

Sergison Bates architects
with Bowles & Wyer, CH+MRP, Quoda,Price & Myers and Montagu Evans

Land of 39a Fitzjohn's Avenue & land adjacent to 46 Maresfield Gardens, NW3
Design & access statement

From

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Issued

February 2024 rev -

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Diagram of the components of the application 'Site' (including the shared landscape, 39a Fitzjohn's Avenue, and new building on land adjacent to 46 Maresfield Gardens) alongside 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue within the 'Wider Site' subject to separate applications)

Definition of the 'Site' & 'Wider Site'

The following report outlines reuse of, and new interventions to, the constituent buildings and land that were historically the estate of the large house at 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue. As shown on the submitted Site Location Plan the application site (the 'Site') measures 3,955 square metres, incorporating land of 39a Fitzjohn's Avenue and land south of 46 Maresfield Gardens.

The Site constitutes 65% of a broader masterplan (the 'Wider Site') measuring 6,057 square metres that also includes land of 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue. For the avoidance of doubt: development of 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue does not form part of this application, as it already benefits from an extant planning permission, and any further design changes that may be required will be dealt with via a separate planning application.

Landscape-led master-plan

As set out in the 'Site investigation' section of this report, large, mature trees and a varied topography define the Site's character both from within and from outside. The 'Landscape master-plan' section describes how the intrinsic qualities of this naturalistic setting will be significantly enhanced for the benefit of residents and wildlife. The cohesive effect of the Landscape enables a rich experience of contrasting and complimentary architectural styles and spaces across the Wider Site. It is also unifying for its community of residents and will enhance their wellbeing and sense of inclusively with thoughtful circulation and opportunities for socialising and play set amongst high quality planting.

Context-specific building proposals

Within this holistic strategy are two buildings with differing architectural approaches. The existing building at 39a Fitzjohn's Avenue has been configured to integrate its rear into the landscape of the Site, and to also preserve the appearance of, and role of, its frontage in the Fitzjohn's neighbourhood.

The design for a new building on the land adjacent to 46 Maresfield Gardens is thoroughly embedded in the Landscape. Its appearance though, is the product of extensive and thoughtful study of local precedents described in detail within the 'Understanding the location' section of the report. This effort has informed a highly considered proposal that will be well-rooted in its context to serve as a robust and positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

Introduction

Project team

West Hampstead Projects

Client developer

West Hampstead Projects are the development partners for 39 Fitzjohns Avenue Limited, the freeholders for the estate at 39 Fitzjohn’s Avenue NW3. Since 2018, the development team at West Hampstead Projects have been working with London Borough Camden on the design and delivery of the planning proposals for the Wider Site.

Our experience spans across diverse parts of London, often in brownfield settings, where complexity presents opportunities to add significant value and we can curate the buildings with the spaces around them to promote long term sustainable growth.

CH+MRP

39a Fitzjohn's Avenue architects

CH+MRP work together as a team in close collaboration with our clients to create bespoke solutions developed from an appreciation of physical and historical context. The success at which this is achieved is borne out by the fact that over 80% of our work is derived from repeat commissions.

CH+MRP bring valuable local experience to the project team having completed three nearby high-end residential projects in the Fitzjohn's and Netherhall Conservation Area, at Otto Schiff House and Mansions at 14 Netherhall Gardens and 38 Heath Drive. CHMRP also secured the recent planning consents at the adjacent development at 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue.



Arboricultural consultant



Ecology consultant

Sergison Bates architects

Lead architects

Established in 1996 and with studios in London, Zurich and Brussels; Sergison Bates architects have built up extensive experience throughout the UK and Europe. The practice is delivering significant cultural schemes, urban planning and regeneration, housing and private houses with a sensitive and informed design-led approach.

Our experience with private residential projects is particularly relevant to the Hampstead area, with our scheme for at 79 Fitzjohn’s Avenue winning a Camden Design Award in 2022. A residential scheme by the practice in south-west London was short-listed for the prestigious RIBA Sterling Prize in 2023.



Sustainability & servicing consultants

QODA is led by highly experienced engineers working across mechanical, electrical and sustainable areas of building design. The QODA team have a successful track record of delivering a range of building engineering solutions in various market sectors and work in collaboration with stakeholders to provide creative and sustainable solutions tailored to individual projects.

Services cover all stages of a project's life cycle and have built up a reputation for innovative solutions that utilise the most up-to-date technology and techniques to deliver robust, cost-effective and appropriate solutions.



