

Shepway Borough Council

Conservation Consultancy Advice:

296	Case ref. no:	Y17/1220/SH
Property Address:	36 Park Road, Hythe	
Proposals:	Demolition of existing rear extension and construction of a new rear extension, together with internal and external alterations (Resubmission of Y17/0880/SH) (2 nd amended Scheme-revC)	
Application Type	Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent	
Agent:	Cyma Architects	
General Comments Operative Conditions?		
Listing / C/A?	Grade II	
Date Consult Received:	16/10/2017	
Date Comments Sent:		

Comments:

Historic Building Description and Significance:

The Whim (no36) is located on the north side of Park Road which is an area of c19th development extending south from the Royal Military Canal, about half way between the Royal Military Canal and the seafront at West Parade.

The building is very unusual and is essentially circular on plan, a “donut” shape, about 12m in diameter with a small central courtyard located at the centre of the plot. There are some rather derelict single storey outbuildings on the north side of the plot. Beyond the plot, to the north, is a long range of garages facing out onto Albert Lane.

The building (known as “The Whim”) seems to have been built by a Mr Henry Scott in 1877-8 and is of interest as an early example of a bungalow and as a Victorian eccentricity anomaly.

The property also appears to have originally included a detached outbuilding all along the north boundary, leaving the donut structure entirely detached at the centre of the plot. The two ranges of accommodation have since (in the c20th) been connected by a link block which obscures the original main entrance porch on the north side of the donut.

The northern outbuilding range is single storey facing the donut with a monopitch roof rising to a generally blank brick elevation on the north side facing out over, and partially obscured by, the garage range. Only the west half of this range remains, in poor condition, with the east half having been demolished, leaving only the ground slab.

Within the circular donut shape, the central space, about 4m diameter, is infilled, with a later glazed partition structure around it, linking to the pitched roof over the donut and forming a circular corridor, linking all of the main rooms. Contemporary records suggest that this central space was originally open and the glazed partition inserted at a later date, leaving a smaller central open space that, in its turn, was roofed over in the 1970s with a solid flat roof.

Both the buildings are/were generally of timber framed construction faced with beaded painted weatherboarding externally and with the rooms internally lined with painted beaded matchboarding. The original roofs are slate with a fretted valance panel all around the exterior of the building, not unlike the valance to a railway station. The internal eaves within the atrium of the donut is similar, also wide but with the boarded valance panels removed and with glazing between the eaves and the centre glazed room which is roofed in metal sheeting.

Within the 'donut', the interconnecting rooms are arranged around the circular plan in segments with walls radiating out from the centre, lined with matchboarding and with traditional Victorian architraves and skirtings, all appearing to be the original and unaltered from when it was originally built

The building had not been well looked after and following an application for demolition (in 2005), by a previous owner, the building was Listed. The outbuildings have become derelict with the east outbuilding completely demolished and only the west outbuilding, and a rather clumsy later porch now connecting the ancillary accommodation to the main donut building, remains. This application by a new owner seeks to re-order the accommodation within the building to make it more useable.

Development Proposals:

Revised Scheme C

(further amendments following the last set of comments)

The demolition of the central glazed room and the roofing in of the originally open circular atrium space, with a new glazed roof supported on vertical walls raised up off the line of the inner walls of the donut shaped building. The inner roof slopes are now retained, down to the line of the valley gutter between the circular central lantern and the inner roof slope. Inside the new glazed central lantern, the decorative valance boarding is now shown reinstated with a short length of the roof slope above, now inside the lantern.

On the north side, the remaining remnants of the outbuildings are to be completely demolished, except for the north wall, and replaced with a new single storey accommodation range containing sitting room, bedroom and bathroom/utility areas. This is all to be built in brick with a slate monopitch roof facing south towards the donut. The outer wall will be the original brickwork extended right along the northern boundary of the site. *(This part of the proposals is the same as shown on the previous revised proposals (revision B)).*

The two separate structures will be linked by a fully glazed link passage between the northern range of accommodation and the north entrance to the 'donut'. This frameless glazed box is shown fitted in under the original projecting canopy on the north side. The drawings now show the retentions of the valance planking to either side of this porch canopy, outside the glazed link)

Within the main circular accommodation, alterations are proposed to the arrangement of segmental rooms, with one complete partition removed to combine the rear entrance hallway and a larger room to the east of this to form a new larger kitchen area. This has been amended so as to retain piers at either end of the removed partition as a downstand beam.

Other changes involve the blocking up of some doorways that currently interconnect between the segmental rooms and the formation of a new doorway between Bedroom 1 and its ensuite bathroom (formed within an existing narrow segmental room).

