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Mr Charles Thuaire  
London Borough of Camden  
Development Control Planning Services  
Camden Town Hall  
Argyle Street  
LONDON  
WC1H 8ND

[REDACTED]  
Our ref: L00489926

11 December 2015

Dear Mr Thuaire

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015 & T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015  
Application for Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission**

**HEATH HOUSE, NORTH END WAY, LONDON NW3 7ET  
Application Nos. 2015/6447/L (Listed Building Consent)  
2015/6280/P (Planning Permission)**

Thank you for your letter of 8 December 2015 notifying Historic England of the scheme relating to the above site.

**Summary**

These proposals are for the conversion of Grade II\* listed Heath House from a single dwelling to six residential units including various extensions and a new underground parking facility. The building has suffered from prolonged water penetration in recent years which has had a led to rapid deterioration of its interior. Consequently the building was added to Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register last year. We are therefore supportive of the proposed repair and refurbishment in principle. We note that opportunities are being taken to reveal the significance of the listed building and enhance the character of the Conservation Area and this is welcomed. However, we do have various concerns about the proposals which your Council should consider in determining the applications.

**Significance**

Heath House is an early 18<sup>th</sup> century double-fronted detached house, with later extensions. The upper levels were rebuilt following WWII bomb damage, and as such the building retains relatively little of its original layout and architectural features. However, some early 18<sup>th</sup> century fabric survives at ground floor level such as the main staircase to first floor, and the general proportions of the west-facing ground floor principal rooms and their associated chimney breasts remain legible.

Externally, the original house is clearly defined and makes a strong architectural statement in its Palladian form complete with its original central portico. The house



1 WATERHOUSE SQUARE 138-142 HOLBORN LONDON EC1N 2ST  
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is prominently sited on the western edge of Hampstead Heath, and is representative of the grand houses that emerged in the area from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The house has historical associations with a number of notable individuals and is the subject of a 1750s painting by T Ramsey. We therefore consider the exterior of the building to be highly significant in terms of its aesthetic as well as historic value, despite the more modest appraisal submitted with the application. Heath House is also an important listed building within Hampstead Conservation Area, and although its prominent siting has been somewhat compromised by its unmanaged grounds and the nearby busy roads, there remains a strong visual link with Whitestone Pond to the south.

#### Impact of the Proposed Development

Historic England (formerly English Heritage) has been involved in discussions regarding proposals for Heath House for a number of years and provided authorisation for the consented 2008 scheme which sought to retain the building as a single dwelling. The current scheme proposes to retain much of the approved interventions such as the new west side wing, basement extension and conservatory. The main change to the consented plans is the proposed subdivision of the property into six self-contained residential apartments. It is also proposed to create a large basement extension below the forecourt to accommodate four parking spaces and cycle storage.

#### Historic England's Position

Heath House is currently in poor condition and is included on our Heritage at Risk Register as previously mentioned. It is unfortunate that the building has been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent. Nonetheless, in the interest of securing the long-term future of this 'at-risk' building, we are supportive of the proposed repair and refurbishment in principle. Whilst our preference would be to see Heath House retained as a single dwelling, we feel that, given the extensive internal alterations and various extensions to the original building, the proposed subdivision can be accommodated without having a major impact on the significance of the listed building. It is also encouraging to see that the main entrance and principle circulation spaces, including the original staircase, will remain in communal use. Nonetheless, your Council must be satisfied that sufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the retention of Heath House as a single dwelling is economically unworkable.

Regarding the internal changes, we note that a ground to first-floor lift is proposed in place of an existing cupboard next to the original chimney breasts between the west-facing principal rooms. The demolition drawings indicate that no historic fabric would be removed to accommodate the lift. However, part of the floor between ground and first floor would need to be removed, and there would be a slight projection into both rooms for the lift shaft which would have a moderate impact on the room proportions and fireplaces. As these ground floor rooms are some of the most significant internal



1 WATERHOUSE SQUARE 138-142 HOLBORN LONDON EC1N 2ST



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spaces at Heath House, we would recommend that options are explored to accommodate the lift elsewhere, or a more slender system is sought which would involve no alterations to the room proportions.

Historic England was encouraged at our last site visit in September by both the scholarly research that has been undertaken into building morphology, and the conservation-led approach to the proposed refurbishment. As set out in the supporting information the aim of this research is to “inform the design process for the repairs, extension and alterations” (p4, Appraisal of Significance, Stephen Levrant, October 2007 – as revised). However, the submission does not appear to include details of the proposed internal finishes, such as the new joinery and plasterwork. It is particularly important that this is provided in the most significant parts of the interior, in order to secure these important heritage gains. We therefore recommend that these details are provided by condition, potentially in the form of a room schedule which should set out details of the finishes.

Externally, the proposed reinstating of a tripartite window to the rear elevation, the reintroduction of lightwells at the front of the building, and replacement of the existing dormer sash windows with casements have been informed by the scholarly research and we feel that this is an improvement on the consented scheme. This, in combination with the proposed removal of the modern grilles to the windows and the relandscaping to the forecourt area should significantly enhance the appearance of the listed building and improve its prominence in views from Whitestone Pond. We note that no detailed landscaping plan has been included and this must be provided either prior to determination or by condition. These improvements should also enhance the character of Hampstead Conservation Area which helps satisfy Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Paragraph 137 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The most significant change to the consented scheme is the proposed basement car park below the forecourt area. Access will be provided behind the west wing extension and therefore no vehicle movement or parking will be visible in front of the building. Whilst this is positive, the extent of excavating is significant and this work must be supported by a structural report by an engineer accredited in the conservation of historic buildings to ensure that the work would have no implications on the listed building. Furthermore, Heath House must be carefully monitored during all construction work to further mitigate any potential for structural movement. Again, these details could be provided by condition should your Council be minded to approve the scheme.

Finally, we noticed during our site visit in September that dry rot is still active at basement level, and this must be treated at the earliest opportunity to prevent any further spreading of the spores.



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**Recommendation**

**We would urge your Council to consider the advice set out in this letter, and determine the applications in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice.**

We have therefore drafted the necessary letter of authorisation (draft attached) for your Council to determine the listed building consent application as you see fit and referred the case to National Planning Casework Unit. Subject to the Secretary of State not directing reference of the application to him, they will return the letter of authorisation to you. If your authority is minded to grant listed building consent, you will then be able to issue a formal decision. Please send us a copy of your Council's decision notice in due course.

Please note that this response relates to historic building matters only. If there are any archaeological implications to the proposals it is recommended that you contact the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service for further advice [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

**Alasdair Young**  
Assistant Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

Enc: Draft letter of authorisation



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