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Design Statement

Proposed New Residential Building
35 Upper Park Road
Belsize Park
London

Submitted to London Borough of Camden
Planning and Built Environment
In support of planning application and
conservation area consent application

35 Upper Park Road Design Statement

Introduction

This report has been prepared to clarify the design approach followed in preparing the proposal for 35 Upper Park Road in Belsize Park. It shows how the design has been developed in response to the existing context, and proceeds from analysis to proposition, reflecting the design process, which seeks to integrate high quality contemporary design within a conservation area in a manner that respects the history of a location through informed reinterpretation. It covers more detailed issues of accessibility and sustainability in outline, in as much as these impinge upon planning issues. This report should be read in conjunction with the drawings prepared by The Heder Partnership and the Planning and Conservation Statement produced by Cluttons LLP Planning and Regeneration that accompany this application. Annexed to this document are brochures for The Heder Partnership and Kevin Fellingham Architecture which shows a track record of high quality architecture. There is no separate heading for sustainability within this report, as this is integral to the design approach and to the appraisals of urban form, landscaping, townscape, transport, mix of units, provision of health facilities, building form, construction and materials, and ventilation.

Proposed new building

The proposal is to erect a new four storey building at 35 Upper Park Road, to consist of six high quality dwellings, all of which will have access to outdoor space, and three of which will also benefit from private terraces. At basement level there will be a communal gym, spa facility and courtyard area. Lift access will be provided to all apartments.

Approach

Our design approach is based on the sensitive integration of high a quality contemporary building into the existing townscape, through adherence to traditional urban design strategies, which give primacy to the street as a unified public space defined by individual of buildings. London is a city made of houses, although many of these are in fact used as apartment buildings. We propose to erect a new building which will conform to the typology of its Victorian neighbours.

The fundamental objective is to contribute positively to the streetscape through:

- Reinforcing the scale and alignment of the street;
- Planting of trees in the front garden to compensate for the lack of street trees on this portion of the frontage;
- Increasing density in line with the Council's policy on housing;
- Increasing the diversity of residents through a diversity of dwelling types;
- Providing full accessibility to half of the dwellings;
- Providing 3 lifetime family homes incorporating private outdoor space and lift accessible basement parking spaces using existing driveway access;
- High quality sustainable contemporary design.

Application for Conservation Area Consent.

As the site lies within the Parkhill and Upper Park Conservation Area, it will be necessary to apply for consent to demolish the existing building on site. For this to occur the replacement building should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Objectively we assume that this means that the building needs to be of equal or better quality than the existing, both in terms of its architectural quality and its contribution to the Council's development policies as these relate to housing provision, environmental performance, and contribution to the townscape.

The Existing Dwelling

- The existing building was constructed in the 1950s. We have not been able to find out who designed the house, as it does not appear in any published source.
- It is a single dwelling, constructed in un-insulated brickwork, with single glazed windows in a variety of frames, both steel and timber.
- The house was considerably altered and extended, to provide additional accommodation in the roof space (1984), and to the rear and side to provide larger living areas with good garden access.
- The roof is tiled, with exposed guttering and overhanging eaves typical of generic post war suburban building.
- The house is under-scaled, set back and rotated relative to the adjacent terrace, resulting in the exposure of the gable wall of No. 37 to the street
- The massing is inconsistent with, and undermines, the clear definition of the public realm which gives the older portions of the conservation area an urban design quality lacking in the newer portions to the east. The site lies within this transitional zone, and we believe it is important to reinforce the street frontage in a manner which mediates between the continuity of the Victorian terrace and the semi detached villa massing to the south of the site.
- The rear garden consists of a paved terrace adjacent to the building, a flat lawn and a steep sloping rear portion planted with shrubs, held in place by brick retaining walls. There are no significant trees within the boundary, but there is an established tree in the neighbouring garden which will be preserved.
- An independent landscape consultant undertook an assessment of the vegetation to the front and rear gardens. The resultant statement is included in Appendix 3 of Cluttons' Planning and Conservation Statement.
- The front garden contains a single semi mature tree set well back from the street, some seasonal planting and some fairly established shrubbery. It is of no great quality and should be replaced with semi established trees hard up against the boundary which will establish continuity with the existing street trees, helping to screen the large block to the south in the oblique view from the north.

