

Project Number 6402

CONSERVATION STATEMENT

Proposed Alterations to
No. 81 Belsize Park Gardens, London



Fig 1: Entrance elevation - view from Belsize Park Gardens looking south west



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1.00 Introduction

1.01 Authorship

This Conservation Statement was prepared by

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1.02 Date of Preparation

September 2020

1.03 Recipients

Client
The London Borough of Camden Planning Department

1.04 Background & Scope

This Conservation Statement accompanies the application for planning permission submitted to Camden London Borough Council (the LPA) to make alterations to the leisure club at no. 81 Belsize Park Gardens.

No. 81 Belsize Park Gardens lies within the Belsize Conservation Area and this statement seeks to provide an analysis of the significance of the property and its contribution to the Conservation Area.

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1.05 Limitations

The historical development of no. 81 Belsize Park Gardens is based on the available archival evidence and visual investigations only.

Only a limited intrusive investigation has been carried out to ascertain the likelihood and condition of remaining original fabric beneath the various phases of remodelling.



2.00 Conservation Statement - Summary

From this conservation statement it can be concluded that: -

2.01 Statement on Overall Significance & Contribution

The property is unlisted and of low significance representing a typical example of 1930s infill development that was common in the area following development of substantial villas, terraces and mews. The design is purely functional – consisting of a series of relatively featureless rectangular volumes reflecting the original intended use as squash and rugby fives courts. The property offers little by way of architectural, aesthetic, socio economic or historical significance.

The substantial mass and scale of the building are largely concealed from public view. The narrow Belsize Park Gardens frontage, being the principal elevation, detracts from the streetscape which is generally very high quality residential development with an abundance of architectural features, styles and designs.

In present form, the forecourt encourages loitering and anti social behaviour.

The south east elevation overlooking the private gardens is of similar poor quality, characterised by a sequence of rectangular, relatively plain, three and four storey volumes extending to the south west. The mass and length of the building present an unsympathetic and austere backdrop to the private landscaped gardens to the south east.

From the limited intrusive investigations, it appears that little remains of the original 1930s interior. What does remain is of low significance – having been altered and re-modelled over the various phases of development.

2.02 Conclusions and recommendations

An opportunity exists to improve the two visible elevations and make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

Improved passive surveillance to the forecourt at Belsize Park Gardens would assist in reversing the decline of the space and create a welcoming environment.

Rationalisation and remodelling of the entrance foyer and external stores would improve the visual amenity.

Any remodelling should be of high quality and respect the period and form of the original building so as not to appear incongruous.

The south east elevation could be enhanced by by improving the fenestration arrangement however consideration should be given to the retention of privacy of the adjoining private gardens.



3.00 The Site

3.01 Property Location

The application site is located at no. 81 Belsize Park Gardens approximately 3 miles north of central London within the Borough of Camden, bordered by Hampstead to the north and Primrose Hill to the south. The property lies within the Belsize Conservation Area.

