

## BELSIZE ARCHITECTS

48 Parkhill Road London NW3 2YP

T 020 7482 4420

mail@belsizearchitects.com

www.belsizearchitects.com

### DESIGN STATEMENT

14 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 and garages for 14 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.



Image 2: Site as existing. Currently used for two garages.

### 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 3&4: Two prominent façade materials adjacent to the site. White Stucco render and red brick.

## 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 No. 13-23. These are three storey red brick double fronted houses, including lofts with dormer windows. These are closely placed with uniformity.

Adjacent to the site on the north are a pair of semi detached houses. They consist of three stories with a gabled roof forming the third storey. The external envelope is red brick, However the one adjacent to the site has been rendered in a white finish.

It was seen that the site sits at a transition between these different groups of houses. The proposal works to resolve this difference in as a transitional pivoting piece between these two groups of houses, resolving the differences in materials. 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. The geometry of the proposal additionally references the distinct roof gable of no.12-10 to provide some visual transition between the adjacent buildings.



Image 5: Isometric view of proposal, a lower stairway volume between the proposal and no.14 allows a degree of separation.

## Design Overview

The proposal is contextual and contemporary in language.

A contemporary approach will allow for the resolution of 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 enhance the conservation setting and create a subordinate volume to that of the existing Victorian house at no 14. The proposal will maintain the front yard typology found on this street. Houses are typically set back from the street. Many of the properties; including no.14, have a front light well.

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

### Basement

- The Victorian houses next to this site have been designed with the 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 from the site so that the overall built-up of the new is no more than the existing weight.

### Overall volume

The main noticeable body of the new house is the ground floor of the building. The first floor is well set back in order to reduce the impact of the building and allow the gap to be read as a historical gap despite the proposed new 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 6: View of proposal from street. The volume site lower than the existing houses and allows space between.

### Amount: Scale and Volume

The proposal is for a 3-storey house with one storey set below street level. We allow the proposal to become subordinate to the existing buildings by designing a compact volume and reducing its street side presence.

The deep setting of a basement in the ground 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.

In order to reduce the presence of the proposal on the street and also to resolve the connection with no. 14. The proposal is set further back from the street partially at the ground floor and at first floor. This gives the appearance of separation from no.14 and avoids crowding the building, allowing the traditional building to be read clearly. The setback at first level allows for more of the adjacent buildings to be read, obscuring as little as possible. This additionally allows for some views through the site, maintaining some of the sites original character.



Image 7: nos. 10 & 12 adjacent to the site of 14 Hampstead Hill Gardens. Gabled roof unique to the street.

## 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 which have tall vertical lines and windows within the facade. These form the dominant features on the proposed façade. The combination of the common material, colours and openings bring together an elemental interpretation of surrounding features which in turn deal with the design of a contextual building.



Image 8: View of proposal from street. The volume is punctuated by narrow openings which breaks up the monolithic volume, dynamic and angled lines reference the geometry of the gabled roof.