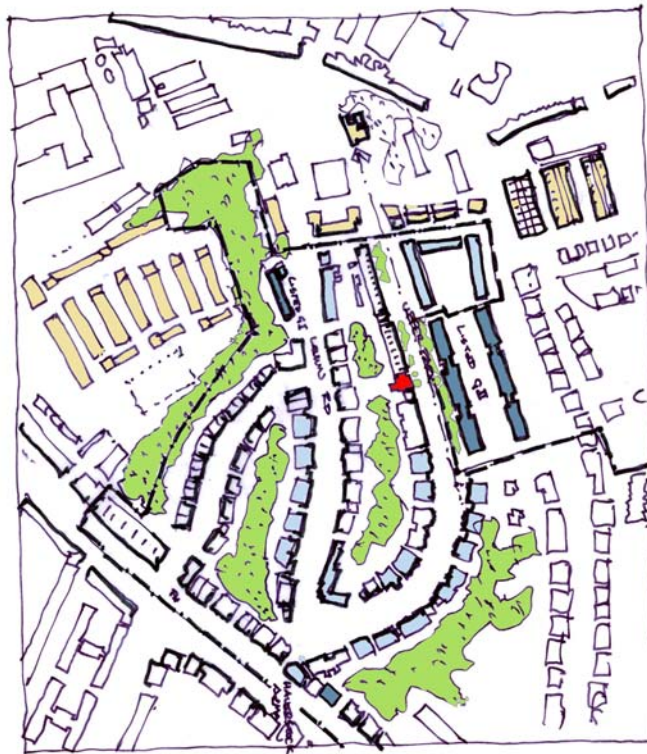


The Existing Dwelling

The Local Context

Pevsner's "The Buildings of England" describes the area as being at "the eastern tip of Hampstead which merges into Kentish Town.... a disparate mix of public and private housing". The Council's Conservation Area Statement points out four main styles of Architecture: Italianate Victorian, Late Victorian, Edwardian Villas and 30's Style. We are most sympathetic to the Italianate urban approach whilst referring to 1930's modernism, in their pursuit of well planned dwellings with ample light and fresh air, sunny terraces, refined detailing and white walls.

- The urban fabric is characterized by a high level of diversity. To the south and west of the site the street is defined by the typical Belsize Park semi-detached villas, with their generous scale and fenestration and mixture of stock brick and stucco in various ice cream related hues.
- The site itself is located between a Victorian terrace, a yellow face-brick modernist villa, two much larger blocks of 1960s/70s style apartments, one showing some design integrity, and its neighbour, a larger and cruder version of the same type.
- The terrace has been extended on the wedge shaped site which forms the northern boundary. It is slightly set back, has different fenestration both in terms of disposition and detail, exposed plumbing on its front elevation, but is similar to its neighbours in general disposition.
- Across the street are "two long blocks of decent post-war council flats in a Neo Georgian spirit." (Pevsner) These are grade 2 listed and are currently being renovated. They are however excluded from the conservation area. They form a strong urban edge, but lack the private front gardens and front doors which are to be desired.
- In the slightly wider neighbourhood two of the more noteworthy neighbours are the Lawn Road Flats (grade 1 listed and recently restored) and the influential Dunboyne Road Estate.
- The northern end of Upper Park Road is edged by an assortment of Arts and Crafts style houses, Moderne terraces with streamlined bay windows and shingle roofs, neo conservative red brick blocks with inactive frontages and brick council existenzminimum blocks.
- The vista down the street to the north is terminated by a thirteen storey brick block of council flats.



Local Area Plan –

site in red, listed buildings dark blue, buildings of local interest in light blue, post-war housing in beige



West Side of Upper Park Road showing Italianate Victorian, Mid Century Modern, Brutalist, Late international style, Bauhaus, Generic Suburban Victorian, Arts and Craft, Mock Tudor, Dutch Modernist and once more Brutalist buildings.



East side of Upper Park Road. Showing Scandinavian Empiricist, Pomo, Suburban Moderne, Neo Georgian and Victorian buildings



Immediate context - over-scaled 1960s/70s flats, Bauhaus style villa, the site, later end of terrace building and Victorian terrace



Council Housing tower terminating Upper park Street Vista



Isokon Flats- Once said to be the ugliest building in Hampstead, now Grade 1 listed and recently restored.



Italianate Semi Detached Villa. Painted render, generous fenestration, vertical proportions, designed to be viewed from the corner, side walls not blank.



Dunboyne Road Estate, Influential low-rise high-density council housing



1930s modern villas with pitched roofs



Local streetscape in winter- note disparity in scale, exposure of blank party walls.

