

## ED 0717 125-127 Upper Street Design and Access Statement

125-127 Upper Street  
Islington  
London  
N1 1QP

24th May 2011



edgleydesign

# 01 Introduction

## Site Location

The proposal is to create a new retail shopfront to the side of 127 Upper Street, in order to improve the existing retail units and the entrance way into the new proposals for the former North London Mail Centre.

The proposal also consists of the relocation of the entrance to the residential units.

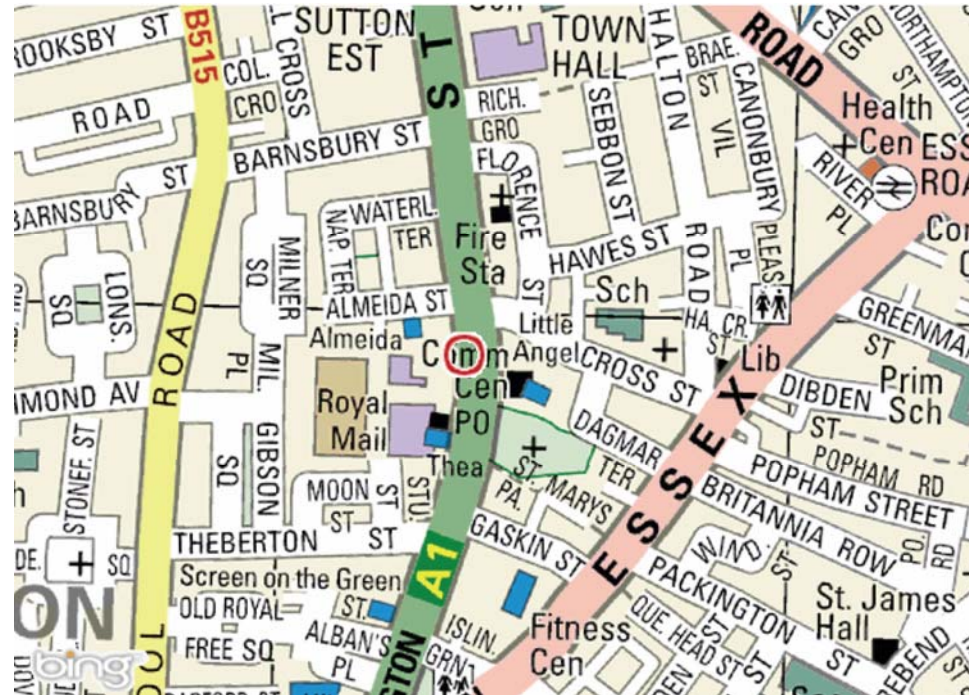
The proposal is situated in the borough of Islington. As a borough, Islington stretches from the City of London in the south along Holloway Road to Archway and the borders of Haringey and Camden to the north and west and Hackney to the east.

The existing property is located on Upper Street, on the heavily trafficked A1 through-route, an important transport link for many commuters travelling between central and outer London.

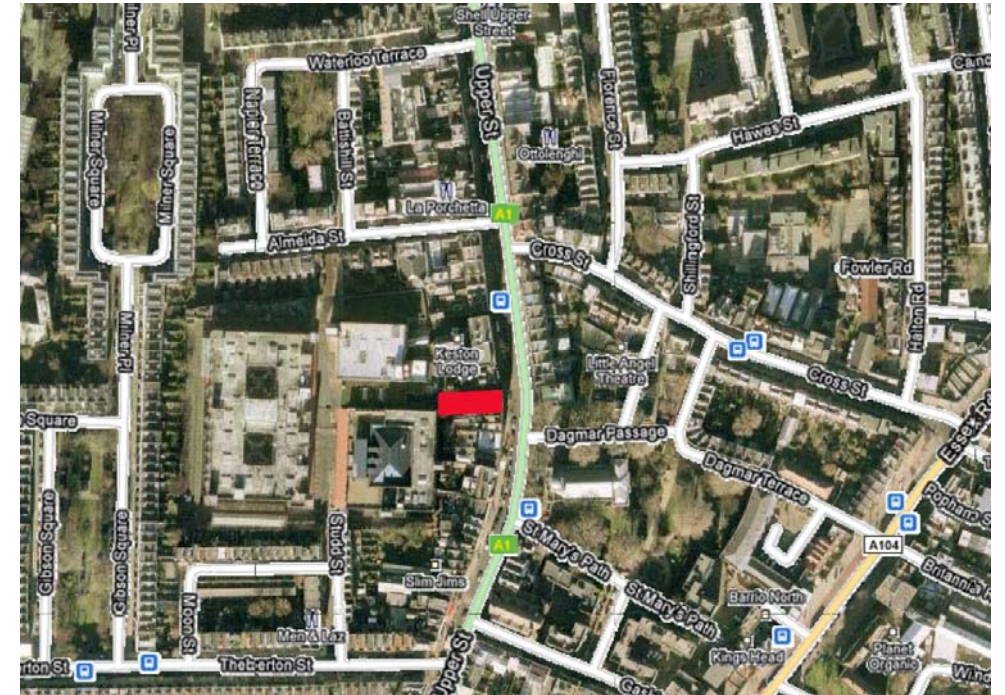
Upper Street is the main shopping street in the borough of Islington, running north from Islington High Street to Highbury Corner.

