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15 &16 Burdett Avenue Sandycove
CONSERVATION REPORT

The consultant is instructed to prepare a report and recommendations on, 15 &16 Burdett Avenue Sandycove a Protected Structure, RPS number 1125, in support in of an appeal against the decision of The Planning Authority to refuse permission for a storm porch to be constructed over the front door.

BACKGROUND

A heavy timber framed porch which totally obscured the door and door case was removed with permission and permission was granted, but not acted upon, to replace this porch with a glass porch similar to that now proposed.

In the Planner's report on the present application it is stated that "The proposed development will contribute to the long-term use of the building as a residential dwelling, and will contribute to its overall sustainability." And also "it is not considered that the proposed porch would have a significant or negative visual impact on the house or on neighbouring property. The proposed porch would be a small, qualitative addition to the building and would not impact the residential amenity of adjoining houses. It is therefore considered that the design of the porch structure is acceptable.". However the conservation officer states that "D10A/0089 Permission granted for the demolition of the existing two storey additions to the rear of the existing house and the construction in lieu of a new, part two storey, part single storey addition. The removal of the existing timber entrance porch (not original) and replacing it with a new glazed porch and repositioning the existing granite steps 900mm forward of their existing location with new matching railings and granite landing where required. We note that there is no report from the Conservation Division for this application." And concludes with an unsubstantiated and subjective evaluation "It is our view that the proposed glazed porch detracts from the character and appearance of the Protected Structure and is considered contrary to Policy Objective HER8: Work to a Protected Structures,"

DESCRIPTION

The house is a good example of the typology of single storey over basement classical houses that are particular to Ireland and especially prevalent in Dublin. Maurice Craig, in his seminal work Classic



ABOVE
The front of number 16; number 15 to the right was purchased by the Local Authority and demolished for a road widening scheme, now abandoned
BELOW
Looking from the front of the house the prospect is of open water, not so enticing when a full gale from the northeast is blowing



Irish Houses of the Middle Size cites an example in Ranelagh, the home of the late Colm O'Lochlainn of the Three Candles Press, an earlier specimen of the this class of house. 15&16 Burdett Avenue is at the end house of a terrace of houses of this typology, all slightly different in detail and some with quite invasive alterations (eg number 17 has 9 over 9 pane sashes and dummy louvered shutters, number 18 a 9 pane glazed door with arched head in a riven granite case, number 21 a glazed door, overpanel and sidelights, while number 24 has the unusual replacement joinery, somewhat out of character with the historic detain and setting, and bent metal mild steel gates). In a welcome contrast to the intrusions in neighbouring properties the subject property has retained its one over one sash windows and its original front door joinery and door case, presenting to the street as being in substantially original condition.

By virtue of its location adjacent to Marine Parade the property is directly exposed to open sea to the North East and to the severest of winter weather. The ungainly Edwardian timber porch that was removed did have the beneficial effect of protecting the door from the vicissitudes of the weather and prolonged its useful life, and it does need to be replaced with a less intrusive porch..

THE PROPOSAL

In the light of the exposure to the elements it is a remarkable tribute to the skill of the joiners who made the door and their selection of a source of timber, possibly North American virgin forest red deal, a timber that is no longer available, that it has survived almost two centuries. It is clearly good conservation practice to preserve and enhance the surviving original joinery and protect it from the elements. The practice of curtaining the outer face of the door to protect it from the sun, recommended in Mrs. Beeton's Household Management, with a curtain of sailcloth or American oilcloth, is both traditional and highly beneficial but cannot spare it from maritime storm conditions, and the only long term solution is, as in the past, an outside porch. The proposal is for a glass porch with a minimal frame which would protect the joinery from the severe wind and rain while having little or no visual impact,

THE ISSUES IN QUESTION

The house is exposed to the weather to an extent that would not be experienced in places with a different location or orientation, and as a result the driven rain comes through and round the door in a severe storm. For this reason larger houses - on Charlemont Terrace for example - have lobbies inside the front door, but the nature of the plan of this smaller Burdett Avenue house precludes this possibility without unacceptable major alterations to the interior.

- *Is the proposal an unwarranted intrusion that detracts from the character of the protected structure*

The view of a mid 20th century house in Kent (right) taken from the brochure of Precision Glass Ltd shows how very little a porch using modern glass technology obscures the appreciation of the original construction. Unlike the porch previously removed the proposed minimalist glass porch allows for the classical composition and design of the door case to be fully appreciated. Similarly the



The previous heavy timber porch totally obscured the door case



The design drawing shows the intention above; the reality, below, is that the glass porch could be visually even less intrusive than the drawing suggests



lightly framed shop windows in front of the stone tracery of the (listed) residential court of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, added in the 1960s, has never been the subject of adverse criticism despite being in the proximity and immediate setting of Kings College Chapel built by Henry Yvele, the King's Mason, James Gibbs' Senate House and the Gibbs Building of Kings College, Sir Christopher Wren's Trinity College Library and of course Dr. Caius' Gate of Honour. Properly detailed these examples show there is no reason to be concerned about the impact of the proposed small scale porch in the context of the property in question nor its setting.