The amended scheme has been further amended to show the retention of all the doors giving onto the central court of the 'donut', with redundant doors sealed shut. Other doorways between the segmental rooms which are to be blocked up will be done so that the architraves of the openings are retained with only the door openings filled in with plaster

Comments:

The Special Character of the Building

This is really a most extraordinary building and thought by the local Heritage England representative to be possibly unique! The principal characteristic is, of course, the perfectly circular plan, with, at its centre, a circular *oculus*, or courtyard, now infilled, with a passageway formed by a conservatory-like glazed timber partition creating a circulation passage around the side of the centre courtyard with, right at the centre, a small space, formerly open and a sort of 'fernery,' but now also capped off to become part of the interior accommodation.

Following concerns about various aspects of the scheme design, a site visit was made and following this suggestions were made, asking for further changes to the Scheme B design so as to retain more of the sense of the original roof form, to reinstate the decorative ridge cresting, to amend the connection between the glazed link and the original north entrance canopy, and to preserve more of the original arrangement of rooms and doors within the donut accommodation, especially to retain all of the doors giving onto the central courtyard.

The Central Space and the Merits of Retention or Removal of the Glazed Corridor Screen

It became clear from our site visit that the original form of 'The Whim' was that of an open central courtyard with an overhanging roof with valence boarding panels around it to provide weather protection to the inside timber wall of the centre courtyard of the 'donut'. This space seems to have acted as a sort of central open air hallway, with all of the room doorways opening out into it, protected slightly by the wide overhanging eaves and valence panel but otherwise giving out onto the open air, with the joinery detailing of the doors and window consistent with this original external situation.

The rooms within the 'donut' are tapered, like segments of an orange, but with intercommunicating doors between, allowing some circulation within the house without having to go outside!

Just when the glazed corridor arrived is less certain, but it has the feel of the very late c19th – a light construction not unlike the very earliest bus bodies. The modern solid capping over the formerly open 'fernery' left in the centre is much more recent and certainly detracts from the character.

The amended proposals show the removal of this later inserted glazed garden room, replacing this with a new roof with a glazed lantern over the central space, supported on vertical walls raised up off the line of the inner walls of the donut shaped building. The inner roof slopes are now retained, down to the line of the valley gutter between the circular central lantern and the inner roof slope. Inside the new glazed central lantern, the decorative valence boarding is now shown reinstated with a short length of the roof slope above, now inside the lantern. This should be slated also but this is not shown on the drawing

Following concerns about the loss of the glazed corridor partition (which in itself is curious and attractive) and the effect of the infilling of the roof well, an assessment was made on site of the relative merits of retention of the courtyard glazed partition against the benefits achieved by the restoration (albeit under cover) of the original form of the circular centre courtyard with its more direct lighting and the reinstatement of the internal decorative valence.

Given that the courtyard was originally fully open to the weather, I remain of the view that the 'harm' caused by the removal of the glazed corridor (which is a later inserted feature of some interest) can be

justified by the 'benefit' to the building's character achieved by the reinstatement of the internal decorative valance and, more importantly, the restoration (albeit under cover) of the original form of the circular centre courtyard and its more direct lighting.

Even though the proposal isn't a restoration to the very original layout (*i.e. with no roof and with a recessed central courtyard floor*) the proposed design will return the central space of the 'donut' to its original shape and size, and the removal of the solid roof at the centre of the space will improve the nature of the lighting of the space to very much more like how it would have been originally. I therefore consider that, on balance, the restorative works and new layout outweighs the harm caused by the removal of the later woodwork of the glazed corridor screen.

I have considered alternative possible layouts that might retain a part of the atrium screen but the practicalities of detailing this means that an idea for retaining a part of it tends to rule this out. Retention of a part of the screen would of course get in the way of appreciating the simple openness that was the character of the building when it was first built.

The Design of the Lantern and the Effect of this on the Roof of the 'Donut'

This revised proposal still involves a quite radical alteration to the roof form of the donut, but the revised proposal with a lower lantern and a valley gutter abutting the inner roof slope addresses my previous concerns about the infilling all of the inner roof slope, and, in addition, allows the re-instatement of the decorative ridge cresting which, though damaged, is an important feature of the roofscape of the building.

This arrangement will be less simple to maintain but the preservation of the underlying form of the roof, both outer and inner roof slopes, together with the ridge cresting reinstated is important. The roof slating also needs to be re-instated inside the new lantern.

The Ancillary Range of Accommodation along the North Boundary

The building is, however, a difficult place to live in and the ancillary accommodation is in very poor condition and not capable of economic restoration. The proposal is then to completely replace the north ancillary accommodation with a new out-building – extending right across the north side of the site, with a monopitch slated roof.

