

# **6 CHALCOT CRESCENT PRIMROSE HILL LONDON NW1**



## **HERITAGE STATEMENT**

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# **1 BACKGROUND AND COMMISSION**

## **1.1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1.1 On 7 February 2017 I, Michael Copeman, was instructed by Marco Ortiz of Emergent Design Studios, to prepare this heritage statement in support of an application for listed building consent for alterations to 6 Chalcot Crescent, London NW1. Pre-application advice was received from Camden Council's conservation officer on 11 May 2017, which has been reflected in the proposals and this report.
- 1.1.2 6 Chalcot Crescent is a mid-nineteenth century terraced house. It is listed grade II and is within the London Borough of Camden's Primrose Hill Conservation Area. This heritage statement report assesses the impact of the proposals on the heritage significance of the house and its setting. It relates to the plans produced by Emergent Design Studios dated 27 June 2017 (refs. CC\_PL). A site visit was made on 1 February 2017.
- 1.1.3 Documentary research was undertaken at the Camden Local Studies and Archive Centre (CLSAC) and in published sources.

# **2 HISTORY**

## **2.1 The House as built**

- 2.1.1 Residential development only took place on a large scale in the Primrose Hill area after the London and Birmingham railway line between Camden and Euston had been completed in 1837. The land on which Chalcot Crescent was built had been part of the Southampton Estate, of which the Primrose Hill/Chalk Farm section was sold in freehold lots in 1840. The sale plan<sup>1</sup> suggests that development was initially envisaged as comprising substantial detached villas, but they were not built and by 1849 the St Pancras Vestry map<sup>2</sup> shows the area divided into larger development plots of which one corresponds with what is now the western (straight) section of the present Chalcot Crescent, marked up to indicate terraced houses. A small terrace had already been built in what is now Chalcot Road.
- 2.1.2 Chalcot Crescent was known as Chalcot Terrace until 1878 when it was linked under the new name with the curved section to the north-east.<sup>3</sup> What are now 1-20 Chalcot Crescent were built c1853-4. (22 is in the same style, but three bays wide, and filled a gap at the end of the terrace.) The statutory list description<sup>4</sup> and the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement<sup>5</sup> give a J. Burden as the builder of Chalcot Crescent and the similar terraces in the adjoining streets. 'Builder' in this context probably means the 'developer' in modern usage, but nothing more is

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<sup>1</sup> CLSAC ref. 85.244 1840 Southampton Estate (St Pancras) sale map

<sup>2</sup> CLSAC ref. 85.244 1849 St Pancras

<sup>3</sup> *From Primrose Hill to Euston Road* Camden History Society 1995 p77

<sup>4</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1244106>

<sup>5</sup> *Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement* LB Camden 2001

known about (presumably) him. 6 Chalcot Terrace appears in the St. Pancras Ratebook in September 1854, indicating the date of its first occupation. The ratepayer was a Francis Perry.<sup>6</sup>

- 2.1.3 The 1860 St Pancras Vestry map<sup>7</sup> shows the straight section of Chalcot Crescent complete. The eastern section of the street is shown hatched, possibly because it was still under construction, curving round to meet the houses already built in Chalcot Road (then St Georges Road).
- 2.1.4 The first edition of the large-scale (25") Ordnance Survey, published 1875 shows the footprints of the houses in Chalcot Crescent very largely as they survive today. The former piano factory off Fitzroy Road was originally separate from the backs of the houses but by the date of the 1916 25" Ordnance Survey it had been extended northwards to meet what is now 28 Chalcot Crescent. To the south, the area now occupied by the Oldfield estate (built 1966) contained a terrace of houses and their gardens, facing Regent's Park Road, and the associated Regents Park Garden Mews. The 1916 Ordnance Survey map shows that a few of the houses in Chalcot Crescent had their rear areas infilled, although there is no evidence that this was the case at number 6.
- 2.1.5 6 Chalcot Crescent forms part of a single architectural composition comprising numbers 1-20. The street elevations consist of houses of three storeys and basements, each two bays wide. The style is a simplified Italianate: a speculative developer's interpretation of the mainstream architectural fashion of the day. The regular pattern is broken by two houses in each terrace, of which 6 is one, that have a single, wide, tripartite window to their first and second floors. The other on the same side of the street, equidistant for the original end of the terrace, is number 16. This slight variation provides the merest hint- but no more- of a symmetrical 'palace front' that is otherwise standard for its date.
- 2.1.6 The terrace follows the conventional pattern, established in London by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, of a public street frontage enlivened with architectural detail and an entirely plain rear. The most distinctive feature of the houses is their deep, pedimented porches, which project far enough to be described in the statutory list description as 'prostyle porticoes'<sup>8</sup>; that is to say, classical temples in miniature; although they do not conform to one of the orders. The front elevation is stuccoed, with banded rustication to the basement and ground floor, a plain first floor band and the render above lined out to suggest ashlar. The first floor has a single full length tripartite window under a segmental cornice supported by console brackets. The top floor window is similarly of three lights, in a moulded architrave. Above it is a wall-head parapet with a moulded cornice. There is a small balcony to the first floor with a primary decorative iron balustrade; the pattern is the same across the terrace. The area railings are also primary (but not the steps or handrails). The

