

By Email & Post

Miss Sophie Pain  
Development Control  
Environment & Planning  
Cambridge City Council  
The Guildhall  
Cambridge CB2 3QJ

Tuesday, 23 August 2011

Dear Miss Pain

ALTERATIONS - 68 MAIDS CAUSEWAY, CAMBRIDGE  
Planning Ref: 11/0653/FUL

The following is a response to your report prepared for the meeting of the West /Central Area Committee due to take place on Thursday 25th August. It should be read in conjunction with the "68 Maids Causeway Responses to Objections" document, dated 18 August 2011, prepared by the applicant.

- Introduction - In general we welcome your report, which in our view provides a generally balanced treatment of the issues, and a recommendation for approval. Clauses follow the numbering of your report.
- 1.3 Boundary wall: described as "2m high". The ground cuts away towards Maids Causeway (and the height of the wall therefore increases); at the corner where the high boundary wall turns back towards the house it is some 2.5m high.
- 2.2 First Floor Extension: The width of this extension is some 1.5m, not 2.6m as stated.
- 2.4 Land Purchase: Our client is adamant that there have been no irregularities with respect to the purchase of the land, which is for garden use. It is unclear why the land was retained by the Council at the time of the original development, but in practical terms it is poorly maintained and is a left-over and an anomaly; furthermore the growth of the shrubs to some extent reduces sightlines when exiting Fitzroy Lane. It should also be stated that the proposed height of the front part of the boundary wall is some 700mm, not 1m as stated.

Historic Environment Manager's Comments:

- 6.2 Glass Blocks: We disagree that glass blocks are inappropriate for this location. They are a modern material, appropriately used on a modern wall, around a modern building on a road that leads to a modern car park and a modern shopping development. They have been introduced as a means of providing some relief to what we fear would otherwise be a rather stark section of wall, and provide some visual benefit to the public realm without compromising on privacy of the private accommodation. However the client is willing to sacrifice this element of the design if there remains a strong feeling against it.
- 6.2 Porch: Clearly the porch is not a traditional feature; to apply a traditional porch to a modern building of limited architectural merit would be a travesty - putting lipstick on a gorilla does not make it any the more attractive. The current house is a banal example of a 1960s standard estate house parachuted into a 19th Century setting with no thought for context. The aim of the proposals is to use the first floor extension and the porch to pull the house from its existing status as something of a jarring eyesore into sensible modern design with some sense of integrity, and thereby to a better job of turning the corner from the 19th Century jumble of Maids Causeway to the modern

development behind. The HEM is right to quote Policy 4/11, as the design will both “*preserve [and] enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area by ... providing a successful contrast with it*”.

- 6.2 Flat Roofs: It should be noted that each of the three immediate neighbours has at least one flat roof: the adjacent house at No 66 has a flat roofed bay window, the office building to the rear has a lead flat roof on top of a pitched roof, and the Zebra pub opposite has a number of flat roofs to the side and rear.
- Policy HE10: In no sense does the existing building “*make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset*” This is not an attractive building! Our client is wishing to spend some money improving matters - this should be welcomed (as your recommendation implies) rather than opposed. We are indebted to the HEM in drawing attention to Policy HE10 which, if used, should clearly be deployed in support of the application.

Assessment:

- 8.2 Wall: For clarification, the proposed parapet wall to the flat roof is some 600mm higher than the existing - clearly a parapet is the most elegant solution, and the most natural in light of the existing language of boundary walls with brick on edge copings etc.
- 8.4 The comments on the appropriate means of altering a mediocre 1960/70s design are well judged. The building already of course has weather boarding on it, infilling under the main ground floor front window. There are also numerous examples of the appropriate use of timber in modern design in the immediate vicinity, as alluded to in the client’s accompanying presentation.
- 8.5 Conservation Rooflights: We understand (though disagree with) the Council’s preference for conservation-style rooflights in conservation areas. However this is inappropriate in this situation for a number of reasons:
  - Tile section - The roof is covered with a relatively bulky concrete interlocking tile. Given the pronounced depth of this section, the proposed rooflights would not protrude significantly from the roof covering.
  - Existing installation - There are already two other standard Velux windows within the same roof plane - to switch to a “conservation” style rooflight would simply serve to confuse matters, and is at odds with the correctly expressed sentiment in the third sentence of your para 8.4.
  - Immediate neighbour - The pitched section of the immediately adjacent roof to the south has no fewer than four ordinary Velux windows that project far more than the proposed ones (because of the slate roof covering) and are more prominent because on a single storey section of building they are much closer to the viewer.
- 8.11 Public Right of Way: It is correctly observed that there is no public right of way over the existing area of planting.

Conclusion: Should this application be unsuccessful the applicant is minded to appeal. Given that the design represents a clear improvement on the existing situation, we would expect this appeal to be successful.

I should be grateful if you would circulate this letter to Councillors prior to Thursday’s meeting. If you have any queries on the above please do not hesitate to let me know.

Yours sincerely

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**Director**

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cc: Mrs Judy Davis