The property lies equidistant from the tube stations of Angel and Highbury and Islington. Essex Road overland rail station is also close by, along with good bus links.

The area is seen by the council to be a focus for Islington's evening and night-time economy.



Map showing site location



Aerial Map showing site location



## 02 Context

### Historic context

Upper Street has been a busy thoroughfare since medieval times, leading to the bustling London markets a few miles to the south.

The following extract taken from the BBC Local History page, map the development of the area and shows how urbanisation, the Industrial Revolution and Victorian town planning have all left their mark. It also shows how the area has always been a key transport link, an important area for retail and commerce area, and an area for living.

Islington's two 'streets', Upper Street and Lower Street, date back to at least the 12th century. Upper Street has also always been part of one of England's great roads - the Great North Road, which begins in Aldersgate and continues through Islington and Holloway to the north.

Long-distance and local stagecoach routes used Upper Street which ran north out of London. The flock of sheep being driven along the street towards London are probably headed towards Smithfield meat market. (see top right image) This would have been a common sight until the arrival of the railways in the 1840s and 1850s and underlines Islington's semi-rural character in the early 19th century. But the row of houses on the left also show something of the transformation of Islington into a wealthy suburb of the city.

These tall Georgian terraced town houses would have been newly built when the engraving was made and owned by people wealthy enough to abandon the unhealthy and cramped districts surrounding the city of London. The population of Islington increased fivefold during the 18th century as the fields which once stretched from the top of Upper Street to Holloway were built over.

Tarmac roads are a relatively recent innovation and as the 1811 engraving shows, Upper Street was once cobbled and probably remained so for much of the 19th century. The pavement on the left of the engraving was a relatively recent innovation in 1811 and emphasises the gentrification and suburbanisation of Islington happening at this time.

Perhaps the only constant feature on Upper Street through the ages is St Mary's church, which dominates the skyline. However, this is not the original building. The medieval church in Islington, which may have dated back to the 12th century, was demolished in 1751.

At first glance the fronts of the shops have changed dramatically between the start and end of the 20th century. (see bottom right image) If you look more closely, though, these differences are cosmetic – the bay windows have been removed and the elaborate parapets at the top of the buildings simplified. Looking up towards the roofs of Upper Street reveals the grand style in which the Victorians built council buildings, railway stations, libraries and other public buildings. This underlines the civic pride and confidence felt by Victorian society.

In this case the London County Council Fire Brigade building on the extreme left of the photograph imitates the style of the late 17th century. This is despite actually being built at the end of the 19th century. It blends well into the surrounding buildings, rather better than its successor of 1992. The Post Office building and the Dispensary still survive as testimony to how much attention and effort was lavished on otherwise mundane buildings.

The important vehicles in the 1908 photograph are the tram and the horse-drawn van. We associate the growth of towns and their absorption of places that were once villages with the building of the suburban railway network. However, it is important to remember the role of horse-drawn buses and the tram in connecting outlying suburbs with the vital hubs of the city. These early transportation systems played a vital role in turning surrounding villages into residential suburbs for the capital's growing middle classes.



