

5 Lyme Street NW1 0EH

Heritage Assessment

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London SE1 3ER
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1 **Scope of Assessment**

- 1.1 This Heritage Assessment has been prepared to support a planning and listed building submission for a small extension, and minor alterations, to number 5 Lyme Street.
- 1.2 It has been prepared by Anthony Walker who is a chartered architect with a postgraduate Diploma in Building Conservation from the Architectural Association. He has been a Visiting Professor at Kingston University and lectures on MSt Courses at Cambridge and Leicester Universities.
- 1.3 This assessment is based on an examination of the building, together with a review of relevant conservation policy documents including the Local Plan, Camden Planning Guidance 1: Design, the Regents Canal Conservation Area Appraisal 2008, the National Planning Policy Framework, and other planning consents in the immediate vicinity, together with the advice received in response to the pre-application submission.

2 **Location and historical background**

- 2.1 Number 5 Lyme Street is located on the north–eastern side of the street and lies within sub-area 2 of the Regents Canal Conservation area.
- 2.2 Residential development in the area dates from the late 18th century, with greater impetus in the first half of the 19th century.
- 2.3 Lyme Street runs to the north-west, away from the junction with Georgiana Street, and forms a triangular block with the western side of Royal College Street. The properties in Royal College Street, combined with the industrial properties along the back of the quay to the Regent’s Canal, block views of and from the Regent’s Canal.
- 2.4 Number 5 is at the western end of this block and lies on the wider base of the open triangular space created. The garden to number 5 tapers away from the back of the house with a tall blank wall on the northern side and a large tree at the end screening the back of the properties in Royal College Street.
- 2.5 On the southern side of Lyme Street is what Pevsner describes as ‘*a curiosity*’ which is a formal composition built as a piano factory in 1852-5, now known as the Limehouse Studios with a four-storey pedimented centre and lower wings, flanked by houses built slightly earlier in 1849. These houses are of three storeys in grey brick and, according to Pevsner, are ‘*a conscious contrast to the small semi-detached stuccoed villas opposite*’. These smaller villas are a group of five semidetached blocks which include numbers 5 and 6 Lyme Street as their central focus.

3 **Building significance**

- 3.1 Description. Number 5 Lyme Street is a semi-detached building, paired with number 6, and they form part of a mid-nineteenth century row of ten semi-detached villas, faced in stucco with hipped slated roofs and projecting eaves and the ground floor windows have alternate triangular and segmental pediments. Numbers 5 and 6 are the central pair in this row of villas and are exceptions in that, unlike the rest which have rusticated quoins to the front façade, they have full height pilasters.
- 3.2 The villas are of two storeys, above a semi-basement, with a single front window on each level and a side entrance porch at ground and basement levels. The basement part projects back from the shallow ground floor entrance with a sloping roof extension to bring

it in line with the back of the main body of the building at garden level. Below the ground floor entrance porch is a lobbied entrance from the side passage, and also a lavatory and a small service area. Some of the other porches in the terrace been extended backwards but have retained the overall height and width of the original porches.

- 3.3 Number 5 has a back extension at basement level. Some of the villas have larger extensions with a terrace at ground floor level, and some have extensions with sloping roofs, or in the form of a conservatory. There have been several alterations to the backs of these buildings, some of which are illustrated in Nicholas Taylor Associates' Planning Report.
- 3.4 The group of villas 1-10 is listed grade II and lies within the Regents Canal Conservation Area, sub-area II. There are several other listed buildings in the vicinity.

The listing description reads:

'CAMDEN TQ2984SW LYME STREET 798-1/66/1085 (North side) 14/05/74 Nos.1-10 (Consecutive) GV II Street of 10 semi-detached villas. Mid C19. Stucco with rusticated quoins except Nos. 5 & 6 with pilasters at the angles. Hipped slated roofs with projecting eaves and central slab chimney-stacks. 2 storeys and semi-basements. 1 window each. Stucco porticoes on returns with flanking pilasters carrying entablature; doorways with fanlight and panelled doors. Architraved sashes, ground floor with alternating triangular and segmental pediments to each pair; 1st floor with architrave forming pilasters and bracketed sills; some retaining margin lights. Nos. 3 & 4 originally with cast-iron balconies to ground floor windows. INTERIOR: not inspected.'

- 3.5 The back elevations are of brick above a stucco basement level, with sash windows to the main back room with '8 over 8' panes, while the staircase is lit by a window at half-level with 6 over 6 panes. Many of the buildings have a single small window at the end of the landing leading down to the basement level.
- 3.6 Interior. The villas all follow a similar, although not identical, plan with a tight staircase which is located at the side of the building in the back corner nearest to the entrance porch. The rooms are of simple rectangular form with chimney breasts on the party wall and a central chimney stack serving both halves of the building.
- 3.7 Bathrooms have been introduced in all the houses in several forms. In some cases, this has meant the loss of a bedroom at the first-floor level while, in others such as number 3, a room has been created beside the main front room. Care has been taken not to disrupt the regular appearance of the front façade and any new windows which are needed have been provided in the return façade leading to the porch.
- 3.8 There is hierarchical decorative plaster work and, in number 5, there is a more decorative scheme on the ground floor and simpler mouldings in the basement and first floor. Similar embellishments appear in the joinery mouldings.

