

Application Reference	Address
2023/4610/PRE	34 Belsize Lane London, NW3 5AE
Heritage Asset Name	Heritage Status
	Grade II Listed, (No. 1487795) Locally Listed (Ref. 335) Fitzjohns Netherhall Conservation Area
Description of the Asset	
<p>The subject property at 34 Belsize Lane – Georgie Wolton House, was statutory listed as Grade II on the National Heritage List for England (No. 1487795) on 25 October 2023. It is also identified on Camden Council’s Local List of heritage assets (Ref. 335) and is also located in the Fitzjohns Netherhall Conservation Area.</p> <p>The building is notable architect Georgie Wolton’s own house dating to 1975-6 with a 1983 side studio addition designed in the Modernist style. The tall garden wall and enclosing mature vegetation largely obscures the single-storied building from the street with only the angled rooflights protruding and visible from the streetscape, giving the impression of a garden site. It has been well designed in the modernist tradition of integrating new architecture into historic settings sensitively, without challenging existing surrounding character.</p> <p>There are two entrances to the site through the curved Belsize Lane boundary wall that was originally the rear garden wall to No. 16 Lyndhurst Gardens (Grade II, 1379394) from which the site was subdivided from. Built of brick with an externally exposed steel frame, the building has a self-effacing ranging/axial planform set around three garden courtyards. The glazed main living area looks out on enclosed gardens on both sides and features custom shutters and a fireplace with intergraded storage that acts as a half partition delineating between dining and living. A sunken lounge projects off the conservatory to the south. The bedroom wing to the north is accessed down a long top-lit corridor from the main entrance and has custom cupboard joinery. The later 1983 Studio extension to the west is linked by another conservatory. Generous entrance, living and studio spaces are contrasted with more cellular arrangements of service rooms. There are original bespoke fixtures, fittings and finishes throughout.</p> <p>Consent was granted in 2021 for the Construction of a clerestory window and flat roof over existing mono-pitched roof light with new insulation to roof (2021/3342/P), these proposed works have not been carried out.</p>	
Summary of Significance	
<p>The heritage significance of this designated heritage asset includes its architectural design and form, contribution to the setting, the internal planform and historic fabric and features. The building remains fully intact in its originally constructed state and as such, although the material condition has deteriorated, the building in its entirety is considered to be of high significance.</p> <p>Although now additionally recognised by the Historic England Listing, the Camden Local Listing for the dwelling described the significance and qualities of the building as:</p>	

Architect Georgie Wolton's own house dating to 1975-6 with 1983 addition. Spacious one story house hidden from the street behind old garden wall and enclosing mature vegetation which gives the impression of a garden site. Built of timber and brick with the main living area has glazed walls to an enclosed garden on both sides; bedroom wing at one end and studios linked by a conservatory at the other. Is in modernist tradition of integrating modern houses into historic settings sensitively, without challenging existing historic character. Contributes to the wealth of high-quality post-war architect designed houses in Camden.

**Significance:** Architectural and Townscape Significance

### **Proposed Works**

A preliminary Pre-Application meeting was held 11 December 2023. Since the first Pre-Application it is noted that the original proposals to widen the garage and demolish the front boundary garden wall has been omitted. Also, the proposed first floor addition has been partially reduced in scale and more exploration done in terms of its form and materiality to help minimise its visual impacts. These are positive improvements and a step in the right direction.

A follow up meeting where a revised proposal was presented in response to comments made at the first meeting was held 1 February 2024. It should be noted that the opportunity to receive an initial set of written comments to the proposed works was not taken. Following the verbal feedback provided at the first meeting, the original proposal has been reviewed. The scheme now preliminary comprises of:

#### **STRUCTURAL ADDITIONS**

- An additional bedroom suite first-floor rooftop extension
- The addition of a glazed linking arcade to the front east façade – demolition of the main external wall and associated sliding panel joinery, relocation of the main entrance.
- Proposed additional studio in rear northwest corner of the garden – associated relocation of the original pond feature and removal of vegetation.

#### **THERMAL/STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS**

- Removal and reinstatement of the flat roof covering with integrated thermal enhancements and a revealed edge.
- Rebuilding of the brick cavity walls with the removal of the internal layer and additional insulation provided.
- Installation of underfloor heating throughout – involving the removal of the existing concrete pad and Spanish terracotta tiles

#### **PLANFORM, FABRIC AND FEATURES**

- Alterations and additions to the planform with the removal of main structural walls, cellular planform and addition of new partitions.
- Demolition/removal of bespoke joinery, fittings and features throughout.

