

# DESIGN STATEMENT

December 2014



13 FERNCROFT AVENUE, LONDON NW3 7PG

**B**chitecture  
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## INTRODUCTION

An application is being made for planning consent to fully refurbish and extend an existing dwelling at 13 Ferncroft Avenue in Hampstead. As part of the works it is proposed to demolish a small single storey portion of the kitchen at the rear of the dwelling. The existing cellar below the dwelling would be excavated and provided with new windows by a small light wells to the front and rear as well as by lowering the side alley path. This Design Statement is appended to that application to explain the relevant planning considerations in its support.



*Aerial photo with plot outlined*

## THE SITE

Ferncroft Avenue is a residential side street branching to the East of Platt's Lane, and running southeasterly until it ends at Heath Drive. It sits at the northern end of the Redington/Froggnal Conservation Area in a sub-area known as 'The Crofts' together with Hollycroft and Rosecroft Avenues. The conservation area is a mostly intact example of a Victorian/Edwardian development of comfortable homes for the well-to-do on the slopes west of Hampstead. Ferncroft Avenue was developed in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century with generously proportioned private dwellings both detached and semi-detached. No. 13 is one these latter and its rear garden abuts land forming part of a substantial covered reservoir as well as private tennis courts. The gracious houses line the Avenue and hold to a typical setback, while regularly spaced mature London plane trees form a continuous canopy over the road. The property provides a front garden with off-street parking and access via a private side alley to a generous rear garden.