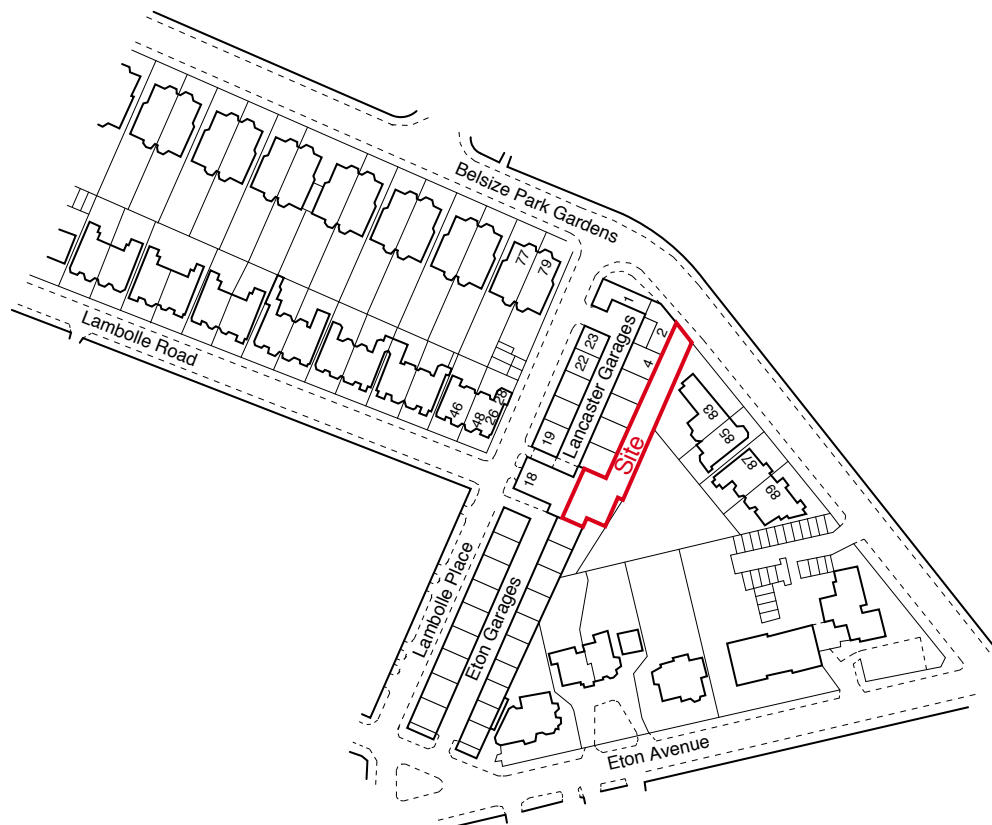


Fig 2: Location Plan (RPP)

The property is accessed via Belsize Park Gardens. There are fire escapes leading to the south east private open space via the rear stair and also into Lancaster Garages from the pool area. There is no off street parking.



3.02 Belsize Conservation Area

No. 81 Belsize Park Gardens lies within the south east corner of the Belsize Conservation Area, London. Originally designated in 1973, the conservation area was extended on a number of occasions between 1984 and 2002. The property is within the area designated in 1985.

