

Heritage Statement



20 Fortess Grove, Kentish Town, Camden, NW5 2HD

On behalf of Mr Ramin Pashaee

December 2017

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared on behalf of the client, Mr Ramin Pashae, the owner of No.20 Fortress Grove, Kentish Town, LB Camden (henceforth referred to as 'the Site').
- 1.2 The Site is located within the Kentish Town Conservation Area (a designated heritage asset) and is recognised as a positive contributor, as noted within the Kentish Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2011. There are no listed building within Fortress Grove.

Purpose of this Statement

- 1.3 In 2015 (ref.2015/4501/P) planning consent was obtained for internal works to No.20 Fortress Grove to allow for the refurbishment of the property. This consented did not include approval for any external changes.
- 1.4 This Heritage Statement has been prepared to support a retrospective planning application for an infill extension integrating the previously existing front element with the front porch.



Fig.2: 20 Fortress Grove prior to refurbishment.

- 1.5 In a pre-application response from Camden dated 17th May 2017 (ref 2017/1412/PRE) the following comments were made:

"The front infill extension is also deemed inappropriate as it would link the existing, undesirable front element to the front porch. This would be an inappropriate addition to the front of the property that would materially harm the character and appearance of the façade of the building, whilst neither preserving nor enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area".

- 1.6 The pre-application response goes on to conclude that:

"the proposal appears to be unsatisfactory in design terms and would not be supported".

- 1.7 There are a few points worth noting in relation to the above pre-application response, which are as follows, and will be addressed generally within this Statement:

- i Whether or not the proposal would 'materially harm the **character and appearance** of the facade' of this non-designated positively contributing building is not the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012. The effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the Kentish Town Conservation Area, as the designated heritage asset, should be the primary focus of any assessment of harm and falls, reasonably, within paragraph 134¹ relating to less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets. The pre-application response does, therefore, not appear to have been formed through a correct interpretation of the NPPF;
- ii The Site is not locally listed, neither is it recognised as a Building of Merit. It is included as part of a group of properties in Fortress Grove that are considered to make a positive contribution to the conservation area but is not specifically mentioned in isolation. It is being treated as a (non-designated) heritage asset for the purposes

¹ "134. 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, including securing its optimum viable use." – NPPF, 2012

of this assessment because it falls within a group of positively contributing buildings. The definition of 'heritage asset' within the Glossary of the NPPF is: *"A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)"*

- iii It is acknowledged that the infill extension does not enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. However, the refurbishment of the building does bring about an enhancement to the streetscene and, therefore, to the wider character and appearance of the conservation overall. Heritage Collective is not of the view that the infill brings about so greater change to cause harm and, therefore, considers that it at the very least the infill extension preserves the character and appearance of the conservation area, when considered in isolation (i.e. without consideration of the wider benefits of the overall refurbishment of the Site).

1.8 It is worth including both the 'before' and 'after' photographs side by side at this juncture (see Figures 2 and 3). These should be referred to throughout this assessment and considered alongside this assessment.

1.9 The wider benefits of the refurbishment are relevant and include better use of the limited internal space to enable successful, and modest, residential use.



Figure 2: The Site prior to infill extension.



Figure 3: The Site as existing, with infill extension

2.0 THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The Site is located at the northern/top end of Fortress Road, to the east of Fortress Road and north of Kentish Town Tube station. It is a unique property insofar as the remainder of the development in Fortress Grove is largely comprised of small stucco rendered terraced houses. (please refer to the Site photographs included at the end of this Statement, for reference).
- 2.2 Fortress Grove lies within the northern sub-area of the Kentish Town Conservation Area, bounded also by Ospringe Road and Railey Mews. A brief history of the area is provided within the conservation area appraisal and has not, therefore, been included here.

- 2.3 The appraisal notes that:

"Fortress Grove is also on an intimate smaller scale than the vast majority of the conservation area, with small stucco fronted terraced painted white".

- 2.4 All properties, except Nos. 9-10 (1-3 Fortress House), are identified as being positive contributors to the character and appearance of the conservation area and there is no specific reference to the Site.

Cartographic Evidence

- 2.5 In the early 19th century the Site was undeveloped but built up rapidly after the mid-1800s. The building sat to the south of an entrance into Fortress Mews and included a small structure in front of the main property and a curved wall containing a small yard area. The overall impression given by the Site today is little changed from this late 19th century arrangement. (Figure 4)
- 2.6 Fortress Mew remains apparent on the OS Map of 1915-16 (Figure 6) but by 1938 (Figure 7) it is no longer shown and has been replaced by a large structure labelled as a 'garage' on subsequent mapping (Figure 8).
- 2.7 The OS Map of 1958 (Figure 8) also shows a change to the Site. The main property and small structure to the front have not been linked and the arrangement that existed prior to recent works is appreciable.



