

TOWNSCAPE & DESIGN ASSESSMENT

PROPOSED DESIGN ALTERATIONS

NIDO STUDENT LIVING, BLACKBURN ROAD, LONDON,
NW6 1RZ

9th December 2017

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
2. Site & Context	3
3. Townscape & Design Assessment	5
4. Policy Context	17
4. Summary & Conclusions	22

Office Address: Townscape Solutions
208 Lightwoods Hill
Smethwick
West Midlands
B67 5EH

Telephone: 0121 429 6111

Email: kbrown@townscapesolutions.co.uk

Revision: B

Date of Issue: 9th December 2017

townscape solutions

BACKGROUND

- I.1 Townscape Solutions has been instructed to provide a townscape & design assessment of the planning application by The Nido Collection for additional floorspace and design amendments in relation to Nido West Hampstead, Blackburn Road, London, NW6 1RZ. The site falls under the authority of the London Borough of Camden.
- I.2 The site was previously a car repair premises which was subject to a planning application for student housing approved in 2009 (LPA Ref: 2009/5823/P). The scheme involved the erection of a part five, part seven, part nine storey plus basement building providing 2,110 sq m of flexible BI employment space at ground floor and 347 beds (39 x cluster flats and 52 x studios) of accommodation for students to upper floors (following demolition of the existing car repair garage).
- I.3 The above scheme was initially refused by the Council for reasons of housing mix and s.106 issues. No townscape issues were included. The scheme was then won on appeal in September 2010 (Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/A/10/2127151).
- I.4 The development has now been constructed and the latest proposals involve the proposed addition of 1-2 storeys at the roof level to provide additional student accommodation, as well as associated amendments to the appearance and landscaping.
- I.5 This report examines the scheme from a townscape and design perspective and demonstrates that the proposals are acceptable and will enhance the character and quality of the area.
- I.6 This document is divided into a number of sections. This section sets out the background and purpose of the report. Subsequent sections are structured as follows:
 - Site & Context
 - Townscape & Design Assessment
 - Policy Context
 - Summary & Conclusions

PURPOSE & METHODOLOGY

- I.7 The main purpose of this report is to assess the relevant townscape and design issues in relation to the proposed scheme and offer my professional opinion on the merits of the proposed design solution. The information in this report is to be used to accompany the planning application.
- I.8 This assessment follows a visit to the site and an appraisal of the previous and proposed plans, 3D views, design and access statement and relevant design policies.
- I.9 There is no definitive methodology for an urban design assessment. A useful tool that has been in operation for a number of years is the use of the 'crib sheet' questions set out in the CABE (now Design Council CABE) guide *'Design and Access Statements: how to write, read and use them'* (2006). The questionnaire sheet provides a qualitative framework for the assessment of the main design components of any development scheme. This is confirmed by the guidance itself:

“Design and access statements are required to provide information covering the design process and physical characteristics of the scheme. You can use this sheet as a starting point when checking the quality of a development scheme.” p.32

As it suggests, the CABE crib sheet provides a starting point for any design assessment and this methodology has been used as the basis of my assessment.

- I.10 The crib sheet covers a range of issues including use and amount. The existing use and majority of accommodation is already present on the site. The proposed scheme mainly involves changes to the roof level and appearance. These issues will be the focus of an abbreviated assessment rather than the full assessment which would be used for a completely new development.

AUTHOR'S EXPERIENCE

- I.11 This report is written by Kenny Brown of Townscape Solutions. With regard to my design background and experience, since 2007 I have been the Managing Director of Townscape Solutions Ltd, an urban design consultancy based in the West Midlands. My work involves masterplanning and advising on development proposals throughout the country including residential and mixed use developments.
- I.12 Previous experience includes Associate Director of Urban Design at Turley Associates in Manchester and Birmingham and Principal Urban Designer in Birmingham City Council's City Design Team based within the Planning Department. Whilst there I co-wrote Places for Living, the Council's residential design guide and Places for All, the general City Design Guide. I have also appeared as an expert witness at many Public Inquiries and Hearings in relation to townscape and design issues.
- I.13 I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and I previously sat on its Urban Design Network Steering Group. I was also a member of the Sounding Board for Better Places to Live by Design, the companion guide to PPG(S)3 and advised on the Design for Homes/ CABE report 'Privacy and Density in Housing'. I hold a BSc (Hons) in Town and Regional Planning and an MA in Urban Design.

SITE AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 The site measuring approximately 0.4 hectares, is located on the north side of Blackburn Road, London, NW6 1RZ, approximately 100m east of West Hampstead Town Centre. The site is occupied by student accommodation providing 347 units within five, seven, and nine storey blocks along with ground floor commercial space. The buildings are arranged in an “L” shaped perimeter block creating a raised central courtyard.
- 2.2 There are no heritage assets on the site and it is not within a conservation area, the nearest being South Hampstead Conservation Area approximately 40 metres to the south, as well as West End Green Conservation Area which lies approximately 100 metres to the north. There are also no listed buildings on the site or within the setting, the nearest being the Grade II Church of St James approximately 220 metres to the south west on West End Lane. There is no street level inter-visibility between the listed church and the site.
- 2.3 The site is in a highly sustainable location and is well located for access including its proximity to public transport. There are bus stops very close to the site on West End Lane and West Hampstead Underground and National Rail stations are located approximately 150 metres, or 1-2 minutes walk from the site. Shops and services including community facilities are also within easy reach.
- 2.4 The site is accessed directly off Blackburn Road. The existing building which houses student accommodation and employment space, is of a contemporary design constructed recently, varying from 5- 9 storeys plus a basement.
- 2.5 The southern edge adjoins Blackburn Road with access off a small paved and landscaped forecourt. Across Blackburn Road to the south a builder's depot is located which has an extant permission for the redevelopment of the site to provide one block of B1/B8 units and one block of 8x houses and 5x flats. Adjacent to this is a footbridge over the railway leading to Broadhurst Gardens further south.
- 2.6 The eastern edge adjoins a ramped entrance to the building with a footpath in front (Billy Fury Way) which links West End Lane to the west with Finchley Road approximately 500 metres to the east. Over the footpath to the east two modern glass and metal clad car sales premises are located.
- 2.7 The northern boundary also adjoins Billy Fury Way, as well as a railway line.
- 2.8 The western edge adjoins no. 13 Blackburn Road which is a former office block recently converted into flats and now known as the Clockwork Factory Apartments providing 29 studio flats (Application Ref: 2014/1671/P). To the north of that is a site with planning permission for a mixed use development which includes 7 x four storey mews houses and a converted Victorian warehouse providing ground floor B1 accommodation and two apartments at first floor (Application Ref: 2015/3148/P)
- 2.9 The wider context is mixed. Historically the site has been surrounded by defined character areas. The railway lines with adjacent commercial development have been a feature since the late 19th century. East and west of West End Lane, large villas and terraced houses were constructed along with retail and commercial uses along the main road. East of West End Lane the houses are larger including 4 storey mansion blocks with a more spacious layout than east of the main road where the streets are of a tighter grain.

