

**BELSIZE PARK FIREHOUSE - TOWER**  
**36 LANCASTER GROVE, LONDON NW3 4PB**  
**LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

**PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS + HERITAGE STATEMENT**

Prepared By



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning, Design and Access + Heritage statement accompanies an application for Listed Building Consent by Vulcan Properties, the owner of the former Belsize Park Fire Station, 36 Lancaster Grove, Belsize Park, now known as Belsize Park Firehouse.

### Background

1.2 Belsize Fire Station closed on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2014, as part of the strategic planned closures by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA).

1.3 Belsize Park Firehouse is a Grade II\* listed building. Such buildings are important assets. Vulcan Properties recognises that they are an irreplaceable resource and that they should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

1.4 In that regard, in 2017, Vulcan Properties secured listed building and planning consents 2016/0745/P, 2016/1128/L, 2016/5813/P, 2016/6119/L, allowing the *alteration and change of use of the former fire station to provide 18 self-contained residential units, including replacement single storey side extension to east elevation and erection of two single storey side extension to west elevation and insertion of roof dormers, with associated external alterations, landscaping and parking*. The approved works retain the intrinsic character of former fire station and secures the listed building's long-term future and condition.

1.5 The applicants are nearing completion of the above development, with some occupation of the flats having already taken place.

1.6 The tower was unaffected by the above and is to remain unused. Given the nature of the unused space, with its tight spiral stair, open voids and access to the roof, it creates health, safety and security issues. Furthermore, the bare brick walls, utilitarian roof hatch and single pane windows, create issues in terms of heating and the general environment within the communal stair core of this now residential building.

1.7 The tower is currently separated from the stair core through provision of a temporary safety hoarding (black painted plywood), but a more appropriate and permanent solution is now sought.

1.8 The applicants propose to remove the hoarding and replace it with a new critall frame screen at the base of the tower on the second floor. The critall frame will support obscure glazed panels and a sliding door to allow access when required/maintenance etc, but otherwise is to form a secure line.

1.9 The new critall frame is proposed to be installed without effect to the historic fabric of the building.

### Layout of this Document

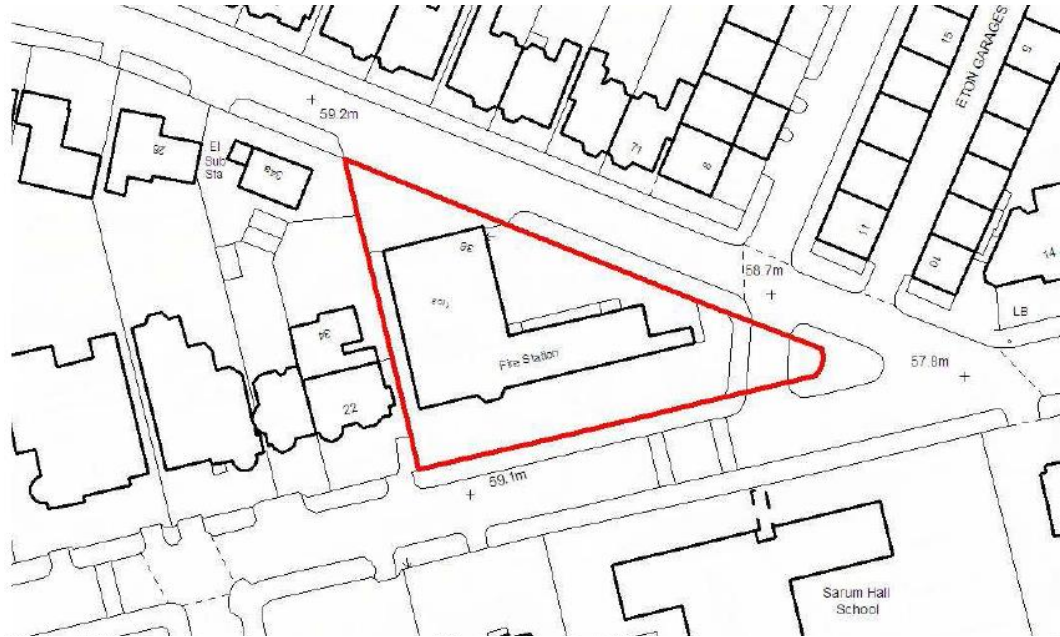
1.10 This statement provides a description of the site and surrounding area in section 2.