Figure 4: 1871-73 OS Map (extract)

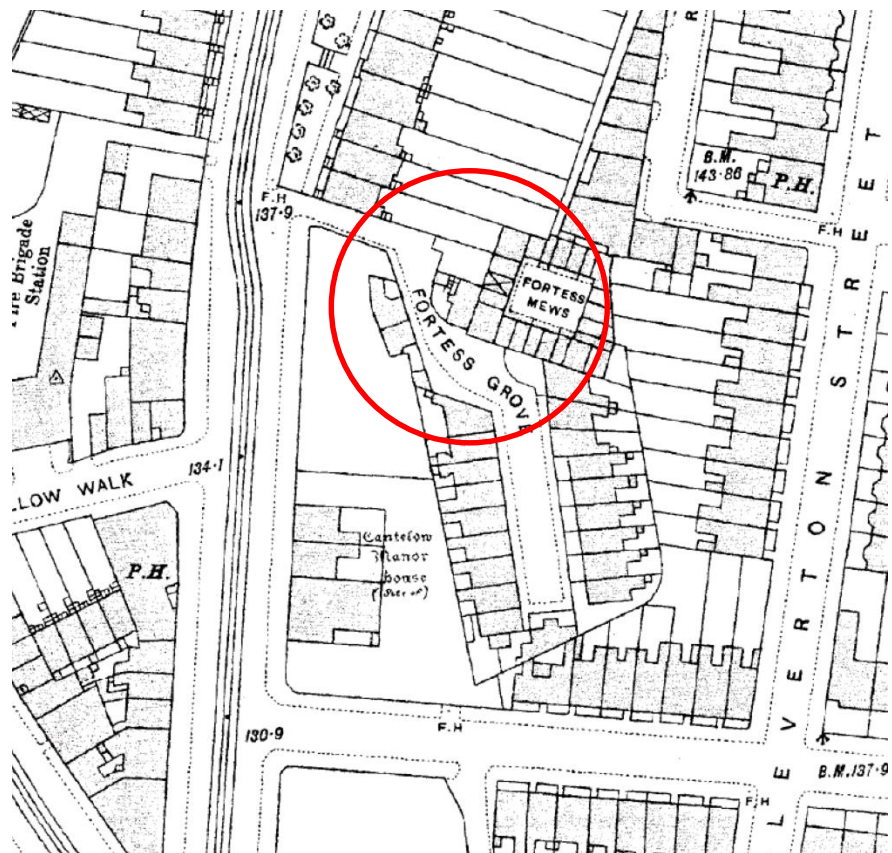


Figure 5: 1895 OS Map (extract)