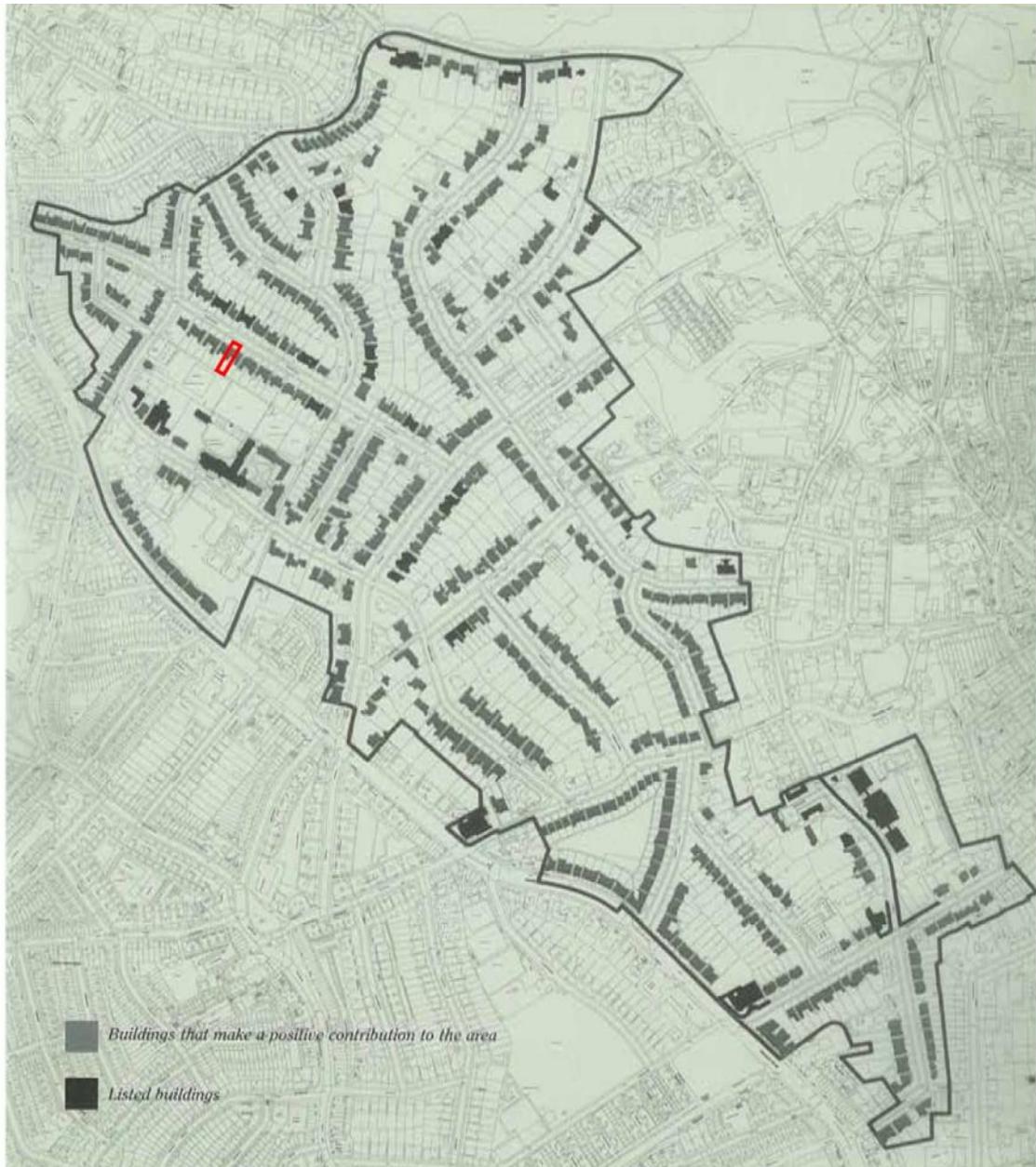


*Aerial photo of plot*

No. 13 Ferncroft Avenue has been well maintained but not substantially refurbished for many years and now needs to be updated to the standards of modern family life. The accommodation is spread across 3 stories including original bedrooms in the roof. There is a partial height cellar under the footprint of the house, portions of which are currently used for the boiler plant as well as garden and bike storage. The adjoining property, No 15 Ferncroft Avenue, has been substantially altered particularly to the rear garden side where windows have been modernised and portions of the ground and first floor of the outrigger wing have been rebuilt with extensive glazing, side facing windows, and roof terraces incorporated. The original chimney stack to the outrigger wing has been removed. To the West No. 11 Ferncroft Avenue is a significant, brick detached dwelling which has been renovated with a ground floor extension to the rear, basement accommodation as well as alterations to the roof including provision of rooflights to the side facing slopes.



*Photo of the context*



*Map of conservation area with plot indicated*



*Photos to the front and side alley*

No. 13 Ferncroft Avenue is the right hand of the semi-detached pair and is set back behind a landscaped front garden with depth of approximately 9.2m excluding the main bay window. A side alley of approximately 2m width connects to the rear garden enclosed by timber fences and approximately 18.6m deep from the rear face of the outrigger wing. From the pavement the site level drops approximately 0.7m to the rear garden, mediated along the length of the side alley. The ground floor level is raised such that the difference in level between the reception rooms and the garden is 1.8m. The cellar void allows the house to be raised above both front and rear gardens. The rear portion of the outrigger wing with its cat slide roof provides an internal staircase to mediate between the internal and external floor levels so that its side entrance is level with the side alley. The more formal reception rooms are provided with a semi-sheltered raised terrace, mirrored by the adjoining No. 15, with steps down to the lawned garden which falls slightly to the rear boundary. The topography of Ferncroft Avenue also falls from East to West so that the mature planting to the boundary with No. 15 sits on a low retaining wall. The side boundaries are enclosed by close boarded timber fences and the rear by a stepped profile, brick wall. The garden is of a typical size for the Redington/Froggnal Conservation Area. While the outlook is very private and verdant with both mature street trees and mature trees at the foot of the garden of No. 11, there are no trees within the plot itself nor any which should be impacted by the proposed development.



