

## St. Matthew's Lodge, 50 Oakley Square London NW1 1NB: Heritage Statement

### Contents

Introduction .....	1
Purpose .....	1
History .....	1
Designations.....	3
Assessing heritage significance .....	4
Concepts and terminology .....	4
Heritage significance .....	5
The existing building and the proposed scheme .....	7
The Policy Context.....	9
The National Planning Policy Framework.....	9
Local Policy: London Borough of Camden .....	11
The proposed scheme: compliance with law, policy and guidance.....	11
Conclusion .....	12

### Introduction

- 1 St. Matthew's Lodge is located at the junction of Oakley Square and Crowndale Road, slightly to the west of the junction of Crowndale Road and Camden Street. The existing building on the site is an unremarkable early 1980s apartment building that replaced an 1856 church. The site is located immediately adjacent to the Camden Town Conservation Area, and to a series of Grade II listed buildings including the terrace that forms the western side of Oakley Square.

#### Purpose

- 2 The purpose of this note is to set out an assessment of the heritage significance of the site of St. Matthew's Lodge, and comment on proposals for a two storey extension to the building. It should be read with the Design & Access Statement and plans prepared by Echlin as well as the planning statement prepared by DP9.

### History

- 3 Oakley Square was developed around 1856 as part of Bedford New Town, an initiative by the Duke of Bedford to create a new suburb on his lands to the north of the Euston Road. It was named after Oakley House near Dedford, one of the Duke's seats. Originally a space enclosed by terraces similar that which survives on the

northern side, the southern side of the square was replaced by the Amphill Square Estate by Eric Lyons & Partners in about 1960, a development described as 'indifferent' by Pevsner.

- 4 The church of St. Matthew was built in 1852–56 on a site presented by the Duke of Bedford, who gave £1,000 to the building fund, £250 of this being contingent upon the steeple being built. In addition he contributed £1,000 a year to the Diocesan Church Building Society out of which the society gave £400 towards the building and lent a further £600. The church was designed by John Johnson and is an elaborate building of Kentish Rag and Bath stone in the Decorated style of Gothic. The nave has a clerestory and the tower with a lofty steeple stands free at the south-east angle of the nave. The total cost was £9,000. The apex of the steeple was damaged during the war. The church was consecrated on 23rd December, 1856, and the vicarage was completed in 1871<sup>1</sup>.

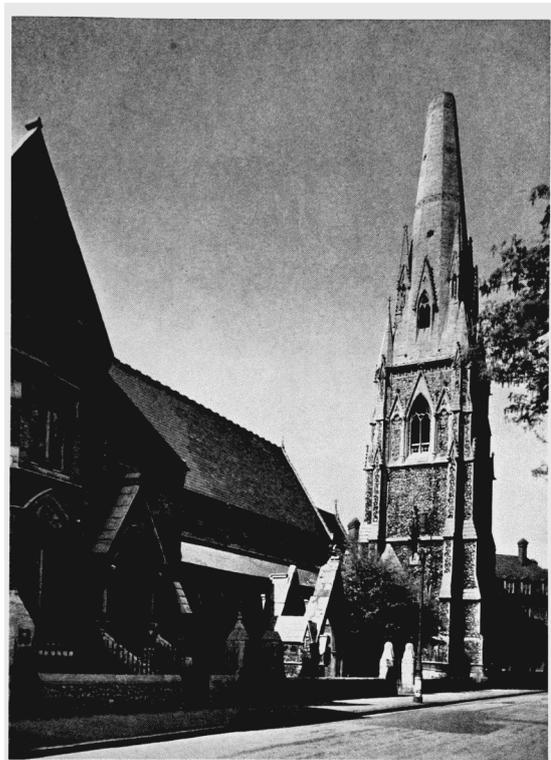
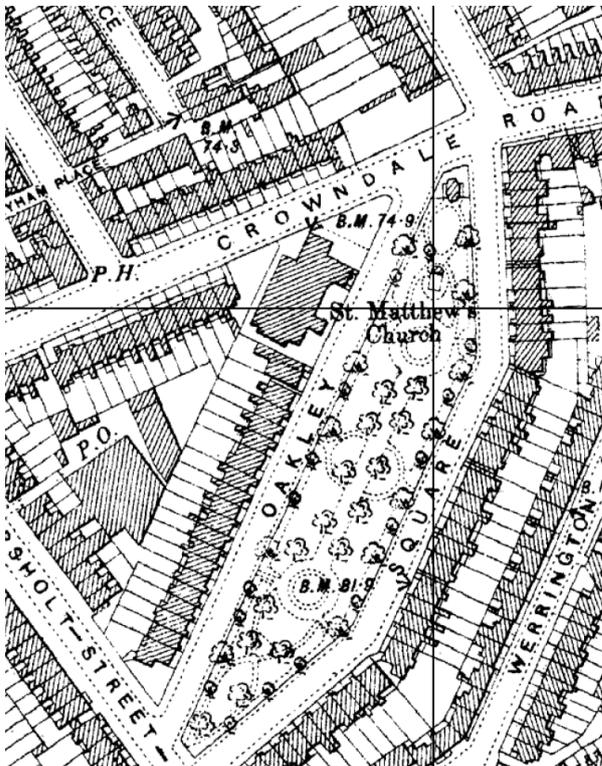


