

36 Lancaster Grove NW3

Heritage Assessment Regeneration of flats 12,13,14,15,16,17 and 18

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September 2016

1 Scope

- 1.1 This Assessment has been produced to consider the impact on the significance of the former LCC fire station at 36 Lancaster Grove, London NW3 arising from the regeneration of the existing flats.
- 1.2 It is based on examination of the building and archive material in the local history study centre and the London Metropolitan archive, together with the Survey of London and relevant planning guidance which includes the Conservation Area Appraisal.
- 1.3 The study has been produced by Anthony Walker, a Conservation Architect Accredited in Building Conservation and with a postgraduate Diploma in Building Conservation. He has been a Visiting Professor at Kingston University and he lectures on Building Conservation matters at the Architectural Association and at Cambridge University.

2 Site location and setting

- 2.1 The site forms a triangular shape at the intersection of Lancaster Grove and Eton Avenue. The whole area was part of the Eton College estate which was sold for residential development towards the end of the 19th century.
- 2.2 It lies within the Belsize Conservation Area, subsection 3 Eton Avenue.
- 2.3 In addition to the impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, consideration has to be given to any impact on the setting of designated Heritage Assets of which there are a number along the length of Eton Avenue.

3 Historical background and significance

- 3.1 Belsize Fire Station is a grade II listed building, built in 1914-15 under the direction of Charles Canning Winmill of the LCC Architects' Department where he had been since 1892. He started work in the housing section but, following a significant fire in 1897, he was appointed to design and supervise the erection of a new fire station in Red Cross Street. In December 1899 the fire brigade section of the department was reorganised under Owen Fleming, with Winmill as second in command. The fire brigade section was given responsibility for doubling the number of London fire stations with the aim to establish six new stations every year
- 3.2 Belsize Fire Station was quite late in the fire station programme. One of the architects, John Summerson, wrote that the long, two-storey building facing south had something of the character of a Kentish farmhouse and that the subtle combination of brick, stone and iron, the neat junction of the roofs and the finish of the eaves was clearly the work of a man who, like Philip Webb, knew and understood the vernacular architecture of southern England and found it a sound starting point from which to approach the problems of the present day.
- 3.3 As noted by Summerson, the building combines the traditional detailing of a larger domestic building with a robust and functional interior. Winmill had a great interest in vernacular buildings, having undertaken a close study of their detailing.
- 3.4 The site lies within the Belsize Conservation Area: sub-area 3 Eton Avenue, which is described in the Conservation Area Statement.
APPENDIX A Photographs of building from Eton Avenue

- 3.5 The eastern wing provides two levels of residential accommodation including flats 12,13,14,15,16,17 with simple internal detailing in contrast, to some extent, with the careful brickwork detailing of the southern façade.
APPENDIX C Photograph of eastern wing.
- 3.6 The Arts and Crafts domestic informality of the designated heritage asset makes it open to careful and sensitive adaptation. The internal simple and often robust finishes provide an interesting contrast to the delicacy of some of the external detailing and are strong enough to be retained. The brickwork is in an English bond with significant areas of decorative bonding.
- 3.7 The London Metropolitan Archive has plans of the original building from 1913 and some with later alterations
APPENDIX D Ground and first floor plans 1913
- 3.8 Eastern Wing
- 3.8.1 The residential wing has a basement, a raised ground floor with a balcony accessed from steps up from the western end, and the first floor above it, again with a balcony access but this time from the central staircase. There is further residential accommodation at first floor level in the main block which is considered in 13.12
APPENDIX E North elevation of eastern wing and section through main building.
- 3.8.2 Ground floor. This provides three flats, originally designed as one single-bedroom and two two-bedroom units, each with a scullery and a bathroom. See 1913 plans referred to in 3.8 above. This was modified in the 1920s, linking two of the units to provide a three- bedroom flat with a larger entrance hall. This contains flats 12,13 and 14.
APPENDIX F Alterations in 1920s
- 3.8.3 The finishes and joinery are simple plaster work with soft wood skirtings and in some places picture rails. Some fire places have been retained and others are boxed in. Where they are retained they generally have an attractive tiled facing under a timber mantle piece.
APPENDIX C
- 3.8.4 First floor. This provided three two-bedroom flats numbers 15,16,and 17. The balcony access was originally completely open but later a translucent roof was installed. Various minor alterations were carried out.
- 3.8.5 The finishes and joinery are simple plaster work with soft wood skirtings and in some places picture rails. Some fire places have been retained and others are boxed in. Where they are retained they generally have an attractive tiled facing under a timber mantle piece.
- 3.9 Main Wing First floor
- 3.9.3 On the south side were two two-bedroom flats, one with access from the courtyard (converted later to an office), and one with direct access from the staircase. The western most flat has an inappropriate fire place inserted which it would be beneficial to remove.

