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69 HIGHGATE HIGH STREET, N6

HERITAGE STATEMENT

BIRDS PORTCHMOUTH RUSSUM ARCHITECTS

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Appendix 1: Historic Maps

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of Mr Iain Brewester and forms part of a planning and conservation area consent application for the redevelopment of the site of 69 Highgate High Street, N6.
- 1.2 The application site is located at the summit (western end) of Highgate High Street, adjacent to its junction with West Hill. It is a tapered 15 metre long, end of terrace site, with frontages to both the High Street and Snow Hill (a pedestrian alleyway which links West Hill with Pond Square to the south).
- 1.3 No. 69, a collection of single storey buildings accessed from both the High Street and Pond Square, occupies the eastern part of the application site. The High Street elevation comprises a fairly blank one-storey brick wall with a central doorway, which screens the buildings themselves. The collection of single storey buildings that make up no. 69 are therefore seen primarily from Snow Hill: comprising a series of three small units, one occupied as a studio flat, one as a clock repair workshop, and the other the florist's store which step down along the passageway to accommodate the level change between the High Street and Pond Square. These three units are of varying brick and timber board construction, and of a lean-to or outbuilding form. The remainder of the site, that part which comprises the apex of the terrace, is currently occupied by a flower stall, which uses a minimal light-weight, timber board structure.
- 1.4 The application site lies within the Highgate Conservation Area. 69 Highgate High Street and the adjacent flower stand are defined as positive unlisted buildings within the Conservation Area by the Highgate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals (December 2007). The application site also lies within the setting of a number of listed buildings, in particular: 67 Highgate High Street, a Grade II (group listed) three-four storey building of c.1826 which abuts the eastern boundary of the application site and whose flank wall overlooks it; and 49-51 Highgate West Hill which occupies the plot on the other side of Snow Hill passageway and is also Grade II listed.
- 1.5 The submitted application seeks to redevelop the site and 69 Highgate High Street to accommodate a new three to four storey building. The replacement scheme would provide a termination to the High Street terrace, a new corner building to mark the junction of the High Street and Highgate West Hill and new residential and retail floorspace.

- 1.6 The purpose of this Heritage Statement is to consider the impact of the submitted application upon the site's heritage interest: what contribution the application site currently makes to the Conservation Area and setting of the listed buildings; those policies relevant to its redevelopment; and whether the proposed scheme meets with such policies. All assessments are informed by current national heritage guidance and local policy

2. The Application Site

The Conservation Area

- 2.1 The application site lies within the Highgate Conservation Area, which was first designated in 1968 and encompasses the historic commercial core of Highgate Village. The area is focused upon the High Street and includes adjacent areas of historic residential development and the historically significant Highgate Cemetery. Historic maps demonstrating the progressive development of the site and surrounding area are included as Appendix A.
- 2.2 The Conservation Area, due to the historic nature of Highgate as an independent village settlement, is characterised by a varied townscape formed by the relationship of topography, open spaces, urban form and architectural details. Buildings are generally 18th or 19th century in date, the period where the Village underwent the greatest levels of expansion, and of brick construction, though they range in scale, plot size and in appearance. Stepped building lines are not uncommon in the conservation area due to its hilly topography. Open and green spaces also form a key part of the Conservation Area, from Highgate Cemetery and Heath, through to larger-than-average private gardens, village greens and informal squares.
- 2.3 The Highgate Village section of the Conservation Area represents the historic core of the designated area, developed at the crossroads of the major historic routes traversing the high ground north of London. This is the most intensely developed part of the Conservation Area and has all the characteristics of a village: a High Street shopping parade; public buildings, grand domestic dwellings; small cottages and a green central square (Pond Square).
- 2.4 Highgate High Street forms the edge of the conservation area and the borough boundary with Haringey. It is characterised by a rich collection of 18th and 19th century buildings, some of which are listed, mostly arranged terraces or grouped rows. The piecemeal nature of its development has resulted in varied building lines, though most front onto pavement, and plot sizes vary along the street reflecting original owners of differing wealth. Most buildings incorporate private garden spaces to the rear, with the exception of the south terrace at the western end of the High Street, which instead backs onto Pond Square.

