

18-20 Elsworthy Road, NW3– Planning Policy Statement

The villas at 18-20 Elsworthy Road as existing are in desperate need of restoration, particularly as they occupy a prominent corner in the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area.

Recent Planning History

Over the last year, a couple of Planning Applications for the sites of 18-20 Elsworthy Road and 15 Elsworthy Rise have been submitted to the council. The first of the two applications (2007/0103/P), registered last February proposed to demolish all existing buildings on the sites and construct a 5 storey block of flats at 20 Elsworthy Road, a 5 storey family dwelling at 18 Elsworthy Road, and a 3 storey building at 15 Elsworthy Rise comprising a 2 storey family dwelling over 3 garages. The application was withdrawn. The second application (2007/2652/P), registered in June, proposed to demolish all existing buildings on the sites and construct a 5 storey block of flats at 20 Elsworthy Road, a 5 storey family dwelling at 18 Elsworthy Road, and a 2 storey building at 15 Elsworthy Rise comprising a flat over 3 garages. The application was refused and the reasons for refusal are stated below:

"The proposed development, by reason of its bulk and massing, height and detailed design would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of this part of the Elsworthy Conservation Area, contrary to policies B1 [General design principles] and B7 [Conservation areas] of the London Borough of Camden Replacement Unitary Development Plan 2006."

The Proposal

The proposed development at 18-20 Elsworthy Road, takes into consideration and positively addresses a number of the policies laid out in Camden Council's Unitary Development Plan and the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area Statement.

The primary aim of the proposal is to restore the neglected villas and to raise them to the standard of the other properties in their context. The proposal is to restore and modernise the villas; landscape the rear gardens and introduce terraces to the rear; and maximise the gross internal areas of the residential units, which would encompass:

- The conversion of the ground floor flats into maisonettes providing basement accommodation, which will create two generous family sized maisonettes with front and rear gardens, which are in high demand in the area.
- Re-planning the circulation spaces and flat layouts

Housing Mix

The proposal provides six 3-bed residential units at 18-20 Elsworthy Road and a flat over garage at 15 Elsworthy Rise, as existing. However the maisonette at no.18 Elsworthy Road could easily be used as a 4 or 5 bedroom property, and the maisonette at no.20 Elsworthy Road could be used as a 4 bedroom property, and hence would provide a greater variety of unit-types and sizes, attracting a greater range of occupants, in accordance with the UDP Section 2, H8 – Mix of Units, which states:

"The Council will only grant planning permission for residential development that provides an appropriate mix of unit sizes, including large and small units."

The maisonettes have front and rear gardens and are therefore perfectly suited for families, as recommended in 2.61 of the UDP:

"Larger units of three or more bedrooms provide flexibility and can be used by a range of household sizes, including families. Where possible, large units suitable for families should be provided on the ground floor and should have access to gardens or public open space where children can play in safety."

The proposal would provide higher quality accommodation, in terms of layout and performance for all the units and addresses all the points set out in 2.63 of the UDP:

"All schemes for conversion (including the further sub-division of existing Flats and maisonettes) should provide a good standard and quality of accommodation without causing any deterioration in amenity for any existing tenants and residents. It is important that adequate and secure arrangements can be made for access to each household space and for off-street refuse storage."

Character and Appearance of the Proposal

The primary objective of the proposal is to enhance the conservation area by means of restoring the character of the original building within the context of the rest of the terrace buildings, which have nearly all undergone alterations and have been modernised over the years. The proposal takes into full consideration the points raised in 9.5 of the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area Statement, namely, respecting the built form of the historic context, its building lines, roof lines, elevational design as well as employing a similar palette of materials to that of its neighbouring buildings.

Front Boundary

The proposed front boundary of 18-20 Elsworthy Road is to be formed by low reclaimed yellow brick walls and piers which are characteristic of the eastern side of the street and are in accordance with 8.1 of the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area Statement. Hedges are to be planted behind the low brick boundary walls for privacy and to preserve the green character of the conservation area as encouraged in 9.26 of the statement. The existing yellow brick wall to be retained and slightly modified to the side elevation is to be chemically cleaned and repointed as part of the restoration of 18-20 Elsworthy Road to enhance the conservation area.

Entrance Canopy

A new slim cantilevered canopy and frameless glass balustrade create a new entrance with oak doors to the flats and refuse store. This constitutes the only modern intervention, picking up on the delicate and minimal detailing of the new rear extensions to the maisonettes.

Extensions

The proposed extensions to the rear of the building, replacing the existing brick ones, extend to the new basement level and lowered patios, are made up of frameless glazing to the ground floor, which subtly and respectfully juxtaposes the original features of the Victorian building with the modern extension. The extension occupies roughly the same foot print as the existing annexe and is limited in height to below first floor level. This results in the new extension being fully subordinate, in keeping with the recommendations set out in 9.12 of the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area statement. The proposed elements of the extensions are minimised to a thin blade of dark grey metal roofing and clear glass in order to be as unobtrusive as possible. The proposed extensions extend down to the basement to provide light and ventilation to the habitable rooms at basement level, for which a precedent is provided at no. 16 adjacent (Planning Application ref. 2006/1214). The impact of the stepped terraces to basement level is not perceivable from the street, the view being blocked by the existing, and slightly altered, brick boundary wall.

The balustrading to the ground floor terraces is also made up of frameless glass inset into the slate paving of the terrace, to create a clear hierarchy between the original and the modern additions. The slate paving at terrace levels picks up on the slate mansard roof proposed.

Roof

At roof level, the height is reduced to reflect that of no.16 and a slate mansard is proposed in keeping with a number of the buildings in the terrace, notably no.2 and 16. The proposal also re-instates characteristic decorative elements, such as cornices, as is encouraged in 9.9 of the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area Statement.

Materials

The proposal re-introduces original features and materials, such as sliding sash windows, half-timbering on render to the front and rear elevations, as outlined in 9.28 of the Conservation Area statement. Slate mansard roofs are introduced in keeping with a number of the villas in the terrace, and the chemical cleaning and repointing of all the brickwork is proposed to enhance the area.

Parking

The off-street parking will remain as existing, providing 3 off street parking spaces at 15 Elsworthy Rise. This is in accordance with the UDP general parking guidelines C3 – residential development (dwellings) which outlines, that low provision areas should provide a maximum of 0.5 spaces per dwelling, whilst the rest of the Borough should provide a maximum of 1 space per dwelling.

Trees

All trees, of which there are a total of three to the rear of 18-20 Elsworthy Road, are to be retained and protected as set out in 9.22 of the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area Statement. One lime tree or other broad leafed tree is proposed at each of 18 and 20 Elsworthy Road's front gardens in order to enhance the conservation area streetscape as set out in 9.24 of the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area Statement.