

The Water House Access Stair Design and Access Statement

urbana
architecture



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-	31/10/2025	Planning	MS

Section 1.0

Project Particulars

1.0

Project Particulars

1.1 Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Urbana Architecture to support a full planning application for a new external stair and modest extension of the upper level space at the rear pedestrian entrance to The Water House, Millfield Lane, N6 6HQ, located in the Highgate Conservation Area.

The proposed works follow a pre-application submission in April 2024 (ref. 2024/1470/PRE) and have been revised in response to the officer feedback received.

An existing outdoor lift, which formerly connected Fitzroy Park to the main dwelling, was non-functional when the current occupiers moved in, and has since been removed. This application proposes a permanent, visually sensitive replacement in the form of a staircase with associated bin and cycle storage above, sitting on a slightly extended platform.

1.2 Consultation with the Planning Authority

A pre-application site visit was held on 11 July 2024 with Brendan Versluys (Senior Planning Officer, Camden Council), who confirmed that the staircase structure is likely acceptable in principle, subject to suitable materials and consideration of neighbours' views. The officer also noted the structure would not be visible from public views but advised careful treatment of the boundary.



View of the level drop from the lower level



Aerial view of site looking North



Aerial view of site looking West

Section 2.0 Site Analysis

2.0 Site Analysis

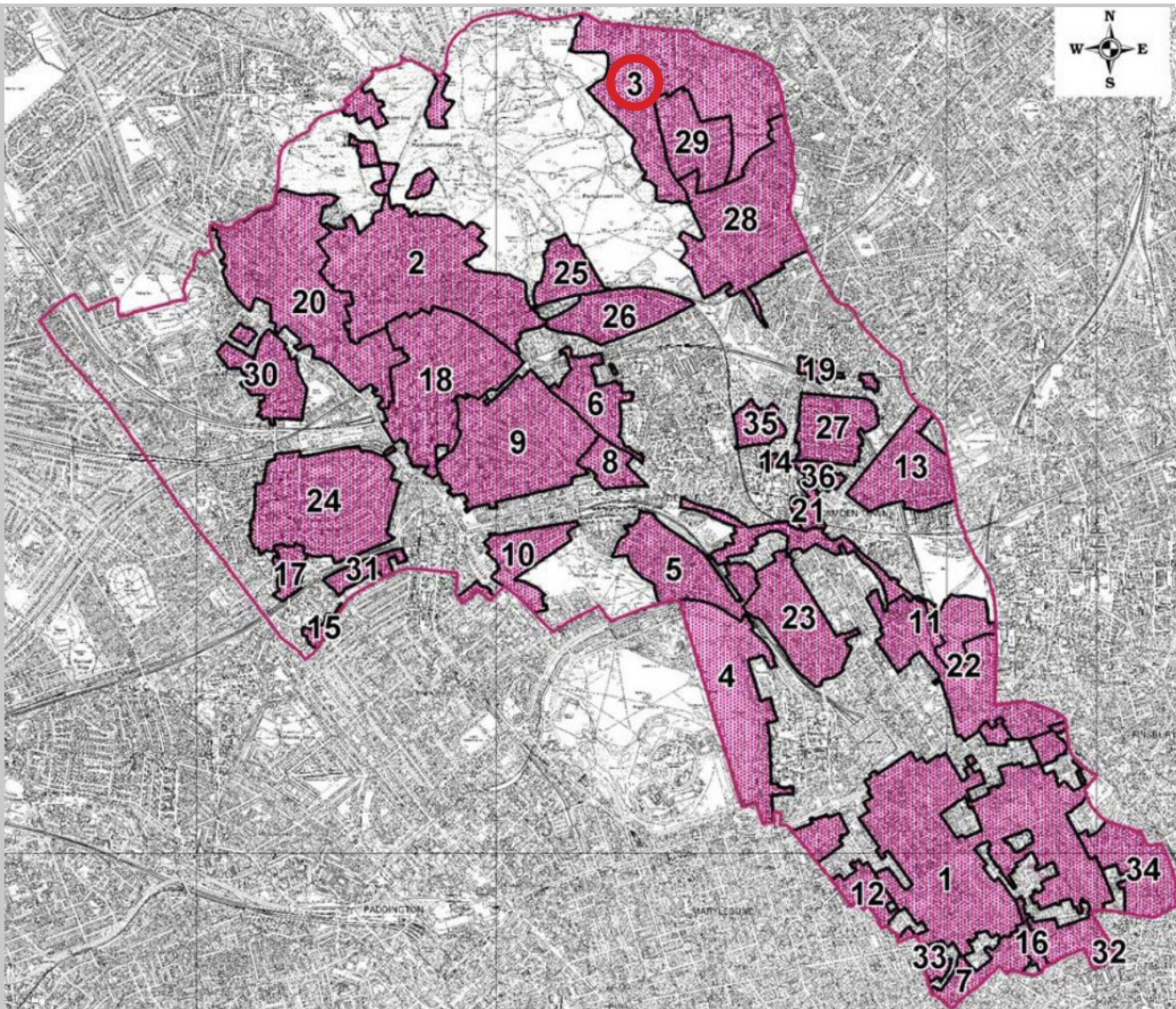
2.1 Location

The Water House occupies a site between Millfield Lane and Fitzroy Park and sits within the Highgate Village Conservation Area. The Fitzroy Park access is a narrow pedestrian route leading to a gated entrance at the rear of the property.

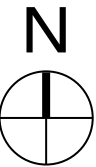
The site lies adjacent to a heavily landscaped area and within proximity to Hampstead Heath. The proposed works have been carefully designed to minimise visual and environmental impact on the surroundings.