- 2.5 Building heights are mostly between two and three storeys facing the High Street, and three and four storeys facing Pond Square, though higher and lower heights are found. The impression of varying building heights within terraces is exacerbated by varied rooflines and gable arrangements, as well as the stepped building lines down the hill. Most buildings are faced in London stock brick or stuccoed, with simple neo-Georgian style detailing, an exception being the timber-fronted Gatehouse public house at the west end of the High Street.
- 2.6 Pond Square is a fairly secluded open space adjacent to the busy High Street area. The northern side of the square is made up of the rear elevations of the High Street terrace, most of which have been subject to successive 20th century interventions. In some cases plots are occupied by single buildings with elevations to both the High Street and the Square, in other cases a separate building has been constructed against the rear wall of a High Street building. As a result building lines and heights vary, though three to four storeys is predominant.

The setting of the application site

- 2.7 The application site occupies the tapering building plot between Highgate High Street and Snow Hill passageway, onto both of which it has frontages. It also has a frontage (at its apex) onto the prominent road junction of Highgate High Street and Highgate West Hill and, as a result, forms one of the four prominent corner sites facing the junction.
- 2.8 The townscape in the immediate setting of the application site is characterised by a mixture of architecturally prominent historic buildings of grander scale (fronting onto the junction) and listed three to four storey terraced houses on the High Street and Pond Square. Whilst the High Street elevation has an urban feel, there is also a strong green quality to the application site's rear setting to Pond Square:
- 67 Highgate High Street, abutting the south-eastern boundary of the application site, is a three (High Street level) to four storey (pond Square level) Grade II building of 1826. It is group listed as part of a designation covering its wider terrace. Construction is of multi-coloured stock brick, laid in Flemish Bond, with a neo-Georgian style elevation of three bays to the High Street featuring three large, 16-light timber sash windows with flat brick headers at first and second floor, and a two bay period shopfront at ground floor. The rear elevation is plainer, with a central doorway flanked by 12-light sashes at ground floor, 16-light sashes to the outer bays at first and second floor, and 12-light sashes at third floor. These

windows have segmental headers. The exposed western flank wall of the building, which overlooks the application site, is solid brick and has been subject to graffiti. The roof is pitched and tiled, with stone copings. The only private amenity space associated with the building is a low-walled narrow courtyard to the rear;

- to the north of the application site, on the north side of Highgate High Street, is the Grade II churchyard wall of the former Highgate Chapel, with the churchyard beyond. The boundary wall is tall and has mature trees set along it, shielding much of the yard from view from the application site;
- to the north-west of the application site, on the west side of Highgate West Hill, is the Gatehouse Public House, a tall three storey mock-Tudor, gabled, detached building which forms a landmark at the top of Highgate High Street;
- to the south of the application site, on the south side of Snow Hill passageway, is the mid-19th century 49-50 Highgate West Hill (Grade II). This has a one-two storey frontage to the highway, of multi-coloured brick stock construction laid in English bond, with over-sized brick quoins and deep cornice. The building rises to three storeys in height at its flank elevation, fronting Snow Hill passageway, which has irregularly-spaced window openings of differing types. The main building ends towards the southern end of the passageway and a single storey wall defines the plot boundary at Pond Square level;

- 2.9 The public realm around the application site is characterised by a mixture of surface finishes: concrete to the highway and passageway, York Stone and modern stone slabs to the pavement. There is an abundance of street furniture, including metal bollards, concrete bollards, lampposts, signage posts and belisha beacons. The application site stands out from the surrounding buildings due to its lack of maintenance. It has repeatedly been targeted by antisocial behaviour and presents an unfortunate image to this part of the square. The route to Snow Hill is used by many school children but in recent years has become increasingly unpleasant and the lack of surveillance after dark means that it has been subject to repeated anti-social behaviour in particular street urination and graffiti.

The application site

- 2.10 The application site represents a collection of temporary and ad-hoc buildings that currently lie in a poor state of repair despite numerous years of makeshift

repairs. The accompanying report by Barrett Firrell makes reference to the building's poor state of repair and concludes that its retention is not a viable option.

