

## Heritage Assessment



## Vernon House, St. Mark's Square, London

On behalf of SAV Group

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This heritage assessment has been written and prepared by Heritage Collective on behalf of SAV Group. It relates to a grade II listed building known as Vernon House, built circa 1860. Vernon House was listed grade II on 14 May 1974. The site in question comprises numbers 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the terrace on St. Mark's Square, and it should be noted that numbers 9, 10 and 11 St. Mark's Square were also part of Vernon House until 1996 at which point they were returned to use as single dwellings. The listed building is officially described as follows (the listing description has not been updated since 9, 10, 11 St. Mark's Square were returned to use as single dwellings):

*"Terrace, formerly of 8 houses, now converted to one building. c1860, altered. Stucco with rusticated ground floor and quoins. 4 storeys and basements; projecting end bays, left hand with extra attic storey. Symmetrical facade of 13 windows and 3-window left hand return. Prostyle Doric porticoes with dentil entablatures continuing across and around the buildings; doorways of former Nos 5 (on left return), 6 and 10 with pilaster-jambs carrying cornice heads, sidelights, fanlights and half glazed doors. Other doorways converted to windows. Tripartite ground floor sashes, most with cast-iron window guards; projecting left hand bay with canted bay window and cast-iron window guard. 2nd floor sashes architraved with console bracketed segmental pediments and continuous cast-iron balconies; projecting left hand bay with canted bay window and balcony. 2nd floor, architraved sashes with console bracketed cornices; 3rd floor, architraved sashes with keystones. Projecting left hand bay with tripartite sashes to 3rd, 4th and attic storeys; 2nd floor with console bracketed cornice. Simplified dentil entablature with console bracketed cornice and blocking course. INTERIOR: not inspected."*

- 1.2 The terrace stands opposite St. Mark's Church, a grade II listed church built 1851-2, with mid-20<sup>th</sup> century interiors. There are a number of listed buildings in the vicinity of 5-8 St. Mark's Square. These comprise (all grade II): 16 Prince Albert Road, 17-22 Prince Albert Road, 1 St. Mark's Square, 2 and 3 St. Mark's Square, and 36 Regents Park Road – all of which are stucco fronted mid-19<sup>th</sup> century semi-detached villas. Number 10 Regents Park Road was designed by Erno Goldfinger, and constructed in 1954-56 on a mid-terrace bomb damage site. The Grafton Bridge over the Grand Union Canal is another grade II listed asset in the vicinity of the site in question.

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- 1.3 The site in question is predominantly surrounded by other housing of a similar age and style. To the south of the site is St. Marks Church, and to the east (next to number 11 St. Mark's Square) is the Grand Union Canal.
- 1.4 The site is within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area.
- 1.5 This report accompanies planning and listed building consent applications for a proposed two-storey rear infill extension.
- 1.6 This heritage assessment describes the significance of the heritage assets and assesses the potential impact of change on their significance.
- 1.7 Site visits were undertaken on 5 January and 17 April 2018.

## **2.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

- 2.1 The decision maker is required by sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building and its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. There is a strong presumption against the grant of permission for development that would harm the special interest of the listed building, though the presumption will plainly be lessened if the harm is less than substantial within the meaning in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as is explained further below.
- 2.2 There is a broadly similar duty on respect of the preservation of the character and appearance of a conservation area in section 72(1) of the Act.
- 2.3 Harm is defined by Historic England as change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.4 The significance of a heritage asset is defined in the NPPF as being made up of four main constituents - architectural interest, historical interest, archaeological interest and artistic interest. The setting of the heritage asset can also contribute to its significance.
- 2.5 The assessment of significance (and the assessment of impact) must be made with primary reference to the four main elements of special significance identified in the NPPF.
- 2.6 In this case the impact on the listed building is direct, in the sense that there will be a physical impact on the listed building. For the purposes of paragraphs 132 to 134 of the NPPF it is necessary to undertake an assessment of the direct impact on significance. Insofar as the Act requires that it is a listed building (or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses) to which special regard to the desirability of preservation should be given, the assessment becomes one in which the focus is on those elements of significance which are appreciated and understood through the heritage asset itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly English Heritage. The relevant guidance is in paragraph 84 of Conservation Principles 2008.

- 2.7 It is helpful to inform the assessment by reference to an established methodology, although it is important not to adopt a mechanical approach that might constrain professional judgment. In this case guidance has been sought from a tabular methodology set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.8 The NPPF requires the impact on the significance of the heritage asset to be considered in terms of either “substantial harm” or “less than substantial harm” as described within paragraphs 132 to 134 of that document. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) makes it clear that substantial harm is a high test, and recent case law describes substantial harm in terms of an effect that would vitiate or drain away much of the significance of a heritage asset.
- 2.9 This assessment is confined to the significance of the heritage assets and the impact of change on that significance. It does not address the planning balance in which public benefit is weighed against the degree of harm, if any.