Logistics consultant



Daylighting consultant

BOWLES & WYER

Landscape architects

Bowles & Wyer is an award-winning practice that designs, builds and tends landscapes for businesses, organisations and private individuals, across the UK and beyond. It focuses on delivering spaces that enhance lives and reconnect people with nature with a range of projects in scale in the residential, commercial and mixed-used sectors.

With a diverse and rich portfolio, Bowles & Wyer have over 30 years of experience with relevant projects to the borough such as Tercelet Terrace, The Pulse on Finchley Road or The Collection in St John’s Wood which won numerous awards.

PRICE & MYERS

Civil & structural engineers

Price & Myers is a consulting civil and structural engineering practice established in London in 1978, with the aim of working with imaginative architects, to make excellent buildings. In its first 43 years the company completed over 29,000 jobs, and won over 800 awards. The team of 160 is dividing between studios in London, Nottingham, Oxford, and Manchester.

Price & Myers has advised on the repair and restoration of many historic buildings, as well as having worked with some of the country’s leading architects on the design of many outstanding modern buildings.



Acoustics consultant



Heritage, townscape and planning consultants

Montagu Evans has a reputation as one of the UK’s leading specialist town planning and development consultancies, and have helped shape some of the most notable residential, commercial, mixed-use property projects in the UK in partnership with developers, institutions, and local authorities.

As a planning and development-led practice, we have an exceptional track record in delivering development in London within historic contexts and our team has direct, recent, and ongoing experience within Camden from a town planning, built heritage, and townscape perspective.

BURO FOUR

Project managers

From being one of the first practitioners of project management in 1985, BuroFour has grown to become an internationally recognised specialist in the field. BuroFour are an independent company of project managers with a distinctive approach. The company's independence from other disciplines enables that we can act solely in the best interest of our clients.

BuroFour is proud that its colleagues are the company's best asset, all of whom place great importance on creating strong, honest and open relationships with our clients, teams and contractors to collaborate, solve and drive progress.

