

Final Issue 21.11.14
Draft Issue 24.10.14



Design Statement

October 2014

138-140 Highgate Road
London NW5 1PB

BROOKS / MURRAY ARCHITECTS

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This design statement has been prepared to accompany an appeal against a refusal of planning permission for the proposed redevelopment of the existing service and petrol station at 138-140 Highgate Road, London. This statement should be read in conjunction with the following drawings and reports

- Drawings: 1021-P-020 Pro Ground Floor A, 1021-P-021 Pro First Floor A, 1021-P-022 Pro Second Floor A, 1021-P-023 Pro Roof Plan A, 1021-P-024 Pro Site Plan A, 1021-P-040 Pro Front Elevation A, 1021-P-041 Pro North Elevation A, 1021-P-042 Pro Rear Elevations A, 1021-P-043 Pro South Elevations A.
- Heritage Report by Giles Quarme & Associates
- Accurate Visual Representations (AVR3) by Preconstruct Ltd
- Landscape Design Report by Henshall Green
- Arboricultural Statement by Bosky Trees
- Appellant's Statement of Case by KR Planning Ltd

1.2 The proposal is for the demolition of the existing petrol station and the construction of a three-storey mixed use development comprising of A1 use at ground floor and two storeys of flats above.

2.0 The site

2.1 For ease of reference, a site plan with site photographs are below.



2.2 The Existing Site



Photograph A: Looking west towards the site from Denyer House



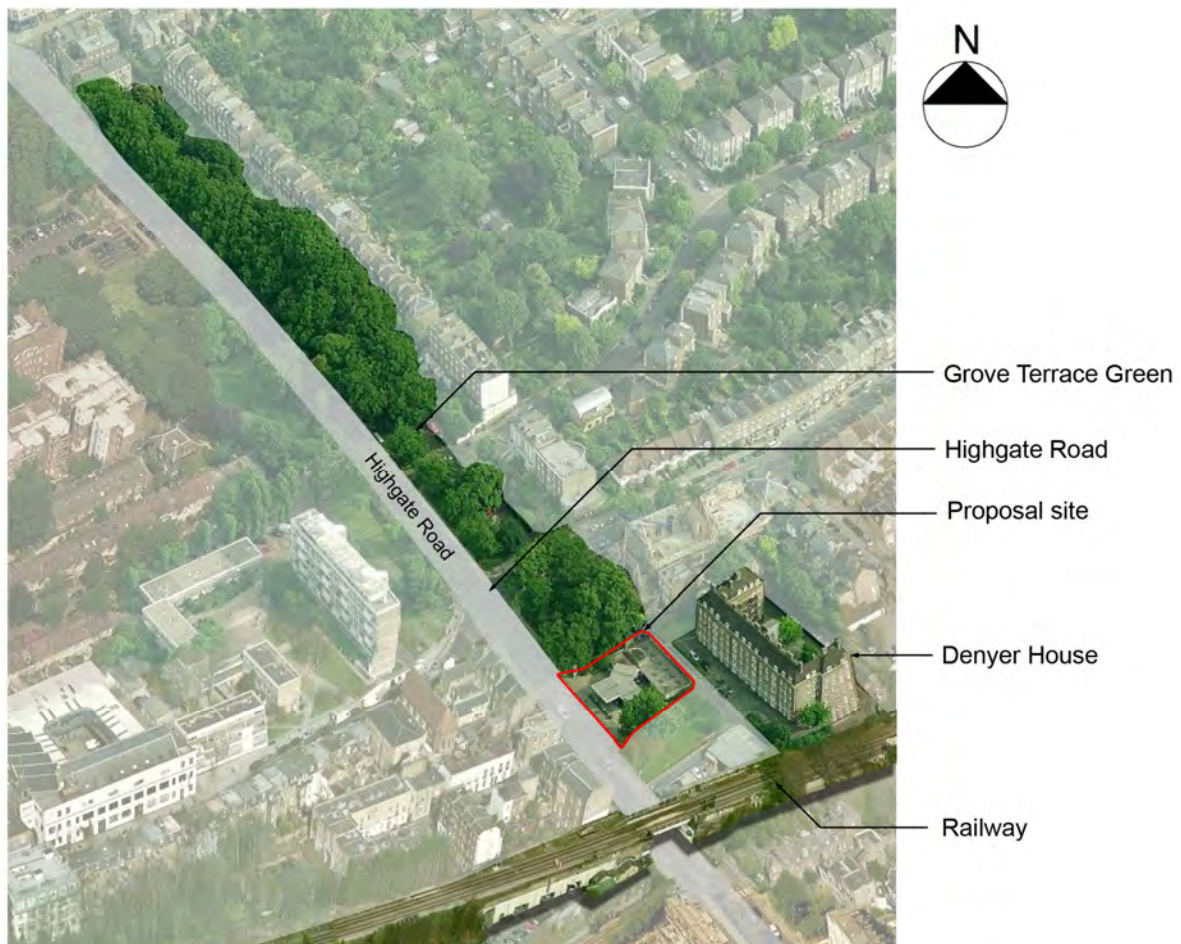
Photograph B: Looking north towards the site from the access road to Denyer House



