

30 Leighton Road
London NW5 2QE

Heritage Statement



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Consultancy for the
Historic Built Environment

KMHHeritage

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to support the application for planning permission and listed building consent for 30 Leighton Road, NW5 2QE.

Purpose

- 1.2 The purpose of the report is to set out the history and heritage significance of 30 Leighton Road, and to comment on the emerging proposals.
- 1.3 This report should be read in conjunction with the documentation prepared by Mackereth Architects.

Organisation

- 1.4 This introduction is followed by a description of the history of 30 Leighton Road. Section 3 analyses the heritage significance of the listed building and its context. Section 4 sets out the national and local policy and guidance relating to the historic built environment that is relevant to this matter. An outline is provided in Section 5 of the merits of the scheme in heritage terms. The Appendix contains the list description.

Author

- 1.5 The author of this report is Kevin Murphy B.Arch MUBC RIBA IHBC. He was an Inspector of Historic Buildings in the London Region of English Heritage and dealt with a range of major projects involving listed buildings and conservation areas in London. Prior to this, he had been a conservation officer with the London Borough of Southwark, and was Head of Conservation and Design at Hackney Council between 1997 and 1999. He trained and worked as an architect, and has a specialist qualification in urban and building conservation.

2 The background & history of 30 Leighton Road and its surroundings

- 2.1 This section of the report describes the history and development of 30 Leighton Road and its surroundings.

Background

- 2.2 The Leighton Road Sorting Office is located on the south side of Leighton Road in Kentish Town, on a site that effectively backs onto the railway line and Kentish Town Station, to the east of the main Kentish Town Road.
- 2.3 The building, dated 1903, is of red brick with stone dressings and with a hipped slate roof with central tall panelled brick chimney stack. The chimney stack is flanked by two brick pediments with ball finials which contain Diocletian windows.
- 2.4 The ground floor façade projects forward from the Diocletian windows. Over the main entrance is a frieze inscribed 'Postmens Office' above which is a pediment with a carved royal coat of arms. Above the ground floor sash windows is a carved plaque with the Royal ER (Edward VII) monograms (although the list description inaccurately records it as GR – George V did not ascend to the throne until 1910).
- 2.5 The rear of the building is not visible from the street and is architecturally utilitarian. The main former sorting office hall is in red brick with air vents/cowls along the slate roof ridge, with timber sash windows. To the rear there are a series of single storey outbuildings (painted white).
- 2.6 Adjacent are two modern buildings – the larger dating from 1996 and the smaller one from 2005. Since 1995 the site has functioned as studio and office space.

Background History of the Post Office

- 2.7 As a Royal Mail Sorting Office, the building was an integral part of the Post Office operation.

- 2.8 The period 1840-1914 was a formative period for the Post Office; it grew from an ad-hoc network of collection points dotted around the country into a vast machine of great complexity and efficiency. But, whilst the national network of post offices expanded from 4,028 in 1840 to 24,354 in 1913, post offices were slow to evolve architecturally. The basic plan remained largely unchanged through the period and, stylistically, the buildings display the full variety of Victorian and Edwardian commercial architecture. The biggest change was the increasing size of post offices, which had to accommodate an increasingly complex range of facilities.
- 2.9 The earliest post offices were not buildings in their own right but mere collection points within shops or other buildings. Human interaction was limited to the posting of letters, so there was no need to provide a space for face-to-face transactions. Early Post Office facilities were provided at the expense of the town postmaster, who was elected by the Treasury on the advice of a local MP.
- 2.10 A national survey of post offices in 1857-8 found that many locally-run facilities were inadequate in the face of a constantly rising volume of letters. In response the Office of Works took charge of the maintenance and provision of post offices. Thereafter the standard form of a post office comprises a main block incorporating a public office on the ground floor with offices and accommodation above, adjoining at the rear a single-storey-top-lit sorting office.
- 2.11 After the introduction of the Parcel Post in 1883, sorting offices became increasingly large, with the need to accommodate extra equipment and volume of post. Plan forms and interior layout became increasingly standardised, and yet always adaptable to awkward sites.
- 2.12 Throughout the Edwardian period, post and sorting office architecture varied between the different architects used by the Office of Works. Common styles included Baroque, Free or Domestic Revival styles with the selection sometimes responding to local context.

