

LAND AND SITE ACQUISITIONS LTD

NO. 81 BELSIZE PARK GARDENS LONDON NW3 4NJ

PLANNING AND HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE APPRAISAL

MARCH 2022

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1. This is a Planning and Heritage Significance Appraisal in respect of a planning application for external alterations at No. 81 Belsize Park Gardens. These are as follows:
 - Localised demolition in eight locations across the building to form lightwells, including out building at the front of the site;
 - Small single storey glazed 7sqm extension at the front of the building forming new common entrance lobby and associated re-modelling of ground floor front elevation;
 - New fenestration and existing windows upgraded; including new projecting angled windows;
 - Removal of vacant plant and equipment on the roof. New dedicated area proposed for plant on the roof; and
 - New landscaped front garden entrance incorporating cycle and bin storage.
2. The application comprises the following plans and documents:
 - 1698_ EX.01-05 Existing Plans;
 - 1698_ PA.01-05 Proposed Plans;
 - 1698_ PA.06-11 Existing/Proposed Elevations and Sections;
 - 1698_ PA.10-11 Existing/Proposed Elevations (colour);
 - A copy of the Full Planning Application Form;
 - A completed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Determining whether a Development may be CIL Liable Planning Application Additional Information Requirement Form;
 - A Design and Access Statement prepared by Tasou Architects dated March 2022; and
 - A Supporting Planning and Heritage Significance Appraisal prepared by Michael Burroughs Associates dated March 2022.

2.0 CONTEXT

3. The site's position in the Belsize Conservation area is shown on the Camden Policies Map below.



The Site

4. This is on the southern side of Belsize Park Gardens and is a vacant linear 3/4-storey building with a narrow frontage and forecourt onto Belsize Park Gardens. It was built as a sports club – the Hampstead Squash and Rugby Fives Club.



5. South-east of the site is a small triangle of private open green space which is owned and used by No. 83. This is screened from public view by the houses along the surrounding streets and is not a significant element of the character of the area.



6. To the north-west the building adjoins the rear of similar-sized, originally commercial buildings, in Lancaster Stables.

7. The building first appears on the 1935 OS for the area and the 1954 OS shows an enlarged building to the rear.



8. The site was most recently in use as a Health and Leisure Club known as Springfield Leisure Club (former Use Class D2 Assembly and Leisure). Planning records show this use commenced in the late 1960s and ceased five years ago in February 2017.
9. Since then, the site has been vacant, and a lawful development certificate application has recently been granted for use of the premises as a nursery (Use Class E). The applicant acquired the site on 29 January 2021.
10. The existing building has a blank street frontage above ground floor level and the side elevation is stark.



11. The site is not within the setting of any listed or locally listed buildings.

The Conservation Area

12. The Conservation Area Statement (2003) places the proposal site in Sub Area 3 The Eton Avenue Area. The CAS identifies the area's significance as: *this is a consistent area of predominantly late Victorian housing with some Edwardian pockets, built on land primarily in the ownership of Eton College. The houses within this area are smaller than the villa development to the north, being predominantly two storeys with an attic level. The properties in this area are notable for their varied styles and elevational treatment. There is however consistency of materials generally, red brick with red clay tiled roofs being a recurrent theme.*

The streets have a constant building line and only small gaps between the buildings. The houses have front gardens with boundary walls defining the edge of the properties along the street. Within this sub area certain elements share particular characteristics.

13. Neither it nor the residential mews 'Lancaster Stables' which abuts the site to the west are identified as making a positive contribution the Conservation Area and the photos above show the application building actually makes a negative contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
14. According to the Council's website the site is not located within a neighbourhood forum area.

Planning History

15. The relevant history is as follows:
16. **3242:** On 29 March 1967 planning permission was granted for *alterations and additions* to the Hampstead Squash and Rugby Fives Club.
17. **5244:** On 6 June 1968 planning permission was granted for *revised proposals for the front elevation and main entrance* to Squash Club.
18. **29742:** On 10 March 1980 planning permission was granted for *change of use of part of second and third floors to dance and/or linguistic school*.
19. **33601:** On 22 March 1982 planning permission was granted for *continued use of part of the second and third floors as a dance school and linguistic school*.
20. **P9600922:** On 11 July 1996 planning permission was granted for *the installation of new roof lights over the existing roof of the swimming pool*.
21. **PW9703128:** On 8 September 1997 planning permission was granted for the *installation of windows in the front elevation at first and second floor level*.
22. **2020/0929/P:** In October 2020 a planning application was withdrawn for *change of use from gym (Class D2) to nursery (Class D1) including the addition of windows to front and side (south east) elevation, 2 rooflights (following removal of existing skylight) and front canopy*.
23. **2020/4336/P:** In May 2021 a planning application was permitted for *alterations to front and side (south east) elevations incorporating new windows and entrance portico; replacement rooflights and installation of plant; removal of roof to form enclosed garden including acoustic barrier; and replacement store at front of site*.
24. **Para 2.3** of the Case Officer's Report recognised *the existing front elevation is unremarkable and presents a blank face to the street above ground floor level. The proposed first and second floor windows to the front elevation are therefore considered to be an improvement.*



