

Camden Methodist Church, 89 Plender Street



On Behalf of Camden Town Methodist Church

November 2016

Project Ref: 2199

HeritageCollective

The Office Marylebone

12 Melcombe Place

London

NW1 6JJ

www.heritagecollective.co.uk

Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE	6
ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTION	7
IMPACT ASSESSMENT	11
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	17

Project Number: 2199
Authored by: Ignus Froneman
Reviewed by: DTM

Date: 25/11/2016
Document Version: v.1

Introduction

1. This Heritage Statement has been produced by Ignus Froneman, a Director at Heritage Collective, on behalf of the applicant, Camden Town Methodist Church, and in consultation with Manalo & White Architects and CBRE Planning Consultants. The report supports an application for planning permission involving internal and external alterations to the existing building to facilitate, conversion of the present student accommodation and worship space with flexible worship, community and hotel use including, a shared entrance at upper ground and 39 hotel bedrooms on the upper floors. The proposals include the addition of a one storey (equivalent) extension, associated alterations to the main and side entrances and fenestration.
2. This report should be read alongside the Design and Access Statement, the application drawings, Planning Statement and all other submitted information.

Heritage assets

3. There are no statutory listed buildings in the vicinity of the application which could reasonably be affected by the proposed development. The closest listed buildings to the application site are shown on the map extract below, from Historic England's online National Heritage List, at **Figure 1**. The listed buildings are not assessed any further in this report.
4. The Camden Methodist Church dates from 1889 and has retained its use as a church, but it has fallen into disrepair and suffers from structural issues. It is unlisted but it falls within the Camden Town Conservation Area, the boundary of which is shown on the map overleaf, from The London Borough of Camden's website (**Figure 2**).