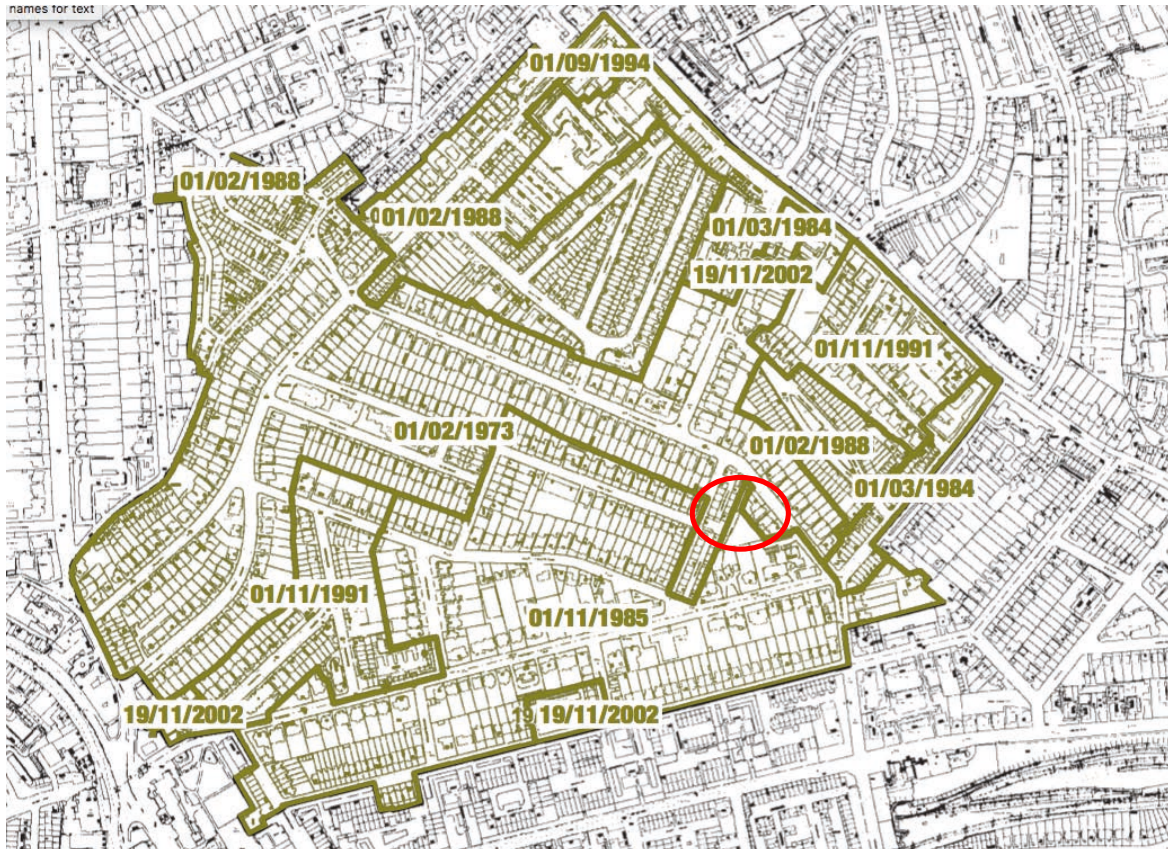


Fig 3: Belsize Conservation Area (extract from Belsize Conservation Area Statement)

3.03 Historical Development

In 1745, the area of Belsize was predominately agricultural with only scattered farmsteads, cottages and a manor house - Belsize House. The house itself was rebuilt and repurposed a number of times between 1663 to 1812 before being demolished in 1853.

From 1815 the land of Belsize was divided up and sold. These areas were subsequently developed creating sandstone villas with substantial grounds. Villas, lodges and terraces were also constructed along the main routes into London and this street pattern can be evidenced today. There are few surviving buildings from this period.

The mid nineteenth century saw further development with a string of Italianate villas providing residence for wealthy professionals such as those at Belsize Park Gardens. These typically included attic and basement space for servants and some areas of mews development (although these mews developments were constructed less and less throughout this period). Terraced houses were also constructed along Belsize Crescent, further to the north west of the application site.



Fig 4: Belsize Area (1871 OS MAP)

Development around the application site did not occur until around the 1880s when Eton Avenue was constructed together with Eton Stables at Lambolle Place (south west of the site).

From 1894 - 96 development continued around the southern edge of the Conservation Area including the remaining plots of land around Eton Avenue, Lancaster and Lambolle Roads.

By 1895, Lancaster Stables (immediately adjoining the application site) had been constructed. The site area itself is indicated as hatching at this time – denoting glass houses adjacent to the open space area.



Fig 5: Belsize Area (1895 OS MAP)



The 1900s to the present day saw many additions and infill developments. The market no longer desired larger houses therefore smaller terraced blocks and mansion flats were constructed. The OS map of 1915 below still demarks the application site in cross hatching denoting glass houses.