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<sup>6</sup> CLSAC Ratebook St Pancras (North) September 1854

<sup>7</sup> CLSAC ref. 85.244 St Pancras 1860

<sup>8</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1244106>

ground floor window is a two-over-two sash; that to the basement a modern casement (see later alterations, below).

- 2.1.7 The rear elevation is undecorated yellow stock brick (painted at basement level). The windows have shallow segmental arches except where they have been altered (at basement level). The main rooms and stairs have double-hung timber sashes. The central roof valley is exposed. The treatment of the rear is utilitarian and typical of such London houses from c1800-1870. The small rear closet extension appears to be primary, although the parapet has been rebuilt and the openings altered. The upper courses of the extension do not quite follow the coursing of the main house but such a crude junction is not uncommon at this period.
- 2.1.8 Internally, the plan follows the conventional London arrangement of two rooms to each floor with the staircase rising against the party wall to the rear of the entrance hall. The basement, which is the only part of the interior affected by these proposals, also followed this standard plan although it has been more altered than the rest of the house.

## **2.2 Later alterations**

- 2.2.1 Applications for drainage works were submitted to St Pancras Borough Council in 1910 and 1912.<sup>9</sup> In 1910 permission was given for the drainage of a new WC in the ground floor closet extension, which appears to have contained only a bath before then. The 1912 works are not clearly specified and the drawing submitted is similar to that of 1910. The work may simply have been postponed, requiring a new notice to the Council. The plans suggest that at basement level the closet extension was divided into a WC against the party wall and a small lobby giving access to the rear area.

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<sup>9</sup> LB Camden Local History and Archives Centre; drainage plans 6 Chalcot Crescent 1910, 1912.

