



Heritage Impact Assessment

Repairs to coal vault walls

88 Albert Street, London, NW1 7NR

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APPLICANTS DETAILS

Mr Alex Howson

ISSUED BY

Matthew Stevens
MSc BA (Hons)
Heritage Consultant

APPROVED BY

Phoebe Farrell
BA (Hons) MA MIHBC
Heritage Consultant and Head of Heritage & Conservation

PROJECT

Repairs to coal vault walls

BERRYS

Worton Park
Cassington
Oxford
Oxfordshire
OX29 4SX

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report has been prepared to accompany a full planning application and Listed Building Consent application for the repair of structural walls of a pair of coal vaults at 88 Albert Street, London, hereafter referred to as the 'Site'.
- 1.2. The Site planning history is detailed in the accompanying planning application statement. An informal Site consultation was held on 5th January 2023 between the applicant's designer and the local planning authority.
- 1.3. The owner of the Site wishes to repair the vaults in order to secure its long term conservation, which includes securing the structural integrity of the external coal vault supporting wall which is in a state of severe material and structural deterioration.
- 1.4. The purpose of this report is to understand, assess the significance and to analyse the impact of the proposed work to affected heritage assets in order to comply with paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 1.5. This Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) should be read in conjunction with the other supporting planning documents and drawings prepared by Berrys and other consultants.

2. Methodology

- 2.1. This report aims to establish the impacts of the proposals on the Site as a heritage asset. It provides an overview of the Site's history, an appraisal of Significance and concludes with an impact assessment.
- 2.2. The methodology in this report will be based upon the following best practice guidance:
- Historic England *Advice Note 12 – Statements of Heritage Significance*
 - Historic England's *Good Practice Advice in Planning 2 – Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment*
 - *Historic England Advice Note 1 - Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management*
- 2.3. This report has primarily been produced through desktop research, using relevant secondary sources including:
- Historic England National Heritage List (NHLE)
 - Historic Environment Records (HER)
 - Camden Borough Council archives
 - UK Census Records (online resource)
 - National Library of Scotland (online resource)
- 2.4. A site visit was undertaken on 5th January 2023 for photographs, to assess the significance and setting of the heritage asset/s identified. Conditions were overcast and slightly damp.
- 2.5. The assessment is primarily a desk-based study which has utilised secondary sources derived from a variety of published sources. The assumption has been made that this data is reasonably accurate. The records held by the HER and historic maps are not an infinite record of all heritage assets, but signposts to sources of information relating to the discovery of historic features.

3. Planning Policy Framework

3.1. Planning decisions should be taken in accordance with local plan policy unless material considerations indicate otherwise, Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 refers. This statement is written in the context of the following legislative, planning policy and guidance:

3.2. Legislation

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990)

1...1. Section 66(1) of the Act requires local planning authorities to *“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”* when determining applications which impact a listed building or its setting.

1...2. Section 72(1) of the Act, in reference to Conservation Areas, requires that *“special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area”* by local planning authorities.

3.3. National Planning Policies

- National Planning Policy Framework (2021) *‘The Framework’*
- National Planning Practice Guidance: *Historic Environment (2019)*

3.4. Heritage Planning Guidance

- Historic England Conservation Principles: *Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (2008)*
- Historic England Good Practice Guide 2: *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (2015)*
- Historic England Advice Note 12: *Statements of Heritage Significance - Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets (2019)*
- Historic England Advice Note 2: *Making Changes to Heritage Assets (2015)*

3.5. Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

- 3.6. Section 16 of the NPPF asserts that heritage assets are an *“irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.”*
- 3.7. Concerning proposals affecting heritage assets, paragraph 195 states that *“Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal”*
- 3.8. Concerning potential impacts to designated heritage assets *“Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.”*
- 3.9. Paragraph 202 of the NPPF confirms that *“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”*
- 3.10. National Planning Practice Guidance provides further detail on the determination of Public Benefits. Notably, public benefits do not need to be visible or accessible to the public. They may include:
- sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset
 - reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset
 - securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset
- 3.11. The following policies and supporting documentation from the local development framework are relevant to the proposal:
- Policy D1 Design - Camden Local Plan 2016-2031
 - Policy D2 Heritage - Camden Local Plan 2016-2031

- Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2007

3.12. Camden Council have begun the review of its 2017 Local Plan, however no immediate changes have been adopted at the time of writing and as such the review will not be considered within this report.

4. Identification of Heritage Assets

4.1. The NPPF (Annex 2 Glossary) defines a heritage asset as:

“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)”.

4.2. The Site is a Grade II listed building within the Camden Town conservation area, designated in 1986. It is part of a statutorily grade II listed terrace row No’s 50-88 Albert Street and is an end of terrace house. Street level railings located at the front of each property across the terrace are also included in the listing.

4.3. The Site is located in the vicinity of a number of neighbouring heritage assets identified in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1. Location of nearby heritage assets.



