

HERITAGE / DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

RELATING TO

FULL PLANNING IN A CONSERVATION AREA

AT

THE TOWERS, 39 DARTMOTUH PARK AVENUE, CAMDEN, NW5 1JP

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1.0 Introduction

Potter Raper are working to facilitate refurbishment and replacement of building elements at The Towers, Dartmouth Park Hill, NW5 1JP. The building is located within Dartmouth Park Conservation area, and has previously had an application refused which attempted to address the issues raised in this statement. The new proposal aim to address the concerns raised with the original application, whilst solving the significant problems experienced. A Pre-application was submitted, and the feedback fed into the revised proposals included within this application.

This Design and Access Statement will support the full planning consent application for the refurbishment of the premises.

2.0 Existing Premises

The Towers is a four-storey residential purpose built block of flats (with additional basement level containing a TRA hall). The site is accessed via pedestrian gates via an uncontrolled perimeter steel fence (circa 1.1m high) with a vehicular access to the western side of the plot from Dartmouth Park Avenue.

The building has 2 open staircase cores, one to the east and one to the west, which do not have controlled access either. There is an undercroft area housing Pram stores which are largely unused and open to the public. The topography of the site is a significant incline from west to east. There are a number of units on the 'ground' floor of the western side of the block which are located above the TRA hall and accessed from the undercroft areas. On the eastern side there is another unit on the 'Ground' floor which has rear access facing Dartmouth Park Hill, with the front door accessed via the eastern stair core up a single flight of stairs. Above the ground floor there are 3 additional stories.

The bin storage is currently located in a mixture of 3 places. Firstly there was originally a bin chute to the eastern stair core. The chute been blocked up, but the ground floor bin store remains with 3 small euro-bins provided which are wheeled to the front on collection day by caretakers. The report will refer to this store as 'existing bin area 1'. There are 4 wheelie bins near the vehicular entrance to the west of the site on Dartmouth Park Avenue which appear to be the recycling facilities for the entire block. These bins will be referred to as 'Existing Bin area 2'. Further to these 2 areas, there is a brick built structure with no roof towards the rear of the site (north west) which it is understood was a provision for larger household waste which would be intermittently collected when required. This structure will be referred to as 'Existing Bin area 3'.

Existing Bin area 1 is continuously littered with refuse that is not placed in the bins. This is due to the currently arrangement being insufficient, where bins are inaccessible due to insufficient space, leading to refuse being left adjacent to the bins rather than inside, exacerbating the issue further. Existing Bin area 3 is also being used for smaller refuse, contrary to the design principal. This has led to a rodent issue at the block.

The residents use the long thin vehicular access road to the west of the block for parking, which is not its intended use. The use of the access road is intended for the refuse lorries only to collect the larger items from the open bin store. Cars are often blocked in by other residents who subsequently need to move cars to enable access.

2.1 Planning Restrictions

The building is situated in Dartmouth Park Conservation area. A previous planning application was submitted (by others) which was refused on the basis that the view through the undercroft should remain (the original plans were to encase the ground floor undercroft) and that the proposals would harm to character of the building.

2.2 Building Control Requirements

All of the works included within this planning application will be covered by self-certification schemes, for example FENSA. The proposed works will be carried out in line with all building regulations, with replacement windows, electrical installation, and plumbing all meeting the required standards. There are no structural works proposed, nor works that materially affect means of escape.

3.0 Anti-social behaviour issues

3.1 Introduction

Potter Raper have visited site on a number of occasions, where residents have voiced concerns about a range of anti-social behaviours occurring within the site (not by residents) As part of this consultation, a security report has been compiled by Police Sergeant Cesar Sanguineti of the Metropolitan Police, reviewing how anti-social behaviour (ASB) impacts on the development at the Towers. The report will be attached to the application, but this design and access statement will summarise the points raised and potential solutions to the problems experienced. This meeting was held on the 12 of July 2021 with Cesar Sanguineti, who has specialist experience in security design at similar blocks. One of the main focus' Cesar raised was that the outer boundary could be improved as an initial security provision.