A previous proposal for 2-storey accommodation on this side of the site has now been dropped and the revised proposal is now for a more modest, lower range, of single storey accommodation right across the site on the north boundary and the rebuilt north range now seems to have an appropriate scale, subsidiary to the scale of the main 'donut range'. The front (south) face of the new outbuilding has been changed to painted weatherboarding which is consistent with the wide openings here and gives a lighter feel to the space between this and the 'donut'.

The Glazed Link between the Donut and the Ancillary range of Accommodation

The circular 'donut' shaped building appears to have originally been completely detached from the range of buildings along the north boundary, which appear to have been service rooms associated with the house reached from a principle entrance doorway on the north side of the 'donut', sheltered by a cantilevered timber projecting canopy roof with slatted plank valances, identical to the decorative valances around both the outside of the building and the central courtyard, which lend the building something of the character of a country railway station. This canopy is currently subsumed into a rough shanty-like structure linking the main building and the northern range and it has been rather spoilt as a result of this low-grade attachment.

The connection between the donut accommodation and the north range is proposed to be made by a new frameless, fully glazed link passage that is 'slipped in' under this original projecting cantilevered door canopy. The detail of the connection is not shown, but the drawings now show the valance panels to be retained on either side of the glazed link to make the connection. This is acceptable but there needs to be more detail showing the retention of the majority of the porch/canopy above and beside the new glazed link.

This glazed link seems the best possible way of making a connection between the two ranges of buildings, with the link appearing insubstantial and reflecting the original lack of *any* structure or connection between the 'Donut' and the north range. It is important that the detail of the connection is thought out so as to ensure that this can be done without harming the porch cantilever roof and its decorative valences.

Alterations to the Layout of the Rooms and Door Openings to the Central 'Donut'

The alterations to the accommodation within the donut building are generally quite modest, with the removal of only one of the radiating walls. None of these changes are particularly harmful to the building.

The proposals for the inner courtyard elevation has now been amended to show all of the original doorways into the courtyard retained, with unwanted doors simply left in place and sealed up or just locked.

The arrangement of doors around this inner elevation is an important element of the character of the building and the revisions address my previous concern about the extent of change here.

The proposed removal of the partition between this and the lobby room leading to the glass link has been modified by leaving remnant jambs at either end with a downstand beam and, as a result, the space can still be read as being originally two rooms but combined into one.

General Comments

- The drawings now show the external eaves valance to be retained and refurbished/repared and the inner one within the atrium reinstated to match.
- The small stub chimneys are now shown on the elevations and the roof plan
- The scheme now includes for the restoration of the damaged decorative ridge tiles

Conclusions

- This is a rare and curious building and the new owners wish to return it to a habitable state and make it more useable than it was previously is understandable and commendable.
- The re-design of the central space is radical – removing a later feature of worth in its own right but on balance, I consider that the gain in clarity (and usability) of the centre space outweighs the loss of the fabric of the later atrium wall. This is a radical approach, but is very sensitive to the character of the building.
- The effect on the roofscape is much improved with the retention of part of the inner pitch and the reinstatement of the ridge cresting tiles.
- The scale, form and materials of the north range is much better and, in my view, acceptable.
- The fully glazed link works well. We will still need to see more detail of the connection with the original valence porch canopy and I suggest this is handled by condition
- The arrangement within the donut building has been amended with less alteration to the original fabric, and the centre courtyard doors are now unaltered (and only sealed up where not required).
- The external eaves valance would need to be retained and refurbished/repared and the inner one reinstated to match with slating above inside the atrium

Recommendations:

I consider that the dis-benefit of the most significant change to the building – the 'harm' caused by the removal of the later glazed inner corridor – should be weighed against the benefits that the restoration of the inner space to its original pure form brings with it, and the improved usability of the house that comes as a result of the removal of the cramped corridor. My considered view is that the changes are acceptable.

The external alterations to rebuild the service range and the glazed connection are less controversial and make the property as a whole more useable. The design of the glazed link is sensitive to the fact that originally there was no link, and additionally the design has been refined to fit into the original entrance canopy in a sensitive fashion.

For this reason, I recommend Grant subject to the following conditions:

- Details of the construction of the circular central lantern, supporting walls, gutter and drainage chutes through the roof to be submitted – scale 1:5 or 1:10
- Details of the reinstatement of the inner roof eaves, valance boarding and slate work to be submitted – scale 1:5 or 1:10
- Details of the construction of the glazed link passage and its connection with the existing original porch roof with its valance boarding to be submitted – scale 1:5 or 1:10
- Details of the blocking of redundant doorways within the building to be supplied – scale 1:5 or 1:10
- Details of the joinery of windows, doors and weatherboarding to be submitted – scales 1:1 or 1:2 and 1:10
- Details of the re-instatement of the decorative ridge tiles and chimney stacks to be submitted and approved
- Details of hard paving and external surfaces to be approved
- Details of the entrance and vehicle gates to be approved