- 2.11 The site appears to have been the last plot to be developed on the street. Map evidence and documentary sources show that the plots at the westernmost end of Highgate High Street were some of the last to be developed on the street. The eastern section of the terrace appears to have been developed largely during eighteenth century. The sites of nos. 63-69 Highgate High Street were then developed in a piecemeal fashion between the 1830s and 1890s, as part of the increasing expansion of Highgate and enclosure of Pond Square.
- 2.12 The western part of the application site is currently occupied by 69 Highgate High Street, a collection of single storey buildings at stepped levels, which have frontages to Snow Hill passageway, but are also accessible in part from the High Street. These have been constructed in successive phases from the mid-nineteenth century and as they currently stand are generally in poor physical repair and appearance.
- 2.13 The High Street elevation of no. 69 comprises a blank single storey painted brick wall, laid in running bond, which screens the collection of buildings behind. A central doorway punched into the High Street wall gives access to a small store inside one of the buildings. The wall is free-standing and does not tie into the brickwork of the adjacent building, nor does its coursing match. Photographic evidence shows that the wall was in place by 1914, though examinations indicate that it is likely to be somewhat earlier in date, from the mid- to later-19th century, when the collection of buildings on the site (behind the wall) was increased (see below).
- 2.14 From Snow Hill, in contrast, the series of single storey buildings that make up No. 69 can be understood: comprising a series of three outbuilding-type structures, two of timber board construction, one of brick. Building heights step down the slope of the passageway to accommodate the level change between the High Street and Pond Square. Architecturally the buildings are of a simple and functional design, being of an out-building or lean-to type form. The ship lap boarding was applied circa 1970 by the current owner's family.
- 2.15 The most easterly of the buildings is a London Stock brick outbuilding, part rendered, with a modern single-panel doorway to the west side of the elevation and a small 3-light window with modern glazing and segmental brick header to the east side. This appears to be the earliest of the three structures, its footprint first appearing in maps in 1849, probably functioning as a separate out-building

for the adjacent no. 67. Map evidence indicates that the two now timber boarded buildings adjacent to the west were constructed slightly later, some time between 1869 and 1894. These two structures are of the same design, though that to the west has a modern single-panel door and single-plate glazed window, whilst that to the centre is more of a 'stable-style' design with multi-light fixed window. A single sloping roof, with a low quality felt surface, spans the entire collection of buildings.

- 2.16 The remainder of the application site, to the west of no. 69 at the apex of the terrace, is currently occupied by a flower stall which utilises a light-weight timber board hut. The hut is little more than a garden shed and requires regular maintenance due to damage from antisocial behaviour.

3. Assessment of Significance

- 3.1 69 Highgate High Street and the flower stall to its west are both identified in the Council's *Highgate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals* (2007) document as unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.
- 3.2 This chapter will consider whether the classification of these buildings as positive is appropriate, what contribution the different features of the site make to the conservation area, and where there are opportunities for enhancement of the site.

Tests of positive contribution

- 3.3 The 10 criteria for assessing whether unlisted buildings make a positive contribution to conservation areas are laid out in Appendix 2 of English Heritage's *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*. The meeting of any one of these criteria could provide the basis for identifying a building as making a positive contribution to its conservation area, provided that its historic form and values have not been seriously eroded by unsympathetic alteration. Conversely, should a building meet one or all of the criteria, this would not automatically signify merit as a further qualitative test must be applied to that information.
- 3.4 The 10 criteria for positive classification are:

Is the building the work of a particular architect of regional or local note?	No.
Has it qualities of age, style, materials or any other characteristics which reflect those of at least a substantial number of buildings in the conservation area?	Not particularly. Some materials (brick, timber windows) do reflect the wider material palette of the Conservation Area, but they are reflective of generic Victorian building styles not the particular character of the Area. The form of the buildings does not reflect the general built character of the Area.