2.2 Planning Context

- Relevant planning policy includes:
- Camden Local Plan 2017 – Policies D1, D2, A1, A4
- Highgate Neighbourhood Plan (2017) – DH2, DH5, DH9, DH10
- Camden Planning Guidance – Design (2021), Amenity (2021)
- Highgate Conservation Area Appraisal

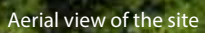


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- 1 Camden Borough Local Character Document - Camden Conservation Map. The Water House located in 3 (Highgate Conservation Area). Not to scale
- 2 Location Plan with site marked up in red. Not to scale

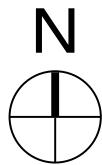
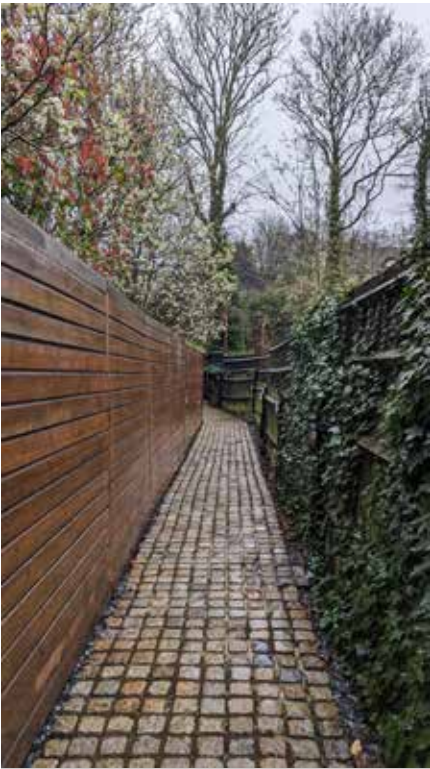


- 1 The Water House
- 2 Long passageway between
The Water House and Fitzroy
Park
- 3 Location of existing level drop
- 4 51 Fitzroy Park
- 5 53 Fitzroy Park

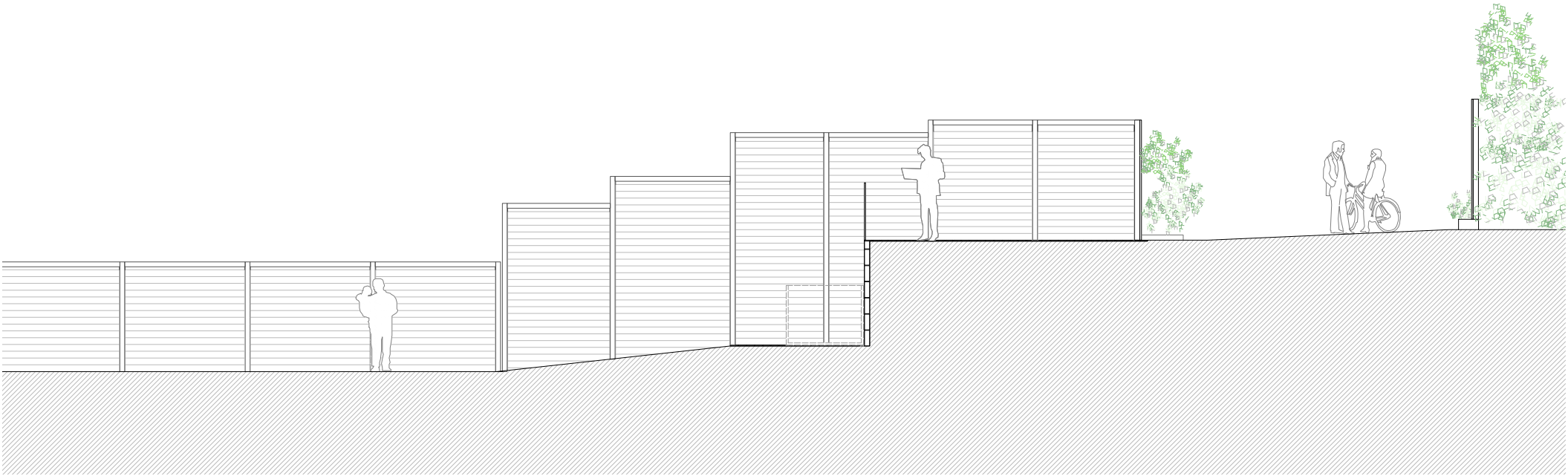


- 1 Location Plan of The Water House as existing, not to scale
- 2 The long corridor from the house
- 3 The level drop at the end of the corridor towards Fitzroy Park

