

Heritage Statement

Beechwood House,
43 Hampstead Lane,
N6 4JU

September 2019 | Project Ref 2780B



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1.0

1. Introduction

- 1.1** This heritage statement has been prepared by Heritage Collective on behalf of the owner of Beechwood House, 43 Hampstead Lane, London. It specifically relates to an outbuilding on the Beechwood House Estate, a former squash court. Planning permission and listed building consent are being sought from Camden Council for internal and external alterations to the building following works (part retrospective, part proposed) to bring it back into use for the purposes of an estate office.
- 1.2** In 2016 applications (2016/1576/P and 2016/1816/L) were submitted for:
- 'Internal works to extend the existing gallery by the insertion a new mezzanine floor within the former Squash Court building and the insertion of 3 new low level windows to provide daylight to ground floor area'.*
- 1.3** This application was withdrawn and pre-application advice was sought from Camden Council during early 2017 culminating in a pre-application meeting in July 2017 to discuss the details of any future application. There was broad agreement of the extent of the works to be carried out but no formal pre-application response was provided following this meeting. As such this application is based upon the verbal feedback provided in 2017. A detailed account of the timeline between 2016 and now is provide within the covering letter to this application from Planning Potential.
- 1.4** Beechwood House is listed grade II and within the Highgate Village Conservation Area. It was listed on 14th May 1974 and is within landscaped grounds stretching south-west from the house and including various outbuildings. Beechwood replaced the former Fitzroy House (c.1770), demolished in 1828. The house was designed in 1840 by George Besevi for his brother Nathaniel, along with the adjacent house 'The Elms'.
- 1.5** The squash court was part of a series of improvements and additions to the estate in the period 1929-66 under the direction of Oswald Lewis. Oswald instructed Wimperis, Simpson and Guthrie to design the squash court, swimming pool, garden

buildings, tennis pavilion, glass houses, new landscaped terraces and pond with the squash court being constructed prior to the war.

- 1.6** In 2008 a report on the history, development and significance of the Beechwood Estate was prepared by Martin Ashley Architects, including some archival research. This 'Conservation Assessment' has formed the basis for on-going applications to the council and has been used to establish heritage significance in this case. It should be noted that it included a limited amount of information on the later years of the history of the estate and subsequent information on this has been gathered and included where relevant in this report.
- 1.7** The content of this report is based on that prepared for the original 2016 application and based on subsequent pre-application notes provided in 2017 with supplements to the text where relevant.
- 1.8** The purpose of this report is to provide Camden Council with further information on the heritage interest of the Squash Court, a curtilage listed building, in order to allow a determination of the planning and listed building consent application. It provides an assessment of the effects of the works and how they comply with policy.



2.0

2. Heritage Significance

Relevant Historical Background

- 2.1** The primary asset of architectural and historic interest is Beechwood House, listed as an early 19th century house. The squash court is an ancillary structure forming part of a series of modifications to the estate. There is no suggestion the squash court is a building of individual special interest worthy of listing in its own right.
- 2.2** First developed in the 1830s on the site of Fitzroy House, Beechwood House was designed by George Basevi for his brother Nathaniel, a barrister. He also designed and developed the adjacent building 'the Elms'. The estate changed hands in 1850 with William Piper and his wife occupying the house until 1910. Edward Perronet Sells added a north-east wing to the house at this point and developed a new lodge on Hampstead Lane.
- 2.3** Oswald Lewis, MP and younger son of the draper John Lewis, bought the house and estate in 1929 and lived there until 1966. He developed the estate with new buildings throughout the next three decades. The squash court forms part of a group of buildings including the former Tennis Court, swimming pool, Gardener's Cottages and Nursery Wing to the main house.