Photograph C: Looking east towards the site from Wesleyan Place across Highgate Road



Photograph D: Looking south towards the site from further north along Highgate Road



Aerial view of the site

3.0 The Proposed Scheme

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Statement has identified that the existing building on the site is a negative feature in the Conservation Area. The statement later goes on to say that *'The council will particularly encourage proposals which seek to redevelop those buildings and spaces which are considered to have a negative impact on the special character or appearance of the Conservation Area'*.

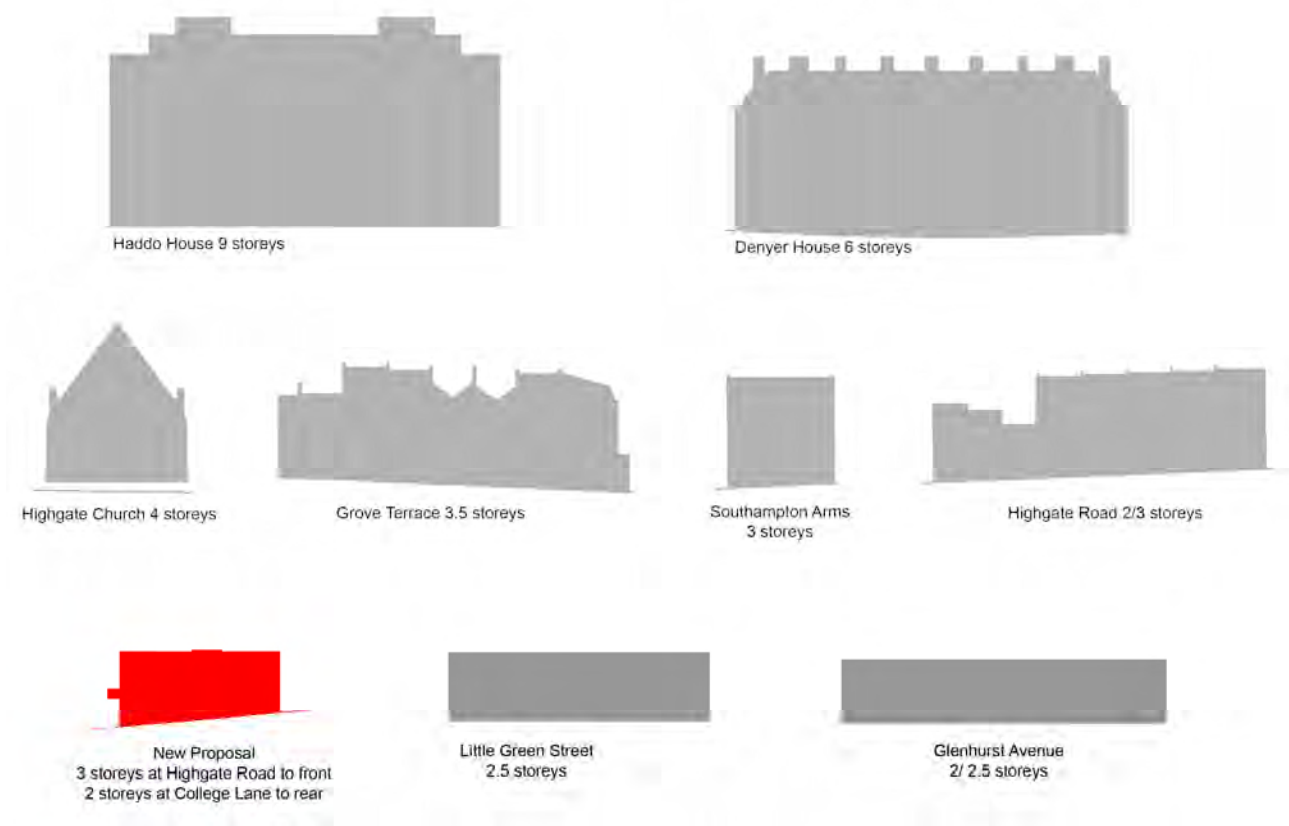
3.1.2 The Council does not challenge the footprint or positioning of the building, the layouts, land-use or materials.

