

# IDEA LYC

Design + Access Statement

March 2012

31 Vivian Road, London E3 5RE

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## 00. PRACTICE PROFILE

Studio Idealyc provides a fully integrated design service, including architectural design, project management and full building related services, both authoring and implementing every aspect of the project. A collaborative approach is a key aspect of the practice portfolio. We involve other artists, designers and professionals throughout the whole process creating homes and workplaces for our clients.

The practice strives to create playful and poetic architecture whilst strictly adhering to Building Regulations. Work has included conservation and new build as well as change of use applications for public buildings such as St Giles International School.

We have also worked extensively in community and green architecture. We are committed to providing buildings that meet government guidelines for sustainable buildings, for instance, reducing carbon footprints and grey water strategy. The practice is also concerned with social cohesion and in our work we endeavor to design architecture that addresses community issues and cross social areas.

Studio Idealyc's first commission and public project, The Hut at Spa Fields in Clerkenwell was Highly Commended as the Best Community based Planning Initiative at the London Planning Awards 2007. This building reflects part of the ethos of the studio by the use of poetic qualities of copper as a main and unique cladding material. Recently this project was selected as a reference model at the 2009 European Competition.

Studio Idealyc has also built up extensive experience of extensions to existing properties as well as internal renovations. We currently hold a 100% successful rate of planning approval.



Various studies for residential houses in London.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

We at Studio Idealyc have been appointed to undertake the submission of a project at 31 Vivian Road, E3 5RE. The property is situated in the primarily residential Driffield Road Conservation Area. Due to the sporadic construction of the houses, each contains its own idiosyncratic features and ornamentation based around the typology of a Victorian terrace house with a rear wing and a parapet that conceals the butterfly roof, synonymous with many of London's historic areas.

The application in question is for a roof extension in which we aim to create a bedroom for a growing family. The property in question is currently a two bedroom dwelling with limited scale and the aim of this proposal is related to the current need of the expanding family. Our clients desire to continue to be part of the community in which they reside but do not feel that the current accommodation is suitable to support the foreseeable future needs and challenges for a modern family.

The loft extension has been carefully considered and designed, especially given the context of the Conservation Area in which the property is located. The design is not visible from the street level of Vivian Road as is demonstrated in the following pages and the aspect visible from the rear of the property achieves a carefully balanced symmetry with the neighbouring 33 Vivian Road and the former Unicorn Pub.



View along Vivian Road looking north, taken in March 2012.

## 2.0 PLANNING HISTORY

31 Vivian Road (ref PA/11/02083)

The current application presented in this document formed part of a previous application for the implementation of a rear mansard and the erection of a single storey rear infill extension and projecting box window. During the progress of the application, the removal of the proposed rear mansard from the application was made, on recommendation of the Planning Officer, to avoid a refusal for the whole scheme. As a result of Planning Office timescales no consultation was offered so the removal was made and the application was granted for the single storey rear infill extension and projecting box window.

The applicants then engaged further with the council to understand the reasons for their recommendation in order to make acceptable changes to the planning application for the proposed rear mansard.

Following discussions with the council after the application, their recommended course of action was to resubmit the application with “additional visual material to verify that the extension will not be visible”. They were further advised us that:

*“the extension will be visible from the rear, including views from the upper floors of the properties opposite [...] recommend that you give some more consideration to this impact. In particular you should address why an extension in this location will not compromise the general aspiration of Council policy to retain historic roof-scape.”*

As per the discussions and correspondence, referenced in the Appendix of this application, we have resubmitted the application, providing the additional visual material alongside our justification of the proposal.



Model of the existing site.

### 3.0 LOCATION - DRIFFIELD ROAD CONSERVATION AREA

Vivian Road is located just off the B119, which is an old Roman road, and begins at the A107 Bethnal Green and then terminates at the A12 near Bow, In London. The Victorian suburb is less than a 5-minute walk from both Victoria Park and Wennington Gardens, hence the property is situated in an ideal location for access to an abundance of amenities.

Vivian Road links onto Chisenhale Road, on the corner of which stands the development of Chisenhale Primary School, a building with distinctly modern characteristics that, although not matching the existing historic buildings, compliments them with the careful use of copper cladding, and large glass windows.

### 4.0 TRANSPORT

Mile End Underground Station is within walking distance and has access to both Central and District Underground Lines that facilitate travel across the capital. A number of bus routes also serve the area.



