

Heritage Statement

in connection with

**Extension to The Constitution Public House
42 St Pancras Way
Camden, London, NW1 0QT**

Prepared by

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Format

This heritage statement has been prepared to assess and inform proposals to extend The Constitution public house, 42 St Pancras Way, Camden. The building is situated within the Regent's Canal Conservation Area (a designated heritage asset), therefore the impact of the proposals on the heritage significance of the place require scrutiny.

In essence the Statement assesses the significance of the site and guides proposals for change in a manner that conserves significance. This approach adheres to the principle of intelligently managing change, which lies at the heart of national planning policy for conservation of the historic built environment.

The Statement has been prepared in accordance with the general guidelines set out in the English Heritage publications 'Informed Conservation'¹ and 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance'² and in particular responds to heritage policies outlined in Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG, 2012). The legal context is set by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990. The local policy context is guided by the Regents Canal Conservation Area Statement (London Borough of Camden, 2001).

1.2 The Author

Chris O'Flaherty, the author, is a Chartered Building Surveyor and professional member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (MRICS). With a background in the recording, analysis and conservation of historic buildings, the author holds a Masters Degree in Building Heritage and Conservation and specialises in heritage planning matters.

1.3 Methods of Research and Investigation

Inspections of the site were carried out in February 2015 to assess its physical nature. Background research has also been conducted to ascertain all relevant contextual matters appertaining to the proposals. The scope of this research has, in accordance with the NPPF, been proportionate to the nature of the proposed works, with particular

¹ Clarke, K, *Informed Conservation*, English Heritage 2003

² English Heritage, *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance: Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, 2008

emphasis placed upon the special architectural and historic interest of the site and those planning policies that manage change.

2.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

2.1 Site Location

The Constitution fronts St Pancras Way and is situated on the north (east) side of the Regents Canal by the Grays Inn Bridge, Camden. A location plan is given below in figure 1.