- 2.10 Today much of the Victorian townscape still remains, with conservation area status protecting significant areas of it (see Figure 1 below). Post war development, redevelopment and infill has also taken place however which has led to a more varied character, particularly around the railway lines, which form part of the West Hampstead Interchange Intensification Area designated within the London Plan (Policy 2.13) and within the West Hampstead Growth Area (see Figure 1 below). The latter is identified in the Fortune Green and West Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan (Policy 4). Intensification areas are typically built-up areas with good existing or potential public transport accessibility which can support redevelopment at higher densities (London Plan Para 2.59).
- 2.11 Within this Intensification/Growth Area, large commercial/retail units have been constructed to the east of the site. Larger scale residential development (including development on the site) has also taken place. This has continued with mixed use and apartments between 5 and 12 storeys currently being constructed to the west across West End Lane (Application Ref: 2011/6121/P). Comprehensive redevelopment has also been approved at 156 West End Lane for mixed uses including apartments up to 7 storeys north of the site (Application Ref: 2015/6455/P). Within this changing and increasingly high density context, the modest amount of rooftop accommodation proposed on the site is appropriate and offers design enhancements as the remainder of this document demonstrates.

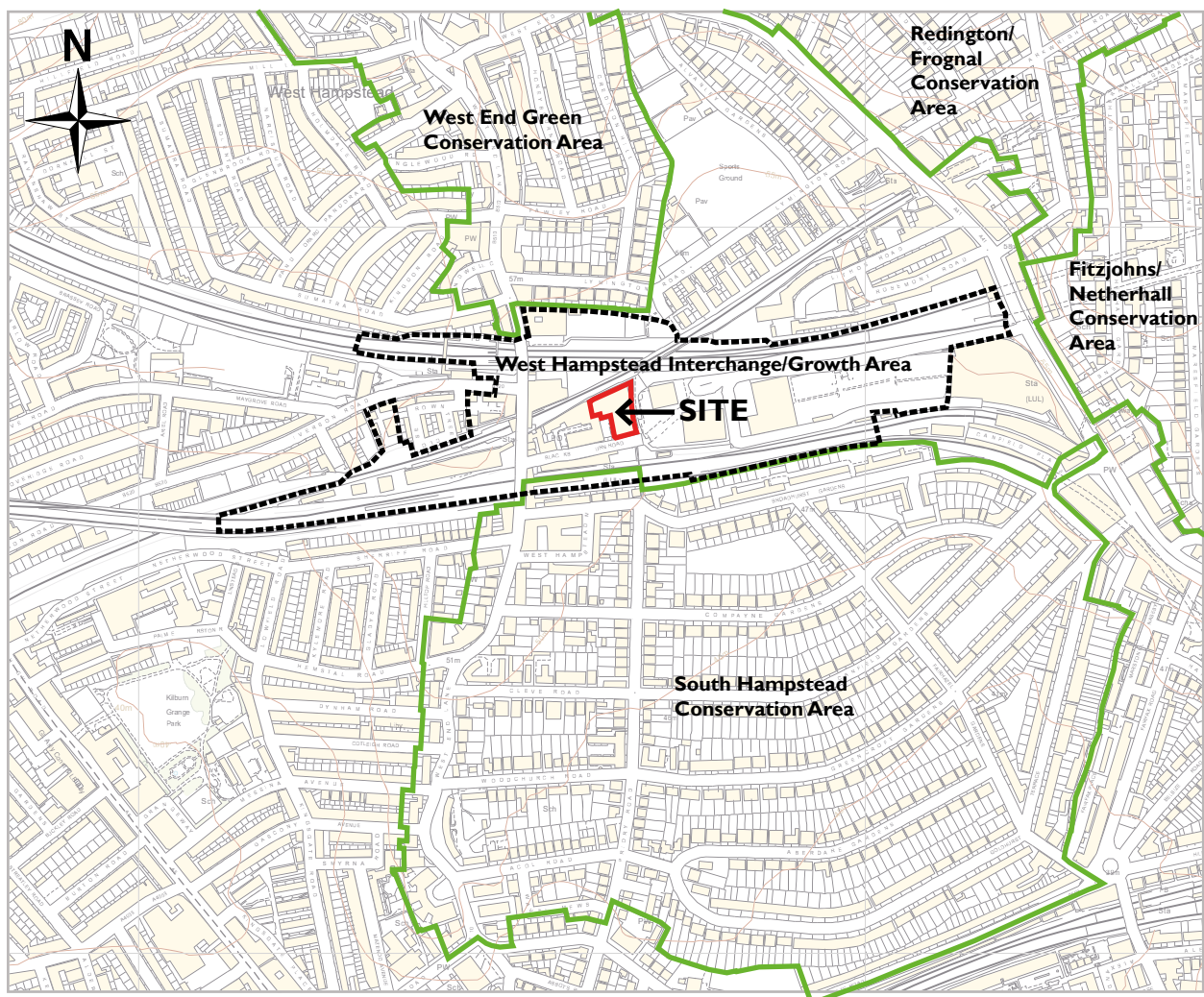


Figure 1: Site Location (OS Copyright, Scale- 1:10000 at A4)