Upper street 1811



Upper street 1908



## 02 Context

Planning Policy

### Key Core Strategy Objectives Applicable to the Proposal

- Ensuring new development and the spaces around it provide a high quality environment that is accessible to all residents, employees and visitors

The proposal improves the public space and accessibility to the new proposal at the old North London Mail Centre

- Maintaining and enhancing Islington's historic environment through conservation-led regeneration initiatives

The proposed elevation along Upper Street has been designed in accordance with the Islington Shopfront Design Guide (2003) and incorporates features such as stallrisers and sensitively proportioned signage areas, responding to the traditional features of the existing buildings.

- Maintaining the growth in employment by ensuring a broad range of opportunities exist for all types and sizes of businesses across all parts of Islington
- Ensuring a range of provision of shopping, leisure and local services which serve the local community and support Islington's economy

The proposal improves the existing retail conditions of the site, which presently include a narrow shop front and a long unit. The new proposal makes more accessible and valuable retail space which in turn will ensure growth of employment and retail opportunities in the area.

- Minimising the borough's contribution to climate change and ensuring we are able to cope with the effects of a changing climate

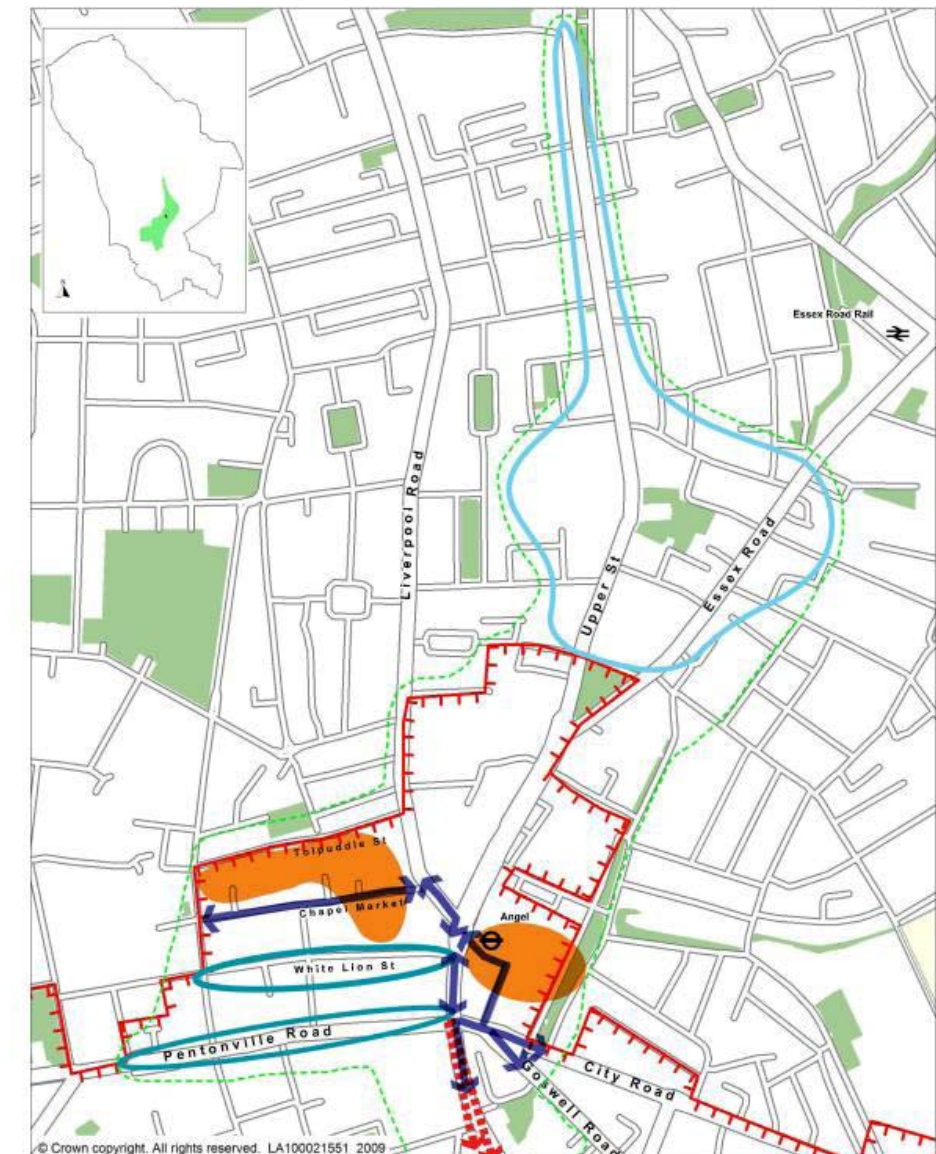
- Reducing Islington's impact on the environment by using resources, including energy, water and other materials, as efficiently as possible
- Encouraging walking and cycling over public transport use and encouraging all of these over car use

The proposal increases retail facilities for local people, encouraging localised pedestrian shopping and less car use and less energy consumption

### Angel and Upper Street Spatial Strategy

The following points are from Islington Council's Spatial Strategy for the area of Angel and Upper Street, and are the statements applicable to the new proposal.