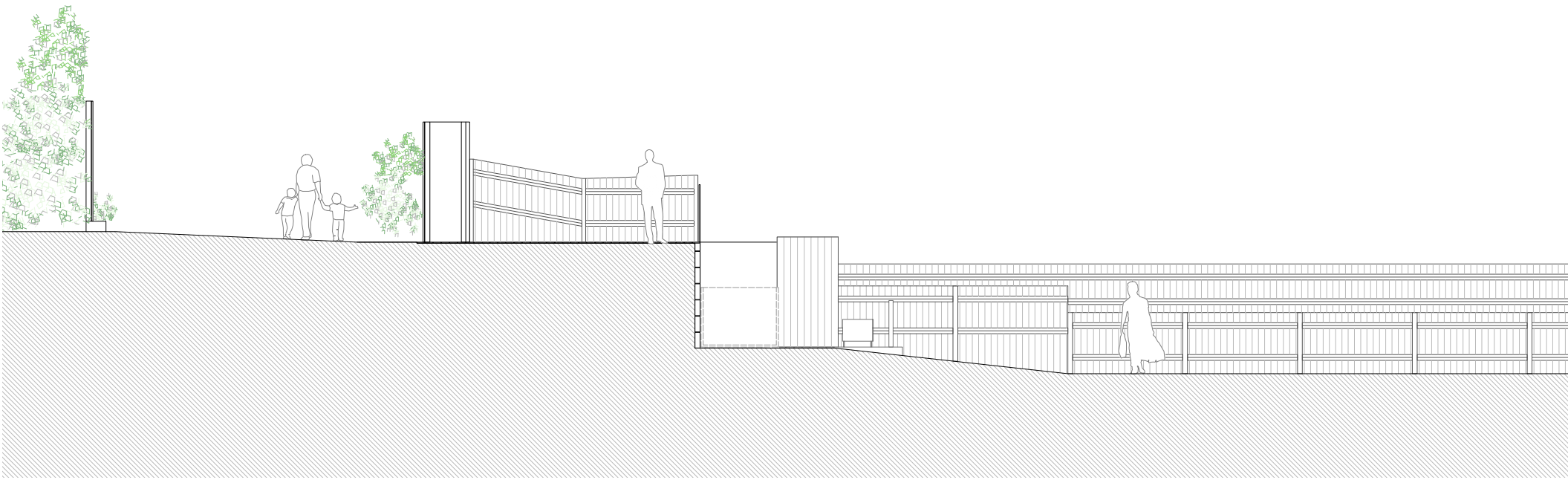
2.3 Existing Condition



2.4 Existing Sections



Existing section and elevation view of the North side of the corridor, not to scale



Existing section and elevation view of the South side of the corridor, not to scale

2.5 Views from the Fitzroy Park Access



View of the entrance from Fitzroy Park, the existing board is a temporary remedy for the fall hazard



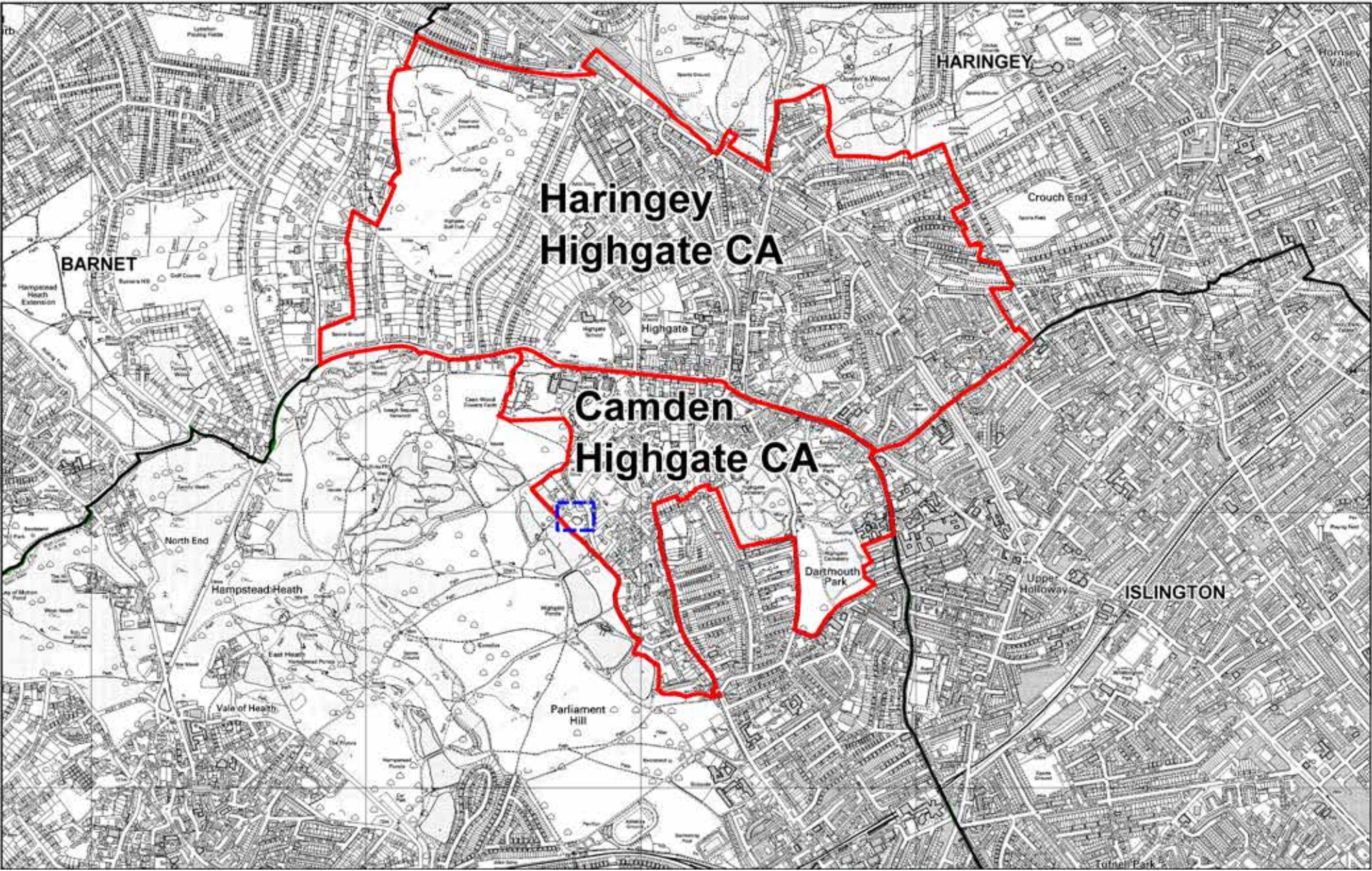
View towards the house and the lower level

Section 3.0 Site Context

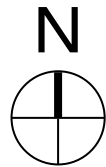
3.0 Site Context

3.1 Conservation Area

The house is not a designated heritage asset, nor is it listed as a positive contributor within the Highgate Village Conservation Area. Nonetheless, care has been taken to ensure any additions remain ancillary, discreet, and preserve the natural setting and character of the area.



Highgate Conservation Area map showing context with Borough boundaries and Haringey's Highgate Conservation Area. The location of The Water House is marked in blue. Not to scale.





Entrance to The Water House (on the left) from Fitzroy Park

Section 4.0

Design Approach



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4.0 Design Approach

4.1 Project Brief

The previously existing lift was unreliable and not operable. The project proposes a practical, long-term solution in the form of a new stair to reconnect the Fitzroy Park entrance with the main house, while also slightly extending the upper-level platform to house:

- Two additional bins for garden waste
- A small covered cycle store

This platform would help the owners use this entrance as a main access and exit, both for pedestrians and bicycles, avoiding further burdening the Millfield Lane vehicular entrance, which is adjacent to the Ladies' Pond and generally busy with walkers and swimmers.

