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HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

In respect of

**The Penthouse,
23 Prince Albert Road, London, NW1 7ST**

On behalf of

Mr and Mrs Leslau

AHC REF: 10230

November 2023

www.assetheritage.co.uk

Annexe Offices, Linton Road, Oxford, OX2 6UD T: 01865 310563

Asset Heritage Consulting Ltd. Registration No: 07502061

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by Sarah Watt, MCIfA, Director of Asset Heritage Consulting Ltd., on behalf of Mr and Mrs Leslau. Its purpose is to provide an assessment of the potential impact on heritage assets of proposals for the alteration of the Penthouse apartment at No.23 Prince Albert Road (an unlisted building constructed in the 1960s), including the erection of a glazed extension to the existing stair enclosure at roof-top level; the enclosure of two existing balconies to form habitable internal space; the formation of a new balcony; and alterations to four existing balconies to replace brick balustrading with solid Corten steel balustrades.
- 1.2 The proposals have been subject to a pre-application enquiry, the response to which from the London Borough of Camden ('the Council') included concerns regarding the impact of the proposals on the character and appearance of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area, in which the building is situated, and on views from Primrose Hill and Regent's Park; while these two open spaces are on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens (at Grade II and I respectively) - and are therefore non-designated heritage assets - the concern expressed in this respect appears to be more to do with neighbouring amenity (the proposals will be visible from 'public open space') than it does with heritage impact. Nevertheless, these are views looking into the conservation area and have therefore been appraised in terms of heritage impact as part of this assessment.
- 1.3 The pre-application proposals have been subject to some minor revisions in response to the pre-application feedback.
- 1.4 The report considers the contribution of the application building to the conservation area and its relationship with the two Registered Parks and the settings of adjoining listed buildings. Informed by this appraisal, the report then considers the potential impact of the site's development as proposed upon the significance and setting of these heritage assets. The assessment was undertaken by means of a visit to the site and surrounding area and is also supported by reference to a number of professionally produced Accurate Visual Representations ('AVRs') taken from key locations.

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- 1.5 This two-part approach of properly understanding significance and then evaluating the potential impact of proposals upon it is in line with good conservation and planning practice advocated in English Heritage's Conservation Principles (2008) and formally expressed in the government's policies on conserving and enhancing the historic environment set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and supported by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 1.6 The assessment of setting is implicitly based on the guidance provided by Historic England in *The Setting of Heritage Assets. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3* ('GPA3'; 2nd edn December 2017). This document explains that setting is not itself a heritage asset; its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance. As the PPG accompanying the NPPF amplifies, an assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.

2.0 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Primrose Hill Conservation Area covers a distinctive area of Victorian residential development bounded by the London and Birmingham Railway on the north-east (although a small area of land on the other side of the railway comprising Gloucester Crescent is also included); by Prince Albert Road on the south, beyond which lies Regent's Park; by Regent's Park Road on the south-west, beyond which lies Primrose Hill; and on the north-west by terraced Victorian housing on Ainger Road.
- 2.2 No.23 Prince Albert Road stands in the extreme south-western corner of the conservation area, on the corner with Albert Terrace, the last building on the north side of Prince Albert Road before the open expanse of Primrose Hill begins.
- 2.3 The area now covered by the Primrose Hill Conservation Area comprised open fields connected by lanes in the medieval period. Although land ownership was irregularly organised, the conservation area primarily occupies land that was owned by Lord Southampton (with other land being owned by the Crown and by Eton College).
- 2.4 In the mid-19th century extensive development began in the area, the first major development being the construction of the Regent's Canal, linking the Grand Canal Junction at Paddington with London Docks. This was completed in 1820 and was followed in the 1830s by the construction of the London and Birmingham Railway (which crosses the canal) and then in the 1840s by the residential development of Lord Southampton's land. The planned northern section of Gloucester Avenue had to be repositioned, with a sharp bend west of the canal bridge and a steep curve to the junction with Regent's Park Road, in order to accommodate the purchase of part of Southampton's land for an extension to the railway line to the new station at Euston Square.
- 2.5 Regent's Park, to the south, had been a crown estate since 1539 and was largely farmland by the end of the 18th century, when it was known as Marylebone Park. Schemes to develop the area had been considered since 1809. The Commissioners of Woods, Forests, Parks and Chases were tasked with putting forward alternative proposals, required to include the creation of a new street linking the park with the city. John Nash (1752-1835), who in 1806 was appointed as architect to the Commissioners came up with a scheme which included proposals for Regent Street (built between 1814

and 1819) and which comprised villas in a parkland setting, with space provided for barracks and other major features including the Prince Regent's Palace, a huge basin of ornamental water and an informal lake.

