**Introduction**

* 1. This statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicants, Dr and Mrs Greenwood, in respect of their planning application for:

“*Replacement of rear first floor window with new door and erection of balustrade; replacement fanlight.”*

* 1. This application follows the withdrawal of a similar planning application (Ref: 2017/1604/P) and seeks to address the issues raised by the Case Officer in an email dated 14 June 2017 (**appendix A**). These predominantly related to the following:
1. The proposed alterations would degrade the symmetry of the host building and the neighbouring no.16; and
2. Require different pattern in the new door and fanlight, to be in keeping with the proportions and style of the original windows on the building.

* 1. This statement seeks to explain how the Officer’s comments and those received by the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Advisory Committee (PHCAAC), dated 18 May 2017 (Ref: 20963484), have been addressed in this revised application.

**Current Proposals**

* 1. The application relates to matters of detail in the building and not to altering the general proportions of it. There are three key changes to the current application scheme:
1. The rear, first floor, stair fanlight to be replaced with a more traditional style that mirrors that at the neighbouring no.16; and
2. The removal of the existing balustrade to the stair fanlight ;
3. Only a single door is now proposed on the first floor living room and this will be detailed in a style that matches the sash windows
	1. The purpose of the new door opening and balustrade is to allow air and light into the property. It is a maisonette occupying the two upper floors so has very limited amenity space which is a small balcony accessed from the return on the stairs. This is an awkward arrangement as there is an approximate 2 foot step up onto it. It is not possible to put steps in because of it being on the narrow staircase.
	2. This window is a fully glazed hinged casement window which acts as a door. The proposal seeks to reinstate a traditional fanlight that would enhance this elevation.
	3. The application proposes the removal of this balcony because of its unsafe access arrangement. Therefore the substitution of one balustrade for another would be on a like-for-like basis thus maintaining a similar relationship with next door as currently exists.



* 1. The applicants would like to introduce the opening with a single door in the rear elevation of the living room so that they can enjoy the canal aspect from within the habitable part of the property, not from a staircase. The balcony would not be large enough to sit outside and would only be large enough to place plant pots. Therefore it would not give rise to any amenity impacts.

**Character and Appearance**

* 1. It is recognised that the rear elevations of houses within St Mark’s Crescent are visible from the public realm and the canal towpath. However, there is an eclectic mix in their appearance and character, and this is what contributes to this stretch of the Regents Canal and the Conservation Area.
	2. There are an array of structures and enclosures at the end of the rear gardens facing the canal, interspersed by a range of mature trees. These establish the initial appearance of this group of houses (**appendix B, figure‘s 1 & 2).**
	3. There is variation in the colour of the rear elevations and many, if not most have been altered in some shape or form, particularly with new openings and balconies (**appendix B**, **figure’s 3 & 4**). There are examples of similar development as to what is proposed in this planning application (**appendix B**, **figures 3 & 5**).
	4. Numerous properties have been extended at lower ground floor level which is at ‘eye level’ when viewed from the tow path. There is no uniform architectural style at the rear and it is this variety that forms the character of this part of the canal and Conservation Area.
	5. The proposal seeks to reinstate a traditional fanlight at first floor level thus enhancing this elevation. This is currently a fully glazed hinged casement and functions as a door.

**Significance of Heritage Assets**

* 1. Paragraph 126 of the NPPF states that when conserving heritage assets that it should be in “… a manner appropriate to their significance.”
	2. At paragraph 132 it states:

“*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*.”

* 1. Historic England provide guidance on assessing ‘significance’ in ‘Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 – The Setting of Heritage Assets’ (2015). This sets out the steps to understanding the significance of a heritage asset:

Step 1: identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected.

Step 2: assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s).

Step 3: assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance.

Step 4: explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm.

Step 5: make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

The Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement is the starting point in terms of understanding the significance of the heritage assets within it. St Mark’s Crescent is identified as being within Sub Area One – Regents Park South, and recognises

that it runs parallel with the Regent’s Canal. The appraisal predominantly focuses on the front of properties identifying them as villa style buildings and the street as being intimate and enclosed in character. Gaps between buildings are identified as being important offering views through to the canal. The rear of the properties are not referenced.

* 1. The significance of the Regent’s Canal this is identified as being designated Open Space, Site of Nature Conservation Importance and being part of a Green Chain. It is recognised as being a significant feature of the Conservation Area and in the ‘layout and planning of the estate’. It states that:

“*…a number of buildings are designed to appear attractive when viewed from the canal with applied decoration to rear elevations*.”

* 1. Recognised ‘Significant views’ within Sub Area One are those along the Regent’s Canal as being ‘towards Primrose Hill School and St. Mark’s Church’. Views along this part of the canal are not mentioned.
	2. The rear of St. Mark’s Crescent is not identified as being of significance within the Conservation Area and this stretch of the canal is not recognised as being a ‘Significant view’. Consequently, following the guidance in the NPPF and Historic England ‘Good Practice Advice: 3’ it is considered that limited weight should be given to the significance of the rear of St. Mark’s Crescent. The majority of rear elevations have been altered, with varying architectural features in both historic and contemporary styles. Notwithstanding, they are generally of a good quality and the variety is what establishes the character of the area and views from the tow path.

