

HeritageCollective LLP

Heritage Statement



31-44 Wicklow Street, Camden

On behalf of Buildwell Homes Ltd

November 2012

Project Ref: 12/0582

Project Number: 12/0582
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Reviewed by: Lucy Jarvis
Date: November 2012
Document version M:\HC\Projects\Projects 501-
600\12.0582 - 33-41 Wicklow
Street,
Camden\Reports\2012.11.02_33-41
Wicklow St - Heritage Statement
Final.docx

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Heritage Collective LLP on behalf of Buildwell Homes Ltd. in respect of a development site at 33-41 Wicklow Street, Camden. Located within the Kings Cross Conservation Area, the site is currently derelict and in need of regeneration. It has previously been in use as a car park and is located adjacent to a cutting for the Thameslink Railway line and above the London underground tunnel for the Metropolitan/Hammersmith and City and Circle lines.

The Application Site

1.2 Wicklow Street forms an L-shaped route running east from Kings Cross Road up to St Chads Street. It has a variety of built form comprising predominantly 3 and 6 storey buildings (residential and commercial) constructed in brick. The cutting for the railway line passes underneath the street at an angle. This results in the application site being an irregular shape bounded by Wicklow Street, with the cutting and the adjacent basketball court to the east (which is designated public open space).

1.3 Across the road to the north-east is Derby Lodge, a six storey building dating from c1865. Built as philanthropic housing it is listed grade II and has group value with Derby Lodge fronting Britannia Street to the north. Historically the application site formed four late 19th century terraced houses (Appendix 2). These were built after Nos.1-13 Wicklow Street, which are located on the same side of the street further along to the east and demolished in the last 50 years to be given over to a car park.

1.4 To the south is a single storey building accessed via a small ally running along the eastern boundary of the application site at 31a Wicklow Street.

The proposed development

1.5 The application proposes a new building to provide four flats and 2 houses comprising three and four storeys. Built in brick, with large multi-pane windows under brick arches, the building is designed to fit into the semi-industrial context of the street and the wider area. A pitched roof is proposed

over the three storey eastern side of the building stepping up to a flat roofed four storey element with a central entrance door.

Pre-Application Consultation

- 1.6 Pre-application consultation has been undertaken with Camden Council. Studio V Architects and Buildwell Homes Ltd. have attended three pre-application meetings with officers over the course of two years (29th October 2010, 9th March 2011 and 16th June 2011). The contemporary design approach discussed at the first meeting was revised and reworked to respond positively to the comments received regarding the character of the area.
- 1.7 Camden Council noted that the area was characterised by 'robust Victorian residential and industrial buildings' and that any new building should respond to this context. This change in design was welcomed by Camden Council subject to a number of detailed design comments, relating to materials pallet and composition. These comments have subsequently been taken on board.

Purpose and Scope of this Statement

- 1.8 This statement appraises the surrounding historic environment to the application site, assessing the heritage significance of the Kings Cross Conservation Area and the setting of Derby Lodge. It sets out an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the heritage significance of those assets and provides the policy context against which the application should be determined.
- 1.9 A site visit was carried out in September 2012 on a clear day (Appendix 1).

2.0 HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

King's Cross Conservation Area

- 2.1 King's Cross Conservation Area was first designed by Camden Council in 1986 and was extended in 1991 (to include the application site), 1994 and 2003. A character appraisal was completed in 2004 and forms the basis of an understanding of the area and its architectural and historic interest. This understanding was also informed by a site visit and online research into the historic development of the site (historic maps).
- 2.2 The heart of the area is based around the internationally significant railway stations of King's Cross and St Pancras. It has undergone, and is still undergoing, regeneration following the creation of High Speed 1 and the extensions to both station buildings and new development to the north.
- 2.3 Development of this area began in the late 18th century with the construction of town houses and new roads. However, it was the building of the major new stations in the 1850s that influenced the majority of the Victorian development now evident throughout the area.
- 2.4 Wicklow Street forms part of Sub-Area 4, as described in the character appraisal. This area covers, *Gray's Inn Road: The remaining area of the Conservation Area south of the Euston Road, bounded by Pentonville Road, King's Cross Road, Swinton Street, and Argyle Street*. The area in which Wicklow Street is located is described as:

4.2.138 The area between King's Cross Road and Gray's Inn Road is characterised by narrow streets generally paved with granite setts, lined with former light industrial and commercial buildings. The buildings front directly onto the back of pavement and therefore create a strong sense of enclosure. The area is divided by the Metropolitan and Thameslink railway cutting, which is flanked to the east and west by narrow corridors of vacant land.

4.2.156 On the eastern side of the railway cutting, the areas on both sides of Wicklow Street are occupied by small empty plots used as car parks (that on the northern side accessed from Britannia Street), which are

variously enclosed by poorly maintained walls and fences. These are located above the Metropolitan Line Underground tunnel and a cylindrical red brick air shaft is visible in the car park to the north. To the east of the car park on the southern side of the road is a small play area, which is surrounded by a low brick wall and tall wire fence and contains young trees.

