UNDERCOVER

ARCHITECTURE LTD

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

For proposed
“REMODELLING OF REAR DORMER, FENESTRATION ALTERATIONS, REPLACEMENT WINDOWS, INSTALLATION OF ROOF LIGHTS, AUTOMATIC OPENING VENTS, SOLAR PANELS, AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMPS AND ASSOCIATED WORKS”

13 BELSIZE CRESCENT, LONDON, NW3 5QU

16th February 2023

Contents

1. Introduction – Design objectives

The objective of the proposed works is to improve the existing family home by attending to particular elements of the property and its use.

- Enhance the property and its contribution to the character of the street and conservation area
- Improve accessibility throughout the home
- Focus on the energy efficiency of the house
- Increase light penetration into the property
- To keep disruption to neighbours to a minimum

2. Assessment of existing conditions

The property is located in Belsize Conservation Area. The existing building is a mid-terrace, 5-storey, single family dwelling located on the South-West side of Belsize Crescent.

It is located in Flood Zone 1 and is at low risk from surface water flooding.

The property was constructed in the mid 19th Century as part of the London stock brick and stucco-fronted terraces which form Belsize Crescent. The houses on the terrace have a uniform design with a homogeneous material palette giving visual consistency. However, while some properties retain original historic detailing this has been lost from others. The front gardens with trees and vegetation soften the views on the street.

The houses originally had barrel topped dormers with white painted timber sash windows. Many of the roofs have been extended to replace the original barrel topped dormers with a tiled mansard storey. This property has previously been extended, with planning permission, with a mansard roof and rear roof terrace at third floor level.

Each house has two vertical lines of white painted timber sash windows on the front façade from the lower ground floor to second floor with an additional barrel shaped sash at third floor, while no.13's mansard has metal framed top-hinged windows.

There is ornamentation in the form of entablatures at eaves level, columned porticoes with balustrading above (this has been replaced with a less classical balustrade on no.13), canted three light bays with balustrading above (missing on no.13), steps to the upper ground floor entrance door with classically detailed balustrades retained to the sides (missing on no.13), balustrading on frontage walls (missing on no.13), and classically detailed window surrounds. Ornamentation creates a horizontal aspect of uniformity along the terrace.

At no.13 ground floor steps lead up to the front door, and down to the lower ground floor level. the steps to no.13 upper ground floor have an asphalt finish. The stair has timber railings with an additional metal handrail to one side supported on metal posts. These finishes and handrails/railings are not in-keeping with the classical finishes and detailing on the terrace.

Each property has a front garden and an original light-well providing natural light and secondary access to the lower ground floor. In most cases the light-well is not visible from the street due to the balustrading and planting to the street frontage.

The steps down to lower ground floor level are fairly steep and narrow, they land in a narrow passage in front of the secondary lower ground floor entrance with stepped access in. There are various level changes throughout the lower ground floor and each level within the property, there is no current disabled access to the house and the level changes make it less accessible internally.

To the rear there is a connection to the garden. The rear elevation has two vertical lines of windows at ground floor these windows are white painted timber sash windows while the windows to first and second floor are PVC windows with a bottom hinged opening panel. The mansard also has metal framed top-hinged windows to the front and rear.

3. Design Proposals

The main purpose behind the proposal is to improve the accessibility throughout the house, whilst contributing positively to the house's appearance on the street by reinstating historical details in line with neighbouring properties on Belsize Crescent. In addition, the connection between the living spaces and the garden will be enhanced, and internal natural light levels increased. There is also an intention to provide a w/c or bathroom on each floor, and to enhance the energy performance of the house.

The following design proposals have been made, each considering the initial design objectives, and carefully considering the existing, surrounding context of Belsize Crescent, the Belsize Conservation Area, and local Belsize Village.

Enhance the property and its contribution to the character of the street and conservation area:

Balustrading copying the historical style as originally constructed is proposed to be reinstated to the top of the raised ground front bay window / first floor balcony level, as well as above the front door.

