



Heritage Statement

44 Downshire Hill, London NW3

Boyer

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This heritage statement has been produced on behalf of Mr. Tony Leifer in support of an application which seeks planning permission and listed building consent for internal repairs and alterations at 44 Downshire Hill, Hampstead, comprising of the following works:
 - Minor internal repairs;
 - The lowering of the basement floor by 300mm; and
 - Minor reports to the front steps and lobby.
- 1.2 The report has been written following a number of site visits to the property, along with a detailed inspection of all relevant background history relating to the property, and has taken into consideration preliminary discussions with Conservation Officers at Camden Council throughout 2016.
- 1.3 This heritage statement is structured as follows:
 - Section Two provides a description of the site;
 - Section Three describes the proposed development;
 - Section Four reviews the relevant planning policy context;
 - Section Five provides an assessment of the impact of the proposed development; and
 - Section Six provides a justification of the proposed development and draws overall conclusions.

2. SITE CONTEXT

44 Downshire Hill

- 2.1 44 Downshire Hill is a 4 storey (including the basement) residential dwelling located within the designated Hampstead Conservation Area in the London Borough of Camden.. The property is a Grade II listed building dating from the early part of the 19th century. The listing description, produced by Historic England, reads as follows:

“Pair of terraced houses designed to appear as one house. Stucco. 3 storeys and basements. 1 window each plus 1 window each in recessed entrance extensions and central blind window to 1st and 2nd floors. Square-headed doorways with patterned overlights and panelled doors approached by steps. Recessed sashes; ground floor in shallow arched recesses, No.44 with cast-iron window guard. Cornice and blocking course. INTERIORS: not inspected.”

- 2.2 The building is one of a pair of two-storey semi-detached houses (the other is no. 45 Downshire Hill) and are typical of the development of Hampstead in the Regency period. Its primary significance lies in its principal façade to Downshire Hill. The rear of the building having been extended in the latter part of the twentieth century. There are however original and historic features within the building – skirtings, doors and windows for example – which contribute and add to the building’s significance.
- 2.3 The site lies within the Hampstead Conservation Area. Reference is made to the ‘Hampstead Conservation Area Statement’, published in October 2002, which confirms that the Conservation Area is of a considerable quality, featuring a wide range of historic buildings and spaces. The Statement divides the Conservation Area into ‘sub areas’, with 44 Downshire Hill lying within Sub Area Three: Willoughby Road/Downshire Hill.
- 2.4 Within this, the architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner described Downshire Hill as, *“the delightful thing is the preservation of so much, yet no uniformity.”*

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 Planning permission and listed building consent is sought for internal repairs and minor alterations to 44 Downshire Hill, which comprise of the following works:
- Minor internal repairs;
 - The lowering of the basement floor by 300mm; and
 - Demolition and rebuilding of the front steps and lobby.
- 3.2 Listed building consent was granted (ref. 2016/2195/L), on 23 May 2016, for the structural underpinning of the existing foundations of the property. Many of the properties within Downshire Hill, including numbers 43 and 45, and St John's Church, have received similar consents for structural underpinning due to extensive subsidence and structural failure.
- 3.3 The underpinning of the property has commenced, and the occupiers of 44 Downshire Hill are currently living in temporary accommodation whilst the works are undertaken to stabilise the property. This application seeks consent to undertake the repairs to the property caused by the structural failures of the building.
- 3.4 This application is accompanied by a Schedule of Condition report, which confirms that the structural defaults of the building has caused a large amount of damage to the building, which includes cracking to ceilings, walls and decorative features. All repair works, as detailed within the accompanying Specification of Repairs, will be undertaken to match the original walls, ceilings etc. as closely as possible. The building will be crack repaired and redecorated internally.
- 3.5 Consent is also sought to lower the basement floor by 300mm. As a result of the structural failings of the property, the floor to ceiling height in the basement has reduced due to the ground floor now sloping SW to NE. This particularly impacts upon access into this family room.
- 3.6 It is proposed therefore to remove the modern concrete floor and lower by 300mm, which will restore the ceiling height. As a result of these works, the door into the basement will be repaired due to the resultant damage caused by the sloping of the ceiling.
- 3.7 No original, or historic features, will be removed as a result of these works.
- 3.8 Permission is also sought to undertake repairs to undertake minor repairs to the front lobby and main entrance steps to stop water leaking into the lobby and to replace the main drainage under. Full details of these works, which will not involve in any alterations to the appearance of the lobby or steps, are provided within the Specification of Works.

