
THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY
The champion for Victorian and Edwardian architecture

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Planning Services
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Our reference: 2016/08/020

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Dear Mr Thuaire

RE: Athlone House (1870-72, *Salomons & Jones*); restoration and extension for use as a 6 bedroom dwelling house

Thank you for consulting the Victorian Society on this application, which was discussed by our Southern Buildings Committee at its most recent meeting. We write in strong support of the reuse and restoration of Athlone House as a single dwelling, a welcome improvement on previous schemes which sought not to retain it.

Athlone House is a key building in Highgate Conservation Area, important as a large and ambitious house set in spacious grounds – one of only a handful in London's inner suburbs. That it almost met the very strict criteria for listing is indicative of its significance and the aspirations of this scheme are befitting of the building's quality. Reinstating crucial features of the skyline is a highly commendable step and will certainly enhance the positive contribution Athlone House makes to the Conservation Area.

Some elements of the scheme will cause a limited level of harm to the building and Conservation Area, though we concur with Historic England that this will be less than substantial. Nevertheless, there is a great opportunity to create an even more commendable scheme in conservation terms that would result in something that is more architecturally coherent and satisfying.

The large extension, and its concept as a 'walled garden', is a clever solution that would not detract from the prowess of the house. The transition between the two is an area that we believe could be finessed however. There ought to be a clearer cut division between old and new and the committee considered that the proposed transitional block, being a rather plain and heavy, does not achieve this. Something livelier and more lightweight would be more appropriate, which brings us onto the curious Edwardian protrusion of the drawing room. The loss of this structure would be regrettable – it is an unusual one off, and is of historic and architectural interest in its own right and as part of the history of the house. It would not be a great challenge to find some use for it, if only the attractive copper roof, elsewhere at Athlone House, if it is to be removed from its present location. It could even form part of a transitional

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block to the new extension with some imagination; after all it was with this type structure that Edwardians playfully linked old with new. This has the potential to remedy the two most harmful elements of the scheme, increasing the overall benefit to the Conservation Area and to ones appreciation of this historically important building.

We make these suggestions in a constructive spirit and applaud the applicant's ambition for this property.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Bowring
Conservation Advisor

Remit: The Victorian Society is the charity concerned with the protection, appreciation and study of architecture between 1837 and 1914. As a National Amenity Society, we are a statutory consultee on all applications for Listed Building Consent which involve an element of demolition, as stipulated by the Secretary of State's *Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015*. The Society also comments on applications which concern the setting of listed buildings and those that affect conservation areas.