*Photos to the rear of the property*



*Proposed site plan*

## PROPOSALS

The owners of No. 13 Ferncroft Avenue intend to carry out works to fully refurbish and modernise the dwelling. An important part of these works will include restoration of its architectural features including its render, brick pointing, hanging tiling, and painted timber trims and windows. The UPVC windows currently fitted to the rear elevation of the house would all be replaced with painted timber casements approximating the original windows in layout and detail. Taken together these works would readily demonstrate the improvement which can be offered to the visual coherence and quality of the conservation area.

Only a pair of minimal alterations are proposed to the front of the house which would mostly comprise a faithful restoration: as part of the conversion of the existing cellar into new accommodation, a new lightwell is proposed in front of the existing double storey bay window; to improve the daylight to the rather dark entrance hall, it is planned to rebuild the existing entrance door screen with taller side lights and an arched fanlight. The front garden would also be completely refurbished with new paving and planting, rebuilt boundary walls to the boundary in brick in keeping with the Conservation Area, and a new timber clad enclosure for bins and recycling.



*Proposed front elevation; photo and drawing of entrance screen*

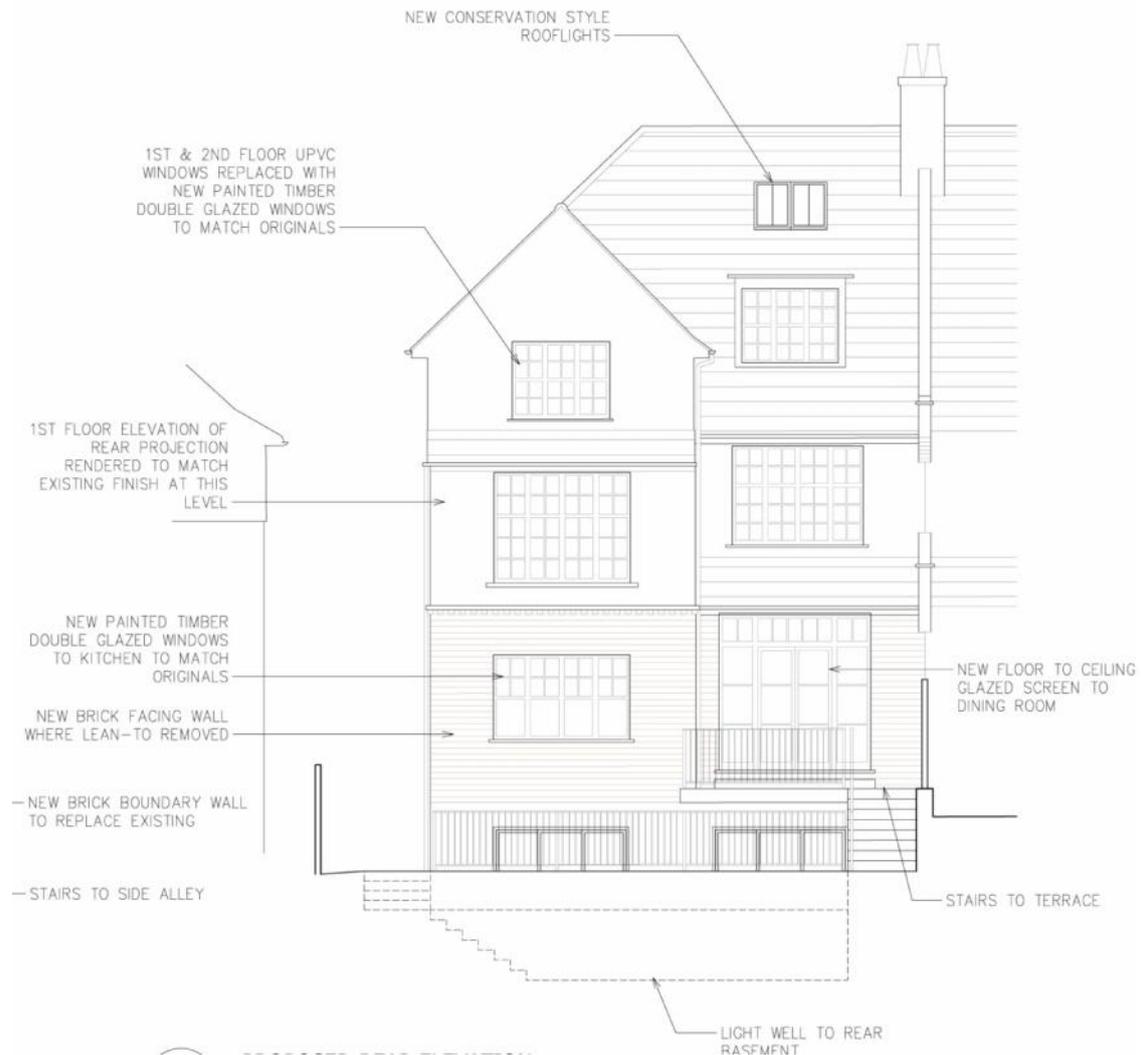
To the side of the property, the existing path would be lowered to provide access to a bike store at the front corner of the property as well as windows to the new basement accommodation. This path would be bordered by raised planting along the boundary with No. 11 Ferncroft. A new window duplicating those above would be introduced to the stairwell while new windows would be provided to the Utility Room and TV Room. At ground floor level the small window to the existing W/C would be closed up and a new window introduced to the entrance hall. At first floor level two existing windows would be altered: a small window to an existing W/C would be moved closer to the front of the house and enlarged to provide light to an ensuite dressing room; the sill of the existing Bathroom window would be lowered. At roof level 3 new sets of conservation rooflights are proposed to provide light to a new W/C, overhead light to the stairwell and to the rear Study/Bedroom.