4. PLANNING POLICY

National Policy and Guidance

Policy

- 4.1 The Government's national policy on the conservation of the historic environment is contained in Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment. For the purposes of the NPPF, the grade II listed building is a designated heritage asset.
- 4.2 The NPPF together with PPS5: HEPPG encourage early engagement in pre-application discussions with local authorities and RMA Heritage is doing this through this exercise.
- 4.3 Paragraph 128 of the NPPF requires 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. This report seeks to do just that and has been completed by an experienced historic environment consultant.
- 4.4 Paragraph 129 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities (LPAs) should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 4.5 Paragraph 131 states that in determining planning applications, LPAs should take account of:
 - the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
 - the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.6 Paragraph 132 sets out a presumption in favour of the conservation of designated assets:

“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 heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional.”

- 4.7 Paragraph 134 states that, *“where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.”*

Guidance

- 4.8 The recently published National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG March 2014), which supplements the NPPF policies, explains that in assessing whether works constitute substantial harm to a listed building, ‘it is the degree of harm to the asset’s significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed’ (para. 017, Conserving and enhancing the historic environment). Paragraph 019 states ‘a clear understanding of the significance of a heritage asset is necessary to develop proposals which avoid or minimise harm’.
- 4.9 When assessing any public benefits of a proposal, they could be anything that delivers economic, social, or environmental progress and may include heritage benefits, such as:
- sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting;
 - reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset;
 - securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation (para. 20).

Local Plan

- 4.10 The development plan for the London Borough of Camden currently includes the following documents:
- The London Plan;
 - The Camden Core Strategy – adopted 2010; and
 - The Camden Development Policies – adopted 2010.

The London Plan

- 4.11 The Mayor of London’s commitment to the built of heritage of London is detailed at Policy 7.8 of the London Plan. Of relevance to the determination of this application is criterion (d) of the policy, which requires development to conserve the significance of heritage assets, particularly in relation to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.

Core Strategy

- 4.12 Policy CS14 of Camden's Core Strategy relates to promoting high quality places and conserving the heritage of the Borough. In particular, the policy requires new development to preserve the setting of heritage assets, which includes conservation areas and listed buildings, as well as protect important local views.

Development Policies

- 4.13 Policy DP25 of Camden's Development Policies goes into further detail in this respect, and confirms that in order to preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will, *"only grant consent for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building."*

Historic England Guidance

- 4.14 Historic England has produced a number of Advice Notes which provide information on good practice to assist local authorities, planners and other consultants in implementing the policies contained within the NPPF. Of particular relevance to 44 Downshire Hill is Historic England Advice Note 2: Making Changes to Heritage Assets, which provides general advice relating to the different categories of intervention in heritage assets, including repair, restoration, addition and alteration.
- 4.15 With regards to repair, the report confirms that minor repairs are unlikely to require consent if the works are carried out using the same materials and technique and where the repair works will not impact upon the significance of the heritage asset. Elsewhere, the guidance confirms that any loss of historic fabric should be proportionate to the nature of the works, and that care is needed to maintain the integrity of the heritage asset.
- 4.16 With regards to more general additions and alterations – such as the lowering of the basement floor by 300mm – Historic England's guidance is clear that it is not appropriate to sacrifice the old for the new, and that historic fabric should be retained wherever possible, together with the most appropriate materials and methods of repair being used. The guidance confirms that the plan form of a building is one of its most important characteristics, and that the removal or modification of internal arrangements, including new openings and extending underground, will be subject to considerations of the works impact upon the significance of the listed building. The report confirms that the removal of historic floors will have a considerable impact on significance and would normally not be permitted.

5. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

- 5.1 Planning permission and listed building consent is sought to undertake minor internal and external repairs to 44 Downshire Hill, caused by structural defects of the property.
- 5.2 The Borough's validation checklist indicates that a Heritage Statement should be supported by appropriate plans and photographs and should include where relevant:
- details about the character and architectural/historical interest of the associated property or structure;
 - an explanation of the principles behind and the justification for the proposed development
 - details of the expected impact that the proposed development will have on the special interest of the listed building or structure and its setting (and adjacent listed buildings);
 - an outline of the steps taken to avoid or minimise any adverse impacts on the significance of the building; and
 - an explanation of the sources considered and the expertise consulted in the formulation of the associated application.
- 5.3 An analysis of the significance of the building is detailed at Section 2 of this statement, with the extent of the proposed works being described in Section 3. The following paragraphs assess the impact of the proposals on the listed building and conservation area and provide a justification for the proposed scheme

Impact on the Hampstead Conservation Area

- 5.4 The proposed scheme does not propose any external alterations. There is therefore no impact upon the Kensington Conservation Area arising from this proposal.

Impact on the Listed Building

The Significance of 44 Downshire Hill

- 5.5 A copy of the listing description is provided within section 2 of this report. The listing description identifies the following features of significance:
- Its recessed entrance extensions and central blind window;
 - Its stucco façade;
 - Its square-headed doorways, patterned overlights and panelled doors; and
 - Recessed sashes.
- 5.6 The building also confirms that the interior was not inspected, which is not uncommon for Grade II listed buildings. It is apparent, however, that there are a number of original fixtures and fittings within the dwellings, including doors, windows, architraves, panelling etc. Many of these features, as indicated within the accompanying Schedule of Condition report, are being harmed by the structural defects of the property.