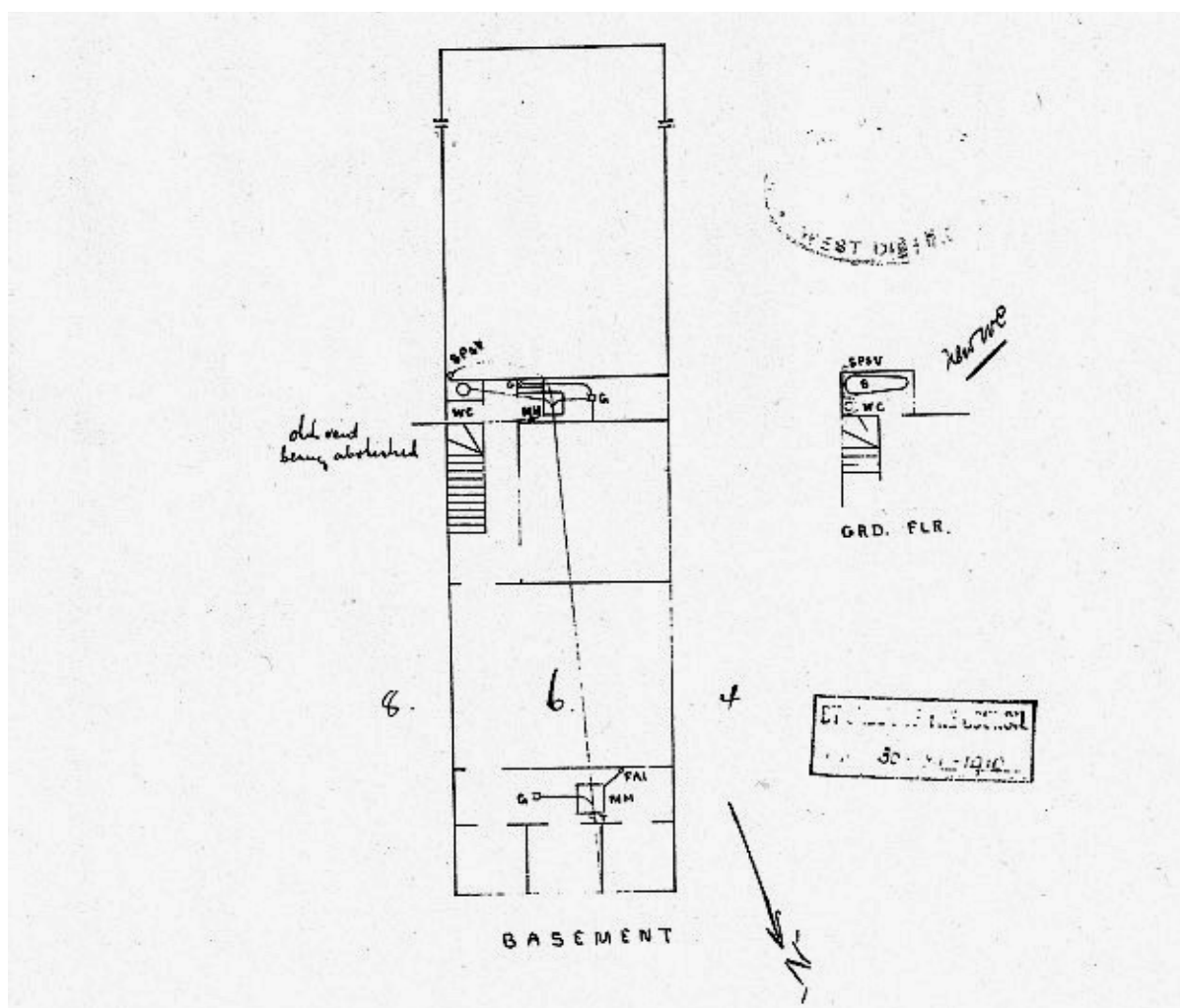


Figure 1: Drainage plan 1910 (LB Camden)

2.2.2 No other alterations requiring approval by the local authority are recorded until 1961, and there is no evidence in the building that any substantial works took place during the intervening period. In 1961 an application for drainage works<sup>10</sup> was accompanied by floor plans for the whole house, annotated with a description of its refurbishment, although unfortunately the photocopied plans in the local archive are barely legible (Fig. 2). The work included taking up the timber basement floor and replacing with concrete screed; replacing the stud partition wall between the rear basement room and hallway with breeze blocks; blocking up all the fireplaces and sealing the chimneys; slate roof repairs; widening the front basement window; removing the pavement vaults and rebuilding the front area steps. It seems most likely that the concrete lintels to the rear basement windows were inserted at the same time; that to the kitchen window is indicated on the 1993 'as existing' plan<sup>11</sup>. The arch to the rear basement WC window is shown in the 1993 'existing' and 'proposed' drawings as a shallow segmental arch; it may have been inserted as a minor variation to the approved scheme, or as it was unaffected by the proposals, it may simply be a drafting error.