**Symmetry**

* 1. In their comments on the previous application the PHCAAC state that the proposals would harm the ‘surviving symmetry of the pair of houses’ and that this is the significant feature of them. It is important to note that the application proposals relate to matters of detail, relocation of a balustrade, introduction of a traditional design. These are features that are common within most properties along this part of the Conservation Area. The proposals do not relate to alterations to the general proportions of the buildings. Their bulk and massing remain largely unchanged and therefore the symmetry of the pair would be unaffected by these proposals.
	2. There are a number of differences in the two buildings, some original and some as a consequence of alterations over time, that has diluted their symmetry:
1. The window arrangements are different. No. 15 retains the original ‘3 over 3’ panes. No. 16 has at some point been replaced with ‘4 over 4’ panes (**appendix B** **Figure 7**);
2. The second floor timber window in no. 16 has been altered by a much longer, almost double in length, replacement (Figure 7);
3. The windows at ground and first floor level are different;
4. No. 15 has a balcony including balustrade at first floor level. The application proposes the removal of this in exchange for the new opening and balustrade.
5. There is variation in site levels at lower ground and upper ground level with no. 15 being slightly higher.
6. The balustrades to the rear are of different design;
7. The fenestration at lower ground is different.
	1. Consequently it is considered that limited weight should be given to the statement that the proposals would ‘seriously harm the surviving symmetry of the pair of houses’. The application proposals are a matter of detail and the bulk and mass of the pair is not being altered and the general proportions are unaffected. Therefore the remaining symmetry is retained.
	2. In addition, the proposals seek to retain the original 3 over 3 window pane arrangement, reintroduce the traditional trace bars in the first floor fanlight and substitute the existing balustrade for a new one in a different location. High quality materials are proposed particularly the balustrade and can be controlled by a planning condition to ensure that it is fully sympathetic to the host building,
	3. The fact that properties have been altered at the rear has been considered as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in the locality. A recent decision at 31 St Mark’s Crescent (ref: 2016/7071/P) was approved in February 2017 for alterations to the dwelling including rear extension with terrace; replacement windows; rooflights; and alterations to fenestration.
	4. At paragraph 3.5 of the Officer’s report reference is made to an objection to the proposals on the basis that there is a ‘clear contrast between the dwelling and its garden setting’. However, the Officer considered that this was no longer a defining characteristic for properties in the row/local area, and consequently it would not lead to a significant impact upon the character and appearance of the local area.
	5. At paragraph 3.6 it is recognised that rear extensions are a common feature and are not considered to disrupt a uniform row of dwellings or appear uncharacteristic for the area. The form of development proposed as part of this application is also a common feature in the rear elevations of dwellings in the locality. Consequently the opening and balustrade would not cause harm to the conservation area and overall the proposals would preserve and enhance the original window arrangement, thus positively contributing to the Conservation Area.

**Summary**

* 1. The character and appearance of this part of Primrose Hill Conservation Area is characterised by an eclectic mix in the appearance of the rear of buildings when viewed from the canal tow path. Most buildings have been altered in some shape or form and this has been accepted by Officer’s when assessing applications within St Mark’s Crescent.
	2. The variation in the appearance of buildings is considered to be what contributes to the area. Therefore the significance that should be placed on the contribution the heritage asset makes in this instance is limited.
	3. The proposal seeks to reinstate a traditional fanlight at first floor level thus enhancing the appearance of this elevation. This is currently a fully glazed hinged casement and functions as a door.
	4. The application proposals relate to matters of detail that are common within most properties along this part of the Conservation Area. The proposals do not relate to alterations to the general proportions of the buildings and therefore the symmetry unaffected.
	5. In light of the above it is considered that on heritage and conservation grounds the proposed works are acceptable and would not cause significant harm to the character and appearance conservation area.

**APPENDIX A**

**From:** "Whittredge, Emily" <Emily.Whittredge@camden.gov.uk>

**Subject: Planning application 2017/1604/P 15 St Mark's Crescent**

**Date:** 14 June 2017 at 11:07:48 BST

**To:** "lawrence@lawrencewebb.co.uk" <lawrence@lawrencewebb.co.uk>

Dear Mr Webb,

I am writing to update you regarding the proposals at St Mark’s Crescent. As discussed, I have sought the view of our conservation team on the acceptability of the proposed alterations.  While it is recognised that very similar developments have been carried out at nearby properties, our concern is that the alteration to one half of a relatively balanced pair of semi-detached buildings would appear unbalanced to a degree that it does not at present.  The rear of the building is highly visible from the towpath, and this alteration would detract from the established character of these buildings.  Although the existing buildings are not exactly symmetrical, the alteration would further degrade their symmetry and balance and would appear discordant.

We would also wish to see a different pattern for the new doors and fanlight so that it is more in keeping with the proportions and style of the original windows on the building. On the basis of these objections, unfortunately, I am not currently in a position to support the application. A proposal where alterations are carried out jointly with the neighbouring property are more likely to be looked at favourably, but this would of course be subject to details.

Could you please confirm whether you would like the application withdrawn, or for me to proceed with a refusal so that the applicants can have the option to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate?

I would be grateful if you could let me know your decision by Friday 16th.

Kind regards,

 --
Emily Whittredge
Planner

Telephone: 020 7974 2362
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