

PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

25 CHESTER TERRACE,
LONDON, NW1 4ND

07 FEBRUARY 2024

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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| Project Title | 25 Chester Terrace |
| Client Name | Bobby and Sabeeta Ahluwalia |
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SECTION 1 | INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning and Heritage Statement has been prepared by Firstplan, on behalf of Bobby and Sabeeta Ahluwalia, regarding associated planning and listed building consent applications submitted to Camden Council ('The Council') in relation to 25 Chester Terrace, London, NW1 4ND.
- 1.2 This development seeks permissions for a very minor alteration to the recently approved planning and listed building consents for works to the vaults at the front of the property granted under refs. 2023/3196/P and 2023/3610/L, simply to allow for a modest increase in the lowering of the floor level in the vaults from the previously approved excavation of 900mm to 1200mm. This is proposed to provide the minimum depth / floor to ceiling height required in order to ensure these currently vacant and underused/wasted spaces can be put to a productive use in association with the existing dwellinghouse. This will help to ensure the long-term preservation and future of this Grade I listed property.
- 1.3 This Statement is structured as follows:
- **Section 2** sets out the relevant background information, including a description of the application site and relevant planning history;
 - **Section 3** describes the application proposals;
 - **Section 4** details the relevant planning policies at national, regional and local levels, against which the applications should be assessed;
 - **Section 5** features a Planning and Heritage Statement which assesses the acceptability of the application proposals in the context of the relevant planning policies
 - **Section 6** includes a Design and Access Statement; and
 - **Section 7** draws conclusions.

SECTION 2 | BACKGROUND INFORMATION

a) Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 The application site comprises the mid-terrace, residential property at 25 Chester Place, which forms part of a Grade I listed terrace (Nos. 1 – 42) fronting onto the eastern boundary of Regent's Park. The terrace was originally built and constructed by John Nash in 1825. The building itself forms part of a uniform terrace consisting of three storeys, as well as basement and attic levels. The consistent appearance is largely replicated and has been maintained across the entire terrace with stucco render to the front façade, with a front lightwell delineated by traditional black-painted railings.



Figure 1. Streetview Image of Application Site – 25 Chester Terrace, NW1 4ND

- 2.2 The part of the building that these applications relate to specifically are the three former coal vaults situated to the front of the building and extended back beneath the pavement from within the lightwell. The basement level of the building is accessed either via the external stairway leading down from street level or from the access door to the main façade of the building at basement level. The primary historic interest surrounding the listed building relates largely to the uniform and well-maintained stucco façade of the terrace. It is understood that the interior of the main building was largely rebuilt in the 1960s, although much of the original layout has been maintained. The vaults at the front are vacant, derelict and unused spaces, with run-down timber doors, a concrete floor and a floor to ceiling height which makes them inaccessible or unusable and therefore wasted spaces.
- 2.3 The surrounding area is largely characterised by other residential dwellings, particularly along Chester Terrace to the north and south. The immediate context is characterised by a mix of building ages and styles, including those of a more traditional and historic appearance, and those that are more contemporary. Regent's Park lies immediately to the west of the application site. Both Regent's Park and Great Portland Street tube stations lie a short distance to the south.
- 2.4 As set out above, the application site forms part of a wider Grade I listed terrace including nos. 1 – 42 Chester Terrace and attached railings and linking arches, which also lies within the Regent's Park Conservation Area.

