

1 Introduction

1.1 This short report assesses the impact of the construction of a timber boundary fence on the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area, and provides contextual support for its materiality and dimensions. The report supports discussions connected to an ongoing enforcement enquiry and a consequent planning permission application for retrospective approval of the erection of a new timber boundary fence on the new boundary of No. 4.

1.2 This report supplements the letter dated 17th September 2021, submitted by The Heritage Practice. That letter described the demolition of the previous brick boundary wall with the plot of the Grade-II listed 10 Fitzroy Park, establishing that it did not meet the definition of curtilage to the listed building. It also established that planning permission was not required for the demolition in relation to conservation area status.

1.3 Further to a request from Camden planning officers, this report considers the suitability of the replacement timber fence, specifically regarding its effects on the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area and any possible effect on the setting of the listed building, 10 Fitzroy Park.

2 History, character & appearance

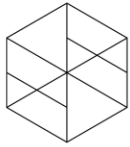
2.1 History of Fitzroy Park

2.1.1 Fitzroy House or Fitzroy Farm was a mansion built for Charles FitzRoy, 1st Baron Southampton on his Tottenham Estate, which lay west of Highgate West Hill, on land descending from Highgate village towards the Heath (Fig. 1). The house was visited by King George III and Queen Charlotte, was depicted by contemporary artists as a picturesque feature in the admired Arcadian

(re)landscaped area of Hampstead and Highgate, and is thought to have had grounds designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. The estate terminated at the edge of the Heath near the New River Company's reservoirs, from which it was separated by the timber-fenced Millfields Lane, known as Poets' Lane, for its association with local poets such as Coleridge and Keats (Fig. 2). Fitzroy House was demolished in c. 1828.

2.1.2 The original carriage drive of the estate opening off The Grove was preserved as the modern Fitzroy Park, but the grounds were eventually divided for residential development. As the *Highgate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy* notes, while redevelopment over the subsequent century or more subdivided the extensive grounds of the Fitzroy Estate, Fitzroy Park's larger houses and gardens contrast in their relative spaciousness and enclosure with the historic village. Large classical houses such as Beechwood (George Basevi, 1840, Grade II) and The Elms (Basevi, 1838-40, Grade II) were joined by smaller houses over a century or so, and from the mid-20th century by some notable modern houses, such as No. 8a (Hal Higgins, 1965-7, Grade II). Many of the infill houses from between these periods have a lightly Arts and Crafts character, referencing the *rus in urbe* tradition of residential development in the area reaching back at least as far as Fitzroy Farm.

2.1.3 One of the large 19th-century houses which was added to the old estate was called Southampton Lodge (Fig. 2). It stood in the angle of Fitzroy Park as it turns south-east from its original south-westerly descent. Few details of this building have been located, though it is likely to have been contemporary with The Elms and Beechwood. Historic mapping evidence shows that during the early 20th century, the grounds immediately north of the Lodge were in a horticultural business use as Highate Nurseries (Fig. 3). However, by 1932 the Nurseries had closed and the land was acquired by the architect Emmanuel



Vincent Harris, who built a neo-Georgian house for himself (2.2.5, below). In another part of the grounds, accessed off Merton Lane, a house called Heathfield Park was built in about the same period. Southampton Lodge itself still stood during the early 1950s survey for the 1958 OS Map (Fig. 4), but had been demolished by the time of the 1960s OS Map (Fig. 5). That map shows that Harris had acquired the grounds of the Lodge to extend those of his house, No. 10.

2.1.4 The small group of houses called Fitzroy Close was developed around 1972, hard on the boundary of the former Southampton Lodge, within the grounds of Heathfield Park. Two houses of similar style were built on the south side of the Close first, appearing in the OS map published in 1979. On the north side of the close, three detached houses were built next, by the noted North London modernist architect Ted Levy's firm Levy, Benjamin & Partners. The firm also developed the West Hill Estate off Merton Lane, in a similar style, characterised by (dark) red brick and hipped or pitched, tiled roofs.



