

## **Heritage Statement**

**42 Elsworthy Road  
NW3 3DL  
London Borough of Camden**



**October 2018**

## **1.0 Introduction**

This Heritage Statement for proposed works at 42 Elsworthy Road, in the London Borough of Camden, was originally commissioned in March 2017 by Adam Arya of M W architects on behalf of clients. The assessment was prepared by Neil Burton BA FSA IHBC, a director of The Architectural History Practice Ltd.

42 Elsworthy Road (Grid Reference TQ 273840) is a large detached mid-Victorian house at the western end of a row of similar houses on the north side of Elsworthy Road. The house is not listed but stands within the Elsworthy Conservation Area.

## **2.0 Development History and Description**

### **2.1 42 Elsworthy Road**

Elsworthy Road formed part of the Eton College estate. It appears that the road was laid out in the late 1860s. The first edition of the Ordnance Survey which dates from 1866 shows this area as open fields, but in 1868 the Eton College estate surveyor applied to the Metropolitan Board of Works to lay out several entirely new streets, including Elsworthy Road. Development was slow to start. The Post Office directories for 1880 show only six occupied houses but by 1885 the street was fully built-up and occupied as far west as number 42.

Until 1890 the land to the west of number 42 was occupied by the Eton and Middlesex Cricket Ground. After the closure of the ground in 1890 the land was developed by William Willetts, who laid out a new street called Wadham Gardens and extended Elsworthy Road to the west. Both new streets were lined with high quality detached houses of different character from those in the eastern part of the road, and mostly of red brick as opposed to the yellow and grey brick of the earlier houses.

Most of the houses in the eastern part of Elsworthy Road were probably built under the auspices of Robert Yeo, who succeeded Samuel Cuming as the principal developer operating on the Eton College estate under the director of the estate surveyor George Pownall. At least one of the houses in the road (number 25) was architect-designed, in this case by Battersby and Huxley, whose drawings were published in *The Building News*, but most of the houses were probably erected by builders sub-contracting for individual properties and following a format established by the estate.

The Post Office directory for 1885 shows that number 42 was then occupied by a builder named Samuel Cumming. The 1881 census shows him living at number 14 Elsworthy Road. He may have been related to the Samuel Cuming mentioned earlier as a principal developer on the Eton College estate (although the spelling of the surname is different) and it is at least possible that he was the builder of one or both of the houses in which he lived.

By the time of the 1891 census, 42 Elsworthy Road was occupied by James John Walker, who was an organ builder. His father, Joseph William Walker, had established the firm in 1828 and James took over the firm after his Father's death in 1870. J Walker & Sons Ltd became one of the better-known British organ builders (they later supplied the organ for Liverpool Anglican Cathedral) and still survives, though now operating from Suffolk and Devizes in Wiltshire. James John Walker remained as the occupant of number 42 until the First World War. He died in 1922.

Already by the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Ordnance Survey published in the 1890s, number 42 had a large conservatory extension on the western side, overlooking a substantial garden bounded by a tall brick wall. The outline of the apex of the conservatory roof which reached up to the level of the second floor, is still plainly visible on the west external wall of the house. It is clear from a drainage plan of 1905 (fig.3) that the conservatory had a solid lower floor and the same outline is shown on the Ordnance Survey revision of 1932 (fig.2). Both the drainage plan and the Ordnance Survey show a further small extension on the south side of the conservatory extension.

After the Second World War the house was occupied by Dr L Jacobs and in 1946 an application was made for permission to convert the house into two self-contained maisonettes. A further application was made in 1957 to convert the lower maisonette into two flats. The plan submitted with the application shows that the large conservatory block had been replaced by a smaller rectangular extension at basement and ground floor level (fig.4). Another application was made in 1982 by Dr and Mrs Jacobs for further works and it was at this date that the single extension on the west side of the house was replaced by a composite structure comprising a garage at the front with a study bedroom over and an L-shaped conservatory/sitting room at the rear. These are the buildings which exist today. The northern part of the garden was later sold for development.