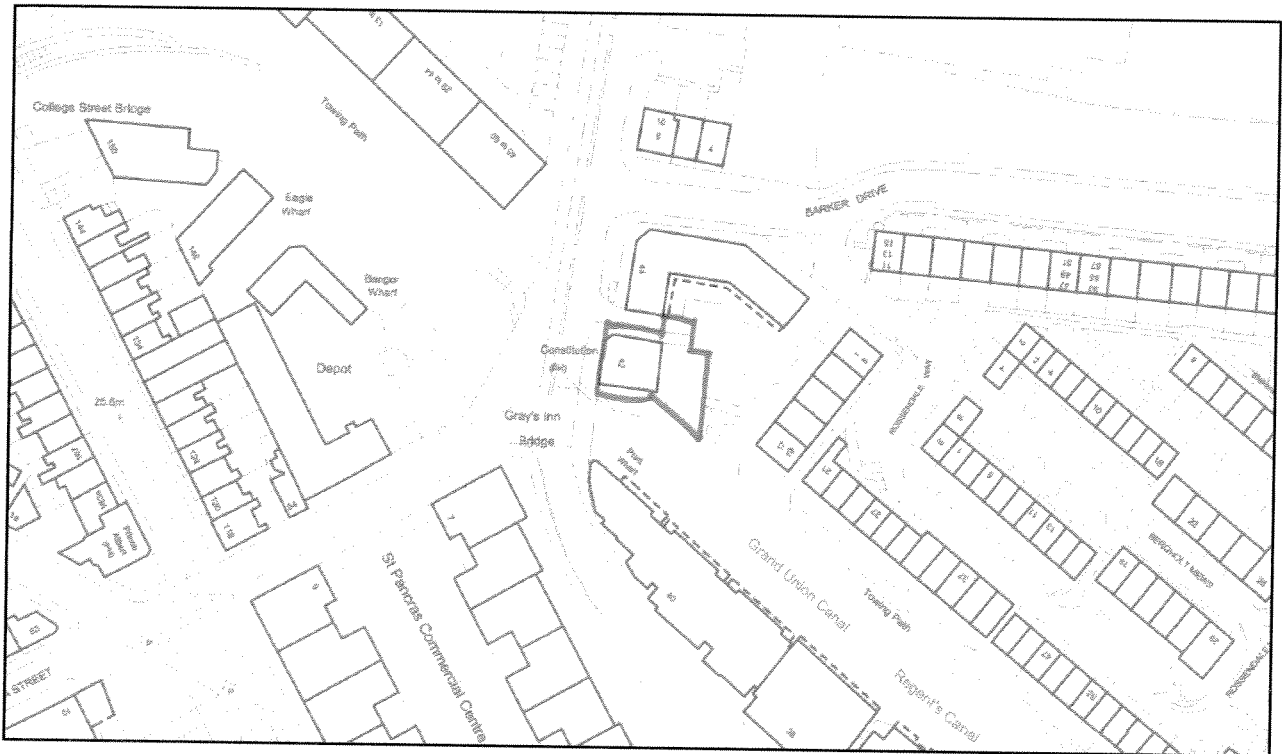


Figure 1. Site Location Plan (not to scale) – the site is edged in red

2.2 Site Description & Brief History

The Regents Canal Conservation Area Statement (2001) offers a background summary to the history of the Canal and associated infrastructure, charting the story from the beginning of the C19th to practical completion in 1820. The waterway effectively connected the southern end of the Grand Union Canal at Paddington Basin to the River Thames at Limehouse. It was hugely important for the transportation of goods through the city and became characterised along its length by an array of wharfs and other ancillary structures, many of which remain. Once such building, The Constitution pub, was built at the crossing of St Pancras Way (formerly Kings Road) over the Canal in about 1860, at a time of local population growth. The building is not shown on the first

edition survey map of 1856 (see figure 2) but does appear on later mapping of the 1890s.

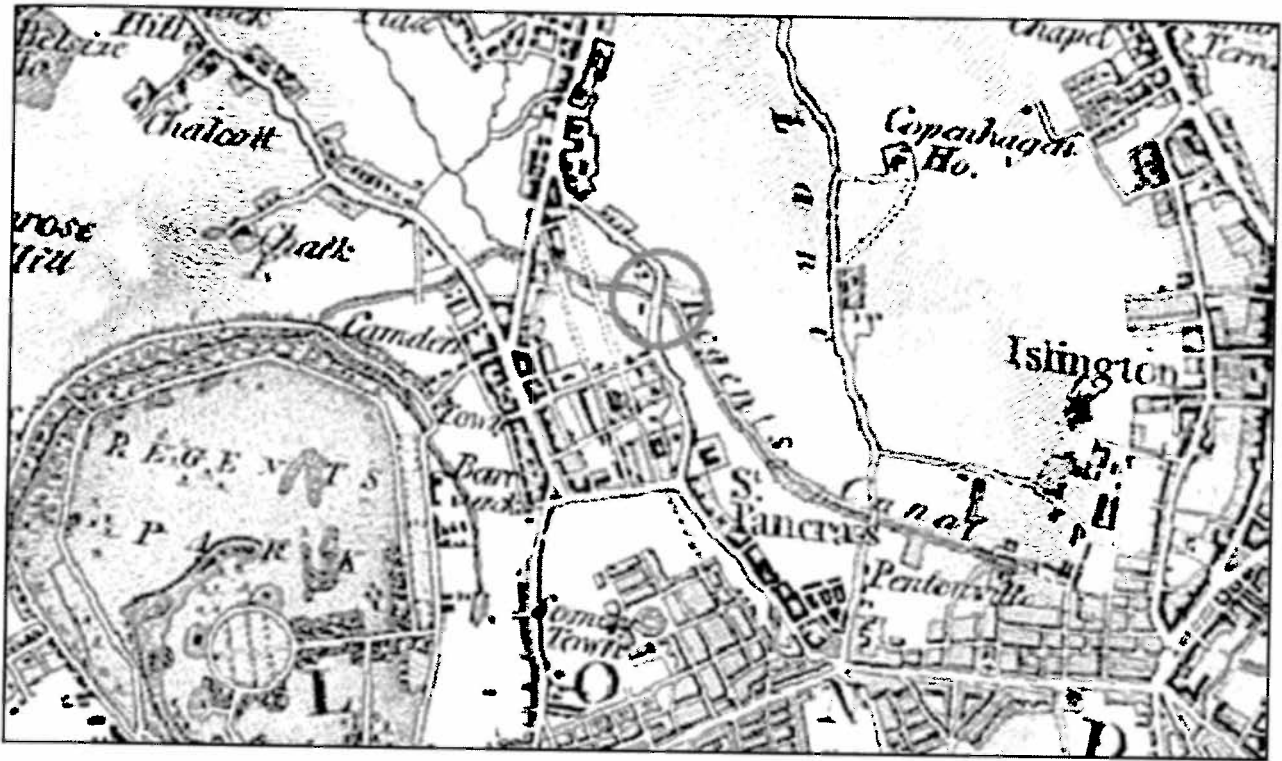


Figure 2. Extract of first edition Ordnance Survey c.1856

The Constitution occupies a tiered plot of land immediately north of Grays Inn Bridge and fronting St Pancras Way. The canal tow path skirts the southern wall of the pub, east of which the pub has a raised patio garden at road level behind a tall brick retaining wall. The building is roughly rectangular in plan and three storeys in height. It is of simple neo-classical design with brick walls, stucco detailing and curved north western corner which incorporates the main entrance off the street. Sample images are shown later.

The surrounding area has been subject to quite dramatic change in recent years, with the building of new housing and residential apartment blocks. The historic character along the canal has however remained largely intact, owing to the designation of the Regents Canal Conservation Area in 1974 (with later boundary changes). A Conservation Area Statement was produced by London Borough of Camden in 2001, the introduction to which, given below, describes the significance of the place and priorities for conservation.