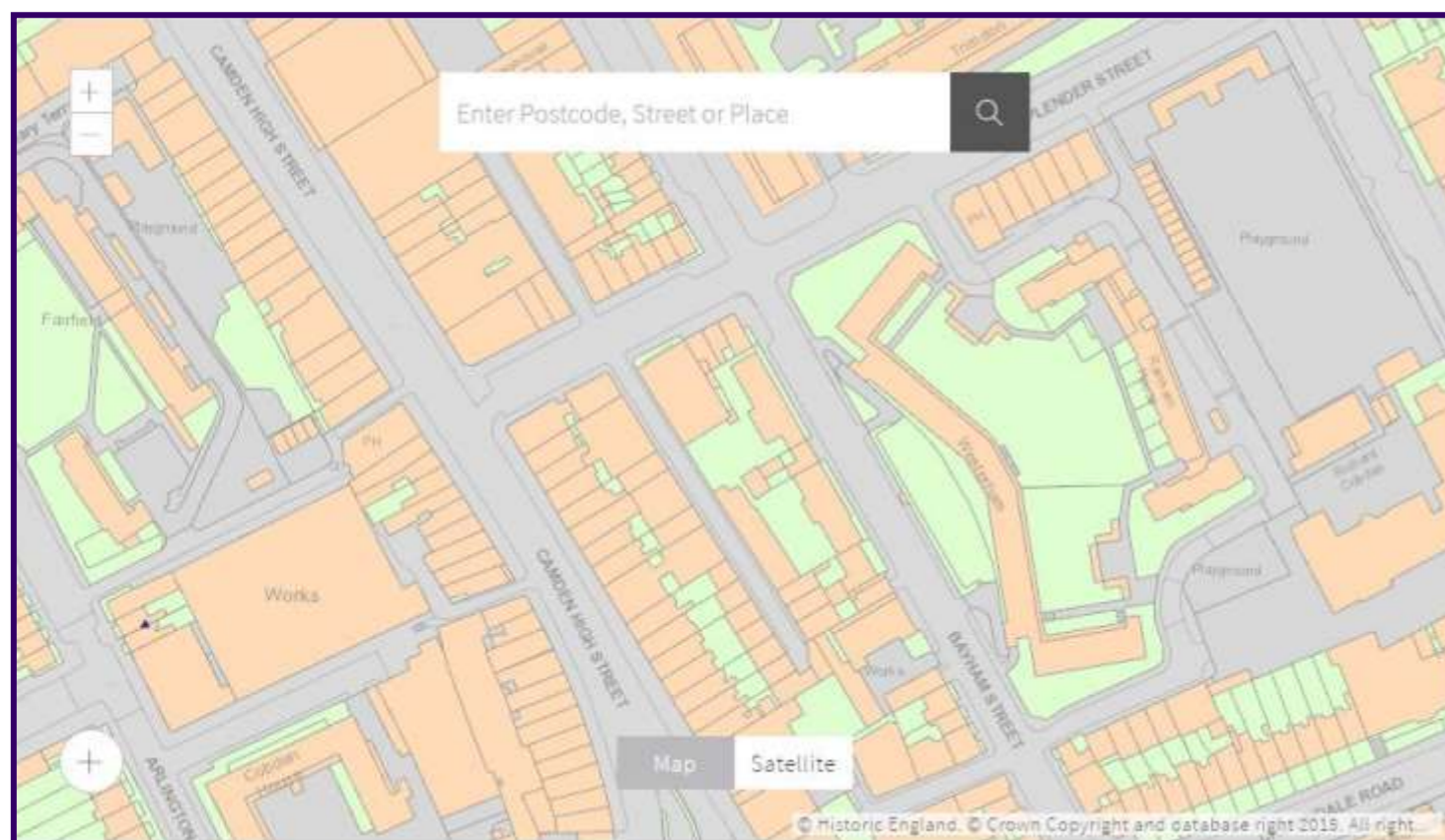


Figure 1: Listed buildings (blue triangles) in the vicinity of the application site, from Historic England's online National Heritage List.

