

Conservation Consultancy Advice:

386(B)	Case ref. no:	Y18/0629/FH and Y18/0630/FH
Property Address:	3 Clifton Crescent, Folkestone	
Proposals:	Change of use and conversion from care home to residential flats comprising 1no studio, 1no one bed flat, 8no two bed flats and 1no one bed flats (11 total). Reconfiguration of internal layout, extend basement terrace area, with replacement dormers and rooflights. Repair façade and replace all windows. (REVISED SCHEME B)	
Application Type	Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent	
Agent:	Offset Architects	
General Comments		
Operative Conditions?		
Listing / C/A?	Grade II	
Date Consult Received:	21/09/2018	
Date Comments Sent:		

Comments:

1- General & Historic Building Description and Significance:

Clifton Crescent comprises of 13 buildings arranged in a shallow crescent facing out towards The Leas. All but one (no9) were originally semi-detached houses. No's 5-7 are converted into flats and Flat A is at semi-basement level of this building. The proposed alterations are described as being at the rear of the property but here, the rear South elevations have a public outlook across The Leas.

Clifton Crescent is one of the centrepiece compositions of the formally planned suburb of West Folkestone laid out during the last quarter of the c19th by Lord Radnor. The 1871 map shows the area largely undeveloped with only a few buildings in Clifton Road and the first pair of villas of Clifton Crescent freshly built, but the roadway yet to be laid out. By 1897 the crescent was complete and remains much as it did in the c19th with the exception of the unfortunate redevelopment of no33 (Madeira Court) in the 1960s.

No38 is the right hand half of a villa pair located at the very eastern end of the crescent. This is a 6-storey building (including semi-basement and accommodation within the Mansard) with canted bays rising through four storeys and two levels of dormers set within the slated mansard roof at front, side and rear.

The building is in the grand Italianate style used extensively in Folkestone, with cream painted stucco elevations enriched with corncicing, string courses, pediments over the first floor windows and rusticated quoin blocks at the corners.

The original villa pair (no1 and 3) would have once been symmetrical. No1 has been extended to the east by the addition of a magnificent single storey C19th extension but no3 has been extended more substantially with a 5-storey extension, attached to the west flank of the building. This is probably fairly modern – 1960s perhaps – and the proportions, storey heights and poorer quality detailing are all rather inferior to the architectures of the main ‘host’ building. The rusticated blocks of the original west corner can still be seen, embedded in the wall, where the extension now extends to the west.

Both properties have had an additional level of accommodation, with dormers inserted into the upper part of the mansard roof.

No 3 has, in the past, been converted into a care home. The conversion appears to have compromised the interiors quite seriously and externally there have been alterations inducing a number of (but not all) the windows changed to uPVC. There is also a metal escape stair leading from The Leas frontage balcony out into the garden.

Although all of the villa blocks within the Crescent conform in general scale, massing and materials, the style of the individual blocks differs slightly from one to another.

In these comments, the ‘*Front*’ Elevation is the north facing street elevation with the ‘*Rear*’ elevation facing south towards the sea, over The Leas. The Leas elevation is however the most important elevation of the building.

2- Development Proposals:

Change of use from care home to 11 Residential flats, reconfiguration of the internal layout, extension of basement terrace area, replacement dormers and roof lights, repairs and replacement windows.

This revised scheme had been substantially amended and now no longer incorporates changes and extensions to the roof level (3rd and 4th Floors) and the two west chimneys are now shown retained.

In most other respects the scheme is similar to the previous scheme - *as amended* (revision A submitted in July 2018)

3- Comments:

Previous comments on the originally submitted scheme on 22 June 2018 summarised that the proposal would harm the historic character and fabric of the building and the external changes - the loss of what remains of the symmetry of the villa pair appearance would have a wider detrimental effect on the historic character of the formal composition of Clifton Crescent.

Following the original submission, a site meeting was held on 03 July 2018 and comments on the interior of the building and the impact of the original scheme proposals on the building were made as follows:

The Interiors

Generally the interiors are much as Clive had expected. The property appears to have been converted into a nursing home in the 1960s or 70s, presumably at the same time as the side (West) extension was constructed. The conversion was fairly ruthless with rooms at all levels subdivided, mostly to provide en-suite bathroom facilities. A lift was inserted within the open well of the original staircase and extended up to serve the two attic levels of accommodation. The extension included a grim second staircase constructed of concrete with metal handrails.

