



20 Vicar's Road, Gospel Oak, NW5 4NL

Application for planning permission – Heritage Statement

Applicant: Mr P Morris and Ms E Kennedy

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1 Introduction

This Heritage Statement accompanies an application for planning permission for the demolition of no.20 Vicar's Road in Gospel Oak and the redevelopment of the site for a new development – referred to as The Cloud House – consisting of two semi-detached dwellings; one four-bedroom and one three-bedroom dwelling.

This Statement assesses the impact of the proposed development on the heritage assets in the vicinity of the site by reference to the significance of these assets, which is examined through the following sections.

2 The Site and Proposed Development

2.1 The site

The site lies on the north side of Vicar's Road, in the Gospel Oak area of north London. Belsize Park lies to the west, Kentish Town to the south-east/east, east Hampstead to the north and Dartmouth Park and Tufnell Park to the north-east. The site itself accommodates a small, two-storey, two-bedroom detached dwelling, owned and occupied by the applicant. The existing house is a small, brick Victorian dwelling built in the Gothic style in the late nineteenth century, with arched windows and a pitched roof. It is a small 'two up - two down' dwelling, with only 75m² floorspace.

The house has a small courtyard on its north side and further yard space to the east. The front half of the yard was previously owned by the Council and its use associated with the workshops that previously adjoined the site. There are concrete bollards still in place and chunks of concrete lying around, along with various bits of detritus left over from it having been used by the builders of the new development to the east. The back half of the garden is at a different level to the front half and is predominantly covered in gravel.



Above left: view westwards along Vicar's Road, with 20 Vicar's Road in centre. Above right: view towards 20 Vicar's Road from south side of street.

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The application site is bound by Vicar's Road to the south, the former St Martin's Church Hall to the west and north, a new four-storey flatted development to the north and new three storey town houses to the east.

2.2 The proposed development

The application proposes the demolition of the existing dwelling at no.20 Vicar's Road and its replacement with 'The Cloud House', a distinctive building characterised by its cascade of pale rendered arches on the exterior, intended to give a cloud-like quality. These arches would be finished in a pale pink/buff colour render, with inset glazing. Ornate painted metal balustrades, side/front gates and railings, which would match the finish of the window frames, would provide further detailing and a consistent material palette across the building.



Above: visualisation of the proposed Cloud House from south west

The Cloud House would comprise two semi-detached dwellings, nos. 20 and 20A Vicar's Road. The four-bedroom dwelling at no.20 would provide accommodation over three floors with roof terrace above. The attached three-bedroom dwelling at no.20A would also be laid out over three floors but with a substantially reduced footprint at first and second floor levels. Both properties would have a variety of outdoor spaces, including front and back gardens where recycled brickwork from the existing house would be used for surfacing, and terraces.

The tallest part of the building would be no higher than adjoining St Martin's Church Hall, stepping down towards the new dwellings to the east.

For full details of the planning application proposals, please refer to the application drawings and Design and Access Statement.

3 Statutory and policy requirements in relation to heritage assets

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as amended, places a statutory duty on local authorities to preserve listed buildings. At Section 66, the Act states that; ... *“In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority ... shall 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.”*

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It recognises heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (para.184). Applicants are required to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by development, including any contribution made by their setting (para.189).

In determining applications, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and to the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (para.192). Great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset’s conservation when considering the impact of development on significance (para.193) and any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Broadly, the NPPF advises that any proposed development that will lead to substantial harm to a designated heritage asset should be refused consent unless there are substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm (para.195). 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 (para.196).

Policy D2 of the Camden Local Plan 2017 reflects NPPF policy, further confirming that the Council will resist development that would cause harm to significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting. It also states that it will seek to protect other heritage assets, including non-designated heritage assets.

4 Identified Heritage Assets

The application property is not listed or included on Camden Council’s Local List. Neither is it within a Conservation Area. There are two listed buildings in the vicinity of the application site, namely:

- St Martin’s Church Hall, now a French-English bilingual primary school, adjoins the site to the west and north and is listed at Grade II (list reference 1379107). The building was added to the statutory list in 1974.
- The Church of St Martin, a Grade I listed building, lies to the south west of the site on the southern side of Vicar’s Road (list reference 1379098). The building was first listed in 1954.

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The list descriptions for these two buildings, and accompanying photos, are copied below.