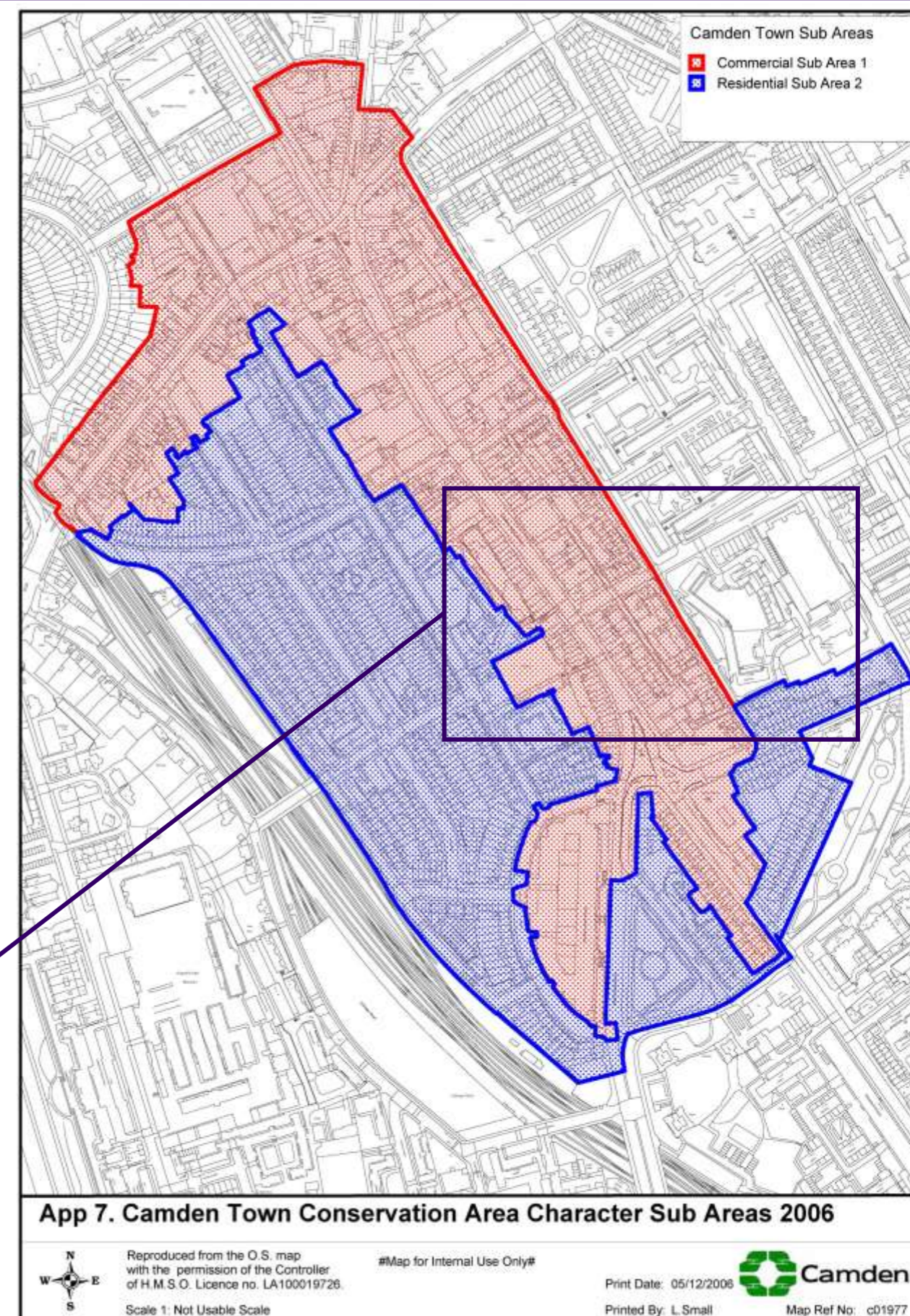


Figure 2: The Camden Town Conservation Area boundary and Character Sub Areas, from the London Borough of Camden's website.

Introduction

5. The building is not locally listed and it has not been treated as a non-designated heritage asset, the focus of the assessment being the conservation area. The Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy identifies the building as a positive contributor to the area (**Figure 3**).

Background

6. A proposal for a broadly similar scheme was submitted to Camden in May 2015 (Ref: 2015/2475/PRE), although at that time a double storey roof extension was proposed. The following points from the pre-application response, dated 23/06/2015, are noted as relevant to this application:
- i. The church is in a dilapidated state, and the existing rear elevation is structurally unsound. The congregation has declined and the church is currently being used by approximately only 30 people. The existing church is far too large for the congregation. The pre-application proposal aims to rationalise the space to suit the needs of the congregation and create a viable use for the building.
 - ii. The proposed removal of the front steps and lowering of the entrance level is disappointing in terms of the loss of historic fabric and radical changes to the main focal element of the frontage. However the existing change in levels makes access from the street complicated and obstructive, particularly for those with mobility issues. Officers are able to support the removal of the steps and the reordering of the entrance but the details of the columns, windows, paving and front door will need to be agreed. It is suggested that the existing stone steps are salvaged and re-laid. Officers would like to see the front boundary enclosure retained.
 - iii. The proposal for the side door could be acceptable, providing the design of the door and the details of the door opening are agreed. The proposal for the window is likely to be considered acceptable subject to the detailed design.
 - iv. The roof extension, which involves the addition of a double height roof structure is most contentious. The architects have provided a number of alternative designs.
 - v. The Methodist Church has a commanding presence in the streetscape as it stands considerably higher than its neighbours, which are roughly three storeys. The proposed designs which bring the roof extension right up behind the front pediment and parapet would create an overwhelming and inappropriate bulk to the building's street frontage. This would impact negatively on the street by creating an even higher and bulkier structure which would be at odds with the smaller scale of the street and the finer details and proportions of the host building.
 - vi. The proposed roof designs which push the roof extension back from the frontage are preferred; however the west-east side elevation is so highly prominent from along Plender Street that it is considered that the effect will be far too dominant from this vantage point. The overwhelming height and canyon effect to the mews to the west will also be uncomfortable and overwhelming.
 - vii. It is strongly recommended that, if a roof addition is proposed, the maximum possible for this building would be a single addition. However it is expected that all sides of the roof extension should be set back from the elevations.
 - viii. The interior is of interest and officers it should be recorded prior to any demolition.



Figure 3: The Camden Town Conservation Area Townscape Appraisal, from the London Borough of Camden's website.

Introduction

7. The proposal was revised following the pre-application feedback, most notably with a change to the form and height of the roof extension, and it was subject to public consultation, the results of which are set out in the Planning Statement. A full planning application was submitted in December 2015 (2015/7007/P) with revisions to meet the pre-application advice.
8. The application was refused, based on "*the proposed massing and the proposed internal structure and the alteration to the front elevation [which] would result in significant harm to the conservation area*". The report also makes reference to the then proposed zinc roof (despite scheme revisions submitted during determination). The refused scheme is illustrated on the adjacent computer generated image.
9. Discussions were held with officers following the refusals and the scheme as submitted in December 2015 was revised to make it acceptable in officers' view. Essentially, the external changes compared with the refused application can be summarised as:
 - i. A change of the proposed roof extension material, from zinc to corten steel.
 - ii. Expression of roof extension windows as openings behind a mesh 'veil', rather than as protruding dormers.
 - iii. The entrance door is now timber with glazed panels, rather than fully glazed frameless.
 - iv. The windows adjacent to the main entrance will remain as existing.
 - v. The floor to floor internal heights have been reduced.
 - vi. A split level has been introduced, to avoid new internal frame slab edges being seen from the Plender Street windows.
 - vii. The ridge height has been reduced.
 - viii. The eaves height has been reduced, with a further step down at the gables.
 - ix. The stained glass windows are to be relocated internally.

