

Docket Item #8
BAR CASE #2005-0227

BAR Meeting
October 19, 2005

ISSUE: Demolition and Encapsulation of Exterior Features

APPLICANT: Thomas Jeffers by R.B. Adams & Assoc.

LOCATION: 211 Franklin Street

ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy to limit the extent of demolition and encapsulation of the original house and its wing.

Note: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is seeking approval of a Permit to Demolish for the selective demolition of exterior features on the house and to encapsulate a portion of the house as it currently exists.

The features proposed for removal include raising approximately 16 linear feet of roof of the rear wing of the original portion of the house (160 sf in area), and removing a brick chimney on the exterior west wall of the 0 to the house. Also, substantial areas (approx. 84 sf.) of the existing walls of the later addition are to be removed to create new window or door openings.

Approximately 93 sf. of the rear wall of the original wing are proposed to be removed in order to create two large openings in this small wall surface.

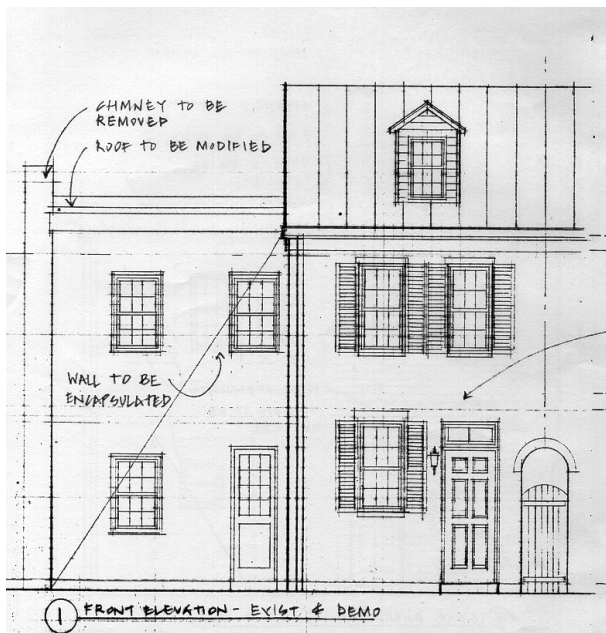


Figure 1 - Front areas of demolition and capsulation

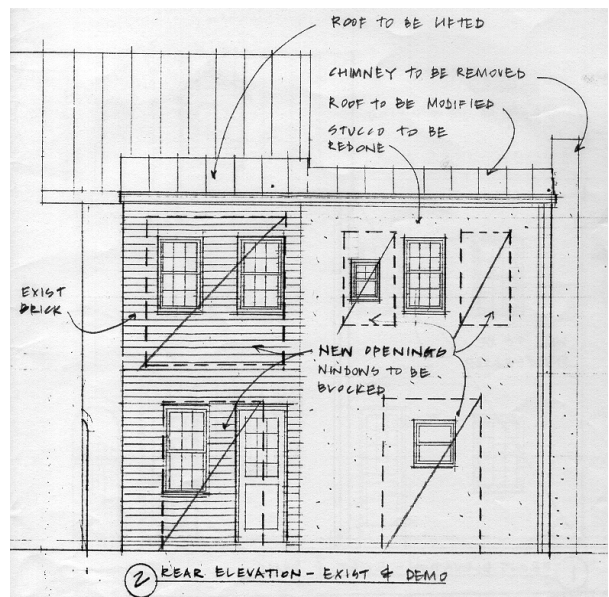


Figure 2 - Rear areas of demolition

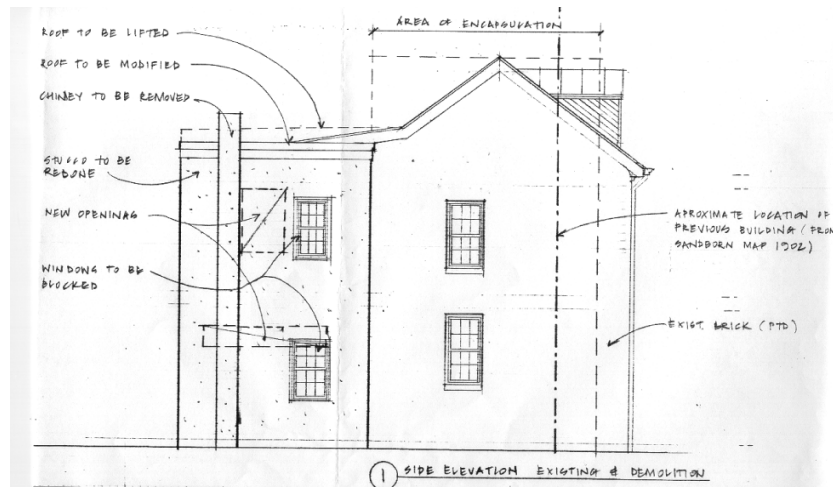


Figure 3 - Side areas of demolition and capsulation

II. HISTORY:

The modest, two story masonry house at 211 Franklin is paired with 209, sharing a party wall at the second level separated at grade level by an open air passageway. The houses were in existence at the time the Hopkins map of 1877 was published and demonstrate detailing typical of vernacular masonry houses of the first third of the 19th c. in Alexandria. Each of the houses has only two bays on the principal or street elevation, capped with a transverse gable roof 8:12 pitch. Dormers centered on each house appear to be substantially later in origin. Original exterior masonry is currently painted.

The 211 structure has a two story addition attached to the west side of the rear wing of the original block. It is square in plan, with a low pitched shed roof. The exposed walls on the south and west are clad in rough cast stucco on wood framing, and there are several small windows on each elevation. Although the exact date of this section is not known, the 1902 Sanborn Map does show a two story structure in this location. The area in front of the side addition is currently paved. A one story addition, also shown on the 1902 Sanborn map, was removed between 1921 and 1941.

III. ANALYSIS:

In considering a Permit to Demolish/Capsulate, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-105(B):

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving, removing, capsulating or razing would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic house?
- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?

- (5) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage, and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?