- The area around Liverpool Road, including Sainsbury's, the N1 Centre, Chapel Market and the Upper Street High Pavement will continue to be the main shopping area, and Camden Passage be a specialist retail area for the antiques trade.
- The boundary of the Angel town centre will be extended north along Upper Street and east along Essex Road. The Development Management Policies will define the exact town centre boundaries, mix of uses and related frontages policies specific to Angel.
- Business floor space will be protected from change of use and opportunities for office led mixed use development, through intensification of uses to contribute to wider employment growth in the borough, will be encouraged. The Angel town centre will be expected to accommodate estimated growth in jobs of approximately 2,200 which will be encouraged throughout the town centre, and in particular along Pentonville Road and White Lion Street. Additional employment growth in retail and other service industries will be supported by encouraging ground floor retail units in the office redevelopments along the main shopping streets.
- Any significant introduction of residential uses, including student accommodation, within the town centre will be resisted. However retail led mixed use development, with an element of conventional residential units which makes a significant contribution towards meeting affordable housing objectives will be acceptable.



#### Key

- Key area
- Potential for intensification of town centre uses
- Improved pedestrian links/public realm
- Views to St Paul's Cathedral
- Existing retail and service uses to be included in expanded town centre
- Commercial led corridor
- Central Activity Zone

Angel Town Centre



# 03 Site

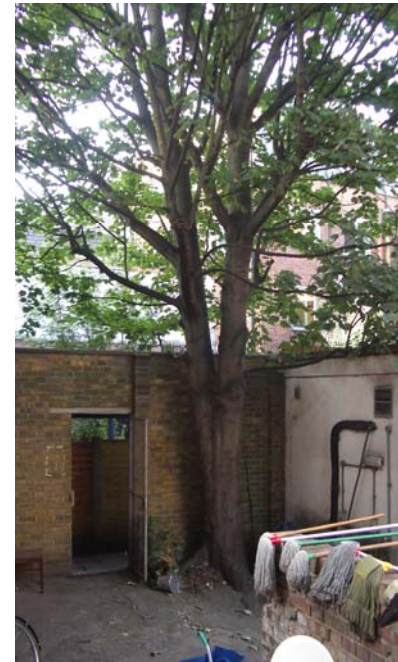
External photos



Front elevation of No. 126-127 and alleyway



Alleyway and entrance to flats



Sycamore tree within site boundary



Side entrance to site



Rear elevation of No. 125-127



Rear elevation of No. 125-127



Rear extensions to No. 127 showing existing flue to rear elevation



Rear elevation of 125 Upper Street



## 03 Site

Existing Building

### Existing

The existing building consists of retail to ground floor with flats above.

#### Retail

The retail consists of three narrow retail units with basement storage below each unit. They are all on commercial leases which will expire within the next three years which provides an opportunity to redevelop the building.

No. 125 is currently let to a furniture shop, combined with no. 124 Upper Street.

No. 126 is currently let as a laundry.

No. 127 is currently let as a restaurant, however the intention is to change the use class of this unit from A3 Restaurants and Cafes to A1 Retail, as it is felt that the change in the layout of the new ground floor, with an increased frontage, would better suit an A1 Retail use.

#### Residential

The residential use consists of 8 flats, varying in size from studios to three beds. These are all accessed from a common stairwell that opens onto the side passage.

The flats we re-developed in the 1980s and have always let well. These flats are of a medium level of quality in terms of size and fitout, and suit their location very well, being better suited to younger tenants than many of the luxury flats on offer in the area. The intention is to retain the flats at their current standard of accommodation



Front elevation of No. 126-127 and alleyway



## 03 Site

### Sager Proposals



We have been in discussion with Sager, the developers of the former North London Mail Centre, in regards to the alleyway which forms the interface between their proposal and the existing property of 125-127 Upper Street, (see top left map). Our proposals have their full support.