The ornamental detailing would also be restored around the bay windows at the front of the property, reinstating the original character of the building and bringing it back into line with the other historical buildings on the street.

Replacements to fenestration at the back of the house will replace existing PVC windows with timber framed sashes, which more closely resemble the historical style of the building, bringing the back windows more into line with the rest of the building and the historical nature of the conservation area. At the front, ageing single glazed windows will be replaced with new timber framed double/triple glazed units to match the original style.

The existing dormer windows at the back are metal framed and will be replaced with timber sashes, again more in keeping with the rest of the terrace. Sliding doors on the rear dormer will be retained, and updated.

Improve accessibility throughout the home:

Various measures are taken to increase accessibility, in line with Camden's Planning Guidance - Access for All, and in particular to meet the accessibility needs of close family members of the property owners.

There will be an internal passenger elevator providing disabled access to all floors as well as provision made for accessible bathrooms, and accommodation in key points throughout the house to allow sufficient turning radius for a standard sized wheelchair, for instance in hallways and at the entrance to bedrooms and bathrooms. This will entail slightly enlarging the rear dormer, such that the bathroom on the top floor is large enough to accommodate a wheelchair.

Focus on Energy Efficiency of the House:

The house is currently heated with gas, with single glazed windows and poor insulation, resulting in significant heat loss to the outside. A surveyor's report concluded that "in its existing state, the house is very poor in terms of thermal retention".

The intention with this renovation is to minimise the carbon footprint of the property by moving to a mixture of electric underfloor heating and air heating derived from heat pumps, complemented by modern insulation and updated, more energy efficient fenestration (still in the style in keeping with the local conservation area). Solar panels are planned for the roof to further contribute to the production of clean energy. The new fabric will be insulated to meet current building regulation requirements.

On the receipt of planning permission, the owners intend to employ the services of environmental consultants, to determine whether further reductions in the carbon footprint of the property can reasonably be made. This analysis will include for example exploring the possibility of ground source heating (given potential synergies with the contemplated excavations), and also an investigation of whether and how electricity consumption can be further reduced.

The air source heat pumps and attenuation and solar panels are proposed to be located at roof level and would not be readily visible from public vantage points. The roof lights, solar panels and heat pump enclosure will be modest in scale and therefore would not harm the appearance of the host building or the contribution it makes to the character and appearance of the conservation area. (Please refer to the roof-works study appended with this document).

A living green roof has been included to reduce rainwater runoff, contribute to urban greening and increase biodiversity.

Increase light penetration in the property:

The raised ground floor windows will be increased in size to form French doors, with a retaining glass safety pane added in the window frame. Materials closely resembling the original windows will be used, with the addition of more thermally efficient glazing. (The addition of these French doors is the subject of a certificate of lawfulness already granted.)

Additional light will be brought into the house through the use of roof lights. The existing roof light above the staircase will be enlarged, such that natural light penetrates down several floors and illuminates the interior of the house. A second roof light will provide additional natural light to the top floor rooms and will slide open to facilitate maintenance (and if necessary replacement) of the air source heat pumps on the roof.

Keep disruption to neighbours to a minimum:

The owners recognise that any building project of this nature will result in disruption, and have met with the residents of neighbouring properties to proactively understand their particular concerns to try to minimise the disruption that they might suffer. The owners intend to continue this engagement throughout the project in order to facilitate minimising disruption and to quickly understand unanticipated points of concern which may arise.

A construction management plan and impact assessment has been undertaken specifically regarding the basement works. The owners are keen that for instance noise and vibration reduction measures (e.g. sound curtains) are properly implemented and that particularly noisy works undertaken only when necessary, and are managed such that they are interspersed and relief is provided. More information about these measures can be found in the construction management plan.

