



Athlone House: The Great Stair, off the Grand Hall, photographed 8 March 2016

ATHLONE HOUSE (formerly CAEN WOOD TOWERS),
HAMPSTEAD LANE, LONDON N6 4RU

HERITAGE REPORT

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**ATHLONE HOUSE (formerly CAEN WOOD TOWERS), HAMPSTEAD LANE,
HIGHGATE, LONDON N6**

1.0 PREAMBLE

- 1.1 I hold the degrees of Bachelor of Architectural Studies (1963) and Bachelor of Architecture, with Class I Honours (1966), from the University of Durham; Master of Planning and Master of Architecture (both 1970) from the University of Illinois. I was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Urban and Regional Studies in 1981, by the University of Birmingham. I am a Chartered Architect, Corporate Member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (since 1968), and a Registered Architect (since 1968) with the Architects' Registration Council of the United Kingdom (now Architects Registration Board). I am a Chartered Town Planner, Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (1973), Fellow (1980). I am a Member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (1985). My professional experience covers 44 years involvement with conservation of the historic built environment. (A more detailed summary of my professional and academic experience is shown in **Appendix MMA**)
- 1.2 I was initially appointed by the former applicant and appellant, Athlone House Ltd. (then the prospective applicant), in February 2007, to join their team of consultants. I prepared the *Historic Building Appraisal* full policy and UDP justification report for the initial applications, the 2011 appeals, the 2014 application and the 2015 appeal.
- 1.3 I first inspected Athlone House in February 2007 and returned subsequently many times over the years, and was present with the Inspector at the site inspections in connection with both appeals. My most recent inspections were made in March 2016 in connection with the present application.
- 1.4 I was appointed by the present applicant in March 2016 to join the team of consultants engaged in formulating the present application for planning permission for the regeneration of Athlone House, involving restoration of key missing external historic features, internal replanning and extensions

as a single residential unit. I have worked in conjunction with the team in an advisory capacity, regularly liaising as the proposals evolved to the application stage, attending pre-application meetings with Camden Borough Council and meeting third parties such as the Athlone House Working Group as required.

2.0 **SUMMARY OF PLANNING HISTORY AND INSPECTOR'S REPORT 2015**

2.1 SUMMARY OF PLANNING HISTORY

2.1.1 In 1999, prior to the NHS vacating Athlone House Camden Council designated the site as a major developed site and promoted its development through UPP policy LU1 and a planning brief. Following vacation of the site, it was purchased by developers and in October 2005 permission was granted for the conversion of Athlone House to a 7 bedroom dwelling (the Lincoln and Campbell scheme), conversion to dwellings of the Coach House, Gate House and Caen Cottage, and erection of three blocks with 22 flats (completed in 2011 as Caenwood Court). A related s.106 agreement was intended to secure the restoration of Athlone House. This was required within 42 months of the permission implementation date, November 2010 but was not undertaken.

2.1.2 In 2009 an application was made for the demolition of Athlone House (under the then extant conservation area consent procedure) and planning permission for replacement with an 8 bedroomed house with ancillary staff and guest accommodation and basement parking and leisure suite. This was refused and was appealed. Following a public inquiry in 2011 the appeal was dismissed, primarily on the MOL issue. Subsequently a modified design was submitted and appealed for non-determination. This was subjected to a public inquiry in 2015.

2.2 INSPECTOR'S REPORT 2015

2.2.1 The second public inquiry was held in February 2015, following an appeal against non-determination by Camden Borough Council of the revised application for planning permission to replace Athlone House. The Inspector C. J. Ball dismissed the appeal by decision letter dated 8 June 2015 (Ref: APP/X5210/A/14/2220872). Among the main issues considered by the Inspector were, in addition to the impact of the proposed replacement upon the designated Metropolitan Open Land, 'the

impact upon heritage assets; ... the planning history of the building; the degree of compliance or conflict with national and local planning policy ...' (Decision Letter 14).

2.2.2 The Inspector accepted that Athlone House 'was altered internally to meet institutional standards and, externally, many decorative features including chimneys, *Dutch gables, verandahs, crenellations, finials and crests were removed, evidently to avoid repair and maintenance costs. Some of the remaining external decorative features have weathered badly, particularly the Doulling stone window mullions and dressings'* (DL24).

2.2.3 In discussing 'other considerations' (apart from the principal MOL issue), The Inspector referred to 'impact on heritage assets' and concluded that 'despite its deteriorated condition, Athlone House is of considerable architectural and historic interest and, although not listed, is recognised as an undesignated heritage asset. CBC's Local List includes the grounds of Athlone House as a natural feature or landscape having historic and townscape significance so the grounds represent a separate undesignated heritage asset. The site lies within the Camden Highgate Conservation Area and is visible from the contiguous Haringey Highgate Conservation Area, both designated heritage assets. The site is also visible from the eastern edge of the grade II* Kenwood Registered Park and Garden ...' (DL 51).

2.2.4 He found that (DL53) 'the significance of Athlone House lies primarily in the rare survival of a of an opulent Victorian merchant's house in the inner suburbs; its eclectic design, representative of a particular period in English architecture; and the survival of various original internal features. Despite the loss of some characteristic external features which led to the decision not to list it, the house retains a high degree of architectural, social and historic interest'; and (DL55) 'the opportunity to sustain and enhance the significance of the house through conservative repair, putting it back into viable use as a dwelling, would be lost through total demolition'. Of its contribution to the Highgate Conservation Area

and its wide range of buildings of different periods and styles, he wrote that *'The exuberant design, romantic asymmetry and domestic scale of Athlone House is characteristic of its particular period and is a unique and important example of the small group of large Heath-side villas. I consider that, despite its altered state, Athlone House makes a clear and positive contribution to the distinctive character and appearance of the Highgate CA'*.

2.2.5 The Inspector's comments reproduced above have benchmarked the significance of Athlone House, of itself, and in context, and will form the starting point for the proposed repair and regeneration of the building. My building inspection of 8th March 2016 was promulgated upon the decision of the applicant who has recently acquired Athlone House to seek planning permission for its repair and regeneration.

3.0 ATHLONE HOUSE: SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

3.1 Site and Surroundings

3.1.1 Athlone House (originally Caen Wood Towers), built 1870-72 for the industrialist Edward Brooke, to a design by the architects Salomons and Jones, is located south of Hampstead Lane about half a mile east of the centre of Highgate Village. It stands on a promontory overlooking Hampstead Heath to the south west, with Fitzroy Park on the lower slopes to the south and views across the south east towards Witanhurst with the spire of St. Michael's as a skyline landmark. Immediately west is a wooded area, beyond which is the walled enclosure for the former kitchen garden of Kenwood House, about 0.75 km distant within its own bounded grounds, but with no intervisibility from Athlone House. Kenwood House is owned by The National Trust. Looking south and west is Hampstead Heath, now owned and administered by The Corporation of the City of London. To the north east of Athlone House lies Beechwood, a visually prominent and extended late 18th century house, now visually separated from Athlone House by the Caenwood Court flats.

3.1.2 These were included in the 2005/6 permissions included, immediately east of Athlone House, three blocks of apartments of modernist appearance, built in 2009-11 on sloping ground, formerly part of the Athlone House estate. They were designed by Sir David Chipperfield.

3.1.3 There are two subsidiary buildings close to the Hampstead Lane frontage. These are Caen Cottage, immediately north of Athlone House and the Gate House, to the north east, concealed from the present vehicular access to the site by the inward curve of the boundary wall. Planning permission to restore both these buildings was obtained under the 2005/6 scheme. The permission also conveyed permission for residential conversion of the former stable block to Caen Wood Towers backing on to the highway of Hampstead Lane (and separated from the ownership of Athlone House in 2005/6) now implemented.

3.1.4 The south side of Hampstead Lane has since the London Government reorganisation of the early 1960s (which created the former Greater London Council and the present London boroughs) formed the boundary between Camden (to the south) and Haringey (to the north). Haringey is the Highway Authority for Hampstead Lane. Prior to London Government reorganisation the boundary lay to the south of Caen Cottage and the Gate House (see Historic Maps Appendix).

3.1.5 Immediately north of Hampstead Lane is the campus of Highgate Junior School and the playing fields of Highgate School. The buildings were first developed in the late 19th century and access is taken from the horseshoe course of Bishopswood Road, superseding Hampstead Lane. Athlone House is visible from the playing fields, with a more distant view from the campus buildings further north.

4.0 BUILDING INSPECTION

4.1 Building Inspection: Interior

4.1.1 I made a comprehensive external and inspection of Athlone House on March 8th 2016. This was the latest of many inspections I have made since February 2007. My purpose was to identify and assess the remaining historic fabric, particularly internal finishes and joinery, for their potential to contribute to the enhancement of the significance of Athlone House as an undesignated heritage asset under the National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF]. I have also analysed the proposed internal alterations and incidental demolition on a room by room basis. This will be summarised overall on the effect on significance in Section 7.