<sup>10</sup> CLSAC; drainage plans 6 Chalcot Crescent 1961

<sup>11</sup> LB Camden planning refs. 9370213; 9301303

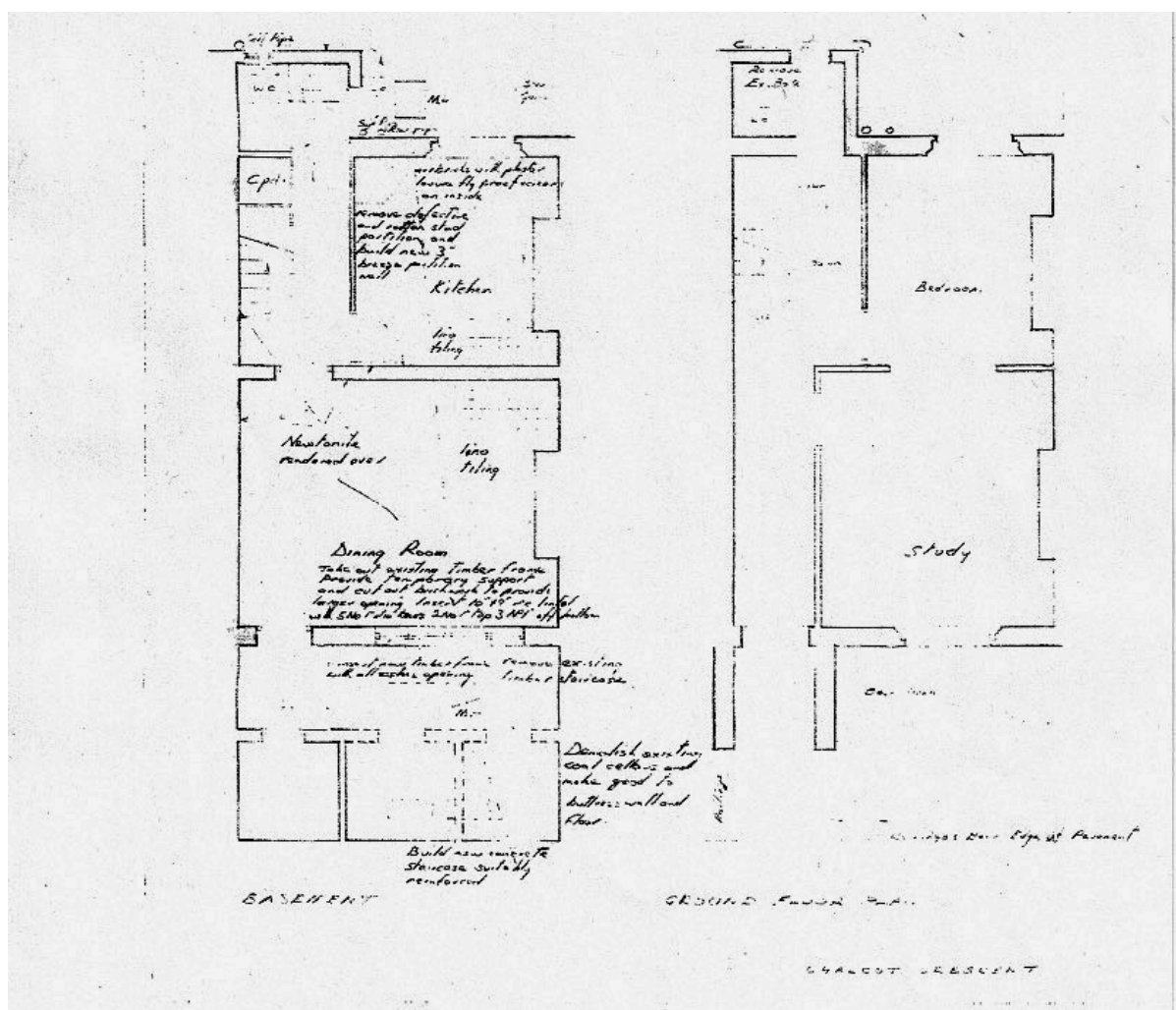


Figure 2: Drainage plans 1961

- 2.2.3 Applications for planning permission and listed building consent were made in 1993<sup>12</sup> for ‘Alterations of rear window to form French windows and timber staircase to garden.’ The applications were withdrawn and the plans were not retained by the Council.
- 2.2.4 Subsequently, in October 1993, planning permission and listed building consent were sought and granted (in January 1994)<sup>13</sup> for: ‘subdivision of single family dwelling for form a basement flat level and maisonette on ground first and second floors. Blocking up of basement door to garden, conversion of ground floor rear window to provide access to a new wooden deck with staircase to garden’ and internal and external alterations in connection with the conversion of property to 2 residential units.’ The scheme included the creation of a new timber balcony to the rear and the conversion of the existing rear ground floor sash window to French doors (see Fig. 3). The owner was Mrs Mallatratt and the architect Hilary Dunford RIBA. The stairs between ground floor and basement were to be kept.

