

1 HOLLY VILLAGE: BOUNDARY and FOOTPATH RENEWAL

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT:

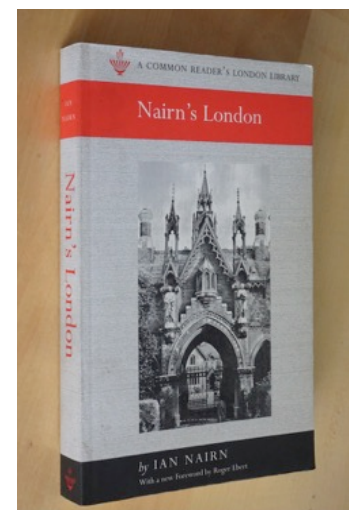
- The proposal involves two parts of 1 Holly Village: the front garden and the footpath alongside it.
- The footpath is owned by one freeholder alone and is one of the access points to Holly Village in general for freeholders, occupants, visitors and service providers.
- No change is proposed for the access status of the footpath. The ground finish at the site 'threshold', where footpath meets pavement, will be level with the public footpath. Narrow lines of stone paving will be placed between opposite posts so that bays will be formed that will be re-surfaced in a coloured asphalt.
- The original posts and iron collars and the chains surrounding the front garden, forming a boundary against Chester Road are either beyond repair or missing. It's proposed they be replaced, marking a significant return to the original frontage design for Holly Village.
- The elevation of nos.1 & 2, facing the junction of Swains Lane and Chester Road, forms the 'main face' of Holly Village, see photo c1870, on Drawing 1. This should be as open to public view as possible, as originally envisaged.
- The existing front garden (containing the holly tree) will continue to be as planted within the triangular, gravelled area. The existing, planted privet hedge will be replaced with a low hedge of Ilex Crenata (Japanese holly).



Discussion:

1 Holly Village is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest, being one of twelve houses that form the group. Historic England List entry number: 1379116 (1-12, Holly Village). The architectural critic, Ian Nairn wrote the evocative description below in his book, 'Nairn's London' published in 1966.

"An endearing group of hedgehogs in the angle between Swains Lane and Chester Road. Built for Baroness Burdett-Coutts with all the child-like bravado of Darbshire's late lamented Columbia Market behind Shoreditch Church. Through the archway on the corner (69) and there is a different world: eight spiky houses, all different, around a central green space. The idea comes from Nash at Blaize Hamlet, near Bristol, and the design has hardened, but also broadened and toughened. Children romp about in the artfully planted traffic-free space in a way that would disrupt the gentleness of Blaize. The cottages in their preposterous angularity must be like having outsize toy animals around the playground. The plan is sensible and convenient as a London square with its central garden, a whole suburb could be built up of units like this."



Holly Village was originally built and owned as one by Baroness Angela Burdett-Coutts. Following her death in 1922, the property was divided into sections (with the exception of the land used for garaging) and sold as twelve individual freeholds, each having one house plus surrounding land.

Attached to each of the properties is a deed of covenant that requires cooperation between the freeholders so as to maintain the 'common garden' that includes the boundary fences and gates (the only purely private land, according to the covenant, being the flower beds immediately outside each house, the considerably larger remainder forming the 'common garden').

No.1 Holly Village has been owned and lived in by Diana Brown continuously since 1967. During that time the twelve freeholders have not repaired or replaced the fence that is the subject of this application for listed building consent, save for some temporary measures. The fence is dilapidated and in need of replacement. Attempts to engage other freeholders in discussion of the way in which this should be achieved have been made over the last five years but have not proved successful. Note that the measures taken at no.2 were not discussed with Diana Brown despite concern being shown. However, provided listed building consent is given to this or another application that also meets the requirements of the owner, then progress can be made.

Part of the fence in front of 1 Holly Village touches Chester Road, N19 and the other lines the footpath that also lies on the property, leading to the iron entry gates. It was originally composed solely of timber posts and chains. Most of the nine remaining posts retain the iron collars that once supported the chains but are in such poor condition it is not feasible to renovate them (see below).



One surviving post is in relatively good condition. This is identified as 'C1' on the drawings and in photographs. It's located against the wall forming the left side of the gated entrance into the Village. By reason of its being sheltered from wind, rain and other effects its condition is remarkably good considering its age- 152 years.

This post is used as a template for new oak posts that are replacements for and additions to the existing number. 'C1' has been measured in detail and these measurements are used in a 3D CAD model that, together with a level survey (see drawings 1-10), shows the basis of the proposal.

The new posts will be located where the originals were placed, using the original granite slabs at ground level in the respective bays formed, raised to very slightly higher levels to maintain a definite line above the back of pavement. These slabs dictate the position of the posts and the CAD model is based on the same slightly irregular spacing, as shown in the survey drawings.

