

6.a Layout and Landscape

6.1 Layout

The overall site is large but the plan shape and configuration is unusual. This unusual shape creates site constraints. The site is split between the main front house and front garden area on Parliament Hill which faces southeast and the back garden area to the north and west. The layout of the proposed new house is largely framed by the existing and fixed parameters of the site. The overall form and relationship of the larger residential terrace and gardens is clearly established and quite fixed. The front building line and the common extent of garden additions is similarly established. The proposed increase in the footprint of the building at the front and back is largely governed by existing adjacent precedents. The arrangement of living, kitchen, bedrooms, and outdoor garden spaces and terraces is typical despite the unusual site plan. All these spaces are laid out to maximise light and external views.

The front light well and related partial basement follow the common form and arrangement within the conservation area. The angled shape of the light well responds to the root protection zones of the adjacent trees. A family room and bedroom are positioned next to the light well. This again is a common use of such space. Lower level areas without natural light and ventilation provide useful service space. This frees above ground areas for use as habitable space.

The internal layout at ground floor level posed two primary and related challenges: How to connect the disparate front and back of the house, and how to bring light into the depth of the main house along the windowless back or northeast edge. The location of the new main entry door along the party wall with 15 Parliament Hill combined with a top lit internal light well and staircase along the blank back elevation establishes a clear structure to the internal layout with the critical doorway between the front and the back of the house as its hinge. The primary circulation of the house is arrayed around this critical doorway. This critical and central circulation space is well very lit by a linear roof light above. All the main spaces of the house can be seen within a few steps of this doorway and all the primary horizontal and vertical circulation to the house can be seen and understood.

6.2 Landscape

6.3 Level Changes

The overall level change between the front of the site and the top of the garden is over 6 metres. Most of the steepest ground is to the back of the garden. The lower portion of the site around the house is relatively level. The total existing level change between the proposed front entry door and the back door to the garden is approximately 750 mm. This level change is fixed by the existing external levels and through the existing level and foundations of that portion of 15a which is set under and within the footprint of 15 Parliament Hill (shown dotted in red on the plan opposite).

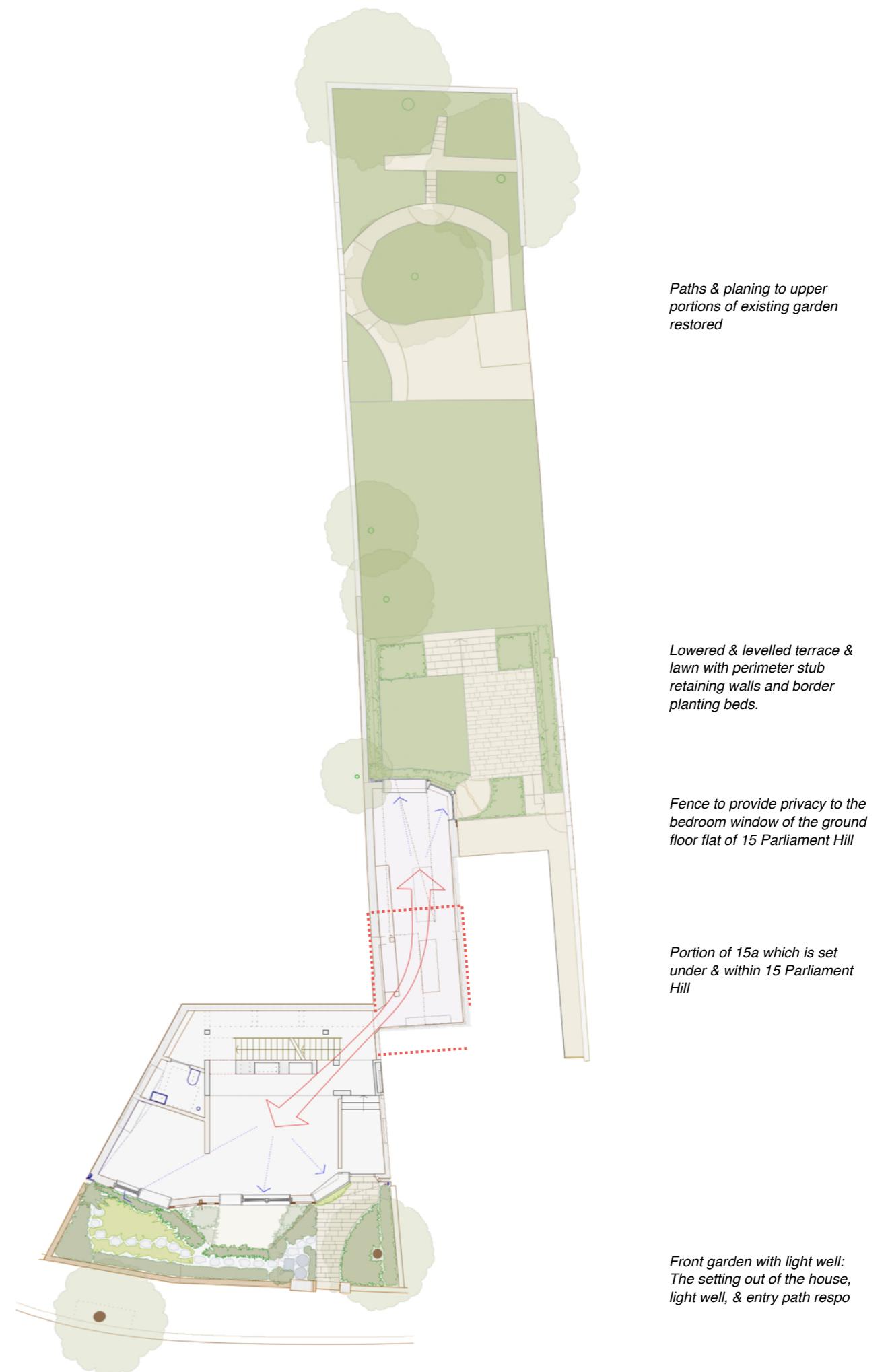
Two low internal steps of ± 170 mm rise between the entry hall and the main ground floor of the house which includes the kitchen and the living and dining rooms. Approximately 350 mm of excavation to the area of the back garden immediately adjacent to the proposed extension will allow a level connection between the internal space and the garden. This combination of internal steps and external excavation to the rear garden will accommodate the level change inherent in the site.