Our proposals have an important relationship to the Sager scheme as they relate to the entrance to the development, and the implementation of our proposal will greatly improve the amenity of this entrance. Currently, the alleyway has a fence to enclose the fire escape form the residential units and the proposal is to open this alleyway up as a pedestrian space.

The importance of our proposal was emphasised by the head of the West Area Planning Sub-Committee, Councillor Convery, who was keen for the scheme to be part of the Sager proposal due to its benefits to the scheme.

The Sager proposal for 5-6 Almeida Street and 128, 130 Upper Street received approval on the 22nd April 2010.



Please note all drawings by CWZG. Also note these drawings are included to show some context to our proposals, but are part of an independent scheme and so are not necessarily correct, to scale or up to date.



## 03 Site

### Planning Consultation and History

#### Planning Application History

##### Previous application consultation

The project was previously submitted as planning application P100893 validated 02 July 2010.

This was for a larger scheme, including extensions to the residential uppers floors at first floor and second floor level.

Following detailed discussions with the planning officers over the proposals, the residential element of the scheme has been withdrawn from the proposals.

In addition, the commercial extension to the rear has been redesigned to allow for the retention of the existing Sycamore tree to the rear yard.

This planning strategy was agreed in principle at a site meeting between the applicant, the planning officer Sandra Chivero, and Bob Armsby the East West Team Leader.

##### Current proposal uses

The proposal is to retain the existing A1 units to the existing building, and to convert the current A3 restaurant unit at 127 Upper Street to A1.

The proposed use for the newbuild commercial unit to the rear is A1/ A3 to allow this to either be used as an additional retail space, or to be converted to a restaurant at a later date, to replace the restaurant use lost at number 127 Upper Street.

The reason for relocating the restaurant use within the scheme is to move it further away from the residential accommodation over, to reduce the impact of a restaurant on these residents.

We note that it would be possible to reuse the existing restaurant flue to the rear elevation of 127 Upper Street, if the unit was converted to restaurant use.

##### Upper Street elevations

Following a request from the conservation officer for more details on the shopfront elevations, an effort has been made to harmonise the shopfronts to 126 and 127 Upper Street, in accordance with the Islington 'Shopfront Design Guide' (2003).

The proposals combine traditional detailing and features with modern materials, retaining and re-introducing recessed stallrisers and entrances where appropriate along with the restoration of traditional details.

There are certain limitations on a harmonious setting out due to the differing ceiling heights and fascia levels of the existing shopfronts.

##### New shopfront design to 127 Upper St north elevation

As shown in the images on the right, the previous scheme included a continuous run of contemporary shopfronts to the north elevation of 127 Upper Street. These were framed by visual concrete columns and exposed steel fascia panes.

In consultation with the conservation officer, this proposal has been revised to form a series of openings that relate to the divisions between the front range of buildings and the rear range, with the openings subordinate to the existing buildings.

The steel fascias have been replaced by a brick soldier course on concealed lintels.

The ground and ceiling levels of these shopfronts have been revised following a detailed survey of the varying levels within the existing building.

As noted previously, the commercial extension to the rear has been set back to allow for the retention of the existing tree.



The previous rear commercial extension to 127 Upper Street



The previous north elevation to 127 Upper Street



## 04 Design Approach

### The Proposal

#### Concept

There is currently a narrow passage to the north of the property which separates the site from the adjoining Mitre Public House. The Mitre site together with the site to the rear forms a part of the Sager Groups redevelopment proposals for the former North London Mail Centre. The Sager proposals are for the area between the fence demarking the passage and the side of the pub to become a pedestrian access into their development.

The simple concept of the planning application proposal is to remove the fence demarking the passage to widen the approach to the Sager Group development, and to animate the new entrance way by adding retail frontage to the North elevation of 127 Upper Street.

A single storey retail extension is proposed to the rear of the property.

#### Retail

A series of clean, modern openings to the North gable wall of 127 would create a new retail frontage along the entrance way to the Sager redevelopment complementing the proposals for the Mitre site.

Towards the rear of 127 it is proposed to build a single storey retail space to extend the retail frontage to the rear of the site. In this application this has been re-designed in order to retain the Sycamore tree, creating a recessed area which would be well suited either as retail or as a restaurant / café space

It has been agreed with Sager that the new retail frontages would be behind any gate into the scheme and this will be locked at night.

