36 Lancaster Grove NW3

Heritage Assessment

Fitting out hose tower to provide single apartment 19

Anthony Walker
Dip arch (dist), grad dip (cons) AA, RIBA

DLG Architects LLP Studio 12.0G.1
The Leathermarket 11-13 Weston Street
London SE1 3ER
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1 Scope

1.1 This assessment has been made to consider heritage impact of proposals to fit out the hose tower of the former Fire Station at 36 Lancaster Grove, London NW3 as a single residential unit.

1.2 It is based on examination of the building and archive material in the local history study centre and the London Metropolitan archive, together with the Survey of London and relevant planning guidance which includes the Conservation Area Appraisal.

1.3 The study has been produced by Anthony Walker, a Conservation Architect Accredited in Building Conservation and with a postgraduate Diploma in Building Conservation. He has been a Visiting Professor at Kingston University and he lectures on Building Conservation matters at the Architectural Association and at Cambridge University.

2 Site location and setting

2.1 The site forms a triangular shape at the intersection of Lancaster Grove and Eton Avenue. The whole area was part of the Eton College estate which was sold for residential development towards the end of the 19th century.

2.2 The land used for the fire station lies within the Belsize Conservation Area, subsection 3 Eton Avenue.

2.3 In addition to the impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, consideration has to be given to any impact on the setting of designated Heritage Assets of which there are a number along the length of Eton Avenue.

3 Historical background and significance

3.1 Belsize Fire Station is a grade II* listed building, built in 1914-15 under the direction of Charles Canning Winmill of the LCC Architects' Department where he had been since 1892. He started work in the housing section but, following a significant fire in 1897, he was appointed to design and supervise the erection of a new fire station in Red Cross Street. In December 1899 the fire brigade section of the department was reorganised under Owen Fleming, with Winmill as second in command. The fire brigade section was given responsibility for doubling the number of London fire stations with the aim to establish six new stations every year

3.2 Belsize Fire Station was quite late in the fire station programme. One of the architects, John Summerson, wrote that the long, two-storey building facing south had a subtle combination of brick, stone and iron, the neat junction of the roofs and the finish of the eaves was clearly the work of a man who knew and understood the vernacular architecture of southern England and found it a sound starting point from which to approach the problems of the present day.

3.3 As noted by Summerson, the building combines the traditional detailing of a larger domestic building with a robust and functional interior. Winmill had a great interest in vernacular buildings, having undertaken a close study of their detailing.

3.4 The main working areas of the station, including the main hall for the fire tender with the dramatic central staircase which unites the building and provides access to both the tender hall and the rest/recreation rooms, and the wing with residential accommodation, are all designed with a simple finishes.

APPENDIX A View of building from Lancaster Grove.

3.5 The Arts and Crafts domestic informality of the designated heritage asset makes it open to careful and sensitive adaptation. The internal robust finishes provide an interesting contrast to the delicacy of some of the external detailing and are strong enough to be retained. The brickwork is in an English bond with significant areas of decorative bonding.
APPENDIX B Tower brickwork detailing

3.6 The London Metropolitan Archive has plans of the original building from 1913 and some with later alterations.
APPENDIX C Ground and first floor plans 1913

3.7 The tower contains the central staircase linking the ground first and second floor levels. Above that there is a circular staircase in one corner giving access to the upper levels of the tower with space for hoses to be hung from the top of the building.
APPENDIX D Central staircase showing third pole for fast response.

3.8 The tower rises in the centre of the complex. From the third floor upwards access is by a tight spiral staircase and there is an open void in the centre of the small floor which is lit at each level by a west-facing window.
APPENDIX E Tower as it is today.

3.9 Central staircase. This is an impressive central feature at the lower levels which is both visually striking and at the heart of the functional activity in the building. It has a steep staircase and use in the case of an incident was supplemented by a third pole located at the western end of the well. This has now been removed. The balustrade to the well is a simple metal rail, supported on square section balusters. The walls are lined with tiles reflecting the functional use and, in contrast to the panelled walls of the recreation room on the south side and those of the mess room to the north, have been retained.
APPENDIX F Photograph of stair tower interior.