4.1.2 As a generality I have found within Athlone House that the best quality surviving original fabric and finishes is localised and largely confined to the main entrance approach through the porte cochere, entrance hall, and main inner hall open to the great stair in the so-called 'chapel' niche. Of the main suite of reception rooms, the original Billiard Room, first left from the main hall has long been stripped of its most important features including the fireplace and the raised fitted seat of the east bay window. The stone cusps of the upper lights of the windows and the stained glass inserts of sports and pastimes may have gone as early as the sale of the building by Edward Brooke, as the billiard table was moved to the picture gallery by Cory-Wright. Likewise Cory-Wright opened up the study (interposed between the Billiard Room and Drawing Room) as a morning room out of the main hall (removing the original fireplace). Whatever of this may survive was covered over by the installation of bathrooms and lavatories. Likewise the Drawing Room was redecorated in Queen Anne style by the Waley-Cohens in the early 1920s, and later on separated into two by closing off the original recess on the north side. Both fireplaces have long gone. Along the west-facing range, the dining room retains its elaborate timber ceiling, albeit that the fireplace has been removed (and it appears that the room may have been reduced in size during the Waley-Cohen era). While much of the original plan form remains legible

throughout the ground floor, there appears to be little of intrinsic significance surviving in the subsidiary rooms of the ground floor, particularly below the central light well.

4.1.3 On the first floor it appears that the finishes were originally less elaborate. There was something of a 'showpiece' aura about the house about its reception rooms, and a marked economy about the family rooms above the ground floor (and even more about the servants' accommodation in the north wing). Under the aegis of the National Health Service, owners since 1953, there was a great deal of stripping out internally to adapt the building as a hospital and later for geriatric residence. Virtually all fireplaces have been removed (except in a few of the servants' rooms where they are conventional types where they survive). Although the plan form remains generally legible, as the 2005/6 permitted Lincoln and Campbell scheme showed, there is scope for flexibility to meet modern standards for bedroom suites.

4.2 Ground Floor (from hereon in the room designations of the survey and proposed plans are use, with original from the 1881 sales plans appended in parenthesis where necessary)

4.2.1 The porte cochere forms the link between exterior and interior and projects from the tower under which is the main ground floor entrance. The flat roof over the porte cochere forms an external terrace commanding the eastward view towards Highgate Village. There is presently no access to this terrace from the tower room on the first floor, and apparently never has been.

4.2.2 The materials of the porte cochere are an eclectic mix. Its floor is of cream brick paviors. In order to mitigate the threshold step a concrete ramp has been laid over the paving against the entrance. The base of the outer bay opposite the entrance contains an original planter with stone curbs. The supporting pilasters are of stone, with projecting rustication blocks on the inset corners and intricate carved capitals with birds, animals and foliage (all by the sculptor J. B. Philip). The arches have

attached roll mouldings. The stonework is discoloured and eroded in places. The vault over the porte cochere is of bright orange brick which has retained its vivid colour through being sheltered from the weather. Among minor original features are the copper plates to which the bell pull was attached, mounted on the face of the right hand pilaster.

- 4.2.3 The entrance doors to the Entrance Lobby (G.01) appear to be original. These are tall double doors in an arched opening, with three-quarter length plate glass above the bottom panel with linenfold panelling. The sidelights of the hardwood door screen were covered over with protective plywood at the time of inspection, but it appears that the linenfold carries through. The architrave of the entrance doors has slender attached projecting columns. The latch/ lock door furniture and hinges of the entrance doors are elaborate and appear to be original.

Entrance Lobby (G.01)

- 4.2.4 This room has a floor of black and white marble tiles laid diagonally in chequerboard pattern, with a black border. This is original, including the mat well. The linenfold panelled wainscoting forms a dado above two-stage deep moulded skirting boards. The walls above are plastered. The fireplace on the left is original (the only one in a major room to have survived). At the time of inspection it was covered by plywood sheets lent against it. The fireplace has a marble mantelpiece (painted over) and a white marble arched opening against a dark Purbeck shell marble backing.
- 4.2.5 This room has an elaborate ceiling made up of moulded exposed timber joists carried from the walls on profiled shallow brackets, with boarded infill between. A moulded timber cornice runs around the walls, above stone corbel blocks, carved with animals and birds including a phoenix (again by Philip). The whole ceiling (including the corbel blocks) has been painted over with white gloss paint and the original finish is not evident. A similar ceiling treatment runs through the Grand Hall (G.05), and the corridor to the west garden doors, within the enlarged Living Area (G.07).

4.2.6 A glazed timber screen with central doors divides the Entrance Lobby from the Grand Hall (G.05). The doors are three-quarter glazed with linenfold panels below as on the main entrance doors. The linenfold runs across the dados of the glazed sidelights. The heads of the screen have shallow Tudor arches. This screen was radically altered at an indeterminate date. Original photographs from the 1880s show a semicircular arched screen with marble columns and foliate capitals and elaborate wall decoration above. It survived beyond the 1909 sale, and the alteration most probably occurred around 1919-20 under the Waley-Cohens' ownership and occupancy.

Grand Hall (G.05)

4.2.7 The floor was finished with wood parquet: while this survives it has been scuffed and unprotected. A linenfold dado similar to that in the Entrance Lobby) runs along the right hand side, obscured by radiators beneath the four light double stage stone-mullioned window lit from the central area light well; the plain dado and skirting opposite is a later replacement of no intrinsic significance. The walls are plain plastered. The ceiling replicates the detailing of the lobby hall, with a rectangular central section defined by transverse moulded beams. It would appear to be feasible to open up this area to the first floor, but a more extensive open well is proposed. Numerous carved stone corbel bocks are inset beneath the ceiling as in the Entrance Lobby. As it now exists the Grand Hall is subdivided by a deep cross beam. As can be seen on the 1909 sales photographs, this was supported by a marble column with an elaborate Corinthian capital at mid-point (a sculpture of a female figure in white marble stood in front of it in 1881). This appears to have required some re-engineering which probably occurred under the Waley-Cohens' ownership.

4.2.8 The left hand wall has witnessed extensive alteration. Before 1909 under the Cory-Wrights' ownership a broad arched opening was inserted to connect the morning room (TV snug (G.04)) with the Grand Hall, entailing removal of its fireplace. In turn this was closed off again when bathrooms and lavatories were installed by the National Health Service, covering over

or gutting decorative finishes in that area. Further along insertion of a small door into the former drawing room (Living Area (G.07)) involved removal of the fireplace in that room. This may have occurred when the Waley Cohens blanked off the drawing room recess as a separate room. Consequently it appears unlikely that fabric or decoration of any intrinsic interest remains to be discovered along or within this wall, although there is a possibility that the arched opening may still exist beneath the plaster finish.

4.2.9 A few original doors, complete with their architraves survive leading out of the Grand Hall. Immediately left is the door to the former Billiard room (later a morning room) (Study (G.03)). This is a tall nine-panelled door (six of them with linenfold infill), set in a matching lining, with bold moulded architraves and a coved cornice. Similar doors provide access to the drawing room recess (later blanked off), to the drawing room recess from the west corridor, to the former butler's pantry from the main hall (a narrower version, bereft of the fine detailing on the reverse), and to the former Library from the rear of the staircase hall. The doors, linings and architraves appear to merit repair and retention in situ where possible, or removed for reuse elsewhere in the house.

4.2.10 The west corridor (part of the enlarged Living Area (G.07)) leads out of the present, longer Grand Hall, towards a garden door, positioned alongside the drawing room recess. There is an original door to the drawing room at mid-point of the left hand wall (the entrance from the main hall is described above). The beamed ceiling, boarded soffit, and carved stone corbel blocks are similar to those in the Entrance Lobby and Grand Hall described above. This sequence of blocks include two bearing the initials 'EB', Edward Brooke, the commissioner and original owner of Caen Wood Towers. These features will require review and restoration and investigation of the feasibility of retaining in situ or careful removal for reuse in an appropriate place within the house, the precise location to be determined in due course.

Stair Hall (G.06, ground and first floor)

4.2.11 The Stair Hall opens off to the right immediately inside the Grand Hall. This the most impressive surviving original feature within the house. It forms a deep recess, with, at the rear right, a connecting door through to the service rooms. Its opening to the main hall has a linenfold patterned panelled lining. The stair itself is of Jacobean style, of open well form and rises around the walls in three flights (apparently cantilevered from the walls), with quarter landings at the corners. At the foot is a curtail step, with an elaborately carved and moulded newel post. The stair is of a closed string pattern, with ornamented arcaded balusters having diminutive Ionic capitals beneath the arched arcading which steps up the flights. The handrail is boldly moulded. The dado opposite is scaled to the height of the handrail and is linenfold panelled. The underside of the stair is panelled. The handrail is ramped up to meet the intermediate newels, under which there are carved pendants (that beneath the first newel appears to have been sawn off). The return landing at the top of the stair was reputedly used as a minstrels' gallery.

4.2.12 Above the intermediate landings and flight of steps on the rear north wall of the staircase hall is a four light Perpendicular Gothic style window with moulded stone mullions and cusped tracery. Its reveals, colonettes and surrounds have been white-painted. On the left hand wall at first floor level are three cusped lancet windows, again with painted surrounds and colonettes. The right hand wall has been radically altered on the ground floor, but two original arched openings survive at first floor level. The utilitarian screen on the first floor landing appears to have been inserted as a security and fire check precaution by the NHS. The walls of the stair hall are papered throughout with a reproduction of a late-period William Morris wallpaper (probably an NHS action). The stair hall is roofed by a three bay arch braced timber trussed roof with panelled soffits. Some of the stone corbels from which the roof trusses spring appear to be crumbling.

