



DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

relating to a planning application for

Property: Flats C and D
33 Downside Crescent, NW3 2AN

Applicant: William Carter

By: Brandon Schubert Ltd

Date: 10 June 2021



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- **Introduction**

This document has been prepared by Brandon Schubert Ltd, an interior design and architectural studio, on behalf of the Applicant, William Carter, owner of Flats C and D at 33 Downside Crescent.

This Design and Access Statement is written in support of a planning application relating to for the following Development at the above Property: “construction of a single-storey replacement rear extension to an existing dwellinghouse (Class C3) and external renovation works to the building”.

- **Location**

Flats C and D are located on the ground floor of 33 Downside Crescent. The property is located within the Parkhill and Upper Park Conservation Area but is not listed. Downside Crescent runs from Haverstock Hill to the south-west and Lawn Road to the northeast. On both sides of the road are semi-detached late-Victorian, red brick, three-storey gabled houses with front and rear gardens.

“Downside Crescent was constructed on the site of Haverstock Lodge; it is densely lined with late-Victorian red brick, three-storey gabled houses with front gardens. The gabled roofscape is distinctive and virtually intact. The houses are semi-detached, sited close together to form a relatively uniform frontage. Hard-standings and cross-overs have recently replaced some front gardens, and garages and car shelters on the ground floors have been added to the fronts of some houses which break the pattern of these houses and their streetscape.”

From Parkhill and Upper Park Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy - part 1, 5.3, 2b.



- **Description of the Existing Property**

The property at 33 Downside Crescent is a semi-detached, late-Victorian, red brick, three storey gabled house, in keeping with most other properties on the street. The property was sub-divided into flats in 1968. The site for this application is located on the ground floor and currently comprises of Flat C, which is a one-bedroom flat, and Flat D, a studio flat with a separate entrance.

The front elevation of the house has a large gable and double height bay window in red brick, though the original pitched slate tiles above this double height bay window have been removed and replaced with a flat roof and a railing. Side and rear facades are simple and flat, constructed in London Stock brick with red brick decorative coursing at windowsill and head levels. There is provision for vehicular and pedestrian access at the side of the house which is shared with the adjacent property at 31 Downside Crescent.



The large garden runs down to meet the tall planting of the Belsize Wood Nature Reserve (Open Space) and is currently subdivided by a garden fence between the two ground floor units the subject of this planning application. The external area at the front of the property is currently hard landscaping: entrance path, bin storage and vehicular access to the side. The adjacent property at 31 Downside Crescent has a recent full width extension at the rear (Application Number: 2017/4357/P).



Flat C, the one-bedroom flat, is situated in the main building with access from the street via the original front door to the house through the communal hallway.

Flat D, the studio flat is located at the rear of the property in a single storey addition to the main building with access provided at the side of the property via the garden gate which is shared between the property and the adjacent 31 Downside Crescent. The studio is constructed in London Stock brick with red brick decorative coursing in keeping with the main house. The rear of the property has been painted white at ground floor level. This rear single storey extension is typical of the street, albeit in this case is set a little to the side of the main building and does not protrude as far into the garden as most of the other single-story extensions along the Crescent.



The original rear extension at 33 Downside has been altered over the years with changes to openings in brickwork, new non-traditional windows and doors, and a new entrance to the separate studio flat to the side. The existing roof is in poor condition and requires replacing. The roof has no thermal insulation and to upgrade it would require the replacement of rafters with new ones of a greater depth.



The rear extension has also been affected by subsidence given the presence of London Clay as the founding soil on the site. It has been recommended that, in order to protect the primary sub-divided dwelling, the most efficient and practical way of stabilising the structure would be to demolish and

rebuild this particular section, with a foundation compliant with NHBC Standard: Part 4 Foundations and current British Standards.



From Flat C, the one-bedroom ground floor flat, a square bay window at ground floor provides access to the large rear garden which wraps around a fence which subdivides the garden between the area between the flats. Although currently sub-divided between the two flats, the entire rear garden belongs to these ground floor flats with no access granted to the upper floor flats in the building.



- **Design Principles and Concepts behind the proposal**

The existing property currently comprises of Flat C, which is a one-bedroom flat of approx. 75sqm, and Flat D, a studio flat of approx. 24sqm (total 99sqm). The design proposes the amalgamation of these two smaller units to create a larger three-bedroom family-sized unit via the construction of a rear extension creating a flat of approx. 142sqm.

The single storey extension currently comprising the studio flat is contemporary to the main house and was a uniform feature along the entire street of semi-detached properties in the Crescent. In many instances (including at numbers 4, 5, 21, 23, 27, 29 and 31 Downside Crescent), these extensions have been demolished and re-built to allow for development of these properties.

