

STOKES HOUSE, HAM STREET



Design and Access/Heritage Statement

Planning Application

Renovation of the eastern boundary wall along Ham Street, including stripping off the modern non-breathable cement based render from damaged brick and blockwork and applying a traditional breathable lime render, along with other minor modifications to the wall including replacement copings.

Stokes House
Ham Street,
Richmond
TW10 7HR

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Introduction

Stokes House is a semi-detached Georgian three storey, five bedroom home, built circa 1760 and originally owned by the Dysart Estate, sitting on a plot of approximately half an acre within a large walled garden, with mature yew and box hedging, herbaceous borders, many roses and interesting trees and shrubs.

The building is not statutory listed, but it was locally listed as a Building of Townscape Merit (BTM) on 5th September 1983, reference number 83/02237/BTM.

Stokes House sits within the Ham House Conservation Area No.23. First designated in 16.09.1975 and extended in 07.09.1982 and 03.09.2007.

This application presents our plan to renovate the eastern boundary wall along Ham Street including stripping off the modern non-breathable cement based render from damaged brick and blockwork on the eastern boundary wall and applying a traditional breathable lime render, along with other minor modifications to the wall including replacement copings.



Site location plan showing outline of site at Stokes House, Ham

The existing property

The existing property sits between Back Lane and Ham Street. Originally called Stokes Hall, the building was split into two properties in 1972, currently they are interwoven at the party wall, now named Stokes House and Bench House. Located centrally in Ham, close to Ham Common, the property has dual access, with the main pedestrian access from Ham Street and pedestrian & vehicle access from Back Lane.

The Georgian property is believed to have originally been constructed circa 1760. The earlier parts of the building are finished in a white lime render with a modern single storey extension currently under construction, which will contain extended kitchen, living and dining space. The outer boundary wall facing Ham Street is being retained, currently in painted modern cement render.



Bench House, Ham Street



Stokes House Entrance, Ham Street

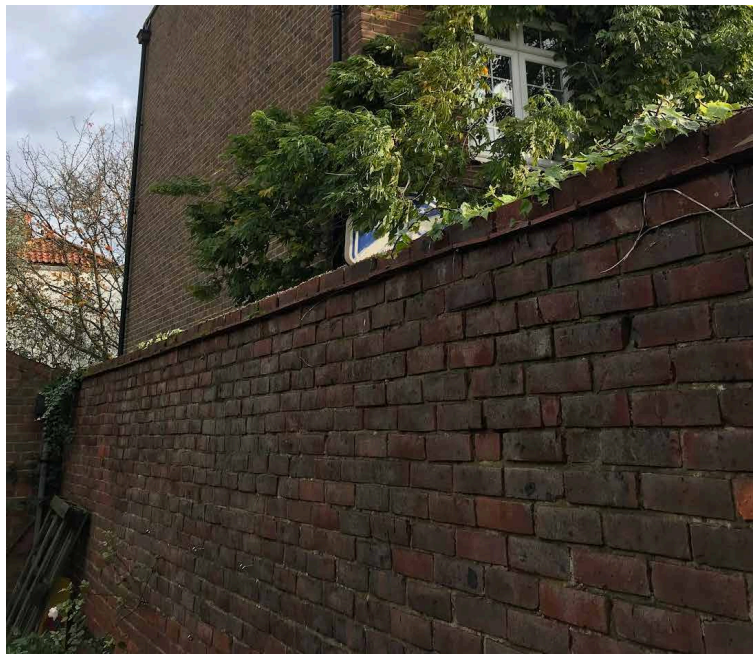
Heritage assessment of the site's existing boundary treatments

The eastern boundary wall at Stokes House does not have the conventional appearance of a boundary wall of a Georgian property. It consists of an irregular series of masonry piers, with a variety of different plinth and coping treatments, and a coarse textured render finish with scarring and deterioration in many places. Having said that, it is clearly a prominent part of the Ham Street streetscene, and an important contributor to the visual appearance of Stokes House, other surrounding buildings of townscape merit and the conservation area. Any proposals to modify the wall therefore need to be carefully considered in terms of their heritage impact.

Before we set out the details of our proposal, we need to properly understand the heritage context of the eastern boundary wall, and how its current form has come about. To inform this understanding we have carried out a careful visual inspection of the various different boundary treatments at Stokes House.

