

HERITAGE STATEMENT, Flat 1, 14 BELSIZE PARK, LONDON N16 7LH

Statement to support a planning application for a rear extension to a flat on the lower ground floor of a converted semi-detached villa.



Martin McKay, Architect, ARB, RTPI

Heritage Consultant

3 East Terrace, Gravesend, Kent,

DA12 2DB

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction	Page 3
2. Planning History	Page 3-5
3. Historic Building Assessment	Page 5-6
4. The Proposal	Page 6-8
5. Assessment against planning legislation and policy	Page 8-10
6. Conclusion	Page 10-11

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement has been compiled to support a planning application for the extension of a flat on the ground floor of a converted semi-detached villa.
- 1.2 This report has been prepared by Martin McKay, Heritage Consultant, Dip Arch, MScTP, ARB, RTPI, who has 20 years' experience as a Conservation Officer at local authorities in Kent, Sussex and London, and ten years' experience as a Conservation Architect and Heritage Consultant within the private sector.
- 1.3 The application site is a flat on the lower ground floor of a three-storey semi-detached property with basement and converted attic, located towards the northern end of Belsize Park.
- 1.4 The surrounding area is predominately residential in character with similar semi-detached properties. The application site is within the Belsize Park Conservation Area and is noted as a positive contributor in the Conservation Area Statement (CAS).

2. Background and relevant planning history

- 2.1 **2013/1928/P** - Erection of a single storey rear extension at lower ground floor level in connection with the use as residential flat (Class C3). **Granted** on 01/07/2013.
- 2.2 **2020/1576/PRE** - single storey infill extension to the rear elevation at lower-ground floor level. The pre-application submission was for a full width extension to the rear elevation of the flat. It would have cut across and rejoined a semi-circular double height bay to the building. The pre-application response from the Council with regard to this proposal was as follows:
'...Although not widely visible, the proposed extension would be read as full width extension which is uncharacteristic feature within this part of the conservation area. The rear extension would adversely affect the architectural integrity of the building and there is no precedent for this kind of development within the conservation. Moreover, the extension would detract from prevailing pattern of development in the conservation area given the scale, density, and pattern of development. Thus, the rear addition would unbalance the composition of the pair of semi-detached dwellings and disrupting the homogeneity of the row of properties as a whole, resulting in harm to the host dwelling and surrounding Conservation Area...'
- 2.3 This current application is still for an extension, but it has been altered as compared to the pre-application submission to address the response above.

Nearby Properties

2.4 Numerous permissions have been granted for asymmetric extensions at the rear of Belsize Park Properties (see accompanying Design and Access Statement and as follows:

2020/3557/P - 14 Belsize Park (Granted)

Alteration to the internal layout of the garden studio to incorporate a shower room as an amendment to planning permission ref 2020/1561/P dated 21/07/2020 for the erection of a studio outbuilding at end of rear garden.

2013/1928/P - 14 Belsize Park (Granted)

Erection of a single storey rear extension at lower ground floor level in connection with the use as residential flat (Class C3).

G7/18/12/29583 - 14 Belsize Park (Conditional)

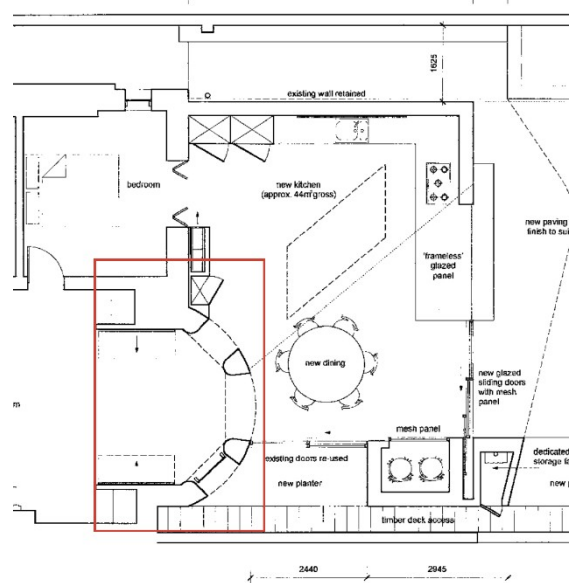
Change of use and works of conversion, including the insertion of a dormer with roof terrace at the rear, to provide four self- contained flats.

2.5 The most direct comparison to the present proposals are permissions granted at **47 Belsize Park Gardens (2006/3249/P)** and **1 Belsize Park (2009/4154/P)**

2.6 **47 Belsize Park Gardens (2006/3249/P)**: erection of a single storey rear extension to an existing flat at ground floor level. **Granted** on 07/06/2010. This was for a full width rear extension across an elevation that included a original curved bay window.

