



Heritage Assessment

In respect of:

**6 Erskine Road
Primrose Hill
London NW3 3AJ**

On behalf of:

Durley Investment Corporation

For:

**Refurbishment and redevelopment of No. 6 Erskine Road
for residential and employment uses**

Date:

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Reference:

EA/AT/1129he/R002m

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Assessment has been prepared by DPP Heritage & Design on behalf of Durley Investment Corporation in connection with a proposal for the rehabilitation and redevelopment of 6 Erskine Road for residential and commercial purposes along with consideration of potential effects on nearby heritage assets.

1.2 The site comprises of Leeder House and the Caretaker's Lodge which both adjoin Erskine Road. There are also a number of commercial buildings occupy the rear of the site (namely Building 2, 3, 4 and 5).

1.3 This assessment establishes the proposals in relation to the relevant statutory duties, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adopted local policy documents including The London Plan and Local Development Framework.

1.4 In particular, NPPF Chapter 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, confirms that:

'Local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting...'
(para 128).

1.5 This assessment should be read in association with all the other supporting documents submitted in support of the application. This submission is supported by a comprehensive set of Architectural drawings and supporting visuals, prepared by PKS Architects.

1.6 Section 2.0 of this assessment highlights the heritage assets within the local area and context of the application site. This is followed by Section 3.0 which sets out the national and local heritage planning policy context relevant to the site and proposals.

- 1.7 The assessment then sets out and assesses the special architectural and historic interest of Leeder House (*Section 4.0*).
- 1.8 It then sets out and assesses the special interest and character and appearance of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area, with particular reference to the application site and its surroundings (*Section 5.0*). This assessment is informed by the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement which was adopted in 2001.
- 1.9 *Section 6.0* then undertakes a review of the application proposals for this site. Finally at *Section 7.0* is a conclusion, where it is concluded that the scheme proposals protect the significance of the heritage assets and positively respond to, the history and character of its context.
- 1.10 The proposals will not harm the special interest or setting of the designated and non-designated heritage assets, and will preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area.

2.0 Defining the Heritage Assets

2.1 The NPPF defines a 'heritage asset' as:

"A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing). Heritage assets are described as 'the valued components of the historic environment' and can include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority during the process of decision making or through the plan making process (known as undesignated heritage assets)."

2.2 The application proposals relate to 6 Erskine Road which comprises of various buildings which are situated within the Primrose Hill area of London. Leeder House, Caretaker's Lodge, Buildings 2 and 3 are situated within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area with Building 5 excluded.

Designated Heritage Assets

Listed Buildings

2.3 The National Heritage List for England was accessed on the 2nd May 2013; this confirmed that there are no statutorily listed buildings within the immediate vicinity of the site.

Conservation Areas

2.4 Part of the application site is located within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area. The conservation area was designated on 1st October 1971 and extended to include the north part of Erskine Road on the 18th June 1985. The designation report notes that the character of the area *'is made up of a series of well laid out*

Victorian terraces. It is residential in character, although there are a number of local industries, and has its own shopping centre, a primary school and, because of the vicinity of Primrose Hill, is extremely well provided with open space'. A Conservation Character Statement was adopted for the Primrose Hill Conservation Area in 2001.

Scheduled Ancient Monument

- 2.5 The National Heritage List for England was accessed on the 2nd May 2013; this confirmed that there are no scheduled ancient monuments in the vicinity of the site.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 2.6 Non-Designated Heritage Assets are often referred to as locally listed buildings, these are either a building, structure or feature which, whilst not listed by the Secretary of State, the Council feels to be an important part of the areas heritage due to its architectural, historic or archaeological significance.
- 2.7 Camden Council is currently drafting a list of locally significant buildings for the area and is expected to go out to consultation in the autumn of 2013¹.
- 2.8 Both Leeder House and the Caretakers Lodge are however identified within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement (2001) as a building which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 2.9 However it is important to note that the adjacent outbuildings have not been recognised as having a positive impact on the conservation area.

¹ Camden Council, 2013

3.0 Heritage Planning Policy

- 3.1 The proposals for the application site will need to be considered in light of policy and guidance set out for historic buildings and areas. The statutory duties, national guidance and local plan policies relevant to the proposals supported by this statement are summarised below:

Statutory Duties

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- 3.2 The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* provides that when determining planning permission within conservation areas, the Act outlines that:

's.72 (1) In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any powers under any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.'

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework, 2012

- 3.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was issued on 27 March 2012 and replaces Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5). The NPPF provides a full statement of Government planning policies with regard to the protection of all heritage assets.
- 3.4 Additional detail is provided by the Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (March 2010) which, whilst published in support of PPS5, remains relevant. This provides further guidance on how the policies set out in the NPPF should be

implemented.

- 3.5 Importantly the NPPF sets out the level of information that would be required in support of applications affecting heritage assets. **Paragraph 128** states:

'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.'

