

# **BELSIZE PLACE GARAGES**

## **DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

**November 2015**

### **Context**

This application relates to a site containing ten existing single car garages and associated manoeuvring space. It is located off the end of Belsize Place which is the only vehicle access. Pedestrian access is from Belsize Place and from Lyndhurst Gardens via a pathway, and there is also a stepped pedestrian link to the rear garden of Akenside Court (see photo 7.).

Due to local level changes the site is around 2m below the level of the Akenside Court gardens to which they form a boundary, with the existing roofs just above the garden level (see photo 9). Other boundaries are formed by:

- The ends of the gardens to nos 8,10 and 12 Belsize Crescent
- The side boundary to 3 Belsize Place (currently in construction)
- The retaining wall to the pathway leading to Lyndhurst Gardens

Level relationships vary on these different boundaries.

The existing garages are small and in need of renovation. The manoeuvring area tapers towards the last garage making access difficult.

It may be inferred from the built relationship with Akenside Court and specifically the connecting staircase, that the garages were originally built to serve Akenside Court. However at present only two of the ten garages are owned by Akenside Court residents. Seven are owned by EAD Ltd, who occupy the offices at no 2 Belsize Place, and the final garage is rented by EAD Ltd from a third party owner.

The site lies on the edge of the Belsize Conservation area, which includes the pedestrian route to Lyndhurst Gardens but excludes Akenside Court. Number 24 Belsize Crescent, adjacent to Akenside Court, is Grade 2 listed. The site is relatively hidden from the public realm other than the pedestrian route.

## **Proposals**

The scheme proposes to:

- Replace the existing garages with new construction built to a higher standard and with materials more sympathetic to the Conservation Area.
- Increase the manoeuvring space by moving the boundary/retaining wall to Akenside Court by 1m.
- Replace the existing concrete slab and finish to the manoeuvring area with an etched concrete block paving in a permeable configuration, so providing sustainable drainage to the site.
- Drop the level of the courtyard by around 650mm to provide easier vehicular access, avoiding an awkward ramp at the narrow entrance from Belsize Place.

Five of the garages will be rebuilt in roughly the same size as the originals and two will be rebuilt to a larger size. The remaining three spaces are left as open access to allow for easier visitor parking spaces. Planters adjacent to the walls at each end of the site help to soften the appearance of the courtyard.

The new garages will have green roofs to improve the prospect from the surrounding residential area. A strip along the Akenside Court boundary will be to an intensive green roof specification supporting a hedge to replace that originally planted in front of the garages (as photo no 9). The remainder will be to an extensive green roof specification providing a greater variety of wildlife habitats.

The green roof configuration also provides an improvement in terms of rainwater run off from the roofs.

A gateway to the steps leading to Akenside Court will improve security for the residents of that building.

## **Materials**

Brickwork will match the character of the Conservation Area and bricks are likely to be similar to those used in the current redevelopment of no3 Belsize Place (Weinerberger Marziale bricks).

Permeable concrete block paving is proposed as Marshalls Drivesett Argent Priora blocks.

## **Advantages of the development**

The redevelopment of the garage courtyard does not involve change of use but offers several advantages to neighbouring residents and to the public realm as well as to the applicant.

- Views into the site will be significantly enhanced by higher quality materials, an improved standard of construction, green roofs and lowered levels.
- Moving the existing hedge at the rear of the Akenside Court gardens onto the new green roof means that the slightly extended area has no significant effect on the garden space, while the security of the gardens is enhanced.
- The improved access, manoeuvrability and open visitor spaces provide greatly improved usability to the users of the garages in addition to the enhanced standard of the garages themselves.
- The green roofs and permeable paving offer improvements in sustainability

## **Timing and management of the development**

During the current reconstruction of no 3 Belsize Place, none of the garages is in regular vehicular use, and most are in temporary use in connection with the development. This is therefore the ideal time to carry out the redevelopment of the garage courtyard without disturbance to users or to local parking provision.

The submitted documentation includes a Construction Management Plan.