

Heritage Appeal Statement

23 Harrington
Square, NW1 2JJ

March 2019 | Project Ref 4198



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21 – 23 Harrington Square Appeal Statement**

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1.0

1. Introduction

Qualifications and Experience

- 1.1** I am Samuel Davis. I hold the degrees of BA (Hons) in History and an MA with merit in Archaeological Research. I have 5 years of professional experience of the historic built environment in the public and private sectors, including employment within the Historic Building department of Historic England.

Background to this appeal

- 1.2** 23 Harrington Square is a townhouse located within the London Borough of Camden. It was listed grade II on 11 January 1999 as part of a terrace of houses officially known as Number 15 to 24 and Area Railings (referred to within this report as 15 to 24 Harrington Square). 23 Harrington Square is also within Camden Town Conservation Area.

- 1.3** A Listed Building Consent application was submitted to the London Borough of Camden for internal alterations in association with amalgamation of 2 flats into 1 at ground and first floor levels to 23 Harrington Square, London, NW1 2JJ (Figure 1), in January 2019 (reference 2018/5167/L). This application was refused on 27 February 2019 for the reasons stated below (the full Officer's Report is within the appendix):

'The proposed amalgamation of Flats 3 and 4, involving the insertion of a staircase in the closet wing, by virtue of a loss of historic fabric, introduction of an alien addition and impact on the historic plan form would harm the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II Listed building, contrary to Policy D2 of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.'

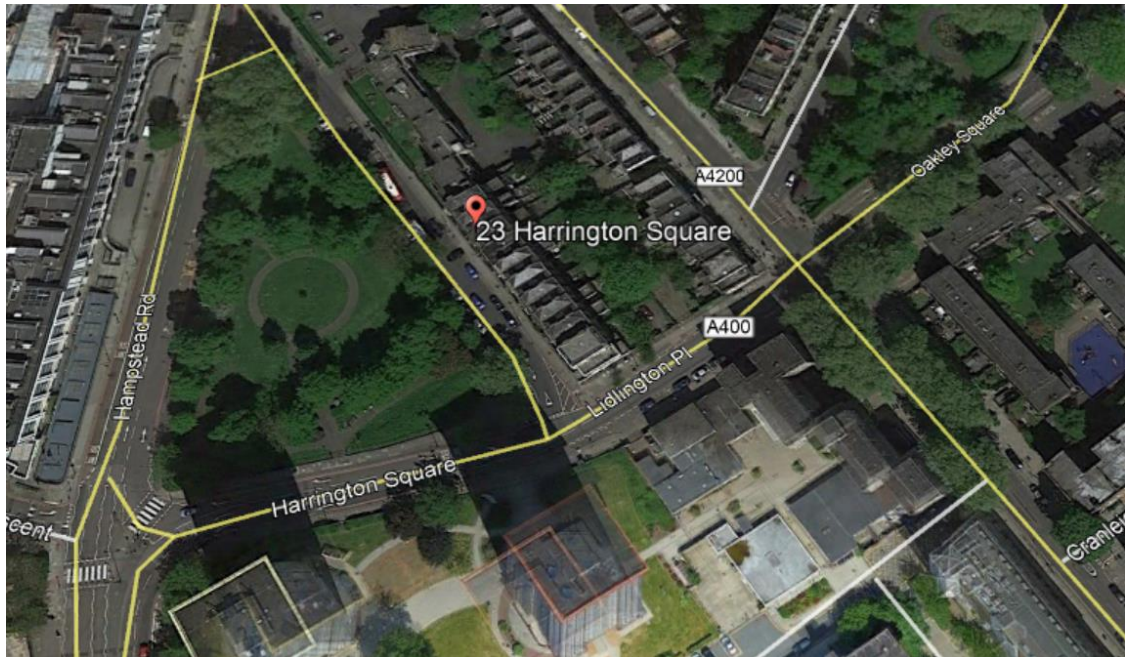


Figure 1 – Site location.

