

1 Introduction

1.1 This short report assesses the impact of the installation of a small window on an elevation on the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area, and provides contextual support for its materiality and dimensions. The report supports discussions connected to an ongoing enforcement enquiry and a consequent planning permission application for retrospective approval of the insertion of a new small window on the elevation of No. 4.

1.2 This report supplements the planning submission for 4 Fitzroy Close and provides supporting evidence for the proposed installation of a new window on a secondary elevation. The alteration relates to a modest, contextually appropriate intervention and is accompanied by an architectural and historical appraisal of its setting within the Highgate Conservation Area. The report builds upon established understanding of the area's character, material palette, and facade language, particularly as they apply to this modernist development.

1.3 This report considers the suitability of the proposed small window insertion, specifically regarding its effects on the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area and any possible effect.

2 History, character & appearance

2.1 History of Fitzroy Park

2.1.1 Fitzroy House or Fitzroy Farm was a mansion built for Charles FitzRoy, 1st Baron Southampton on his Tottenhall Estate, which lay west of Highgate West Hill, on land descending from Highgate village towards the Heath (Figure 1). The house was visited by King George III and Queen Charlotte, was depicted by contemporary artists as a picturesque feature in the admired Arcadian

(re)landscaped area of Hampstead and Highgate, and is thought to have had grounds designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. The estate terminated at the edge of the Heath near the New River Company's reservoirs, from which it was separated by the timber-fenced Millfields Lane, known as Poets' Lane, for its association with local poets such as Coleridge and Keats. Fitzroy House was demolished in c. 1828.

2.1.2 The original carriage drive of the estate opening off The Grove was preserved as the modern Fitzroy Park, but the grounds were eventually divided for residential development. As the *Highgate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy* notes, while redevelopment over the subsequent century or more subdivided the extensive grounds of the Fitzroy Estate, Fitzroy Park's larger houses and gardens contrast in their relative spaciousness and enclosure with the historic village. Large classical houses such as Beechwood (George Basevi, 1840, Grade II) and The Elms (Basevi, 1838-40, Grade II) were joined by smaller houses over a century or so, and from the mid-20th century by some notable modern houses, such as No. 8a (Hal Higgins, 1965-7, Grade II). Many of the infill houses from between these periods have a lightly Arts and Crafts character, referencing the *rus in urbe* tradition of residential development in the area reaching back at least as far as Fitzroy Farm.

2.1.3 One of the large 19th-century houses which was added to the old estate was called Southampton Lodge. It stood in the angle of Fitzroy Park as it turns south-east from its original south-westerly descent. Few details of this building have been located, though it is likely to have been contemporary with The Elms and Beechwood. Historic mapping evidence shows that during the early 20th century, the grounds immediately north of the Lodge were in a horticultural business use as Highgate Nurseries. However, by 1932 the Nurseries had closed and the land was acquired by the architect Emmanuel

Conservation area context report

4 Fitzroy Close, Highgate, LONDON, N6 6JT

June 2025

Vincent Harris, who built a neo-Georgian house for himself (2.2.5, below). In another part of the grounds, accessed off Merton Lane, a house called Heathfield Park was built in about the same period. Southampton Lodge remained in place during the early 1950s, but had been demolished by the 1960s. By then, Harris had extended the grounds of his property, No. 10 Fitzroy Park, to incorporate the former site of the Lodge.

2.1.4 The small group of houses called Fitzroy Close was developed around 1972, hard on the boundary of the former Southampton Lodge, within the grounds of Heathfield Park. Two houses of similar style were built on the south side of the Close first. On the north side of the close, three detached houses were built next, by the noted North London modernist architect Ted Levy's firm Levy, Benjamin & Partners. The firm also developed the West Hill Estate off Merton Lane, in a similar style, characterized by (dark) red brick and hipped or pitched, tiled roofs.

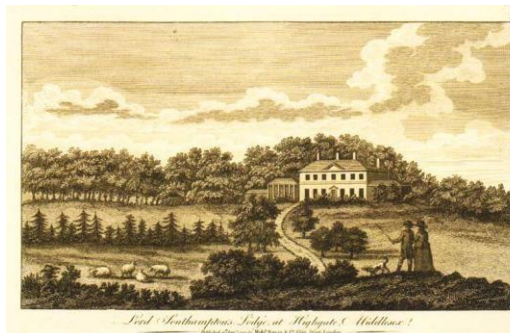


Figure 1 | Engraving of Lord Southampton's Lodge published by R. Sayer in 1792 (source: British Museum)

Conservation area context report

4 Fitzroy Close, Highgate, LONDON, N6 6JT

June 2025

2.2 Highgate Conservation Area

2.2.1 Highgate Conservation Area was designated by the London Borough of Camden in 1968 and extended in 1972 and 1992. Fitzroy Park is in Sub-Area 2 of the Conservation Area.