Proposed Street Elevation (North-East)

Permitted front elevation



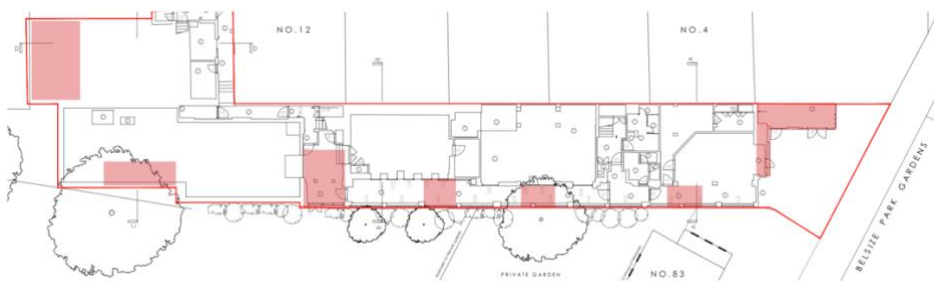
Proposed Long Elevation (South-East)

Permitted Side elevation

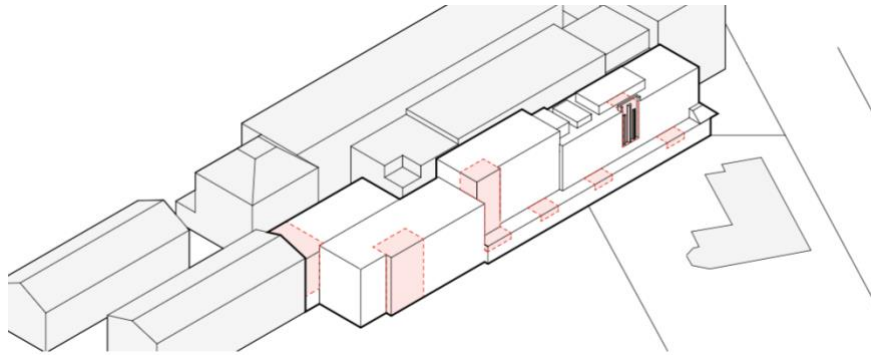
25. On March 2021 a Certificate of Lawfulness (Proposed) was granted, under application reference **2020/4338/P**, for use of the property as a nursery (Use Class E). The Certificate of Lawfulness was granted because the use of the property as a nursery does not fall within the meaning of development requiring planning permission as defined by Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
26. On 9 March 2022, Prior Approval was granted, under application reference **2021/4743/P**, to convert the existing building into 3 x duplex residential units.

3.0 THE PROPOSAL

27. In order to break up the mass of the building, small areas are planned for demolition to create lightwells. This is highlighted in red in the plan and image below:



Ground floor plan showing proposed areas of demolition



Model showing proposed areas of demolition

28. New windows are proposed and some existing windows will be upgraded. The existing and proposed drawings below show the appearance of the side (east) elevation with the lightwells and improved fenestration pattern.

