

**27 Belsize Crescent, London, NW3 4QY**

## **Visual Impact Assessment**

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### Appendix 1: Proposed Drawings

27 Belsize Crescent – Visual Impact Assessment

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## 1.0. Introduction

- 1.1. 27 Belsize Crescent, London, NW3 5QY is an unlisted building within the London Borough of Camden. The building comprises a three-storey end-of-terrace house built during the late 1870s and converted into self-contained flats in 1973. The building is located within the Belsize Conservation Area.
- 1.2. The proposals involve a number of internal and external alterations to the lower ground and raised ground floors, including:
- The removal of the existing unsightly timber fence and side gate and the provision of a new metal semi-transparent gate/metal screen to the side of the front elevation;
  - The reinstatement of timber sash windows to the lower ground and raised ground floor of the canted bay to the front elevation;
  - The reinstatement of bottle balustrading to the front boundary wall;
  - The reinstatement of soft landscaping to the front garden;
  - The alteration of the side window opening to the rear room of the raised ground floor to create a loggia space with internal glazed screen;
  - The rationalisation of the existing window openings to the side elevation at lower ground floor level, the provision a new pair of double doors and the reinstatement of metal framed windows.
- 1.3. This assessment complies with the requirements of the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012) and the online Planning Practice Guidance in respect of Heritage issues. It should be read in conjunction with the Heritage Statement (July 2018) which is part of this application.
- 1.4. As detailed in the Heritage Statement, the proposals may have an impact on:
- The subject building at 27 Belsize Crescent;
  - The setting of the Grade II statutorily listed No. 24 Belsize Crescent;
  - The character and appearance of the Belsize Conservation Area;
  - The settings of the surrounding “positive” buildings on Belsize Crescent.

The setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Elements of a setting may make a positive, neutral or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral (NPPF glossary).

- 1.5. Historic England’s *Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3* (December 2017) observes that the contribution of setting to the significance of a heritage asset is often expressed by reference to views, a purely visual impression of an asset or place which can be static or dynamic, long, short or of lateral spread, and include a variety of views of, from, across, or including that asset (paragraph 10). The document recommends that where complex issues involving views come into play in the assessment of setting – whether for the purposes of providing a baseline for plan-making or for development management – a formal views analysis may be merited.

## 1.6. Authorship

- **Dorian A T A Crone** BA BArch DipTP RIBA MRTPI IHBC - Heritage and Design Consultant. Dorian has been a Chartered Architect and Chartered Town Planner for over 30 years. He has also been a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation for 25 years. Dorian is a committee member of The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the International Committee on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), ICOMOS UK and Institute of Historic Building Conservation. He has been a court member with the Worshipful Company of Chartered Architects and a trustee of the Hampstead Garden Suburb. He is also a trustee of the Drake and Dance Trusts.

Dorian has worked for over 30 years as Historic Buildings and Areas Inspector with English Heritage, responsible for providing advice to all the London Boroughs and both the City Councils. Dorian has also worked as a consultant and expert witness for over 20 years advising a wide variety of clients on heritage and design matters involving development work, alterations, extensions and new build projects associated with listed buildings and conservation areas in design and heritage sensitive locations. He is a Design Review Panel member of both the London Borough of Islington and Design Council – CABE – and a panel member of the John Betjeman Design Award and the City of London Heritage Award. Dorian has also been involved with the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition Architectural Awards and the Philip Webb Award along with a number other public sector and commercial design awards.

