



51 Highgate West Hill

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Heritage Statement

51 Highgate West Hill, Highgate, London, N6 6DA

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Introduction

No.51 Highgate West Hill is a grade II listed building (along with the two other houses in the terrace) neighbouring two other grade II listed buildings, all located within the Highgate Conservation Area. It is a building of special interest and any alterations should aim to preserve its significance as well as preserving the character and appearance of the conservation area, in accordance with national and local policy. This Heritage Statement will identify the significance of the building and assess the impact of the proposals on it, as per paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012).

The proposals include:

- Two rooflights to the front roof-slope
- Reinstatement of the front railing and replacement of the pavement lights
- Single storey rear extension
- Second floor roof terrace including new balustrade and enlargement of rear second floor window opening to form doorway
- Re-rendering ground floor front elevation
- New bathroom window to rear

Understanding

No.51 Highgate West Hill forms part of a terrace of three houses dating from c.1849 and listed at grade II in 1974. The listing description (list entry no. 1379050) reads as follows:

Terrace of 3 houses. c1849. Multi-coloured stock brick with brick pilaster strips at division of houses through 1st floor; brick quoins to left hand angle. Stuccoed ground floor, channelled to appear as ashlar. Stucco cornice at 1st floor level. Slated roofs with projecting eaves and dormers. 2 storeys and attics. 1 window each. Plain square-headed entrances with overlights and panelled doors. Ground floor with recessed sashes; 1st floors with wider cambered arch sashes, No.51 with shaped stucco panel above window. INTERIORS: not inspected.

The building stands within the Highgate Conservation Area (designated in 1968 and extended in 1978 and 1992) and the terrace is neighboured by grade II listed buildings to both sides; the former Highgate District Police Station and Justice Rooms (now nos. 49 and 50) dating from c.1850 to the north-east, and nos. 54 and 55 dating from the 18th century to the south-west.

The terrace lies in the heart of the historic core of the village and encapsulates the close-knit urban form of predominantly 18th and 19th century buildings within this part of the conservation area. The Survey of London (Volume XVII, 1936) tells us that the parcel of land on which the terrace stands (including the former Police Station and nos. 54 and 55) was described as a piece of 'wasteland' on Highgate Hill in 1692 when permission was granted to

enclose the land. By the 1730s, a house had been constructed on the land and by 1884 it had been replaced with six houses, one of which being the Police Station and Justice Rooms (then known as nos. 46-51 South Grove).

No.51 itself forms the northernmost end of a terrace of three single bay houses. It is stucco rendered at ground floor with ashlar detailing, terminating in a moulded cornice, and the first floor is of stock brick laid in a Flemish bond. Roofed in slate, each of the three houses has a small flat-topped central dormer with sash windows and an eight-over-eight sash window at first floor with a smaller six-over-six sash at ground floor, flanked on the left by a six panelled front door and fanlight. No. 51 also features a rendered panel above the first floor window.

To the rear, the building is set back from Pond Square with a stock brick wall and single storey garage forming the rear boundary. The rear roof slope also features a dormer window and the rear elevation is rendered. The rear of no.51 appears to have been heavily altered in the 20th century. The tall, narrow staircase window (as seen further along the terrace in nos. 52 and 53) has been lost and the fenestration now consists of two, likely 20th century, eight-over-eight sash windows at first and second floor, and modern patio doors at ground floor. To the right of the elevation, a two storey mid-20th century extension with a flat roof has partially obscured the original rear elevation and presents a featureless blank wall towards Pond Square.

Significance

No.51, as part of the terrace, makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of this part of the Highgate Conservation Area and to the settings of the neighbouring listed buildings. It is also inherently significant due to its architectural and historic value as a listable example of 19th century domestic architecture.

The significance of a heritage asset (including assets such as listed buildings and conservation areas) consists of the sum of its heritage values which can include its historic, architectural, aesthetic and communal value.