St Martin's Church Hall

Grade: II

Church hall, now in commercial use. Late C19. Possibly by the son of EB Lamb; refurbished 1989. Kentish ragstone rubble main facade, brick sides and rear. 3 storeys. 3 windows and 1-window slightly projecting entrance bay; 5-window left hand return. Recessed doorways with pointed heads. 2 and 3-light square-headed windows with cusped tracery lights and small panes. Sill strings to upper floors. Parapet. Return with mullioned square-headed windows having small panes in shallow segmental-arched recesses reaching the full height of the building; battlemented parapet. INTERIOR: plain. Forms a group with Lamb's seminal church opposite.

Left: Photo of St Martin's Church Hall, principal frontage to Vicar's Road.

Church of St Martin

Heritage Category: Listed Place of Worship Grade I

Church. 1864-6. By EB Lamb for JD Allcroft; later chapel at north-west corner after 1915 by his son EB Lamb junior. Kentish ragstone rubble with fine dressings. Tiled gabled roofs with fishscale diaper patterns. EXTERIOR: west part of nave 3 bays, aisleless, then 3 aisled bays with the transept cutting into the nave and as high as this, and with the other bays of the aisle treated as angle chapels; polygonal apse narrower than the almost polygonal south transept. Tall, 3 stage north tower (originally with corner pinnacles) close to west end with attached, even taller stair turret. Unusual modified Gothic design with eclectic and original details. Imaginative Perpendicular windows with eccentric cusping and heavy transoms, called "Tudor" by Nikolaus Pevsner. To north of apse and on south side near east end, small towers with broach spires. INTERIOR: with elaborate carved hammerbeam roof throughout resting on shafts which do not go down to the ground but start from Cistercian-like brackets attached to each side of the large square piers which stand between nave and aisles. Lamb's choir stalls and pews, altar rails with pierced decoration, font with cover and pulpit remain. Massive organ in south choir aisle. Royal arms over south porch inside. Initials of JBA (outside) and EBL (within). Vestry fully panelled. Stained glass at east end contemporary with the church, as is the mosaic spandrel decoration in the chancel. Mosaic floors. Stained glass in nave dated 1905 and 1907: St Cecilia in memory of Harriet Puzey, organist, one by Morris and Co. Heraldic glass in transepts post-1945. Transept also has commandment boards. Memorial to John Derby Allcroft 1821-93. HISTORICAL NOTE: Allcroft was a wealthy glove manufacturer and strong Evangelical who paid for several churches. (Survey of London: Vol. XXIV, King's Cross Neighbourhood, St Pancras IV: London: -1952: 144)

Below: photos of the Church of St Martin



5 Historic and current context

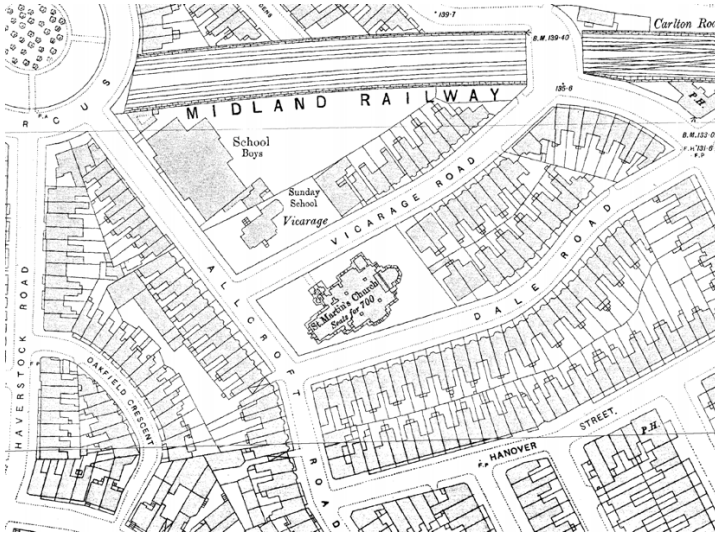
The setting of the designated heritage assets, and 20 Vicar's Road, has been the subject of dramatic transformation over their lifetime.

Mapping from the 1870s shows St Martin's Church established on the southern side of Vicar's Road; the Church is known to have been consecrated in December 1865. Opposite the Church, on the northern side of Vicar's Road, a large Vicarage set within substantial grounds occupied the corner site with Allcroft Road (now Wellesley Road). At this time, a gap was present to the east of the Vicarage, beyond which terraces of semi-detached dwellings lined both sides of Vicar's Road.