Figure 2. Description of nearby heritage assets.

Name	Listing	Description
Numbers 50-88 and attached Railings	Grade II List UID: 1378632	Terrace row of houses on Albert Street, mid 19 th century construction. Inconsistent designs and all three storeys plus basements. Stucco ground floor and stock brick upper storeys.
Numbers 15-25 and Attached Railings	Grade II List UID: 1067390	Terrace row of houses on Delancey Street. Mid 19 th century construction, 3 storeys plus basements. Consistent design and generally in good unaltered condition across the row. Stucco ground floor and stock brick upper storeys.
Numbers 45-97 and attached railings	Grade II List UID: 1378630	Terrace row of houses on Albert Street, mid 19 th century construction. Irregular terrace of 3 storeys. Stucco ground floor and stock brick upper storeys.
Numbers 29-41 and attached railings	Grade II List UID: 1067391	Terrace row of houses on Delancey Street. Mid 19 th century construction. 5 storeys to include Mansard roofs and basement level. Stucco ground floor and stock brick upper storeys.
Number 38 and attached railings	Grade II List UID: 1067392	End of terrace house. Mid 19 th century construction. 5 storeys including basement level. Stucco only at basement level with large stock brick finish across all upper storeys. Bricked up windows across Albert Street elevation.
Numbers 40-60 and attached railings	Grade II List UID: 1067393	Terrace row of houses on Delancey Street. Mid 19 th century construction. Five storeys including attics and basement levels. Stucco ground floors and stock brick upper floors.

4.4. The Camden Town Conservation Area lies central to the Borough of Camden. The northern border of the Conservation Area is bounded by Parkway and Inverness Street while the western side is defined by the mainline railway from Euston to Birmingham. To the southeast lie Somers Town, St. Pancras and Kings Cross. The Conservation Area almost adjoins the Regent's Canal Conservation Area to the north and the Primrose Hill Conservation Area to the northwest, whilst to the west the Regent's Park Conservation Area is separated from the Camden Town Conservation Area by the railway lines.¹

¹ Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy

5. Historical Development and Appraisal

- 5.1. Named after Charles Pratt, 1st Earl Camden, Camden Town began its development from a hamlet to a prospering town in 1791 when the Earl began leasing land along the main road for development.
- 5.2. Thompson's map of London Fields shows the village of Camden on the main road out of London. It is depicted in its parochial rural arrangement in 1804, with rows of houses stretching northwards to Kentish Town and the newly developed Pratt and King streets projecting away from the road.²



Figure 3. Thompson's map of London Fields, 1804. Camden is located to the left with the map orientation viewed with North to the right. Source: Bodleian Libraries.

- 5.3. The opening of Regent's canal in 1820 accelerated development across the emerging precinct, however the central roads of Arlington Road, Albert Street, Mornington Terrace and Delancey Street remained undeveloped building plots until the railways arrived in the 1830's and generated increased speculative development.³

² "Camden Town." Survey of London: Volume 24, the Parish of St Pancras Part 4: King's Cross Neighbourhood. Eds. Walter H Godfrey, and W McB. Marcham. London: London County Council, 1952. 134-139. British History Online

³ Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy

- 5.4. By 1886 Albert Street was part of speculative development which sought to attract middle-class Londoners wishing to live away from the bustle of the metropolis. The street layout as we see it today was established in the mid-19th century, stemming from Mornington Street and parallel to Mornington Road to the west. It is a long north-westerly orientated street following the arc of the Regent's Canal to the south west.
- 5.5. Albert Street was renamed from Gloucester Street in 1882 to Mornington Grove and finally to Albert Street prior to the publication of the OS Map of 1886, following a London-wide renaming scheme instigated by the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1857.
- 5.6. 88 Albert Street was constructed between 1884-1885 with some regard to the design of its neighbouring property and other more uniform groups of houses along the terrace. The building has been extended with a monolithic rear extension in the mid 20th century, as well as a Mansard Roof extension in 2012. Additional works to the Site include replacement of broken lintels on the property frontage in 2017 and partial reconstruction of failing brickwork adjoining the front basement coal vaults in 2017.
- 5.7. In 1952 the contributing author to the *Survey of London* for the Parish of St Pancras described the majority of Camden Town's street facing properties as possessing insufficient architectural character to merit description. In 1972 the terrace row was designated Grade II listed as a site of national significance.
- 5.8. The Camden Town conservation area was designated in 1986 with Albert Street included within the original designation.