- 3.9.4 The finishes and joinery are simple plaster work with soft wood skirtings and in some places picture rails. Some fire places have been retained and others are boxed in.
- 3.9.5 It is proposed these two flats are combined to form a single flat number 18.
- 3.10 Setting
- 3.10.1 The building is, as noted above, set within a triangle of land at the junction of Lancaster Grove and Eton Avenue. The land on the Lancaster Grove side of the site is largely devoted to hard-surfaced yards with cobbled paviers, described in the Conservation Area Statement section Streetscape as large stone setts to crossover and forecourt which appears to be in contradiction of the paving which exists today. The area directly in front of the appliance room is open to the street to facilitate a fast response to an emergency. To the east along Lancaster Grove the frontage is enclosed by a brick wall with an entrance gate leading to the corner where it changes to a hedge running along the Eton Avenue frontage.
- 3.10.2 The area between the hedge and building which runs along Eton Avenue is used as a garden, echoing those of the houses along the road. Due to the changes in level there is a small retaining wall, leaving a hard-paved area immediately along the whole of the frontage of the building at about 450mm below the garden level. The garden is well planted and, as a result, the building benefits from good plant screening.
- 3.11 Significance
- 3.11.1 The building is listed grade II* and is described as follows:
GV II Fire station 1912-5, by Charles Canning Windmill of the Fire Brigade Branch of the London County Council Architects Department.*
- MATERIALS: Brick with tile roof and tall brick chimney-stacks. Stone-clad appliance bay frontage and raised basement of the accommodation range. Tile-hung dormer windows, tile lintels and brick relieving arches to other windows. Decorative metalwork castellated hoppers and cresting along the gutters of the roof terrace and appliance bays.*
- PLAN: L-shaped with accommodation range to Eton Avenue and appliance room facing Lancaster Grove, large brick tower at the hinge for drills and hose-drying.*
- EXTERIOR: A clever interpretation of an Arts and Crafts-style house, adapted to meet the requirements of the fire brigade. The elevation to Eton Avenue could be mistaken for a terrace of cottages with its tall chimneys, casements with leaded lights, canted timber bays sitting just under the deep eaves, and ground-floor bay with moulded brick mullions and transoms. Its rear, facing the yard, is a more typical LCC design with deck-accessed fireman's flats. The elevation to Lancaster Grove accommodates the three appliance bays, the most functional element of a fire station, in a similarly rustic design with a steeply pitched roof that flares at the low-hanging eaves and tall hipped dormer windows. Also impressive is the monumental tower, which does not disrupt the domestic character despite its height and breadth; the segmental arched and lattice work recessed panels in the brickwork soften its bulk.*
- INTERIOR: The appliance room retains its original watch-room and cream glazed brick wall. Stairwell also has cream glazed bricks; stair with metal balustrade and sliding-pole chamber and doors survives intact; watch tower retains its iron spiral stair and hose-drying chamber. The first-floor single men's dormitory, now the gym, has an open truss roof and a second pole house which leads directly to the appliance room. Next to this room, the former single men's mess room, now the kitchen, has an original fireplace in russet glazed brick with overmantle*

inlaid with Delft-style tiles. The ground floor recreation room has the original panelling and fireplace. There are also numerous original fireplaces and timber doors in the accommodation sections of the station. Even to the detail of numbered pegs in the gear room, the survival of original features is notable.