- 1.4** From the above it is clear that the London Borough of Camden has concluded that the proposed alterations would harm the significance of the listed building.
- 1.5** The Listed Building Consent Application followed Prohibition Orders made by Camden Council on 20 March 2018, stating that the studio flats 3 and 4 (located on the ground and first floor of the closet wing) were not large enough for occupation. Hence a Listed Building Application was made to join the two flats.
- 1.6** The following statement assesses the impact of change on the significance of 23 Harrington Square and the terrace as a whole. The proposal is only for internal changes and so there would be no change to the character and appearance of Camden Town Conservation Area.
- 1.7** The appeal site was visited on 11 April 2018.



2.0

2. RELEVANT HERITAGE POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 2.1** The decision maker is required by section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building. The decision maker must also give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the listed building. 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 can be overcome if the harm is mitigated or outweighed by public benefits, as is explained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 2.2** For the purposes of this assessment “preserve” means to do no harm¹. Harm is defined by Historic England as change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset².
- 2.3** 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. Setting is defined in the NPPF as follows:
- “The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”
- 2.4** The assessments of heritage significance and impact are normally made with primary reference to the four main elements of significance identified in the NPPF.
- 2.5** 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

¹ South Lakeland 1992.

² Paragraph 84 of Conservation Principles 2008 and 2015.

described within paragraphs 193 to 196 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.

- 2.6** The NPPF 2018 states that, 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 - and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance (Paragraph 193). Substantial harm to, or loss of, scheduled monuments should be wholly exceptional (Paragraph 194(b)).
- 2.7** Paragraph 193 of the NPPF 2018 states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset when considering applications that affect its significance.
- 2.8** This assessment is confined to the significance of 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.



3.0

3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS

Historic background

- 3.1** Prior to the 1840's the area that was to become Harrington Square was part of a field known as Fig's Mead. Fig's Mead was part of the Duke of Bedford's estate and was located to the north of the New (Euston) Road.
- 3.2** Up until 1820 the land around Fig's Mead was largely rural. However, by the 1830's the surrounding land had been developed, with Somers Town, Camden Town and the Fitzroy's estates development around Mornington Crescent all being in the near vicinity. It was decided that Fig's Mead could no longer stay a meadow. The prospects of developing first or second class houses was unlikely, and so it was decided to construct lower-middle class terraces, cheap enough to attract artisans and clerks to north London away from their places of work. The estate manager of the Bedford estate, Christopher Haedy, drew up plans for the new development, which shortly became known as 'Bedford New Town'.
- 3.3** The new development was designed to have relatively small houses with narrow plots, but wide streets that led to a square or garden (Figure 2). Harrington Square was part of the development and was constructed between 1842 and 1848. It was originally laid out as three terraces overlooking a triangular space and separated from Mornington Crescent by Hampstead Road.
- 3.4** There was little change to Harrington Square and the surrounding area in the late 19th and early 20th century (Figure 3), apart from further development of Euston Station. However, during the Second World War bomb damage destroyed the north terrace. In its place a post-war housing block was constructed, known as Hurdwick House.



Figure 2 – Extract of O.S Map 1874 (red arrow points to 23 Harrington Square).

3.5

During the 1960's the south terrace of the square was demolished to make way for a local authority housing development. High rise residential buildings were constructed in its place (Amphill Square Estate).



Figure 3 – Extract of O.S Map 1914 (red arrow points to 23 Harrington Square).

Significance of 15 to 24 Harrington Square

3.6 15 to 24 Harrington Square is a terrace of Victorian houses, constructed between 1842 and 1848. 23 Harrington Square is part of the terrace (Figure 4). The terrace is grade II listed and officially described below:

Terrace of 10 houses, forming east side of former square. 1842-48. Grey brick, No.19 reddened, No.21 painted, over stuccoed ground floor. Slate roofs. 4 storeys and basements, No.15 with attics, all 2 windows wide. No.15 terminates terrace, projects forward with wider main bay and entrance with Doric door surround in narrower bay to side. The other houses with projecting porches. No.17 now with window, the others with panelled doors, that to No.19 with raised and fielded panelling. Upper windows with small paned sashes, those to Nos 21 (wholly) and 16 (partly) replaced; first floor with casements opening on to projecting balconies with cast-iron railings of crossed spear pattern set in round-arched rendered surrounds, all save Nos 19 and 22 with rosettes in spandrels. Ground floor with 4-light sashes under cambered heads. Heavy stuccoed cornice over second floor. Rendered parapet to Nos 15-21 and No.24; that to Nos 23 and 24 renewed in machicolated brick. INTERIORS not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: railings with spearhead finials to all areas.



