

## **Heritage Statement**

# **20 Chalcot Square NW1 8YA London Borough of Camden**



**April 2019**

## **CONTENTS**

**1.0 Introduction**

**2.0 History and Description**

**3.0 Assessment of Significance**

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

**Appendix: List Description**

## **1.0 Introduction**

This Heritage Statement for proposed works to 20 Chalcot Square in the London Borough of Camden was commissioned in November 2018 by Guy Morgan of Powell Tuck Associates on behalf of clients. The assessment was prepared by Neil Burton BA FSA IHBC, a director of The Architectural History Practice Ltd and is intended to supplement the architects' own Design and Access Statement.

Neil Burton worked as an architectural historian in the Greater London Council Historic Buildings Division for fifteen years and then at English Heritage as an Inspector of Historic Buildings, dealing with buildings in the north of England and later the East Midlands. More recently he was Secretary of The Georgian Group. He has published a number of works on historic buildings including *Life in the Georgian City* with Dan Cruikshank and *Behind the Facade: London House plans 1660-1840* with Peter Guillery. Has been a director of The Architectural History Practice Ltd since 2001.

20 Chalcot Square (National Grid Reference TQ280841) is a stucco-fronted terraced house of the mid- 1850s at the north-east corner of Chalcot Square in the London Borough of Camden. The whole of the terrace was first listed Grade II in January 1974 and stands within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area, which was first designated in 1971.

## **2.0 History & Description**

The development history of this part of Primrose Hill is set out in Camden's Conservation Area Statement for the Primrose Hill Conservation Area. At the beginning of the nineteenth century most of the land was owned by Lord Southampton. The Southampton estate was sold in 1840, divided into a number of freehold lots which it was proposed to develop following a planned layout with a central square. The original scheme was not carried out but it influenced the present street layout.

Chalcot Square was built-up in the later 1850s as a speculative development, with terraces of three and four-storey houses with stucco fronts and Italianate detailing. Number 20 is the easternmost house on the north east side of the square and has a main front of three storeys over a basement, with a mansard roof. Early maps show that from at least the 1870s the east side wall of the house adjoined the end wall of a large commercial building in a yard accessed from Fitzroy Street. Between this building and the side wall of the house is a full-height void, not visible from the square, but open at the rear towards the garden.

The original plan of the house followed the standard London terrace house arrangement, with one room at the front and one at the back on each floor with a passage and staircase against one party wall and the chimneystacks against the other. There is now a small rear wing rising to first floor level and leading off the staircase. This may be original or a later addition intended to house the lavatory and bathroom. All the main rooms would originally have been rectangular, with a chimneybreast in the centre of one wall and with plaster cornice to the main rooms.

There have been several minor alterations to the house in the twentieth century. These include the conversion of the basement to a self-contained flat with the removal of the original basement stair, the colonisation of the void space at basement and ground floor level with various openings through the side wall of the house and the formation of a third floor balcony within the void, reached by a doorway in the rear room. Many of these alterations were made in 1990



**Figure 1: A detail from the Ordnance Survey (sheet VII.11), published in 1895, showing 20 Chalcot Square, and its abutments**

### 3.0 Assessment of Significance

The assessment of the significance of historic buildings and their settings is not an exact science but 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. 20 Chalcot Square is listed Grade II, which means it is a building of special interest; just over 90% of all listed buildings are in this class. The list description is included at Appendix 1. The house stands within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area.

In 2008 English Heritage (now Historic England) 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).

Heritage Significance is essentially a hierarchial concept, using descending levels of value. These follow guidelines 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.

In the following assessment of overall significance the Historic England Values have been merged with the NPPF significance categories.

### Evidential Value/Archaeological Significance

The house was constructed on a greenfield site and there is probably no below-ground archaeology of any value. The house is of *Little Archaeological Significance*.

### Historical Value and Significance

Chalcot Square was built-up in the late 1850s as part of the planned development of the Primrose Hill area after the break-up of Lord Southampton's estate in 1840. The square is one of the main elements in the development, which followed a pattern common across much of north London from the eighteenth century onward, where old landed estates were developed with speculative housing. The individual houses, including number 20, follow a common London type. It does not appear that any of the past occupants have been of national significance. The building is of *Some Historic Significance*.

### Aesthetic Value and Architectural Significance

No architect is associated with the development of Chalcot Square and the houses follow a common type used by many speculative builders. The stucco fronts articulated with Italianate detail are typical of many London houses of the 1850s and 1860s. They are ornamental, especially since different houses are now painted in different colours. All the houses have the commonest London terrace house plan, with two main rooms on each floor. In number 20, the rooms are mostly of simple early Victorian character, with no elaboration of detail, though there has been some alteration and modernisation on the two lower floors. Overall the house is of *Some Aesthetic and Architectural Significance*.

### Communal Value

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

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

The current proposals are fully set out in the drawings and statements issued by Powell Tuck Associates. There has been pre-application consultation with Camden Council officers and the proposals have been amended to take account of their concerns. The principal elements of the proposed works can be summarised as follows:

##### **External Works**

###### Front elevation

The existing large window opening to the basement front area is to be re-aligned with the ground floor window opening above and given a triple sash of traditional pattern. Otherwise there will be no change to the front elevation.

