



HERITAGE AND DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

**Application for Planning and Listed Building Consent for a
New Summer House and Works to Woodland
at 36a Highgate West Hill, London N6**

On behalf of Witanhurst Construction Management Limited

September 2014

ISSUE 1

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HERITAGE AND DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT: NEW SUMMER HOUSE AND WORKS TO WOODLAND GARDEN AT 41 HIGHGATE WEST HILL, LONDON N6

1.00 INTRODUCTION

1.01 The following Heritage & Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Witanhurst Construction Management Limited to support an application for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent to rebuild the existing garage to accommodate a new woodland summer house, together with works to the grounds to create a new woodland garden setting and form new internal access gate and visual links to the Italianate Garden.

1.02 Historically, the works for Sir Arthur Crosfield between 1913 - 1920 transformed the existing house and the estate into spectacular and lavish house set in 11 acres of grounds, which have in the intervening period become run-down and neglected, seeking further use until ultimately, the Listed building and grounds were put on the English Heritage 'Buildings at Risk Register'.

The Woodland Garden site was disposed of by previous owners, but has been reacquired by the current owners and is to be re-incorporated into the grounds of 41 Highgate West Hill.

1.03 The proposals that were put forward from 2009 onwards seek to restore, re-create and enhance this character which has made the House and grounds an historic asset.

This is rightly extended throughout the estate, where the gardens have undergone a restoration and renewal, with the Lower Garden having been given careful consideration in the scheme by Balston Agius to achieve a spectacular garden and setting for the House while providing focal elements, enhancement of spaces and a hard landscape and planting regime that supports this character.

The proposal for a Summer House in this area of woodland is seen as a complimentary part of these proposals.

1.04 This statement sets out the details of this proposal and the context of the site and the heritage asset.

1.05 These proposals are indicated on the following architects drawings:

- 2228-08/00/00 Rev. A Site Location Plan

- 2228-08/00/01 Existing Site Plan
- 2228-08/00/02 Existing Plans
- 2228-08/00/03 Existing Elevations + Sections
- 2228-08/00/04 Existing Elevations + Sections
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- 2228-08/01/01 Proposed Site Plan
- 2228-08/01/02 Proposed Plans
- 2228-08/01/03 Proposed Elevations + Sections
- 2228-08/01/04 Proposed Elevations + Sections

1.06 Refer also to Landscape Architects drawings:

- 601-P-1202-C for associated planting and hard landscape to the Woodland Garden.
- 601-P-1203-A for the replacement gates.
- 601-P-1278-000 for the Clairvoyee Screens and Gate to the Italianate Garden.

2.00 THE SITE AND PLANNING HISTORY

2.01 While the House at 41 Highgate West Hill is Grade II*, there are a number of further elements on the estate including the Italianate Garden which are also statutorily listed (Grade II), a number of them being the work of the noted landscape architect Harold Peto.

The estate is also set within the Highgate Village Conservation Area.

2.02 41 Highgate West Hill is set in the north east corner of a 5 acre estate which also contains a number of ancillary buildings and associated structures.

The House is approached via a double arched gatehouse off Highgate West Hill leading to a formal forecourt with turning circle. Vehicles are garaged in an underground car park provided as part of a previous planning consent. This is the only day to day access to the site.

2.03 The property has always been a private residence, albeit on a grand scale and its future came into doubt when it could no longer function as a private residence and alternative uses were sought for it, which were followed by its listing in 1970 and ultimately its inclusion on the English Heritage Risk Register before purchased by the current owners for use as a private residence again.

2.04 Recent works (2009-to date) have sought to refurbish and renovate the main house, its ancillary buildings and grounds to provide accommodation commensurate with its use as a 'grand house' by its occupants.

2.05 The Woodland Garden is a former part of the Crosfield site which has been reacquired by the current owner with the intention of re-incorporating this part of the site into the overall scheme for the gardens.

It adjoins the recently restored listed Italianate Gardens by Harold Peto and these proposals seek to protect this garden setting as well as the area of woodland which is subject to a Group Tree Protection Order.