Number 42 Elsworthy Road is a typical example of a substantial detached suburban villa of the 1870s or 1880s, of which there are very many examples still surviving in London. The building is faced with grey brick and has three main storeys raised on a semi-basement. The storeys are separated by stucco string-courses with incised ornament and the house has a tall pitched hipped roof covered in Welsh slate. The windows are all large-paned sashes, some with slightly cambered brick arches with keystones. The external ornament is an eclectic mix drawn from both Gothic and Italianate models. To the right of the main front is the main entrance door, up steps, with a shallow brick porch on granite columns with floriated capitals of Gothic type while the roof has deep eaves on shaped brackets with modillions under the gutters, which is an Italianate detail.

Attached to the east side of the house are two small two-storey brick built extensions which may be original. On the west side is the two-storey garage block with a conservatory behind, both of which date from the 1980s and replace a series of earlier additions.

## **2.2 The Elsworthy Road Conservation Area**

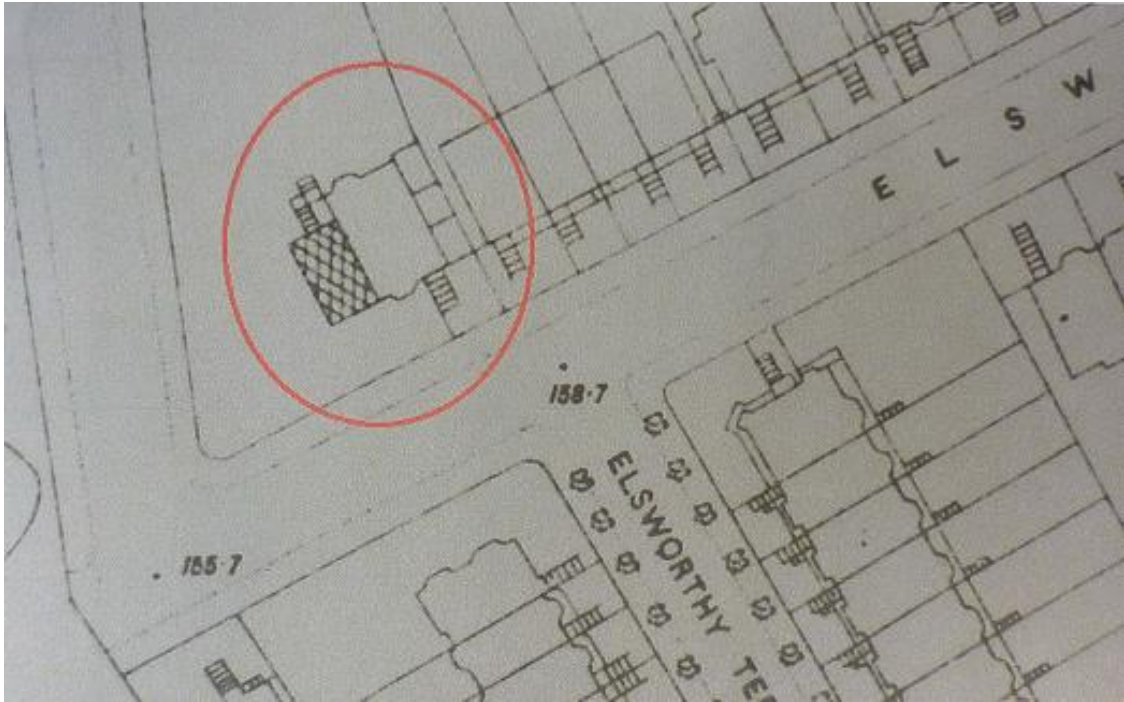
The Elsworthy Road Conservation Area includes the whole of the former Eton College Estate. Urban development of the area occurred between 1840 and the early 1900s when there was a large amount of speculative residential development of an affluent nature. Terraced townhouses, large semi-detached villas, and latterly large detached houses following a 'garden suburb' pattern were built for well-to-do families wishing to live in spacious, pleasant, leafy surroundings within easy reach of central London.