Purpose, scope and structure of the statement

10. The purpose of this document is essentially twofold. It firstly provides an assessment of the special interest of the conservation area, and the contribution of the building to the area, to a proportionate degree of detail to enable an understanding of the potential impacts, in accordance with paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The character and appearance of the whole of the conservation area is not covered in great detail as the nature of the proposed alterations means that the effects would be localised and entail very little change to the overall appearance of the area.
11. The impacts are then assessed against the significance of the area, in accordance with NPPF paragraphs 128 & 129. According to paragraph 129 "*Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal [...] They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset [...]*"

12. To this end the remainder of this report is structured into four sections, each with a separate heading but with continuous paragraph numbering throughout.
13. The relevant legislation, national and local heritage policy framework is set out in the next section. That is followed by an assessment of the relative significance of the conservation area and the contribution of the Methodist church, informed by the Camden Town Conservation Area Statement, produced by the London Borough of Camden. The following section contains an assessment of the impacts of the proposed development and the final section summarises the conclusions.

Site visit and research

14. The assessment was informed by a site visit, in October 2015. The building was inspected internally and externally. Given that the date of the building is known, as well as its use over time, no map regression or additional research was carried out to inform the assessment.



Legislation, Policy and Guidance

Legislation

15. Legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. For the purposes of this application, the only relevant consideration is Section 72 of the 1990 Act. It places a duty on the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the special character and appearance of conservation areas.
16. The Act does not require the preservation of conservation areas *per se*, but rather it is a duty on decision makers to ensure that their special interest is properly taken into account as material considerations when determining applications.

The National Planning Policy Framework

17. The National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) was published in May 2012 and constitutes guidance for local planning authorities and decision makers. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the local development plan, unless it is silent or material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration.
18. Section 12 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment, in paragraphs 126 to 141. The NPPF places much emphasis on heritage "significance", which it defines in Annex 2 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 also from its setting."
19. Paragraph 126 of the NPPF encourages local planning authorities to recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. One of the factors to be taken into account is the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. On the other hand, the same paragraph recognises the fact that new development can make a positive contribution, which is one of the factors to be taken into account.
20. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal to a proportionate level of detail. Paragraph 129 requires essentially the same from local planning authorities: to identify and assess the "*particular significance*" of any heritage asset. It is the significance of the heritage asset that should be taken into account when considering the impact of a proposal.
21. According to paragraph 131, a number of considerations should be taken into account, first of which is the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. Paragraph 132 applies specifically to designated heritage assets, such as listed buildings and conservation areas. It states that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets and it propagates a proportionate approach (i.e. the more important the asset, the greater the weight attached to its conservation).

22. Paragraph 133 deals with substantial harm to, or total loss of significance of, a designated heritage asset and it is not relevant to this application, which could not reasonably result in the magnitude of harm. Paragraph 134, on the other hand, deals with less than substantial harm. Harm in this category should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal – such as replacing unsympathetic alterations with more appropriate ones, carrying out restoration, or simply by removing unsympathetic alterations. The National Planning Practice Guidance¹ (NPPG) describes public benefits as "*anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress*".
23. According to paragraph 137, local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development in conservation areas to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

Local Plan

24. The London Borough of Camden's Core Strategy Policy CS14 deals with promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage. This policy requires the preservation and enhancement of Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets.
25. Camden Development Policy DP25 deals with conserving Camden's heritage. In relation to maintaining the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will (amongst others) take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas. Development within conservation areas will only be permitted if it preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area.

