

Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple Heritage Statement

December 2016



Built Heritage
Consultancy

Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple Heritage Statement

December 2016

Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	Understanding	2
3.0	Significance	22
4.0	Policies	31
5.0	Assessment of the proposals	40
6.0	Conclusion	48
7.0	Sources	49

© Built Heritage Consultancy 2016

This report is for the sole use of the person/organisation to whom it is addressed. It may not be used or referred to in whole or in part by anyone else without the express agreement of the Built Heritage Consultancy. The Built Heritage Consultancy does not accept liability for any loss or damage arising from any unauthorised use of this report.

The Built Heritage Consultancy Limited is registered in England, number 7314300. Registered office: 5 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon, OX14 3PX.

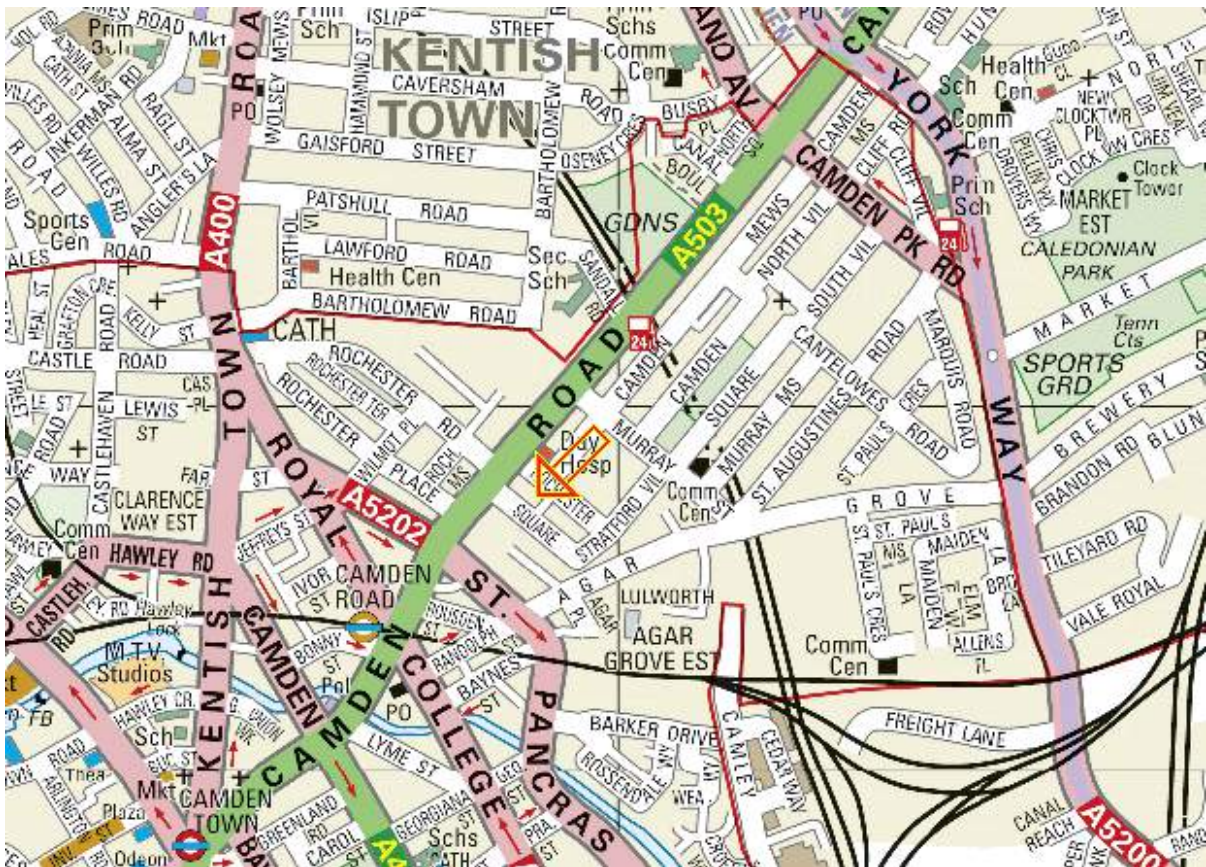
1.0 Introduction

The Built Heritage Consultancy were commissioned to assess the potential heritage interest of the former Spiritualist Temple on Rochester Square in the London Borough of Camden, to inform proposals for the site, including the detailed design of any replacement building if appropriate. Following a process of design development including Pre-Application discussions with Council officers, this final version of our Heritage Statement has been prepared to accompany the Application for redevelopment of the site.

The Spiritualist Temple stands within the Camden Square Conservation Area and is identified by the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (adopted 11 March 2011) as a building that makes a positive contribution to it. In heritage terms this means that redevelopment would only be permissible if the benefits outweighed any harm caused, as per paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

This document summarises our research, setting out the history of the building and its surroundings. It assesses the degree of heritage value the building possesses and sets out the applicable heritage policies, before explaining how redevelopment is possible, and considering the proposed scheme's acceptability in heritage policy terms.

The statement has been written by Edmund Harris and James Weeks, based on site visits and archival research in February and May 2016.



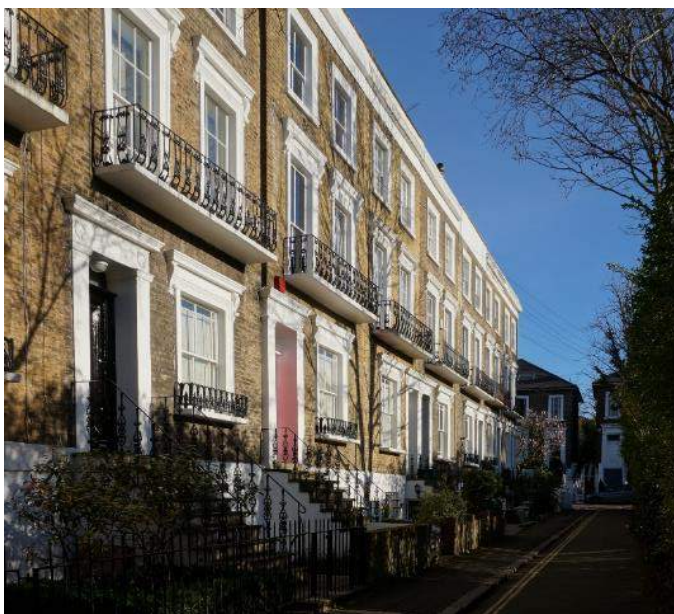
Location map (Streetmap)

2.0 Understanding

2.1 The historic development of Camden Square

In the Middle Ages the area now occupied by Camden Square was part of the Manor of Canteloves, which was located a short distance to the north and is commemorated in a number of local toponyms. It was part of the parish of the church today known as Old St Pancras, but whereas that is located some distance to the south, the main local population centre grew up to the north in Kentish Town, where a chapel of ease was built. The area was rural and mainly pasture land until the late eighteenth century, when the northwards expansion of London crossed the New Road (now Euston Road), which had been cut in 1756, and began to encroach on the area. An Act of Parliament of 1788 granted the Earl of Camden the right to develop his land, including much of Canteloves Manor.

The commercial and architectural potential of formally planned residential developments on a grand scale had already been amply demonstrated in the West End and Bloomsbury, yet attempts to repeat their success here fell flat. A plan of c. 1790 by George Dance the Younger for a complex based on a sequence of circuses in Camden Town came to naught and generally development was slow to get off the ground. It was finally spurred by the construction in 1824 of a turnpike road linking the emerging urban centre of Camden Town with Holloway and Tottenham - what is now known as Camden Road and Seven Sisters Road, or the A503. Detached and semi-detached villas went up along it, following the trend set by John Nash's Regent's Park Village, but construction on the remainder of the estate proceeded more slowly. Although some piecemeal development went up at the south-eastern end of Murray Street, it was not until the 1840s that a start was made in earnest on what would be Camden New Town.



The street front of Nos. 29-36, the terrace of houses forming the northwest side of Rochester Square (above, left) and semi-detached villas on the northeast side of Rochester Square (above, right), erected during the first phase of development of Camden New Town.

The Earl of Camden intended the estate to be an architecturally uniform, high-class development, in contrast to Camden Town, where short leases dictated a very different, more haphazard pattern - the result of property being erected primarily for a rapid return. In the New Town, leases were sold to commercial developers rather than to householders and specifications were imposed on the designs of houses. The centrepiece of the development was a large area of soft landscaping, now known as Camden Square Gardens, overlooked by a Gothic Revival church with a prominent spire (St Paul's, Camden Square, designed by Ordish and Johnson, built 1847-1849). This provided not only a landmark but, by indicating that the area had been instituted as a parish in the Established Church, was a badge of respectability.



Houses on North Villas (above, left) and on South Villas at its junction with Camden Square Terrace (above right), which represent the later phase of development of Camden New Town.

Although Rochester Square and most of the other streets had been laid out and named by 1849, at that date there were only six houses in the vicinity of St Paul's Church. Development proceeded slowly and the neighbourhood was not complete until 1871. The protracted nature of the construction left its mark on the architecture, the housing on later streets such as North Villas was of a higher density and decked out with exuberant Italianate trimmings, unlike the elegant but restrained terraces and villas to the south. The character of the development had been profoundly affected by the construction of the London extension of the Midland Railway in 1864-1867, whose final approach to the new St Pancras Station was taken directly underneath Camden Square in a cut-and-cover tunnel. The initial construction campaign and a later widening of the tunnel in 1898 necessitated the demolition of several houses. Although a number of prominent figures in Victorian life, such as the painter Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836–1912), settled in the neighbourhood, the noise, vibrations and pollution from the smoke vents much reduced its desirability and prestige. Some of the planned construction was curtailed, such as the development of two streets of mews. Wealthier residents began to move out and were replaced by manual workers, many of them employed by the railway and associated industries. Large houses originally intended for single families ended up in split occupancy. The population of the

old parish of St Pancras rose from 130,000 in 1841 to 236,000 in 1881, although it began to diminish in the twentieth century.



No. 21 Murray Mews, one of the few mews houses to have been constructed as part of the nineteenth century phase of development (above, left) and Camden Mews looking north from the junction with Murray Street.

The strategic importance of the railway lines and nearby industrial sites made the area a target for German bombing at an early stage of World War II. Although the wholesale demolition of the neighbourhood envisioned in the Abercombe Plan of 1942 was not enacted, the damage it inflicted changed forever the character of the district. The area between Rochester Square and St Pancras Way, which was particularly badly affected, was rebuilt with six-storey slab blocks of local authority housing set in spacious grounds, creating a very different kind of urban grain. Less prominent infill development appeared at later dates on several other former bombsites, such as Abingdon Close. Following war damage and problems caused by subsidence, St Paul's Church was demolished in 1956 and replaced by a far more modest structure.

