

Grove Lodge, Admiral's Walk, London, NW3
New Railings

Heritage Appraisal

January 2017

Portico Heritage

Introduction

- 1 This report has been prepared to support applications for railings both within and enclosing the site. This includes along the southern boundary of the site, surrounding the rear sunken courtyard and an extension of the existing railings on the front wall. The purpose of the report is to assess the proposed alteration against national and local policies and guidance relating to the historic built environment.
- 2 This statement should be read in conjunction with the other documentation submitted as part of the applications.

Overview

- 3 Grove Lodge is located on northern side of Admiral's Walk in Hampstead within the London Borough of Camden.

The Proposals

- 4 The proposals are for the installation of a wrought iron railing along the southern boundary and surrounding the sunken courtyard, as well as an extension of those on the front of Grove Lodge to Admiral's Walk. The southern railings will replace the existing painted wooden fence.

The heritage context

- 5 Grove Lodge was statutorily listed at grade II in 1974. The list description reads as follows:

'Semi-detached house. Early C18 with later alterations and additions at rear, c1910. Stucco with tiled roof and dormers. 2 storeys and attic. Single window and single window lower extension at south end. C20 entrance portico in south-east angle. Plain stucco 1st floor band. Recessed sashes with louvred shutters. Parapet. INTERIOR: not inspected. HISTORICAL NOTE: home of John Galsworthy, novelist and playwright, 1918-33, during which time he completed The Forsyte Saga and won the Nobel Prize for Literature (LCC plaque).'

- 6 The list description is relatively short and describes Grove Lodge in very basic terms. It notes the likely date of construction and consequent alterations. It also notes that the sash windows to the building had louvred shutters (since removed). The description highlights the association with John Galsworthy and acknowledges that no internal inspection of the building was undertaken. The list description is intended to provide enough information to identify a building rather than to give a summary of the building's significance.

Hampstead Conservation Area

- 7 Grove Lodge also forms part of the Hampstead Conservation Area which was designated in 1968 and later extended in 1977, 1978, 1980, 1985, 1988 and 1991. When first designated, the conservation area was known as the Hampstead Village Conservation Area. It has been renamed Hampstead Conservation Area following its extension to include areas outside the extent of the original village. The conservation area now covers a very large and varied area which principally encompasses the best examples of 18th and 19th century development in the Hampstead area.

- 8 The detailed Conservation Area Statement for Hampstead (LB Camden, 2002) summarises the character of the area as follows:
- Hampstead has an exceptional combination of characteristics that provide the distinct and special qualities of the Conservation Area. The variety of spaces, quality of the buildings, relationships between areas, all laid upon the dramatic setting of the steep slopes are described below. The contrast between the dense urban heart of Hampstead and the spaciousness of the outer areas is one of its major characteristics. It also demonstrates its historic development with the 18th century village still evident, adjacent to the streets created in the Victorian era, as well as many 20th century contributions. The Conservation Area character is therefore derived from the wide range of areas within it, each of which makes an important and valuable contribution to the Conservation Area as a whole.*
- 9 The Conservation Area Statement divides the conservation area into a series of sub-areas. Grove Lodge is included within Sub Area Four or Church Row/Hampstead Grove. This area is described as having ‘the largest concentration of 18th century houses in the Conservation Area and still preserves something of the village character Hampstead must have had before the late Victorian development. The buildings form several distinct groups, gradually reducing in density and formality from the terraces of Church Row to the relaxed sprawl of houses in big gardens around Upper Terrace and Lower Terrace’.
- 10 Grove Lodge is clearly an example of this latter form of development, part of the relaxed sprawl of houses in big gardens around Upper and Lower Terrace. The building is clearly of sufficient relevant architectural and historic interest to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Its materials, brick, stucco and tile, are part of the characteristic and distinctive palette of materials seen locally. Its age, form and setting also are typical of Sub Area Four of the conservation area and the conservation area more generally.
- 11 The Conservation Statement for Hampstead Conservation Area refers to Grove Lodge directly in the context of Admiral’s Walk and the Fenton House area. The statement sets out that:
- ‘Admiral’s Walk linking Hampstead Grove to Lower Terrace is almost rustic in appearance and is dominated by Admiral’s House (c1700, listed) at its western end. A tall distinct stucco building with a Tuscan portico and quarterdeck on the roof added by a late 18th century owner. Grove Lodge is attached to Admiral’s House and is about the same age. Beyond this point, two 1950s detached houses [Fleet House and Broadside] contrast in scale and style to the historic buildings that dominate the road. Opposite is Terrace Lodge (listed, early 19th century), a detached stucco villa set back behind a verdant garden and elegantly trimmed hedge’.*
- 12 Admiral’s Walk is rustic in nature: its character is dominated by its leafy quality and the boundary walls of Admiral’s House and Fenton House as much by Admiral’s House itself. Grove Lodge does of course contribute to the rustic nature of Admiral’s Walk through its height, detailing, age and materials. It helps to ground Admiral’s House in the townscape, softening this strong and robust building and contributing to the sense of groups of buildings contributing to character rather than grand architectural statements forming the core of the conservation area’s character and appearance.