4.2 Approach Summary

The new stair and platform have been designed to:

- Match the natural materials and muted tones of the surrounding landscape that are already existing in the property.
- Minimise visual impact from neighbouring properties.
- Provide practical access for pedestrians and weather-protected space for bins and bicycles.
- Incorporate discreet balustrades and renew existing boundary fencing to mitigate any sense of overlooking.

- 1 Previously existing lift
- 2 View of the upper level behind the Fitzroy Park entrance, with the existing bin shed
- 3 View of the level drop from the long corridor

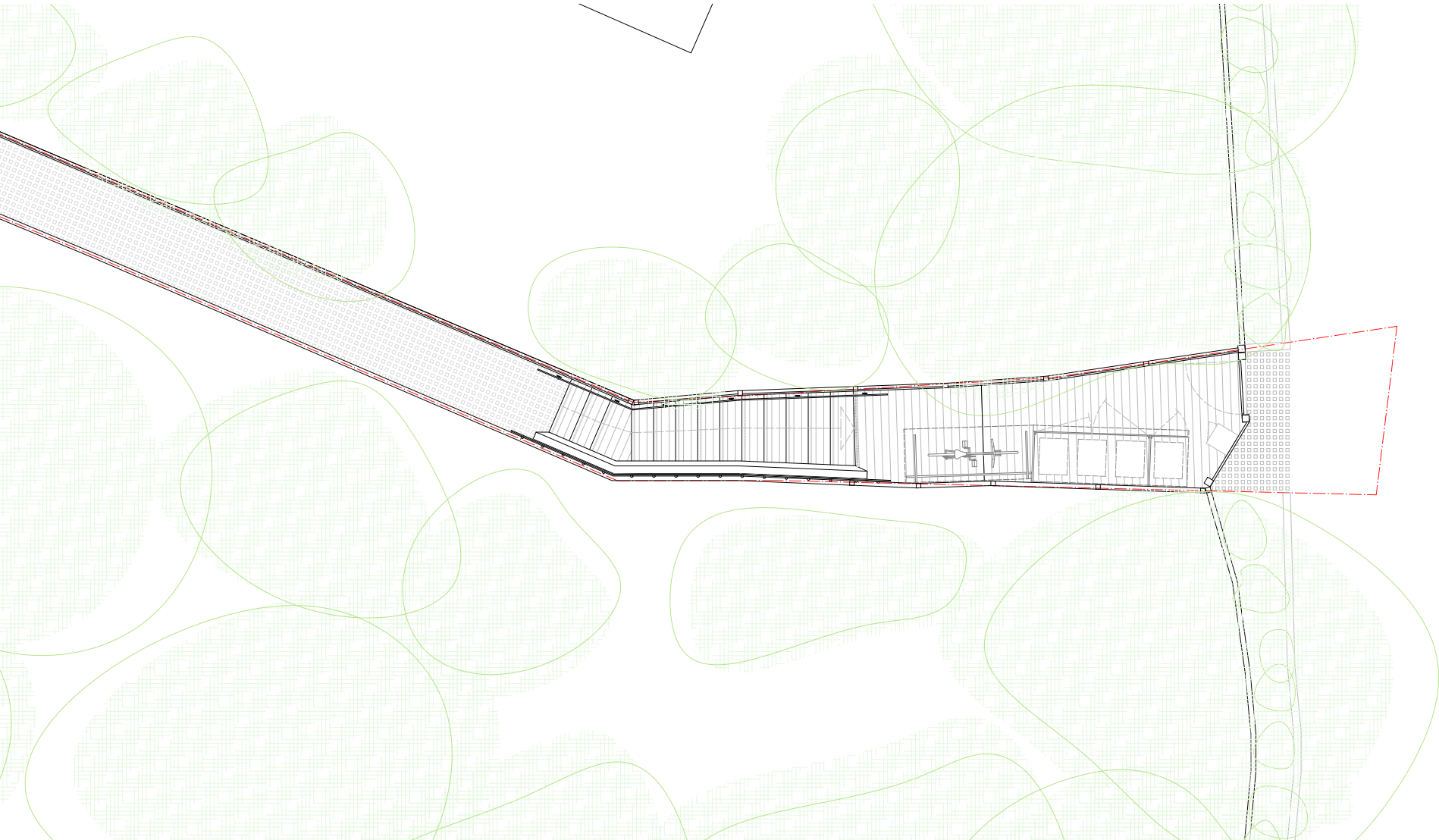


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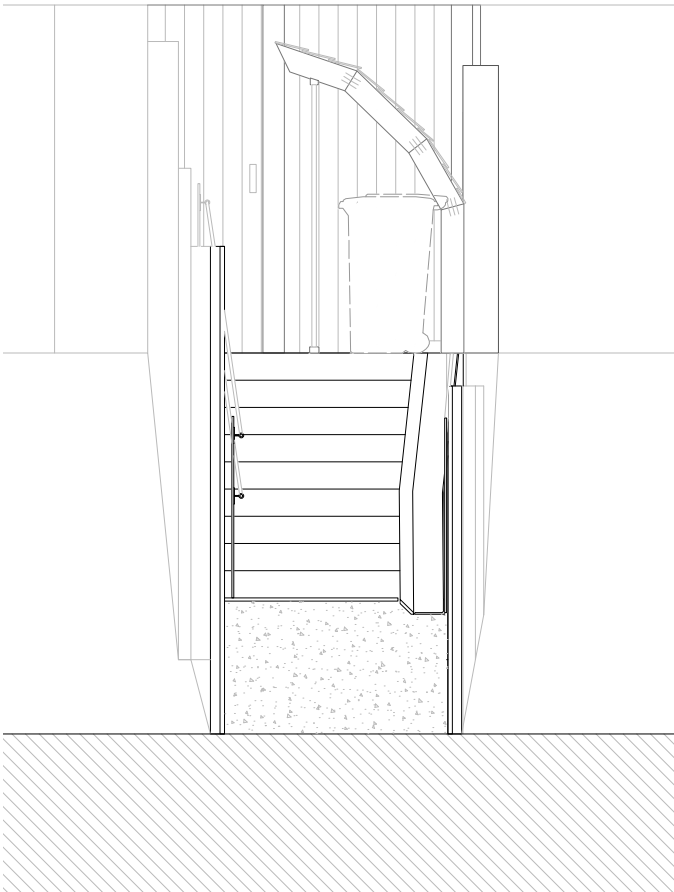


