

designed a scheme for Regents Park, and it is fair to say that Henry Eyre sought his estate to be a modest reflection of this design. The first public road through the estate was successful under the Finchely Road Act of 1826. Finchley New Road and Avenue Road were built heading north into the Hampstead section of Eyre's land and were completed by 1829. Swiss Cottage tavern was built at the apex of the two roads by 1841.



Figure 5: Map 1833

- 4.6 The later half of the 19th century saw the rapid development of St John's Wood. The building pattern reflected the broad avenues of semi-detached and detached villas of Nash's design and it is this which gives the area its distinctive character. The St John's Wood Society quotes the architectural historian, Sir John Summerson "It was the first part of London, and indeed of any other town, to abandon the terrace house for the semi-detached villa – a revolution of striking significance and far-reaching effect". It is this pattern and character of St John's Wood which is still important today.
- 4.7 By 1870, Queen's Grove and the surrounding streets of St John's Wood Road, Norfolk Road and Acacia Road had all been developed, with the prevailing character being semi-detached villas in a classical, vaguely Italianate style, though there are considerable variations on the standard Italianate themes. Properties on Avenue Road to the east were detached villas in substantial grounds, with those on the east backing onto parkland, some of which now form part of the Elsworth Conservation Area. The pattern of development can be clearly seen at figure 6.



Figure 6 Map 1871-1880

- 4.8 In the early part of the 19th Century the normal 99 year leases began to expire and it was the practice of Eyre estate trustees to replace houses that were beyond repair with new developments promoted by individuals (not by the estate). Early redevelopment consisted of large detached Neo-Georgian Houses and mansion blocks along Wellington Road and Abbey Road. In particular 1935 saw the redevelopment of No's 40, 41 and 42 Queen's Grove in a piecemeal and speculative fashion, as the leases individually became available.
- 4.9 After WWII much redevelopment also took place as gap sites occurred. Also the evacuation of people to the country saw more houses fall into disrepair and returned to the Eyre Estate. By 1954, the semi detached villas on the corner plots, with Ordnance Hill (No's 24-25 and 48-49), were redeveloped with large detached properties, again in a Neo-Georgian style.

- 4.10 By the 1960's the land to the rear, on St John's Road saw 12 semi-detached properties and three detached properties redeveloped with a series of residential tower blocks and flats. A terrace of garages is situated against the rear boundary. It was these sorts of redevelopments that prompted the St John's Wood Preservation Society to be set up in 1962, to fight for the preservation of the buildings and the areas distinct character from the early part of the 19th Century.