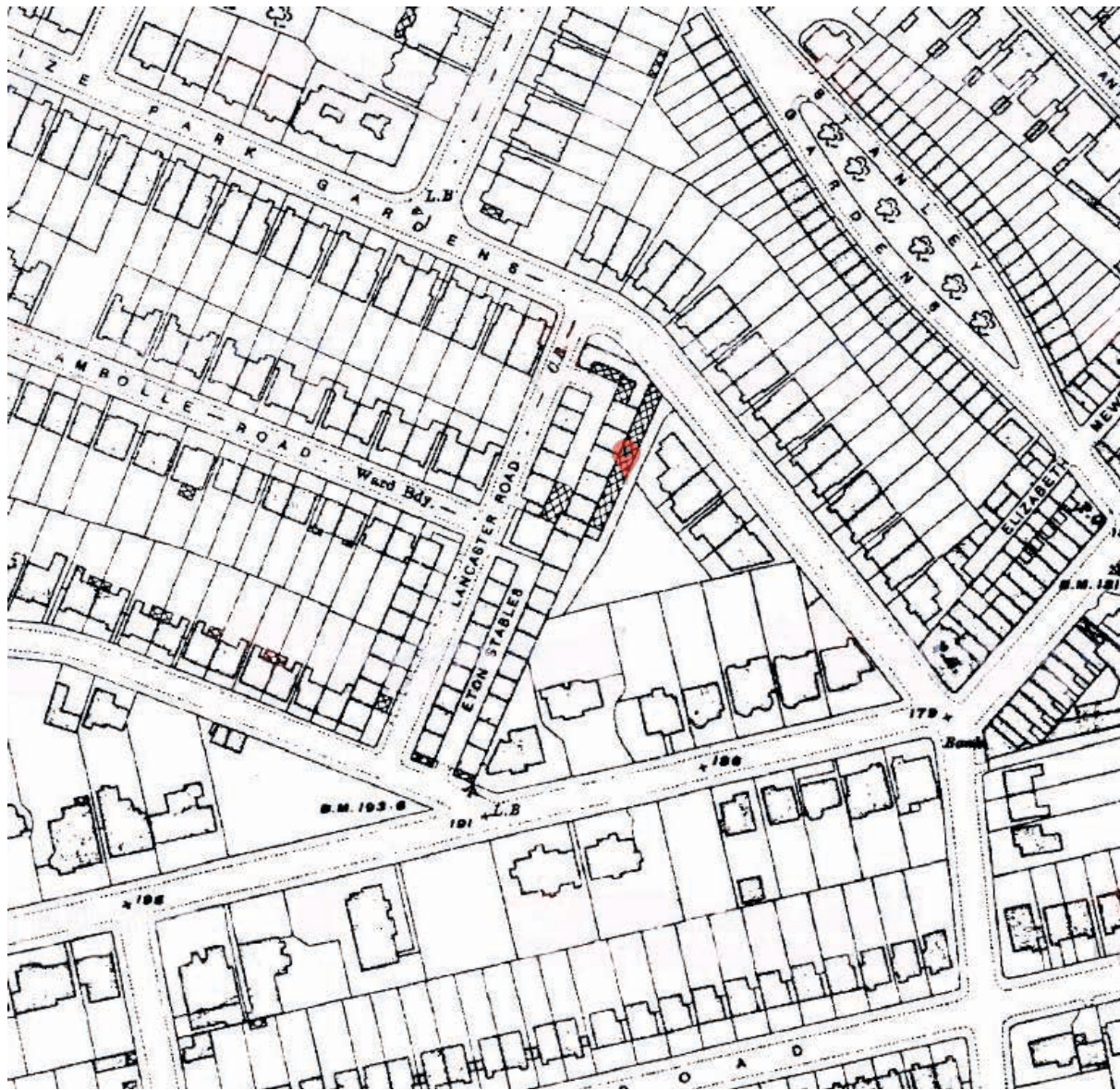


Fig 6: Belsize Area (1915-1916 OS MAP)



Many public buildings were constructed around the 1930s including a fire station library and synagogue.

The application property was originally the Hampstead squash and rugby fives club which opened in c. 1935. These purpose built premises contained squash courts and two rugby fives courts which were similar in size to a squash court.

In 1937 one of the rugby five courts closed resulting in Hampstead no longer being suitable for large competitions. It is unknown whether the court was converted to squash or other purposes. It is also possible that the court was demolished although this appears unlikely.



Fig 7: Belsize Area (1937 OS MAP)

Between 1937 and 1954 the building appears to have been extended to the south west, having previously terminated at the rear of no.10 Lancaster Stables, the footprint now extended to the rear of the garage at the junction of Lambolle Road and Lambolle Place.