HISTORY: Belsize Fire Station was constructed in 1912-5, at the end of the most creative period of design in the Fire Brigade Branch of the London County Council Architects' Department, during which the Brigade's most characterful buildings were built. Since 1896, new stations were designed by a group of architects led by Owen Fleming and Charles Canning Winmill, both formerly of the LCC Housing Department. They brought the avant-garde approach which had evolved for new social housing to the Fire Brigade Division, as the department was called from 1899. While some stations were built to standardised plans, others were highly experimental, sensitive to local context, and designed to a bespoke plan. The exemplars from the earliest years are Perry Vale, Euston, East Greenwich and West Hampstead. This is one of the last designs produced by the Department before the outbreak of WWI, yet (no doubt due to Windmill's authorship) it is more characteristic of the earlier stations in its distinctive architecture, attention to detail, and sensitivity to its setting. The station occupies a prominent site, on the apex of two roads lined with high-quality Edwardian houses and the sensitivity of the design to this context is marked. The generous plot size accommodates the fireman's flats in a separate two storey range and the view from the junction is strikingly picturesque. The area had formerly been served by stations at St John's Wood (built 1870), Hampstead village (built 1874) and West Hampstead (built 1901); this station replaced that at St Johns Wood. The foundation stone for Belsize Fire Station records that the station was opened on the 22 May 1915 by Percy C Simmons, Chairman of the Fire Brigade Committee of the LCC.

SOURCES: Andrew Saint, London's Architecture and the London Fire Brigade, 1866-1938(Heinz Gallery RIBA, Exhibition Catalogue, 1981) Will Reading, L.C.C. Fire Stations, 1896-1916, their History, Condition and Future Use (Architectural Association, Graduate School, 2007) John B Nadal, London's Fire Stations (Huddersfield, 2006) Hampstead: Public Services, A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 9: Hampstead, Paddington (1989,138-145 Historic photographs held by the London Fire Brigade Museum.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION: Belsize Fire Station is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * It is one of the most distinctive and original of a remarkable series of fire stations built by the LCC between 1896-1914, each executed to a bespoke design, which are widely admired as being among the most accomplished examples of LCC civic architecture of this rich and prolific period; * High architectural quality - as manifest in design, detail, materials and sensitivity to context; * It is also one of the most intact, having not been extended externally, and retaining its original timber appliance bay doors, plan form and numerous other features; * In the wider context of Edwardian architecture, this station is an exemplar of the use of a domestic idiom, the Arts and Crafts style, in a municipal building; * The building groups well with its neighbours in this area noted for its concentration of distinctive Arts and Crafts houses, including the many listed houses on Eton Avenue.*

3.11.2 The background to the development of fire stations is set out in *London's Historic Fire Stations*, produced by English Heritage and the London Fire Brigade in 2010. The 1866 Act of Parliament gave rise to the first publicly funded fire brigades, of which the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, led by Captain Eyre Massey

Shaw, was the first. He drove an intense programme of building which continued into the 1880s. The LCC replaced the Metropolitan Board of Works with responsibility for building and adapting fire stations in 1889 and there was a lull in new building until the turn of the century. The mechanisation of all appliances provided another spur to development, with the first station to have only mechanised appliances being the Wapping station in Red Lion Street in 1905. The First World War brought a halt to the boom although stations already in progress continued.

