

Heritage & PPS5 Statement:

Rev 0

41 Elsworthy Road, NW3 3BT

1. Introduction

1.1 Elsworthy Road lies on the north western edge of Primrose Hill and forms part of the old 'Chalcots' Estate'. The development of the area was a prestigious period of growth of more than 100 properties constructed between 1890 and 1903 by the builders William Willett (younger and elder). The original house at No. 41 Elsworthy road dates from circa 1900.

1.2 Please see enclosed Design Statement for further details describing the context and form of the existing house.

2. History

2.1 The Elsworthy Conservation Area is situated in an area immediately to the north and west of Primrose Hill. Prior to the nineteenth century the land occupying the current Conservation Area was farmland owned by the Eton College Estate and the Eyre Estate. The Conservation Area designation covers the entire Eton College Estate dating back to the fifteenth century, with the exception of Avenue Road which was within the Eyre Estate.

2.2 The name Elsworthy is believed to have been sourced by a contractor employed by Eton College, which was endowed with the Manor of Calcots (London Encyclopaedia).

2.3 *'The Willett's extended Elsworthy Road, forming a loop with the new Wadham Gardens, which they linked to Avenue Road on the west and the existing roads on the north. The site, bordering Primrose Hill but within easy reach of public transport, was highly sought after. By 1903, when the elder Willett retired, the firm had built more than 100 houses, designed by Faulkner, behind privet hedges rather than garden walls and forming a neglected precursor of Hampstead Garden Suburb.'* (British History Online)

2.4 Elsworthy Road, together with Wadham Gardens, contains well-detailed buildings using a rich mix of materials. A combination of brick and decorative tiling creates a strong architectural vocabulary on many properties, while others with large expanses of stucco add contrast to the streetscape. The quality and level of detailing in wood, stucco and stone is high.

2.5 Each building has unique features, but shares a common form and style with its neighbours to produce strong group value influenced by the Free Style of the 1890s (whereby architects could pick and mix features from



classical, Gothic, English and Scottish 16th century, or Italian and French Renaissance in any combination of building materials they chose).

- 2.6 Despite there being a huge wealth of variety of styles, drawing from different inspiration, research by David Prout revealed that all but two properties were designed by one main architect. Amos Faulkner (1867-1940), referred to above, was the 'in house' architects for the Willett's and the original house is likely to be of his design.
- 2.7 Faulkner proved to be successful at evolving the fashionable suburban style influenced by Norman Shaw and his pupil Ernest Newton. At its time from the 1890's the free style use in the rapidly growing suburban setting was both innovative and different, today its influence still resonates in provincial London suburbia.
- 2.8 Even during its time the Elsworthy Road development was regarded very highly and praise was heaped upon the Willett's dedication to good design, despite their prolific output.
- 2.9 The style can be defined by the lack of terraces, no basements, and no rigidly defined brick boundary walls and railings. The ground floor layouts were generous and the houses were detached with small front buffering gardens.
- 2.10 Yellow London stock brick and red brick are the predominant materials used across the Conservation Area. Other materials are employed as contrasting features on the late Victorian and Edwardian buildings and different combinations of variously coloured brick, stone, tile, stucco and timber are used as contrasting detail in the treatment of facades across different parts of the Conservation Area.
- 2.11 Despite not being a listed building, the property lies firmly in and contributes as a positive member to the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area. As a fine example with well-preserved details it is seen as an important member of the fabric of dwellings that constitutes the conservation area.
- 2.12 It is recorded that in 1944 a VI landed on 43 Elsworthy Road, completely destroying the building. Despite being in close proximity, 41 Elsworthy Road miraculously suffered only minor damage to the property and the main structure got away mainly unscathed. Any minor works were completed in accordance to the original.

3. PPS5 assessment of significance

- 3.1 *Policy Planning Statement5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5)*, which this year replaced PPG15 as a statement of the government's guidance on planning policies with regard to heritage matters, places considerable stress on the identification of the significance of any heritage asset.
- 3.2 With specific reference to conservation areas it states that (in policy HE9.5): *'Not all elements of a World Heritage Site or Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. The policies in HE9.1 to HE9.4 and HE10 apply to those elements that do contribute to the significance. When considering proposals, local planning authorities should take into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the World Heritage Site or Conservation Area as a whole. Where an element does not positively contribute to its significance, local planning authorities should take into account the desirability of*



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enhancing or better revealing the significance of the World Heritage Site or Conservation Area, including, where appropriate, through development of that element. This should be seen as part of the process of place-shaping.'

- 3.3 It is debateable to the level at which any of the elements of the present 41 Elsworthy Road make a significant contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area. However, its architect, Amos Faulkner, was not an outstanding architect and it can be argued that this was not one of his best works. The importance of the property is its contribution to the whole.
- 3.4 In the relative grading of significance which PPS5 encourages, the elements which are affected by the current proposals pale into insignificance, due to their intended sympathetic and appropriate execution.
- 3.5 Behind its façade No. 41 Elsworthy Road has been much altered, including its rear elevation where changes have been made including to the fenestration at every level.

4. The impact of the proposals on the conservation area

- 4.1 This statement is concerned with those aspects of the proposals which have an impact on the conservation area, or what otherwise might be described as the outwardly visible aspects of the proposals.
- 4.2 Following on from the 'free style' employed by Faulkner for the Elsworthy development the proposals fit in suitably with the design ethos. The proposal is sympathetic with the original external aesthetic and the internal layout is updated to accommodate modern family living.
- 4.3 The only proposed alteration to the front of 41 Elsworthy Road, apart from beneficial restoration, is the introduction of a historically sympathetic bay window to provide a greater sense of symmetry to the elevation. This would not be overwhelmingly visible from any vantage point in Elsworthy Road and would only have a positive effect on the way the building is read. It could not be said to have any adverse effect on the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 4.4 A new centrally positioned window opening at first floor is a sensitive addition, and consequential of the revised internal layout at this level.
- 4.5 The proposed rear extension of 41 Elsworthy Road, side extension and the minor alterations to the elevations are scholarly reinterpretations of typical Edwardian approaches to the design of such features.
- 4.6 The architectural treatment of the rear elevation would duplicate the gabled roof extensions seen prolifically in the neighbouring original Edwardian properties. Reinstating the symmetry will restore the regularity that has been lost in subsequent alterations and shall offer the parkscape view a grander affront.
- 4.7 Not only would the proposed building at 41 Elsworthy Road be a considerable improvement on the building standing on the site at present, but we believe will provide a more satisfactory elevation to the streetscape. Its



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style would be complementary to that of the main house, and it would enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

5. Summary and conclusions

- 5.1 The present building on the site 41 Elsworthy Road was erected in circa 1900's to the designs of the architect Amos Faulkner for the speculative builder Willets (Elder and Younger).
- 5.2 In terms of a PPS5 assessment of significance, 41 Elsworthy Road proves to be an integral part upholding the character and appearance of the conservation area, even though the building cannot be said to be of any particular architectural merit, it makes a part of the whole.
- 5.3 The desire to conserve the details within the modern extensions and overall façade restoration is fundamental to the preservation of the language of the area.
- 5.4 The proposed extension and erection of a basement level only serves to enhance the area. The sensitive façade treatments will only synchronize the design through the better internal layout alterations.
- 5.5 The proposals involve the retention and restoration of the street façade of 41 Elsworthy Road, the substantial refurbishment of the interior of the house while retaining the existing floors, the rebuilding of its rear elevation in a style which will be complementary to that of the street front.
- 5.6 In conservation area terms, the scheme as a whole would both preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area.



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