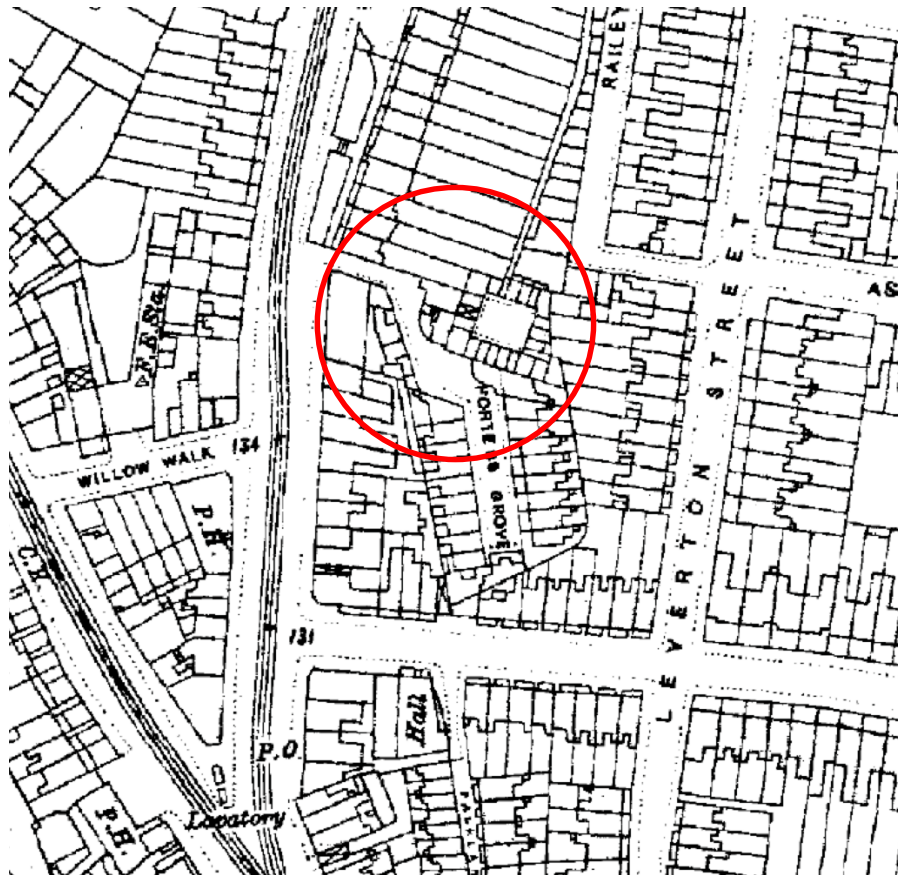


Figure 6: 1915-16 OS Map (extract)



Figure 7: 1938 OS Map (extract)



Figure 8: 1953 OS Map (extract)

- 2.8 The rest of Fortress Grove remains largely unchanged throughout the 19th and 20th centuries as does the Site, save for the linking of the front element to the main building. However, the area immediately to the north and west of the Site has seen significant change, with the loss of the original mews development and replacement with a garage.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Relevant legislation is contained within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act, 1990 (The Act). Section 72 concerns conservation areas and requires that special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012 constitutes policy for local planning authorities and decision makers, and it is a material consideration in planning decisions. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the local development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.3 Section 12 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment, in paragraphs 126 to 141. The NPPF places much emphasis on heritage 'significance', which is defined in Annex 2 as:

'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'.

3.4 The effect of any development on a heritage asset (in this case, primarily, the Kentish Town Conservation Area) needs to be assessed.

3.5 Paragraph 128 of the NPPF requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage asset affected by a proposal to a proportionate level of detail.

3.6 Paragraph 129 states that it is the 'particular significance of any heritage asset' that should be taken into account when considering the impact of a proposal on that heritage asset.

3.7 Paragraph 132 applies specifically to designated heritage assets (of which the Kentish Town Conservation Area is one). It states that great weight should be given to their conservation and it requires a proportionate approach (i.e. the more important the asset, the greater the weight attached to its conservation).

3.8 Conservation (for heritage policy) is defined within Annex 2 of the NPPF as:

- 3.9 The importance and relevance of this definition is that it does not suggest consideration to be the same as preservation. Indeed, what sets conservation apart is that there is an emphasis on proactively maintain and managing change, not a reactive approach to resisting it. In its simplest interpretation conservation could amount to a change that at least sustains/preserves the significance of a heritage asset.
- 3.10 Paragraph 133 of the NPPF deals with substantial harm to, or total loss of, significance of a designated heritage asset. In cases where substantial harm is identified the application should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefit that outweighs that harm or loss. Paragraph 134 deal with cases of less than substantial harm and notes that any such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Importantly, heritage protection and the conservation of heritage assets are both recognised as being beneficial to the public.

Regional Framework

- 3.11 Relevant local policy and guidance is contained within the following:
- Camden Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, Policy CS14 – promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage;
 - LDF Development Policies: Policy DP24 – Securing high quality design; Policy DP25 – Conserving Camden’s heritage;
 - Camden Local Plan (draft submission 2016): Policy D1 – Design; D2 – Heritage; A1 – Managing impact of development;
 - Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan, 2016;
 - Kentish Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy, 2011.

4.0 ASSESSMENT

Assessment of Significance

Kentish Town Conservation Area (designated heritage asset)

- 4.1 It is recognised that not all parts of a heritage asset will necessarily be of equal significance. In some cases, certain aspects or elements could accommodate change without affecting the government's objectives, which include 'intelligently managed change' and which seeks to ensure decisions are based on the nature, extent and level of significance of those heritage assets affected.
- 4.2 Change is only considered to be harmful where it erodes or negatively affects a heritage asset's significance. Understanding the significance of any heritage asset (along with any contribution made by its setting) is, therefore, fundamental to understanding the ability for the asset to accept change.
- 4.3 A description of the Kentish Town Conservation Area (a designated heritage asset) and the Site itself (a non-designated heritage asset/positive contributor) has been set out below. The descriptions are proportionate to the significance of the heritage assets in question and are sufficient to understand the nature of the impacts that the proposed infill development has upon that significance.
- 4.4 The core of the Kentish Town Conservation comprises the village centre and is made up predominantly of 18th and 19th century development. Kentish Town Road and Leighton Road, which links east-west to Torriano Avenue, are the primary roads from which the conservation area derives the majority of its character.
- 4.5 The northern element of the conservation area was included in 2011.
- 4.6 To the west of the conservation area is the commercial edge of Kentish Town Road with shops and public houses, along with some surviving taverns.
- 4.7 Torriano Avenue is lined with 19th century houses, largely stuccoed but some brick and comprising a range of designs reflecting the piecemeal development of this particular area.