- 3.6 **Paragraph 129** then sets out the assessment that a Local Planning Authority (LPA) should undertake when determining applications affecting heritage assets, and states:

'Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.'

- 3.7 **Paragraph 131** then confirms the issues that the LPA should take account of when determining such applications; and states:

'In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*

- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.'*

3.8 With regard to applications affecting designated heritage assets, **Paragraph 132** states:

'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. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting.'

3.9 In addition **Paragraph 135** provides additional policy guidance regarding the consideration of applications regarding undesignated heritage assets and states:

'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.'

3.10 This is supported by way of additional information held within the **Planning Practice Guide** which states:

'83. Some non-designated assets, such as buildings of good local character or sites of archaeological interest, are of heritage significance but not at a level that would pass the threshold for national designation. Such assets can, singularly and collectively, make an important, positive contribution to the environment. The desirability of conserving them and the contribution their setting may make to their significance is a material consideration, but individually less of a priority than for designated assets or their equivalents.'

- 3.11 **Paragraph 137** identifies the opportunity that exists for development within Conservation Areas and/or the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal that setting, it states:

'Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.'

- 3.12 However **Paragraph 138** also notes that not all elements of a Conservation Area contribute to its heritage significance:

'Not all elements of a World Heritage Site or Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance.'

- 3.13 The Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide gives further explanation on how setting can contribute to the significance of a heritage asset. It states that setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations such as views of or from an asset, and spatial associations such as the historic relationship between places, and can therefore be wider than the curtilage of a building.

- 3.14 The Guide states that any development of change capable of affecting the significance of a heritage asset or people's experience of it can be considered as falling within its setting. The design of a development affecting the setting of a heritage asset may play an important part in determining the impact upon it. The scale, proportion, height, massing, alignment and use of materials can contribute to the setting, and therefore the significance, of an asset.

Local Policy and Guidance

- 3.15 The following local policy for Camden Council is a relevant consideration for the application proposals on the site:

The London Plan, 2004

- 3.16 The *London Plan* was adopted by the Greater London Authority in February 2004 and sets out the Spatial Development Strategy for all Boroughs within Greater London. Subsequent review of the Plan led to the Mayor incorporating both the Early and Further Alterations in the London Plan in February 2008. The London Plans also sets out policies regarding the protection of the built heritage in London, it states that:

'4B.11 London's built heritage

The Mayor will work with strategic partners to protect and enhance London's historic environment. DPD policies should seek to maintain and increase the contribution of the built heritage to London's environmental quality, to the economy, both through tourism and the beneficial use of historic assets, and to the well-being of London's people while allowing for London to accommodate growth in a sustainable manner.

4B.12 Heritage conservation

Boroughs should:

- 1. ensure that the protection and enhancement of historic assets in London are based on an understanding of their special character, and form part of the wider design and urban improvement agenda, including their relationship to adjoining areas, and that policies recognise the multi-cultural nature of heritage issues;*

2. identify areas, spaces, historic parks and gardens, and buildings of special quality or character and adopt policies for their protection and the identification of opportunities for their enhancement, taking into account the strategic London context;

3. encourage and facilitate inclusive solutions to providing access for all, to and within the historic environment and the tidal foreshore.'

London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework, 2010

- 3.17 The London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework and Core Strategy (together with the Development Policies) were adopted on the 8th November 2010. Together they form the planning framework for development management purposes in Camden. The following policies relate to the proposals, in terms specifically of the design quality of the development and its impact on heritage assets.

Core Strategy

- 3.18 The Core Strategy is the principal document in the Local Development Framework and provides the vision, objectives and spatial policies to guide development in the borough up to 2025.

- 3.19 In relation to promoting high quality places and conserving heritage, **Policy CS14** states that the Council will ensure that Camden's places and buildings are attractive, safe and easy to use by:

'a) requiring development of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character;

b) preserving and enhancing Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens;

c) promoting high quality landscaping and works to streets and public spaces;

d) seeking the highest standards of access in all buildings and places and requiring schemes to be designed to be inclusive and accessible;

e) protecting important views of St Paul's Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster from sites inside and outside the borough and protecting important local views.'

3.20 It also states within **Paragraph 14.9** of the Core Strategy that the Council has prepared conservation area statements, appraisals and management strategies that provide further guidance on the character of these areas. It further states that the council will take these documents into account as **material considerations** when they assess applications for planning permission and conservation area consent in these areas.

Development Policies

3.21 The Development Policies contribute towards delivering the Core Strategy by setting out detailed planning policies that the Council will use for determining planning applications.

3.22 With regards to conserving Camden's Heritage, **Policy DP25** states that in order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will:

'a) take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;

b) only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area;

c) prevent the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area where

this harms the character or appearance of the conservation area, unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention;

d) not permit development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character and appearance of that conservation area; and

e) preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of a conservation area and which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.'