¹ <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment/why-is-significance-important-in-decision-taking/>

Assessment of significance and contribution

Camden Town Conservation Area

26. The Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (CTCAAMS) summarises the special interest of the Camden Town Conservation Area as two sub areas of distinctly different character; a busy commercial and retail area, and, a quieter more formal residential area.
27. The commercial sub area, within which the Methodist Church lies, consists of a traditional wide shopping street linking the busy junction at Mornington Crescent to the eclectic and lively town centre at the heart of Camden Town. The CTCAAMS describes this retail and commercial area as *"powerfully urban in character"*. The buildings reflect the diverse and changing architectural styles over the last two hundred years. The following buildings which all contribute to the wide ranging variety of architectural styles are identified:
 - terraces of flat fronted early to mid 19th century houses, now fronted by shops;
 - mid Victorian stucco terraces;
 - Victorian Gothic buildings;
 - late Victorian and Edwardian red brick parades four and five storeys high with decorative gables;
 - imposing banks;
 - places of entertainment and public houses occupying key focal sites; and
 - 20th century buildings.
28. To the east of the High Street, the backs of the retail premises are accessed by cobbled mews which today are still largely in commercial use. Beyond the commercial interests are areas of late 18th and early 19th century residential development while to the west of the High Street narrow passageways link through to quiet tree lined streets forming the residential sub area.
29. The Conservation Area has a high proportion of 19th century buildings both listed and unlisted, which make a positive contribution to the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area. There is an overall 19th century architectural and historic character and appearance throughout.
30. The CTCAAMS notes there is greater architectural variety in the commercial sub-area, due to greater pressure for redevelopment since the later 19th century. Where historic buildings survive, there is a greater tendency for alterations. Camden High Street, running roughly north-south down the centre of the Conservation Area, is architecturally diverse, with a lively mix of 19th and 20th century buildings. The skyline boasts a greater variety of roof forms and chimneystacks. There is a broad range of building materials.
31. Pratt Street and Plender Street are discussed together, and characterised as generally consisting of three-storey flat-fronted buildings. The Camden Town Methodist Church is described as: *"situated on the south side of Plender Street on the east corner of King's Terrace. It was built as the New Camden Chapel in 1889, by T & W Stone. The facades are of stock brick with stucco dressings in a debased classical style, accentuated by the*

pedimented front entrance. Its neighbour on the western corner of Kings Terrace is a poor example of modern development, since it is bulky and out of scale with its context. Likewise, Livery House at No 9 Pratt Street is out of character with its inappropriate bow window."

32. The CTCAAMS notes that King's Terrace was built in the 1830s, and in its southern section has some good examples of unaltered mews buildings (such as Nos 1, 3, 5 and 7).
33. Under the heading *"The Management of Change"*, the CTCAAMS notes that the special character of the conservation area is vulnerable to erosion and significant harm through neglect and lack of investment, as well as through inappropriate change. The next heading is *"Investment and Maintenance"* and again the issue of investment, or lack of investment, is highlighted: *"While overall the town centre is predicted to remain healthy despite growing competition ... there is evidence of some lack of investment or poor standards of maintenance and alteration in significant parts of the built fabric in the southern part of Camden High Street"*
34. The following quote from the CTCAAMS, under the heading *"New Development"* is relevant: *"It is clear from the Conservation Area appraisal that a key element of the distinctive character and appearance of the commercial part of the Camden Town Conservation Area is its variety and eclecticism. Given its overall economic dynamism its predominant 19th century commercial character has seen significant change. Some, though not all, more modern development has been inappropriate, eroding the character and detracting from the townscape. These unsuccessful changes have particularly taken the form of inappropriate building massing, and detail, and poor choice and use of materials, with inadequate attention to the form and character of surrounding buildings. While the commercial area has to continue to adapt to changing customer demand and economic trends, change must be managed so as to retain the distinctive and varied character of this part of the Conservation Area, with new developments contributing positively to that variety and distinctiveness."*

The Methodist Church building

35. The building forms part of the Victorian development that shaped the character of much of the conservation area; the formally composed, Classically inspired design give the building an imposing frontage and a distinctive street presence (**Plate 1**). The design and materials fit the period and the church is a good representative of Victorian architecture although it could not be described as forming part of a coherent ensemble or complementing a group of buildings that are related in terms of design, style, materials, etc.
36. However, as can be seen from the photo overleaf, the design is not exceptional and the brick parapet above the pediment gives the building an odd top-heavy feel that belies the overt use of Classical elements to give a sense of finesse and proportion. The western flank elevation, on King's Terrace (**Plate 2**), is the only other elevation that displays self-conscious design in the ordered rhythm of bays. Beyond the façade return, which carries forth the stucco dressing, the remainder of the elevation is rather more robust. The engineering brick plinth and the panel-and-pier construction, coupled with the height of the wall is reminiscent of industrial architecture, the sense of which is accentuated by the granite setts on King's Terrace.