Study (G.03)

4.2.13 Back to the ground floor, the Study (former Billiard Room/ Morning Room) was entered by the door opposite the stair hall. This room faced both east and south. The fireplace was removed to form a bathroom entrance and the remaining joinery is of little intrinsic merit, with the exception of the linenfold reveal and casing to both windows. The bottom of the reveal to the north window is plain – indicating the removal of the raised fitted seat from which the game could be observed. The windows have suffered from removal of the cusps to their top lights, originally fitted with stained glass depicting sports and pastimes. The beamed ceiling is the best surviving feature: it was originally dark finished but as with much of the remaining surviving joinery in the house it was white-painted by the NHS.

TV Snug (G.04)

4.2.14 As noted above the original morning room was opened from the main entrance hall out by the Cory-Wrights c.1900. It appears that little may have survived the internal installation of lavatories and bathrooms by the NHS. It is proposed to form an opening into the Drawing Room (Living Area (G.07)).

Living Area (G.07)

4.2.15 This comprises the former Drawing Room, which was the principal ground floor reception room. Archive photographs show it to have been robustly eclectic with a Jacobean style pendant ceiling. It attracted a major makeover in the early 1920s by the Waley-Cohens, possibly designed by the architect L. Rome Guthrie. The Queen Anne style was not ideally suited to the house, and this is emphasised by the strident yellow and white colour scheme adopted by the NHS. The best feature is the Tuscan Doric screen treatment of the opening to the semicircular projection added to the south elevation around 1900 (proposed to be demolished in the present scheme). The ceiling with its twin oblong

borders linked by a central circle appears generic rather than individually designed, although the modillion cornice and shallow coving adds some visual depth. This room was proposed for enlargement under the 2005/6 Lincoln and Campbell scheme, and this is followed under the current SHH proposals, with possible removal of vestiges of the structural loadbearing walls of the drawing room, recess and west corridor. See above para.4.2.10 for note on the corbel blocks and possible relocation after removal for restoration.

Atrium (G.11)

4.2.16 A proposal for a central atrium was also found on the 2005/6 Lincoln and Campbell scheme. There is a large stone mullion and transom eight light window in two stages, lighting the inner hall from the existing central open well. (There is an equivalent window on the main first floor landing.) While this is an impressive original feature, I do not consider it to be so significant as to prevent removal to create and access the central atrium. The ground floor window has linenfold panelled wainscoting matching the dado, and might be retained for reuse. The Atrium space is currently an external light well, with a maze of subsidiary service rooms on the ground floor, and open to the sky above. Design of the atrium will be described with the proposal below in Section 6.0.

Cigar Room (G.8)

4.2.17 A subsidiary room, originally a study opening off a corridor leading to the Dining Room from the west corridor, its configuration was altered by the NHS and has little surviving fabric of intrinsic interest.

Dining Room (G.10)

4.2.18 The Dining Room was the principal reception room in the west wing. This was approached through a corridor between a study and the Butler's pantry (corridor later relocated to run through the latter). Scrambling the plan appears to have removed virtually every feature of historic intrinsic

interest and this also applies to the Dining Room with the exception of the large projecting bay window, with its recess lined with the linenfold panelling seen elsewhere and the bold architrave around the opening. The fireplace glimpsed on the archive photographs has long since disappeared. The frieze, cornice and ceiling, the last divided into octagonal boarded panels by moulded ribs, are all now white-painted but with the original dark stained finish visible through an inspection hatch in the corridor outside the present foreshortened room. These are features which would enhance the proposal to return the dining room to its original configuration. The proposed new main entrance will be from the Atrium.

Family Dining (G.05)

4.2.19 This open plan area (which will interconnect with the Kitchen (G.13) and informal Sitting area (G.14) as a family living space. The only existing room of any intrinsic significance affected by the proposal is the former Library, currently approached through an original dark stained door with linenfold panels from a corridor opening off the Stair Hall. The library fittings including the fireplace appear to be possibly later than the initial build of 1871-3 and are only one-third height of the room. In the inner corners are diagonally set cupboards. The abrupt termination of the window lining suggests that there may have been a fitted seat in the recess. All the shelving is white-painted. The fireplace has a low surround of dark-stained timber, with coupled Ionic pilasters, a panelled mantel and a quadrant architrave to the grey tiled grate and hearth and is the best feature of the room: it is to be retained. The character of the room is more of a schoolroom than a major country house library, and the loss of the room definition and its fitting is considered overall to be acceptable.

4.2.20 The remainder of the ground floor comprises the kitchens, parts of which have been demolished and ancillary staff and service rooms. Nothing of intrinsic significance survives. The infilling below the original light well is particularly congested. The rooms on the northwest corner of the building appear to have been rebuilt during the 1940s, possibly as result of wartime damage. While as yet unsubstantiated, the introduction

of concrete flooring above the basement, Fletton brickwork, and a hollow tile partition wall to the staircase to the basement from the main hall (where none existed historically) all reflect utilitarian rebuilding characteristic of the 1940s.

First Floor and above

4.2.21 At first floor level the floor plan is generally legible across the south of the building and the area served by the main landing (Staircase (1.01) and Grand Hall (1.02)). However no original floor plan has yet been found and detail is uncertain, particularly in the west wing. The insertion of bathrooms has infiltrated the irregular space above the morning room, and on the main south front two bedrooms have been combined to form a large dormitory (to be subdivided as Master Robe (1.06) and Suite 2 (1.08)). Apart from the large stone mullion and transom windows with their timber architraves there are few distinctive surviving features. No fireplaces of any intrinsic significance survive in what were the main bedrooms and decorative plasterwork is generally more conventional than on the ground floor.

4.2.22 The Grand Hall (1.02) is above the Grand Hall on the ground floor. It subdivided into by a screen, with an opening in the form of a shallow Tudor arch, situated alongside the far side of the window overlooking the light well (which will be retained to overlook the Atrium (G.11)). Above the opening of the screen there appears to be a deep downstand beam spanning the width. Beyond the ceiling has been stripped revealing a modern timber construction of sawn narrow width joists stiffened by nogging blocks. The roof above is flat with a felt and gravel covering replacing the pitched roof whose silhouette is visible of the west face of the tower. This reconstruction appears to have occurred post 1945 as the original roof is visible on 1947 and 1949 RAF photographs (see Appendix MMQ). Around the landing features of joinery, door architraves and the like, are less substantial than on the ground floor. The landing is separated from the Stair 1.01) hall by a rather utilitarian timber and

glazed screen. This appears to have been installed by the NHS and is of no intrinsic significance.

4.2.23 The most individual of the first floor bedrooms is the room below the tower (to be converted as the Master Ensuite (1.03)). This is to the east of the landing, approached through a plain panelled door in an arched doorcase with slender pilasters. The room is in two parts, the main area lies under the tower, and there is a slightly narrower projection over the port cochere, with large stone-framed six-light mullion and transom windows on three sides. The junction between the two areas is marked by a moulded timber architrave framing a panelled plaster reveal, with a coved ornamental plaster cap featuring a grotesque mask and Jacobean style strapwork. Due to damp penetration some of this plasterwork has been stripped, but could be replicated. There is a plain low chest of drawers fitment beneath the east window above the porte cochere. This room may once had had an en suite dressing room/ bathroom, as an original door now opens on the north to a narrow w.c. behind the large inserted wheelchair lift shaft.

4.2.24 The southeast corner bedroom (Master Bedroom (1.04)) has large eight light mullion and transom stone windows on the east and south walls, with timber architraves and heads. The ceiling has a flat cornice with bands of miniature shields, now paint choked. The small room beyond (Master Lobby (1.05)) has a curved projecting oriel window as its major feature, which is an important element on the south elevation.

4.2.25 The small west bedroom may possibly have functioned as two small dressing rooms. It is proposed as a Lounge (1.09) to be opened out on to the Grand Hall (1.02) creating a full length space westward from the base of the tower. The shallow banded plaster cornices are original but not of great intrinsic significance. The existing right hand window is full length and leads to the balcony. It is to be replaced by full width stone mullioned screen with openings to the balcony which retains the original balustrading (in poor condition). A more open iron balcony front is under consideration.

4.2.26 The remaining rooms on the west corridor retain little of intrinsic significance. The first two are to be converted and linked as Suite 3 (1.10). The west to north corner room appears to have been a wartime rebuild following damage to this part of the building. The utilitarian steel-framed windows are typical of their period. This room may have been used for therapy as gymnastic wall bars indicate, originally fixed to the walls. It is to be rebuilt as the Gym (1.14), in a design forming a transition between the restored exterior of Athlone House and the proposed new-build swimming pool wing to the north. North of the corridor in the west wing are bathrooms with windows and tiling that suggest an earlier installation, possibly fitted during the fitting of additional bathrooms by the Waley-Cohens. These are wooden mullion and transom type with leaded lights and period style obscured glass.