Site observations

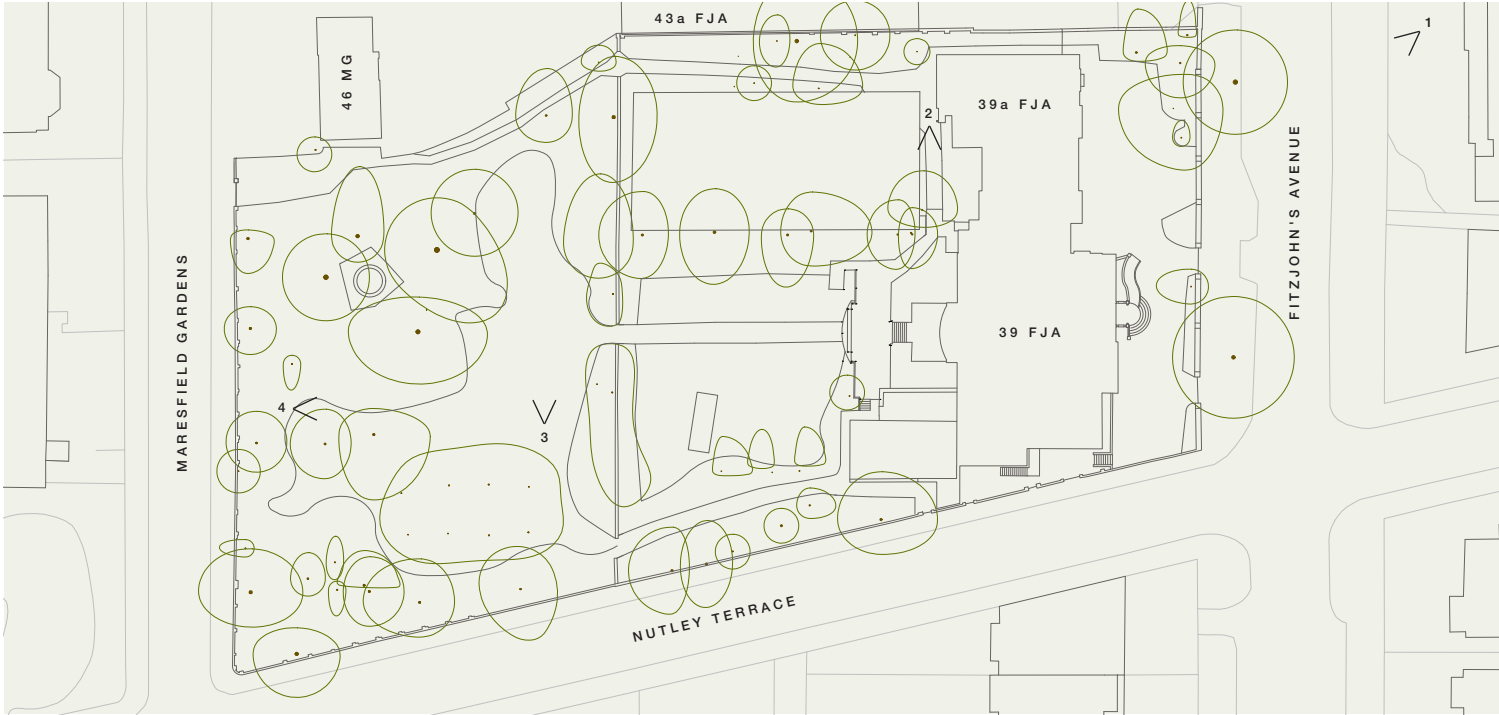
Setting of the Wider Site



View 1: Photograph showing the forecourt and buildings of 39 and 39a Fitzjohn's Avenue at the east end of the Wider Site



View 2: Photograph showing the passage within the Site at the rear of 39a and 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue



Site plan diagram showing view positions of the existing situation



View 3: Photograph showing the hard core rubble tracks in the centre of the Site



View 4: Photograph showing the unkempt landscape at the far west of the Site

Buildings & land uses

The Wider Site is positioned on the end of the urban block and bounded by three roads, Fitzjohn's Avenue to its east; Nutley Terrace to its south; and Maresfield Gardens to its west. It occupies a long plot that measures 110.2m on its west to east axis, and an average of 56m on its north to south axis. The entire plot is fairly unkempt as a result of many years of being unoccupied. Across its longer axis, the general character of the Wider Site gradually changes, from hard to soft, from east to west.

The eastern-most third of the Wider Site is accessed from and largely open to Fitzjohn's Avenue. It is defined by the contiguous forecourts of, and conjoined red brick buildings of numbers 39 and 39a Fitzjohn's Avenue. This area has previously been used as parking space. Its previous heavy trafficking by vehicles has meant this space is largely devoid of landscaping and of poor quality. Number 39 dominates over 39a owing to its larger footprint and higher quality of ornamented construction dating to 1885. 39a is relatively simple, compact, plainly decorated and diminutive in scale. 39a also stands further back from the street than 39.

Through its centre the Site is a mix of both impermeable and permeable hard surfaces intermingled with sporadic planting and some low level scrub. A large derelict asphalt tennis court fills the space to the rear of 39a and the space is hardened further by the dominance of the long, tall and plain flank wall of the inner-block development of 43a Fitzjohn's Avenue. Remnants of concrete paths and dwarf brick walls are visible behind number 39.

The western-most third of the Wider Site is undeveloped and in a neglected state. A wide hard core gravel pathway curves from the Site's west boundary around a thicket of mature, and self-propagated trees that are surrounded by scrub. Some of the largest trees are gathered together in copses, and within the largest of these is a tall metal fence guarding the large concrete ring of a railway vent. The presence of the adjacent roads is significantly diminished by the particularly thick growth of trees and plants at the boundaries of the Site. Ground underfoot is noticeably uneven and in places either falls dramatically away into hollows, or rises on small hills.

Site observations

Boundaries & access



Photograph of the stepped boundary wall to Fitzjohn's Avenue



Photograph of access off Fitzjohn's Avenue and transition to Nutley Terrace



Photograph of the multiple, tall boundary types adjacent to 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue



Photograph of the long wall and fence boundary to Nutley Terrace



Photograph of the wall and fence boundary to Maresfield Gardens



Photograph of vehicle access gate into the Site from Maresfield Gardens

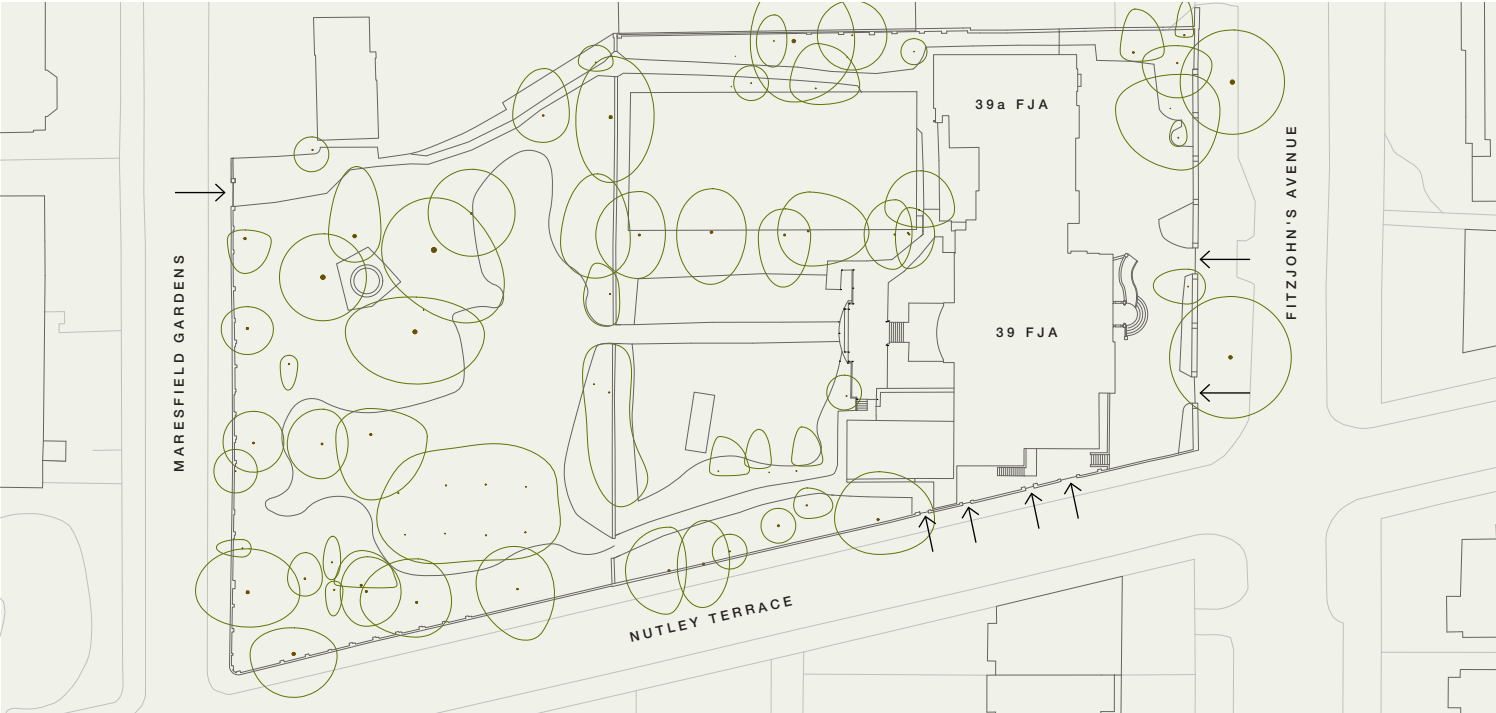


Diagram showing Wider Site access points

To Fitzjohn's Avenue

The Wider Site is bounded on three sides by public highways. The largest and most heavily trafficked of these is Fitzjohn's Avenue to the east. Here the Wider Site is bounded by a low wall with two, vehicle width, openings that may have previously provided circular carriage access/exit from the street. The wall appears contemporary with number 39 and is in keeping with other low front boundaries on the street that step with the falling ground. The forecourt to the east end of the Site is therefore open and highly visible from the street. It is currently in a state of disrepair, but it retains its basic and attractive ornamental features achieved through material choices and their sculpting.

All material treatments are simple, with few details applied to brickwork and the frequent use of timber fencing panels on top of a brick wall to restrict opportunities for overlooking into properties from the street. The brick boundary also appears to serve another purpose of retaining ground inside the Site from the lower pavement outside. The most attractive section of wall is a tall brick screen to the flank of 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue where bins and other utilities are concealed. This wall is perforated by four non-descript solid, timber, pedestrian gates. There is no access in the remaining two thirds of the boundary as it progresses west.

To Nutley Terrace

The Wider Site's longest boundary is to Nutley Terrace to the south. Away from the traffic and natural surveillance of Fitzjohn's Avenue, the boundary is taller and more protective. This wall is in a poor condition and has been subject to a number of ad hoc additions and repairs. Along its length there are a variety of different designs and materials that work collectively to defend the Wider Site.

To Maresfield Gardens

The tall ensemble of brick wall topped by fence from Nutley Terrace continues through the corner onto Maresfield Gardens. Like the wall on Fitzjohn's Avenue, it steps regularly with the steeper topography than that on Nutley Terrace. This boundary is muted and generic. It is broken by the only other significant access to the Site at its north-west corner. A wide, utilitarian vehicle gate accesses the hard core gravel passage that winds through the centre of the Site adjacent to the railway tunnel vent.