Figure 1 (left): Oakley Square in 1896 Figure2 (right) The church of St. Matthew before demolition

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Bedford Estate', in *Survey of London: Volume 24, the Parish of St Pancras Part 4: King's Cross Neighbourhood*, ed. Walter H Godfrey and W McB. Marcham (London, 1952), pp. 128-131



Figure3: The church of St. Matthew when completed (image c 1860)

- 5 The present building on the site was designed by Stefan Zins Associates and granted planning permission on 23 February 1982. It is five storeys in height with a flat roof, with a lift motor room to the rear. The building is longer on Oakley Square than on Crowndale Road (there is a substantial gap between St. Matthew's Lodge and 31 Crowndale Road), and steps down and insets at the points closest to neighbouring properties on those streets. The corner at the junction of the two streets is stepped in plan, and set back from the curved corner of the plot, which retains the former church boundary wall and railings. The elevations are arranged in bays of two windows separated by paired brick pilasters, and articulated by projecting balconies. The fifth floor has a series of cantilevered oriels.

## Designations

- 6 The site is located adjacent to the Camden Town Conservation Area to the west and north. The former vicarage of St Matthew's (immediately to the west of the site), Nos 53-57, and 58-70 Oakley Square are listed Grade II, as is Oakley Square Gardens Lodge. On the northern side of Crowndale Road, the Working Men's College at Nos. 46 and 46 is also listed Grade II, along with 31-53 Crowndale Road and the Camden Palace. Oakley Square gardens are included in Camden's Local List.

