

25th April 2022

## **Health & Safety issues associated with access to 82 Fitzjohn's Avenue, Hampstead, London, NW3 6NP**

### **Introduction**

DWH Consulting are the Client-appointed Principal Designer responsible for 'Health & Safety' under the Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 2015 for the refurbishment of 82 Fitzjohn's Avenue.

As part of the design review process DWH Consulting identified access to 82 Fitzjohn's Avenue as a significant risk for the Principal Contractor and others requiring access or delivering materials to the house, during the construction phase of the project.

The Principal Contractor, Trenchco Ltd, advise that vehicles required for waste and spoil removal as part of Phase 1 development and subsequent phases on site are of a width that presents the risk of damage to the boundary wall at the entrance to the site and possible collapse or partial collapse of the wall.

It is also important to consider that similar vehicles are likely to be required for later phases of the development.

Vehicles will access the site from Fitzjohn's Avenue (B511), crossing a pavement (using the existing crossover) and entering a narrow driveway to the house at the rear of the site. This driveway is bounded by a building on one side (84 Fitzjohn's Avenue) and, on the other, the property's boundary wall. This is a brick wall approximately two metres in height with a public footpath to its other side. This is Spring Walk: a pedestrian route between Fitzjohn's Avenue and Shepherds Walk (which leads to another main road: Rosslyn Hill).

The boundary wall is constructed in two sections:

Firstly, a red brick wall at the entrance to the site (approximately two metres in height). The brickwork matches that of 84 Fitzjohn's Avenue (now flats) to the other side of the driveway. This is the part of the boundary wall that is the subject of the planning application. The part of it that is closest to Fitzjohn's Avenue has been modified in the past with iron railings inserted.

The remaining older section of the wall (further down Spring Walk) comprises London stock bricks to a height of approximately 2.4 metres. It is beyond the access pinch point and therefore does not present an access safety issue and is therefore proposed to be retained.

The red brick wall that creates a 'pinch' point for vehicles removing waste and delivering materials is shown in the photography below.

The architect's and heritage consultant's proposal is to carefully dismantle this wall, salvaging bricks and carefully re-building it to match at the end of construction. This has been challenged by Camden Council's Conservation Officer on the grounds that the wall is within the Hampstead Conservation Area, is attractive, and over concerns regarding the quality of its reinstatement.



**View of the boundary wall across the access driveway**



**View of boundary wall seen from Spring Walk**

## **Design and Construction.**

During the tender stage all contractors were advised to schedule deliveries to the site between 10:00am and 3:00pm to avoid potential clashes with pedestrians and the adjacent Fitzjohn's Primary School to the north of the site.

For efficient programming of the Phase 1 work Trenchco Ltd propose the use of a HIAB 'grab' lorry for the removal of waste and spoil: these vehicles are 2.49m wide giving 5cm clearance to either side of the driveway. Additionally, there is insufficient space on the site to turn vehicles meaning the it is necessary for the vehicles to be reversed into the site (under the supervision of a banksman).

**The below images show the limited clearance available for construction vehicles accessing the site**





**Proximity of a construction vehicle to the Spring Walk boundary wall**



**Proximity of a construction vehicle to No 84 Fitzjohn's Avenue**

## Assessment of Risk and Mitigations

The potential for the boundary wall at the entrance to the site to collapse or be structurally damaged by a vehicle impact is greater than anticipated at the commencement of the project.

The use of a banksman to supervise vehicles accessing the site cannot guarantee the wall will not be struck given the margin for error of only 5cm to each side of the vehicle. This is not a suitable safety margin – human factors and the lack of tolerance could lead to a vehicle impact to the wall – however this can be substantially improved by dismantling the wall.

We understand Camden Council's Planning Department have suggested the use of smaller vehicles. Having reviewed options with Trenchco Ltd, the smaller vehicles are only marginally narrower (by approximately 9cm) which does not significantly mitigate the risk of collision with the wall. Additionally, these vehicles have approximately one third of the capacity of the proposed vehicles and thus three times as many vehicle movements would be required. This clearly increases the risk of a collision by three times.

The wall has a number of cracks and defects that would indicate movement has taken place prior to works commencing on site. These weaken the structural stability of the wall.



### Existing cracks and open joints

To avoid the risk of the boundary wall collapsing and injury to pedestrians, the wall should be carefully dis-assembled, salvaging bricks where practicable, and the bricks stored on site. A timber hoarding can then be erected along the boundary wall providing greater width for access and providing a boundary treatment that is not subject to collapse.



## Recommendations and Conclusion

### Key conclusion:

**Given the very small tolerance between the boundary wall and construction vehicles, there is a real risk of damage to the wall include its collapse. This could cause serious injury or death to any member of the public walking along Shepherds Walk. We consider the risk of retaining the wall too great. We highly recommend that the wall is taken down in a controlled manner (salvaging bricks for its later reinstatement) and that a safe temporary hoarding is erected.**

Removing the wall under controlled conditions will ensure the maximum number of bricks including the brick specials can be salvaged.

From a Health & Safety perspective there are no practical or physical limitations to dismantling the wall.

### Other considerations:

An increase in the number of vehicles accessing the site is undesirable for several reasons:

- An extended construction period increases the nuisance to neighbours
- An increase in the number of crossings increases inconvenience to pedestrians on Fitzjohn's Avenue
- Increase in vehicle movements will not align with the Mayor of London WRRR scheme (Work Related Road Risk) of 'save lives and protect communities by reducing the risk of collisions.'