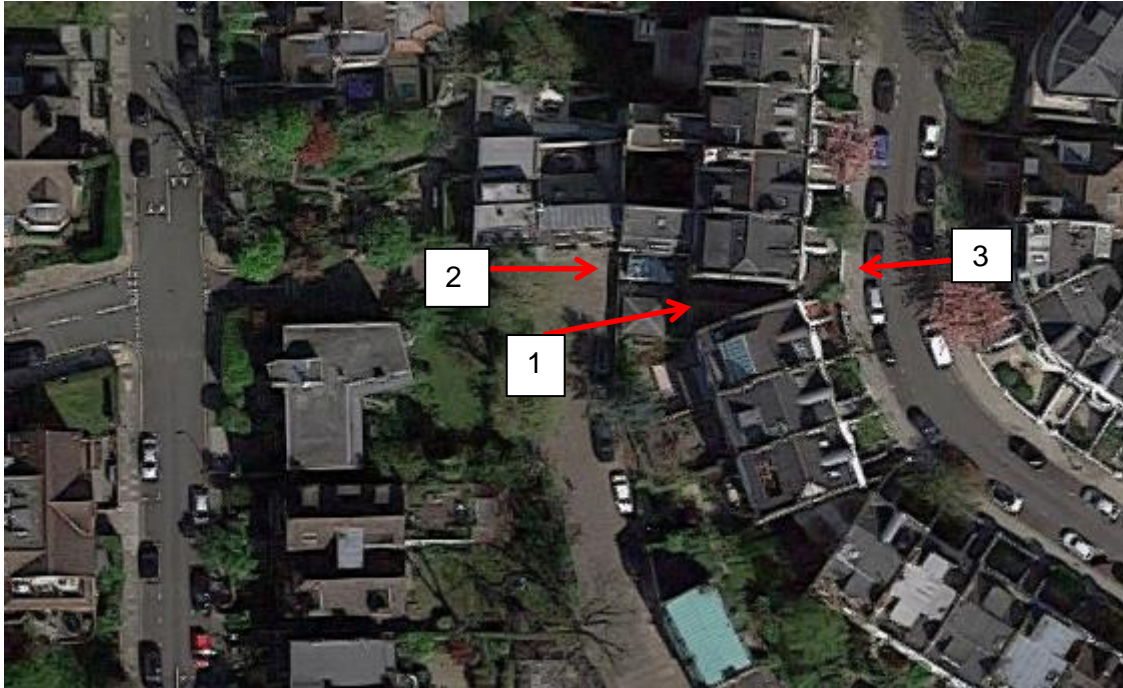
- **Dr Daniel Cummins** MA (Oxon) MSc PhD – Historic Environment Consultant. Daniel is an historian with a BA and Master's in History from Oxford University and a doctorate from the University of Reading, where he specialised in ecclesiastical buildings and estates and had his work published in leading academic history journals. Daniel has a Master's in the Conservation of the Historic Environment and provides independent professional heritage advice and guidance to leading architectural practices and planning consultancies, as well as for private clients. He undertakes detailed historical research, significance statements, character appraisals, impact assessments and expert witness statements for new development projects, as well as for alterations and extensions which affect the fabric and settings of Listed Buildings and Locally Listed Buildings, the character and appearance of Conservation Areas, the outstanding universal value of World Heritage Sites, and all other types of heritage assets.

## 2.0. **Methodology and Criteria**

- 2.1. The subject site is located on the west side of Belsize Crescent, London Borough of Camden. The rear part of No. 27 backs onto the north end of Daleham Mews. Belsize Crescent and Daleham Mews are both located within the Belsize Conservation Area. The subject site is located within Sub-Area 2: Belsize Village. This area is characterised largely by terraces on a south-facing slope, constructed in a tight grain between the 1850s and the 1880s. Views are limited along short lengths of the streets which follow historic field boundaries and routes.
- 2.2. Three viewpoints have been selected in order to establish the visual impact of the proposals on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and on the settings of any other heritage assets. Specific points have been chosen where the proposals might impact on the local townscape, statutorily listed buildings, the Belsize Conservation Area and any identified non-designated heritage assets.

Drawings illustrating the proposals can be found in **Appendix 1**.

- Viewpoint 1: Daleham Mews looking North East
- Viewpoint 2: Daleham Mews looking East
- Viewpoint 3: Belsize Crescent looking South-West



Plan of the views assessed in this report (Google).

2.3. This Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) takes into account relevant conservation guidance and principles, namely Historic England's *Setting of Heritage Assets* for adopting a broad approach to assessment, undertaken as a series of steps to assess the contribution of a view, or views, to the significance of heritage assets and the ability to appreciate that significance:

- **Step 1:** Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected
- **Step 2:** Assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated
- **Step 3:** Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it
- **Step 4:** Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm

The analysis carries out a review of the proposals in the spirit of Paragraph 62 of the NPPF using the accepted and established criteria of most Design Review Panels and in particular used by the Design Council/CABE (Dorian Crone is both a Design Review Panel Member of the London Borough of Islington and the Design Council/CABE).

2.4. The VIA will firstly establish a baseline for each view against which to judge the impact of proposals upon heritage significance. A description of the baseline view is provided to identify the heritage assets and the degree to which the view contributes to an understanding and appreciation of their setting/significance.