Fig 8: Belsize Area (1954 OS MAP)

The club was taken over in 1967 (at which point the final rugby fives court was closed), again in 1983, and then in 1985 by Ragdale Health Club. In 2017, the leisure centre (now Springhealth) closed to the public.

It appears that at some point since the 1960s, an area immediately behind no. 18 Lambolle Place (noted as 'Garage' in the OS map above) was subsumed and incorporated into the fitness centre to house the pool area.

In addition to this, later OS Maps dating from 1967 appear to indicate the construction of a connecting corridor between phases one and three.

3.04 Local Character

The Belsize Conservation Area Statement divides the Conservation Area into six distinct sub areas of unique character. The application property is located at the eastern end of sub area three: 'The Eton Avenue Area' which is generally characterised by late Victorian housing, smaller than the detached villas described previously. The properties are noted to have a degree of consistency in materials generally, red brick and red clay tiled roofs though styling and finishes are mixed.

Within sub area three, certain areas are noted to contain further shared characteristics and the application property is considered within the Lambolle Place/ Lancaster & Eton Garage areas. These streets are noted to house a variety of commercial and residential uses with many containing narrow streets and terraces of smaller two storey scale.



Fig 9: Lambolle Road – Typical Victorian housing within sub area three

To the west of the site are Lancaster and Eton Garages. These streets form typical mews development which have been much altered. The two storey Eton Garages are constructed of yellow stock brick, with red brick detailing including prominent arches fronting Lambolle Place and slate roofs although a number of these properties have painted brickwork. Lancaster Garages has a stucco finish with a parapet roof.



Fig 10: Lambolle Place looking east to Eton Garages



Fig 11: Lambolle Place looking east at no. 18 and Lancaster Garages

The properties to the south east of the site, fronting Belsize Park Gardens consist of two and a half storey semi-detached villas constructed of red brick and steeply sloping red tiled roofs.



Fig 12: Belsize Park Gardens (adjacent to property)

Nearby, there are modern higher quality developments such as Sarum Hall School on Eton Avenue with red brick, white render and full height glazed dormers.



Fig 13: Sarum Hall School

3.05 Listed Buildings

There are no listed buildings within the immediate vicinity of the site – the nearest being no.13 Eton Avenue which comprises a grade II listed 1904 detached house.



Fig 14: Proximity of Listed Buildings: Historic England Mapping



The Belsize Conservation Area Statement assesses the sub area further by listing properties deemed to make a positive impact. No. 81 Belsize Park Gardens is not listed in this respect.