Southern Boundary

- The majority of the southern boundary is enclosed by Stokes House and the storage outbuildings that adjoin Stokes House and Bench House.
- The remaining section of wall is a simple brick garden boundary wall of approximately 2.2m height dividing the driveway of Stokes House and the end of the neighbouring terraced housing known as The Bench.
- This wall is constructed in a single skin stretcher bond (4 inches thick), with a single layer creasing tile at high level and a single stretcher course capping above.
- The brick is a dark red brick.
- It's possible that this section of wall was built at the same time as The Bench next door, or later when the car port or storage buildings at Stokes House were modified.
- The wall is not in bad condition, and appears in keeping with its surroundings, but because of the single skin construction the wall is not of the highest construction quality when compared to other boundary treatments around the site.



Photograph of existing southern boundary wall

Western Boundary

- The western boundary of Stokes House is separated from Back Lane by a circa 2.4m high brick wall.
- Modern gates have been installed, and visual modification in the brickwork can be seen where gate piers have been created using modern brickwork, particularly on the south side of the entrance.

- The majority of the wall along the western boundary is exposed red brick. The lower section of the wall is formed in 9 inch brick, with wide piers, similar in width and projection to those on the eastern side of the site, but this is only 900mm or so high, above that the wall reduces to a single skin stretcher bond (4 inch thick), and has much narrower, but more regular piers.
- It's possible that this section of wall has been demolished and rebuilt at some point in the history of the house. This is clearly evident internally due to the change in thickness of the wall, but is less obvious from outside because the single skin of brickwork in the upper section has been built to align with the external face. The only evidence being the change from flemish bond at the bottom section to stretcher bond in the top section, and a slightly different tone of brick.
- Along this section of wall the brick on edge header course at the top of the wall has been formed using a cut brick.



Left hand image is the outside view of western boundary wall, note the slight change in brick appearance and bond pattern part way up the wall.

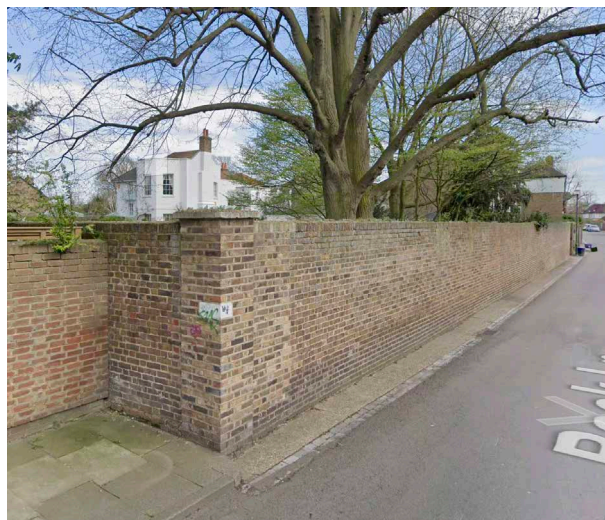
Right hand image is the internal view of the same wall, note the change in brick appearance and step in the wall where it becomes a single skin, along with the reduction in pier width.

- About two thirds of the way along this wall, towards the northern corner, the wall returns to a 9 inch thick wall across its entire height, with the earlier wider and more spaced out piers. The piers in this section have a curved top that returns into the wall just below a brick on edge header course.
- This design of wall continues around the north western corner of the site and stops just after the first pier on the northern boundary.



The wider piers, with less regular spacing with curved tops are thought to be earlier. Note the brick on edge along the top of the wall.

- The corner pier at the end of this wall, at the north western corner of the site is of a different design, projecting up above the general height of the wall, with a flat modern concrete coping on top. The slight difference in tone of the brickwork and mortar around this corner pier suggest it has been rebuilt more recently than the rest of the wall, therefore it is not known what the exact format of the earlier wall would have been in this area. There is a cornerstone halfway up the wall, but due to erosion it is not possible to read any inscription.



Corner pier in the northern corner looks to have been rebuilt.

Northern Boundary

- Along the northern boundary the brick wall continues, dividing Stokes House from 57 Ham Street. Along this boundary the wall is approximately 2m high.
- After the first pier, the brick colour changes significantly to more of a yellow stock, piers are also narrower again, more akin to the modern construction of the upper section of wall along the western boundary, but this wall appears to be 9 inches thick, and still has the brick on edge capping.



