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Retrospective Application for Front Porch Extension and Two Storey Rear Extension. New Application for Balcony and steps to Rear at Douglas House, Burnett Street, Auchenblae, Laurencekirk, AB30 1WP

For Mr & Mrs H Rothi

DESIGN STATEMENT

Introduction

Douglas House has recently been purchased by Harith and Chloe Rothi (Aug 2022) and they are aware that the previous owners have made significant alterations to the property without consent. Douglas House is a listed building in category C and lies within the Auchenblae Conservation Area. We have been commissioned to seek consents for these completed alterations and propose further changes to complete the works to the rear and make the garden accessible.

We would ask that it is borne in mind that the applicants have not carried out any unauthorised work. They have correctly sought approval for minor internal alteration works and are committed to ensuring that the listing and the conservation area are respected in their ownership of the building. It may also be worth noting that the parents of the applicants were responsible for the recent renovation of Argyll House on Auchenblae High Street, a building that was previously listed as a 'building at risk' in the Conservation Area Appraisal.

Planning Context

The house was category C listed in 1980 and lies within the Auchenblae conservation area with a listing description as follows:

Early 19th century. 2-storey and attic, pinned ashlar with thin margins and contrasted dressings. 2 courses deep. 3-window front, later central timber porch with crenellated parapet and mullioned and transomed glazing. Two bowed dormers. Ground and first floor windows in north east gable. Rear outshot, 12-pane sashes. Slated roof with straight skewes, end stacks rebuilt in brick. Low rendered garden wall with fleur de lys finialled railings (damaged) and one gatepier.

The text highlighted in yellow relates to changes made to the property. The house also features in a photograph on page 18 of the Conservation Area Appraisal. This photograph relates to the street context and not Douglas House specifically, but is useful for research purposes and will be referred to in the coming text.

Unauthorised Alterations

The unauthorised alterations are highlighted in yellow on the existing plans. Were we proposing alterations to these, the down takings are highlighted in a red cross hatch on the existing drawings.

As we knew nothing about the porch and two storey rear extensions, whether they were designed and how they are constructed, in the first instance, we asked a structural engineer to make a structural appraisal/investigation of the works. This ascertained that they are structurally sound and we feel that both the replacement porch and two storey rear extension should be acceptable in principle due to their form, scale and location we will review each in detail, in turn.

Porch Extension

We have found photographs and drawings from previous applications showing the previous front porch, which the listing confirms, was not original to the house. It looks like the roof of the previous porch was a flat parapet roof and it is apparent from the Conservation Area Appraisal photograph (below, circa 2014?) that the roof of the porch had been modified in an unattractive way. We would assume that this is because the original roof had failed and was leaking.



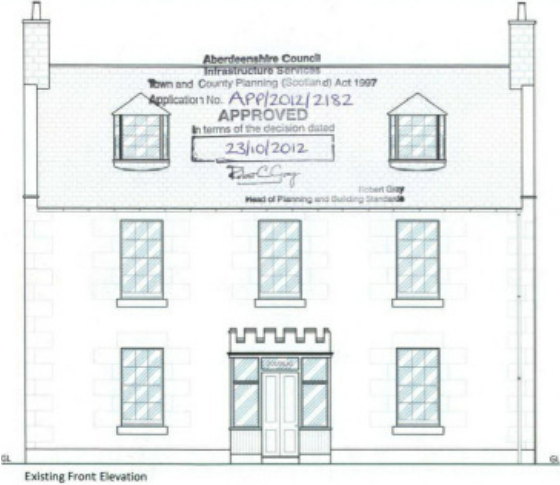
Δ Photograph from Canmore circa 1976 showing the original porch & railings



Δ Photograph from Conservation Area Appraisal 2014



Δ Photograph from Google Maps 2022



Δ Drawings showing old porch from previous planning application and new porch from this application

The original porch was of stained timber construction with a castellated parapet and a flat roof that was probably of felt. The conservation area photo shows an added black flat roof on top of the existing covering the castellations. This may have been conceived as a temporary repair and ended up becoming permanent, there may have been leaks or damp/rot issues from the previous leaky roof.

The replacement porch is also of stained timber construction with a parapet roof and a fibreglass resin roof covering (as can be seen in the photographic survey). It is of similar height to the original but is 600mm wider, measuring 3m wide as opposed to 2.4m according to the previous planning drawings. It has a wide panelled timber door, sturdy corner posts and windows with astragals to the front (west) elevation only, setting out a horizontal emphasis to the glazing. The base plinth is tiled and the house name is printed on the glass above the door in a similar way to the original.



Δ Photograph from 2022 showing replacement porch

We would say that the replacement porch has been well designed and is in keeping with the house and the wider conservation area. It is of a similar scale to the previous porch and the construction and detailing is of high quality and in materials appropriate to the house. Given that the previous porch apparently had issues with the roof and had been modified in an unattractive way, we would suggest that the replacement porch represents an aesthetic improvement.

Two Storey Rear Extension

We have found a previous planning application for extensive internal alterations, ref: APP/2013/2791 that shows the previous elevations of the house. For information, the internal alterations permitted under this application were not carried out.