Decorative plaster cornices.

In the basement and first floor the cornices consist of two rows of Cygma Recta mouldings at the top of the wall, with returns across the ceiling comprising three rows of reeds. On the ground floor there is a strip around the ceiling with a series of rosettes at regular intervals and a central ceiling rose with acanthus leaf decoration.

Joinery.

Staircase: painted with simple, square-section balusters at close centres.
Skirtings: most are in simple rectangular section. On the ground floor they have a two-stage vertical face with a quirk, above which is a Cygma Recta and a small capping bead.
Windows: the main windows to back and front are 6 over 6 pane sashes. Most windows have horns except those in the basement.
Doors. Simple square-section frames, with flat panels on both sides to the upper and basement floors. Doors on the ground floor have planted Cygma Recta mouldings on the frames, and similar planted mouldings on the junction between the frame of the door and the flat panels.



First and basement floors have simple, square-section frames with no decorative mouldings.



Ground floor joinery with inset mouldings and architrave round door frame.

- 3.6 The group of 10 buildings has an overall significance as confirmed by the listing. They have retained a uniform general appearance from the road, with a regular window pattern facing the street and a generally uniform roof form with central chimney stacks on the line of the Party Wall. At the same time there is some variety in detail, including the corner pilasters to numbers 5 and 6 in contrast to the rusticated quoins in the other villas.
- 3.7 The contrast between these crisply detailed stucco villas and the more romantically detailed villas opposite is noted by Pevsner, and is welcomed as reinforcing their significance (see 2.5 above).

4 Relevant conservation guidance and legislation

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2018

4.1.1 In paragraph 10 of the NPPF the presumption in favour of sustainable development is confirmed.

4.1.2 Section 16 deals with Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. Paragraph 196 deals with the situation where a development proposal would 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**.

4.2 Local Plan

4.2.1 Section 7 deals with Design and Heritage.

4.2.2 Policy D1 includes a requirement that: *The Council will seek to secure high quality design in development. The Council will require that development: a. respects local context and character; b. preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2 Heritage;*

4.2.3 This is developed in paragraph 7.2: *The Council will require all developments, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, to be of the highest standard of design and will expect developments to consider:*

- *character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings;*
- *the character and proportions of the existing building, where alterations and extensions are proposed;*
- *the prevailing pattern, density and scale of surrounding development;*

4.2.4 *Policy D2 Heritage the Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens and locally listed heritage assets.*

4.3 Regent's Canal Conservation Area Appraisal

4.3.1 The site lies within sub-area 2 and, while clearly related to the development of the area and its commercial and residential character, it is in fact hidden from the canal itself.

4.3.2 The canal was finally finished in 1820: 5 Lyme Street and its related group of five semi-detached villas was finished about thirty years later. By 1840 the canal was carrying building materials, grain, hay, cheese, chemicals and beer to many related wharves.

4.3.3 In the Appraisal it is noted that numbers 1-10 Lyme Street, 1-6 Lyme Street, and 11-19 Lyme Street are listed as making a positive contribution to the area.

4.3.4 The management strategy provides clear guidance as to what should be considered in assessing any development proposals. In particular, the sections on Roof and Rear Extensions are relevant. *'Roof extensions which fundamentally alter the roof form of buildings where visible from the canal will not normally be permitted, although each proposal will be considered on its own merits'. Rear extensions 'should be as unobtrusive as possible and should not adversely affect the character of the building or the conservation area. The proposal's general effect on neighbouring properties, the setting of the canal and the conservation area will be the basis of its suitability. Within the terrace or group of buildings what is permissible will depend on the original historic pattern of extensions. Rear extensions will not be acceptable where they would spoil a uniform rear elevation of an unspoilt terrace or group of buildings, particularly when the elevations concerned are clearly visible from the canal.'*

5 **Proposals and their impact on the significance of the building and the Conservation Area.**

5.1 The Proposals

5.1.1 The proposals are shown on the drawings and in the DAS prepared by the architects.

5.1.2 For the purposes of this assessment the proposed works comprise the following:

- The reconstruction of the back wing to form a full-width, single-storey extension to the basement, combined with opening up the wall between the front and back rooms leaving a nib on either side and a downstand to identify the original wall position, thereby creating a unified sitting room with kitchen and dining room looking out over the garden with direct access to the garden. The large fireplace in the kitchen will be retained as well as the fireplace in the sitting room.
- The existing lower ground WC is to be enlarged to align with the back wall of the main body of the building and to allow space to include a basin. A window will be incorporated at the back to light this area.
- The ground floor entrance lobby is to be enlarged to align with the back wall of the main body of the villa, and to provide a shower room to serve the two bedrooms at this level. A window will be incorporated at the side to light this area.
- The provision of a terrace at ground floor level looking out over the garden. Access will be provided by converting the windows from the back room into French windows, and the small window at the end of the landing into a single doorway on to the terrace.
- The layout of the two rooms at ground floor level will be retained, thus preserving the historic decorative plaster work.
- At first floor level the existing bathroom will be rearranged to make more efficient and compact use of the space looking out over the garden at the back.