3.1.3 The Council states that the proposal is harmful to the streetscape and the character and appearance of the Conservation area because of its height, scale and detailed design (Reason for Refusal No 2).

3.1.4 We describe and illustrate below how the height, scale and detailed design of the proposed building is devised and inspired by direct reference to other buildings within the immediate vicinity such that it does not harm but preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, streetscape and setting of nearby Listed Buildings.

3.2 Height

3.2.1 The proposed building is generally the same height as the set of Victorian three storey buildings directly opposite the site on Highgate Road, (although these existing buildings are not all exactly the same height as each other). The diagram below shows the relative heights of the buildings along Highgate Road and Dartmouth Park. As can be seen, there is a variety of building heights.



Proposed building height in comparison to buildings in the area

3.2.2 Those directly opposite the site are generally three floors, with shops at the ground floor with two floors of flats above – as is the proposed scheme. It is also the prevailing planning policy that requires a mix of unit sizes which has also informed the building form (Policy DP5).



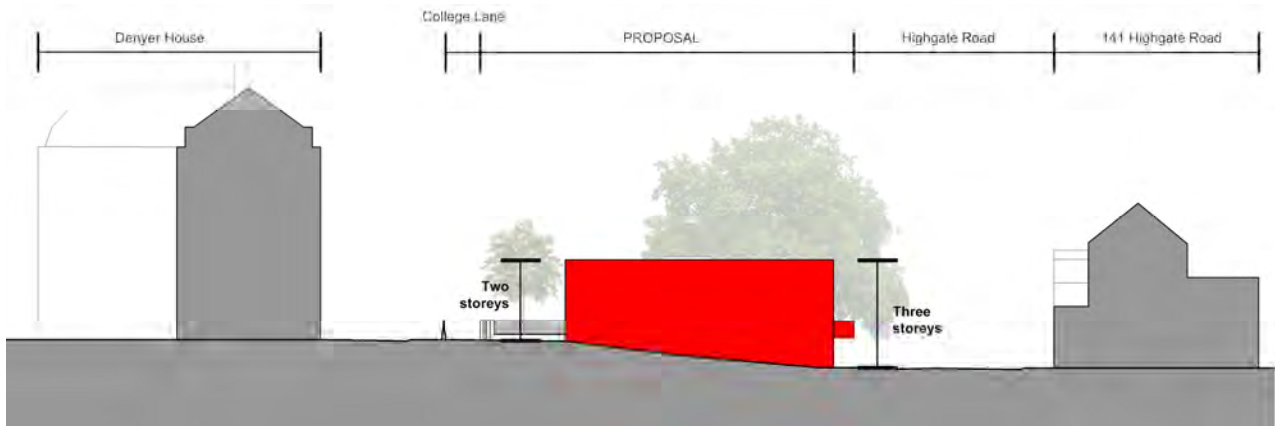
Existing buildings facing the site from Southampton Arms on the south (left) to 157 Highgate Road further north (right)

3.2.3 Behind the site, and positioned on rising ground, is Denyer House, a six storey residential building. Further north of the site, Grove Terrace Green is a generally uniform three and four storey terrace of late 18 century and early 19 century town houses. Opposite Grove Terrace, on Highgate Road is a nine storey post war, modern housing block.