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement, 2001

- 3.23 As previously mentioned, this document provides a brief summary of the significance of the conservation area. It is a material consideration of some weight in the determination process. The guidance contained in the document amplifies that contained within the Core Strategy and Development Policies and as such should be considered during the design process.

The Setting of Heritage Assets: English Heritage Guidance (October 2011)

- 3.24 In July 2010 English Heritage published 'The Setting of Heritage Assets: English Heritage Guidance' for public consultation. This document outlines a method for establishing the extent of setting, assessing the contribution setting makes to the significance of a heritage asset and how to determine the effects of a proposal upon setting, and by extension, the significance of a heritage asset.
- 3.25 It is noted that the intention is that the guidance should be read in conjunction with the NPPF, Conservation Principle's & Guidance (2008) and other English Heritage guidance. The document was adopted in October 2011 and is now a material consideration in the planning process.

- 3.26 The document provides an overview of the statutory definition of setting as well as the elaboration provided in guidance, specifically PPS1 and the former PPS5 (which has now been rescinded and should instead be read in light of the guidance contained in the NPPF), and notes that any assessment of significance should include the contribution of the heritage asset's setting. The question of setting is unlikely to be a significant consideration in this instance and we note the guidance here for the sake of completeness only.

4.0 Assessment of Significance

- 4.1 In order to consider the impacts of the proposals it is necessary to complete an assessment of the significance of the heritage assets.

Leeder House, 6 Erskine Road

Background

- 4.2 The collection of buildings known as 6 Erskine Road is a back land site with only a narrow frontage onto Erskine Road comprising Leeder House and a small, single storey building known as the Caretaker's Lodge.
- 4.3 It is bounded on two other sides by mid-Victorian terraces/houses on Regent's Park Road and King Henry's Road respectively. The properties on Regent's Park Road comprise commercial premises at ground floor with predominantly residential above, while King Henry's Road is wholly residential.
- 4.4 The freehold owner of the land is understood to have been Eton College who, it is assumed, leased out tranches to developers to build the terraces and villas evident today. The buildings bounding the site date from the 1860's as does Leeder House.
- 4.5 The site lies partially within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area: Buildings 6 (Leeder House), 2, 3 and 1 (Caretaker's Lodge) lie within the conservation area, while buildings 4 (not part of the current application) and 5 are outside it. None of the buildings on the site are listed.

Evidential Value

- 4.6 The building retains much of the external character and form associated with its execution and occupation as a Victorian industrial building, forming part of the historical development of Primrose Hill. The original external form of the building remains discernible allowing an interpretation of the buildings function and purpose.
- 4.7 The architectural significance of the building will be discussed below. However it is important to note that even when one considers the cumulative impacts of any later alterations and subdivisions, the architectural form, scale and proportion of the building remains apparent.

Architectural Interest

- 4.8 The property known as 'Leeder House' comprises a detached four storey building dating from the 1860's, constructed in brick and later rendered under a slate roof. It is executed using a simple unassuming symmetry of classical proportion utilising details and elements of the Italianate style as its architectural theme, in common with much unassuming industrial architecture of this period.
- 4.9 Its form, design and use of materials are typical of mid-19th century industrial buildings built during this period. In this context, it is not in itself an early, rare or exceptional example of the building type or style.



Figure 1 – Principal Elevation to Leeder House

- 4.10 The principal elevation is to Erskine Road and roughly symmetrical in its execution with two gable ends at either side. The elevation is further characterised by the protruding dormer windows to its fourth floor.
- 4.11 There are pilaster entablatures between the ground floor windows comprised of cornices with a cyma recta cymatium, half-round corona and arissband bed moulding over an egg and dart ovolo surmounting a fluted capital with half-round and ariss band stepped necking below. The remainder of each pilaster is rendered over.
- 4.12 The ground floor windows are round-arched openings with semi-circular fixed fanlights, flanked with a triptych window in a mock-Palladian motif to the right hand side and rectangular windows and the timber front entrance door to the left hand side.
- 4.13 Detail to the elevation is limited and comparatively plain as one would often expect from an industrial building, however as previously mentioned the use of

pillar capitals together with the use of a cornice to the upper floor helps break up the elevation and achieve a degree of aesthetic interest, drawing the eye up the elevation and thus balancing the horizontal form with an applied aesthetic verticality.