Proposed Massing

As an initial exploration into acquiring the neighbouring site to the south, in order to construct a building based on the typology of the Italianate semi detached villas typical of Belsize Park proved fruitless, the most rational response to the context seemed to be to extend the terrace frontage adjoining the site to the north. In order to respect the integrity of this fairly short and fairly coherent terrace it seemed that the new building would have to relate to the existing assemblage without attempting a pastiche.

The precedent has been set in that, although close in time to the original construction, the southern end of the terrace is in fact a later addition. It is slightly set back, has a different disposition of windows, different window surrounds, different window frames, a different roof edge (gutter rather than parapet), a slightly different ridge level, plaster quoining on its southern corner and slightly different decorative treatments. Its brick is also slightly different in colour.

Consistency between Proposed building and the neighbouring Terrace

- It reads as a terraced house rather than a collection of apartments
- Division into roughly equal upper and lower registers strongly demarcated from one another, representing a base and a body in a nominally classical manner;
- 3 levels of punched openings above the basement;
- Shallow pitched slate and artificial slate roofs invisible from the pavement, even across the street;
- Consistent ridge line to the roof;
- White painted render to base and details;
- Generously proportioned windows to major rooms;
- Gate posts, low rendered walls, and trees planted hard up to front boundary and hedges;
- Adherence to the street frontage;
- Dominantly vertical proportions both in general disposition and fenestration of each frontage;
- Each bay reads as a single unit, regardless of whether it is a single home or divided into flats;
- A rather more random disposition of fenestration to the rear façade;
- Projecting rear extensions;
- Roof windows in the plane of the tiles;
- Rear dormer roof extensions.

It is intended that the new building will conform to all of these implicit rules .

Gaps

The Conservation Area Statement advises that the Council aim to retain gaps between buildings where they are significant in townscape terms. This phenomenon is illustrated, and specific reference is made to the large Semi Detached Villas in the Area. The immediate area is not characterised by these gaps as it consists of terraces and long social housing blocks. We have however pulled the new facade free of its neighbouring terrace to reveal the quoining, and to make a small notch on the skyline. On the southern end, we have proposed a fully glazed circulation core, deeply recessed from the facade, and a full storey lower than the body of the building, in order to produce a massing which mediates between terraced and articulated massing.

Blank Wall

The proposal abuts and thus conceals the blank to the north by adhering to the street frontage of the terrace. The even larger gable wall to the large flats to the south remains visible, but will benefit from the proposed planting of a semi mature London Plane tree to the southeast corner of the site.

Smaller Neighbour to South

As mentioned, the smaller house to the south (no. 33) is not currently available for redevelopment, although in the longer term it seems likely that it will be redeveloped at a scale somewhere between the current proposal and the large block of flats. The recessed circulation core attempts to pre-empt a larger development by notching the skyline, but accommodates the existing neighbour by stepping down to mediate the relationship between the two. This is

proposed as a flat roofed glass element, relating to the Bauhaus styling of the house.

Tall flats

The tall flats to the south are of little merit. The northernmost portion shows some design integrity, but reads as over-scaled because, although it is no higher than the typical villas, it reads as being a full storey higher due to the fact that it has no pitched roof. The lack of stucco trim and the unpainted timber windows contribute to a generally dull character, as does the straightforward stacking of floors and windows. It has a front, but it doesn't have a facade. There are no trees in the front gardens and there is too much paving. In opposition to this we propose a proper facade, which reads as a coherent whole rather than a stack of flats. We intend to make use of roof space to reduce scale, stucco to relate to the brightness and formality of the neighbourhood, treesmaking up for the lack of street trees, windows and doors to the ground floor, a narrow, well-designed garage door, a well planted front garden, and reinstatement of boundary wall.



Typical Belsize Park semi detached villa superimposed on site- twice as wide and two storeys higher than proposed scheme. Neighbouring site is not currently available for redevelopment.