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4.3 Proposed Solution



Proposed plan view showing the extended space at higher level (right) and the stair and existing long corridor towards the house (left), not to scale



Elevation view of proposed bin and bicycle shed at the higher level connecting with Fitzroy Park, not to scale

Section 5.0

Appearance, Use and Layout

5.0 Appearance, Use and Layout



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5.1 Materiality

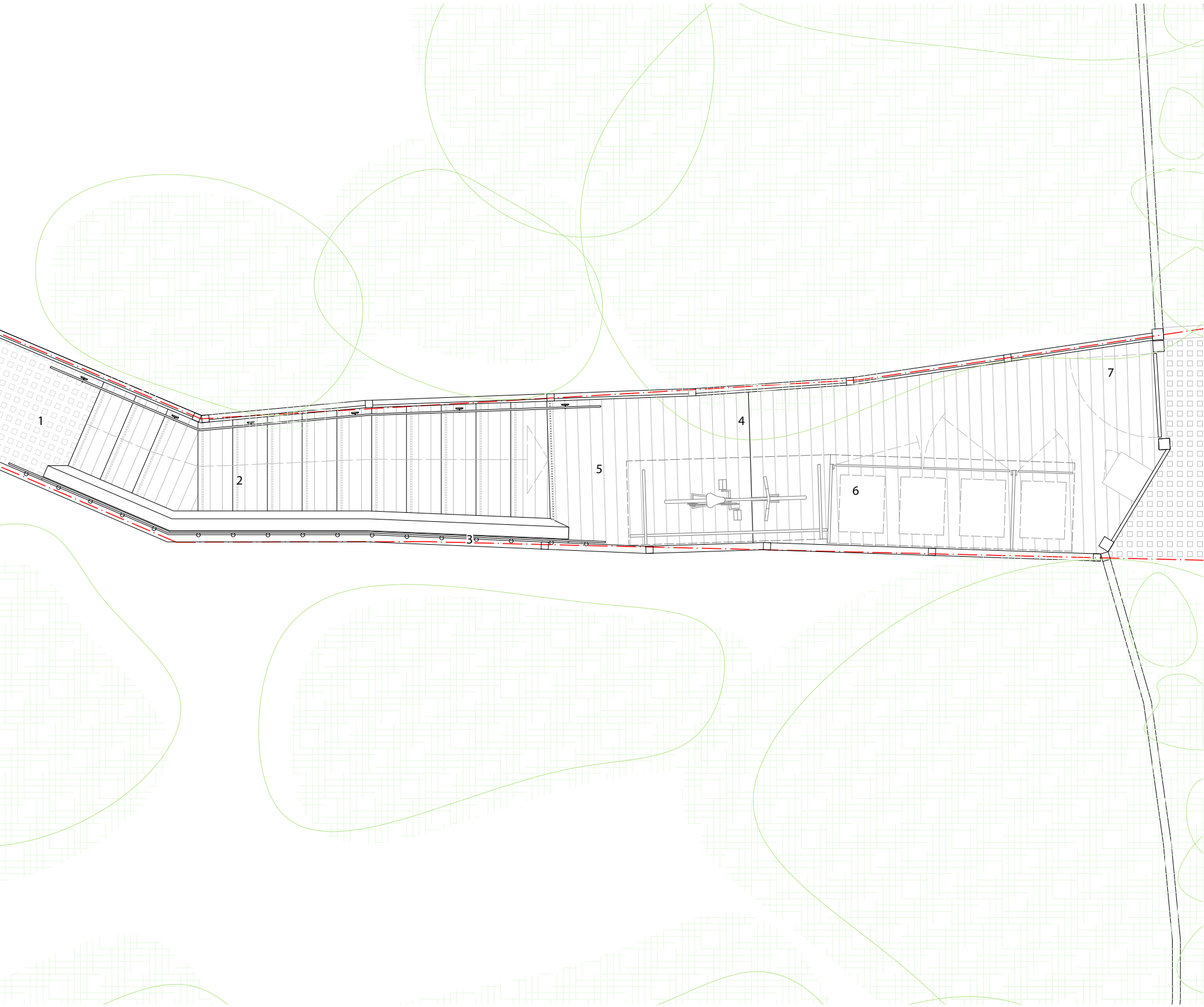
- Proposed materials include:
- Powder-coated steel balustrades
 - Timber decking surface at upper platform, to match existing
 - Retaining the existing granite paving at the lower level
 - Low intensity lights on presence detectors

Details and finishes will harmonise with existing boundary treatments.

5.2 Use and Layout

- Existing Use: Single-family residential dwelling
- Proposed Use: Ancillary to residential use; no change of use is proposed
- Bin and Cycle Storage: The bin and cycle store is to remain at Fitzroy Park level to allow for continued refuse collection from that entrance. This avoids requesting bin lorries to descend via Millfield Lane, a shared and sensitive pedestrian route that already experiences high footfall from swimmers and walkers accessing the Ladies’ Pond. Reducing vehicle use along this lane helps maintain safety and goodwill in the area.