3. TOWNSCAPE & DESIGN ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The proposed alterations to the existing building have been through a long evolution with a number of pre-application meetings with the Council taking place in an effort to agree the design approach. In addition, meetings with the Fortune Green & West Hampstead Neighbourhood Development Forum were also held to listen to local residents views. Full details are contained within the Planning Statement. In essence however the Council and local residents were keen to see improvements in the appearance of the building.
- 3.2 The Council has suggested that a robust justification for any additional height is required. This could derive from opportunities to create a more considered architectural composition and improved appearance of the existing buildings through improved design, materials and detailing. Justification can also be sought if the development seeks to improve the public realm around the existing building.
- 3.3 These objectives have been met and the proposals will improve the character and quality of the area as this section explains.

PROPOSALS

- 3.4 The proposed development seeks to add 41 new units of student accommodation at roof level, as well as public realm improvements. The height will not however exceed its current maximum height of nine storeys. The overall height changes from 5- 9 storeys to 7- 9 storeys overall with height only being added on the lower storeys.
- 3.5 In considering the acceptability of the alterations, the main design issue is the impact of the scheme on the character and appearance of the area.

CHARACTER & APPEARANCE

- 3.6 As stated in the introduction, the CABE crib sheet questions are used as a basis for the assessment. The full assessment deals with each of the key components required for a planning application set out in the CABE document i.e Use, Amount, Layout, Scale, Landscaping, Appearance and Access. Not all of these are relevant however, since the proposals involve amendments to an existing development with additional floorspace at roof level. As set out in the Introduction, an abbreviated assessment is provided in this report. The use and layout of the building will remain unchanged. In terms of any potential impact on character and appearance, the main issues to consider are scale and appearance, with landscaping also of relevance. Each issue will be examined in turn

Scale

- 3.7 In terms of scale, a key question from the crib sheet is “*will the building(s) sit comfortably with their surroundings?*”
- 3.8 The scale of a building is concerned with its absolute height of the building which can be measured in terms of floors and/or to a number of key points such as the eaves or ridge. It is also comparative and measured in terms of how the building as a whole compares to other buildings, as well as how the size of its parts such as doors and windows compare.

3.9 In comparison to the current height of the building, the proposed increase from 5- 9 storeys to 7- 9 storeys overall is modest. The design and access statement (DAS) explains the changes to the scale (on page 2) as follows:

“The extension at roof level to provide additional student accommodation: single storey standing seam mansard roof extension to purple south block; two storey red brick and saw tooth glazed brick extension to red brick south block; single storey red brick and sawtooth glazed brick extension to red brick middle east block.”

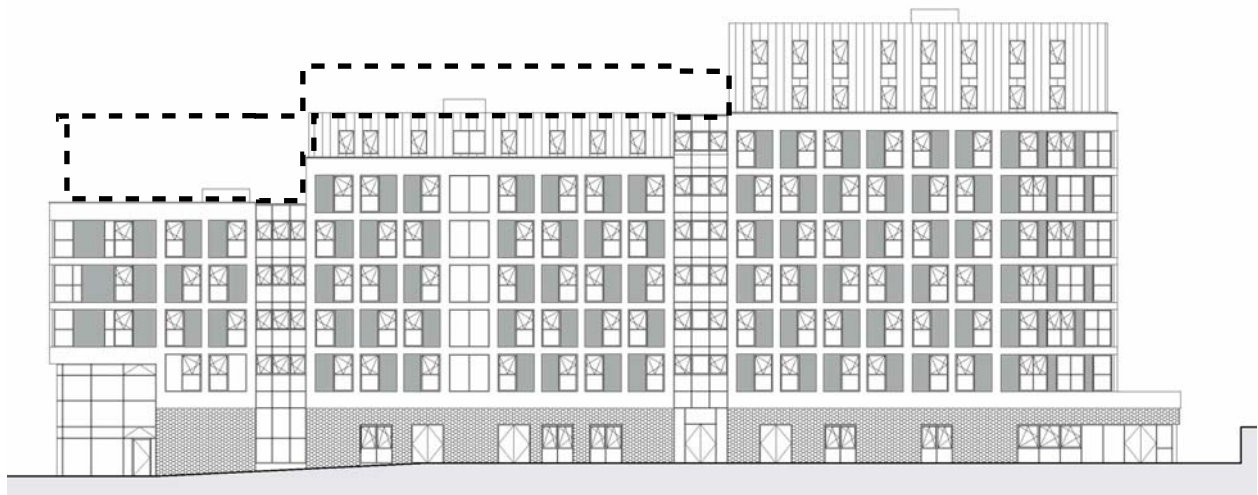


Figure 2: The additional height proposed (shown by the dotted line on the existing elevation above) is modest and only a small increase in percentage terms i.e. approx. 10% on the east elevation

3.10 To summarise the scale amendments, it is helpful to detail the alterations per elevation face as follows:

- South elevation: Existing- 5 storeys/Proposed- 5.5/7 storeys
- East elevation: Existing- 5/7/9 storeys/Proposed- 7/8/9 storeys
- North elevation: Existing 7/9 storeys/Proposed- 7/9 storeys (unchanged)
- West elevation: Existing- 5/7 storeys/Proposed- 5.5/7 storeys

3.11 Figure 2 above shows the east elevation where the additional height is most evident. There is only a small increase of approximately 10% to the face area as the dotted line representing the additional accommodation makes clear. The impact of the additional floor space at roof level is therefore minimal.