- 2.13 The Sorting Office or 'Postmens Office' at 30 Leighton Road ceased to be used as such in c.1995. Since then the space has been used for commercial purposes, with a studio built at the back. This use has left the original building largely in tact.
- 2.14 Internally the space is simple and utilitarian. The cellular offices in the front part of the building have simple cornices and some parquet flooring remains. The main sorting office is effectively a large hall, lit from skylights and windows high in the side walls and the Diocletian windows to the front. At one end, the former supervisors office has an oriel bay that overlooks the main space.
- 2.15 A modern mezzanine has been inserted along one of the long sides of the hall.
- 2.16 The character of the wider area is a mixture of commercial and residential buildings of varying ages and style, however the immediate vicinity of 30 Leighton Road is predominantly residential. The buildings are a range of ages, styles and heights. Mainly early to mid Victorian in brick and/or stucco the buildings tend to be between 2 and 4 storeys in height.
- 2.17 There is some modern in-fill of little architectural merit to the north west of 30 Leighton Road and some classic 4 storey inter-war LCC housing to the north east.
- 2.18 Most of the buildings have small front gardens or hardstanding, many with railings fronting the road.
- 2.19 Within this context, and not unsurprisingly, the Sorting Office is neither typical nor contextual but is nevertheless a quiet and high quality neighbour.

3 The heritage significance of 30 Leighton Road and its surroundings

- 3.1 This section of the report describes the heritage significance of the 30 Leighton Road and its surroundings.

The heritage context

- 3.2 30 Leighton Road is listed Grade II; the list description is contained in Appendix A. Nos 20,22,24,26 and 28 Leighton Road are also listed Grade II.
- 3.3 30 Leighton Road and the other listed buildings are located in the Kentish Town Conservation Area. The boundary of the conservation area runs along the northern boundary of the railway line, which is also partly the southern boundary of the site of 30 Leighton Road. It returns north along the eastern boundary of 30 Leighton Road with No32 Leighton Road, and then goes eastwards to include those properties on the southern side of Leighton Road.

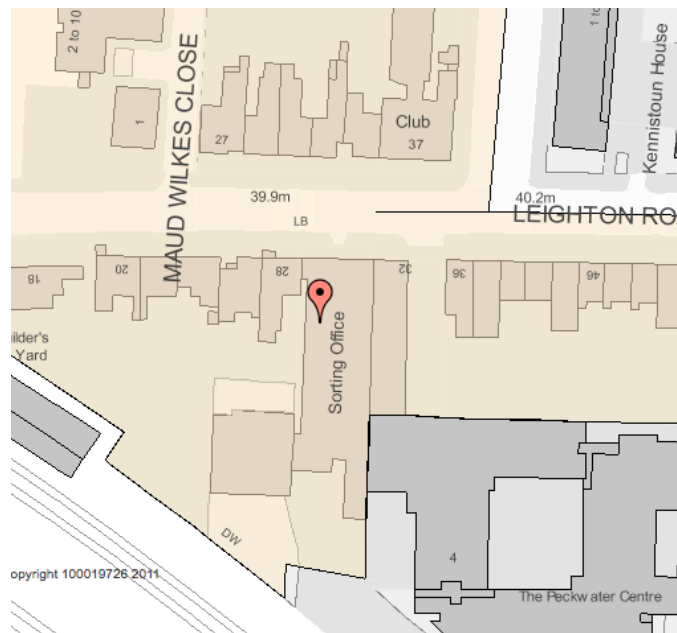


Figure 1: The site in the context of the Kentish Town Conservation Area (conservation area shaded orange) (© Camden Council)

- 3.4 30 Leighton Road, the other listed buildings and the Kentish Town Conservation Area are ‘designated heritage assets’, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Structures that make a positive contribution to the conservation area can be considered as ‘undesigned heritage assets’.

