

Planning, Design and Access Statement

34 Fitzjohns Avenue NW3 5NR

Introduction

34 Fitzjohns Avenue is a semi-detached property comprising lower ground, raised ground, first and second floors.

There is a three bedroom flat on the first floor and a two bedroom flat on the second floor. Both are self-contained and held on leases.

The lower ground and ground floors had last been in occupation by one family, although there were previously two separate flats and, as noted in the pre-application report, Council Tax records the property as containing four flats. This would remain the status based on the current proposal.

The property is located within Fitzjohn's Netherhall Conservation Area.

Various tree works have been carried out with no objections from Camden and recent applications to remove a tree in the front well and two closest to the house at the rear met with no objections and will be undertaken to allow increased natural light into the lower ground floor front and rear windows.

The new freeholder intends to make her home in the property but also to provide a home for her disabled husband and his carer as well as for her daughter, now a single parent with two young children. It is a priority, therefore, to create as much space as possible to allow for multi-generational living, whilst affording all occupants a good degree of amenity and privacy.

The Proposal

This statement is prepared in support of a planning application to Camden Council for the following proposed works:-

- The re-conversion of the ground and lower ground (semi-basement) to two units. One number two bed, three persons unit and one number 4 bed family duplex.
- The removal of an external store at the front of the property and the removal of lower ground floor protrusions in the side access on the unattached side.
- Creation of a ramped access in the sideway to the lower ground floor alternative entrance.
- Removal of existing rear conservatory at lower ground floor and construction of new fully insulated brick built extension in that location.
- New rear extension at lower ground floor to create a family living room opening onto the garden.
- Reinstatement of window on frontage of lower ground to replace existing door and new entrance door located on return elevation.
- New flank wall windows.
- Internal lift.



Existing front door to lower ground to be reinstated as window

Neighbouring Properties

Both nos. 32 and 36 Fitzjohns Avenue have substantial rear extensions at lower ground floor and the intention is to extend to the same depth as the adjoining property at no. 32.



Response to Pre-Application Advice

The pre-application report refers to private front gardens contributing to the area's verdant character – number 34 has an attractive mature tree on the frontage but the current access down to the front door of the lower ground is not pleasant with a bulky outside storeroom. The proposal is to remove this completely to create more space at the lower level that can be enhanced to improve the amenity and outlook from the new 2 bedroomed unit. The same treatment is proposed to the area outside the flat's living room where, unfortunately, the existing acer is blocking most of the natural light.



View out from front window with tree in place.
Extract fan to be removed and window re-glazed.



Existing well



Store at front to be demolished



existing well entrance side

The pre application advice noted that the principle of the creation of the front flat is accepted. Policy H7 of Camden's Local Plan is referred to and the dwelling size priorities noted. The provision of the two bedroom flat meets the priority criteria (high), and, whilst a four bedroom unit is a lower priority, this is being provided for the specific needs of the applicant's family.

The proposal to create two small amenity areas at the front of the property will enhance the appearance of the frontage and, although, not entirely visible from the street, the removal of the ramshackle additions that project into the existing side access will enhance the appearance of the property.



Sideway with tree stump



sideway structures below

The report refers to the 'basement level' rear extension being acceptable in principle. (It is, as noted elsewhere, really a lower ground floor and will have a level access at garden level at the rear). The report refers to the 'full width' nature of the extension but the proposal is not full width at the same depth but set back adjacent to the boundary with 32 where it replaces the existing conservatory. The application drawings now also show the extensions to both 32 and 36 with the proposed extension on 34 lining through with the rear wall of its adjoining neighbour.

The contemporary window style included in the pre-application drawings for the rear extension has been amended to reflect the patterns of the existing windows and french doors.

Loss of garden space is not significant as it is so extensive and, although requiring some tidying up, will not lack trees and shrubs, which exist in abundance.



Partial view of rear garden with typical foliage

The extension previously proposed at the raised ground floor has been omitted from this application.

The reference to an external lift is also no longer relevant as this was only a feature on an earlier scheme and the internal lift proposed will be a domestic lift that will fit within the two storeys that it serves.

The rear extension is effectively at the lower ground level at the rear of the property and therefore not a basement as considered in Camden's Planning Guidance document for basements (2021).



Rear view at lower ground floor.

Standards of accommodation – the two bedroomed flat has been altered to a 3 person unit, reducing the size of the second bedroom and increasing the living room. As the proposal is now to reduce the level of the side access and ramp down, the proposed new windows in the flank wall will benefit from a good level of natural light for the small bedroom in the front flat. A lateral division of the units, as pre-app report suggested should be tried, was considered but compromised the accommodation to both units.

Waste and Transport -

Existing bins are on site already for three units and a new enclosure is proposed for the two bedroom flat with cycle storage also proposed – both sited beneath the existing tree.

There are two existing summerhouses further towards the rear of the garden of 34 and it is proposed to house cycles for the duplex within one of these.

Whilst all developments are required to be car free we would request that a permit be available for the use of the person requiring the use of a wheelchair.

Formal Party Wall/party Structures Agreements will be implemented with all relevant neighbours and the possible requirement for a Section 106 Agreement for safeguarding neighbouring amenity we submit is unnecessary.

Trees and Landscaping –

As noted, it is intended to enhance the front garden with the lower ground floor areas improved. Existing shrubs and mature tree to be retained and managed.

The rear garden, as also previously noted, has abundant trees and shrubs and will be tidied and maintained.

Planning Policy Framework

The pre-application advice referred to the Local Plan and Camden Planning Guidance documents and our responses, above, relate to the relevant policies and guidance. We also add the following points:-

Impact on Conservation Area -

The additional external alterations and extensions are not significant when viewed in relation to the other houses in Fitzjohns Avenue. The rear of the building is not visible from the street and the extensions would have no adverse impact upon residents on the upper floors. Neighbouring properties will only have an oblique view for their windows – as can be seen from photographs and google earth, there are many trees and much foliage screening views both in and out of the site. The pre-application advice refers to Fitzjohns being one of four parallel avenues with substantial areas comprising well-vegetated rear gardens.

Impact on Living Conditions-

The extension would not have any harmful impact on any of the neighbouring properties.

Access

As the raised ground floor is inaccessible for a wheelchair the proposal is to create a comfortable gently stepped ramp down the new proposed side access at lower ground/garden level. Any retaining of the sideway to no. 36 will be implemented in accordance with structural engineer's detailed design, subject to building control approval and will be included in the Party Wall Agreement to safeguard the neighbour's property.

Access will then be possible internally to the upper ground floor with the provision of the internal lift.

Conclusion

The proposed scheme is specifically designed to meet the needs of the family, who are anxious to be able to commence the necessary work in order to be able to move back in together to benefit from a secure and safe environment and comfortable accommodation for multi-generational living.

Farrow Silverton January 2024