2.06 This Heritage & Design and Access Statement draws upon archival research and appraisal carried out by Adam Architects in 2009.

3.00 **THE EXISTING GARAGE AND WOODLAND**

- 3.01 Whilst presently separated from the main gardens, this area of woodland shows signs of having been used as a garden. The garage roof is paved to form a terrace with steps leading up to it from both sides of the garage. Although no path construction is visible, the landform has hints of a path circuit, reinforced by the remnants lines of rockery stone/concrete rubble. A concrete base for a small water feature remains in the lower area of the garden.

Former garden walls remain from earlier subdivisions of the property and the only substantial structure is the part buried garage in the northern corner of the site.

Description

- 3.02 The existing canopy of trees are all drawn up to a high level due to their competing demands for light. The understorey vegetation is sparse due to the shade cast by the trees.

The trees are in reasonable health and there are no requirements for tree removal or surgery on account of trees being dead, dying or diseased.

- 3.03 The frontage to Highgate West Hill is presently boarded up and a temporary gate of timber boards securing the existing vehicular access to the garage and woodland site.

A notable feature on the road frontage is the drinking fountain, which features on the early 19th Century maps of the area.

Other boundaries are marked with a variety of metal railings, chain-link fencing and timber boarding.

- 3.04 The Garage would appear to be an early 20th Century construction built on the site of a previous structure alongside an earlier brick boundary wall to its west.

The garage is substantially set buried into the site, with a sunken driveway leading to the doors from the site existing gates. It is constructed in solid 9 inch London stock brickwork in Flemish bond, with a low parapet around a tiled flat roof which forms a terrace over the concrete slab roof. This is approached via steps on the east and west sides down to the woodland floor. Remnants of decayed, partly glazed timber folding garage doors remain.

The garage is not currently in use.

Historical Assessment

- 3.05 The woodland garden does not appear to have been part of the scheme developed by Sir Arthur Crosfield for the gardens, but would appear to have been added to the Estate in the post war years, only to have been sold again during the Estate disposals from 1975 onwards.

Other than the site of the current garage, there does not appear to be any record of buildings having stood on this site.

- 3.06 The current property appears to have been formed out of the western part of the site (extending to the line of the existing garage), with the eastern portion having been historically associated with what is now No. 37 Highgate West Hill.

The site sits at a bend in West Hill where the road swing around to the north east as it rises to the top of the hill. The 'drinking fountain' is a significant feature on this bend.

- 3.07 Neglected over the years, the grounds having become overgrown and the garage fallen into disrepair.

A 'group' tree protection order (TPO) has been put in place which serves to maintain this element of woodland as a natural screen between the grounds of 41 Highgate West Hill and the road itself. It is therefore likely to endure as a 'green' feature in Highgate.

The Setting

- 3.08 The informal nature of this area of woodland falling away to the south from the Italianate Garden provides an important backdrop to the Italianate Garden and a privacy screen between the more formal gardens and the road.

The Italianate Garden whilst having the high backdrop of the tree canopy, has because of the eastern edge boundary condition not had any visual or physical connection with the Woodland Garden, unlike the open nature of its other sides.

4.00 PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION & PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

- 4.01 The proposals are to integrate this less formal woodland garden back into the Estate by subtle connections through to the Italianate Garden and providing a modest summer house erected on the site and footprint of the existing garage, historically a site for structures on this site.

The intention is that this summer house can act as a 'destination' in the garden in a less formal surrounding where the house's occupants can experience a different character of space and relaxation in their garden.

The Summer House, along with the other features in the grounds (Temple of Love, Pool and Tennis Pavilions) is considered appropriate and in character to a 'grand house' of this scale and identified as a positive enhancement.

- 4.02 A new access is proposed from Harold Peto's Italianate Garden to provide a short route to the new summer house placed on the footprint and structure of the existing garage.

As one moves through the hedge from the formal Italianate Garden, the garden character becomes deliberately less formal.