"The Regent's Canal, part of the Grand Union Canal, winds its way through many

London Boroughs before reaching the Thames, forming a corridor of unique character. It is an important feature of historic and visual interest in the townscape and following the decline of traditional canal-related commercial activities has been increasingly recognised as a valuable resource for water-based leisure activities, for its ecological value and its potential for transportation and informal recreation. It is the Council's aim to conserve and enhance the existing character of the canal and to improve its potential for recreation, transportation and wildlife propagation. The ever changing vista, the variety and contrast of townscape elements and the informal relationship between buildings and canal contribute more than any other factors to the character of the canal. The sections of the canal vary considerably in the water level, width and direction and in the nature and use of adjacent buildings and landscape." (London Borough of Camden, 2001)

2.3 Heritage Asset Designations

The Constitution is located within the Regents Canal Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset. A Conservation Area Statement was published by the London Borough of Camden in 2001 outlining the history and special character of the place. The Constitution is named within this document as a positive feature of the historic built environment, but it is not a designated heritage asset in its own right. In essence this means that possible changes inside the building are unrelated to development control and not considered within the Statement.

2.4 Photographic Survey

There follows a brief photographic survey showing The Constitution in its local setting.



Figure 2. Front elevation to St Pancras Way with Grays Inn Bridge right



Figure 3. View east along the canal from Grays Inn Bridge



