

# 15 MARESFIELD GARDENS, NW3

Proposed Development:  
**Erection of a Conservatory at Garden  
Level and Remodelling of Balcony on  
Upper Ground Floor**

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## **DESIGN and ACCESS STATEMENT**

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March 2007

**rbp**

This design and access statement has been prepared on behalf of Mr and Mrs Freedman, of Flat A, lower ground floor, in support of an application for development proposals at 15 Maresfield Gardens, NW3, in accordance with the requirements set out in PPS1 and the accompanying 'By Design' and advice given in DCLG Circular 01/2006.

As the proposed development seeks to extend the existing flat into the garden, no changes are proposed to the existing access arrangements, which fall outside the scope of Flat A.

## **(1) INTRODUCTION**

An application for a rear conservatory at Lower Ground Floor level was submitted to Camden Council on 28 September 2006 (Registered No 2006/4485/P). The case officer, Ms Mary Samuels advised the agent that following consultation, the Council had received objections from the Heath and Hampstead Society and the Hampstead CAAC, acting for the Fitzjohns/ Netherhall Conservation Area. The application was subsequently withdrawn.

A revised proposal that addressed some of the concerns expressed was sent to these consultees in January 2007. The CAAC has discussed the proposal but declined to comment at pre-application stage; the Heath and Hampstead Society spokesman considered the revisions an improvement on the withdrawn scheme. The revision introduced two important amendments:

1. The original bay windows that constitute the most important feature in the rear elevation at garden level are retained and
2. The height of the stairs from the rear balcony to the garden has been reduced.

## **(2) SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

No 15 Maresfield Gardens is situated within the Fitzjohns/ Netherhall Conservation Area (Sub Area 1) designated in 1984. It lies on the west side of Maresfield Gardens, which runs mainly north-south although at the southern end it turns at a right angle to form an L. The character of the street can be divided into three parts: north and south of Nutley Terrace it is essentially residential whilst in the southernmost leg larger institutional buildings prevail.

South of Nutley Terrace, the street displays a variety of styles and types of building, resulting in subtle changes in character. On the west side, Mourne House, adjoining No 15 is a 1970s block of flats, Nos. 15 and 17 are double fronted, whilst the rest of this section is characterized by a closer group of mostly detached houses. North of Nutley Terrace, houses in Maresfield Gardens have been built within larger plots resulting in a more open character.

No 15 is a large detached late 19<sup>th</sup> Century house consisting of lower ground, ground and first floor with a second floor contained within the roof. It is well set back from the highway and has the longest rear garden in the street. The site backs on to some large buildings within vast gardens in Netherhall Gardens; the nearest house to the rear is some 90m away.

## **(3) PLANNING HISTORY**

**No 15 Maresfield Gardens:** Most of the planning history relates to the upper floors and is not relevant to this application. In 1961 the Council approved the conversion of the maisonette occupying the lower ground and ground floors into two self-contained flats. The following year a conservatory at garden level was granted permission; it appears that this has not been implemented. The erection of the balcony and stairs at the upper ground level were approved in 1967.

**No 17 Maresfield Gardens:** This house, also double fronted, forms a pair with No 15 so that its planning history sets an important precedent for any development at No 15. The relevant permission is PL/9100346, of August 1991, which as part of its conversion into flats approved a rear extension at lower ground level that is 8m wide and 7m deep.

**No 19 Maresfield Gardens:** This building is part of a group of smaller houses that form the pattern of development towards the north. Here permission was given in December 1996 for a rear extension at garden level with roof terrace above (P/9603141) measuring 6m wide and 3.5m deep. In November 1999 (PW/9902610) permission was granted for a conservatory, which together with the previous extension occupies the full width of the building; it is 6.2m deep

**Mourne House:** This 1970s block of flats has been granted permission on the site of No 11a, previously occupied by another very large house. Although this building respects the front building line prevalent in the street, at the rear it is 5.5m deeper than the rest of the houses in the street and in part it is 8m deep.

All the above are shown on Drawing 01 in outline. Details are available in the Council's files.

In addition, it is worth pointing out a couple of other developments that have been approved by Camden:

**10 Maresfield Gardens:** Across the road from the application site, permission has been granted in May 1998 (PW/9702977) for glazed extensions at lower ground and ground floor levels to house a plunge pool excavated into the basement. The relevance of this extension is its modern approach: both levels are completely glazed.

**59 Maresfield Gardens:** At the northern end of the street, also on the west side, is a group of three small cottages. There have been successive applications (2006/0492/P and 2006/3073/P) for the extension of one of the cottages in this group, No 59. The combined effect of the two permissions can best be appreciated in the latter, granted in November 2006, which turns a 2-storey house with a pitched roof into a 4-storey building with a 5<sup>th</sup> floor within the roof-space and deep extensions at the rear. The scale of the increase in volume in relation to the original modest building can best be appreciated by comparing Sections AA (Drawing No 33) and BB (Drawing No 34) as proposed with the existing Section AA (Drawing No 4).