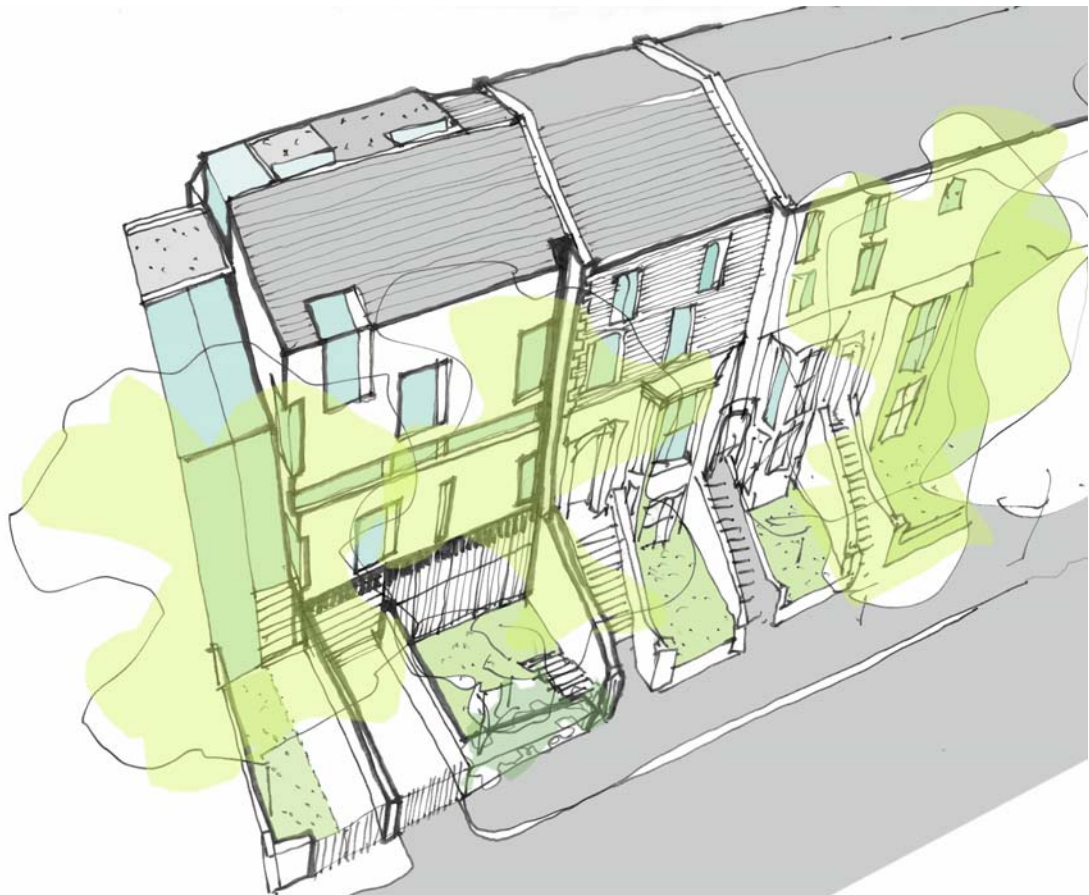


Sketch montage of proposal in context

Streetscape

We have paid careful attention to the impact of the proposal on the immediate streetscape, in order to enhance this part of Upper Park Road, as it becomes a little bleaker to the south of the site.

- We intend to make use of the existing driveway access point to provide entry to the site. A narrow drive sloping to a bespoke garage door, designed as integral to the facade system, will provide access to the undercroft.
- There will be no ventilation grilles in the façade. Ventilation will occur through the fixed panel above the garage door as an integral part of the timber cladding.
- Due to the existing high banking of the front garden it will not be possible to retain the existing planting. With the exception of one semi mature tree vegetation that consists of shrubbery and perennials which will benefit from a new front boundary planting scheme to be designed by a qualified landscape architect.
- We intend to plant two semi mature London planes, or similar, as close as possible to the boundary in order to improve the streetscape, and to match the similar trees to the north.
- A boundary wall with integrated planter will be constructed, along with gateposts and garden gates to the pedestrian and vehicular entries. This wall will be no higher than the existing as it is a comfortable height and relates well with others in this part of the street
- The depth of the planter and the planting will ensure privacy to the garden flat. The street number will be integrally designed with the garden gates, a simple courtesy often overlooked in London.
- The building's name and post-boxes will be designed integrally with the communal front door.



Birds-eye sketch of proposal in context

Façade

The façade has been designed with reference to the adjacent terrace. The southernmost end of the terrace appears to have been constructed later than the rest, and differs in a number of respects. We have taken up that theme of addition and transformation within a tradition with the intent of producing a contemporary façade which reflects on its context.