• *Is the proposal an unfortunate precedent for similar developments elsewhere*

The proposal would possibly be a precedent for a similar porch on an equally small property with well preserved original joinery facing northeast on the sea front, if such another was needed, but the possibility that any comparable conditions exist is remote and without the same considerations in place any proposal that cited the structure under consideration as a precedent should be dismissed as bogus. More relevant as precedents elsewhere would be the glass internal draught lobbies in the fine entrance hall of the Irish Architectural Archive and that in the stair hall of the Powerscourt Townhouse, both of which are far more intrusive in the historic fabric and fine interiors there than is this proposal for Burdett Avenue, but in their context remain appropriate to the setting, condition and need.

• *Does the proposal enhance and contribute to the long term usefulness and conservation of the property*

There is little doubt that the proposal will increase the comfort within the building, reduce the carbon footprint by saving on the heating load imposed by cold draughts and make the property more desirable. It will also by protecting the joinery of the front door from the ravages of the stormy weather that is all too familiar, and make a positive contribution to the conservation of a significant feature of this property.

• *Does the proposal adversely affect the proper conservation of the structure*

The proposal has a light touch in its impact on the public face of the Protected Structure, does not involve any intrusion on the historic fabric and if subsequently removed would leave no trace of its presence. Interventions to Protected Structures should be to the minimum necessary and all new works will be expected to relate sensitively to the architectural detail, scale, proportions and design of the original structure. In this case the proposal respects these considerations.

CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES

All works to the protected structure to be carried out in accordance with best conservation practice, as defined by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in the Venice Charter of 1964, and in subsequent charters. This requires adherence to the following basic principles:

- *Conservation work to be based on an understanding of the building and its historical development. The primary aim should be to retain and recover the significance of the building.*



Above, shop display windows on Rose Crescent, Cambridge enclose the stone tracery without loss of significant detail
Below a glass porch enclosure on Powerscourt Townhouse







The adjacent houses on Burdett Avenue are far more sheltered from the winter storms; they have all been altered in ways that are far more intrusive than is the proposed glass porch on 15/16, and although the alterations are to a greater or lesser extent detrimental to the strict preservation of the historic fabric they have not adversely impacted on the quality of the streetscape; they do have the virtue of individuality and none of the alterations have been precedents for similar changes elsewhere. The proposed porch on number 15/16 is the least intrusive and most necessary of the all changes from the original fabric that can be seen in the immediate vicinity.

It is submitted that the proposal follows this principle.

- *Any alterations should be carried out in accordance with the principle of 'minimal intervention*'.

There is absolutely no intervention required to the historic fabric in this proposal.

- *Repairs to original fabric should always be favoured over replacement. Where replacement of an original element is unavoidable, this should be historically accurate in form and materials.*

This is not relevant to the proposal as repairs and replacement of original fabric are not required, and the proposal extends the useful life of the original fabric and detail for as long as possible without any intervention that is affecting the original joinery.

- *Where lost elements must be reconstructed, these should aim for historic authenticity and avoid conjecture in as far as possible*.

The only lost element is the late 19th or early 20th century porch that was an unsightly and heavy handed intervention. Historic authenticity is not an option available when the need is to protect and preserve the original joinery and improve the conditions in the house during a storm.

- *Modern interventions should be reversible and visually identifiable. New work should be recorded.*

The glass porch outside the front door fully satisfies this requirement. There is no reason to invent a bogus Georgian porch that would be inappropriate in the context of this property, Rather the porch should be clearly articulated. Like de Blacham and Meagher's much lauded work at Limerick Castle, the entrance porch proposed is entirely identifiable and does not obscure the original fabric. The glass lift shaft on the rear of the Irish Architectural Archive and the extension to the Goēthe Institute on Merrion Square, the linking buildings at Collins barracks, the east wing extension of the Hugh Lane Gallery in Parnell Square and the enclosed courtyard, linking building and new wing of the Chester Beattie Library in the archeologically and historically highly sensitive setting of Dublin Castle are all examples of good modern design that compliments protected structures, enhances there usefulness and do not detract from original structures while being extensions on a significant scale. More on the scale of the proposed porch are the entrance screens of The Irish Museum of Modern



The front door and door case are original and well preserved. However the natural shrinkage and weathering of the original woodwork has made the it virtually impossible to achieve the level of rain and wind exclusion necessary to preserve this structure. Water penetration has and continues to impact on the original features. The proposed storm porch is an essential addition.

Art in The Royal Hospital Kilmainham and the enclosure of the byre at Ballindoolin House, Carbury, County Kildare to form a cafe and visitors centre. Well designed small scale additions such as that proposed are seldom unacceptable intrusions, and it is submitted that the present proposal is both beneficial to the conservation of the protected structure and in no way detrimental to its appearance.



King John's Castle Limerick
Collins Barracks



Irish Architectural Archive
Hugh Lane Gallery



Göethe Institute
Chester Beattie Library







RECOMMENDATION

Although the Local Authority Conservation Officer recently expressed concerns about the proposal no such concerns were expressed by The Planning Authority about the similar proposal in the previous Planning Permission granted. It is the opinion of the consultant that taking a full view of the property, its exposure, context, specific needs and qualities the proposed intervention in the construction of a glass storm porch with a minimal frame conforms to good conservation practice, has no detrimental impact on the protected structure, but serves to enhance its usefulness and support the proper maintenance and conservation of the protected structure, and should therefore be permitted.

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ABOVE
The Royal Hospital Kilmainham

Two small interventions of low key glass screens and entrances that have a minimal impact on the protected structures they serve, comparable in impact to the porch proposed for 16 Burdette Avenue

BELOW
Ballindoolin House farmyard