Does it relate by age, materials or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings, and contribute positively to their setting?	Not particularly. See above.
Does it individually, or as part of a group, serve as a reminder of the gradual development of the settlement in which it stands, or of an earlier phase of growth?	Not particularly. Though the buildings do inevitably form part of the ongoing development of the area, they do not represent a deliberate phase of development, nor do they contribute in any particularly meaningful way to the understanding of how uses or building forms in Highgate evolved. It is also unclear who owned or used these buildings, though their function was most likely only ancillary to a larger building.
Does it have significant historic association with established features such as the road layout, burgage plots, a town park, or a landscape feature?	No.
Does the building have landmark quality, or contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces, including exteriors or open spaces with a complex of public buildings?	No. It is located on a corner plot, but is not of a scale or design to be distinctive within the townscape. It does not enhance the quality of adjacent buildings.
Does it reflect the traditional functional character of, or former uses within the area?	No.
Has it significant historic associations with local people or past events?	No.

Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area?	To a minor extent. The flower display does contribute some activity to the Area during opening hours, but otherwise uses on the site do not notably contribute.
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- 3.5 The structures comprising 69 Highgate High Street – the brick wall fronting Highgate High Street and the three lean-to structures to Snow Hill passageway – are not therefore found to substantially meet with any of the criteria English Heritage have identified to define a positive unlisted building.
- 3.6 The structures are constructed in part of stock brick and are in part nineteenth century in date. However, they are of such a small-scale, and utilise such standard functional Victorian design features, that it is not reasonable to argue that the structures contribute to the particular character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area. Equally, parts of no. 69 (the wall and brick outbuilding) may have been constructed by later owners. However, the existence of a particular ownership and use relationship between the structures is still unclear and no. 69 certainly adds little to the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building that lies adjacent. The buildings are constructed in a rudimentary fashion and even had they been maintained in a better fashion, they detract from the setting of their neighbours.
- 3.7 The presence of the flower shop on the corner of the site does arguably add some visual interest to this part of the conservation area, however this use is not associated with any fixed structures and could decline, therefore it should not be regarded as sufficient in itself to justify the site's official classification as a 'positive building'. Equally, there has been some suggestion that the poor condition of these structures adds a certain 'picturesque quality' to the appearance of this part of the Conservation Area, however the retention of buildings for their poor quality seems contrary to conservation best practice of keeping positive buildings in good order, particularly given the introduction of modern alterations to the structures.
- 3.8 If therefore, the application site on balance does not make a 'positive contribution' to the Conservation Area, what is its contribution and significance?

Assessment of Significance

- 3.9 English Heritage's *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2011) identifies categories that can be used to assess the significance of a heritage asset: evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.
- 3.10 Evidential value is concerned with how a heritage asset demonstrates evidence of past human activity, particularly archaeologically. It is not anticipated that the application site, given that it has been developed only once in its history, has the potential for any particular archaeological potential. The site is of some minor interest for the fact that it was never fully developed along with the rest of the High Street, and therefore to some extent for its contribution to the understanding of the development patterns in the Conservation Area. On the other hand, the limited development and activity on the site historically has severely curtailed its scope for providing evidential value of any interest. In terms of evidential value the application site is therefore classified of **neutral significance**.
- 3.11 Historical value is concerned with a heritage asset's relationship to people or events of significance, or its historic rarity. Neither no. 69 nor the flower stall are associated with any known architects, owner or events of interest. Nor are any of the structures on the site of unusual design or materials. In terms of historical value the application site is therefore classified of **neutral significance**.
- 3.12 Aesthetic value is concerned with the design, architectural appearance and sensory stimulation of a heritage asset. 69 Highgate High Street has been developed in a piecemeal manner by multiple individuals and as such has neither a coherent or consistent architectural design. The features of the building are generally utilitarian and typical of Victorian design found across the country (eg. Segmental brick headers to windows), several have been replaced with insensitive modern equivalents. Materials are varied and of either standard quality (eg. timber and brick) or low (eg. Roof covering), though the use of stock brick in part of the building does reflect the local vernacular. The only particularly distinctive design feature of the application site is its stepped building form, which responds to its topography, though better-resolved examples can be found nearby. In terms of aesthetic value the application site is therefore considered be of no particular interest and is therefore classified of **neutral significance**.