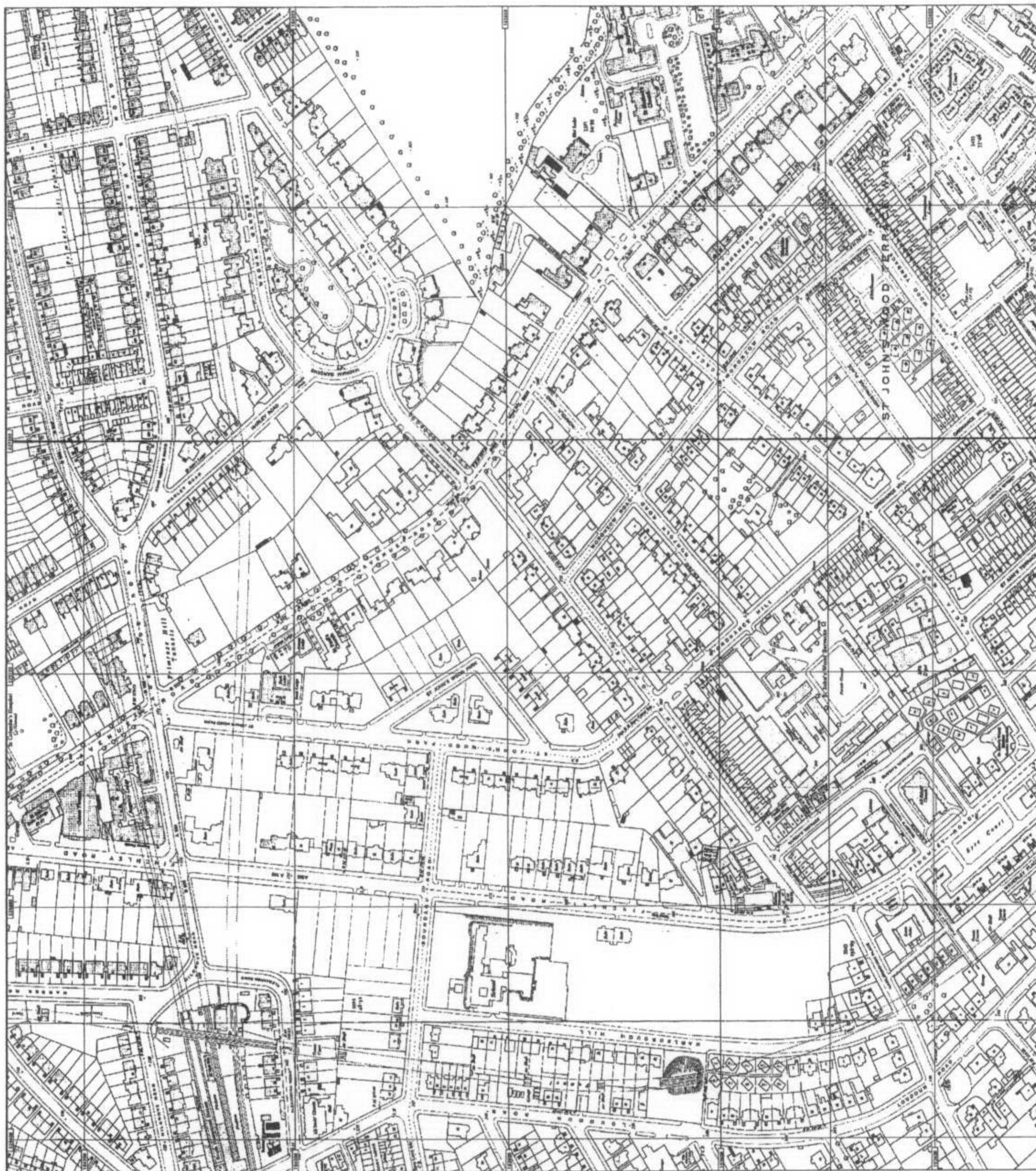


Figure 7: Map 1955

- 4.11 In 1964 the Society organised a tour of St John's Wood, with Mr Dale of the historic Buildings Section of the Ministry Of Housing and Professor Pevsner of the Victorian Society. (Mr Dale is a noted historian of Regency Brighton and contributed to the Pevsner volume for that city in the West Sussex volume of *the Buildings of England*.) Following this tour the Society prepared a study putting a strong case for the preservation of Blenheim Road, Clifton Road

and Norfolk Road in their entirety. What was unusual about this work was that the buildings were not listed for their individual merit but for their value as groups of buildings. It must be remembered that there was then, in 1964, no statutory means of protecting historic areas. That was to come with the Civic Amenities Act three years later.

4.12 Provisional Preservation Orders were issued in May of 1964 by the LCC and later confirmed. It was this kind of approach to preservation and the value the public attached to such areas and groups of buildings, which lead to the later Act of 1967.

4.13 Prior to the passing of the Civic Amenities Act 1967, the protection of historic buildings was provided in the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 and in the Town and Country Planning Act 1962. The provisions allowed for buildings of architectural or historical interest to be provided protection on their individual merit. As a result there was no protection prior to the 1967 Act to prevent the gradual erosion of groups of buildings which were of individual merit in areas which had a certain character or value. Under the 1967 Act it became the duty of the Local Planning Authority to pay special attention to the character and appearance of a designated Conservation Area when exercising any functions under the 1962 Town and Country Planning Act. This function still exists under the presents acts.

4.14 It is not surprising, given the strong local support for the preservation of Regency ensembles, that St John's Wood was one of the first Conservation Areas in the Country and its value as an area is perhaps best described by Joan Dunkerly, Group Planning Officer, Special Areas Group, Architecture and Planning Department at the City Of Westminster, in her statement of case from 1964 for the preservation of buildings in Circus Road, Cavendish Avenue, Cavendish Close and Wellington Place:

"The area provides the only example of the delightful suburban villa development of the early 19th Century in the City of Westminster, and in spite of much unsympathetic large scale replacement and individual rebuilding there is still a large part of St John's Wood where it's character is worth preserving and enhancing"

4.15 The Society's news letter of May 1967, sent out a map for consultation with residents (Figure 8), which contained areas of buildings that they considered should be listed. The area was extensive and it is from this map that the beginning of the St John's Wood Conservation Area can be identified and also what was considered to be of particular merit. Since this time the area has been reviewed and expanded, amounting to two Conservation Areas in two boroughs, although with much the same general shape and the Finchley Road essentially dividing the Westminster Conservation Area. However, from this first map it is evident that the principle behind the designation of the Conservation Area was to protect properties which were constructed and formed part of the original, Regency development.






