

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee objection to applications [2023/2766/P](#) and [2023/3393/L](#) for installation of front and rear external stair lifts at 14 Highgate West Hill London N6 6JR.

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee believes this application is inadequate for a significant Grade II listed building on a prominent corner in a conservation area.

We also question whether the proposed stairlifts are necessary given that it is not clear whether there is anyone living in the house who needs disabled access presently. If there is, this might be acceptable subject to the heritage and design considerations set out below.

### Listing

Camden Council's website and Historic England page

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1379025> show clearly that the listing covers the entire building on the corner of Highgate West Hill and Millfield Lane, not just that the part of the building shown on the location plan.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1379025?section=official-list-entry>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1379025?section=comments-and-photos>

The "Heritage Statement" does not consider the effect of the proposed installation on the appearance of the building viewed from the public realm, and in particular does not take into account the potential impact on the railings mentioned in the listing:

*"Detached villa. Mid C19 with later additions. Stucco with slated hipped roof. 3 storeys and basement. Double-fronted with 3 windows and side and rear extensions. Central entrance with wooden gabled porch; radial fanlight and panelled door, approached by steps flanked by cast-iron railings. Recessed sashes; ground floor with margin glazing. Cornice at 2nd floor level."*

## Drawings, photos and details

The drawings and descriptions of the proposed works are not adequate, as set out below.

There are no elevations showing the proposed alterations relative to the entire building, or illustrations of their appearance from Millfield Lane and Highgate West Hill.

There are no plans which clearly indicate the location of the proposed stairlifts relative to the entire building. The location of the rear stairlift is particularly unclear. The highly simplified small drawings “All Drawings - existing”, “All Drawings - proposed” and “Detailed Drawings” do not provide this information.

The photos appear to show four or five sets of external steps when only two stairlifts are envisaged. It is unclear where some of these sets of steps are.

Confusingly, both “All drawings - proposed” and “All drawings - existing” show both the “front elevation” and “side elevation” twice with different small drawings, and all the drawings are too small/simplified to determine which steps they are meant to be.

There are no detailed drawings of the steps and stairlifts together in context, for instance showing railings and other surrounding features. The mechanism, wiring, fixings and so-on are not shown.

None of the documents provided include photos or detailed diagrams of the proposed “Bruno Elite Straight Stairlift” or associated wiring, attachments etc.

No detail is provided about how the stairlifts will be attached without damaging the fabric of a listed building. To quote from the English Heritage listing page:

*“The listing includes both the structure itself and any object or structure fixed to it (whether inside or outside) as well as any object or structure within the curtilage of the building.”*

A grey aluminium structure does not seem to be the most suitable choice for a 19th Century stucco house.

## Principle and alternatives

The justification statement is unclear about whether the stairlifts are needed for occupants now or whether this is a more speculative intervention:

*“The justification for this proposal is to provide a high quality of accessibility for the existing and future occupants.*

*Although some harm will be introduced to the appearance of the site, this is outweighed by the benefit to occupants as accessibility provisions are required.”*

There is no requirement for disabled access on a private dwelling comparable to that for a publicly accessible building as far as we are aware.

If the stairlift is necessary, the applicant should be encouraged to consider alternatives such as a vertical lift that would also accommodate people in a wheelchair.

For all of the above reasons Highgate CAAC believes that these proposals should be refused.