

48B Netherhall Gardens
Proposed New House

Planning, Design and Access Statement

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1 Contextual Analysis

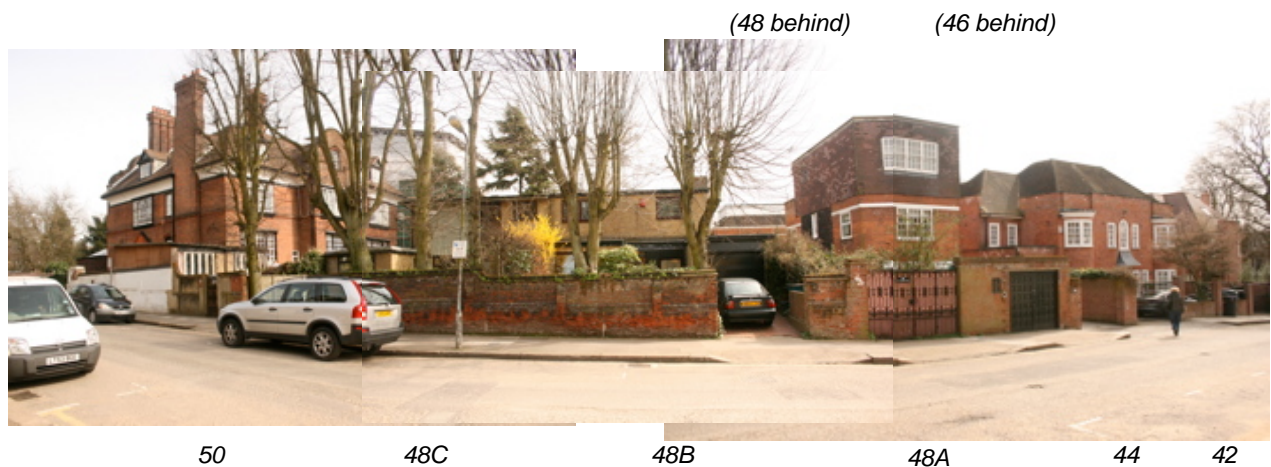
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Location

The present house at 48B is at the top Netherhall Gardens on the south side of the street below the intersection with Fitzjohns Avenue. It is a residential neighborhood within the Fitzjohns and Netherhall Conservation Area. The house is approximately equidistant from Hampstead Village to the north, and the Finchley Road to the south and west.

Site Access

The house is close to a number of Underground, overland train, and bus routes. There are excellent transport links and the street locally is not heavily parked. The present house has a small garage and a single off-street parking space. There is some change of level on the existing drive due to the natural topography on the front boundary of the site along Netherhall Gardens, but the ground is generally level, and level access and parking should be possible.



View of 48B Netherhall Gardens & Surrounding Properties

Built Environment and Site Analysis

In planning terms 48B Netherhall Gardens is a complicated site with a complicated history. This is not a typical setting within the conservation area, and the history of the development of the site and its immediate surroundings is unusual. To better understand the existing circumstances an investigation of the following will be made:

- The Character of the Conservation Area
- The Development of the 48B and Adjacent Sites in the Post War Period
- The Original Development of 48B and 48C Netherhall Gardens in 1956
- The Present House at 48B Netherhall Gardens

From this study a clearer understanding of the problems and constraints of the site will emerge.

- The Character of the Conservation Area

The site is within the leafy residential neighborhood of the Fitzjohns and Netherhall Conservation Area. The area is on southwest facing hill which rises up from Swiss Cottage to Hampstead Village. The pattern and grain of the local streetscape is quite consistent; Large traditional and vernacular turn-of-the-century houses predominate with small front and large back gardens, brick front walls, entry gates, and hedges. The buildings forms are similarly consistent: Pitched roofs, dormer windows, tall chimneys, and bay windows on Victorian, Edwardian, and Arts & Crafts Houses. Materials are those common to the period: clay tile & slate roofs, brick and hanging tile walls, painted timber windows and surrounds, with lead and zinc flashings, weathering and canopies.

Less typically to the area there are some generally smaller infill houses and larger mansion blocks from the inter-war and post war period. These typically have flat roofs and more modern detailing. Due to their size, and changing needs, many of the large houses have been converted into flats or in some cases schools. This in turn has lead to extensions and roof alterations. Demand for the convenience of off street parking has resulted in the paving of some front gardens. Not all of these developments and changes have been managed in a way which is sympathetic to the context. The site at 48B Netherhall Gardens and the adjacent properties summarizes the affects of many of these pressures.