Brick wall change on northern boundary

- This design runs along almost the entire length of the northern boundary, with the exception of the last two bays, which are once again constructed in the darker red brick with the wider format pier design, which appears to be the earlier garden wall.
- Although slightly speculatively, it is likely that these two end parts of the wall were at some point linked together, and for some reason the central section of the northern boundary wall has been demolished and rebuilt using a different brick in a slightly different design.

Eastern Boundary

- When viewed from Ham Street, the east boundary treatment has an irregular quality, with differing heights and inconsistent piers of varying widths. It is cement rendered with a pebble dash and concrete coping & caps on the prominent piers. The eastern boundary is the main subject of this application, understanding the existing wall is therefore of critical importance.
- At the northern end of this wall, the pier is slightly taller than the boundary walls intersecting it, and it has a generic flat concrete coping stone. It is difficult to assess the age and original form of the pier as it has been rendered on the outside and there is a small garden building built against it on the inside.

- From here, the first four bays of the eastern boundary wall seem to mimic the design of the older parts of the northern and western boundary walls. The piers are a similar width and projection, and have curved tops tapering back into the wall. A key difference is that the piers are visible both inside and outside the garden.
- Further to this, there is no brick on edge coping above the curved top of the pier, and the outer facing side has been rendered in a thick, very coarse render with a bright white paint.



Northernmost 4 bays of the eastern boundary wall

- The internal face of the wall is predominantly finished in facing stock brick, similar to all the other walls surrounding the garden.
- Moving south along the eastern boundary wall, a taller pier marks a change in the design of the wall. From here the wall starts to step up in height as it approaches the house, and the piers are straight all the way up, instead of tapered at the top. The modern coarse render continues as does the modern concrete coping.

- Following the taller pier, there are four bays in the wall before the Ham Street entrance to Stokes House. Half way along the second bay the wall steps up awkwardly. The step in this location in the wall feels unnatural as it does not align with the piers. This suggests that the position of the step has been modified at some point since the wall was originally built. A theory that is further supported by the presence of a render finish on the internal side of this part of the wall, which stops in line with the awkwardly positioned step. It is likely that at some stage a building was built in the garden against this section of the wall. The smooth render with straight lines cut into it to give the effect of ashlar stonework suggests this is likely to have been an orangery or other type of glazed leisure building.



Eastern boundary wall steps up as it moves towards the house.

- The entrance to Stokes House from Ham Street is located in the centre of this section of the wall. It consists of a pair of narrow doors with a rendered surround that is taller than the section of wall in which it sits. A straight pediment is visible above the doorway, but appears undersized, likely due to the fact that the thickness of the modern render has reduced its projection and visual prominence. A projecting rendered band runs above the door, in line with the height of the adjacent wall, and there is an awkward step present in the top of the wall to the left of the door surround, the origins of which are puzzling.



The Stokes House entrance on Ham Street, and the unusual adjacent detail.

- South of the doorway, four more bays of the same design of wall are present. In the last bay of these four the wall once again steps up awkwardly before the pier.



Awkward step up not aligned with pier

- The last three bays of the wall at the southern end before the boundary with Bench House are taller again, most likely raised in height to accommodate an extension behind. The central panel of these three steps up further, marking what used to be an entrance to the property, as seen in the archive photo below dated circa 1975.



1899 plan and 1975 photograph of Stokes House, seen from Ham Street (London Metropolitan Archives, ref: 165235.)

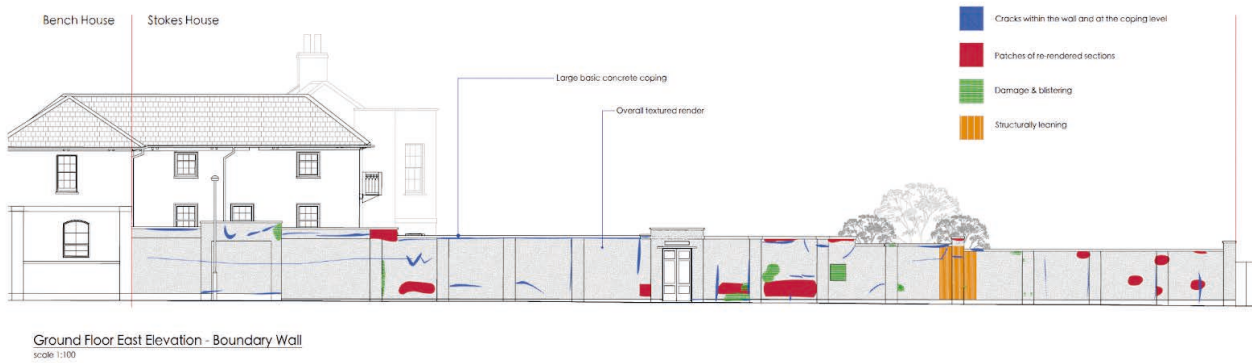
- Also of note is the 1899 plan (extract above), showing a projecting part of the house in this area, linking the building to the wall. Note also the blue and pink hatched outbuildings to the north, further supporting the theory of buildings built against this wall having impacted its form and height.
- When compared to a more recent image of the same section of wall (see below), it appears that this section has been raised in height, with some detailing removed from the taller section to reflect the fact there is no longer an entrance here. A horizontal step appears in the two bays either side of the raised section, from the old height to the new height, and the awkward step down mentioned above, has

