

## Design and Access Statement for refurbishment works to the front area of Akenside Court, 26 Belsize Crescent, London NW3 5QT

### Existing Condition

The property is a five-storey block of nine flats located at the junction of Belsize Crescent, Akenside Road and Lyndhurst Gardens. It is situated in the Fitzjohns and Netherall Conservation Area, but is not mentioned in the Conservation Area Statement.

The building is set sympathetically in its corner site, curving at each end to address the different axes with the front door orientated towards the long view from Akenside Road. It is set back from the road at the lowest level of the sloping site and has generous front gardens to either side of the entrance.

Constructed in the early 1960s, the building is in good condition generally, if rather utilitarian in appearance, with buff coloured brick, strip windows and large stone paneling. The original windows were replaced c.2000 with double glazed, metal equivalents.

### Proposals

The front area and entrance of the property are now in need of repair and refurbishment. There are three aspects to the proposed works:

- a. The repair or replacement of damaged areas of wall and uneven surfaces caused by tree and ground movement.
- b. To provide a defined boundary to the property to prevent the unwanted incursion of people and dogs, which happens on a regular basis.
- c. To provide a more appealing entrance with a ramp and level threshold and allow more light into the entrance lobby.

Areas of repair are evident, particularly around the existing maple tree. The remaining boundary wall will need to be rebuilt with a reduced length to avoid the root ball of the tree whilst still protecting the gas supply pipe.

A low hawthorn hedge is proposed as the most appropriate perimeter barrier to the pavement edge, in keeping with many of the front boundaries of the surrounding houses. It will also attract and sustain wildlife. The demarcation of the property will be by a brick edging along the boundary below the hedge.

A ramp is proposed to allow disabled access to the property with handrails on either side. It is narrower than the existing path and lined with planters. As well as providing an attractive approach, this will reduce the existing area of hard surfacing and assist with rainwater disposal. At the top of the ramp are two metal gates either side leading to the front beds and preventing unwanted casual access.

There is no gate at the start of the ramp in order to provide a clear landing. The external entrance level has been raised to provide a level threshold to the property.

The proposed canopy is raised above the height of the existing and has a large rooflight. This is to provide a more generous and lighter entrance to the building. The canopy is orientated with the building as opposed to the approach, removing the awkward junction between two that exists at present.

The proposed materials are designed to be consistent with one another and to compliment rather than mimic the existing.