In common with the many precedents along this Crescent, this planning application seeks permission to demolish the single storey addition and construct a new rear extension in its place, which will extend across the rear of the property to the eastern property boundary. This extension will contain a Bedroom and a Reception Room, each providing direct access to the rear garden which itself will be reunited to its former state as being one garden without the subdivision between the two ground floor flats.

The existing Dining Room will be converted into a Kitchen whilst the existing Reception Room will become a second Bedroom. A third bedroom will be constructed by a small addition to the side of the building. Neither the rear extension nor the small side addition will be visible from the street.

A key part of the design brief for this proposal has been to respect the Victorian nature and qualities of the existing property, both internally and externally. Hence the use of traditional materials in keeping with the Conservation Area such as a pitched slate roof, timber framed windows, and symmetrical layouts to the principal rooms.

- **Heritage improvements**

The Applicant is keen to restore and improve historic elements of the property as part of their current plans with the aim of positively contributing towards the Conservation Area. The heritage context is further explored in the Heritage appraisal contained within the Planning Statement accompanying this planning application.

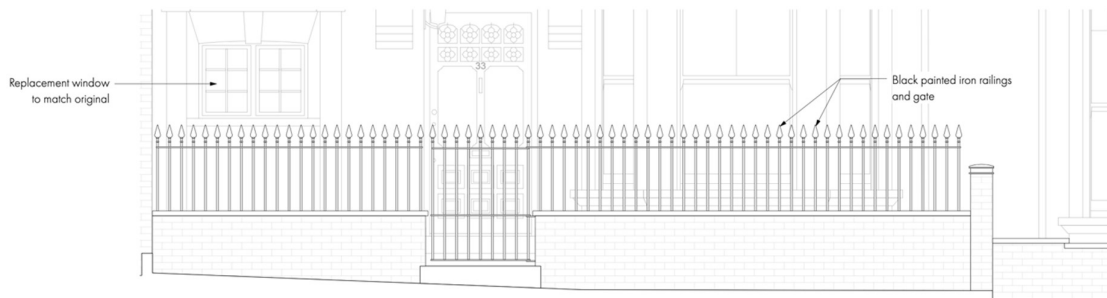
There are six improvements which the Applicant's Heritage consultants have recommended which the Applicant is seeking permission for as part of this application:

1. **Reinstating a low wall and railings to the front boundary – following historic precedents which exist elsewhere along the crescent.**

The Applicant proposes to reinstate metal railings to the front garden wall, which have been removed at some point in the past. The design of these new railings would match the originals which have been retained by other properties on the street such as those retained at 25 Downside Crescent:



Below the proposed reinstatement plans at 33 Downside Crescent:



FRONT GARDEN WALL - PROPOSED ELEVATION

2. Relocating the white meter boxes so they are no longer visible from the street.

In a prominent corner of Downside Crescent, the white gas meter cupboards are unsightly and detract from the original historic features of the street. The Applicant is proposing to move these gas meters to the side of the property (behind the garden gate) so that they are no longer visible from the street.



3. Relocating the bins so they are no longer visible from the street.

The bins also currently enjoy a prominent position at the front of the property on the corner. The Applicant here has suggested that these can be moved to the side of the property so that they are no longer visible from the street. In any event, the proposals involve reinstatement of railings where the Applicant is also planning on planting a new hedge, so that this area of the garden will not be visible to the street.



4. Reinstating a tiled walkway to the main house as elsewhere on the crescent.

The current path leading to the front door of the property does not have a positive contribution to the Conservation Area:



Above: the current entrance path at 33 Downside Crescent

Below: the original tiled entrance paths to 25 and 29 Downside Crescent



5. Reinstating the pitched roof over the bay window to the front elevation.

From left to right in the below photo, you can see the original pitched slate roof over the double height bay window on the front elevations of 29 and 31 Downside Crescent and then see the flat roof with railings above the double height bay window at the front of 33 and 35 Downside Crescent. This important original feature will be restored under the current planning application:



6. Replacing the small window to the ground floor (to the left of the entrance on the front elevation) to match those on the rest of the Crescent.

Below left is the window at 33 Downside Crescent which will be replaced with the original window design which match those on the rest of the Crescent (example below right):



- **Description of Use**

The existing use of the property is a one-bedroom flat (Flat C) and a studio flat with separate entrance (Flat D). The proposed use is a single amalgamated three-bedroom family sized flat.