1.11 In section 3 we provide a description of the application proposals.

1.12 In section 4 we provide an assessment of the proposals against relevant policies and other material planning considerations.

**2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE**

2.1 The former Fire Station lies in Belsize Park at the junction of Lancaster Grove and Eton Avenue. The triangular shaped plot comprises 0.44 acres (0.1761 hectares).



**SITE LOCATION PLAN**

2.2 The building was designed by Charles Canning Winmill of the Fire Brigade Branch of the London County Council Architects Department, and erected 1914-5. The building is Grade II\* listed and is of special architectural merit.



**BELSIZE PARK FIRE STATION (NORTH ELEVATIONS)**

- 2.3 The building has an L shaped plan and comprises a part basement, ground/upper ground and first floor levels. There is also a substantial roof void at second floor level.
- 2.4 The focus of this application is the internal integrated former drill tower, arranged over four additional upper floors.

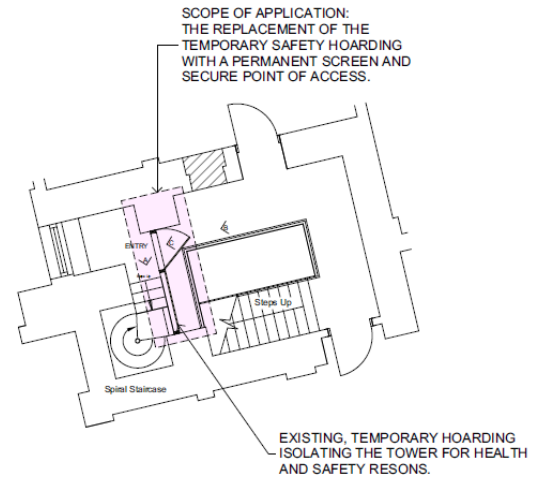


TOWER EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR

- 2.5 Elevations are constructed principally from brick. High architectural quality of an Arts and Crafts style is manifest in its design, detail and materials. The building is mostly intact, having not been extended or significantly altered externally. The tower benefits from a window lighting each level.
- 2.6 Internally, the tower was designed to perform the twin roles of drying hoses, which were dangled through a series of apertures in the centre of each level, and of training firemen in moving through confined spaces, to which end it was designed to present a series of tight, winding staircases and claustrophobic spaces.
- 2.7 The building is located in the Belsize Conservation Area

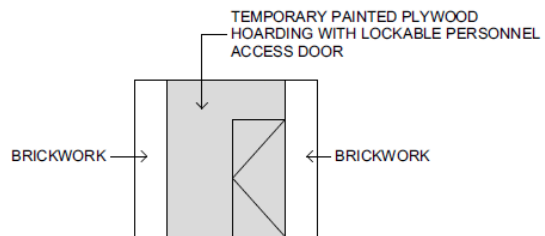
**3.0 THE PROPOSALS**

3.1 The vacant tower is currently separated through provision of a temporary safety hoarding (black painted plywood).



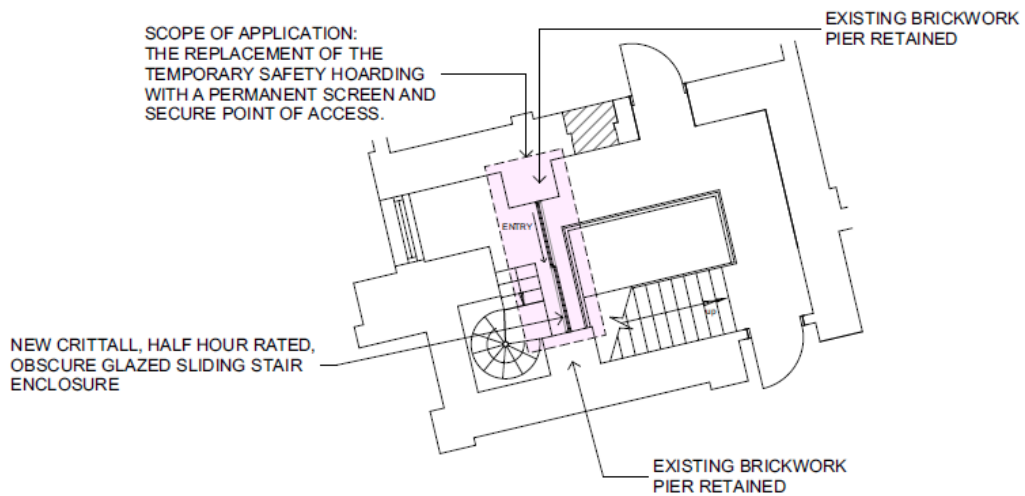
**EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN**