*Proposed side elevation*

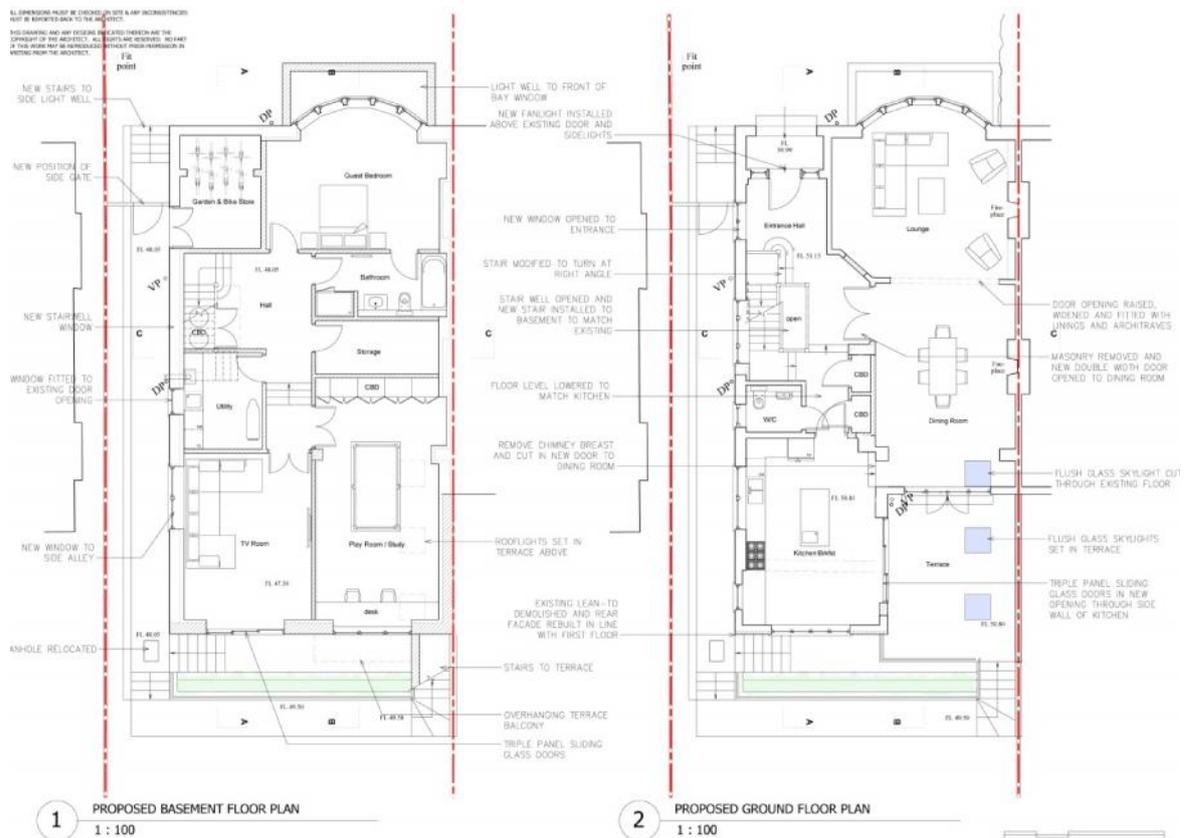


*Proposed section*



*Proposed rear elevation*

The most significant external alterations are proposed to the rear of the property. The single storey lean-to appended to the rear of the kitchen would be permanently removed and the new exposed face rebuilt in facing brick to match the existing dwelling with a generous new window overlooking the garden from the kitchen. The footprint of the lean-to would be replaced by a new lightwell stretching across the face of the basement providing light and views from the new basement TV Room and Play Room / Study. In this way, the basement accommodation will be introduced without any reduction in size of the existing garden. A large new glazed side opening from the Kitchen and new full height glazed screen from the Dining Room would provide direct access to the terrace formed on the roof of the basement below. This paved terrace would be set at a similar level to that of No. 15 next door. Both the terrace and the lightwell would be safeguarded with painted steel railings of simple design. The existing UPVC windows at first and second floor levels would all be replaced with painted timber casements matching the details and proportions of the original versions. The first floor of the outrigger wing would be rendered and painted to unify this with the balance of that wing and the rest of the house which are all rendered at that level. At roof level new conservation rooflights would be inserted on the rear slope above the existing dormer and on the side of the outrigger roof, bringing additional light to these rooms.



*Proposed basement & ground floor plans*

In order to achieve the sort of accommodation the owners require for their growing family they propose to extend the property through the excavation of a new basement level. This new accommodation would allow them to provide additional family living space, a Utility Room, storage and a guest suite. Natural light will be brought into the basement via discreet openings including a modest front lightwell in front of the bay window, down the side alley and a lightwell across the rear. Several glass