Figure 4. Modern buildings north of the building



Figure 5. Southern elevation across the Bridge



Figure 6. Cellar level fronting the Canal tow path

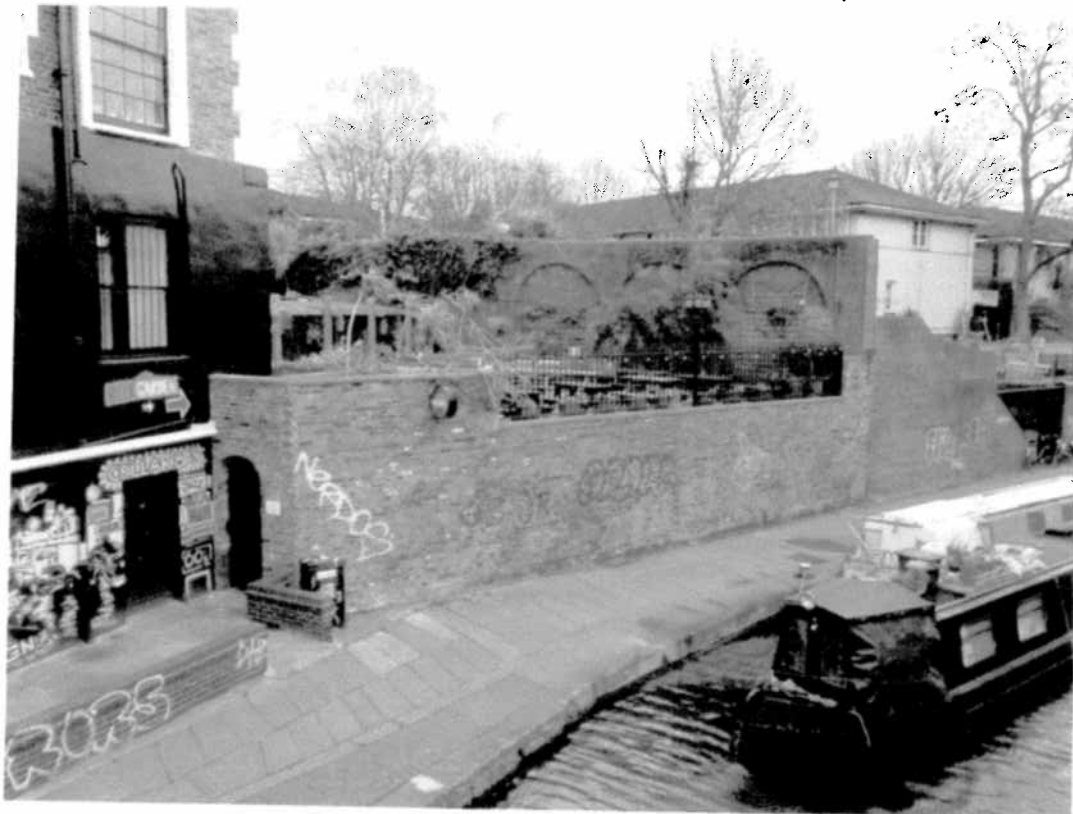


Figure 7. Canal tow path with outdoor patio area above



Figure 8. Northern elevation of the building



Figure 9. Eastern elevation facing the patio

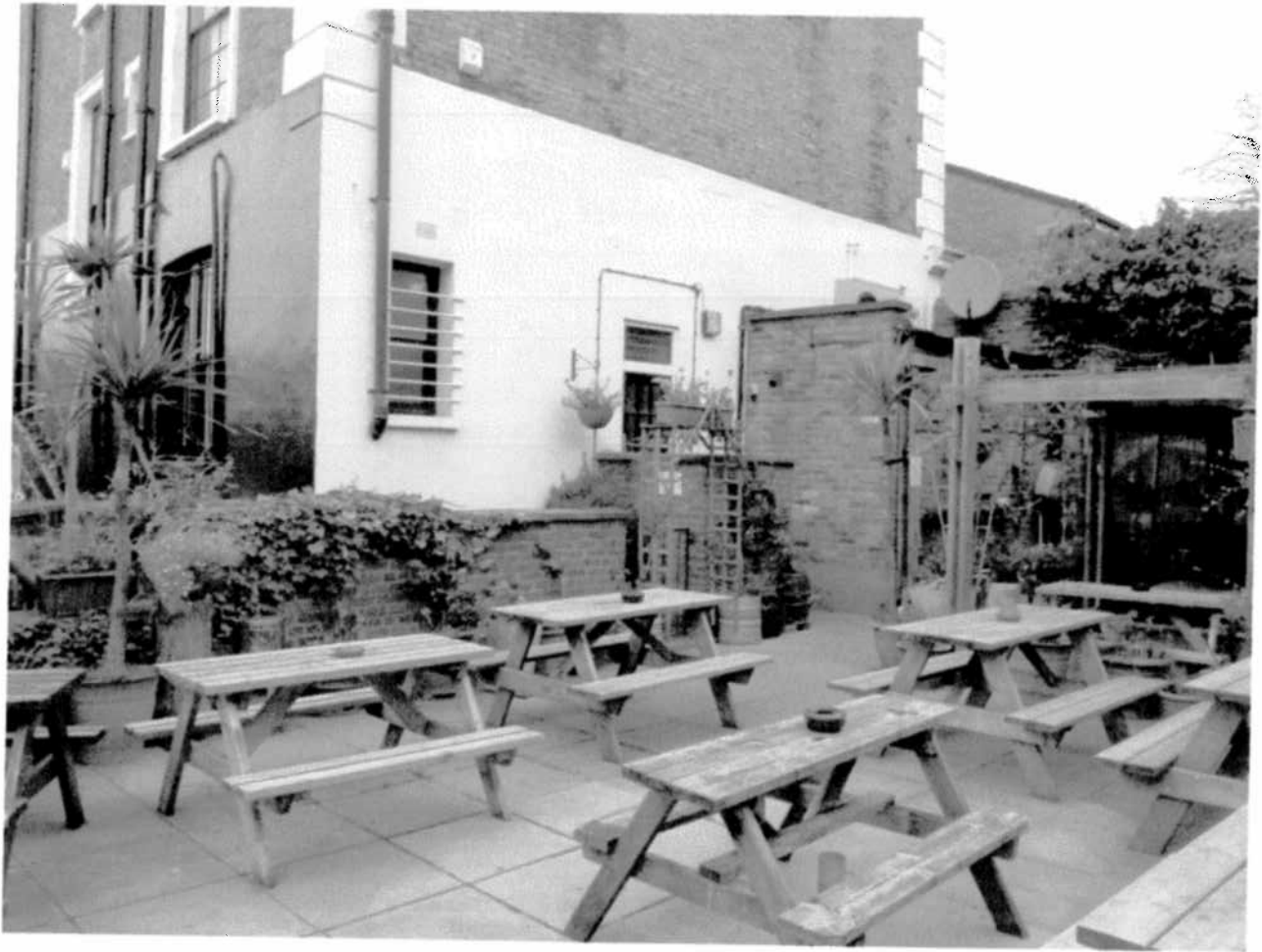


Figure 10. Patio area

3.0 HERITAGE APPRAISAL

3.1 Introduction

The following heritage appraisal adheres to guidance published by English Heritage (2008)³ and relates specifically to the requirement contained in clause 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), given in extract below:

"In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary."

(Clause 128. NPPF, 2012)

The appraisal begins by identifying the potential range of heritage values attributed to the building and how they relate to the broader context of the Conservation Area. Through determining the range of heritage values, priorities for conserving the significance of the place are identified and expressed within a 'statement of significance'. This statement is then used as a basis for developing and critically assessing the design of new proposals, making sure to prioritise conservation of significance where possible and appropriate.

3.2 Heritage Values

The following appraisal of the heritage values devotes particular interest to how these values might be affected by emerging proposals for change. In line with English Heritage guidance they are distilled under the following headings: evidential value; historic value; communal value; aesthetic value.

³ English Heritage, *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance: Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, 2008

3.2.1 Evidential Value

English Heritage (2008) suggests that "Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity"⁴.

