

**FORMER SQUASH COURT, BEECHWOOD
DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**



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Date: September 2019

Document Issue: 2230-06/W.02/Issue 1A/ST

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1.00 INTRODUCTION

1.01 The following Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Hanley Limited the owner of the Beechwood Estate since March 2008 to support an application for Planning and Listed Building Consent to convert the former Squash Court in the grounds of Beechwood House to estate offices.

1.02 Historically, Beechwood House has been subject to major refurbishment works associated with changes in ownership ever since it was built by George Basevi in the 1840s. The most recent works were subject to a number of consents over the period 2010-12 which sought to return the House to a family dwelling in a style more sympathetic to its character and origins.

The proposal to refurbish the former Squash Court and bring it back into beneficial use is seen as part of these overall proposals.

1.03 This statement is intended to describe briefly the proposed extent and the nature of the works in support of an application for Planning and Listed Building Consent.

1.04 This should be read in conjunction with the Heritage Statement dated September 2019 prepared by the Heritage Collective (Ref. 2780B) together with the following drawings:

- As Existing Drawing Nos. 2230-06/00/01-06 incl.
- As Built Drawing Nos. 2230-06/10/01-06 incl.
- As Proposed Drawing Nos. 2230-06/01/01-06 incl.

2.00 THE SITE AND PLANNING HISTORY

2.01 Beechwood is a statutorily listed (Grade II) 19th Century Regency villa, listed as built between 1838 and 1840, but possibly dating from circa 1834, to the designs of George Basevi (along with the adjoining Elms), on a series of plots sold off for development following the demolition of Fitzroy House in 1828.

Beechwood is set within the Highgate Village Conservation Area and the site is designated Metropolitan Open Land.

2.02 Beechwood House is set in the north east corner of a 10 acre Estate which also contains a number of ancillary buildings and associated structures.

The House is approached off an entrance gate onto Hampstead Lane past a gate lodge and drive leading to a formal forecourt with turning circle. Vehicles are generally garaged in a service yard at the northern edge of the site. A secondary entrance gate provides access onto Fitzroy Park to the east.

2.03 Beechwood House has always been a private residence and has been adapted to suit each new owner's needs, a chronology was included in the Conservation Assessment (MAA 2008) and detailed in the Heritage Statement dated September 2019 by the Heritage Collective.

2.04 Recent works (2010-12) have refurbished and renovated the main house, its ancillary buildings and grounds to provide accommodation commensurate with its use as a 'grand house' by its occupants.

2.05 The Squash Court was one of a series of buildings constructed just prior to the Second World War in a programme of improvements for Oswald Lewis MP, who became its owner in 1929 and continued a programme of works to the designs of his Architects, Wimperis, Simpson & Guthrie, through the 1930's and late 1940's.

2.06 This Design & Access Statement draws upon archival research and site inspections and appraisal carried out by Stephen Twine of Scott & Twine Architects in 2008, which together with advice from the Heritage Collective was used to provide a framework to allow a better understanding of the historic fabric with a view to guiding the current proposals for the alterations, refurbishment and repairs for the current owner.

3.00 THE FORMER SQUASH COURT

3.01 The existing building is located to the east of the House across what was formerly the Kitchen Garden and has recently been returned to this use.

This building sits between a number of other outbuildings now used to house mechanical services plant and the gardener's stores (in the former Stables).

This side of the House functions as the 'service' area for the House and Estate, with kitchens, plantrooms, gardener's stores and refuse storage all located in this secluded and well screened part of the site.

Description

3.02 The existing building is a solid walled brick structure, built in a soft red facing brick laid English bond, with brick gables to the east and west ends and surmounted by a natural slate clad pitch roof behind a brick parapet, with a large patent glazed roof light, originally to provide natural light to the squash court.

The main entrance door is a handsome painted timber 6 panelled timber door, with timber surround and a semi-circular segmental sandstone step. There is an arch headed timber sash window at balcony level, while the entrance door is flanked by circular metal windows on either side.

There are limited decorative brick surrounds to the window openings (and the timber vent in the east gable), with limited use of Portland stone window cills and keystones over openings.