The buildings in the Conservation Area generally reflect the period in which they were built. In general there is unity to the overall residential pattern with significant architectural variation in the style and detail of individual buildings. Some of the postwar building and much of the alteration and extension of existing buildings suffers for lack of quality, and sensitivity to the surrounding context in both form and material.



Typical Conservation Area Houses on Netherhall Gardens

- The Development of the 48B and Adjacent Sites in the Post War Period

Although the circumstances surrounding the development of 48b are unusual in their particulars, the story itself is not; In 1948 permission was granted to convert the adjacent large house on the corner of Netherhall Gardens and Fitzjohns Avenue into two separate houses. The building is a listed, Queen Anne revival house with Dutch Gables built by Norman Shaw in 1878 for the painter Edwin Long. The two resulting houses were then broken up into flats, and the property is now known as 61 Fitzjohns Avenue and 50 Netherhall Gardens. By the mid 1950's the opportunity presented by the large garden to the original house with its long frontage on Netherhall Gardens was also taken; Permission was granted for the development of two semi-detached houses now known as 48B and 48C Netherhall Gardens. The existing collection of outbuildings at the bottom of the garden, were also converted into residential use and extended. In late 1956 permission was granted to convert 48A Netherhall Gardens. Not surprisingly for the period, the results of this development of the garden and outbuildings has not been particularly successful; The collection of houses which resulted are numbered 48, 48A, 48B, and 48C. None are recognized in the conservation area map as making a positive contribution to the area.



48C



48B



48



48A

- The Original Development of 48B and 48C Netherhall Gardens in 1956

As detailed above the original houses were built in the 1950's on land which formed part of the large back garden of 50 Netherhall Gardens. They are built in the prevailing post-war regional modernist style: yellow stock brick, a mixture of low pitched and flat roofs, and painted timber trim. The austerity of the period is apparent in the construction, and other than the use of brick, the form, materials and detailing does not acknowledge the surrounding context.

This post-war suburban character is also apparent in the houses' overall form, relation to the street, and configuration on the site; The relatively low density and sprawling houses, are set back from the street and the traditional building line. The garage and garage door were given a privileged position and occupy the most prominent position on the site, closest to the street (Note: The garage at 48C was subsequently converted into a kitchen). The front edge of the garages is the only part of the houses which aligns with the historic building line of the street. The main two storey volume of both houses is set back from the garage behind single storey front extensions. There is no dedicated pedestrian access or gate into the front garden and the front entry doors to the houses are relatively hidden.

This displacement of the pedestrian and prominence of the garage is part of a 1950's celebration of the car and the sprawling, low density suburban life which it facilitated. The lack of a pedestrian gate and the prominence of the garage is inconsistent with the character of the conservation area. Similarly the sprawling post-war suburban character of the houses is contrary to the leafy, but more dense, pre-war, suburban grain of the area.

*48B Netherhall Gardens*

At 48A and 48B Netherhall Gardens an idiomatically post-war, low density, suburban building style and form has been placed within what is a distinctive and relatively complex existing context. The houses are architecturally unremarkable. The map in the Netherhall and Fitzjohns Conservation Area Statement notes that the two houses are not making a positive contribution to the area. The character and arrangement of the houses ignores the existing architectural character of the area. The house at 48B Netherhall Gardens also fails to respond to the very particular and unusual circumstances of its site and surrounding.

- The Present House at 48B Netherhall Gardens

The appropriateness of the imposition of two 1950's suburban houses on the site is both circumstantial and varied. The houses are symmetrical in their treatment of their respective outer boundaries; As originally conceived they are very nearly exact mirror images of one another, but their corresponding neighbors are very different. In planning terms two critical issues need to be considered along each boundary; The character of the streetscape, and the circumstantial issues regarding overlooking, privacy, and light.

The relationship between 50 and 48C Netherhall Gardens is the relatively straightforward one between a large handsome listed building and a lower, modern infill set back from the building line. The existing render to the front wall and the present ad hoc garage are disappointing, but 50 Netherhall Gardens is handsome, and it is not hard to imagine that these secondary issues will be resolved over time. The listed house is a definitive building in the Conservation Area which dominates its site.

*50 & 48C Netherhall Gardens*

On the other side of the semi-detached pair, the planning issues confronting the relation between 48B and 48A are very different. Here the continuity of the character of the streetscape is tenuous at best; Fragmented is a more apt description. Starting at 48B, there are five separate and consecutive driveways in less than 20 metres. Other than those at 48B, there are no trees and little greenery.