- 3.11.3 The form of historic fire stations varies considerably. The change from horse-drawn to mechanised appliances clearly had a significant impact on layout, as did the introduction of slippery poles in 1904. Residential accommodation was often provided, sometimes as separate cottages. Mess rooms, often with a good quality fire place and panelling, were provided as well as a separate billiards room.
- 3.11.4 Architectural style varied and often reflected current fashion. After 1900 a significant change in design came about with an emphasis on British Design and Civic pride. It is stated in *London's historic fire stations* that '*The development of architectural detailing ranging from Classical and Queen Anne through to Arts and Crafts can be seen producing stations that resemble suburban mansions*'. *The crucial emphasis seems to be designing for the location – hence Cannon Street station of 1906 had a façade like a city bank while Belsize of 1916 emulates the artists' studios of its neighbourhood.*
- 3.11.5 While Belsize clearly incorporates many of the then current innovations, most of these were not in fact new. Mechanised appliances had been in use for ten years or more as had slippery poles. To understanding the building it is important to realise that there was a clear aspiration that it be appropriate to the location and this is reflected in the materials and details, many of which reflect those of the residential area in which it is set.
- 3.11.6 Change has been a natural consequence of the use of the building. The partitions for the single men's dormitory have gone, the watch room has changed its wall overlooking the appliance room, the original sets and ironstone floors have given way to light, non-slip tiles and the coal stores in the basement have been converted to general storage.

4 Relevant National and Local Conservation Legislation and Guidance

- 4.1 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990
 - 4.1.1 Section 7 requires consent to be obtained for any works which affect the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building.
 - 4.1.2 Conservation areas are to be designated as areas of special architectural or historic interest and special attention shall be paid to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.
- 4.2 National Planning Policy Framework NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance PPG
 - 4.2.1 Paragraph 14. *At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.*
 - 4.2.2 Section 12 deals with conservation and the following extracts are relevant to the proposals.

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

134. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

4.3 London Plan

POLICY 7.8 HERITAGE ASSETS AND ARCHAEOLOGY

A *London's heritage assets and historic environment, including listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and other natural and historic landscapes, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields, scheduled monuments, archaeological remains and memorials should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be taken into account.*

D *Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.*

4.4 Camden Local Plan

4.4.1 In Core Policy CS14, Conserving Heritage, it is stated that the Council will ensure that Camden's buildings are 'attractive, safe and easy to use by (b) preserving and enhancing Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings'. This is amplified in paragraph 14.9, confirming that conservation area statements will be material considerations in assessing applications.

4.4.2 Camden Planning Guidance 1, Design

Section 3 Heritage. Camden has a rich architectural heritage; development within conservation areas will only be permitted if it preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area.

Section 4, Extensions, alterations and conservatories. Alterations should take into account the character and design of the property and its surroundings, that windows, doors and materials should complement the existing.....

4.4.3 Policy DP25 - Conserving Camden's heritage

Conservation areas

In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will:

- a) take into account the conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;*
- b) only permit development, within conservation areas, which preserves and enhances the character and appearance of that area;*

.....and

- e) preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of the conservation area and which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.*

Listed buildings

To preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will:

- e) prevent the total or substantial demolition of a listed building unless exceptional circumstances are shown which outweigh the case for retention;*

- f) *only grant consent for a change of use of, or alterations and extensions to, a listed building where it considers that this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building;*
- and
- g) *not permit development which it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building.*

4.5 Belsize Conservation Area

4.5.1 36 Lancaster Grove lies within sub area 3 of the Conservation Area.

4.5.2 This sub area is described as having predominantly Victorian housing with some Edwardian examples, predominantly of two storeys with an attic level. The area is notable for its variety of styles but with a general consistency of materials with red brick walls and roof tiles. Eton Avenue is described as having large detached villas, predominantly in Queen Anne style, but with many Arts and Crafts examples. Recurrent themes include canted bays.

4.5.3 The fire station is noted as an impressive Arts and Crafts building, with steep hipped roofs and intricate brick detailing, which forms a landmark.