3.2 The plywood structure sits neatly between the existing brickwork piers on either side of the entrance to the tower.



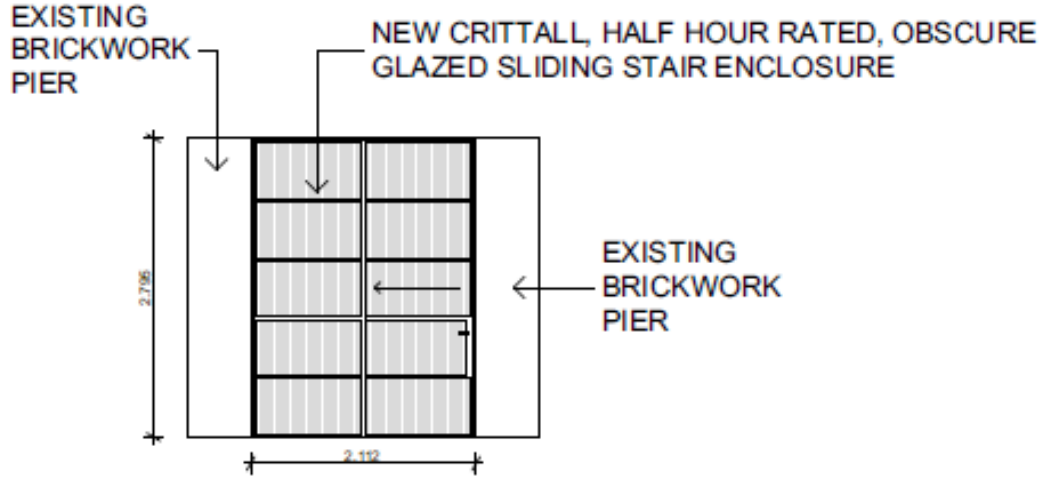
**TOWER ENTRANCE ELEVATION**

3.3 The applicants propose to remove the hoarding and replace it with a new crittall frame screen at the base of the tower on the second floor.



**PROPOSED SECOND FLOOR PLAN**

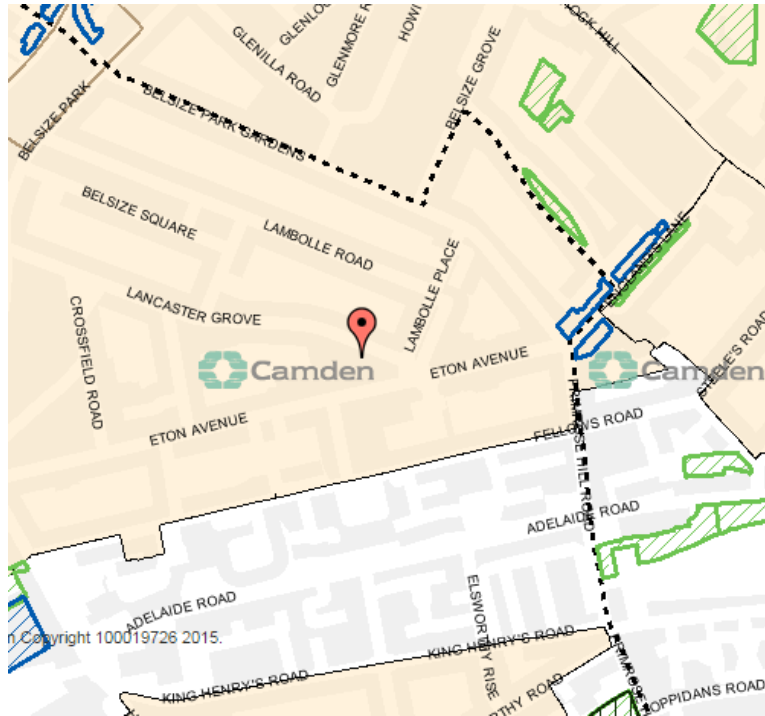
- 3.4 The black painted crittall frame will support obscure glazed panels. The frame also supports a sliding door to allow access when required/maintenance etc, but otherwise forms a secure line.
- 3.5 The proposed crittall frame is proposed to be formed between existing brickwork piers at the base of the tower stair, fixed with screws into concrete floor slab, the underside of the third floor slab, and to the either flanking brick pier. The installation can be implemented without any loss of existing fabric.
- 3.6 The new crittall/glazed screen provide half-hour rated fire safety.