3.12 Figures 3-12 illustrate existing and proposed elevations. Views 1-7 show before and after 3D images with both close range and long views from the wider context illustrated. These will be examined further below.

- 3.13 In comparison to the older surrounding buildings, the height is currently greater than most in any case. As the last section discussed however, the site is within the Intensification/Growth Area where larger scale buildings are being constructed. It is also outside any conservation areas and there are no listed buildings on or around the site. Furthermore there are large spaces around the building, in particular the wide railway corridor to the north and south and the parking/circulation areas to the east. In terms of achieving a positive level of enclosure and height to width ratios (see Manual for Streets pages 52-54), the height of the scheme is appropriate and should not cause any overbearing effect given the generous surrounding spaces.
- 3.14 The massing of the proposals is also well articulated with steps in the height breaking up the outline of the building in a sympathetic manner. Each elevation is also further articulated with small recesses and different materials visually breaking up the elevation with vertical sections. Further to this, there is a distinct base, middle and top to the building. Overall the scheme looks comfortable in its context. The accompanying 3D views that have been produced demonstrate this to be the case. Again it should be stressed that the increase in height is modest in comparison to the existing situation. Furthermore it is mainly on the east elevation where the increase in height is apparent. East of the site there is little of any sensitivity, being mainly car showrooms, a DIY store and car parking.

Appearance

- 3.15 In terms of the appearance, the CABI crib sheet asks “*how will the development visually relate to its surroundings?*” and “*will it look attractive?*” It is important to understand how the proposed amendments will visually relate in appearance to the existing building, as well as its surroundings.
- 3.16 The design and access statement (page 2) explains the changes to the appearance as follows:
- “Re-cladding existing zinc standing seam roof elements in red brick and sawtooth glazed brick;
Replacement of existing timber infill panels with sawtooth glazed bricks; Installation of white concrete horizontal and vertical elements to windows;
Ground floor mesh cladding replaced with back sprayed glazing panels;*
- 3.17 In summary, the main design objectives are explained in the DAS on page 3:
- “The key driver for the whole project has been to unify the many different languages of the existing building while maintaining the smaller scale of the broken down blocks. In addition the materials of the existing are to be replaced with higher quality finishes to improve the appearance of the building.”*
- 3.18 With regard to the existing situation, there are a number of different contrasting materials used including different coloured bricks and cladding. The top floor grey cladding for example looks utilitarian and contrasts with the surrounding Edwardian streets where red brick is the predominant facing material.
- 3.19 The opportunity has been taken to rationalise the materials including the replacement of the grey zinc cladding on the top floor with brick piers, glazing and glazed bricks, as well as replace the wood effect cladding with glazed bricks on the lower floors. The proposed changes will create more consistency between the upper and lower floors, which at the same

time still recognises and marks the top floor with a set back and double height proportions. The base is also to be improved with a change of materials and an enhanced appearance. The south, and in particular, the east elevations, are where the proposed amendments will be most apparent. Figures 5 and 7 summarise the proposed alterations on these elevations with full details included within the design and access statement.

- 3.20 The proposed changes to the elevations will improve the appearance of the building with a more coherent approach resulting in a more considered architectural composition overall. It will give the building a better finished top, as well as a related middle and base of the building with better overall proportions.
- 3.21 The roof level will also incorporate a green/brown roof improving the buildings sustainability credentials in comparison to the current situation.
- 3.22 In terms of the relationship to the surrounding context, the building already exists and the changes are only minor additions on the whole. The alterations will however be an improvement. The building after the amendments are made will relate more positively to the area and in particular to the other existing and proposed buildings in the vicinity with a higher quality and more considered contemporary appearance. The use of quality materials including traditional brick, as well as the vertical proportions and more attention to detailing, will also ensure it relates better to the older buildings within views from surrounding Victorian and Edwardian streets. Views 6 and 7 demonstrate that the proposed treatment with its consistent palette of materials looks more comfortable with a better relationship in terms of the skyline silhouette, colours and materials. The before and after images from the conservation areas demonstrate a clear enhancement to the views out, with a more sympathetic and attractive backdrop.
- 3.23 The use of quality materials and more coherency is likely to be successful on the whole. In any case paragraph 60 of the NPPF suggests that planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes. The scheme has however sought to both promote and reinforce local distinctiveness.

LANDSCAPING

- 3.24 The proposals also include improvements to the landscaping. The CABE crib sheet asks *“Will it help to make the place look good and work well, and will it meet any specific aims for the site?”*
- 3.25 The scheme includes improvements to the landscaping and public realm. There are three main aims set out in the Landscaping DAS:
 - 1. Improve the feeling of safety and security;
 - 2. Promote existing public pedestrian routes, improving quality of routes and visibility;
 - 3. Improve existing streetscape and arrival experience to the student accommodation building through tree planting and street furniture.