- 4.14 The corninging comprises an ogee moulding with dentil band under and two ariss bands below, the upper ariss band painted red between and beneath the dentil blocks. This is further strengthened through the use of an unadorned string course to the first floor of the building.
- 4.15 The windows to the first floor are surbased segmental arched windows, again with triptych windows to either end imitating those below. The windows to the third floor are French-arched windows to the central section, but the triptych to either end picks up the round-arched mock-Palladian motif of the ground floor once more. To the upper floors, the detail becomes progressively less detailed and more rudimentary.
- 4.16 The downpipes at the front of the property are painted cast iron; with sections running down the sloping face of the roof and then vertically downwards before turning in through the front wall between the ground and first floors.
- 4.17 This elevation does also retain a number of areas of detail possibly contemporary with its period including its casement windows, however such features are not unusual on such buildings with those encountered here not being of any particular note and are in a deteriorated state.
- 4.18 The flanking elevations are comparatively plain, their scale and mass making them visible within the streetscape as one moves along Erskine Road. A degree of interest is provided by the cornice which crowns the entablature along the top edge of the building, providing a degree of articulation within the plane of the elevations. These help to draw the eye to the buildings symmetry and exacerbate its mass.



Figure 2 – Rear Elevation to Leeder House

- 4.19 The rear of the building is comparatively plain and has been subjected to various alterations during the latter part of the 20th century. This has limited much of the clarity and quality of this elevation, thus harming its character.
- 4.20 Therefore, as experienced, the building represents an example of a competently detailed Victorian industrial building (albeit now commercial). Whilst what is now the principal elevation of the building is reasonably unaltered, its architecture is comparatively plain and simple, being an example of a style and completion that is commonplace within the townscape of Britain.
- 4.21 The building makes a neutral/positive contribution to the Conservation Area but this contribution is concluded to be specifically related to the external appearance of the principal elevation and its position within the wider townscape.

Historic Interest

- 4.22 Leeder House is a fairly typical and unassuming example of a late nineteenth century industrial building. The building has retained its original context, surrounded by neighbouring residential and commercial properties dating from a

similar period.

- 4.23 The Ordnance Survey map of 1850-51 indicates that this area of Primrose Hill was at that date as yet unconstructed and instead the land still formed part of the Chalk Farm area. The farm began selling ale in the 17th century (although farming continued until at least 1732) and had become the Chalk Farm Tavern by 1790.
- 4.24 It included pleasure gardens on the site now bounded by Berkley Road, Chalcot Square and Sharpleshall Street². At the height of its success, the Tavern boasted a dance floor capable of taking one thousand people as well as a bandstand, known as the Chinese Orchestra, which was 36 feet high³.
- 4.25 When Primrose Hill Tunnel was being built, the Chalk Farm Tavern was the first resting place of navvies killed in the works. By then the Tavern was separated from its gardens by the new road that became Regent's Park Road. The Tavern was rebuilt in 1853-4 to a size much smaller than its predecessor (now the Limonia Restaurant).
- 4.26 The Ordnance Survey map of 1871-75 shows that by this date what is now 'Leeder House' is established within its surrounding context, however the areas of Ainger and Oppidans Roads are still open grassland during this point.
- 4.27 It is believed that Leeder House was constructed for industrial use at first (possibly connected to a timber yard) and was later turned into a Piano factory during the 1870's. The rhythm of the windows is characteristic of industrial style buildings, emphasising higher floor to ceiling heights and illustrating its role and position within the wider context of the area.
- 4.28 This corresponds with Ordnance Survey maps and the importance that the Primrose Hill area became in piano manufacturing. Notable manufacturers within the area included J Spencer and Co, which were located at the end of Egbert

² Camden Railway Heritage Trust, 2013

³ Camden Railway Heritage Trust, 2013

Street, John and James Hopkinson, located in Fitzroy Road, and Collard and Collard, located on the corner of Gloucester Crescent and Oval Road⁴.

4.29 Camden Town was a very suitable centre for piano manufacture. The Regent's Canal could be used for transporting heavy and bulky goods like pianos cheaply, either to the west and so to the national canal system, or east to the docks and from there all over the world. Camden Town was also near the rail-heads of King's Cross, Euston and St Pancras, so transport conditions by water and rail were ideal. Soon the area became a centre of the piano industry.

4.30 By 1895, the surrounding area was completely redeveloped and little to no evidence left regarding the former Chalk Farm (albeit the rebuilt tavern/pub). The majority of the outbuildings situated within the application site are identified on the Ordnance Survey map of 1915 confirming that the site reached its developed arrangement by that date. The building was later converted into commercial use during the 1950's and has remained in this use up to the present day.



Figure 4 – View down Erskine Road with the rebuilt Chalk Farm Tavern to the left and Leeder House to the right⁵

⁴ Primrose Hill Conservation Area Character Statement, 2001

⁵ Google Maps, 2013

- 4.31 Leeder House was originally constructed for industrial purposes and appears to have had a variety of uses up until the early twentieth century. The building therefore forms an element of the development of Primrose Hill, although to date no evidence has been identified to suggest that the building is of any particular significance for its relationship to the historical development of Primrose Hill.