The heritage significance of the site and its context

The relevant heritage assets

- 3.5 In terms of the assessment of the proposals for 30 Leighton Road, the heritage assets within Camden most relevant to considering the affect of the scheme are the listed building itself, nearby listed buildings, and the Kentish Town Conservation Area.
- 3.6 The affect of the proposed scheme on these assets will be first and foremost on the special architectural and historic interest of 30 Leighton Road and its setting, and then secondly on the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of other listed buildings.

Assessing heritage significance

- 3.7 ‘Significance’ is defined in the NPPF 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’. The English Heritage ‘Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide’ puts it slightly differently – as ‘the sum of its architectural, historic, artistic or archaeological interest’.
- 3.8 ‘Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment’ (English Heritage, April 2008) describes a number of ‘heritage values’ that may be present in a ‘significant place’. These are evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.
- 3.9 Historical value is described as being illustrative or associative. ‘Conservation Principles’ says that:

Illustration depends on visibility in a way that evidential value (for example, of buried remains) does not. Places with illustrative value will normally also have evidential value, but it may be of a different order of importance... The illustrative value of places tends to be greater if they incorporate the first, or only surviving, example of an innovation of consequence, whether related to design, technology or social organisation.

‘Historic interest’, ‘Historical value’ and ‘Evidential value’

- 3.10 30 Leighton Road, the listed and unlisted buildings nearby, and their relationship to one another and the Kentish Town Conservation Area collectively illustrate the development of this part of London. They tell us about the nature of the expansion and suburbanisation of London in the 19th century. The origin of Leighton Road lay in a path from the Assembly House to Maiden Lane. Now the road links the commercial edge of Kentish Town Road with remnants of the roadside taverns, the Assembly House pub, shops and 304 Kentish Town Road, an eighteenth century building perpendicular to the road – to the early nineteenth century houses typically in stucco with some brick and typified by Torriano Avenue to the east. The sorting office typifies the more commercial/service requirements of Kentish Town as it developed, whilst sitting amongst the more residential development that grew up along this and nearby streets.
- 3.11 In terms of English Heritage’s ‘Conservation Principles’ the listed buildings and conservation area provide us with ‘evidence about past human activity’ and, by means of their fabric, design and appearance, communicate information about its past. Subsequent alteration, demolition and redevelopment has not entirely removed the ability of the older townscape and intact historic buildings to do this; the Kentish Town Conservation Area and its listed buildings clearly retain sufficient historic character and appearance to convey the area’s historical ethos.

- 3.12 30 Leighton Road retains its ability to convey its historical value within its surrounding context and also its significance as an example of part of the development of the post office at the turn of the century – which in itself is connected with the expansion of London and the need for more postal facilities as well as the ever increasing organisation and provision of postal services. Its continued commercial use is an important aspect of its significance.

‘Architectural interest’, ‘artistic interest’ or ‘aesthetic value’

- 3.13 It is clear that the Kentish Town Conservation Area and 30 Leighton Road have ‘architectural’ and ‘artistic interest’ (NPPF) or ‘aesthetic value’ (‘Conservation Principles’). In respect of design, ‘Conservation Principles’ says that ‘design value... embraces composition (form, proportions, massing, silhouette, views and vistas, circulation) and usually materials or planting, decoration or detailing, and craftsmanship’.
- 3.14 The part of the Kentish Town Conservation Area in the vicinity of 30 Leighton Road possesses these heritage values to a considerable degree. The contributing elements of the aesthetic significance of the area as a piece of historic townscape are the nature of older (listed and unlisted) structures and their contribution to the historic streetscape.
- 3.15 The special architectural or aesthetic interest of 30 Leighton Road lies principally in the architectural treatment of the front facade of the building. As the public face of the sorting office this was afforded the greatest architectural effort and is a good example of the degree of care and attention that was given to the architecture of public buildings – even relatively humble buildings – in the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Its Free Domestic Revival architectural style and detailing is of a high quality and typical of post office architecture of its time and the partially intact boundary treatment incorporates custom-designed railings.