Figure 1 | Engraving of Lord Southampton's Lodge published by R. Sayer in 1792 (source: British Museum)

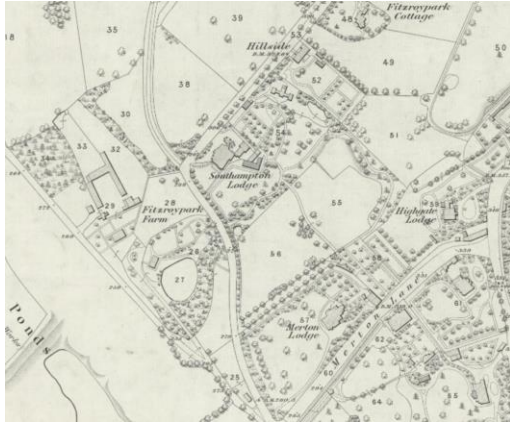
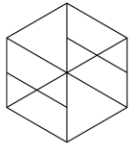


Figure 2 | OS map detail showing Southampton Lodge, published 1870 (source: National Library of Scotland)

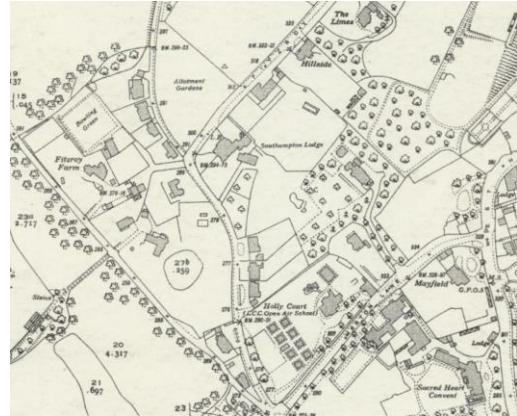


Figure 4 | OS map detail showing 10 Fitzroy Park and Southampton Lodge, published 1953 (source: National Library of Scotland)

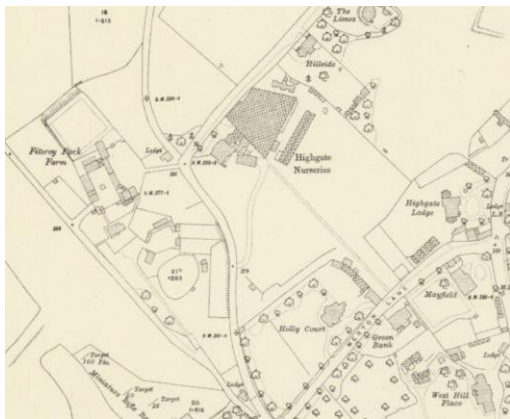
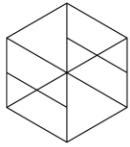


Figure 3 | OS map detail showing Highgate Nurseries, published 1915 (source: National Library of Scotland)



Figure 5 | OS map detail showing Southampton Lodge demolished, published 1968 (source: National Library of Scotland)



2.2 Highgate Conservation Area

2.2.1 Highgate Conservation Area was designated by the London Borough of Camden in 1968 and extended in 1972 and 1992. Fitzroy Park is in Sub-Area 2 of the Conservation Area.

2.2.2 The high, north-eastern reach of Fitzroy Park has the character of backland to the grand Georgian houses of The Grove. There is a long descent down the hill between high boundary walls and fences, screening larger houses. Approaching the Heath as the descent eases, Fitzroy Park develops a village character of its own, with the neo-Georgian No. 10 (E Vincent Harris, 1932, Grade II) and a group of Arts and Crafts influenced cottages (The Lodge, Westwind, Dancer's End, Kenbrook) facing onto allotments. The rural character is secured by the edge of Hampstead Heath.

2.2.3 The Council's *Appraisal* notes that the character of the Fitzroy Park sub-area in general marks a "contrast" with the historic village, and this is specifically to do with the spaciousness of the residential development, and the semi-rural character of the lane. The sub-area includes the allotments to the north-west of the site and Millfield Lane adjacent to the Heath.

2.2.4 Highfields Grove is a slightly distinctive feature of the area, being a gated development of similar, purple-brick detached houses built in the 1980s on the grounds of Witanhurst. Highfields Grove fills much of the land east of Fitzroy Park, being bounded by a fence which, as the *Appraisal* notes, "changes to an unsightly chain link mesh" on its south side. Here the development adjoins more distinguished 20th- and 21st-century houses: a group on The Hexagon, and Heathfield House, which replaced Heathfield Park at No. 6 Merton Lane, designed by Alan Powers.