Communal & Townscape Value

- 4.32 There is a relationship between Leeder House and the wider surrounding buildings, in terms of their shared age, classically influenced design and common association with the layout out of the Primrose Hill area in the 19th century.
- 4.33 The building is a pleasant element of the local townscape being visually prominent due to its scale in relation to the neighbouring properties fronting onto Erskine Road and its architectural character. It is noted on review that the buildings contribution to the surrounding area and thus its significance can be considered associated with its principal elevation and is specifically related to its design, scale and execution as opposed to its surviving fabric.

Other Buildings

- 4.34 There are a number of associated buildings which form part of the wider site and have developed in association with Leeder House, these are noted below.
- 4.35 The Caretakers Lodge is small, single storey slate-roofed building dating from 1894-5. The building was historically used as offices for the factory on the site at this time, then as a showroom for the piano / organ factory.
- 4.36 At some time it was used as a caretaker's flat but is now used as studio/office space. Whilst the building does engage with Erskine Road it has been subjected to multiple change and alterations, therefore it is of limited historic value although forming an element of the streetscape.

- 4.37 Building 2 was constructed in 1899 as a “new factory”. It is a two storey, flat-roofed brick building, now rendered and painted. Building 3, added to the site in 1932, is a brick built two storey building with pitched roof which contrasts somewhat with its flat roof neighbour.
- 4.38 Building 5 is sited outside the conservation area, the building dates from the last years of the 19th century and is a single storey pitched slate roof building.
- 4.39 These buildings form a group which enjoy a historical and spatial relationship with Leeder House. Whilst the buildings themselves are of limited merit they enjoy a degree of historical relationship and represent the development of the site in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Summary of Significance

- 4.40 Leeder House remains as the focal point of the site engaging with Erskine Road, its scale and architecture contrasting with the surrounding built form. The buildings to the rear are of limited architectural quality but form an element of the development of the site and its surroundings.
- 4.41 The surrounding streetscape is of varied quality, and formed of a combination of mainly comparatively 3 storey townhouses, of standard types dating from the 19th century. When surrounded by such an arrangement the incorporation of architectural detailing and style over four storeys will inevitably draw the eye giving Leeder House presence within the street scene.
- 4.42 Therefore whilst it is noted that the building does remain as a feature within the townscape, this is more to do with its scale and design when compared with the surrounding townscape and has less to do with its own significance as a heritage asset.

- 4.43 Whilst it undoubtedly retains elements its original architectural form and scale, these features are comparatively common in such Victorian compositions and are not of sufficient significance to warrant statutory protection.
- 4.44 In addition archival research has failed to indicate any details of the buildings architect or historical association during its occupancy period. Therefore any historical significance is limited to that as now encountered.
- 4.45 It is therefore concluded that the building remains as an example of Victorian industrial architecture, albeit an example which is comparatively common.

5.0 Assessment of Significance – Primrose Hill Conservation Area

- 5.1 An appraisal of the significance of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area is provided in this section; with specific reference to the application site and its surrounding area. This appraisal is informed by the Character Study for the Primrose Hill Conservation Area (2001).

History

- 5.2 From Medieval times, the area covered by the Primrose Hill Conservation Area was open fields with small lane running alongside. The existing Conservation Area is primarily located on land owned by Lord Southampton, while land to the north and west was owned by Eton College and to the south by the Crown Estate.
- 5.3 From the 17th century, the Chalk Farm Tavern was located on the site of the current building at No.89 Regents Park Road. The tavern was famous for its shooting ground and large pleasure garden to the rear now surrounded by Berkley Road, Sharpleshall Street and Regent's Park Road. It was not until the mid-19th century that extensive development of the area began, in response to the expansion of London as both a trade centre and fashionable place to live.
- 5.4 The first major development was the Regent's Canal, which linked the Grand Canal Junction at Paddington and London Docks. The completion of the canal in 1820 was followed by proposals to develop Lord Southampton's land for housing. As with Nash's development surrounding Regent's Park, the canal was not seen as a hindrance to development and an estate was envisaged of large suburban villas with substantial gardens.
- 5.5 The estate was developed in the 1840s after the building of the London and Birmingham Railway in the 1830s. A map dated 1834 shows a railway terminus located at Chalk Farm (most likely due its popularity in the 17th and 18th century).

However it soon became obvious that the railway needed to terminate closer to the heart of London, and Euston Square was chosen for the site of the new station.