been introduced just past the right hand pier. Note also that the height of the darker plinth has been reduced in the right hand bay of this taller section, introducing asymmetry around the raised section.



More recent image of the same section of wall

- In addition to our study of the various boundary treatments at Stokes House, we have also carried out a detailed visual inspection, and some intrusive investigation into the east boundary wall. Our findings are as follows.



Existing eastern boundary wall - diagram showing wall condition



Various photographs showing examples of the condition of the rendered wall.

- The above diagram and photographs show the result of our visual inspection of the eastern boundary wall, it shows the significant amount of cracking and damage, the patchwork of repairs in the surface finish and damaged areas in need of repair, it also shows sections of the wall that are significantly out of level and in need of some structural attention.



Removed patch of render reveals an attractive red brick

- A removed section of render has revealed an attractive red stock brick substrate, in flemish bond with a durable cream coloured lime mortar, that appears consistent with the walls surrounding the rest of the garden.

Summary of existing eastern boundary treatment

- The eastern boundary wall is an important part of the area's historic environment, and therefore an important part of the historical context of both Stokes House and the surrounding conservation area.
- The whole wall has been treated with the modern hard cement spray on render with a coarse finish, painted in a bright white masonry paint which is inappropriate to the age of the boundary wall, the associated building and surrounding historic environment.
- This wall was almost certainly not originally rendered. Render is not traditionally a treatment used on garden boundary walls, and certainly not ones constructed in bricks of this quality. Also, considering our analysis of other boundary walls at this property, the most likely finish would have been exposed stock brick.
- The modern coarse textured render finish is inconsistent with the age of the wall, and the other Stokes House boundary treatments. It is likely that the wall was originally finished in the red stock brick with cream coloured lime mortar we see in the area where the render has been removed.
- It is not known why the wall was rendered, but given the materials used it is likely to have been mid to late twentieth century.

- It is not uncommon for render to be used to cover up low quality materials, but looking at the general quality of materials used at Stokes House and the bricks we have uncovered, we feel this is unlikely to be the reason here.
- Instead we suspect that the render was applied as a cheap way to conceal unsightly decay or defects, or to cover up patch repairs.
- The modern render, and bright white paint finish are misleading because they give the impression of a modern wall. This finish, to this wall, in this historic environment is entirely inappropriate. The appearance of this wall is harmful to the historic environment, and surrounding designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- In the long term, the application of non-breathable cement based renders and non-breathable paints is also known to cause enhanced decay and damage to historic brickwork. This type of cement based finish is too hard and inflexible to accommodate natural movement in the brickwork, and the non-breathable nature of these materials can cause moisture to become trapped within the wall. The wall should not have been rendered in this way. In order to protect and preserve the original wall, the existing render should be removed.
- Unfortunately, the existing render has a very strong adhesion to the original bricks, and therefore cannot be removed without causing damage to the brick face, meaning that it will not be possible to remove the render and leave the original stock brick as the finish.
- The whole wall on this side also has a modern generic concrete coping, which has been applied with no real regard to the variation in age, design and identity of the different parts of the wall. The northern section of this wall, which has the piers that curve in at the top, are most likely to have originally had a brick on edge capping, like the other walls around the garden, and the rest of the wall is most likely to have had a more formal stone coping.

The Proposal

We have established the wall's historic significance, and its important contribution to local buildings of townscape merit and the surrounding conservation area. At the same time we have also established that a series of insensitive and unsympathetic modifications have been made that are detrimental to the appearance of the wall and also its longevity.