2.2.5 South of The Hexagon is No. 10 Fitzroy Park, described in the *Appraisal* as a

"crisp" example of neo-Georgian style, designed by Emmanuel Vincent Harris for himself. It was left by him to the Borough. The attractive grounds and gardens, the granite forecourt screening much of the house from the road, and the change of levels across the site elevating the house above a garden level are all noted in the *Appraisal*. The plots of the houses on Fitzroy Close adjoin the grounds of No. 10 to its south.

2.2.6 Having dealt with No. 10 and the most significant 20th-century houses on Fitzroy Park, the *Appraisal* makes direct reference to Fitzroy Close:

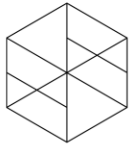
"The road curves towards the south and there is another group of 1970s/1980s houses, Fitzroy Close... The houses on the north side were designed by Ted Levy, Benjamin and Partners (see Westhill Park in Merton Lane & Millfield Lane Sub-Area)."

These houses on the north side of the Close are characteristic of the work of Levy's practice in the period, featuring a red-brown brick, dark timber joinery, irregular modelling and fenestration and hipped and pitched tiles roofs. Within the conservation area, they bear a resemblance to the low-rise houses and flat blocks designed by Levy at West Hill Park.

2.2.5 Reflecting the general pattern of development through time, the houses on Fitzroy Close are less spaciouly arranged than the earlier 20th-century houses before them and the Victorian villas before that. Nonetheless, each is set behind a drive and the irregular form conveys clear appreciation of their detached form, each set in a garden. Small but verdant residential plots with tight boundaries is part of the character of the Close.

2.3 Context summary: significant setting, character, appearance

2.3.1 The rear boundary of 4 Fitzroy Close separates it from the area of the former



Southampton Lodge, which as noted above has since become part of the grounds of the listed building, 10 Fitzroy Park. This area of land was only acquired for the listed building after the demolition of the Lodge, likely in the 1950s, and, not part of the original gardens, according to mapping appears to have remained without significant landscaping intervention during the lifetime of Harris, who died in 1971. The significance of No. 10 lies entirely in its architectural interest derived from the design by Harris; thus this part of the grounds and the boundary with Fitzroy Close may be part of the setting of No. 10, but contributes nothing to its significance.

2.3.2 Fitzroy Close is quite screened from 10 Fitzroy Park and 6 Merton Lane on its north side by vegetation. Developed around a cul-de-sac, it is by nature somewhat secluded and inward-looking. The buildings are a somewhat more modern-suburban type than the older semi-rural villas of the conservation area, and as such are not set in expansive grounds, but are more modest, arranged fairly closely adjacent in tightly-bounded gardens. Nonetheless, the setting is remarkably verdant and not at all urban in character.

2.3.3 The “rustic character... [and] appearance” of Fitzroy Park is stressed in the *Appraisal's* description of the sub-area, which is noted to be rare in London, and “the impact on it of any proposed development will be a major factor in assessing the appropriateness of any development proposals”.

2.4 Boundary treatments in the CA

2.4.1 There is no consistent boundary treatment in the conservation area, which is part of what contributes to its informal, accreted rustic character. Boundaries tend to reflect the architectural character of the houses – from high brick boundary walls to the Victorian villas near the top of the road, to dwarf stone walls and hedges to the Arts and Crafts cottages near the allotments. As noted

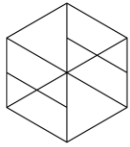
above, the architectural context of the site and in the conservation area generally is very varied. In some places, as described at Highfield Grove, boundary treatments that are not very sympathetic to the character of the area have already been built.

2.4.2 There are many and varied timber fences around Fitzroy Park and the neighbouring streets and lanes, and these are often used for very tall boundaries and mixed with shrubs and trees which give heavy screening. Timber gives visual softness, ease of alteration or replacement and a character suited to the rustic surroundings. Merton Lane is bounded on both sides at its lower reach by tall fences (see Appendix).

2.4.3 A particularly interesting and noteworthy example of timber fencing within the sub-area is the tall timber boundary which runs the entire length of the rear of Millfield Lane, enclosing the grounds of the former Fitzroy Farm on the east side, and now of its successor plots. This fence replicates one documented in the same position in a historic depiction of the Lane - renowned as ‘Poets’ Lane’ because of its association with the Romantics – painted by John McIntyre in 1900 (Fig. 7). The scene appears much the same today, imbuing this timber boundary with historic and artistic significance for the conservation area (Fig. 8).