31 Vivian Road located on a map of the local area.



Average journey time to nearest Underground station.

5.0 EXISTING SITE



Existing front elevation of 31 Vivian Road (shown in red) and the neighbouring properties.

Observing the front elevation of the street, there is a level of coherence maintained through part of the unified facade. The former Unicorn pub, shown in the drawing above, which is a discordant element in the street, breaks this symmetry. Another break in the rhythm of the street and the roofscape is the mansard roof implemented at number 33 Vivian Road in the 1980s. While this elevation shows an idealised view of the street, in reality, the levels of the buildings vary as the building were not built as a single development but were constructed at various intervals in the history of the Driffield Road Conservation Area.

## 5.0 EXISTING SITE



Existing rear elevation of 31 Vivian Road (shown in red) and the neighbouring properties.

The rear elevation of the street is at odds with the coherent and ordered appearance of the front elevation. The symmetry of the terraces originally established by the arrangement of the windows and the aligned back to back rear wings, has been lost due to numerous small changes to the appearance of each individual house. The former unicorn pub has been extended both at the rear and with a mansard roof while the symmetry between 31 and 33 Vivian Road has been broken by the addition of a mansard roof.

## 5.0 EXISTING SITE

No. 31 Vivian Road is a two story Victorian terraced house with a traditional "London Roof" otherwise known as a butterfly roof. The roof is constructed in the form of a 'V' and the central gutter is perpendicular to the front raised parapet. It forms part of a terrace of similar style of properties with an unbroken parapet line.

However, in very close proximity to the property in question there is a dominant converted Pub (formerly the Unicorn Pub) that breaks the line of uniform domestic buildings and, immediately to northeast side of 31 Vivian Road, the roof of the neighbouring building (No 33) is extended to form a mansard. This has two dormer windows on the third storey that face both the front and back of the property. As a result of these developments, at present there is no uniform roof line on this part of the street on the front and rear beyond the original parapet that has been retained.



Details on the front elevation of 31 and 33 Vivian Road.