The essential pattern of the Conservation Area is of terraced townhouses and semi-detached villas in the north and east, and larger detached houses in the west. The historic development of the Conservation Area can be divided into three relatively distinct phases which in turn form three clearly defined geographical sub-areas. The first is Avenue Road, developed in the 1840s. The second is King Henry's Road and the eastern part of Elsworthy Road developed

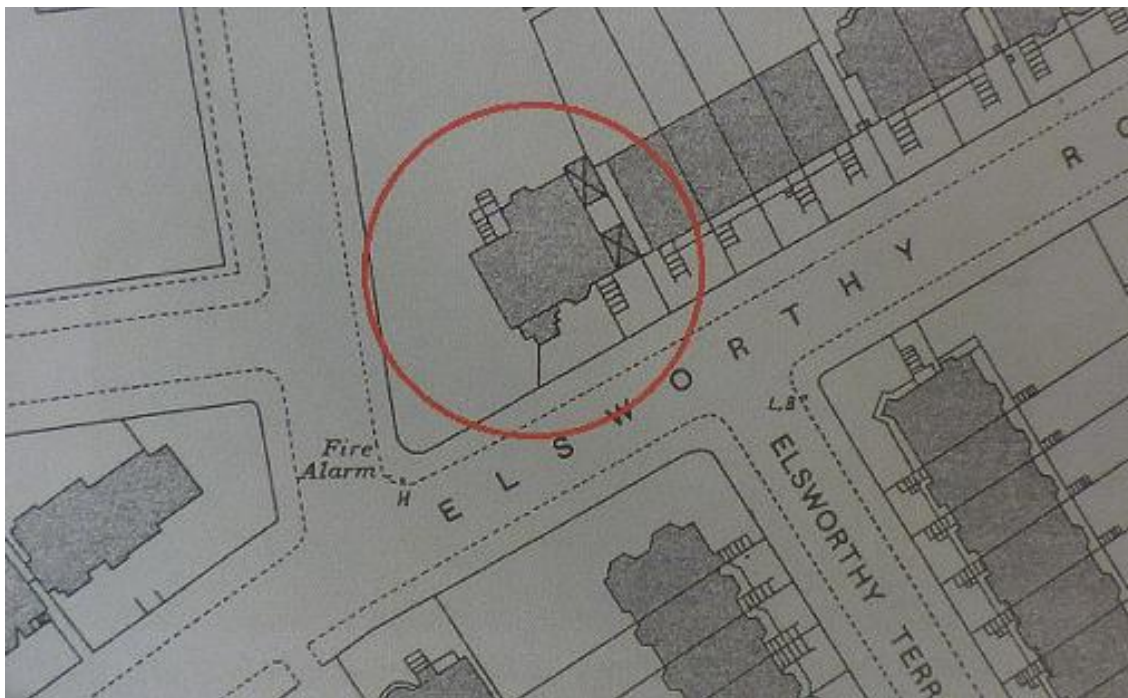
from the 1850s to the 1880s. The third is the development of Wadham Gardens and the western part of Elsworthy Road, developed by William Willett in the 1890s and early 1900s.

Number 42 Elsworthy Road stands within sub-area two, where four storey terraces and substantial semi-detached villas predominate. Buildings are set back from the street and the original boundary treatments of small walls, privet hedging and wooden gates and gateposts were designed to increase the green, leafy environment of the quiet residential streets. Yellow and grey London stock brick is the predominant building material.

The houses at the eastern end of Elsworthy Road are generally of three storeys with semi-basements and raised ground floors approached by impressive front boundary steps. However, individual detailing creates different effects and includes gothic, ecclesiastical and carved relief elements on various buildings.

