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## **41-42 Chester Terrace, London, NW1 4ND: Spine Wall Remedial Works**

### **Design & Access Statement and Heritage Appraisal (To accompany Listed Building Consent Application)**

**May 2015**

#### **Introduction**

1. No. 41-42 Chester Terrace is a Grade I listed building (c1825), part of the grand-palace style terrace by John Nash, within the Regents Park Conservation Area in the Borough of Camden.
2. In June 2013 Listed Building Consent (2013/1888/L) and Planning Permission (2013/1426/P) have been granted for the conversion of two existing adjoining houses at Nos. 41 and 42 Chester Terrace to form a single family dwelling. The granted scheme has been implemented on 16th April 2014 with the start of the excavation and underpinning works.
3. Furthermore, a consent was granted for the subterranean development to the side of the building under the existing garden in September 2014 (LBC 2014/2938/L and PP 2014/2872/P).
4. Consent was also granted in December 2014 for Amendments to approved applications 2013/1888/L and 2013/1426/P, including internal alterations and proposed changes to demolition (LBC 2014/5315/L and PP 2014/4977/P).
5. Following on from the previously granted permissions and their implementation on site started, Stephen Levrant: Heritage Architecture Ltd was commissioned to prepare a Design&Access Statement and Heritage Appraisal whose purpose is to provide heritage based evidence in support of the urgent remedial work to the spine wall at 41-42 Chester Terrace. This statement complies with the requirements of the NPPF- National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) ("The Framework") and Local Planning policies in respect of Heritage issues.
6. This document should be read in conjunction with the following documents:
  - Structural Engineer's Statement for the Remedial Works to the Spine Wall by Sinclair Johnston, May 2015;
  - Construction drawings and details by Sinclair Johnston, May 2015;
  - Method Statement for Forming openings in Party Wall by the Contractor (Sherlock), May 2015;

## **Context**

7. Chester Terrace is located on the eastern boundary of Regents Park and No. 41-42 is at the northernmost end and separated from the terrace. The house fronts on to Chester Terrace with gardens to both sides and rear. The site is bounded to the north by Cumberland Place, to the east Chester Terrace, and to the west by Outer Circular. Regent's Park is situated to the west.
8. The property is within the Regent's Park Conservation Area within the Borough of Camden. The entirety of Chester Terrace is listed Grade I (under a single entry) and is additionally surrounded by a number of other listed buildings and the Grade I registered Regent's Park.
9. Nos 41 and 42, have been designed by John Nash, prince Regent's architect, built in 1825, by James Burton. The design is a Grand Palace style terrace comprising 37 houses and 5 semi detached houses. Chester Terrace has been the longest unbroken terrace that was built at the time of Regent's Park developments.
10. The interior of both houses have sustained considerable alteration and change particularly in the second half of the twentieth century. Other than the front façade hardly any of the original fabric remains.
11. In 2013 permission was granted (2013/1888/L and 2013/1426/P) to unify the two adjoining houses to form a single family dwelling together with internal alterations. In order to achieve this the new openings at the east end of the party/spine wall on all levels from the Ground Floor (Entrance Hall) to Third Floor (Landings) are proposed. All the openings are same width and same location (for details see enclosed Construction drawings and details by Sinclair Johnston, May 2015).

## **Significance Assessment**

12. As recommended by NPPF (March 2012), proposals for the alteration or redevelopment of listed buildings or buildings within a Conservation Areas should be considered and be based on an understanding of the site's significance.
13. The concept and the design of the whole of Chester Terrace have architectural and historic interest in both national and local terms. The houses in Chester Terrace are listed for 'group value', being part of the composition of neo classical buildings built around Regent's Park.
14. The elevations remain very much as originally conceived and constructed, enhancing the evidential value of this property and its group value as a typical terrace development of the Regency period.
15. The special interest of the buildings would normally be expected to include the internal layout and finishes and fittings that formed part of the original construction that were contemporary with Nash's external fabric. However, the interior of the buildings and indeed the whole of Chester Terrace were entirely re-modelled and re-planned in the 1960's as part of The Louis de Soissons Partnership's design. Furthermore evidence shows that 41-42 Chester Terrace went through numerous alterations over the years, their internal layout changed to a great extent, the original proportionality and plan form are lost. No original fabric remains, apart from a party wall and the external walls. The significance of the interior and the internal layout is therefore minimal.