<sup>12</sup> LB Camden Planning refs. 9301595; 9370237

<sup>13</sup> LB Camden Planning refs. 9301303; 9370213

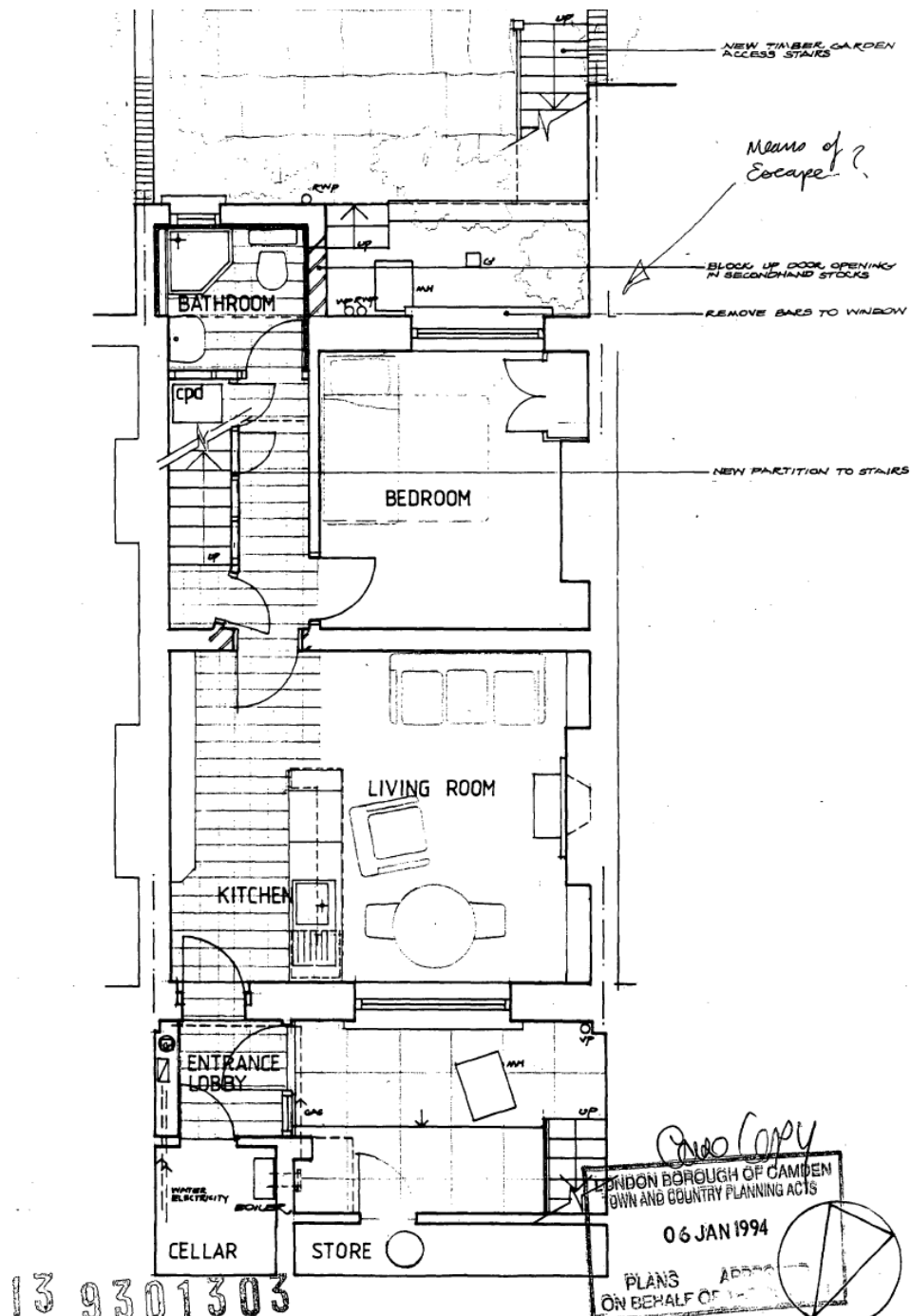


Figure 3: Alterations to basement 1993/4 (Hilary Dunford RIBA)