The York stone paving utilised in the Italianate Garden is continued to the gate, but changes beyond the threshold to larger scale 'crazy paving' stepping stones laid on a 'no dig' base to avoid impacting on tree roots. The stepping stone path gives way to an informal bark mulch path away from the summer house and winds its way through the woodland trees and new understorey planting consisting of ground cover plants and groups of shrubs intended to define the spaces within the garden and screen the new summer house from neighbouring properties.

The Summer House

- 4.03 The Summer House is designed as a traditional timber framed structure sitting within the woodland amongst the existing tree planting.

It has been located on the existing garage brick walls, which are being reduced in height down to the existing ground level to form a base for the new summer house.

It is octagonal in form, with fenestration facing north and west to provide privacy within the summer house and restricting its outlook towards the Italianate Garden.

- 4.04 The structure is an all timber construction, with Oak columns supporting and oak frame roof structure with Oak shakes surmounted by a decorative lead finial. The external walls are oak boarded and left a natural oak finish, with simple classical detailing and fenestration with Copperlite fanlights.

The summer house sits on a simple Yorkstone plinth laid on a new concrete slab that bears onto the existing brick garage walls.

The residual garage space and its restricted head room forms an undercroft which will be used as garden storage.

- 4.05 The materials and designs selected follow a less formal and simpler classical style that the other garden features and reflect the more informal character of this woodland site and its usage.

The Woodland Garden

- 4.06 Bark mulch will define an irregular circuitous walk around the garden between new understorey planting made up of informal drifts of shade tolerant plants.

This path will not involve the construction of a base, but will consist of bark mulch laid on the existing soil level.

- 4.07 Where necessary, existing brick walls are being repaired and in case where collapsed either rebuilt or removed as indicated.

The existing remnant wall to the north of the garage will be removed along with the lowering of the garage structure. The retained tree that is presently growing up around this wall and has absorbed some of the brickwork will have a tree seat placed around it to mask the remnant brick structure that cannot be removed without damaging the tree.

- 4.08 The existing driveway to the garage will be resurfaced with a porous tarmac.

- 4.09 Existing boundary brick walls will be rebuilt where collapsing and repaired where intact.

A small area of Japanese Knotweed growing on the frontage will be brought under an herbicide management regime in order to eradicate it as removal by excavation would cause too great a damage to tree roots.

- 4.10 A new boundary fence comprising of a 2.4 metre high metal fencing painted green/black (RAL 6009) is proposed to reflect this type of fencing used on adjacent areas.

It will be set back from the boundary to West Hill and have a holly hedge planted against it on both sides to create a soft boundary facing onto the hill, reinforcing the 'green' presence' on the street scene provided by the protected woodland.

A new close boarded timber gate matching the specification of gate used on the approved emergency gate design also on West Hill is proposed – refer to detail.

- 4.11 3 No. new visual connections are proposed between the Italianate Garden and the Woodland Garden formed in the existing Yew hedge on the axis of the lower compartment of the Italianate Garden.

These take the form of Clairvoyee screen (2 No. screens and 1 no. gate) which reflect the style and composition of Harold Peto's gates in the Italianate Garden derived from the late 17t and early 18t Century models which were re-imagined in the Edwardian 'Wrenaissance' context of Crosfield's scheme.

Pre-application Advice

- 4.12 No formal pre-application advice has been sought on the proposals.

5.00 DESIGN AND ACCESS

- 5.01 The following outlines the specific design and access considerations associated with the provision of the summer house and the surrounding woodland garden.

It sets out the design process and consideration taken into account to ensure that the proposals have been sensitively designed having due regard to the heritage asset and its appropriateness for the House and its occupants.

Use

- 5.02 The proposals provide a single space undercover within the ground of the House, but in a location which will allow for more informal uses in an area which may be more suitable as a children's play area, a use that is not catered for elsewhere, and is a facility that is both likely to be needed and will enhance the use of the House and its grounds as a 'substantial' private dwelling.

The summer house is heated and has limited facilities (toilet and a kitchenette), and represents a 'destination' that will allow it to be used in conjunction with other parts of the gardens which have no facilities.