3.10 Upper levels of the tower comprise a compact space at each level with a central opening for hoses to hang to drain. There is a window at each level and the spiral access staircase in one corner.

3.11 Significance

3.11.1 The building is listed grade II* and is described as follows:

GV II Fire station 1912-5, by Charles Canning Windmill of the Fire Brigade Branch of the London County Council Architects Department.*

MATERIALS: Brick with tile roof and tall brick chimney-stacks. Stone-clad appliance bay frontage and raised basement of the accommodation range. Tile-hung dormer windows, tile lintels and brick relieving arches to other windows. Decorative metalwork castellated hoppers and cresting along the gutters of the roof terrace and appliance bays.

PLAN: L-shaped with accommodation range to Eton Avenue and appliance room facing Lancaster Grove, large brick tower at the hinge for drills and hose-drying. EXTERIOR: A clever interpretation of an Arts and Crafts-style house, adapted to meet the requirements of the fire brigade. The elevation to Eton Avenue could be mistaken for a terrace of cottages

with its tall chimneys, casements with leaded lights, canted timber bays sitting just under the deep eaves, and ground-floor bay with moulded brick mullions and transoms. Its rear, facing the yard, is a more typical LCC design with deck-accessed fireman's flats. The elevation to Lancaster Grove accommodates the three appliance bays, the most functional element of a fire station, in a similarly rustic design with a steeply pitched roof that flares at the low-hanging eaves and tall hipped dormer windows. Also impressive is the monumental tower, which does not disrupt the domestic character despite its height and breadth; the segmental arched and lattice work recessed panels in the brickwork soften its bulk.

INTERIOR: The appliance room retains its original watch-room and cream glazed brick wall. Stairwell also has cream glazed bricks; stair with metal balustrade and sliding-pole chamber and doors survives intact; watch tower retains its iron spiral stair and hose-drying chamber. The first-floor single men's dormitory, now the gym, has an open truss roof and a second pole house which leads directly to the appliance room. Next to this room, the former single men's mess room, now the kitchen, has an original fireplace in russet glazed brick with overmantle inlayed with Delft-style tiles. The ground floor recreation room has the original panelling and fireplace. There are also numerous original fireplaces and timber doors in the accommodation sections of the station. Even to the detail of numbered pegs in the gear room, the survival of original features is notable.

HISTORY: Belsize Fire Station was constructed in 1912-5, at the end of the most creative period of design in the Fire Brigade Branch of the London County Council Architects' Department, during which the Brigade's most characterful buildings were built. Since 1896, new stations were designed by a group of architects led by Owen Fleming and Charles Canning Winmill, both formerly of the LCC Housing Department. They brought the avant-garde approach which had evolved for new social housing to the Fire Brigade Division, as the department was called from 1899. While some stations were built to standardised plans, others were highly experimental, sensitive to local context, and designed to a bespoke plan. The exemplars from the earliest years are Perry Vale, Euston, East Greenwich and West Hampstead. This is one of the last designs produced by the Department before the outbreak of WWI, yet (no doubt due to Windmill's authorship) it is more characteristic of the earlier stations in its distinctive architecture, attention to detail, and sensitivity to its setting. The station occupies a prominent site, on the apex of two roads lined with high-quality Edwardian houses and the sensitivity of the design to this context is marked. The generous plot size accommodates the fireman's flats in a separate two storey range and the view from the junction is strikingly picturesque. The area had formerly been served by stations at St John's Wood (built 1870), Hampstead village (built 1874) and West Hamptead (built 1901); this station replaced that at St Johns Wood. The foundation stone for Belsize Fire Station records that the station was opened on the 22 May 1915 by Percy C Simmons, Chairman of the Fire Brigade Committee of the LCC.