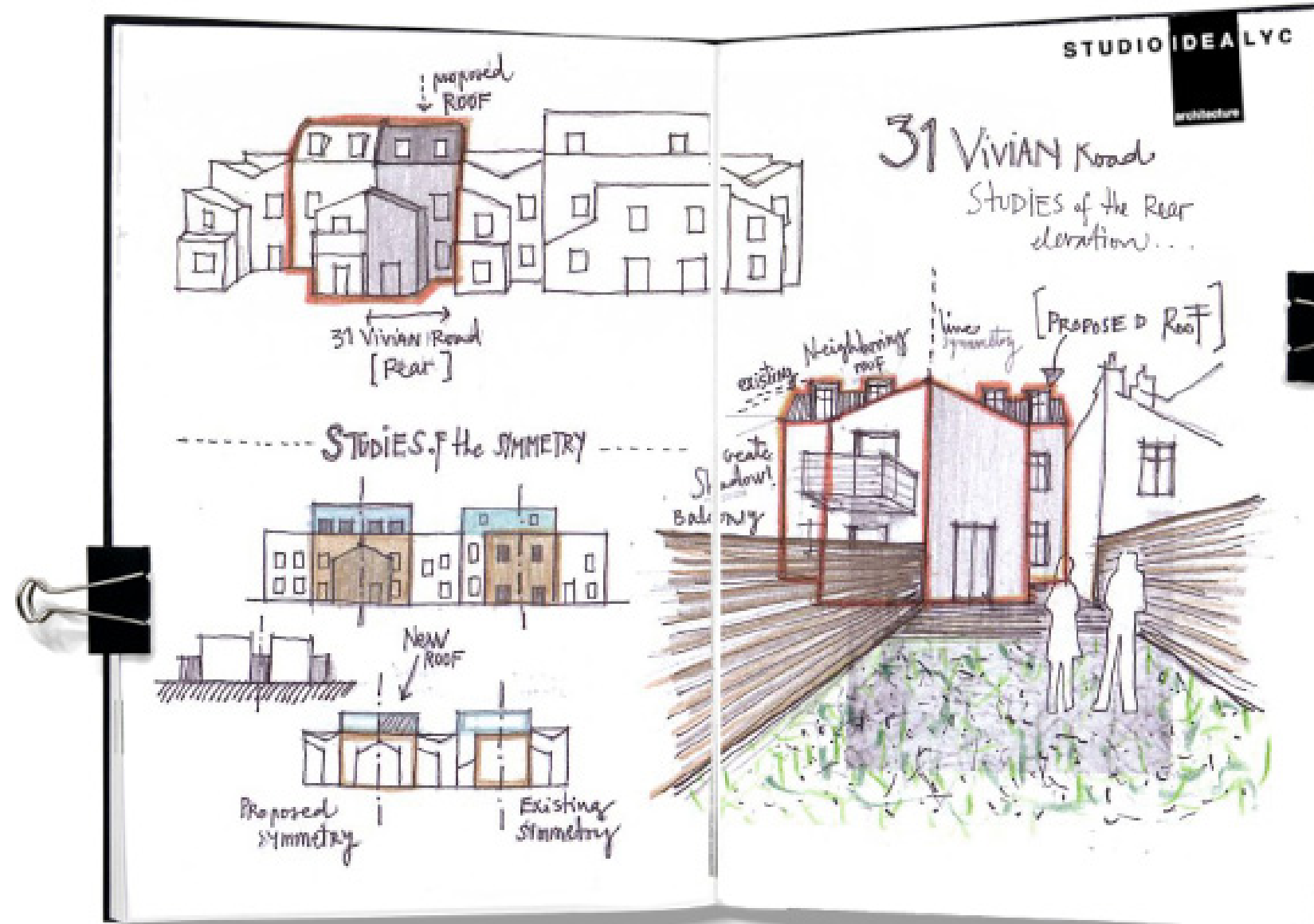
6.0 PROPOSED SITE

The proposed alteration to 31 Vivian Road is the addition of a rear mansard loft extension. The extension will be submissive to the heights of the two existing mansard party walls, sheltering the proposal from sight. The existing line of the parapet on both elevations of the property will not be altered, maintaining this critical feature of the terraces. Two windows will be added to the rear mansard to match the symmetry of those windows initially established in 33 Vivian Road.

We understand the implications of past proposals of this nature, but firmly believe we have a unique situation in that No. 31 is situated between two taller structures, No.33 and the old Unicorn Pub, which makes this proposed design, even when viewed from an oblique angle on the street, impossible to be seen and therefore preserves the streetscape, without setting a precedent.

We believe the design will both preserve the appearance of the streetscape and enhance the character of the area by restoring symmetry and balance to the rear aspect, with minimal impact and maximum sensitivity.

At the same time this will provide the facilities needed to meet the requirements of a growing family.



Studies of the symmetry and proposed rear elevation.

## 7.0 VISIBILITY FROM THE FRONT ASPECT

The image opposite illustrates the complete lack of visibility that our proposal will incur from the street. While the two mansards of the neighbouring properties are partially visible, the design of our proposal is completely hidden behind the parapet of the roof.

The applicant has tested the proposed height of the mansard himself, placing a marker at the highest point of the proposed roof and investigating the visibility of this at street level. This experiment yielded the results illustrated in the drawings we have produced, namely that the proposal cannot be seen from the street due to the set back design and the existing height of the parapet.

Not only does the parapet of the terraces hide the proposed mansard from view but also the existing side walls of the mansards already implemented shield the proposed site from view at oblique angles.