During site visits, residents of the block provided information and photographic evidence of some of the anti-social behaviour and criminal activity taking place regularly at the block, particularly after school times by students, and overnight. These meetings were not formal and took place as a result of the residents engaging with the visitors to site to express their concerns.

3.2 Resident Feedback

The residents of the block provided the following reports of anti-social behaviour and criminal activity which was described as typical and frequent:

- Harassment of residents including a pregnant resident with young children
- Drug taking
- Drug dealing
- Criminal Damage in the form of Graffiti (including obscene language)
- Defecation
- Indecent exposure
- Assault
- Rough Sleeping

4.0 Specialist Recommendations

We will summarise the findings within the report received by Cesar Sanguineti on the 12th of July 2021 in the order in which they appear in the report where relevant to our proposals:

- 1) Inadequate lighting to void areas – Most of the areas in question are served by the emergency lighting provision, which are understood to be lit at night. The provision is limited and it is recommended that they are enhanced.
Proposals: External lighting will be improved to the blocks as part of these proposals. In conjunction it is proposed that lighting is introduced to the car parking area and the garden areas as shown on drawings.
- 2) The main reason for ASB was attributed to due access to the site (multiple escape routes and access points) and the outer boundary fence. This is enhanced by the fact that there is no means of security installed to the boundary to restrict access.
Proposals: 1.8m high steel fencing proposed with controlled access to prevent unauthorised access to site.
- 3) Use of the Residents Association facility.

Proposals: Renew doors and utilise TRA Hall in future. Provide storage elsewhere for personal items contained in TRA hall at present.

- 4) The refuse outbuilding is overcrowded with litter and encouraging vermin. The location is not conducive to a bin lorry gaining access and is currently being mis-used. Bins are currently kept elsewhere.

Proposals: Construct a roof on top of the refuse store (Bin Area 3) and remove the refuse provision here. Use for storage instead.

- 5) There is currently no CCTV installed as a deterrent.

Proposals: A Landlord CCTV system would appear to be impractical in the circumstances and are rarely managed efficiently. Instead, it may be better to support the residents in setting up individual CCTV systems outside of flats.

- 6) Issues to the staircase and lift areas were highlighted consistently by residents.

Proposals: New controlled access doors proposed to prevent unauthorised access to the stair cores without blocking the whole undercroft area.

- 7) Door and Windows – Whilst doors and windows were highlighted as suitable for the use, the door locks were not.

Proposals: Improve door locks.

It is worth noting that the report recommends that the boundary fence is 'upgraded', i.e. height added to the existing installation. By virtue of the condition of the existing installation, the practicality of this, and the 'end-product' we envisage that the existing railings would instead be removed and replaced with a strong, durable new product that compliments the building better than a upgrade would.

5.0 Design Proposals

5.1 1.8m high Steel Railings to the perimeter of the boundary

The highest recommended preventative measure presented by Cesar Sanguinetti of the Metropolitan Police was to install a higher perimeter fence around the boundary with controlled access. This may be a sensitive proposal in a conservation area, however we believe a combination of factors will establish why this should be an acceptable proposal.

As part of the exercise, Potter Raper have found a similar example within Camden, which the photo below identifies. This design provide a high level of security and access control, without having an significant impact on viewing the building from the street due to the gaps between railing bars.

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Further to this, the topography of the site means that the 1.8m high railings have a reduced impact on the view of the building itself. On Dartmouth Park Hill, where the railing will be at the highest topography, the significant undercroft feature that the local planning authority are keen to preserve is not visible. The view from this street is simply of the 'rear' elevations of 4 of the eastern units. There is already a low level fence in place here which is a grated design and less sympathetic in style as the proposals. The 1.8m high option will also match the height of the brick wall located to the north eastern boundary of the site, along the Dartmouth Park Hill Street Scene.



