



# The Garden House

*Façade Retention & Demolition Application*

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JAMES GORST ARCHITECTS

## Introduction

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This document has been prepared to accompany a planning application at the Garden House, seeking permission to carefully retain, partially demolish and subsequently reconstruct areas of damaged external façade. Wherever possible existing bricks will be re-used to repair and reconstruct the walls as existing.

The application has been prepared to address neighbourly concerns of programme length and construction crossover with nearby site 'Hillview'. By proposing the careful demolition and reinstatement of existing low quality brick walls as shown, the construction programme will be reduced by over 6 months. This will be achieved by the careful reconstruction of external walls where appropriate, allowing work to commence on the main house during simultaneous works in the basement.

Importantly these works propose no changes whatsoever to the size, height or area of the existing proposals. Replacement brickwork will be built in the exact position as existing and of the same thickness.

Further, the construction team would welcome Camden Council to make periodic visits to inspect wall positions during construction sizes if required.

It should also be noted that whilst not required to facilitate construction, the strategic demolition included in this application will significantly expedite the process of refurbishment of the house, lessen the disruption to neighbours and reduce the proposed parking suspension period by over 6 months.

This report aims to provide a clear and concise evaluation of the existing brickwork and proposes a logical conclusion that will save time, lessen disruption and provide a long-term sustainable building.

**The Garden House**

**Façade Retention and Demolition Application**

This statement has been prepared by James Gorst Architects on behalf of Mr Alex Vlachos and follows full planning consent and permitted development consents for the refurbishment of The Garden House. Its aim is to clarify the benefits of the partial demolition of the existing house, in regards to neighbouring amenity, construction time on site, sustainability and on-site health and safety.

Following community consultation with residents of the Vale of Health the following critical issues have been raised:

1. Concerns regarding ground movement and groundwater flow affecting neighbouring houses.
2. Overall construction period.
3. Suspension of parking pays.

Item 1 has been covered extensively in the Basement Impact Assessment available online. Movement monitoring targets will be setup around the perimeter of the site and neighbouring properties where appropriate, and the relevant movement and groundwater summary pages can be found in the BIA pages 12-15 (application reference 2017/2885/P).

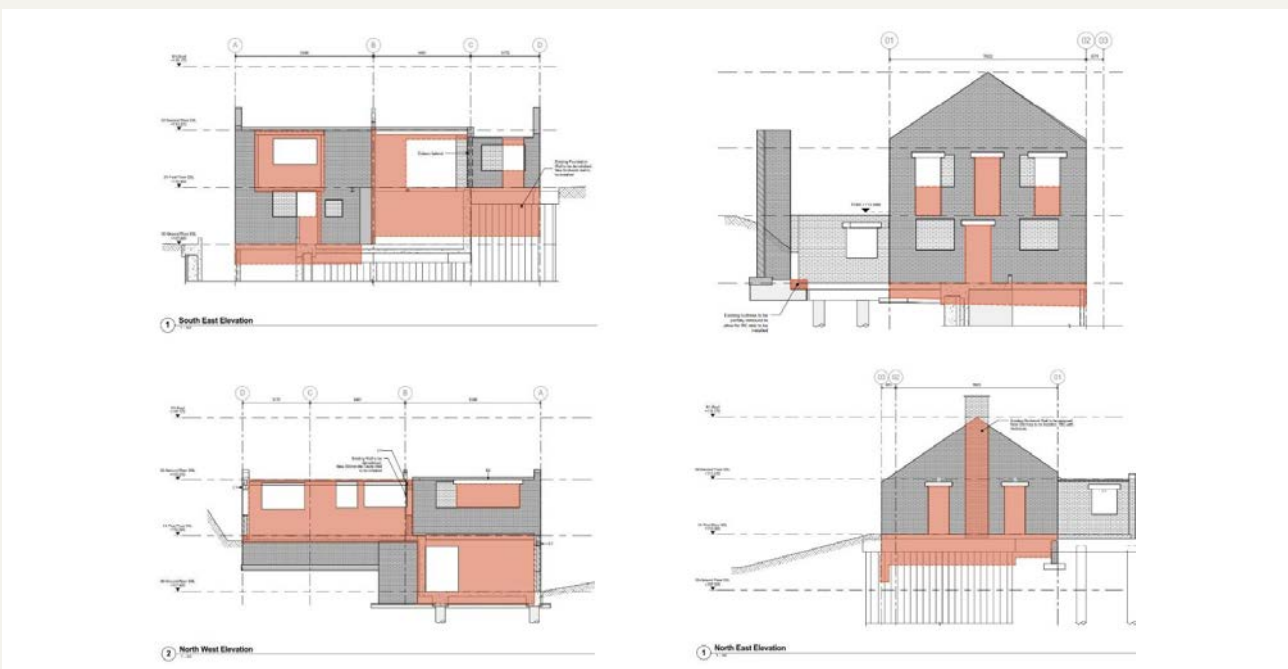
Mindful of the tranquil environment of the Vale of Health we are now working with our contractors to identify opportunities to address items 2 and 3. Together with our design team we have been exploring a variety of ways to save time on site and limit disruption whilst delivering the project with the least possible impact on the immediate neighbours.