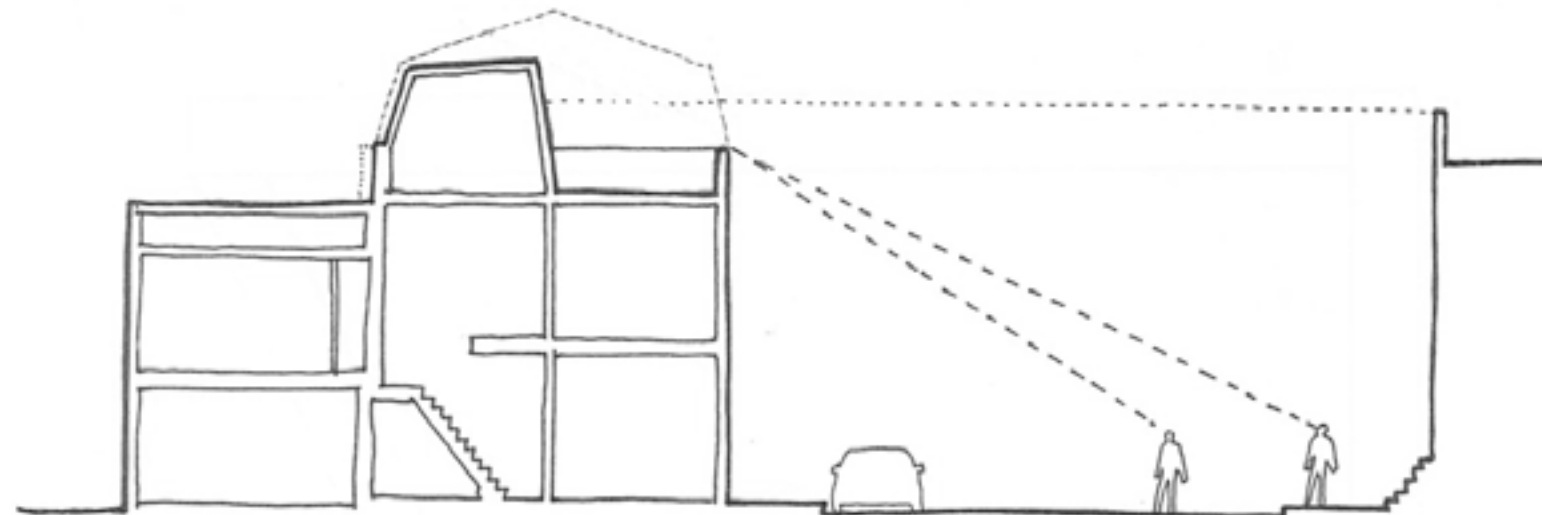


Diagram indicating visibility from street level along Vivian Road.

7.0 VISIBILITY FROM THE FRONT ASPECT



Image of proposed site looking south along Vivian Road.

7.0 VISIBILITY FROM THE FRONT ASPECT

The photograph shown below was taken by the planning officer assigned to the previous case during her site visit, it supports our assertion that the extension will not be seen from an 'oblique angle' ”.



Image of proposed site looking north along Vivian Road.