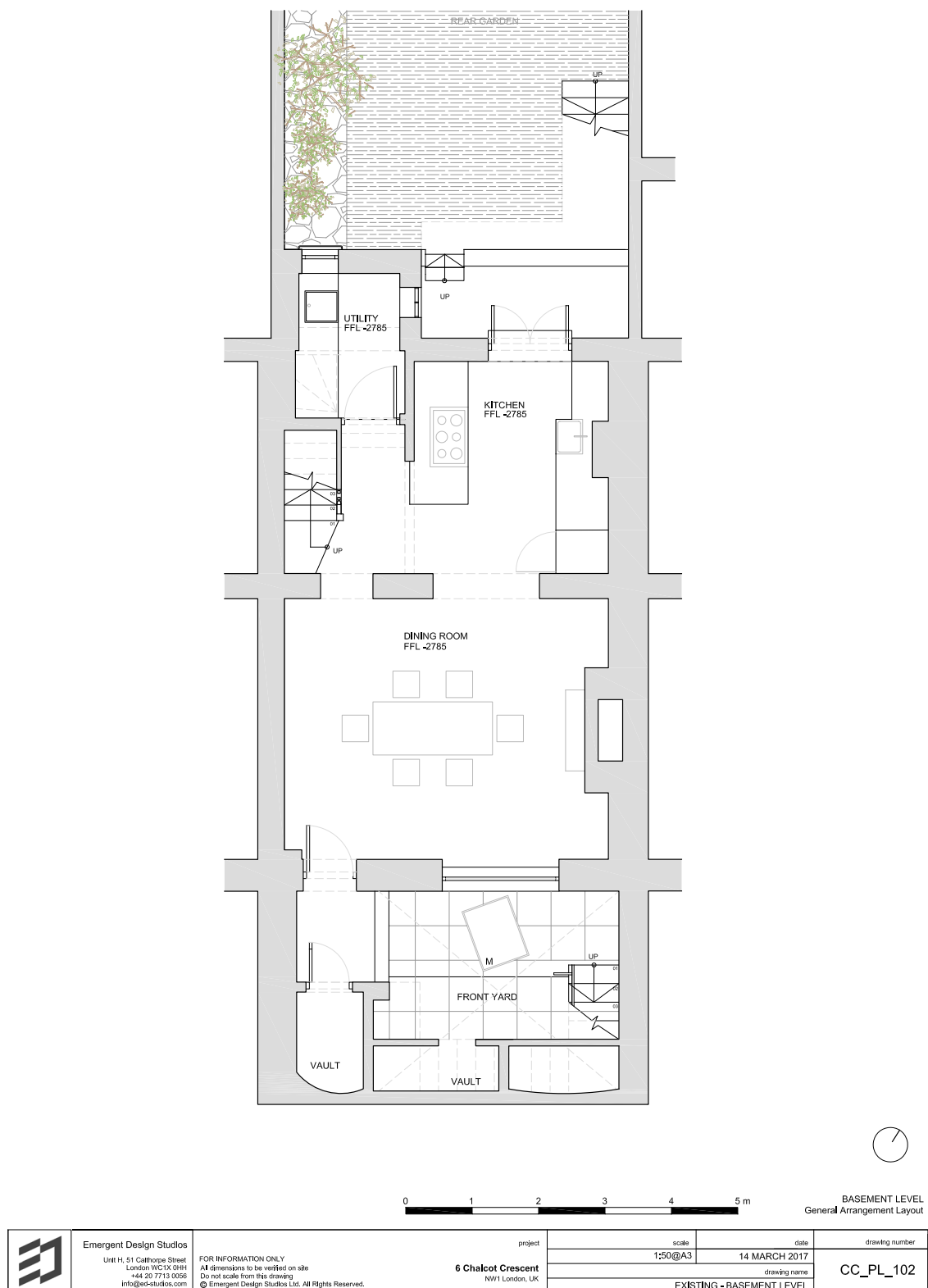


Figure 4: Basement plan in 2017 (Emergent Design Studios)

2.2.5 No further applications for planning permission or listed building consent have been made since 1993. However, the arrangement of the basement as it exists today does not exactly correspond to the 1993 plans, the house having been restored to its original form as a single dwelling at some point prior to its acquisition by the present owners in 2006. The rear basement window has been converted to French doors. The doorway from the former lobby in the rear extension has been blocked but a window that was not shown on the 1993 plan has been introduced in its place. An opening was made in the wall between the two main basement rooms. The door between the stair hallway and front room has been removed, the wall between the hallway and rear room cut back and the basement stairs slightly altered. In addition, the new front door to the basement approved in 1994 does not appear to have been built. On the ground floor the approved scheme included the blocking up of the door from the hall to the rear room and the retention of that to the front room. Today the latter is blocked and the former open.

## 2.3 Setting

2.3.1 The house stands within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area. Its setting comprises the adjoining and nearby terraces, the streetscape of which it is a part and the Oldfield estate. The house cannot be seen in longer views, but it contributes to the distinctive architectural character, similar in date and style, of this area of Primrose Hill. The front of the house is an essential component of the terrace of which it is a part and the streetscape that includes the terrace on the north side of the street which shares the same details. Together they create a unified architectural composition. There are attractive views up and down the street. Looking westwards the open parkland of Primrose Hill is visible, framed by the houses on Regents Park Road. Eastwards the view is terminated by the satisfying curve of the Crescent.



Figure 5: Chalcot Crescent: views to east (l) and to west (r)

2.3.2 The upper floors of the rear of the house may be seen from the adjoining gardens and from service the road of the Oldfield estate (private property). The basement level cannot be seen from either the neighbouring gardens nor the service road.