Heritage Significance

- 13 Grove Lodge, the listed buildings in its vicinity and the Hampstead Conservation Area are 'designated heritage assets', as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 14 'Significance' is defined in the NPPF as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and further generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic'. The Historic England 'Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide' puts it slightly differently – as 'the sum of its architectural, historic, artistic or archaeological interest'.
- 15 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment' (Historic England, April 2008) describes a number of 'heritage values that may be present in a 'significant place'. These are evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.
- 16 There are clearly various strands of interest and value that together contribute to the significance of Grove Lodge. These relate to its origins, architectural and historic interest, the position of the building in local history and townscape, its relationship with its neighbours, and its connection to people of note.
- 17 These strands also include the original Georgian character and quality of the original building on the site. Conversely, much of this character has been removed from the building and the resulting structure is an amalgam of different styles, extensions and additions. While these are picturesque and unified through a shared palette of brick and tile, some diminish from its overall architectural form and interest and therefore detract from its overall level of significance.
- 18 Grove Lodge makes a positive contribution to the Hampstead Conservation Area. The conservation area is one of genuine significance given its history of development, its topography and landscape, the blending of the built environment with that topography and its semi-rural or rustic feel and charm. Grove Lodge contributes to this broader character and also to the significance of Admiral's Walk as an element within the conservation area.
- 19 This significance is, however, lessened by the nature of the current boundary along Admiral's Walk.
- 20 The existing white painted wooden fence is modern, bulky and visually prominent and is of no architectural or design importance. It makes no contribution to the identified rural character of the street.

The Policy Context

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 21 The legislation governing listed buildings and conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings 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.

- 22 In March 2012 the Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Section 12 of the NPPF deals with ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’.

Local Policy: London Borough of Camden

- 23 The relevant policy from the Core Strategy in relation to the historic environment (CS14) sets out Camden’s overarching strategy and focuses on the need to preserve or enhance heritage assets and their setting and the requirement for new development to be of the highest quality and to respect local context and character.
- 24 DP24 of LB Camden’s Development Policies Document provides further guidance on the Council’s approach to ‘Securing high quality design’. The policy sets out that ‘The Council will require all developments including alterations and extensions to listed buildings, to be of the highest standard of design and will expect developments, including alterations and extensions to consider: the character, setting, context and form of neighbouring buildings; the character and proportions of the existing building; the quality of materials to be used; the provision of visually interesting frontages at street level; the appropriate location for building services equipment; existing natural features, such as topography and trees; the provision of hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatments; the provision of appropriate amenity space; and, accessibility.
- 25 DP25 of LB Camden’s Development Policies Document provides further guidance on the Council’s approach to the historic environment. The main points of this policy in this instance are as follows.:

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

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

The proposals and their effect on significance

- 26 The proposals are for the installation of a wrought iron railing along the southern boundary and surrounding the sunken courtyard, as well as an extension of those on the front of Grove Lodge to Admiral's Walk. The southern railings will replace the existing painted wooden fence.
- 27 Boundaries within the conservation area vary from high impenetrable brick walls, to hedges, fences and railings. Usually the boundary treatment is commensurate to the nature of the building it surrounds. In this case, the railings have taken their cue from the Georgian architecture of Grove Lodge and its front railings. Examples of this can be found throughout the conservation area – and in the immediate vicinity in Lower Terrace and Hampstead Grove.
- 28 The new metal railings would be in keeping with the existing metal railings surrounding Terrace Lodge and sit amongst the established shrubs and planting on the side of the embankment – retaining its leafy rustic feel.
- 29 The proposed black painted railings will blend into the surrounding landscape much more sympathetically than the previous white painted, and obviously modern, wooden fence and appear as a simple low railing located in the vegetation as is often found in rural settings.
- 30 The landscaping scheme has been carefully considered to ensure that the 'rural' character of the southern boundary is retained and enhanced. Its height will ensure that it remains domestic in scale.
- 31 The proposed treatment is entirely in keeping with the main listed house and is an improvement on the existing white modern fence. The new railings will not affect any historic fabric relating to the listed building - therefore the proposals will have a positive impact on the architectural and historical significance of Grove Lodge.
- 32 Likewise, the contextual and sympathetic approach being proposed will enhance the setting of the other buildings on Admiral's Walk as well as the character and appearance of the wider conservation area.
- 33 The proposed railings around the sunken courtyard are located behind a section of the building that is a modern extension that has permission to be re-built. The railings will be hidden from public view behind a wall and will have no impact on the special interest of the listed building or the conservation area.

Compliance with policy and guidance

- 34 The report has provided a description and analysis of the significance of Grove Lodge, its existing boundary fence and its heritage context. This has identified that the existing fence is a modern white painted fence of no quality that makes no contribution to both the significance of Grove Lodge and also the Hampstead Conservation Area.
- 35 The analysis above demonstrates that the proposals will preserve and enhance the setting of the listed building and also the character and appearance of the conservation area – proposing a high quality and contextual solution that will sit amongst an improved landscape setting – enhancing the 'rural' feel of Admiral's Walk whilst recognising the nature of the building that it encloses.

- 36 The works will not cause any harm to the significance of the heritage assets and therefore meeting the policy tests of the National Planning Policy Framework
- 37 Likewise, with regard to the policies of the London Borough of Camden the proposals 'preserve or enhance heritage assets and their setting and the requirement for new development to be of the highest quality and to respect local context and character.

Conclusion

- 38 The proposed solution has been conceived with consideration for both the significance of the listed Grove Lodge and also the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 39 The proposals aim to preserve and enhance the character of this part of Hampstead and provide a high quality and contextual boundary solution. The railings around the sunken courtyard will have no impact on either the special interest of the listed building or the conservation area.