The current scheme has an estimated site programme of 18-24 months and this report identifies a opportunities to abbreviate the construction period to 65 weeks- a reduction of up to 9 months in construction disruption, parking bay suspension and noise. As per correspondence between the design team and residents, our ambition at this stage is to complete the project with the least possible disruption and as quickly as possible.

It has been calculated that this reduction can be achieved by retaining only brickwork that is in good condition, reducing the need to temporarily prop, repair and strengthen areas of external brickwork currently suffering from movement as a result of seasonal shrinkage and swelling. Areas of retained, good quality brickwork are identified on the attached drawings, specifically the entire north façade which will be protected, propped and retained throughout.

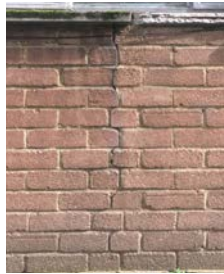
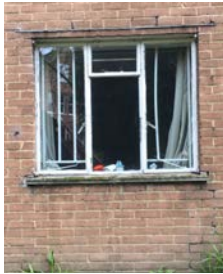
**Extent**

The existing consented scheme gives approval to substantial demolition works to the existing envelope, as shown below.





In order to retain the patchwork of brickwork shown above, significant temporary works will be required to stabilise and safely support the brickwork during the construction period- an intensely time-consuming process considering the quality of the existing brickwork, as evidenced in the photographs below:



*Existing brick damage and movement on the south facade, please see drawings for further information.*



*Existing brickwork on the east elevation.*



*Existing brickwork on the west elevation.*

## Quality

As evidenced above, the existing masonry façade is of low quality and historic value, built during the post-war rationing period. The walls sit on shallow foundations on waterlogged ground subject to seasonal shrinkage and swelling. Significant ground movement beneath this low quality construction has resulted in significant cracks throughout, and cracking of individual bricks.

Whilst this could be overcome with temporary propping steelwork, repointing, crack stitching and replacement bricks, this process on all four façades would come at a high cost in terms of construction programme, effort and local vehicular disruption.

Throughout the demolition and reconstruction process, any existing bricks that can be re-used will be used to reconstruct the external walls.

## Sustainability

In terms of sustainability, we are balancing both the benefits of high performance, high quality new construction with the material efficiency of retaining external wall where it is of sound quality. The images overleaf below show the brickwork on the north façade:



*No evidence of significant cracking, damage or deterioration of brickwork. Wall is in relatively good condition with no visible cracks and is marked for protection, propping and retention.*

This façade will be retained in its entirety, with the exception of three new openings (already consented) for two windows and a new fireplace and chimney.

We are not proposing a total demolition, but the careful removal and replacement of damaged brickwork on a case-by-case basis dependent on localised quality. This long-term, fabric first approach to sustainability is what will allow the building to stand the test of time on a demanding site suffering from significant groundwater flow and underlying silt clay soil.

### **Programme, Parking and Noise**

As mentioned in the introduction to this statement, this exercise has been a direct response to various concerns voiced by neighbours during the Construction Management Plan consultation period.

The existing programme estimate for construction is between 18 and 24 months. The demolition shown in this application would discard the need to temporarily prop, protect and repair bad brickwork as well as allowing free movement around site. We have been advised that these changes reduce the time on site to 65 weeks, a 9-month reduction in overall programme. Not only would this be a benefit in terms of noise, but would also reduce the period of suspended parking bays.

Our contractors have advised that during the demolition (and subsequent construction) period, the existing property will be fully scaffolded and sheathed with noise attenuating sheeting to limit disturbance to neighbours. Rebuilding the existing external walls would take place during the basement construction period and the period of noisy work would be reduced by over 6 months.

### **Health and Safety**

In 2015 the Health & Safety Executive revised the CDM Regulations, the result of which places greater responsibility to designers to remove project risks before work starts on site. As architects and lead designers it is our duty to eliminate foreseeable health and safety risks to anyone affected by the work.

In the case of these poor quality, cracked and broken walls our feeling is that the clearest method of reducing these risks is to remove the walls and rebuild them in the exact same position using quality brickwork. Given the extent of demolition already consented, it would make sense to add these areas of damaged brickwork to the demolition scope and retain only the façade in the best condition.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, given the reasons listed above and in the supplementary structural report by engineers Eckersley O'Callaghan it is estimated that this selective façade retention and demolition would reduce the construction phase from 18-24 months to 65 weeks.

This would alleviate disruption to the Vale of Health residents, reduce the impact of site works, provide a safer working environment and a produce sustainable, high quality building.

Critically, this creative approach directly addresses two of the key concerns raised by concerned residents and proposes a straightforward and sensible strategy to deliver the project in the quickest way with the least disruption to the local residents.