Figure 4 – 23 Harrington Square.

3.7

The significance of 15 to 24 Harrington Square can be described as follows, using the terminology of the NPPF:

Architectural Interest: 15 to 24 Harrington Square is a Victorian terrace, originally designed for lower-middle class occupiers. This has meant that while there are aspects of their design and decoration that are of interest, they lack the detail and elaboration that many other terraces in London have. This is not to say that the terrace doesn't have elements of interest. The front elevations (west; Figure 4) in particular have nice details such as the ground floor stucco and porticos, the first floor arched and stuccoed windows, and the stuccoed cornice above the second

floor windows. However, the interest of the front elevations is somewhat diminished by the inconsistency in both the window casements, particularly on the ground and third floors, and the condition of the individual houses, with some being in a fairly poor condition.

The rear elevation (east; Figure 5) is subservient and of lesser detail and order and is only partially visible from the rear of the houses of Harrington Square and Eversholt Street. Its more modest design reflects the hierarchy of the public frontage of the property, and the less important rear. The use of stock London brick does bring some consistency, but it is where there is most variation with some properties having two storey closet wings (21 and 23 Harrington Square), others with a one storey addition and some with no addition. The second storey elements of the closet wings of 21 and 23 Harrington Square are a later addition as clearly evidenced by the difference in brickwork (Figure 8). The rear is where most external changes have taken place to the terrace, with not only later extensions but also the additions of many modern windows. It is also the location of the rainwater goods on most of the houses within the terrace.



Figure 5 – Rear elevation of 23 Harrington Square.

The group value is an important aspect to the interest of the terrace. The loss of the south and north terraces of Harrington Square, and their replacement with late 20th century residential buildings, does somewhat diminish the interest, but still the surviving part is an important representative part of the development of the area in the mid 19th century.

23 Harrington Square plays a part in the architectural interest of the terrace, and its front elevation still retains many of its characterful elements. However, the condition of the front elevation is quite poor, with second floor cornice especially suffering.

Internally, it is only possible to discuss 23 Harrington Square, as access to the other houses was not possible, but it does appear from viewing Planning Applications for the other houses on the terrace that alterations have occurred to the interior of many of them (if not all), including both historic and recently permitted alterations.

The original plan form 23 Harrington Square has been affected by its conversion into flats, with modern partitions, the creation of lobbies and modern mezzanines within the flats making the original layout hard to perceive. This is the case on all floors and locations, including the closet wing where partitions for kitchens and bathrooms have changed the original layout. In terms of historical nothing survives apart from the staircase, which is historical but fairly simple in design, and panelling which is part of some of the second floor windows. Other than this no internal architectural detail remains. Both floors of the closet wing lack any detail or elaboration (Figures 6 and 7). This may have always been the case as this area of the house would have been seen as lower status, as it was used as a water closet.



Figure 6 – Ground floor closet wing flat

Overall, both the terrace and 23 Harrington Square are of local and regional architectural interest. In summary, the aspects of architectural interest are: i) the primary (west) elevation and ii) group value with the rest of the terrace.

Historical Interest: The terrace and individual houses are of local historical interest, in the sense that it allows an observer to form a tangible connection with the 19th century lower-middle class development of Fig's Mead. The association with the Duke of Bedford adds a small amount of interest.



Figure 7 – First Floor closet wing flat

Artistic Interest: 15 to 24 Harrington Square only appears to have artistic interest in respect of the aesthetically appealing qualities of its front elevation.

Archaeological Interest: 15 to 24 Harrington Square appears to have little archaeological interest.