The roof is drained by 4 chute outlets, 3 of which still had the original rectangular cast iron hopper heads, while downpipes had been replaced over time with modern round uPvc downpipes.

3.03 The interior comprises of the double height squash court, with a timber boarded floor and painted plaster walls and an open roof on exposed metal roof trusses, with a boarded underside.

The squash court has an entrance lobby area, with a timber staircase on the north side leading to the viewing gallery at the upper level.

3.04 The former squash court would appear to have been constructed in the 1930's with drawings for the proposed Squash Court dating from 1930. It features on the 1938 OS Map for the first time, by which time other buildings including the Tennis Court and Pavilion had also been constructed.

Described in the 1952 Country Life article as 'handsomely designed', the Squash Court adopts the Neo-Georgian style utilised for most of Oswald Lewis's additions to the estate.

- 3.05 The Squash Court fell out of use after Oswald Lewis death in the early 1960's and has been used for a variety of purposes by subsequent owners, including staff accommodation.

Until 2016 when a programme of refurbishment and repair works was started, it had been used to keep items from the House, office equipment and as a store for the estate building maintenance team.

The Setting

- 3.06 The scale and detail of the former Squash Court building sits comfortably amongst a group of other ancillary buildings along the eastern boundary of the site bordering Fitzroy Park. These other buildings abut the Squash Court and create a group of buildings when viewed from either the House or from along Fitzroy Park.
- 3.07 With the completion of the 2010-12 programme of refurbishment works on Beechwood House and the refitting of the House kitchen and service wing at the east end of the House, the area between the House and this group of buildings has functioned very much as the 'service yard' for the estate, with the former stables also having been converted to use by the team of estate gardeners.
- 3.08 The former Squash Court has not been used as a 'client facility' for many years and the current setting suggests that it would be more appropriate in use as part of the service area.
- 3.09 The proposed refurbishment works do not involve any changes to the setting of this building. The only external works included in these proposals were conservation repairs to the external fabric and the replacement of unsympathetic modern additions (plastic rainwater goods and bulkhead light fitting) with materials and designs that match the original character and detailing.

4.00 PROPOSALS AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 4.01 The servicing of a 'grand' house together with its outbuildings and some 10 acres of landscaped grounds requires a significant level of staffing and an administrative staff to maintain the estate on a day to day basis.

It is proposed to provide administrative offices for the entire Estate team in one office (including Housekeeping) with a meeting room and servery for both internal use and visitors, improving the previous inadequate provision of one small office available for this purpose with two desk spaces in the basement of Beechwood Lodge (adjacent to the former Squash Court) together with a Head Gardener's office in the Gardener's Store – also adjacent the former Squash Court.

A number of different buildings and locations both on and off site were considered to meet this need, with the former Squash Court being one of the only areas of on-site accommodation that was not in beneficial use.

- 4.02 The former Squash Court is one of a series of 'Curtilage' buildings on the estate which enhance and contribute to the setting of the Grade II Listed Beechwood House, the primary heritage asset on the estate.

- 4.03 The former Squash Court had fallen into disrepair, with roof leaks having caused ongoing damage to the fabric of the building.

The current owners do not have a use for a squash court facility, located in the midst of the service area for the House and estate, but they do have a pressing need for office space for the significant household and estate team staff that support the running of this estate.

- 4.04 An options review was carried out to assess how the space in the former squash court could be beneficially used and the number of staff that it could practically accommodate.

- 4.05 The principal consideration in determining which option was considered most appropriate was the scheme that provided the most effective use of the existing building volume without detracting from the character of the original building and its contribution to the group and setting of Beechwood House.

With the predominantly internal nature of the works proposed, the proposals are considered not to have any adverse effect on the character of the site and the provision of much needed accommodation in this existing space will reduce pressure on other buildings and help maintain the character of the estate.

- 4.06 The proposed refurbishment works were largely repairs which help ensure the maintenance and protection of this building, a noted element within the development of the estate.

Proposed Works

- 4.07 The scheme proposed is one that aims to utilise the large internal volume of the former Squash Court by creating additional floor area by introduction of an accommodation 'Pod' at the east end of the court housing an acoustically insulated meeting room with and adjacent servery for both visitors and staff use.