2.7 This application was submitted in 2006 for the erection of a single-storey rear ground floor level extension with green roof and rooflight (following demolition of part of existing single- storey rear extension), including provision of rainwater storage facility, and part excavation of rear garden all in connection with existing ground floor level flat (Class C3) for the property at 47 Belsize Park Gardens NW3 4JL.

2.8 With regard to the enclosure of the rear bay window of the property the Council stated in its report that:



'The proposal, whilst concealing the bay, would retain an internal connection with the bay feature. The pillars to the bay are to be retained as a decorative support structure. The works would enhance the rear façade of the building, introducing a design response that forms a strong connecting with the original building.'

This application sets a precedent for the creation of a full width extension, for the enclosure of the bay window and its retention of it as an internal feature to the flat.

2.9 **1 Belsize Park (2009/4154/P):** 'Erection of replacement single-storey side extension including increase in height of part of the street boundary wall and a replacement single storey rear extension to the existing flat.' This was also for a full width single storey extension across a rear curved bay window.

3. Historic building Assessment

3.1 The building is not listed, but is within Belsize Park Conservation Area. The significance of the building therefore lies mainly in its external architecture and appearance, and the contribution that this makes to the special character and appearance of the conservation area.

3.2 The building is one half of a semi-detached pair of villas designed by Daniel Tidey in the mid-1850s, and is one of four pairs along this part of Belsize Park. All are symmetrical around the chimney stacks and have hipped roofs. The narrow gaps between these pairs lead to a uniform rhythm along the street with glimpsed views between them.

3.3 The rear of each property features a magnificent double height semi-circular bay finished in stucco (a typical Daniel Tidey feature). These are paired with each adjoining property at the party wall, this arrangement reinforcing the symmetry of each paired set of villas.



*Lower part of rear elevations:
No.14- left, No.15- right*

3.4 The symmetry of the paired rear elevations of Nos.14 and 15 has however been compromised by subsequent extensions and alterations:

- As compared to No. 14, the bay window of the adjoining property No.15. has lost its balcony at upper ground floor level, and with this, its distinctive supporting corbels.

- The single storey extension to Flat 1, No. 14 Belsize Park is larger and more modern than the modest equivalent extension at the adjoining property of No.15.
- The symmetry across the pair of villas of Nos.14 and 15 is also disrupted by a dormer on the roof of No.15 which is not matched by an equivalent feature at No.14.

3.5 Despite this the symmetry imparted by the bays remains a strong feature, at least as viewed from within the gardens of Nos.14 and 15.

3.6 Views to the rear of the properties from the public realm are restricted to oblique views from Belsize Square and Belsize Park Gardens to the east and west respectively. Boundary walls, garage blocks, mature trees and shrubs prevent views to the lower parts of the elevations of each property, including No.14. This means that that the lower rear elevations of the buildings are scarcely visible from surrounding streets.



View from Belsize Square: No.14 arrowed



From Belsize Park Gardens: No.14 arrowed

4. The Proposal

4.1 The proposal is for the erection of a single storey infill extension to the rear elevation at lower-ground floor level of No.14. It will stretch across the rear elevation of the building from the existing extension.

4.2 The extension will be lower than the existing extension and will sit below the corbels and upper ground floor balcony of the existing bay on the main rear elevation, thus preserving this key feature. In addition, there will be a considerable set back in plan from the existing extension. This means that it will read as a separate structure that belongs to the existing bay, rather than to the adjacent existing extension. This will be reinforced by curved bay form of the proposed extension which alludes to the upper part of the original bay window above.

4.3 The extension will have a minimalist structure which will be extensively glazed, with an extremely thin roof zone. This will allow for views through it to the double height bay.



Proposed elevation, plan (blue) and axonometric of proposed extension (red)

Comparison with permitted schemes.

- 4.4 In line the proposal at 47 Belsize Park **47 Belsize Park Gardens (2006/3249/P)** and to quote the officer report for that scheme:

'The proposal, whilst concealing the bay, would retain an internal connection with the bay feature. The pillars to the bay are to be retained as a decorative support structure. The works would enhance the rear façade of the building, introducing a design response that forms a strong connecting with the original building.'

- 4.5 The lower height and the separation of the proposed extension from the existing rear extension, and the preservation of the deck and corbels of the bay window above means that this is more sensitive a bespoke addition to the building as compared to 47 Belsize Park Gardens (2006/3249/P) and 1 Belsize Park (2009/4154/P).

Effect on the special character of the conservation area

- 4.4 The extension will not be visible from surrounding streets. The upper storeys of the paired bays of No.14 and 15 above the extension will be left intact and thus the symmetry of the paired

houses will still read as intact as viewed from surrounding streets. There will thus be a minimal effect on the special character and appearance of the conservation area.

- 4.5 To the extent that the extension will be seen, it will be from the back garden of the property where it will read as lightweight and minimalist with views through it from the garden to the lower ground floor elevation of the bay.