#### Residential

The residential element of the building is largely unchanged, except for some internal re-modelling to the first floor.

The number of flats remains unchanged, but two flats will benefit from more coherent and useable spaces.

In addition, the entrance to the residential upper floors will be relocated to the Upper Street Elevation at number 127 to improve the retail frontage to the alleyway.



Examples of sensitive contemporary shopfronts on Upper Street





## 04 Design Approach

The Proposal

### Security/ Privacy / Overlooking

The retail units will face the retail units incorporated into the Mitre site on the opposite side of the entranceway, and so no overlooking issues are created.

The security of the building will be increased by these proposals, as the current unsatisfactory very narrow side alleyway will be replaced by the wider secure entrance to the Sager development which will be closed at night.

### Access

Access to the new retail units at ground floor of 127 Upper street is via the level pedestrian area which forms access to the proposed redevelopment of 5 Almeida street.

There is ramped access, with no thresholds, from the existing pavement along Upper Street to the pedestrian area between 127 and 129 Upper Street.

All new retail units within 127 Upper Street are designed to have level entrance thresholds

### Technology/ Materials/ Environment

We will be exploring all the available options for improving the sustainability of the scheme, and these will be finalised at the technical stage.

The proposed rear extension is to have a green roof and air to air heatpumps for the new retail space are also being investigated.

### Scale

Below is a summary of the areas for the existing and proposed residential and commercial parts of the scheme: -

Existing retail area A1: 140.4 sq.m

Existing restaurant area A3: 110 sq.m

Total existing= 250.4 sq.m

Proposed retail area A1: 235.8 sq.m

Proposed retail/restaurant area A1/A3 : 81 sq.m

Total proposed: 316.8 sq.m

Total gain: 66.4 sq m

Residential area: - 425 sq m ( no proposed change)

### Landscaping and appearance

There is currently a Sycamore tree to the rear yard. Following consultation with the council, the proposals have been re-designed in such a way as to retain the tree.

This approach has been agreed with our arboriculturalist and a report describing the measures taken to ensure the tree can be retained form a part of this application (attached separately)

The Root Protection Zones required for this tree, and the safe building line in relation to these zones, has been agreed with our Arboriculturalist, and these are shown on drawing 0130 Proposed Foundation Plan. Note that due to the location of the existing small rear extension, near to this tree, it is possible to build closer to the East of this tree than to the South.