Figure 7 | Millfield Lane, Highgate c. 1900, by John McIntyre (source: City of London Corporation)



3 Impact assessment and justification

3.1 As the letter of 17th September notes, the brick boundary wall which marked the former boundary of No. 4 was not curtilage to the listed building, No. 10. The fence put in place to mark the new boundary requires planning permission since, as set out in the letter, it is ineligible for prior approval under the GPDO regulations, as it stands within the setting and on land which is the curtilage of the Grade-II listed 10 Fitzroy Park. Apart from this heritage consideration, it is important to note that the fence would otherwise qualify as permitted development.

3.2 In deciding whether to grant planning permission, LB Camden officers will need to have regard to their statutory duty to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area. They will also need to have regard to the desirability of preserving the contribution of significance made by the setting of the listed building, 10 Fitzroy Park.

3.3 As established in 2.3.1, above, the construction of a fence in an area of the grounds of No. 10 not in the same ownership when it was built, distant from the house, and screened by heavy tree cover (Fig. 11) will have absolutely no bearing on its significance and do no harm to the setting of the listed building.

3.4 The great variety of architecture and boundary treatments in the Fitzroy Park sub-area of the conservation area – but the notable preference and the significance associated with timber fences as a historic feature of the area – means the choice of a timber fence is entirely appropriate both to the slightly suburban Close and the rustic character of the wider area. There are many other instances of timber fencing within the CA sub-area (see: Appendix). The fence at 4 Fitzroy Close is proportionate in scale to the plots and boundary and sits comfortably in the

verdant context alongside brick walls, as seen elsewhere nearby. It would preserve the character and appearance of the Highgate conservation area.



Figure 8 | Millfield Lane today



Figure 9 | The new fence in position

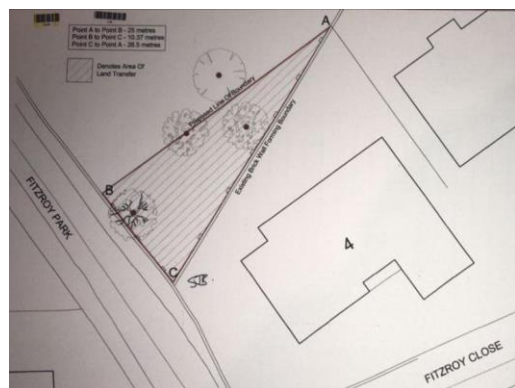
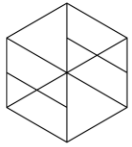


Figure 10 | A plan showing the land transfer at 4 Fitzroy Close and the position of the new fence



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Conservation area context report

4 Fitzroy Close, Highgate

January 2022



Figure 11 | An RAF aerial image from the late 1940s showing 10 Fitzroy Park and Southampton Lodge (centre) and the heavy planting in the area of the present Close and the surrounding grounds (source: Historic England)

Sources

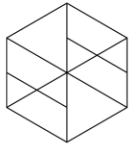
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Brown ferme ornée in Highgate? The jury is still out...' (London Gardens Trust) [accessed 6 January 2022:

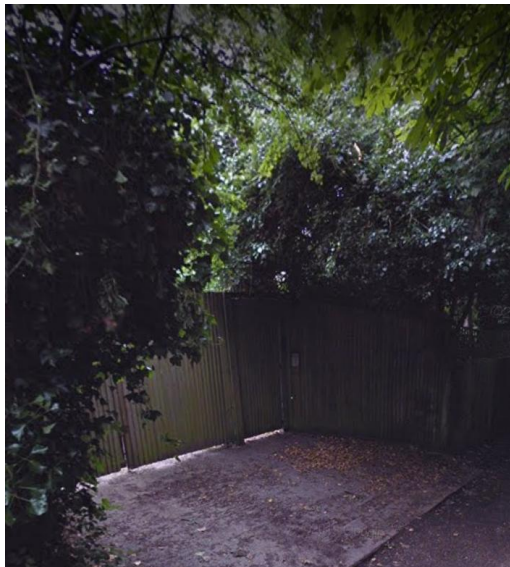
<https://www.londongardenstrust.org/features/BrownHighgate.htm>]

Survey of London Vol XVII, The Village of Highgate (St Pancras Parish pt. II)



APPENDIX A

Timber fences near Fitzroy Close in the Highgate Conservation Area



Millfield Lane (see also Fig. 8)



Merton Lane, north side



Merton Lane, south side



Merton Lane/Highgate West Hill corner



Highgate West Hill east side