From the 1960s onwards the area experienced a revival. Improvements in environmental standards brought about by measures such as the Clean Air Act of 1956 made it a more pleasant place to live. Many residential properties were sold out of split tenancy and turned into single family houses again or at any rate brought back into private ownership, which gave residents a vested interest in conserving and enhancing the neighbourhood. The renewed desirability of the area, coupled with an increase in permissible planning densities and the popularity of mews living, heightened interest in the still numerous vacant plots and several notable architects of the day recognised the potential for innovative new homes.

Two of the houses that appeared as a result have been statutorily listed in recognition of their architectural value – No. 62 Camden Mews (Grade II*) built by architect Edward Cullinan for himself in 1962-1965, and No. 22 Murray Mews (Grade II), built by Tom Kay for himself in 1970-1973. There are numerous other works dating from the 1960s to the 1990s, which may well follow

suit in due course. Notable examples of new dwellings on sites originally intended for mews include another work by Cullinan of 1983, No. 16 Murray Street, and No. 66 Camden Square of 1984-1985 by Peter Bell and Partners. The latest edition of the North London volume of *The Buildings of England* singles out for mention no fewer than six houses in Murray Mews alone, including Nos. 15-19 of 1964-1965 by Team 4, the practice that first brought Richard Rogers and Norman Foster to prominence.



No. 62 Camden Mews, Grade II*, by Edward Cullinan, 1962-1965 (above, left) and No. 22 Murray Mews, Grade II, by Tom Kay, 1970-1973 (above, right)



Nos. 15-19 Murray Mews, by Team 4, 1964-1965



No. 66 Camden Square, by Peter Bell and Partners, 1984-1985



No. 16 Murray Street by Edward Cullinan, 1983

These buildings exhibit considerable variety of form and design, a consequence of the large number of different architects involved and, no doubt, their desire to make a strongly personal statement - in several cases the architect was his own client. Many of the houses of the 1960s and 1970s exemplify the uncompromising language of brutalist domestic design that evolved from seminal works such as Le Corbusier’s Maisons Jaoul of 1954-1956. Those from the 1980s onwards are more diverse, including excursions into post-modernism and more expressionistic forms.

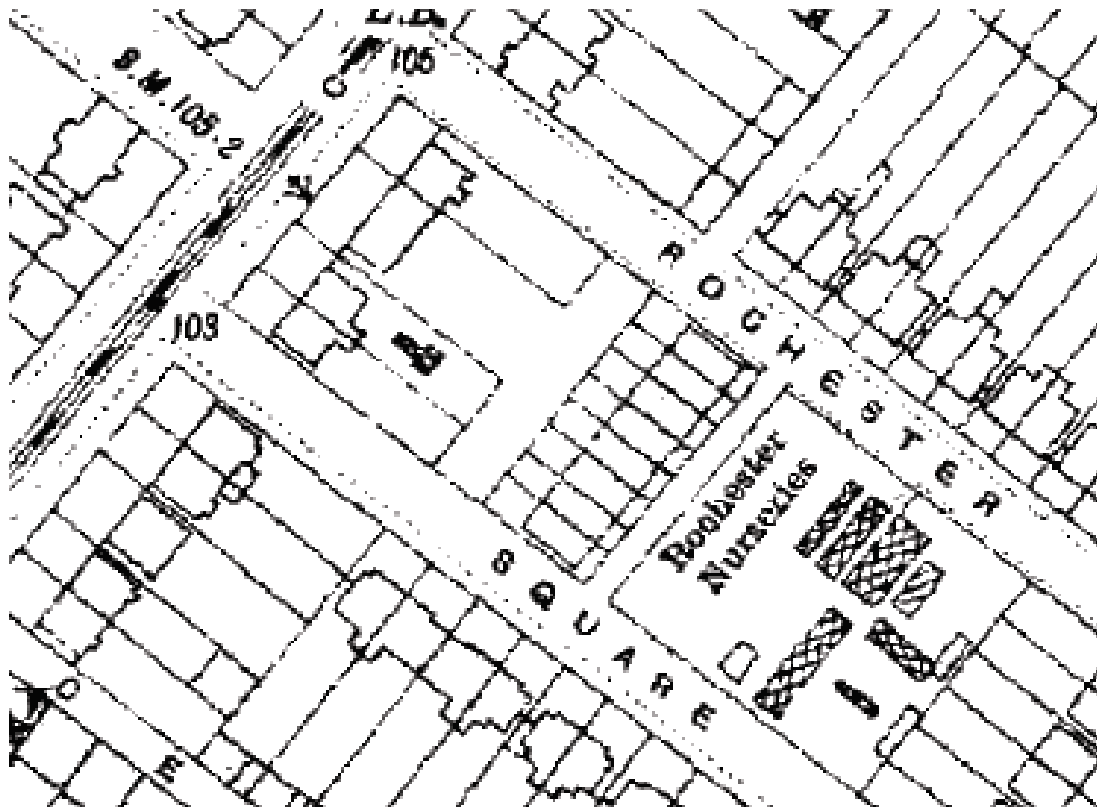
2.2 Map regression



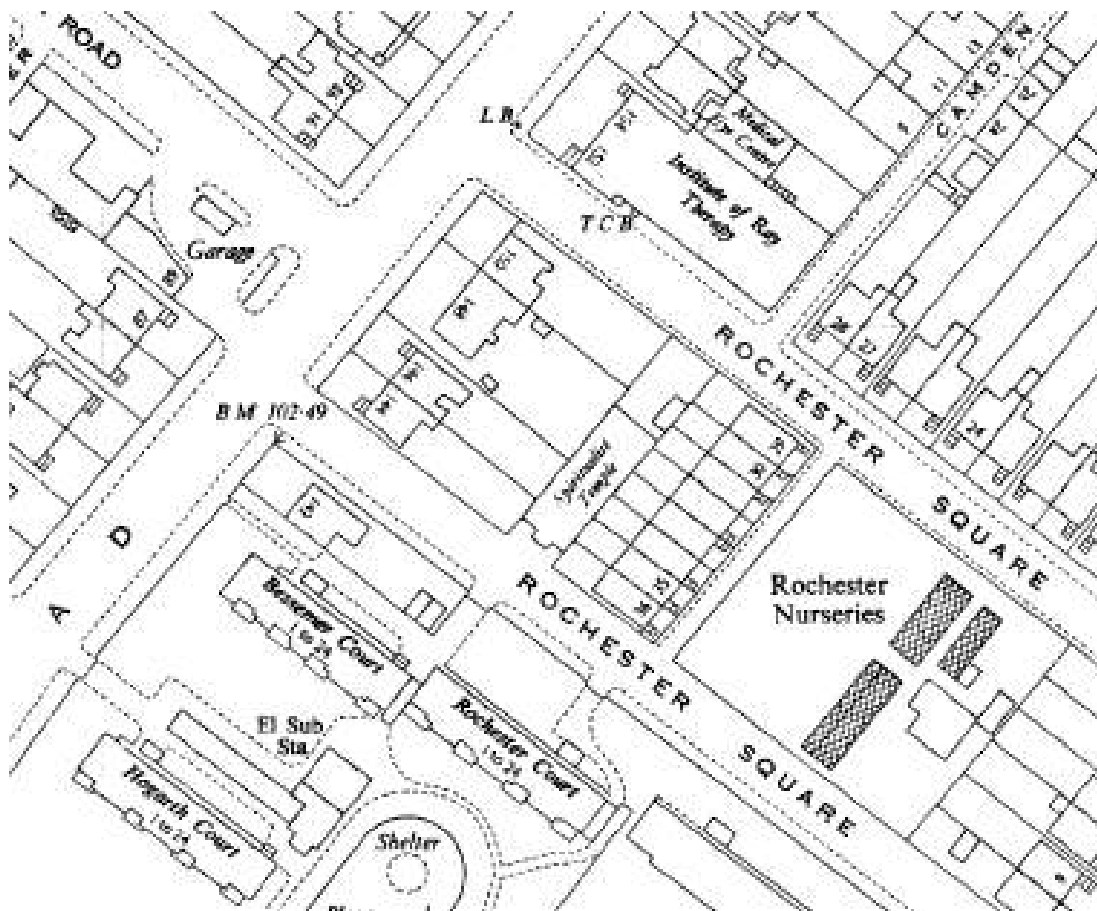
Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map of 1875



Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map of 1896



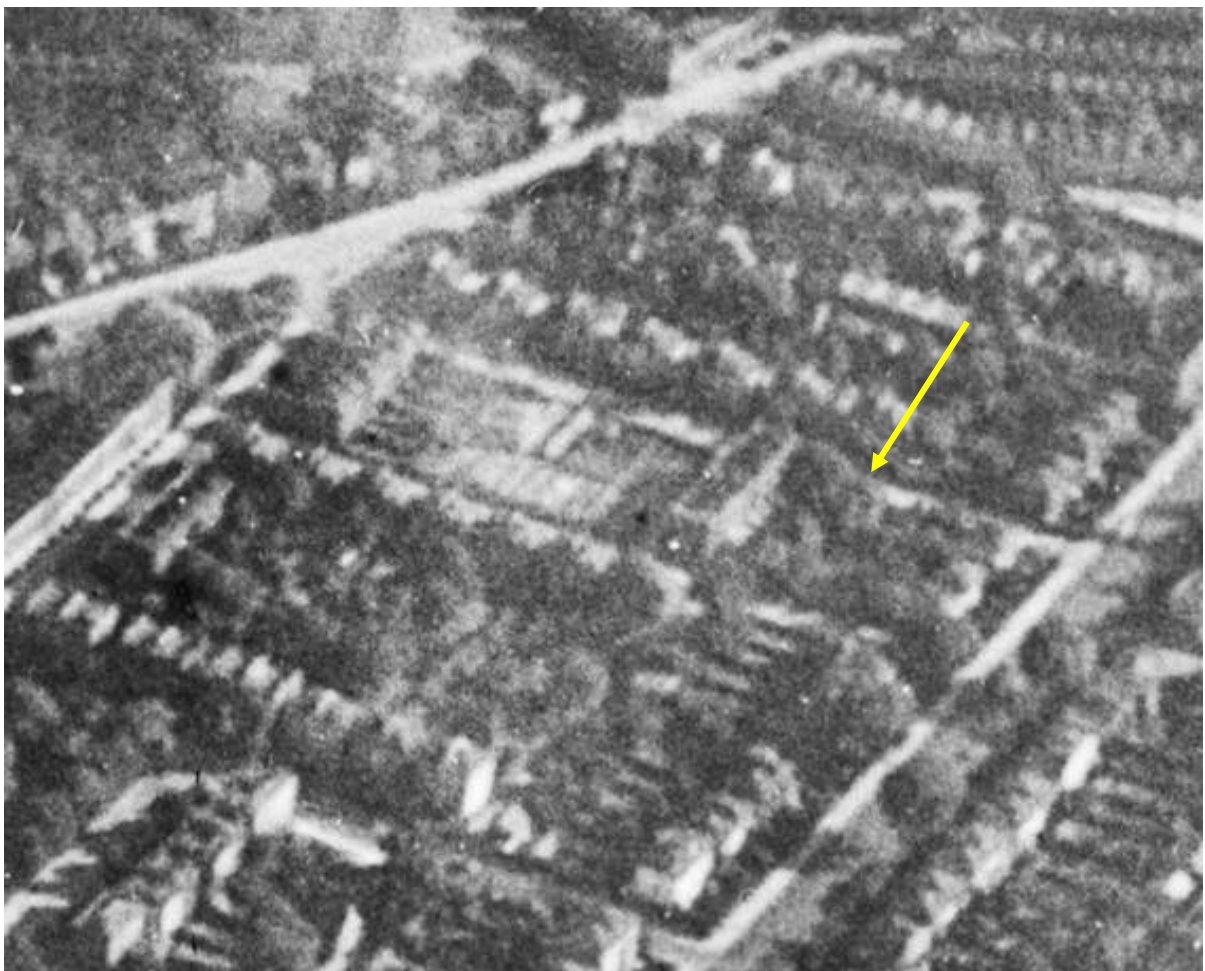
Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map of 1916



Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map of 1953

2.3 Development of the site

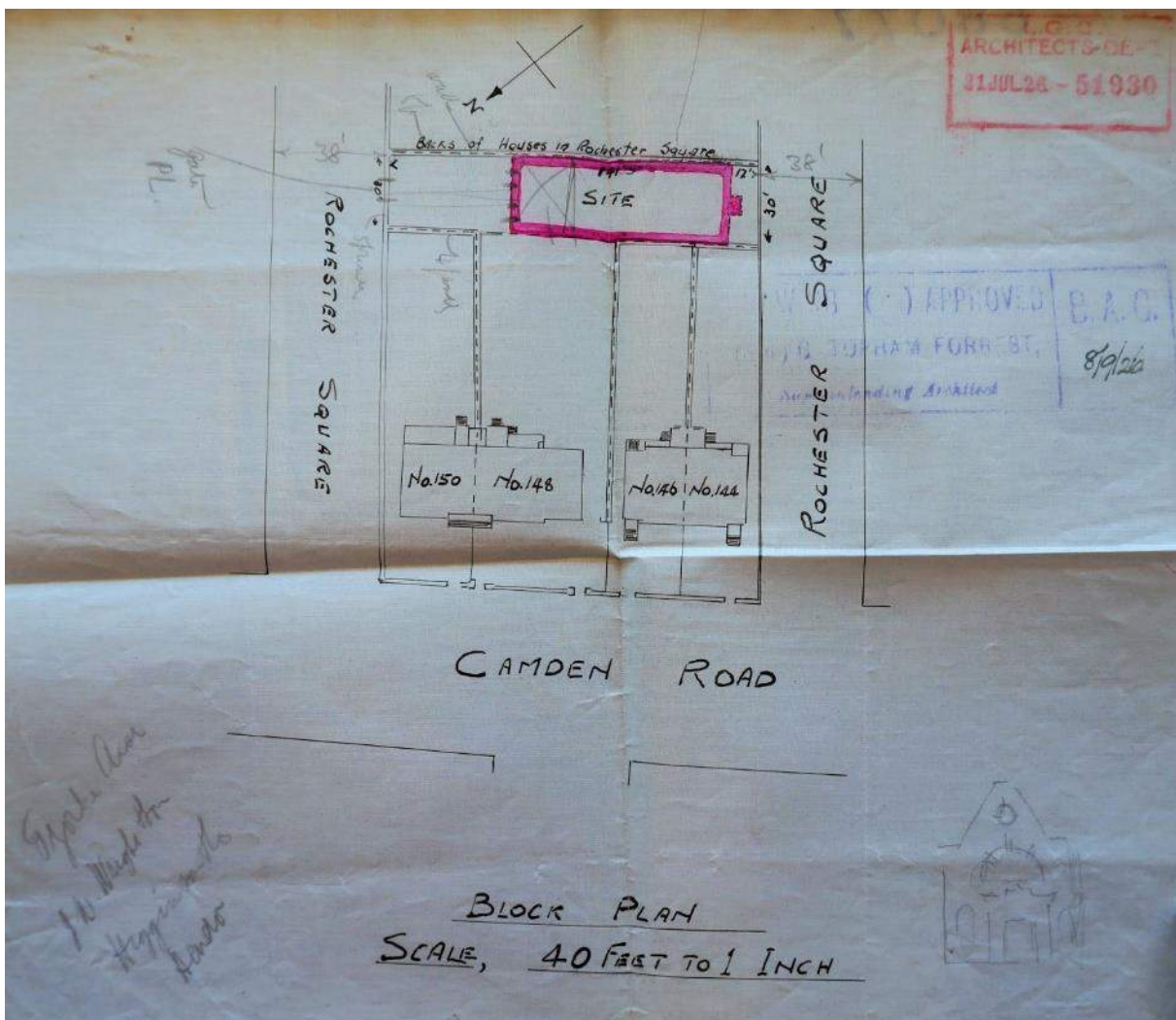
The site chosen for the Spiritualist Temple was an empty plot at the rear of Nos. 144-150 Camden Road (a pair of semi-detached villas), with frontages to both the northern and southern approach roads of Rochester Square. Map evidence shows that the plot was part of the rear garden of No. 148, which extended further back than those of the neighbouring properties so that its rear boundary was conterminous with that of the back gardens of Nos. 29-36, the terrace forming the northwest side of Rochester Square. It also occupied all the vacant space on either side to the rear of the neighbouring plots so that in plan it formed a 'T' shape. Landscaping of this garden in the form of trees and a lawn with a serpentine border is indicated on the 1875 Ordnance Survey map. Its position and form suggests that part of it may have originally been intended as the location for a service road, to be developed in due course with carriage sheds and mews.



Rochester Square from the north on an aerial photograph of March 1921, showing the future site of the Spiritualist Temple (marked by a yellow arrow) at this point still a garden, apparently full of mature trees (© Historic England. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk)

Although the plot is not quite aligned with Camden Mews to the north, of which it would have been a natural extension, this discrepancy can easily be explained by the presence of the back gardens of Nos. 29-36 Rochester Square. It is possible that, when the scheme to use the site for mews fell victim to the declining prestige of the area (which would have set in by the time of the 1875 Ordnance Survey) the owner of No. 148 purchased the vacant and by now commercially

unviable land to enlarge his garden. The site remained part of the garden until 1926, when a separate plot was formed out of it and purchased by Richard Ellis (c.1858-1929). He founded the Spiritualist Temple and commissioned a design for the building from Thomas Yorke, an architect and surveyor based at No. 20 Grove Terrace, Highgate Road. The Rochester Square Temple was affiliated to the Spiritualists' National Union, which was originally founded in 1901 as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. The Union's primary object was to promote and disseminate knowledge of the religion and its philosophy, based on the Seven Principles of Spiritualism revealed to and codified by Emma Hardinge Britten (1823–1899), the celebrated medium, spiritualist writer and lecturer. In 1902 the Union took over the rights, assets and obligations of the National Spiritualists' Federation, which had been founded in 1890, as advocated by Britten, to bring together hitherto disparate groups, mediums and their followers. The Federation's lack of legal status had meant that it could not hold property.

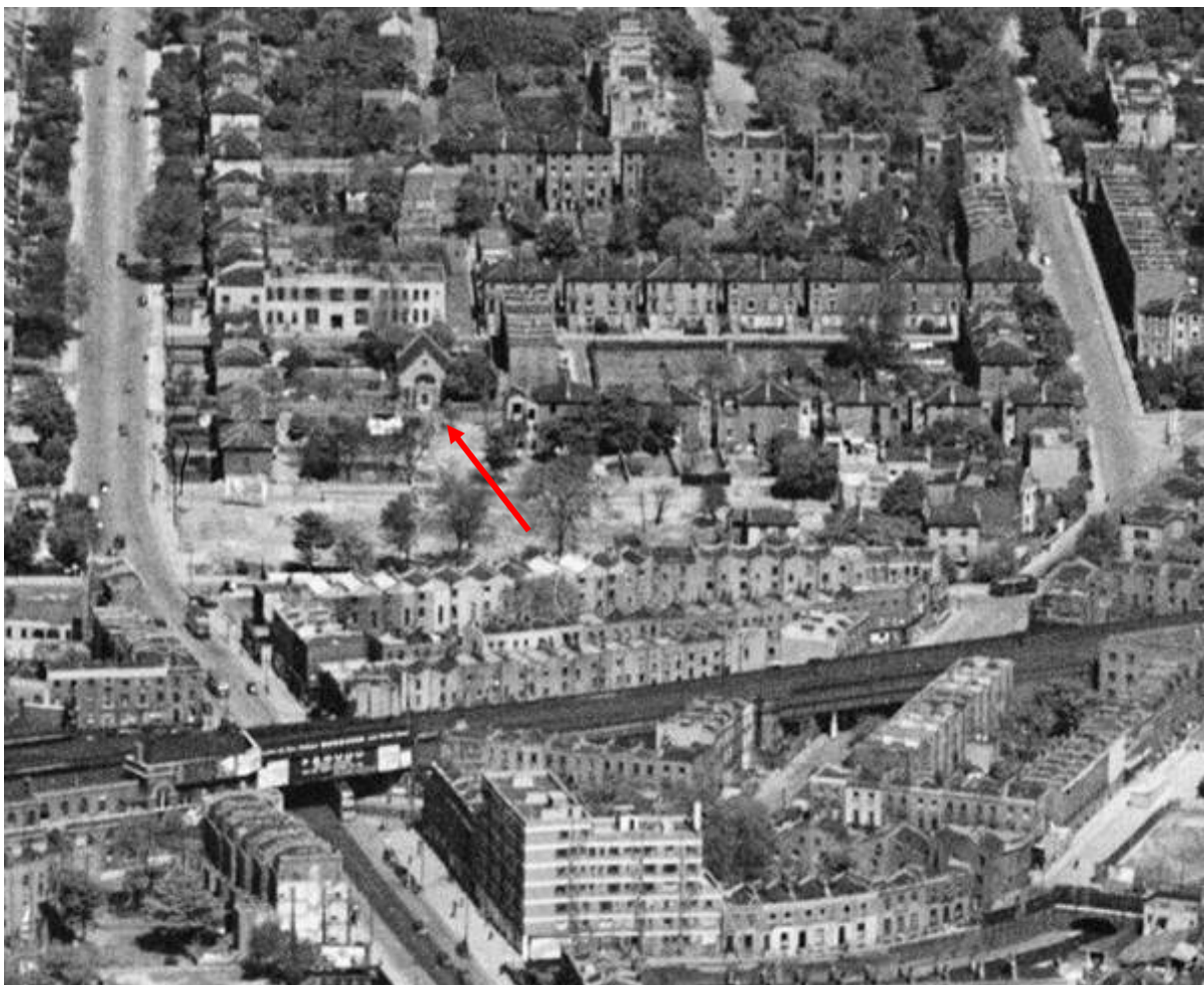


Block plan of the site of the Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple from the building control file of 1926-1927: note the pencil sketch of the street front in the bottom right-hand corner. (London Metropolitan Archives, City of London, GLC/AR/BR/06/058077 from the Greater London Council collection)

A building control file deposited in the London Metropolitan Archives provides details of the original planning application, in which the Temple is referred to simply as a 'mission hall'. The application was submitted to the London County Council on 30 July 1926 and an initial report on

it from the superintending architect, Topham Forrest, states that the plot 'would appear to have been garden ground in connection with No. 148 Camden Road'. Permission was granted, subject to conditions, on 8 September 1926 and then by St Pancras Borough Council on 30 September 1926. Forrest informed Yorke in a letter dated 28 January 1927 that final consent had been granted but building work must already have been in progress by this point since inscriptions on the foundation stones record that they were laid on 30 October 1926. They record also that the contractors were J. Wright & Son and Higginson & Co, both of Hendon.