- **Description of Layout**

The proposed layout of the development will create a three-bedroom flat with good connections to the rear garden from two principal rooms, as well as a generous internal hallway. Alterations to some internal partition walls allow us to create two comfortable bathrooms (one en-suite), a kitchen / dining room which links to a living space, a utility cupboard together with adequate storage in the three generous bedrooms.

With the kitchen in the centre of the plan it is necessary to introduce rooflights in the new Reception Room roof, to allow more light into the space.

As mentioned above, this proposal strives to respect the Victorian qualities of the existing property, and therefore the symmetrical arrangement of windows on the rear façade are important.

The design also reflects a desire to retain a dominant side of the rear extension where the existing extension is currently located by re-constructing a pitched slate roof over this side which will contrast to the flat roof created over the “infill” area. This means that the architectural story of the rear façade will read as a dominant side (where the slate pitched roof will be) and a subservient side – an “infill” – so that the rear elevation clearly delineates between the original side extension (the dominant side with pitched slate roof) and the infill addition (the subservient side with flat roof over the infill).

- **Details of scale**

The side wall of the new extension will align with that of the existing rear addition albeit with a smaller narrower extension to the side of the property where the third bedroom will be created. The extension will not be visible from the street, given the garden gate obscuring the view:



The built form of the extension will not project any further from the side of the building than the existing rear addition as can be seen in the below elevation showing the redline of the existing and the proposed extension at the rear and to the side:



ELEVATION A-A

These proposals will be entirely obscured from view from the street.

The below section illustrates that the height of the extension will be the same as the existing – where the pitched roof of the existing matches with the pitched roof of the proposed (again with the redline showing the outline of the existing overlayed on the proposed section drawing):



SECTION A-A

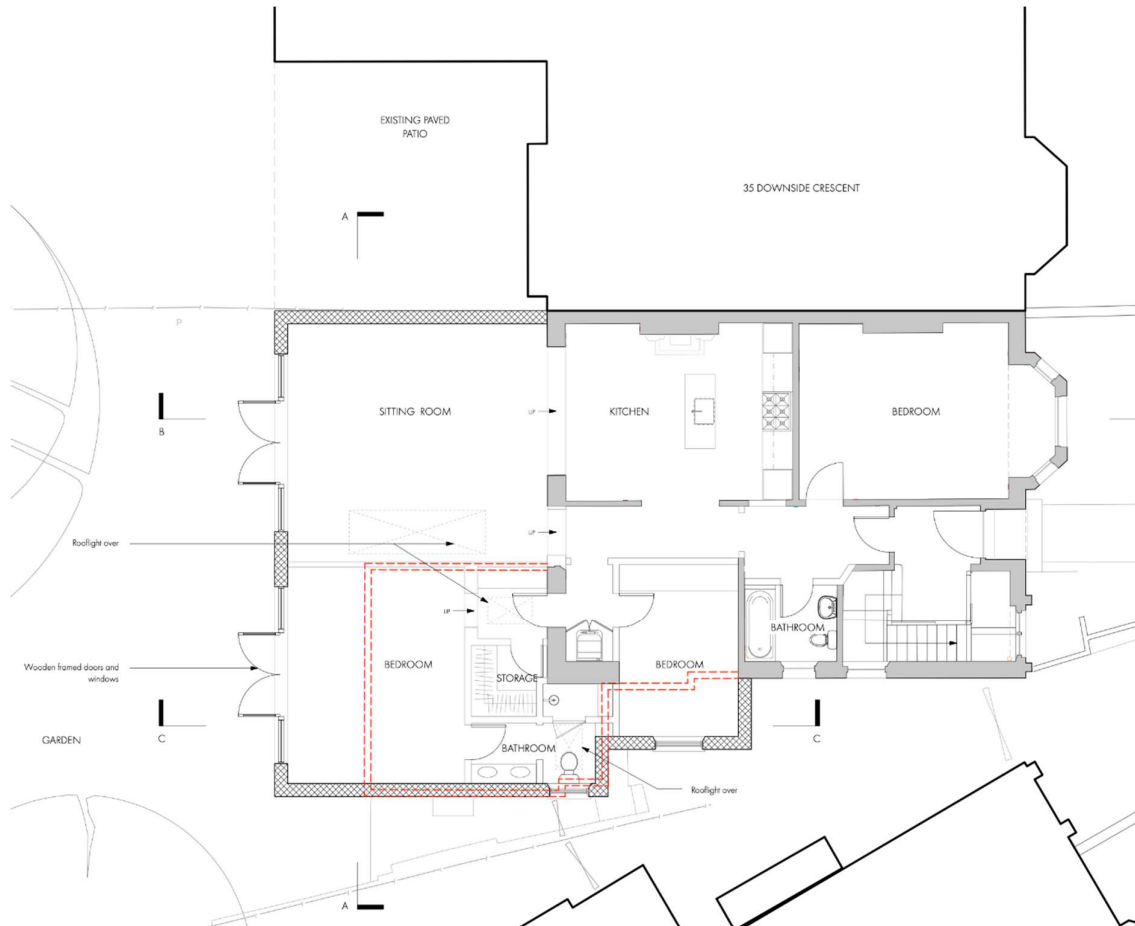
Finally, the below elevation of the rear façade of the property shows the new timber framed doors and windows set in the London stock brick with a decorative coursing to match the existing showing the redline of the existing extension overlaid:



