

No 33 Chalcot Square, London Borough of Camden.

A short history and assessment of architectural interest

1. Introduction

1.1. This report is prepared at the request of Peter Hall, the owner of No 33 Chalcot Square, a Grade II listed building set in the Primrose Hill Conservation Area. It is intended to accompany applications for planning permission and listed building consent for works at the house. It is designed to help meet the requirement in Paragraph 3.4 of *Planning Policy Guidance 15* which asks applicants to provide information to assist the assessment of the impact of proposals on the special interest of a listed building and its setting.

1.2. The report has been prepared by Frank Kelsall, a director of the Architectural History Practice Ltd.

1.3. The report comprises a short illustrated history of the square and the house (Section 2). This is based on primary sources (there is no published history of Chalcot Square) and a general inspection of the house. A detailed feature by feature survey has not been made. This is followed by an assessment of the special interest, taking into account those matters referred to in sections (i) to (iii) of Paragraph 3.5. of *PPG 15*. (Section 3). A list of sources used is attached.

2. History

2.1. The Southampton Estate

2.1.1. No 33 Chalcot Square was built on land whose early history is complex. It is not clear if the property belonged to the manor of Tottenham (Tottenham Court) or Rugmere or if Rugmere was a sub-manor of Tottenham. In the Middle Ages St Pancras parish and manor was part of the property of St Paul's Cathedral but in the 16th century the Crown took an interest as part of the formation of what became Regent's Park. At the end of the 17th century the land came to Henry Fitzroy, first Duke of Grafton and illegitimate son of Charles II, though a grant to his wife, Isabella Countess of Arlington. The property passed to a cadet branch of the family. The first duke's great-grandson, Charles Fitzroy, was created Earl of Southampton in 1780, but his rights took time to establish, needing an Act of Parliament in 1768 (which bought out the interest of St Paul's Cathedral) and a family settlement in 1780. As proprietor the Earl had manorial rights and direct possession of some of the demesne lands but not beneficial ownership of everything. Chalk Farm was subject to a leasehold interest bought only in 1786.

2.1.2. The Earl of Southampton had begun to develop the Fitzroy Square area of his property in 1789 through eight building agreements with the Adam Brothers, but the French wars made completion a protracted business. Developments further east were interrupted by the arrival of the railway at Euston in 1837. Perhaps because of a perceived loss of value caused by the railway and the scattered nature of the demesne lands throughout St Pancras parish much of the Earl of Southampton's estate was sold in a big three-day auction sale in 1840. The third day's sale included the area where Chalcot Square now stands; it is shown in a plan attached to the sale catalogue with the land divided into building plots on a street pattern recognisable today. In 1840 Chalcot Square does not appear and semi-detached villas were the preferred building form. So far it has not been possible to trace the purchasers in 1840 but sufficient adjoining plots were acquired by the same purchaser to

permit a change in the ground layout. It is probable that little work on the streets themselves had been carried out by 1840.

2.2. Chalcot Square

2.2.1. A St Pancras parish plan of 1849 shows the area little more built up than at the time of the sale and with the same street plan outlined in 1840. But by the 1860 revision of this plan Chalcot Square had been built. The square was then called St George's Square, a name kept until 1937. The building leases so far seen date from 1856 and 1857 and were granted by William Broder, a builder who lived in St James' Terrace, now part of Prince Albert Road. Broder is not hitherto known as a London developer; he seems to have started in Clerkenwell c1840 and by the 1850s was working in Hammersmith and Marylebone (perhaps St John's Wood). Chalcot Square was his last development for he died late in 1857 or 1858 owning property in Kent as well as London. It seems probable that it was Broder who bought the land from Lord Southampton. In 1928, when the *Report of the Royal Commission on London Squares* was published, the freeholders of the open space in Chalcot Square were the trustees of the Broder Estate. Broder was able to modify the Southampton Estate plan to provide for Chalcot Square but not to amend the line of what became Regent's Park Road or the oddly stirrup-shaped plot now bounded by Berkeley Road, Sharpleshall Street and Regent's Park Road which was the garden to the south of and let with the pre-existing Chalk Farm Tavern; this is presumably the site of what Dickens described as 'the bowers for reading and smoking scattered about the tea-gardens at Chalk Farm'. By the time of the first Ordnance Survey map the area was built up to its form recognisable today.