SOURCES: Andrew Saint, London's Architecture and the London Fire Brigade, 1866-1938(Heinz Gallery RIBA, Exhibition Catalogue, 1981) Will Reading, L.C.C. Fire Stations, 1896-1916, their History, Condition and Future Use (Architectural Association, Graduate School, 2007) John B Nadal, London's Fire Stations (Huddersfield, 2006) Hampstead: Public

Services, A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 9: Hampstead, Paddington (1989,138-145 Historic photographs held by the London Fire Brigade Museum.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION: Belsize Fire Station is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * It is one of the most distinctive and original of a remarkable series of fire stations built by the LCC between 1896-1914, each executed to a bespoke design, which are widely admired as being among the most accomplished examples of LCC civic architecture of this rich and prolific period; * High architectural quality - as manifest in design, detail, materials and sensitivity to context; * It is also one of the most intact, having not been extended externally, and retaining its original timber appliance bay doors, plan form and numerous other features; * In the wider context of Edwardian architecture, this station is an exemplar of the use of a domestic idiom, the Arts and Crafts style, in a municipal building; * The building groups well with its neighbours in this area noted for its concentration of distinctive Arts and Crafts houses, including the many listed houses on Eton Avenue.*

3.10.2 The background to the development of fire stations is set out in *London's Historic Fire Stations,* produced by English Heritage and the London Fire Brigade in 2010. The 1866 Act of Parliament gave rise to the first publicly funded fire brigades, of which the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, led by Captain Eyre Massey Shaw, was the first. He drove an intense programme of building which continued into the 1880s. The LCC replaced the Metropolitan Board of Works with responsibility for building and adapting fire stations in 1889 and there was a lull in new building until the turn of the century. The mechanisation of all appliances provided another spur to development, with the first station to have only mechanised appliances being the Wapping station in Red Lion Street in 1905. The First World War brought a halt to the boom although stations already in progress continued.

3.10.3 The form of historic fire stations varies considerably. The change from horse-drawn to mechanised appliances clearly had a significant impact on layout, as did the introduction of slippery poles in 1904. Residential accommodation was often provided, sometimes as separate cottages. Mess rooms, often with a good quality fire place and panelling, were provided as well as a separate billiards room.

3.10.2 Architectural style varied and often reflected current fashion. After 1900 a significant change in design came about with an emphasis on British Design and Civic pride. It is stated in *London's historic fire stations* that '*The development of architectural detailing ranging from Classical and Queen Anne through to Arts and Crafts can be seen producing stations that resemble suburban mansions'. The crucial emphasis seems to be designing for the location – hence Cannon Street station of 1906 had a façade like a city bank while Belsize of 1916 emulates the artists' studios of its neighbourhood.*

4 Relevant National and Local Conservation Legislation and Guidance

4.1 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990

4.1.1 Section 7 requires consent to be obtained for any works which affect the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building.

4.1.2 Conservation areas are to be designated as areas of special architectural or historic interest and special attention shall be paid to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.

4.2 National Planning Policy Framework NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance PPG

4.2.1 *At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking*.

4.2.2 Section 16 deals with conservation and the following extracts are relevant to the proposals.

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting.

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.

4.3 London Plan

POLICY 7.8 HERITAGE ASSETS AND ARCHAEOLOGY

A London's heritage assets and historic environment, including listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and other natural and historic landscapes, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields, scheduled monuments, archaeological remains and memorials should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be taken into account.

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

4.4 Camden Local Plan

4.4.1 In Core Policy CS14, Conserving Heritage, it is stated that the Council will ensure that Camden's buildings are 'attractive, safe and easy to use by (b)
preserving and enhancing Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings'. This is amplified in paragraph 14.9, confirming that conservation area statements will be material considerations in assessing applications.

4.4.2 Camden Planning Guidance 1, Design
Section 3 Heritage. Camden has a rich architectural heritage; development within conservation areas will only be permitted if it preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area.
Section 4, Extensions, alterations and conservatories. Alterations should take into account the character and design of the property and its surroundings, that windows, doors and materials should complement the existing……..

4.4.3 Policy DP25 - Conserving Camden's heritage
Conservation areas
In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will:

a) take into account the conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;
b) only permit development, within conservation areas, which preserves and enhances the character and appearance of that area;
……..and
e) preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of the conservation area and which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.
Listed buildings
To preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will:
e) prevent the total or substantial demolition of a listed building unless exceptional circumstances are shown which outweigh the case for retention;
f) only grant consent for a change of use of, or alterations and extensions to, a listed building where it considers that this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building;
and
g) not permit development which it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building.