This 'Pod' would be detailed to be clearly identifiable as a contemporary introduction into the space, one that was reversible if required and that would maintain the essential 'squash court' character of the space.

The viewing gallery above the entrance to the court is maintained, with discrete cupboards for essential services being introduced on to the landing and a cloakroom installed at ground floor in place of a kitchenette.

- 4.08 Improvements to the environmental aspects of the building would be made through the introduction of thermal insulation into the sub-floor below the former squash court floor, behind drylining to the external walls of the court and to the underside of the roofing.

The cracked and broken single 'wired' patent glazed rooflight was replaced by double glazed laminated glass on traditional aluminium glazing bars. Blinds would provide solar control, new vents introduced to provide natural ventilation.

Environmental service utilising heat reclamation were introduced to the building utilising the existing 'free air vent' in the rear gable of the court for supply and extract of air.

5.00 DESIGN AND ACCESS

5.01 The following outlines the specific design and access considerations associated with these proposals for the conversion of the former squash court building into estate offices for the Beechwood Estate.

It sets out the design process and consideration taken into account to ensure that the proposals have been sensitively designed having due regard to the heritage asset and its appropriateness for the House and its occupants.

Use

5.02 The proposal to refurbish and bring into beneficial use the currently under-used Squash Court will enhance the use of Beechwood House and its grounds as a 'substantial' family dwelling.

The provision of 'Household' offices within the estate will improve the ability of the Household team to operate and maintain the House and the estate, with the provision of on-site office space for staff who cannot currently be accommodated.

These functions and the use of this building are entirely ancillary to the use of Beechwood House and the proposals will enhance the use of the House in a manner appropriate to the character and significance of the Listed Building.

Amount and Scale

5.03 The proposals do not affect the scale or volume of the existing building.

The 'Pod' has been kept to a size and scale that allows the original character and purpose of the building to be clearly appreciated.

Layout

5.04 The building volume is not being changed and the character of a single space is being retained by careful positioning of the inserted accommodation 'Pod' at the rear of the court, where it will not detract from the perception of a large single space from either entry into the court and ground floor or from the former viewing gallery.

The former kitchenette opposite the stairs in the ground floor lobby area can be successfully used to create a new Cloakroom area without affecting layout significantly.

Appearance

- 5.05 The external appearance of the former squash court will essentially be the same. The external fabric has been repaired, roof re-slatted, the brickwork parapets repointed, unsympathetic uPvc rainwater goods replaced with cast iron.

The existing patent glazed roof is being replaced on the same layout with new glazing bars with double glazed units and the inclusion of 4 No. new opening vents – all powder-coated a slate grey colour with associated lead flashings and ridge roll to match the existing appearance.

Landscaping

- 5.06 While no landscaping is proposed as part of this application, the existing landscaping scheme and the recreations of the former 'Kitchen Garden' provides an apt setting for the building and access routes for its users.

Access

- 5.07 The proposed refurbishment of the former Squash Court building and its use as Household offices will enhance the operation of Beechwood House and ground without any detrimental effect in terms of the appearance, character and historic significance of the Listed Building.

The existing access arrangements to the House and its ancillary buildings are unaffected by these proposals.

6.00 CONCLUSION

6.01 The proposal to refurbish and bring back into beneficial use, the former squash court building at Beechwood House is intended to complete the refurbishment and repair works that took place at Beechwood House during 2011/12.

The proposed works will enhance the operation and maintenance of the House and its ground, without detracting in any way to its setting, historic character and appearance, or that of the Conservation Area in any way.

6.02 The former Squash Court building represents an 'interesting' and historically significant phase in the development of the Beechwood Estate by Oswald Lewis, one that is recognised and that these proposals seek to retain in terms of its character, whilst bringing it into beneficial use.

6.03 The proposal retains the building fabric, repairing and conserving it and facilitates a beneficial use solely through internal alterations, which ultimately are entirely reversible in nature.

6.04 The proposals are considered to sustain and enhance the significance of the heritage assets and facilitate the viable use of the House consistent with its conservation.

The proposals will not cause harm to the significance of the Listed Building or its setting and will enhance those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the significance of the assets.