3.2.4 To the south of the railway on the east side are a group of late 18 century cottages (Little Green Street) of two and three stories. Next to these are numerous post-war housing blocks, reaching eight storeys.



3.2.5 Clearly there is not a consistent height which can be said to characterise the conservation area, and since the proposal is lower than its immediate neighbours in front and behind, and only marginally higher than the canopy of the existing service station, the height of the building cannot be said to be harmful to either the streetscape or the Conservation area.



Section diagram showing the height of the proposal in relation to buildings opposite on Highgate Road (in front) and Denyer House (behind).

3.3 Height relative to the adjacent structure of the trees

3.3.1 There are no existing trees on the application site (but the proposal includes the planting of two), but the trees beside the site on both sides are substantial. These have been surveyed, see Arboricultural Statement by Bosky Trees Ltd and drawn in the “proposed” drawings, to scale.

3.3.2 As can be seen from the Accurate Visual Representations (AVR3) by Preconstruct Ltd, the height of the proposed building is such that it sits below the canopies of these trees. The relative height, therefore, of the proposed scheme, is subservient to the structure of the trees.

3.4 Height of the proposed scheme compared to the existing structure.

3.4.1 The two diagrams below show that the height of the proposed building is one storey higher than the canopy of the existing service station. (Note the relationship to Denyer House windows behind).



Existing front elevation



Proposed front elevation

3.4.2 The single extra floor of height does not harm the streetscape or the wider Conservation area as it has been established that the proposal is lower than its immediate neighbours and there is no consistent height that characterises the area.

3.5 Height of the proposal in relation to street enclosure and definition

3.5.1 In our design for the new building, we were also concerned with the concept of creating a legible “edge”, both to the streets (Highgate Road to the front, College Lane to the rear) but also to the adjacent open space on both sides of the new building. In the Design and Access Statement accompanying the original application, Brooks Murray identified that they had referenced the *Urban Design Compendium* (Llewelyn Davies Yeang - published by English Partnerships, 3rd Edition Homes and Community Agency,

2013), at the design stage, which gives direct advise/ guidance to designers on mass and height in the design of new buildings. The table below, reproduced from the above document (page 88) serves as a guide to the desirable ratio between the height (of the building) and the width (of the street) indicating that it should ideally be no more than 1:3, and no less than 1:1.5 in a “street” setting.

Table 5.2 Height to width ratios		
	Maximum	Minimum
Mews	1:1.5	1:1
Streets	1:3	1:1.5
Squares	1:5	1:4

3.5.2 The ratio of the proposed building is 1:2 and 1:2.5 (see diagram below), which is within the recommended parameters. The design is therefore consistent with the guidance in the Compendium and the new building presents the opportunity of creating a sense of ‘enclosure’ and ‘street’, which by their very nature, have edges. Clearly this is guidance only, and slavish adherence to the principles would have the elevation facing College Mews higher, (to form a 1:2 rather than the 1:2.5 ratio). In the case of this proposal, there are other sensitivities regarding views from Denyer House, which have prevailed, such as views of Hamstead Heath which remain unaffected by the proposals.



3.5.3 The Design Compendium concludes that too little height can be equally problematic as too much height. The sense of enclosure that exists in relation to the site, which we have illustrated above is a consequence of the height to distance ratio. This process enables the designer to control the space beyond the building.

3.5.4 In the proposal there are four distinct sides to the proposed building, each of which have been considered in respect of size, mass and design (see later), and each of which makes a positive impact on those edges. Refer to the analysis of each elevation below.

College Lane

Two of the verified views illustrate the positive impact the proposals would have to College Lane. The proposed building replaces the oppressive wall of the garage and the space is framed by the set-back building. A landscaped front garden is introduced to make an attractive design.

South Edge

Camden has a significant deficiency in formal play space for children (less than one fifth of the area in the GLA benchmark – see Shaping Neighbourhoods: Play and Informal Recreation SPG. Although Grove Terrace Green to the north offers an open space and seating, it has limited activities. By removing the service station and creating a well defined and well designed edge, the opportunity arises to create a lovely, formal garden here, instead of the undefined un-interesting left-over grass. A landscape design has been commissioned to illustrate the opportunities for transforming this space into a positive community asset. Refer to the Landscape Design Report by Henshall Green. The agreed financial contribution towards public open space can be utilised to deliver this or a similar facility.