Two of the three foundation stones were laid by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) and Hannen Swaffer (1879–1962). Conan Doyle is best remembered as the creator of Sherlock Holmes, but towards the end of his life he developed a strong interest in spiritualism. He became a prominent advocate of the movement, writing several books on it, including *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist* (1921), *The History of Spiritualism* (1926), and *Pheneas Speaks: Direct Spirit Communications in the Family Circle* (1927). Swaffer, a journalist, author and drama critic, also embraced spiritualism, proclaiming his belief in it in *Northcliffe's Return* of 1925. He was appointed honorary president of the Spiritualists' National Union and regularly attended séances.



Rochester Square from the southwest on an aerial photograph of May 1946: bomb damage temporarily opened up sightlines to the street front of the Temple (marked by a red arrow). (© Historic England. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk)

Unfortunately the working drawings have been removed from the building control file and only a small pencil sketch of the street front confirms that the subject of the application is indeed the design that was executed. Nothing is known about Yorke beyond the information given in the file. No buildings by him have been statutorily listed, nor are any works by him included in the London Borough of Camden's local list. The subsequent planning history can only be inferred from the evidence provided by the building itself since applications recorded on the London Borough of Camden's planning portal go back no further than 1997 and relate solely to the reduction of lime trees on the site. There are no signs that any major structural alterations have ever been carried out and the single biggest change seems to have been the removal of the original seating and introduction of a new floor surface of carpet tiles in the main worship space. The building has also been redecorated internally and new lighting and other services have been installed.

Substantial changes to the setting have occurred since the building was first erected, however. The destruction by German bombing of the area to the southwest of Rochester Square and the replacement of the villas that originally occupied the site by post-war social housing has been described above. Nos. 148-150 Camden Road were demolished and replaced, probably in the 1970s, by Julian Court, a four-storey block of flats. This building occupies not only the entire width of the plot but a large part of the former garden, the remainder being given over to a curved access road leading downwards to a basement garage. Part of the garden of No. 144 Camden Road was divided off to form a separate plot, which is now occupied by a two-storey private house.

2.4 The site today

Disposition and layout

The Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple occupies approximately half the strip of land between the gardens of adjacent properties on Camden Road and Nos. 29-36 Rochester Square. The principal axis of the building runs southwest-northeast. The main entrance front is on the southern approach road to Rochester Square and is set back slightly from it behind iron railings mounted on a dwarf wall. This frontage is hard landscaped. To the rear is a garden, also hard landscaped although with some planters and mature trees and shrubs. At the north end of the plot this is closed off by a boundary wall running along the northern approach road to Rochester Square. This probably pre-dates the Temple and has just a narrow entrance fitted an openwork metal gate for access.

The building consists of a large worship space rising to approximately second-floor level. The main entrance front has a small porch. To the rear is a single-storey wing, approximately half of which is occupied by a function room extending its full length. The remainder is occupied by a corridor with various ancillary spaces (toilet, kitchenette, etc) opening off it. The lateral walls of the building are coterminous with the boundary of the plot and therefore completely blind, with the exception of the ancillary spaces in the rear wing, which have their own windows on the north side although they are glazed with frosted glass.

Exterior

The Temple is built of red brick laid in Flemish bond. The worship space has a pitched roof covered in slate with a central ridge light running the entire length of it. The rear wing has a flat roof, probably of concrete, screened by a low parapet. There are sparingly used stone (and in some instances cast concrete) dressings for details like cornices, string courses, drip mouldings and quoins, while some of the window heads and surrounds are executed in tiles. The windows are a mixture of timber framed glazing and metal-framed, industrially produced units.

Stylistically speaking, the only part of the building with a pronounced architectural flavour is the entrance front. It is a kind of free classical style – symmetrical and dominated by a large lunette with prominent but widely spaced voussoirs, and an oculus above whose surround is executed in tiles. All of the gable is finished in smooth render. Below the lunette projects the porch, which has a doorway with a segmental stone arch and quoins. Its parapet steps upwards in the middle and the two halves bend through small reverse curves to form something like the tip of an ogee arch. The twin wooden doors are panelled with small upper lights and have decorative iron strap hinges. Flanking the porch are two windows with round arches constructed of tiles, beneath the sills of which are set the foundation stones. The mixture of features drawn from different historical styles, the free treatment of classical devices and the interest in varied textures and materials all reflect the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement in architecture, which had been prevalent from the 1890s up until World War I.

The rear elevation to the garden is simpler and the decorative touches (tile springings and keystones to the segmental arches, moulded sills, etc) are used sparingly. The triplet of round-arched windows that are a prominent feature of the interior fill the gable of the rear worship space. These windows are obscured at close range by the rear wing, which blocks sightlines to them. The flat peak to the gable is adorned by a stone finial in the form of a seven-pointed star, echoing the opening directly beneath of identical form (this is entirely hidden from view by the rear wing and visible only internally).

Interior

The interior of the front porch is entirely plain. The main worship space is oblong and open to the roof. This is a simple structure – the trusses have arch-braced collar beams and king posts with raking struts. They are supported on moulded corbels of simple design, fixed to internal buttresses. The underside of the roof is clad in diagonal matchboarding and the ridge light has clear glazing. The walls are finished simply in painted plaster with a wooden dado rail. The loss of the seating and floor surface makes it difficult to guess the original configuration of the interior and no photographs or drawings have been found which record its appearance.

Surviving evidence suggests that the layout was probably similar to that of the chapels and meeting houses of most other non-conformist denominations in being orientated towards a (nominal) east end marked by a central dais and pulpit, flanked by doors leading to ancillary accommodation at the rear. All of that is in evidence here. Although the Temple was used for

mediumship and spiritual healing, these were combined with congregational worship similar to that of mainstream Christian denominations. The dais is of polygonal form and has turned, spiral balusters supporting a moulded rail and square posts with moulded caps. Behind is a broad, tall, oval-arched recess with a wooden lining emerging as a moulded architrave and small panelling in imitation of sixteenth and seventeenth century prototypes covering the rear wall. The flanking doorways have wooden linings and the doors have circular lights with wavy glazing bars, glazed with frosted glass. Directly above the oval-arched recess is a window in the form of a seven-pointed star with stained glass in the central roundel depicting Christ giving a blessing.

The three round-arched windows above filled with tinted glass with decorative leading, although incorporating in the centre stained glass panels depicting scrolls inscribed 'Light', Peace' (this includes a dove and rays of light) and 'Life'. This does not quite accord with the Spiritualists' National Union's motto of 'Light, Life, Truth'. The lunette over the main entrance is filled with engraved glass, including a depiction of the True Cross superimposed on a seven-pointed star. These seem to be the only features that explicitly embody any of the tenets and symbolism of spiritualism - the board hanging on the north wall proclaiming the Seven Principles of Spiritualism is clearly a much later addition, while the function of the votive light suspended from a bracket above with dais is unclear. A marble wall tablet commemorates the Temple's founder, Richard Ellis, and a wooden board commemorates deceased members of the congregation. The interiors of the ancillary spaces to the rear of the building are plain and finished very simply.

Photographs



The entrance front of the Temple and, to the right, the rear elevations of Nos. 29-36 Rochester Square



Detail of the street front and main entrance



The foundation stone laid by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



The foundation stone laid by Hannen Swaffer and his wife



The rear elevation of the Temple and garden



The side elevation of the Temple seen from the access road serving the basement garage in Julian Court



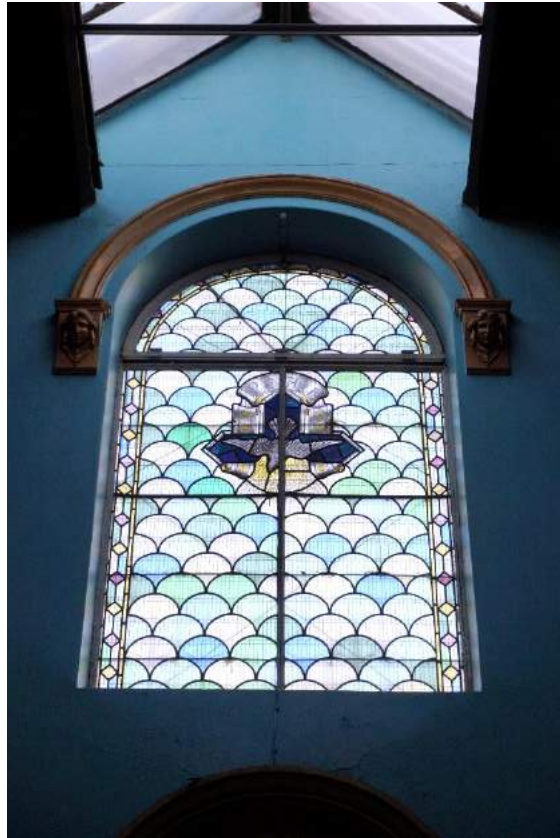
The Temple and rear boundary wall seen from the northern approach road to Rochester Square



The interior of the Temple looking north towards the pulpit: at the time of the site visit the building was temporarily tenanted by property guardians, to whom the furniture visible here belonged.



The pulpit and dais, flanked by the doors leading (left) to the corridor providing access to the kitchen and toilets and (right) to the function room



Stained glass in the windows above the dias: the roundel with the representation of Christ (above, left) and the central round-headed window with dove and scroll reading 'Peace' (above right). The glass in the remaining two is identical, with the exception of the central symbol and inscription on the scroll.