16. The party wall is constructed with a (modern) half brick skin to each side of a 9inch (original) brick wall. As clearly shown in the photographs (Fig.1 and Fig.2) the half-brick skins are poorly tied into the original wall which itself is in a poor condition.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

### **Present Proposal**

17. The proposed works that form part of this application have arisen from a need for the emergency repair which became evident during the course of the works on site.
18. Whilst forming the east openings between 41 and 42 at ground/1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> floor levels (next to the entrance door at Ground), both reveals appeared to be in very poor condition – refer to attached photographs.
19. The structural engineer advised that the existing brickwork is unsuitable to support the proposed steelwork and prepared the attached solution as the most effective, with 2no PFC fixed top and bottom to steel beams and vertically to wall using anchors (See attached Structural Engineer's Statement and Contractor's Method Statement for details).

### **Pre-Application Advice (Apr/May 2015)**

20. The urgent remedial works of stabilizing and strengthening the retained spine wall have been discussed by exchange of letters/emails with the Local Planning Authority (Antonia Powell, Senior Planner), The Crown Estate (Paul Prentice) and the Historic England (Alasdair Young).
21. They were all in principal supportive of the proposed method of the remedial works to the spine wall.
22. The LPA officer acknowledged "*that the work is urgent due to the vulnerable nature of the retained structure. Work to ensure the retained fabric is supported and safe from collapse should be undertaken*" and "*can confirm that in principal I am supportive of the proposed method of remedial work to the spine wall*". However the officer also advised that "*the introduction of this additional steel work would require formal Listed Building Consent*".
23. The Crown Estate agreed that "*These works appear to be necessary and sensible if adequate provision is made for depth and fixing of finishes and joinery and other requirements for the openings.*"
24. The Historic England officer also acknowledged "*that the opening up works revealed some rather worrying structural issues with the internal walls*" and advised that "*Providing a fully structural survey has been carried out to support the proposals, I am content with the proposed remedial work*".

### **Impact Assessment and Justification Statement**

25. The overall impact of the proposed development on the identified heritage asset is considered to be **low or negligible**.
26. Due to the exposed nature and the poor condition of the original brickwork of the spine wall these remedial works are considered to be necessary in order to retain and support the original historic fabric. Following the revision of the proposal and further site investigation, we consider that these proposed works will not have an adverse effect on

the significant fabric and appearance of the main house and its setting, nor the character of the Regents Park Conservation Area and are consistent with the spirit of local policies and national conservation principles, particularly NPPF policy principles guiding the determination of applications for consent relating to all heritage assets.

27. There will be a minimal intervention on the original building fabric. The intervention is limited only to the approved new openings on each floor. The proposed works will not be visible, as they are of the structural nature. These are honest, purely functional (supporting) interventions that are intended to be practically reversible and of high quality.
28. The proposed alterations will not adversely alter the special interest of the house at No41-42 Chester Terrace. Surveys, investigations, recordings and documentary research/analysis have been undertaken to inform the design.

### **Conclusion**

29. The permitted scheme granted in 2013 (2013/1888/L and 2013/1426/P) to unify the two adjoining houses to form a single family dwelling is based on an agreed conservation approach, to create additional new spaces, with minimum impact on the main house and its setting.
30. It is considered that the level of proposed intervention is acceptable in conservation terms. It is substantiated by the research undertaken as well as the schedules of significance submitted as part of the 2013 application.
31. The significance of the heritage asset and the surrounding Conservation Area is not challenged. The proposal results in degrees of **impact** across the site and within its settings which are considered to be **low or negligible**.
32. It is considered that the proposed works cause “**no harm**”. If, however the officer may find that the proposals do cause a degree of harm, we believe that this cannot be greater than 'less than substantial harm'. In which case the proposal will be clearly balanced by the following public benefits: the optimal viable use of the property developed through a sensitive and sympathetic design that maximises the intrinsic qualities of the existing building, further revealing its heritage value and enhancing the quality of its setting.

**Stephen Levrant: Heritage Architecture  
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