

**DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT FOR  
THE ALTERATION, REFURBISHMENT AND REPAIR OF BEECHWOOD HOUSE**

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## **DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT FOR THE ALTERATION, REFURBISHMENT AND REPAIR OF BEECHWOOD HOUSE**

### **1.00 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.01 The following Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of the new owner, Hanley Limited, of the Beechwood Estate on Hampstead Lane, to accompany an application for Planning and Listed Building Consent lodged by the owner's agents, Savills Planning Consultants for the construction of a new 'service wing' and other limited external alterations to Beechwood House.

This statement has been prepared by Martin Ashley Architects in conjunction with Savills, Planning Consultants and draws upon the archival research and analysis undertaken during June 2008.

Where relevant, specific references are made to the proposals prepared by the owner's architect, Martin Ashley Architects and submitted with this Design and Access Statement as part of an application to Camden Borough Council for Planning and Listed Building Consent. The drawings that comprise these proposals are referred to in the appendix.

- 1.02 Beechwood House is a statutorily listed (Grade II) 19th Century Regency style villa built between 1838 and 1840 along with the adjoining 'Elms' to the designs of George Basevi.

The Estate is part of the former Fitzroy Park Estate, formerly owned by Lord Southampton, which was passed to the Duke of Buckingham in 1811 and subsequently sold and divided into developable plots, with Fitzroy House being pulled down in 1828.

The original plot containing Beechwood House had adjoining areas of land added to it, notably to the west, where a portion of the adjoining plot (Caen Wood Towers) including a Gate Lodge and drive were added in the early 20th Century and which now forms the site of the swimming pool built in 1950-51.

The Estate lies with the Highgate Village Conservation area and is designated Metropolitan Open Land.

- 1.03 The purpose of this statement is to explain the design process undertaken to arrive at the submitted proposals and specifically to address the issues of access and how this has been achieved while taking into account the setting of this building within the landscape and it's role in enhancing the character of the Conservation Area.

## 2.00 **DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

- 2.01 The existing House has undergone a number of significant changes and alterations through a series of successive owner since it was built to the designs of George Basevi for his brother Nathaniel in the early 1840s.

Successive occupants have added to and altered the building to suit their own particular requirements, a process that has lead to a series of significant changes which are recorded in the Conservation Assessment for the Beechwood Estate prepared in 2008 and issued to Camden Council for reference in consideration of future statutory applications on the Beechwood Estate.

Designed as a Regency style Villa set within the former landscaped ground of Fitzroy House along with the adjoining Elms, the House has been extended on at least 4 occasions to the east and latterly the west end to provide substantive domestic accommodation set in extensive 11 acre grounds.

The existing House underwent an extensive refurbishment in the early 1990's when the House was extensively refurbished for the Emir of Qatar. This provided extensive reception rooms and 'throne room' (Majis) at ground floor with generous guest facilities (bedrooms suites) at first floor. Support services (staff accommodation + storage) was provided in a number of the buildings on the Estate and supplemented by Portakabin storage at the east end of the House.

The property has been vacant for a number of years now and its fabric and services are now in need of significant overhaul and repair.

- 2.02 The current proposal is to refurbish the interior of the House, replace redundant and defective services, renewing decorative surfaces and using the opportunity to give the House back some of its lost Regency character by subdividing some of the uncharacteristically large spaces that were formed during the last refurbishment, and to thereby achieve better room proportions.

- 2.03 Externally, the building fabric is generally being repaired to replace defective render, replace decayed asphalt roofing and generally to take the opportunity to remove surface run services, trucking and drainage pipework.

External alterations are limited to the alterations to existing door openings (3 No.) and the replacement of a unused secondary access at the east end with a more useable service wing to provide the much needed 'Back of House' areas that were formerly provided by the outbuildings and temporary Portakabins (now removed).

2.04 With the conservation assessment of the House interiors concluding that most of the historic fabric, and indeed the historic layouts, had been lost in successive refurbishments, the principle value of the building and the relevance to it's listing, is the external appearance and its setting, which as far as the central core of the original Villa is concerned has been largely retained in form, if not in actual substance.

2.05 The House and it's setting therefore still provides an important contribution the character of the conservation area, and these proposal seek to enhance and reinforce this character through the removal of elements that have and currently still do detract from this character.

This is the substance of this Design and Access Statement and application for Planning and Listed Building Consent.

### **The Design Process**

2.06 The provision of a modest extension at the east end of the House, follows a pattern that has always seen the 'Back of House' functions of this House located at the east end of the plot, adjoining a service area that includes the Chauffeurs Lodge, Head Gardener's House, Boiler House, Squash Court, Stables and rear gate onto Fitzroy Park.

Successive refurbishments have gradually extended the living accommodation of the House and pushed the service accommodation (Kitchen, Butlers Pantry, Servant Hall and stores) further east generally to in an area to the south and east of the service wing constructed in the early 20th Century (often referred to in error as a separate House).

2.07 The refurbishment works in the late 1970's saw the provision of a two-storey extension to form a catering kitchen with storage below and a ground floor link to provide a secondary entrance, or 'Ladies Entrance' to cater for the customs and protocols of it's then middle-eastern owners.

The absence of useable back of House areas in the House (Laundry, kitchen stores, etc) and the absence of a practical use of this secondary entrance and derelict external stores below it, lead to the proposal to provide a useable space within this area and in the process allow for a rationalisation of this 'Back of House' area, involving a significant degree of improvement to a rather poor appearance that detracted from the overall character of the House and it's setting.

- 2.08 Other limited alterations to the external appearance are carefully detailed and are intended to achieve two main aims;

1. To improve the external appearance of the House by removing unsympathetic features such as externally run drainage pipework, mechanical services and plant and a significant array of satellite dishes.
2. To provide more suitably detailed external access to the existing Garden Terrace south of the House by removing raised thresholds in 2 No. instances and a new garden door to facilitate access to the garden from the Kitchen.