- 2.6. Using the established baseline, the impact of the proposals on the views will be assessed by considering how the heritage significance may be changed or affected by reason of the latter's location or design. This has been based on the proposed drawings which can be seen in **Appendix 1**. For the purposes of assessing the likely impact to result from the proposals and the subsequent impact on the identified heritage assets, established criteria have been employed. If the proposals will enhance heritage values or the ability to appreciate them, then the impact on heritage significance within the view will be deemed **positive**; however, if they fail to sustain heritage values or impair their appreciation then the impact will be deemed **negative**. If the proposals preserve the heritage values then the impact will be deemed **neutral**.
- 2.7. Within the three categories there are four different levels that can be given to identify the magnitude of impact:
- **"negligible"** – impacts considered to cause no material change.
  - **"minimal"** - impacts considered to make a small difference to one's ability to understand and appreciate the heritage value of an asset. A minor impact may also be defined as involving receptors of low sensitivity exposed to intrusion, obstruction or change of low to medium magnitudes for short periods of time.
  - **"moderate"** - impacts considered to make an appreciable difference to the ability to understand or appreciate the heritage value of an asset.
  - **"substantial"** - impacts considered to cause a fundamental change in the appreciation of the resource.

### 3.0. Visual Impact Assessment

#### 3.1. Viewpoint 01: Daleham Mews looking North-East

##### 3.1.1. Baseline View



Figure 1a: Baseline View 01 looking North-East from Daleham Mews

This view is taken looking north-east from Daleham Mews. The looser grain at the northern end of the mews allows views of the rear elevations of the houses fronting Belsize Crescent, in particular the subject site at the top of the slope. The subject site forms the focus of this view, particularly the much-altered and somewhat disfigured side (south) elevation which was substantially altered during the early 1970s. The poor-quality alterations included the truncation of the two chimney stacks, the creation of a large number of new window openings, and the separation of the original rear wing of the house which now reads as an entirely separate building in the foreground. The windows openings were particularly ad-hoc in their arrangement to the raised ground floor and lower ground floor and contained metal windows with concrete lintels and sills. Whilst the lower ground floor windows are not visible in this view (concealed behind the brick boundary wall) the windows to the raised ground floor give some indication of the unattractive ad-hoc appearance of the fenestration. The window openings to the rear elevation are likely to be original, but all contain inappropriate metal windows with concrete lintels and sills.

### 3.1.2. Proposed View North East from Daleham Mews



Figure 1b: Proposed View 01

The view following the proposal for a loggia to the south-west corner of the raised ground floor of the subject site can be seen in Figure 1b. The proportions of the original rear window opening will remain unaltered and the inappropriate metal window will be removed; the glazed internal screen with a single high-level transom will continue to give the impression and reflectivity of a window and will not detrimentally affect the appearance of the rear elevation. It is proposed to slightly enlarge the 1970s window opening to the side elevation to floor level and towards the rear; there will still be a clearly discernible strong brickwork corner to the corner of the building, sustaining the impression of a window opening; indeed the south elevation is the least sensitive elevation of the building and has already been subject to substantial visible change in terms of its fenestration. It is considered that this proposal will be a discreet alteration and barely discernible from the public realm on Daleham Mews. With the internal glazed screen and minimal associated framing, the enlarged opening will still give the impression of a window opening, and will not have any detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in this view. In addition, the proposal to rationalise the openings between the two chimney stacks at raised ground floor level by better reflecting the proportions and arrangement of the windows to the upper floors will improve the appearance of the side elevation. **The impact of the proposals on View 1 is therefore considered to be minimal and neutral to positive.**



### 3.2. Viewpoint 02 – Daleham Mews looking East

#### 3.2.1. Baseline View



Figure 2a: Baseline View 02 looking east from Daleham Mews

This view is located at the end of Daleham Mews. It is located within the Belsize Conservation Area and illustrates the contrasting mews developments and larger classical terraces; the relationship between these service streets and the principal streets is well-illustrated by the gap between the houses fronting Belsize Crescent which allows glimpses of the front elevations on the east side of the road. The fact that the grain is much looser at the north end of Daleham Mews means the rear elevations of the some of the buildings on the west side of Belsize Crescent are prominent. The rear elevation of the subject site is particularly prominent as it is framed along the narrow street which retains its traditional surface of setts. The subject site is at best a neutral contributor to the view. The lower ground floor and side garden are not visible owing to the brick boundary wall. The window openings to the rear elevation are likely to be original, but the windows have all been replaced with inappropriate metal windows and concrete lintels and sills.