-  BUILDINGS ON THE STATUTORY OR SUPPLEMENTARY LIST OF BUILDINGS OF HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST OR SUBJECT TO BUILDING PRESERVATION ORDERS CONFIRMED BY THE MINISTER OF HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT.
-  OTHER BUILDINGS WHICH HAVE BEEN RECOMMENDED FOR LISTING BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES BUT ON WHICH NO DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN BY THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT.
-  AREA WITHIN WHICH THE SOCIETY RECOMMENDS THAT FURTHER GROUPS OF ORIGINAL ST. JOHN'S WOOD BUILDINGS (PRE c 1850) SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR LISTING.

Figure 8: St Johns Wood Society Map of Areas for Listing

5.0 SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE WIDER HERITAGE ASSET: ST JOHN'S WOOD

- 5.1 The St John's Wood Conservation Area in Camden is a relatively small Conservation Area and is almost certainly designated with that larger historic entity in mind, as an addition to the area identified by the City of Westminster. Authority boundaries in London rarely reflect historical circumstances precisely. Currently the borough boundary divides Queen's Grove and Norfolk Road. The overall character and house design in the area is largely reflective of the adjoining Conservation Area in Westminster. The London Borough of Camden Conservation Area covers the northern side of Queen's Grove and two properties in Norfolk House Road. Sixteen properties are covered in total. The Westminster Conservation Area covers the eastern side of Queen's Grove and extends southwards, covering the remainder of Norfolk Road. The rear of the buildings on Wellington Road acts as the boundary, which separates the western side of the Conservation Area.
- 5.2 St. John's Wood is a leading example of suburban development from the Regency period. Its pattern of streets and spaces were laid out in the 1830s and 1840s and completed with terraces, semis and detached houses (the latter often having the quality of villas) over the ensuing 20-30 years.
- 5.3 Most of this first phase of development was in the classical tradition, drawing on the style known commonly as Italianate and which was pioneered by John Nash, Decimus Burton and Charles Barry, to name only a few of its leading practitioners. There are occasionally examples of Gothic Revival villas. Houses are set within gardens or generally back from the pavement edge. Its 'essence' is that of a Regency/Early Victorian picturesque, Villa Suburb; it is exemplary in this regard.
- 5.4 And like many such suburbs, whilst the architecture as a whole hangs together because of the continuity of materials and consistency of detailing, there is actually some variety within a certain common theme, differently massed buildings, for instance, or some more picturesque than others. Walking across the area, therefore, one has certain expectations having to do with scale, massing, materials and colour. One also is expecting to see villas, set in their own plots.
- 5.7 Across St. John's Wood the majority of built fabric dates to the range 1820 to 1879 (according to Westminster's published analysis and plan), with a light scattering of interwar buildings. However, most of the residential dwellings were constructed between 1820-1830. There are also significant areas of post-WWII development, some of it of good quality. The prevailing character and street layout of St John's Wood is one of wide tree lined streets, low density development, generally of a domestic scale. Generous gardens, trees, and gaps between buildings to the greenery beyond are important aspects of the areas character and feel. Interestingly, although not executed, the detached and semi-detached villas are in some

circles said to have perhaps influenced, Nash in his slightly later plan for Regents Park. However, over time, across the area, this background of Regency building has been infilled. These buildings tend to be of different materials and character. Some have high intrinsic merit as works of architecture in their own right, and in that sense make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Others are merely typical products of their time, making little or no contribution.

- 5.9 The majority of the properties in Queen's Grove are semi-detached villas in classical / Italianate design, most constructed in around 1820-1849, with the exception of the terrace at No's 2-22, which was constructed slightly later. In respect of Queen's Grove in particular Pevsner writes " a handsome terrace with giant pilasters 2-22 and detached houses with unusual details (No.27 segmental arches on pilasters and a central recess with brackets, No's 30-31 the same motifs in reverse order dated 1847). The list description of these properties is in appendix 1. Other prevalent designs within St John's Wood are Gothic Villas, terraces and the 1930's infill development such as mansion blocks and neo-Georgian detached houses.