## **Local Policy and Guidance**

- 2.10 In the Camden Local Plan the policy relating to the alteration of listed buildings is summarised below:

*Policy D2(j) states the Council will 'resist proposals for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where this would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the building'.*

## 3.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS

### Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter of the assessment identifies the significance of the designated heritage assets according to the guidelines in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

### **Vernon House, 5-8 St. Mark's Square, London.**

- 3.2 Vernon House (5-11 St. Mark's Square) was listed grade II on 14 May 1974. The list description has not been updated to reflect the subdivision and conversion of numbers 9-11 as single dwellings.
- 3.3 In 1840 the Southampton Estate was sold in freehold parcels for development. The sale map shows the expectation for a grand estate populated by detached and semi-detached villas in generous gardens. This layout is largely reflected in the street pattern of the area at present, though with a greater range of accommodation types than first drafted on the sale map.
- 3.4 Detached and semi-detached villas were the most common building types of the late 1840s, but the 'grand terrace compositions' (such as 5-11 St. Mark's Square) incorporated a density that had not originally been envisaged for the area. By 1870 the estate was almost completely developed.
- 3.5 When it was first built the terrace would have consisted of basement level plus four floors. It is not clear when the mansard roof accommodation was added, but is thought to be mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.6 Until the electrification of the nearby railway line in the 1970s, the area had a poor environmental quality, and demand for grand residences was not as high as it had been. Accordingly, many large single dwellings were converted into multiple residences. The record of conversion for Vernon House has not been located, but it is possible that at the time of these works, the mansard roof extension was also added.
- 3.7 Architectural interest: Vernon House was built circa 1860, at a period of rapid development in the area. Originally built as a terrace of 8 houses, following the

prevailing local use of stucco, with rusticated ground floor and quoins. The building is 5 storeys high (one of which is in the mansard roof) and basements; the projecting western end bay has an extra attic storey. The façade is symmetrical with 13 windows and a 3-window left hand return. The entries are emphasised with Prostyle Doric porticoes with dentil entablatures which continue across and around the buildings. The doorways of number 5 (on left return), 6 and 10 have the best surviving examples of pilaster-jambs carrying cornice heads, sidelights, fanlights and half glazed doors among the terrace. The ground floor windows are tripartite sashes, most with original cast-iron window guards. The projecting left hand bay has a canted bay window and cast-iron window guard. The second floor sash windows are architraved with console bracketed segmental pediments and continuous cast-iron balconies; with the projecting left hand bay with canted bay window and balcony. The third floor windows are, architraved sashes with keystones. The projecting left hand bay features tripartite sashes to third, fourth and attic storeys; while the second floor has a console bracketed cornice. The interiors have been substantially altered in the process of reconfiguration, with the original floor plan largely illegible through many modern partitions dividing the original room volumes, and suspended ceilings featuring prominently throughout the building.

- 3.8 Historic interest: Vernon House has not been attributed to a particular architect. There is an illustrative link to the morphology of the area, as the 'grand terrace' model is a clear departure from the previously popular detached and semi-detached villas of the area in the 1840s-1850s, showing the changing perspectives on density and also how the area has developed over time. The history of conversion and re-conversion of the building shows how the site has changed over time, and how attitudes to the area have also changed.
- 3.9 Artistic interest: The building is visually distinctive as a large, complete terrace running between Princess Road and the Grand Union Canal. The decorative detail adds interest, however it is not so unique as to possess more than a moderate amount of artistic interest.
- 3.10 Archaeological interest: Vernon House is not of intrinsic archaeological interest.
- 3.11 Initial assessment of significance: Vernon House is of special architectural and historic interest. Its significance is largely derived from its principal front elevation and contribution to the local street-scene. Internally, there is little

remaining original detail, and even the plan form has been consistently obscured throughout. It retains its historical value and is of medium significance.