4.6 England, 'Making Changes to Heritage Assets'

4.6.1 This document which has evolved from the Planning Policy Statement 5 Practice Guide was published in February 2016.

4.6.2 Paragraph 2 of the introduction recognises the need to accommodate change. *This advice promotes positive, well-informed and collaborative conservation, the aim of which is to recognise and reinforce the historic significance of places, while accommodating the changes necessary to ensure that people can continue to use and enjoy them.*

4.6.3 In paragraph 3 it is stated that *An unreasonable inflexible approach will prevent action that could give a building new life;*

5 Proposals

5.1 The proposals are set out in the architects' Design and Access Statement.

5.2 For the purpose of this Heritage Assessment they may be summarised as the refurbishment and alteration of existing flats.

5.3 On the ground floor and first floor of the east wing there is a two bedroom flat to each bay of the existing structure. This will retain much of the layout of the existing flats in that the bedrooms face north and south. It is proposed to make some alterations in layout to produce improved bathrooms and kitchens to modern standards. This type of alteration is recognised in Historic England Guidance paragraph 52 where it is noted that although upgrading kitchens and bathrooms may not need consent the impact of services needs careful consideration.

5.4 The finishes will retain the simple range which is typical of the buildings at present. Fire places will be retained and the inappropriate fire place on the first floor of the main block which will form flat 18 will be replaced.

5.5 Flat 18 will be formed by an amalgamation of what were originally two flats but became partly administration accommodation for a while. The main entrance will be directly off the main staircase and the other original entrance door will be

retained to provide access to the first floor courtyard. Again there will be modifications to improve both the kitchen which was originally located overlooking the courtyard and combined a scullery with sink and a bath.

6 Assessment of the impact of the proposals on the significance of the Designated Heritage Asset and the Belsize Conservation Area

- 6.1 The external form of the building is unchanged. Thus there is no impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area nor on the external architectural or historical interest of the building.
- 6.2 Although there are some alterations the interior spaces will retain the scale of the original building and the simplicity of the detailing. The alterations focus on bringing bathrooms and kitchens up to date as suggested in *Making Changes to Heritage Assets* paragraph 52.
- 6.3 The need to make these changes arises from the change of use for the fire station. The proposed changes do not change the character of the spaces and retain the scale of the historic forms, finishes and detailing.

7 Summary

- 7.1 In *Making Changes to Historic Assets* it is made clear that change is part of the life blood of retaining and sustaining a heritage asset. As stated in paragraph 4.6.2 above such changes should *promote positive, well-informed and collaborative conservation, the aim of which is to recognise and reinforce the historic significance of places, while accommodating the changes necessary to ensure that people can continue to use and enjoy them.*
- 7.2 In paragraph 3 of *Making Changes to Historic Assets* it is stated that *An unreasonable inflexible approach will prevent action that could give a building new life;*
- 7.3 The change of use of the Fire Station has already been established. A rigorous examination of the historic and architectural interest of the building has informed the design process. This process has taken account of the changes needed to meet the social, economic and environmental needs of the owners today. It has followed the guidance in Historic England's *Making Changes to Historic Assets*.
- 7.4 The proposals have been careful to maintain the scale and nature of the internal spaces and the finishes and detailing so that the special historic and architectural interest is retained.
- 7.5 The proposals for the existing flats have retained the exterior of the building unchanged thereby retaining the architectural and historic interest of the designated heritage asset and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Anthony Walker September 2015

**APPENDICES
APPENDIX A**

Photograph of building showing tree screening in Eton Road with 'cottage' appearance to the main building which here is mainly residential use.



APPENDIX B

Fire places as existing
Modern fire place in first floor office to be removed



APPENDIX C
Eastern wing as existing



APPENDIX D
 1913 Ground and first floor plans
 By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London



APPENDIX E

1913 North elevation of eastern wing and section through main building.
By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London



APPENDIX F

1920s Alterations to flats in eastern wing.
By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London