Summary of Significance

- 3.8** In summary, the significance of the terrace 15 to 24 Harrington Square, as well as 23 Harrington Square, stems from the architectural interest of its front elevations and from its group value as a 19th century terrace. There is also local historical interest in the terrace being a tangible connection with the 19th century lower-middle class development of Fig's Mead.



4.0

4. EFFECTS ON HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Application Proposals

- 4.1** The Listed Building Consent Application (2018/5167/L) was for internal alterations in association with amalgamation of 2 flats into 1 at ground and first floor levels to 23 Harrington Square. The flats referred to are the two flats located within the closet wing on both the ground and first floor. The proposal includes the addition of a staircase between the ground and first floor flats, the removal of the modern mezzanine and fitted wardrobes in the ground floor flat and some partitioning in the first floor flat.



Figure 8 – Closet wing of 23 Harrington Square.

Change to 23 Harrington Square

- 4.2** The application proposes the addition of a staircase from ground to first floor flats within the closet wing. This would require the removal of a small amount of the ceiling of the ground floor and floor of the first floor.
- 4.3** It is proposed to remove partitions that form the bathroom (and the bathroom as a whole) within the first floor flat.

Effect on the Significance of 15 to 24 Harrington Square and 23 Harrington Square

- 4.4** The changes will not affect the external appearance of 23 Harrington Square. Therefore, the front elevation will remain unchanged and the group value of the terrace will remain unaffected.
- 4.5** It is stated within the officer's report (2018/5167/L) that the 'inherent character' of the closet wing is that of a 'subsidiary wing'. This is agreed and reflects that the architectural interest of this part of the house is less than other aspects. The report also states that the conversion of the two flats into a duplex would be 'out of keeping with the character and appearance of the closet wing.' Therefore, they are stating that the inherent character of it being a subsidiary wing would be lost. This is not the case. The size and dimensions of the closet wing would remain and so it would remain a subsidiary part of the house and would not alter the character of the house or the terrace as a whole. Visually, the effect on appearance would be minimal, with no change to the external appearance. Internally, the changes would only be possible to perceive within the flat itself.
- 4.6** The character of the closet wing has already been altered. Due to its second storey extension we can discern that it has always been a part of the house which has been viewed as an acceptable area for change. The wing is no longer used as a water closet, instead it is two flats, meaning that it is now difficult to perceive its original use. The Officer's report states that the introduction of a staircase would 'will undermine the legibility of the original function of the historic closet wing'.

However, this legibility of function has already been lost. If you were to enter the current house and had no knowledge of houses of this period, you would not recognise that this part was once used as a water closet. There would be no cumulative effect on the legibility by introducing a staircase and forming a duplex flat.

- 4.7** It is stated within the Officer's Report that the staircase would be a wholly 'alien element' to the closet wing. However, throughout London changes to closet wings within listed buildings have been accepted, without causing harm to the significance of the listed building. For example, in an appeal relating to 57 Chester Square, Westminster (APP/X5990/W/16/3160593) greater changes were allowed to the closet wing, including an extension, as the 'modest element' would retain its 'subservient appearance'. This would be the case with the changes to 23 Harrington Square, the changes would not lead to any change in the external appearance and the closet wing would remain subservient to the rest of the house.
- 4.8** The introduction of a staircase would require interventions through existing fabric. Unfortunately, without invasive investigations it is hard to know exactly how much historic fabric remains in this part of the house. However, even if historic fabric does remain only a small part of the fabric would need to be removed, and not an amount that would cause harm to the listed building.
- 4.9** The removal of the bathroom and partitions within the first floor flat would have a neutral effect on the significance of the building and terrace as a whole.
- 4.10** Paragraphs 195 and 196 of the NPPF are not engaged. There will be preservation for the purposes of the decision maker's duty under section 16(2) of the Act.
- 4.11** It is also worth noting that without the two flats being joined they will not be able to be occupied due to their size, as per the Prohibition Order of 20 March 2018. The house is currently divided into flats and so other uses for this space are not possible. Therefore, if the two flats are not joined then there is a real possibility that the area will remain empty and unused.