Five Consecutive Drives to 48C, 48, 48A, 46, and 44 Netherhall Gardens

The houses at 42 and 44 Netherhall Garden all reinforce the historic character of the streetscape, but the existing house at 48A Netherhall Gardens struggles to do as much. It is an awkwardly proportioned, oddly thin, three storey, flat roofed house clad in hanging tile. It sits neatly on the historic building line and the tile hanging is appropriate to the area, but the task of maintaining the context in this circumstance is difficult. 48A is surrounded by drives and in architectural terms it is abandoned and ignored by 48B which offers no help in maintaining the character of the area: 48B steps back leaving a garage door and yet another drive. To the extent that the character of 48B is itself inappropriate, stepping back is an advantage; At least by this it does less harm. Even a carefully considered building could not fix this relatively forlorn length of the street, but with care a thoughtful response to the context could go some way toward improving matters.



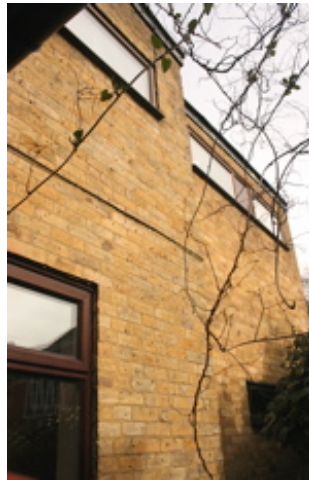
44 & 42 Netherhall Gardens

The thoughtlessness of 48B's design to the street and neighboring houses is continued along its western boundary with 48 and 48A. The circumstances of the boundary are challenging; The two adjacent houses, 48 Netherhall Gardens (also known as "The Coach House") and 48A Netherhall Gardens, have a single narrow 8.5 metre wide frontage to Netherhall Gardens. The buildings are arranged one behind the other running back from the street. Together with 48B Netherhall Gardens the three houses form a close group. This results in a range of planning issues regarding light and overlooking.

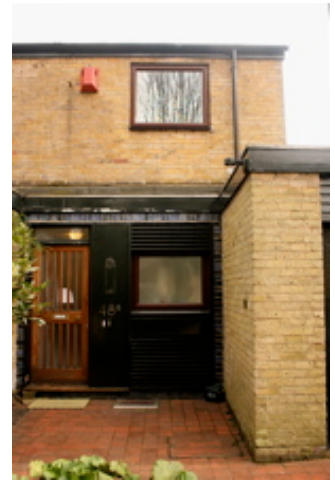


Slot Garden/Drive to 48 Netherhall Gardens Between 48B & 48A Netherhall Gardens

In this context the loose, ad hoc, plan form of 48B is wholly inappropriate. Its relatively sprawling form anticipates the open and low-density, suburban setting for which it was conceived, not the dense context in which it has been placed. The plan of the house is deep along the western edge. With this depth comes the necessity of side windows. These windows compound the inherent problems with overlooking along the boundary. The design of 48B does little to mediate these problems through the arrangement of the internal plan, window placement, or the boundary treatment. Along such a fraught boundary a shower or bathroom with high or etched windows is appropriate, but at 48B the shower and bathroom are oddly given choice positions on the front elevation with unnecessarily large windows at ground and first floor. Two large bedrooms are placed in the middle of the west elevation and this leaves all three properties awkwardly exposed and overlooked.



48B Netherhall Gardens: West/Side Elevation Windows, & North/Front Elevation Bathroom Windows



48 Netherhall Gardens: North Elevation Windows



48A Netherhall Gardens: East Elevation Windows



A two storey garden extension to 48B (approved in 1964) has only made matters worse; The half extension runs along the western edge and projects off the back elevation. This reduces and compromises the size and shape of 48B's garden while imposing its volume on neighboring gardens and houses. Very large back window to the south brings the neighboring windows and rooms of 48 into even closer proximity, and two side windows to the east create brand new problems with overlooking to 48C and 50 Netherhall Gardens. Although the latter is on the very edge of planning's 18 metre definition, the frontal relationship between the two properties makes the actual problem worse than the distance suggests.



*Half Extension to 48B
Netherhall Gardens*



*View from the garden of
48B toward 48 & 48A*

The historical permissions associated with the three houses provides some indication of the difficulty with overlooking. Within the approval documents can be found various conditions and notes indicating provisions regarding window placement, dedicated planters, etc. all in an attempt to prevent loss of privacy. To some extent the problems are inherent in the proximity of the three building. Not all these problems can be solved, but a carefully conceived building at 48B which considered the particular circumstances of the site could significantly reduce the problem of overlooking.