The key elements contributing to the significance of no.51 include:

- Its group value alongside other 19th and 18th century buildings
- Its location at the core of the historic village
- Its capacity to demonstrate the 19th century patterns of development and favoured architectural styles within Highgate village
- The quality and survival of its 19th century architectural features and use of materials
- Its attractive 19th century façade fronting Highgate West Hill

No. 51's attractive frontage, with typical mid-19th century detailing of ashlar stucco work and Flemish bond brickwork alongside prominent sash windows, is of clear significance. This is enhanced by its relationship with the other two houses forming the terrace and their uniform appearance within the streetscene.

Of lesser significance is the rear of the building due to the 20th century alterations. The historic rear elevation has largely been lost through later alterations and additions, including replacement fenestration and a two storey extension. On this elevation, little remains of particular architectural interest in relation to the building's 19th century origins, although the small dormer is an attractive feature that replicates the two others within the terrace.

The setting of the building also makes a contribution to its significance. Its immediate setting alongside other grade II listed 18th and 19th century buildings forms its group value, but the wider setting as part of Highgate village sets the building in its historical context and can provide an understanding of the reasons behind its plot size, siting and architectural style.

Policy and legislation

Legislation

Listed buildings and conservation areas are protected under the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Buildings added to the list are those of special architectural or historic interest. Under section 7 of the Act it is stated no works should be carried out to a building that would affect its special interest without authorisation (listed building consent) and, under section 66(1), that a local authority should give special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.

Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest in which it is considered desirable to preserve or enhance their character or appearance (S69(1)) and, similarly to listed buildings, the Act states that special attention should be paid to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area through the planning process (S72).

National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF sets out the government's policies on planning and promotes sustainable development. The conservation of heritage assets is a factor that sits at the core of the concept of sustainable development; the environmental concerns of sustainable development include the protection and enhancement of the built and historic environment (para. 7).

Paragraph 128 requires an application to be supported by a description of the significance of the heritage asset affected in order to understand the impact of the proposals on this significance. The NPPF goes on to state that great weight should be afforded to the conservation of heritage assets and that any harm to their significance should be clearly and convincingly justified (para. 132). The assessment of the proposals below is intended to fulfil these requirements and demonstrate that the understanding of the building's significance has informed the proposals put forward.

Paragraphs 133 and 134 go on to outline degrees of harm and how these should be tested in determining applications, however, the proposed works to no.51 are not considered to cause harm to the significance of the building.

London Plan

Policy 7.8 relates to London's heritage assets and archaeology and, under paragraph D, requires development affecting heritage assets to conserve their significance by respecting their form, scale, materials and architectural detail. The assessment of the proposals below are considered to demonstrate compliance with this policy.

Local Plan

Camden's Local Plan provides further policies on the protection and enhancement of heritage assets and the high quality of design expected of new development. Under Policy D2 (Heritage) the Council will preserve, and where appropriate, enhance the Borough's heritage

assets by ensuring that harm to their significance is minimised or balanced by other benefits, as per the NPPF.

With regards to conservation areas, development is required to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area (Policy D2e). The proposals contained within this application are considered to preserve both the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation area as they respect the architectural and historic value of the host building and the views of the wider streetscene, and do not detract from any of the building's significant features. Furthermore, the reinstatement of the boundary rail to the front of the property and the re-rendering, to remove the unsympathetic rough-cast render finish, are considered to enhance this part of the area as these works will renew the attractive uniformity across the terrace of three.

Under Policy D2(j) proposals would be resisted by the Council where they would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of a listed building. The assessment of the proposals below demonstrates that the key elements contributing to the building's significance remain unharmed by the proposals. The proposals were developed with respect afforded to the special interest of the building and so do not alter any historic fabric of note or obscure architectural details or features hinting at the building's history.

