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20 April 2023

Dear Christopher Smith

**2023/1541/L - 28 Albert Street, Camden, London, NW1 7NU**

The Twentieth Century Society has been alerted to the above planning and listed building consent applications for external and internal alterations to 28 Albert Street, which is Grade II listed. While the building dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was extended to the rear in the 1980s. The Society objects to the harmful alterations proposed to this extension and recommends that the applications are refused.

Significance

No. 28 forms part of a terrace houses from 1844-48 built by George Bassett, surveyor to the Southampton Estate. Permission was granted to extend no.28 in 1981 with “The erection of a three-storey rear extension to include a new spiral staircase and roof terrace” (refs: K12/8/20/HB2602 & K12/8/20/31788). The applicant was the owner and architect Brian Taggart. Taggart (-2011) was a partner at Nicholas Grimshaw & Partners before he established his own practice Brian Taggart Associates. He then formed the Cassidy Taggart Partnership with Michael Cassidy and by 1994 he was in New Zealand, later lecturing at the University of Auckland. The 1980s work involved the removal of the existing 1920s addition which was in poor condition (owing, it appears, to damage caused by a falling tree) and construction of a new extension, accommodating a studio and kitchen at basement level, storage space and a laundry on the ground floor, and a bathroom and shower room at first floor level with a roof terrace above. Taggart designed the extension himself in a High Tech industrial aesthetic. It was faced with silver-coloured steel cladding panels and fitted with aluminium-framed windows, which take a stepped arrangement on the upper levels of the side elevations. A steel spiral stair was added to the end elevation to connect the laundry and garden. We understand that the interiors have since been altered, but the exteriors survive largely in their 1980s form.

Policy

The mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century terraced houses on Albert Street were listed in 1974. No.28 was extended in the 1980s after the property was listed but, as outlined by Historic England, “Extensions or alterations to listed buildings made after listing form part of the listed building and are subject to the protection regime” (Listed Buildings Identification and Extent).

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Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that “In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority [...] shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

The house also falls within the Camden Town Conservation Area (designated in 1986, extended 1997). Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requests that “In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area [...] special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.”

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) includes paragraph 194 which states that “In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance”.

Paragraph 199 states that “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation [...] This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.” Paragraph 200 states that “Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset [...] should require clear and convincing justification.”

### Comments

The applicant’s Heritage Statement provides little to no information about the extension, including the name of the architect responsible. The applicant dismisses the extension as “modern in character and does not contribute to the significance of the listed building or conservation area” (4. Assessment of Impacts, p.10). The extension forms part of the house’s Grade II listing and its heritage significance needs to be properly assessed, in accordance with paragraph 194 of the NPPF.

It is the Society’s view that the extension has architectural merit as well as historic and evidential value as an interesting 1980s High Tech addition to a Victorian house designed by a noted architect for himself, and which forms part of the history of the house’s phased evolution. We consider that the extension makes a *positive* contribution to the house’s special interest.

In terms of the conservation area, the Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (2007) identifies “oversized and out-of-scale rear extensions” to Albert Street “many of which were constructed under permitted development rights prior to the statutory listing of properties and the designation of the Conservation Area” (p.22). The applicant’s Heritage Statement then claims that “The existing rear extension [...] would probably be described as being one of the ‘out of scale’ rear extensions built under previous permitted development rights” (p.6). This is incorrect – the extension to no.28 was an architect-

designed addition built following the Grade II listing of the terrace and having been granted planning permission and listed building consent. It underwent proper checks by Camden planners and as a result gained approval. This clearly well-considered addition cannot be claimed to form part of the group of insensitive and detrimental extensions to Albert Street properties. It is our view that this unique modern extension makes a positive contribution to the architectural variety and interest of the area.

The applicant proposes to replace the extension's steel cladding with white silicone render (with thermal insulation behind), alter the windows and fenestration pattern, and alter the interiors. This would amount to the total loss of the building's 1980s High Tech elevations. It is our view that this loss would seriously harm the significance of the Grade II listed house. We consider that it would be possible to thermally upgrade the existing structure through a number of minor interventions while still conserving its 1980s appearance and character. No clear and convincing justification has been provided for the level of loss and harm proposed.

For these reasons, the Society objects to the application and recommends that the local authority refuses planning permission and listed building consent.

We hope that these comments are of use to you. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you require more information or advice. We would be grateful if you could please inform us of your decision.

Yours sincerely,



Coco Whittaker

**Senior Caseworker**

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**Remit:** The Twentieth Century Society was founded in 1979 and is the national amenity society concerned with the protection, appreciation, and study of post-1914 architecture, townscape and design. The Society is acknowledged in national planning guidance as the key organisation concerned with the modern period and is a constituent member of the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies. Under the procedures set out in *ODPM Circular 09/2005*, all English local planning authorities must inform the Twentieth Century Society when an application for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition is received, and they must notify us of the decisions taken on these applications.