Wall tablet adjacent to the main entrance commemorating the founder of the Temple



Remembrance board commemorating deceased members of the Temple adjacent to the main entrance



The interior of the church looking south towards the main entrance



Interior of the function room in the single-storey wing at the rear of the Temple



The corridor in the single-storey wing to the rear of the Temple providing access to the ancillary accommodation (above, left), including the kitchen (above, right) and toilets

3.0 Significance

3.1 Introduction

Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple is recognised by the London Borough of Camden in the appraisal for the Camden Square Conservation Area as a building that makes a positive contribution to it. In order to assess the potential impact of the proposed scheme upon the heritage interest of the site and the wider conservation area, it is necessary first to define in detail the significance of the building and of its role in the conservation area.

The following assessment of the building uses English Heritage / Historic England's Conservation Principles (2008), which provides tools for understanding the significance of buildings and places in relation to the following values:

- **Evidential (or archaeological) value** – the physical aspects of a building that yield evidence about its past.
- **Historical value** – the extent to which the building is associated with or illustrative of historic events or people.
- **Aesthetic (architectural / artistic) value** – includes the importance of buildings or places for their design, visual, landscape and architectural qualities.
- **Communal value** – includes the importance of buildings or places to societies and communities, including for local identity.

The assessment of the conservation area and the site's role within it draws upon the methodology outlined in English Heritage / Historic England's Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (2011). This document provides guidance on the designation, appraisal and management of conservation areas, and is mostly intended as guidance to local authorities when designating conservation areas and producing conservation area appraisals and management plans. This document outlines a number of questions which English Heritage / Historic England suggest should determine the interest of a potential heritage asset within a conservation area, and which inform the assessment below. These questions include:

- Is it the work of a particular architect or designer of regional or local note?
- Does it have landmark quality?
- Does it reflect a substantial number of other elements of the conservation area in age, style, materials, form or other characteristics?
- Does it relate to adjacent designated heritage assets in age, materials or any other historically significant way?
- Does it contribute positively to the setting of adjacent designated heritage assets?
- Does it contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces including exteriors or open spaces with a complex of public buildings?
- Is it associated with a designed landscape, e.g. a significant wall, terracing or a garden building?

- Does it individually, or as part of a group, illustrate the development of the settlement in which it stands?
- Does it have significant historic association with features such as the historic road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?
- Does it have historic associations with local people or past events?
- Does it reflect the traditional functional character or former uses in the area?
- Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the area?

3.2 The Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple

The Architectural Heritage of Spiritualism

Although Spiritualist temples are often grouped together with the heritage of non-conformist denominations such as the Methodists, Baptists and Unitarians, in fact their pedigree is very different. Those three denominations appeared out of the religious ferment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They attracted large numbers of adherents and were active throughout Great Britain. Many of those were prominent merchants and industrialists who put at their disposal considerable financial resources. This enabled worshipping communities to put up architecturally significant buildings to demonstrate their pride and confidence, and to accommodate the large numbers of followers that they attracted. Their chapels were often combined with schools and other charitable institutions. The Spiritualists, by contrast, appeared much later and indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century when their movement had coalesced into a formally constituted association and appeared on the national stage, organised religion had started to go into decline.



Brighton Spiritualist Church, Edward Street, Brighton (Unlisted, Bev Pike of Overton and Partners, 1964-1965)

Having initially started as small groups of people holding meetings and séances in private houses the Spiritualists had needs that were very different and far more modest. Their buildings were emphatically meeting houses rather than chapels. Certainly the movement was popular, especially during the inter-war period when esoteric interests were very much in vogue, as depicted and indeed sometimes parodied in contemporary works of literature. But this popularity seems never to have translated into a major architectural programme. This is reflected in the fact out of the five Spiritualist Churches that have been statutorily listed, all were originally built for other denominations. Only two Spiritualist churches are included in the Twentieth Century Society's database of churches – the Rochester Square Temple and the National Spiritualist Church in Brighton (Bev Pike of Overton and Partners, 1964-1965). The latter is an uncompromising piece of highly sculptural modernism but, even allowing for the very different idiom to the Rochester Square Temple, no common characteristics can readily be deduced.

As discussed above, the features of the Rochester Square Temple that can explicitly be identified with the Spiritualist Movement are confined to a few touches of symbolism, such as the seven-pointed stars, and the stained glass windows. In all other respects its significance merits consideration in the wider-context of non-Anglican and non-Catholic inter-war places of worship.

Assessment against listing criteria

The two main criteria used by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in assessing whether a building is of sufficient special interest to merit being added to the statutory list are: historic interest, and architectural interest. The first of these can be dealt with briefly: in the *Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings* it is stated that 'To be of special historic interest a building must illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural, or military history and/or have close historical associations with nationally important people'. As one of a large number of Spiritualist churches founded in the inter-war years it has no intrinsic interest on those grounds alone, while the associations with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Hannen Swaffer are not known to extend beyond their laying of foundation stones. No associations with nationally important events have been discovered.

To take the second criterion, in the same document it is stated that 'To be of special architectural interest a building must be of importance in its architectural design, decoration or craftsmanship; special interest may also apply to nationally important examples of particular building types and techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms'. This needs to be considered in the light of a general principle set down in the *Principles of Selection* of taking into account age and rarity when considering a building for listing. Since the Temple was built well after 1840 – the cut-off date for a general presumption in favour of listing – particular stringency would be exercised in the selection process were it to be considered for listing.

This criterion is best illuminated by considering the building in its broader context of the history of British architecture in the early twentieth century and comparing it with an example of a similar building type that has been listed at Grade II.

Significance in a National Context

The Rochester Square Temple was built during a period when British architecture was in a state of flux. During the inter-war years, modernism was viewed with scepticism, if not downright hostility. It was slow to make inroads, not really gaining ground until the 1930s. One reason for this was that it was viewed in many circles as just another style – and one which was likely to be a passing fad - at a time of great architectural diversity. Numerous lines of development which had held sway before World War I were still being followed – Neo-Gothic (often increasingly stylised and abstracted), the multifarious strands of Arts and Crafts, Edwardian Baroque and Neo-Classicism, as well as architecture in thrall to Scandinavian National Romanticism. Only around the beginning of the 1930s did architects start to draw selectively on developments in Continental Europe, such as German Expressionism or the elementary geometrical forms of Dutch architect Willem Dudok. Everything stated above was especially true of ecclesiastical architecture, where the influence of and preference for these past styles was even stronger than in other areas.



Methodist Church, Overstrand, Norfolk by Sir Edwin Lutyens, 1898: exterior and main entrance from Cliff Road

For all these reasons the architectural style of the Temple could just as easily have dated from 1906 as 1926. It is not innovative for its date and so in fairness it should really be compared with similar buildings produced by architects working in the same tradition. An instructive example in this regard is the Methodist Church on Cliff Road, Overstrand in Norfolk, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944), built in 1898. There are many points of similarity with the Temple: like it, the Overstrand Methodist church is a single, oblong space, built for a denomination which had no complicated liturgical requirements prescribing architectural form. Like it, Lutyens’s design shows

the influence both of the classical language of architecture and of the Arts and Crafts sensibility for materials and textures. Like it, this building has blank lateral walls and is top-lit.

But at Overstrand Lutyens exploited for architectural gain the limitations imposed on him. He raised up a clerestory, splitting the roof slopes into two tiers, giving the Church interest as a sculptural form and adding monumentality to what is in fact a small building. Each of the clerestory lunettes has two mullions, turning them into proper Diocletian windows, and closely spaced glazing bars. This makes the references to the classical tradition generally and English Georgian architecture in particular far more explicit than the way the same device is used at Rochester Square. To ensure the worship space is unencumbered, the clerestory is carried on transverse beams, which project through the lower roof slopes to meet the buttresses on which they rest. This introduces a note of drama and adds interest to what would otherwise be a featureless elevation.

The courses of tiles incorporated in the brickwork are used far more boldly than at Rochester Square, introducing striking contrasts of colour and texture and creating vivid patterning to heighten the drama of the deep portal. This is set off by the roughcast, unpainted rendering of the clerestory and barrel tiles to the roof slopes, adding great visual interest through variations in colour and texture. Unlike at Rochester Square the porch is pulled into the composition and made an integral part of the compact sculptural form of the building, and it is stylistically similar to the main part of the building. The significance of the Overstrand Church is reflected in its listed status. Whilst it is the work of a nationally important architect it is also of demonstrably significant architectural quality.

Significance in a Local Context

Nominations for inclusion of a building on the London Borough of Camden's local list are judged against a series of selection criteria. These are given in turn below, and followed by a consideration of the Rochester Square Temple against them.

To be considered for inclusion on the Local List nominations should satisfy a minimum of two criteria with at least one being either criterion 1 or 2.

Criterion 1, Architectural significance - this includes assets that:

- a) Demonstrate distinctive artistic, craftsmanship, design or landscaping qualities of merit (e.g. form, layout, proportions, materials, decoration); and/or*
- b) Are attributed to a locally known, architect, designer, gardener or craftsman and demonstrate quality of design, execution, and innovation; and/or*
- c) Exemplify a rare type or function which survives in anything like its original condition and form.*

The Temple's aesthetic expression is limited to the entrance front. Although some of its features such as the tiling around the gable oculus are recognisable as Arts and Crafts motifs, the elevation mixes up a number of different elements from different historical periods without achieving harmony or an interesting juxtaposition. The round-arched windows at ground floor level sit

uneasily with the projecting porch which is a plain late-Victorian version of 16th century gothic with a segmental arch; meanwhile the giant window above takes after Victorian versions of 17th century Flemish architecture, although the rendered upper façade is at variance with this, as is the oculus in the gable. Overall these different styles have not been thrown together with great aplomb and are used essentially to make more prominent what would otherwise be a fairly utilitarian structure with little presence in the streetscape.

The building is not the work of a locally renowned designer or craftsman – no buildings by Yorke are included on the local list – and although there are individual decorative features they do not add up to a coherent statement or embody a distinctive aesthetic. While Spiritualist churches are relatively rare in comparison to more mainstream denominations, there are hardly any features in this building which are identifiable as Spiritualist, while most of the original interior fittings have clearly been lost.

Criterion 2 - Historical Significance this includes assets that:

*a) Demonstrate rare evidence of a particular phase or period of the area's history;
and/or*

*b) Are associated with a locally important historic person, family or group;
and/or*

c) Are associated with a notable local historic event or movement;

Nominations under this criteria should retain physical attributes which are of key importance to their historical significance.

The Temple was erected long after the original phase of development of Camden Square and the adjacent streets had finished in c. 1871. It was built when the neighbourhood was at the nadir of its fortunes, and it is likely that the site was chosen because the new congregation's budget was limited and the land there was cheap. While there is some associative value from the fact that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Hannen Swaffer laid two of the foundation stones, their extensive activity in the Spiritualist movement means the church is not unique in this regard and they are not known to have had any subsequent association with it.

Criterion 3 - Townscape Significance this includes assets which play a key part in supporting the distinctive character of the local neighbourhood either as a landmark, for their aesthetic qualities, through promoting collective identity or group value.