- 5.6 The railway line extension to Euston had to negotiate a steep incline and consequently, a winch was used to haul trains as far as Chalk Farm. The straight track required for the winch meant the line had to run directly to Euston, necessitating the purchase of part of Lord Southampton's land. This entailed the repositioning of the northern section of Gloucester Avenue, with a sharp bend west of the Canal Bridge and steep curve to the junction of Regents Park Road.
- 5.7 In 1840, the Southampton Estate was sold in freehold portions for development. The sale map shows a grand estate consisting of large semi-detached and detached villas located in generous gardens. The layout reflects the current street pattern of the area and incorporates the sweeping curves of the villa development with the addition of a formal intersection and garden at the centre and retention of the Chalk Farm Tavern gardens.
- 5.8 A map dated 1860 shows that 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 following a variety of styles. Such variety of layout reflects the architectural fashions of the time, whilst the compromises to layout may indicate competitiveness between the architects and conflict between the landowners.
- 5.9 The importance of the railway grew throughout the 19th century; the winch was abandoned as more powerful engines were brought into use, large railway sheds were erected alongside Gloucester Avenue and the track area increased in size.
- 5.10 As a consequence of the growth of the railway and associated activities, noise, vibration and smoke pollution increased, at the expense of the surrounding environment. It quickly became apparent that grand villas could not be placed near the railway line and instead, simple terraces were erected in Gloucester Avenue and adjoining streets.

- 5.11 By 1870, the Southampton Estate land had been largely developed. Whilst the wide roads of the villa layout were retained, the density of development, particularly in the later phases, was significantly higher than originally intended, particularly in locations close to the railway line.
- 5.12 The final built form of the Conservation Area varies considerably from what was originally intended by the Southampton Estate planners, due to a number of factors. The neighbouring railway line had a significant impact upon the physical layout and environmental quality of the area. This was apparent as many of the buildings which were located close to the railway fell into disrepair, as the poor state of the environment discouraged investment.
- 5.13 In the 20th century, the estate experienced a number of changes. World War II bomb damage required substantial repair to a number of buildings, whilst others were completely destroyed. Redevelopment of bomb sites occurred throughout the latter half of the 20th century.

Character and Appearance

- 5.14 Regents Park Road is the principal road that curves along its entire length and is wide and commercial in character, with a large number of small shops and cafes. There are a small number of street trees in Regents Park Road, and where these exist, they are located at the junctions of secondary roads. This allows long views of Primrose Hill and of trees in front gardens at the north end of the road.
- 5.15 On the west side of Regents Park Road, the Queens Public House marks the break with the green character of Primrose Hill and St. Georges Terrace Gardens, and frames the entrance to the commercial part of Regents Park Road.
- 5.16 The commercial buildings within Regents Park Road vary in character. On the west side, between the Queens Public House and No.89, there are a number of small terrace groups of three storey brick buildings and an unusual two storey property at No.75, which has a double pitched mansard roof and single dormer windows.

These properties are stepped accordingly to the topographical incline and are simply detailed with a mixture of original window arrangements, including sash and casement windows.

- 5.17 Two prominent corner buildings define the entrance to Erskine Road. The first is No.89 Regents Park Road (the Lemonia Restaurant), which is a former public house. This building is three storeys high and has a symmetrical white stucco façade with decorative pilasters, hipped roof and prominent chimney stacks. The second is No.91 Regents Park Road, which is an end of terrace property of four storeys with prominent gable features to the front and side elevations.
- 5.18 Erskine Road provides a link across the old St. Pancras Borough Boundary to Ainger Road and is subsequently livelier in character than the neighbouring cul-de-sacs. The road is fairly wide and contains a few street trees, mainly Silver Birch with some smaller species.
- 5.19 On the south side of the road is a terrace of typical mid-19th century buildings with rusticated ground floors. Some properties have been converted for commercial uses with the addition of later shopfronts. Access is also provided to the redeveloped Erskine Mews, via an archway. On the north side of the road is an access alleyway to the works at the rear of Nos. 91-109 Regents Park Road.
- 5.20 Within the Conservation Area Character Statement it describes Leeder House as '*a large industrial style building with an ornate symmetrical stucco façade*', however upon investigation, it is believed that the building is constructed from brick and was later rendered.
- 5.21 Regents Park Road is terminated at its north end by the junction with Gloucester Avenue. Views north are of the metal pedestrianised bridge over the railway line and distant high buildings. On the west side of the road are a number of commercial and residential buildings, a hall constructed in decorative brickwork, a single villa and a former 1930's petrol station.

6.0 Assessment of Development Proposals

- 6.1 The following section of the report will outline the development proposals and then assess their impacts on the identified significance of the heritage assets as noted and considered within this report.

Development Proposals

Leeder House

- 6.2 The application proposal involves the change of use and refurbishment of Leeder House to form 4.no. residential apartments, the demolition and replacement of Building 5 and the refurbishment of the Caretaker's Lodge, Buildings 2 and Building 3.
- 6.3 As recognised within the Building Survey, Leeder House is currently in a very poor condition and substantial refurbishment works are required in order to stabilise and bring the building up to a suitable standard. These works include the replacement of the roof, re-pointing, stabilising and rendering of existing facades, installation of a basement and extensive reconfiguration of the internal layout.
- 6.4 The only alterations to the principal elevation of Leeder House include the installation of a window to replace a redundant doorway, the extension of window bays at ground floor level in order to allow light into the proposed lower ground living areas and the opening up of a window on the third floor. At roof level, a condenser enclosure is a new addition and photovoltaic panels will be installed (albeit these were also approved under planning permission 2011/6306/P).
- 6.5 Minor alterations are also taking place on the rear elevation of the property, including the installation of glass balconies, reconfiguration of windows to allow kitchen and WC extraction equipment and the replacement of windows at roof level to allow for the installation of a roof terrace. Additionally, an existing window

opening on the buildings south east elevation is to be blocked up.