## **Primrose Hill Conservation Area**

- 3.12 5-8 St. Mark's Square falls within the boundary of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area. The conservation area was designated in October 1971, and extended in June 1985. The conservation area statement was adopted in December 2000. The conservation area is divided into four sub-areas, of which the site in question is in sub-area 1: Regent's Park Road South.
- 3.13 The conservation area is generally residential in character, comprising a series of well laid out Victorian terraces. It is punctuated with local industries, shops and pubs.
- 3.14 Sub-area 1 of the conservation area is largely flat, with a small incline from south-east to north-west. It is neighboured to the west by Primrose Hill, and bounded on the south by Regents Park and London Zoo, Regent's Canal to the north-west and the railway line to the north. The sub-area is characterised by Italianate Villas lining principal streets, with generous set-backs and mature street trees giving the area a leafy character. Three to four storey Italianate villas are the primary typology in the area, with raised ground floors and numerous decorative features. The villas are generally semi-detached or in terraces, and most commonly have stucco fronts, rusticated on lower floors.
- 3.15 St. Mark's Square is referred to in the conservation area statement as one of two 'grand terraces' in the area, and makes a positive contribution to both the immediate street-scene and wider conservation area.

## 4.0 POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON SIGNIFICANCE

### Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter of the assessment describes the proposed changes that have the potential to affect the significance of the building – particularly those that might change the architectural and historic interest of the structure. It should be read in conjunction with the appendices, particularly the report on refurbishment that demonstrates historic fabric will be unaffected.

### The application proposal.

- 4.2 Vernon House will remain in residential use.
- 4.3 The proposed scheme is for a two storey rear infill extension to improve the existing accommodation.
- 4.4 At the lower ground-floor level, as detailed on drawings 17023\_PL2\_009 (plan), 17023\_PL2\_040 and 17023\_PL2\_041 (sections), the existing terrace door, frame and sill are proposed to be removed to enable greater flow and usability of the proposed space.
- 4.5 Also at lower ground level, as detailed on drawing 17023\_PL2\_109, two existing sash window openings are proposed to be filled in (with a set-back to east elevation). This provided the necessary privacy to B06. Existing sash windows will be kept in-situ and blocked in from each side.
- 4.6 At ground floor, as detailed on drawing 17023\_PL2\_010, 17023\_PL2\_040 and 17023\_PL2\_041 (sections), it is proposed to remove the existing sash window and lower the existing sill height to provide access to additional floorspace for G07. As detailed on drawing 17023\_PL2\_110 the existing window shutter will be refurbished and fixed in place. Removal of existing fabric will be kept to a minimum in order to provide access.
- 4.7 Also at ground floor, as detailed on 17023\_PL2\_110, an existing sash window opening is proposed to be filled in (with a set-back to east elevation). This will provide the necessary privacy to G06. The existing sash window will be kept in-situ and blocked in from each side.

- 4.8 The proposed new infill's elevation will be a slim frame aluminium sliding glass door at lower ground level and sliding window at ground level, with an internal glass balustrade. The new glazed elevation will be set back from the host building's closet wing at a depth to match that of the set back of the similar infill extension at number 9 St. Mark's Square.
- 4.9 The existing masonry walls at lower ground and ground floors will be made good and painted white.
- 4.10 As detailed on drawings 17023\_PL2\_111 (plan), 17023\_PL2\_140 and 17023\_PL2-141 (sections) the new roof will be a combination of batten roll lead roof and an opaque glass roof. The height of the glazed section will match closely to that of number 9 St. Mark's Square, with a similarly increased pitch in the lead section to accommodate the height of the existing ground floor window opening.

## Effects on the listed building

- 4.11 Impact on Architectural interest: The architectural interest of the building is best understood through the front façade of the terrace. The proposal for a subservient rear infill extension (matching those of two neighbouring properties) with minimal loss of original fabric, will therefore have a negligible effect on the architectural significance of the building.
- 4.12 Impact on Historic interest: The proposed changes will not affect the historic interest of the building. The continued residential use will retain the historic connection with the original domestic function of the building.
- 4.13 Impact on Artistic interest: There will be no impact on the artistic interest of the building. The external elevations will remain unchanged.
- 4.14 Impact on Archaeological interest: There will be no effect on the building's archaeological interest.

## Effects on Primrose Hill Conservation Area

- 4.15 The proposed scheme for the rear infill-extension has been designed with sensitive regard for the special interest of the host building, and will unify the rear elevation of the terrace by replicating closely the extensions of neighbouring properties 9 and 10 St. Mark's Square. The character and appearance of the conservation area will be preserved for the purposes of the decision maker's duty under section 72(1) of the Act.

