the outside and the middle rooms of the existing house at upper and lower ground floor level, this would result in a loss of daylight and loss of opportunity for natural ventilation as well as creating an increased sense of enclosure.
- The side wall of an extension situated alongside the existing closet wing would compromise the amenity of the kitchen window to No 9 Sandwell Crescent.
- The deep plan which would result from this layout was unlikely to result in high-quality residential accommodation.

Rear extension as proposed

Summary

By forming the extension along one side of the garden, glazing can be orientated to take full advantage of the sunny South-western aspect as well as the green views down the hill and across the gardens.

The extension has been designed to allow the whole length of the garden to be enjoyed. The remaining width of the garden is similar to that which might be found in similar London houses and will be at least as wide as the existing front garden.

The full-height sliding glazing of the extension will help to break-down the division between inside and out and will allow full width views of the plot through the glass or when the glazing is in its open position.

The proposed orientation will also allow there to be greater levels of natural daylight and sunlight generally throughout the day which otherwise would be compromised by Claddagh Court; the block of flats immediately to the North.



The existing topography of the rear gardens to the houses on this side of the crescent falls to the West so views from the extension are not directly into any other garden (fig 4).

Fig 4

An open courtyard between the new kitchen and the rear of the existing house facilitates passive cross ventilation to the upper and lower rear rooms as well as allowing daylight into the rear of the building.

The proposed new courtyard garden is positioned directly opposite the kitchen window of No 9; the existing wall between the two areas would be raised by 345mm to a height of 1525mm measured from no 9's garden level.

The level of the green roof of the extension is positioned below mid-height of the ground floor rear window of No 9 Sandwell Crescent so views from this window will not be compromised.

Pre-app advice

The pre-application advice letter dated 21st December 2021 stated;

- a) *The proposed first floor plan (drawing no 450 02-03) does not show the roof of the new extension which makes it difficult to appreciate how the extension would relate to the first floor and what the roof would be constructed from.*

Drawing 450 02-03 has been revised to show a flat extensive green roof to the extension, the top of the roof would be slightly lower than the 1st floor of the closet wing of the house.

- b) *The extension would take up the majority of the eastern part of the garden. The proposed length together with its height would result in a large and predominant extension that would take up a third of the rear garden area.*

Drawing 450 01-20 has been included for illustrative purposes only* and shows three alternative approaches to extending the existing building at ground floor level;

- 1.0 As would be allowed under permitted development.
- 2.0 As a wrap-around extension as has recently been granted consent at no 7.
- 3.0 The scheme as currently proposed.

As can be seen from the area calculations, a development built under PD rights (if they were applicable) would occupy 26% of the garden, a wrap-around development 35% of the garden and the current proposal 30% of the existing garden area.

Note that 1.0 and 2.0 could be developed to a height of 3m from the existing ground level whereas the height of 3.0 is set lower at 2.7m.

The wrap-around infill development option would present a 8.8m length wall on the boundary standing potentially 3m in height.

The proposed scheme occupies less than 1/3 of the garden area and, due to its distribution on plan and reduced height, would be less intrusive than either of the other two alternatives. In addition the proposal to install an extensive green roof to the majority of the extension will help to mitigate any loss of green space.

- c) *Although the majority of the extension would be screened by the existing boundary wall the top section appears to be visible by 1.1m for approx. 7m along the boundary. This could have an impact on the daylight received into the ground floor windows particularly in the afternoon. It would be necessary to undertake a daylight and sunlight assessment to assess the impact of the extension on the levels of daylight into the neighbouring properties in order to demonstrate that the extension would not have a detrimental impact on the daylight and sunlight to the windows of the flats in no. 9.*

As can be seen from drawings 01-09, 01-14, and 02-09 & 02-14, existing windows to No 9 Sandwell Crescent are located at ground, first and second floor levels on the side elevation of the closet wing close to the rear of the main building. These windows face directly toward the side wall of No 8's closet wing.

*It is acknowledged that PD rights no longer apply to houses that have been converted into flats. However, it is assumed, as with other neighbouring buildings, that PD rights once applied to no 8 and that had it remained as a single family dwelling they would still apply.

The existing ground floor room to No 9 (a kitchen) also benefits from a glazed door and window on the rear elevation of the closet wing; these windows are perpendicular to and distanced from the proposed extension so existing daylight and sunlight levels will not be effected.

In summary, we have not undertaken a daylight and sunlight study as the ground floor windows to No 9 are either already directly facing an existing obstruction (ie the existing closet wing) or are facing North-north-west and therefore away from the proposed extension and are already compromised by the block of flats.

As can be seen from drawing 450 02-16, at present sunlight would only reach these NNE-facing windows when the sun is at its highest in the middle of the summer at which point it would be above the roof of the proposed extension but below the roofs of the existing terraced housing on Kingdon Road to the North of the site.

d) *There would be some sense of enclosure created for the windows in the rear elevation of no. 9 due to the location of the extension on the boundary and its length at 8m. Reducing the length of the extension would help to overcome this.*

As stated above, the windows in question do not face the proposed extension so would not benefit from any reduction in the length of the extension. In addition, in order to retain the floor area needed, a reduction in the length of the extension would result in the loss of the inner open courtyard which we think will benefit both the of neighbours.