6.4 Rear Garden

Most of the upper garden is to be retained as existing. Refurbishment of the paths and walls and general garden pruning and care is required. The lower area of the rear garden adjacent to the house will be excavated as detailed above. The excavation will be set back from the existing garden walls. Small earth retaining stub walls will be formed with border garden planting beds along the perimeter under the garden walls. Half the lowered and levelled area will be paved with yorkstone with pervious joints and bedding to form a terrace. The other half is to be covered in grass. A set of wide yorkstone steps will lead up to the higher ground of the upper lawn and garden.

Improved privacy between the garden and the rear kitchen window to the flat at 15 Parliament Hill is to be created through the lowering of the adjacent garden area and the erection of a garden fence. A buffering space is to be created between the window and the new fence. This will improve privacy, but will allow light and views to from the kitchen window.

Note: The replanting of the existing Magnolia to 14 Parliament Hill is proposed in the Tree Development Report. The Magnolia is very close (150 – 200 mm) to the brick garden wall on the boundary between 14 and 15. This proximity to the existing brick wall is not practical. The tree will begin to lift and damage the wall very soon. The proximity of the proposed new extension may also adversely impact on the roots of the tree. It is proposed that 15a Parliament Hill pays for the replacement of the tree with a suitable similar tree chosen by 14.



6.5 Front Garden

The primary intention of the design is to create a front garden area which is consistent with the pattern of front gardens in the conservation area. The existing off street parking space has been removed and a planted front garden with pedestrian gate and path to the front door of the new house is proposed. The front gate is framed by brick piers and a single small steel arch for climbers. The gate is slightly off set from the entry door to protect the roots at the base of the adjacent birch.

The arrangement and heights of the shrubs and hedges within the front garden are designed to provide a degree of structure to the front garden which relates to the function and use of the relevant spaces. The entry area is more open to the street. An area adjacent to the entry gate is framed by higher evergreen hedges to screen the rubbish and recycling collection points create a degree of privacy to the front living rooms.

The removal and replacement with planting of the front entry drive paving will improve the moisture levels and health of the soil generally to an area which is proximate to the root protection zones of the adjacent Lime and Birch trees.

The front light well is positioned in response to the root protection zones of the two existing trees. The garden to the front will be accessed garden work only, and therefore the distance of the light well from the entry path combined with the dense planting of appropriate hedge-type shrubs will obviate the need for a perimeter balustrade. This will improve the light and views to and from the lower ground floor level. Without a balustrade the front garden area will be less encumbered by physical structures and the garden vegetation will be instead be foregrounded.



*Front Garden Plan & Elevation:
Off street parking is removed and the front garden is conforms with the common pattern throughout the conservation area: Brick front garden wall & pedestrian entry gate & path, with front garden planting & light well.
The footprint of the house, light well, & line of the entry path follow the root protection zones for the adjacent trees.*