Staff believes that criteria #1, 3, 5, & 6 are met as applied to the original portion of the house. Staff notes that small vernacular houses of this period are relatively uncommon in Alexandria. The roof of the original house which is proposed to be raised is likely to consist of original fabric. The original roof pitch in this area as re-built would also be altered from the original as well. The removal of substantial areas of original masonry on the rear or north elevation would alter irreversibly this portion of the house. Also, encapsulation of the west wall of the main house to the degree anticipated would further impinge upon the visible form and fabric of the west side of the earliest portion of the structure, a wall which clearly was constructed with the intent to be a finished and visible feature, despite the known, but undocumented appearance of a later structure which has since been removed.

Review of the Criteria for Demolition demonstrate than none of the features proposed for removal or encapsulation on the two story side addition merit retention. A building permit from 1951 indicates that numerous alterations to the addition were completed, including reconstruction of the north (rear) wall, reconstruction of the chimney and raising the overall height of the addition to increase ceiling heights on the second story (permit #9858, 8/29/51).

The side addition to the original house is a fairly ungainly mass of little distinction which simply abuts the wing of the house. Its only virtue, slight at best, is that it is set well back on the lot, leaving the essential form and character-defining attributes of the front portion of the house in plain view. This addition is a non-contributing component of the site. The changes proposed, in terms of removals, new openings, or encapsulation are no threat to the integrity of significant resources.

It is the policy of the Boards that the absolute minimum demolition of an existing structure should take place. Staff believes that the extent of demolition is not appropriate and cannot support the application as currently proposed.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy to limit the extent of demolition and encapsulation of the original house and its wing.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F- finding

Code Enforcement:

C-1 Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit or land disturbance permit, a rodent abatement plan shall be submitted to Code Enforcement that will outline the steps that will taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

“This is a major change in use of open space by evaluating requirements in relation to the 2nd lot, and a major change to the original facade. Also a great deal of encapsulation.”

Alexandria Archaeology:

F-1 Research has documented that the existing structure on this property probably dates from the early 19th century. In addition, tax records indicate the presence of a free African American household on the 600 block of Fairfax Street, but the exact address is not known. The lot therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into residential life, possibly relating to free African Americans, in early Alexandria.

R-1 Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.

R-2 The above statements in R-1 must appear in the General Notes of all site plans so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.