

Design & Access Statement

Project: 52 Aberdare Gardens, London NW6 3QD

Date: 23/12/21

Introduction

1. This statement is in support of the planning application for:

Conversion of the existing building from 3 dwellings to 2 dwellings including creation of basement extension, together with associated external works including modification of single storey rear extension with raised parapet and new roof terrace, alterations to fenestration and front boundary treatment, removal and replacement of trees, installation of condenser in rear garden, and installation of solar panels to roof.

2. This document should be read in conjunction with the Planning Statement prepared by Hume Planning.

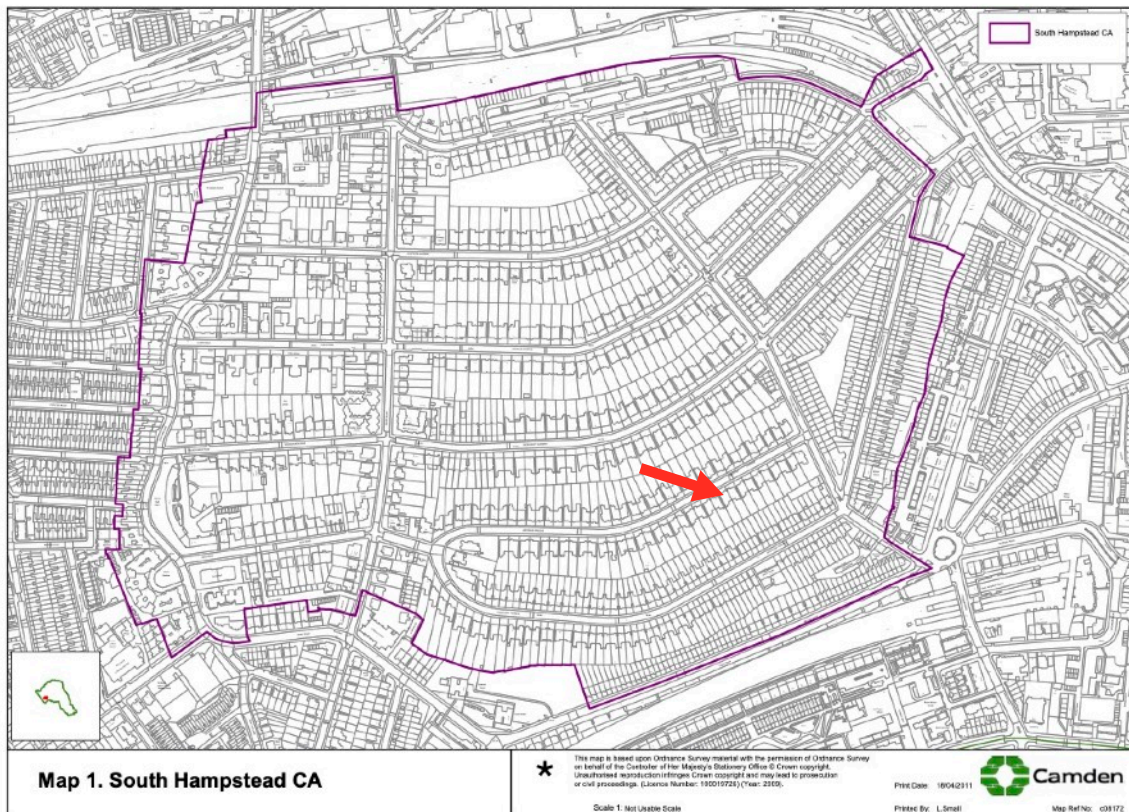


Fig 1: Map of South Hampstead Conservation Area

3. The site is in the South Hampstead Conservation Area which is described in some detail in the 'Character Appraisal And Management Strategy February 2011. Please refer to the heritage Assessment which follows for more detail.
4. An application for pre-planning advice has been submitted and a meeting was held with the Officer (Nathaniel Young) on 26th October 2021. The latest submission drawings and this statement take account of the verbal advice given at this meeting and formal report response received 13/12/21.