5.0

5. Conclusion

- 5.1** 23 Harrington Square is a mid-19th century terrace house, which is listed grade II as part of 15 to 24 Harrington Square. It is located within the London Borough of Camden and within the Camden Town Conservation Area.
- 5.2** A Listed Building Consent Application (reference 2018/5167/L) for the amalgamation of the ground and first floor flat within the closet wing was refused by the London Borough of Camden on 27 February 2019. The reasons given for refusal were that the amalgamation would introduce an alien addition to the closet wing (through the addition of a staircase) would affect the inherent character of the closet wing and involve the removal of historic fabric.
- 5.3** The application would bring about change within the interior of 23 Harrington Square. However, the changes would not have a negative effect on the significance of the building or terrace as whole. The inherent character of the closet wing and legibility of its former use as a water closet has already been lost, due to its conversion to flats, and the creation of a duplex flat in the wing with the addition of a staircase would not have a cumulative effect and increase the loss. Visually the effect would be small, with no external effect and little internal effect with the changes only being visible from within the flat. The subsidiary appearance of the closet wing would remain.
- 5.4** While the staircase would be a new addition it is not an alien addition. Throughout London, and throughout the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, closet wings have been viewed as areas that can accommodate change within listed buildings, including the introduction of lifts and staircases, which have not harmed the significance of the building. This would also be the case with 23 Harrington Square.
- 5.5** Only a small amount of intervention would be required to existing fabric, not enough to affect the significance of the listed building or terrace.
- 5.6** There would be no effect to the important front elevation of the property or to the group value of the terrace.

5.7 Paragraphs 195 and 196 of the NPPF are not engaged because there is no harm to the significance of the heritage asset arising from any aspect of the appeal proposal. For the purposes of the Inspector's duty under section 16(2) of the Act the change to 23 Harrington Square does not give rise to any harm.

6. Appendix

Full Officer's comments on impact on the listed building

6.1 *'The Impact on the Listed Building of Special Architectural or Historic Interest The Council's Policy D2 states that the Council will preserve, and where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including listed buildings. Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ("the Listed Buildings Act") are relevant. Section 16(2) provides that in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works to a Listed Building special regard must be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The effect of these sections of the Listed Building Act is that there is statutory presumption in favour of the preservation of the preservation of Listed Buildings and their setting. Considerable importance and weight should be attached to their preservation. A proposal which would cause harm should only be permitted where there is strong countervailing planning considerations which are sufficiently powerful to outweigh the presumption. Whilst the interior of the building has undergone insensitive alterations, the closet wing still survives. The closet wing is considered a significant feature of Georgian houses in London, and its preservation is of considerable importance. The closet wing was a subsidiary structure built to house the water closet of early-mid 19th Century buildings. They were accessed from the half landing and were never designed to be habitable rooms or to be traversed internally without going via the main house. The closet wing provides evidence of the historic function of the listed building, giving a sense of how society and housing developed over time. Whilst it no longer functions as a closet, its inherent character is that of a subsidiary wing. The small internal proportions of the closet wing adds to its subservient character. Whilst the closet wing is currently being used as flats (Flat 3 and Flat 4, 23 Harrington Square), which is out of keeping with the character of this historic wing, in that 2 subsidiary rooms of the main house are self-contained flats, the overall plan form is maintained, which contributes to the significance of the building. The introduction of the staircase in the closet wing will cause harm to the significance of the listed*

building:- - It is a wholly alien addition, and also an alien element to that part of the building. Moreover, the addition of a second staircase in the Georgian house would alter the historic circulation pattern of the building. - It will transform the single cell rooms into a duplex flat, which is out of keeping with the character and appearance of the closet wing. - It will undermine the legibility of the original function of the historic closet wing. - It will be visually intrusive. The staircase would be out of keeping with the architectural and historic interest of the listed building. The introduction of a staircase will be contrary to Local Plan Policy D2. The introduction of the staircase would also require interventions through existing fabric. As above, these alterations would harm the significance of the listed building. The proposed removal of internal modern partition walls to the bathroom and kitchen of Flat 4 are considered acceptable.'



6.0