Assessment of significance and contribution



Plate 1: The Plender Street façade.

37. On closer inspection, perhaps the most notable feature of the west elevation is the string course made up of side-by-side inscribed stones, with names of presumably members of the congregation at the time (e.g. "THIS STONE WAS LAID BY MR BRAND" or "THIS STONE WAS LAID BY H. J. ALLEN ESQ."), perhaps those who made donations towards the construction of the church. Like the date stones on the façade, these form a tangible connection with the past but all the more so because of the less conspicuous sense of subtlety of the string course and also the sense of a connection with ordinary members of the congregation.
38. The rear elevation (**Plate 3**), which is now shored up by a steel frame, is altogether unremarkable and plain. The east elevation (**Plate 4**) displays a broadly similar rhythm as the west, but it is simpler and with less attention to detail, reflecting the fact that it would not have been publicly visible. It is notable that the façade does not return to the east to bookend the elevation in the same way as on the west and in comparison it gives the east elevation a somewhat unresolved feel.



Plate 2: The King's Terrace side elevation.



Plate 3: The south-west corner onto King's Terrace.

Assessment of significance and contribution



Plate 4: The upper part of the east elevation.

39. The interior of the church has remained relatively unchanged and it contains some good Victorian features, including joinery (e.g. the pulpit, organ, gallery seating, simple panelling etc.) and stained glass windows (**Plates 5-7**). This adds to the interest of the building, but it does not elevate its significance in terms of its contribution to the area.
40. In summary the contribution of the building to the conservation area can be described as essentially its pleasant architectural treatment, primarily the imposing Plender Street façade and the King's Terrace side elevation. It forms part of the Victorian development of the area and it represents the period as a 'one of a kind' structures rather than as part of an ensemble or group. The building is not remarkable for any reason and it is unsurprising that it is not locally listed, but it does add character and a sense of time depth, and it illustrates the development of the area. In this sense it is a positive contributor to the character and appearance of the area.



Plate 5: A stained glass window.

Assessment of significance and contribution



Plate 6: General view of the interior, looking south from the gallery.



Plate 7: General view of the interior, looking north from the gallery.

Impact assessment

41. The Design and Access Statement by Manalo & White Architects sets out the proposed changes in detail. This has not been rehearsed in full in the Heritage Statement but instead the focus here is on those elements of the proposal that could affect the character or appearance of the area, or the contribution of the building to the conservation area. The key relevant changes in this respect are listed below and then assessed in turn:
- Lowering of the front doors to ground/street level and the removal of the front steps, which becomes redundant.
 - A return to the east of the façade to match the west.
 - Modification of a window at the rear of the side elevation to form a door.
 - Reconstruction of the structurally compromised rear elevation.
 - Enclosing the open area to the east side of the lower ground floor.
 - A new low profile, single storey roof extension, in pre-weathered/oxidised corten steel cladding, set back from the parapets on all sides; parapets heightened slightly to reduce the visual presence of the extension.
42. **Lowering of the front doors to ground/street level and the removal of the front steps, which becomes redundant.** Whilst original, the steps in front of the building are worn out (**Plate 8**) and they play at best a very marginal and peripheral role in terms of the overall compositional arrangement. The removal of the steps will facilitate the proposed new use which will secure a long term viable use for the building. The existing access arrangement from the street is complicated and obstructive, particularly for the disabled or those with mobility issues; the removal of the steps as proposed will significantly improve inclusive disabled access to the building. The existing stone steps will be salvaged and re-laid as stone flags.
43. The area behind the steps and the areas of infilled brickwork will be done using London stocks to match the existing. Proportionally the lowering of the main entrance doorway would sit more comfortably with the proportions of the building and commensurate with the scale of the portico. This change can be seen as positive.
44. **A return to the east of the façade to match the west.** At present the eastern return (**Plate 9**) seems almost truncated in comparison to the west. Constructing a similar return, detailed to match the western return, will bookend the elevation. It will considerably improve the presence of the building and serve to enhance the sense of symmetry of the formally composed façade. This is illustrated on the photomontage overleaf, produced by Manalo & White Architects.
45. **Modification of a window at the rear of the side elevation to form a door.** This modification will leave the architectural interest, including the elevational rhythm, unaffected (**Plate 10** overleaf). It will not change the architectural interest of the building or its contribution to the area and can be described as neutral.
46. **Reconstruction of the rear elevation.** The rear elevation will be reconstructed similar to the existing elevation (**Plate 11** overleaf), leaving the character and appearance of the area unaffected. Likewise, the contribution of the building to the area will remain unchanged. In this sense the reconstruction will have a neutral effect.



