

23025 TCMCA/MM Heritage Notes_January 2024

Relevant heritage assets

The proposal site is some 70m west of the Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area (LDCA), and also around 90m east of Mill House, a Grade II listed building.

Understanding of heritage significance

The 2021 LDCA Character Appraisal & Management Plan explains that the heritage significance of the relevant 'built core' portion of the Conservation Area lies in its close association with Lower Dovercourt's heyday as a nineteenth century seaside resort. Its historical streets enclosed by predominantly high quality nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings represent a combined historic and architectural heritage interest value.

The List Entry for Mill House describes only its external features and materiality, and so bestows an architectural heritage interest value. Old maps in the 2021 LDCA Character Appraisal & Management Plan show that Mill House may have originally been known as Hill House, which dampens enquiry into connection with a windmill shown on the 1777 Chapman & André map to have stood some 500m away at the eastern end of today's Marine Parade. Although a fine nineteenth century villa on the roadway to former cement works north of the High Street – which hints at potential historic significance connected to past land use, local industry and even associated grandees - Mill House doesn't register on the websites of local heritage interest groups.

Despite its proximity to High Street, Mill House seems to reject the public realm thanks to the quiet and firmly private residential area that has resulted from encroachment on its formerly extensive grounds by tight-knit housing development, and reinforced by high, dense boundary treatments that allow only oblique or fragmentary views of the listed building, even up close. Mill House today appears barred by its setting from sharing its heritage value.

Impact of proposals

The proposal site is located within the setting of LDCA, in the western part of the High Street characterised by the bland architecture of larger scale post-war redevelopment buildings that in their collective appearance are considered to have an adverse impact on the Conservation Area due to their stark lack of fine grain and intricacy. This jarring juxtaposition is made worse by their place on relatively uphill ground, which gives them undue prominence as a raised backdrop in views from arguably the most characteristic part of the Conservation Area's 'built core' at the Kingsway crossroads.

The proposals aim to mitigate the host building's modest contribution to this adverse heritage impact by using a simple contemporary and complementary architectural approach for the new upper one storey. It is designed as a single design entity with a sloped roof featuring overhanging eaves. The proportions and fenestration pattern of existing building and the extension together were carefully considered to create a satisfactory overall appearance. The existing building will be also retrofitted to improve appearance as well as its energy performance. Light-coloured high quality cladding material and elegant balcony enclosures will also complement existing.

In terms of views, within the Conservation Area boundary only the host building's shorter High Street frontage is visible from the Kingsway crossroads and westward along High Street. The updated and extended host building will gain some visual prominence, but with an element of the setting-back of new upper floor, it will make it barely visible from the Conservation Area. Indeed, the proposed extension and the overall upgrade of the existing building on site will greatly improve this part of the Conservation Area's setting and enhance inward views of it along High Street.

The impact of proposals on the setting of the somewhat barricaded Mill House is negligible because the proposed extensions would be wholly obscured from view by the relatively taller, wider and deeper-plan discount store adjoining the west side of the host building, and also by mature trees in back gardens that make up the remainder of the separation to Mill House.