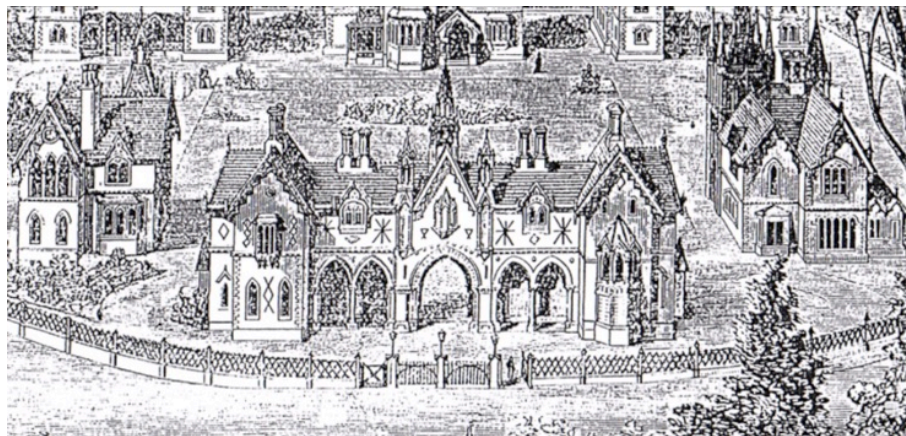
The photograph of the front elevation of nos1&2 Holly Village taken c.1870 shows the original public footpaths and the private footpath of 1 Holly Village, the line between private and public areas being indefinite where footpath meets pavement.

In recent years, the Highways Authority has significantly altered the pavements and crossover on Chester Road and Swains Lane and it is to accommodate these formalised changes to the area immediately adjacent to the property that the proposals include the footpath. When Highways modified the pavement immediately next to the footpath on 1 Holly Village, it took in a part of the latter property (see photograph below), otherwise it would have created a small step at the junction between public and private areas, - a likely source of trouble for those entering or leaving Holly Village. However the decision to do this was never brought to the attention of the owner of 1 Holly Village, nor was it discussed or agreed with the owner at any point.



The proposal re-asserts ownership of this small strip of 1 Holly Village land and shows it replaced with a narrow line of stone paving running from C5 (location shown left in photo) to S5, as indicated on the accompanying drawings. From experience, the public often think that the footpath is an extension of the road, not recognizing that it's in private ownership. The merging of old and new asphalt does not provide a clear enough message. To further this aim, two posts have been placed on the boundary to emphasise the private / public separation, without impeding access.

In reviewing the 1870 photograph and the (selectively inaccurate) 'artist's impression' of Holly Village (see below), as proposed prior to 1865, the architect's intention is made clear- to make the two houses flanking the iron gates that form the main though not exclusive entrance to Holly Village unique (there are five other gates, also in private ownership). Each Holly Village house being unique, nos.1&2 are not identical nor entirely symmetrical. Though he used a mirrored plan, the architect specifically designed parts of each house, on each side, to differentiate one from the other. In addition, the room directly located over the archway forms part of no.1 alone.



The staircases in 1 and 2 differ: the latter being partly 'spiral' with the shape of the building exterior reflecting that. The staircase windows are completely different and beside the main parts of the two houses, the ancillary larder enclosures are likewise different in shape and position. Cf. also the ground-to-string course heights to protruding gable ends for nos.1&2 in the artist's impression.

The underlying land-form can be seen to fall from left (east) to right (west). The group is built on the lower slopes of Highgate hill resulting in several definite level changes within the group that are managed with steps or slopes, according to whether they involve paths or lawns. From the gates at no.11 to those at no.4, there is a fall of about ten meters.

The proposal therefore does not repeat changes to the fence at no.2 Holly Village, carried out in 2013, because they are not appropriate. The over-scaled, half-round, latticed timber panels visually overpower the posts. The crudity with which they have been executed is objectionable.

In designing the entrance elevation Darbyshire makes clear his intention- a wide, open presentation of one building mass centred on an archway that joins two houses, one with the additional room at first floor level (no.1). Consistent with ensuring the full effect of this elevation, the post and chain boundary is in deliberate, sharp contrast with the dwarf-walled, holly-hedged remainder of the Village's boundaries (see photo c.1870 in drawings submitted), rather overgrown, rendering the front elevation the only intentional opportunity for the public of a clear view of the Village.

The original concept for the main entrance, turned as it is toward what was Holly Lodge, is of an open frontage, on display. Only the relatively low boundary fence and landscaping seen in the c.1870 photograph will ensure the return to the original look and feel of at least one of Henry Darbyshire's original 'spiky hedgehogs'.

In summary, the proposal seeks to revive the original image of one continuous building mass facing the junction, in full view, unhidden by foliage.