- 3.26 In summary the following measures are proposed to meet these aims. The DAS explains the measures in more detail.
1. Widening of Billy Fury Way junction with new parking to match.
 2. Improved lighting along both stretches of Billy Fury Way
 3. Improvements to planting on adjoining site (subject to separate approval)
 4. Improved communal garden with filtered views to Billy Fury Way through replaced railing
 5. Improved rear gardens with new railings, lighting and screen planting
 6. Planting to Billy Fury Way Edge
 7. New paving to Blackburn Road frontage
 8. Tree planting, seating and new lighting
 9. Lighting and screen planting along Billy Fury Way
- 3.27 The scheme will therefore not only improve the immediate environment surrounding the building, but will also enable improvements to surrounding spaces and key routes and in particular Billy Fury Way. The quality of this route which connects Blackburn Road to Finchley Road currently leaves a lot to be desired and the proposed measures should enhance its appearance, as well as improve perceptions of public safety and security.
- 3.28 Overall it is clear that the proposed landscape measures positively answer the CABI crib sheet questions and will enhance the townscape and public realm on and around the site.

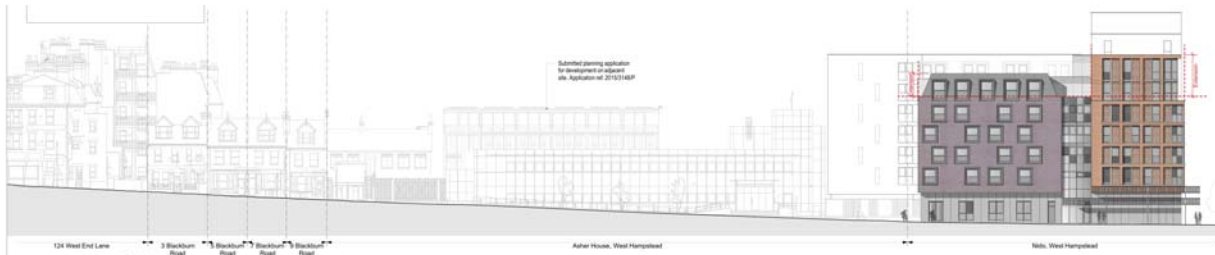


Figure 3: Proposed contextual long south elevation along Blackburn Road (Not to Scale)



Figure 4: Existing south elevation (Not to Scale)



Figure 5: Proposed south elevation (Not to Scale)

- Existing purple brick facade remains;
- A mansard style roof addition in line with local examples;
- The dormer windows integrate and become part of the existing building;
- New deeper reveals to match the mansard roof;
- The existing metal mesh cladding to the ground floor area is replaced with a slim profile back sprayed glazed curtain wall.

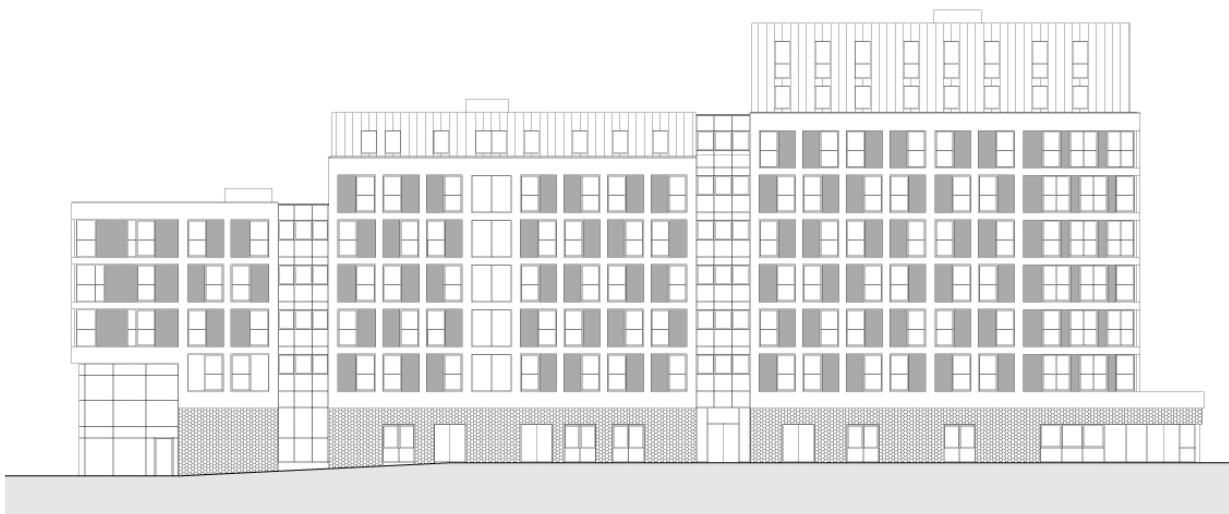


Figure 6: Existing east elevation (Not to Scale)



Figure 7: Proposed east elevation (Not to Scale)

- The existing red brick is maintained as is;
- The additional storeys match the existing brick below;
- The openings appear as double height;
- The zinc clad boxes are re-clad to match the new additions;
- The existing timber infill panels are replaced with a sawtooth glazed brick;
- Glazed brick references the Victorian residential buildings in the area;
- The existing metal mesh cladding to the ground floor area is replaced with a slim profile back sprayed glazed curtain wall.

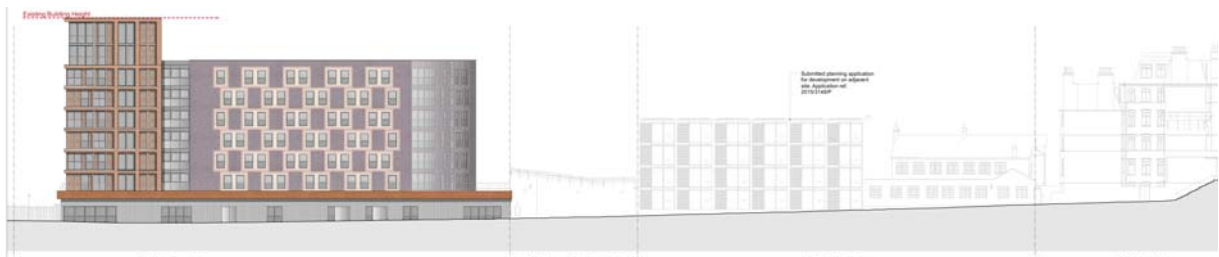


Figure 8: Proposed contextual long north elevation (Not to Scale)