Site observations
39a Fitzjohn's Avenue



Photograph showing two bays of the plain front elevation of 39a



Elevation drawing of 39a (right) adjoining 39 (left) Fitzjohn's Avenue via a recessed link structure

Relationship to 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue

39a Fitzjohn's Avenue is the only existing building on the 'Site', but it owes its existence to number 39, the primary building on the Wider Site. 39 Fitzjohn's Avenue is a large residential building that has been extended several times during the twentieth century. Its north wing (39a) is the earlier of the two extensions to the main building, and was constructed around 1937. It is plain and institutional in character, reflecting the use of the Wider Site by the Jesuits by whom the extensions were built. It is consciously set back further from the road than number 39 and has a larger forecourt than its neighbour.

Architectural character

39a is a three storey, flat roofed structure with a raised parapet and is connected awkwardly to the main house by a recessed link structure which, although deferring to the end gable, nonetheless crashes unceremoniously into the side flank of number 39. 39a has red brick façades with flared and arched window lintels and is further articulated with simple violet brick coursings at each floor level, and with a soldier course below the stone parapet.

The five bay main façade is broken by the 1st and 4th bays' shallow projections. The height of the 5th bay steps down to 2 stories with an entrance door and a crenelated parapet. Although not unadorned, the simple rhythmic character of no 39a does not balance well with the richer detailing, rhythm, and massing of the original house no 39 to which it currently adjoins.



Photograph showing the deep forecourt in front of 39a which is set back and reveals the flank elevation of its neighbour at 45 Fitzjohn's Avenue



Photograph showing the rear elevation, escape stair and incongruous two storey extension of 39a facing into the Site

Relationship to the Site

At the rear of no 39a, a two storey bay has an incongruous horizontal window and a metal escape stair which mars the architectural coherence of the elevation. The awkward junction between 39a and 39 is more apparent from within the Site, and a single storey projection visually detracts from the original main building.

Neither of the two 20th century extensions to the original Victorian dwelling are of any particular architectural merit and neither are mentioned in the Conservation Area Statement, either for positive or negative impacts. However, it can readily be appreciated that their massing, form, detailing and articulation are not harmonious with the original Victorian dwelling, nor the character of the Conservation Area.

Site observations

Fragments of functions

Inner-block boundary to the Site

Land in the west of the Wider Site has previously been used as gardens to 39 Fitzjohn’s Avenue. The presence of a wall in the middle of the site suggests this land was subdivided in the nineteenth century. Contrasting species and maturities of vegetation either side of the wall suggest that it created a more manageable scale of formal garden in sight of the house, and gave ground over to more informal orchard, woodland, and greenhouse spaces that were further away.

Recent occupants of 39 and 39a appear to have reinforced this duality by installing the impermeable tennis court immediately west of 39a, and by leaving large parts of the informal end of the garden less maintained and overgrown. During this period the north-west corner of the site also appears to have been sold into separate ownership for the development of 46 Maresfield Gardens.

Number 46 noticeably, and uncomfortably, pushes into the Site. The historical entanglement is also expressed by the conspicuous garage doors that open onto the Site from the flank of number 46. Together these elements (the dwarf wall, contrasting land management, and the plot position of number 46), all contribute to the definition of an inner-block boundary between the Site and 39 Fitzjohn’s Avenue.

Railway tunnel vent

The most western end of the Site, that which sits adjacent to Maresfield Gardens, contains a circular vent that evacuates air from the rail tunnel traversing the Wider Site from west to east, at a depth of approximately 22m. The mouth of the vent which stands approximately 1.4m above the ground, is masked from easy access and view by the surrounding vegetation. It is also enclosed by a tall metal fence of no design quality and which serves a purely utilitarian purpose.

The protection of the vent removes any conscious acknowledgement of its presence. However its existence is expressed by several trees that encircle it and which, undisturbed, have grown into a mature and significant copse.