The following characteristics relate to the proposed new development:

- It is designed to read as a single "house"
- It is divided into upper and lower halves, reflecting the layout next door and hiding the division into more 5 contemporary floors within the same envelope as the four Victorian floors of the older building.
- A narrow recessed vertical slot divides the new façade from the old, exposing the quoining of the existing corner.
- The façade is to be rendered and painted in the manner of the Italianate villas and the 1930's houses.
- Fenestration is generously proportioned with minimal subdivisions as in the Italianate villas. The windows pick up the theme of vertical disjunction of the windows inherent within the row house tradition in London.
- In the older part of the terrace the upper and lower registers are offset with respect to one another. The southern end of the terrace is looser still, with the windows within the upper register not aligning vertically with one another, nor horizontally with the rest of the terrace.
- Re-state the pairing of windows on the upper register, but allows one window to float upwards, allowing the sky to break through the cornice line in a whimsical incident within the collective street wall.
- The oblique view from the southwest is enlivened by an acute corner around which the windows wrap as a contemporary form of quoining.
- The stair and lift enclosure is designed as a minimally framed glass element, recessed both in plan and in section, to open up the view to the sky between the buildings.
- The roof finish is to be slate to match the existing terrace.
- The rear elevation consists of a vertical stack of windows adjacent to the party wall, and a rear extension which is more glazed, as is traditional in London.
- The opportunity exists to include building integrated photovoltaics into the panels adjacent to the windows on the rear extension. These however, even with grant funding, only start to pay their way financially after 30 years, and at the current low efficiency available, are unlikely to recoup the energy used in their production during their expected lifespan. We eagerly await more efficient thin film technology on the British market.



Perspective sketch of proposal in context

Accessibility and Transport

The site is well served by public transport but car ownership is prevalent in the area due to its relative prosperity. We have made a concerted effort to facilitate disabled access to the apartments, and have taken this into account in our design for the site. Two possible parking bays have been allocated for disabled drivers.

- It is 500 metre walk to Belsize Park Underground Station. On the Edgware branch of the northern line, providing easy access to the City and the West End
- Bus routes N5, C11, 24, 46, 168 and 268 are within 500 metres of the site
- The PTAL (Public Transport Accessibility Level) score for the site is 3 on a scale of 6, which means that access to the site is moderate Appendix 5 of the Planning and Conservation Statement includes a schedule of public transport accessibility criteria, including methodology, for 35 Upper Park Road (calculated by Transport for London).
- The basement provides safe, lock up, ramp accessible parking for bicycles. There is sufficient room for every resident to park a bicycle without providing tempting targets for petty crime or cluttering hallways and fire escapes.
- We have provided basement parking for three cars, which is one for every two apartments.
- It is intended that if necessary, disabled residents would have guaranteed use of at least one parking bay if required.
- Currently on street parking is controlled by permit.
- Charging facilities for electric vehicles will be provided in the basement.
- Lift access provides step-free wheelchair and ambulant disabled access to the entrance level of all apartments.
- Stairs to the maisonettes on the top floor have been designed to be wide enough to take stair lifts if required.
- It is intended that where possible all dwellings will have at least one disabled accessible toilet. The single floor flats will have accessible shower rooms.



Bus service from Belsize Park

Accommodation

The building consists of six apartments, with a basement providing storage and some parking. A communal spa and gym facility is provided to the rear of the garage, below a communal garden accessible from the common parts.

Three of the apartments benefit from private terraces to the rear, screened from overlooking the neighbours to either side. In general bedrooms and living rooms have been given optimal position on the perimeter with service spaces centrally located and artificially ventilated. The kitchens will have "mechanical ventilation rated as capable of extracting at a rate of not less than 60 l/sec (or incorporated within a cooker hood and capable of extracting at a rate of 30 l/sec) through 120 minute fire rated ducting. Background ventilation will be by "mechanical ventilation being in addition capable of operating continuously at nominally one air change per hour." Bathrooms will have Mechanical extract ventilation capable of extracting air at a rate not less than 6 l/sec, which may be operated intermittently with 15 minutes overrun

- Apartment 01 is a two bedroom duplex apartment occupying the eastern (street) portion of lower ground and ground floor levels. It benefits from an open plan living area leading directly into a private front garden, which is at a lower level and very well screened from the street. It has a fire escape on the ground floor opening into the common lobby. The rear bedroom opens onto a light well.
- Apartment 02 is a single storey three bedroom unit occupying the first floor, and boasts three en suite bathrooms, an open plan living area leading directly onto a private west facing terrace at ground level. Steps lead down to the apartments share of the rear garden. The kitchen has fire doors to both the hall and the living-room, which will be electromagnetically activated 'hold open' doors linked to the smoke alarm. Bedroom 1 has a wheelchair accessible en suite shower room.
- Apartment 03 is a single storey two bedroom unit on the second floor with an open plan west facing living area.
- Apartment 04 is a single storey one bedroom unit on the second floor with an open plan living area facing onto the street.
- Apartment 05 is a two bedroom duplex apartment occupying the western (garden) part of third and fourth floors. This unit benefits from a rear private terrace,
- Apartment 06 is a two bedroom duplex apartment occupying the eastern (street) part of third and fourth floors.