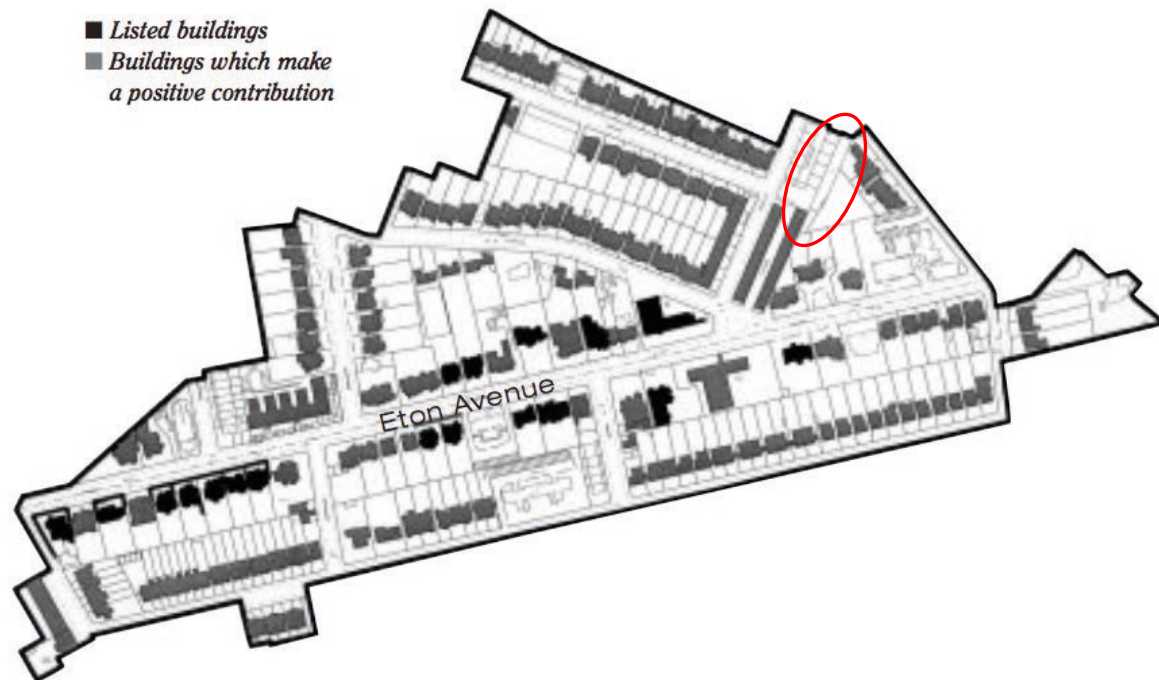


Fig 15: Buildings Making a Positive Contribution: Extract from Belsize Conservation Area Statement

4.00 Assessment of Significance

4.01 Architectural Assessment of Property

No. 81 Belsize Park Gardens comprises a four storey former fitness centre/ gym which extends to around 1,450sqm. The property is linear in form with a narrow frontage and forecourt to the north east (Belsize Park Gardens). The south east and south west elevations front an area of private open space. The north west elevation is built directly onto the rear of Lancaster Stables. The property is not listed.

The property has been altered and extended previously with at least five separate phases evidenced as follows:

- Phase one: three storey brick volume fronting Belsize Park Gardens. c.1933
- Phase two: four storey rendered volume extending to the south west (may have been constructed at the same time or shortly after phase one).
- Phase three: three storey brick structure extending further to the south west.
- Phase four: formation of ground floor corridor at south east forming an internal connection between phase one and three. C.1960s
- Phase five: inclusion of the pool area immediately behind no.18 Lambolle Place (at some point after the 1960s).

External Features

The Belsize Park Gardens elevation is set back around ten metres from the road running at an oblique angle. The design is simple, lacking architectural embellishment. The ground floor contains a projecting entrance foyer with a monopitch slated roof. Upper floors are white painted brickwork with parapet and no fenestration. A flat roofed single storey extension finished in cladding extends north east towards the street. Bins are stored against the wall of the adjoining property, open to view.



Fig 16: No. 81 Belsize Park Gardens – north east elevation

This elevation in current form contributes nothing to the streetscape which is generally very high quality residential development with an abundance of architectural features. The poorly designed forecourt, lack of passive surveillance, and arrangement which is set back from the street result in a space that encourages loitering and anti social behaviour evidenced by the ongoing instances of graffiti on the adjoining building.

The south east elevation is of similar poor quality, characterised by a sequence of rectangular, relatively plain, three and four storey volumes extending to the south west. External finishes are red/brown brick and white render although ivy and other vegetation covers much of the elevation. The mass and length of the building present an unsympathetic and austere backdrop to the private landscaped gardens to the south east.



Fig 17: No. 81 Belsize Park Gardens – View of south east elevation facing private gardens.

No other external elevations are visible; these being constructed directly adjacent to or forming the party wall of the adjoining structures.

Internal Features

Internally the property contains little of architectural significance having been extensively refurbished and repurposed on a number of occasions. The original 1930s interior appears to have been lost however limited intrusive investigations have revealed evidence of the squash courts at the front and rear of the building.



Fig 18: No. 81 Belsize Gardens – View of Interior

Architectural Summary

The property represents a typical example of 1930s infill development that was common in the area following development of substantial villas, terraces and mews. The design is purely functional – consisting of a series of rectangular volumes reflecting the original use as squash and rugby fives courts. The elevations are largely blank though strip windows exist on the south east elevation.