4.5 Belsize Conservation Area

4.5.1 36 Lancaster Grove lies within sub area 3 of the Conservation Area.

4.5.2 This sub area is described as having predominantly Victorian housing with some Edwardian examples, predominantly of two storeys with an attic level. The area is notable for its variety of styles but with a general consistency of materials with red brick walls and roof tiles. Eton Avenue is described as having large detached villas, predominantly in Queen Anne style, but with many Arts and Crafts examples. Recurrent themes include canted bays.

4.5.3 The fire station is noted as an impressive Arts and Crafts building, with steep hipped roofs and intricate brick detailing, which forms a landmark.

4.6 England, 'Making Changes to Heritage Assets'

4.6.1 This document which has evolved from the Planning Policy Statement 5 Practice Guide was published in February 2016.

4.6.2 Paragraph 2 of the introduction recognises the need to accommodate change. *This advice promotes positive, well-informed and collaborative conservation, the aim of which is to recognise and reinforce the historic significance of places, while accommodating the changes necessary to ensure that people can continue to use and enjoy them.*

4.6.3 In paragraph 3 it is stated that *An unreasonable inflexible approach will prevent action that could give a building new life;*

5 Proposals

5.1 The proposals are set out in the architects' Design and Access Statement.

5.2 For the purpose of this Heritage Assessment they may be summarised fitting out the top floors of the hose tower to provide residential accommodation.

5.3 The works are all internal and there are no changes to the external vertical faces of the tower visible from the ground.

5.4 Access will be by means of a modified staircase in the location of the existing stair and with a similar form. A small new staircase is provided to the top floor discretely ,located in the

corner at the end of the wardrobe to provide access to the roof. A hatch will be provided to allow access to the roof and a minimal safety rail will be provided fixed to the back of the parapet wall.

5.5 The central opening no longer has a functional use. It is proposed to infill it with a reversible construction and provide a false back illuminated lay light to resemble to existing opening at second floor level and with an set metal trim on the floor above.

6 Assessment of the impact of the proposals on the significance of the Designated Heritage Asset and the Belsize Conservation Area

6.1 The external form of the building is unchanged and thus there is no impact on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

6.2 Externally the use of the tower has no impact on the architectural or historic interest of the heritage asset.

6.3 Internally the form of the external tower wall is retained. An enclosure is formed around the spiral staircase echoing the corner into which it is tucked at present. The existing opening in the floor will be infilled with a removable floor and underneath will have a laylight reflecting the limited daylight which came through the opening but which when in use for hanging hoses would have been largely obscured.

6.5 Access to flat 19 is by a new lobby on the second floor which has been introduced for fire safety reasons. This area leads to what at present are roof spaces for which consent has been granted to convert them to flats on either side of the main staircase. The nature of this area has been changed with the closure of the fire station the dominant element of the hanging hoses will have gone and the upper landing leading to roof storage will become the access to the approved flats.

6.6 The form of the tower, the access and the central laylight will be discrete and retain much of their present significance consistent with the residential use. Changes will only be evident to those gaining access to the space and for whom the history of its use can be made available in other forms.

7 Summary

7.1 The plans which accompany this application clearly show that the form of the tower is retained and there is no impact on the external appearance nor the character of the tower as a landmark in the Conservation Area.

7.2 Internally the overall space of the tower is retained and as described above the impactof the central opening is retained albeit in a different form. The original form with hanging hoses has already been changed there being no current need for hanging space for hoses to drain down. The layout with a corner circular staircase is retained and the new screen maintains the form of the existing short walls which are to be removed.

7.3 The internal alterations do constitute less than substantial harm and in accordance with paragraph 193 of the 2018 NPPF are a means of achieving a viable use of the building while retaining its historic and architectural interest.