Δ Drawings showing old two storey 'outshot' from previous planning application and existing extension

The drawings show a previous two storey 'outshot' to the rear with a similar footprint to the new two storey extension. There is smaller single storey 'lean to' element to the south. There is no back door opening shown on the drawing but we would think there would have been one in the south elevation. It is unlikely this this was original to the house and the finishes are not indicated on the drawing; however, it is likely that it would have been of brick construction and possibly rendered finish. The two storey 'lean to' roof is a slightly different pitch to the main roof and appears to have a slate finish.



Δ Drawing from previous planning application showing old two storey extension to rear.



The rear extension is of timber frame construction with vertical timber 'board on board' cladding and has two large window openings facing east, overlooking the garden at first floor level and two smaller east facing windows at ground floor level. There is a single back door opening facing south and the extension has a low pitched roof clad with grey single ply membrane roofing.

The existing roof lights have also been replaced with Velux windows and there are 2No new pairs of roof lights either side of where the existing ones were.



As the extension is to the rear, sits on a very similar footprint of a previous two storey extension and cannot be readily seen from Burnett Street, we feel that the extension is acceptable in principle. It's design, fenestration and cladding is also attractive but we feel that the roof would have been contentious if it had been proposed to planning ahead of construction. We propose to replace the roof with a slate roof at 20° pitch and raise the stone skew of the north gable as required to sit above the new roof line.

Δ Photos showing existing two storey extension to rear

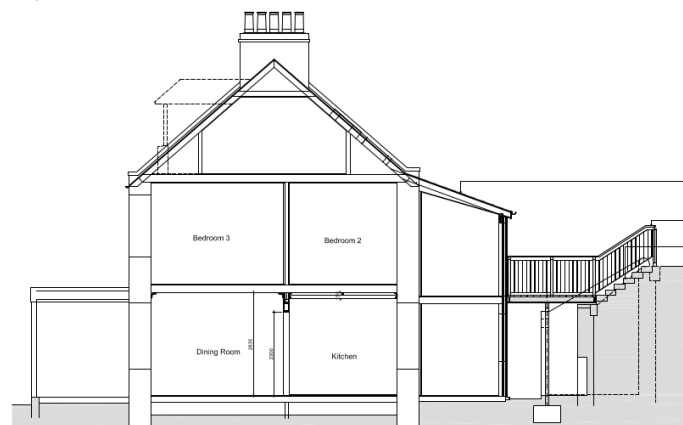
It appears there were 3No. roof lights in the existing roof from previous applications, two cast iron type and one larger unit shown as multi-pane. These have been replaced with standard Velux windows and 2No pairs of roof windows have also been added either side of the originals. Although the planning department may have preferred conservation type windows, given the location to the rear of the property, not in public view, we do not think these significantly detract from the listed building and have a negligible impact on the conservation area. We would therefore propose to leave these as existing.

New Design Proposals – Balcony / Bridge, External Stair & Balustrading

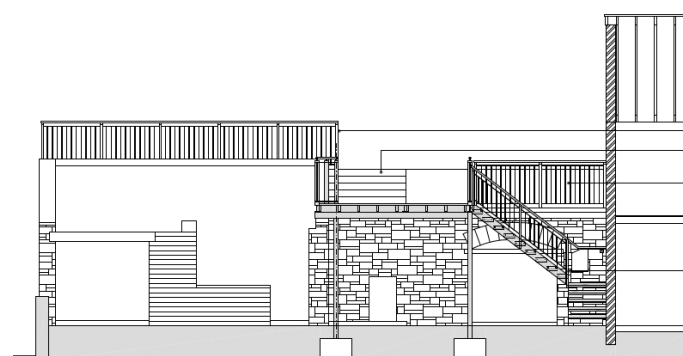
The existing two storey rear extension is unfinished. It has an existing sliding folding door in the room shown as study, which was apparently meant to lead to a balcony / bridge into the garden. This would make sense functionally as the garden sits about 3.5m higher than the house to the rear.



Proposed East Elevation



Proposed Section A-A



Proposed Rear Wall Elevation

The proposed slate roof on the existing rear extension is shown hatched yellow on the proposed drawings as shown left. A new balcony / bridge is proposed as a separate structure to the rear with steel superstructure and railings, timber joists and high quality composite decking. This will make the door from the study safe and provide accessible amenity space and safe and convenient access to the garden.

Two new steel posts would be installed to allow the path along the back of the house to be maintained, these would support the balcony structure over and provide support to the new external stair from the back of the house up to the balcony and garden. A new steel stair and balustrades of simple but robust design in black painted steel would provide access to the garden and a safe edge to the elevated garden to allow its safe use.

Steps would also be introduced in the garden to transition between the balcony level and the upper garden level.

Conclusion

Despite the previous alterations being unauthorised, we would suggest that the one with the biggest visual impact, the front porch is well designed and well suited to the house and the wider conservation area. It is not hugely dissimilar to the one that was there before and the signage relates it back to the previous porch.

The extension to the rear has far less visual impact on the house and the wider conservation area. The timber clad design

and contemporary windows are in contrast to the existing stone building and allow it to be read as a modern addition in contrast with the original house. As such we feel it is an appropriate alteration and would not warrant demolition and replacement. By replacing the roof with a pitched, natural slate design, we feel that its design is a positive contribution to the house. The addition of the balcony / bridge and balustrading makes the house and garden safe and practical to use and creates a positive link to the rear that has not existed in the past.