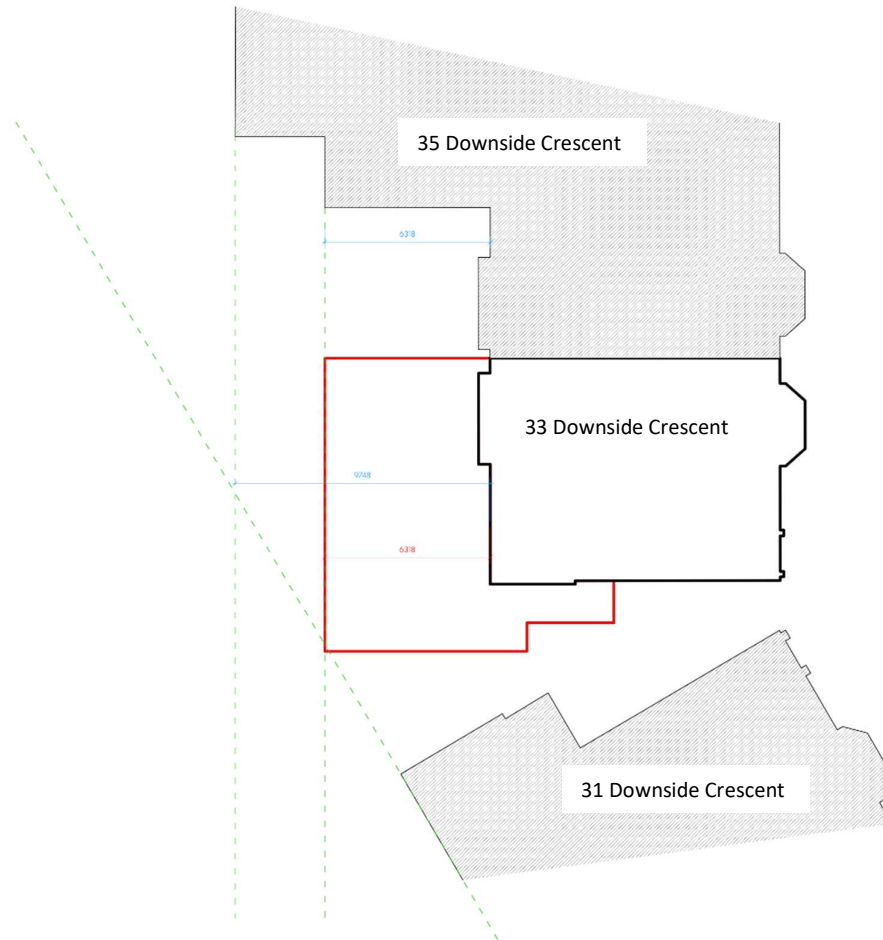
ELEVATION C-C

The extension will moderately increase in depth into the garden by approx. 1.9 metres beyond the current extent of the property boundary at the rear of the extension. This proposed increase in depth is considerably less than the approx. 4 metres proposed in the previous application in November 2019 made by a former owner of the same property (subsequently withdrawn).

The plan below shows the overlay of the existing rear extension in red dashed lines compared with the proposed extension:



The depth of the proposal is now equal to other full width extensions along Downside Crescent – so there is clearly precedent for this approach. Furthermore, the proposed depth of the extension will match the depth of the extension of the neighbouring property, at 35 Downside Crescent (which projects approx. 6metres from the main building into the garden). The below illustration shows the outline of the proposed extension in red, together with green lines projecting in a straight line from the neighbouring properties. The property line of No. 35 actually extends further into the garden given that there is a more recent addition of a garage to the rear of the extension which is also marked on the plan below:



It is noted that of the many examples of extensions along the Crescent, there are extensions which project significantly further into the garden (example being 4 Downside Crescent where the extension protrudes approx. 9m into the garden compared to the current application's 6m) and others which are wider than the current application (example being 31 Downside Crescent which is a wider extension than the proposed extension here at 33). The extension's depth into the garden of approx. 6m has been approved several times along the Crescent including at numbers 16, 21, 23 and 27 Downside Crescent.