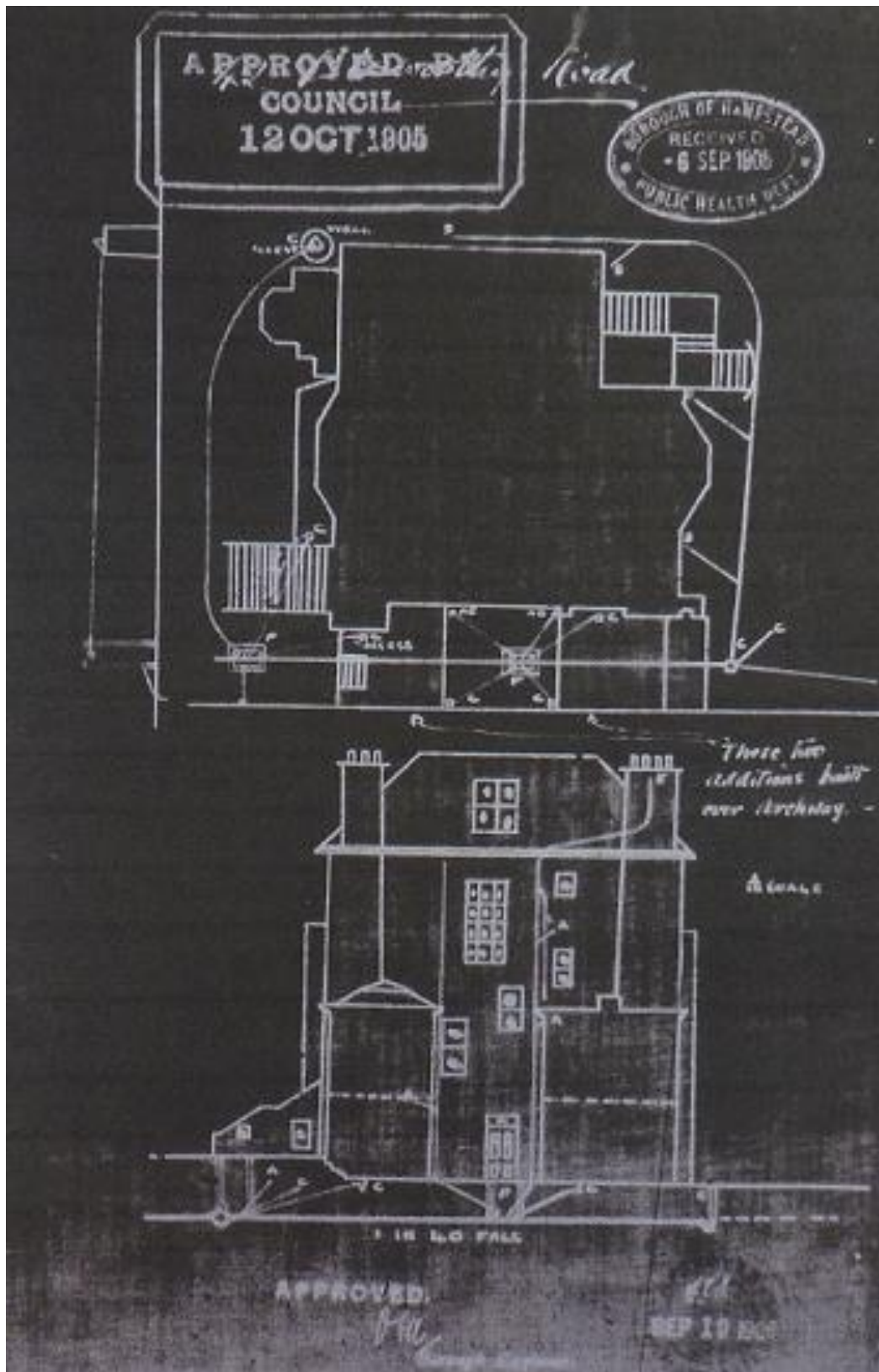


**Figure 1: A Detail from the Ordnance Survey map of 1896 (London VI.20)**

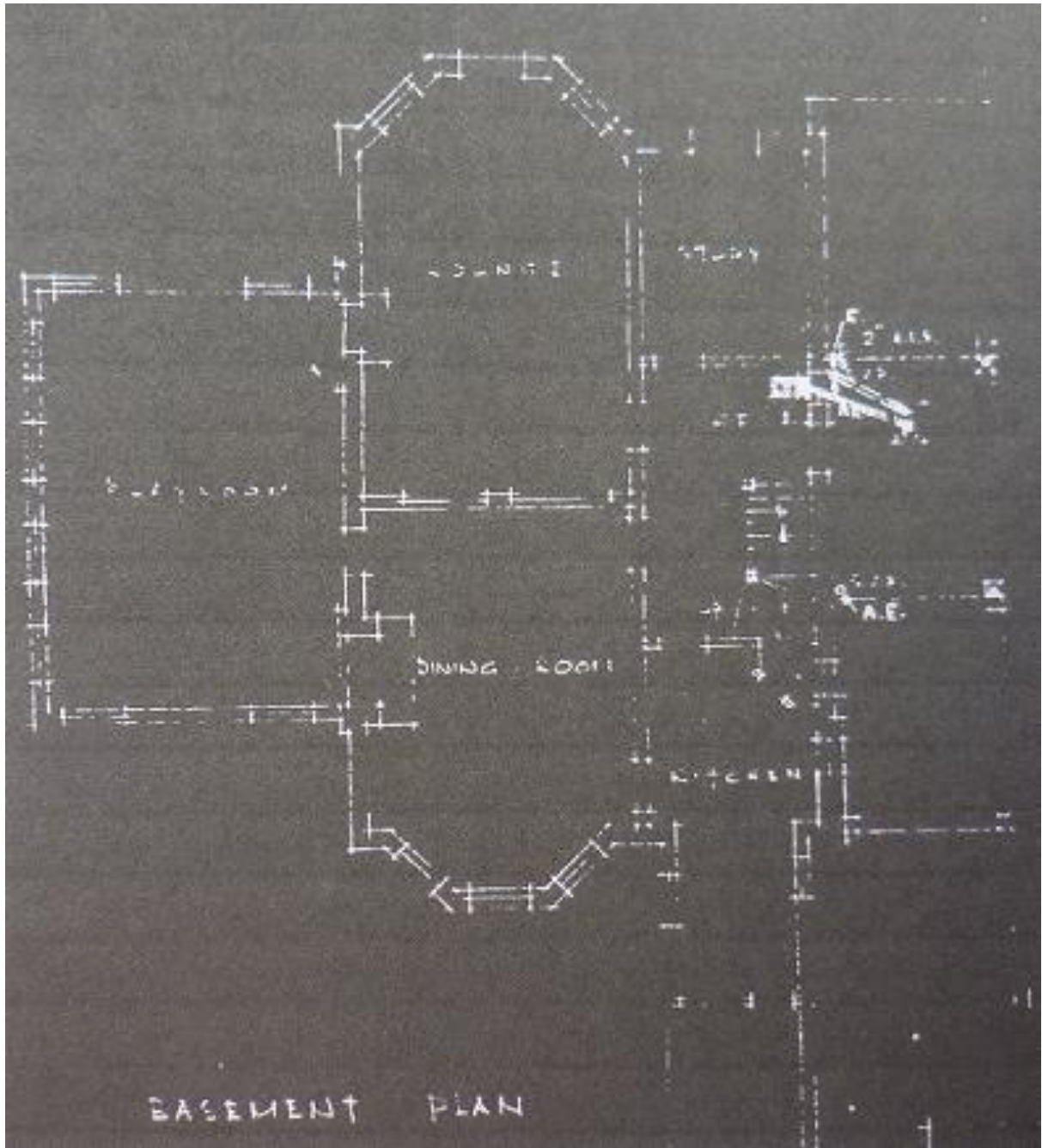


**Figure 2: A Detail from the Ordnance Survey map of 1932 (London VI.20)**

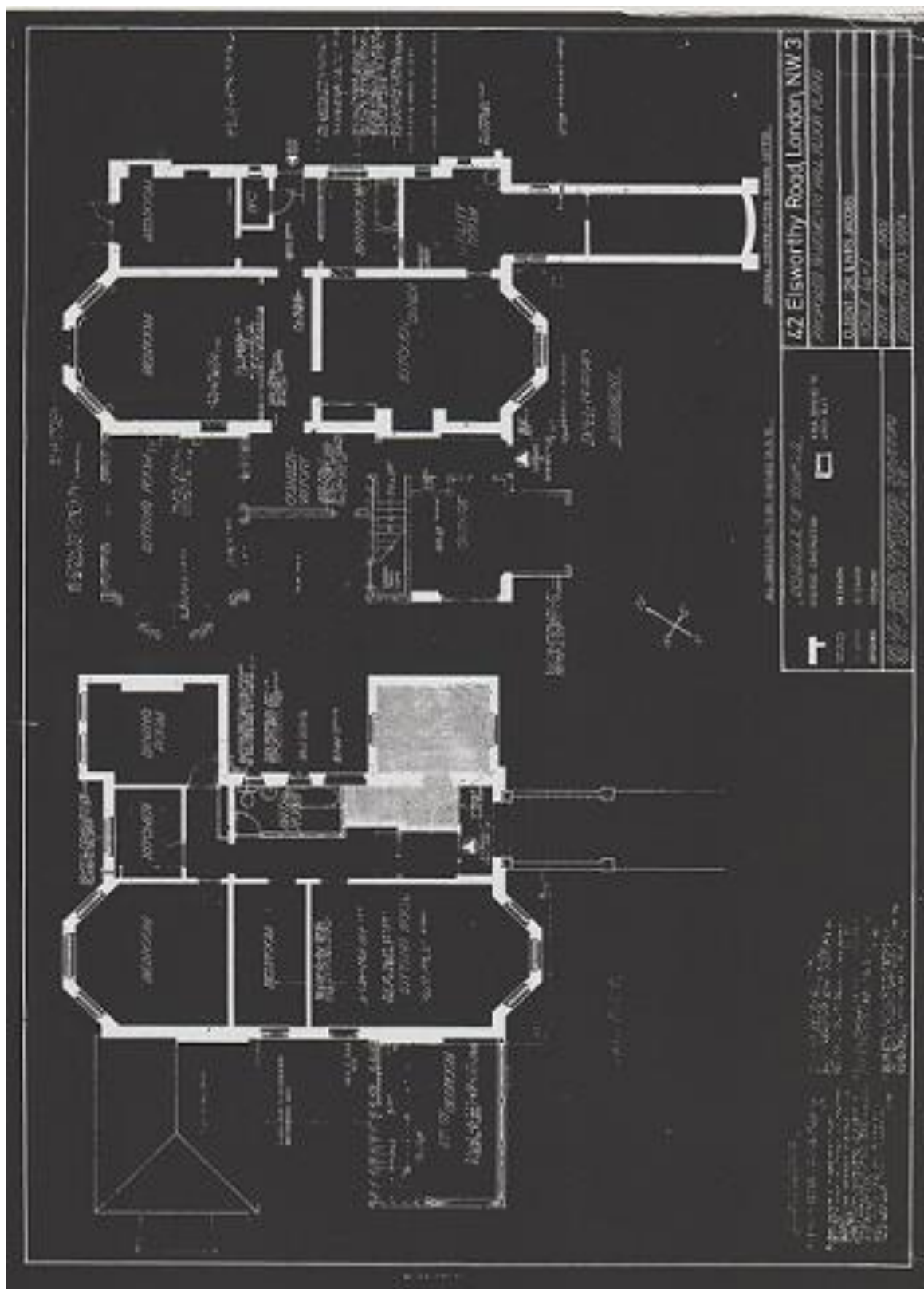




**Figure 3: The block plan and east elevation of the house in 1905 from a drainage plan (Camden Local Studies)**



**Figure 4: The plan of the basement storey in 1946, from a drainage plan  
(Camden Local Studies)**



**Figure 5: The basement and ground floor plans ‘as proposed’ in 1982  
(Camden Local Studies)**





**Figure 6: The main front of the house to Elsworthy Road, showing the 1982 side addition.**



**Figure 7: The west side of the house from Wadham Gardens**

### 3.0 Assessment of Significance

The assessment of the significance of historic buildings and their settings is based on detailed knowledge of the building type, a comparison with what exists elsewhere and the extent to which it may be distinctive or have special meaning for different groups of people.