Heritage Assessment

1. The Conservation Area Character Appraisal is very detailed and gives a comprehensive assessment of the significance of the heritage assets so we do not feel it necessary to reproduce large sections of that text here. The document also identifies pressures which may affect the character of the area and we summarise here the points we believe to be relevant to the proposed development:
 - 1.1. The vegetation (both front and rear) is considered a prominent feature with buildings set-back and boundaries demarcated by ornate garden walls. The report states that 'Views along rear garden vistas and into areas of dense tree cover are characteristic of the conservation area and should be protected'
 - 1.2. The properties in Aberdare Gardens are 'elaborately composed to include a range of fashionable late 19th century forms and details. The variety of porches is particularly interesting – they include elaborate ironwork porch canopies, render and striped brick arches, grand Baroque-style pediments with date stones and carved brick faces, and Gothic revival arches and arcading.' No.52 itself has a red brick frontage (and yellow stocks to the side / rear) with corbelling, brick arches, painted sub-cills, ground floor bays and a decorative Dutch gable. The roof tiles to the front are clay with bands of rounded 'club' tiles to add decoration.



Fig 2: Existing front elevation



Fig 3: Aerial view of existing rear elevation

1.3. The following 'definition' of the specific character area containing Aberdare Gardens is given as 'Central wedge – Aberdare, Broadhurst, Canfield, Compayne and Greencroft Gardens; includes east side of Priors Road. The heart of the conservation area these properties are some of the most ornate and attractive in the area, with lively roofscapes, timber and ironwork porches, typically late 19th century multi-paned sashes and gaps between houses contributing to character. '

1.4. The property is not listed but numbers 2 - 70 are identified as being 'positive contributors' to the area.

2. The assessment notes that the greatest pressure in the area has come from the 'continued trend for the conversion of former single family dwelling houses, to flats and maisonettes'. As such an Article 4 Directive has been put in place which covers Aberdare Gardens. The accompanying design guide 'Swiss Cottage Conservation Area Design Guide: Advice on alterations and repair following the introduction of an Article 4(1) Direction' has been referred to in preparing our design proposals. Some specific design issues are also raised which have been taken into account when preparing the proposals:

2.1. Item 7.11 notes that 'In recent years, South Hampstead Conservation Area has seen a proliferation of basement developments and extensions to existing basement accommodation, together with excavation of associated lightwells at the front and rear of properties. Some of these (e.g. on Aberdare Gardens) are overly large, spilling into and resulting in a loss of verdant front and rear gardens, detracting from the serene, leafy character of the rear gardens in the CA'.

2.2. Items 7.14 states 'particular care should be taken to ensure that the attractive garden setting of the host building, neighbouring gardens and any private open spaces is not compromised by overly large

extensions and areas of hard landscaping. Residents are encouraged to maintain as much soft landscaping as possible in rear gardens.'

2.3. Item 7.22 notes on a positive side that 'incremental reinstatement of quality details, reinstating garden walls and railings and front gardens (see below), will enhance the area.'

3. Under Part Two of the document (Management) the following guidance is given and has been referred to in the development of our design proposals:
 - 3.1. Item 13.25: 'The intensive sub-division of houses that were originally constructed for single family occupation can have significant detrimental impact on the appearance of the CA through external alterations, extensions and possible demand for additional car parking spaces and will be discouraged.'
 - 3.2. Item 13.27: 'Just as overly large extensions above the ground level can dominate a building, contributing to the over-development of a site, an extension below ground can be of an inappropriate scale to the host property and to its neighbours, as well as impacting on immediate and neighbouring garden setting The Council will resist this type of development where it is considered to harm the character or appearance of the conservation area.'
 - 3.3. Item 13.28: 'There are a number of factors that would mean basement development would be overdevelopment. These include, the visual impact of the development both at the front and rear of the property is also a key consideration and lightwells, sunken courtyards, skylights and stepped planting schemes can significantly detract from the attractive amenity of the remaining garden and views from neighbouring properties; harm caused to any trees on or adjoining the site, where the development would restrict future planting and mature development of trees typical to the area, and any impact to the water environment. . The permissible size of a basement development will therefore be guided by the characteristics of the site, its surroundings and the pattern of developed to undeveloped land in the area (i.e. the ration of built form to public and private open space) and will be resisted where there would be a negative impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.'
 - 3.4. Item 13.29: 'A basement development that is modest in size such that it does not extend beyond the footprint of the original building and is no deeper than one full storey below ground level (approximately 3 metres in depth) is often the most appropriate way to extend a building below ground, provided that the internal environment is fit for the intended purpose, and there is no impact to any trees on or adjoining the site, to the water environment, or to the visual amenity of the remaining garden and views from neighbouring properties.'
 - 3.5. Item 13.31: 'The Council will ensure that gardens maintain their biodiversity function for flora and fauna and that they are capable of continuing to contribute to the landscape character of an area so that this can be preserved and enhanced. Where there are trees on or adjacent to the site, including any street trees, an arboricultural report will be required with the submission of a planning application.'
 - 3.6. Item 13.32: 'The creation of new lightwells can harm the relationship between the building and the wider streetscape, as well as resulting in the loss of garden space; railings around lightwells can cause a cluttered appearance to the front of the property; the inclusion of rooflights designed within the landscaping of a front garden can result in light spill from these subterranean rooms and harm the character of a building's garden setting. Development will be resisted where it is considered there would be a negative impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.'
 - 3.7. Item 13.33: 'When considering applications for basement extensions within the conservation area, the Council will also need to be satisfied that effective measures will be taken during demolition and construction works to ensure the stability of the building and neighbouring properties.'
 - 3.8. Item 13.41: 'Roof lights may be considered acceptable if fitted flush with the roof and located on the rear roofslope. The individual merits of each proposal will be considered in relation to their impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.'
 - 3.9. Item 13.45: 'Loss of front garden spaces can significantly detract from the appearance of the area and further harm is caused by the paving over of green spaces, loss of boundary walls and hedges, the erection of inappropriate walls, railings and gates and the visual intrusion of the cars themselves parked within the former garden. Unfortunately a significant number of gardens and boundary walls have been removed in the area, making the retention of those surviving, and the reinstatement of those lost, a high priority.'
 - 3.10. Item 13.47: 'Where front refuse bin stores are considered necessary, great care should be taken to ensure that the store is located sensitively. This would include concealment by existing boundary walls and planting, the use of sensitive materials (reclaimed brick or timber) and siting away from the main frontage of the building.'