- 2.6 The Park was completed in 1827, with a number of alterations and omissions from the original proposals of 1812; the Prince's Palace, ornamental basin and some of the terraces and crescents of houses were not built, and the Regent's Canal was re-routed. Only eight villas were built in the Park, instead of the forty originally proposed. The Royal Zoological Society (founded in 1824) acquires 8ha of land in the northern part of the Park. Recommendations for opening part of the park to the public were recorded in 1834.
- 2.7 Primrose Hill, farmland lying north of Regent's Park and in the ownership of Eton College, became Crown property in 1841 and in 1842, after an Act was passed securing the land as public open space, the public were freely admitted. A year later the bridge connecting Regent's Park with Primrose Hill was completed and opened.
- 2.8 The Southampton Estate was sold off as freehold development plots in 1840. It was planned as an estate of large detached and semi-detached suburban villas with generous gardens. The purchasers of the plots included speculative builders, wealthy citizens and the Crown Commissioners, who acquired five or six lots in order to form part of the Primrose Hill park, which was opened to the public in 1841.
- 2.9 Development of the buildings occurred sporadically throughout the 1840s. During this time, the last remaining strip of Crown land to the north of Nash's Regent's Park layout was developed as villas, involving the purchase of small lots of land from various owners of the Southampton freeholds. A map dated 1849 shows the majority of development concentrated around Regent's Park and towards Camden Town. Smaller developments had also been completed, the majority of these taking the form of villa-style properties set in their own grounds, or grand terrace compositions with formal landscaped areas, but the houses were generally much less grand and the development denser than originally envisaged. Small terraces of railway workers' cottages were also constructed to the rear of Chalcot Road (since redeveloped).

- 2.10 In 1851 the parkland of Regent's Park (and Primrose Hill) was transferred by means of the Crown Land Act from the management of the Commissioners of Woods, Forests, Parks and Chases, to the newly formed Ministry of Works. Pressure from the public for further access to the park continued and several alterations to private fence lines and public footpaths are related to this. The park was no longer one of the more fashionable areas of London, the ground being used increasingly for recreation. Extensions to the Zoological Gardens were undertaken in 1905 and again in 1908.
- 2.11 By the 1860s Primrose Hill had become a popular place for public meetings, demonstrations and rallies and, around this time, an area to the east was set aside as a Guards Drill Ground and a Refreshment Lodge was built to the west. By the turn of the century buildings surrounded Primrose Hill on three sides.
- 2.12 By 1860 the development of villa style properties had extended westwards along Regent's Park Road, opposite Primrose Hill Park. Elsewhere, however, the large villas had been abandoned for more formal terrace compositions, including the symmetrical terraces at St George's Terrace and Chamberlain Street, the formal Chalcot Square, and the sweeping Chalcot Crescent. Simple terraces were constructed on Gloucester Avenue adjoining the railway, where large higher-status villas were no longer considered appropriate because of the poor environment, leading to disrepair and lack of investment (a situation only reversed when the line was electrified in the 1970s).
- 2.13 By 1870, as the OS Town Plan surveyed in that year and published in 1872 shows, the estate was largely complete. A large garden space in the centre had been developed by this date and the density of later phases was significantly higher, but the wide road layout remained.
- 2.14 This map (**Fig.1**) shows the site of No.23 Prince Albert Road (i.e. the application building) to have been occupied by a large, detached villa in a substantial corner-plot garden, extending along both the Prince Albert Road and Albert Terrace frontages. To the north were three pairs of semi-detached villas on Albert Terrace, facing Primrose Hill and, to the east, a terrace of six mid-19th-century properties (Nos.17-22, now listed at Grade II), with two pairs of semi-detached villas (also Grade II listed) turning the corner into St Mark's Square to face St Mark's Church (itself a Grade II listed building, erected in

1851-2 by Thomas Little, with additions of c.1889-90 by Sir Arthur Blomfield. It was gutted in 1940 and rebuilt in 1956-7 by AB Knapp-Fisher).