Statutory designations provide some guide to the importance of historic buildings. Number 42 Elsworthy Road is not listed but stands within the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area which was first designated in February 1973. The Conservation Area Appraisal, adopted in July 2009, identifies number 42 as making a positive contribution to the conservation area and says of the building, 'the house occupies a large plot on which Nos 2 and 4 Merton Rise were built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. No 42 shares a similar scale with no 25 Elsworthy Road situated diagonally opposite...These two properties form part of Sub-Area 2 because they adhere to the formal Victorian style of this area rather than to the looser Free Style of Willetts's houses' [in the western section of Elsworthy Road].

In 2008 English Heritage published Conservation Principles, which identified four principal heritage values which might be taken into account when assessing significance. These values are *Evidential*, deriving from the potential to yield (mainly archaeological) evidence about past human activity; *Historical*, deriving from ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present; *Aesthetic*, deriving from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place; *Communal*, deriving from the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience and memory.

In 2012 the Department of Communities and Local Government issued the National Planning Policy Framework (slightly revised in July 2018) which suggests that for planning purposes, the significance of historic buildings and assets should be assessed under the headings of *Archaeological*, *Architectural*, *Artistic or Historic* (which are closely related to the English Heritage values) and points out that significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence but also from its setting.

Heritage Significance is essentially a hierarchial concept, using descending levels of value. These follow guidelines established by James Semple Kerr, which have been adopted by Historic England, the Heritage Lottery Fund and other bodies concerned with heritage assets. The levels of significance are:

- *Exceptional* – important at national to international levels
- *Considerable* – important at regional level or sometimes higher
- *Some* – usually of local value only but possibly of regional significance for group or other value
- *Little* - of limited heritage or other value
- *Neutral* – features which neither enhance nor detract from the value of the site
- *Negative/intrusive* – features which detract from the value of the site.

### Evidential Value

The house was constructed on a Greenfield site and there is probably little below-ground archaeology of any value. It is of *Little Evidential Value*

### Historical Value

The house is of *Some Historical Value* as the former residence of the organ builder John James Walker, as part of the speculative development of the Eton College Estate in the 1870s and 1880s and also as an example of a common later Victorian building type.

### Aesthetic Value

The house has *Some Aesthetic Value* for its external architectural features

### Communal Value

The house has always been a private residence and has *Little Communal Value*, except as an element in the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area.

### Setting

The immediate setting of 42 Elsworthy Road has changed over the years. When first built it was the westernmost house in the road, with the Eton and Middlesex Cricket Ground occupying the land to the west. This ground was developed after the ground was closed in 1890 with houses of different character. In more recent times there has been some new building close to the house, with two new houses built in Merton Rise on part of the former garden ground and a new house at 15 Elsworthy Road, immediately opposite.