Due to its historic importance the wall should be retained, but we are proposing a series of carefully considered modifications in order to enhance the appearance and protect the long term wellbeing of the wall.

- Firstly, the modern spray on non-breathable render and masonry paint need to be removed to reduce the potential for damage caused by inflexibility, and reduce the potential for trapped moisture and long term decay.
- The modern generic concrete copings will also be removed, along with the unsuitable pediment above the entrance.

- Once modern render and copings are removed, the wall will then be carefully inspected and any essential structural repairs carried out, such as bed reinforcement or ties between walls and piers, to ensure the long term structural stability and soundness of the wall is maintained.
- Two awkwardly positioned steps in the height of the wall will be repositioned to align with the existing piers and the awkward detail adjacent to the Ham Street entrance will be removed and aligned properly with the wall.
- The taller section of the dark coloured plinth will be extended one bay further along, to create more symmetry around the taller section of the wall, tidying up the appearance.
- Where modern generic concrete copings have been removed, capping treatments will be as follows:
 - A double layer of creasing tiles and a brick on edge coping detail above the four bays of wall at the northern end, where the piers are tapering at the top. This is the lowest and most simple part of the boundary wall which just encloses the garden, and should therefore be treated with a similar coping detail to the rest of the garden.
 - In other locations modern generic concrete copings will be replaced with more traditional, cast stone copings, pier caps and straight pediments.
- Once the render is removed, the original brickwork is likely to have a damaged face, which will be unsightly and too porous to be left exposed, and so a new breathable lime render finish is proposed. This finish will conceal historic damage, along with any repairs and strengthening, and give the wall a refreshed and more traditional appearance. The lime render finish will be thinner than the existing modern textured cement based render, and therefore pier widths, and depths, along with other details in the wall will appear more elegant and closer to their original design intent.
- The finish in the lime render will be Chalk White, which will match the finish and texture approved under planning permission 24/2040/HOT for lime render to the main house.
- Finally, a new front door will be made to replace the dilapidated existing timber doors in the existing door opening facing Ham Street. The design of the new door is based on the original, but will have enhanced thermal, acoustic and security performance.

The combination of the proposed wall modifications, new coping treatments and lime render finish will create a sympathetic design that better reflects and complements the historic context of the property.



The proposed finish (chalk white lime render)

Conclusion

The purpose of this application is to enhance the appearance of the eastern boundary wall of Stokes House. We recognise that the property is a Building of Townscape Merit, and is located within the Ham House Conservation Area, so prior to developing our proposals for the wall, in order to ensure we have a good understanding of the existing context, we have carried out a detailed analysis of all existing boundary treatments. An outline of that analysis is presented here.

From this analysis we can see that the eastern boundary wall has undergone some substantial modifications in recent history that are unsympathetic and on the whole detrimental to its appearance, the appearance of the building of townscape merit, and the appearance of the surrounding conservation area. On top of that, in many areas the wall's existing condition is poor, and some of the modern modifications identified jeopardise the long term wellbeing of the wall.

Our proposals have been carefully considered in this context, and along with seeking to enhance the appearance of the boundary wall, and therefore its contribution to the appearance of the historic environment, we are looking to improve the wall's construction quality and overall longevity.

We believe that the modifications proposed within this application are the most suitable solutions for protecting the eastern boundary and enhancing its appearance and contribution to the historic environment. These proposals would respect the building's historic character while enhancing its visual appeal, ultimately contributing to the preservation of this significant asset within the local architectural landscape.

For these reasons, and the reasons set out within this report, we believe our application should be supported by the local authority, and we look forward to their favourable response.

Application Drawings

Existing Drawings

1939.01.03.Exg.07.001	Site Location
1939.01.03.Exg.07.002	Existing Block Plan
1939.01.03.Exg.07.065	Existing East Boundary Wall Plan & Elevation
1939.01.03.Exg.07.203	Existing Typical C - Pediment Detail

Proposed Drawings

1939.03.03.Pln.07.002	Proposed Block Plan
1939.03.03.Pln.07.065	Proposed East Boundary Wall Plan & Elevation
1939.03.03.Pln.07.200	Typical A - Coping & Pier Detail
1939.03.03.Pln.07.201	Typical B - Coping & Pier Detail
1939.03.03.Pln.07.203	Proposed Typical C - Pediment Detail