For specific context, a report from an experienced surveyor revealed the overall condition of the house, including for instance that the lower floors are not inhabitable and that the lower ground floor is particularly ruined, and was described as “comprehensively damp”. The current electrics and gas services are described as “patently dangerous”. Further, the surveyor recommended that “existing heating systems are not used, not even temporarily”. The surveyor also noted “progressive signs of deformation up through the building to the point where the upper two floors dish so significantly that the current condition is such that they will present substantial problems relating to furniture and general use”. Soil surveys showed levels of led contamination in the back garden more than eight times in excess of recommended levels, requiring excavation of several meters of soil to be properly remediated. There is also asbestos fibre in tiles on the back terrace, as well as asbestos cement in the ceilings, which must be carefully removed.

4. Use

The house will remain as a single residential dwelling with increased accessibility throughout and greater amenity in the areas of family rooms and ancillary spaces.

Scale:

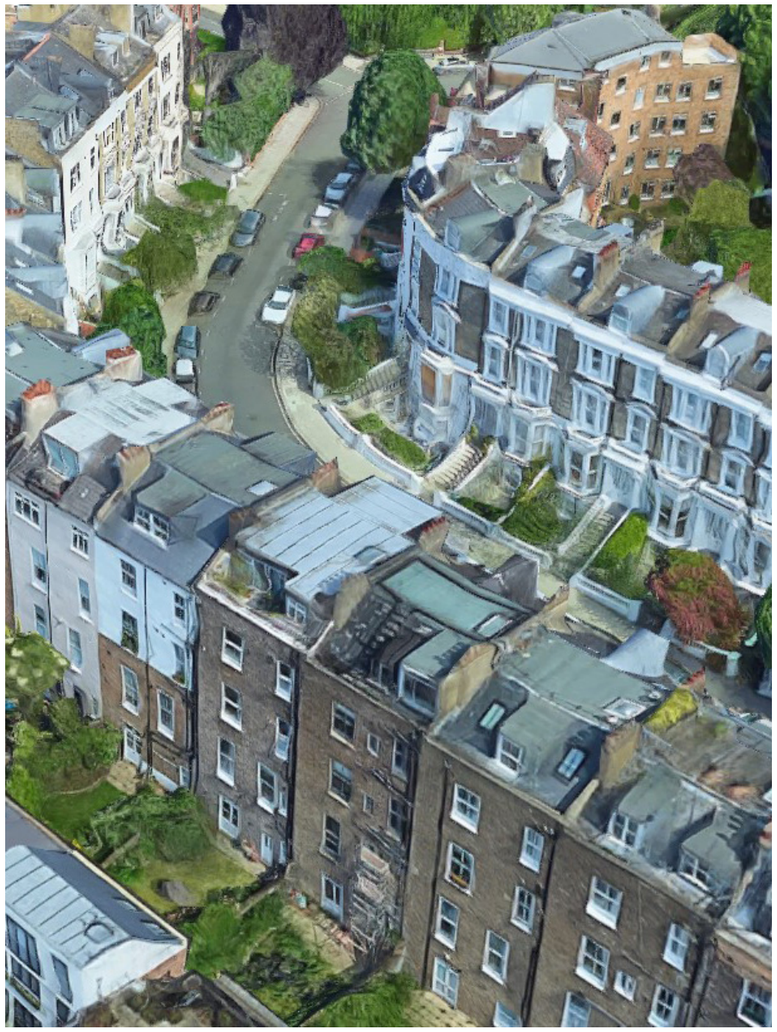
The internal GIA of the house will increase by 0.4m^2 at the rear of the third floor level where it is not visible from the street.

Appearance:

The Belsize Conservation area has been respected throughout the design process and in fact the considerate restoration of many of the original features of the house, which will be visible form the street, should significantly improve the impact of the building on the surrounding conservation area, in particular the reinstatement of balustrading at the front of the property.

5. Access

Camden’s guidance on accessibility, including “Access for All” has been used to guide decisions in the design of the property. The proposed changes are intended to strike a balance between being inclusively designed whilst conserving and enhancing the local character of the street.



Existing Roof Services

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Proposed Roof Services

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Existing Roof Condition

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Proposed Roof Condition

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Existing Roof Condition

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