

Design and access statement

31/10/2017

Flat A, 6, Bath Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6NB

Existing

Flat A forms the ground floor of no. 6 Bath Road which with its neighbour, no. 4, comprises a large 4 storey early 19th century block. Flat A, benefits from the full ownership of the rear garden which is accessed via an existing metal balcony and associated stone steps which bridge over the full width basement light well created by an existing retaining wall from which the steps derive some support. The existing balcony has not historically been well maintained and is in poor condition with large areas of rust being evident. Furthermore the balcony is supported by metal brackets built out from the rear wall of the building and at the point of contact with the face brickwork there is significant cracking in the masonry which clearly demonstrates the unsound nature of the balcony above. The upper section of the retaining wall also shows evidence of deterioration of the masonry which casts doubt upon its long term structural integrity to both retain the ground beyond and support the stone steps above. The metal balcony has been deemed by a structural engineer to need urgent replacement. Due to the structural uncertainty of both the balcony and stone steps, the garden has been left overgrown and provides limited opportunity for use until remedial works have been approved and completed.

Proposed works associated with the house and attachments

The proposed works would replace the existing balcony and its support system with a metal balcony that would derive its support from the ground and outer brick wall, thus alleviating the majority of the support requirement from the outer (lower) building fabric. The damaged area could then be repaired as necessary in agreed matching materials. The length of the new balcony would match that of the existing but its depth would be increased from 600mm to 900mm to provide better access through the existing outward French doors and meet modern building regulation requirements. The original cast iron handrail would have to be cut to match the new width and comply with the new regulations, or it would become a trip hazard.

The existing balustrade style is not building regulation compliant and therefore the new proposal is to provide a format which echoes the existing but, by the addition of further slim vertical infills, meets current regulations. The existing steps and associated balustrade are to be retained; however the balustrades have significant defective elements on them which will involve them being removed and taken to a specialist to restore. While the balustrades are being restored, the steps and their foundations are to be rebuilt to ensure their legacy.

Proposed works associated with the garden

The surrounding outer perimeter wall has large sections of its lime mortar in an unsatisfactory state. Within the boundary wall, bricks that are loose and unattached are allowing weeds and shrubbery to grow between the mortar. To remedy this, works would involve repointing damaged sections with a suitable lime mortar and agreed matching materials where required. A match has already been confirmed with a lime mortar supplier to match to 90% accuracy – the data sheet is attached.

Separating the upper and lower sections of the garden is a strip of wooden posts fixed into submerged cement. A number of these wooden posts have rotten and become unattached from its foundations. To make this section more desirable and bring back to a suitable structural condition, this proposal would involve replacing the whole section with reclaimed brick(s) which match that of the existing outer perimeter and use the same lime mortar mix used for the repointing.

NOTE –

Plans to replace the balcony and cast iron balustrades were originally submitted (and approved) under Planning Permission number 162180 and listed building consent number 162201. There were however conditions put on the listed building consent from John Mullis asking for clarification on how the cast iron hand rails/ balustrades would be re-attached to the existing stone steps. A mutual decision between Jordan Lee (owner) and RBC to close the LBC and re-raise when appropriate, as it took considerable time to find a supplier with suitable skill set.

The balcony has since had a slight re-design; the original design had four vertical (round section) supports. The two vertical supports nearest the outer wall would have interfered with the buildings foundations, so a decision has been taken for a redesign; remove them and have wall-anchors for support. The two vertical posts away from the wall have been kept.