6. Establishing Significance

6.1. Architectural and Artistic Interest

- 6.2. The Site is a substantial mid-19th century end of terrace townhouse designed by an unknown housebuilder. The general quality and uniformity of stock brick and rusticated stucco finishes are consistent across the terrace and are of architectural merit, contributing towards the quality of the streetscape and conservation area.
- 6.3. The terminal three houses in the terrace ending with no.88 exhibit less design flare than neighbouring properties further along the terrace, with the noticeable absence of corbeled 1st storey window canopies and 2nd storey wide stucco window reveals, establishing an inferior design within the streetscape context.
- 6.4. The Coal Vaults to the front of the property contribute to architectural interest in their twin barrel-vaulted design and substantial height. The remains of the coal-holes provide an interesting feature which is of greater historic interest than architectural merit. The degradation of the structural integrity of the external supporting wall has placed the vaults at risk.
- 6.5. Internally the building retains no decorative features of historic artistic interest. The internal room arrangements are likely to have been altered in order to effectively create multiple self-contained flats, however there are no historic floor plans available to support the assumption.

6.6. Historic Interest

- 6.7. The Site has a strong connection with the history of the development of Camden during the mid-19th century. The terrace no's 50-88 are relatively well-preserved and in generally in good condition, presenting an attractive and legible historic streetscape. The Site usage has changed from a single residency to a house of multiple flats, diminishing to a minor degree its historic continuity.
- 6.8. Whilst the Site in isolation does not provide substantial historic interest, as part of a historic terrace the Site contributes towards an illustration of speculative development in the mid-19th century aiming to attract middle-

class professionals to the area during the town's upheaval following the introduction of the Regent's Canal (1820) and Euston-Birmingham railway 1830s-1840s.

- 6.9. The coal vaults are of historic interest as they are an archaic facet of mid-19th century housebuilding. The design of Coal storage units in the street-facing areas of such residences illustrates the importance of coal in house-warming and their preservation provides a link to past practices in functional property design and construction.

6.10. Archaeological Interest

- 6.11. The old centre of Camden village to the north has been identified in the Camden Local Plan as an Archaeological priority area, however the Site is located a substantial distance from this area. There are also no planned interventions below ground as part of the proposals, negating the need for a detailed assessment of archaeological interest.

Figure 4. Site photographs (5th January 2023)



1. 88 Albert Street - Facade



2. Flagstones and railings above coal vault



3. Separation of masonry within vault roof structure



4. Current condition of degraded vault entrance

7. Heritage Impact Assessment

- 7.1. Securing the structural integrity of the degraded coal vault wall is of most immediate concern. During pre-application discussions it was noted that the repairs should use traditional mortars and the re-use of historic masonry in reconstructing damaged areas of the wall. These considerations have been integrated into the proposal designs:
- Reuse of all historic masonry of integrity in the rebuilding of the wall.
 - Only masonry which has become damaged beyond repair will be replaced with suitable replacement masonry of equivalent material composition.
 - All replacement mortars and pointing will be lime-based to ensure consistency of material properties across the wall
 - Structural integrity will be improved with the introduction of new hardwood lintels
- 7.2. The proposals originally sought to secure the tanking of the vault structure for the benefit of increased long-term stability, however this intervention has been retracted from the designs following concerns at pre-application consultation.
- 7.3. The glass cap to the top of the coal-hole results in no harmful impact owing to its reversibility and legibility as a contemporary solution to water ingress.
- 7.4. Original flagstones will be retained and re-laid above the coal vaults as part of the repair proposals, resulting in no loss of existing historic fabric.
- 7.5. The existing external staircase from ground level to the basement is unserviceable and must be replaced to allow access to and from the basement level. The proposals introduce a sensitive and unassuming design which incorporate some of the existing metal frame and handrail, ensuring some continuity of appearance.
- 7.6. There is a requirement to replace existing ironmongery on the vault entrance doors which are degraded beyond repair. The proposal for like for like replacement of ironmongery is considered a preservation of the entrance

door system, the appearance of which forms part of the overall property aesthetic contributing to significance.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. The proposals of repairs across the site result in no harm to the heritage significance of the building. The designs have been carefully considered to take into account concerns raised at pre-application consultations and now reflect a design intent of minimal intervention and like for like repair where possible.
- 8.2. The repair programme to the basement coal vaults will improve the appearance, useability and structural integrity of the building, thereby enhancing the contribution of the coal vaults to the overalls Site's significance and contributing to its long-term conservation.
- 8.3. The proposals do not include any actions which will impact upon the principal house, limiting material impact to the coal vaults alone.
- 8.4. The introduction of new hardwood lintels above the vault entrance doors is considered to be a like for like repair in using traditional lintel materials, resulting in the preservation of the structural composition of the vaults. The replacement of existing ironmongery on the vault doors with modern replacements is considered a suitable like for like replacement which does not harm the significance of the Site.

9. Appendices

Appendix I – Site listing entry

Official list entry

Heritage Category:	Listed Building
Grade:	II
List Entry Number:	1378632
Date first listed:	14-May-1974
Statutory Address 1:	NUMBERS 50-88 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS, 50-88, ALBERT STREET

Location

Statutory Address:	NUMBERS 50-88 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS, 50-88, ALBERT STREET
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The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Camden (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference:	TQ 28889 83559