2.2.2. Individual houses in Chalcot Square were let by Broder to individual builders. The leases for some houses on the south side of the square give a clue as to who was probably responsible for the design. Three houses (Nos 11, 14 and 15) were let at the end of 1856 to Richard Henry Moore, an architect then living in Queens Terrace, now part of Regents Park Road, and his was the

address given in an advertisement in *The Builder* in 1857 for those interested in acquiring ground near Regent's Park. Moore's best known building, the Hop Exchange in Southwark Street of 1866, was built for a company of which he was a major shareholder. He was not a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects, unsurprising in view of his involvement in speculative building and commercial enterprise. He also designed a Baptist Chapel in Bromley and it may or may not be a coincidence that by 1870 a Baptist Chapel had been built in Berkeley Road, just to the north of Chalcot Square.

2.3. No 33 Chalcot Square

2.3.1. The building lease for No 33 Chalcot Square was granted by William Broder to Thomas Clarke, a builder of Bentley Crescent in the Balls Pond Road in Islington, on 21 December 1857. Clarke had also built the two adjoining houses (Nos 31 and 32) under a building lease of 8 November 1856. The three houses were then numbered 27 to 29; the numbering was changed in 1876. Clarke does not appear to have built other houses for Broder. He mortgaged his three houses soon after getting the leases but defaulted on his payments; he may have had difficulty completing them for the St Pancras ratebooks suggest that No 33 at least was unoccupied for some time after it was built.

2.3.2. The first clearly identified occupier of No 33 Chalcot Square was John Chaplin, there at the time of the 1871 census. Chaplin was a coachman. He may have been a servant in occupation while the head of household was away, but while the house was respectably middle class at the time Chalcot Square was not an area readily identified with those owning their own coaches and there was no accommodation for them; it seems more probable that he was a successful tradesman. By 1881 census the house was the home of Emilia Bannatyne, a widow living on her investments, who kept a cook and a housemaid; on census night she had a visitor, presumably her brother-in-law or nephew, John Bannatyne, minister in the Scottish Free Church.

2.3.3. Charles Booth's social survey of London in the 1890s noted that St George's Square had 'gone down', with many houses let in lodgings. No 33

Chalcot Square matches this pattern exactly, for the 1891 census shows the house as a 'Home for Working Lads', occupied by Joseph and Mary Lane, described as superintendent and matron of the home, and no fewer than 21 male boarders between the ages of 14 and 20. The house appears to be a smaller private enterprise version of the Boys' Home which was at the corner of Regent's Park Road and King Henry's Road from 1865 to 1920. By 1901 it had closed and No 33 Chalcot Square was occupied by Charles Wilson, his wife and three children of working age.

2.3.4. Though the 1901 census gives no indication that Wilson took boarders he probably did so soon afterwards and his widow certainly did. By 1910 the second floor was separately tenanted and in the Post Office Directory for 1915 Mrs Wilson is specifically listed as keeping a boarding house. She was not the owner for in 1911 the house had been looked at by the London County Council when the means of escape was deemed inadequate. The owner was a Mr Peacey of Park Street and there were thirteen people living in the four floors above the basement. The lists of occupiers through the 1920s and 1930s suggest a house divided informally into apartments.

2.3.5. In 1938 the informal division was changed into a formal separation of 33 Chalcot Square into five self-contained flats. The application was made by Herbert Austin, a surveyor of Chobham, Surrey, on behalf of Henry N Fry, the owner, trading as R A Fry & Sons. Despite this division, clearly identifiable on site, the house has not appeared in occupiers' lists as more than Nos 33, 33a and 33b Chalcot Square, presumably because there were separate entrances only to the basement, the ground floor and the upper floors. Since 1938 there is record of works to the basement of the house in 1985 and works to combine the first and second floors in 1994.

2.3.6. 33 Chalcot Square clearly shows evidence of physical change to meet changing occupational patterns, mainly through reorganisation of internal space. The only significant drawings to illustrate these changes are the block plan attached to the registered copy of the 1857 building lease and the plans attached to the building act application of 1938. Some external changes can be

documented through photographs. These show that the house has retained its general form from its first building in 1857 but has undergone many changes in detail.

2.3.7. The plan of the house as built is unusual in London terrace house terms because of the constraints of the site. But these constraints also offered an opportunity to take advantage of westward views. The eastern half of the house appears as a continuation of the general Chalcot Square form, four storeys above a basement, three windows wide with projecting porch, first floor balcony and cornice; the south front is all executed in stucco but the rear elevation reveals the brick structure. But the house is only one room deep and the additional space which is usually provided in a double-depth plan is provided at No 33 Chalcot Square by a western range, originally only three storeys above the basement, two windows and then a canted western bay with a further window and a prominent chimney stack at the end. The 1857 plan shows that there was a basement and ground floor projection behind the staircase compartment from the first building. The 1938 plans shows that the present extensions at basement and ground floor levels were already in existence and that the western extension at third floor level was made in 1938.