These proposals are all designed to improve the operation of the House layout and enhance the external appearance of the House within it's setting.

- 2.09 The design of the new Service wing is intended to achieve a number of objectives:

1. Provide ancillary accommodation to the 'Back of House' functions that was formerly carried out in unsuitable basement areas or external Portakabins in a more practical fashion.
2. Allow unused areas of the House to be brought back into beneficial use.
3. Allow the front elevation of the House to be re-addressed and the hierarchy of the main entrance to be re-established with the removal of the colonnade structure and the establishment of a clearly discernable service entrance with appropriately subservient architectural treatment.
4. External steps from the 'service yard' are put under cover, which aids both operation of the House and safety of the users (wet slippery steps in winter).

The decision to extend the line and height of this new extension to that of the existing 1970's Kitchen extension allows this elevation to be read as a single entity, with the same subservient hierarchy of detail and materials, replacing what does effectively look like what it is: 'a raised covered walkway'.

### **Building Use**

- 2.10 Beechwood House, together with the grounds and ancillary buildings comprising the 11-acre Estate will continue to be used as a **single domestic dwelling** with associated on-site staff accommodation.
- 2.11 The hierarchy of these spaces and their arrangement within the site reinforces the character of this Historic Building and plays a significant role in the character of this Conservation Area.

The proposals for the Estate as a whole, and this proposal in particular, seek to re-establish this hierarchy and use, enhancing the overall value and contribution of this Estate to the area.

### **Layout**

- 2.12 In both design and practical terms, the proposal for the ancillary service accommodation associated with the existing Kitchen is intended to be on the same level as the kitchen to allow ease of operation. Separate functions such as the laundry are located in the basement area, where they have direct access to both outside for deliveries, collection, etc and internally within the 'Back of House' areas.
- 2.13 Established service access routes via the 'service yard' are maintained and consolidated by the proposals, a separation that is as important to the use of the House today as it was when initially built.
- 2.14 Locating these functions at the east end of the House remains as valid today as it has been in the past. The proposals allow for a clear separation of the formal entrance to the House and its egress onto the gardens at the rear from the service area of the house to the east and reinforces the hierarchy of use on this substantial residence.

### **Scale**

- 2.15 Overall, the footprint of the new extension is some 24 M2 less than the total footprint of the existing entrance and colonnade (74 M2).

The scale of the proposed extension is balanced with the existing Kitchen extension constructed in the last 1970's and will provide a more balanced and 'finished' aspect to a rather 'messy' elevation facing onto the service yard.

The overall scale of the extension is subservient to the main House and set back behind and below the current building lines.

### **Appearance**

- 2.16 It is important that the selection of materials and details sit comfortably with the Listed Beechwood House and particularly within the historic landscape.

The 'language' of the House is predominantly that of rendered ashlar walling, with simple classical elements, which are complimentary with the existing House, yet subservient in importance and level of detail exhibited by the main House.

- 2.17 The extension has been detailed to be perceived as part of a composition of a service wing, incorporating the existing Kitchen extension.

Elevations on the Southeast are simply detailed with windows, doors and roofs to match the existing Kitchen extension and a simple rendered cornice, which is an extension of the detailing of the existing Kitchen extension.

- 2.18 The removal of the colonnade forming the secondary access to the House is intended to reduce the impact of this entrance to a level commensurate with service access and reduce the competition with the status of the main entrance of the House from the driveway.

### **Landscaping**

- 2.19 The service yard is a simple grassed area and the proposals for the extension mean that this will extend onto the grassed area by no more than 2.2 metres into this grassed area.

No trees are affected by these proposals, nor are there any proposals to change the nature of this grassed service yard.

- 2.20 A tree survey has been undertaken, together with an assessment of the existing trees and their value to the landscape.

No trees are affected by these proposals, nor are any changes to the existing utilitarian landscaping of this area envisaged.

### 3.00 **ACCESS**

- 3.01 No changes are proposed to the external access arrangements of the site, with all regular access coming through the main gates onto Hampstead Lane.

The existing set of gates in the South onto Fitzroy Park are not currently in use and are not intended to be a general access point to the House and its site. North-west corner of the site onto Hampstead Lane do not provide regular access to the site and can only provide access to the rear of the Guest bungalow rather than the wider site.

- 3.02 Existing pathways around the Estate and in particular to the service yard are unaffected by the proposals. Existing pedestrian access at ground floor is maintained and the basement access is now via a stair lobby to the basement rooms directly rather than being a purely external access.

All access being formed is level access, suitable for both deliveries and

There is no vehicular access intended to the service yard and 'Back of House' areas, with all deliveries taking place to the upper level service yard by the Fitzroy Park gates and adjacent Chauffeurs Cottage.

- 3.03 Maintenance access to basement plant areas is provided via existing external doors at basement level.

- 3.04 In considering the proposed use of the building (domestic dwelling) and the likely needs of its occupants, it is thought that these proposals strike a reasonable balance with access needs and the need to protect and enhance the character of the Conservation Area.



4.00 **LISTED BUILDINGS**

4.01 The Conservation Assessment Report (June 2008) makes an assessment of the architectural and historical significance of Beechwood House and the buildings and structure on site, most of which by their nature are all curtilage buildings.

4.02 Generally the proposals for the house as a whole seek to reinstate some of the lost Regency character of the Listed Building and make a positive contribution that will enhance the character of the Conservation Area by their execution.

4.03 The addition of any extension to a dwelling within Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) need to be both reasonable and not harm the openness of the MOL.

The reduction in the overall; footprint of House achieved by these proposals is considered to positively work to this goal.