Of the permissions referred to in this Section, only Mourne House predates the Conservation Area, the other precedents have all been allowed after its designation in 1984.

#### **(4) CAMDEN'S UDP POLICIES AND SPG GUIDELINES**

In addition to Government advice contained in PPG15 on conservation areas, Camden's UDP, adopted in June 2006, is the relevant policy framework. Camden Planning Guidance was also published in 2006.

**UDP 2006:** In addition to policy SD6 (Amenity) the relevant policies are contained in Section 3 on the Built Environment. These are B1 (Design), B3 (Alterations and Extensions) and B7 (Conservation Areas). In particular B3 sets out the criteria against which the proposal will be scrutinized in Section (6) of this statement.

Policy SD6 covers the amenity for occupiers and neighbours; particularly relevant to this application are (a) visual privacy and overlooking and (b) sunlight and daylight levels.

Policy B1 encourages the highest quality in new development, both in contemporary and more traditional styles. Paragraph 3.8 states:

"Unless a development site is within an area of homogenous architectural style of a high standard that it is important to retain, high quality contemporary designs within the policy framework will be welcomed."

Policy B3 is specific to alterations and extensions, which should not cause harm to the architectural quality of the existing building or to the surrounding area. The Council will consider matters such as whether the building and its setting are respected, that the scale of the extension is subordinate and that original features are retained and the architectural integrity of the building is preserved.

**CPG:** Has a section on Alterations, Extensions and Conservatories. Conservatories should be located at the rear of the building, at basement or ground level. They should not be a dominant feature and should not extend the full width of the building. Overlooking and light pollution can be an issue and should be minimized.

**Conservation Area Statement:** In 2001 the Council has published a statement for the Fitzjohns / Netherhall Conservation Area. The site lies within Sub Area 1 and is amongst the buildings in the street considered to make a positive contribution to the area. Guidelines for conservatories are contained in F/N19 and F/N22: they should be small in scale and subordinate to the original building and at ground level only. Design, scale and materials should be sensitive to the special qualities of the property and not undermine the features of the original building.

**English Heritage:** Its guide to Alterations and Extensions to London Terrace Houses helps to understand the relationship between traditional and modern architecture:

"...that the new work is integrated harmoniously with the character of the building as a whole. However, there may be some occasions where a

more modern design approach may be acceptable.”

## **(5) PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

The revised proposal consists of the demolition of the existing balcony, its columns and concrete supports and the stairs and the erection of a conservatory to provide an informal sitting/ eating area for the family. Part of the roof is flat and provides for a replacement balcony for the upper ground floor flat, linked to new stairs that give access to this flat's part of the rear garden. The footprint, of irregular shape, measures 30.8m<sup>2</sup>.

Its perimeter walls consist of double glazed structural panels and columns with steel-framed double glazed sliding doors, with the exception of the south-facing wall, which consists of a rendered panel to avoid overlooking from the external stairs. The visible (pitched) part of the roof, also consisting of frameless double-glazed panels, is integrated with the balcony's balustrade consisting of steel-framed mesh panels that continue along the stairs.

The majority of the new structure is contained within the existing paved patio area, avoiding water run-off problems. All glass will be UV resistant (Pilkington's K glass or similar) in order to reduce heat loss.

In the revised scheme, the existing bay windows are retained as existing. The southern bay will also remain in-situ as access to the proposed conservatory will be from the general circulation area of the flat. Although one of the bays will become internal, the original windows at this level will be kept intact so that there will be no harm to the fabric of this Victorian building.

The architectural design is essentially modern but respects the original building. Boyarsky Murphy Architects have experience in creating contemporary solutions to extending period buildings or 'infill' buildings within a traditional urban context.

## **(6) DESIGN and CONSERVATION CONSIDERATIONS**

The planning officer had two reservations about the previous (withdrawn) application, which will be discussed below:

### **(a) The Stairs from the Balcony**

- The stairs should not project beyond the footprint of the building into the gap between No 15 and the block of flats in order to protect the views from the street into the rear gardens.

The remodeling of the balcony offered the opportunity to relocate the stairs, which

offered two advantages:

1. It would no longer be sited on land that is not in the ownership of the Ground Floor Flat, which uses the stairs to gain access to their part of the garden and,
2. It would improve the amenities of the occupiers of the Lower Ground Flat, who in the present situation are subjected to overlooking into their bedroom and dressing room. It will also improve the amount of daylight reaching these rooms.

The architects, in response to the planner's comments have reduced the overall height of the stairs and as a result, they will not be seen from the street, as the level of the ground at the rear of the house is 2m below street level. Furthermore, there is a gate with a trellis above at the back of the side passage, which will mask the stairs completely from the street. (See Photo No 8 and Drawing No 8)

#### **(b) The Conservatory**

- The relationship between the conservatory and the building has not been resolved satisfactorily.

