

**Northaw Place, Coopers Lane, Northaw, Hertfordshire**

**Design and Access Statement  
Heritage Statement**

2009/2702

**Explanation of the Proposed Works**

15.12.2009

A study of the historical development of Northaw Place by BEAMS, dated December 2009 is submitted with the application.

To summarise this, Northaw Place was constructed in 1690 as a two storey house, with basement and attic rooms. A second storey was added early in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, with substantial additions to the west c. 1800 and later in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A balancing single storey wing was added in 1988.

The painted staircase hall c. 1700, is of national significance, and is the remaining significant internal feature, since much remaining original fabric was stripped from the interior when the building was substantially repaired c. 1988. This followed a period of neglect after the Childrens Home run by the London Borough of Haringey (which had occupied the property since c. 1950) closed down in the 1970's.

Permission was granted for six new houses to be built in the stable yard as enabling development to provide funds for the repair of the listed house, including the eradication of dry rot and the restoration of the staircase.

A feature of the house is that ownership historically has been fragmented, as the building changed hands frequently. This has encouraged the gradual increase in size of the property, with its associated stable yard and outbuildings to the west. There are photographs of some interiors prior to the 1970's when the original building was last fully occupied, which confirms that many of the features illustrated have now been lost. Most of the interior walls have been covered by dry lining which has concealed any plasterwork or features which may have survived from the previous centuries. The neglected condition of the property resulted in outbreaks of dry rot which justified the removal of much of the structural timberwork. In 1988, the house was reduced in size, as the west wing was reduced to separate the house from the stable block to create a detached entity. The house was then separated from the majority of the site when new houses were built in the stable yard. Since 1988, 1 Northaw Place has been occupied as a single family unit, although most recently has been up for sale and empty for a 3 year period until acquired by the present applicant. During this period the house was neglected and the ingress of water through roof coverings has led to the recurrence of several new outbreaks of dry rot.

The house sits in the remains of its historic setting. The wooded park to the north is evident, although the axial avenue of lime trees centred on the front entrance is no longer clearly discernable, and the vestige of the walled garden to the south of the house is defined by remaining brick walls.

In c. 1988 when extensive repairs were carried out, many internal features were lost. The purpose of much of the proposed work is now to review the detail of the 1980's repair work and to carry out amendments which will enhance or reinstate missing historic features, which were poorly reinterpreted or omitted at that time, using evidence from record photographs and plans where available.

Proposed alterations are:

## 1.0 Ground Floor

### 1.1 Flooring:

In the 1988 repairs original floorboards were removed throughout the ground floor. Modern replacement boards are stained black, and are of a regular width. They do not compliment the character of the house. The proposal is to replace them with oak boards stained to reflect the colour of the original staircase, with widths varying between 100 and 200mm.

### 1.2 Opening between original Dining Room and Morning Room (present Breakfast Room):

In the 1867 sale particulars, "folding doors" linking the two rooms are referred to. These doors have been removed since and it is proposed that they should be reinstated. They will be placed centrally in the south wall of the Dining Room, the more architecturally important of the two rooms.

### 1.3 Entrance Hall:

The original early 18<sup>th</sup> Century panelling, cornice and fireplace were removed when the building was repaired in 1988. Whilst the spirit of the original was followed the detail was not. The plaster ceiling cornice is a standard modern reproduction, more elaborate than the original; and the detail of the surrounds to the arched opening at the foot of the staircase, the double doors into the Sitting Room and the arched opening in the west wall ignore their original form and character. The detail of the arched opening in the south wall is particularly clumsy, especially where a pipe casing has been run alongside the east reveal which increases it's depth relative to the opposite reveal. The proposal is to remodel the detail of these openings so that they follow more closely the detail which has been lost. This will improve the relationship of the hall to the grander staircase, reinstating a balance between the two which has been significantly eroded.

### 1.4 West Lobby outside Drawing Room:

The lobby to the West Wing Drawing Room lies beyond the entrance hall and is in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century extension to the house. It is an unlit architecturally unsatisfactory space with different door/openings (size and design) in each wall. It is confusing that the large modern double doors in the west wall which lead to the back door are more impressive than the single door which opens into the substantial Drawing Room. The Drawing Room door is clearly not original as it has been set into a larger opening adapted to accommodate a smaller door.

It is proposed that the lobby should be improved by creating arched openings in the south and west walls using the theme of the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century style of arched opening in the north wall. This will allow the importance of the Drawing Room door to be pre-eminent. A fanlight will be introduced into the arch over the west doorway (now reduced to a single leaf) to allow natural light into the space.

