

Application for proposed conversion of 53 Hamilton Square – APP/25/01343

The application:

53 Hamilton Square, Birkenhead, Wirral, CH41 5AS.

Conversion of commercial building to private house, with external parking and bin storage.

Summary

The proposal, as submitted, raises issues regarding Full Planning Permission for this Listed Building.

The [proposal](#) appears to show the removal of the original half landing floor. This feature is referenced in the applicant's submitted Gazeteer (*Gazeteer No.14, 54-GR04-Passage*) with no photograph to show the current condition. The application also shows the blocking of the existing half landing doorway to this original heritage feature.

There are no specific details regarding the proposed rear access balcony.

These adversely impact this heritage asset, against WBC Policy WD2 (B) and (C), and thus **planning objection is raised to this application.**

Reasons for objection

The submitted layout for the proposed Ground floor (A2_24_976_52-201-PR-GROUND.pdf) show the original Georgian half landing doorway blocked up, and folding doors to enclose a Pantry.

The proposed section does not appear to show retention of the original half-landing servants storage, which indicates the intention to remove this heritage element of this Grade 1 Listed building (*Heritage Statement, 5.1 External proposals*).

However, the applicant's Heritage Statement says, *There are limited internal alterations proposed to 53 Hamilton Square, as the original building layout facilitates use as a dwelling once again. (Heritage Statement, 5.2 Internal proposals).*

The apparent removal of the original Georgian half landing floor is not considered to be a 'limited alteration' in order to raise the original passageway height to allow a double height pantry between the proposed kitchen and dining room.

No justification for half-landing floor removal

The original half-landing in this Listed building is a significant architectural feature relating to facilities provided for servant use during the Georgian and later periods. Loss of this structural feature would significantly impact the history of this Listed building, and hinder future reinstatement.

The applicants Heritage Statement does not provide any exceptional circumstances to clearly justify substantial harm or loss to a grade II Listed Building.

Therefore, the proposal as submitted fails to meet Policy WD2 - Heritage Assets - (C) 1).

Thus, we raise **planning objection to the proposal as submitted.**

Departure from the Applicant's Heritage Statement.

Although, it could be suggested that the retention of the half-landing floor and doorway access could be covered by a Planning Condition, the application is for Listed Building Consent. The apparent proposal appears to be significant departure from the Applicant's Heritage Statement.

Thus, we raise **planning objection to the proposal as submitted.**

Use of Period Items – Planning Conditions

We note the applicants statement that the building '*has suffered least during the course of various commercial office uses during the 20thC. The property retains its original staircase in full, with the majority of fibrous plasterwork and skirtings and architraves remaining legible and original. A number of non-original windows and adaptations exist to the rear elevation which are to be replaced with period correct items. (Heritage Statement, Section 5, Proposal)*'.

We request **Planning Conditions** that ensure the retention of the original staircase in full; the fibrous plasterwork; original skirting & architraves & doorframes; and the original ceiling cornices.

Rear Balcony & Access – Planning Conditions

Although the applicant states that they intend to use appropriate period materials (*Heritage Statement 5.1 External proposals*) the list of works in the Heritage Statement (*6.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE*) does not include the proposed rear balcony.

We request **Planning Conditions** to ensure that the proposal balcony is of cast iron material, and of a period style that copies the style of the retained original Georgian rear balconies that still exist in Hamilton Square (e.g. period examples found to the rear No 2 – No 19, Hamilton Square) in order preserve or enhance the historic character. (Policy WD2, Hamilton Square (CON-SA2.1)(A) 1).

Retention of internal doorframes to ensure no loss of architectural integrity – Planning Condition

Where an original internal doorway is block up, we request a **Planning Condition** to ensure the original internal doorframes are retained in place to ensure no loss of architectural integrity of this Listed building and thus provide context for future. This is in keeping with National guidance, stating '*The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations (is) because of its heritage interest.*' (*NPPF Glossary, Heritage Statement, 6.1 Rationale*)

Suggestion for Improved Fire Safety in Listed buildings

The main means of escape for the residents is via the original Georgian central staircase.

It is understood that the underside of this staircase is of lath & plaster. We believe that Listed buildings could benefit from the application of fireproof intumescent paint on lath & plaster surfaces, which is an approved upgrading solution by Building Control.

When attacked by fire, the intumescent material protects the integrity as well as the insulation of the coated surface. Moreover, offers over 1-hour fire protection to plasterboard. A suitable solution for protected and heritage buildings which do not currently meet revised contemporary fire standards.

Conclusion

There appear to be discrepancies between the applicant's Heritage Statement proposals, the details provided in the submitted Gazetteer, and the drawings submitted for this Full Planning Application. These discrepancies are too significant to be addressed by a Planning condition requiring enforcement later.

Therefore **planning objection is raised to this application.**

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Friends of Hamilton Square Conservation Area