

5 Lyme Street NW1 0EH

Heritage Assessment

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London SE1 3ER
June 2019

1 **Scope of Assessment**

- 1.1 This Heritage Assessment has been prepared to support an application for planning and listed building consent 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.

2 **Location and historical background**

- 2.1 Number 5 is located on the north–east side of Lyme Street and lies in 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, shut off views of and from the Regent’s Canal.
- 2.4 Number 5 is at the western end of this block and lies at 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’ in a formal composition built as a piano factory in 1852-5, which is now known as the Limehouse Studios with a four-storey pedimented centre and lower wings, flanked by slightly earlier houses built 1849. These 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 the 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-19th century row of ten semi-detached villas, faced in stucco with hipped slated roofs and projecting eaves. The ground floor windows have alternate triangular and segmental pediments. Numbers 5 and 6 are the central pair in the row of villas and are exceptions in that, unlike the rest of the villas 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. Below the entrance porch is a lobbied entrance from the side passage, and also a lavatory and other small service area. The side porches have in

several cases 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 of '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 in the back corner nearest to the entrance porch which is located at the side of the building. The rooms are of simple rectangles 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 are 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 back and front are 6 over 6 pane sashes. Most windows have horns except 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.



Ground floor doors, frames, and recessed book cases beside chimney breasts. Striped joinery with simple mouldings.



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

- 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 and central chimney stacks on the line of the Party Wall. At the same time there is a 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 in *The Buildings of England London 4:North* and is welcomed as reinforcing their significance.

4 **Relevant conservation guidance and legislation**

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework. 2018

4.1.1 Paragraph 11 of the 2018 NPPF confirms the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

4.1.2 Section 16 deals with Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. Paragraph 192 requires LPA's 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.

4.1.3 Paragraph 196 requires where the development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset this harm should be weighed against public benefits including securing its optimum viable use.

4.1.4 The February 2019 revision of the NPPF following a technical consultation has not changed the application of the above sections.

4.1.4 <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/generalintro/heritage-conservation-defined/> *Definition of **Heritage** Conservation. ... Conservation (or preservation, when given its proper **meaning**) of the most sensitive and important buildings or sites may come close to absolute physical preservation ... Indeed **change is often vital** to facilitate the optimum **viable use** of an asset so that it continues to receive investment.*

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 followed around 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 on what to consider 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.

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

BASEMENT

- The reconstruction of the back wing to form a single storey extension to the basement inset on either side and retaining the masonry nibs to differentiate the extension housing the kitchen from the main body of the building. A large window looks out over the garden with brick returns on either side reflecting the kitchen units lining the walls on either side.
- The existing single door at the back of the house to be widened to form a larger opening in the existing back wall at basement level retaining significant masonry wings on either side. This provides an outlook into the garden while clearly retaining the form of the original building.
- The existing doorway in the partition between the two existing basement rooms to be widened to link the two spaces visually and functionally while retaining substantial brick nibs reflecting the location of the cross wall.
- The existing lower ground WC to be enlarged with slight inset from the back wall of the main body of the building and to include a basin.

GROUND FLOOR

- 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 existing small window at the end of the landing will be retained. Metal balustrading will be provided to ensure a secure safe area and fixed planters will be installed on either side to provide privacy.
- At the raised ground floor level the entrance porch will be retained as existing.

- The layout of the two rooms at this level will be retained to provide two double bedrooms.

FIRST FLOOR

- At first floor level the existing bathroom will be rearranged to make more efficient use of the space in retaining a more compact bathroom, 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 the villas and to some of the sides, the basic form including the roofscape and the chimney stacks has been retained.
- 5.3 The significance of the fronts of the villas, and their form, is reinforced by the subtle detailing with the alternate pediments to the ground floor windows, 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.
- 5.4 None of the proposals affect this significance. There are no alterations to the roofscape, the rear extension is comparable to other examples in the group of villas and, by virtue of the enclosed back area, 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 in the Regent's Canal Conservation Area.
- 5.5 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.
- 5.6 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 the 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 from the public space.
- 5.7 The Local Plan sets out the need for any development to 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 the Local Plan guidance and the significance of the terrace of five pairs of semi-detached house is maintained.
- 5.8 Internally the decorative work will be retained with repairs where necessary and so the original hierarchy of the rooms will be retained.
- 5.9 An indication of the sub-division by the wing walls along the line of the main walls of the basement will be retained while also uniting the area as providing the kitchen, dining and living room with the flexibility to accommodate a range of different furniture.

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 character of this particular part of the area, including the contrast with nearby buildings referred to by Pevsner, 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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June 2019