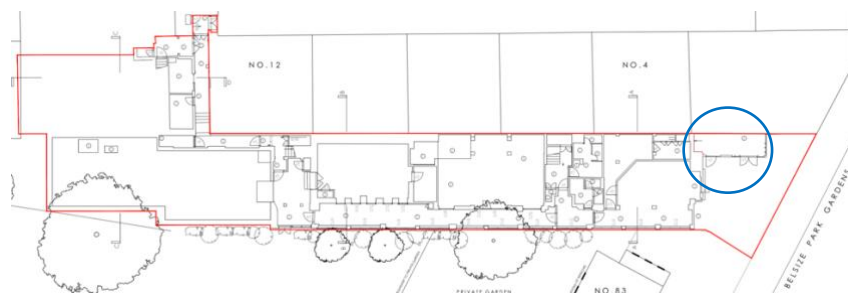


Side (east) elevation as existing

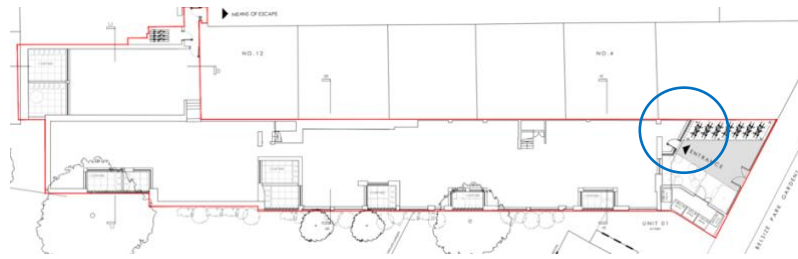


Side (east) elevation as proposed

29. The application also seeks consent to replace the outbuilding at the front of the site with a small 7sqm extension. This will allow for a new landscaped front garden incorporating cycle and bin storage.



Existing ground floor plan



Proposed ground floor plan

30. The remodelled front elevation with a small single storey glazed extension will have the following appearance:



31. The proposal also includes the removal of vacant plant and equipment on the roof and a new smaller dedicated area for replacement plant.
32. The proposal uses materials and detailing that are sympathetic to the host building and buildings nearby.
33. The alterations have been carefully designed to protect the privacy of the neighbouring property at No. 83. The mitigation measures involve recessed and angled windows looking away from No. 83 and obscure glazing to eliminate direct overlooking within 18m.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

The Revised National Planning Policy Framework

34. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, including contributing to protecting and enhancing our built and historic environment and conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. A heritage asset is a building or place etc with a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.
35. **RNPPF Para 194** requires an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. **Para 199** states when considering

the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation and **Para 200** states any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), requires clear and convincing justification.

36. **Para 202** says that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
37. The only relevant heritage asset in this case is the Conservation Area. As explained below, the proposal has a positive effect on it.

Camden Local Plan

38. **Policy D1 (Design)** requires development to respect local context and character and preserve or enhance the historic environment. The alterations respect the character and proportion of the existing building and the amenity of neighbouring properties. The palette of materials for complements the existing brickwork.
39. **Policy D2 (Heritage)** requires development within conservation areas to preserve or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area. This proposal enhances the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as discussed below.

5.0 HERITAGE IMPACT

40. The site is not listed or locally listed and is not within the setting of any listed or locally listed building. The only relevant heritage asset is thus the Belsize Conservation Area. The statutory test (after South Lakeland) is that development in conservation areas should not harm their character or appearance.
41. The CAS identifies the significant elements of this area's character and appearance as:
 - The character is residential;
 - Its appearance is two-storey plus attic late Victorian housing with Edwardian pockets;
 - There is variation in style and elevational treatment and materials;
 - There is consistency of red brick with red clay tiled roofs;
 - The streets have a consistent building line with small gaps between buildings; and
 - Properties benefit from front gardens with boundary walls.
42. The existing large building is not residential, not Victorian or Edwardian, not 2-storey plus attic, is flat roofed, is set back behind the building line and does not have a front garden. It could hardly be more different to the identified character of the Conservation Area. Its only overlap with the CAS's description of the area's character is its use of red brick on part of its south-east

face. It plainly detracts from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as described in the CAS.

43. The facade has a blank street frontage above ground floor level and the side elevation is stark. In response, the proposal seeks to address this by sensitively altering the existing building. The minor demolition required to facilitate the lightwells will break up the mass so it will be less dominant with an improved scale.
44. The replacement front extension gives the site a bit more breathing space providing an opportunity to establish a front garden and landscaping area. This will enhance the significance of the host property and character of the Conservation Area as a whole.
45. The influential 2008 English Heritage Report Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance set out a framework for thinking systematically and consistently about the heritage values that can be ascribed to a place and concludes they can be grouped into four categories:
 - *Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity;*
 - *Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present - it tends to be illustrative or associative;*
 - *Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place; and*
 - *Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.*
46. The proposal does not engage any of the above as issues. The application building has a negative effect on the Conservation Area that it mitigated by the proposal, which has no impact on the evidential, historical, aesthetic or communal value of the property.

6.0 CONCLUSION

47. The minor external changes are consistent with the historic environment policies in the RNPPF and the Local Plan. The Council is respectfully requested to permit the application for the reasons set out above.