4.2.27 The north range contained servants' accommodation. A narrow dogleg stair, with open string, stick balusters and a plain elliptical moulded handrail connects all service levels, which incorporate three as against two floors in the main house. A transverse corridor runs across the north range lit by windows from the central light well. The servants' rooms are small, with no distinctive features. They are proposed for conversion to a Yoga Room (1.14) and a Treatment Room (1.18) separated by a new rear stair.

4.2.28 The remainder of the first floor rooms have little significance although most of the main dividing walls remain legible.

4.2.29 The central light well opens out above ground floor. The walls on the ground floor are faced with drab colour cement render. Above this level the walls are brown London stock brick laid in English Bond. The windows of the stair recess are flush set without any moulding of the tracery giving a more austere effect, which is quite distinctive. The treatment of the walls of the proposed central atrium will receive careful consideration, as will the detailing of its roof in relation to the existing corbelled out eaves courses. Clearing away the clutter of the ground floor

structures will create the impressive double height Atrium at the heart of the building providing access to all of its distinctive areas, and unifying the interior overall. The proposed cloister- arcades on the first floor will open out views between the first floor corridors and the Atrium. The glazed light shaft between the Atrium and the family dining will provide a hitherto disregarded view of the staircase window enhancing its significance and that of the house as a whole. The proposal to introduce two new windows between the east corridor and the stair will also enhance the interpenetration of space within an area of key significance within the building, although the existing arched openings are quite distinctive.

4.2.30 The bedrooms on the second floor are pushed into the roof, with an existing corridor access constricted by the roof slope. They are to be served by the new stair and converted to Bedroom 5 (2.03) and Bedroom 6 (2.06). On the half landing of the new stair it is proposed to convert the white painted timber doors to a matching dormer.

4.2.31 The loft spaces above the first floor are to be repaired as necessary and retained as existing. The lift overrun alongside the tower which mars the roof profile is to be internalised with the new lift to be fitted. This will benefit the exterior.

4.2.32 The two tower rooms are on the second and third floors are approached a steep single flight staircase of restricted width at the foot and head, where it is encroached upon by the equally restricted dog leg stair to the third floor tower room. From the upper landing a cast iron spiral stair leads into the roof turret from which a door opens out on to the castellated parapet top of the tower, which commands spectacular views in all directions, particularly south east towards Highgate Village and south over Hampstead Heath towards the City of London. The tower rooms are very basically finished, with no bathroom facilities. The third floor windows are among the few to retain their cusped tracery in the window heads: this is an important point and most relevant to the exterior of the house. As for the interior I consider that it has never fulfilled the

promise of a belvedere outlook and there is a greater margin of freedom in the regeneration of this feature.

4.2.33 It is proposed to insert a new stair and lift to provide better access to the tower. This will narrow the rooms within. Given the basic finishes noted above I consider this to be acceptable. The Private Study (2.01) retains the fireplace. The Viewing Room (3.01) has views in three directions. The open Roof Terrace and the Access Turret are to have their crenellations restored.

4.3 Exterior

4.3.1 Rather than describe the exterior in full detail, with reference to the alterations and demolition of the gables, or note the evident deterioration of much of the stonework, particularly window mullions (all of which is well known) I have decided to focus on the decorative embellishments, to which I paid particular attention during this inspection. They are all the work of the sculptor J. B. Philip (see also Appendix MMF).

4.3.2 The truncated gables of the east elevation each incorporate circular carved decorative panels within a roundel. From north to south there are a girl's head with a doll; a shield with seven stars surmounted by a crescent and star on a foliate background with a scroll bearing the inscription 'IMMORUS' (?); and an anchor with a fern background. On the first floor is a projecting oriel bay window with an angled corbelled splayed base, outer faces moulded, centre face flat (and cracked), with a carved corbel block below, having a central cusped trefoil arch and carved squirrels below.

4.3.3 On the east gable of the south elevation, immediately above the projecting head of the central first floor window there is a carved stone panel with quadrant and reverse quadrant frame reflecting the 'Dutch Gable' profile of the main gables in their original form. The panel appears heavily eroded and was carved with elaborate foliage scrolls and a central peacock. Although built in the early 1870s Caen Wood Towers here

appears to presage the 'aesthetic' movement of the late 1870s/ early 1880s in which the peacock was a potent motif. It is also to be found on a small scale on Philp's work on the hotel at St. Pancras Station.

4.3.4 To the left is a turret and cupola in the angle of the set back of the elevation. This has a curved profiled lead roll roof (which has been lowered from its original form). The original weather vane survives, ornamental ironwork with scrolls and a profiled beaver grasping the scrollwork direction pointer. Below the cupola roof of the turret features a cornice of special bricks also found along the main roof eaves. In contrast to more exposed brickwork, these cornices appear to have weathered well. Immediately below the cornice is a scrollwork profiled stone panel featuring a sundial, with a copper projecting gnomon. This panel appears to be surmounted by a Bishop's mitre but the detail appears eroded and unidentifiable. At first floor level is the projecting semicircular oriel noted on the internal inspection. This has a lead roof with a stone finial, a bold moulded timber frame and fascia, with curved profiled plate glass, technologically innovative at the time of construction. Below in the projecting moulded oriel base, diminishing to a carved boss featuring Gothic style 'stiff leaved foliage'. The stonework appears to be cracked and spalling in places. It is proposed to reinstate the cupola roof to its original height following the original detailing. This will restore one of the principal eyecatchers which feature in views of Athlone House from the Heath, particularly from the Stable Field to the southwest.

4.3.5 Near the southwest corner is the projecting light stone curved end 'music shell' of the drawing room. This was probably built by the Cory-Wrights at the turn of the 19th century or shortly after as it appears ivy-covered like the rest of the house on the 1909 sales photographs. Its most distinctive feature is the copper roof, maturely patinated pale Verdigris green. The roof has a saucer domed profile and the scalloped copper 'tiles' add a distinctive appearance, as does the Lotus bud finial. Its stylistic character contrasts with that of the house and it has, however, been decided to demolish this feature (as was also the case on the Lincoln and Campbell approved 2005/6 scheme). The effect of this on significance will be

assessed against the enhancement to be brought by the extensive external restoration.

- 4.3.6 On the gables of the west elevation are three more of the carved roundels seen on the east. Left to right there are a shield with a cross of St. George, a female head in semi-profile looking right, and a female head in semi-profile looking left. Between the two gables, centre and right, the first floor balcony retains its original turned baluster front, although the original arcading has been replaced by crude diagonal bracing to the carriage beam over the opening. See also para.4.2.21 above.
- 4.3.7 On the north elevation little of consequence remains at ground floor level due to the severance caused by demolition of the projecting service wings. However, on the first floor and dormered second floor all original windows appear to survive, and there is distinctive diagonal brick verge detailing on the projecting gable of the Sussex style part-hipped roof. The right hand dormer on the second floor appears to contain a loading bay and possibly housed a hoist. This is to be converted into a dormer window uniform in design with the existing two.
- 4.3.8 The area immediately north of Athlone House was occupied by an elaborate conservatory. Originally thought to have been demolished about 1934/5, aerial survey photographs taken by the Royal Air Force in 1947 and 1949 record its postwar survival (and the 'alcove' at the north end of the terrace) together with the western kitchen wing, the eastern service wing and a two storey service block replacing the eastern service wing, built about 1934/5 (as indicated on the 1935 OS revision). The conservatory was probably demolished when Athlone House came into the ownership of the NHS in 1953. The remaining service buildings were demolished about 2003 after Athlone House had closed as a medical facility. The prefabricated timber wards, erected during the 1960s north east of the house were cleared at the same time.

4.4 Roof

4.4.1 The roof is elaborately modelled into gables and valleys. The finish throughout is alternating bands of fishscale and plain tiles. There are 5 courses of fishscale and plain tiles at the eaves followed by 3 or 4 of plain tiles, then 5 more of fishscales and so on up the roof slope. The eaves courses slacken pitch and are carried on sprockets spiked to the main rafters. On some of the elevations tiny open triple motifs are slotted into the open rolls of the ridge tiles. This appears to have been original, although it appears that attention was paid to renewal of these features as there are spare ridge tiles and inserts stored within the building.

4.4.2 As part of the restoration it is proposed to restore all of the Dutch Gables and reinstate all chimneys to their original height. A cluster of five of the original height chimneys survives behind the cupola. These were not built using the ornamental bricks from Norfolk which were originally specified due to their relatively inconspicuous position. Nevertheless they are a valuable template for the height and form of the reinstatement.

5.0 HERITAGE ASSETS

5.1 Athlone House

5.1.1 Athlone House is an undesignated local Heritage Asset, and has been selected as a building which makes a positive contribution to the Highgate (Camden) Conservation Area, a designated Heritage Asset, within which it is located. The positive assessment also includes The Gatehouse, Caen Cottage, Stable Block and the brick screen wall along the frontage of the site along Highgate Lane. These were included as such in the Highgate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan [CAAMP] p.53, of which the Stable Block has recently been residentially converted). The Gatehouse and Caen Cottage (both in the ownership of the appellant) are subject to proposals for restoration.