Figure 9: Existing north elevation (Not to Scale)



Figure 10: Proposed north elevation (Not to Scale)



Figure 11: Existing west elevation (Not to Scale)



Figure 12: Proposed west elevation (Not to Scale)

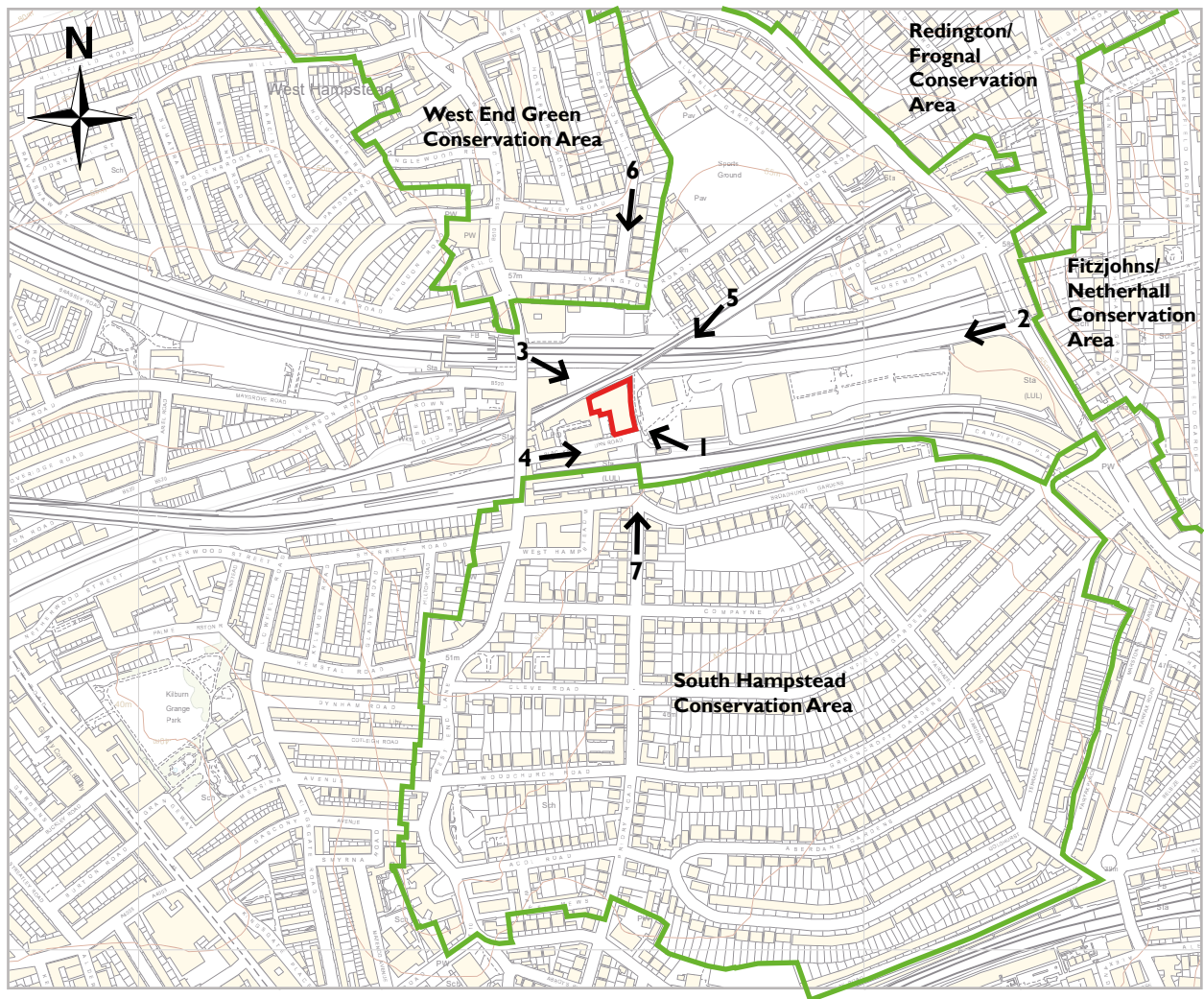


Figure 13: Location of the 3D views (OS Copyright, Scale- 1:10000 at A4)



View 1: Existing view northwest from Blackburn Road



View 1: Proposed view northwest from Blackburn Road



View 2: Existing long view approximately 500 metres to the east at the junction of Blackburn Road and Finchley Road



View 2: Proposed view



View 3: Existing view from West End Lane to the north west of the site looking south west



View 3: Proposed view



View 4: Existing view from Blackburn Road west of the site



View 4: Proposed view



View 5: Existing long view from Billy Fury Way to the north east



View 5: Proposed long view



View 6: Existing view looking south from Crediton Hill to the north of the site



View 6: Proposed view



View 7: Existing view looking north from Priory Road south of the site



View 7: Proposed view

INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 This section builds on the assessment in the previous section and sets out the policy context and the degree to which the proposals comply with national and local design policy.

NATIONAL POLICY

- 4.2 In terms of national policy; principally the NPPF, the scheme addresses the main criteria. Paragraphs 17 and Section 7 (Requiring Good Design) contain the main design references. These include sense of place, optimising the potential of the site, safe and accessible environments and a visually attractive result. Paragraph 58 in particular sets out a range of objectives:

- *will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- *establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;*
- *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;*
- *respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;*
- *create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and*
- *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.*

- 4.3 The design response achieves these objectives. In summary, the scheme provides a suitable use in a way that sensitively optimises the potential of the site. It also improves the appearance of its already active frontage with main windows and doors facing the public realm offering a potentially safe and secure environment. Visual attractiveness is somewhat subjective but the use of appropriate and well proportioned elevations and quality materials leave me in no doubt that the result will be attractive. The landscape proposals should also create a potentially safer and more accessible environment.