By 1895, the gap adjacent to the Vicarage had been filled by St Martin's Church Hall and no.20 Vicar's Road, presenting a continuous built frontage along the north side of Vicar's Road – no.20 directly abutting the Victorian dwellings (see map and image below).

Both the Church Hall and Vicarage to its west were associated with St Martin's Church on the opposite side of the road, which has served the local community since the 1860s. Historic records indicate that no.20 Vicar's Road may have been used as a Victorian schoolhouse associated with St Martin's Church Hall.

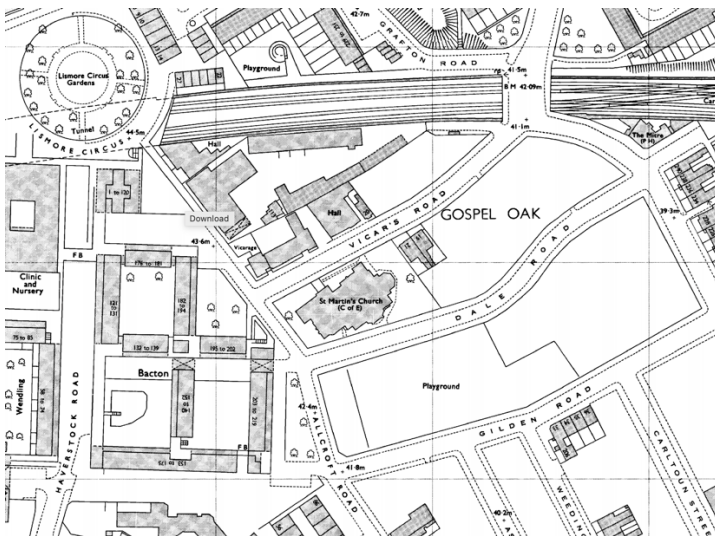
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Above left: Extract from OS Town Plan of 1895: 20 Vicar's Road (or Vicarage Road) is bound by St Martin's Church Hall to the west and semi-detached properties to the east. Above right: image of 20 Vicar's Road as part of a continuous built frontage with the Church Hall and dwellings.

Historic maps show that, while Vicar's Road remained largely unchanged until 1970, the wider area was subject to significant change in the 1960s/70s, with extensive demolition and redevelopment in the vicinity of the site as the Council embarked on an urban renewal programme. Victorian housing was demolished and large areas redeveloped, new streets were created, and housing estates constructed, including the Bacton Low Rise estate to the west of Wellesley Road.

In the 1970s, the Vicarage to the west of St Martin's Church Hall was removed, its site redeveloped for the four-storey block of flats on the corner of Vicar's Road and Wellesley Road. The terraces of Victorian dwellings at the eastern end of Vicar's Road, on both sides of the street, were also demolished – the exception to this being the remaining pair of semi-detached dwellings directly adjoining the Church at 51 and 53 Vicar's Road and no.20 Vicar's Road.



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Above left: Extract from OS Plan of 1970, showing dwellings at the eastern end of Vicar's Road demolished. Above right: remaining semi-detached dwellings at nos.51&53 Vicar's Road, opposite the application site.

In the late 1970s, the terraces on the southern side of the road had been replaced by a four storey blocks of flats, extending along the newly created Weedington Road to the south. By 1980, the terrace next to no.20 Vicar's Road had also been replaced with a crescent of two-storey workshops adjoining the 'Corporation Yard' to the north of the site (latterly the Gospel Oak District Housing Office and yard).

The immediate vicinity of the site is again undergoing major transformation at this time, following the grant of planning permission in 2013 for the redevelopment of Bacton Low Rise Estate, the Gospel Oak District Housing Office and the workshops at 2-16 Vicar's Road. Following demolition of the Housing office and workshops, Phase 1 of this predominantly residential scheme has been delivered (and surrounds the Church Hall and no.20 Vicar's Road on its east and north sides). The buildings range from 2-8 storey: three-storey town houses adjoin no.20 Vicar's Road on its east side, with buildings then stepping up to five then eight storeys further east; to the rear (north) of the site, the new apartment block is four storeys.

To the west of St Martin's Church and Wellesley Road, later phases of the Bacton Low Rise Estate redevelopment are soon to commence, with new high-rise residential development to be constructed.