b) Planning History

i. Application Site – 25 Chester Terrace

- Planning permission was granted on 7 July 2016 (ref. 2016/2103/P) for: 'Creation of roof terrace within the roof slope; installation of 1 x AC unit at roof level; and replacement of rear single-glazed sash windows with matching double-glazed windows.'
- Listed building consent was granted on 7 July 2016 (ref. 2016/2745/L) for: 'Creation of roof terrace within the roof slope; internal alterations including installation of staircase from third floor to roof terrace; installation of 1 x AC unit at roof level; and replacement of rear single-glazed sash windows with matching double-glazed windows.'
- Planning permission was granted on 5 December 2023 (ref. 2023/0791/P) for: 'Creation of a roof terrace (behind existing slate roof), installation of York stone to front lightwell with new enclosure beneath main entrance stair, replacement garage door to rear.'
- Listed building consent was granted on 5 December 2023 (ref. 2023/1402/L) for: 'Creation of a roof terrace (behind existing slate roof), installation of York stone to front lightwell with new enclosure beneath main entrance stair, replacement garage door to rear. Also with internal alterations including; installation of staircase from 3rd floor and lowering of floor at lower ground floor level.'
- Planning permission was granted on 20 December 2023 (ref. 2023/3196/P) for: 'Works to front vault area: Removal of part of 2 vault walls to create openings between vaults; removal of existing concrete floor and install new concrete floor at lower level; enclosed hallway linking vaults to main house; steps down to vaults.'
- Listed building consent was granted on 20 December 2023 (ref. 2023/3610/L) for: 'Works to front vault area: Removal of part of 2 vault walls to create openings between vaults; Removal of existing concrete floor and install new concrete floor at lower level; enclosed hallway linking vaults to main house; steps down to house.'

2.5 The planning and listed buildings consents granted in December confirmed that the principle of linking the vaults and lowering the floor to allow improved head height in the spaces is acceptable. This application proposes only a very minor 300mm increase in the floor to ceiling height already approved in order to provide adequate head-height to enable the spaces to become ancillary spaces usable in association with the main dwellinghouse.

ii. Surrounding Area – Wider Chester Terrace

2.6 As summarised within Table 1 below, there is an extensive planning history relating to similar proposals at a number of neighbouring properties in recent years along Chester Terrace, which have been supported by the Council.

| <u>Address</u> | <u>Application Refs.</u> | <u>Development</u> |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1 Chester Terrace | 2020/4680/P | Creation of a sunken roof terrace; replacement garage doors; paving of lightwell; installation of glazed screen at basement level; excavation of existing vaults at basement level. |
| | 2020/5521/L | Creation of a sunken roof terrace; replacement of garage doors; paving of lightwell; installation of glazed screen at basement level; excavation of existing vaults at basement level and various internal alterations. |

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| 11 Chester Terrace | 2022/1634/P & 2022/2376/L | Excavation of third existing vault following approval for excavation to the two remaining existing vaults approved under ref. 2020/4680/P and 2020/5521/L dated 28.04.21. Introduction of a fully reversible cavity drainage waterproofing membrane to all three vaults. |
| 26 Chester Terrace | 2021/5977/L | Internal alterations on all floors including front vaults and installation of security bars to one window on the rear elevation at basement level. |
| 28 Chester Terrace | 2015/7195/P | Alterations including replacement of existing roof structure, creation of roof terrace, installation of 2 floor mounted air conditioning units, timber louvre screen, glass enclosure and lift over run on the roof, new chimney pots, lowering of lower ground vault floor under the pavement with new openings to create additional non-habitable storage space, installation of timber glazed screen and door under the front entrance steps within front lightwell, replacement of timber sash single pane windows with timber sash double glazed windows at ground, first and second floors on the rear elevation, replacement of CCTV cameras and replacement lighting on the front and rear elevations of the single family dwelling. |
| | 2016/0307/L | External and internal alterations including replacement of existing roof structure, creation of roof terrace, installation of 2no. floor mounted air conditioning units, timber louvre screen, glass enclosure and lift over run on the roof, new clay chimney pots, lower of lower ground vault floor under the pavement with new openings to create additional non-habitable storage space, installation of timber glazed screen and door under the front entrance steps within front lightwell, replacement of timber sash single pane windows with timber sash double glazed windows at ground, first and second floors on the rear elevation, replacement of CCTV cameras and replacement lighting on the front and rear elevations, internal alterations including replacement and reconfiguration of walls and partitions, replacement of staircase from second to third floor level and extension from third floor to roof level, replacement of doors, cornices, and flooring to all floors of the existing single family dwelling. |
| 31 Chester Terrace | 2012/3237/P and 2012/3294/L | Alterations to the below pavement vaults to lower the floor level and to use the space as ancillary to the existing residential dwelling |
| 33 Chester Terrace | 2014/6202/P & 20014/6252/P | Excavation of basement vaults with associated alterations , creation of roof terrace with associated access glass roof and 2 x skylights. |
| 35 Chester Terrace | 2014/5799/P | Proposed basement enlargement and creation of a roof terrace in connection with existing use as a dwelling house (Class C3). |
| | 2014/6051/L | Proposed basement enlargement, internal alterations , and creation of a roof terrace in connection with existing use as a dwelling house (Class C3). |
| 38 Chester Terrace | 2020/5801/P | External and internal works to existing residential dwelling including creation of a plant room and wine cellar within pavement vaults, new louvred doors to the vaults, creation of roof terrace at existing roof level, replacement conservation style rooflights and replacement of ground floor window to door on the rear (east) elevation, installation of metal gate and |