Photograph of the inner-Site wall that dividing the Wider Site into halves

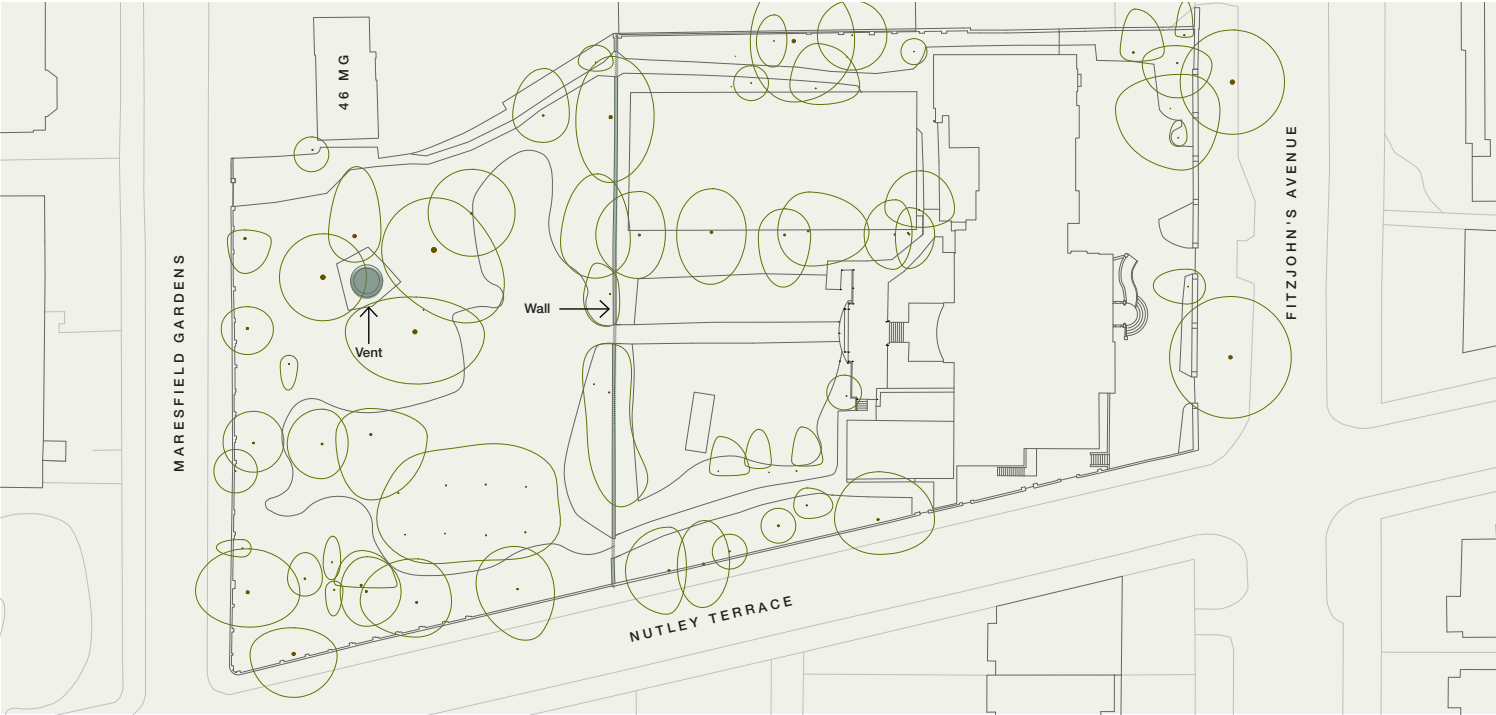


Diagram showing the location of the implied Site boundary and the railway tunnel vent