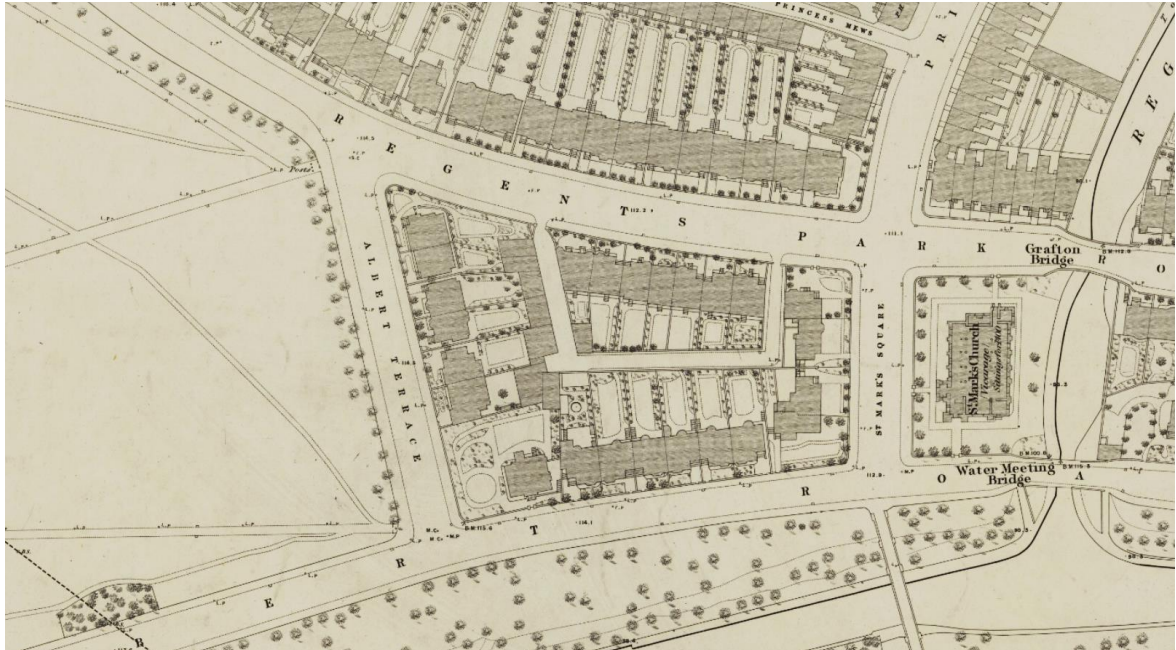


Fig.1: 1872 OS Town Plan (surveyed in 1870)

- 2.15 In the later 19th century the Primrose Hill area became a centre for piano manufacturing, and well known for its association with the arts. In 1877 a group of 12 artists' studios, the 'Primrose Hill Studios', were erected by Alfred Healey to the central block behind Fitzroy Road and housed a number of famous artists, including the illustrator Arthur Rackham and the conductor, Henry Wood.
- 2.16 During WWII a number of buildings were damaged or destroyed, with redevelopment of bomb sites occurring throughout the second half of the 20th century. No.10 Regent's Park Road was redeveloped in 1954-6 with a block of flats and studios and former railway workers' cottages at Auden Place were redeveloped with new housing in 1970. Other sporadic developments occurred throughout the 20th century, of which the replacement of the large villa on the application site with No.23, an eight-storey apartment building, is one.

3.0 No.23 AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO HERITAGE ASSETS

Description

- 3.1 No.23 was built in the 1960s (following permission granted on 11th February 1963) on the former site of a large detached villa and its garden, on the corner plot between Prince Albert Road and Albert Terrace. The building, which is divided into flats, is of eight storeys with a rooftop terrace and has elevations of red brick. The building's massing is divided into two blocks, like an inverted 'U' with thick arms in plan, the gap between the arms created by a deep vertical recess all the way up through the building on the front elevation to Prince Albert Road.
- 3.2 There is a much shallower vertical recession on the rear elevation, infilled at the top (7th) floor and roof terrace (8th floor) levels by a glazed staircase enclosure that projects above the roof terrace to which it provides access. On both sides, the elevation within the recess has full-height glazing to each storey.
- 3.3 On the front elevation (**Plate 1**), each of the two separate elements or blocks is divided into three bays, the outer bays at each level filled with glazing and separated from the storey above by bands of red brick, and the inner central bay of the three recessed between them to form a covered balcony. At 7th-floor level, the central balconies are not covered because the eighth storey is set back from the main building line, creating open balconies in each of the outer bays at that level. The rooftop terrace is enclosed by a brick parapet surmounted by a glass balustrade (granted permission in 2014).
- 3.4 The west and east side elevations have a regular fenestration pattern at each floor, which wraps around the outer corners into the front and rear elevations. The rear elevation has a flat building plane to each of the main elements. The continuous open balcony enclosed by a brick parapet at 8th-floor level on this side (broken by the stairwell infill in the recessed centre) is enclosed with glazed panels that match those of the stair enclosure; this latter was replaced following permission granted in 1996, along with the enclosure of the balconies (**Plate 2**).
- 3.5 The 6th, 7th and 8th floors (the latter being the roof terrace) all form the Penthouse unit within the ownership of the applicant and which is the subject of this application.

