

# Christian Leigh

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## 16 ETON VILLAS, LONDON, NW3 4SG

### Heritage and Planning Statement

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### Introduction

1. This Statement accompanies a planning and listed building consent application for internal works comprising alteration to lower ground, ground and first floors with the amalgamation of two dwellings, replacement of dormer windows, and a rear extension at lower ground floor.
2. The statement has been prepared in accordance with guidance contained in Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and the Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (2014). Regard has been paid to the Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning 2 (2015).
3. The Statement has been prepared by Christian Leigh BSc(Hons), MPhil (Dist), MRTPI. I have over 20 years' experience on projects concerning Grade I, II\* and II residential and commercial properties within central London and the South East. Wider work involves heritage appraisals, planning and listed building application and appeals, and enforcement matters. I have prepared advice relating to conservation area designations. Clients include a number of the London Estates, local and central Government, as well as major developers and householders within central London. I am currently a lecturer in planning law and practice, including heritage matters, at the Henley Business School, University of Reading.
4. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states that applications for consent affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by a description of the significance of the heritage asset affected and their contribution to their setting of that significance. This assessment was prepared following a review of the statutory records for the property, an appraisal of published documentation and site visit in October 2020. I was also involved in work relating to changes at the property for the same clients that were granted permission in November 2015 (refs. 2015/3496/P & 2015/3980/L) and visited the property at that time.



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## History of the property

5. The subject property forms part of a group of listed buildings, being 13-20 Eton Villas, which were listed in 1974. The list description reads as follows:

*TQ2784NE  
ETON VILLAS  
798-1/52/416 (East side) 14/05/74  
Nos.13-20 (Consecutive)*

### *GV II*

*8 semi-detached villas. c1849. By John Shaw. For Eton College. Built by S Cuming. Stucco, ground floors channelled, upper floors as ashlar; stucco quoins. Hipped slated roofs with dormers and bracketed eaves; Nos 13 & 14 with cornice and blocking course. 2 storeys, attics and semi-basements. 2 windows each. Prostyle porticoes with round-arched side openings; doorways with fanlights and panelled doors (some part glazed) approached by steps. Recessed, architraved, mostly tripartite sashes; ground floors with console bracketed cornices. INTERIORS: not inspected.*

6. The land upon which the current houses are built was owned by Eton College since 1449, when it was given to the estate of the College by Henry VI as farmland. However, as noted in the listing, the land was not actually developed until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and the villas built in 1849. The land was not fully built until the end of the Century.
7. The group of villas is mentioned in *A History of the County of Middlesex: Vol 9* (1989). This attributes the building of the properties and the 'villa' design to the builder Samuel Cumming, who had taken a sublease from William Wynn; John Shaw (mentioned in the list extract) being the surveyor for the area. The *History* notes that a number of painters, architects and engravers lived in the Villas after they were built, though not at No. 16.
8. The property lies within the wider Eton Conservation Area, designated in 1973. The Council's adopted Conservation Area Statement (2002) identifies the character of this part of the Area as follows:

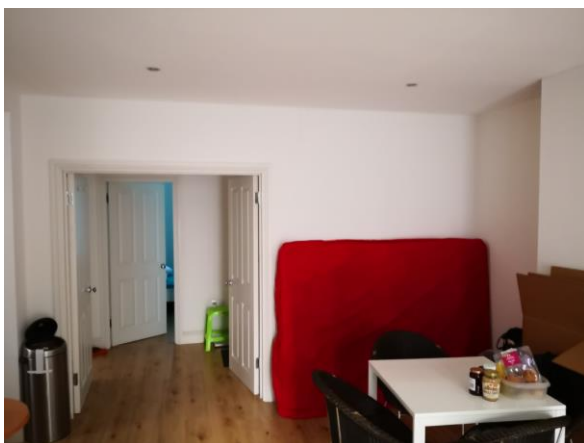
*The east side of Eton Villas (north) comprises eight semi-detached villas of similar plan. They date from c1850. The properties are on two main storeys plus lower ground and attic. They are faced in stucco with projecting porches supported on square section columns. Detailing, where it survives, is relatively simple (these being from that part of the Victorian age when the simplicity of Georgian domestic architecture was still prevalent). Roof form is generally hipped with eaves but Nos.13 and 14 Eton Villas at the junction with Eton Road have a parapet and cornice with a concealed pitch behind.*

9. The published literature therefore focuses on the generally consistent appearance of the group of the Eton Villas houses, which derives from the construction as a group at the same time by the same architect. The interiors of the buildings have not been assessed in the published documentation.