Along the Dartmouth Park Avenue street scene, the topography falls, reducing the impact the boundary treatment has on the ground floor of the block because the ground floor is at a consistent height. The most affected area is therefore the entrance to the eastern stair core. This area has limited visibility as it is through to the rear, as there is a much narrower corridor of light. In terms of light from the rear, the railings will have little material impact due to the gaps between bars as well as being located away from the building, on the boundary. The architectural importance of the building is subsequently largely maintained whilst helping to solve to ASB issues experienced by residents. By the midpoint of the undercroft where most of the light comes through from the rear, the topography at the boundary is much lower, meaning that the proposed boundary treatment has a lesser effect on the view of the building. By the end of the block the railings and gates has very little impact at all due to the lower topography.



5.2 New Controlled access doors

The Anti-social behaviour and criminal activity extends to the upper floors of the blocks, and causes distress to the residents. We have therefore ensured that our proposal include for a secondary access control, an additional security measure for the stair cores. This will create a fail-safe security measure should external perimeter gates be left open on occasion, and provide residents with better piece of mind. The proposals have been designed in a way that maximises light using largely glazed fenestrations. This reduces the extent of the installation to significantly less than the previous proposal which was refused. The installation of both the external perimeter fencing and these controlled access doors should reduce and stop the ASB on the site. The install will be a durable steel unit with hammer glass, with significant resistance to vandalism.

5.3 New Bin Storage

It was clear from site visits that the whole bin storage arrangement needed to be re-thought. Since the refuse chute was blocked up, small tweaks have been made to the provision which have been far from successful, and have led to littering and rodent issues. It was also clear that the bin sizes were not sufficient for the number of residents (28 flats) either from a general waste or recycling perspective.

We engaged with the Street Space Group who are specialist in bin and cycle storage to offer a solution to the problem. Their proposals are detailed within our application package.

5.4 Parking

The proposals include to introduce controlled access to the area within which residents park at present. Based on feedback from the planners in the pre-planning application, the area is not suitable for parking, and therefore the only option available to the client to restricted access to maintenance purposes only.

5.5 Renewed external doors

The proposals aim to encourage the use of the TRA hall, and as such include for the doors to be replaced to renew the appearance and condition. This should help facilitate greater resident engagement in the space and encourage use

which should also help reduce ASB in the area. All pram store doors are also proposed for replacement, as some have been used for rough sleeping in the past (unauthorised).

5.6 External Lighting

As mentioned in the report, external lighting should be improved. There is a line to be struck between increasing this provision and causing disturbance to residents of the block as well as neighbouring residents. We therefore propose that the lighting is to be renewed to the undercroft area and front elevation, and new lighting installed to the western elevation where the maintenance road is located, activated by a PIR system. The number of light fittings will be limited and care will be taken to ensure that the location and brightness of the lighting will not cause disturbance.

5.7 Bin Storage to the rear

As can be seen on proposed drawing, we aim to remove the previous 'large refuse' store toward the rear of the site, and instate a grassed area instead. This reduces the hard landscaping on site, and well as the impact of the proposed bin store in this regard.

6.0 Facilitating Works

6.1 Access Equipment

All works are at ground level and no significant access equipment will be necessary to review or construct the proposals included in this design and access statement.

6.2 Car Parking/Transport

As identified in the pre-application, parking provisions are to be removed.

The block enjoys a location with many others transport methods such as buses, taxis, and the London Underground (Tufnell Park and Archway).

6.3 Refuse Disposal

All refuse which arises from the proposed works will be carefully removed from site and disposed of in line with the building contractor's waste management plan.

7.0 Summary

This application includes works which are essential to ensure the long lasting nature of this conservation asset. Proposals aim to retain the design of the building, whilst providing much needed upgrading to ensure the safety and peace of mind for the residents affected by significant ASB and criminal activity. Without controlled access to this site, the asset falls at risk of deteriorating further, driving out the residents who would otherwise be happy living within the building, and further encouraging ASB and criminal activity on the site.