

2022/2346/L- 49 Arlington Road, [REDACTED]

Site and significance

The building forms part of a GII listed terrace of 7 houses dating from the 1840s. It has a modern attic storey which is identified within the list description as not being of special interest. Aside from the attic storey the significance of the building includes its architectural design and materials, planform, evidential value as an 1840s terraced house and its townscape value including its positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Camden Town Conservation Area.

Impact of proposed work on significance

Lower Ground Floor Extension

The application documents state that the volume of the proposed lower ground floor extension mirrors in principle the approved and completed extension of no. 53 Arlington Road which the applicants believe to be at an appropriate scale of massing for the extension proposed under this application. They also note that a two-storey rear extension at no. 47 Arlington Road is approved but is yet to be constructed. The extension at Number 53 (permitted 2007) is within a different listed group, and although there are obvious similarities with the historic form of the subject site, it is nonetheless not part of the same statutory designation. The extension which was permitted but not constructed at Number 47 in 2011 clearly shows harm to significance of the listed building. I am unsure what the precise circumstances of its permission were, but the impact of works on listed buildings has to be assessed within the context of not only the wider group but also the specific building which the works affect. Therefore the impact of this proposal must also be assessed in relation to the significance of Number 49 in its own right, notwithstanding what else has been permitted adjacent.

The footprint of the proposed extension is almost as great as that of the main house, and it is difficult to see how its scale could be considered to be subservient to the original basement floor which it adjoins.

The chief impacts of the proposed rear extension are the loss of historic planform, the loss of historic fabric, and its impact on the legibility of the original rear elevation. The erection of the extension would be facilitated by the total loss of the following fabric: The rear window and wall of the basement room, the lower part of the chimneystack and the existing extension and boiler house (the loss of the boiler house is however acceptable). The existing rear extension may or may not be historic- while the heritage statement notes that the extension shown on the 1890s map does not correspond to the existing extension there is also no evidence of it having been demolished and rebuilt since then so it is difficult to ascertain its date. However, it does date from after 1870. However, the most harmful impact of the basement alterations is the loss of the rear wall of the rear basement room, and the loss of the lower part of the chimneystack. This also needs to be assessed in combination of the other works proposed within the basement, the sum of which is the total loss of the historic cellular planform of this floor of the house.

Reconfiguration of Interior and rear windows

Aside from the alteration to the historic basement planform assessed above, reconfiguration of the upper floors is also proposed.

Ground Floor

The ground floor has suffered from opening up works in the past and the planform has been partially eroded. The proposals reinstate a sense of the historic planform through the removal of the stair enclosure and the re-introduction of the hall wall. However, harm is caused by the loss of a sash window on the rear elevation and its replacement with a door.

First floor

It is proposed to convert the two bedrooms on the first floor into an inter-connected suite of bedroom, walk-in-wardrobe and ensuite bathroom. The existing planform of this floor is entirely original, i.e. two separate rooms off a landing. The proposed alteration would result in a planform in which the rear room would be subdivided into two distinct spaces and the spine wall would be breached. The door to the rear room would be lost. The single glazed landing window would be replaced in double glazing.

Second Floor

The existing second floor plan is historic, apart from the access to the C20th roof extension. The proposed works involve converting the bedroom and bathroom at second floor into x2 bedrooms and a bathroom and removing the existing chimney stack at this level to match third floor. These works eradicate the historic proportions of the front room. The room would be divided into three spaces (landing extension, bathroom and residual space used as a bedroom) and the original chimneybreast would be demolished. The rear single glazed timber window would be replaced in double glazing.

Third Floor

The third floor is C20th. The works comprise adding a new ensuite at 3rd floor and two new dormer windows to replace existing. This part of the building does not contain historic plan-form or fabric and the works are acceptable at this level.

All of the rear windows would be replaced under these proposals. The Heritage Statement notes that none of these are original, but regardless of their age they are nonetheless single glazed timber sash windows, which are appropriate to the special architectural and historic interest of the heritage asset. Their replacement in double glazing (and in one case conversion to a door) fails to better reveal or enhance significance and in fact diminishes the significance of the listed building.

Garden Room

It is accepted that a number of the neighbouring properties along Arlington Rd. have constructed ancillary structures in the rear garden, including no. 53. However, the proposed garden room under this application is exceptionally large in scale. Were the application to be otherwise acceptable it would still be advised that the scale of the proposed garden room harmfully affects the setting of the listed building and that it should be reduced in scale.

Conclusion

The proposals cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building. This harm occurs at several levels of significance, as outlined above, including: planform, architectural design, historic fabric, and evidential value as an early C19th house.

In respect of the parallel planning application, the impact of the works on the contribution which the building makes to the character and appearance of the conservation area is more limited, and the works to the front of the property preserve the contribution made to character and appearance.

The proposals under the application for listed building consent cause less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset. There is no public benefit of a nature suitable to outweigh that harm and the application for listed building consent should therefore be refused.