3.11. Item 13.48: 'The brick boundary walls, gate posts and ironwork along the frontages are an important facet of the character of the entire conservation area. An Article 4 Direction is in place in the conservation area requiring planning permission for all works (except repairs and like for like replacement) to front boundary treatment. The Council will resist the loss of original boundary treatments and the iron and wooden elements and planted greenery associated with them.'

3.12. Item 13.50: 'Planning permission is required for changing a hard surface at the front of a house or flat in the conservation area. This includes paving over a front garden (or garden at the side of the property where this faces a road) where it is not already paved, or changing the size or a material or size of an existing paved areas. In addition to where Planning Permission or Conservation Area Consent is required, approval for a cross over is also required from the Council's Highways Department.'

Amount

1. The site curtilage measures approximately 510sq.m.
2. The proposals seeks to reduce the number of dwellings from 3 to 2 comprising a ground floor flat and upper maisonette with new side entrance. The latter also benefits from the proposed basement space.
3. The existing / proposed schedule of accommodation is as follows:

	EXISTING				
	Basement	Ground	First	Second	Totals
Flat 1 (3 bed)	23	118			141
Flat 2 (2 bed)			95		95
Flat 3 (2 bed)				99	99
Circulation		9	8	6	23
Total	23	127	103	105	358
	PROPOSED				
	Basement	Ground	First	Second	Totals
Flat 1 (2 bed)		113			113
Flat 2 (4 bed)	106	12	103	103	324
Total	106	125	103	103	437

Layout

1. The development is contained within the original external volume so has been dictated by this constraint. As such rooms are generally based on original wall positions with some removal of non-original partitions, additional 'opening-up' and a couple of new partitions / infills where required.
2. The upper maisonette is accessed from a new discreet entrance to the side which will be accessed via the existing gate and side access path so giving no visible change to the appearance of the frontage. The new entrance gives access to a ground floor level WC and study at the front. From here a new stair leads to the

new basement accommodation (formed by excavating down the existing cellar). As per the guidance initiated 3.4 above, the basement is restricted to the footprint of the existing house and the light wells are modest and designed to minimise their visual impact in the following ways:

- Front light-well is flush with ground level with a discreet metal grill over - the existing curved bay window is extended down into the light-well to provide daylight and ventilation to the front room.
- Rear light-well is formed in the 'recess' between the existing rear projection and the neighbouring extension on the boundary line. The area immediately outside of the dining room French doors is to be fully glazed at allow level access to the terrace with a small open section to the side which allows natural ventilation / daylight into the light-well below. The light-well will barely be visible from the garden and certainly not from beyond the site boundaries.

The layout of the basement is dictated by the light wells with the rooms located where we have daylight. Service elements such as the plant room and utility/store are located in the 'dark' parts of the plan.

The remainder of the maisonette occupies the first and second floor with the main living accommodation at the rear of the first floor and benefitting from the new roof terrace.