###### Rear elevation

A new single-storey flat-roofed addition is to be formed in the angle between the main house and the existing rear wing at basement level. The addition will not project beyond the rear wing and will have a wholly glazed front to the garden. The roof of the addition will form a terrace in front of the ground floor rear room, accessed through the existing rear door. A new metal stair against the garden wall will lead down from the roof terrace to the garden. A new low-profile roof-light will be added to the roof of the existing rear wing. All these works are relatively minor and will have no harmful impact on the character, appearance or significance of the listed building or the conservation area.

In the void against the side wall of the house, a new pierced metal screen will be installed rising from the existing ground floor infill of the void to the third floor balcony above. The screen will be set back from the rear elevation of the main house and will be a neutral or dark colour to be inconspicuous. At third floor level the existing balcony in the void is to be slightly enlarged with a skylight over the void.

## **Internal Works**

### **Basement**

The separate basement flat will be re-incorporated into the main house and a new stair from basement to ground floor will be installed in the place of the former stair. There has already been a considerable amount of alteration to this floor and several original internal partitions have been removed. The proposed works will restore the room divisions on their original lines.

### **Ground floor**

In the front room it is proposed to convert the existing door to the right of the chimney breast into a jib door. The door, with its moulded timber surround, was installed in 1990 to give access to a utility space formed in the void beyond the side wall of the house. A jib door will be less obtrusive and restore the space to something like its original appearance.

### **First Floor**

Low quality built in shelving will be removed from both rooms and architectural detailing reinstated.

### **Second Floor**

It is proposed to remove all the bathroom fittings from the rear room and fitted wardrobes from the front room, both spaces will have original architectural detailing reinstated where necessary returning the original character of the space.

### **Third Floor**

The partition wall between the front and rear rooms on this floor has been largely removed. It is proposed to form a new bathroom in the centre of the house within the original rear room, retaining the front room across the full width of the house. A new glass roof light is formed in the external terrace over the void to allow light inside.

### **Fourth Floor**

The formation of a new stair up from the third floor will require some minor alterations, but otherwise there will be no significant change.



## **Heritage Impact**

The proposals will re-unite the house as single dwelling. Externally, the re-alignment of the front area window will be an improvement to the exterior. The new rear addition will be minimal and inconspicuous. The new metal screen to the void space east of the main house will unify what is presently a visually messy area.

Internally, the re-instatement of the basement stair is to be welcomed and the renewal of modern finishes at this level raises no heritage issues. The house has already been extended into the adjacent void space at basement, ground and third floor level, with several access openings through the original side wall. The provision of a new bathroom at third floor level and the provision of a new stair from third to fourth floor in place of the present ladder will improve the amenity of these two floors which, because of past alterations, have seen considerable loss of original fabric and are of much less architectural and historic interest than the floors below

## **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**

20 Chalcot Square is a Grade II listed building. The full programme of works now proposed (and listed in the Design and Access Statement) will clearly help to preserve the building into the future. The principal significance of the house is its external appearance and its value as part of a planned mid-nineteenth century development. This will not be affected by the works. The interior has some significance as an example of a Victorian terrace house with the common London house plan. There have already been several internal alterations, especially at basement and ground floor level, but the house still retains something of its mid-nineteenth century character. Most of the proposed alterations are relatively minor; they work with the grain of the historic building and will have no adverse effect on its identified significance. In many cases the changes will be clearly beneficial.

## Appendix : List description

### NUMBERS 20-28 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS

#### Overview

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1258098

Date first listed: 14-May-1974

Date of most recent amendment: 11-Jan-1999

#### Location

Statutory Address: NUMBERS 20-28 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS, 20-28, CHALCOT SQUARE

County: Greater London Authority

District: Camden (London Borough)

National Grid Reference: TQ 28050 84113

#### Details

CAMDEN

TQ2884SW CHALCOT SQUARE 798-1/64/190 (East side) 14/05/74 Nos.20-28 (Consecutive) and attached railings (Formerly Listed as: CHALCOT SQUARE Nos.1-33 AND 33A (Consecutive))

GV II

Terrace of 9 houses forming east side of Chalcot Square. 1855-60, altered. Stucco with rusticated ground floors, mostly painted. Nos 20, 23-25 & 28, slate mansard roofs with dormers. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys, attics and basements except Nos 21 & 22 and 26 & 27, slightly projecting, with 4 storeys and basements. (Nos 22 & 26 with C20 penthouses). 3 windows each. Prostyle Doric porticoes supporting balustraded stucco balconies continuing across 1st floor windows. Doorways with cornice-heads, fanlights, side lights and panelled doors (some part glazed). Tripartite sashes to ground floors. Projecting houses with panelled pilasters at angles rising from 1st floor level to support the main entablature with modillion cornice (which continues across other houses) below attic storey. Upper floors, lugged architrave sashes with margin glazing; 1st floors joined by continuous cornice with keystones above windows and console-brackets between and pediments over central windows (projecting houses, segmental). 2nd floors with keystones; central windows having large key-stone projecting into the architrave above. Attic storeys with pilaster strips at angles, cornice and blocking course. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings to areas.



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