The conservation area and listed buildings within it

- 3.6 There is no question that the building is at odds with the established 19th-century character and appearance of the conservation area, being one of a relatively small number of late 20th-century interlopers in this environment.
- 3.7 The Council's Conservation Area Statement for the Primrose Hill Conservation Area (published in 2000) includes the building in 'Sub Area 1 Regent's Park Road South' of the conservation area and identifies it as a 'negative building,' one of eight such buildings in this sub-area which are considered to detract from the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area *'due to inappropriate qualities such as bulk, scale, height, materials, the way in which they address the street or application of architectural details.'*
- 3.8 The Conservation Officer's comments in the pre-application feedback reinforce this identification, stating that the building *'is considered to contribute negatively to the conservation area in particular due to its bulk and scale; the building is clearly notably taller than surrounding buildings and is highly visible from a number of views, including from within Primrose Hill and Regent's Park, both of which are public open spaces.'*
- 3.9 While I would agree with this assessment – the building being of greater height and massing than the 19th-century houses around it (even though many of these are themselves large) and of uncharacteristic materials, its red brick standing out from the white stucco of its neighbours – it is not intrinsically overly unsightly and could be considered relatively 'neutral' in terms of its general appearance in other contexts.
- 3.10 Indeed, the Conservation Officer's pre-application comments also note that, despite the building's identification as a 'negative contributor,' there is nevertheless *'a consistency in the design and materials used throughout.'*
- 3.11 Despite its greater height, No.23 does not feature in many views within the conservation area, largely because it is situated in the latter's extreme south-western corner. Indeed, it is only visible in very direct local views from Prince Albert Road and Albert Terrace (see **Plates 1 & 2**) and in oblique views looking west from the entrance to Regent's Park on Prince Albert Road (**Plate 3**).

- 3.12 For direct views, see **Plates 1 & 2** and also refer to Viewpoint 1 Existing in the AVR report. No.23 clearly detracts from the established 19th-century character of the conservation area. However, while its corner location is prominent, it is also at the very edge and south-west corner of the designated area, which enables the building to 'stand apart' to some extent and be viewed in isolation. The robust nature of the 19th-century properties on each street frontage (Nos.17-22 Prince Albert Road are listed at Grade II) is strong enough that their character is not overly 'diluted' by the presence of No.23, whereas if the building had stood within a linear run of historic villas and terraces, or in a corner location in the heart of the conservation area, then it is likely to have had a greater detrimental impact.
- 3.13 Thus, the immediate setting of the listed Nos.17-22 is affected by the intrusion of No.23 in place of the large villa and garden which originally stood here, but No.23 does not dilute the group value of the terrace as a whole.
- 3.14 In the oblique views from the Regent's Park entrance to the west (where a footbridge crosses the canal) (**Plate 3**), No.23 does not appear much taller than the neighbouring run of villas to its east, and its front building line is deeply recessed behind that of the villas. This means that it is not visually prominent except that its red-brick facing stands out in contrast to the white and cream stucco of the villas. The building detracts from character and appearance in these views but in a relatively minor way.
- 3.15 The building is also visible in longer views looking east-northeast along Prince Albert Road from outside the conservation area looking into it (see **Plates 4 & 5** and Viewpoint 3 Existing in the AVR report). In these views, which are taken along a section of the road that runs between Regent's Park and Primrose Hill, No.23 is the first (and only) building visible in the conservation area. This is a little unfortunate as it does not provide any visual indication of the nature and quality of the architecture in the heart of conservation area behind it, but the view is at least softened by the hedges and trees lining both sides of the road within the open spaces.

Regent's Park and listed buildings within it

- 3.16 There is little visibility of the building from within Regent's Park itself. There are glimpsed views, heavily filtered by the trees lining both sides of the Regent's Canal and by

buildings within the zoo, of part of its roof terrace and upper floor from the Outer Circle road in front of the entrance to London Zoo (see **Plate 6** and Viewpoint 2 Existing in the AVR report). These glimpses, seen across a car park opposite the zoo entrance, and across the northern part of the zoo premises, are minimal and transient and play no role (positive or negative) in one's experience of the Park. The zoo is the main focus and reason for visiting this part of the Park rather than an appreciation of landscape or views.