10. The property of No. 16 is divided into a separate flat on the lower ground floor, with its own separate entrance. There is no longer an internal staircase to the lower ground floor and the internal layout at that level has been substantially altered.
11. Other Eton Villas properties have been altered in the past. This can be seen from the street. The planning records at the Council also confirms that many of these changes have been permitted by the Council, namely:
  - 13 Eton Villas: Installation of dormer and erection of a single storey rear extension with terrace over and external stair to the garden (2007/4766/P & 2007/4768/L). The rear extension permitted as part of this scheme was a glazed addition, similar to that proposed at No. 16, as shall be examined later.
  - 13 Eton Villas: Installation of replacement double glazed windows to dormer (2012/4122/L). Granted 2013.
  - 14 Eton Villas: Installation of roof dormers and rooflight. Erection of a single storey rear extension with balcony and external stair to the garden. Internal alterations, which included changes to the chimney breast to accommodate a new kitchen, as proposed in the current scheme at No. 16. Granted 2006 (ref. 2006/1091/P & 2006/0656/L)
  - 19 Eton Villas: Internal alterations, enlargement of dormer on side elevation and new rear extension. Granted 2013 (2012/1629/P & 2012/1314/L). The approved rear extension in this scheme was for a glazed addition that is similar in design and scale as that proposed at No. 16, as shall be examined later.
12. The changes were all permitted when the properties were listed, within the Conservation Area, and post the publication of the Conservation Area Statement, ie the legislative and policy situation was essentially that which currently exists. They are changes that have generally been sensitive to the respective properties and the wider area, with the group value of the buildings remaining.
13. The property of No. 16 was in a very poor state of repair when purchased by the current owners in 2015, having suffered from serious neglect over many years. The previous applications 2015/3496/P & 2015/3980/L were submitted partly to address the structural defects of the building, and those approved works have been undertaken.

## Appraisal of property and proposed works

14. The property forms part of an important group within the conservation area that together still displays the good, consistent character of their original form. This group contributes to the area, and is clearly of positive value to the Conservation Area.
15. That external appearance and group value is the greatest significance to the property. This is confirmed by the published literature that does not refer to the interior of the building. The quality of the external appearance to the building had been compromised before the current owners' work to the property due to the poor structural condition, but their work has rectified those defects that were so severe as to be clearly visible from the road. The interior works authorised by the previous applications have been undertaken in a manner sensitive to the historic interest of the property.
16. The works now proposed would see the amalgamation of the lower ground floor dwelling with the dwelling set over the upper floors. This amalgamation is allowed under Policy H3 of the Camden Local Plan 2017 which only resists development involving the net loss of two or more homes; there would be the loss of one home. The reason for this change is for precisely the reason envisaged by paragraph 3.75 of the supporting text to Policy H3, namely that *'such developments can help families to deal with overcrowding, to grow without moving home'*. This work will allow the owners of the house to restore the property back to a single dwelling and live in long-term as a family home.
17. The lower ground floor has been much-altered over the years, well before the current owners have owned the property, with the removal of the staircase and the previous hallway to the front of the building, and modifications to the layout of rooms to facilitate a rear bedroom, bathroom and the access to the flat from the side. The past conversion works also saw the lower ground floor ceiling/upper ground floor structure being substantially altered with the introduction of new steels and, most likely, new joists. The altered internal layout at lower ground floor can be seen in the photographs below.



18. The proposed works at this level will see the removal of modern fabric and layout in the area, with the reintroduction of the staircase to upper ground floor. The large chimney breast at this level will be retained but modified to enable a kitchen to be provided. This was the same approach as allowed at No. 14 Eton Villas. Lowering of the floor is shown, with that being a modern concrete floor, to improve head height. The new work at this

floor would see the suitable skirting and architrave to reinstate the traditional form of this level of the house. As the lower ground floor currently consists of modern works, including the steels and new joists, the new layout and works would not affect historic fabric.