- 1 Composite decking clad stairs
- 2 Composite decking existing in the property
- 3 Granite paving on the lower level
- 4 PIR activated low intensity pathway lights



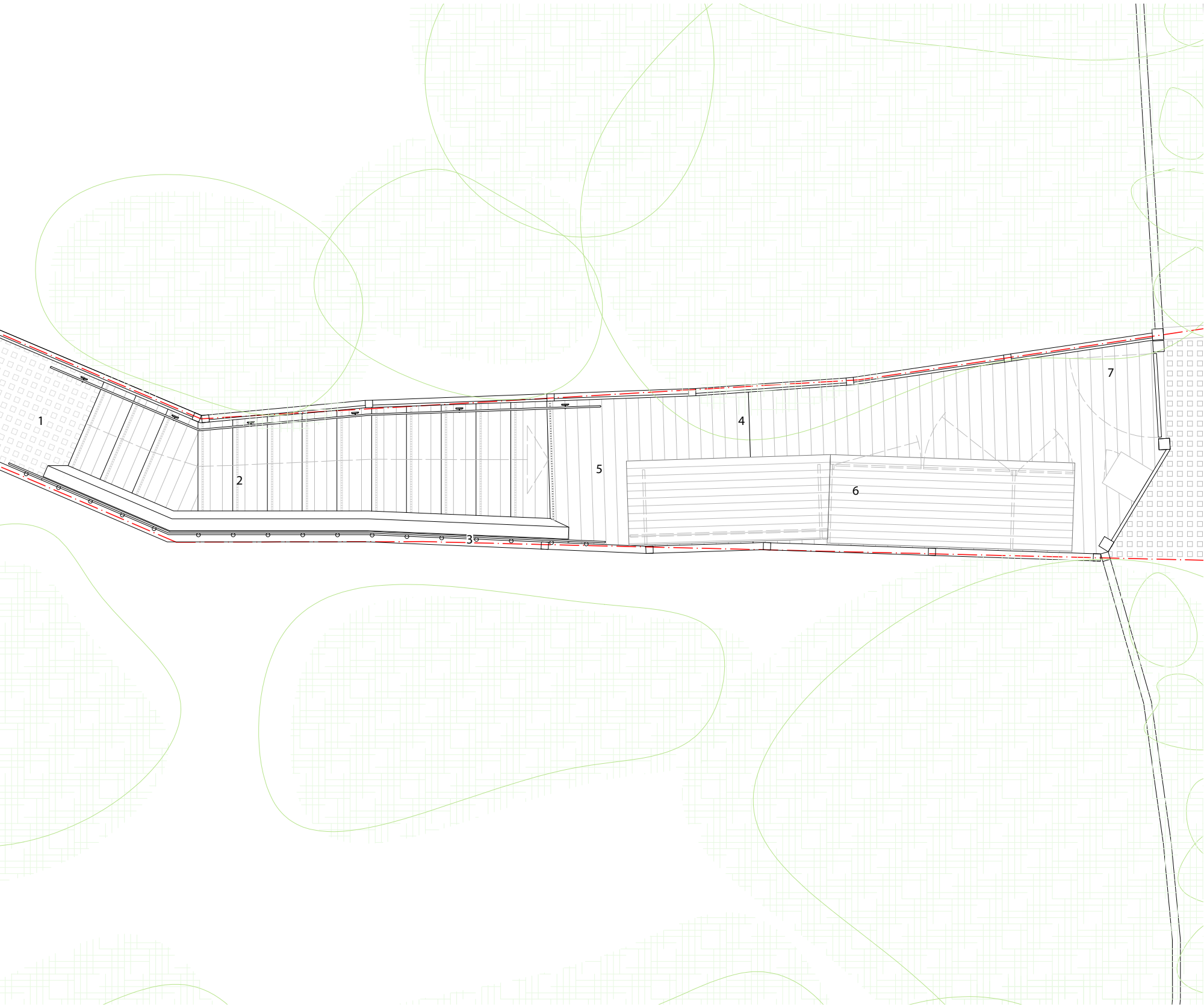
5.3 Proposed Plan View

The adjacent plan identifies the following key elements:

- 1 Long passageway between The Water House and Fitzroy Park
- 2 New proposed stairs
- 3 Proposed bike rail
- 4 Location of previously existing level drop
- 5 Extended area at higher level
- 6 Proposed bike and bin shed
- 7 Fitzroy Park pedestrian entrance

Not to scale.