6 Significance of heritage assets

6.1 The Heritage Assets

The NPPF Glossary defines significance 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. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting."*

In terms of the significance of the listed buildings, the list descriptions copied above define the main characteristics of the assets. The Grade I Listed Church of St Martin has an imposing presence on Vicar's Road and the surrounding area, with its tall tower and array of turrets part of its *"unusual modified Gothic design and eclectic and original details."* These details include *"imaginative Perpendicular windows with eccentric cusping and heavy transoms"*. Architectural Historian, Sir Nicholas Pevsner, is quoted as describing the church as *"the craziest of London's churches"*. Together, the tower, turrets, arched windows and elaborate detailing give the Church a fairy-tale quality. The Grade II St Martin's Church Hall has more solid, rectilinear proportion, but also adopts the use of elaborate, gothic-style windows and arched doorways set within its ragstone rubble principal façade.

A principal aspect of the significance of the two buildings is, therefore, their **architectural and aesthetic** contribution to the street scene as buildings of significant architectural interest.

Reference is also made in the list description for the Church Hall to the link between the Church Hall and the Church, which together form a grouping. From an architectural perspective, these buildings are linked by their use of ragstone rubble as the primary façade treatment – for the Church, this external material is used extensively across the exterior of the building; for the Church Hall, the stone is used on the Vicar's Road façade only, with brick elevations across the remainder of the building. The use of elaborate window cusping and arches also unites the two buildings.

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The connection between the two buildings also relates to their historic use, having served the community together since the late nineteenth century as a place of worship and communal gathering. The buildings therefore have **historic significance**, in terms of their contribution to community life. While the Church continues this community role, the Church Hall has been in private education use since the 1990s and, prior to this, in office use.

6.2 Contribution of setting to the significance of heritage assets

The visual link between the two listed buildings is an important part of their setting, such that they can be appreciated together in views along Vicar's Road. The setting of the Church of St Martin is also characterised by its landscaped grounds, complemented by a number of street trees; these provide an openness and greenness to the Church's setting and create the appearance of the Church tower rising above the tree tops. This building is prominent in views from the surrounding area.

As explained in Section 5 above, the immediate vicinity of the listed buildings has been subject to considerable change from the 1960s to the present day and many of these changes have proved detrimental to the setting. The vicinity of the listed buildings now consists of developments of a variety of building periods, architectural styles and materials, from 1960s tower blocks and flatted buildings, to the recently built modern houses and apartments built as part of the Bacton Low Rise development. Many of the 1960s buildings in the vicinity are of mediocre or poor quality, detracting from the settings of the listed building. The phased redevelopment of Bacton Low Rise estate is improving the quality of this built environment, resulting in enhancements to the setting.

The existing no.20 is diminutive in scale, such that it sits subserviently adjacent to the Church Hall. The front elevation and wall to no.20 do, however, push forward of the building line of the Church Hall.

Although of a similar period to the Church and Church Hall, the application property has limited visual connection with the listed buildings. It is of a markedly different appearance, architectural style and character; the only hint of a relationship is in the stone boundary wall (albeit this appears incongruous with the house itself). External materials are traditional to Victorian dwellings but provide no visual link with the two listed buildings. More widely, with changes in scale of the built environment, no.20 Vicar's Road now seems out of keeping with its surroundings and prevents cohesiveness in the street being achieved, to the detriment and quality of the setting of the listed buildings.

Overall, while an attractive property, the existing dwelling is considered to have a neutral contribution to the significance of the setting of the listed buildings due to its isolation from the wider street scene.

7 Impact of development on significance of assets

There would be no direct impact on the two heritage assets as a result of the proposed development.

The Cloud House would be adjacent to the Grade II Listed Church Hall but separated from the Grade I Church by some distance across Vicar's Road. The replacement side gate to the new dwelling at no.20 and metal pergola over the side access path would adjoin the former Church Hall; these would not, however, be physically attached and there would be no intervention in the fabric of the listed building. Further, the removal of the existing gate would not alter the fabric of the building. Referring back to Section 7 of

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the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* (as amended), the works would not alter or extend the listed building in a manner that would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest

Heritage impacts would, therefore, relate to changes in the setting of the listed buildings.

The aesthetic significance of the two listed buildings was highlighted above. Importantly, there would be no interruption of views of the Church or the principal façade of the former St Martin's Church Hall or to their relationship with one another in views along Vicar's Road. Further, there would be no change to the street trees and landscaping that forms an important part of the Church's setting.