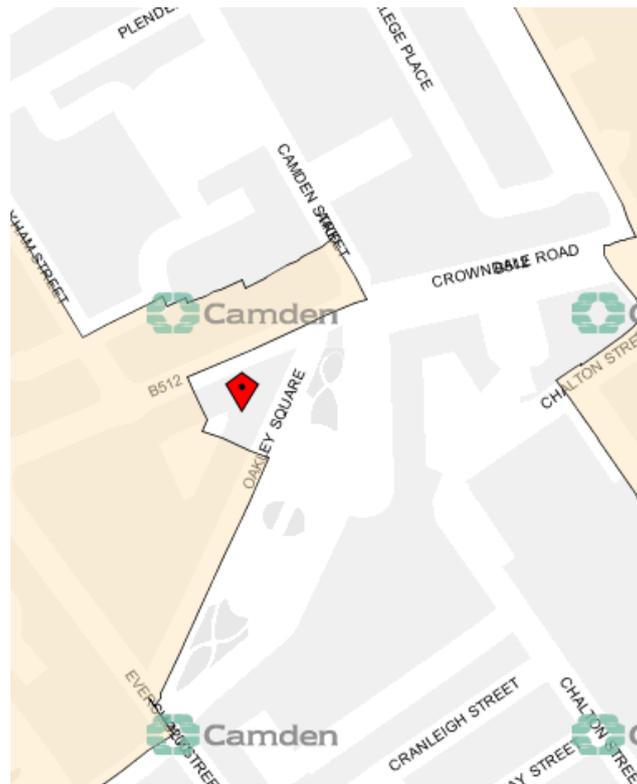


Figure 4: The site in relation to the Camden Town Conservation Area

## Assessing heritage significance

### Concepts and terminology

- 7 The Camden Town Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings are ‘designated heritage assets’, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF). Locally listed buildings or features - the Oakley square gardens - are ‘non-designated heritage assets’.
- 8 Heritage ‘significance’ is defined in the NPPF as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic’. The Historic England ‘Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2’ puts it slightly differently – as ‘the sum of its architectural, historic, artistic or archaeological interest’.
- 9 ‘Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment’ (Historic England, 2008) describes a number of ‘heritage values’ that may be present in a ‘significant place’. These are evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.

## Heritage significance

- 10 Historical value is described as being illustrative or associative. The listed and unlisted buildings of any discernible historical quality nearby, their relationship to one another and to the conservation area, illustrates the evolution of this part of London. What happened to these older buildings, the historic urban grain and the area generally throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century is highly illustrative of how our towns and cities changed in that period. It tells us about the transformation of the older city the expansion of London into new northern suburbs during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and about social change and lifestyles in various periods. The area as a whole has historical associations with various important historical architects, developers and other figures.
- 11 It is clear that, despite the changes that have occurred in the area over time, the conservation area and the listed buildings near St. Matthew's Lodge have 'architectural' and 'artistic interest' or 'aesthetic value'. In respect of design, 'Conservation Principles' says that 'design value... embraces composition (form, proportions, massing, silhouette, views and vistas, circulation) and usually materials or planting, decoration or detailing, and craftsmanship'.
- 12 The listed buildings that surround St Matthews Lodge form part of an urban setting that is already typified by the multi-layered mixture of building types, heights and styles that characterises this part of Camden and the Camden Town Conservation Area.
- 13 31-53 Crowndale Road are a terrace of mid-early 19<sup>th</sup> century Italianate terraced houses similarly found across London. Externally, their special interest lies in their architectural form and detailing. Their setting already comprises a variety of buildings of different heights and architectural style – many of which affect, but do not necessarily detract, from the ability to appreciate the significance of the terrace itself.



Figure 5: 31-53 Crowndale Road

- 14 The significance of the listed former Vicarage on Oakley Square also lies, externally, in its architectural form and high quality detailing – in this case the Gothic Revival style. It was designed by John Johnson as the vicarage for the demolished St Matthew’s Church, which stood on the application site. Since the replacement of the gothic Revival St Matthews Church the building is now unique amongst its immediate neighbours, with the Italianate (also listed) 53-57 Oakley Square looming close to the south west (fig.6).



Figure 6: Former Vicarage, Oakley Square

15 Again, this juxtaposition does not, however, detract from the ability to read the architectural form and detailing of the vicarage but highlights the variety of architecture in this part of Camden that gives the Conservation Area its character.