The Temple makes a modest townscape contribution to the southern approach road to Rochester Square, but its relationship to the original streets and houses of Camden New Town is awkward. Stylistically, it has nothing in common with the terraces and villas that define the Conservation Area's special interest. The neighbouring properties present largely blind end walls to the street where the entrance front is located. The building is literally and metaphorically overshadowed by the much taller terrace of Nos. 29-36 Rochester Square, which presents a plain rear elevation to it. The location means that it is only visible in views looking northwest along the southern edge of the Square. The rear elevation of the Temple is restrained and set well back in the plot. Its position behind a high wall means that it barely figures in views at close range. It can be seen only at a distance from the southern end of Camden Mews where, thanks partly to the rising ground,

limited sightlines open up. Its design was clearly not considered in relation to Camden Mews, which, at the time of its construction, was a backstreet with numerous empty plots that would not have been considered a desirable address – mews living did not become popular for another thirty to forty years. For all these reasons the Temple's townscape and group value is relatively low.

Criterion 4 - Social Significance this includes assets that:

a) Are associated with distinctive communal, commemorative, symbolic or spiritual significance; and/or

b) Are associated with locally distinctive cultural heritage, such as art, literature, music or film; which have support from and are valued by a wider community or society.

Nominations under this criteria should retain physical attributes which are of key importance to their social significance.

The Rochester Square Temple formerly had religious significance as a local centre of the Spiritualist movement, but lost much of it when it ceased to function as a place of worship. It is not known to have any associations with locally distinctive cultural heritage.

3.3 Camden Square Conservation Area

The significance of the Camden Square Conservation Area derives primarily from its high degree of architectural uniformity as a formally planned early Victorian suburb. It was laid out on a regular, rectilinear street plan with Camden Square Gardens and the now lost Church of St Paul as its grand centrepiece. It fills most of the space between Camden Road, York Road and Agar Grove and includes frontages to these main thoroughfares, as well streets in the vicinity of St Paul's Crescent on the south side of the last of them. Although the construction was protracted, which is reflected by the stylistic variations in the houses, the area nonetheless exhibits a high degree of architectural homogeneity. This is explained by the fact that the street plan was laid out in its entirety before construction began and the size and general appearance of the houses, if not the detailing, were controlled by the Earl of Camden, who, as the ground landlord, was keen to maintain the respectability and social standing of the development. By the 1870s the area had been built up and the only free plots were those in the backlands originally intended for mews developments.

The revival of the area's fortunes in the 1960s after a long period of decline stimulated development on vacant plots, mostly although not exclusively in the backlands on sites intended for mews. These were architecturally innovative and, although very different in character from the original development, of considerable architectural quality. This is reflected by the granting of listed status to two of them and the identification of nearly all of them as a distinctive and positive part of the Conservation Area's character, which adds to its special interest. In all cases they are either consistent in scale with or visually subservient to the historic housing.

Rochester Square is identified as a discrete character area in the Conservation Area Appraisal. The square is unusual in that although it follows the classic London arrangement of terraces of townhouses arranged around a central green space, in this instance that was historically a

'working' rather than a recreational space – a nursery, which seems to perpetuate a use of the land dating from before the development of this formerly rural locality began. The urban grain is surprisingly varied within this small area. The houses on the northwest side of the square (Nos. 29-36) which back onto the Spiritualist Temple are a continuous three-storey terrace set on a tall semi-basement. But on the remaining two sides of the square included in the Conservation Area they are two-storey, semi-detached villas, also set on tall semi-basements, with attic storeys, as indicated by the dormer windows. Unusually, the houses on the southeast side present their rear elevations to the central space, although this becomes less surprising on acquaintance with the history of the site.

The setting of Rochester Square to the north is different in character. While the same materials – chiefly stock brick and slate - predominate among the historic buildings and boundary walls, there is far less regimentation and uniformity because of the more protracted and uneven development and post-war infill. Generally the buildings here are only two storeys high and not set on basements, although they are overlooked by taller buildings lining the square and Camden Road. There is much greater variation in the treatment of the street elevations and, as mentioned above, many of the houses erected since the 1960s are in a defiantly modernist idiom that makes few concessions to its surroundings. That pattern of development continues to this day, as demonstrated by the house under construction in the rear garden of 144-146 Camden Road.

Since the elevations that larger buildings present to this area are rear elevations and not the principal aspect, they provide a sense of enclosure which in turn provides a sense of seclusion. The nature of the streetplan means that here gardens are situated side-on to the streets, so trees and greenery play an equally important role as before in Rochester Square itself, although in a different way as here they are seen above garden walls and in the spaces between buildings. The impression they make is less formal and more haphazard. The buildings on Camden Mews stand directly on the street with no front plots and this road is partly paved in granite setts.

As a much later addition of unremarkable design quality which was never conceived as part of the Camden New Town, the Spiritualist Temple cannot be considered part of the area's core special interest. As discussed above, because of its position it has little group value with the buildings that surround it. Its modest scale and secluded location mean that it is not visually prominent. Although the design of the street front – the only architecturally prominent feature – has enough visual interest to make a positive contribution to the immediate surroundings, that contribution is limited. The Temple is not of great architectural quality, and stylistically it has little in common with any of the other buildings. The latter is also true of the original St Paul's Church or the former Presbyterian Church on Camden Park Road Finch (Hill and Paraire, 1867-9, not listed), but these were designed as Gothic stone buildings with tall spires to act as landmarks. They were typical of the religious buildings that were provided in new developments erected in the mid-nineteenth century and therefore as characteristic a statement of their time as the stock brick terraces and villas.

3.4 Summary of significance of the Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple

- The architectural quality of the design is below the standard required for local or national listing. It is not a notable example of its style or building type and is not the work of a noted architect.
- The Temple has limited historical value: it appeared during a period of decline in the neighbourhood and its limited architectural expression reflects this. The buildings of the 1840s-70s and 1960s onwards are the key phases defining the special interest of the Camden Square Conservation Area.
- The Temple was not one of the two places of worship planned as part of the original Camden New Town development. As a record of the activity of the Spiritualist movement the Temple has some local interest, which, given the cessation of worship, is now purely historical.
- The building's location means that it does not feature prominently in important views, it makes only a limited positive contribution to the Conservation Area.
- As a building that is lower in mass than its older neighbours and draws on the language of traditional (i.e. pre-modernist) architecture, the Temple is appropriate to its surroundings. However, the difference in style and material means that it has little visual consistency with the stock brick and stucco housing of the original development.

4.0 Policies

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF seeks to streamline national planning policy into an integrated set of priorities, structured around the central theme of sustainable development, ‘which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking’ (paragraph 14). In order to successfully deliver sustainable development, the NPPF makes it clear that ‘business should not be overburdened by the combined requirements of planning expectations’ and that ‘planning policies should recognise and address potential barriers to investment’. Paragraph 7 states that:

There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- *An economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy...;*
- *A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities... by creating a high quality built environment... ; and*
- *An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy; ...*

Core Planning Principles

The NPPF also sets out 12 ‘core planning principles’ that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. These include that planning should:

- *Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs...;*
- *Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;*
- *Take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas...;*
- *Encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value;*
- *Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations;*
- *Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.*

Good design

The NPPF also requires high quality design within the built environment, stating in paragraph 56 that:

The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

Paragraph 57 states that:

It is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes.

Paragraph 58 states that:

Local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- *will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- *establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;*
- *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;*
- *respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;*
- *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.*

Paragraph 61 adds:

Although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Chapter 12 of the NPPF (paragraphs 126 to 141) sets out the national planning policies on the historic environment. Paragraph 126 states that: ‘Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance’. The guidance continues

to place the assessment of the significance of heritage assets and the impact of proposed development on this at the heart of planning for the historic environment, as follows:

Paragraph 128 states:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.

Paragraph 129 states:

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

Paragraph 131 states:

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

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

Paragraph 137 sets out as a general principle that

Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas... to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

Regarding the impact of the proposed redevelopment of the site of Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple on the Camden Square Conservation Area, paragraph 133 states that

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to... a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss (...)

and paragraph 134 states that

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Paragraph 138 sets out the criteria against which the impact of the proposed demolition of the Temple would be assessed to enable it to be classified as substantial or less than substantial harm:

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

With regard to assessing the loss that would be entailed by the proposed demolition of Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple itself, paragraph 135 states:

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Concerning the obligations incumbent on the planning authorities, paragraph 136 states:

Local planning authorities should not permit loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred.

Concerning the obligations incumbent on the developer, paragraph 137 states that local authorities:

...should also require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

4.2 Regional planning policy

The London Plan (March 2016)

This document is an overall strategic plan, setting out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of London over the next 20–25 years. It is meant to ensure that there is ‘general conformity’ between each London Borough’s Local

Development Plans and provides general guidance on spatial development within all London Boroughs.

The specific policies within the London Plan that are relevant to consider in this case are as follows.

Policy 7.4 'Local Character' requires that:

Development should have regard to the form, function, and structure of an area, place or street and the scale, mass and orientation of surrounding buildings.

The approach to architecture is discussed in Policy 7.6, which states as a general strategy that:

Architecture should make a positive contribution to a coherent public realm, streetscape and wider cityscape. It should incorporate the highest quality materials and design appropriate to its context.

It goes on to set out the following policies guiding the decision-making process.

Buildings and structures should:

- a. Be of the highest architectural quality;*
- b. Be of a proportion, composition, scale and orientation that enhances, activates and appropriately defines the public realm;*
- c. Comprise details and materials that complement, not necessarily replicate, the local architectural character;*

[...]

- f. Provide high quality indoor and outdoor spaces and integrate well with the surrounding streets and open spaces;*
- i. Optimise the potential of sites.*

Policy 7.8 states that, as a general policy guiding the design of proposals which will have an impact on heritage assets:

C. Development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.

D. Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.