- 5.10 The Westminster Conservation Area audit described the earlier Italianate villas as:

'fully stuccoed with simple classical detailing. Predominantly with shallow pitched roofs and broad overhanging eaves set on brackets and tall chimneys. The half basement storey renders the ground floor rather than the first, piano nobile with large windows and some have entrances with grand porches. A second, and sometimes third, storey of reduced height and more modest detailing sits below the eaves. The classic St John's Wood Villa is broader than it is tall. This basic villa design was adapted to include semi-detached buildings, often designed to resemble a single large property. Entrances were often recessed on the side wall of each property to create the feeling of one grand house.'

- 5.11 There is no Conservation Area audit for the St John's Wood Conservation Area in Camden. The local authority have, therefore, not formally indicated which properties make a positive contribution to the area. It is clear that the Regency period and early Victorian rendered properties must be such a category of building.

6.0 CONTRIBUTION OF EXISTING BUILDING

6.1 There is no Conservation Area Appraisal for the St John's Wood Conservation Area in Camden and therefore the contribution of No.40 Queen's Grove to the Conservation Area needs to be considered. In assessing whether a building makes a positive contribution to a Conservation Area, English Heritage raises the following points in its Conservation Area Appraisals and Conservation Area Practice (2006). We have selected the criteria which are most relevant to this site:

- Is the building the work of an architect of regional or local note?
- Does the building have qualities of age style materials or other characteristics which reflect those of at least a substantial number of buildings within the conservation area?
- Does it relate by age, materials or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings and contribute positively to their setting?
- Does it serve as a reminder of the gradual development of the settlement in which it stands?

The English Heritage Guidance states that a positive answer to any one of these questions might lead one to conclude a building does make a positive contribution to the conservation area. And clearly some of these questions – the last two – involve the application of professional judgment.

6.2 The following section examines the existing building against these points in more detail.

Queens Grove and the History of nos. 40 to 42

6.3 Queens Grove was laid out on the Eyre Estate in the 1840s. The houses were of a type that typifies the wider historic development in St. John's Wood: Italianate in inspiration, all drawing on the language of typology of the classical villa, as adapted to middle class speculative housing. There is a characteristic mix of single terraced houses, semi-detached villas and isolated single houses. They are rendered, with details deriving more or less loosely from Renaissance sources. The original leases fell in during the 1930s, and the Estate encouraged the redevelopment of older properties as detached, brick houses in a style then fashionable, what can broadly be described as neo-Georgian.

6.4 The reasons for this are recorded: the original houses were considered in poor condition. And this ultimately explains why the new development has a piecemeal, uncoordinated character. These 1930s houses are dotted about, without any particular guiding principle to their position or inter-relationship in design terms each with the other. Thus the trio of which

no. 40 forms part have no design coherence as a group. They sit together because of similar materials and scale, and they also are obviously, roughly contemporary.

- 6.5 Historical records show that no. 40 was the first of the three properties to be considered for redevelopment. In October 1934 this house was identified as being in poor condition. It was a large detached property in the Italianate style, and the lessee was encouraged to surrender it early so the plot could be marketed for rebuilding. The site was put out to tender and as many as 15 bids received. The successful bidder was Christopher Wright, a developer-architect, whose design for the parcel was built in 1935—36. This is the current property.
- 6.6 Wright is not a recognized designer. He was ARIBA, having trained at the Liverpool School of Architecture, qualifying in 1911. Early apprenticeships were for firms associated with the neo-Georgian. Research assembled in respect of a nearby site confirms that Wright was engaged in speculative development in the 1920s in Oxford and more widely, on this relatively small scale, in London during the 1930s. Victor Belcher reveals nothing is known of him from his enquiries with RIBA. Wright subsequently, in 1935-36, redeveloped the other houses, nos. 41 and 42, we assume, to his own designs.
- 6.7 There is no doubting these were speculative houses, and the finishes and relatively anodyne design confirms this. They are absolutely typical of a variety of detached neo-Georgian house from the period, many examples of which survive across wide swathes of London, and in areas near to Hampstead Garden Suburb. They are not unique or characteristic of this Conservation Area or the adjoining one.
- 6.8 Since the contracts for all were awarded by competitive bidding, there can be no doubt they were not conceived as a group. Wright could not have been sure that he would be successful, so he designed each building as a single composition. The variety one sees from house to house presumably helped in their marketing.
- 6.9 Any unity the group may have had, has been compromised by piecemeal extensions and by the rebuilding of no.42, whose brickwork is of a different colour to the rest. The design details vary as well.
- 6.10 There are architecturally more ambitious interwar houses in St. John's Wood from this period, as noted in the revised Pevsner volume for London: Northwest, but these occur on larger plots in Avenue Road. The rest are described in the Buildings of England volume as 'intrusions'. As identified earlier at para 4.7, No's.40, 41 and 42 were part of a rebuilding policy of the Trustee's of the Eyre Estate. The minutes from the Trustee's meeting in 1934 show that No.40 was in a dilapidated state. Subsequently, No.40 was re-built in a Neo-Georgian style, as a speculative development.

