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13 & 13A WEST HAMPSTEAD MEWS LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN



*An Appraisal of the Site as a Heritage Asset
and the Possible Impact of the Proposals.*

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1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.01 This report seeks to describe the characteristics of the site and its place in the South Hampstead designated conservation area as a heritage asset.
- 1.02 The proposals will be discussed in terms of their possible impact and effect on the special interest of the heritage asset in the context of current local and national policies for the management of change in the historic environment.

2 THE SITE

- 2.01 Nos.13 & 13a West Hampstead Mews form an end of terrace site of an “L” shaped plan at the west end of this mews. The site is occupied by two distinct buildings. No.13a is a two storey stock brick building under a slated roof behind a brick parapet crowned with a stucco cornice. The ground floor has two large carriage-style doors with domestic sash windows above under red brick segmental arches.



2.02 No. 13 is a more altered and complex building group. Towards the rear there is a single storey carriage building with a pitched slated roof. In front of this is a courtyard which is now covered in a stepped modern roof. The frontage to the mews now has a series of poor quality painted brick alterations and additions obscuring the original site boundary treatment.



2.03 The site has most recently been predominately used as a garage repair and paint spraying business (B1) with residential use on the first floor of No.13a.

2.04 Both Nos. 13 and 13a are in a poor state of repair, but No.13 is particularly neglected and in need of major renovation.

3 HISTORY

3.01 Before the later 19th century, the area now known as West Hampstead was rural countryside to the west of Hampstead village, centred on the small hamlet of West End.

3.02 The rapid urbanisation of the area came in the last 30 years of the 19th century. Three railways came to the area, transforming the future and making central London easily accessible for the new phenomena of the daily commuter:

- Hampstead Junction Railway 1857
- Midland Railway Company 1868
- Metropolitan & St Johns Wood Railway 1879

3.03 In the period 1879-1894, Colonel Henry Cotton, a major developer in the area, laid out a series of streets of detached and semi-detached houses,

including Alcol Mews (1879) and West Hampstead Mews (1886).

- 3.04 Despite the best efforts of the estate developers, the area never became truly select. Charles Booth (1840-1916) in his pioneering survey of life in the capital, “Life and Labour of the People of London”, commented of the area;

“better class of artisans, clerks, railway men, policemen, travellers and a few professional men.”

- 3.05 It is therefore unlikely that the extensive mews accommodation in West Hampstead Mews was ever intended to be linked to particular houses such as was the case 20 years earlier in the aristocratic houses of Kensington and Mayfair, where the mews carriage house was normally directly linked with the house it served.
- 3.06 It is more likely that West Hampstead Mews provided stabling and carriage housing for those who could rent or else utilise livery for hire or a base for carters or other tradesmen. It was basically a tradesman’s address rather than an upper class service building mews.



3.07 In the case of No. 13 West Hampstead Mews, the building towards the rear of the site has an armorial plaque applied to the gable, showing a coat of arms and a date -1886. The coat of arms is that of the Kellum family. The motto at the base of the arms reads “beneficiorum memor”- “mindful of benefits”

There are several branches of this Northamptonshire family and it seems likely that they ran a livery business from this address and sought to attract a better class of customer with an armorial bearing over the door.

4 HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

- 4.01 Nos.13 and 13a form part of the original development of West Hampstead Mews. This mews, as an example of later 19th century urban planning is typical of its period, being more extensive and always having more mixed use than earlier mews developments.
- 4.02 The character of the mews is defined by the two storey stock brick terraces with carriage doors to the ground floor and domestic sash windows to the floor above. The surviving granite sett street surface is also an important part of the special interest of the area.



5 THE PROPOSALS

5.01 It is proposed to renovate No.13a for residential use. No 13 would be redeveloped as B.1 use with an architectural form and elevation to match the existing examples of mews buildings nearby. The mews frontage would be treated as an extension of the existing mews terrace.