The Constitution provides physical evidence of a mid C19th public house, illustrating architectural fashions, building techniques and a functional plan form (altered). The building is a contributory feature of the distributed historic fabric lining the canal, therefore plays a role in conserving the evidential value of the place. This role relies upon the survival of the building, which in turn requires the building to remain in active and economically sustainable use.

3.2.2 Historical Value

English Heritage (2008) suggests that - "Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be *illustrative or associative*".

The Conservation Area, characterised by the canal and adjacent buildings and infrastructure, exists as a historic vein running through the city, evoking a sense and an appreciation of the past. The Constitution contributes to this historic value and is primarily illustrative in nature.

3.2.3 Communal Value

English Heritage (2008) suggests that: "Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory".

By their very nature, Conservation Areas tend to possess rich communal values on account of the public space they enclose. The Regents Canal Conservation Area is no exception, winding its way through Camden and bestowing the place with architectural and historical interest. The Constitution is a contributor to the communal values of the place and, on account of its function, a focus of communal leisure activity. Keeping the pub in active use is key to the conservation of this communal heritage value.

3.2.4 Aesthetic Value

English Heritage (2008) suggests that: "Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place".

The Constitution is highlighted as a positive contributor within the Conservation Area Statement of 2001. Whereas the immediate surroundings to the pub have changed quite dramatically in recent years, the aesthetic value of the building remains largely intact, particularly to the western and northern elevations where architectural decoration and formality of composition is most pronounced. The southern (canal facing) and eastern elevation possess less architectural quality, deferring more to function in the composition of window and door openings. The eastern elevation, facing the patio, is largely blank and possesses very little in terms of character or visual interest. The aesthetical value of the building exists primarily to the north, west and south: the eastern elevation, by contrast, has low value and provides possible opportunity for visual enhancement.

3.3 **Statement of Significance**

Having assessed the heritage values associated with the site, it is possible to take a more informed approach to the assessment of site significance, giving specific consideration of plans to implement change. In this context a statement of significance is given below.

The Constitution pub is a mid C19th century building situated on the east side of St Pancras Way and on the banks of the Regents Canal within the Regents Canal Conservation Area, Camden. It is a prominent historic landmark amidst newer development and possesses a range of heritage values which contribute to the overall qualities of the place. Principal amongst these are the building's aesthetic value, particularly to the north, west and south, and the illustrative historic value of the building as a feature of C19th infrastructure development around the canal. In 2001 the London Borough of Camden published the Regents Canal Conservation Area Statement, which highlights the character of the place and makes the following suggestions for the design of future development:

⁴ Ibid

"Appropriate design for the Conservation Area should complement the appearance, character and setting of the existing buildings, the canal, and the environment as a whole"

On account of the above, and in accordance with the general legislative aim of conserving and enhancing the special architectural and historic interest of conservation areas, proposals which involve visible public realm change to The Constitution and its associated land (e.g. patio) should satisfy the following priorities:

- Conserve the architectural qualities of the northern, western and southern elevations
- Conserve the overall appearance and volume of the original 3 storey building
- Restrict physical changes to the blank eastern elevation and adjacent patio area, where the extant visual qualities of the building are minimal and there exists scope for positive enhancement