4.3 Local planning policy

Policy CS14 of the Camden Core Strategy 2010-2025 Local Development Framework is relevant to the proposals for Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple. It sets out LB Camden's general position on new design and heritage assets, stating that

The Council will ensure that Camden's places and buildings are attractive, safe and easy to use by:

- a) requiring development of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character;*
- b) preserving and enhancing Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens;*
- c) promoting high quality landscaping and works to streets and public spaces;*
- d) seeking the highest standards of access in all buildings and places and requiring schemes to be designed to be inclusive and accessible;*
- e) protecting important views of St Paul's Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster from sites inside and outside the borough and protecting important local views.*

Policy DP24 sets out how the Council secures high quality design and states that

The Council will require all developments, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, to be of the highest standard of design and will expect developments to consider:

- a) character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings;*
- b) the character and proportions of the existing building, where alterations and extensions are proposed;*
- c) the quality of materials to be used;*
- d) the provision of visually interesting frontages at street level;*
- e) the appropriate location for building services equipment;*
- f) existing natural features, such as topography and trees;*
- g) the provision of appropriate hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatments;*
- h) the provision of appropriate amenity space; and*
- i) accessibility.*

Policy DP25 deals specifically with heritage assets and states that the Council will:

- a) take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;*
- b) only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area;*
- c) prevent the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area where this harms the character or appearance of the conservation area, unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention;*
- d) not permit development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character and appearance of that conservation area; and*
- e) preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of a conservation area and which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.*

A Local Plan is currently at submission stage and therefore policies within it can therefore be given limited consideration when determining planning applications. Those which are relevant to the proposals for Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple are quoted below. Policy D1 covers new design and states the following:

The Council will seek to secure high quality design in development. The Council will require that development:

- a) respects local context and character;*
- b) preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2 - Heritage;*
- c) is sustainable in design and construction, incorporating best practice in resource management and climate change mitigation and adaptation;*
- d) is of sustainable and durable construction and adaptable to different activities and land uses;*
- e) comprises details and materials that are of high quality and complement the local character;*
- f) integrates well with the surrounding streets and open spaces, improving movement through the site and wider area with direct, accessible and easily recognisable routes and contributes positively to the street frontage;*
- g) is inclusive and accessible for all;*
- h) promotes health;*
- i) is secure and designed to minimise crime and antisocial behaviour;*
- j) responds to natural features and preserves gardens and other open space;*
- k) incorporates high quality landscape design (including public art, where appropriate) and maximises opportunities for greening for example through planting of trees and other soft landscaping,*
- l) incorporates outdoor amenity space;*
- m) preserves significant and protected views;*
- n) for housing, provides a high standard of accommodation; and*
- o) carefully integrates building services equipment.*

The Council will resist development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

Policy D2 concerns heritage assets and states that the council

...will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens and locally listed heritage assets.

Concerning designated heritage assets it states that

The Council will not permit the loss of or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, including Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings, unless it can be demonstrated that the

substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

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

The Council will not permit development that results in harm that is less than substantial to the significance of a designated heritage asset unless the public benefits of the proposal convincingly outweigh that harm.

With regard to conservation areas it states that

In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management strategies when assessing applications within conservation areas.

The Council will:

- e) require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area;*
- f) resist the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area;*
- g) resist development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character or appearance of that conservation area; and*
- h) preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character and appearance of a conservation area or which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.*

Finally, concerning other non-designated heritage assets it states that

The effect of a proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, balancing the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

LB Camden has prepared a series of planning guidance documents to support the policies in the Local Development Framework. CPG1, the first of these documents, is relevant to this proposal. For the most part it is an elaboration of and commentary on national and local planning policy and therefore will not be rehearsed in detail here. Two points relating to non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs), which elucidate the status of the Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple, bear repetition here, however.

3.38 The identification of NDHAs and the process of local heritage listing aims to focus attention on buildings/features which are considered to be locally significant but whose architectural and historic value is not formally recognised (and therefore do not currently benefit from protection as part of the planning process).

3.39 For this reason the focus of Camden's Local List is largely with buildings/features located outside designated conservation areas and does not include buildings that are identified as making a positive contribution to the character of a conservation area. However there may be exceptional circumstances where a building, landscape or feature is located within a conservation area but can still be considered for inclusion on the local list.

The same document also states that it is the London Borough of Camden's general policy that

There is a presumption in favour of retaining NDHAs which are either identified as part of planning process or on the Local List.

Paragraph 7.5 of the Camden Square Management Strategy is also relevant to this application. It states that

Any proposals for the demolition of an unlisted building that would harm the character of the conservation area would require clear and convincing justification. [...] The loss of buildings which make a positive contribution will be resisted unless there are exceptional circumstances which would outweigh the case for retention.

5.0 Assessment of the proposals

5.1 Potential for redevelopment

As established above, on the grounds of its limited architectural, historical and townscape value, the Spiritualist Temple does not form part of the core special interest of the Camden Square Conservation Area. Together with its relatively low intrinsic significance, this means that its removal would not cause substantial harm to the significance of the conservation area, under paragraphs 134 and 138 of the NPPF.

Paragraph 134 of the NPPF sets down that the admissibility of a proposal causing less than substantial harm depends upon the public benefits resulting from it. In this case the public benefit is potentially threefold – the provision of much-needed housing, the creation of an enlarged and higher-quality community space, and new development of sufficient architectural quality to make a positive contribution to the Camden Square Conservation Area. Paragraph 137 of the NPPF enjoins local authorities to ‘look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas... to enhance or better reveal their significance’. This is consonant with Development Policy 25 from LB Camden’s local plan, which states that development within conservation areas is only permitted when it ‘preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area’ and that the demolition of a building that makes a positive contribution to a conservation area is permitted only when ‘exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention’.

In relation to the Temple’s status as a non-designated heritage asset, paragraph 135 of the NPPF allows demolition where the benefits would outweigh the harm. In practice this is a similar (though perhaps somewhat lesser) test to that for the conservation area.

There are dwellings on Murray Mews and Camden Mews erected from the 1960s onwards whose architectural quality is such that they have been identified as making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, and in two cases these buildings have been granted statutory listed status. They therefore demonstrate that authentically modern design is capable of enhancing this heritage asset and adding to its core special interest, provided that it is of a certain quality, scale, and character.

5.2 Precedents for development

Within the surrounding area there are a number of modern houses on Murray Mews and Camden Mews, which offer some pointers for the design of any new development on the site. (The houses referred to are pictured either in section 2.1 or else below.) These modern mews houses are varied in layout, often occupying single traditional plots but sometimes, as in the case of 15-19 Murray Mews, occupying more than one plot though with the design articulated into separate ‘units’.

Most of these modern mews houses have continuous frontages but with some the design incorporates small spaces enclosed by boundary walls. In several instances climbing plants have been trained up them and one or two houses (e.g. No. 30 Murray Mews) even incorporate planters for small shrubs into the hard landscaping.

Without exception, these mews houses are subservient in scale to the main houses at the 'front' of the urban blocks in the conservation area. Where third storeys are present these have smaller floor areas and thus have a reduced mass compared to the storeys below, sometimes to allow a roof terrace. On some examples the third storey has a different cladding material to set them apart.

The architectural language of the earlier 20th century mews houses is that of 'high' post-war modernism, based on orthogonal elevations, generally with flat roofs, and devoid of ornament. The forms are strongly modelled to create sculptural interest and contrasts of light and shade. Some of the later houses, such as 12 Murray Mews, take a different approach and use traditional forms, although usually in a post-modern manner rather than as pastiche.

Variegated buff or stock brick is the most frequently used cladding material. This harmonises with the nineteenth century buildings in the Conservation Area, although its inherent qualities are exploited by the designers for the subtle variations in colour and texture that form a prominent feature of many of the designs. An exception is Nos. 15-19 Murray Mews where bright red brick is used, in apparent homage to the 'red trilogy' of James Stirling.

In some cases the bricks are used to set off smooth, even polished surfaces, which is done to particular effect at 12 Murray Mews. They are also sometimes used with industrial-type glazing units and even industrial-type folding gates, as at 43 Murray Mews. At 16 Murray Street metal cladding is one of the predominating features of the design.

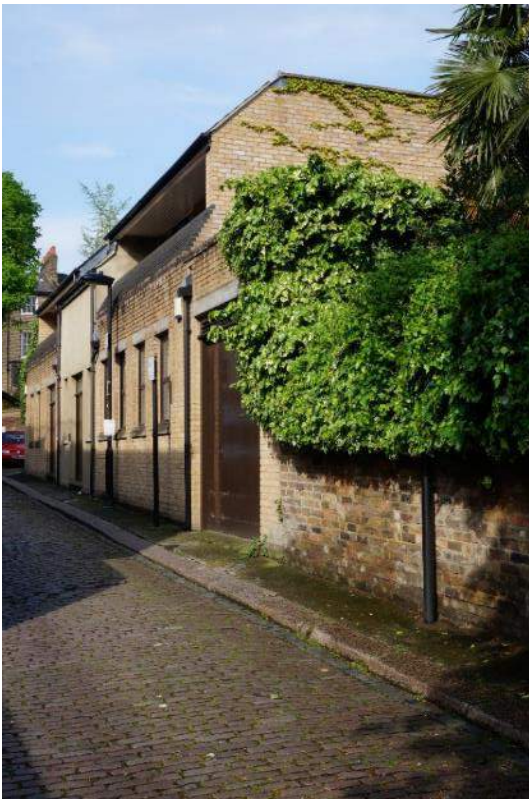
Béton brut is used for structural members such as lintels and posts, to particularly good effect at 62 Camden Mews and 30 Murray Mews. Its rough-hewn quality complements the rough surface of the bricks. Wooden structural members and cladding are generally either painted a dark colour or left unpainted to weather naturally and acquire a patina. Horizontal and vertical members are clearly articulated by projecting them beyond junctions with each other, mostly notable at 62 Camden Mews and 66 Camden Square. At 5C Cobham Mews rolled steel 'I' beams form the structural skeleton of the building.

The aesthetic is generally based on the natural finishes of the facing materials used, but in some cases bright, but sparingly applied touches of colour are applied, notably at No. 33 Murray Mews.

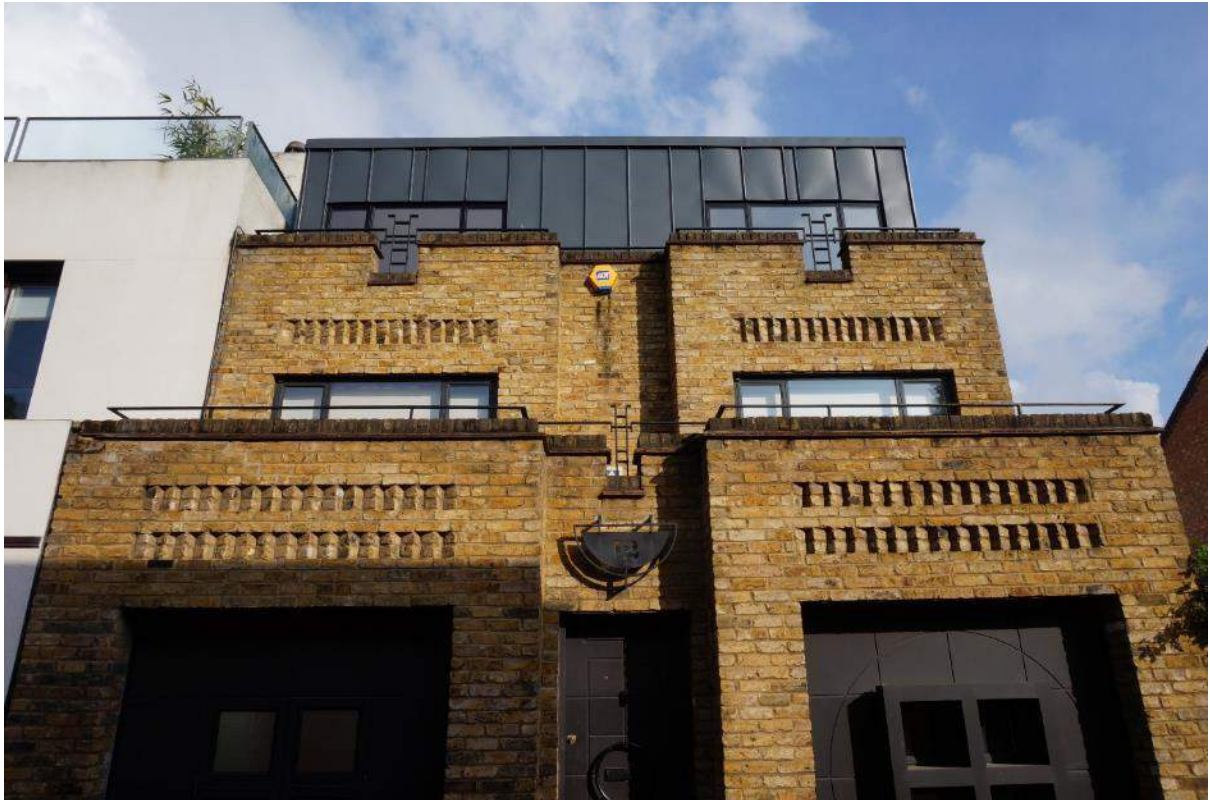
Many of the houses incorporate large areas of glazing, notably No. 66 Camden Square. Usually the windows are arranged in strips and the units are pivoted rather than having glazing bars and opening vents. At No. 5C Cobham Mews glass bricks – a favourite device of modernists of the 1920s and 1930s – are used as an infill material.