**PROPOSED TOWER ENTRANCE**

#### 4.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The relevant planning framework comprises the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019), Mayor's London Plan (2018) and the Camden Local Plan (2017).
- 4.2 The site falls within the Belsize Park Conservation Area (BCA). The host building is grade II\* listed.



#### Map key

- Conservation Area
- Belsize Park

POLICIES MAP EXTRACT

- 4.3 As the application site is situated within the Belsize Conservation Area and the building is Grade II\* listed, the statutory provisions relevant to the determination of these applications are Section 16, 72 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013.
- 4.4 Section 16 requires that in considering whether to grant listed building consent for development which affects a listed building, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building, its setting and its features of special architectural or historic interest.
- 4.5 Section 66 of the Act requires that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building, its setting and its features of special architectural or historic interest.
- 4.6 Section 72 of the Act requires that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development in a Conservation Area, special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 4.7 The NPPF defines listed buildings as designated heritage assets. Section 12 of the NPPF provides guidance on managing change to designated heritage assets through the planning system,



- including avoiding or justifying harm to the special architectural or historic interest of listed buildings. Paragraph 134 states that “less-than-substantial harm” to a designated heritage asset must be outweighed by the public benefits secured by the proposals, including heritage benefits to the assets.
- 4.8 The fire station tower is now redundant for its original purpose. The loss of the Sui Generis floorspace has been established under planning refs. 2016/0745/P and 2016/5813/P, which involved the conversion of the fire station to 16 residential units in total. Occupation of the building has now taken place, therefore the lawful use of the site is C3.
- 4.9 The proposal will have no effect on the external appearance of the building.
- 4.10 The tower has been designed to provide deliberately cramped access conditions and confined spaces at each level to aid firemen training. At present, this plan form survives entirely intact, and its purpose-built historic use is therefore wholly legible. This historic form is wholly unaffected by the proposals however, its use does not work well with the residential nature of the building. The building accommodates multiple flats, including family sized accommodation. There is an expectation that children will reside in the premises and will have access to all communal parts. The tower raises concern relating to health and safety and requires secure separation from the remaining communal parts.
- 4.11 The proposed internal alterations are limited to the provision of a new crittall screen. This would not involve the removal of any historic fabric.
- 4.12 The proposals will result in a very slight change to plan form, which involves only the provision of a partition at second floor, where this has historically been open. However, the space at this level, the exposed brickwork and the stairs up to the tower all remain in situ and are wholly unaffected. The apertures in the floor slabs of the tower are also unaffected.
- 4.13 The design of the crittall frame screen has been informed by similar interventions at the building, under the principle planning consents. We include a couple of examples of the type of crittall screens which have been employed in the former appliance bay at ground floor, and to the new lower ground floor flat accesses to the rear communal garden. The crittall frame design is considered to provide an appropriate, robust and utilitarian response, befitting the character of this part of the building.



CRITTALL FRAMES USED IN THE FORMER APPLIANCE HALL (LEFT)  
AND LOWER GROUND FLOOR GARDEN ACCESS (RIGHT)

### Planning balance

- 4.14 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies for decision making on development proposals. At the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of 'sustainable development'. The protection and enhancement of the historic environment forms one of three core objectives that defines sustainable development.
- 4.15 Paragraphs 195 and 196 refer to proposed development leading to harm to the significance of heritage assets and the need to weigh this harm in the balance when coming to a decision, including any public benefits of the proposals.
- 4.16 The minor nature of the proposed works would result in less than substantial harm. The proposals will not remove any historic fabric and would not erode the legibility of the intact plan form. Despite the provision of the proposed screen, the building's tower will continue to be understood for its original intended purposes of drying hoses and providing a purpose-designed training facility.
- 4.17 In order to support the very minor heritage harm, there are tangible public benefits arising from the scheme that would outweigh that harm. In this instance, the public benefit would be the protection of residential amenity and safety. This is considered a sufficient benefit to outweigh the very minor heritage harm.