- 4.4 Para 64 of the NPPF also states the following:

“Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.”

The previous section which set out my design assessment, clearly demonstrates that the scheme meets the main design principles identified by Design Council CABI, with regard to design quality. It is certainly not a “development of poor design”. Furthermore there is only a modest increase in the scale, and the design relates coherently to the remainder of the building improving the appearance overall in comparison to the existing appearance.

LOCAL POLICY

4.5 Regarding local policy and guidance, a number of documents should be considered:

- *The London Plan*
- *Camden Local Plan*
- *Camden Planning Guidance (CPG)*
- *Fortune Green and West Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan 2015*

The London Plan

4.6 The London Plan provides the spatial development strategy for London. The site is within an 'Area of Intensification' i.e. typically built-up areas with good existing or potential public transport accessibility which can support redevelopment at higher densities (London Plan Para 2.59). The site is within an intensification area known as the 'West Hampstead Interchange'.

4.7 Policy 3.5 of the London Plan relates to issues of design quality and context which suggests that the design of all new housing developments should enhance the quality of local places. In addition, the place shaping policies set out a number of townscape and design policies. Policies 7.4 Local Character and Policy 7.6 Architecture, are of the most direct relevance to the scheme.

4.8 **Policy 7.4 Local Character**

"Development should have regard to the form, function, and structure of an area, place or street and the scale, mass and orientation of surrounding buildings. It should improve an area's visual or physical connection with natural features. In areas of poor or ill -defined character, development should build on the positive elements that can contribute to establishing an enhanced character for the future function of the area."

4.9 The scheme is entirely in accordance with this policy. The site is located within an area of mixed and changing character. The design also relates in scale and form to the Intensification Area skyline which is punctuated by taller buildings, including the existing building itself.

4.10 **Policy 7.6 Architecture**

"Architecture should make a positive contribution to a coherent public realm, streetscape and wider cityscape. It should incorporate the highest quality materials and design appropriate to its context."

4.11 The scheme incorporates the above objective and as the design assessment in the previous section demonstrated, it uses improved high quality materials and is appropriate to the context with its form, scale and blend of traditional and modern materials enhancing the appearance of the building.

4.12 **Policy 5.11 Green Roofs and Development Site Environs**

Planning decisions

Major development proposals should be designed to include roof, wall and site planting, especially green roofs and walls where feasible, to deliver as many of the following objectives as possible:

- a adaptation to climate change (ie aiding cooling)*
- b sustainable urban drainage*
- c mitigation of climate change (ie aiding energy efficiency)*
- d enhancement of biodiversity*
- e accessible roof space*
- f improvements to appearance and resilience of the building*
- g growing food.*

- 4.13 The scheme is not a 'major development' as such since only a modest extension is proposed. Nevertheless the applicant is willing to incorporate a green/brown roof on the building meeting the objectives of Policy 5.1

Camden Local Plan

- 4.14 The Camden Local Plan was adopted on 3 July 2017 and has replaced the Core Strategy and Camden Development Policies documents as the basis for planning decisions and future development in the borough. Relevant design policies include D1 Design and D2 Heritage.
- 4.15 Policy D1 consists of a number of design objectives, the main thrust of which requires respect for local context and character. As the previous section explained, the scheme improves the relationship to local context and character and enhances existing views.
- 4.16 Policy D2 relates to heritage impact. The site is not within a conservation area and contains no listed buildings or other heritage assets. It is also not within the setting of any listed buildings. It is however visible from surrounding conservation areas. Policy D2 (g) suggests that the Council will "*resist development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character or appearance of that conservation area.*"
- 4.17 As the previous section demonstrated, no harm is caused, and indeed the scheme improves the views out of the conservation areas with the more sympathetic massing and materials. This is evident from the 3D before and after views.

Camden Planning Guidance

- 4.18 Camden Planning Guidance Design CPG1 should also be considered. One of the key messages in Section 2 (page 9) suggests that Camden is committed to excellence in design and schemes should consider the context of a development and its surrounding area and the design of the building itself. Both of these issues have been examined earlier with a positive result.

- 4.19 Section 4 deals with extensions and alterations which suggests that alterations should always take into account the character and design of the property and its surroundings. Section 5 deals directly with roof alterations:

Roof extensions fall into two categories:

- *Alterations to the overall roof form; or*
- *Smaller alterations within the existing roof form, such as balconies and terraces.*

When proposing roof alterations and extensions, the main considerations should be:

- *The scale and visual prominence;*
- *The effect on the established townscape and architectural style;*
- *The effect on neighbouring properties*

- 4.20 Again these considerations have been positively addressed and the proposed design will have a positive townscape impact. Whilst additional space is added at roof level, the maximum height does not increase. Furthermore, the more sympathetic materials and colours offer less visual prominence in a number of key views. The effect is positive on the established townscape. The architectural style is also more coherent resulting in an improved coordination between the base middle and top of the building.

- 4.21 Impact on amenity has not been expressly examined in this report, however the modest increase in accommodation at roof level, its location on the building and lack of nearby affected properties, should ensure that there is no resulting adverse impact on neighbouring properties.

Fortune Green & West Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.22 The Council formally adopted the Fortune Green and West Hampstead (FGWH) Neighbourhood Plan on 16 September 2015. The plan now forms part of the statutory 'development plan' for the area and therefore will be used alongside the Council's own adopted planning documents when making decisions on planning applications in the neighbourhood area.