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| | | stair within the rear courtyard and installation of new privacy screen at the rear. |
| | 201/0239/L | <i>External and internal works to existing residential dwelling including creation of a plant room and wine cellar within pavement vaults</i> , new louvred doors to the vaults, creation of roof terrace at existing roof level, replacement conservation style rooflights, replacement of ground floor window to door on the rear (east) elevation, installation of metal gate and stair within the rear courtyard and installation of new privacy screen at the rear. Internal works to include alterations to room layouts at ground, first, second and third floors; installation of lift within existing lift shaft, secondary glazing to stairwell window, and new flooring with underfloor heating, new suspended ceilings, new partition walls and new skirting. |

Table 1. Summary of Wider Chester Terrace Planning History

- 2.7 The permissions detailed within Table 1 have set a number of precedents for alterations to properties along Chester Terrace and, crucially, for the excavation of the vaults to facilitate their use as usable, habitable spaces in association with the main residential dwellings. In particular, this has included the lowering of the vaults at nos, 33 and 35 by 1400mm, nos. 31 and 26 by 1100mm, and at no. 11 to allow for a floor to ceiling height of 2.4m. The principle of excavation of the vaults to a similar / more substantial level, and their use as habitable rooms, has therefore been well-established within the listed terrace.

SECTION 3 | PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 These applications seek planning and listed building consents for the excavation of the basement vaults with associated alterations at 25 Chester Terrace, NW1 4ND. The proposals seek to physically improve and make better use of these currently redundant spaces to allow them to be put to a productive use and enjoyed as functional spaces that serve the residential dwelling, in this case in the form of wellness/gym areas and a plant room in association with the main house. The applications follow on from previous approved applications 2023/3196/P and 2023/3610/L, and solely relate to the following:
- Excavation and lowering of existing basement vaults floor level by 1200mm, as opposed to the already approved 900mm excavation.
- 3.2 The only other works proposed by the application are those already approved under these previous applications, listed as follows:
- Addition of partitioning wall within lightwell to create foyer area between main dwelling and existing vaults;
 - Removal of dividing walls between existing basement vaults to allow for amalgamation of the spaces to provide a residential gym and plant room;
 - Replacement of existing lightwell concrete flooring with New York stone;
 - Refurbishment of existing lightwell external stairs from street level and associated balustrade; and
 - Replacement of existing and installation of new door from main dwelling house into lightwell.
- 3.3 Full details of the proposals are detailed on the drawings prepared by BB Partnership and submitted in support of these applications.

SECTION 4 | PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 The Development Plan for the application site comprises the London Plan (2021), the Camden Local Plan (2017) and Camden Policies Map. Other material considerations that are relevant to the application proposals include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023), and any relevant supplementary planning documents or guidance.

4.2 Camden Council are also in the process of adopting its new Local Plan and is currently undergoing consultation and engagement (Regulation 18 stage) between 17 January and 13 March 2024. Following the expiry of this consultation period, the responses received will be reviewed and the Plan will be updated. The Council's draft new Local Plan policy page outlines the following expected timescales for the next stages of their Local Plan Review:

- Regulation 19 Stage: Winter 2024 – Spring 2025;
- Regulation 22 Stage - Submission to Secretary of State for Examination: Spring 2025 – Summer 2025;
- Examination in Public: Autumn 2025 – Winter 2025;
- Adoption: Winter 2025 – Spring 2026.

a) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023)

4.3 The NPPF provides the overarching planning policy guidance for development across England. It states:

"The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs."