- 2.5 At present the application site detracts from the character of Wicklow Street. Its overgrown appearance, with corrugated metal boundary treatment, is identified on page 55 of the appraisal as a negative feature. The granite sets and London stock brick walls, either side of the railway cutting, are set out as making a positive contribution to the area. The application site itself is of no significance as an open space and has historically been occupied.

Architectural Interest

- 2.6 This conservation area has very high architectural interest derived from the significant gothic architecture of the Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras, as well as the station buildings at St Pancras and King's Cross which is the most significant building in the area. Within sub-area 4 Derby Lodge has high architectural interest and reflects the overriding, semi-industrial character of the buildings in the area.

Historical Interest

- 2.7 This is an area rich in historical interest, again focused around the main infrastructure of the area at King's Cross Station and St Pancras. Historical interest is derived from the development of the buildings in the area. The survival, adaptation and replacement of these buildings contributes to a sense of heritage interest in this urban environment. This is combined with historical associations with well known historical figures who lived in and around the area.

Archaeological Interest

- 2.8 Part of the conservation area is designated as an archaeological priority area centred on the medieval settlement of Battle Bridge. It is located at the junction of Gray's Inn Road and King's Cross Bridge.

Artistic Interest

- 2.9 This conservation area can be said to have some artistic interest. It has formed the subject matter for a great many images, including early photographs and paintings, of the major terminus.

3.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK

Legislation

- 3.1 Legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 72 places a duty on the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the character and appearance of a conservation area. A similar duty exists with regard to the special interest of a listed building and its setting (Section 62).

National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) March 2012

- 3.2 The Framework constitutes guidance for local planning authorities and decision makers. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Framework is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 3.3 Section 12, paragraphs 126 to 141 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The Framework places much emphasis on heritage "significance". Significance is a common thread that occurs throughout Section 12 and is defined as:

"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting."

- 3.4 The effects of any development on a heritage asset therefore need to be assessed against the four components of its heritage significance: its archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest (see section 2.0).
- 3.5 Development affecting a conservation area should be considered in light of paragraphs 128-131 of the Framework, which deal with basic information requirements and with the essential balance between heritage significance and potential harm. Harm is defined as change that erodes the significance of an asset, and not just change.

- 3.6 Paragraphs 132-134 deal specifically with levels of harm, setting out the need to justify any harm but also to weigh that harm, whether it be substantial or less than substantial against the public benefits of the proposals and in the interest of securing the optimum viable use of an asset.

Local Policy Framework

- 3.7 Policy DP24 'Conserving Camden's Heritage' is applicable. Parts (b), (e) and (f) are considered most applicable.

Policy DP25 – Conservation Areas

In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the council will:

Take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;

- Only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area;*
- 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;*
- Not permit development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character and appearance of that conservation area; and,*
- Preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of a conservation area and which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.*

- 3.8 The Kings Cross Conservation Area Statement forms supplementary planning guidance. It includes a description of the character and appearance of the conservation area and its constituent parts.

4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 A part three, part four storey development is proposed, fronting hard onto the pavement, maintaining the typical building line of Wicklow Street. The building will be constructed in stock brick with red brick dressings and slate roof. The three storey, two bay part will comprise a shallow hipped roof, whilst the four storey element will have a flat roof. Windows will be multi-pane crittal style metal windows reflecting the industrial character of the area.
- 4.2 Modern detailing is used for the entrance doors, which will be timber panelled. The stair cores will be articulated by larger windows divided by metal panels reflecting a contemporary industrial robustness to the facades.
- 4.3 In proposing development for this site an inherent improvement to the conservation area will be achieved by removing a gap site (which is identified as detracting from the street scene of Wicklow Street). The sense of enclosure along the street will be reinforced by the proposed building.
- 4.4 The replacement building pays regard to the prevailing character of the area through the use of appropriate materials (brick, slate, glass, metal window surrounds). The use of metal panels will mark the building out as a modern interpretation on the warehouse style and will break up the mass of the stair core.
- 4.5 In designing a replacement building the height and bulk has been carefully considered. Three to four storey development correlates with the rest of the conservation area and remains subservient to Derby Lodge, the listed building opposite which will remain the dominant building in this part of Wicklow Street.
- 4.6 The new building will form part of views within the conservation area which are available from the north and south on Swinton Street, looking down the railway cutting, and from the car park on Britannia Street. Both of these views are characterised by a plethora of old and new development and are not of particular heritage significance within the conservation area. Views east and west along Wicklow Street will be improved by the increased sense of enclosure and the establishment of the build-line on a plot that has not been occupied for some time.