- 6.11 Individually the buildings have suffered from various alterations since their construction. No.40 in particular having suffered from the insertion of dormers in its early years of occupation. The urns have disappeared from the parapet and the porch has been replaced. There is also an extension to the rear of the property, comprising ground and lower ground floor including a sunken court. Eric Parry was the architect.
- 6.12 No.42 was recently demolished and rebuilt with a facsimile of the original facade, although with a number of additions. Different bricks, modern door surround and the addition of dormers, mean that the building is a shadow of the original.
- 6.13 The 2006 Committee report for the demolition behind a retained façade of No.41 states 'the existing house is not considered to be a typical or particularly high quality example of Neo-Georgian Architecture', a comment which can perhaps also be attributed to all three within the group, considering the gradual alterations over time further eroding any individual integrity the buildings may have had.
- 6.14 Therefore in this case the contribution is purely through the fact that the three buildings are of a similar pastiche, situated next to each other, rather than three buildings of striking individual quality, which as a whole enhance the area. Given the context and the history of the group it is considered that No.40 cannot be said to make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, although in fairness, the dwelling cannot be said to be a negative feature of the Conservation Area, as it has some group value with the adjoining properties from the same period and originally by the same architect, albeit this contribution is limited. Therefore, it is concluded the building is neutral within the Conservation Area.
- 6.15 No.40 was under construction in 1935 and completed in 1936. The Eyre estates redevelopment policy of buildings that were in poor state of repair, means that later additions to the estate are 'pepper potted' in no particular pattern and are normally of a Neo-Georgian style, a stark contrast to the original classical buildings that form much of St John's Wood. Cherry and Pevsner, as noted, refer to the later buildings between the wars as intrusions and we share this view. In view of the above we do not consider the building makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area's character or appearance. Neither does it detract from it. It is, in other words, neutral, just the sort of building whose replacement is in principle acceptable subject to the characteristics and effects of the proposed replacement.
- 6.16 If we return, on the basis of this analysis, to the English Heritage criteria or questions, we have the following observations:
- Is the building the work of an architect of regional or local note?

Wright is not an architect of even regional importance.

- Does the building have qualities of age, style, materials or other characteristics which reflect those of at least a substantial number of buildings within the conservation area?

When reference to the larger historic entity of which this Conservation Area, the building cannot be said to reflect a substantial number of other properties. This question is clearly intended to assess whether a building by its physical characteristics reinforces the prevailing architectural and townscape character of an area. The subject building does not.

- Does it relate by age, materials or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings and contribute positively to their setting?

As a matter of fact the subject property does not reflect the characteristics of nearby listed buildings. It is part of a small grouping which we have assessed as having little architectural or historic merit. The answer to this question is again 'no'.

- Does it serve as a reminder of the gradual development of the settlement in which it stands?

The redevelopment of the plots during the interwar period is a characteristic of the villa suburb's history, but not a positive one as demonstrated by the Pevsner assessment. Where an individual property from this period has higher architectural quality than the subject property (and there are many which do), then it could be said to have value. Here the evidential value of the subject property and its neighbours is weak and the loss of the building would not remove the sense of change and development that characterizes the Conservation Areas as a whole. In our judgment, then, whilst the subject building does reflect historical development, it does not do so uniquely, and neither is it the best example of its type from this phase of development. Consequently, we have concluded the answer to this question is no.