Photograph showing the garages of 46 Maresfield Gardens opening into the Site



Photograph showing the railway tunnel vent within the protection of its fence

Site observations

Topography & ground conditions

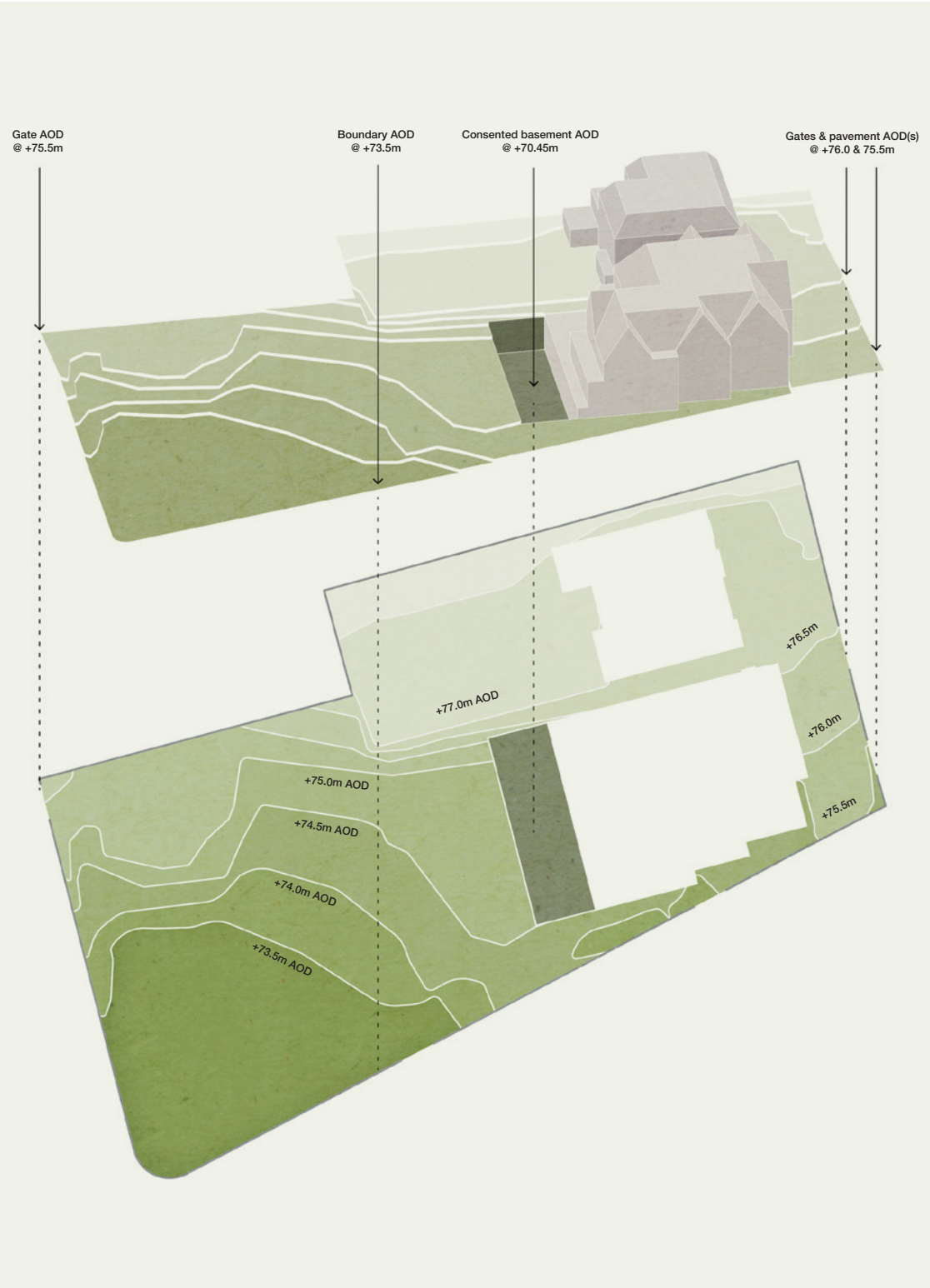


Diagram of the topography and Ordnance Datums (AODs) surveyed showing the diagonal fall across the Site



Photograph showing the falling topography adjacent to the tennis court in the north-west of the Site

Natural falls

In the north-east corner of the Site, behind 39a Fitzjohn’s Avenue, the ground has been terraced to accommodate a tennis court. At the edges of the court the ground steps down sharply by a metre and a half onto the natural slope of the underlying topography. This slope falls diagonally across the Site by a further two metres to its south-west corner, beside the junction between Nutley Terrace and Maresfield Gardens. Across this slope the ground is often uneven, dropping suddenly into depressions or rising on small hills.

Adjacent to Maresfield Gardens on the west edge of the Site, the ground is often far lower than the adjacent pavement. Against Nutley Terrace on the south edge of the Site the ground is up to a metre higher than the adjacent pavement. Along the west edge of the Site, the forecourt of the Wider Site falls gently with the slope of Fitzjohn’s Avenue, but outside number 39a the ground is lower than the adjacent pavement.

Soil investigations

Geotechnical and Environmental Associates (GEA) completed a Ground Investigation and Basement Impact Assessment report dated December 2023. Investigations have confirmed that the Site is underlain by: a thin layer (0.3m to 1.3m) of made ground; a deeper layer (1m to 4.7m) of weathered London clay; and finally un-weathered London clay. The London clay formation is classified as unproductive strata, meaning it cannot support groundwater flow over any significant distance.

Groundwater was not encountered during the investigation nor the return monitoring visits of the installed standpipes. The Environment Agency (EA) flood map for planning shows that the site is in Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at ‘low’ risk of tidal and or fluvial flooding. The property has no recorded history of groundwater flooding, and the site investigation has not detected groundwater.

Site observations

Trees

Historical patterns of cultivation

Trees are prominent in the Site and Wider Site. Careful analysis of their location and health has revealed patterns of conscious placement and self-propagation; as well as their cultivation and neglect. Species on the Wider Site are common and widespread across London, with a predominant number of ash and birch trees. No individual trees on the Site have been assessed as being of the highest value (category A).

Many of the most mature trees are located along the Site's boundaries to Nutley Terrace and Maresfield Gardens, creating a veil of privacy to the Site whilst also contributing a verdant atmosphere in the street. The boundary predominant consists of Ash, Birch, Maple and Horse Chestnut trees. Some of these have been assessed as of being in poor health (categories C and U) but the existing canopy provides an important visual amenity, that adds quality to the local streetscape.