Highgate Road

The side facing onto Highgate Road is difficult for pedestrians to use, both because of the 'in and out' arrangement for cars using the service station which makes it both dangerous and unattractive. New shops and a defined street edge, with buildings of comparable height on both sides, will dramatically enhance this side, not harm it.

North Edge

The north edge of the proposed building defines the edge of Grove Terrace Green and is a significant improvement on the existing service station. The tall forecourt branding signage and metal fascia of the canopy is replaced with materials similar to that which is seen in the immediate area to form a deliberately designed end-piece rather than the incidental service station with no contextual reference.

3.6 Scale

3.6.1 Whilst “size” itself, (as a product of height, mass, disposition and form) bears a relationship to “scale”, the terms are not synonymous. Indeed, a small building can be large in scale and a large building can be small in scale relative to its surroundings. The Shard, (at 77 storeys) is very large in respect of the London skyline, whereas compared to New York’s Empire State Building (which is 103 storeys), it is nothing extraordinary.

3.6.2 Compared to Denyer House and the recently converted Highgate Road Chapel behind the site, the scale of the proposed scheme is small – indeed, only a third of its size. As previously discussed, even in relation to the trees on the adjacent site, the building is subservient.

3.6.3 Scale can be manipulated with proportion, height, mass and form to provide a subtle and inventive tool in urban design and architecture.

3.6.4 Mass contributes to the sense of relative size (scale) of a building, and therefore an unarticulated façade or form of a building may increase the perception of its mass, and distort the scale. For this reason, the proposed building is broken up, by articulating the elevations, precisely to reduce this sense of scale, as can be seen in the four elevations.



North elevation of proposal facing south down Highgate Road. (Trees in front, obscuring the view of the façade not shown, for clarity).

3.6.5 Also, distinction should be drawn between primary scale and secondary scale. Primary scale concerns the relationship which the building has with other buildings in the wider context, as discussed above. Secondary scale concerns the components and features which make up the building itself and which, related to human form, provide reference to function and status. For example, it is appropriate that the shop-front windows are large, and signify their function. The residential windows above are of a smaller scale, reflecting theirs.

3.6.6 In the context of the site, whether by direct comparison with existing buildings (trees etc), or by reason of actual size, and based on advice in the Urban Design Compendium, issued by the Homes and Communities Agency (see section 3.5.1), the “scale” or “mass” or “height” of the proposed building, would not cause any harm to the streetscape, the Conservation Area or the setting of any Listed Building. As set out above, the proposed development would preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the streetscape, the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby Listed Buildings. Refer to the Heritage Report by Giles Quarme and Associates.

3.7 Detailed Design

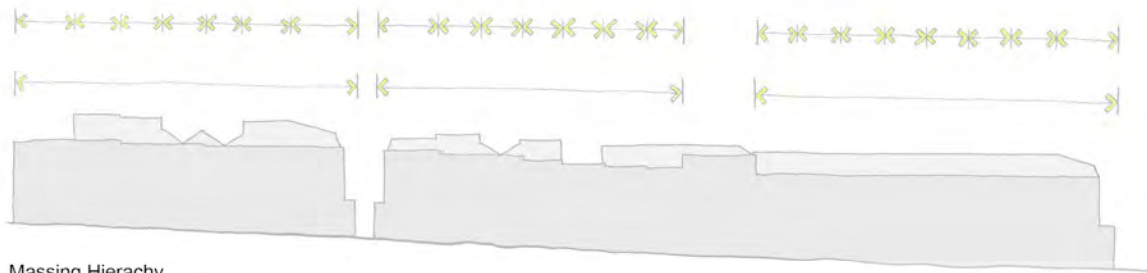
3.7.1 The remaining aspect of the detailed design of the proposed building is the articulation of the facades; the form, and the materials. These are addressed below, although much of these points are previously explained in the Design and Access Statement accompanying the application.

3.7.2 Form and void to solid relationship: The appearance, elevation and solid/void rhythm of the proposal is designed differently for each condition that it addresses; streets to east and west; open space to north and south. In designing the street elevations an analysis of the predominant building types facing streets in the immediate vicinity was carried out, to determine the typical relationships between solid and void as well as the elevational structural form.