It is still possible to determine the layout of the larger rooms of the principle floors at ground, first, second and third stories. Most of the rooms on all floors are devoid of historic features, with a few exceptions. At the attic levels, the conversion is entirely modern and there are no features surviving of the original, except the stair access (separate from the main stair that leads up from the second floor to the fourth floor).

The central staircase is the most significant feature to remain. This is an open well cantilevered stair with decorative iron balusters and mahogany handrail which rises from ground to third floor. This is severely compromised by the inserted lift but all the historic features remain including the staircase itself, a heavily corniced ceiling within the ground floor hallway and one surviving panelled door leading out at ground floor level to the East side accommodation.

On the West side, there is an arched opening with decorative cast iron columns. This may have been the original open porch by the front door, but is now enclosed within the extension.

Only two rooms retain any original cornices, these being the two principle rooms on the East side at ground floor level. However, the cornicing has been adapted to follow the outline of the inserted en-suites and lobby areas. Part of the cornicing in the rear room has collapsed.

Interior Layout

- Attic (4th and 5th floors) – No concern about the planning of the interiors but see other concerns over the reconstruction of the roofs, dormers, etc, and the loss of the two West chimney stacks (see below).
- Third Floor – The planning involves the loss of the separate stair leading from second to fourth floor but this might be acceptable in the overall context. There are no other heritage features at this level worth preserving.
- Second Floor – Flat 8 (East side) needs re-planning to preserve the proportions of the original rooms – this achieved by retaining the line of the inner partition of the rear room but possibly with an opening through it to a kitchen alcove. The en-suite of bedroom 1 should be minimised and perhaps formed as a cubicle within the room to maximise the size of this room.
- First Floor – Flat 6 (East side) needs re-planning in a similar way to Flat 8, preserving the original wall between the two rooms with an opening through to a kitchen alcove.
- Ground Floor – Flat 4 (East side) need re-planning so as to restore the rear South room (living/dining). The cornice here needs to be reconstructed where missing and reinstated following the removal of the inserted compartments. The front East room also has a fine cornice – this room needs re-planning to create a rectangular room (shorter than the original) but with the en-suite formed within it as a cubicle, allowing the cornice to run round above it. Flat 3 (West side) needs re-planning to retain the cast iron columns and arch over and the masonry of the original entrance porch to the rear of it. The arched opening could be blocked but left exposed on the hallway side.
- Basement Level – Here there is nothing of historic interest and the layout as proposed seems ok.

Exteriors

The fundamental issue of the need to retain the essential symmetry of the villa pair needs to be addressed as follows:

- The roof should be retained or rebuilt to its original profile (NB: comparison of their existing and proposed roof plans reveals by just how much the flat roofed area is shown to be increased from the existing) – the preferred option would be to retain the roof and repair it rather than reconstructing it, which should only be considered as a last resort and justified by the Applicant.
- The two original stacks should be retained.
- The dormers should be reduced from the scheme proposals, especially the double width one on the South-East side.
- The extension to the roof of the modern West extension needs to be reconsidered, perhaps set back from the line of the original roof to allow the original villa pair roof to be appreciated better than it is now. Consideration could be given to the idea of setting back the existing roof over this West extension so as to allow the reinstatement of the South-West hip of the original villa pair, currently lost as it is merged in with the extension roof.
- The fourth floor West flat could perhaps be redesigned as a lighter element separate to and different from the original villa roof – set back at both front and rear, perhaps with glazed doors leading out to a terrace on the South side. This would avoid the need to cut through the eaves line to create a balcony on the roof of the West side bay window stack.
- The area of excavation on the rear South side needs to be reduced to allow retention of a front garden strip behind the boundary wall to The Leas frontage. This could be banked down towards the sunken area, lessening the closed-in feeling of the basement areas shown on the current scheme.
- The alteration of the West side ramp as improved accommodation for the basement West flat, with plateau rooflights, seems ok.
- On the Clifton Crescent side, new windows cut into the front of the modern West extension are acceptable. However, these should be raised as high as possible, with the first floor window taller than the second floor one – to improve the proportions. These windows can be plain recessed sashes as per other side extension windows nearby.
- Existing plastic windows are mostly unauthorised. Replacement windows need to be traditional timber sashes detailed to match the existing originals. These could however be glazed with Slimlite double glazed units, glazed into real glazing bars if required.
- The railings on the Clifton Crescent side need to be repaired, not replaced. The reinstatement railings on The Leas side should exactly match those at no1. The discussed changes to the basement excavated area means that there would no longer be the need to make these comply with the building regulations.