Assessment

Front rooflights

It is proposed to insert two conservation type rooflights into the front roof-slope, one either side of the existing dormer, to provide much needed additional light to the second floor bedroom. The proposed rooflights will lie flush with the slates and will therefore be of low visibility and will not dominate or detract from the primary elevation of the building. It should be noted that the neighbouring property at no.52 has two rooflights installed, however, these are more prominent than those proposed for no.51 as they protrude from the roof-plane.

The proposed rooflights are not considered to detrimentally impact on the appearance or architectural quality of the front elevation being only minor interruptions in the roof-plane.

Front railing and pavement lights

The proposed reinstatement of the railing to the front to match the existing railings found on nos.52 and 53 will restore continuity across the terrace and enhance the appearance of the terrace by reinforcing its value as a uniform architectural piece. It will also introduce some defensible space to the front of the property which is currently lacking.

The alteration of the pavement lights will allow a much needed increase in light into the basement. It will result in a slight alteration to the appearance of the front of the property, but this is confined to the pavement and so is not considered to be visually intrusive. The proposed pavement lights will maintain the pattern of pavement lights in front of each of the three properties and will not impact on any architecturally significant elements of the frontage.

Rear extension

The proposed rear single storey lean-to extension has been designed as a lightweight, glazed addition with simple, contemporary detailing. It fits comfortably on the rear elevation and, due to its lightweight nature and simple detailing, does not detract from the host building. It

is considered that it will preserve the legibility of the building, being clearly read as a modern addition.

To provide access into the extension it is proposed to remove the existing patio doors. The doors are not of any historic value (likely dating from the late 20th century) and are of no notable aesthetic value so their removal will not result in the loss of any historic or architecturally notable fabric.

Roof terrace

The proposed roof terrace on the flat roof of the existing 20th century two storey extension will be visible from the rear of the building which backs onto Pond Square. Glass balustrading is proposed in order to tie-in with the design of the proposed extension and also to keep the interventions lightweight and contemporary in appearance. As the extension abuts the large rear extension of the neighbouring property, only two sides of the terrace require any balustrading and it will be seen against the backdrop of this flank brick wall, minimising its visual impact.

The extension on which the roof terrace will sit is not of any architectural merit, other than displaying the evolution of the building through the 20th century, so the proposed roof terrace and glazed balustrade will not detract from any features of architectural or historic significance. Given the 20th century alterations to the rear of the property, this elevation is of lesser significance.

The creation of the roof terrace will also necessitate the removal of an existing sash window at second floor level and the enlargement of the opening to form a door. It appears that the existing window proposed for removal dates from the construction of the rear extension when the opening was reduced in size and a smaller window inserted; the other two houses within the terrace have tall windows in the same position, presumably to light staircases, and this feature has been lost from no.51. In this case, the removal of the window and the lowering of the cill would not result in the loss of historic fabric and so is considered to have little impact on the building's significance.

Bathroom window

It is proposed to insert a timber sash window (to match those existing) in the rear wall of the 20th century rear extension. Given the age of the extension this would not result in the loss of any historic fabric and the insertion of a window here, particularly one to match the existing, would better integrate the extension with the rest of the building and provide some interest to an otherwise blank wall.

Re-rendering the front elevation at ground floor

In order to restore the building's historic finish and reinstate the uniformity across the terrace it is proposed to replace the existing incongruous rough-cast render with smooth render to match the other two houses within the terrace. This is considered to be an enhancement to the listed building in improving its appearance.

Conclusion

The discussion of the proposals above demonstrates that the proposed alterations do not detrimentally impact on or harm what is considered to be significant about the listed building. The alterations have been carefully considered to ensure that the elements and features of the building that contribute to its special interest are not impacted and, where

possible, enhanced. The building's positive contribution to the street scene and this part of the Highgate Conservation Area will remain, with the proposals having the additional benefit of enhancing the internal living arrangements.

As discussed above, the proposals are considered to comply with the relevant policies contained within the NPPF, London Plan, and Camden's Local Plan as harm is not caused to the overall significance of either the listed building itself or the conservation area in which it sits.