3.7.3 On No's 137-157 Highgate Road opposite the site, and also on Grove Terrace No's 01 – 27, there is a clear vertical pattern evident on the upper storeys. The ground level is taller than the upper storeys and has horizontal form with frequent and larger openings which are offset to the rhythm of the windows above. This vertical rhythm has been utilised in the design to both contextualise the proposed building, but also to break up the mass of the form (see later), on the front and south elevations, which are most clearly viewed from outside the site.



Grove Terrace



Massing Hierarchy

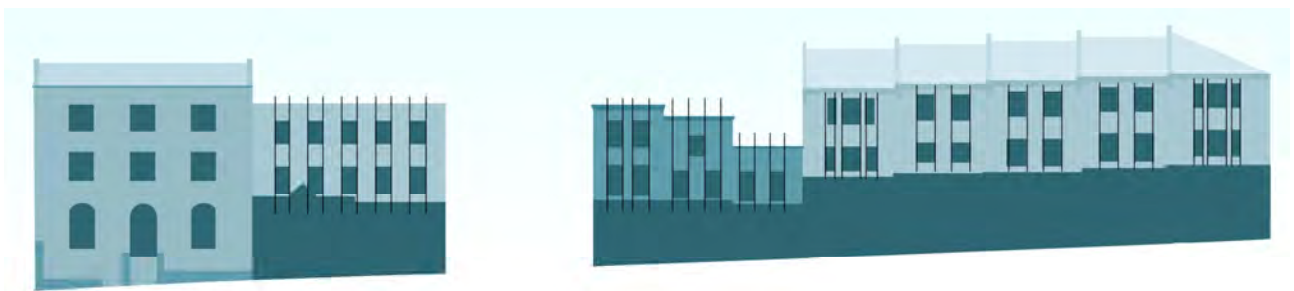


Solid/Void Analysis



Rhythm / Offset Base

Grove Terrace No's 01 – 27 Elevation Study



No's 137-157 Highgate Road Elevation Study

3.7.4 As described in the Design and Access Statement, each elevation has been carefully designed in detail design to respond to its immediate context. Each of the four elevations can be categorised as either street facing (Highgate Road & College Lane) or open space facing (north and south elevations). Both the street facing and open-space elevations have been carefully considered to respond to their different physical context, privacy, distance to adjacent buildings, internal layout, building footprint and daylight/sunlight.

Street facing

Elevations facing the street (Highgate Road & College Lane) are set back from the public realm. The proposed set-back to the front (Highgate Road) is similar to what is prevalent along the east side of Highgate Road, further north and south of the site. It affords a wider pedestrian path and level access to the commercial ground floor units. The proposed ground floor is expressed differently from the two storeys above to reflect the elevational structure on Grove Terrace and the opposite side of Highgate Road. A taller ground floor in the form of a horizontal band of glazing clearly communicates the commercial function. Whilst the predominantly brick upper storeys with glazed window openings denote the residential use. Added to that are instances of fixed vertical metal fins in front of tall glazed openings that break up the massing further. The fins provide privacy and further articulate the vertical rhythm along the length of the building.

The set-back to the rear (College Lane) provides a distance of 18m from Denyer House for privacy and serves to minimise any overlooking to Denyer House. It also maximises daylighting to both the Denyer House and proposed building whilst still providing enclosure to College Lane to define a streetscape. In addition, the set-back gives a defensible space, level access and open space to what is the residential entrance for the proposal. The slope of the site means that this elevation facing College Lane is only two storeys whilst the front Highgate side is three storeys. This elevation continues the same detail design as the upper two storeys of the Highgate Road through the use of brick, vertical rhythm and fins. And along with introduction of two new trees, this elevation will undoubtedly enhance the experience of people walking along College Lane.

Open-space facing

The open-space elevations directly abut public space to the north and south. These elevations are therefore addressed differently from the street-facing elevations, but still respect the definition of the ground floor as separate from the upper floors.