The substantial mass and form of the building are largely concealed from view and the impact on the street is limited due to the narrow width of the principal façade which fronts Belsize Park Gardens. This frontage makes no contribution to, and indeed is considered to detract from the Conservation Area.

Views of the building are limited to Belsize Park Gardens and the private landscaped area to the south east. An opportunity exists to improve these elevations and make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

4.02 Identification of gaps in knowledge

Whilst this report offers insight into the significance of the property, its contribution to the Conservation Area and social heritage, it is recognised that the following gaps in knowledge exist: -

1. No detailed disruptive survey has been carried out to date.
2. No structural condition survey has been carried out to date.
3. Only limited information is available as to the historical development of the building and site.



5.00 Risks and Opportunities

Physical Risks

- The building has been vacant since 2017 with little maintenance therefore the physical condition will continue to deteriorate.
- Vandalism is more likely in unoccupied buildings.
- The forecourt in current form attracts anti social behaviour.

Economic Risks

- A conversion of this property may not be economically viable.

Risks to Setting

- Any remodelling or extensions to the building should be of a sympathetic scale, mass and character to the original form.
- Architectural quality should be high in order to ensure that the setting within the Conservation Area is not adversely affected.
- Any alterations to the south east elevation should respect the privacy of the adjoining owners.

Opportunities

- It is considered that the significance of the building is low and detracts from the surrounding Conservation Area.
- There is the potential to sensitively remodel the existing building or redevelop the entire site to improve the streetscape and make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.
- There is scope to improve the roofscape as the current arrangement includes a plethora of obsolete plant equipment.
- The forecourt area could be improved and a more welcoming public space created.



6.00 Planning Issues

6.01 Planning History

Planning records are available for the application property back to 1963. Applications within the last twenty-five years are listed below for reference.

Date	Reference	Description
30-06-10	2010/3390	Removal of dead/ dying cherry tree within forecourt
31-01-99	9802739	Retention of existing air handling unit (withdrawn)
14-10-98	PW9802221	Retention of existing air handling unit (withdrawn)
22-12-98	PW9802976	Retention of air handling units
16-01-98	PW9703128	Installation of windows at front elevation at first and second floor levels (appears not to have been implemented)
28-03-96	P9600922	Installation of new rooflights over swimming pool
18-03-96	P9600711	Erection of entrance canopy and boundary fence



6.02 Planning Policies

Overarching Heritage Policies

Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), at section 12, states that local planning authorities (LPA's) should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.

Those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are called heritage assets. The Government's overarching aim is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.

The NPPF states that LPA's should require an applicant to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance. The level of details should be proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset.

Camden Local Plan 2017

The Camden Local Plan 2017 sets out the Council's planning policies and covers the period from 2016 – 2031.

Key policies include:

Policy D1: Design

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;
- c. is sustainable in design and construction, incorporating best practice in resource management and climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- d. is of sustainable and durable construction and adaptable to different activities and land uses;
- e. comprises details and materials that are of high quality and complement the local character;
- f. integrates well with the surrounding streets and open spaces, improving movement through the site and wider area with direct, accessible and easily recognisable routes and contributes positively to the street frontage;
- g. is inclusive and accessible for all;
- h. promotes health;
- i. is secure and designed to minimise crime and antisocial behaviour;
- j. responds to natural features and preserves gardens and other open space;



- k. incorporates high quality landscape design (including public art, where appropriate) and maximises opportunities for greening for example through planting of trees and other soft landscaping,
- l. incorporates outdoor amenity space;
- m. preserves strategic and local views;
- n. for housing, provides a high standard of accommodation; and
- o. carefully integrates building services equipment.

The Council will resist development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

Policy D2 Heritage: Conservation areas

Conservation areas are designated heritage. In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management strategies when assessing applications within conservation areas.

The Council will:

- require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area;
- resist the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area;
- resist development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character or appearance of that conservation area; and
- preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character and appearance of a conservation area or which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.