5.4 Proposed High Level Plan View

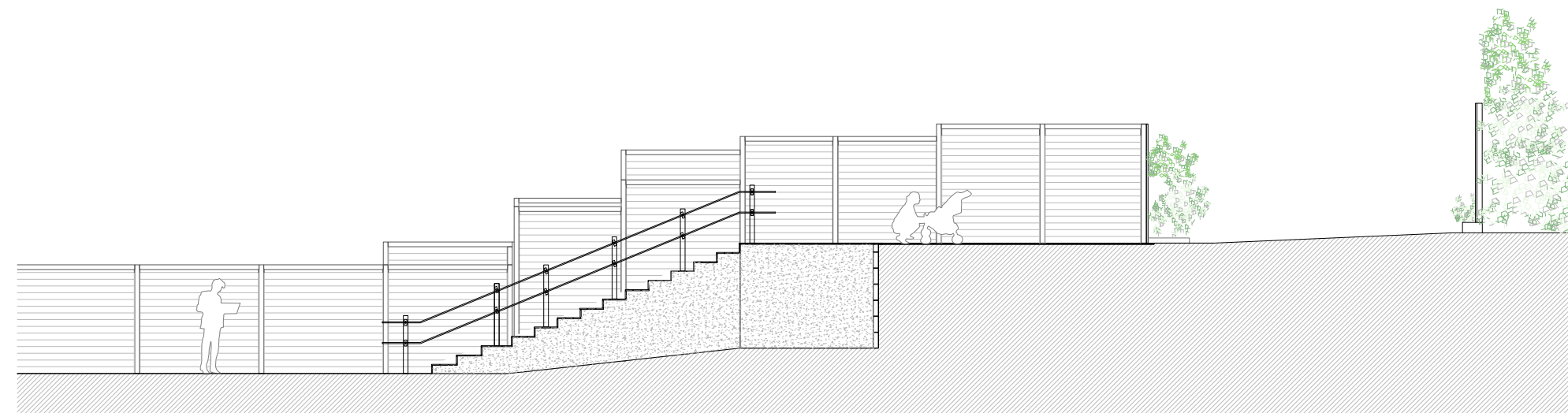
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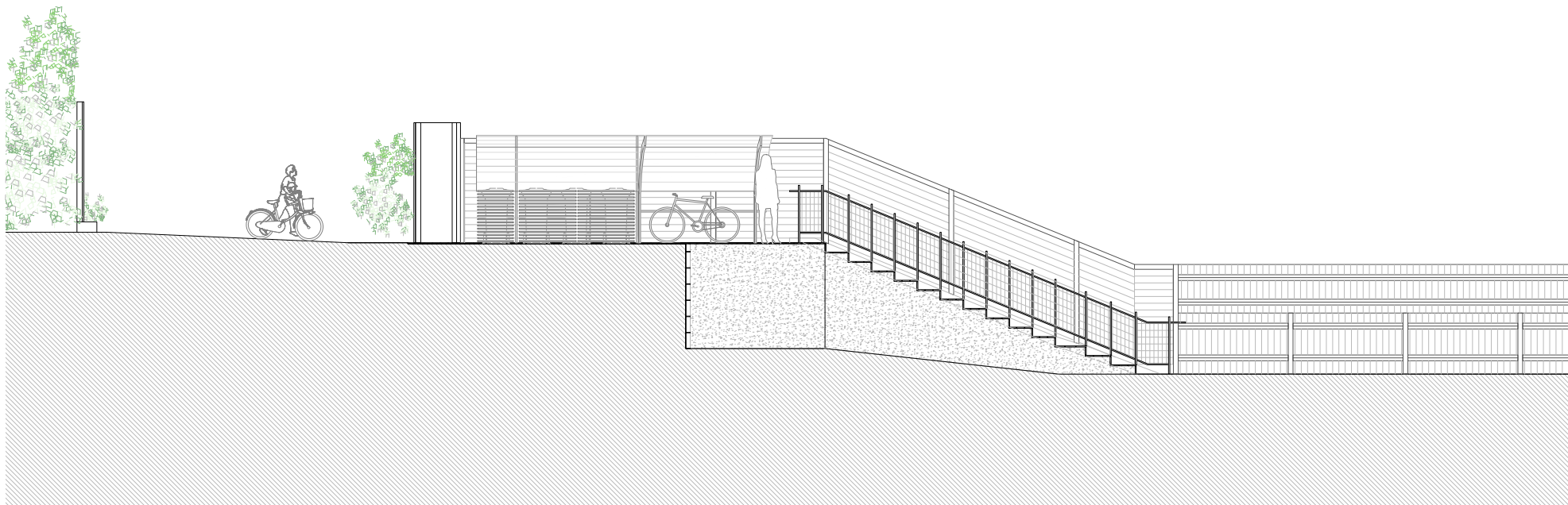
Not to scale.



5.5 Proposed Section Views



Existing section and elevation view of the North side, not to scale



Existing section and elevation view of the South side, not to scale

Section 6.0 Sustainability and Waste Strategy



View of The Water House (left) and the side of the long corridor leading to Fitzroy Park (right) from outside 53 Fitzroy Park (foreground); the house at the back is 51 Fitzroy Park

6.0 Sustainability

6.1 Assessment

- Waste collection would continue at Fitzroy Park, reducing the need for further vehicle movements along Millfield Lane near the Heath.
- Cycle storage encourages low-impact travel options.
- Materials are selected for durability and low visual impact.

6.2 Materials and Embodied Energy

Materials have been selected to complement the existing house and outdoor space and respond appropriately to the surrounding Conservation Area. Timber is proposed for fencing and the bin and bike shed; this is a renewable, low-carbon material that visually integrates with the existing palette. Balustrades will be constructed from steel and timber, offering a durable and visually lightweight solution.

The proposed stair and raised platform will be built over a compacted base incorporating a lightweight concrete mix using expanded clay aggregate, subject to final specification. This approach reduces the overall material weight and embodied carbon compared to conventional concrete, while ensuring adequate performance for foot traffic, bicycle parking, and domestic waste storage. The platform surface itself will use a weather-resistant composite material selected for longevity and minimal maintenance.

The overall material strategy prioritises long life, minimises visual disruption, and responds sensitively to the site context.

6.3 Lighting

Discreet, low-level lighting is proposed to ensure safe access during darker hours without impacting the surrounding character or neighbouring amenity. A linear LED strip may be integrated beneath the handrail of the new balustrade, providing subtle illumination focused only on the stair and platform surface.

This approach avoids upward or outward light spill, with no high level lights proposed. The lighting will be warm-white and low-intensity, supporting safety and usability while respecting the site’s sensitive setting within the Highgate Conservation Area and near the Heath.

6.4 Security

The modest increase in fence height at key points responds partially to recent incidents of trespassing and antisocial behaviour in the vicinity. These proposals improve passive security while maintaining visual consistency with neighbouring boundaries.