5.1.2 Athlone House occupies the site of an earlier building, Fitzroy House, built c.1760 with grounds (reputedly) landscaped by Capability Brown and, subsequently, Humphrey Repton. Fitzroy House was demolished c.1870, and replaced by Caen Wood Towers (which was renamed Athlone House in 1953), built by Edward Brooke MP, an industrial chemist. His architect was Edward Salomons, working in association with John Philpot Jones. The design was richly eclectic, red brick with abundant stone dressings, mullioned windows with Gothic tracery; a tall tower with an outlook turret and crenellations; florid stone-coped Dutch gables; and tall Tudor style chimneys, with intricate twisted shafts of patent bricks. There were elaborate service outbuildings to the north, and a long conservatory on the western terrace, leading to a tall garden pavilion close to Hampstead Lane (the 'Alcove'). The interiors of the house were elaborately decorated, including the Entrance Hall and Great Staircase. Brooke further embellished the grounds with a lake, rockeries, a model farm and observatory tower. See also Appendix MMF.

5.1.3 The house maintained its prestige under a succession of owners, of whom Sir Robert Waley-Cohen was the most notable: in residence from 1919-40 (and owner until his death in 1952). Alterations were made to the interior in the 1920s, and during the 1930s, there was some demolition and

rebuilding in the service area. The 1935 Ordnance Survey revision (see Appendix MMH) shows a building which photographs affirm as flat roofed replacing one of the wings of the kitchen courtyard. The house was requisitioned by the Royal Air Force in 1940 and used as a school for intelligence officers, and appears to have suffered some damage. However the large conservatory survived. After the war, the building was purchased by the National Health Service and converted for use as a hospital. Extensive demolition, including the conservatory, garden pavilion, and more of the service wings took place. The exterior was radically simplified, with loss of the Dutch gables, virtually all the chimney shafts, window tracery, and crenellations of the tower. Many of the original decorative features of the interior were removed (with the exception of the main staircase), and single storey flat-roofed timber system-built hospital extensions spread to the north. The final NHS use was as a geriatric hospital, which ceased in 2003, since when the building has been unoccupied.

5.1.4 There were several approaches to English Heritage (now Historic England)/DCMS to list Athlone House, but all have been rejected – see Appendix MME. In advising the DCMS English Heritage concluded that Salomons and Jones were hardly masters of country house design and the depletion of so many key architectural features of the building precluded listing. However, as the Inspector concluded when determining the 2015 Athlone House retains a substantial degree of local architectural and historic interest and remains a positive contributor to its setting – see below.

5.2 Athlone House Gardens

5.2.1 The grounds and gardens of Caen Wood were embellished with a small lake, Pulhamite rockeries, the Milner folly tower and a model farm. In the early 1920s a formal rose garden by the eminent designer Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) was added under the supervision of the architect Leonard Rome Guthrie (1880-1958) who was making alterations to the house for Lady Cohen. In recognition of the quality and local interest of the Gardens

they were entered on a new Camden Local List. The 2005 planning permission was accompanied by a s.106 legal agreement which included donation of land to Hampstead Heath. Immediately south of the present boundary of the Athlone House land is an area donated to the Heath and formerly part of its gardens denoted 'Athlone House Garden'. Other land to the west was also donated. These areas are now in the care of the Corporation of the City of London.

5.2.2 Under Camden Planning Guidance CPG1 Design an addendum to section 3 Heritage was proposed to be inserted explaining the draft local list. Para.3.30 explained that although buildings made up the majority of Non-designated Heritage Assets [NDHAs] *'historic natural landscape features such as gardens and parks can also be considered'*. Asset ref252 is: Athlone House Grounds; Significance: Historic and Townscape; Asset Type: Natural feature or landscape. A detailed description of the grounds appears on the local list (see Appendix MMB). There is no specific architectural interest pertaining to the significance of the grounds as included on the Draft Local List. The draft was last updated in May 2014. See also the reports by Catherine Bickmore Associates and Jacqueline Clay, JFA Associates.

5.3 Highgate (Camden) Conservation Area

5.3.1 Athlone House is located in the Highgate (Camden) Conservation Area in the Fitzroy Park sub-area. This lies on the western fringe of Highgate village, which forms the historic core of the area. The Council's *Highgate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals* (HCAAMP) states that Athlone House is *'considered to be representative of the large private villas which formerly occupied this part of Highgate'*. I shall discuss this context, together with the impact of its proposed development below. Under the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2012) the Highgate (Camden) Conservation Area is regarded as a Designated Heritage Asset. Further details are in Appendix MMB.

5.4 Highgate (Haringey) Conservation Area

5.4.1 The south frontage of Hampstead Lane forms the local authority boundary between Camden and Haringey London Boroughs. There is a contiguous conservation area, Highgate (Haringey) Conservation Area, in Haringey also a Designated Heritage Asset. The impact of the proposed development affects the setting of this conservation area. Further details are in Appendix MMB.

5.5 Listed Buildings

5.5.1 There are a number of listed buildings in the vicinity of the Appeal site. These comprise:

Street	Location	Grade
Kenwood	Kenwood House (Iveagh Bequest)	I
Kenwood	Service wing and outbuildings to Kenwood House	II*
Kenwood	The Lodge House to Kenwood House and adjoining Garden wall	II
Hampstead Lane	East Lodge to Kenwood House and attached gateways	II
Hampstead Lane	Park Flats	II
Hampstead Lane	Kitchen garden walls to Kenwood Nursery	II
Hampstead Lane/ Fitzroy Park	Beechwood	II

All the above are Designated Heritage Assets. The list descriptions are reproduced in Appendix MMC.

5.6 Kenwood House Registered Historic Park and Garden

5.6.1 The grounds of Kenwood House are a Registered Historic Park/Garden, Grade II*, and a Designated Heritage Asset. Although Athlone House is not visible from within the enclosed historic park and garden, The Stable Field, on the summit of Hampstead Heath immediately east of the enclosure provides views of Athlone House and the recently built Caenwood Court flats from several points. The asset boundary includes this field. The description and map are reproduced in Appendix MMD.

5.7 Hampstead Heath

5.7.1 Although primarily valued as a preserved swathe of open country, interspersed with tree belts, with sweeping views toward central London from Parliament Hill field and the heights below Hampstead Lane, the Heath contains several listed structures and was accepted overall as an undesignated heritage asset in its own right at the time of the 2015 appeal hearing. Although located in Camden, the Heath is owned and administered by the City of London Corporation.

6.0 **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

- 6.1 I consider that the proposed development plans represent a welcome and carefully considered restoration of Athlone House, allied to an appropriately sympathetic and subservient extension to provide accommodation commensurate to the status of the house. The commitment to restore key missing features such as the Dutch gables, chimney shafts, crenellations, and the cupola of the turret on the south elevation. Internally there are welcome commitments to restore the grand staircase and the important dining room ceiling, as well as to reinstate missing fireplaces in principal rooms. The plans show a degree of opening up generally comparable with that on the approved 2005/6 Lincoln and Campbell scheme but more subtly considered. The opening up a void in the hall ceiling also has precedent in the 2005/6 scheme, as also does the proposed demolition of the semicircular projection on the south elevation.
- 6.2 The design of the proposed extensions had been carefully considered in order to maintain the dominance of Athlone House as a principal building in the light of the extent of Athlone House and its outbuildings as they existed on 1 July 1948, the appointed day of the coming into operation of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act (as shown on the aerial survey photographs of 1947 and 1949 – see Appendix MMQ) which benchmarked the extent of the original building for the purpose of compliance with Metropolitan Open Land policy. The architectural concept of integrating the extension with the existing form of the house has been drawn from a modern interpretation of the form of the large conservatory, in terms of a connected 'leisure' use, and from the reinstatement of the equivalent of the east service wing and service entrance, sheltered behind a 'garden wall'. On the long west elevation, reconstruction of the existing elevation of the end of the building forms a transition between the restored west elevation, replete with its eye-catching features and the low key modernism of the pool hall extension. The height of the rear extensions has been kept low enough not to impede the view of the restored north elevation of the building, both within the site and also in the way that the

upper part of the north elevation will be viewed from Highgate Junior School playing fields.

- 6.3 The relationship of the exterior of Athlone House to its setting will be enhanced by the restoration of the elevational features in a symbiotic relationship with the concurrent restoration of the important locally listed gardens, and beyond to views from the Kenwood Registered Historic Garden and from viewpoints beyond from Hampstead Heath, and also to views from within the Highgate Conservation Areas.
- 6.4 The internal alterations have been based upon a thorough survey and understanding of respecting the building's historic attributes, both surviving and demolished and the manner in which they can be creatively and sensitively adapted to relate to present concepts of lifestyle. Prime amongst these is the atrium to be transformed from a utilitarian light well, rising above a confused melange of servants' spaces on the ground floor, to an area which forms the heart of the building providing access to all activity zones improving the function of the building and adding value aesthetically. For fuller details please refer to the Architects' Design and Access Statement.
- 6.5 The impact of the proposals on the significance of Athlone House is a matter to be analysed in the next section, followed by justification of the proposals under national and local planning policies and guidance.

