

our ref: 333/02

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

in support of applications for
Planning and Conservation Area Consent
for

**55-57 NETHERHALL GARDENS
LONDON NW3 5RH**

January 2016



INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Statement considering the architectural and historical significance of the 55-57 Netherhall Gardens building and its environs has been prepared in support of applications for conservation Area Consent and Planning Consent to demolish the two existing and construct two new entrance porches of the property.

The document has been prepared to consider the heritage asset in relation to the requirements of local planning policies that consider the historic built environment. The document follows a detailed viewing of the site and the local setting.

This statement is intended to be read in conjunction with all documents comprising the Planning application.

SUMMARY

Situated at the beginning of the north side of Netherhall Gardens, the building is a block of flats converted in the early 80s from two semidetached houses dating from the late-mid nineteenth century. The building consists of five storeys split in two separate blocks each containing 3 flats.

The building is within the Camden Town Fitzjohns-Netherhall Conservation Area and it is not listed.

HISTORY

The early history of the area is well documented in Camden's Conservation Area Statement. The late start of the land development west of Fitzjohns Avenue was due to the long legal battle of the heirs of the landowner Sir Thomas Marion Wilson who died in 1821 limiting their ability to build on the land. The area was kept as open farmland increasingly surrounded by urban sprawl until the late nineteenth century. The first ordinance survey map showing Netherhall Gardens and the surrounding streets with developed large plots of land and mostly free standing houses is from 1895. The whole area has mostly kept its original character to this day. Large detached and semidetached good quality houses designed in then fashionable styles are still present in great numbers.

The property which is the subject of this application was shown on that map as two large semidetached houses on two separate plots of land. The houses were two storey from the front with the additional lower ground at the rear where the grounds slope towards the north. Each house had two bay windows around a central main entrance and together they formed a symmetrical frontage.

They remained intact until 1980 when various planning applications were submitted to the Local Planning authority by a firm of developers, seeking the amalgamation of two plots of land and its development into a large block of flats or series of houses and bungalows.

The planning permission was granted to a scheme which partly preserved the original houses, keeping the front and rear elevations and adding side extensions and an additional storey to the roof providing 6 self-contained flats over 5 storeys. The construction of the block of flats was done in 1981 and the building has not had any changes to the present days.

SITE ASSESSMENT

Being redeveloped completely in 1981 the site has some characteristics and elements of the original Victorian houses which are apparent in the symmetrical position of two entrances to the ground floor flats and two storey high bay windows on either side of them. The principal facade development created two large, side extensions cascading from the back toward the front and which at the ground floor contain the main entrances to the stairwells serving two remaining flats on either side of the building. Each of the side entrances contain a glazed entrance porch covered with a wavy transparent roof which stand out from the rest of the building. The two end bays were also extended upwards for the additional storey; the one on the left is upsailed by the roof terrace and the one on the right received a gable roof. The main roof was enlarged in volume with an additional storey featuring dormer windows with gable roofs and terraces. The intervention also added timber bargeboards, balconies and terraces with heavy timber railings and large windows.

The property is larger than the adjacent buildings which are mainly single family dwellings. In spite of its scale and the introduction of new materials and features, the building blends in its surrounding and within the wider area partly due to mature plants and partly due to the inconspicuous brick colour.



Front elevation - north side

THE PROPOSED WORKS

Demolition

The proposed alteration to the existing building fabric concentrate only on the two entrance porches on either end of the block of flats. Being designed to look almost like rear garden conservatories with unusual and impractical wavy roofs they are in sharp contrast with the rest of the principal elevation. However, their complete removal is proposed not only for their aesthetic being out of the building character, but also principally because they have been causing numerous practical and functional problems to the residents of this block of flats:

- The single glazing set out within the light timber frame construction with timber panels at the base, together with the curved and pointy roof made out of clear Perspex sheeting set in metal frame have now reached the end of their life span.
- Although regularly maintained over 35 years since being constructed, the timber framing is showing signs of weariness and dilapidation, while the Perspex roof sheets are being discoloured.
- Regular water leakages are a regular occurrence during rainy periods causing damp within the main entrance lobbies.
- The east and south orientation of the porches together with completely transparent construction causes overheating of the entrances during sunny periods.
- The glazed sides being positioned directly next to the ground floor bay windows present continuous overlooking issues for the residents of the two ground floor flats.
- The light construction of the entrance porches is not deterrent for crime.



Discoloured roof



Overlooking into adjacent flats



Tired timber framing



Dilapidated timber structure

The proposal

The new porches are to be constructed within the footprint and the volume of the existing, but using solid masonry construction with the pitch gable roofs. The two new entrances are to be identical insofar that the one on the north side will have the existing solid side wall kept. The front gables will match the existing gables of dormers and bay window with the roof projecting some 0.6m from the front elevation of the porch and ending with timber bargeboards. The front elevation will contain a solid timber panelled entrance door over which the round window will be positioned within the triangle of the gable. The round window is to match the existing found on both side extensions.

The side walls of the proposed porches will have two small arched casement windows constructed in double glazing set in timber frame to provide sufficient daylight into the entrance lobbies.

The materials as proposed are generally specified to be in keeping with the traditional approach to building and to match the adjacent works as closely as reasonably possible.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the proposal aims to make good of poor design and material choices made in the past by utilising traditional materials and techniques to construct new entrance porches. The works as a whole will be installed in a manner that reflects similar detailing on the block of flats and adjacent properties within the conservation area. At the same time it would enhance the experience and contribute to the general quality of living for the residents.