The wider setting of the house is the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area and in particular sub-area two of the conservation area, which is characterized by large brick-built terraced and semi-detached houses of the 1870s and 1880s, with a variety of detail, standing set back from the road behind boundary walls and hedges and standing in mature gardens. As the Conservation Area Appraisal remarks, number 42 Elsworthy Road and number 25 diagonally opposite are on a larger scale than their neighbours, perhaps to mark what was the western extremity of the urban development at the time they were built.

## **4.0 The Proposed Works and their Impact on the Built Heritage**

The current proposals are detailed in the drawings and statements issued by M W Architects. As part of a general refurbishment of the building it is proposed to replace the existing modern two-storey additions on the west side of the house with a new two-storey addition with three small gables on the west elevation.

The new addition is substantial, but there is ample precedent for an addition of this scale in the large conservatory on the west wall of number 42 which must have been a very conspicuous feature of the house in the decades either side of 1900, and would have been clearly visible from, Elsworthy Road and above the garden wall on the west side of the house. Indeed, the conservatory addition would have been much more conspicuous than what is now proposed.

The front of the proposed addition to Elsworthy Road would be two storeys high next to the main house. The two-storey section would not rise higher than the apex of the roof of the present addition. This is considerably lower than the height of the Victorian conservatory.

Although the new addition would be visible from Elsworthy Road and also from Wadham Gardens it would not be unduly conspicuous. In the former view, the two-storey part of the frontage is only three bays wide. In the latter view, the upper storey of the new addition would be seen above the brick wall enclosing the garden of 42 Elsworthy Road but would be partially screened by a large mature tree. The lower parts of the addition would be screened from public view by boundary walls and hedges.

The proposed new addition is wholly modern in style, with a grid of large window openings in a slender frames faced with grey stock brick and timber. There are already precedents for modern-style buildings within the Elsworthy conservation area, like number 15 Elsworthy Road, immediately opposite number 42.

It is important that any new addition should not compete with or detract from the architectural quality and character of the main house. In this case there is certainly a contrast between the Gothic influenced detail of features like the front porch with its elaborate foliated capitals and the simpler style of the proposed addition, but the addition is clearly distinct from and subordinate to the main building and does not compete with it visually.

### **Local Planning Policy**

The Camden Local Plan which was adopted on 3 July 2017, contains policies on both Design and Heritage. Policy D1 Design begins by noting that The Council will seek to secure high quality design in development and will require that development respects local context and character and preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets.

Policy D2 Heritage contains a reminder that Conservation Areas are designated heritage assets and notes that, in order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management strategies when assessing applications within conservation areas and will require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area

### **NPPF Advice**

Section 16 of The National Planning Policy Framework (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, as revised in July 2018) sets out guidance for local planning authorities on decision-making in relation to the historic environment.

A key principle enshrined in the NPPF is the conservation of heritage assets and the presumption against causing harm to an asset's significance, which must be taken into account in assessing the impact of proposal, to avoid or minimize any conflict between conservation and any aspect of the proposal when considering potential impacts, the advice given is that 'substantial harm' should be exceptional and 'less than substantial harm' should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Among other things, local planning authorities are advised to take account of ‘the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation’ and ‘the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness’ (para 185).

## **Conclusion**

Number 42 Elsworthy Road is not listed but could be considered as an undesignated heritage asset because it is described in the 2009 Conservation Area Appraisal as making a positive contribution to the character of the Elsworthy Road Conservation Area.

The proposals are not destructive to the house; there will be no harm to the building and no historic fabric will be lost in the work. The proposed addition follows the scale of a preceding conservatory addition which once covered much of the western elevation of the house and extended up to second floor level, considerably higher than what is now proposed. The new addition will be contemporary in style and clearly distinct from the existing fabric, but will not have an adverse effect on the external appearance of the house and will be clearly subordinate to the main building.

There will be no harm to the conservation area. The new building will be an elegant addition to the existing house and will enhance the appearance of the conservation area. The works will also help to secure the optimum viable use for the building in order to preserve it for future generations.



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