- 3.17 Similarly, glimpsed views filtered by trees available from the canal-side path make no contribution to the experience of this linear feature, where primary views are channelled in either direction along the waterway.
- 3.18 From within the zoo premises, there are views which encompass No.23 from its northern section, which runs between the canal and Prince Albert Road. The upper part of the building can be seen above the zoo entrance buildings (1936-7; listed at Grade II) from the south-west (**Plate 7**) and from the south-east near the Grade II listed mid-19th-century footbridge over the canal (**Plate 8**); from here, the upper parts of the villas on the Prince Albert Road frontage can also be seen above the roofs of the entrance buildings and animal enclosures, alongside the upper half of No.23 and the spire of the Grade II listed St Mark's Church to the east.
- 3.19 The listed entrance buildings (North entrance gate, Keepers' Office, Storage Kiosk and canopy) are of low height, together forming a long linear structure running parallel to Prince Albert Road. They are best experienced from within the zoo, where the main distinctive feature is the wave-profile concrete canopy. The upper floors of No.23 can be seen in some oblique views above these structures, as a component of their wider urban setting, but the primary setting of the buildings is the zoo. Therefore, while the height of No.23 means it is the only building that has any real degree of visibility in conjunction with the listed buildings in these views, it is only a minor detracting feature.
- 3.20 The views looking into the conservation area from the zoo from further east near the canal footbridge simply help place the zoo in its contemporary mid-19th-century urban context to the north. No.23 is an interloper in this respect and does not contribute anything to an appreciation of this context.

- 3.21 In summary, it is clear that No.23 does not affect any formal, designed or otherwise significant view from the Registered Park and Garden into the conservation area. All the glimpsed views available from the Park are from within the area generally encompassed by London Zoo, and are seen in the context of animal enclosures and other buildings; these latter constitute the focus of the experience of visiting the zoo. No.23 does not contribute anything to the wider experience of the Registered Park.

Primrose Hill

- 3.22 There is an entrance to Primrose Hill from its south-east corner, opposite No.23's side elevation onto Albert Terrace. The footpath here runs north-west up to the hard-surfaced circular viewing point at the summit of the hill.
- 3.23 From points along the footpath, there are views across the grass to the houses on Albert Terrace and oblique views to the side and rear elevations of No.23, albeit these views are filtered by trees (particularly in the case of No.23) (**Plates 9 & 10**). Large-scale late 20th- and early 21st-century apartment buildings are also visible across the Park to the west on Ormonde Terrace and St Edmund's Terrace. For the most part, the various footpaths across the Park are lined with ornamental trees as many mature trees were lost in the storms of 1987 and 1990.
- 3.24 From the viewing point (which is a popular public amenity) there is a panoramic view south-east to the City of London. From this viewing point, the 'London View Management Framework March 2012 part 1' identifies two Protected Vistas south-east, towards St Paul's Cathedral and towards the Palace of Westminster (both Grade I listed buildings).
- 3.25 As the View Management Framework describes, *'The foreground and much of the middle ground of the panorama is dominated by open space, with only London Zoo introducing significant urban context...Urban development dominates the far middle ground, beyond Regent's Park. There is little order or prevailing character amongst the groups of large commercial buildings and tall residential buildings. Continued development of this kind in the middle ground could reduce the viewers' ability to see the principal buildings in the City of London, as well as the Palace of Westminster further west.'*

- 3.26 The roof and upper floors of No.23 are visible in the mid-ground of the panorama to the City (see **Plate 11** and Viewpoint 4 Existing from the AVR report) but not in any detail because of the distance, such that individual structures cannot be discerned. The building lies outside the scope of the Protected Vistas. Even when magnified in a photographic image (which of course does not represent a 'naked eye' view, the glazed structures and balustrade (and plants) on the roof terrace of the building blend with the tree cover in front and behind, while it is the building's red brickwork which is most visible in the vista of distant City buildings, which mostly comprise structures of glass and steel with an overall grey appearance.

4.0 THE PROPOSALS & ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL IMPACT

4.1 The proposals comprise:

- i. Level 08 (as referred to in the Design & Access Statement): the erection of a small extension to the existing glazed stair enclosure and landing at roof-top level (as per the initial proposals);
- ii. Level 07: the enclosure with glazing of the two existing inner balconies to form habitable internal space (as per the initial proposals);
- iii. Level 07: the replacement of the solid brick balustrades to the two outer balconies with solid Corten steel balustrades (revised from the initial proposals, which replaced them with open metal railings);
- iv. Level 07: the insertion of a new balcony centrally, within the existing vertical recess between the two 'blocks' of the building on the front elevation. This will have a solid Corten steel balustrade (revised from the initial proposals, which indicated an open metal railing); and
- v. Level 06: the replacement of the solid brick balustrades to the two existing balconies with solid Corten steel balustrades (revised from the initial proposals, which replaced them with open metal railings).

