

## **2A Montagu Mews South, London W1H 7ER : Proposed Roof Terrace**

### **Design & Access Statement**

**March 2021**

The application proposal relates to the creation of a roof terrace surrounded by privacy screens at varying heights and set back from the front and back parapets of a terraced, flat roofed mews townhouse.

Montagu Mews South is a double blind, shared surface cobbled highway with single access and egress from George Street, just south of Montagu and Bryanston Squares. The mews itself lies within The Portman Estate Conservation Area and is not subject to an Article 4 direction relating to the use of roof terraces although it is acknowledged that all usual planning controls apply.

The house at number 2A is one of 5no, 3 storey terraced townhouses, completed by the Portman Estate in 1976 which are not listed, nor architecturally significant, and are now held freehold by resident owners. All five houses have flat roofs with skylights.

Other properties in the mews comprise original mews type houses, which are unlisted buildings of merit as noted in the Conservation Area Audit, with the only exception being a commercial garage/dealer closer to the mews entrance off George Street.

Higher buildings surround the mews immediately on three sides comprising George Street (4 storey residential with no 117 being office), Montagu Street (5 storey residential with the aforementioned garage at ground facing the mews) and Great Cumberland Place which was the Arch Hotel and now named the Prince Akatoki Hotel.

The majority of the houses on George Street, backing on to the 5no townhouses, have lower level roof terraces to their rear at a level between the first floor lounge and second floor bedroom level of the townhouses.

4-5 storey buildings on Upper Berkeley Street to the south are separated from the application site by Brunswick Mews and the second, southern leg of Montagu Mews South, and therefore far enough away for occupants to be aware of, or affected by, the proposal.

There are also a number of precedent examples of roof terraces/gardens in the mews and around the general area, either built with the original building or, in most cases, completed later when the opportunity was recognised. Two local examples of higher level roof terraces within the mews are shown in the image pack at the end of this document at no 115 George Street and 25B Montagu Mews South.

The difficult and restrictive times of the pandemic have accentuated the need for usable external amenity space which, subject to carefully addressing relevant planning issues would be a small enhancement to the existing roofscape of the townhouse which is currently a patchy grey asphalt roof covering with a dilapidated rooflight.

The applicants are aware of, and sensitive to, the potential effect a roof terrace could have with respect to design, planning and neighbour amenity criteria.

Matters that that have been considered in principle are as follows :

- Access – this would only be from within the house itself through a new replacement opening rooflight
- Townscape — neither the terrace nor privacy screens can be seen from the mews/highway
- Townscape views from the surrounding higher buildings - the timber screens and planting in containers or sedums would provide a more interesting, softer view of the roofscape than the existing asphalt covering. Albeit small in scope, planting would also provide some small measure of biodiversity
- Design – largely stained timber based construction for the decking and surrounding privacy screens; the precedent image below describes; access rooflight with high performance double glazing in colour coated metal opening frame
- Protection of surrounding residential amenity – timber privacy screening and containment from adjoining neighbours on three sides; terrace lighting will generally be low level and low intensity local to seating areas
- Construction – the terrace would be built on the existing roof covering with timber joists on adjustable pedestals; prefabrication of elements will reduce build time and disruption on site to neighbours; prefabrication also makes the deck and privacy screens demountable should any work or maintenance be required to the roof waterproofing
- Although not a planning issue, the proposals have been checked for structural capacity compliance by an qualified engineer

Informal guidance on how to proceed has been sought from from Westminster City Council. On 22 February 2021, Toby Cuthbertson, WCC Design & Conservation Officer commented as noted below which was both helpful and appreciated. Application responses to those comments are noted in bold italics :

- I think the acceptability of this scheme will boil down to finding the right balance between height of screens and preventing overlooking.  
**Noted**
- I wonder if the screens at the sides are strictly necessary?  
***They are for the safety of adults and children using the terrace as there would otherwise be unprotected edges at low parapet walls to neighbouring roofs***
- In design terms I would rather see a lower ‘garden fence’ to the left and right of the terrace, to avoid creating a boxlike structure on the rooftop, which would read somewhat as an additional storey.  
***Comments taken on board by reducing the height of the taller screen from 1.8m to 1.5m off the roof terrace deck and reducing the lower screen from 1.2m to 0.9m off the deck to the south and wrapping this lower level around one third the length of the return boundary screens. The slightly higher screen also allows the opportunity to grow planting against it.***

- Alternatively might it be possible to agree an approach with all the owners in the row to be implemented simultaneously so that a consistent treatment can be devised ?  
***Immediate neighbour at number 3 is keen to progress a replica roof terrace, but the neighbour at no 2, while supportive of the proposals, is not interested in pursuing his own roof terrace***
- I think that providing we can agree some lower screens the case is likely to be mainly an amenity one, and would be handled by one of my development control colleagues.  
***It is hoped that the lower screens approach is an acceptable response for other amenity matters to be considered through the determination process***
- As to whether you prefer the preapp or application approach, it's up to you. A planning application would be cheaper from your perspective (and if you need to withdraw you get a 'free go' subsequently).  
***Noted and hence this statement as part of a planning application***

Neighbours on both sides of the north leg of the mews have been informally consulted and also the neighbour to the much larger adjoining house to the rear (ie north) at 123 George St. It is understood that residents at 125 George Street are not in residence in the UK. No residents consulted are raising any concerns or objections but they have been informed that they will be formally consulted by the Council through the planning process and can comment then if they wish.