Figure 6: views from Oldfield estate service road

## 2.4 Significance

- 2.4.1 The principal heritage significance of the house derives from its street frontage, which is of interest as an individual building and as part of the terrace, streetscape and neighbourhood of which it is a part. Above ground level, the front elevation appears unaltered except for the window joinery. At basement level the window and area steps are utilitarian late 20<sup>th</sup> century replacements of no special architectural or historic interest. (Many of the other houses in the terrace have had their front basement windows and area steps altered; this has had a negligible effect on the appearance of the streetscape.)
- 2.4.2 The rear elevation is substantially intact at first and second floor levels. The 1994 timber balcony, projecting beyond the closet wing, dominates the ground and basement levels. It is heavy-handed and out of keeping with the simple mid-19<sup>th</sup> century character of the house. As noted, the French doors at both levels are modern and the openings to the basement level of the closet extension have been altered. The external brickwork at basement level has been rendered to approximately 500mm above ground level and painted above that.
- 2.4.3 Internally, the front hall retains its primary plasterwork although, as noted, the door to the front room has been blocked. The main ground floor reception rooms retain their original proportions but few primary decorative details. The staircase from the ground floor upwards is primary. (No internal works to the ground floor, nor any works to the first and second floors are proposed. The first and second floors were not inspected.) The stair from ground level to basement appears to be a modern

reconstruction. The 1993 plans indicate that it was to be separated from the basement by a stud partition. The present balustrade presumably dates from the re-conversion to a single dwelling (before 2006).

- 2.4.4 The basement would, historically, have been the plainest, most utilitarian part of the house. Its primary plan was standard for its date and type and there is no evidence that it had unusual or distinctive features prior to the 1961 alterations. It retains no historic details apart from the residual survival of the primary plan, identifiable from the position of the reduced partition walls. In summary, the extent of alterations in 1961 and 1994 mean that in its present form the basement is of very limited heritage significance and the balcony and steps are intrusive.
- 2.4.5 The heritage significance of the house may be summarised as deriving principally from:
- its architectural interest, expressed primarily in its street frontage, as part of an intact terrace of the 1850s, distinguished by its unified composition and unusual prostyle porticos;
  - its positive contribution to the character and appearance of Primrose Hill Conservation Area, architecturally and as part of the streetscape;

### **3 IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

#### **3.1 Policy context**

- 3.1.1 The acceptability of proposals for development affecting heritage assets (including listed buildings and sites in conservation areas) must be determined by the local authority against the relevant national and adopted local policies: principally the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012) and LB Camden's Core Strategy Policy CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage) and Development Policies DP24 (Securing high quality design); DP25 (Conserving Camden's heritage) and DP27 (Basements and lightwells).
- 3.1.2 The over-arching principle of NPPF is that planning system should contribute to the 'achievement of sustainable development' (para 6). Where development affects heritage assets, they should be conserved 'in a manner appropriate to their significance' (para. 126). To this end, their heritage significance must be fully understood (paras. 128, 129), and any harm to that significance arising from the proposals should be weighed against their benefits (paras. 132, 133, 134).
- 3.1.3 LB Camden has produced two supplementary planning documents (Camden Planning Guidance) to support its core and development policies. These are material considerations in the determination of planning and (where relevant) listed building consent applications: CPG1-*Design* (2015) and CPG4-*Basements and Lightwells* (2015). In addition, the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement (in effect, the conservation area appraisal and management plan) sets out the special interest for which the area was designated and includes guidance for its management.

- 3.1.4 Of these the most relevant are the general guidance relating to heritage in the section 23 of the *Design* SPD and the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement management guidelines PH25-PH30. In particular, PH26 states that ‘Rear extensions should be as unobtrusive as possible and should not adversely affect the character of the building or the Conservation Area. In most cases such extensions should be no more than one storey in height ....’ PH27 states that ‘Extensions should be in harmony with the original form and character of the house and the historic pattern of extensions within the terrace or group of buildings.’ Although the proposals affect a basement and lightwell, the Council’s *Basements and Lightwells* SPD is primarily concerned with new work (especially excavations) rather than alterations and the proposals set out below do not conflict with any of its guidance.

## **3.2 Proposal**

- 3.2.1 The proposal is for a small extension to the basement which would replace the timber ‘deck’ balcony at the rear of the house, along with minor internal alterations.
- 3.2.2 The applications also seek to regularise the alterations noted at para 2.2.5 (above) that appear to have been made between 1994 and 2006, for which planning permission and listed building consent may not have been obtained. It is not possible to tell exactly what these works involved but, as noted, the joinery, fireplaces and other primary features were removed from the basement in 1961. The basement stair enclosure was replaced in 1994. The subsequent alterations do not appear to have resulted in the loss of significant historic features. It is proposed to retain the openings between the two basement rooms, the doors to the ground floor reception rooms and the basement stair in their present configuration. In line with the Council’s advice, the historic plan of the basement would clearly be identifiable from the retained nibs and downstands. We do not believe that these changes have harmed to the heritage significance of the building.