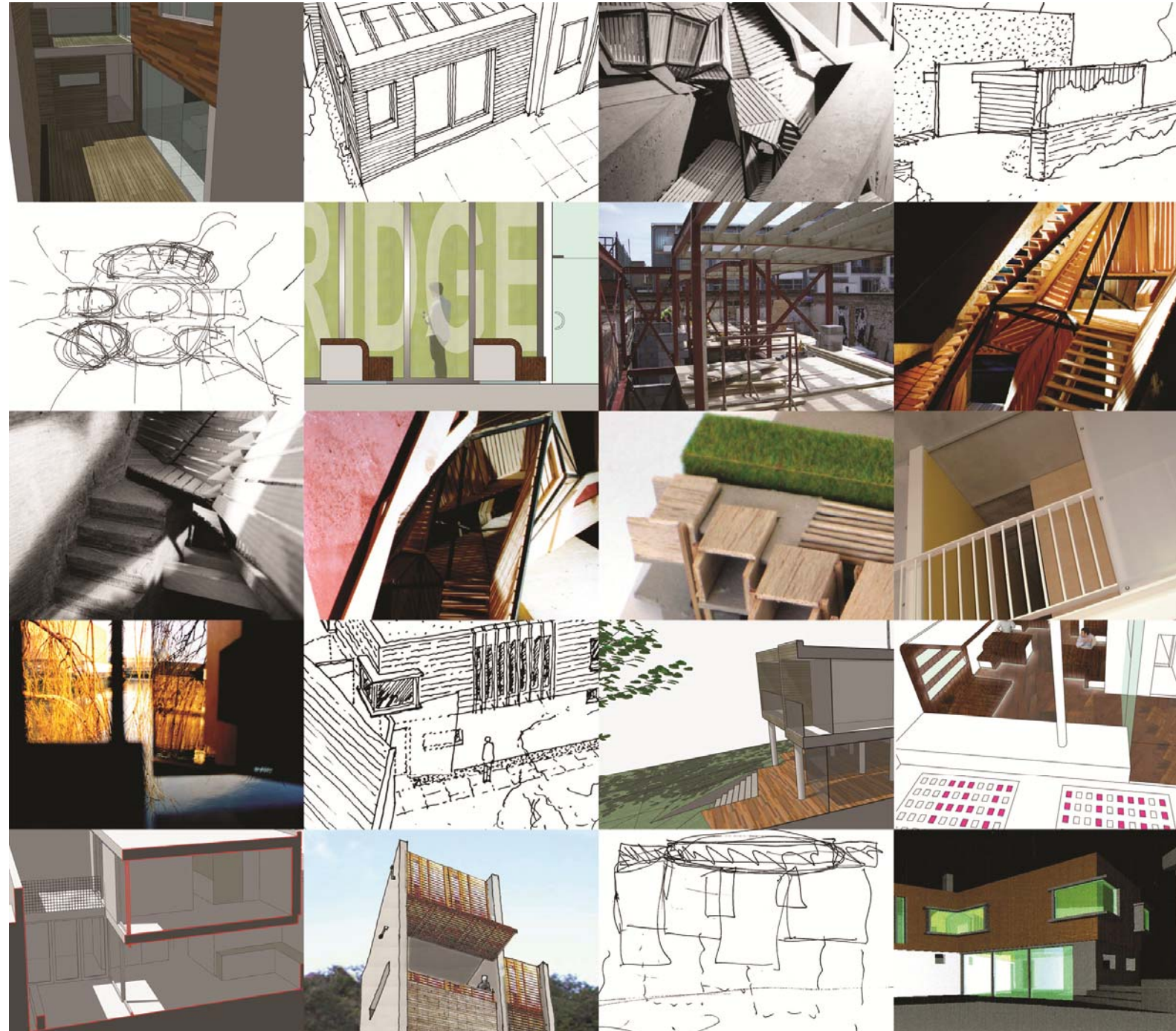
### Summary

We feel that the proposals would have a positive impact on the amenity of the existing residents at the site and in addition add to the positive impact that is proposed by the Sager scheme. We believe that these relatively minor proposals could have a significant affect on the quality of this location on Upper Street.



## 05 Practice Profile

Edgley Design



### Practice Background

Edgley Design is an architectural practice based in Shoreditch, East London, set up by Jake Edgley in 2004.

We have a wide range of experience including urban masterplanning, residential new build, mixed use and commercial office projects. We have also undertaken projects as property developer, which gives us an understanding of the financing of schemes, as well as the facilitation of projects from a client perspective.

We are currently working on a wide variety of schemes. These include residential refurbishments, new builds and apartment blocks, as well as retail fitouts.

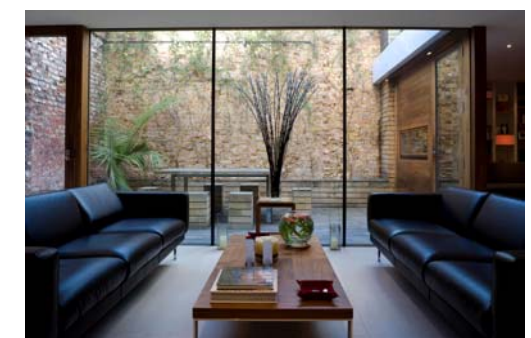
### Practice Philosophy

We believe that the practice of architecture involves a constant process of research, both practical and academic, alongside the making of buildings, to develop fresh approaches and ideas both in terms of aesthetics and practicalities.

We see every project as an opportunity to probe conventions and explore possibilities, with the aim of creating unique and exciting responses to questions posed by projects. We relish the problematic—creativity can come from constraints, and the most difficult sites often produce the most vibrant concepts.

Architecture in the 21st century demands a sustainable approach to problem solving, and a concept of forms that arise from their natural surroundings informs our work. Buildings need to be built to last, to reduce the latent impact of their construction—timber, stone and glass ripple and fold from the earth to form new surfaces and enclosures that are intrinsic to their context and have a natural resonance that will mellow and deepen with age

Practice Director: Jake Edgley  
BA(hons) AAdip ARB RIBA



Chapel Market, Islington:  
Two new build houses on an ex industrial site  
Completed 2006

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