- 3.13 Communal value is concerned with the symbolic status of a heritage asset for the community, or the contribution it makes to the collective memory. The application site in its existing form appears to have no particular symbolic or community importance, being neither a visually distinctive feature within the townscape, nor does it, or has it in the past, accommodated public or private activities of particular resonance to the community. This is with the exception of the flower stall which is a relatively recent occupier. In terms of communal value the application site is therefore classified of **neutral significance**.
- 3.14 Overall, it appears that the application site should more appropriately be considered as of neutral or indeed negative significance to the Conservation Area, rather than the positive contribution previously suggested.

Issues and Opportunities

- 3.15 The following potential opportunities for the enhancement of the application site's contribution to the Conservation Area have been identified:
- to complete the High Street terrace;
 - to create an active frontage to the High Street by the creation of a retail unit;
 - to remove the visual presence of the blank, inactive flank wall of 67Highgate High Street from the townscape;
 - to create a new corner building on the site, reflecting its prominence on a major junction in a similar manner to other buildings at this confluence;
 - to introduce a building of much greater architectural significance;
 - to increase public and business activity within the site, enhancing the wider vitality of the Conservation Area and support the High Street generally;
 - to retain the local flower stall but within an attractive purpose built shop with necessary sanitation facilities;
 - to improve public legibility of the pedestrian link between West Hill and Pond Square (Snow Hill passageway);
 - to reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour to Snow Hill in particular.

3.16 Any proposals for the redevelopment of the application site should however seek to retain those features in and around the site that do contribute positively to the Conservation Area, and also seek to preserve the Conservation Area. In addition to the criteria laid out in general national and local heritage policies, respecting the following site-specific development constraints should help ensure that the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, as well as the setting of the listed buildings, is preserved:

- development should respect the scale of neighbouring buildings and the site's particular setting;
- development should be executed in materials appropriate to the Conservation Area;
- development should follow and visually express changes in topography within the site;
- development should seek to retain the flower shop on site, for the reason that it adds to the visual interest and activity in this part of the Conservation Area;
- key views around the site should be retained: from Pond Square to the Gatehouse (via Snow Hill passageway); and from the High Street towards the Gatehouse.

4. Summary of Proposals

External appearance

- 4.1 The proposed building has been designed to reflect the scale and typology of existing buildings along the High Street, which are predominantly three storey terraced buildings of varying lengths, stepping parapets and ridge alignments.
- 4.2 The proposed building is three / four storeys in height, fronts onto the pavement line of the High Street and Snow Hill and has a footprint that matches the shape of the current building plot. A 'flat iron' form has been incorporated into the north-western apex of the proposed building to provide a visual termination to the terrace and to reinforce the site's corner location on the road junction.
- 4.3 The site apex contains the relocated flower stall and florists plinth with a canopy and bay window above. The composition will provide a joyous civic quality which will contribute to the vibrancy of Highgate village.
- 4.4 The façade of the High Street elevation is conceived as being formed of distinct elements to reflect the historic incremental development of the High Street. At street level the facade is broken down into three shop fronts. Above the facades are rendered with smooth and rough texture with inset bronzed framed windows. The roof will be planted with sedum to provide ecological benefits by attenuating rainwater to help relieve pressure on urban drainage, reducing heat island effect and encourage wildlife habitats and urban biodiversity.
- 4.5 The façade to Snow Hill reflects the more ad-hoc form and materials of the existing structure and the neighbouring buildings on Pond Square. It is proposed to be of London stock brick and timber weatherboarding panels which step to respond to the tapered site.
- 4.6 A glazed canopy shelters the extended plinth of the flower stall and the apex is punctuated by an inset window at first floor level and a projecting window at second floor which are orientated to give views along North Hill. The proposed shop / gallery and flower stall provides the significant benefit of completing the retail frontage of the High Street and connecting with the existing rather isolated shops along the east edge of West Hill.
- 4.7 The first and second floors contains a three bedroom maisonette flat with bedrooms at first floor level and an open plan living area on the second. The living area has a small external terrace which enjoys the southerly aspect and views over Pond Square. Commercial space is inserted into the lower ground

beneath High Street level is accessed and naturally lit off Snow Hill. The maisonette is accessed directly off Pond Square via an entrance and stair at the corner of the proposed building. The entrances to the commercial space and maisonette, the windows above and additional lighting will create a safer naturally supervised environment for pedestrians using the alley at night time.

