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**Sent by email:** [Gideon.Whittingham@camden.gov.uk](mailto:Gideon.Whittingham@camden.gov.uk)

31 August 2017

Our ref: 17 08 09

Dear Mr Whittingham,

**2016/7088/P Spiritualist Temple, Rochester Square, London NW1 9RY**

The Twentieth Century Society is the national amenity society concerned with the protection, appreciation, and study of post-1914 architecture. The above application has been brought to our attention and we wish to object.

**Significance**

The former Spiritualist Temple, Rochester Square, lies within the Camden Square Conservation Area, and is identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal (March 2011) as a building that makes a positive contribution to the locality. The Temple has both historic and architectural interest and we consider it to be a non-designated heritage asset. Designed by local architect Thomas Yorke, it was completed in 1927. The Temple is in a free classical style reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts movement, in contrast to the largely Italianate style of the neighbourhood. Internally, it contains a number of interesting features, many of which reflect its origins as a spiritualist temple. The main worship space is a plain oblong, open to the roof trusses with arch-braced collar beams and king posts. A polygonal dais is flanked by doors with circular lights with wavy glazing bars. Overall, the building has a 'street presence' and contributes to the character of the conservation area, whose interest lies in its diversity.

The Spiritualist Temple also has historic interest as a surviving example of a purpose built Spiritualist Society meeting house. Of particular interest too is the association with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The temple was in part funded by the famous author and spiritualist. Conan Doyle had a life-long interest in mysticism, paranormal activity and clairvoyance.

**Proposals**

The proposed development would involve the complete demolition of the Spiritualist Temple, the building currently occupying the site.

## Policy

With respect to conservation areas, Policy D2(f) of the local plan states that the Council will resist the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

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.

Paragraph 7.5 of the Conservation Area Appraisal also 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.

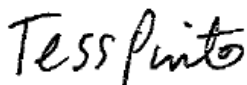
## Comment

In line with the NPPF, the Camden Local Plan requires a weighing of harm against any public benefit of the development. We do not consider that it has been demonstrated that the public benefit of the proposed scheme outweighs the harm caused by the total loss of this local heritage asset. In addition to the loss of a non-designated heritage asset, the new development comprises an increase in scale and density, and would result in the loss of open space and greenery. This is also in contrary to the appraisal, which states that green gaps in streetscapes and views along rear vistas should be preserved.

Should you be minded to approve the application, we would ask that the consent be conditioned on the preparation of a detailed photographic record of the building.

I trust that these comments are of use to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me at this office if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,



Tess Pinto  
Conservation Adviser  
**Twentieth Century Society**

**Remit:** The Twentieth Century Society was founded in 1979 and is the national amenity society concerned with the protection, appreciation, and study of post-1914 architecture, townscape and design. The Society is acknowledged in national planning guidance as the key organisation concerned with the modern period and is a constituent member of the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies. Under the procedures set out in *ODPM Circular 09/2005*, all English local planning authorities must inform the Twentieth Century Society when an application for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition is received, and they must notify us of the decisions taken on these applications.