While the proposed building incorporates a continuous, horizontally defined ground floor, there are no windows on the side elevations at ground floor. The plan has no requirement for light on the ground floor and the solid wall creates a clear sense of enclosure to the public open space it abuts. These are in effect the “flank elevations” formally, of the building, and reference has similarly been made to the flank elevations of the existing terraces mentioned earlier; the vertical elements of the flanks have a taller proportion, and are separated from each other. The large set-back glazed facade between these elements serves to make the building feel lighter and smaller on these sides. With high quality materials, metal fins for privacy and planters, this elevation in scale and detail design serves not to just define the open-space elevations contextually but provide a more visually appealing building.

3.7.5 Materials: Apart from the stone chapel on College Lane, and the painted concrete of Haddo House, all the surrounding buildings are brick. The proposed building would match the predominant yellow stock brick of the area.

3.7.6 Large glazed openings in the brick walls both break up the mass of the building, and to allow the maximum amount of light into the flats makes the proposed building lighter and less dominant. The windows are proposed to be made from fine metal sections to maximise the light, give a contemporary look to the building, and to have the best insulating properties possible.

3.7.7 A critical consideration has been the protection of the future residents’ privacy and the privacy of neighbouring residents as well as the potential light pollution from the flats, and so screening has been designed into the scheme from the early concept. The vertical metal fins break up the views into the bigger glazed elements, screen users of the open space, and adds an attractive decorative effect onto the building. The vertical rhythm of the existing Grove Terrace and Highgate Road elevations is reflected in the size and position

of openings and vertical fins in the new building to form a relationship between the existing and proposed.

3.7.8 Window boxes facilitate planting hanging on the sides adds further interest and variety to the facades.

3.7.9 Boundary treatment at the rear: Brick walls with regular openings for railings and gates are proposed. The railings and gates are detailed in a square edge contemporary way and affords a defensible and private garden for residents.



3.7.10 Clearly much thought and consideration has been given to the detailed design of the building, with specific reference having been made to specific forms and materials within the Conservation area. The detailed design demonstrates that the proposed development would not be harmful to the streetscape, character or appearance of the Conservation Area or the setting of nearby Listed Buildings.

Views Across the site

3.8.1 The Council states that the proposed building would block views across the site (Reason for Refusal 3), and that this would harm the setting of that space, and the public enjoyment thereof.

3.8.2 However, the Council's objection is without foundation. There is a brick wall to the rear of the existing service station, which obscures/prevents views across the site from Denyer House to Highgate Road. In relation to views north from Highgate Road and south from Grove Terrace, Accurate Visual Representations have been produced that demonstrate that there is limited sight through the existing trees at present, and the proposal will have minimal impact on visual permeability across the site. Refer to the Accurate Visual Representations by Preconstruct Ltd, Photoviewpoints 3-5. Refer also to the Heritage Statement by Giles Quarme and Associates.

3.8.3 Existing views towards the site obviously have within them, the (harmful) view of the service station. The replacement of the service station by the proposal building would improve the views as described above.

3.8.4 The montages show that the higher limbs and leaves of the trees is what is predominantly visible in views across the site, with only glimpsed views of the site/existing building. The proposed building height will ensure that those views and the predominance of the trees from these viewpoints, would remain.

3.8.5 By better addressing the edges of the building, and indeed by creating clear edges, the public would be able to to *better enjoy* the areas of open space, by the provision of increased clarity and definition. It is our conclusion therefore that the views are neither blocked, nor harmed by the proposal.

Third Party Design Related Objections

3.9.1 Objections from the local residents outlined in the Delegated Report have been summarised below with a corresponding response. Design specific objections for the proposal fell into the following five categories;

- (i) **Size:** *Overbearing, bulky & unacceptably large in scale to the existing petrol station.
(also Council Reason for Refusal 2)*

Paragraph 3.2, 3.4, 3.5 & 3.6 in this document outline the reasons why the height, size and scale of the proposed building is suitable for this site.

- (ii) **Daylight/Overlooking:** *Adversely affect light, cause overlooking to residents of Denyer House*

The Daylight and Sunlight Report by David Maycox & Co submitted with the application concludes that the scheme is wholly BRE compliant and properties surrounding the proposal are not adversely affected.