floor panels in the paved terrace and just inside the Dining Room glazing would give additional light. Because the rear light well would sit on the footprint of the demolished lean-to, there would be no loss of garden and the proposal would not have a visual impact on the character of the Conservation Area. There are numerous historic and recent examples of light wells to the front of properties in the context of Ferncroft Avenue: these include No's 3, 11, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 27, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 41, 44. The proposed accommodation has been carefully considered to make the best use of the available amenity. The excavation is planned to achieve a ceiling height identical to the existing ground floor in the new storey so that the new level would enjoy a bright and spacious feel.



*Local examples of front lightwells*

## PLANNING POLICIES

The scheme has been designed with reference to a number of documents and policies published by the London Borough Camden:

### Development Policies

- LDF policy CS5 – Managing the impact of growth and development
- LDF policy CS14 – Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage
- LDF policy DP22 – Promoting sustainable design & construction
- LDF policy DP23 – Water
- LDF policy DP24 – Securing high quality design
- LDF policy DP25 – Conserving Camden’s Heritage
- LDF policy DP26 – Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours
- LDF policy DP27 – Basements and Lightwells

### Supplementary Planning Documents

- CPG1 – Camden Planning Guidance
- CPG4 – Basements and lightwells
  
- Conservation Area Statement – Redington/Froggnal Conservation Area

A number of specialists have been consulted in preparation of this design proposal. A structural engineer has advised on suitable details for excavation and retention of the new basement storey ensuring no damage is caused to adjoining dwellings and gardens. A team of specialist engineers has prepared the Basement Impact Assessment required under new LB Camden guidance outlined in DP27 and CPG4. The BIA is appended to this application and also addresses the principles of policy DP23.