The additional area of approx. 43sqm will be gained predominantly by extending across the rear of the property up to the eastern boundary (an "infill" extension). The adjoining property at 35, has a paved patio area immediately next to the proposed extension boundary:



The new Reception room will be slightly larger than each of the existing principal rooms (approx. 33sqm). The new wall adjacent to the boundary with 35 Downside Crescent will be 3.7m high. The current fence is 2m high between the properties.

- **Amenity**

The infill rear single storey extension will be built up to the boundary line with 35 Downside Crescent. The rear elevations and gardens of 33 and 35 Downside Crescent face north and, for this reason, there will be minimal impact on the sunlight amenity of the neighbouring property. Given there is a large area of patio immediately adjacent to the extension, there will be no impact on any vegetation either.

The boundary treatment is currently approx. 2m above the external ground level (existing garden fence). The proposed extension at this point will be 3.4m to the flat roof and 3.7m to the top of the parapet wall.

Some external amenity space will be lost by the development of the infill extension. However, the existing rear garden is large: the current open space at the property is 265.63sqm (including the front and rear garden), so loss of approx. 43sqm represents only a loss of 16% of open space which should be considered acceptable.

- **Landscaping**

No significant landscape works are proposed as part of this development. There are no trees in the area of the proposed extension. A patio area will be removed to the rear of the property to make way for the new extension.

A new hedge will be planted along the front boundary of the property where the railings will be reinstated and new flowerbeds will be installed in the garden area. Loss of the fence which currently subdivides the garden will improve the feeling of openness in the rear garden.

- **Materials and Appearance**

The proposed extension would be constructed in cavity masonry walls with external London Stock bricks to match the existing property. A decorative coursing of red brick to match and align with that on the existing building will run around the top of the new walls, which will be capped with traditional capping.

The pitched roof over the Bedroom will be clad in slate at a pitch to match that of the existing roof of the addition together with terracotta tiles at the corners. The flat roof over the Reception Room (the "infill" extension) will be lined with a dark grey waterproof membrane.

The large windows and doors at the rear of the property are traditionally designed and timber framed. A lot of the design inspiration for this extension has been taken from the successful project completed at 27 Downside Crescent where a full width extension was created in complimentary materials to the existing building (see photo below).

- **Description of how local context has informed the design**

As mentioned above this design strives to respect and reflect the context of the existing property. The use of a pitched slate roof over the side of the extension where the existing addition lies, together with timber framed doors and windows facing the garden, and London Stock brickwork walls are explicit references to the existing building. It is our intention that this proposed extension appears as equally integrated into the main fabric of the building as the existing rear addition but with improved construction built to significantly higher standards (with increased energy efficiency and insulation) than the existing.

There are several examples of full width rear extensions along Downside Crescent, most of which take a more contemporary design approach. However, the full width extension at 27 Downside Crescent (2014/3518/P - Granted 21-07-2014) is an example of where the ground floor flat was successfully extended in a manner which was appropriate and authentic to the original building and local context

using London Stock bricks, a decorative coursing of red bricks, capped traditionally. A photo of the successful rear extension at 27 Downside Crescent is below:



[Photo above: The full width extension at 27 Downside Crescent. This is an example of a successful full width extension on this street using traditional materials which relate to the original property. The dominance of the original extension was maintained by re-constructing a slate pitched roof with red terracotta tiles on the corners over the original side, with a flat roof over the "infill". Traditionally designed timber framed windows and doors complete the authentic period appearance of this extension: design elements which we have been inspired to replicate at the scheme at 33 Downside Crescent.]



[Photo above: The full width extension of the adjacent property at 31 Downside Crescent. Although the slate roof was reconstructed over the original side of the extension which maintains the architectural history of the building (i.e., the dominance of the original side of the extension), the materials used clearly distinguish the new extension from the original building. At 33 Downside Crescent, the Applicant wishes to use London stock bricks with red-brick decorative coursing which will mean that the extension will harmonise more with the original building.]



[Photo above: The full-width extension at 5 Downside Crescent which uses more traditional brickwork than the darker bricks used at 31 Downside, but this example has two “peaked” roof lines over the original side extension and the new “infill” which means it has lost the architectural history of retaining a dominant side in the location of the existing extension.]



[Photo above: The extension at 4 Downside Crescent.]

- **Access**

It is proposed that the existing rear access to the Studio flat (accessed via the garden gate in between 31 and 33 Downside Crescent) shall no longer be used, with access to the amalgamated three-bedroom unit provided via the shared front building entrance (making use of the existing entrance to the one-bedroom flat).