There would be a change in the scale of development on the site of the existing no.20. In terms of footprint, The Cloud House would fill the plot more fully between the former Church Hall and the new town houses to the east, filling the existing gap. As noted in Section 5, this gap arose as a result of the demolition of the row of Victorian semis that previously adjoined no.20; the proposed development would re-fill this gap, reinstating a continuous built frontage.

The increase in height would be assimilated with its surrounding through variations in the massing of the new building, with changes in height, setbacks and elevation treatments. At its tallest, the new building would be set just below parapet height of the Church Hall. The height would, however, step down towards the dwellings to the east, creating a gradual transition between the listed Church Hall and the new town houses. Adjacent to the Church Hall, the building line would be pushed back from that of the existing dwelling, so creating clearer views of the Church Hall's main façade in views from the east along Vicar's Road.

A further set back at second floor level (in the location of a second-floor terrace) would provide views of the return elevation – and battlement parapet – of the former Church Hall on its eastern side. Due to the increased height, the new building would conceal a small area of the roof line on the eastern flank of the former Church Hall when viewed from further east on Vicar's Road; however, this roof line would remain visible in short distance views. The minor loss of mid-distance views of the roof line would be compensated for lower down, with the set back in the building line of The Cloud House allowing greater appreciation of the front ragstone rubble elevation of the Church Hall.



Above: visualisation of the proposed Cloud House and St Martin's Church Hall from the south east

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The front elevation of The Cloud House would be divided both horizontally and vertically into groups of arches, breaking down the massing and creating proportions that will complement those of buildings in the vicinity.

The alley between the former Church Hall and new building would be maintained (with the exception of the replacement gate and lightweight pergola), retaining a visual gap.

Overall, the minor change in views of the former Church Hall as a result of a change in scale and massing is not considered to be harmful to the heritage asset. Further, the changes in scale would reinforce the street, creating a greater cohesiveness. This is considered to be beneficial to the heritage asset.

The architectural approach to The Cloud House would introduce a distinctive and flamboyant element to Vicar's Road and to the setting of the Listed Buildings, which is deliberately intended to be a unique and surprising addition to the street. This follows the heritage of the Gospel Oak area as a place of architectural innovation and experimentation (see Design and Access Statement) and, indeed, the imaginative and innovative architecture of The Church of St Martin.

Notwithstanding this, the building is intended to be respectful of its context and, particularly, the neighbouring heritage assets. Whilst scale has been used to ensure the building remains diminutive to the listed buildings, the architecture of The Cloud House draws inspiration from the listed buildings through various means; this includes adopting tall perpendicular windows and arches as a defining feature and re-creating the 'fairy-tale' character of the listed Church and former Church Hall.

The use of render in pale buff/pink tones as the principal material would also complement the colouring and materials of the heritage assets and other buildings in the vicinity of the site. The cascade of pale arches is intended to give a softness to the building that would be respectful of – and not compete with – its surroundings; indeed, it is intended to soften the somewhat 'blocky', rectilinear appearance of the northern side of Vicar's Road. The use of pale green painted balustrading, entrance gates and window frames, creating more vertical arch forms, would add further quality, unifying the building and adding to its softness and fairy-tale character.

The planting of hedging at the front of the new dwelling would further add greenness to the street, complementing the street trees and landscaping that form part of the setting of the Church. Resurfacing around the new building, using recycled brick work from the existing house, would improve the quality of the built environment and create a reference to the building that stands on the site now.

Overall, the proposed dwelling would make a positive contribution to the Vicar's Road street scene through contextual design and the sensitive use of materials, and through creating an exemplary piece of contemporary architecture fitting of its position in the setting of The Church of St Martin and St Martin's Church Hall. It would not harm the significance of the listed buildings either directly or through harming their setting.

Paragraph 192 of the NPPF states that, in determining planning applications, planning authorities should take account of the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. This is considered pertinent to the consideration of the current application, which would add a building of quality and distinctiveness to the setting of the listed buildings.

8 Conclusion

Based on the above assessment, it is concluded that there would be no harm to the significance of heritage assets as a result of the proposed development of The Cloud House either directly or as a result of development within the setting of the listed Church of St Martin and St Martin's Church Hall. The introduction of a distinctive, contextual new building that would re-instate the street frontage and, for the reasons set out above, make a positive contribution to local character, would enhance the setting of the nearby heritage assets.