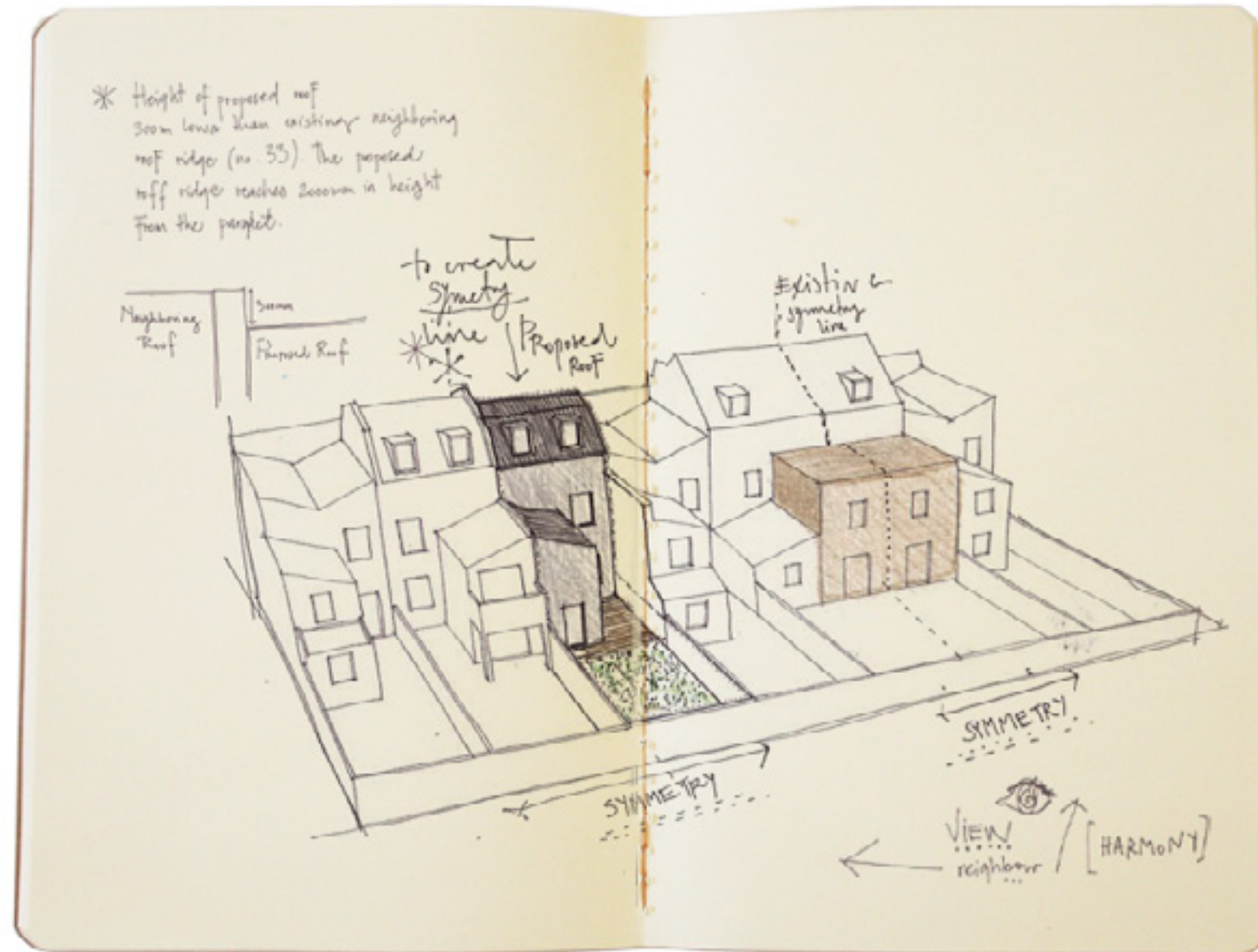
8.0 THE QUESTION OF IMPACT

While in our previous application we established that the geometry of the proposed roof was determined by the neighbouring (No.33) roof outline. In the current proposal, the scale, volume and part of the mass have been reduced, hiding away from the predominant aspect of the large adjacent mansard roof already implemented by the neighbour.

One of our main concerns is to respect the rhythm of the existing roofscape already evident in the row of terrace houses on this part of Vivian Road. We recognise that the council aspires to maintain the existing roofscape as, although the proposal is not visible from the street due to the parapet, it will be seen from the properties opposite. However, it is clear that any congruency that may have existed has been lost in the rear elevation and consequently, not only have two large roof extensions already been built, but the rear of the terraces host a number of different extensions, each at odds to one another. Several architectural features of diverse nature and function are exposed, giving a visual perception that no rhythm is maintained.

Looking at the two aspects of these terraces, it is obvious that the harmony of the front elevation has been largely maintained over the years, although, as a critic and defender of heritage architecture, it must be noted that the fact the council allowed for the erection of a front mansard clearly ruined the constant line of the original parapet, reinforcing the elegant and practical reason for its construction, which was merely to hide the butterfly roof behind. While this is now seen as feature to conserve, at the time it was built it was seen as a low cost solution and not worthy of exhibiting. This said, the parapet has now become a key aspect in our design process, a veil behind which the proposed rear mansard will be concealed.

Moreover, as established above, the rear aspect of the Victorian terraces, with a partial width rear wing typology has been completely lost. However, the design we have produced respects the original symmetry of the two adjacent houses created by the adjoining rear wings, a feature that, although lost along much of the street, has been kept between 31 Vivian Road and its neighbour. This symmetry is then reinforced at the rear with the addition of the rear mansard which reflects that of the neighbour which is already implemented.



Studies of the proposed rear elevation.

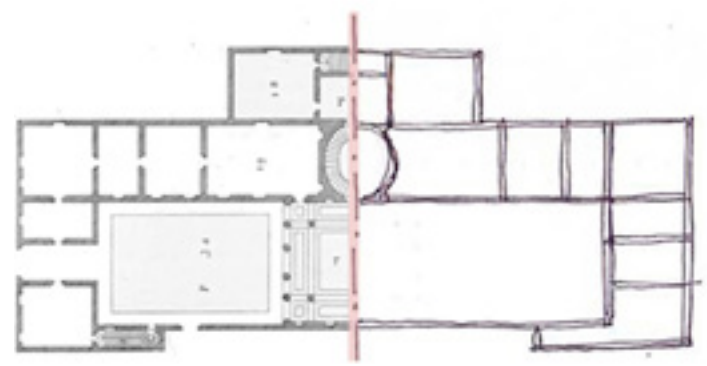
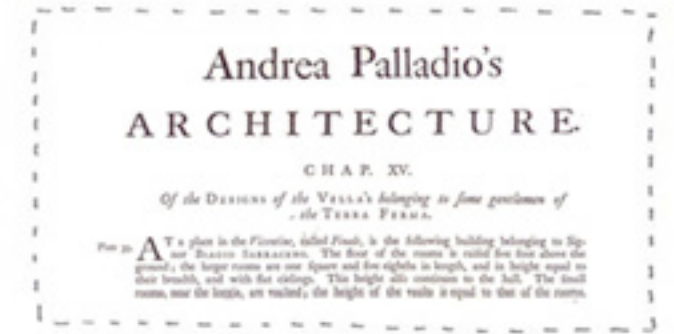
9.0 HISTORIC APPROACH