- 4.8 The adjacent 67 Highgate High Street will continue to be architecturally distinct from the proposed scheme. The architectural separation between the listed and new buildings is reinforced by a vertical glazed set back, 3 foot wide, between the two structures.

The Proposed Accommodation

- 4.9 At Highgate High Street level a retail space is provided with a glazed frontage of 15 metres length. The retail façade allows for subdivision into 3 smaller units. The florist is retained in its current position in the unit at the apex of the site and glazed elevation slides open to connect with a floral display plinth. This preserves the florist's presence on the site and the colourful focal point it creates on the corner of the High Street and Snow Hill passageway.

5. Legislation and Policy

- 5.1 Conservation Areas are designated by the local authority under the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* and are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve'.
- 5.2 Current statutory guidance on the management and development of conservation areas is laid out in the National Planning Policy Framework as well as local policy documents.

Conservation area control over demolition

- 5.3 Conservation area designation introduces general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings within the area. Local authorities are required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area and, in particular, there should be a general presumption in favour of retaining unlisted buildings identified as making a positive contribution to the area.
- 5.4 Where the demolition of neutral or negative unlisted buildings is proposed the application for demolition should be supported by proposals for an acceptable replacement scheme. Where the demolition of a positively contributing unlisted building is proposed, the applicant is required to demonstrate both that the demolition is justifiable and that the acceptable and detailed plans for a replacement scheme that will preserve or enhance the conservation area have been received.
- 5.5 This is done through assessing the proposals against the same broad criteria laid out in the NPPF and local policy for the justification of proposals to demolish listed buildings.

New development in conservation areas

- 5.6 New development in conservation areas will require planning permission and, where associated with the demolition and replacement of an unlisted building(s), acceptable and detailed plans for the replacement scheme will need to be considered by the local authority along with the application for demolition.
- 5.7 An application for new development within a conservation area should be acceptable to the local authority where it can be demonstrated that the

proposals will preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, and its setting. This will be a material consideration in the handling of development proposals.

- 5.8 There is no requirement within the legislation to prevent new development within conservation areas. Emphasis should instead be placed upon the controlled and positive management of change, and on allowing the wider conservation area to remain alive and prosperous.
- 5.9 This approach to the assessment of applications for new development in conservation areas is reinforced by Camden policy which states that consent for development in conservation areas will only be allowed where it preserves or enhances the special character or appearance of that conservation area.
- 5.10 Also of relevance are Camden Council's General Design Principles for new development. These identify particular elements of new design that will be examined by the local authority in assessing new development proposals:

Development should:

- a) respect its site and setting;
 - b) be safe and accessible to all;
 - c) improve the spaces around and between buildings, particularly public areas;
 - d) be sustainable by promoting energy efficiency and efficient use of resources;
 - e) be easily adaptable to changing economic and social requirements;
 - f) provide appropriate high quality landscaping and boundary treatments; and
 - g) seek to improve the attractiveness of an area and not harm its appearance or amenity.
- 5.11 In assessing how the design of a development has taken these principles into account, the Council will consider:
 - h) building lines and plot sizes in the surrounding area;
 - i) the existing pattern of routes and spaces;

- j) the height, bulk and scale of neighbouring buildings;
- k) existing natural features, such as topography and trees;
- l) the design of neighbouring buildings;
- m) the quality and appropriateness of detailing and materials used;
- n) the provision of visually interesting frontages at street level; and
- o) the impact on views and skylines.

6. Justification of the proposals

6.1 In order for the proposed application to be found acceptable by the local authority in heritage terms it must be demonstrated that the following policy requirements have been sufficiently addressed:

- that there is a justifiable case for the substantial demolition of 69 Highgate High Street under the terms of national and local policy; and
- that an appropriate replacement scheme for the site is offered, which preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of any listed buildings, and meets with other relevant policy.

