

Justification for the demolition of the existing buildings at Nos 100-102 Arlington Road and Nos 16-18 Delancey Street

1. 100-102 Arlington Road and 16-18 Delancey Street sit within the Camden Town Conservation Area, adjacent to the Grade 2 listed Tramshed on Arlington Rd.

2. Their demolition was considered by the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State into the Appeal against a previous scheme. In his decision letter dated 28th November 2005 he dismissed the appeal on the detailing of the fenestration of the replacement development. This has now been addressed in the current Application. He did not consider that these buildings were worthy of retention, and he did so within the context of the relevant planning policies, namely:

Policy EN31, that is concerned with preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation area.

Policy EN32, that seeks to retain buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of conservation areas

Policy EN38, that states that regard must be taken to the setting of listed buildings.

3. PPG 15 also provides clear guidelines on the demolition of buildings in conservation areas. In paragraph 4.16 it points out that 'the emphasis will generally need to be on controlled and positive management of change.' Paragraph 4.17 states that new buildings in conservation areas 'should be designed with respect for their context'.

4. We have, as recommended by paragraph 2.11, carried out early consultation with local authority officers on our proposals and they reflect these discussions. We have also held two meetings with the Camden Town Conservation Area Advisory Group, who were also not in principle opposed to demolition of these buildings.

5. Paragraph 3.19 identifies three considerations for the demolition of listed buildings. The buildings under consideration are not listed, but we have nevertheless applied these criteria:

-The condition of the building, the cost of repairing and maintaining it in relation to its importance and to the value derived from its continued use.

The site contains three structures. An infill 1980s building adjacent to the listed Tramshed, the twentieth century Crown and Goose Public House, and a hall originally built in the 1890s as an annex to the Crown Public House that has been subject to extensive alterations and has had a wide range of uses. The history of the site is also set out in the History section of the Design report.

There has been a public house in this location for many years (previously know as The Crown) but the existing building is mid 20th century and is not of particular architectural significance. The infill element on Arlington Road was built in about 1980 and is of indifferent quality; its relationship to the adjacent tram shed is poor and could be improved.

The existing hall was built just before the turn of the century as an annex to the Crown and has subsequently housed a variety of uses. In 1903 it was converted for roller-skating, before briefly becoming a 'penny gaff' cinema from 1908 to 1917, in common with many other buildings at this time. It is not mentioned in 'Picture Palaces', English Heritage's publication on the history of cinema architecture. In 1919 it became a billiard

hall, before being converted into a bingo hall. More recently it reverted to being a snooker and billiard club.

Few distinguishing characteristics appear to have survived these progressive alterations. The north end of the building was substantially altered to insert a mezzanine, apparently for projection purposes. The roof has been repaired in an ad hoc manner, often when water damage had become apparent below. The condition of the ceiling was sufficiently poor for a suspended ceiling to be introduced some time ago. The current panels were installed using the old hangers in 1980. The brickwork screen and doorway, which entirely replaces the old entrance, also dates from this period.

In the course of previous considerations of this site, the proposal was referred to both the Victorian Society and English Heritage. Neither they nor Council officers have attached any particular importance to these buildings. Whilst capable of repair, there are fundamental limitations to the use of all three elements: The infill element that has a poor relationship to the Tramshed, is part of the Crown and Goose Public House. This building functions well as a Public House, although local residents have expressed a wish for a change to a café/restaurant use that this application respects. The kitchen is severely limited for such a use. Moreover the residential component above can only be used as part of the public house and does not comply with a range of modern standards such as lifetime homes provision. Addressing the issues related to these two buildings would also involve substantial relocation of existing plant and would require wholesale internal reconstruction.

As a place of assembly the hall has limited natural light. As the Appeal inspector to the last application found, there is poor demand for this use in the area. Due to the double volume space and the lack of windows in the façade, the building would therefore require radical internal and external modification for any other feasible use.

-The adequacy of efforts to maintain the building in use. The Public House use is popular but in an inadequate building that does not merit retention and the residential element does not conform to modern standards, and similarly the billiard hall is in poor condition and the club has struggled due to lack of demand. Local residents have indicated strongly that they do not wish the public house use to extend into the hall. In this context the condition of the buildings and the demand for their use does not provide sufficient rental income to pay for their repair and maintenance. These proposals are a clear response to the need to keep the site in use in view of the above point.

-The merits of alternative proposals for the site. Particular care has been taken in designing a sympathetic replacement that respects setting, follows fundamental architectural principles of scale, height, massing and alignment and uses appropriate materials. The Inspector's decision on the appeal to the last application confirmed that the relationship to the adjacent listed structure was improved and that massing was appropriate to the context, but indicated that the design of the fenestration required addressing and that has been the focus of these new proposals.

6. As unlisted building buildings in a conservation area, it is helpful to refer to the 10 tests identified for unlisted buildings in Appendix 2 of English Heritages' Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals.

-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 significant number of the buildings in the conservation area? No. The buildings are all somewhat more recent than the predominantly early Victorian terraces that characterise the area. The brick type and extensive use of render is also uncharacteristic.

-Does it relate by age, materials or any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings, and contribute positively to their setting? No. This was confirmed by the Inspector's report that in fact pointed out that the existing relationship was unsatisfactory and that the proposed massing was an improvement in this respect.

-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? No.

-Does it have significant historic association with established features such as the road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature? No. These are all replacement buildings.

-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. English Heritage themselves saw no reason for retention of any of the buildings (letter to LBC 21 May 2004).

-Does it reflect the traditional functional character of, or former uses within, the area? No, not particularly. The hall has had numerous uses. The A3 use has been housed in a number of buildings. The current mid twentieth century building with a 1980s infill annex is not characteristic of public houses in the area.

-Has it significant historic associations with local people or past events? No

-Does it contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area? No. In fact, as indicated above, it relates poorly to the adjacent listed building. Moreover the dead façade along Delancey Street has led to a graffittied, blighted appearance in contrast to the more active opposite side of the street.

-If a structure associated with a designed landscape within the conservation area, such as a significant wall, terracing or a minor garden building, is it of identifiable importance to the historic design? No, not relevant.

These tests indicate that demolition is appropriate and it should be emphasised that this was also the view of English Heritage (letter identified above) and indeed Council officers in connection with the last application. We have therefore proposed following their recommendations to preserve by record in accordance with paragraph 3.23 of PPG 15.

7. Conclusion

The Inspector's report (paragraphs 18 to 20) effectively summarises the position:

'Although both buildings are unobtrusively in keeping with their surroundings and have some architectural details of interest, overall they lack architectural distinction and are not worthy of retention on this account. This view is supported by English Heritage and the Council's conservation advisors.

The snooker hall is also of some historic interest because of its early use as a cinema but it was not built for this use and its retention is not, in my view, warranted for this reason. The public house is regarded as a good surviving example of a traditional pub but its bars do not appear to me to be distinctive or well preserved and I have no evidence that traditional pubs are rare in this area. All in all, I consider that the case for retaining these two buildings as they are is not compelling.

I conclude that the existing buildings are not of such quality and interest that they should be retained.'