The style of harmony is established through the balance of symmetry, this is especially evident in the terrace houses of London and specifically Vivian Road. Our approach to the design of the rear mansard seeks to repair the symmetry of the rear elevation where its appearance is visible. The diagram on this page demonstrates the Palladian motives to our design, building on the order of the rear aspect of the terraces, which has largely been lost, and our proposal's intentions are to reinstate this feature.

From Georgian to Victorian architecture, symmetry played an important role in terms of design and building. In terraces such as Vivian Road, the balance establishing during the original construction was the main statement of the street facade. Unfortunately, due to the passage of time and the evolution of the urban fabric, including the use of artificial materials, the effect of this symmetry has gradually disappeared as a direct result of the detrimental work on the properties that is now prevented by the Conservation Area policies, which were not established until after the neighbouring house, number 33, erected a front to rear mansard with a serious visual impact on both aspects of the terrace.

We are not looking to propose a development due to the existing extension built by the neighbour, using this as a precedent as this is against the policy of the Conservation Area. Our proposal is instead based on the context and preservation of the policy established in the Driffield Road Conservation Area regarding the contextual aspect of the surrounding properties. It not our wish to break the line of the historic roofscape, although clearly this is already broken by the imposition of the volume of both mansard roofs at either side of 31 Vivian Road.

Our design is based on the paired element of the rear wing in which a line of symmetry would be projected, mirroring the two properties in both material and geometric character. At present this symmetry is broken by the mansard roof while the rear wings were initially paired. By the implementation of a mansard at the rear, this symmetry will be restored, returning the harmony lost due to this previous development.



Symmetry



Existing



Proposed

- ✓ Visual balance
- ✓ Symmetry
- ✓ Harmony

Studies on symmetry and comparison with Palladian architecture.

## 10.0 MATERIALS

It is our intention to match the material character of the Conservation Area and the buildings in the immediate context as closely as possible. This will lessen the impact of the proposed extension for the view from the rear properties as the development will therefore be contextual, it will also serve to reinforce the symmetry of the design established in section 9.0 of the document.

We plan to reuse all the tiles, which will be removed from the existing roof, on the proposed extension and source material that match the existing surrounding properties as well as the overall characteristics of the area, so as to blend the extension into the site as much as possible. The white render that is currently on part of the rear elevation will be removed and the rear view will be restored to natural London Yellow Stock Brick. The windows to be implemented in the proposed extension will be built from hardwood and painted to match the existing windows of the adjacent properties in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area.



Images and diagram of materials to be used.

## 11.0 CONCLUSION

It is clear from the evidence presented previously that the proposed alterations to 31 Vivian Road would serve to enhance the character of the area, restoring symmetry and balance to the discordant rear elevation of the terraces while from the front of the property, the extension would have no visible impact, maintaining the appearance of the front elevation and the established parapet that is cited as a key feature in the Driffield Road Conservation Area Appraisal. Moreover, the proposal seeks to match the existing materials used in the construction of the mansard to further establish the proposed symmetry.

While we agree that the nature of this development would not be seen as acceptable in the regimented two storey terraces of much of the area, the specific location of the site lends itself strongly to the addition of the mansard loft extension. As demonstrated in our previous application, the existing party walls of the adjoining mansard extensions shield the proposed addition from view, creating a unique situation in the Conservation Area.

Our proposal makes the most of this situation by providing a solution that preserves the appearance of the front aspect and restores symmetry and balance to the rear aspect, thereby enhancing the character of the area and at the same time meeting the aim of our clients to support their family needs and continue to be part of the community.

## 12.0 APPENDIX

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