The case for demolition

6.2 The case for the demolition of the collection of single-storey buildings comprising 69 Highgate High Street rests upon both the minimal contribution currently made by the site to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and the merits of the alternative proposals.

6.3 As discussed in Chapter 3, the application site when tested against the criteria outlined by English Heritage, is considered to make a predominantly neutral contribution to the Conservation Area. This chapter will continue to test the case for demolition.

6.4 Demolition may be justified when: no viable use may be found for the building; the building is of such poor structural integrity that repair is no longer reasonable; or the replacement scheme offers outstanding community benefits. The first two criteria - use and structural integrity - are not relevant in this case. The third - community benefits - is however relevant.

6.5 The report accompanying this application by Barrett Firrell identifies that the existing buildings are beyond reasonable repair. The report outlines that the level of improvements and repairs required to bring the buildings up to a reasonable standard are such that it is not economically feasible. The risk is therefore that the buildings will continue to degrade to the point where they become vacant.

6.6 The current 69 Highgate High Street does have some features of arguable interest and in-keeping with the character of the Conservation Area: the colourful florist display and the stepped building form. Equally however, many of its

features make either no or negative contributions to Conservation Area, being either generic or of poor quality: the blank brick wall to the High Street; the poor state of repair of the structures; their extensive alteration; the lack of activity currently generated by the site; and the waste of its potential landmark quality. Nor does the current form of the application site contribute positively to the setting or understanding of any of the surrounding listed buildings.

- 6.7 The submitted scheme, in contrast, seeks to bring new activity and to the site. To create a high quality contemporary building, which active frontages or architectural interest, but which also continues to reference the principal characteristics of the Conservation Area: height, massing, materials and uses.
- 6.8 It is therefore argued that the potential community benefits arising from the proposed scheme, balanced against the minor or neutral contribution currently made by the site to the Conservation Area, are sufficient to meet the criteria for demolition. The proposed scheme includes some distinctive features, the flower stall plinth and canopy appropriate to its landmark position and is in many ways in-keeping with the general character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The case for the replacement building

- 6.9 Policy places emphasis upon the controlled and positive management of change within Conservation Areas, and on allowing the conservation area to remain alive and prosperous in its widest sense. The following paragraphs demonstrate that the replacement building will improve the character and appearance of the conservation area but also have positive practical implications for the functioning of the immediate area.
- 6.10 The existing character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area can be summarised as an eclectic gathering of buildings that vary in age, architectural style, plot widths, height and massing. Despite their eclectic nature the buildings share many common characteristics in terms of their human scale, the manner in which they address the street, the solid to void ratio, the importance of corner elements and frequent architectural richness.
- 6.11 The façade to the High Street is a carefully considered composition. The bulk is broken down into two principle elements to reflect the historic incremental high street development. The facades observe the typical high street arrangement of clearly articulated shop fronts with solid wall and window apertures above. The use of render references and is in-keeping with the existing palette of materials along the High Street within the Conservation Area.