In response to this objection, the revised scheme does not extend downwards the windows in the bay but keeps them as they are. One of the windows will separate the existing lounge from the conservatory but will not provide access to the extension.

In reviewing the design of the conservatory, the architect has considered other design approaches with a view to achieving a better relationship between the new and the old:

1. A 'Victorian' conservatory, which would be the traditional way of extending a house of this period. Such a structure, due to the pitched roof (section), would result in an awkward relationship with the existing balcony above.
2. A flat roof 'box', like many other examples in the street, would have been a conventional approach that would have overcome the problem identified in 1. However, such a solution would not relate to the bay and would in plan also result in a 'leftover' space where rubbish would collect.

Both these could be off-the-peg solutions and would not guaranteed the high quality of design promoted by UDP B1 in both contemporary and more traditional styles. This policy welcomes high quality contemporary designs in areas where there is no homogeneous architectural style. This part of Maresfield Gardens is characterized by buildings of a variety of styles and it is perfectly acceptable to extend a 19<sup>th</sup> Century building in a contemporary way as this, by contrast, enhances the qualities of the original building. Such a solution was adopted at No 10 Maresfield Gardens (Section 3).

The conservatory in this application has been designed taking account of its relationship to the building and the history of development in the area, with particular regard to other single storey extensions in the immediate surroundings. Drawing 02

shows the proposal in the context of these nearby properties, comparing favourably in terms of its bulk, width and projection into the garden.

In fact, at 105m<sup>3</sup>, the proposed extension represents only 4% of the 2673m<sup>3</sup> volume of the original building; if this were a single dwellinghouse this figure would be comfortably within the permitted development rights in a conservation area. In addition, the lower ground floor area enclosed by the pillars that support the balcony above comprises a volume of 48m<sup>3</sup>, which would be demolished.

In terms of bulk, the additional volume is very modest compared to other precedents approved by the Council in the vicinity (Section 3) and in relation to the building itself. The conservatory complies with all the policies in this respect:

- It is located at the rear of the building, at basement level and does not extend the full width of the building (CPG p.84),
- Its scale is subordinate and the building and its setting are respected (UDP B3)
- It is small in scale, on ground level and subordinate to the original building (F/N 19 and 22)

In fact, in terms of its effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, located as it is at the back of the house, the proposed development cannot be seen from any public areas or even from private spaces or neighbouring buildings. It therefore preserves the character and appearance of the conservation area.

At present the garden flat is dark, due to the depth of the floorplan and the shadows cast by the full width balcony and the pillars that support it. The new balcony will not be full width and will allow more daylight and sunlight into the lounge, improving the amenity of the flat's occupiers. At ground floor level, the new balcony will be equivalent in floorspace to the existing – to be demolished – but rearranged to provide a better configuration for outdoor amenity. The owners of the Ground Floor Flat have been consulted and have given their full approval to the scheme. The amenity for both flats would be improved in accordance with UDP SD6.

In order to further increase daylight in the lounge, the previous application proposed the replacement of the bay windows with doors, which would have resulted in the loss of the most important elevation feature in the back elevation. The revised proposal retains these, which means that in future, if the conservatory were to be removed, the rear elevation would be restored to its original appearance. Thus the design of the proposal retains the original fabric of the building and preserves the architectural integrity of the building (UDP B3)

The conservatory, as a garden room, though attached to the house, has to fit in with the architecture of the building and the forms of the landscaping. A non-rectilinear plan form has been developed as the best way to avoid blocking daylight into the bay windows and to visually relate to the curving effect of the bay and the shape of the flowerbeds in the garden. The section, on the other hand, is essentially conventional. In the revised proposal, the line of the eaves has been lowered to align with the windows in the bay.

The simplicity of the construction details and materials will ensure that the addition does not compete with the elaborate detailing of the rear elevation. The contemporary design will not be out of place in this part of the Borough where modern architecture has contributed to the enhancement of conservation areas for decades.

Finally, the use of UV resistant double-glazing will result in an energy efficient building.

## **(7) CONCLUSION**

Since the previous application was withdrawn, the proposal has been revised to take into account officer and local groups' comments. In addition, all the existing elevation features will be retained. Further research into the planning history of buildings in the neighbourhood has also revealed planning permissions for much larger and less sympathetic rear extensions/ conservatories.

The proposed conservatory is modest in size and single storey and is sited on the rear elevation. It only measures 30.8m<sup>2</sup>, a small increase if the demolition of the supports to the existing balcony is taken into account. In the context of the large rear gardens, the conservatory will not be visible from surrounding properties, or from the street, so that visual and other amenities will be preserved.

The development also complies with all the relevant policies and guidance in terms of design, conservation and amenity.