7.0 EFFECT ON SIGNIFICANCE

7.1 In Section 2 above I quoted and commented on what I consider to be a key paragraph in the Inspector's Decision Letter determining the 2015 Appeal. He found that (DL53) *'the significance of Athlone House lies primarily in the rare survival of a of an opulent Victorian merchant's house in the inner suburbs; its eclectic design, representative of a particular period in English architecture; and the survival of various original internal features. Despite the loss of some characteristic external features which led to the decision not to list it, the house retains a high degree of architectural, social and historic interest'*; and (DL55) *'the opportunity to sustain and enhance the significance of the house through conservative repair, putting it back into viable use as a dwelling, would be lost through total demolition'*. Of its contribution to the Highgate Conservation Area and its wide range of buildings of different periods and styles, *'The exuberant design, romantic asymmetry and domestic scale of Athlone House is characteristic of its particular period and is a unique and important example of the small group of large Heath-side villas. I consider that, despite its altered state, Athlone House makes a clear and positive contribution to the distinctive character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area'*.

7.2 Appendix MMF contains a fuller narrative on the changing significance of Caen Wood Towers/ Athlone House from 1870-2016. Significance is defined in the NPPF Annex 2 Glossary as:

The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence but from its setting.

And setting:

The surroundings in which a heritage assets is experiences. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its setting evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the

significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

It is evident that asset and setting are in a highly individual interrelationship where Athlone House is concerned. Below I discuss the changes in significance brought by the proposed development related to the present high level of significance found by the Inspector, which I have flagged up as a benchmark level.

Restoration of Athlone House

- 7.3 In historic photographs reproduced in Appendix MMK it is evident that the skyline, south front and south western corner of Caen Wood Towers/ Athlone House was, and remains, an important eyecatcher in views from Hampstead Heath, particularly from the Stable Field which lies within the Kenwood Registered Historic Park and Garden, which is a designated Heritage Asset of national significance. Elsewhere there are views from the 'Athlone House Garden', immediately below the house on the land donated to the City of London Corporation, and more distantly the top of the tower rises above the tree canopies, including views from Parliament Hill Fields.
- 7.4 In the restoration all of the missing features of the upper elevations, roof and skyline is to be restored: tower turret and castellations, cupola roof, chimney shafts and Dutch Gables. The long era of the depleted and impoverished skyline has drawn to a close. From far and near the public perception of Athlone House will be restored to the glory days of Caen Wood Towers. The proposals add the value of greatly enhanced views in terms of the house and its immediate setting, which also enhances the locally listed Athlone House Gardens, and all views, whether public or from private properties within the Highgate (Camden) Conservation Area and its setting, which is a designated Heritage of national significance. Views from the north, including those from Highgate Junior School Playing Fields, are from within the contiguous Highgate (Haringey) Conservation Area, from which the tower and the upper parts of the north elevation are clearly seen. The boundary between the two conservation areas lies along

the southern highway frontage of Hampstead Lane. Athlone House lies within the setting of the Highgate (Haringey) Conservation Areas. The effect on both conservation areas is not only to preserve the perception of Athlone House, within or from them, but manifestly to enhance their character and appearance, over and above the positive benchmark level defined by the Inspector in his decision letter.

- 7.5 The significance of Athlone house in its external context is raised and restored to levels appertaining to that of the 1930s, as is that of its status a locally designated heritage asset.

Demolition

- 7.6 There is, however, the matter of the demolition of the curved 'music shell' projection on the ground floor of the south elevation. The light stone and green patinated copper roof accord it a degree of prominence in view from The Stable field on Hampstead Heath, within the boundary of the Registered Historic Park/ Garden. I consider that, recognising the degree of enhancement any harm imputed to demolition of this feature must be regarded as marginal, and entirely justified. Its demolition was approved under the Lincoln and Campbell 2005/6 scheme.
- 7.7 All other external demolition involved in the proposals is incidental to the restoration of missing features or replacement of badly eroded fabric. This will include the lengthening of ground floor windows, as shown on the elevation drawings, which will be accomplished when replacing the severely eroded major windows, which were also maltreated during the insertion of aluminium framed glazing units.

Extensions

- 7.8 Athlone House is not only being restored but is also to be extended in an appropriate manner, to provide an internal/ external swimming pool, gymnasium and service facilities. The area of the proposed extensions is within the latest research into the area of Caen Wood Towers as of 1 July

1948, the benchmark date for establishing the 'original' area relative to replacement within Metropolitan Open Land constraints. The swimming pool covers the area of the great conservatory, still present on the 'appointed date'. A low key recessive modernism, sensitive to its scale and context has informed the design. Ferneries are to be incorporated between the pool enclosure and service area, reviving a feature incorporated into the original planning as seen on the 1881 plan. The rebuilt service wing uses the character of a garden wall, which is to be planted along its east facing flank. On the west elevation the rebuilt block containing the gym and relaxation facilities forms a transition between the restored Athlone House and the pool enclosure, both in scale and detailing. Glimpses of the extensions in relation to the restored north elevation will be obtained from the copse to the south west adjoining Hampstead Lane, which has a public footpath running down to the open valley of Hampstead Heath below the western boundary garden of Athlone House. The quality of restoration of the most damaged elevation of the house and the carefully graduated relationship to it of the new extensions will ensure that the impact will be entirely benign, enhancing significance. of all relevant designated areas and from all viewpoints.

- 7.9 I consider that in external matters related to the requirement for planning permission the proposed development of Athlone House meets all requirements of the NPPF and PPG, the Plan for London and the Local Plans of Camden and Haringey Borough Councils, and will demonstrate this in Section 8 below.

Interiors of Athlone House

- 7.10 The Inspectors in both the 2011 and 2015 appeals recognised that the depredations of the years of National Health use, allied to the particular requirements of geriatric patients had led to removal of many of the interior fittings and finishes. It was also recognised that as Athlone House was an unlisted building there was no control over internal alterations, and that the 2005/6 scheme by Lincoln and Campbell did not present a

convincing indication of appropriate retention of surviving interior fittings and finishes, in addition to the shortcomings of its external treatment.

- 7.11 Preparation of the present proposals has brought a fresh survey of the original structure followed by a new appraisal of the interior (see section 4 above). This resulted in a dialogue with the architect and client in which the potential and feasibility of positive treatment of the most significant internal features has been discussed. The sensitively proposed restoration of the Staircase and Dining Room are prime examples. These and other examples are set into a contemporary context by the creation of the atrium at the core of the house, redeeming a part of the building hitherto regarded as entirely utilitarian, with a maze of inadequate service rooms on the ground floor and all windows looking in from the main part of the house on the first floor obscure glazed. The atrium connects to the perimeter rooms, linking the main reception areas with the family and leisure suites, with a glazed shaft and koi pool framing the exterior of the Staircase with its dramatic traceried window. The concept of the glazed roof above the landing (through the utilitarian postwar roof) providing a dramatic view up to tower is an innovative and entirely justified intervention. The scheme brings a high level of added value and significance to the interior, complementing the exterior.

New Access and Restoration of the Gate House and Caen Cottage

- 7.12 A new access from Hampstead Lane has been proposed, avoiding the congestion and duality of the access to the Caen Wood Court flats. The position is intermediate between the Gate House and Caen Cottage. This is in the vicinity of the access, shown on the 1870 OS Map (see Appendix MMH), providing access to Fitzroy House (which predated Caen Wood Towers). It will differ in precise location and detailing and will be a gated access setback from the frontage of the wall along Hampstead Lane, which will be opened out to accommodate it with inward curving screen walls. The Gate House, which appears to have been built in connection with Fitzroy House, will be restored. Its rustic porch, characteristic of the picturesque style fashionable during the early-mid 19th century will once

again face the authentic direction relative to the access. While this boundary wall has been flagged up by Camden Council (together with the Gate House and Caen Cottage) as a building element which contributes positively to the Highgate (Camden) Conservation Area (and doubtlessly although not specifically stated to the setting of the contiguous Highgate (Haringey) Conservation Area), Camden planning officers did not oppose this in the positive pre-application discussions.

- 7.13 Caen Cottage appears to have been built later than the Gate House, and is also present on the 1870 map. It is a plain gault brick structure with a gable rising directly from the frontage boundary wall, and a blue Welsh slated roof. The lean-tos which appear as extensions are visible on later maps and also on 1934 photographs (see Appendix MMK). Further extensions were permitted under the 2005/6 scheme and the footprint of these will be built out as a three car garage.
- 7.14 The Gate House and Caen Cottage together with the boundary wall are included in the Highgate (Camden) Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as buildings which contribute positively to the area. Breaching the boundary wall will not harm the conservation area: rather it will preserve and enhance it by reinstating an access which will enable appreciation of the original role of the Gate House, albeit in the vicinity of and differently detailed from its 1879 predecessor. In views along the Camden footway along Hampstead Lane and the more composite picture from the north side and Highgate School Playing Fields (within the Highgate (Haringey) Conservation Area, the immediate street picture will be preserved and enhanced, forming the foreground to the more distant prospect of Athlone House itself, rising above the proposed extensions, which are duly low key in design and subservient in scale.
- 7.15 I consider that in all matters relating to the significance of all heritage assets involved, both designated and undesignated, there will be no harmful impact and significance, both individually and collectively, will be enhanced by the proposals. The next section will present a full justification against policies cited in Appendix MMG.