- 6.6 A private courtyard is to be incorporated at ground level, which provides amenity space for future occupants of the ground floor dwelling. This has been created as there is no longer a requirement for the core servicing area, which was approved as part of the office scheme. Adjacent to this amenity space are 2no. car parking spaces, to be allocated alongside the residential dwellings.

Caretaker's Lodge

- 6.7 The refurbishment of the lodge incorporates some minor external alterations to that previously approved under 2011/6306/P, including the installation of entrance doors to the north west elevation in order to provide access to the refuse storage area. The sub-station has direct access onto Erskine Road through double doors, the principal of which was approved under 2011/6306/P.
- 6.8 The core servicing area immediately to the rear of the lodge has been slightly reconfigured, with the roof height increasing by approximately 200mm to meet current requirements.

Building 2

- 6.9 Building 2 is to be refurbished, largely in accordance with planning permission 2011/6306/P. The only proposed departure from the approved scheme is the removal of a window opening on the south west elevation and the creation of additional window openings at first floor level on the south east elevation. Alterations are also taking place at roof level adjoining the Regents Park Road boundary, in order to allow for external condensing units to be screened by the roof pitch and to allow for adequate Rights to Light of adjacent properties.

Building 3

- 6.10 Similar to Building 2, Building 3 is to be comprehensively refurbished and continue

to be used for office purposes. The current proposal allows for a pitched roof with skylights, as opposed to the flat roof which was approved under 2011/6306/P. As a consequence of this, no photovoltaic panels are proposed on the roof of Building 3.

Building 5

- 6.11 Building 5 is to be demolished and replaced with a building of similar size and appearance to that previously approved. Window configuration on the south eastern elevation and the internal basement layout has been amended to reflect current requirements, however these are not considered to be material changes which affect the principal of development. In addition, the amount of photovoltaic panels on the roof has been reduced from that previously approved.
- 6.12 The core servicing area located between Buildings 4 and 5 has also been amended with an extension to the entrance lobby. Although the footprint of the building has slightly increased at ground level, this is below the existing retaining wall and consequently will not impact upon the amenity of adjoining neighbours. Additionally, windows are no longer proposed adjoining the King Henry's Road boundary, thus reducing the amount of potential overlooking when compared with the extant permission.
- 6.13 In summary, the development proposal involves the comprehensive refurbishment and redevelopment of 6 Erskine Road. Although there have been some minor design alterations, the proposal remains broadly similar to that previously approved, with the main departure being the change of use of Leeder House from offices (Class B1) to 4.no. residential dwellings (Class C3).

Assessment

Leeder House

- 6.14 The development proposal secures the retention and rehabilitation of Leeder House retaining its presence within the context of the townscape and wider conservation area. The works facilitate the repair of structural defects and improvements to the general aesthetic of the building.
- 6.15 Whilst minor changes are proposed to the elevations of Leeder House these will complement the existing architecture and when combined with the rehabilitation of the structure will reinforce the clarity and cohesion of the architecture.
- 6.16 Within the elevation to Erskine Road the works to the entrance doors and surrounding windows will enhance the arrangement, bringing the fenestration back into keeping with its surrounding design, returning the rhythm and aesthetic cohesion which has been lost through later alterations.
- 6.17 The insertion of a window to match its neighbours replacing the door will again maintain the rhythm and integrity of the elevation and whilst affecting a slight change in the arrangement of the elevation the cohesion will be maintained, ensuring that the works maintain the significance of the Conservation Area.
- 6.18 The proposed extension of window bays at ground floor level in order to allow light into the proposed lower ground living areas does not cause unnecessary disruption to the fenestration and will balance the door at the opposite end of the elevation that also extends to ground level.
- 6.19 The works at the upper floors and roof level are minor in nature and will be little visible from ground level. The insertion of a condenser enclosure which forms an element of the wider rehabilitation will sit with the already approved PV panels and lift enclosure.