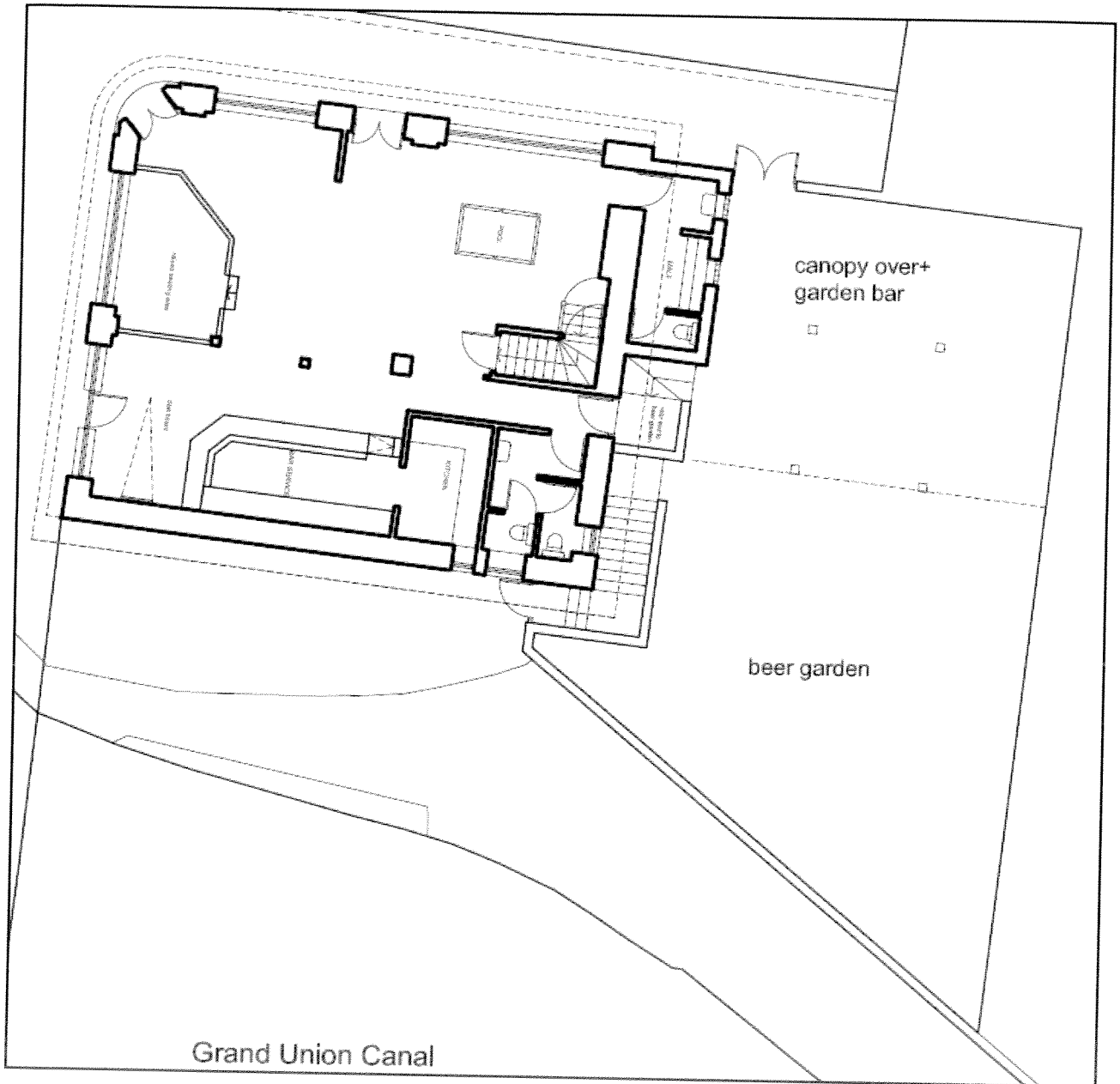
4.0 ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSALS

4.1 General Principles

General guidance on assessing proposed changes to heritage assets is given in chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). This establishes that conserving significance should be a guiding principle when developing proposals for any new scheme. In order to satisfactorily do this, it is first necessary to conduct an appraisal of heritage values and identify the significance(s) of heritage assets before commencing with design work. Part 3 of this heritage statement fulfils this need, and the findings of part 3 have informed the development of the new scheme. There follows, here in section 4, an objective review of the finalised scheme to verify to what extent conservation of significance has either been secured or compromised.

4.2 Summary of the Proposals

The proposals are intended to enhance the commercial viability of the pub and will involve some interior alterations including the conversion of cellar space, relocation of interior staircase and the formation of a new rear (eastern) access porch to the outdoor patio area. A small new fixed canopy and adjacent retractable canopy will also be erected by the patio access doors. Sample drawings of the proposals are shown below in figures 11-13.