- 4.8 To the north and south of the linking Leighton Road are London County Council housing blocks, all 20th century in date.
- 4.9 The conservation area appraisal describes Kentish Town as an 'elevated village suburb' that has been integrated into an urban landscape. This is definitely the feel of the area today, which is strengthened by the relatively low-level development (between 2-4 storeys) and a consistency in the material palette (which includes slate roofs, red brick and stucco). In addition, timber sashes are most typical along with various configurations of glazing bars. Timber doors are also important and contribute to the character of the area. However, the conservation area appraisal specifically notes that some poor quality examples have been introduced and these have a negative impact.
- 4.10 There are a number of prominent buildings that make the most notable contribution to the character and appearance of the area and these include the former Royal Mail Sorting Office (dated 1903), the Church of Our Lady Help (1864-7) and the Pineapple Public House (dated 1868).
- 4.11 Terraced properties are the predominant building type and these are largely uniform in appearance, particularly along Lady Margaret Road and Leverton Road.
- 4.12 Torriano Avenue includes houses and flats with front gardens or grounds and has a more spacious feel to other nearby streets.
- 4.13 Commercial development is also common within the conservation area and this too varies in character and date from quite restrained 19th century development to plain terraces and the more ornate Assembly House dated 1898.
- 4.14 There are a number of important views identified within the conservation area appraisal and these are largely focused to the main/key routes along Leighton Road, up and down Lady Margaret Road and up and down Kentish Town Road.
- 4.15 It is worth noting that Fortess Road and Fortess Grove are not specifically mentioned and although these elements of the conservation area clearly contribute its overall character and appearance, they do not contribute to the same degree as the other roads mentioned in previous paragraphs.

The Site (a positive contributor to the conservation area – non-designate heritage asset)

- 4.16 The Site comprises a much altered building with curved boundary wall to Fortress Grove (on the south-western edge). The Site historically formed the entrance building to Fortress Mews but this is no longer appreciable at street level or recent mapping/aerial photography.
- 4.17 Fortress Grove principally comprises a uniform group of modest 19th century stuccoed/painted terraced properties, either side of the road. The northern half of the road is more eclectic in character and this includes the Site. There is also a 20th century block of flats to the north, fronting Fortress Road.
- 4.18 The Site itself is of some character and its footprint remains largely unaltered from the 19th century. The boundary wall on the northern side (separating it from a former garage), is tall and obscures views of the property in some views south and east from within Fortress Grove itself. In addition, the curved boundary wall to the south-west of the property, adjoining the road largely obscures the ground floor from view, making the small courtyard area entirely enclosed and unappreciable from street level.
- 4.19 The building has some limited local aesthetic and historic merit owing to its age and form, the latter being largely unaltered. It is of no artistic or archaeological value. It affords the majority of its value as part of the development within Fortress Grove and is, therefore, of more value when considered as part of the conservation area and particularly the immediate street-scene, than it is in isolation. Overall, it is the property's proportions (height and footprint), the characterful curved wall and rendered elevations that contribute most to the character of the street and, as a result, the wider character of the conservation area.

Assessment of the Proposal

- 4.20 This Statement focuses on the impact of the infill extension, already constructed, at the front of the Site, which links an existing external element to the main property (western elevation) along the northern boundary wall.

- 4.21 The infill comprises a small, single storey addition connecting the previously existing external element (visible on historic mapping) with the main property, to the north of the entrance porch (refer to Figures 2 and 3).
- 4.22 The infill remains at the same height, with flat roof as the existing external element. The window is in the same location as the original timber sash with glazing bars. The new window is of the style multi-pane, timber framed style, in-keeping with the building but has been slightly enlarged to increase natural light coming into the area behind.
- 4.23 In addition, a section of the boundary wall to the north has also been built up.
- 4.24 The above changes have introduced a more ordered, less ad-hoc appearance to this part of the Site. It has not compromised the overall appearance of the property, which remains largely unchanged in all other respects. The other external works to the property, including replacement of windows and re-rendering are all in-keeping with the building's original character and are discrete.
- 4.25 The pre-application response to this infill extension included the comment that the front infill extension 'would link the existing, undesirable front element to the front porch'. The front element, as noted previously, appears on 19th century mapping and has been part of the Site since, it would seem, its construction. It was in a poor condition and did not contribute positively to the street-scene as it was. Integrating it with the main property, as has been undertaken, has brought about an improvement not only in the quality of this part of the site but also its overall aesthetic. This original external element has provided an opportunity to create a small but valuable amount of internal space, which allows the building to work effectively as a dwelling by the 21st century. The change has very limited impact on the significance of the wider Kentish Town Conservation Area.
- 4.26 It is worth noting, further to officer's comments (included at paragraph 1.5 above) that this the infill extension affects a very small and localised part of a much larger Site. It affects, most importantly, a very small part of a much larger conservation area that derives most of its significance from elsewhere, including the uniform terraces further south along Fortress Grove.