6 DISCUSSION OF THE PROPOSALS

6.01 A judgement on how appropriate the proposals are must be informed by the local and national policies for change in the historic environment. The local authority officers have raised the issue, (despite initially being positive about this project) of the council's policy document "South Hampstead Character Appraisal and Management Strategy. February 2011" in which No.13 is included in a list of buildings that make a "positive contribution" to the character of the area.(Nos. 1-12, 13, 13a, 19-23)

6.02 It is clear in the case of Nos. 1-12 and 19-23 that these are the terraces of mews buildings which are prime formers of the particularly satisfactory workaday character of the mews. Their modest architecture and scale, repeated to form extensive

terraces set each side of a granite sett carriageway are the essence of a working mews.

- 6.03 No 13a is an exception as it stands alone forming a view stop at the west end of the mews. With its relatively unaltered elevations and its architectural formality, it makes a very prominent landmark contribution to the character of the area.
- 6.04 In contrast, No.13 is neither prominent visually, of importance as part of a terrace nor in good or unaltered condition. The mews frontage to No. 13 is greatly altered and in a poor condition with a great deal of modern mutilation including painting of the decayed brickwork. The building to the rear is also in a very poor condition and aside from the gable inscribed plaque, makes little or no contribution to the conservation area. Given the poor, highly altered and decayed appearance of this corner of the mews, it is appropriate to say that this site detracts from the character of the area.
- 6.05 The council's Character Appraisal for the Conservation Area describes the mews and back land sites thus;

“5.10 There are two traditional mews in the conservation area: West Hampstead Mews and Wavel Mews. These properties are generally two storeys with pitched roofs

hidden behind parapets and attractive simple elevations in keeping with their original function as garages, workshops and stables. As is typical in mews properties, the front elevation is not set back.”

6.06 The council’s Appraisal goes on to say of buildings identified as of “positive” value;

“6.2 There is a strong presumption to retain buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the area. Detractors are elements of the townscape that are considered to be so significantly out of scale or character with their surroundings that their replacement with something of a more appropriate scale and massing or detailed architectural treatment would benefit the character of the area.

6.07 Negative factors, including the extent of intrusion or damage are further described:

“6.9 These buildings, elements or spaces detract from the special character or appearance of the area. Sensitive redevelopment may provide an opportunity for beneficial change. In other words, they blight the area and improvement is expected in proposals for redevelopment.

6.08 The poor quality of the frontage of No. 13 and the very decayed altered nature of the building means that this building falls within the category of

detracting from the special interest of the area and is a site where redevelopment can bring beneficial change. Indeed, the careful and sensitive design now proposed meets all the demands of the council's own description of mews character quoted above in paragraph 6.05 of this report.

- 6.09 The council's approach to appraising the conservation area is founded, we are told, on English Heritage advice given in "Conservation Area Appraisals and Management of Conservation Areas" It is instructive to look at paragraph 4.16:

"In addition to listed buildings, it is important to identify on a map those unlisted buildings that make an important contribution to the character of the conservation area."

- 6.10 The judgement to be made, therefore, is which buildings "make an important contribution" to the conservation area. It is self-evident that Nos.1-12, Nos.19-23 and No.13a form the visible heart of the areas character. But No.13, in its decayed and mutilated condition can hardly be called "an important contribution" to the character of the conservation area.

- 6.11 National Government guidance concerning change in the historic environment is given in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and offers a helpful steer. No.13 is a building within the

designated heritage asset of the South Hampstead Conservation Area. Paragraph 134 of Section 12 of NPPF states:

“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 securing its optimum viable use.”

6.12 The designated heritage asset in this case is the conservation area rather than the building which, of itself, would not merit statutory listing. Whatever vestigial harm that may be claimed would be caused by the loss of No.13, it would be greatly outweighed by the enhancement of the conservation area with a new building of appropriate design and detail.

6.13 The NPPF also advises in paragraph 131 that one of the factors local planning authorities should take into account is:

“the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.01 The local authority has indicated that the reason for refusal in this case would be based on their policy LDF 25(C). This policy states that there is a strong presumption against the loss of buildings identified as making a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.
- 7.02 No.13 is a mutilated building in poor condition which makes little or no contribution to the special character of the South Hampstead Conservation Area. The inclusion of this building in a list of those that form the special interest of the area is mistaken.
- 7.03 The proposal as now presented for redevelopment represents a significant enhancement of a site that currently detracts from the special character of the conservation area. The proposal will also bring new economic and social life to an otherwise neglected and underused corner of West Hampstead Mews.

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