Fig. 1: 1866 Ordnance Survey Map (pre-squash court)

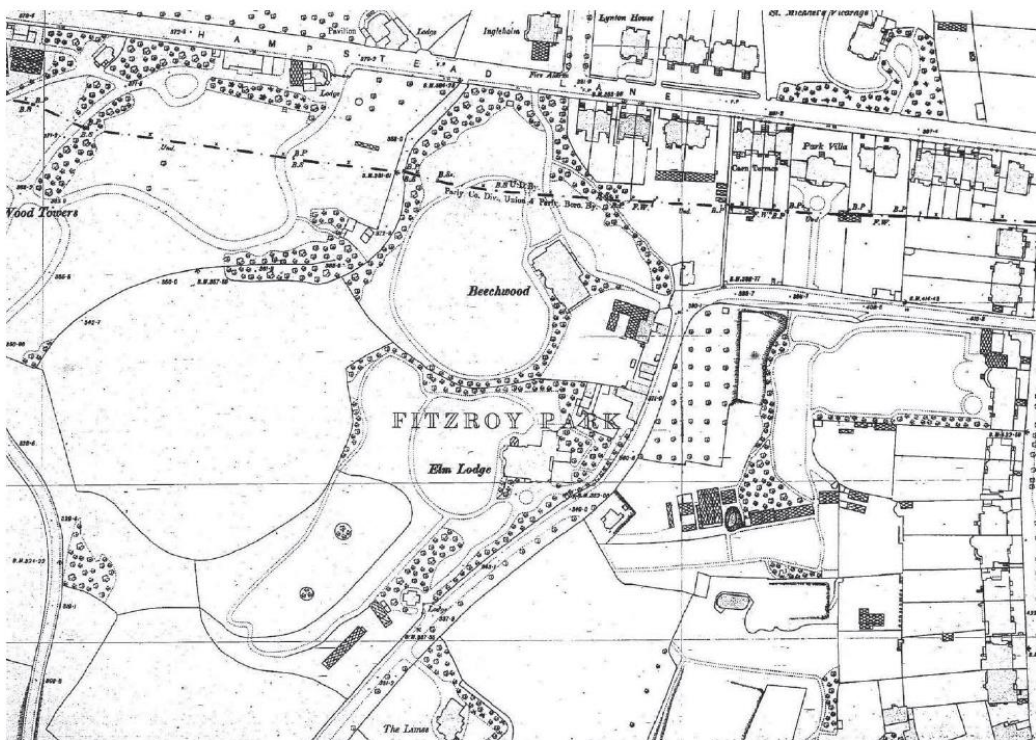


Fig. 2: 1894 Ordnance Survey (pre Squash Court)

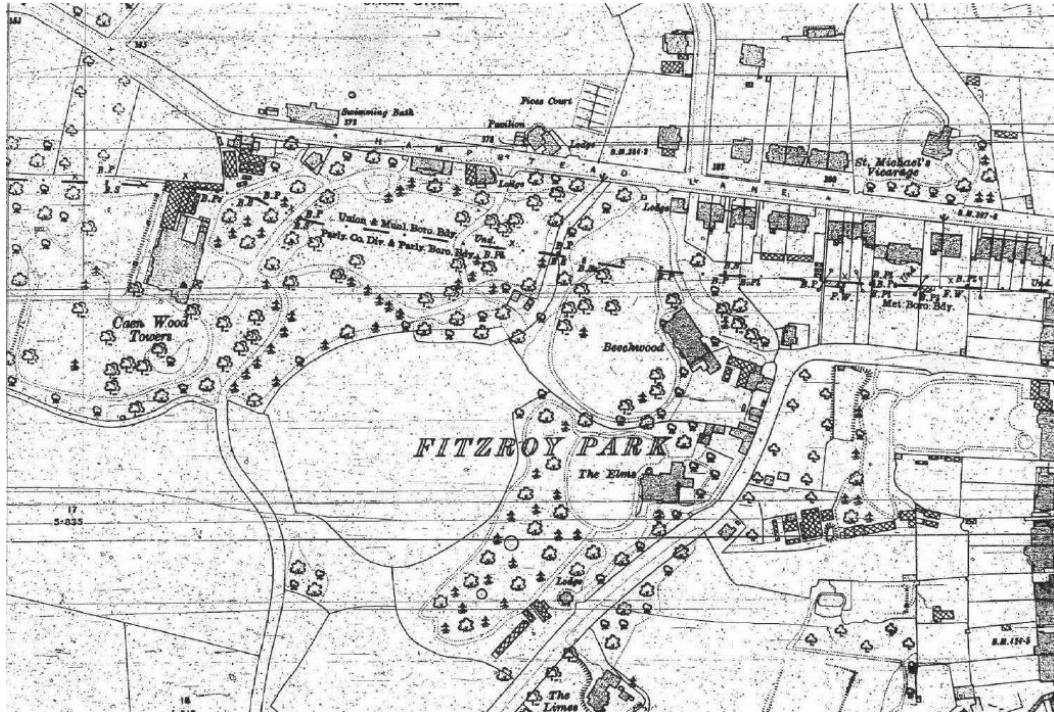


Fig.3: 1913 Ordnance Survey (pre Squash Court)