### **Impact on the Conservation Area and Setting**

Omitting the works to garage and boundary wall has fully addressed this area of concern initially raised. It is also appreciated that the revisions have tried to look at ways to visually minimise the impact of the rooftop addition through different material treatments. There however remains a number of unresolved Heritage and Conservation concerns:

#### **STRUCTURAL ADDITIONS**

### **Roof Addition**

A second story addition to the existing dwelling would not be considered appropriate or supported from a Heritage or Conservation perspective, this was also communicated at the original Pre-Application meeting with Suki.

The additional story would compromise the single-level modernist villa architectural language and character of the Listed dwelling. It is considered that any additional bulk and massing added to the roof would pose inherent harm to the original form, and would be highly visible when viewed from Belsize Lane (as noted on the site visits). The single-story nature aids in allowing the dwelling to sit within its garden setting and have limited visibility from the streetscape and any introduced additional height would make it a prominent feature in the historic context.

### **Front Arcade Link**

Previous comments did not specifically address the arcade link because more focus was drawn to the effects of the roof addition. While this aspect of the proposal is less contentious than the roof addition, it will also obscure and remove historic fabric and features (primary external wall, shutters and front door), and significantly alter the planform and original form of the dwelling, specifically the main entrance approach with the front door lost and entrance subsumed into the link.

### **Garden Studio**

The principal of a detached building in this location doesn't raise any major heritage concerns. However, the loss of any trees and vegetation would need to be mitigated through a replacement planting strategy. And the associated relocation of the pond isn't encouraged as, while retaining the feature, it will be moved from its original location which would have been a key aspect to Georgie's vision for the garden landscape.

### **THERMAL/STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS**

Removal and reinstatement of the flat roof covering with integrated thermal enhancements and a revealed edge raised no concerns. Revealing the edge detail of the steel beams would be a notable enhancement for the building.

Rebuilding of the brick cavity walls with the removal of the internal layer and additional insulation provided may be supportable provided the additional build out is kept to the absolute minimum.

Installation of underfloor heating throughout would require the demolition of the existing concrete pad throughout and the associated removal of the terracotta tiles. The highly invasive installation of underfloor heating and insulation may be supportable in balance so long as all the salvageable tiles are relayed and this floor finish is reinstated.

### **PLANFORM, FABRIC AND FEATURES**

The fireplace, front entrance door, and all bespoke sliding shutters and cupboard joinery need to be retained.

Partitioning off the main hallway with a WC and Utility would harm the open architectural character and spatial qualities of this primary entrance space. These WC/utilities could instead be relocated to the garage.

Depending on how it is detailed, the proposed bathroom in the Studio may be considered (in balance with the extent of other works proposed). However it would have to present as a "pod" where the structure does not extend full height and leaves the full line of clerestory windows intact. The full-length partitioning of this end of the Studio as shown would not be supported.

Demolition of central hallway and service link (bathroom and kitchenette) between the Living/Studio/Conservatory involves the loss of original plan form, the loss of historic fabric, and the loss of original circulation patterns. This area of cellular planform needs to be retained.

Creation of a new window into the Studio would remove historic fabric and is not supportable.

The existing cupboard joinery unit next to the stair down to the studio is shown to be demolished, but should be retained.

## Conclusions

As currently presented, unfortunately the scheme is considered to adversely affect the character and special architectural and historic interest of the listed building such that less than substantial harm is posed and would therefore not be supportable. The works would therefore be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 Para 208, and policy HC1 (Heritage conservation and growth) of the London Plan 2021.

It is highly recommended that the scope of the proposed works be rationalised to a retain and restore approach. It then might be possible to balance some small interventions such as reconfiguration of the kitchen (similar to previous designs by Georgie) and bathrooms.

Any project arising will be assessed according to policies D1 and D2 of Camden's Local Plan of 2017, and section 16 of the NPPF. This, among other things, requires Camden to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets; and to weigh harm caused to such assets by development against public benefits accruing therefrom, including securing the asset's optimum viable use.

This document represents an initial informal officer view of your proposals based on the information available to us at this stage and would not be binding upon the Council, nor prejudice any future planning application decisions made by the Council.

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Regeneration and Planning | Supporting Communities

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