

## **DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

This Design and Access Statement follows in order and content the requirements of the section "What information should be included in a design and access statement" taken from the Camden Planning and Built Environment website.

### **Description Of The Existing Property**

The property to be modified is the four storey terrace house at:

31 Downshire Hill  
Hampstead  
London NW3 1NT

The building is brick built with a slate roof and rendered facade. It has a cellar area in front and a small garden at the back. The date of construction is estimated as 1800.

### **Design Principles And Concepts Behind The Proposed Development**

The intent of the modification is to create a kitchen/dining room in the back of the basement. This area is presently divided into a room and corridor by a wood and plasterboard partition which has been added since the property was built. The proposal is to remove this non-structural partition creating a room which is substantially larger than the front basement room which presently serves as a kitchen and is suitable for food preparation only on account of its small size.

The front basement room and corridor have solid floors. These floors have been screeded and tiled on top of what is probably the original brick. The floor in the back basement room is suspended timber, 100 mm lower than the solid floors in kitchen and corridor and is clearly not original.

The right hand side wall of the property, as viewed from the front has subsided at some time, probably when the present Freemasons Arms was built with a basement directly adjacent to this property. No further subsidence has been apparent during the last 40 years, during which time I have lived at this address. The extent of the subsidence is such that the rear right corner of the building, as viewed from the front is some 150 mm below the front left hand corner of the building. The basement ceiling, as constructed, is low and the subsidence almost certainly explains why a previous owner has seen fit to reduce the floor level in the back room by 100 mm. Why they did this by installing a suspended floor is not so obvious.

The sub-floor ventilation which is necessary to preserve the suspended floor makes the back room difficult to heat.

Concerning the floor the proposal is to replace the existing suspended timber floor in the basement back room and the adjacent area of solid floor with a new solid floor at a consistent level. It is proposed that this floor will be paved with natural stone and that the finished floor level will be some 25 mm below the present level of the suspended floor. This floor level will improve the ceiling height and enable a standard height worktop to be installed along the back wall without impinging on the back window. Replacing the suspended timber floor will improve heat conservation.

The internal door to the basement back room, which is presently located in the wood and plasterboard wall, will be moved so that it separates the back room from the corridor. The door dimensions and residual rebates for locks and hinges in the new position make it practically certain that this change relocates the door back to its original position.

It is proposed to enlarge the opening in the chimney breast to accommodate a range cooker and cooker hood. If practical the hood will exhaust to the flue which will be protected with a stainless steel liner. If exhaust via the flue proves impractical due to the low ceiling height the exhaust will

be ducted through the back wall. The chimney breast above the hood will be supported on pre-stressed, pre-cast concrete lintels as proposed by the consultant, (see below), or equivalent steel RSJ's laid across the remaining flanks of the chimney breast.

It is proposed to reduce the depth of the cupboard in the back left hand corner of the building to 600 mm so as to correspond with standard kitchen units that might be installed next to it. The wooden partition wall of this cupboard is clearly not original and its location coincident with the doorway of the back door indicates that the depth of the cupboard has been increased at some time, probably to convert the cupboard to serve as a toilet, as evidenced by redundant plumbing. Doors for the reduced depth cupboard will be taken from the two existing alcove cupboards in the back room. It is more than likely that moving these panelled doors as proposed will relocate them to their original locations.

The intention is to install kitchen units, with a sink and drainer, along the back wall of the house, with drainage through the wall connecting to the drain which conducts water underneath the house discharging into the main drain in Downshire Hill,

It is clear to me that the original intent of the building was to have the kitchen at the back. The cupboard in the back left hand corner has a window plus iron bars and was, I believe, intended as a pantry. Inspection of the hearth shows that it has been partially bricked in and redundant water pipes are evident. A kitchen stove and/or a boiler would almost certainly have been installed in this location. The floor would originally have been solid throughout and at one level.

In conclusion I believe that the proposed modifications will return the back room to a configuration and intended use close to that of the original building. Known differences between this proposal and the building as originally constructed are the accommodation of a wider cooker and cooker hood to meet modern cooking and ventilation needs, also a lower finished floor level, necessary on account of the historical subsidence. It is worthy of note that the proposed finished floor level is still above the external reduced ground level.

### **Intended Use Of The Proposed Development**

It is intended that the enlarged back basement room will serve as a kitchen/diner and that the front basement room, which presently serves as a kitchen will be repurposed without modification as a utility/work room.

### **Layout Of The Proposed Development**

See the accompanying drawings

### **Scale Of The Proposed Development**

There are no external works so that the scale of the proposed development is irrelevant

### **Landscaping**

All the works are internal so that landscaping is not applicable

### **Appearance Of The Proposed Development**

Doors used in the modification are relocated existing doors. They are simple panelled doors which are probably original to the property and I believe their new locations will be their locations in the

building as originally constructed.

The floor will be paved with a plain natural unpolished stone, approximately 25 mm thick, over a hardcore and concrete base.

Standard dimension kitchen units with granite worktops and stainless steel sinks are envisioned.

### **Influence On Design Of The Local Context**

Reasons for proposing these changes include:

- This house has a small footprint. The proposed change incorporates the existing corridor beside the basement back room, which is presently wasted space, into the room thereby creating the space for a kitchen/diner.
- Extending the hearth to accommodate a range cooker allows for safer and more ambitious cooking and reflects modern kitchen accoutrements
- A cooker hood will allow controlled ventilation in the kitchen which has not been available in this house previously.
- In its relocated position the kitchen looks out on to the garden instead of a blank wall as at present.
- Under present social conventions a formal dining room is not required. However, should a separate formal dining room be required at some time in the future this can be created without difficulty in the basement front room or the ground floor front room or alternatively in the remodelled cellar at basement level in front of the building.

### **Access To The Development Site**

Access to the new kitchen will be via a door from the basement corridor. There will be a 125 mm step down to the kitchen at this doorway. Access to the garden from the new kitchen will be via the existing back door. There will be a 125 mm step up to garden path level and a further mm step up in the path to garden level.

There is a right of way from the garden, behind the Freemasons Arms to Willow Road. This right of way will be used to bring in hardcore for the new solid floor. If practical, concrete for the new floor will be pumped in from a mixer parked on Downshire Hill. Should this prove impractical concrete components will be barrowed in via the right of way and mixed in the garden of 31 Downshire Hill.

### **Historical And Architectural Importance Of The Listed Building**

This building is an artisan cottage and, whereas it has a pleasing ambience, is of itself of little historical or architectural importance. However it occupies a position in a street which is remarkable for the pleasing appearance of its buildings which are mostly from the Regency and of varied appearance but consistent scale. In this context it is a significant element of the local scene.

### **Consultation**

In order to establish that my proposed modifications were structurally sound I consulted Property Tectonics in 2012 and their representative, Mr. I. Haywood BSc MRICS inspected the property, advising me on the acceptability of removing the partition wall and the requirements regarding opening up the chimney breast. See his letter dated 9 July 2012, attached. (Note that the address appearing on the letter of 31 Devonshire Hill is incorrect and should be 31 Downshire Hill).