- 3.16 Internally the building is utilitarian and simple in its detailing. The original plan form remains largely in tact with a number of cellular offices and the volume of the main sorting office hall. A particular feature is the former supervisors office and its oriel window overlooking the hall. This is a physical expression of how the historic activities were managed – sitting above the space in a position where the sorting office workers could be observed at their work.
- 3.17 The significance of the main hall has already been slightly reduced by the existing mezzanine structure.
- 3.18 Other aspects of the listed building's significance are the treatment of the side wall (on the western side) and the survival in a vestigial state of some structures that are attached to the rear of the sorting office and that were clearly ancillary to the main building.
- 3.19 The modern insertions within the main building and the modern extensions to the rear are not considered to be of heritage significance.
- 3.20 The listed buildings near 30 Leighton Road have, by definition, special architectural and historic interest. However in respect of development on the site of 30 Leighton Road that might affect their setting, only significance related to their external appearance and setting could be affected. Their internal special interest would clearly not be affected by adjacent development.

Summary

- 3.21 30 Leighton Road has clear and extensive historical and evidential value, and this value is expressed in the architectural treatment of the front elevation and the uses that once took place within the building. The building is associated with the overall development of the Post Office under the Office of Works at the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth centuries.
- 3.22 In terms of architectural or aesthetic value, this is largely limited to the front elevation of the building, although

internally its plan form remains largely in tact as well as the overall sense of the original double height volume of the sorting hall. There are a few simple details that remain, such as the cornices to the offices, some parquet flooring and the supervisors office oriel window. The modern interventions to the main building and the rear extensions are not regarded as having heritage significance.

4 The policy context

- 4.1 This section of the report briefly sets out the range of national and local policy and guidance relevant to the consideration of change in the historic built environment.

Legislation

- 4.2 The legislation governing listed buildings and conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 66 (1) of the Act requires decision makers to ‘have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses’ when determining applications which affect a listed building or its setting. Section 72(1) of the Act requires decision makers with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area to pay ‘special attention...to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.3 In March 2012, the Government published the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which replaced Planning Policy Statement 5: ‘Planning for the Historic Environment’ (PPS5) with immediate effect.
- 4.4 The NPPF says at Paragraph 128 that:
- In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.*
- 4.5 A description and analysis of the heritage significance of 30 Leighton Road and its context is provided earlier in this report.

4.6 The NPPF also requires local planning authorities to ‘identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal’.

4.7 At Paragraph 131, the NPPF says that:

In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

4.8 Paragraph 132 advises local planning authorities that ‘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’.

4.9 The NPPF says at Paragraph 133 ‘Good design ensures attractive, usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning.’ Paragraph 133 says:

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse

consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

- 4.10 Paragraph 134 says that ‘Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
- 4.11 Further advice within Section 12 of the NPPF urges local planning authorities to take into account the affect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset when determining the application. It says that ‘In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset’.
- 4.12 Paragraph 137 of the NPPF advises local planning authorities to ‘look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably’.
- 4.13 Paragraph 138 says that:

Not all elements of a World Heritage Site or Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 133 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 134, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

4.14 The NPPF incorporates many of the essential concepts in Planning Policy Statement 5 'Planning for the Historic Environment'. PPS5 was accompanied by a 'Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide', published by English Heritage 'to help practitioners implement the policy, including the legislative requirements that underpin it'. The 'Guide' gives, at Paragraph 79, a number of 'potential heritage benefits that could weigh in favour of a proposed scheme' in addition to guidance on 'weighing-up' proposals in Paragraphs 76 to 78. These are that:

- It sustains or enhances the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting;
- It reduces or removes risks to a heritage asset;
- It secures the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation;
- It makes a positive contribution to economic vitality and sustainable communities;
- It is an appropriate design for its context and makes a positive contribution to the appearance, character, quality and local distinctiveness of the historic environment;
- It better reveals the significance of a heritage asset and therefore enhances our enjoyment of it and the sense of place.