2.2.2 The high, north-eastern reach of Fitzroy Park has the character of backland to the grand Georgian houses of The Grove. There is a long descent down the hill between high boundary walls and fences, screening larger houses. Approaching the Heath as the descent eases, Fitzroy Park develops a village character of its own, with the neo-Georgian No. 10 (E Vincent Harris, 1932, Grade II) and a group of Arts and Crafts influenced cottages (The Lodge, Westwind, Dancer's End, Kenbrook) facing onto allotments. The rural character is secured by the edge of Hampstead Heath.

2.2.3 The Council's *Appraisal* notes that the character of the Fitzroy Park sub-area in general marks a "contrast" with the historic village, and this is specifically to do with the spaciousness of the residential development, and the semi-rural character of the lane. The sub-area includes the allotments to the north-west of the site and Millfield Lane adjacent to the Heath.

2.2.4 Highfields Grove is a slightly distinctive feature of the area, being a gated development of similar, purple-brick detached houses built in the 1980s on the grounds of Witanhurst. Highfields Grove fills much of the land east of Fitzroy Park, being bounded by a fence which, as the *Appraisal* notes, "changes to an unsightly chain link mesh" on its south side. Here the development adjoins more distinguished 20th- and 21st-century houses: a group on The Hexagon, and Heathfield House, which replaced Heathfield Park at No. 6 Merton Lane, designed by Alan Powers.

2.2.5 South of The Hexagon is No. 10 Fitzroy Park, described in the *Appraisal* as a

"crisp" example of neo-Georgian style, designed by Emmanuel Vincent Harris for himself. It was left by him to the Borough. The attractive grounds and gardens, the granite forecourt screening much of the house from the road, and the change of levels across the site elevating the house above a garden level are all noted in the *Appraisal*. The plots of the houses on Fitzroy Close adjoin the grounds of No. 10 to its south.

2.2.6 The *Appraisal* makes now direct reference to Fitzroy Close:

"The road curves towards the south and there is another group of 1970s/1980s houses, Fitzroy Close... The houses on the north side were designed by Ted Levy, Benjamin and Partners (see Westhill Park in Merton Lane & Millfield Lane Sub-Area)."

These houses on the north side of the Close are characteristic of the work of Levy's practice in the period, featuring a red-brown brick, dark timber joinery, irregular modelling and fenestration and hipped and pitched tiles roofs. Within the conservation area, they bear a resemblance to the low-rise houses and flat blocks designed by Levy at West Hill Park.

2.2.5 Reflecting the general pattern of development through time, the houses on Fitzroy Close are less sparsely arranged than the earlier 20th-century houses before them and the Victorian villas before that. Nonetheless, each is set behind a drive and the irregular form conveys clear appreciation of their detached form, each set in a garden. Small but verdant residential plots with tight boundaries is part of the character of the Close.

2.3 Context summary: significant setting, character, appearance

2.3.1 Fitzroy Close is quite screened from the surrounding by vegetation. Developed around a cul-de-sac, it is by nature somewhat secluded and inward-looking. The buildings are a somewhat more modern-suburban type than the older semi-rural villas of the conservation area, and as such are not set in expansive grounds, but are more modest, arranged fairly closely adjacent in tightly-bounded gardens. Nonetheless, the setting is remarkably verdant and not at all urban in character.

Conservation area context report

4 Fitzroy Close, Highgate, LONDON, N6 6JT

June 2025

2.3.2 The “rustic character... [and] appearance” of Fitzroy Park is stressed in the *Appraisal*'s description of the sub-area, which is noted to be rare in London, and “the impact on it of any proposed development will be a major factor in assessing the appropriateness of any development proposals”.

2.4 Facade and Window: A Historical Continuum

2.4.1 18th Century Origins: The Picturesque and Prospect:

The wider Fitzroy Park area traces its origins to the late 18th century, notably Fitzroy Farm, historically associated with Charles Fitzroy and believed to have been landscaped by Capability Brown (Deason, 2016). Within Brown's characteristic 'ferme ornée' ethos, the blending of architecture and landscape was paramount (Williamson, 1995). Here, windows were not simply for ventilation or illumination — they framed vistas. In this spirit, any new opening, even a modest one, becomes a conscious act of engaging with the surrounding topography (Turner, 1996).