Section 7.0

Adjacencies and Access

7.0 Adjacencies and Access

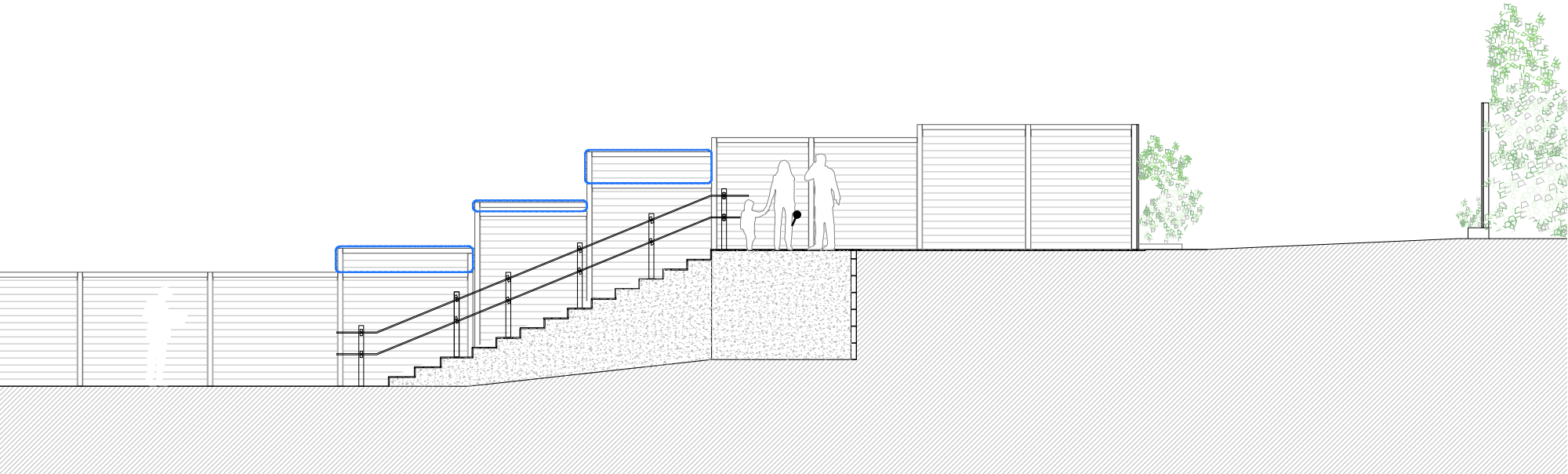
7.1 Neighbouring Properties

As part of the proposed stair and platform works, the existing perimeter fencing will be modestly extended in height along restricted sections of the shared boundaries with both 51 and 53 Fitzroy Park. This adjustment responds to two key needs: the current fencing to 53 Fitzroy Park near the entrance is unusually low — offering little privacy or security — and there have been recent instances of trespassing and antisocial behaviour at this currently unoccupied neighbouring plot, raising legitimate safety concerns. The proposed fence extensions have been carefully designed to balance these concerns with the surrounding context. The intention is to provide a more appropriate and consistent level of screening, consistent with dividing fences on other properties in the area.

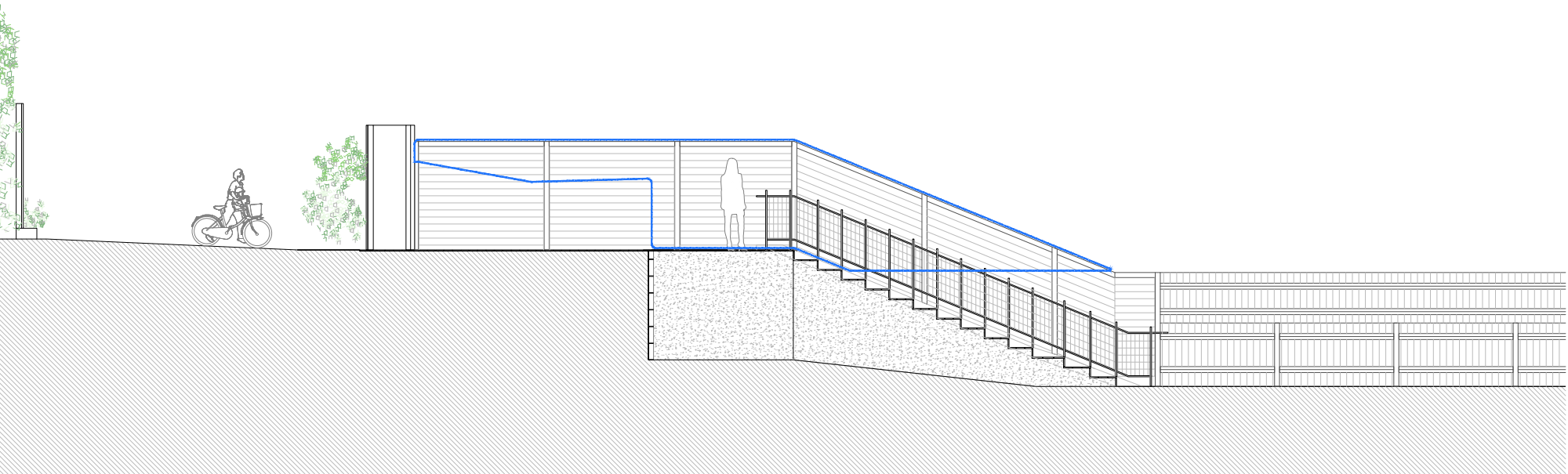
In advance of this application, the immediate neighbours at 51 and 53 Fitzroy Park were contacted by the owners via email on 15 July 2024, to provide early notice of this planning application.

The occupiers of 51 Fitzroy Park engaged positively with the proposal and a representative visited the site on 9 September 2025 to view the existing setup. Their feedback has been constructive and communication ongoing.

A response was also received from the owner of 53 Fitzroy Park, who requested clarification on the exact location of the proposed stair. The pre-application documentation was re-shared in response, and discussions remain open should the neighbours wish to follow up.



Section of the proposed stair looking North towards 51 Fitzroy Park. The blue mark-ups indicate the proposed extension to the existing fencing. Not to scale



Section of the proposed stair looking South towards 53 Fitzroy Park. The blue mark-ups indicate the proposed extension to the existing fencing. Not to scale

7.2 Universal Access

The extended platform replaces a previously existing accessible lift, which unfortunately never worked and has since been dismantled. The proposed stair restores functional access to the Fitzroy Park entrance, and step-free access will remain available via Millfield Lane.



Millfield Lane access

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