8.0 ANALYSIS: POLICY JUSTIFICATION

8.1 In section 7 above I have set out the manner in which I consider the significance of Athlone House will be preserved and enhanced by the proposed development. Below I provide a comprehensive justification of the proposals against the prevailing policies: National Planning Policy Framework; Plan for London and Camden Local Plan Core Strategy and Development Management Policies, Highgate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Policies, and related supplementary planning guidance. Based upon the Inspector's findings in 2015 and specifically his assessment of the continued high level of significance of Athlone House, notwithstanding the depletion of its fabric externally and internally, I shall assess the added value in terms of enhanced significance brought by the development proposed by this application.

Conservation Area obligation

8.2 The initial requirement is that the relevant sections of the 1990 Act shall be met: s. 72(2): that '*Special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the [conservation] area*'. This is met by the proposals, and the gain in significance results in preservation *and* enhancement of the Highgate (Camden) Conservation Area, the relevant designated heritage asset as regards the location of Athlone House. Likewise the setting of the Highgate (Haringey) Conservation area will be preserved *and* enhanced.

Setting and Surroundings; Views

8.3 The importance of preserving the settings of listed buildings is addressed under s.66 of the 1990 Act. Although there is no intervisibility between the buildings, the setting of Kenwood House (grade I) includes the Stable Field, outwith its enclosed grounds, which is also part of the grade II* Kenwood Registered Historic Park/Garden. The effect of the proposal, with the restoration of the gables and chimneys of Athlone House will be entirely positive in views from the Stable Field. Another high status listed building is Witanhurst (grade II*), recently extended and restored, on the summit of the Highgate ridge to the south east of Athlone House above

the valley of Fitzroy Park; Athlone House falls within its setting and vice-versa. The restoration of the gables and chimneys will enhance this view and thereby the setting of Witanhurst.

- 8.4 Setting and views are interrelated, and are important considerations in para.137 of NPPF. The proposals preserve the elements that make a positive contribution to the settings cited and better reveal their significance, allied to the restoration not only of the characteristic features of Athlone House, but also through the restoration of its historic grounds meets para.137 and thereby merits favourable consideration. Given the location of the site on the heights above Hampstead Heath, the public realm requirements of The London Plan policies Chapter 7 'London's Living spaces and places' include 7.4 Local Character and 7.5 Public Realm, 7.6 Architecture and 7.8 Heritage, particularly 78D. In terms of the Camden LDF: Core Strategy and Development Policies, key policies for Architecture are CS14 the Natural Environment are involved – CS15 and DP31. Views are protected under the London Plan and the Mayor's London View Management Framework SPG. In Camden this involves the View of St Paul's Cathedral from Kenwood (the former Gazebo site in the Stable Field).
- 8.5 Under para. 14.23 of the narrative to CS 14 the Council undertook protection of locally important views, considering the impact of a scheme in terms of townscape, landscape and skyline, considering the view as a panoramic whole and not just the portion within a defined view corridor. Locally important views included views from open spaces such as Hampstead Heath and Kenwood including panoramic views and views into and from conservation areas. The area contains many high quality architect designed houses from the 19th and 20th centuries, many of importance to local heritage, and some listed for national significance. This is amplified by para. 15.2 under CS 15: Hampstead Heath is the largest open space in the borough and CS15a, which also includes protection of Metropolitan Open Land undertakes to preserve and enhance the historic open space, significance and nature conservation importance of Hampstead Heath and its surrounding area in terms of collaboration

with the City of London, involving protection of views and Metropolitan Open Land. It is evident that protection of views is a key aspect to be addressed. The restoration of Athlone House including its most characteristic and long lost roof and skyline features will be beneficial to all aspects of views and settings involved with this development proposal and clearly evident that the proposals add value to and from the surrounding viewpoints.

- 8.6 In terms of impact on setting and surroundings and all views, the proposed development of Athlone House will both enhance and be enhanced by the comprehensive restoration of its external fabric and of its historic gardens, locally listed by Camden Borough Council. The settings of any listed buildings which share intervisibility with Athlone House, or whose setting is affected will be preserved *and* enhanced. Athlone House has been acknowledged as an important landmark in views from several adjoining areas. I have concluded and demonstrated that the effect on the setting of and views from the grade II* Kenwood Registered Historic Park/ Garden, principally The Stable Field, will be wholly beneficial as will the setting of and views from Hampstead Heath, including views from the area adjoining Parliament Hill Fields. The policies summarised above in paras.8.4 and 8.5 are met.

Design and Heritage: Athlone House

- 8.7 The design and detailing of the present scheme has been based upon the sympathetic restoration of key missing features externally, such as Dutch gables, crenellations (particularly on the tower), chimney shafts, and the cupola. Incorporation and restoration of key internal features, notably the main stair, are also involved. Thus the significance of Athlone House will be preserved *and* enhanced an important undesignated local heritage asset in a holistic overall scheme.

Extensions

- 8.8 The proposed extensions are of high quality contextual modern design, occupying a part of the site originally built as the exuberant vaulted glasshouse and service wings. These are proportionate in area and scale,

and are within the 'original' built area as defined under the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act as the 'original building' area limit to be replaced. The concept of the extensions is low key and low profile to retain Athlone House as the dominant building when viewed from the north. The principal walling material is brick, in harmony with the robust brickwork of Athlone House and providing visual continuity and a transition to the unassertive modern design idiom of the extensions. The glazed window wall of the west elevation will be capable of retraction into the basement, which will also contain the plant for the pool and connect with the original basement of the house.

- 8.09 In terms of the broader conservation area impact the proposals will add value through the creative juxtaposition of old and new, and the acknowledged richness of the eclectic mix of building types, scales, periods and styles in the Camden Highgate Conservation Areas, particularly in respect of the important views from Highgate Junior School playing fields to the north.
- 8.10 Design relating to heritage matters and generally is an important theme running through the NPPF (and the related guidance under PPG) and both components of the local plan (including SPG's). Some of the latter are of pre-NPPF vintage, but will be relevant according to the degree to which they contribute towards the realisation of NPPF objectives.
- 8.11 Heritage matters are, and their relation to design, a recurrent theme in the NPPF. The three dimensions of sustainable development (NPPF para.7) include protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment under the environmental role as a component of sustainable development, for which there is a presumption in favour of approval (para.14 'at the heart' of the NPPF) for decision taking without delay where proposals accord with the development plan. The proposals so do (as I shall demonstrate below) and I consider that granting approval is fully justified.
- 8.12 Core planning principles (para.17) involve always seeking to secure high quality design and conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. Under 'Requiring good design (section 7) good design is

a key aspect of sustainable development and indivisible from good planning (para.56). Development should respond to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation (para.58) and it is recognised that it is proper for planning authorities to seek to reinforce local distinctiveness (para.60). Conserving and enhancing the historic environment is the theme of Section 12 of the NPPF, which includes the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (para.126) reiterated in para.131, and planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas or within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance (para.137).

8.13 In addition The London Plan policies Chapter 7 'London's Living spaces and places' include 7.4 Local Character and 7.5 Public Realm, 7.6 Architecture apply, with the strategic objective that architecture should make a positive contribution to a coherent public realm incorporating the highest quality materials and design appropriate to its context, and 7.8 Heritage, particularly 78D. In terms of the Camden LDF: Core Strategy and Development Policies, key policies for Architecture are CS14 the built environment General Design Principles, B3 Conservation areas, and Development policies DP24 and DP25.

8.14 I consider that the proposals, both in terms of the restoration of Athlone House itself and the form, scale, materials of the extension and its relationship with Athlone House meet all the policies itemised above. In design and heritage aspect the proposals overall represent sustainable development which brings a presumption in favour of approval.

Impact/ effect on heritage assets

8.15 The impact of new development on historic areas is a key matter dealt with in paras.131-138 of the NPPF. Para 131 deals with the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, recognising the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to

sustainable communities including their economic vitality. The above together with the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness are all met by the restoration of Athlone house and its appropriately designed extensions. Under para.132 when considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. There are two designated heritage assets to be considered: the Highgate (Camden) Conservation Area within which Athlone House is located and the setting of the contiguous Highgate (Haringey) Conservation Area. I consider that both designated heritage assets are manifestly preserved *and* enhanced by the gain in significance of Athlone House above the benchmark positive level identified by the Inspector in determining the 2015 appeal.

Demolition

- 8.16 As NPPF para.132 states significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset. As heritage assets are irreplaceable any harm should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial loss to or loss of a grade II listed building park or garden should be exceptional: substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance ... grade I or II* registered parks or gardens should be wholly exceptional. As Athlone House is an undesignated heritage asset para.135 also applies requiring the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application ... a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. Para.138 is also involved regarding loss of a building or other element which makes a positive contribution to a conservation area, being treated either as substantial harm under para.133 or less than substantial harm under para.134.
- 8.17 The application involves demolition of the small semicircular single storey extension to the drawing room of Athlone House on its south elevation, built before 1909, which is seen in views from the Kenwood grade II* registered park/garden. This might be regarded as an element which

makes a positive contribution to the Highgate (Camden) Conservation area, although it represents a miniscule proportion of the fabric of Athlone House. Its loss was sanctioned under the 2005/6 planning consent. I consider that having regard to a balanced judgment taking into account the relative significance of the element and its contribution to the conservation area as a whole, the positive gain in the proposed restoration of Athlone House is of a magnitude that renders the loss of this element of it marginal. If any harm is perceived it is clearly less than substantial and entirely justified under para.134 by the public benefits of the proposal including attaining its optimum viable use. The advice in PPG para.18a-017 is germane, 'How to assess if there is substantial harm?' as a value judgement which recognises that it is the degree of harm to the asset's significance, rather than the extent of development that is relevant. It is a 'high test' which may not arise in many cases and may not occur at all. I have included this section as I consider that if this point is raised it is prudent to provide the justification.