### 3.2.2. Proposed View East from Daleham Mews



Figure 2b: Proposed View 02

The view following the proposal to create a loggia to the south-west corner of the raised ground floor can be seen in Figure 2b. The proportions of the original rear window opening will remain unaltered and the inappropriate metal window will be removed; the proposed glazed internal screen with a single high-level transom will continue to give the impression and reflectivity of a window and will not detrimentally affect the appearance of the rear elevation in this framed view. The important baseline characteristics of this view will remain unaffected and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be preserved. **The impact of the proposals on View 2 is therefore considered to be neutral.**

### 3.3. Viewpoint 03 – Belsize Crescent looking South-West

#### 3.3.1. Baseline View



Figure 3a: Baseline View 03 south-west along Belsize Crescent

This view, illustrated in Figure 3a, is taken looking south-west towards the principal street elevation of the subject site on Belsize Crescent. The view is located within the Belsize Conservation and forms part of the streetscape setting of the Grade II statutorily listed No. 24 Belsize Crescent. The buildings flanking the subject site are identified within the Council's Conservation Area Statement as positive contributors to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. These latter buildings display the key characteristics of Belsize Crescent and the wider Belsize Village Sub-Area, including the use of brickwork and stucco render, pedimented window surrounds to the first-floor windows, timber sash windows, canted bay windows to the lower and raised ground floors, distinctive barrel dormer windows, and bottle balustrading bay windows, porches, and to the low boundary wall fronting the street. These features create an unbroken rhythm and uniformity within the streetscape. The subject site is considered to be a negative contributor within this view owing to its somewhat bland and disfigured street elevation following the removal of all architectural detailing, original windows, soft landscaping and bottle balustrading during the 1970s. The large dormer windows are particularly incongruous. The poor-quality of the 1970s alterations breaks the classical rhythm of the terraces on Belsize Crescent and gives the subject site undue prominence. The Council's Conservation Area Statement identifies the subject site as the only classical building on Belsize Crescent not to be a positive contributor and singles out its negative contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as a result of the loss of significant architectural detailing. The gap between the subject site and its neighbour is an important aspect of the historical development of the road, as it illustrates not only a different phase of building, but also the curving alignment of the field boundary which marked the western boundary of the development. Although concealed behind a tree in this view, the existing solid timber fence and gate between the two houses is an unattractive modern addition which detracts from the clear gap in kinetic views at street level.

### 3.3.2. Proposed View South-West from Belsize Crescent



Figure 3b: Proposed View 03

Figure 3b depicts the view following the proposed works to the lower ground and raised ground floors. Some of the key lost elements are proposed to be reinstated, including the bottle balustrading to the front boundary wall, soft landscaping and planting within the front garden, and timber sash windows to the canted bay, the design of which will match those on the more intact neighbouring house. These proposals are considered to offer substantial enhancement to the appearance of the building within the streetscape of Belsize Crescent and will go some way towards redressing its current negative contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the Grade II listed No. 24. At street level at least, the uniformity and rhythm of the classical terraces will be reinforced by the proposals. The proposed semi-transparent gate/screen between the houses will not be visible owing to the existing and enhanced planting within the front garden; however its high-quality “light touch” design would make it appear imperceptible in kinetic views at street level even during the winter months with less foliage and the gap between the houses will remain clearly readable and enhanced. **The impact of the proposals on View 3 is therefore considered to be minimal and positive.**

## 4.0. Conclusion

- 4.1. **The proposals overall will have a minimal and neutral to positive visual impact** on the character and appearance of the Belsize Conservation Area and settings of any other heritage assets within the three viewpoints. The proposed alterations to the side elevation, including the creation of the loggia to the south-west corner of the raised ground floor, the regularisation of the fenestration to both the lower ground and raised ground floor, and the provision of semi-transparent metal screen/side gate are all considered to preserve and sustain the key characteristics of the Belsize Village Sub-Area on Belsize Crescent and Daleham Mews. The proposals offer substantial enhancements which will begin to redress the negative contribution the building currently makes to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as identified in the Council's 2003 Conservation Area Statement, including the reinstatement of timber sash windows to the canted bay to the front elevation, the reinstatement of bottle balustrading to the front boundary wall and the reinstatement of soft landscaping to the front garden.
- 4.2. The proposals therefore present the opportunity to enhance a currently negative contributor to the character and appearance of the Belsize Sub-Area in the three views to make it a neutral contributor by better reflecting the prevailing architectural detailing and soft landscaping to the street frontage of Belsize Crescent.

Appendix 1: Proposed Drawings



Proposed front (east) elevation.



Proposed rear (west) elevation.



Proposed side (south) elevation.