- (iii) **Detailed design:** *Out of character of the Georgian design in the area, too modern, no aesthetic value (also Council Reason for Refusal 2).*

Paragraph 3.7 of this document and the Design and Access Statement by Brooks Murray Architects submitted with the application outline reasons why the design is suitable for the site. The proposal addresses the immediate context of the surrounding area in a contemporary way through material choice, elevation proportion and detailed design. The design reflects higher living standards, accessibility, sustainability and urban design in the 21st Century to avoid a pastiche replication of the surrounding buildings.

- (iv) **Views:** *The existing petrol station provides the site with open and airy feel, views will be lost to the iconic Post Office Tower and along Wesleyan Place, would harm the setting of listed buildings and wider conservation area.*

The proposal is lower than the pitched roof opposite the site on Highgate Road and so will have no impact for residents who already have a view of the Post Office Tower. Some residents who have a view to Wesleyan Place will have this obscured, although neither of these are protected vistas. Refer to the Heritage Report by Giles Quarme and Associates for a detailed examination on the impact of the proposal in the in setting of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.

- (v) **Footprint:** *The proposal occupies the whole site and there are no front/back gardens.*

This is not true as the proposal is set back at the front and rear. This has been purposely designed so as to reflect the setbacks along Highgate Road, comply with BRE guidance on daylight/sunlight, increase privacy and provide amenity space. Refer to paragraph 3.5.4 in this document regarding the front and rear elevations as well as the Design and Access Statement. There are private gardens with level access from flats adjacent to the residential access from College Lane whilst the proposal as a whole complies fully with the London Housing Design Guide for private external amenity space.

3.9.2 In addition to similar reasons above, an objection from Councillor de Souza as outlined in the Delegated Report is below with a corresponding response.

- (i) **Sight lines:** *Different nature of visibility/sight lines of a 3-4 storey block of flats compared with the existing petrol station. (also Council Reason for Refusal 3)*

This proposal is not a 3-4 block of flats. The proposal is 3 storeys at the front facing Highgate Road and 2 storeys to the rear as a result of the sloping site. Paragraphs 3.2, 3.4, 3.5 & 3.6 in this document outline the reasons why the height, size and scale of the proposed building in suitable for this site. Paragraph 3.8 outlines the reasons why views are not harmed by the proposal. Refer to The Heritage Report by Giles Quarme and Associates for a detailed examination on the impact of the proposal in terms of views across the site.

3.9.3 An objection from English Heritage as outlined in the Delegated Report has been summarised below with a corresponding response.

- (ii) **Sight lines:** *Introduction of significant built element to green strip blocking views to historic buildings (also Council Reason for Refusal 3).*

Paragraph 3.8 outline reasons why the setting of the Conservation Area and Listed Building are not harmed by the proposal. Refer to The Heritage Report by Giles Quarne and Associates for a detailed examination on the impact of the proposal in terms of views.

3.9.4 In addition to similar design related objections above, the following objection from Dartmouth Park CAAC/Grove Terrace Residents' Association, Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Forum, Grove End Action Group, as outlined in the Delegated Report is below with corresponding response.

- (i) **Enclosure:** *A canyon-like affect between the new building and existing building.*

Paragraph 3.5 addresses this in regards to forming enclosure and a positive streetscape to Highgate Road and College Lane.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 The proposal in its height, scale and detailed design does not harm the streetscape, character, setting or appearance of Dartmouth Park Conservation Area.

4.2 This report demonstrates that;

1. The height of the proposal is appropriate for the site and the Conservation Area. There is no existing consistent height and the proposal is lower than existing buildings on the opposite side of the road and a third of the size of the adjacent Denyer House.

2. The massing and scale creates enclosure to the front, rear and south, whilst providing a positive new termination to the green strip which is replacing the service station.
3. Secondary scale and detailed design creates a positive and attractive streetscape by using high-quality materials.
4. The proposal does not harm views across the site due to limited existing permeability and in fact improves the views by replacing the service station.
5. The scheme improves and enhances the public enjoyment of the space by replacing the service station with a building that addresses the immediate context, improves the amenity value and green space as well as provide new trees. The opportunity is available to improve the open-space further by implementing the Landscape Design proposal by Henshall Green.

4.3 The Appeal should be upheld as the proposal complies with the Local Authority's policies to promote high quality design, conserve heritage, to protect and improve parks and open spaces, and encourage biodiversity.