4.4 **Paragraph 135** sets out that planning decision should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. Similarly, development should create places that maintain a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

4.5 **Paragraph 205** is clear 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, total loss of or less than substantial harm to its significance.

b) The London Plan (2021)

4.6 The London Plan is the overall spatial development strategy for London, setting out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of London over the next 20 – 25 years. The overall strategy is for 'Good Growth' to promote sustainable development, including the use of previously developed land and buildings in a design-led approach, ensuring development is accessible and takes into account any physical constraints.

4.7 **Policy D5 'Inclusive Design'** states that development proposals should achieve the highest standards of accessible and inclusive design.

4.8 **Policy HC1 'Heritage Conservation and Growth'** is clear that development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance by being sympathetic to the asset's significance and appreciation within their surroundings.

c) Camden Local Plan (2017)

4.9 **Policy D1 'Design'** notes that development proposals should respect local context and character, whilst preserving or enhancing the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2 'Heritage'.

4.10 **Policy D2 'Heritage'** confirms that development proposals should preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings including conservation areas and listed buildings.

d) Camden Planning Guidance – Design (2021)

4.11 This guidance document outlines that when assessing listed building proposals, the Council has a statutory duty 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. Furthermore, it confirms that proposals should seek to respond to the special historic and architectural constraints of the listed building, rather than significantly altering them.

e) Camden Planning Guidance – Home Improvements (2021)

4.12 This guidance document provides homeowners and developers will information about how homes can and should be adapted and improved. This highlights that every building within the Borough is unique and contributes to the overall identity of each street and area of Camden, as well as the importance of taking into account the wider streetscene and community context when altering residential premises. This further outlines that the Borough has a rich architectural heritage with many special places and buildings reflecting Camden's history. The basic principles that should be considered include:

- Respect and be complementary to the original character of the existing building;
- Design spaces to be functional and adaptable for a range of uses, such as social gatherings, rest and relaxation;
- Ensure rooms achieve a good quality internal environment that benefit from adequate natural daylight, outlook and ventilation;
- Ensure that the space is usable and accessible to people with varying abilities;
- Consider sustainable measures within the design that maintain and improve your living conditions; and
- Ensure extensions and alterations are safe and secure.

f) Regent's Park Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (2011)

4.13 This document confirms that the Regent's Park area was designated as a conservation area on 1 July 1969 and outlines that the significance of the Regent's Park area is of national and international importance. This strategy document makes specific reference to Chester Terrace and provides the following description:

"Chester Terrace is set back from the park with a strip of contained shared gardens with flowering plants, shrubbery and trees. Chester Terrace is the longest unbroken façade in the park (287m/840ft) with a complex alternating system of bays (ABCBABCBA) totalling 99 bays, marked by giant Corinthian columns attached and detached in groups which rise from ground floor level. Balconies run continuously between and behind the columns. At either end are projecting wings, connected to the main façade by theatrically thin triumphal arches inset with the name 'Chester Terrace' across the full street width."

4.14 This further notes that there is a strong contribution to retain buildings that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

g) Draft New Camden Local Plan – Regulation 18 Consultation Version (2024)

4.15 Whilst the Draft New Camden Local Plan is still with the early stages of being adopted and yet to form part of the adopted development plan for the Borough, the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

- **Policy CC2** – Repurposing, Refurbishment and Re-Use of Existing Buildings;
- **Policy CC10** – Sustainable Design and Construction Certification;
- **Policy D1** – Achieving Design Excellence;
- **Policy D4** – Extension and Alterations;
- **Policy D5** – Heritage; and
- **Policy A1** – Protecting Amenity.