The proposals is intended enhance the use of the House and grounds in a manner appropriate to the character and significance of the Listed Building, whilst maintaining the essential woodland character of this site.

Amount and Scale

- 5.03 The height of the proposed summer house is modest and consistent with the scale of other garden structures and buildings.

The structure will be located on a lower base than the existing terrace on top of the garage and will be significantly lower than the lofty canopy of the woodland trees that surround it on all sides.

The overall dimensions fit comfortably into the footprint of the existing garage and do not require the removal of, or adversely affect any roots of the existing trees.

Layout

- 5.04 The summer house is laid out with its axis to the west towards the Italianate Garden and away from adjoining property (No. 37) and from the properties on the other side

of West Hill. This is to maintain maximum privacy and prevent overlooking in either direction.

Surrounding paving layouts are deliberately informal to reinforce the informal character of this woodland site.

Appearance

- 5.05 The appearance of the summer house is intended to draw on the informal woodland setting and sit amongst the trees as opposed to the more formal setting of the adjoining Italianate Garden.

The summer house structure is an all timber structure situated on top of the largely buried brickwork garage plinth.

The Tuscan detailing is, like that of the new Tennis Pavilion Pergola, deliberately subservient to the more elaborate detailing of Harold Peto's designs for the gardens, with their fine carved details, Ionic columns and Venetian style window surrounds.

Exposed timber roof structures and simple timber cornice and boarding further re-enforce this subservient language. Oak shake roof coverings are designed to weather and blend into the woodland setting.

The internal finishes are timber floors, panelled walls and ceilings associated with summer houses and further re-enforce this subservient character.

The informal Yorkstone paving stones are also designed to reinforce this character.

Landscaping

- 5.06 Impact on the existing landscaping is relatively minimal, with no adverse impact being caused on the existing tree group.

The informal nature of the woodland and summer house combination involves no new excavation, while existing features are repaired, retained and adapted wherever possible.

The treatment of the boundaries with 'embedded' fencing is designed to give a soft, yet secure boundary, while the use of understorey planting and new shrubs will maintain the green character of the woodland below the lofty tree canopy.

The discrete formation of visual links between the Woodland Garden and the adjoining Italianate Garden are via

sensitively designed Clairvoyee – offering glimpses of adjoining spaces without compromising the setting of either space.

Access

- 5.07 The proposed summer house and woodland adjoins the main grounds of the House and is intended to be integrated and accessed principally from the grounds of the House via the Italianate Garden.

Existing external access arrangements are not affected in any way by the proposals, with the existing gate onto West Hill being retained solely for occasional maintenance access.

6.00 CONCLUSION

- 6.01 The proposal to provide an informal, yet complementary facility into the grounds designed in such a way as not have a detrimental effect on the character of this informal piece of natural woodland or the formal setting of the Italianate Garden, but to provide a facility currently not present in this part of the garden for use by the house's occupants and guests.
- 6.02 The proposed summer house and treatment of the woodland garden neither competes architecturally with the Listed Italianate Garden, nor set on the existing garage footprint, has any adverse effect on the character and function of the woodland covered by the group TPO.
- 6.03 The proposals seek to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area, specifically the 'green' nature of this areas of trees, while providing facilities that are commensurate with both the historic use and the proposed use of the house and estate as a significant private dwelling.
- 6.04 The proposals are considered to sustain and enhance the significance of the heritage assets and facilitate the viable use of the House and gardens consistent with its conservation.

The proposals will not cause harm to the significance of the Listed building or its setting, and will enhance those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the significance of the assets.

APPENDIX A: Images



Fig. 1: West Hill looking South-west towards Woodland



Fig. 2: Drinking Fountain on West Hill on southern boundary



Fig. 3: Existing gate access to Woodland & Garage.



Fig. 4: Brick wall along southern edge of Garage.



Fig. 5: Existing Garage with raised roof terrace & steps.



Fig. 6: Garage Interior in 2013.



Fig. 7: Garage entrance doors in 2013.