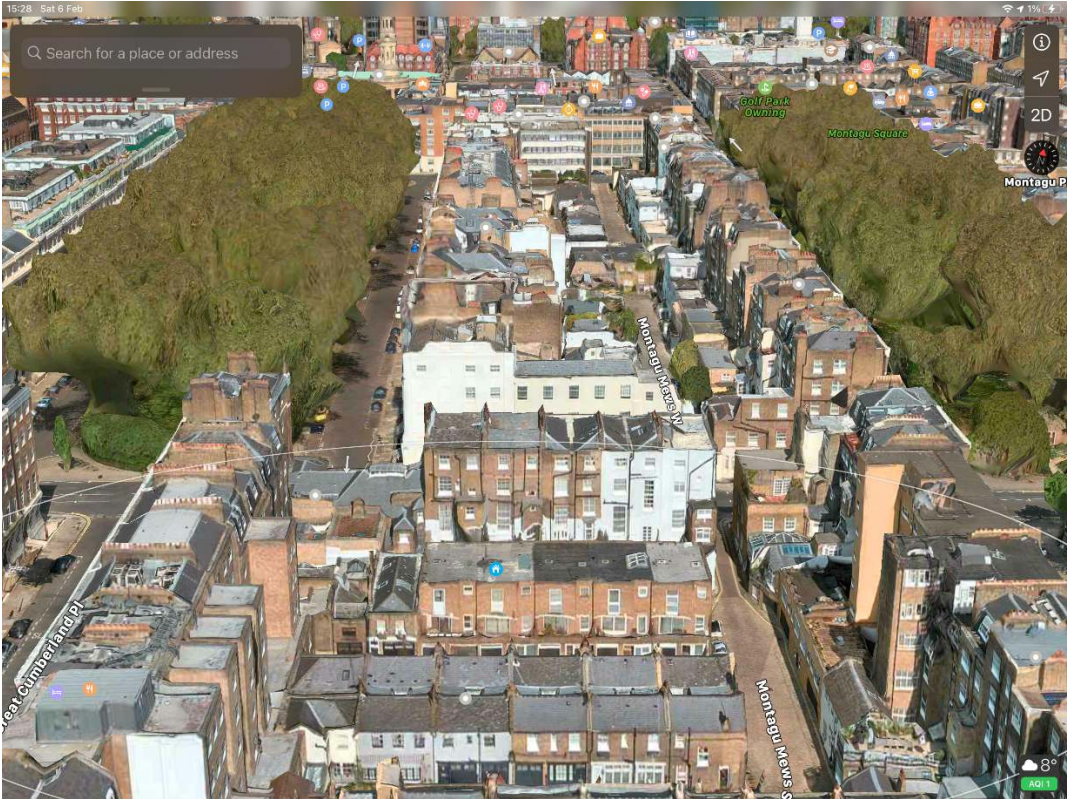
Below are photos of the existing condition and updated images of the proposed roof terrace relative to the comments and responses above, pursuant to this planning application. In addition, there are illustrative images showing the two roof terraces of nos 2A & 3 together if they were both to be granted planning permission and implemented.

In the context of other roof terraces in the mews and the general area, the resident owners at no 2A Montagu Mews South are applying for planning permission to use the central part of the roof space for family amenity. The adjoining owner at 3 Montagu Mews South is submitting a replica application concurrent this this one.

In conclusion, due consideration is respectfully requested of the Council and planning permission sought on the basis of :

- Quiet enjoyment for residential family amenity
- High quality, durable largely timber materials appropriate for a roof terrace solution
- No visual impact on the streetscape
- Very low visual impact when viewed from higher level surrounding properties – and an arguable benefit
- Consideration of adjoining neighbours privacy consistent with WCC Officer's informal comments and adjustment to heights
- Mitigation of disruption through construction, by building on the existing deck and use of prefabrication
- Introduction of plants and sedums for biodiversity

EXISTING



1 Existing View Towards Montagu Mews South From The South



2 Roof – Existing Context



3 View South Towards Montagu Mews South



4 View South Across 3 Montagu Mews South and To Rear of Gt Cumberland St



5 View East Towards Rear of Montagu St from no3 Montagu Mews South



6 View West to Rear of Gt Cumberland Street from No2 Montagu Mews South



7 View North to Rear of George Street



8 2A Montagu Mews South Existing Rooflight – To Be Replaced

PROPOSED



1 Context View From The South



2 Aerial View Proposed





3 View From Rear of George Street 1



4 View From Rear of George Street 2



5 View From Rear of Gt Cumberland Street



6 View West from Montagu Mews South



7 Terrace Elevation Perspective – this cannot be seen from any viewpoint

**Illustrative images of roof terraces AT 2A & 3 together**





Precedent Image



Roof Terrace at 115 George Street Looking into Montagu Mews South



Roof Terrace at 25B Montagu Mews South