7.0 THE PPG15 CRITERIA AND THE EMERGING PROPOSALS

- 7.1 Having concluded that the building does not make a positive contribution – or rather any contribution sufficient to put into play the presumption in favour of preservation outlined in para 4.27 of PPG15 – the decision maker must turn to the quality of the replacement building and, specifically, whether or not it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 7.2 In this case PPG15 advises that preserve means 'cause no harm' or even 'enhancement', the latter interpretation (deriving from a High Court ruling) being consistent with the spirit of Conservation Area legislation which is on the positive management of change.
- 7.3 For advice on the correct approach to new development sites (whether or not they are existing gap sites or sites like this one, which contain buildings that do not make a positive contribution) we have to turn to para 4.17. Here the PPG advises that 'their replacement should be a stimulus to imaginative, high quality design, and seen as an opportunity to enhance the area. What is important is not that buildings should directly imitate earlier styles, but that they should be designed with respect for their context, as part of a larger whole which has a well established character and appearance of its own.'
- 7.4 Para 4.18 expands the point, and in advising on the desirability of requiring detailed plans for new development, the PPG states that 'Special regard should be had for such matters as scale, height, form, massing, respect for the traditional pattern of frontages, vertical or horizontal emphasis, and detailed design (e.g. the scale and spacing of window openings, and the nature and quality of materials).' The proposals are promoted on the basis of detailed designs and, as required, a Design and Access Statement.
- 7.5 The implied approach is to pay attention to the abstract elements of design to achieve a response that is both contextual and of its time, an approach favoured in recent best practice guidance on conservation area management (published by English Heritage) and joint publications prepared by Cabe and English Heritage (for example, 'Building in Context'.) The general notes on design in PPS1 also make it clear that even in historically sensitive settings, there are in most cases good grounds for contemporary design.
- 7.6 The emerging proposals follow the PPG15 advice exactly. The architect has creatively reinterpreted the format of the English Suburban Villa, in light of various Modern Movement buildings that respond to that same villa ideal.
- 7.7 Overall conformity is achieved through materials and colour and by an approach to the main elevation that relies on a masonry format, punctuated by openings to produce shadows. There is a subtle play in the layering of this façade. The building does not shout. It is well

mannered. At the same time the basic division of the street façade – an informal 'base' and a more regular upper floor element – reflects the division of traditional properties into rustic and *piano nobile* with polite upper storeys. The window proportions are Georgian in character.



Figure 9: Proposed Front elevation

7.8 Inside and at the back the design is more open, as appropriate to more private areas (again this greater informality is an aspect of Villa architecture and reflects too ancient Vitruvian principles of appropriateness). Here the language is also of the 1930s but not the neo-Georgian, that of the International Style as recorded in the seminal exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art. The greater movement of the façade than what one finds in canonical works in this style reflects an English approach to architectural abstraction between the wars. And so the design mediates between three appropriate design contexts. The front draws on the Georgian tradition in expression and façade organisation. The informal arrangement, however, of the ground floor openings recall an earlier C20 approach to architectural design which is fully manifest on the rear. Here the building is Romantic about the white, abstract architecture of the 1930s, and its proximity to another 1930s architecture (with very different aspirations) is part of the proposal's interest. At the same time, the highly picturesque arrangement of masses on the rear reflects an English response to Continental Modernism. The architect also draws on the architecture of Adolph Loos (in the elevation mostly) who was himself fascinated by English domestic architecture and its relatively mute and unostentatious character. In summary, we find this to be both a highly satisfying design and one that is rich in contextual and art historical references. Its broad characteristics as seen from the public highway will ensure it sits comfortably in this position; closer examination reveals it to be a work of refinement and careful consideration.

7.9 The spaces of the house reflect the particular interests of the owner and applicant, whose professional involvement with development of high design quality and the design agenda is widely acknowledged. The architect's own proven track record, combined with the patronage of this house, is material to the assessment of quality. Together, patron and architect, demonstrate ambition.