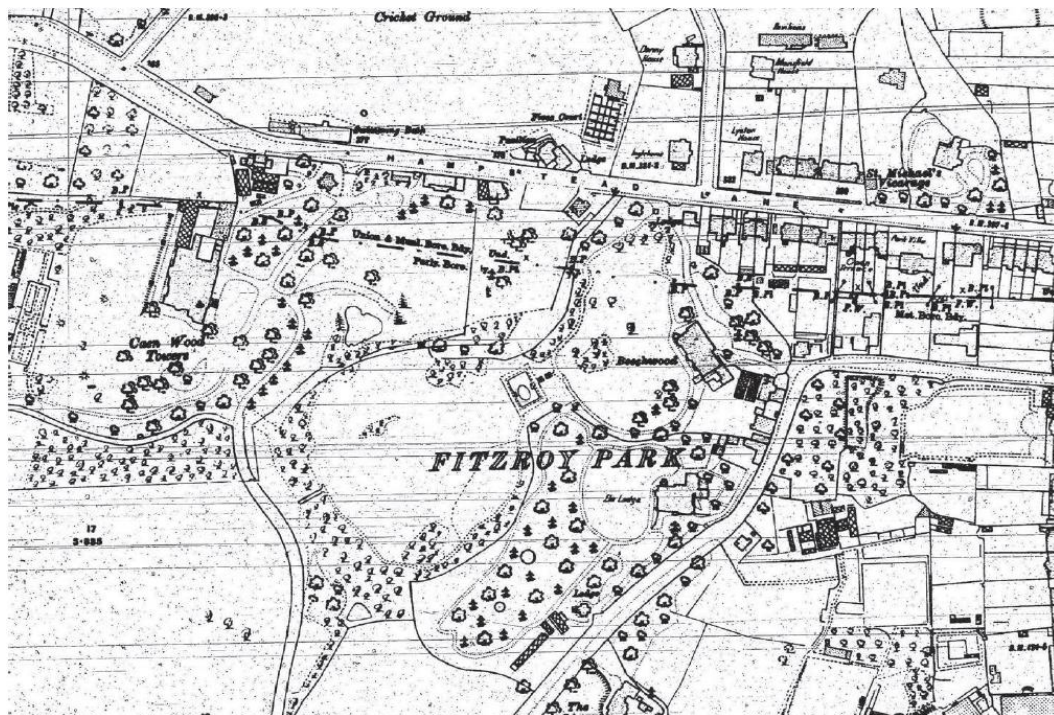


Fig.4: 1938 Ordnance Survey

Heritage Values

- 2.7** Historical interest is derived from the date of the building, forming part of a group of buildings designed as a planned improvement programme. The original function holds some limited interest in that it demonstrates the fashion for tennis, squash and swimming as often carried out recreational activities for the wealthy inhabitants. Although historical interest is more readily appreciated from the association with Wimperis, Simpson and Guthrie, a well-known practice at the time who were responsible for Fortnum and Masons in 1925. Despite the alterations to the tennis court and other buildings in the group they still hold group value due to their age and external appearance and role in the setting of Beechwood House, the primary asset.
- 2.8** The former function of the Squash Court is also legible from its external appearance. It is a building with windows on one elevation only, lit by a rooflight and standing at one and a half storeys tall, rather than single storey. Its architectural style, as appreciated from its external appearance, demonstrates its 1930s construction and thus puts it with the other outbuildings from this period, which include both buildings that function as sports buildings and accommodation. In addition its location, among earlier outbuildings (some of which were demolished to make way for it), indicates its suitability for a small area (for instance the tennis court or swimming pool could not have been located in this part of the estate, being too large but the small footprint of the squash court allowed it to be shoe horned into an existing range of buildings).
- 2.9** There is also some architectural interest in the building, derived from the front (west) elevation which has a simple but pleasing symmetry to it in a 1930s style. The side and rear elevations of the building have no window openings or embellishments and the roof has a single central glazed rooflight. This is a building of some historical interest derived from its ancillary function and group value. The building has not functioned for a substantial period of time and has been altered internally to form storage units (prior to the recent works) but nonetheless contributes to the setting and significance of the main house.