- 4.7 The proposal is in compliance with Local Policy DP25 through the use of appropriate detailing, bulk, location, size and materials that correspond well to the context of the site and the street scene. This proposed development will enhance the conservation area, adding a high quality development to Wicklow Street that will remain subservient to the dominant form of Derby Lodge and respect its quality and setting.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The application site at 33-41 Wicklow Street is a gap site. It detracts from the street scene of Wicklow Street and the overall character sub-area 4 within the King's Cross Conservation Area.
- 5.2 An assessment of the attributes of the conservation area has established the context for the application site and has guided the design of the proposed three and four storey building. Pre-application discussions between the applicant and Camden Council have enabled a sensitively designed development that will enhance the heritage significance of the area through the consequent improvement in the townscape on Wicklow Street.
- 5.3 The form and detailing of the proposed development will respect the character of Derby Lodge, the closest listed building, without mimicking it or competing with its prominence.
- 5.4 This development fulfils the objectives of sustainable development advocated in the Framework. It sustains and enhances heritage significance and should be treated favourably.

APPENDIX 1: Photographs



Appendix 1.1: Wicklow Street, south side



Appendix 1.2: Access to 31a Wicklow Street adjacent to site boundary



Appendix 1.3: View looking north from Swinton Street over the railway cut

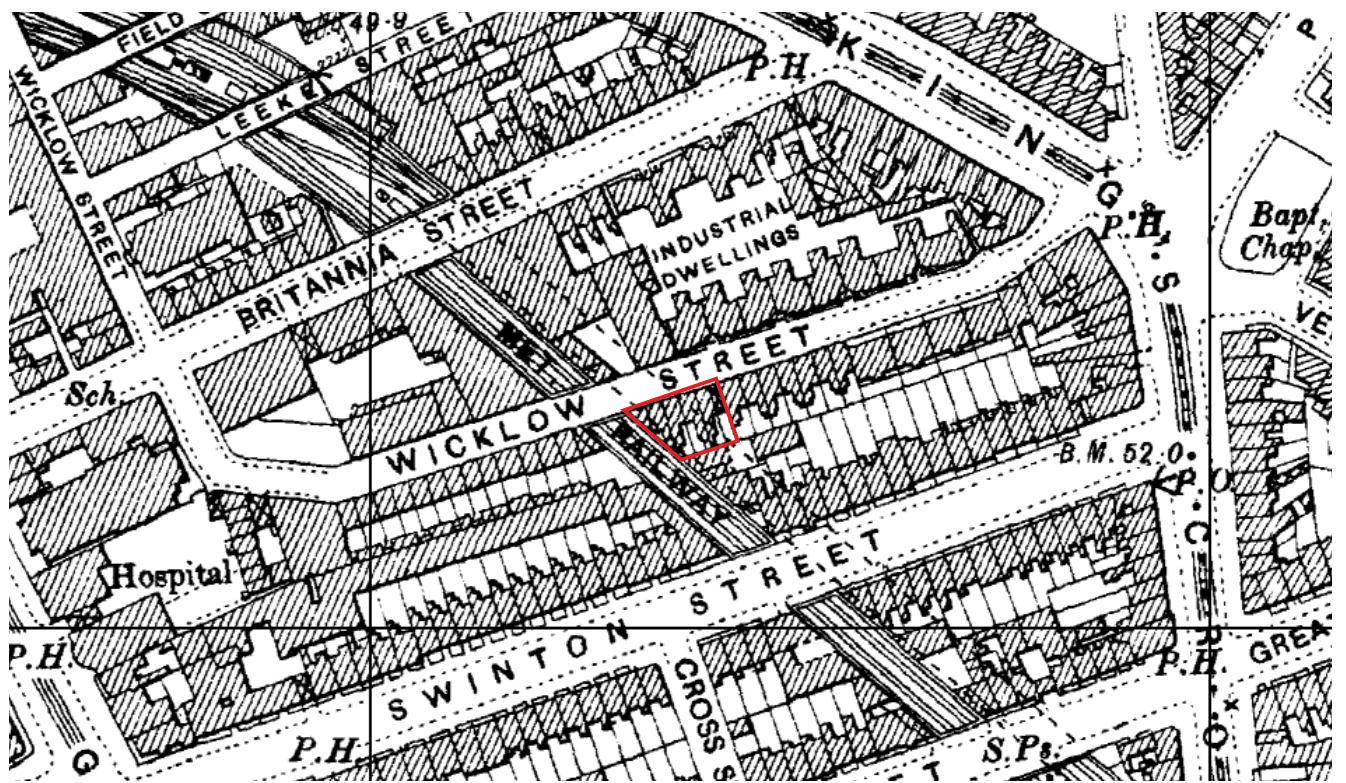


Appendix 1.4: Modern buildings fronting Swinton Street, west of the site



Appendix 1.5: Derby Lodge on the south side of Wicklow Street

APPENDIX 2: Historic Maps



Appendix 2.1: 1896 O.S Map



Appendix 2.2: 1953 O.S Map