16 Camden Council have identified the character of the Camden Town Conservation Area as ‘Sub-Area 2: Residential’ (Conservation Area Appraisal, Oct 2007). The character is described:

*“The residential parts of the Conservation Area are largely homogenous in scale and character, having been laid out within a period of three decades spanning the years 1820-1850...A...pocket of residential development, originally made up of slightly grander terraces, falls south-east of the High Street (Harrington Square and Oakley Square). The area contains a large number of good examples of early/mid 19<sup>th</sup> century speculatively built terraced London houses, generally of uniform appearance, and many statutorily listed for their special interest”.*

### **The existing building and the proposed scheme**

17 The existing building has a curiously unfinished appearance. Its vertical termination is, to say the least, abrupt. It is not clear whether it was originally intended that the building should have additional storeys, but this is certainly the impression that the building gives. In addition, the existing building makes little of its location – it fails to respond to the prominence of its site at the junction of two straight streets with long visibility, and thus misses the opportunity to help reinforce the sense of place at this important junction in a way that the former church did.



Figure 7: St Matthews Lodge as existing

18 In terms of architectural quality, St. Matthew’s Lodge is, at best, inoffensive, and could perhaps be better described as bland. The only aspect of the design that

draws the eye – the oriel features – simply appear odd rather than interesting or forming part of a convincing overall design to which they make an intelligible contribution and give the building a top-heavy appearance.

- 19 The Camden Town Conservation Area boundary was clearly drawn to exclude the building from within it. Though five storeys in height, the existing building is lower than the adjacent former vicarage, the terrace beyond on the western side of Oakley Square and the Working Men's College. It is roughly the same height as the unlisted terrace on the northern side of Crowndale Road and slightly higher than the terrace at 31-53 Crowndale Road.
- 20 Permission was granted in March 2019 for a single storey extension and as described in the Design & Access Statement, this process led to a series of design principles being identified that have informed this proposal which is for the addition of two storeys to the existing building to provide an additional seven apartments which we believe offers an opportunity to more successfully mark the corner.
- 21 The proposals are discussed in more detail in the D&A, however in summary they have been designed to create a rooftop form that completes the existing building. This will be done through a series of raised and set back sections. These have been defined by the existing architecture and projecting bays.
- 22 The extension massing is set back behind the parapet line forming a clear distinction between the new addition and the existing façade, while the stepped form at either end provides breathing space to the vicarage and terraces along Oakley Square and Crowndale Road. The proposed 5<sup>th</sup> floor will be finished in brick – forming a transition between the existing building and the proposed 6<sup>th</sup> floor, whilst the 6<sup>th</sup> floor will be finished in a standing seam zinc finish to provide the 'rooftop' to the building.
- 23 This combination of form and materials will emphasise the appearance of a roof form, with detailing being contemporary, elegant and well considered. It will also help to reduce the current top-heavy over-dominance of the protruding oriels and lift overrun.
- 24 The views provided by Echlin demonstrate how the building would sit within its townscape context. Where the proposed extension is seen together with the surrounding buildings this impact is no different to other surrounding buildings appearing in views that make up the already multi-layered urban context of both St Matthews Lodge and the setting of the listed buildings.
- 25 The setting of the nearby listed buildings remains largely unchanged and we do not believe there is any harmful impact on their setting. The proposed extension provides a 'top' to the building, which currently appears oddly top heavy and

unfinished and will thus allow the building to sit more comfortably with its more traditional neighbours.

- 26 Many of the surrounding views are dominated by mature street trees. This is particularly the case across Oakley Square where the density and presence of the trees and hedges means St Matthew's Lodge is barely visible (in both summer and winter) behind them.
- 27 In all cases the significance of the listed buildings remains intact, entirely readable and unharmed and the opportunity to 'finish' the top of St Matthews Lodge offer an opportunity to enhance both the building and its contribution to the setting of these assets and context.
- 28 In addition, the proposals offer the further benefits of improved landscaping – with improved lighting and security – and a new lift that will be compliant to modern DDA requirements. The environmental sustainability and performance of the building will also be enhanced through inclusion of renewable energy and improved thermal efficiency.