- 4.15 Paragraph 111 of the Guide sets out the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that local planning authorities when making decisions must ‘have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses’ and ‘pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance’ of a conservation area.

Camden Council’s Local Development Framework

- 4.16 Camden Council adopted its Core Strategy and Development Policies on 8 November 2010. Core Strategy Policy CS14 deals with ‘Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage’ and says:
- ‘The Council will ensure that Camden’s places and buildings are attractive, safe and easy to use by:
 - a) requiring development of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character;
 - b) preserving and enhancing Camden’s rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens;
 - c) promoting high quality landscaping and works to streets and public spaces;
 - d) seeking the highest standards of access in all buildings and places and requiring schemes to be designed to be inclusive and accessible;
 - e) protecting important views of St Paul’s Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster from sites inside and outside the Borough and protecting important local views’.

- 4.17 The commentary to the policy says:

‘Our overall strategy is to sustainably manage growth in Camden so it meets our needs for homes, jobs and services in a way that conserves and enhances the features that make the borough such an attractive place to live, work and visit. Policy CS14 plays a key part in achieving this by setting out our approach to conserving and, where possible, enhancing our heritage and valued places, and to ensuring that development is of the highest standard and reflects, and where possible improves, its local area’

4.18 It goes on to say:

‘Development schemes should improve the quality of buildings, landscaping and the street environment and, through this, improve the experience of the borough for residents and visitors’

4.19 Regarding Camden’s heritage, the Core Strategy refers to Policy DP25 in Camden Development Policies as providing more detailed guidance on the Council’s approach to protecting and enriching the range of features that make up the built heritage of the borough.

4.20 Policy DP25 is as follows:

Conservation Areas

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

- a) take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;
- b) only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area;
- c) prevent the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area where this harms the character or appearance

of the conservation area, unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention;

d) not permit development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character and appearance of that conservation area; and

e) preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of a 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 that outweigh the case for retention;

f) only grant consent for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building; and

g) not permit development that it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building.

Archaeology

The Council will protect remains of archaeological importance by ensuring acceptable measures are taken to preserve them and their setting, including physical preservation, where appropriate.

Other heritage assets

The Council will seek to protect other heritage assets including Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest and London Squares.

5 The proposed scheme and its affect

- 5.1 This section of the report briefly describes the proposed scheme and its affect on the heritage significance described earlier. The proposed scheme is illustrated in the drawings prepared by Studio Mackereth and this section should be read in conjunction with the Design & Access Statement.

The proposed scheme and its affect on heritage significance

- 5.2 The proposals will provide 1 open plan commercial unit within the existing sorting office space, with two live/work units to the rear. The offices will be sensitively refurbished to allow for better thermal performance and services to create high quality commercial space.
- 5.3 The residential element will provide a mix of units comprising 5 No.2 and 3 bed maisonettes (4 x 2 bed & 1 x 3 bed) and 2 No.1 bed flats along with the two live/work units. The proposed buildings are to be 2 double storey buildings and a 3 storey block sitting within the newly landscaped site.
- 5.4 To provide access to the residential units to the rear, a section of the ground floor running under the mezzanine in the Postmens Office is to be partitioned off from the main hall. This will create an arcade with filigree brickwork that leads from a communal entrance area on Leighton Road to the rear of the site.
- 5.5 To achieve the proposals the more modern buildings behind (and attached to) the original rear wall of the sorting office as well as single storey subsidiary plant rooms will be demolished. None of these spaces are regarded as being of heritage significance and therefore their loss will not affect the special interest of the listed building. In contrast the quality of the new buildings will positively enhance the conservation area.