2.4.2 19th Century Development: Rhythmic Facades:

By the early 19th century, Fitzroy Lodge and similar villas along the hillside introduced vertically proportioned sash windows as dominant facade elements (*Survey of London*, Vol. XVII). These were often carefully spaced and detailed, forming a rhythmic dialogue with the surrounding gardens. Window placement was critical to the architectural language — registering hierarchy, symmetry, and openness in equal measure.

2.4.3 20th Century Modernism: Modulation and Nature:

In the mid-20th century, modernist interventions by architects such as Hal Higgins and Ted Levy redefined Fitzroy Park (Harwood, 2015). Timber cladding, horizontal proportions, and large but considered window openings became a strategy for buildings to establish a rapport with the wooded character of the Conservation Area (LB Camden, 2007). Even the most contemporary insertions avoid ostentation in favour of organic continuity.

3 Impact assessment and justification

3.1 In deciding whether to grant planning permission, LB Camden officers will need to have regard to their statutory duty to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area. They will also need to have regard to the desirability of preserving the contribution of significance made by the setting of nearby heritage assets.

3.2 The architectural diversity and natural setting characteristic of the Fitzroy Park sub-area — including the sensitive use of modernist language in the 20th century — provide strong precedent for subtle and respectful interventions. The proposed opening enhances the building's usability while maintaining its dialogue with the landscape. It therefore preserves the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area and does no harm to its setting or architectural significance.

3.3 In order to maintain the rhythm of the facade, the proposed window has been aligned with the existing bathroom window at the same height on the south west elevation and adopts a double-width variation of the same design. This ensures adequate internal ventilation while preserving architectural consistency. The proposed window will utilize identical materiality and detailing — including frame profile, glazing type, and color — to match the existing, thus maintaining coherence with the original modernist language of the house. (Figure 2-3-4-5)

3.4 As Fitzroy Close is a private, gated road with no public pedestrian or vehicular access, the proposed elevation is not visible from the public realm. A photographic series showing views from the approach to the Close and within it will be included in the Appendix A to evidence this condition. From the perspective of neighboring private properties, the introduction of a modest, well-proportioned new window opening — on an unobtrusive elevation, not visible from key public viewpoints, and designed in material and proportion sympathetic to the original — will have no adverse impact on local character. The proposed alteration is of limited scale, consistent with established fenestration patterns in the Close, and respects the visual rhythm of the building and its green context.

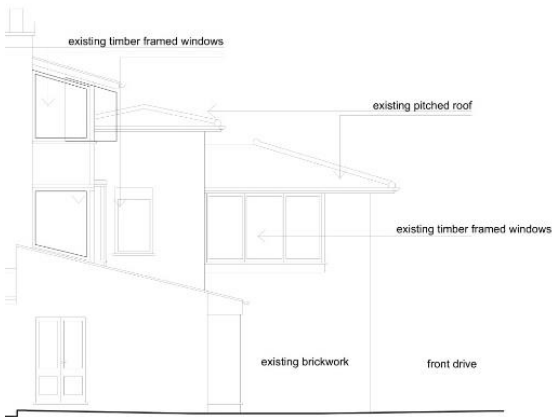


Figure 2 | Existing South West Elevation



Figure 3 | Proposed South West Elevation



Figure 4 | The Front (south east) Façade – Existing Bathroom Window



Figure 5 | The South west Façade – Proposed Location for New Window on the Existing Wall

Conservation area context report

4 Fitzroy Close, Highgate, LONDON, N6 6JT

June 2025

Appendix A – Visual Evidence from Fitzroy Close: Window Context and Public Invisibility



Aerial Photo Fitzroy Park and Fitzroy Close Streets



The Private Access on Fitzroy Park



The Private Access and Gated Entrance on Fitzroy Close

Sources

Ruskin, John (1849) *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. London: Smith, Elder & Co. (Note: The poetic expression regarding the window draws inspiration from Ruskin's general views on architecture, though it is paraphrased.)

Survey of London, Volume XVII, *The Village of Highgate (St Pancras Parish pt. II)*

Williamson, Tom (1995) *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*. The Alan Sutton Publishing.

Turner, Tom (1996) *English Garden Design: History and Styles Since 1650*. Garden Art Press.

LB Camden (2007) *Highgate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy*

Deason, Barbara (2016) 'A "Capability" Brown ferme ornée in Highgate? The jury is still out...' London Gardens Trust [accessed 6 January 2022: https://www.londongardenstrust.org/features/Brown_Highgate.htm]

Harwood, Elain (2015) *Space, Hope and Brutalism: English Architecture 1945–1975*. Yale University Press.

Prepared by:

HORIZONTAL DESIGN
22 Hyde Park Street, W2 2JN, London

June 2025