

Design and Access Statement

April House,

45 Maresfield Gardens

The proposal is for the constitution of a family dwelling house from two separate flats and associated alterations.

The building is known as April House, being flats A and B, part of 45 Maresfield Gardens, which was originally a very substantial house.

The subject property is not listed but is part of the Fitzjohns Netherhall conservation area.

We believe that our proposal –

- will make a positive contribution to the conservation area.
- will not affect the amenity enjoyed by neighbouring properties.
- will make a positive contribution to the streetscape and enhance the general amenity of the immediate environs.

Maresfield Gardens is a comfortable street. The architecture reflects the quiet, undemonstrative success of the original owners. While there is a continuing echo reflected along the street, with the predominance of gable roofs there is little pretension, idiosyncratic detail or powerful architectural statement. This was a street sought out by the very comfortable merchants and professional classes of the late Victorian period who did not seek the bold exuberance of the terraces of Belgravia and Kensington but preferred the amenity of large gardens and the relative tranquillity and peace of the slopes rising up to Hampstead .

Changing times have meant that these large houses, that are a defining feature of the street, particularly in this upper section, have been sub-divided, converted to institutional use or been demolished to use the large plot sizes for more intense development.

April House was originally part of such a large house and has been latterly configured as two flats. The remaining part of the structure remains as a development of apartments. There have been any number of changes to the whole since the Victorian period and a plethora of planning applications refer.

The topography of the site is worth mention as it brings benefits and restriction to the manner in which development can be achieved. The street rises along its length, with pronounced increase in declination in the upper part. No 45 is part of this section and there is a marked difference in ground level between adjoining properties and the front elevations reflect this.

Similarly the rear gardens are subject to considerable differences in levels between close by houses. The effect is further exacerbated by the steep slope to the rear of the houses and has meant that a series of disassociated plateaux have been established. The garden of April House is on two levels, the upper level being lower than the rest of no. 45 and the lower level, to the immediate rear of the property, being very much lower indeed. The lower garden of Nutley House, no. 43 in institutional use, is more than two floors below that of April House.

In the 1980's, that golden age of house design, April House was subject to unsympathetic development. To the front the features immediately apparent are an over-emphasised front gable with a deep void and a disordered front elevation with off centre side by side front doors, being separate entrances to each flat. The eye is further led to the gable void by the insertion of large black glass panels.

To the rear a similar treatment has been applied to the upper levels and on the lower level of the garden a tent like extension was constructed. Connected to the lower levels of the house this structure is neither utilitarian or attractive. The interior of the extension is dark and darkens the interior of the house. The design pays no reference to the verticality of the house or any other design feature. It is a folly in both senses of the word.

The effect is indeed eye-catching, but somewhat tatty and cheap, and this in a street that architecturally welcomes discretion and solidity.

Our solution to the issues raised by this unattractive house is to relate to the original ethos of the street and mute the front elevation by reinstalling brick and simple traditional fenestration instead of a glass wall and then through careful detailing bring the house back close to the original wholesome integrity. The integration of the two flats into a single dwelling has allowed the removal of a front door and allows the opportunity to return to a more simple ground floor elevational design.

In the rear elevation a more utilitarian approach is predicated and the proposed main feature, the double height window, will bring a flood of light into the family rooms of the house. Set in the well of the garden the modern design is in keeping with much larger initiatives established closeby and bearing in mind the isolation of this elevation, created by


the radical topography of the site, will have little long distance impact. The depth of the rear extension has also been considerably reduced returning space to the garden.

Other alterations are proposed that will enhance the manner in which the house is used.

In the courtyard to the front of the property a range of the levels with front boundary wall treatment are reinstated that improve the approach to the house. The development will give an opportunity to effectively establish proper refuse storage and to be able to screen this from the street.

The Fitzjohns Netherhall Conservation statement makes mention of the over pronounced gable and we believe our efforts to mute that impact are in line with conservation policy.

North of Nutley Terrace the road has less dense development and a more open character. The garden of No.47 Fitzjohns Avenue originally stretched to Maresfield Gardens providing an open green character. This was reduced when Nos.50-66 were built in the 1990s. The four properties are set back within generous plots with mature trees retained which helps to lessen the loss of open space. The buildings are red brick with neo-Georgian facades and prominent clay tiled roofs, a mix of influences but designed with a careful attention to detail. On the west side Netherhall House was built in the garden of Nos.16 Netherhall Gardens in the 1960s. The building makes no positive contribution and is too high at seven storeys, but is set back from the street frontage and screened by trees. Nos.43-49 are 1880s houses built with front walls of overburnt brick and double entrances originally for carriages. No.45 was extended with an over dominant gable, attempting to echo its neighbour but undermining it instead. No.43 had the original windows replaced, to its detriment. Nos.51& 53 are two storey, possibly inter-war, houses with a low level ground floor making the parapet, tiled roof and first floor sculpture relief of importance to the townscape. Nos.55-59 are a mid 1950s two storey terrace, on a sunken site that has little relationship with the surrounding area.



We believe that the 1980's alterations are of negligible merit and the proposals to remove these and reinstate in a traditional manner will make a positive contribution to the conservation area.

The other initiatives we propose are consistent with relevant policies of the council .

We respectfully request that the application be approved.

M.C.