Item (i) Proposed rooftop terrace

4.2 As will be clear from the submitted architectural drawings, the proposed glazed addition to the rooftop terrace (item (i) above), has been designed to be a discreet structure; it will have a slim profile, will be fully glazed, and will not exceed the height of the existing glazed stairwell projection. The extension will be attached to the south side of this existing structure and extend south across the centre of the roof terrace towards the front elevation and the vertical recess here.

4.3 The Council's pre-application advice stated that this element of the proposals would not be acceptable because, in their view, the existing glazed roof structure *'is already visually prominent. Further extensions to this would be insubordinate to the building, add unnecessary bulk to the roof, and increase the negative impact that the building has on the conservation area. An expanded glazed conservatory and extended roof deck would constitute visual clutter that would cause harm to the conservation area and*

would not be considered acceptable. This is particularly pertinent given how visible the site is from public space...’.

4.4 In support of this view, the Council cites PH18 of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement 2000, which states that, *‘Roof extensions and alterations, which change the shape and form of the roof, can have had [sic] a harmful impact on the Conservation Area and are unlikely to be acceptable where:*

- *It would be detrimental to the form and character of the existing building*
- *The property forms part of a group or terrace which remains largely, but not necessarily completely, unimpaired*
- *The property forms part of a symmetrical composition, the balance of which would be upset*
- *The roof is prominent, particularly in long views and in views from the parks*
- *The building is higher than many of its surrounding neighbours. Any further roof extensions are therefore likely to be unacceptably prominent.’*

4.5 In terms of the first point, it is quite clear that the proposal will not be detrimental to the existing form and character of the building. This is essentially symmetrical and right-angled, and will remain symmetrical, with the proposed extension simply continuing an existing structure in symmetrical form in a linear manner across the central line of the building, with a flat roof and using glazing as per the existing stair enclosure, the existing enclosure to the upper-floor balconies against the rear elevation and the glazed balustrade to the terrace.

4.6 Points 2 and 3 are quite evidently intended to refer to the prevalent type of building in the conservation area, i.e. the 19th-century terraces, crescents, architectural set-pieces and groupings of contemporary detached and semi-detached villas, where significant changes to the roofscape of one (such as the addition of a dormer or the other fundamental alteration of an existing historic roof form) could easily have a detrimental impact on the roofscape of the group as a whole. These two points are not relevant to No.23.

- 4.7 Point 4 is relevant as the roof of the building can be seen from the viewing point on Primrose Hill. It is, however, much less visible in closer, more local views because of the building's height and the available sightlines. Tied in with this is point 5 – No.23 is taller than its neighbouring buildings, but whether or not any proposed roof extension would be '*unacceptably prominent*' is a matter of judgement on each individual case.
- 4.8 Because of this, four AVRs have been prepared which demonstrate the degree of visibility of this element of the proposals in the identified representative views (as well as, of course, indicating how the other elements of the proposals will appear in the same views). The AVRs include Existing and Proposed images so that these can be viewed side by side.
- 4.9 AVR Viewpoint 1 is a very direct local view of the building from Prince Albert Road. In this view, all that will be seen of the proposed rooftop extension is the fully glazed southern elevation, symmetrically positioned above the vertical recess and balanced by the proposed glazed enclosure, in similar form, of the two inner balconies at Level 07. The enclosure of these balconies successfully mediates between the existing open balconies and the proposed extension and reduces the latter's visibility significantly.
- 4.10 The symmetry and character of the front elevation of the building is entirely preserved, the transparent nature of the glazing preserves the central recessed form, and there is simply no harmful impact whatsoever arising to the character and appearance of the conservation area from the minimal visibility of the proposal, a conclusion which will also apply to other similar direct views.
- 4.11 AVR Viewpoint 2 illustrates one of the glimpsed, heavily filtered views from the Outer Circle road in Regent's Park, through London Zoo (described above at paragraph 3.16). The building is barely discernible in this view and unlikely to be picked out by any casual observer visiting the Park or zoo. As demonstrated by the AVR, there will be some minor visibility of the proposed glazed extension projecting above the existing balustrade, but it is still well below the prominent aerial that is also seen in the view and is unlikely to be noticeable in any meaningful way. Certainly, it could not be said to have any kind of detrimental impact on Regent's Park.

