

Oak Hill House, Hampstead NW3

Conservation and Design Statement



Figure 1 | Oak Hill House seen amongst trees in the centre in an aerial photograph from 1949 (Source: Britain from Above, EAW000618)

Oak Hill House

Oak Hill House is a symmetrically-composed stucco-faced neo-classical villa-block of the 1850s, one of the last remaining of the half-a-dozen which made up the original mid-Victorian development on Oak Hill Park. Its principal elevation faces south onto a large hardstanding forecourt, on land which drops away quite sharply behind the house to the north and west. Mature trees

surround the plot on all sides, providing heavy greenery that substantially screens neighbouring houses.

Oak Hill House has prominent projecting eaves, and a shallow roof with a hipped form, but which contains between its four pitches a series of valleys running from the front to rear elevations. Two chimney stacks are visible over the front elevation, standing symmetrical and perpendicular to it. The front elevation has a central porch with steps up to the front door. The sash windows of its front and rear facades express a classical hierarchy and are framed with stucco aedicules or, on the top storey, pilasters which rise to tight under the eaves.

The house was extended to the rear into the garden at sub-ground-floor level in 2014 by a large, single-storey modern timber-clad extension by Claridge Architects.

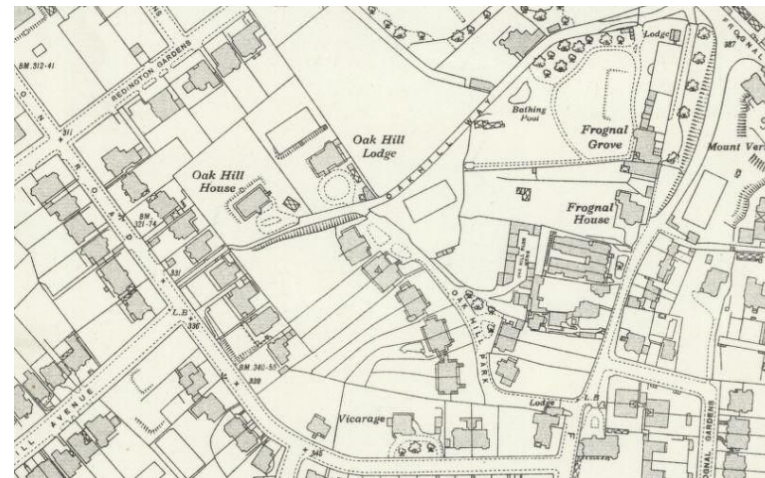


Figure 2: OS Map 1934

Hampstead Conservation Area

Hampstead Village Conservation Area (CA) was designated in 1968 to preserve the special character and appearance of the historic village. Though its boundaries have been extended several times since 1968, and its name changed to Hampstead CA to reflect its wider scope, embracing the wider eighteenth- and nineteenth-century middle-class expansion of Hampstead as a satellite settlement and then suburb of London, the layout, grain and architecture of the ancient is still the essence of the CA, which defines its character, and around which later eras of development are arrayed.



Oak Hill House is identified in Camden Council's CA Appraisal document as making a Positive Contribution to the CA. It does so as an intact example of the early-mid Victorian, grand neo-classical phase of development which was some of the first suburban

development, influenced by the rapid contemporary expansion of London, around old Hampstead Village.

The smaller detached houses of Redington Road to the west of Oak Hill House were laid out in plots immediately on its boundary at the turn of the twentieth century, and the houses of Redington Gardens to the north in the 1910s. The shared boundaries are in all case heavily planted with mature trees and shrubs. These houses lie outside the Hampstead CA.

Oak Hill House stands within sub-area 6 of the CA Branch Hill/Oak Hill. This sub-area is essentially characterised by precisely the suburban Victorian extension of old Hampstead, but its architectural character and appearance has been substantially altered in the twentieth century by replacement, infill and comprehensive residential redevelopment, including: smaller dwellings and two seven-storey brick apartment blocks in 1960 which replaced the other Victorian villas in 1960; and the construction of Branch Hill Estate at Spedan Close by Benson & Forsyth for the Borough in 1974-76, which has been listed at Grade II since the CA Appraisal was written.

Oak Hill Lodge, a seven-storey, brick-clad residential apartment block of the mid-twentieth century, stands on the site of the original villa of the same name, just to the north-east of Oak Hill House, close to its boundary. The mature trees which edge all the plots help to soften the perception of these close adjacencies.

The Proposal

The proposals would re-organise accommodation at second-floor level and introduce a roof terrace within the central valleys of the historic roof form. In order to facilitate construction of the roof

terrace and the revised layout internally, one chimney would be reconstructed and the second-floor sash windows replaced like-for-like. The roof would also be reconstructed, with an exact match for the existing form up to the ridges of the four main outer slopes.

The proposals would reinstate exactly the existing appearance of Oak Hill House as seen from anywhere within the existing CA context. Materials such as slate, brick and chimneypots could be salvaged and reinstated, and others specified for an exact match.

The house is mainly perceived from ground roughly level with it, or slightly lower than it, accentuating the extremely limited visibility of the shallow-pitched roof surface, and lending extra prominence to the eaves. Any balustrade needed for the terrace could be carefully controlled in height and position not to be visible from the surroundings. The proposals would thus leave the character and appearance of the CA unaltered.