- 5.6 Overall, the works to the listed building have been carefully considered to give it a long-term sustainable future which not only retains the listed building's commercial use also but enables it to be upgraded, giving it a new lease of life.
- 5.7 The front elevation - architecturally the most important element of the building – is to be repaired and refurbished where necessary. The existing brick walls will be repaired and the original railings will be repaired and reinstated in their original position around the existing post box. Stonework will also be carefully cleaned and repaired. New high quality granite surfacing will replace the existing cracked tarmac.
- 5.8 The only intervention on the façade will be the reglazing and careful refurbishment of the original doorway.
- 5.9 Internally, following advice from the Conservation Officer, the main hall is to be retained as a single refurbished space, with a new extended mezzanine that will sit below the oriel window to the former supervisors office.
- 5.10 This mezzanine structure will sit over the proposed walkway from front to back and will be a lightweight structure with two lightweight open stairs providing access to the upper level. It will ensure that the overall feeling of space will be retained.
- 5.11 The lightweight nature of the structure will ensure that it is read as a modern intervention which does not detract from the original structure.
- 5.12 A new glazed curtain walling system that will reflect the commercial nature of the space - both historically and into the future - will flank the new walkway internally. The external wall is to have a brick filigree introduced below the existing cill level of the windows. This will use the existing Flemish bond brick pattern as its structure and will mean that when looking 'along' the wall rather than directly at it (which due to its position tight against the boundary is not likely in practice) it will retain the visual impression of a solid brick wall – and so retain the

integrity of the overall hall proportions internally and externally – whilst providing light to the passageway and the commercial unit.

- 5.13 The space to the rear of the main sorting hall, and part of the historic building, is to be retained largely in tact providing further commercial space. This is a considerable benefit over the pre-application scheme submitted, which would have required the excavation of the floor and potentially the underpinning of the historic building to have enabled the insertion of the proposed mezzanine. This design is regarded as considerably more sensitive to the special interest of the listed building.
- 5.14 Existing windows will be retained and refurbished as will the parquet flooring throughout the building where possible. In the new walkway, this will be blue brick laid in a herringbone pattern.
- 5.15 The new residential accommodation to the rear has been designed to ensure that it is subsidiary to the existing listed building and the wider conservation area. Also, following the pre-application advice from the Council, the design is contemporary but deferential to the sorting office and other nearby buildings.
- 5.16 The new development will not be visible from Leighton Road.
- 5.17 The material palette has been chosen to reference the existing building without creating a pastiche of the original construction by merely duplicating the original materials. This will ensure that the new development will contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The affect on the conservation area and other listed buildings

- 5.18 The affect on the character and appearance of the Kentish Town Conservation Area and on the setting of other listed buildings will be negligible but positive. The character is already a varied one, with buildings of different heights,

styles and ages. The repair and refurbishment of the front elevation will enhance the building's contribution to the conservation area, whilst the new development at the rear will be a high quality addition to an area that already has a varied and eclectic residential character – therefore enhancing its character and appearance.

- 5.19 The new development has been specifically designed and located so as not to harm the setting of any nearby listed buildings.

6 Compliance with policy and guidance

- 6.1 This report has provided a detailed description and analysis of the significance of 30 Leighton Road and its heritage context, as required by Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework. In addition, the report also describes how the proposed scheme will affect that heritage significance. The affect is positive, and for that reason, the scheme complies with policy and guidance.

The level of ‘harm’ caused by the proposed scheme

- 6.2 As outlined in Section 4, the NPPF identifies two levels of potential ‘harm’ that might be caused to a heritage asset by a development: ‘substantial harm...or total loss of significance’ or ‘less than substantial’. Both levels of harm must be caused to a *designated* heritage asset – in this instance, 30 Leighton Road, other listed buildings and the Kentish Town Conservation Area and their settings.
- 6.3 The proposed scheme, in our considered view, preserves the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and the character and appearance of the Kentish Town Conservation Area, and thus complies with S.66(1) and S.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It does not lead to ‘substantial’ harm or any meaningful level of ‘less than substantial’ harm to the listed building at 30 Leighton Road, or any other heritage assets. The considered approach to the listed building and new buildings at the rear will have a positive affect on the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the listed buildings.
- 6.4 The only potential for ‘less than substantial’ harm would be the loss of something in 30 Leighton Road that had a direct relationship to what is central to special architectural and historic interest in the listed main building. There is nothing about the proposal that would

give rise to this level of harm. Other changes to the listed building, individually or cumulatively, do not reach the threshold of harm that would cause the scheme to fail to preserve the special interest of any listed building or conservation area.