2.3.8. It is reasonable to assume that changes were made to accommodate the conversion to lodging house use, perhaps to provide separate accommodation for the lodging house keeper, but this is not documented. The present compartmentation is broadly that established in 1857 with internal arrangements adjusted on several occasions, most significantly in 1938 and again in 1994. The original plan of the house remains clearly legible except for the arrangements at the landings on the first, second and third floors where the creation of self-contained flats with individual entrances and bathrooms has obscured the original plan. Opening up in the course of works may provide archaeological evidence for the original plan.

2.3.9. External changes in detail include partial loss of and change to the first floor balcony on the western part of the house and erosion of stucco detail. The principal windows of the house, as others in Chalcot Square, have an

unusual glazing pattern where each sash is divided into equally spaced sides by a central glazing bar but unequally spaced sections by a horizontal glazing bar; this pattern has been repeated in a number of replacement windows but original sashes and glazing bars survive in some windows as elsewhere in Chalcot Square.

2.3.10. Internal changes in detail include a remodelling of the staircase within its compartment. Joinery has been altered to accommodate new circulation patterns. At least two probably original chimney pieces survive and the plaster cornices to the two main rooms at ground floor level also appear to be original.

3. Assessment

3.1. No 33 Chalcot Square is Grade II listed building. It is in my opinion properly listed and graded. Changes to such listed building are provided for in the general advice in PPG15, especially at Paragraphs 3.3., 3.10., and 3.12.-

3.15. The relevant issues for the consideration of listed building consent applications are set out at Paragraph 3.5. Paragraph 3.12 asks for an assessment of the elements that make up the special interest of the building.

3.2. The architectural and historical significance of No 33 Chalcot Square may be briefly set out:

- It is an important element in an overall and more or less intact composition of houses which make up Chalcot Square. The whole square is an interesting example of the last stage of the stucco faced classically derived London terrace house tradition. The site of No 33 at the west end of the north range gives it especial prominence.
- Chalcot Square is an important part of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area and the house makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
- Individually No 33 remains broadly in its original form. In some respects this is the form of a typical London terraced house but in other respects, especially its double width rather than double depth plan, it is an interesting variation of the type.
- There have been changes none of which have added anything to the special interest of the house. The minor additions do not significantly detract from its overall form; the internal and external alterations do not compromise the general overall character; and the changes in detail can either be tolerated or reversed.

3.3. PPG15 Para 3.10 specifically advises that the best use for an historic building is likely to be its original use and continuation or reinstatement of that use should be the first option when the future of a building is under consideration. In that respect the proposed use of most of No 33 Chalcot Square as a single family residence is in line with that advice. Provided that further change is seen either to reverse alterations of no special interest or to work with the grain of the original historic building then it seems probable that works to No 33 Chalcot Square can be carried out with no detriment to special interest of the house as set out in above.

4. Sources

At London Metropolitan Archive:

- Records in the Middlesex Deeds Register
- Records of street naming and numbering
- Electoral registers
- Records of the Southampton Estate
- Photographs
- Building Act case

At Camden Local History Centre and Archives

- St Pancras Parish ratebooks
- St Pancras Parish maps
- Ordnance Survey maps
- Miscellaneous MS 5650
- Census records
- Photographs

At Camden Town Hall

- Drainage plans
- Planning files

On-line sources

- Charles Booth archive at London School of Economics
- British History on Line (*Old and New London, Victoria County History and Survey of London*)

Printed Works

- *Camden History Review*
- Camden History Society, *Primrose Hill to Euston Road*
- Pevsner/Cherry, *Buildings of England: London, South*
- *Builder*, 22 May 1852, 4 April 1857 and 5 October 1867

List of illustrations:

1. Estate plan from Southampton Estate Plan, 1840
2. St Pancras Parish Plan, 1849
3. St Pancras Parish Plan, 1860
4. Ordnance Survey Map, 1870
5. Plan attached to registered copy of building lease, 1857
6. Drawings attached to Building Act application, 1937
7. Photograph of Chalcot Square, 1906
8. Photograph of Chalcot Square, 1968
9. Photograph of Chalcot Square, 1977