- 4.12 AVR Viewpoint 3 is an example of the view looking east-northeast along Prince Albert Road towards No.23 from outside the conservation area (as described above in paragraph 3.15). In this view, the proposed extension will have minimal visibility (of the front elevation) that will simply blend visually with the existing glazed balustrade around the terrace. The proposed extension has no prominence in the view and indeed is barely noticeable. There is no sense of additional visual clutter and quite evidently no harm arising to the character and appearance of the conservation area in a view that (as noted at paragraph 3.15 above) is in any case uncharacteristic of the historic built environment that lies beyond No.23.
- 4.13 AVR Viewpoint 4 is the view from the formal viewing point from the summit of Primrose Hill towards the panorama of the City of London. As set out above, No.23 lies outside the Protected Vistas towards St Paul's Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster. However, while obviously not a focal point of the view, the upper floors of the rear and west elevations of the building are partially visible rising out of the trees in the middle ground of the general view south-east. However, at this distance (and as described above at paragraph 3.26), little detail of the existing rooftop structures is visible.
- 4.14 As the Proposed AVR demonstrates, there is simply no additional visibility of the proposed glazed rooftop extension at this distance. If the view is magnified through a camera or other lens, the existing glazed stair enclosure in the centre of the rear elevation is visible. If the AVR is magnified, this feature is, however, barely noticeable except for its curved roof form – this appears to be because the verticality of its main elevation reflects the darkness of the trees in the foreground, while the angled roof (like that of the angled sky-facing glazing enclosing the continuous Level 07 balconies to either side of it) reflects the sky and is therefore more visible. Similarly, the proposed extension blends with the dense tree coverage beyond and is barely visible, and certainly not visible in any prominent or otherwise meaningful way that could have any detrimental effect on this wide-ranging view.
- 4.15 I am therefore quite satisfied based on the AVRs and my own inspection of the view from Primrose Hill, that the proposed rooftop extension will have no harmful impact whatsoever on either the character and appearance of the conservation area or the view from either of the Registered Parks and Gardens.

Items (ii)-(v) Other proposals

- 4.16 In terms of the other proposals affecting the appearance of the building's front elevation, the Council at pre-application stage took the view that the originally proposed replacement of brick balcony balustrades at Levels 06 and 07 with open metal railings would *'disrupt and be detrimental to the overall appearance and coherency of the property, exacerbating the negative contribution that the building makes to the conservation area.'*
- 4.17 While I disagree with this view (the symmetry of the elevation would have been retained and the more open nature of the railings could have alleviated the existing massing of the building as it rose through floors), the revised design instead proposes that the balustrades be replaced with solid Corten steel. This will retain the solidity of the existing form and also the red-brick colour; the proposed material, also sometimes referred to as 'weathering steel', forms a stable rust-like appearance after several years' exposure to the weather.
- 4.18 The Council's pre-application advice found that the proposed enclosure of the Level 07 inner balconies with glazing would be acceptable in principle, on the condition that both were constructed together in order not to disrupt the symmetry of the elevation. I agree entirely with the expressed view that, given the existing symmetrical form of the building, the existing enclosure of the inner balconies on the floors below, and the fact that this proposal will not add unacceptable bulk or massing to the building, this element of the proposals will preserve the building's existing form and character and thus have no additional detracting effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 4.19 The remaining element of the proposals is item (iv), the insertion of a new balcony within the central vertical recess at Level 07, to have a solid Corten steel balustrade (replacing the originally proposed open metal railings).
- 4.20 In their pre-application advice, the Council took the view that this proposal would *'disrupt the consistency of the building and the uniformity that is otherwise present at every level below. In addition to this, it would add visual clutter to the alcove, which is*

otherwise free of infilling additions.' However, it is not clear how this was considered to affect the character and appearance of the conservation area.

- 4.21 As AVR 1 illustrates, this is a very discreet proposed addition to the building and in my view works well, in design terms, with the proposed enclosure of the two balconies flanking it and the proposed rooftop extension above, emphasising the building's symmetry rather than detracting from it. The overall effect will still be one of uniformity but with some subtle changes to the upper floors that complement the existing form. A strict uniformity in a building of this nature is not always necessarily positive and a few minor changes can have the effect of enhancing its appearance.
- 4.22 I do not see that the term 'visual clutter' is relevant to this element of the proposals, which follows the line and form of the existing building and is recessed within the central section, and will therefore not be prominent within the elevation (indeed, barely observed in most views), but if there is any perception of such then it is likely to be reduced through the use of the solid Corten steel balustrade rather than the open railings.
- 4.23 Certainly, there will be no perceivable impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area arising from this element, and it will not be visible in longer views.