Grand Union Canal

Figure 11. Existing ground floor plan

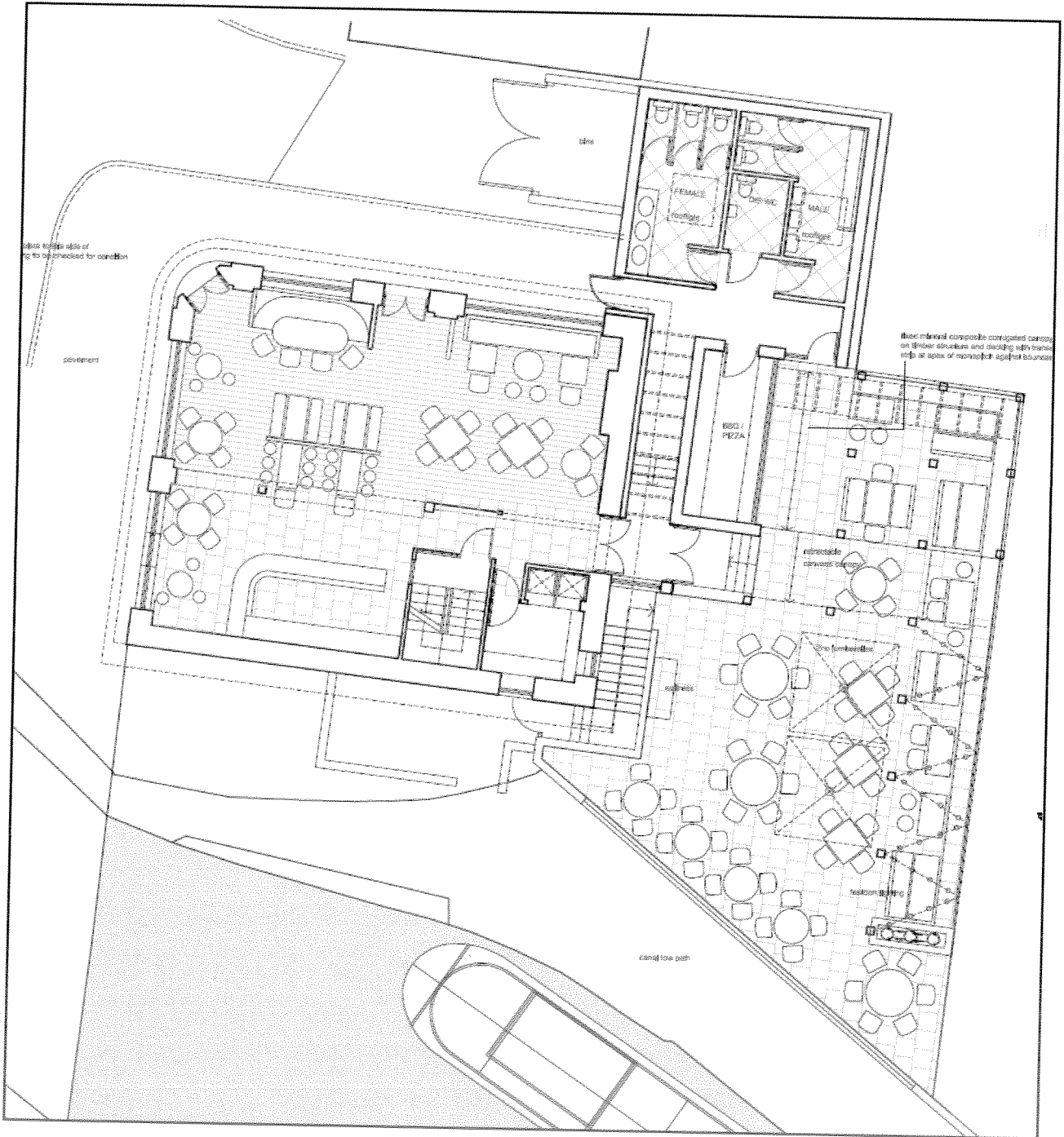


Figure 12. Proposed ground floor plan

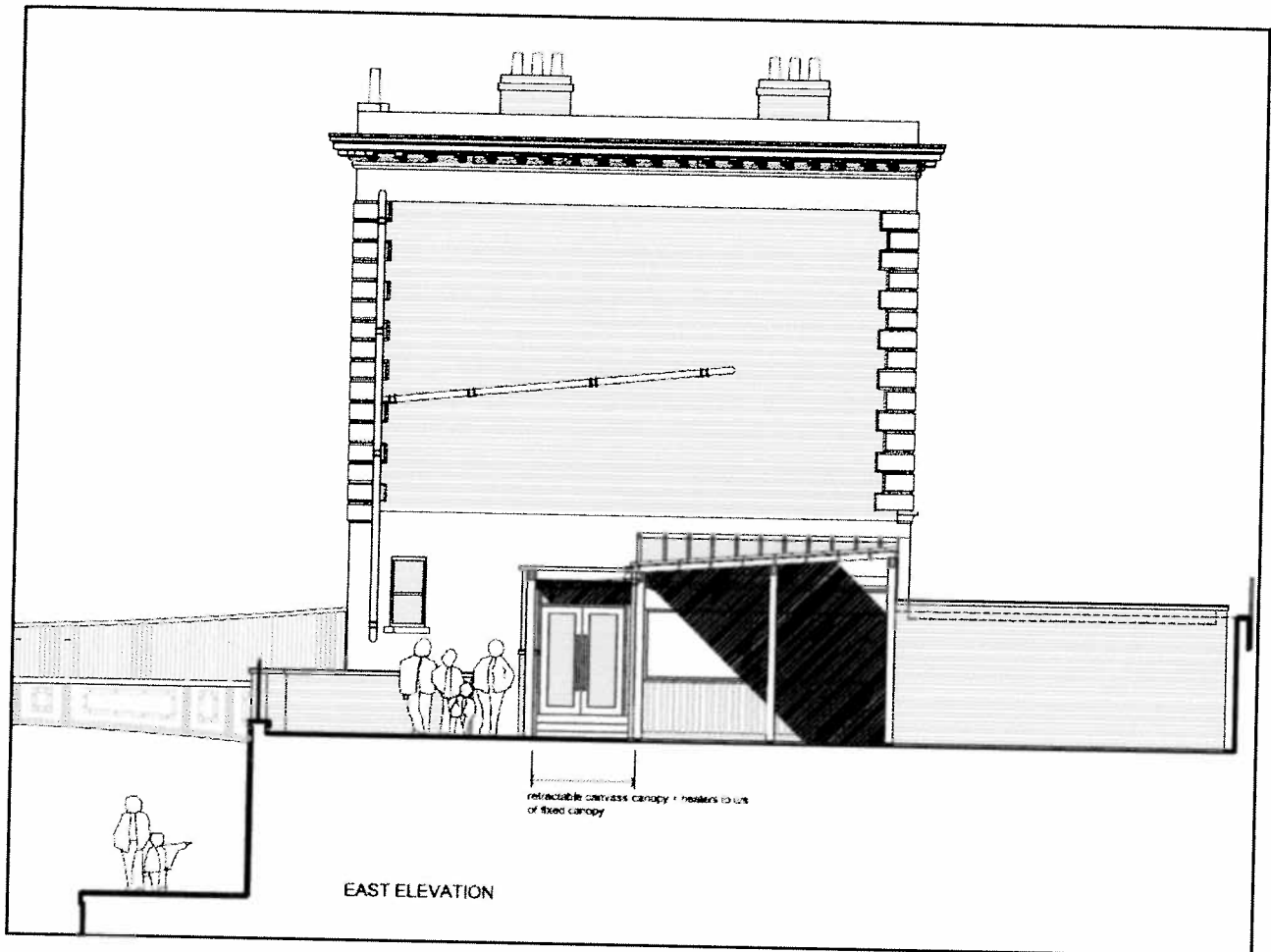


Figure 13. proposed rear elevation showing small retractable canopy and fixed canopy

4.3 Analysis of the Proposals: National Planning Policy Framework

As discussed earlier, section 12 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of the NPPF (2012) considers heritage planning and identifies the following key drivers in the decision making process:

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
- *opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.*

In essence the NPPF unifies the overall approach to planning in a way that previous guidance, such as PPS's and PPG's, did not. This ensures that deliberations over decisions relating to heritage assets are made in the full planning context, where factors other than heritage conservation play a crucial role. Securing sustainable development is the primary driver, and in the heritage context this relies on maintaining active use (long term) in a manner that seeks to limit potential harm to significance.

In order to establish a clearer, objective assessment of the proposals in the context of the NPPF, the following commentary considers how the proposed scheme aligns itself to the four principle NPPF heritage policy drivers listed above.

4.3.1 The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation (NPPF)

The aim of the proposals is to enhance the economic sustainability of the business at a time when the closure of economically unviable public houses is at an all-time high. Owing to the heritage values of the building and how these contribute to the place, retaining the pub business is vital to the conservation of place therefore the proposals are very much in line with the NPPF policy driver. This is ensured by the minimum nature of exterior change and the focus of change to those parts of the building possessing the lowest aesthetic and evidential value.

4.3.2 The wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring (NPPF)

The pub is a focus of social activity and represents a positive visual landmark along the Regents Canal. Maintaining the active use of The Constitution will therefore help conserve the diverse values of the building and the contribution it makes to the Conservation Area. Sustaining the benefits bestowed on the place relies upon the visibility of the business, therefore the aims of the proposals are very much aligned to the policy driver.

4.3.3 The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (NPPF)