Comparison with pre-application scheme. 2020/1576/PRE

- 4.7 The following table compares the pre-application scheme to the present submission:

Officer comment 2020/1576/PRE	Revised scheme
The proposed extension would be read as full width extension.	The different dimensions and height of the revised proposed extension are such that it would read as separate from the existing extension. It will be extremely lightweight and minimalist with glazing allowing views through to the original building.
The full width extension is an uncharacteristic feature within this part of the conservation area	The proposed extension is uncharacteristic of the conservation area, but no more so than many other individual extensions and alterations. It is bespoke and sympathetic to the building
The rear extension would adversely affect the architectural integrity of the building	As with the proposal at No. 47 Belsize Park the extension <i>'would retain an internal connection with the bay feature. The pillars to the bay are to be retained as a decorative support structure...'</i>
The rear addition would unbalance the composition of the pair of semi-detached dwellings and disrupting the homogeneity of the row of properties as a whole, resulting in harm to the host dwelling and surrounding Conservation Area...'	The current elevations of the pair of semi-detached dwellings is already unbalanced by a number of additions and alterations. The addition will add further to the imbalance, albeit in such a way that this is minimised. The extension will not be visible from areas other than from surrounding gardens. The lack of balance will not therefore detract from the quality of symmetry of the paired villas as viewed from public parts of the conservation area.

5. Assessment against planning legislation and policy.

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation) Act, 1990

- 5.1 The building is within Belsize Park Conservation Area. It is therefore covered by the provisions of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Act), 1990 as amended and updated. The Act defines conservation areas as *'Areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is important to preserve'*.

- 5.2 The Act requires that *'with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area... special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.* The main issue with regard to this application is therefore the effect of this proposal on the special character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.3 The requirements of the Act are expanded upon within the NPPF and in local plan policies. The effect of the proposal on preserving and enhancing the special character and appearance of Belsize Park Conservation Area is therefore described in the paragraphs below.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Chapter 16: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

- 5.4 *Paragraph 189* of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to identify and assess the 'particular' significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal. This requirement has been fulfilled by Section 3 above.
- 5.5 Amongst other matters, *paragraph 192* of the NPPF emphasises the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them into viable uses consistent with their conservation.
- 5.6 Paragraph 195 and 196 of the NPPF divides level of heritage harm into '*substantial*' and '*less than substantial harm*'.
- 5.7 The proposal is to add an extension. It will not alter significant parts of the building or result in the loss of historic features. It will obscure the lower parts of a double height bay on the rear façade but by being fully glazed, only to a degree. This notwithstanding the lower parts of the bay not visible from the public realm such that the extension will not affect the special character of the conservation area as experienced from surrounding streets. The degree of harm to the designated heritage asset of the conservation area is therefore minimal, if anything.

Local Policies

- 5.8 The Policy D1 (Design) of the Camden Local Plan 2017 requires development to be of the highest architectural and urban design quality which improves the function, appearance and character of the area.

- 5.9 Policy D2 of the Local Plan 2017 seeks to preserve or where possible enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas. It requires new development to demonstrate good quality design that integrates with local surroundings and landscape context and stipulates that traditional features i.e. projecting bay windows of properties) should be retained or reinstated where they have been lost.
- 5.10 Camden's Local Plan Document is supported by guidance in CPG Design, 2021. Further information on the special character and appearance of the Belsize Park Conservation Area is contained within the Belsize Park Conservation Area Appraisal 2009. Both these documents have informed the design approach taken with regard to this application.
- 5.11 The design of the extension is lightweight and minimalist in deliberate contrast to the heavier traditional architecture of the existing elevation and to the prevailing architecture of the Belsize Park Conservation Area. This is to allow the existing architecture to read as the dominant form. The design is a bespoke one that responds to the existing character of the building and one that is elegant in itself. The proposal therefore conforms with Policy D1.
- 5.12 The bespoke design will ensure that the existing feature of the upper part of the bay on the rear elevation of No.4 will be left intact and visible such that this building, along with its adjoining building, will continue to contribute to the key characteristic of building symmetry as experienced from surrounding streets within the Belsize Park Conservation area. The design therefore conforms with Policy D2.
- 5.13 The application is to be determined under a new set of policies (2017) as compared to the permitted scheme a scheme at 47 Belsize Park Gardens (2006/3249/P) and 1 Belsize Park (2009/4154/P). However, the general thrust of the policies remains the same. The reasoning, as laid out in the reports for 47 Belsize Park, also remains valid.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This statement has assessed the significance of the building and the contribution that the building makes to the special character and appearance of the conservation area within which it sits. It assesses the effect of the proposal on the architecture of the building and the special character and appearance of the conservation area and concludes that the proposal will cause minimal if any harm to special character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposal conforms with policies D1 and D2 of the Local Plan with regard to design and conservation.

Further, the works comply with the Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act (1990) as amended and updated.

6.2 Planning permission should therefore be granted for the proposed works.

END