Plate 8: Detail of the steps at the main entrance.



Plate 9: View from the east, showing the absence of a return to the facade.

Impact assessment



Impact assessment



Plate 10: The west elevation, oblique view from King's Terrace.



Plate 11: The rear elevation.

Impact assessment



Plate 12: The open area to the east side of the lower ground floor.

47. However, the CTCAAMS notes that the special character of the conservation area is vulnerable to erosion and significant harm through neglect and lack of investment, and that is of particular relevance to this part of the proposed development. The primary effect of the reconstruction of the structurally compromised rear elevation is not related to visual change, but in the effect of this intervention on the long term future and viability of the building. The state of the rear elevation is symptomatic of the dilapidated state of the building and lack of investment over time, which in this area has resulted in a severe structural issue. To become viable again the structural integrity of the building will need to be restored, and that will require considerable investment.
48. Whilst the reconstruction of the wall would leave the contribution of the building to the area unaffected, the reason behind the works is fundamental to the retention of the building and securing its preservation. This aspect of the proposed development therefore represents a considerable public benefit in securing the structural integrity and long term future of the building.
49. **Enclosing the open area to the east side of the lower ground floor.** The open area to the east side of the lower ground floor is not visible from the surrounding area, even from the adjoining housing development (e.g. **Plate 4**). It is a dark and uninviting little alley-like external space (**Plate 12**) that does nothing by of adding to the character of the area or the contribution of the building to the area. Roofing the space would not materially affect the character or appearance of the area, or change the visible upper part of the elevation, or the contribution of the building to the area.
50. **A new low profile, single storey roof extension, in pre-weathered/oxidised corten steel cladding, set back from the parapets on all sides; heightening of parapets.** Before considering the effect of the addition, it is worth starting from first principles and considering how the CTCAAMS describes this part of the conservation area. The document notes “*variety and eclecticism*” of the commercial part of the Camden Town Conservation Area as a ‘key element’ of the distinctive character and appearance of this sub-area. Elsewhere this area is described as “*powerfully urban in character*”. The CTCAAMS notes the buildings reflect the diverse and changing architectural styles, and that there is greater architectural variety in the commercial sub-area. Camden High Street is described as architecturally diverse, with a “*lively mix*” of 19th and 20th century buildings. The skyline is described as boasting “*a greater variety of roof forms and chimneystacks*”. It is in this context that the proposed addition needs to be considered.
51. Secondly, it is necessary to recognise that this addition will ultimately facilitate the long term preservation and beneficial use of the building, whilst retaining a worship space and community facility. This weighs heavily in favour of allowing the extension in the longer term interest of the building.
52. Turning then to the design, and the way in which this change will relate to the building, the new roof will be set behind the pediment parapet, which itself gives the façade a somewhat top-heavy feel. This robust elevation is capable of taking recessed new roof without being dominated, or resulting in top-heavy or unbalanced feel. The new roof sits recessed behind the pediment parapet, in a recessive cladding, which avoids any sense of dominance or giving the façade an overbearing character.

Impact assessment

53. However, in closer views from Plender Street the roof extension is hardly visible at all and the contribution of the building to the street scene remains unaffected. This can be seen from the photomontages below, produced by Manalo & White Architects, which also show the hardly noticeable effect of raising the parapets on the side elevations. Previously expressed concerns about the 'overwhelming height and canyon effect to the mews' of the then proposed addition have been fully addressed. The roof extension will hardly be visible in views from the surrounding area, and insofar as it would be visible it could not reasonably be described as anything other than subservient and recessive. This is illustrated in the photomontages produced by Manalo & White Architects. There will be a small change, but on the whole the addition appears consistently recessive.
54. The roof extension would only have a notable presence in long views to the east along Plender Street (see the photomontage overleaf). The new roof takes the form of a low profile contemporary design, and there are parallels between the proposed roof extension and others, for example the award-winning metal clad roof extension to the grade II listed Bethnal Green Old Town Hall (incidentally also a hotel conversion). Much care has been taken to relate the new addition in a harmonious and sensitive way with the existing building, for example the setbacks from the elevations, the recessive appearance of the structure and the cladding material, and the absence of unnecessary detailing that could draw attention away from the more richly detailed elevations below. Whilst there would be a change, this will be to a view in which much of the existing building is not experienced as a strong or important element in the view and there is no sense of it being dominated—the key change being that to the general roofscape of the area.