3. The ground floor flat is accessed via the existing front door with the layout improved and opened-up to create a generous 2 bedroom flat.
4. The revised layout is based on the Officer advice that the basement should ideally form part of a larger unit - with the majority of it located above ground. Due to the existing layout and the position of the staircase this was the only viable arrangement which would meet these criteria.

Scale

1. The external envelope above ground is only marginally increased with the raising of the parapet walls of the existing rear kitchen projection in order to give level access. An accessible roof terrace is formed at first floor level with suitable railings and proposed screen planting to the side. At the same time the existing small outside store on the rear facade is removed.
2. The proposed basement is approximately 3.2m deep and restricted to the footprint of the existing house (but does not extend below the kitchen projection) in order to remain 'discreet' and 'modest'.
3. The Officer did not raise any concerns about the extent of the proposed development and welcomed the retention / remodelling of the existing kitchen extension rather than demolition and replacement.

Appearance

1. The proposed designs are intentionally discreet and intended to compliment the existing property and improve or enhance the character of the conservation area. Key points to note:
 - 1.1. Windows are to be generally replaced with double-glazed units to match the appearance/profiles of the existing. The non-matching first floor front window is to be replaced to match others.
 - 1.2. Gas meter boxes (fixed to front of right hand bay) are to be removed and either buried or relocated to the side wall - details to be confirmed.
 - 1.3. Front wall is to be repaired with a small hedge planted behind this in order to hide the new bin store in the front garden area.
 - 1.4. The existing concrete oversite in the front garden is to be removed and replaced with a combination of paving and planting (full details to be confirmed). The existing trees are to be removed with replacement planting. Refer to attached arboricultural report.
 - 1.5. The front light-well is to be flush with the ground level and protected by a metal grill.
 - 1.6. The kitchen addition is retained and improved with external pipework removed, small openings to the side infilled, the rear store demolished and large Crittall-style French doors/windows added to the rear and side returns plus to replace the adjacent dining rooms French doors. The parapet wall is to be raised in stock brick to match and metal balustrades added - all to an appropriate traditional design to

compliment the existing building. The new French doors opening onto this terrace are to be double glazed, painted timber - in a similar style to the existing ground floor French doors.

1.7. The rear lightwell is recessed between the kitchen projection and the neighbouring extension. It is partly covered by a glazed unit (flush to the terrace) with an open section to the side which will have metal balustrades to match the first floor roof terrace. The terrace is kept to a reasonable depth so as not to dominate the rear garden and will steps down to meet the lawn. Existing trees very close to the building are to be removed to allow more light and mitigate against potential structural damage. Replacement planting is proposed within the garden (details to be confirmed) - refer to arboricultural report.

2. All materials are to either match the existing or to compliment them:

2.1. Raised walls to rear in stock brick to match.

2.2. New first floor French doors / windows in timber to match existing

2.3. New ground floor & basement doors/windows in Crittall style metal frames

2.4. Replacement windows in timber to match existing

2.5. New side entrance door in panelled timber to match existing

2.6. Balustrades in painted metal

2.7. New terraces / paved areas with grey porcelain tiles.

3. The Officer did not raise any objections to the proposals but emphasised the need to match profiles where we are replacing windows on a 'like-for-like' basis (as confirmed in item 4.1 above). Crittall windows were considered acceptable at ground and basement levels on the rear.

Landscape

1. The front garden is to be improved with the existing concrete over-site replaced with a combination of porcelain paving and grass / soft landscaping.

2. The rear garden proposals include the provision of a new basement light-well in the same position as an existing ground floor patio with the addition of a new raised patio at ground floor level. This latter feature provides a link between the house and the garden and is an essential part of the design but has been kept to a reasonable size (covering 12% of the garden area). The remainder of the garden is give over to lawn and soft landscaping with all trees and planets at the far end of the garden retained.

3. Some existing trees near to the rear of the house and in the front garden are to be removed as part of the proposals with suitable replacement planting provided - refer to tree report for full details.

Access

1. The self contained ground floor flat will use the existing main entrance door to the front with the maisonette accessed from a new side door formed by modifying an existing window opening.

2. Access to the garden for maintenance is via the existing side alleyway.

3. Bins are to be stored in the front garden area in a new bin store which will improve the appearance and is to be discreetly hidden behind a hedge.

4. The bikes are to be stored in the existing shed in the rear garden, accessed via the side alley and gravel path.