SECTION 5 | PLANNING AND HERITAGE CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 This section assesses the proposed development in the context of the relevant planning policy framework. The key areas for consideration relating to the proposals are as follows:

- Impact on Heritage Assets;
- Principle of the Development;
- Design and Accessibility Considerations; and
- Flood Risk.

5.2 Each of the above key considerations have been addressed in turn below.

a) Impact on Heritage Assets

5.3 25 Chester Terrace forms part of Grade I-listed terrace located within the Regent's Park Conservation Area. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) sets out clearly that there is a presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets; in this case, the Grade I listed terrace and the Regent's Park Conservation Area. Therefore, the main considerations are the impact of the proposals on the historic significance and importance of the building and Conservation Area, as well as the overall design and use of the space.

5.4 The Historic England Listing (Listing Entry Number: 1271885) provides the following description for 'Numbers 1-42 and attached railings and linking arches, 1-42, Chester Terrace':

"Grand palace-style terrace of 27 houses & 5 semi-detached houses. C1825. By John Nash, For the Commissioners of Woods, Forests and Land Revenues. Built by J Burton. Stucco. Slate mansard roofs with attic dormers. Exterior: the longest unbroken façade in Regent's Park (approx. 280m) with an alternating system of bays (ABCBABCB). At either end projecting pavilion blocks connected to main façade by thin triumphal arches. Main Block (Nos 6-38): symmetrical composition of 3 and 4 storeys. 3 windows to each house. "A" bays, screen of 8 free-standing, fluted Corinthian columns supporting an entablature with modillion cornice above which a recessed attic storey with round-arched windows. Round-arched ground-floor openings; architraved heads linked by impost bands. Recessed doorways with panelled doors and fanlights. Windows with margin glazing. 1st floors with architraved sashes and continuous cast-iron balconies. "B" bays, round-arched ground floor openings; architraved heads linked by impost bands. Recessed doorways with panelled doors and fanlights. Windows with margin glazing. Architraved 1st and 2nd floor sashes' 1st floor with continuous cast-iron balcony. Main projecting modillion cornice at 3rd floor level. Cornice and block course above 2nd floor. "C" bays, slightly projecting with screen of 6 attached, fluted Corinthian columns supporting an entablature with modillion cornice above which 2 recessed attic storeys with cornice at 3rd floor level and pediment above. Round-arched ground floor openings; architraved heads linked by impost bands. Recessed doorways with panelled doors and fanlights. Windows with margin glazing. 1st and 2nd floors with architraved sashes; 1st floor with continuous cast-iron balcony. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings to areas. Linking triumphal arches with round-arched vehicle entrance flanked by pedestrian entrances. Inner elevations with 4 attached Corinthian columns supporting a modillion entablature above which a scrolled frieze, cornice and blocking course. Outer elevations with 4 Corinthian pilasters supporting a modillion entablature with panel inscribed "Chester Terrace", cornice and blocking course.

Nos 4 & 5 and Nos 39 & 40: to south and north of arches respectively. Channelled stucco ground floors. Square-headed doorways with panelled doors and fanlights. Recessed sashes, upper floors with architraves; 1st floors with continuous cast-iron balconies. Main cornice at 3rd floor level. Cornice and blocking course above 3rd floor. Right hand return of No.4 pedimented with blind windows. No.3 fronting on to Chester Gate. 2 storeys and basement. 4 windows. Forms the terminal return to main block. 3 central bays slightly projecting. Greek Doric prostyle portico; panelled door and fanlight. Recessed sashes, those flanking the portico with shouldered architraves (left hand blind). Right hand bay with projecting window surmounted by parapet with central balustraded panel. Cornice and blocking course with central feature of segmental-headed cut out block flanked by panelled dies. Left hand angle with enriched pilaster strip and surmounted by anthemion acroterion; right hand angle with anthemion acroterion only. Symmetrical west frontage to garden; 2 windows, 1st floor with balconies. Bust of Nash on bracket between 1st floor windows. Parapet with central urn. INTERIOR not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railing to garden and flanking steps. Nos 1, 2 & 41, 42: projecting pavilion blocks fronting Regent's Park and linked to main block by triumphal arches. Similar to "C" bays. 4 storeys. 5 windows and 3-window returns. Attached Corinthian pilasters to other fronts. Round-arched ground floor openings; windows architraved with margin glazing. Upper floors with recessed sashes; 1st floors with cast-iron balconies except central window. 2nd and 3rd floor form attic storeys (2nd floor windows architraved) with cornice at 3rd floor sill level and cornice and blocking course above 3rd floor. INTERIORS: not inspected. HISTORICAL NOTE: No. 13 was the residence of CR Cockerell, architect and antiquary (English Heritage plaque)."