- 4.23 The Neighbourhood Plan includes a number of relevant sections, particularly Policy 2 on Design:

All development shall be of high quality of design, which complements and enhances the distinct local character and identity of Fortune Green and West Hampstead.

This shall be achieved by:

- Development which positively interfaces with the street and streetscape in which it is located.*
- Development which maintains the positive contributions to character of existing buildings and structures.*
- Development which is human in scale, in order to maintain and create a positive relationship between buildings and street level activity.*
- Development which has regard to the form, function, structure and heritage of a place - including the scale, mass, orientation, pattern and grain of surrounding buildings, streets and spaces.*

v. *A presumption in favour of a colour palate which reflects, or is in harmony with, the red brick and London stock brick of existing development.*

vi. *New buildings and extensions that respect and are sensitive to the height of existing buildings in their vicinity and setting. Higher buildings in the Growth Area will need to have regard to their impact on the setting of the two immediately adjacent conservation areas, in order to avoid any negative impact on them.*

vii. *Extensions - and infill development - being in character and proportion with existing development and its setting, including the relationship to any adjoining properties.*

viii. *The provision of associated high quality public realm.*

ix. *Having regard to the impact on local views across the Area and the streetscapes within the Area (as identified in A11 and Map 2).*

x. *Development which aims to fulfil the criteria set out in Building for Life 12 (as detailed in A18).*

4.24 Points vi and vii are probably of the most direct relevance to the scheme. In terms of the impact on any conservation areas, the site is outside the conservation areas and an additional 1-2 storeys on the lower roof sections should not create any adverse impact on the setting. It is only the more limited side view of the roof extension that will be at all evident from the conservation areas in any case. Furthermore the design of the extension improves views from the conservation areas. Map 2 in the plan identifies a number of views to consider including views towards the site from the conservation areas. Views 6 and 7 seen earlier on page 16 of this report illustrate views out from the conservation areas where it is evident that the views will be enhanced. Policy 3 also deals specifically with the setting of conservation areas and it is clear that the scheme is in accordance with this policy.

4.25 Point vii states that extensions should be in character with existing development. Whilst this policy is probably more intended to apply to domestic house extensions, nevertheless the previous section explained that the roof level extension and other design amendments will improve the design of the building offering more overall coherence and consistency.

4.26 Also of relevance is the dedicated section dealing with the West Hampstead Growth Area. Policies 4i and 4ii are of relevance to townscape issues:

i. *Be in keeping with and enhance the character of the wider area - including the two adjacent conservation areas and their settings.*

ii. *Have regard to local views of and across the area (as identified in A11 and Map2).*

4.27 These points have been addresses above where it is clear that the proposals are in accordance with the policy.

4.28 Paragraph B4 also addresses the issue of building height:

Height: although classified as an area for intensification, the height and mass of new buildings will need to respect, and be sensitive to, the height of existing buildings in their vicinity and setting (see Policy 2).

4.29 The text does not however specify any height limit or deal directly with additions to existing buildings. The height increase is however justifiable as previously discussed and the addition of 1-2 storeys of roof top accommodation is modest in this context.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This assessment has examined the proposed scheme in relation to townscape and design issues, including policy matters. The proposals involve alterations to an existing block of student accommodation to create an additional 41 units at roof level.
- 5.2 Section 2 examined the site and context. The site is in a highly sustainable location within an Intensification/Growth Area which includes a number of existing and proposed high density developments nearby. There are no heritage assets on the site and it is not within a conservation area. The wider context is mixed with buildings of varied age and type including recent larger scale contemporary buildings both existing and proposed. There are nearby conservation areas but these will not be adversely affected.
- 5.3 The main proposed alterations and design issues are explained in Section 3 and can be summarised as follows:
1. The amended scheme adds a modest 1-2 storeys at roof level, increasing the height from 5-9 storeys to 7-9 storeys overall but with no increase to the maximum height of the building.
 2. The east elevation is where the additional height is most evident and there is only a small increase of approximately 10% to the face area. The impact of the additional accommodation at roof level is therefore minimal.
 3. The proposed massing of the building is also well articulated with changes in height and set backs breaking up the outline of the building in a sympathetic manner.
 4. Overall the scheme looks comfortable in its context. The accompanying 3D views that have been produced demonstrate this to be the case.
 5. The opportunity has also been taken to rationalise the materials including the replacement of the grey zinc cladding on the top floor with brick piers, glazing and glazed bricks as well as replace the wood effect cladding with glazed bricks on the lower floors. The proposed changes will create more consistency between the upper and lower floors. The base is also to be improved with a change of materials and an enhanced appearance.
 6. The proposed changes to the elevations will improve the appearance of the building with a more considered and coherent approach than there is currently. It will give the building a more finished top, as well as a related middle and bottom of the building with better overall proportions.
 7. The roof level will also incorporate a green/brown roof enhancing its sustainability credentials.
 8. Views from surrounding streets and spaces will be enhanced, including views from the nearby conservation areas. The skyline silhouette, colours and materials are improved and more sympathetic, enhancing the views.
 9. The proposed landscaping and public realm measures will also improve the appearance of the building's setting and perception of safety and security within surrounding spaces and key routes.

- 5.4 Section 4 examined national and local design policy in relation to the scheme. It is clear that the proposals are in line with national and local policy in terms of townscape and design principles.
- 5.5 After assessing the design of the additional roof level accommodation and other design amendments, including changes to the materials, landscaping and also relevant policy issues, it is my professional opinion that the scheme is of a high quality of design and will improve the character and quality of the area. The architect has done an excellent job of providing additional accommodation in a way that not only relates well to the existing building but improves its appearance and enhances the townscape. In my view there is no design reason why the proposals should not be approved.