5.2 The significance of the building is that it forms an integral part of the group of five semi-detached mid-19th century villas. Although there have been alterations to the backs of most of these villas, and to some of the sides the basic form, including the roofscape and the chimney stacks, has generally been retained. All the villas have entrances at the side leaving the front of the villa free of entrance doors. The entrance doors are located at the side close to the staircase, thus minimising internal circulation. The main entrance is at the raised ground floor level with a secondary access at basement level directly below, and at the foot of the main staircase.

5.3 The side lobby access retains the width and height of the existing side porch and thus preserves the appearance of the villa from the front. The lobby is extended back to the

line of the back wall of the main body of the building, providing essential accommodation as a viable residential unit in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF.

- 5.4 The Planning Solutions Team response to the pre-application submission under the heading 'Two storey side extension' is incorrect in that on page 4 in the penultimate paragraph they say that extensions above ground level are not characteristic of the villas. In fact, such extensions are fundamental to the means of access and character/appearance of the villas as set out above and in the previous submission. This proposal maintains the height and width on the front of the existing building facing the street. There is a minimal extension to the back to match that of No. 6, but this would only be seen obliquely within narrow views and would have minimal impact on the architectural or historic interest of the buildings.
- 5.5 The significance of the fronts of the villas, and their form, is reinforced by the subtle detailing of the alternate pediments to the ground floor windows and the emphasis on the corners of numbers 5 and 6 which have pilasters rather than the rusticated quoins which are used on the two pairs on either side. The layout of the windows at the front is preserved.
- 5.6 None of the external proposals affect the significance of the designated heritage assets. There are no alterations to the roofscape, the rear extension is comparable to other examples in the group of villas and with the enclosed area behind the villas it is well concealed from public view. It is clear that the proposals do comply with the guidance set out in paragraph 4.3.4 above for works within the Regent's Canal Conservation Area.
- 5.7 The current arrangement with a single WC in the basement and a single bathroom on the top floor is a poor standard of provision and distribution of the amenities and does not comply with the objectives of a sustainable development. Historic England defines change as vital in facilitating the optimum viable use of an historic asset so that it continues to receive investment. As set out in Historic England's 2008 document, *Constructive Conservation in Practice*, "*Constructive Conservation' is the broad term adopted by Historic England for a positive and collaborative approach to conservation that focuses on actively managing change. The aim is to recognise and reinforce the historic significance of places, while accommodating the changes necessary to ensure their continued use and enjoyment.*"
- 5.8 There are some alterations to the designated listed building and, as such, there is some harm as defined in the NPPF but this is clearly less than substantial. The proposals do, in enhancing the use of the building, comply with Historic England's approach to change as being essential to the optimum viable use of the building in accordance with paragraph 134 of the Framework. As noted above, there is no harm to the form or general appearance of the building.
- 5.9 In the Local Plan it is set out that any development must respect both the local context and the character of nationally and locally listed heritage assets. In preserving the form and appearance of the building it is considered that these proposals comply with this Local Plan guidance.
- 5.10 The ground floor terrace provides an additional amenity area for the residents of number 5 and, because of the tapered shape of the garden and the shielding of its back by the building along the side of the canal and the large tree at the end of the garden, there is no overlooking or loss of privacy. The Pre-Application response noted the existence of the small rear extension which is shown on the 1914 OS in the Conservation Area Appraisal.

- 5.11 A timber balustrade is proposed around the balcony which preserves privacy.
- 5.12 Internally the decorative work will be retained with repairs where necessary and thus the original hierarchy of the rooms will be retained.
- 5.13 The basic form of the existing rooms is retained on the ground floor and basement with the small side entrance lobby which also provides lavatory and washing amenities. On the top floor the main room at the front is retained and the partition moved to make better and more effective use of the space available.

6 **Summary**

- 6.1 It is considered that the proposals do not harm the significance of the building and do comply with the Historic England objectives to secure a viable future for, and attract future investment in, the building.
- 6.2 The significance of the Conservation Area will not be harmed and the character of this particular part, including the contrast referred to by Pevsner which contributes to its character, will be retained.
- 6.3 It is therefore considered that the proposals do comply with both national and local conservation area objectives and guidance.

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