The balance of 'harm' versus benefit

- 6.5 In any event, and even if some level of harm was to be caused by the proposals, the scheme provides a tangible public benefit in the form of restoring and repairing many elements of the building's special interest, both internally and externally and providing the listed building with a high quality sustainable future, including continued commercial use. This would more than outweigh what very low level of 'harm' - if any - that might be asserted to be caused by the various interventions proposed. The core special architectural and historic interest of 30 Leighton Road and other heritage assets remains entirely intact in the proposal.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 6.6 In respect of Paragraph 131 of the NPPF, the proposed scheme can certainly be described as 'sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation'. It secures the 'positive contribution' that 30 Leighton Road makes to the Kentish Town Conservation Area, and the setting of other listed buildings, and it preserves the essential elements of its special architectural and historic interest as a listed building.
- 6.7 The proposed scheme complies with Paragraph 133 of the NPPF - it certainly does not lead to 'substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset'. It also complies with Paragraph 134 for the reasons given in detail earlier in this report – the scheme cannot be considered to harm the listed building, but rather alters it in a fashion that has a relatively small affect on overall heritage significance and protects surviving significance.

- 6.8 It is our view that none of the individual minor interventions that make up the overall set of proposals can reasonably be considered to cause harm to the listed building when the cumulative extent of intervention involved is measured against the overall listed building. The interventions - individually and taken as a whole – help secure the ‘optimum viable use’ of the listed building. The scheme very definitely strikes the balance suggested by Paragraph 134 of the NPPF – it intervenes in 30 Leighton Road in a manner commensurate to its significance as a listed building. This balance of intervention versus significance is described in detail earlier.

Camden’s Local Development Framework

- 6.9 In positively addressing the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, the works also meet the policy requirements of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework relevant to the historic built environment.
- 6.10 In terms of Core Strategy Policy CS14 and its accompanying commentary, the proposals ‘would not cause harm to the special interest of the building’ or to ‘the setting of a listed building’.
- 6.11 Equally, the proposals will ‘preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area’.

7 Summary and conclusions

- 7.1 The proposed scheme has been designed to make minimum intervention into the historic building whilst providing modern and viable accommodation for the future. The proposals combine the sensitive repair and restoration of existing fabric with the provision of new contemporary and flexible space.
- 7.2 The commercial use, an element of the listed building's significance is to be retained and given a new lease of life.
- 7.3 The affect of the works and new buildings on the heritage significance described earlier is therefore positive. The works will preserve and enhance the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and its setting – its historic fabric and features are retained and the appearance and layout of the listed building remains legible and appreciable. The proposals will also preserve and enhance the setting of other listed buildings and the character and appearance of the Kentish Town Conservation Area.
- 7.4 For these reasons, the proposed scheme complies with the law, and national and local policy and guidance for listed buildings and conservation areas.

Appendix A: List Description

TQ2985SW LEIGHTON ROAD 798-1/43/1024 (South side)
13/02/95 No.30 Kentish Town Sorting Office (Formerly Listed as:
LEIGHTON ROAD No.30 (former Royal Mail sorting office - incl.
attached railings))

GV II

Royal Mail sorting office. Dated 1903. Red brick with stone dressings. Hipped slated roof with central tall panelled brick chimney-stack set above a segmental pediment and flanked by brick pediments with ball finials above Diocletian windows with keystones. Symmetrical design. Lower single storey facade projects forward beneath the Diocletian windows to give a segmental-arched entrance with pilasters having enriched capitals and frieze inscribed "Postmens Office", above which a pediment with carved royal coat of arms; original part-glazed double doors. Left hand bay with 2 sashes, upper halves with glazing bars; right hand bay with 3 smaller sashes, upper halves with glazing bars. Both bays with brick parapets, corresponding to doorway frieze, and having central segmental headed plaques carved with royal GR monograms. Original rainwater head and pipe to left hand bay. INTERIOR: not inspected.

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