Interiors by the heder and by Kevin Fellingham

Ventilation

Other than construction method and the energy embodied therein, heating and ventilation are the key to sustainability of the building itself. Other than its location and the limited provision of parking, we can do little to reduce the energy footprint of the residents over the lifespan of the building, which is likely to far exceed that of anyone involved in its construction.

- The kitchens will have "mechanical ventilation rated as capable of extracting at a rate of not less than 60 l/sec (or incorporated within a cooker hood and capable of extracting at a rate of 30 l/sec) through 120 minute fire rated ducting. Background ventilation will be by "mechanical ventilation being in addition capable of operating continuously at nominally one air change per hour."
- Bathrooms will have Mechanical extract ventilation capable of extracting air at a rate not less than 6 l/sec, which may be operated intermittently with 15 minutes overrun.
- The need to ventilate these warm spaces tends to suggest that heat recovery from the extract stack would be a rational form of ventilation.
- The intention is to provide an envelope which is as airtight as possible, and optimally insulated. In winter this will ensure that fresh air enters the building in a controlled fashion, from the garden side of the building, and is distributed to the apartments at points as far from the extractors as possible, in order to ensure a balance between fresh air and incursion of cold.
- In summer the intention is to rely as far as possible on the external insulation of the building to keep the heat out, whilst relying on cross ventilation, both natural and forced (through the extract system) to provide fresh air.
- In general the strategy is to have fixed, sealed glazing concentrated for maximum depth of light penetration and air-tightness, allied with ventilation panels clad in timber, easier to seal, positioned for optimum cross ventilation, offering security and providing an expression on the façade of the ventilation system of the building.



Timber clad ventilation panels. With few large glazed openings



Building integrated thin film photovoltaics



Residential heat exchanger

Construction

As befits a speculative residential building forming a normative part of the urban fabric of London, we propose a normative residential form of construction.

- Detailed construction documentation has not yet been undertaken, but the strategy is to use a composite structure of steel framing with concrete floors and soffits, without dropped ceilings in order to act as a thermal flywheel on the interior.
- Perimeter walls will be of plastered block-work for a similar reason.
- Interior partitions will be of light timber framed construction to facilitate easy reconfiguring of the accommodation in the future should demographic shift require a different mix of dwellings. The use of concrete slabs with minimum penetration will limit vertical noise transmission.
- Robust Detailing will be used to ensure adequate sound insulation between units where these share the same floor-plate.
- The use of framed construction will facilitate rapid construction, limiting disruption to the neighbours.
- It is intended to make use of a rendered external insulation system, such as that provided by Sto for reasons of insulation, and to match the crisp rendered finish common to both Victorian and modernist buildings in the immediate context..
- Windows are to be Rational Adus sliding doors or side-lights in light to mid grey or similar with bespoke timber clad vents.
- Frameless glazing to skylights and circulation core



House by The Heder



House by Kevin Fellingham Architecture

Conclusion

The Heder Partnership was established ten years ago by Brad Pinchuck and Hanan Pomagrin. They have focussed consistently for ten years on producing work of the highest standard. This has recently been recognised by an RIBA International Award for their collaboration with Daniel Libeskind on the Wohl centre in Israel. Having lived in Belsize Park for his seven years as a senior architectural and urban designer with Arup Associates and Rick Mather Architects, Kevin Fellingham has recently established a practice in Islington. This is our second Collaboration, but the association between the practices is based on mutual respect and goes back however to 1990 in Johannesburg, where all the principals studied. A consistency of approach enables smooth international collaboration.

We have attached Brochures of the two practices work to illustrate The Heder considerable track record not only in award winning new buildings but in the extensive and sensitive work with historic buildings. We have not included any work done for other practices, but point out that in his time at Rick Mather Architects, Kevin was heavily involved in the creative reuse of listed buildings, in the design of contemporary projects within established contexts, and the development of design codes for such interventions on behalf of various councils, English Partnerships, and English Heritage.

We are committed to producing contemporary architecture of the highest possible quality, and seen in that light, this planning application represents a stage in the refinement of the project. The clients are intent on building an exemplary project that will help to establish a reputation for sensitive high quality residential development within the Borough of Camden.

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