55. This has to be assessed in the context of an area with a 'powerfully urban character' which is characterised by 'variety and eclecticism' and where there is a 'lively mix' of buildings. Insofar as the extension will be visible in longer views from the High Street, this will be in the context of a skyline with a 'great variety of roof forms and chimneystacks'.
56. Importantly, the roof extension must also be judged on the effect on what is a unique and 'one of a kind' building, with an imposing street presence. The roof extension would not disrupt the existing building's sense of unity or coherency, neither would it unduly dominate the building. The building as existing is an imposing structure with a strong street presence. This sense of an imposing and unique building will be subtly reinforced, rather than diluted or changed. The recess and slope of the proposed new roof will avoid any strong or overwhelming presence, with it effectively only being visible in longer views from the east, in which it is a recessive, low element that is set back from the pediment, which retains its primacy in the view (see page 12). This, combined with the use of corten cladding means it would be a subservient addition that respects the presence of the host building, both on Plender Street and on King's Terrace. There are no indications that the roof extension would detract from or erode the building's character or its contribution to the area. The synergy between old and new, insofar as this will be appreciable from the street, is capable of adding to richness, time depth and eclectic variety of the area in a positive way.



Impact assessment



Summary and conclusions

57. The Camden Methodist Church dates from 1889 and has retained its use as a church, but it has fallen into disrepair and suffers from structural issues. It is neither statutory nor locally listed but it falls within the Camden Town Conservation Area, within the 'commercial sub area' as identified in the Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy. The document describes this retail and commercial area as *powerfully urban in character* with the buildings reflecting the diverse and changing architectural styles of the last two centuries. There is an overall 19th century architectural and historic character and appearance throughout the conservation area but there is greater architectural variety in the commercial sub-area. The area is architecturally diverse, with a lively mix of buildings. The High Street skyline is characterised by a variety of roof forms and features.
58. The Methodist Church forms part of the Victorian development that shaped the character of much of the conservation area; the formally composed, Classically inspired design gives the building an imposing frontage and a distinctive, strong street presence. The west return on King's Terrace is the secondary return elevation, with a stripped and robust design. The east elevation displays a broadly similar rhythm as the west, but it is simpler and with less attention to detail and lacks a façade return to bookend the elevation. The rear elevation is altogether unremarkable and plain, and is affected by severe structural issues. The interior of the church has remained relatively unchanged and it contains some good Victorian features. These add to the interest of the building, but the interior does not elevate the significance of the building in terms of its contribution to the area.
59. The key external change is the addition of a new low profile corten-clad roof, which has been designed as a legibly modern addition but influenced by faceted traditional forms to help it sit harmoniously on the building. Care has been taken to reduce the visible presence of the addition and to relate it well to the host building so as not to have an undue presence, or compromise the proportions of the building, or the way it is perceived in street scenes. The successful resolution of the addition is illustrated in the photomontages.
60. The remainder of the changes are relatively minor and would facilitate the proposed conversion of the building, thereby reversing its fortunes and securing its long term viable use and conservation. The main change amongst these is the reconfiguration of the front entrance, but this has been sensitively handled and the new entrance will relate well to the proportions of the building and the scale of the entrance portico. There are also beneficial changes, for example the rebuilding of the structurally compromised rear elevation and a new return to properly bookend the east elevation in line with the western return.
61. Overall, the benefits of the proposed development, including the conversion to secure a sustainable and viable long term use, would by far outweigh any residual harm. The National Planning Practice Guidance recognises that reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset is a heritage-specific benefit, as is securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation. In this respect there is a compelling case, in heritage terms, for granting permission on heritage grounds.
62. As the proposed development accords with local policy and national policy, and the provision of s.72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.