- 6.20 It is considered however that the strength of the architecture form and rhythm at the lower level will draw the eye, meaning that alterations at roof level will not cause detriment to the significance of the conservation area.
- 6.21 Alterations to the rear are limited in form and scale, which form part of the further evolution of the building to meet its proposed upgraded use. It is important to consider the context of the rear elevation and its associated engagement with the wider conservation area and thus its significance.
- 6.22 The revisions to balconies and fenestration retain the rhythm and architectural detailing of the elevation, whilst the incorporation of insulated metal panels at roof level is using a contemporary material which reflects the utilitarian heritage of the building.
- 6.23 The works will also facilitate the removal of the substantial fire escape stair leaving a comparatively crisp and visible elevation.
- 6.24 The proposals will secure the rehabilitation of Leeder House, which whilst visually prominent in the context of the conservation area is in deteriorating condition. This will retain the position of the building within the wider townscape and specifically within its context to the wider character of Erskine Road.
- 6.25 The works to the building are comparatively minor in nature and where required have been designed and specified to take a note from the building. Changes to the fenestration respect the surrounding rhythm and maintain its character, whilst the changes at roof level have limited visibility within the context.
- 6.26 It is therefore concluded that the works to Leeder House will protect the character of the conservation area through the re-use of the building, where change is proposed it is minimal and does not cause detriment to the identified significance of the conservation area.

Caretakers Lodge

- 6.27 It is noted that the proposal facilitates the refurbishment of the Lodge broadly in accordance with the works as previously approved under 2011/6306/P. The key change is the installation of entrance doors to the north west elevation in order to provide access to the refuse storage area.
- 6.28 This elevation already displays a range of openings lacking a spatial and proportionality rhythm, it is therefore concluded that this alteration will have a neutral effect upon this elevation.
- 6.29 It is therefore concluded that the proposals, when viewed in association with those already approved will have a neutral effect upon the character of the conservation area.

Building 2

- 6.30 The only proposed departure from the approved scheme (2011/6306/P) is the removal of a window opening on the south west elevation and the creation of additional window openings at first floor level on the south east elevation.
- 6.31 Alterations are also taking place at roof level adjoining the Regents Park Road boundary, in order to allow for external condensing units to be screened by the roof pitch and to allow for adequate Rights to Light of adjacent properties.
- 6.32 These proposals constitute minor alterations to that previously considered acceptable within the context of the wider conservation area. On review it is considered that they will again form an element of the sites wider development and thus will not cause detriment to the wider significance of the conservation area.

- 6.33 It is therefore concluded that the proposals, when viewed in association with those already approved will have a neutral effect upon the character of the conservation area.

Building 3

- 6.34 The proposals will secure the comprehensive refurbishment of the building and facilitate its continued use for office purposes. The proposal allows for a pitched roof with skylights, as opposed to the flat roof which was approved under 2011/6306/P.
- 6.35 It is considered that the minor revision to the approved scheme will have a neutral effect upon the significance of the conservation area.

Building 5

- 6.36 The proposals seek consent for the demolition of Building 5 and its replacement with a building of similar size and appearance to that previously approved. The window configuration on the south eastern elevation has been amended to reflect current requirements.
- 6.37 Whilst the proposal seeks amendments to that previously approved the built form and scale of the building remains broadly similar. The building retains its spatial and architectural engagement with its immediate neighbours and continues to contribute to the wider aesthetic of the building group.
- 6.38 This building is outside the conservation area and thus its potential effects upon the setting of the conservation area must take note of its immediate neighbours and thus the townscape in which it is experienced.

6.39 As noted above the building will enjoy a cohesion and spatial engagement with its immediate neighbours and thus sit comfortably with the conservation area, it is therefore considered that it will not cause detriment to the significance of the conservation area.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 This report assesses the significance of Leeder House; it notes that the building does remain as a feature within the townscape; its character and massing making it prominent when compared with the surrounding townscape.
- 7.2 The setting of Leeder House is characterised by its surrounding context (the conservation area), through the various 19th century terraces and commercial buildings towards Regents Park Road. Whilst Leeder House undoubtedly retains elements of its architectural form and scale, these features where they exist are comparatively common in such Victorian compositions.
- 7.3 The proposal takes note of pre-application advice as received from Camden Council and retains Leeder House within the streetscape. The works facilitate its sustainable repair and put the building to a new viable use which will ensure its protection.
- 7.4 This will ensure that the building remains a feature within the wider conservation area (the heritage asset), maintaining the character and significance of both the immediate and wider setting.
- 7.5 The works to the buildings to the rear in the majority of cases follow the principles and form of those previously approved, however certain changes are required in order to ensure that the development meets modern standards and regulations. On balance it is concluded that these works will not cause detriment to the significance of the conservation area when compared to what is previously approved.
- 7.6 It is apparent that the proposals will retain the cohesion and legibility of the architecture to the rear allowing the wider site to both engage with the streetscape and also remain as a cohesive collection of buildings around the yard to the rear of Leeder House.

7.7 Taking note of the assessment it is concluded that the works will maintain and enhance the conservation area and are therefore in accordance with the requirements of Policies 4B.11 and 4B.12 of the London Plan along with CS14 and DP25 of the London Borough of Camden Core Strategy and Development Policies. The proposals accord with the requirements of the NPPF and are therefore considered to be in accordance with adopted national and local policy considerations.