Impact upon 44 Downshire Hill

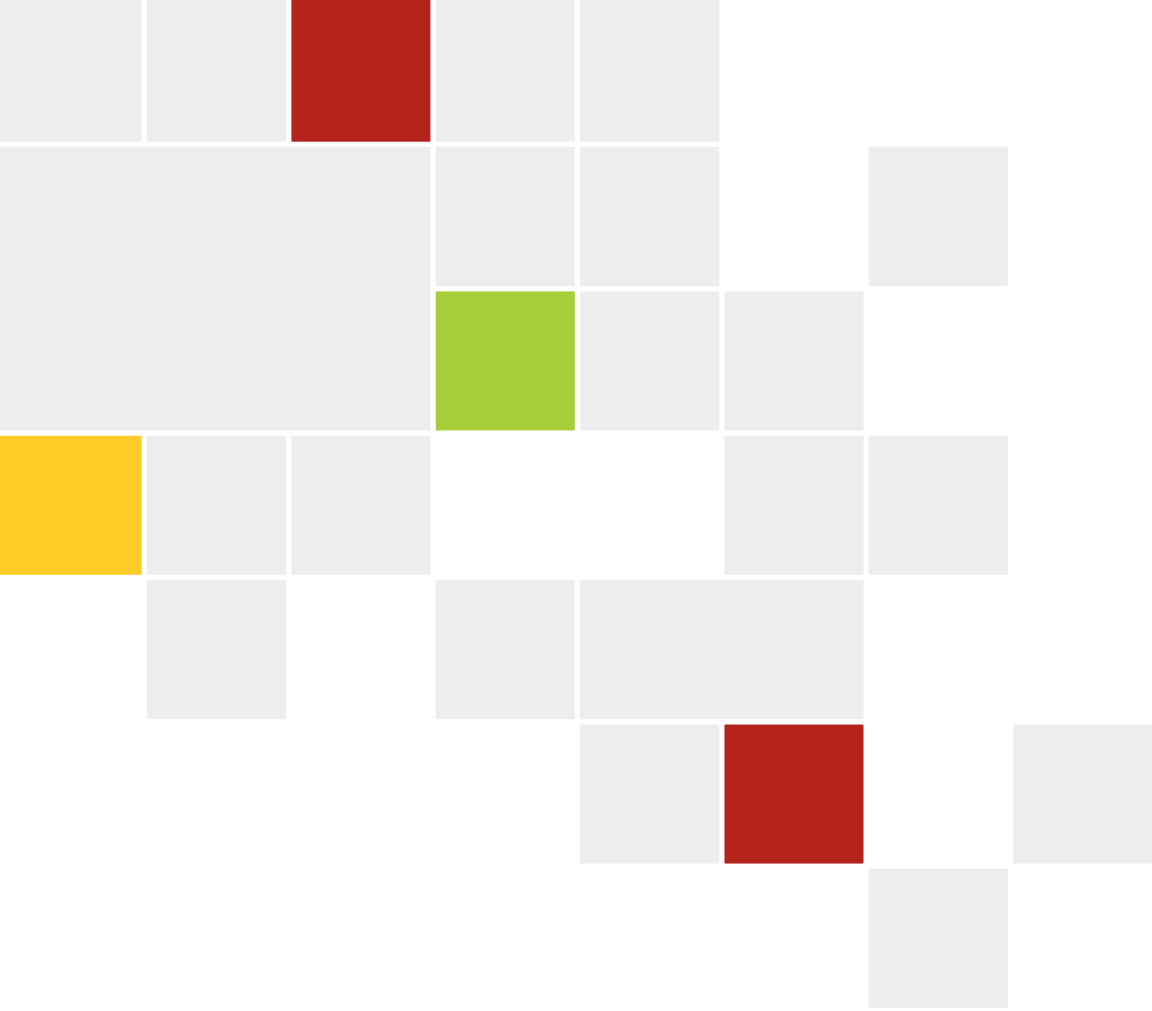
- 5.7 The proposals to repair 44 Downshire Hill have been carefully prepared and considered so as to have the minimum possible impact upon the historic fabric, and character, of the building.
- 5.8 The Scheme Architect is aware of the importance of the listed building and has sought to minimise potential harm to its significance.
- 5.9 In this respect, all works undertaken to repair the building, as detailed with the Schedule of Repair works, will be undertaken to match original walls, ceilings etc. as closely as possible. As such, the repair works will not cause any harm to the listed building.
- 5.10 Similarly, works proposed to the porch are required to solve long term water penetration into the lower lobby area. All steps will be carefully removed and replaced after installing new installation, with these works similarly therefore having no impact upon the historic fabric of the building.
- 5.11 With regards to the basement works, it is clear that the floor that will be removed is contemporary and that no historic floors would therefore be removed. Furthermore, all skirtings within the kitchen/family room are also modern. The works involved will therefore not involve the removal of any 'original' or significant materials.
- 5.12 Furthermore, it is clear that ceiling heights within these rooms have reduced quite significantly as a result of the structural defects of the property. The works proposed are, therefore, in effect seeking to restore the ceiling heights of the room to its original heights and that we are not, therefore, increasing the floor-to-ceiling heights.

Justification of the Proposals

- 5.13 The proposed works would not see any removal of the historic fabric of the existing property. The works will not adversely impact on the setting of the listed building or the character or appearance of the conservation area, and it is believed that the proposal would result in an enhancement of the rear garden.
- 5.14 The proposed works are not considered to cause harm to the overall significance of the listed building or its context, and the public benefits of the scheme should be considered.

6. SUMMARY

- 6.1 Planning permission and listed building consent is sought to undertake minor repairs and alterations to the Grade II property at 44 Downshire Hill, which are principally required as a result of structural defects to the property.
- 6.2 The property dates from the early 19th century and was listed primarily for its architectural importance, with the list description making no reference to the internal layout of the property.
- 6.3 This heritage assessment has provided an analysis of the impact of the proposals upon the significance of the listed building. It is considered that the works proposed to the property have been carefully considered and will be undertaken commensurate to the importance of the building, with all repair works undertaken in manner which will preserve the historic fabric of the building.
- 6.4 It is therefore considered that the proposal works will not harm the special character and appearance of the listed building, and complies with the requirements of national, regional and local planning policy.



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