- 5.5 As set out in Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, 'in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State 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'. Historic England consider that listed buildings and registered landscapes with a Grade I listing are of exceptional interest.
- 5.6 It is understood, based on the above Historic England listing description and the planning history for this particular building, that the majority of the historical and architectural interest associated with the property relates to its exterior, and specifically its principal façade fronting onto Regent's Park. The above listing does not make reference to nor highlight any historic interest surrounding the existing, former external coal vaults within the lightwells fronting the application site. Indeed, they are of limited historic value, with concrete floors, and the interior of the main building is also of limited historic significance as it has been substantially altered and refurbished in the 20th century. There are therefore limited features of historic fabric within the property, and it is not considered that the proposals, which relate to a very minor increase in the floor to ceiling height of the coal vaults, will have any meaningful impact on the historic value or significance of the building or wider terrace. Indeed, there will be no impact on any surviving historic fabric of the vaults given that they possess concrete floors and have been plastered and painted internally and fit with modern, timber doors.
- 5.7 Given the below street-level and concealed location of the existing vaults, as well as the minor nature of the proposed works, it is not considered that these will have any negative or harmful impact on the wider historic significance of the Regent's Park Conservation Area. The proposed alterations will remain at an entirely subterranean level and therefore there will be no visible change from street level, and it is clear that similar proposals have been supported by the Council at other neighbouring properties. The principle façade of the building and wider terrace, to which the historic interest is predominantly attached, will remain unaffected as a result of the proposals. Furthermore, it is clear that other more extensive physical alterations to the wider Grade I listed terrace properties have been supported by the Council historically.
- 5.8 It is our view that the proposals will in fact improve and enhance the listed building by facilitating the use of this currently vacant and underutilised space which is in a poor state of condition. The improvement works to the

vaults to facilitate their use as functional spaces in association with the main house will ensure that they are well maintained and preserved and, despite not being specifically referenced in the historic listing description of the site, they will continue to be an associated feature of this property. Importantly, the vaults will be put to a productive use rather than remaining as underused, vacant and run-down spaces.

- 5.9 In the light of this analysis, it is our view that the proposed lowering of the vaults and other associated improvement works to the vaults is entirely acceptable in heritage terms and would successfully comply with the relevant, identified planning policies at a national, London-wide and local level.

b) Principle of the Development

- 5.10 The existing vaults no longer serve their former, historic purpose for the storage of coal, but instead have acted as ancillary storage space used in association with the adjoining residential dwelling. As such, the proposals seek to physically improve and provide the minimum floor to ceiling height required to make better use of these spaces to allow them to be used and enjoyed as functional spaces in association with the main residential dwelling. The application site is located within a long-established residential area and the proposed alterations are sought in order to help upgrade and improve the enjoyment of this existing residential family home.
- 5.11 As previously outlined as part of pre-application response (ref. 2023/0707/PRE) in respect of similar proposals at the site, the Council accepted that:

“It is noted that many of the vaults along the terrace have undergone significant interventions to turn them into more usable spaces, so the principle of the proposals is acceptable.”