- 8.18 The remainder of demolition involved externally is incidental to the repair and reinstatement of missing features such as the gables, or preparatory to the erection of the 'transitional link' between the northern gable of the west elevation and the pool hall. The replacement of severely deteriorated ground floor windows will entail alteration on their replacements in respect of their alteration by lengthening to full height, which I consider to be fully acceptable and will be absorbed into the overall eclectic character of the house (see also para. 7.7 above).

Local Plan Policies

- 8.19 The design of the proposals and their conservation area impact meet the local plan policies, particularly London Plan Policy 7.8C in identifying, valuing, conserving, restoring, re-using and incorporating Athlone House into the proposed development and 78D in conserving the significance of the heritage assets and their settings by development sympathetic to their form, materials and architectural detail. In respect of the Camden Core Strategy CS 14 Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage the proposals meet the requirements of (a) by providing development of

the highest standard of design that respects local context and character; (b) preserving and enhancing one of Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and its setting, also the Highgate (Camden) Conservation Area within which Athlone House is located; and the Kenwood grade II* registered historic park and garden; (c) promoting and incorporating high quality landscaping; and (e) protecting important views of St Paul's Cathedral from the Stable Field, and also protecting important local views. The objective of excellence in design in the narrative of paras.14.3-14.8 is met.

8.20 Under CS 15 (a) the protection of open spaces including Metropolitan open land by complying with the 'original' area standard of Athlone House/ Caen Wood Towers as it existed in 1948 and preserving and enhancing the historic open space of Hampstead Heath and its surrounding area, particularly in views towards Athlone House from the Heath, including the donated land of Athlone House Garden to the immediate south of the retained garden.

8.21 With regard to the Camden Development Policies the proposals meet all relevant parameters of DP 24 Securing high quality design by achieving design of the highest quality, especially in respect of (a) consideration of character, context and setting and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings; (b) the character and proportions of Athlone House in relation to the design, form, scale and materials of the proposed extension, which also achieves (c).The restoration of the gardens achieves (f) appropriate consideration of existing natural features including topography and trees, and (g) provision of appropriate hard sans soft landscaping including boundary treatments. The parameters under para.24.7 have all been carefully considered in respect of the design of the extensions, and the impact of the restoration of Athlone House in respect of its contribution to the public realm and views and vistas. The Camden Design SPG is met in full.

8.22 Policy DP 25 assists implementation of Core Strategy CS 14 by containing comprehensive coverage of protection for the Borough's diverse range of heritage assets. The policies are relevant insofar as they are consistent

with the NPPF. Under DP 25- Conserving Camden's Heritage the Council will (a) take account of conservation area statements and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas – the applicants recognise this although the Highgate CAAMP of 2007 is long outdated in respect of the policies current at the time of publication and now superseded (b) will only permit development within conservation areas that preserves or enhances the character or appearance – this has been at the forefront of concern to the applicant and I have above stated that I consider that the proposed development will manifestly both preserve *and* enhance the Highgate (Camden) Conservation Area; (e) preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of a conservation area and which provides a setting for Camden's architectural heritage – this the proposed restoration of the retained Athlone House gardens manifestly achieves.

8.23 Restoration of the Gate House, Caen Cottage and a new vehicular access from Highgate Lane (discussed in greater detail in paras. 7.12 and 7.14 above) are also included in the proposed development, complemented by the long awaited comprehensive and sensitively designed restoration of the gardens of Athlone House. These works are in compliance with all the planning policies I have cited above.

8.24 I have concluded that in all material respects the proposed development would have a strong positive effect on all matters related to heritage protection, of buildings, historic areas and all heritage assets, designated or undesignated, built or natural environment, in terms of all relevant policies, meriting the granting of planning permission.

9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 In the foregoing Report I have set out my academic and professional qualifications and experience involved with conservation of the historic built environment in both public and private sectors. My involvement with Athlone House has covered the past nine years, with many building inspections, two sets of applications and two public inquiries over applications to replace Athlone House with a new neo-classical building.
- 9.2 Following dismissal of the 2015 appeal, and sale of Athlone House, I was approached by the architects appointed by the new owner, now applicant, to join the team preparing the present scheme for restoration and extension of Athlone House as a single unit residential property, allied to restoration of its historic gardens, and restoration of the Gate House and Caen Cottage as ancillary service buildings, together with a new vehicular access from Hampstead Lane. Early on, in March 2016, I revisited Athlone House to analyse the significance of the surviving fabric and decorative features and finishes to inform the ongoing preparation of plans (see Section 4.0 above).
- 9.3 Throughout the preparation of the application I have liaised through the architects SHH, who have been team leaders, with the multidisciplinary team of specialist professionals, covering all aspects of the project. I have attended team progress meetings, a pre-application session with Camden Council, and a meeting with the Athlone House Working Group, who have been one of the prime advocates for retention of the Athlone House over the years since its closure as an NHS facility. Both those meetings resulted in a positive reaction to the developing proposals and provided a steer towards the finalisation of the plans.
- 9.4 In my analysis of the Inspector's Report I took his assessment of the retained positive significance of Athlone House, both as an undesignated local heritage asset , and in its contribution to the character and appearance and significance of the Highgate (Camden) Conservation Area (and to the settings of nearby listed buildings), the designated heritage asset of national importance within which Athlone House is located, the

setting of the Highgate (Haringey) Conservation Area, the setting of the Kenwood Registered Historic Park/Garden and to Hampstead Heath generally. The obligation of the present plans is that they are required to preserve or enhance the character or appearance and thus uphold the significance of the heritage assets itemised above.

- 9.5 In section 8 above I have provided a comprehensive justification of the proposals against the prevailing policies: National Planning Policy Framework; Plan for London and Camden Local Plan Core Strategy and Development Management Policies, Highgate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Policies, and related supplementary planning guidance. Based upon the Inspector's findings in 2015 and specifically his assessment of the continued high level of significance of Athlone House, notwithstanding the depletion of its fabric externally and internally, I have assessed the added value in terms of enhanced significance brought by the development proposed by this application.
- 9.6 The design and detailing of the present scheme has been based upon the restoration of key missing features externally, such as Dutch gables and chimney shafts, and incorporation and restoration of key internal features, notably the main stair. Thus the significance of Athlone House will be preserved *and* enhanced an important undesignated local heritage asset.
- 9.7 In terms of its impact on its setting and surroundings, it will both enhance and be enhanced by the comprehensive restoration of its historic gardens, locally listed by Camden Borough Council. The Camden Highgate Conservation area will be preserved *and* enhanced, as will the setting of the contiguous Haringey Highgate Conservation Area, from which Athlone House is visible. The settings of any listed buildings which share intervisibility with Athlone House will also be preserved *and* enhanced.
- 9.8 The proposals involve some demolition. Most of this is incidental to the repair and reinstatement of missing features such as the gables, or preparatory to the erection of the 'transitional link' between the northern gable of the west elevation and the pool hall. However it is proposed to demolish the semicircular single storey projection on the south elevation.

The style and materials of this pre-1909 addition are described above. It is a very small building in relation to Athlone House as a whole and its removal will enable reinstatement of the original garden door. This is near the southwest corner of the building, which is visible from Hampstead Heath within and outside the Stable Field. In the event of this being considered harmful, I consider that the proportionate approach I have followed in my assessment above in section 8, will affirm that only a marginal amount of harm would ensue, massively outbalanced by the accrued added value and enhanced significance of the overall effect of the proposed development as a whole.

- 9.9 The proposed extensions are of high quality contextual modern design, occupying a part of the site originally built as exuberant vaulted glasshouses and service wings. These are proportionate in area and scale, and are within the 'original' built area as defined under the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, and retain Athlone House as the dominant building when viewed from the north. In terms of the broader conservation area impact the proposals will add value through the creative juxtaposition of old and new, and the acknowledged richness of the eclectic mix of building types, scales, periods and styles in the Camden Highgate Conservation Areas, particularly in respect of the important views from Highgate Junior School playing fields to the north.
- 9.10 Athlone House has been acknowledged as an important landmark in views from several adjoining areas. I consider that the effect on the setting of and views from the Kenwood Registered Historic Park/ Garden, principally The Stable Field, will be wholly beneficial as will the setting of and views from Hampstead Heath, including views from the area adjoining Parliament Hill Fields.
- 9.11 In all material respects I have concluded that the proposed development would have a strong positive effect on all matters related to heritage protection, of buildings, historic areas and all heritage assets, designated or undesignated, built or natural environment, meriting grant of planning permission.

Dr Mervyn Miller

16 June 2016