3.0

3. Assessment of Effects

3.1 The aim of the proposed works was to bring a derelict building back into active use, having been left with no use for some time before the owners took over the estate in 2008 and commissioned a review of the estate (a sensible and forward thinking commission). This section of the report should be read in conjunction with the DAS and detailed drawings supplied by Scott & Twine Architects.

3.2 In 2012 works were carried out on the estate to improve a series of the outbuildings. These works were largely repair works, not requiring consent with the exception of the Stables, which were altered under a planning and listed building consent. The squash court was not included at this time because to bring it back into use would have required permission and it was in use as storage, having been subdivided (by the previous owner) to provide two separate storage rooms within the main court space, altering its spatial qualities.

Restoration Works

3.3 Over time the building has decayed and the following defects were evidenced in 2016 when the original works were begun and have since been remedied by the works carried out;

- Leaking roof
- Decayed and rotting structural roof timbers and damp
- Leaking and broken roof lights
- Split lead gutters
- Leaking down pipes
- Defective masonry
- No internal lighting
- Defective sprung timber floor (blocks lifting and de-laminating)
- Blown plasterwork at high level and within the court area

- Defective doors and windows – seized and broken
- Non-working WC and changing facilities
- Poor decorative order

3.4

Thus the proposed works (now carried out) entailed comprehensive repair and alteration to the building requiring listed building consent. Including the following;

- repointing of brickwork (beneficial);
- replacement of inappropriate uPvc rainwater downpipes with new cast iron pipes (beneficial);
- replacement of inappropriate light with carriage lamp in black metal finish (beneficial);
- redecoration and repair of windows (beneficial);
- replacement of damaged rooflight with like for like example (with double glazed safety glass) (beneficial);
- repair refurbishment of interior to make watertight (beneficial);
- repair of internal timber staircase (beneficial).

3.5

All of these works have benefitted the fabric, character and appearance of the building and have improved the group value of the building when seen alongside the garden buildings adjacent to it. In order to make a viable investment into the building it has been bought into a use so that it will serve the estate in an effective way.

Office Conversion (part implemented)

3.6

The original scheme, which has been implemented, involved the full horizontal subdivision of the internal double height space (already subdivided vertically prior to 2008) forming two floors of desk space, with meetings rooms at the back of the space (divided by stud partitions). A central lightwell for the first floor to allow light into the ground floor area and the ability to retain the spatial proportions of the space when standing in the middle of the former squash court, looking up to the rooflight was also proposed.

- 3.7** It is now proposed, following detailed discussions with Camden officers in 2017, to remove the new floor and forgo the desk office space at first floor level. It is proposed to also remove the stud partitions at first floor level which enclose two offices and former squash court balcony area, restoring the balcony as an open balcony with simple balustrade and handrail, looking over the space and creating an open mezzanine with space for desks, accessed via a spiral staircase at the other end of the building. Thus reversing the horizontal subdivision and revealing the double height space once again.
- 3.8** Originally eight desks were planned for the first floor to provide work space for existing resident staff, which include up to 30 people (Estate Manager, house, grounds, drives, security, IT etc), but in order to secure a consent the estate will try to accommodate the staff elsewhere. In addition the owner has a travelling staff of 8-10 who currently have no area to work from, the ground floor will provide space for them to work from when at the estate. It is both logical and practical that existing empty buildings on the estate, if there is no longer a need for their original use, should be used as part of the running of the estate in a way that ensures the group value of the buildings is retained and enhanced. Its use to date has worked well and the building is now an integral part of the estates' operation.
- 3.9** In dividing the space, both vertically and horizontally, the character of the interior has changed. Some change is unavoidable in order to achieve a usable space for the purposes of an estate office, and most other uses other than a squash court. The proposed subdivisions are all within the original double height space and do not interrupt the existing entrance hall with staircase area, which has been restored. A W.C. has been inserted at ground floor level under the balcony, in place of a previous kitchenette, with associated services, thus limiting the need to insert new services into the building.
- 3.10** The works have entailed lining the walls with new stud linings to ensure the existing wall surface is kept intact and not affected by the insertion of sockets or other interventions required for office use. As such there is an element of reversibility to the works.