- 5.12 Alongside the above referenced pre-application advice request, planning and listed building consent was sought and later approved in December 2023 (refs. 2020/3196/P & 2023/3610/L), which also further confirms that in principle, the Council were accepting of the proposals. The proposed scheme for which consent is sought is only 300mm different in depth. Furthermore, a number of the associated works proposed as part of the applications referenced above, have also already been approved and considered acceptable.
- 5.13 As has been demonstrated in the preceding sections of this statement, it is clearly evident that other nearby properties have also adopted the same approach in terms of making better use of the existing vaults fronting their properties along Chester Terrace for similar purposes, and this has evidently been supported by the Council in recent years. It is important to note that the proposals seek to simply physically improve the layout of the existing vaults to introduce non-habitable spaces to be incidental to the enjoyment of the primary residential use of the building and will not introduce a secondary or separate use that is accessible to members of the public. Planning policies support the productive use of existing underused land and buildings, and putting these vacant and underused vaults to a productive use is therefore supported in policy terms – the proposals by this application will facilitate this objective being fulfilled.

c) Design and Accessibility Considerations

- 5.14 As part of the proposals, it is proposed to excavate the existing and lower the floor plate to a level approximately 1200mm below its current level. Whilst it is noted that at the pre-application stage, the Council indicated that a maximum excavation level of 900mm would be permissible, it is evident from the planning history for other neighbouring properties along Chester Terrace, there appears to be an inconsistent approach historically in terms of approved floor to ceiling heights within other existing vaults. For example, as part of application ref. 2014/6252/P approved at 33 Chester Terrace, the Council confirmed:

“In addition, the proposal would involve the lowering of the ground by 1.5 metres which is considered relatively minor.”

- 5.15 It is our client's intention to lower the existing floor plate of the vaults to the level set out above so that these spaces can be used as functional spaces to be enjoyed incidental to the enjoyment of the primary residential use of the building to which they are connected. Currently, these spaces are relatively physically constrained in terms of floor to ceiling heights and allow for minimal use, hence why they have been solely used for storage purposes to date. The lowered floor level and amalgamation of the vaults will allow for these spaces to be used by the occupiers of the main dwelling, without which it would make utilising these spaces for these purposes particularly difficult and unachievable.
- 5.16 Whilst the proposals will involve lowering the existing floor slab of the vaults, the overall total floorspace of the vaults will remain largely unchanged and will not require the vaults to be extended in any way beyond their existing footprint. The lowering of the vaults is proposed in order to create additional head-height within these spaces to enable them to provide more functional and useable space to serve this family home.
- 5.17 As previously highlighted, the proposed spaces are to only be used by the residents of the main dwellinghouse and therefore these spaces have been designed to ensure they are accessible to the residents. The basement level of the building will continue to be accessible in the existing manner via the external access stairway from street level and also from the lower level of the residential dwelling itself. Given that these spaces will only be used by residents of the existing dwelling, it is not considered that extensive accessibility methods are introduced.
- 5.18 Given the nature of the proposed works, as well as the use of the spaces they will facilitate, it is not expected that there will be any negative impact on surrounding amenities.

d) Flood Risk

- 5.19 The Government's Flood Risk Map for Planning designates the application site as falling within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore considered to have a low probability of flooding from rivers and the sea – see Figure 2. This means in any year, the land has a less than 0.1% chance of flooding.