Notwithstanding this, the roof profile of the extension has been revised so that it steps down toward the boundary with No 9. The height of the roof, as seen on the boundary would be 430mm above the existing fence, it then steps back 615mm away from the boundary before projecting up to 2m height.

Please also note that the overall height of the proposed extension has been reduced by 275mm following receipt of the pre-app advice.

The living room window to No 9 is full-height and is at raised ground floor level; the centre height of this window is above the proposed roof so is not obscured by the extension.

On the subject of massing, the email from Mr Young, sent following our virtual meeting with him also stated;

It was considered that while the proposal would not be of a typically acceptable design, it would arguably present limited harm. It appears that there would be a limited impact to neighbouring occupiers as the proposal would seemingly reach a maximum of approx. 2m in height above the neighbouring garden ground levels (given the height differential between the rear gardens shown on the submitted drawings).

There would also be limited views of the proposed extension from the surrounding conservation area given that it is single storey and to the rear.

Trees and Landscaping

The following advice was received at pre-app stage;

If an application is submitted for these works it should be accompanied by an independent arboricultural impact assessment and tree protection plan to demonstrate how the trees would be retained and protected.

This application is accompanied by a report written by John Cromar Dip. Arb. (RFS), FArborA of Treescan; independent arboriculturists.

Our proposals for the extension and landscaping have been revised to respond to the recommendations covered by the report and to ensure that trees remaining on the site are not adversely effected by the built form - specifically, existing ground levels adjacent or near to the existing trees will be retained and the extent of the proposed works has been curtailed in order to ensure that they do not impact on root protection areas.

The report recommends the planting of a new Manchurian Cherry tree in order to mitigate the removal of an existing tree of the same species (tree 4). Paragraph 5.6 of the report suggest that the removal of the Cherry might allow neighbouring trees (trees 3 & 5) to develop more normally;

'Both 3 and 5 are likely to respond positively to the increased light levels after the proposed removal of tree 4 by growing into the space vacated'.

Establishing a new Cherry tree in the left-hand corner of the garden as proposed would also have the mutual benefit of providing new screening between the block of flats and the garden of No 8.

Whilst not discussed in the report, on the advice of the Arboriculturist, we are proposing the planting of a Japanese Maple tree within the courtyard garden which we hope will provide colour and interest at the boundary between No 8 & 9 all-year round.

Rear dormer extension as proposed

Summary

A new rear dormer is proposed to replace the existing and to accommodate a master bedroom suite at the top of the house. The new dormer is not dissimilar in size to the new dormers to No 7 Sandwell Crescent (granted consent in 2014) but has a smaller glazed area. As is typical with most of the existing rear dormer extensions in the terrace, the top ridge of the proposed mono-pitch dormer sits just beneath the main roof ridge and slopes down toward the eaves.

The West side dormer cheek is distanced away from the party wall and the front of the dormer is set back from the eaves at the rear of the main roof slope. The dormer is to be clad in zinc to match the flat roof below and to allow its reading as a roof element.

The distribution of fenestration is off-set in the dormer to reduce potential overlooking from the windows of the block of flats to the rear and to afford greater privacy.

Pre-app advice

The pre-application advice letter dated 21st December 2021 stated;

- e) *Given its size (particularly its width) and the fact that it would not be set in from the party wall with the neighbouring property the dormer would not be considered subordinate within the roof slope.*

And later;

It would be necessary to reduce the size of any dormer on the rear roof slope and try to move it away from the party wall.

The proposals have been revised to address the above concern; the proposed dormer is now narrower and set further away from the party wall.

- f) *The large sliding glass window gives the impression of a large open void at roof level that further exacerbates the harm.*

And later;

The fenestration size, pattern and detailed design should more closely follow the existing windows.

The contemporary window has been omitted in favour of traditionally detailed timber sliding sash windows of a more modest size.

Other proposed works

The pre-app advice letter made reference to the existing basement as follows;

- g) *Having compared the existing and proposed section drawing it would appear to show that excavation works are proposed at lower ground floor level to extend the area used as the existing hallway under the footprint of the house to enlarge this area to create a utility room.*

The area referred to above already exists under the existing staircase - the drawings submitted have been amended to show this.

Access

No newly proposed vehicle or pedestrian rights of way have been created with this application, parking arrangements and access to the property remain unaffected.

Conclusion

Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal is not a typical design for a rear extension, we believe that it responds to its immediate existing built and topographical context and does so without compromising the amenity of neighbours.

The design and appearance of the dormer has been revised to lessen its impact on the roofscape as well as appear more in keeping with the existing.

We are quite certain that the extension will provide our client with much needed high quality residential accommodation and that the proposed enhancements to the existing house will benefit the conservation area as a whole.

The advice received in March 22 (drafted in December 21) was given without the benefit of a site visit by the Case Officer.

We subsequently met with My Young virtually and were able to show him (via FaceTime) the unusual surroundings of the site; the tumbling gardens to the West and oppressive block of flats immediately to the rear.

In a subsequent email he wrote;

It could be argued that this would not set precedent for future development throughout the conservation area given the exceptional circumstances of the site. The curved/splayed gardens, the lack of uniformity in the terrace, the heavy overlooking of the property to the rear and large religious building to the east, and changing garden ground levels.

We would like to request a site meeting with a Case Officer if at all possible.

Keith Tillman

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