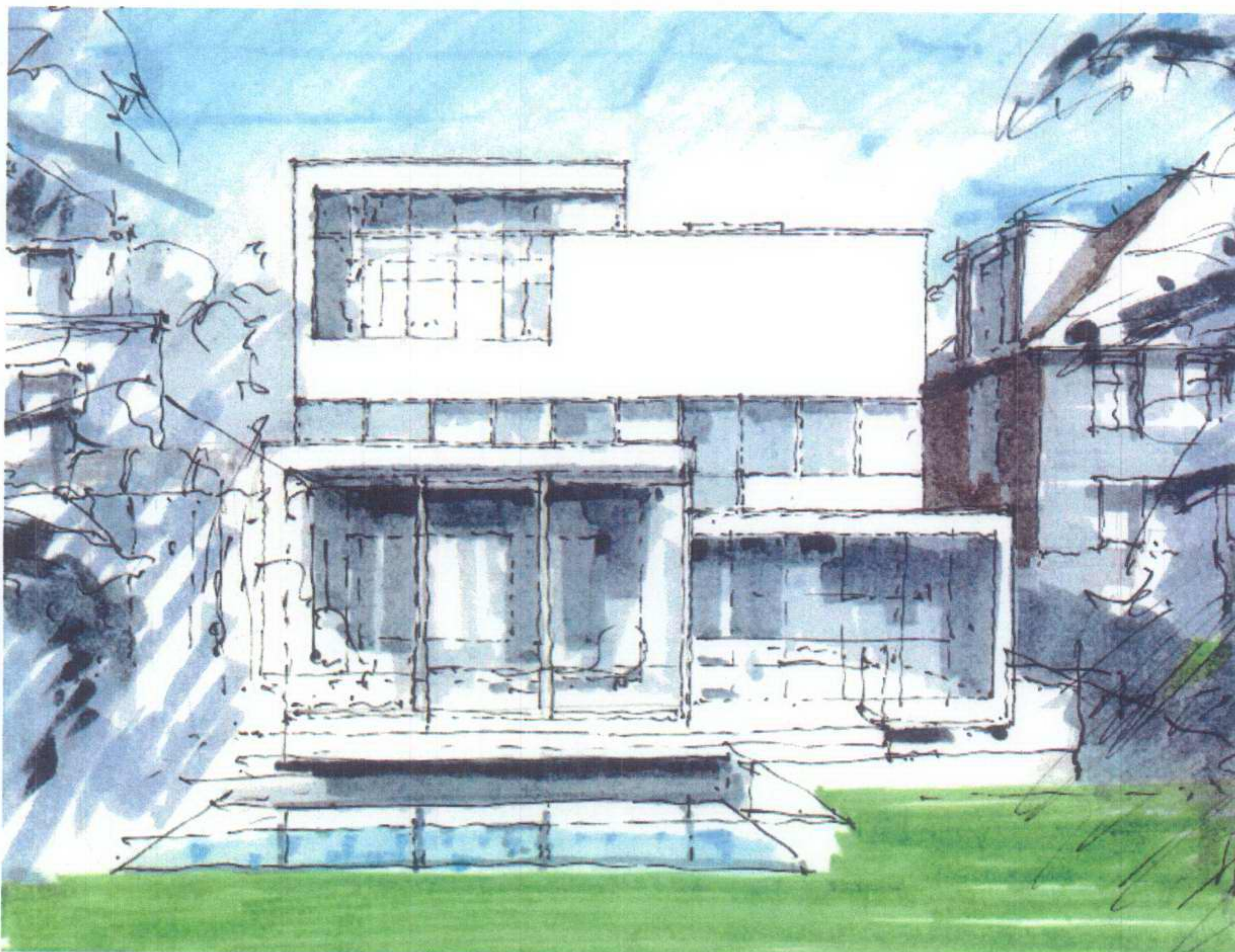


Figure 10: Proposed Rear elevation

- 7.9 Looking across this part of London more widely, one finds many instances of modern houses in historic suburban contexts developed in precisely this way, many now sitting, as positive character buildings within designated conservation areas.
- 7.10 And so just as the area is characterised more widely by its exemplary suburban villa architecture, so too does it boast examples of exemplary modern and contemporary houses. These reflect an historical and cultural profile which is associated with St. John's Wood and also with Hampstead.
- 7.11 To demonstrate this point we illustrate a number of these exemplary modern insertions at our Appendix 2.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 We have concluded that the property makes no positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area. Consequently, in accordance with guidance in PPG15, we do not consider that there should a presumption in favour of its retention.
- 8.2 The proposed design is a creative interpretation of the English Villa tradition, and as such is consistent with the special interest of the Conservation Area and the wider historic environment of which it is part. The proposals also form part of an established tradition of Modern houses in this part of London, many in conservation areas.
- 8.3 As such the proposals both preserve and enhance the character and the appearance of the Conservation Area, adding a building of quality that at once reinforces and reinterprets an established local tradition.
- 8.4 For these reasons too – character, colour, proportions and scale – we conclude that the proposals will preserve the settings of nearby listed buildings