Following this, further discussions ensued on the possible modification of the original scheme design to lessen the impact of the scheme on the character of the building and, in particular, about the proposed extensions at roof level (third and fourth floors).

This latest scheme follows on from these discussions and the scheme has now been amended to omit any alterations at roof level and now shows the retention of the existing roof profiles, which are to be refurbished only, with the two chimney stacks on the west side retained. Changes at this level now involve only the replacement of the existing dormers, with a repositioning of the two on the side (west) elevation, together with a slight relocation of the existing rooflight on the flat roof top of the main range roof.

Other more detailed concerns over the planning of the interiors at ground, first and second floors have already been addressed by the previous submission of a revised scheme in July 2018 (Revision A) and the arrangement at these levels remains unchanged from that previous revised scheme.

In general terms then, the revised proposal appears to be acceptable in principle and comments on this latest revised submission cover, principally, matters of detail concerning the design of the replacement dormers, details of the sash windows and the proposed boundary railings along the rear (south) boundary wall facing The Leas.

Internal Planning

Within, the planning of the flats is very similar to the previous scheme. At third floor, 2 no flats consisting of a two bedroom flat in the main building and a one bed flat within the existing mansard over the 1960s west side extension. At fourth floor, the accommodation is reduced down from a three bed flat to a one bed, located entirely within the existing roof over the original range. The planning of these units involves the loss of much of the existing fabric within but, since this is mostly modern, these proposed changes are not a cause for concern.

Dormers

Externally, the works involve the replacement of *all* the existing dormers. Here the concern is that, whilst the dormers are kept to the same size and positioning (except on the west side), the detailing is poor with overhanging roofs with fascias and soffits and with the windows inset into the front of the dormer construction in the modern way. Because of this, the dormers will not be a match for the existing. For some of these dormers, I would prefer to see these reinstated to the historic pattern, as can be seen on old photographs (attached). The others need to be reconstructed to match the existing designs much closer than the existing proposals at present, without roof overhangs and bulky side cheeks.

In particular the double sash dormer on the rear (south) elevation should have single glazing bars (elevation 3). The side (west) dormers should be larger single sashes, similar to the current size (of the larger of the two dormers) but traditionally detailed – not with the side cheeks expressed at the front as they are currently designed. These, and the front and rear dormers over the 1960s extension, would look best if detailed to the historic pattern.

Elevation Windows

The front (north) elevation windows are the original and should be retained as existing and refurbished, with secondary glazing to upgrade them rather than replaced with double glazed sashes.

The rear (south) are mostly replacement Upvc and could be replaced with new timber sashes – double glazed with Slimlite panes as proposed.

Windows at the side (west) elevation are also originals but their retention is less important and so these too could be replaced with new timber Slimlite sashes.

Railings

The drawings show the wall top railing facing The Leas as a series of vertical balusters. This is not acceptable and the railing needs to exactly match the existing railing adjacent at no1 – i.e. with two horizontal rails and “butterfly” pattern fretwork at the widely spaced stanchions. This pattern is commercially available and can be reinstated as a replica to no1, not as currently shown.

If there is a problem with the Building Regulations regarding the drop behind them into the sunken basement area, then the width of the battered planting area behind the railings would need to be increased (at the expense of the sunken area) until the width is such that the requirement for Regulation compliant railings is no longer a problem.

4- Recommendations:

Once these issues are resolved, I would recommend grant subject to the following conditions:

- Samples of materials – roof slating, flat roof coverings, paving materials to sunken area
- Details of construction of dormers, side basement extension eaves – scale of 1:5 or 1:10
- Details of the construction of the rear (south) sunken area and its retaining walls, steps and planting area and hard paving – scale of 1:10 or 1:20

- Details of joinery of replacement windows and doors – scale of 1:1 or 1:2 including their relationship with the adjoining masonry
- Details of rooflights
- Cast iron rainwater goods
- Details of the retention or reinstatement of the cornices to the two principal ground floor rooms and hallway to be provided, including details – scale 1:1 or 1:2 or 1:5
- Details of the infilling of the cast iron arched opening behind the entrance lobby (to form a separate bathroom
- Details of the upgrading of the existing original door to the stair hallway, ground floor
- Details of the proposed wall-top railings and gates to the rear boundary wall to The Leas.
- All meter boxes, utility service and telecom runs to be located internally
- The development to be provided with a communal TV receiver to avoid the need for individual TV aerial