- 4.27 The conclusion of officers in the pre-application response is that 'the proposal appears to be unsatisfactory in design terms and would not be supported'. The way in which the infill has been design is to ensure its impact is as limited as possible. Any more detail or 'designed' elements could well have made such an addition far more impactful. As it stands, the infill follows the existing conditions in terms of height and depth and obscures a part of the front elevation that was of very limited visibility previously and of limited heritage interest.
- 4.28 Overall, it is the view of Heritage Collective that the infill, as constructed, is appropriate to the existing arrangement and of limited impact both to the building and the Kentish Town Conservation Area. What limited impact there is preserves the special interest of the conservation area and does not cause any material harm to the Site, particularly when considered in light of the improvements made to bring the building back into use as a dwelling house.
- 4.29 Furthermore, the value of the Site both to the conservation area and in and of itself must also be taken into consideration. The Site is comprised of a much altered building that has been deemed by the LPA to make a positive contribution to the conservation area. It is neither locally nor nationally designated. It has been subject to change and although it retains some 19th century fabric it is the building's overall proportions and form that are of more importance within the street-scene and wider contexts of the conservation area. These elements have been preserved and remain unaffected by the infill extension.

Policy Compliance

- 4.30 The proposals are in compliance with legislation insofar as they preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area overall.
- 4.31 This Statement accords with paragraph 128 of the NPPF and provides a proportionate assessment of the impact of the infill development on heritage significance. In this case the Kentish Town Conservation Area is the primary consideration, as the designated heritage asset. The heritage value of and contribution made by the Site (identified as a positive contributor) to the character and appearance of the conservation has been considered and factored into this assessment with reference to the definition of significance as set out within Annex 2 of the NPPF and included at Section 2 of this Statement.

- 4.32 The proposals accord with local policy insofar as they are of appropriate quality and conserve the special interest of the conservation area, which is the principal consideration as the designated heritage asset (Core Strategy CS14 and Development Policy DP24 and DP25).
- 4.33 The proposals are in compliance with Camden's Local Plan (draft submission) Policies D1 and D2 (design and heritage respectively), as well as A1. The design of the infill is simple and ensures minimal change to the appearance of the building from within the conservation area. The change will be apparent but it will not be out of keeping with the property and the majority of it is hidden behind the boundary wall to the Site from street level.

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This Heritage Statement has provided an assessment of the significance of the Kentish Town Conservation Area (a designated heritage asset) and the Site at 20 Fortess Grove, a non-designated heritage asset (identified as a positive contributor to the conservation area by LB Camden). It has provided an assessment of the impact of the proposals (the infill extension) on the significance of the conservation area and of the Site itself, as a 19th century much altered building that makes a positive contribution to the character of the area.
- 5.2 The building was in a poor condition prior to works being undertaken. A comprehensive programme of sensitive alterations and repairs has been undertaken to bring the building back into a high quality residential use, a use for which it was intended. The building's original form and key design elements (such as the curved boundary wall and overall scale and massing) remain wholly unaffected.
- 5.3 The infill extension brings about a localised small-scale change to the Site. It affects a part of the Site that has already been subject to change and does not obscure or remove appreciation of the building's original form or proportions. The infill amounts to a discrete external element that connects up to the main property, to provide additional internal living space.
- 5.4 There is a modest change to the external appearance of the building due to the infill extension. Assessed as part of the wider benefits of the work undertaken to bring this building back into use and bring it back up to a high quality, this change is not considered to result in harm to the character and appearance of the Kentish Town Conservation Area.
- 5.5 In conclusion, the infill brings about a slight change to this non-designated heritage asset. However, this change is localised and affects a building of modest local value. There will be no harm to the character and appearance of the Kentish Town Conservation Area, which derives the majority of its significance from elsewhere (as identified within the previous section).
- 5.6 The infill extension is considered acceptable in heritage terms with no harm to heritage significance.