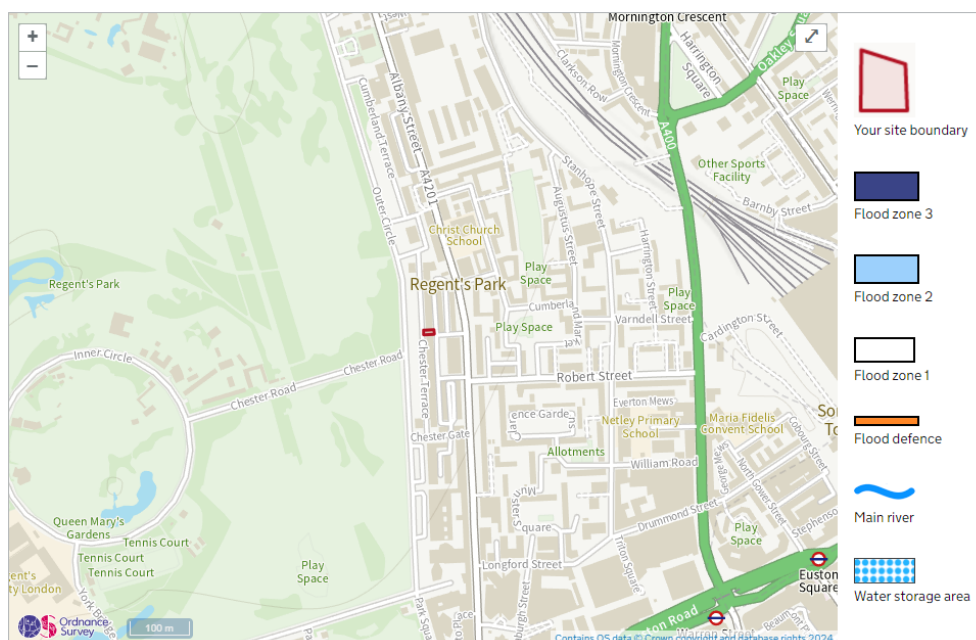


Figure 2. Extract of Government's Flood Risk Map for Planning

- 5.20 Given that the application site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and the existing basement vaults are a long-standing and well-established part of the wider residential dwelling, it is not considered that the proposals

will increase the risk of flooding in this location or the surrounding area. As set out within the preceding sections of this statement, the principle of the proposals was considered acceptable at the pre-application stage and no concerns were raised regarding the impact on flooding. Similarly, given the minor nature of the works and the fact that varying levels of excavation has been accepted at the basement vaults of other neighbouring properties, it is not expected that the proposed works would impact the structural integrity of the listed building or alter the drainage arrangement in this particular area given their proposed use. The proposals will also only result in a reduction in the flood level of the existing vaults fronting the property and not the main residential dwelling itself.

SECTION 6 | DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Use

- 6.1 This application seeks planning and listed building consent for the excavation of the existing basement vaults at the application site, as well as other associated physical alterations to facilitate the use of these spaces.

Amount and Scale

- 6.2 The proposals are considered minor in amount and scale and will not alter the existing footprint of the basement vaults nor the main dwellinghouse. The proposed works are also only limited to the existing basement vaults and lightwell area fronting the property.

Layout and Appearance

- 6.3 The proposals relate solely to the existing basement vaults situated below street level and therefore there will be no external or visible changes to these from street level. In terms of the layout, the existing three vaults are to be largely amalgamated into one single space by removing the existing dividing walls, with new partitioning introduced within one of the vaults to create a plant room.

Landscaping

- 6.4 There is no existing landscaping present at the application site, nor is any new landscaping proposed as part of the application proposals.

Access

- 6.5 The proposed spaces are to only be used by the residents of the main dwellinghouse and therefore these spaces have been designed to ensure they are accessible to the residents. The basement level of the building will continue to be accessible in the existing manner via the external access stairway from street level and also from the lower level of the residential dwelling itself. Given that these spaces will only be used by residents of the existing dwelling, it is not considered that any new means of accessibility are necessary.

SECTION 7 | CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 These planning and listed building consent applications seek permissions for a very minor alteration to the already approved works to the existing basement vaults at 25 Chester Terrace, London, NW1 4ND. The proposals seek to physically improve and make better use of these spaces to allow them to be put to a productive use in association with the main dwellinghouse, and simply involve an increase in the depth of the approved vaults by a nominal further 300mm. This will provide the required headheight to enable the spaces to be properly accessible and usable as functional spaces, without which they would remain as underused, vacant and derelict.
- 7.2 Overall, the proposed works to the application site are considered to be minor in nature and will therefore have no negative impact on the historic or architectural significance of the Grade I listed terrace, nor the wider Regent's Park Conservation Area. Furthermore, the proposals are in line with other similar proposals for vaults along the same listed terrace and cannot therefore be considered to have a detrimental impact on the character or heritage importance of the listed terrace. It is therefore considered that the proposals successfully comply with and adhere to the relevant, identified planning policies at a National, London-wide and local level.
- 7.3 We therefore trust that you have sufficient information to enable a positive determination of these applications and we look forward to receiving confirmation that the applications have been validated shortly. In the meantime, should you require any further information or have any other queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