Bchitecture has broad experience working on a number of basement projects for both new build and refurbishment including underpinning, sheet piling and contiguous piling with a short list of experienced and suitably scaled building contractors. Most recently, Bchitecture has overseen successful applications nearby in the Belsize Conservation Area, the Hampstead Conservation Area and the Highgate Conservation Area.

With reference to DP22, due consideration will be given to determining the most sustainable manner of carrying out the work, disposing of the waste and sourcing new building materials. Excavated clay is a material sought after by landfill sites as it is needed to meet daily cover requirements. Refurbishment of the building will provide the opportunity to upgrade its existing envelope and greatly improve its thermal efficiency. Energy efficient lighting and other environmental systems are a committed part of the design brief.

With reference to DP24, the proposals have been carefully designed using high quality materials matching those of the existing building. Alterations would respond directly to the local context character building on relationships with neighbouring and adjoining dwellings. Preservation and refurbishment of the existing property will retain its ‘embodied’ energy while enhancing its environmental performance in order to provide a high quality family home.

DP25 requires development within conservation areas to demonstrate that the character and appearance of the area will be preserved and enhanced. The proposed alterations and extensions will have minimal impact on the externally

visible fabric of the host building because the basement has very little external manifestation and the other works are mostly concentrated to the rear and side. The only exposed face of the basement will be a front lightwell partly screened behind planting and the off street parking. Such lightwells are a common feature of Ferncroft Avenue and therefore the proposals will not represent a material change from the existing situation. Landscape features in the front and rear gardens will be retained and enhanced.

The Conservation Area Statement (CAS) for Redington/Frognal has been extensively consulted in assembling the design proposals. This states at RF2 that “extending into basements areas will only be acceptable where it would not involve harm to the character of the building or its setting”. The proposed basement in this application complies with CAC guidelines since it would essentially sit under the footprint of the existing dwelling, and the only visual impact on the front of the property would be a modest light well which the depth of the existing garden will allow to be screened with planting and which, in any case, is a common feature of Ferncroft Avenue properties. The limited demolition (RF3) of the rear lean-to is justifiable because of both its limited visual impact and the material improvement its loss would bring to the character of the property. Following the aims of CPG1 (Design), the proposal is clearly secondary to the main building and uses high quality materials sympathetic to its architectural language. With regard to the front garden and boundary (RF8), the balance of hard/soft landscaping would be maintained and the existing crossover used. The replacement of the existing sections brick boundary wall is acceptable because of the low quality of the existing materials and state of repair; the opening to the cross-over would actually be reduced as part of the works and a new hedge planted behind to improve the landscape quality of the setting. The refurbishment of the property will be carried in line with the requirement of RF13-17 to match existing materials and detailing where doors and windows are replaced because of poor state of repair or inappropriate replacement in the past with UPVC. The only alterations to the roof will include the provision of new conservation style rooflights (RF27) which have been carefully placed in relation to the existing design of the building and so as to sit comfortably.

The proposals have been made with due regard to their potential impact on neighbouring properties. The new accommodation would be wholly underground and the side and rear light wells would not intrude on the privacy or light to these neighbours. The potential structural impact on neighbours will be addressed appropriately through Party Wall Agreements and the underpinning of the host property will be professionally designed by qualified engineers. The BIA has determined that the proposed basement will not impact the local water table or geology to the detriment of either the host or neighbouring properties.

## **ACCESS STATEMENT**

The existing building will be extended to create new accommodation which will be no less accessible than the existing building. A new more generously sized W/C will be provided on the ground floor and the rear terrace will be raised with a level threshold access from the Kitchen. The new internal staircase serving the basement storey will be designed to comply with Approved Document M standard. All building works will comply with current Building Regulations and best practice wherever possible.