

8 Downshire Hill London NW3 1NR

Historical Building Assessment



Front elevation from Downshire Hill

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Description of the Proposal

Removal of non-original studwork partition, doors and associated joinery from the second floor front rooms to reinstate a single room to the front reflecting the original layout.

Description of the Application property

8 Downshire Hill is a 4 bedroomed single family dwelling house disposed over 4 storeys including basement.

The house forms one half of a pair of early 19th century semi-detached villas in the Strawberry Hill Gothic style. Originally semi-detached the house is now contained within a continuous terrace, the result of adjacent development over the years.

8 Downshire Hill is Grade II Listed and lies within the Hampstead Conservation Area. The house and its neighbour number 7 Downshire Hill have been significantly altered and extended since they were first built.

The Listed Building Entry from 1975 is as follows:

Semi-detached pair of villas. Early C19. Stucco. Double pitched roofs with tall central chimney-stack. 3 storeys and semi-basements. 1 window each. Battlemented gable fronts. No 7 entrance with C20 verandah; doorway with pilaster-jambs carrying cornice head, patterned fanlight and panelled door, No 8 with entrance on return. Both have square-headed sashes with pointed lights and dripmoulds: ground and first floors with cast-iron window guards, 1st floor continuous cill band. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings, No 7 with torch flambe finials, on low garden walls.

Planning History

The property has an extensive relatively recent planning history. The extract below taken from the Council's website.

PW9703069R1 - Demolition of existing single storey side extension and erection of two storey side extension. Granted Planning Permission 03/04/1998.

LW9703070R1- Demolition of existing single storey side extension and erection of two storey side extension, including internal alterations. Granted Listed Building Consent 02/04/1998.

PWX0103314 - The erection of a single storey rear extension. Granted Planning Permission 14/01/2002.

LWX0103313 - The erection of a single storey rear extension, together with internal alterations. Granted Listed Building Consent 14/01/2002.

LWX0202675 - Erection of an extension at basement level and internal alterations, as a variation to Listed Building consent dated 14.01.02 (Ref. No. LWX0103313R2) for erection of a single storey rear extension. Granted Listed Building Consent 07/02/2003.

2003/0133/P - Excavation to create a basement under an approved ground floor rear extension. Granted Planning Permission 16/06/2003.

The history reflects the fact that the existing dwelling has been altered and added to a number of times over the years and is not in its original state.

Of particular relevance are the Planning and Listed Building consents of 1998 PW9703069R1 and LW9703070R1 respectively when the two storey side extension was added and the house re-modelled internally.

The previous owners advise that the small window in the flank elevation to what is currently the study was inserted sometime during the twentieth century, post 1947.

The subdivision of the second floor front room is a clear departure from the original plan form and is evidenced by the 'modern' doors, joinery and partitions.

Pre-application advice

Pre-application advice was sought for the proposal to modify or remove the modern subdivision of the front second floor room ref 2019/5583/PRE. The advice was as follows:

- It seems very likely that study was created by subdividing bedroom 3 as the dividing wall is too close to the window opening to be comfortable. Therefore officers raise no objection to the reunification of these two parts of a former single room back into one.

Significance of the Listed Building

The significance of the Listed Building is the contribution which it makes to the character of the Conservation Area together and referenced from the definitions of heritage value set out in Historic England's document 'Conservation Principles' published in 2008.

External Appearance and Setting: Clearly despite the various additions and changes over recent years the building maintains a coherent historical architectural contribution to the streetscape in Downshire Hill. Obviously no change is proposed to this.

Interior Features: There are many original Interior Features in the house such as decorative mouldings, joinery and plasterwork, however none of these are present in the interior of the two rooms which are the subject of the application, with the exception of the window to bedroom.

Structural Integrity and Historic Fabric: the partitions are not original and are non load-bearing. Similarly there is no loss of historic fabric. The existing skirtings and architraves to the rooms are 'modern' and were installed around the time of the extension and major works in 1998.

Plan Form and Treatment of Interiors:
With reference to 'Conservation Principles':

Plan form and treatment of the interiors; London house often conform to a limited number of related plan forms with consistent hierarchy between floors and front and rear rooms. The basic plan form of the regular terraced house of the Georgian period (1715-1840) is usually two rooms deep but often with cellar or basement below.

It seems highly likely that the original plan form of the second floor was for just two rooms, one to the rear and one to the front. The whole composition of the front façade with a single central window strongly suggests this, as does the knowledge that the small window on the flank elevation is a relatively modern insertion.

In removing the 'modern' partitions the proposal would return the plan form to what would in all likelihood have been its original state.

Summary

The proposals will have no impact at all on the historical fabric of the building, will not harm the fabric or special interest/significance of the building and will preserve its architectural and special historic interest.

The proposed removal of the 'modern' partitions and doors are therefore considered to comply with both national and local historic environment policy.

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