## Summary of impacts

- 4.16 Consideration of change and harm: The addition of a glazed infill extension; the removal of a small section of original wall in order to lower the sill height of the existing ground floor window to convert to a doorway; the removal of an existing timber door and sash window; and the blocking in of three existing sash windows will have a negligible impact on the significance of the building, which has already been significantly altered internally over the course of its existence. The proposed infill extension has been designed sensitively to match the infill extensions of neighbouring properties numbers 9 and 10 St. Mark's Square.
- 4.17 Consideration of methodology: The methodology in Appendix 1 acts as a control mechanism by which to check and calibrate the above assessment. It is applied as follows:
- Vernon House is a designated heritage asset of **medium significance** which will be the subject of **negligible** change resulting in a **neutral/small** impact.
- 4.18 Proportionality and professional judgment: The application of a proportional approach and the use of professional judgement confirm that the application of the methodology is consistent with the overall assessment of the effects, which are neutral and will not cause harm.
- 4.19 Minimising Harm: Heritage Collective have worked with SAV Group to minimise the harm to the listed building, with the result that the smallest amount of removal and alteration to existing fabric will be undertaken in order to provide the increased communal space and private accommodation.

- 4.20 Overall conclusion: The listed building and conservation area will be preserved for the purposes of the decision maker's duty under sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Act.

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Built circa 1860, the listed terrace was part of the rapid development of Primrose Hill at the time, brought on in part by the presence of the railway terminating at Euston and by the sale of land from the Southampton Estate. The building used the popular stucco finish of the area, but was one of the 'grand terraces' which diverged from the more popular detached and semi-detached typology which initially characterised the area.
- 5.2 The building is typical of many in the area which came to the point where it could not sustain use as a single family dwelling, and it was therefore divided into multiple accommodation. The fact that three of the eight buildings in the terrace were returned to single family dwellings in 1996 shows the changing fortunes of the area over time. Its changes of use have resulted in significant alterations and the loss of interior details and legibility of original plan form. It makes a positive contribution to the streetscene and the conservation area.
- 5.3 The effect of the proposed addition of a two storey rear infill extension to the building is **not harmful** for the purposes of policy D2(j) of the Camden Local Plan.
- 5.4 The character and appearance of Primrose Hill Conservation Area will be **preserved**, for the purposes of the duty in section 72(1) of the Act.
- 5.5 There will be **negligible impact** to localised fabric resulting in **no harm** for the purposes of the duty in sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act. Paragraphs 133 and 134 of the NPPF are therefore not engaged.

## Appendix 1

The following tabular methodology is a guide adapted from ICOMOS guidance on impacts on World Heritage Properties 2010 with reference to comparable approaches in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and guidance issued by Historic England and the GLA in relation to impacts on setting and significance. It intended to be a guide, not a mechanical process, and it is not a substitute for professional judgment.

Very High	World Heritage Sites including buildings, urban landscapes or historic landscapes of international value whether designated or not. Extremely well preserved historic landscapes with exceptional coherence and time depth, and areas associated with cultural heritage innovations of global importance.
High	Nationally designated archaeological areas including buildings that have exceptional qualities (typically listed grade I or II*), conservation areas containing very important buildings and spaces, and structures of clear national importance. Nationally designated historic landscapes and designated areas associated with globally important activities, innovations or people.
Medium	Designated or undesignated heritage assets and buildings (typically listed grade II) that have exceptional qualities or associations. Conservation areas that contain buildings that contribute significantly to historic character. Historic townscapes with important historic integrity. Designated special historic landscapes and areas on local registers for their regional or local significance.
Low	Designated or undesignated assets of local importance, poorly preserved with limited value. Unlisted buildings of modest quality in their fabric, townscape of limited historic integrity, and robust undesignated historic landscapes that have intangible cultural heritage associations of local significance.
Negligible	Assets with little or no surviving archaeological interest, buildings or urban landscapes of no architectural interest, intrusive buildings, and landscapes with little or no significance or historic interest.

### Magnitude of Change

Major	Total alteration or comprehensive change to setting. Change to most or all key elements or attributes, or major changes that affect associations, visual links and cultural appreciation.
Moderate	Change to many key elements or considerable change to setting that affects the character of the asset or which causes significant change to the setting. Considerable change to cultural appreciation.
Minor	Slight alteration to fabric or slight change to setting, including change to key elements leading to noticeable change. Limited change to noise levels, sound quality and access. Change that affects cultural appreciation.
Negligible	Very minor change to key physical components or to setting that hardly affect the asset. Very slight change to noise levels, sound quality and access.
No change	No change to the heritage asset or its setting.

### Assessment of Impact

Significance	Scale of change				
	No change	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major
<b>Very High</b>	Neutral	Small	Medium/Large	Large/Very Large	Very Large
<b>High</b>	Neutral	Small	Medium/Small	Medium/Large	Large/Very Large
<b>Medium</b>	Neutral	Neutral/Small	Small	Medium	Medium/Large
<b>Low</b>	Neutral	Neutral/Small	Neutral/Small	Small	Medium/Small
<b>Negligible</b>	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral/Small	Neutral/Small	Small