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DESIGN STATEMENT

25 Hampstead Hill Gardens, London, NW3

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Introduction:

This design statement relates to:

The erection of a three storey dwelling (Two stories above ground & one basement) on land currently used as a garden for 25 Hampstead Hill Gardens, below which the LNWR railway tunnel runs which dissects the road. The site is located in the Hampstead conservation area.



Image 1: Location Plan of site marked in red. Position of tunnel under shown as a dashed line.

Historical Context of the Site

The tunnel which runs underneath the sites that is part of the Hampstead Junction Railway was opened in 1860 to obviate North London Railway trains running on the Busy Euston main line. Because of the presence of this Victorian tunnel, little construction has taken place over this tunnel resulting in an abrupt break in the street line on both sides of the road. Current usage of these sites are as gardens, garages but also at 23a there resides a 1970's two storey house with basement/lower ground levels. There are some mature trees covering the site.

The area is characterised by late Victorian 4 storey stucco and Edwardian houses generally of two storeys with dormers at roof level. The sites are situated where the facade materials used in the street change. Houses south of the site are rendered in a white stucco. Houses on northern side of the street are substantially faced with red brick. There are a few instances of more modern developments, these generally respect the material usage in the area.

Modern developments

There are a few modern developments on Hampstead Hill Gardens. All use brick in some way to maintain the character of the area.



Image: 2 23a Hampstead Hill Gardens. Two storey house in red brick with a brick front garden wall. Driveway to the side to parking at rear.



Image 3: 8 Hampstead Hill Gardens. Multiple dwelling units. Concrete and brick construction. Four Storeys



Image 4: 2 Hampstead Hill Gardens. Two storey dwellings. Brick and zinc façade.



Image 5: Two prominent façade materials adjacent to the site. White Stucco render and red brick.

Physical Context: Conservation Area Designation and Character

Hampstead Hill Gardens is within the Hampstead Conservation Area in the Christ Church/Well Walk sub area. The text below, which is derived from Camden Council's website provides the history of the neighbouring area.

"Hampstead Hill Gardens The road forms a loop between Pond Street and Rosslyn Hill. The LNWR railway tunnel dissects the road, although not visibly. Development began in the 1870s with a fine group of stucco-faced semidetached villas (Nos.14-20 and 25-33). These are three storey with basements, a dentil cornice and parapet at roof level. On the west side there have been some roof extensions that lack consistency and harm the character of the buildings. Development continued in the 1880s around the northern loop to Rosslyn Hill. Nearest to Rosslyn Hill are the grander detached and substantial red brick houses, Nos.1, 1a, 1b, 2, 2a, 3, 3a, 4, 5, 5a, 5b, 7, 9, 11 by Batterbury and Huxley (listed). Nos.13-23 are two storey red brick double fronted houses, closely placed and more uniform with three small dormers, sash windows and entrance with pediments. There are glimpses through the gaps to Heath Hurst Road and South End Road. A few small modern houses and flats have been added in recent years, which, although in marked contrast to the older villas, do not detract from the character of the area."



Image 6: Site as existing. Currently used as garden with an extension.

Understanding of the context

The location is a sensitive one in a conservation area. The study of the site was instrumental to the development of the idea of the design.

The area is characterised by late Victorian and Edwardian houses. On the south side of the site lie stucco faced semi-detached villas from the 1870's. These properties are three storey with basements and feature dentil cornices and parapets at roof level.

On the northern side are Nos.13-23. These are two storey red brick double fronted houses, closely placed with uniformity. These feature three small dormers, sash windows and entrance with pediments. Directly adjacent to the site on the north is a small 1970's two storey house with basement/lower ground levels. This house is built partly over the tunnel.

The proposal would sit at a change between these differing sets of façade material. The proposal works to resolve this difference as a transitional piece hinging these two housing groups. It was decided that the height of the scheme should remain lower than the surrounding buildings, as it is an infill site and therefore should not compete with the surrounding buildings.

It is our view that the character of the area is not solely formed from the historic styling of the buildings. The street has other strong defining elements. These include the setback and front yard, and also uniformity of material across stretches of the street.



Image 7: Axonometric of proposal. Proposal is low, and allows for generous amounts of space around it.

Design Overview

The proposal is contextual and contemporary in form and design language. The narrowness of the site and tunnel that runs underneath bring difficult conditions and technical challenges. A contemporary approach will allow for the resolution of these issues in an innovative method without having to distort a historic precedent.

It is important to note that the gap both in East and West side of the street at this point are the pivotal point between the 4 storey white stucco buildings and the red bricks 3 storey building.

The intention of the design is to not detract from the conservation setting and create a subordinate volume to that of the existing Victorian house at no 25. The proposal will maintain the front yard typology found on this street. Houses are typically set back from the street with walled or hedged front gardens. Many of the properties; including no. 25, have a front light well.

The proposal is a three storey dwelling with two stories above ground and a basement. An existing extension on the site will be demolished.

There are a number of important factors which inform the design of the new house;

Basement

- The Victorian houses next to this site has a basement and light well to the front of the property.
- The fact that there is tunnel under the site means that we need to remove weight form the site so that the overall built-up of the new is no more than the existing weight.

Overall volume

The proposal has three storeys in total. One of the main decisions that characterises the proposal is the setting of half the total volume below street level as a result of removing weight from the site. The volume above ground separates the proposal from the property at no.25. These factors reduce the impact of the building and allows the site to be read as a historical gap despite the presence of the proposed building.

Material

Given the pivotal position between white stucco and brick building, usage of a light almost white colour brick would be the appropriate material to act as a connection of the two typology of the buildings either side

Layout: Orientation of the Building

The proposals follow the same orientation of the houses adjacent, facing orthogonally to the street. This seems to be the correct approach as all the houses on this stretch of Hampstead Hill Gardens.



Image 8: View from street, the volume is low and set back, maintaining a subservient image, reducing impact on street.

Amount: Scale and Volume

The proposal is for a 3-storey house with one and a half storeys set below street level. We allow the proposal to become subordinate to the existing buildings by designing a compact volume and reducing its street presence by giving the top storey a smaller footprint, allowing for terrace space. This detaches the proposal from the main building at no. 25 and allows for the retention of existing views through the site, creating a more opening feeling around. This also allows the benefit of allowing the side elevation of no 25 to be expressed fully.

The deep setting of a basement and half the ground storey is a result of dealing with the challenges of building over the Victorian era train tunnel that runs under the site. In order to minimize impact and additional stresses on the tunnel, the idea is to excavate an amount of earth from above the tunnel to compensate for the additional weight loaded by the proposal, in order to maintain an equilibrium.

Appearance:

The new proposal, though modern in concept, is still contextual and relates itself to the surrounding buildings.

The primary cladding material is a light toned brick. This makes references to the cladding materials used on existing buildings in the street, white stucco and red brick. This creates a relationship in using traditional materials with a contemporary form, rooting the proposal into its context, and avoiding an interruption in the white rendered facades either side.

The size and proportion of windows used on the proposal refer to those used on the existing surrounding houses. Tall vertical elements. These form the dominant features on the façade. The combination of the common material, colours and openings bring together an elemental interpretation of surrounding features.



Image 9: View from street, the proposal is homogenous in texture. Window openings form the language of the façade, making a reference to the tall and narrow windows of its neighbour.