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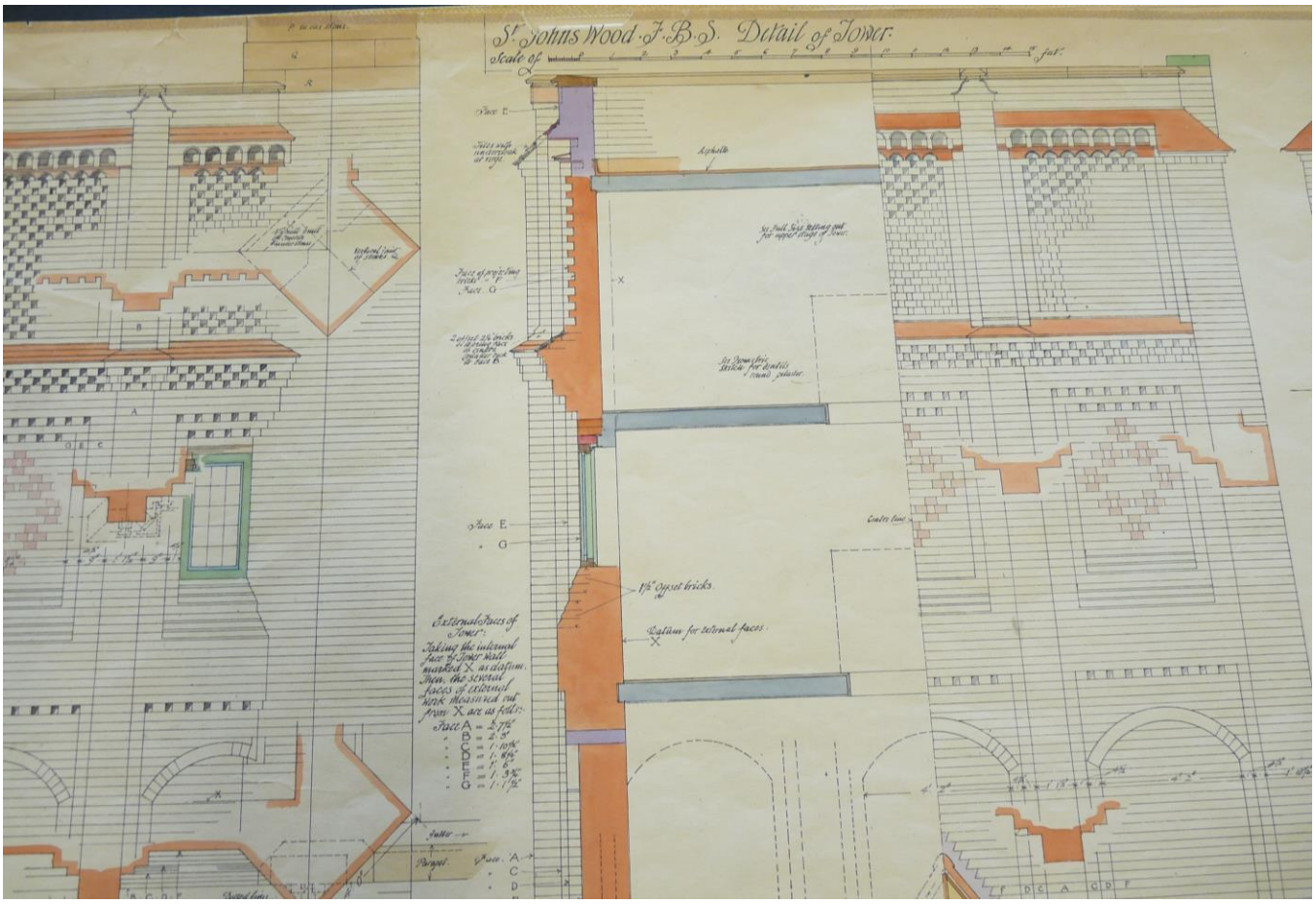
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Fire station viewed from Lancaster Grove

APPENDIX B

Tower external brickwork details showing contrast between decorative exterior and simple internal work

By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London



APPENDIX C

1913 Ground and first floor plans

By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London


No 2
Section D-D
1st Floor Plan
SECTION I-I
YARD

APPENDIX D

Central staircase

By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London

APPENDIX E
Tower as it is today

APPENDIX F

Photograph of stair tower interior

APPENDIX G

1913 West Elevation facing adjoining house Millbank showing windows in the tower
By courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archive City of London