### **The Policy Context**

- 29 This section of the report briefly sets out the range of national and local policy and guidance relevant to the consideration of change in the historic built environment.
- 30 The legislation governing listed buildings and conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 31 ). Section 66(1) of the Act requires decision makers to 'have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses' when determining applications which affect a listed building or its setting. Section 72(1) of the Act requires decision makers with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area to pay 'special attention... to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'

### **The National Planning Policy Framework**

- 32 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised in March 2019.
- 33 Section 16 deals with 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'. The NPPF says at Paragraph 189 that:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be

proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

34 A description and analysis of the heritage and townscape significance of the site and its context is provided in this report.

35 At Paragraph 192, the NPPF says that:

In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness

36 Paragraph 193 advises local planning authorities 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). Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting'.

37 Paragraph 195 says:

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use

38 Paragraph 196 says that 'Where a development proposal will 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.

- 39 Paragraph 197 goes on to say ‘the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset when determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset’.
- 40 Paragraph 200 of the NPPF advises local planning authorities to ‘look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

41 Paragraph 201 says that:

Not all elements of a World Heritage Site or Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 195 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 196, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

Local Policy: London Borough of Camden

42 The London Borough of Camden adopted its Local Plan in 2017. Specifically Policy D1 relates to Design and D2 relates to Heritage.

### **The proposed scheme: compliance with law, policy and guidance**

- 43 The proposed development has the capacity to be judged as capable of preserving the special architectural and historic interest of the designated heritage assets (the conservation area and the setting of listed buildings), thus satisfying Sections 66(1) and 72(1) the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 44 The proposed scheme is respectful of the setting of the Camden Town Conservation Area, and we believe it would enhance the conservation area. The legal requirement regarding satisfying Section 72(1) of the Act, established by *South Lakeland District Council v Secretary of State for the Environment and another* [1992] 1 ALL ER 573, is met if the proposed development leaves the conservation area unharmed. The proposed scheme will not only positively enhance a key building outside the conservation area but also views into and out of the conservation area.

- 45 The proposed scheme would clearly not lead to ‘substantial’ harm to any designated heritage asset. The only potential for ‘less than substantial’ harm would be if the proposed scheme caused the loss of something central to the special interest of the designated heritage assets in question. There is nothing about the proposal that would give rise to this level of harm. While the setting of various designated heritage assets will be altered to a modest degree by the proposed scheme, this will not detract from their special interest as listed buildings or as a conservation area. The same can be said of the locally listed Oakley Square gardens.
- 46 All of the surrounding heritage assets already exist in a multi-layered urban context where buildings are appreciated in their own right and also in the context of others of different styles, heights and materials.
- 47 The proposed scheme therefore complies with Paragraph 195 of the NPPF - it certainly does not lead to ‘substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset’. It also complies with Paragraph 196 for the reasons given in detail earlier – the scheme cannot be considered to harm the conservation area or listed buildings that it affects, but rather alters the site in a fashion that has a relatively small overall effect on heritage significance. Any ‘less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset’ (Paragraph 196) - if any - that might be ascribed to the scheme is outweighed by the public benefit of new housing and the heritage benefit of a scheme that will enhance the setting of listed buildings and the conservation area over the present situation. Further, improvements such as the enhanced landscaping, new compliant lift, renewable energy and improved thermal insulation will ensure the long-term sustainability of the building for the future.
- 48 For these reasons also, we believe that the proposed scheme complies with the London Borough of Camden’s policies for design and for heritage assets, and in particular Policies D1 & D2. The proposals have full regard for the local context and character and preserve and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets. The scheme also seeks to improve the landscaping around the building.

## **Conclusion**

- 49 It is clear that the proposed scheme is positive in its effect. The scheme will change the site and its surroundings, but do so in a way that will enhance both. In effect it will ‘complete’ a building that has an unfinished appearance and will thus sit far more comfortably with its neighbours. It will preserve and enhance heritage assets and townscape, and will deliver heritage benefits and public benefits for Camden and its residents.

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