- 3.11** In any event the effect of the implemented scheme on the heritage significance of the curtilage listed building has been limited. It still holds its historical associative interest with the architects and its group value as part of the 1930s works. It retains its architectural interest, which has been enhanced by the works to the exterior of the building. The building has remained subservient to the main house and an asset that contributes to the setting of the main house.
- 3.12** The effects of the further proposed works, to reverse some elements of the interior conversion, will better reveal the interior spatial qualities of the former squash court from that which exists on site while allowing a new use to operate within the space and keep the building in active use.
- 3.13** An end result which sees a double height space with balcony overlooking it and an inserted mezzanine with office and kitchenette below will preserve the heritage significance of the curtilage listed building and its contribution as part of the wider listed Beechwood house.



4.0

4. Legislation and Policy

The 1990 Act

- 4.1** Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the decision maker to give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the special interest and setting of a listed building. Section 72 has a similar provision for conservation areas.
- 4.2** In this case the primary listed building on the estate is Beechwood House and it must be the case that the presumption set out in s.66 is less strong in the case of a curtilage listed building, the Squash Court. This has certainly been the approach with regard to consented alterations to other curtilage buildings on the estate, such as the Tennis Court. These curtilage buildings hold primary interest due to their group value and contribution to setting and thus works of alteration to their interiors will consequently have a limited, if not no, effect on their role as a group or within the setting of the listed house or conservation area.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.3** The significance of a heritage asset is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (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."

- 4.4** 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 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

case law describes substantial harm in terms of an effect that would vitiate or drain away much of the significance of a heritage asset.

4.5 Harm is defined by English Heritage as change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset.¹

4.6 Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset when considering applications that affect its significance.

4.7 This assessment is confined to the significance of the 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.

The effect of the works in policy terms

4.8 It is a fact that the group value, architectural interest and contribution of the squash court to the setting of Beechwood House would be enhanced by the restoration works to the building. The role of the building will also be enhanced by bringing it back into a viable new use, thus ensuring its long term preservation. This was a derelict building in a state of decay that has been and will continue to be maintained as a result of the works proposed.

4.9 In 2016 the assessment was made that total horizontal sub-division would cause a low level of less than substantial harm to the asset. If the proposed works, to remove the inserted floor, and include only a modest mezzanine, were implemented this would remove that harm and the significance of the asset would not be harmed as an end result. This was an alteration which is ultimately reversible and was always designed to be sensitive to the fabric and history of the building.

4.10 As such there is no planning balance to be made. The proposed works will preserve special interest and thus are compliant with s.66 and do not engage paragraph 189 of the NPPF.

¹ Paragraph 84 of Conservation Principles 2008.

4.11 In the Camden Local Plan the policy relating to the alteration of listed buildings is summarised below:

Policy D2(j) states the Council will 'resist proposals for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where this would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the building'.



5.0

5. Conclusions

- 5.1** Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the decision maker give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the special interest and setting of a listed building. Section 72 has a similar provision for conservation areas.
- 5.2** It is the case that the restoration of the fabric of the squash court, which forms one part of the listed building, being curtilage listed, will enhance the group and preserve the setting of Beechwood, the grade II listed building that forms the primary asset on the estate. The works to date have enhanced and brought back into use a former derelict building which contributes to the character of the estate as a whole and thus the wider Highgate Village Conservation Area.
- 5.3** The proposed change of use, once the works are implemented, will preserve the sense of the interior double height space and preserve the character of the former use of the building. The works do not involve any alteration of significant features and ensure the character of the space is legible. Ultimately the works are reversible.
- 5.4** There is no further need for the building as a squash court and absolutely no sense in restoring a building to a function that will not be used. The key components of significance will be preserved and enhanced as a result of the proposed works and the wider estate will benefit from the building being restored and converted into a useable building.
- 5.5** Taking into consideration national and local policy relating to historic buildings, which has a primary focus on preserving significance and managing change to avoid conflict between significance and use this assessment concludes that the works are compliant with policy and have been planned so as to avoid alteration to key components of significance or to mitigate the effect of the works for the long term interest of the building and Beechwood House.