- 6.12 The existing florist stall, which currently makes some positive contribution to the Conservation Area, is retained and relocated within the new building, still at ground floor in the prominent apex section of the site. The retail unit is proportioned to closely reflect the scale and size of other retail units on the High Street. A canopy above the florist will also add to the visual interest of this part of the building.
- 6.13 The Pond Square / Snow Hill façade of the new building also uses a contemporary architectural approach, but again references the scale and materials of the existing structures on the site and adjacent development. The façade uses panels of timber and brick cladding, which reflects the current materials on site. The stepped form of the current buildings on the site as they move along the passageway is reflected in the replacement building form. The design of the replacement scheme thus has the potential to create a major visual improvement to the corner of Pond Square and Snow Hill.
- 6.14 The proposed building will achieve a new point of interest that begins and terminates Highgate High Street in a manner that references its townscape context and functions. The result will be a building of much greater architectural significance, which is of its time and possesses a vocabulary of its own, yet is informed by an in-depth analysis of the Conservation Area. Its building elevations, in contrast to those currently on site, will create interesting and active frontages that positively contribute to the Conservation Area.
- 6.15 In its height (predominantly three storeys), building line, plot form, stepped building form and brick materials the proposed scheme is in-keeping with the general character of the rest of the Conservation Area and adjacent listed buildings. The 'Flat iron' form fits in with a conventional London architype for terminating terraces, turning corners and offers a focal point at the end of the North Hill and announces the commencement of Highgate High Street. The use of bronzed metal work detailing to the canopy and projecting bay window to terminate the corner reflects the gravitas of the adjacent buildings that occupy this confluence of routes. Buildings at this junction possess a greater civic presence as well as a variety of architectural style. The proposed scheme is therefore in-keeping with local design principles in national and local policy namely; respect site and setting, building lines and plots, patterns of routes and spaces, scale of neighbouring buildings and detailing and materials.
- 6.16 The intended quality of the proposed building is demonstrated by the quality of materials proposed and by its design by a practice of acknowledged acclaim

(Birds Portchmouth Russum are frequent recipients of RIBA, Civic Trust and Royal Academy awards).

- 6.17 No detrimental impacts on key local views or skylines are anticipated.
- 6.18 In practical terms the building will improve the functioning of the surrounding area. The existing buildings have become a repeated target for vandalism, graffiti and street urination. Despite the owners efforts the scale of this problem has become such that the building continues to be a particular local problem. The design solution resolves these issues by simply defining public and private space and creating overlooking to the public realm. The improvement will allow for safer and non-threatening use of the passageway in particular. The retail element of the proposals adds to the quality of accommodation that is available. It occupies a strategic location at the confluence of a number of roads and thereby sets a better quality tone for the High Street.

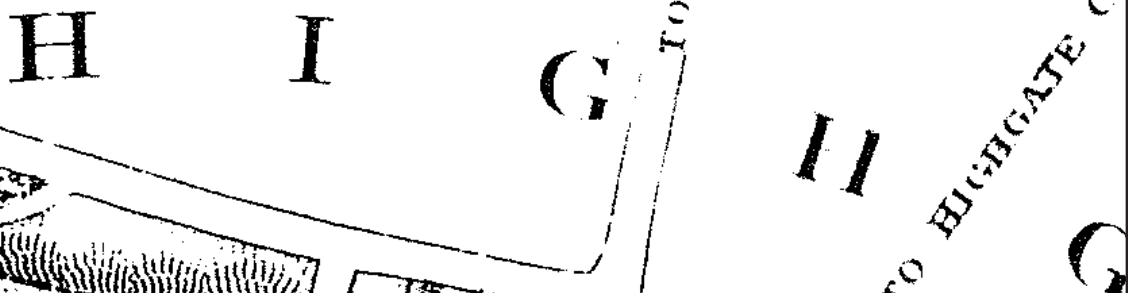
7. Conclusion

- 7.1 In order for the submitted application for the redevelopment of 69 Highgate High Street to be granted consent policy requires that the local authority give consideration to the contribution currently made by the site to the Conservation Area, and the appropriateness of the replacement scheme.
- 7.2 The site in its current form makes a neutral contribution to the Conservation Area, though there are some features of some interest such as the florist, as well as features that detract such as the generally poor repair of the existing structures. The loss of No. 69, so long as it is replaced with something which preserves or enhances the Conservation Area, should therefore be acceptable in policy terms.
- 7.3 The replacement scheme, in contrast with the existing development, is of a scale, footprint, building line, massing and use (retail and residential) that reflects and is in-keeping with adjacent development on Highgate High Street and Pond Square. It also offers the potential for bringing increased activity and architectural interest and a high quality new building to the Conservation Area. The proposed scheme is therefore in-keeping with the current character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and should be regarded as enhancing the application's site's overall contribution to the activity and appearance of the Area.
- 7.4 The application scheme is therefore found to be in accordance with current national and local heritage policy and is recommended for approval.

Appendix 1: Historic Maps



Map 1801



Map 1832