Camden Planning Guidance

Camden Council has prepared a number of other documents known as Camden Planning Guidance (CPG). These documents do not have the same weight in decision making as the Camden development plan documents though can be 'material considerations'. Particularly relevant CPGs include "Design" March 2019 and The Belsize Conservation Area Statement published 2003.

Camden Planning Guidance: DESIGN

The above document defines a conservation area as follows:

"3.5 A conservation area is defined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and, where possible, enhance. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) identifies conservation areas as "heritage assets" and requires that proposals in conservation areas are assessed for their impacts on their historic significance. There are 40 conservation areas in Camden, which vary greatly in appearance, size, character and style."

Effects of Conservation Area status:

"3.9 The Council will only permit development within conservation areas, and development affecting the setting of conservation areas, that preserves and where



possible enhances the character and appearance of the area in lien with Local Plan policy D2 and the NPPF.”

“3.10 The Council has greater control over building work in conservation areas, including demolition, materials and detailed design. Planning permission may be required for alterations or extensions that would not normally need planning permission elsewhere, such as minor roof alterations, dormer windows, renewable energy installations or installation of a satellite dish. For more information on energy efficiency in buildings please see CPG Energy Efficiency and Adaptation.”

“3.11 When determining an application the Council will consider Policy D2 Heritage, the NPPF and our conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans (see below). It is an offence to totally or substantially demolish a building or structure in a conservation area without first getting consent from the Council and we would not normally allow their demolition without substantial justification, in accordance with criteria set out in government policy and guidance including the NPPF, in particular paragraphs 195-196 and 201.”

Camden Planning Guidance: THE BELSIZE CONSERVATION AREA STATEMENT

The Belsize Conservation Area Statement provides further guidance on the character of these the Belsize area and the Council will take this document into account as a material consideration when assessing applications for planning permission in this area. It is not intended to prevent all new development but rather to assist with managing change.

This guidance in itself contains a number of policies. Those which are considered particularly relevant to this application include:

“BE3 Within the Conservation Area total or substantial demolition of a building (whether listed or otherwise) will require conservation area consent.”

Note: It is considered that the proposed demolition of the pool area to the rear of the property does not constitute “total” or “substantial” demolition.

“BE19 New development should be seen as an opportunity to enhance the Conservation Area. All development should respect existing features such as building lines, roof lines, elevational design, and, where appropriate, architectural characteristics, detailing, profile and materials of adjoining buildings. Proposals should be guided by the UDP in terms of the appropriate uses and other matters such as density and parking standards.”



7.00 Review Arrangements

It is recognised that the understanding of a site and building can change through time. As a result, this Conservation Statement should be reviewed and updated as further historical information or results of specialist investigations become available.

8.00 Conclusion

The property is unlisted and of low significance representing a typical example of 1930s infill development that was common in the area following development of substantial villas, terraces and mews.

All original internal features have either been lost or are considered to be of low significance given the lack of association with any architectural style, construction method or notable Architect. The design is purely functional – consisting of a series of relatively blank rectangular volumes reflecting the original intended use as squash and rugby fives courts.

The property offers little by way of architectural, aesthetic, socio economic or historical significance.

The north east elevation in particular detracts from the Conservation Area and an opportunity exists to improve this setting.



9.00 Appendices

9.01 Bibliography & References

Conservation Area Statement, Belsize – London Borough of Camden

Camden Planning Guidance – Design 2019 – London Borough of Camden

Camden Local Plan 2017 - London Borough of Camden

Structural Review of Initial Architectural Proposals – One Engineering Ltd 15th Nov 2019

Refurbishment and Demolition Survey – Leesafe Ltd 6th August 2018

Brief Building Condition Appraisal – Philip Newman Chartered Building Surveyor Nov 2019

Planning Application Reports – Camden Council 1999-2019

RIBA archives

www.nls.uk (Historical OS Maps)

www.oldmaps.com (Historical OS Maps)

www.british-history.ac.uk - Hampstead squash and Rugby Fives Club