4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This report has appraised the contribution of No.23 Prince Albert Road to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to the settings of adjoining listed buildings, and has considered its relationship to the Primrose Hill and Regent's Park Registered Parks and Gardens.
- 4.2 This appraisal, alongside a number of Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs), has then informed the assessment of the impact of a number of proposed external alterations to the building's Penthouse apartment in terms of any impact these may potentially have on the conservation area or on views towards the building from the Registered Parks.
- 4.3 The report has concluded that the proposals will not affect the character and appearance of the conservation area in any discernible way, or the significance or setting of any listed building, and that in longer-distance views from the Registered Parks, the proposals will simply not be perceptible in any meaningful way.
- 4.4 In conclusion therefore, and for all the reasons set out above, I am of the view that the proposed development complies with the advice on conserving the historic built environment contained in the NPPF, all relevant local policy, and the statutory tests set in Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.



Plate 1: No.23, front elevation to Prince Albert Road



Plate 2: Rear and west side elevations



Plate 3: Looking west towards No.23 from the entrance to Regent's Park on Prince Albert Road (Nos.17-22 are listed at Grade II)



Plate 4: Looking east-northeast along Prince Albert Road towards No.23, which marks the beginning of the conservation area



Plate 5: Looking east-northeast along Prince Albert Road towards No.23, which marks the beginning of the conservation area

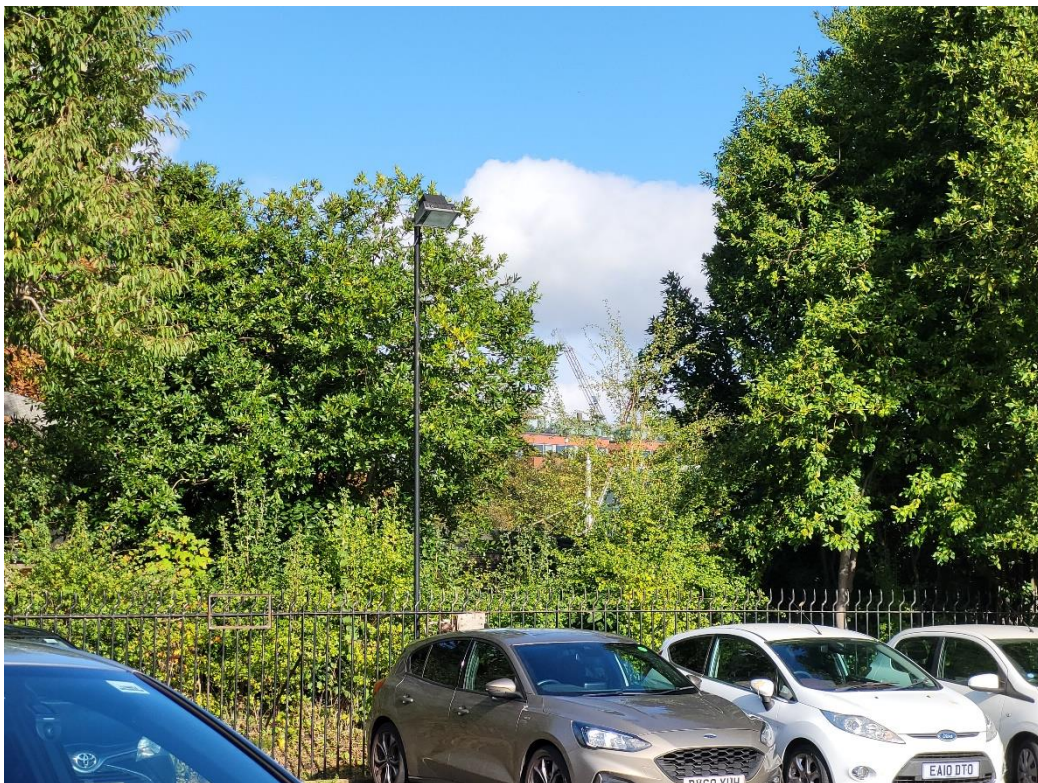


Plate 6: Looking north-east from entrance to London Zoo on the Outer Circle towards No.23, which is just glimpsed through trees



Plate 7: No.23, seen beyond listed entrance buildings to London Zoo (2017 view)



Plate 8: No.23, seen beyond animal enclosures in London Zoo from close to canal footbridge (2017 view)



Plate 9: Looking east from footpath leading from south-east corner of Primrose Hill towards Albert Terrace and No.23



Plate 10: Further north-west along the same footpath No.23 disappears from view behind trees



Plate 11: View south-east from viewing point on summit of Primrose Hill (view taken with No.23 in centre and at 50mm focal length)