No. 5C Cobham Mews, by David Chipperfield, 1990



No. 2 Camden Mews, by Tom Kay, 1988-1989 (above, left) and No. 20 Murray Mews, by Richard Gibson, 1965-1969 (above, right)



No. 12 Murray Mews, by Sean Madigan and Stephen Donald, 1988



No. 43 Murray Mews, by John Townsend, 1974-1975 (above, left) and No. 33 Murray Mews, by David and Anne Hyde-Harrison, 1965-1967 (above, right)



No. 30 Murray Mews, by Jeff Kahane, 1992

5.3 Pre-Application discussions and design development

Initial design

The scheme went through several internal iterations to respond to the identified heritage and other constraints before it was presented for Pre-Application discussions with officers of the London Borough of Camden. It provided for the replacement of the existing building with 5 mews houses, together with an arts-based community space with 2 bed flat over, running all along the rear of the Rochester Square houses. They were laid out in a symmetrical composition with deeper plans in the centre and narrower plans closer to the two streets, although all six bays shared a building line along the boundary to the north.

The scale was kept subservient to the historic terrace and to the large 20th century block of flats to the north, so that the development would appear clearly as a mews type. The massing was of two and three storeys, with 3-storey features facing south which enclose the entrances, balconies and 2nd floor roof terraces.

The architectural approach was contemporary, drawing upon the conservation area context near the site which includes various modern mews developments as described above. The plain brick facades, flat parapets, use of Cor-Ten, and lack of ornament were all intended to accord with the nearby modern reinterpretations of mews buildings. The intention was to use good quality bricks

to complement the traditional facing materials used in the conservation area, together with attractive metal finishes.

Pre-Application discussions

The Pre-Application meeting was held on 28 July 2016, following which Camden's officers provided written feedback highlighting issues including the following:

1. The scheme did not yet provide sufficient community space and demonstrate an improvement in terms of accessibility.
2. The building made a limited positive contribution to the Camden Square Conservation Area, and was itself a non-designated heritage asset.
3. The loss of the building and trees on the site would cause 'less than substantial harm' to the Conservation Area, but this harm was not yet outweighed by sufficient public benefits.
4. The public benefit of the scheme's design quality was not included in officers' evaluation of the scheme as this was a prerequisite of their local policy and guidance.
5. The height of the proposals was a potential issue as 'it is considered important that the development should remain subordinate to the principal properties... and at present it appears to be the same height as the frontage buildings...'
6. The level of glazing may need to be reduced to each frontage 'to reduce the perception of scale and prominence and provide a more mews like quality to the development.'

Further to this feedback, our own record of the meetings noted that officers were generally pleased with the design approach and materials, which were acknowledged to be of high quality and responsive to the local area. They wished for the potential of the site to be optimised, though with due regard to the heritage and other constraints.

Design revisions for the Application

The design of the proposed scheme has now been revised to respond to the points raised in the Pre-Application meeting and feedback. The main changes include:

- Enlarging the community facilities on the basement and ground floors, so that their floor area is now over 3 times greater than previously proposed.
- Improving the internal layout and access within the community space.
- Reducing the height of the development so that the taller southern parts are markedly lower than the ridge of the existing building, almost 2m lower than the ridge height of the villas along Camden Road, and 0.5m lower than the northern end of the development.
- Increasing the set-back of the second floor terrace screens to greatly reduce the massing of the upper part of the building.
- Refinements to the detailing of the design, including the Cor-Ten elements.

5.4 Application scheme

Response to Pre-Application feedback

The Application scheme has been revised to respond to the heritage and design issues raised in officers' Pre-Application feedback. In relation to the summary in Nos. 1 to 6 of section 5.3 above, we would note that:

1. The amount of community space has been greatly increased to over 3 times what was previously proposed. Accessibility has been enhanced through the provision of a central staircase and lift serving both floors.
2. & 3. Officers agreed with our assessment that the significance of the present building is limited, and a new development is possible. The public benefits of the Application scheme are considered further in the main assessment below.
4. Whilst high quality design is required by Camden's own policies and guidance, it is not taken for granted in the National Planning Policy Framework. Hence when considering the overall planning balance under the NPPF it may be appropriate to consider the benefits of the scheme's design quality, as under national policy this would weigh in favour of the scheme.
5. The height of the parts of the scheme nearest the original villas along the Camden Road frontage has been significantly reduced, so that the scheme has markedly less prominence in views. It is particularly relevant that the street-front part of the development is only 2 storeys in height.
6. The glazing to the southern frontage is relatively large at ground floor level as this is considered appropriate to the community use. At the north end of the building the glazing follows the character of the wider building and appears appropriate in the context of the adjacent modern block of flats. Relatively large windows are present on some of the modern mews buildings discussed above (e.g. 66 Camden Square), which are now a characteristic part of the Camden Square Conservation Area, and so this aspect of the proposals would be sympathetic to the designated asset's significance.

Overall assessment of the scheme

Sections 5.1 and 5.2 of this report have explained the existing building's relatively limited significance and modest contribution to the Camden Square Conservation Area, and how this means that redevelopment is possible in terms of both national and local policy – subject to design quality and other benefits of the proposals. This principle is accepted by the London of Camden's officers, whilst sections 5.3 and 5.4 above set out how officers' concerns at Pre-Application stage have been addressed in the revised design.

The proposed scheme would be of a demonstrably high architectural quality, in both its materials and its design. As noted by officers during the Pre-Application meeting, it takes a suitable approach to the site which is in the location of a mews (and which as described above was likely to originally have been intended for mews development). It responds well to the material and architectural character of the conservation area, and in particular it follows the tradition of

modern mews redevelopments that is such a characteristic feature of the neighbourhood. The recent design revisions have reduced its scale towards the south, and minimised the massing at top floor level by recessing the Cor-Ten screens.

Following the design revisions, the Application scheme would provide sufficient benefits to outweigh any harm caused by the loss of the existing building. National planning policy and guidance allows for such exceptional design quality to be taken into account as a public benefit, and thus it would appear to have some weight in the decision-making process. Additional public benefits of the scheme include the provision of housing units in an area of considerable demand, and the provision of much-improved community space. These benefits and the weight afforded to them are considered in more detail in the accompanying Planning Statement. Together these benefits would outweigh the relatively modest harm to heritage.

The proposals would therefore satisfy the requirements of the relevant national, regional and local authority policies with regard to heritage. They would accord with NPPF paragraphs 131 and 137 which encourage new development to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Through its appropriate massing and design quality, the provision of new dwellings, and the community space, the development would more than outweigh the less than substantial harm caused to the conservation area through the loss of the existing Spiritualist Temple, and so the requirements of NPPF paragraphs 134 and 135 would be more than met.

Likewise with regard to the London Plan the development clearly has regard to local character and would make a positive contribution to the streetscape. It would therefore meet the requirements of policies 7.4 and 7.8.

In terms of the London Borough of Camden's policies, the proposals would be of a high standard, and would (through their design approach) conserve the special interest of the conservation area. They would consequently satisfy policies CS14, DP24 and DP25 of the LDF, as well as the emerging Local Plan policies. Likewise the appropriateness of the design and massing, as explained above, would ensure that it meets the requirements of the Camden Square Management Strategy (paragraph 7.5).

6.0 Conclusion

This report has described the significance of heritage assets affected by the proposed scheme, as required by Paragraph 128 of the NPPF. It has assessed the significance of the Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple and the Camden Square Conservation Area. The Temple does not meet the criteria either for national or local listing and it has at most a limited significance, deriving principally from the positive but modest visual contribution that its entrance front makes to the Conservation Area. The potential therefore exists for its replacement with a suitable new development.

The proposed new dwellings are of a demonstrably high architectural quality, and follow the established tradition of modern mews developments within this conservation area. The Application scheme has responded to feedback from Council officers during the Pre-Application process, which has resulted in a reduction in massing, refinements to the detailed design, and the provision of much more community space alongside the residential flats, providing notable public benefits. Taking into account the quality of the design and the other benefits, the scheme would make a positive contribution which outweighs the loss of the existing building of limited value. The proposals consequently satisfy the various national, regional and local authority policies on heritage assets, and merit Planning Permission.

7.0 Sources

'A Brief History of the Spiritualists' National Union', The Spiritualists' National Union <http://www.snu.org.uk/snu/snu_history.html> [Consulted 20 April 2016]

Department for Communities & Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework*, March 2012

Department for Culture, Media and Sport, *Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings*, March 2010

Oxford Dictionary for National Biography

Google Maps

Harwood, Elaine, Davies, James O., *England's Post-War Listed Buildings* (London: Batsford, 2015)

London Borough of Camden, *Camden Core Strategy 2010-2025, Local Development Framework*

London Borough of Camden, *Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy*

London Borough of Camden, *Camden Development Policies 2010-2025*

London Borough of Camden, *Planning Guidance Document CPG1*

London Metropolitan Archives documents relating to Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple

Ordnance Survey maps

Pevsner, Nikolaus, Cherry, Bridget, *The Buildings of England, London 4: North* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002)

Twentieth Century Society Churches Database <<http://www.c20society.org.uk/churches/>> [consulted 20 April 2016]

64 Great Titchfield Street
London
W1W 7QH
office@builtheritage.com
020 7371 7660

Built Heritage
Consultancy