Other than a minor extension in a position of low aesthetic value and sensitivity, there is no new development therefore this policy driver is not relevant to the proposals.

4.3.4 Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place (NPPF)

By maximising the business potential of the site the proposals should help draw greater attention to the building and the adjacent canal. It is noted within the Regent's Canal Conservation Area Statement that the "*Constitution pub at Gray's Inn Bridge positively contributes to the Conservation Area although more could be made of its link to the canal towpath*". This potential is realised through the proposed improvements to the outside space, which will make the patio area a more pleasant place to socialise. The scheme therefore serves to enhance the Conservation Area, and is thus in line with the policy driver and the general requirements of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act.

4.3.5 NPPF Policy 132

Policy 132 of the NPPF states:

"When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting...".

As revealed through the appraisal of heritage values, The Constitution contributes to the significance of the Conservation Area primarily through the building's historic use and aesthetic value. The proposals seek to maintain the function of the building and enhance the aesthetic value of the eastern façade and outside space. In all respect this ensures conservation of significance and satisfies the requirements of clause 132 (NPPF).

5.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

The proposed changes to The Constitution pub, Camden will enhance the business prospects of a historic landmark feature of the Regents Canal Conservation Area. Although not listed, the building contributes positively to the aesthetic and historical values of the Conservation Area and its importance is acknowledged within the Conservation Area Statement published by the London Borough of Camden in 2001. The proposals, which include interior re-ordering of space, a compact rear (eastern) porch extension and improvements to outside patio space, will not harm either the heritage values or significance of the place and are therefore supportable under the heritage policies of the NPPF. In addition, improvements to the outside patio area will enhance both the usage potential and visual quality of this space, thereby enhancing the Conservation Area in line with requirements of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act in a manner which also improves the economic sustainability of the pub and therein secures its active use.