## **3.3 Assessment**

- 3.3.1 The primary purpose of the proposed work is to create a high-quality living room that makes the best use of the existing basement. It would rationalise the present rather dark and cluttered space, improving its environmental performance. The design would be simple and contemporary, complementing the original character of the house and replacing the poor-quality work of 1994.
- 3.3.2 The new balcony would be an elegant lightweight structure with a painted steel balustrade in keeping with the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century classically-derived character of the house. The rear basement area (below the present timber balcony) would be enclosed to form a small glazed extension, reflecting the proportions of the listed house, extending no further than the original closet wing.
- 3.3.3 The present opening in the rear wall of the basement would be widened beneath the extant concrete lintel (see 2.2.2) to bring in much-needed natural light. A small

area of primary brickwork would therefore be removed. The extension is too small to function as a separate room, so a narrower opening in the rear wall than proposed would make it very difficult to use. However, nibs and a downstand would be retained to frame the opening and to denote the original plan.

- 3.3.4 A new window and window seat would be formed in the rear wall of the closet requiring the removal of some primary brickwork from the rear wall of the closet wing. Externally the visual identity and historic proportions of the closet wing would be preserved by setting back the new glazed doors to mark the division between old and new work. (The ground floor of the closet wing would be unaltered.)
- 3.3.5 Adjacent to the house the ground level of the garden would partly be lowered to match that of the basement. (Its original level would be retained adjacent outside the closet wing.) The present landscaping of the garden appears to be contemporary with the timber balcony. It is not of architectural or historic interest. This work would have a negligible impact on the setting of the house and no effect on its heritage significance.
- 3.3.6 The proposed alterations to the rear of the house would be visible only from the its own private garden and, at a considerable distance, in private views from the upper flats of the Oldfield estate. The work would not be seen from anywhere in the public realm. The replacement of the intrusive timber balcony and steps would improve the appearance of the house in the private views, while having a negligible impact on the character or appearance of the listed building and conservation area.
- 3.3.7 The internal basement staircase would be rebuilt to complement the overall character of the new space and the former closet extension would open into the main part room. The blocked (presumed primary) doorway from the closet wing to the basement area would be re-opened to link with the new extension. (The 1961 plans indicate that the closet was separated from the main house by a stud partition, which was removed under the 1994 LBC.) This work would not affect the historic significance of the house, since the present form of this area dates from 1961 or later. The open plan of the basement would be retained but its original layout would remain clearly legible by the retention of nibs and downstands where openings have been made in the walls.
- 3.3.8 A new front door within a simple timber frame would be introduced under the front steps to make better use of this area and the adjacent vault. This would have minimal impact on the appearance of the house or street scene. (This has been done to many, if not most, of the other houses in the street without detriment to their special character. The change was also, as noted above, approved under the 1994 LBC.)

## 4 CONCLUSION

### 4.1 Summary

- 4.1.1 The new work would be undertaken to high architectural and construction standards that would make a considerable improvement to the amenity, appearance and energy efficiency of the house, securing its sustainable future as a family house. The work has been designed as a contemporary architectural intervention that responds to and enhances the historic architecture of the house without imitating or intruding on it. The new balcony delivers a conservation benefit by replacing a poor-quality modern feature with a design that far better reflects the character of the listed building. The new extension would be integral with the balcony. The present dark and uninviting rear area would become a useful and attractive space, of high quality in both external appearance and interior character.
- 4.1.2 The proposed work would not affect the features that contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of the house. It would therefore have a negligible impact on its heritage significance. With the minor exception of the new front door, it would not be visible from the public realm. Only to a very limited extent would it be seen in private views so it would have a negligible affect the character or appearance of the conservation area. To the extent that the new balcony would be visible, it would enhance the appearance of the house. Internally the work would be restricted to the most utilitarian parts of the house that retain few historic features and have already been subject to unsympathetic alteration.
- 4.1.3 In line with the Council's policies and guidelines, in particular the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement, the extension would be unobtrusive and would not adversely affect the character of the building or the Conservation Area. It would be of one story only, at semi-basement level, and in harmony with the original form and character of the house and (where they exist) with the historic pattern of extensions within the terrace or group of buildings.
- 4.1.4 For the reasons set out above the proposals are considered to meet the requirements of NPPF that development should be sustainable and that its benefits should outweigh any harm to heritage significance. Therefore, we submit that listed building consent and planning permission should be granted.