

## Duncan Coe Heritage Consultant

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HOWITT CLOSE  
HOWITT ROAD  
BELSIZE PARK  
LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

Your Ref: 2021/3839/P

Our Ref: DCHC 008.1

### **HERITAGE TECHNICAL NOTE**

#### **Introduction**

A planning application for the erection of a 'Mansard roof extension to create 7 flats (for the purpose of consultation: 1x 1bed, 5 x 2-bed, 1x 3-bed)' at Howitt Close, Belsize Park was lodged on 24 September 2021. The application proposal had been through an extensive design process supported by heritage assessment work undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology and detailed pre-application discussions with Planning, Design and Conservation Officers from Camden Borough Council. A further Heritage Technical Note was issued in January 2022.

During the consideration of the submitted scheme some concerns about the design of the proposal were made by David McKinstry, Planning Officer (Conservation). In his view the mansard roof design was inappropriate, and the design details, in particular the architectural treatment around the window openings, were too dominant. His stated preference was that any scheme would need to be a lot 'quieter'. As a result, a revised proposal has been developed through discussion with officers from Camden Borough Council.

#### **Revised proposal**

The revised proposal seeks to deliver similar scale of accommodation, but the design has been paired back, with a flat roof and vertical walls, finished in brick to match the existing ground and first floor elevations. Whilst the window locations and the forms (tripartite and bipartite) will match that seen on the existing building, the style and form will be simple with no overt architectural styling. The overall appearance will be contemporary, but low key.

#### **Heritage Assessment**

A full assessment of the heritage issues considered was set out in the original Heritage Assessment and the Technical Note and the details will not be repeated here. The key issues at play are:

- The potential impact on the character and appearance of the Belsize Park Conservation Area; and
- The potential impacts on a building that makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

**Conservation Area** - The building lies to the south-eastern extent of sub-area 4 of the Belsize Conservation Area, which is characterised as a distinct area of Edwardian terrace housing. On Howitt Road, the houses are characterised by large, square, double height bay windows, incorporating plain lower window panes with glazing bars in the lights above and mansard roofs finished with slate. The character of terrace housing is broken along Glenilla Road where the built form is less consistent.

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Howitt Close – Although the Art Deco styling of Howitt Close is out of character with the surrounding area the western and northern elevations form an attractive component of the streetscape along Howitt Road. The materials and use of render to the second storey accords with the prevailing character of Edwardian terraces that dominate the building's immediate surroundings. The undulating topography of the sub-area means that the building sits at a low point within sub-area 4. Additionally, the flat roof of the building contributes to its diminutive form, which is visually subservient to neighbouring terraced houses, despite its greater overall size. The streetside trees reduce any unbroken views of the building even in the winter.

Howitt close was designed by architectural firm of Henry F. Webb & Ash. They were a relatively minor practice based in North London with most of their commissions being focused in that area. Henry F. Webb never attained membership of the RIBA above that of Licentiate class (for architects who could show competence, without completing any examinations). Major Arthur Stanley Ash attained the class of Fellow in 1938, after his partnership with Webb had ceased and lasted until 1942, before recommencing for one year in 1943. There is no evidence that Ash was an Associate prior to this so it is assumed that was also a Licentiate member at the time of the design of Howitt Close.

### **Heritage Impact of the revised proposals**

The revised scheme proposals have sought to achieve an understated character. They have aimed to match the brick and white painted render of the existing building, and the window detail reflects the overall pattern of the existing without competing. Given the relatively low-lying nature of the existing structure and the taller neighbouring building heights the additional floor will not rise above existing roof heights and will not form a dominant presence in the street scene. Overall the impact on the Character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be neutral, complying with the requirements of Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The form and character of the existing Howitt Close will remain, with all of the key architectural details retained. The single storey addition will represent a change, but in its muted form and simplistic style will not compete with the existing architectural treatment. The impact on the building will be neutral with its heritage significances preserved.

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