## **2.0 First Floor**

### **2.1 Bathroom 1:**

A modern bathroom has been introduced into the south east room adjacent to the painted staircase. The room has been subdivided as part of this work and a modern doorway and window created in the east elevation. The layout of the sanitary units in the bathroom blocks the door opening directly from the staircase; and this door has been set towards the staircase side of the opening which architecturally is most uncomfortable and has a detrimental impact upon the staircase hall.

The proposal is that the bathroom fittings and dividing partition should be taken out so that the original size of the room can be reinstated and the entrance door set into its original position. (A further Listed Building Application will be submitted for proposed works to the East Wing which will incorporate a new bathroom to replace this facility).

### **2.2 West Wing:**

The modern lobby to Bedroom 4 is an unlit space. The north elevation of this wing was remodeled in 1988 following demolition of 19<sup>th</sup> Century first and second floor additions. When the first floor elevation was then exposed, two sash windows with plaster architraves were created to light the adjacent bathroom, but an adjacent third blank window complete with architraves in front of the lobby was plastered. It is proposed that a sash window should be introduced into this "blank", so that the lobby can be naturally lit.

### **2.3 West Wing Mezzanine:**

This space was remodeled in 1988 when the adjacent wing to the west was demolished. It was turned into a bedroom with an ensuite bathroom. The proposal is to reduce the size of the bathroom so that the east facing window can be incorporated into the main room within a bay. To improve the quality of the light in the room it is proposed that a roof light with canted sides should be introduced, which reflects the canted corners within the remodeled room and to create an architectural unity, which the space currently lacks.

## **3.0 Second Floor**

### **3.1 Re-arrangement of bathrooms:**

It is proposed that there should be three bedrooms on the second floor, each with an ensuite bathroom. The original layout has four principal rooms in each corner, with narrower central dressing rooms/stores between on the north and south sides, with a circulation lobby and staircase running centrally east – west. The basis of this layout is maintained. The south east room is divided into two to contain two bathrooms and two previous doorways linking the south rooms are reopened. A partition is reinstated across the north central room and similar partition introduced across the corresponding south roof. The surviving Victorian cast iron bedroom grate will be maintained in the south east room, but unfortunately no other original features survived the 1998 work on this floor.

### **4.0 Staircases:**

New secondary staircases were introduced in the west wing and up to the second floor in 1988. They are constructed using "off the peg" standard twisted balusters and crude acorn finials to the square newel posts, which do not compliment the quality nor character of the house. At the same time the stair to the second floor was repositioned onto the south wall of the corridor,

with consequent reduction in the apparent width of the corridor leading to the west wing, as the foot of the stair projects further down the corridor towards the main staircase.

It is proposed that the staircase to the second floor should be taken out and rebuilt, so that it runs up the north wall of the corridor as prior to 1988. This creates a more elegant access to the west wing, and the reconfiguration will improve the level of natural light within the corridor generally. The turned painted balusters of the existing staircase echo the main oak staircase, but ignore the subtlety of the later detailing, especially its newel posts; so we consider it more appropriate that the staircase should not try to mimic the oak stair. We propose that a simpler design should be adopted, reflecting the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century period when the second floor was added.

The opportunity can also be taken to remodel the modern staircase in the west wing which has been detailed as the second floor staircase. Here the balusters and newels would be removed and redesigned following the style of the new flight to the upper floor. The existing metal balustrade leading to the basement has simple square balusters, so that the lower and upper flights will now match.

## **5.0 Basement**

- 5.1 The basement now has few fittings of interest following the 1988 repairs. At that time a bathroom and kitchen were fitted into the central south space beneath the staircase hall. It is proposed the uses of these spaces should be swapped over so that the Bathroom and WC are now accessible from the central circulation corridor and that the kitchen should open off the South room which will be used as a living room. To provide fire and acoustic separation it is proposed that two fire doors should be placed across the central basement corridor.

## **6.0 Access to the roof for maintenance**

- 6.1 Access to the roofs (except for the East Wing) presently requires ladders to be brought to site to get to the parapet gutters, at all levels. Consequently routine access, for example to clean out gutters, has been difficult to achieve and recent outbreaks of dry rot are generally considered to be a result of the failure to ensure that gutter outlets have been kept clear.

To ensure maintenance is properly carried out, access to the parapet gutters must be improved. We propose to introduce access hatches into the central roof slopes of both the second floor roof and over the first floor of the West Wing. These will not be visible from the ground but will significantly ease access to assist maintenance to be carried out on a regular basis.