There is a second significant visual boundary in the north of the Site where a large Poplar (T3) stands beside the railway tunnel vent blocking views into the Site from up the hill of Maresfield Gardens. It is accompanied by two London Planes (T1/T2) and a Horse Chestnut (T9). The Chestnut is evidently in poor health having struggled to leaf in the summer of 2023.

Within the Site there are a number of fruiting trees. In peripheral locations, such as beside the tennis court of 39a Fitzjohn's Avenue, these are Wild Cherries. A Plum is also located on the boundary with Maresfield Gardens. In the most overgrown western end of the Site is a group of Apple and Pear trees arranged in what would have been a small orchard. These are no longer fruiting. Many of the trees on the Site have been smothered with Ivy growth.



Photograph of the Ash and Plum trees on the Site boundary to Maresfield Gardens



Diagram of existing trees canopies, root protection areas (RPAs) and their categorisation by Landmark Trees



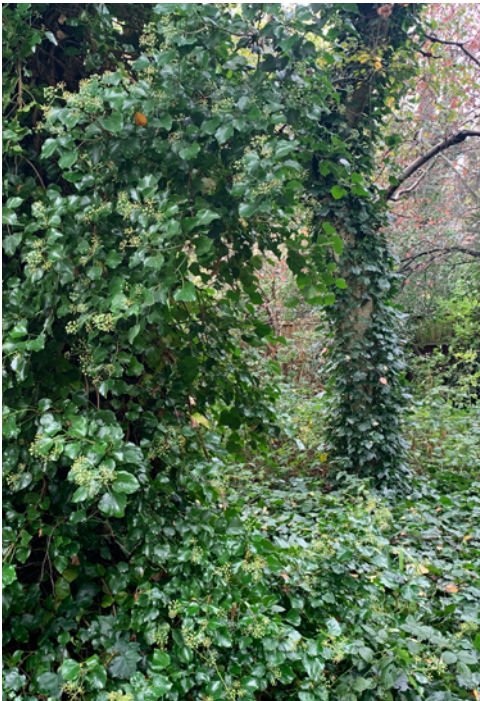
Photograph of the Poplar tree beside the railway tunnel vent which appears prominently both from within and outside the Site



Photograph of the Horse Chestnut beside the railway tunnel vent which appears to be in poor health



Photograph of the apple and pear trees that once formed a small orchard in the west of the Site



Photograph of two ivy smothered trees in the centre of the Site

Site observations

Arboricultural & ecological investigation



Diagram of trial pit (TP) locations, and additional trenches (TR) around the Poplar



Photo of TP10 showing no significant rooting from the Horse Chestnut (T9)



Photo of TR5 showing the extent of roots of to the Poplar tree (T3)



Photograph of the current condition of trees and understory in the south -west corner of the Site

Arboricultural investigation

A series of air spade (root friendly) trial pits (TPs) were carried out to investigate the extent of roots for key trees that would be located in proximity of new buildings or potentially impacted by landscape development. The Site plan diagram shows the trees investigated. A more detailed survey of trenches (TRs) was produced for the Poplar tree (T3) due to its significance and likely influence on development in the west of the Site.

The trial pit and trench investigations demonstrate that the impact of development in the west of the Site on key trees would be within tolerable limits of the trees impacted subject to appropriate tree protection measures. A detailed tree protection statement with information on works within a RPA is included in the Arboricultural Report that supports this report and planning application.



Photo of TP4 showing roots of the Plum (T11) on the west boundary with a maximum size of 24mm - works in the area will comply with arboricultural report



Photo of TP5 showing maximum roots of 22mm to the Chestnut (T13) to the west boundary of the Site - works in the area will comply with arboricultural report

Ecological appraisal

An ecological appraisal for the site was carried in May 2023 to evaluate the current condition of the landscape. 'Although the site appears to not support any species of note, with its biodiversity limited by its isolation, and is neither a statutory or non-statutory wildlife site (SINC), there is some 'local' value in its generally 'wild' and unmanaged state. However, any benefit accrued by its (theoretical) lack of people access, is compromised by frequent unauthorised entry' (extract from Ecology Network report).

While it was noted that a number of bird species were present during the survey such as magpie, pigeon and crow, the survey (coupled with the information derived from the biological records), did not reveal any evidence of reptiles, badgers or crested newts. A later detailed appraisal carried out in September 2023 showed no evidence of significant bat roosts within the trees identified for removal.



Image reflecting current condition of trees and understory in south -west corner