19. At upper ground floor the works would see the closing of an opening between the rooms. This was in fact an opening undertaken following the grant of permission 2015/3496/P & 2015/3980/L, but with the amalgamation of the upper floors with the lower ground floor and new layout this is no longer needed.
20. The first floor of the property was heavily modified when the current owners bought the property in 2015 and the approved changes allowed some reversion of that layout, which has been undertaken. The further changes to the first floor now shown again arise from the reversion of the property back to a single house, and the need for bedrooms and bathrooms. The changes would see the closing of non-original doors, with works undertaken to match adjoining materials.
21. The existing layout within the roofspace would be retained, with the sole changes being the replacement of ageing windows to be double glazed. This would improve thermal efficiency to the property. Similar work was allowed at 13 Eton Villas. A photograph of the existing poor quality windows is shown below:

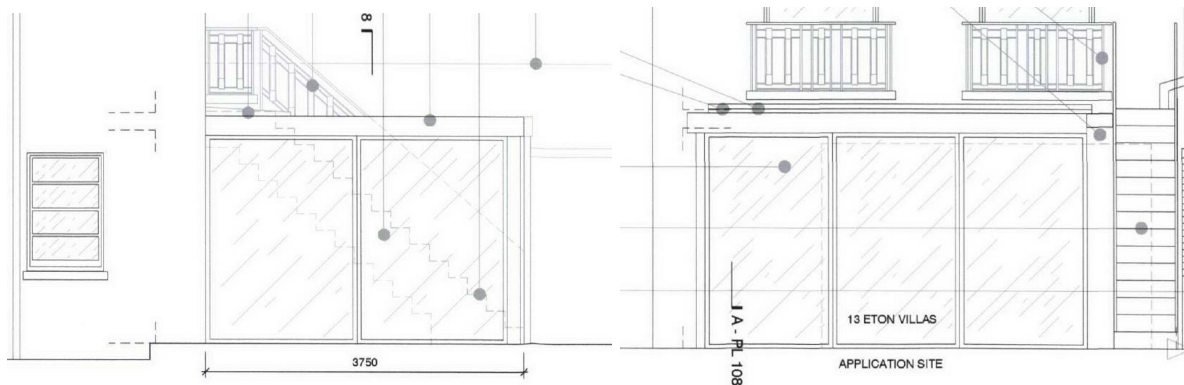


22. The works at lower ground floor would see a new rear extension. This is shown to be a clearly modern, glazed addition and would allow additional space and a true connection to the garden for the family house which otherwise would not exist. As the following photographs show, there is no connection to the garden at present at lower ground floor. The rear elevation has been modified at lower ground floor:





25. The permitted extension to No. 13 also saw a modern rear extension at lower ground floor, as the following extracts show:



26. The Delegated Report on this extension commented as follows:

*'It is proposed to add an extension at basement level, projecting 3.75m from the rear elevation. This is considered acceptable 'in principle' given its location on the building and other extensions recently consented on neighbouring properties. Although the extension is almost full width, this is considered the most suitable approach given the flat backed character of the building. The extension is of a simple contemporary design with large glazed doors to the garden and a partially glazed and partially pebble covered flat roof. It would be partially visible over the existing boundary wall; however it is considered the design, form and scale is acceptable and would not detract from the character and appearance of the Eton Conservation Area.'*

*'The Residents' Association objection to the use of contemporary design incorporating glazing is not considered to be a basis for refusing to the scheme as the simple form compliments the historic character of the building and it is not for the Council to influence taste, rather to ensure that all development represents good design.'*

27. As noted earlier, both these extensions were allowed within the same legislative framework and broadly same policy framework as currently exists. The same conclusions apply in the proposal at No. 16, namely that given the changes to the rear elevations in the group of Eton Villas houses and the simple contemporary design proposed, the scale and design of this addition would be acceptable to the building and the wider Conservation Area. The single storey height of this extension would also have no effect on the amenity of adjoining neighbours.

## Summary and balanced conclusions

28. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 contains the statutory duty in relation to heritage assets that, *'In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State 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.'*
29. In conservation areas, the statutory duty is set out in Section 72(1) that *'In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any functions under or by virtue of any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2)3, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.'*
30. The National Planning Policy Framework says that the strategy for plans should take into account *'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation'* (paragraph 185). Paragraph 193 advises that *'great weight should be given to the [designated heritage] asset's conservation'* and that *'the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be'*.
31. The heritage significance of the property arises due to the exterior appearance and the group value of the listed building, as part of the row of the Eton Villas houses. This contributes to the Conservation Area. The interior of the building is of less significance, notwithstanding the inclusion on the statutory list.
32. The proposed changes to the interior of the property are appropriate and sensitive. The existing layout and ornamentation within the property would be preserved, with new works matching adjoining materials. The rear extension would be appropriate to the house and the wider area.
33. The works to buildings are considered to not cause any harm to significance: as defined by paragraph 017 of the Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. However, if the Council were minded to consider that the limited removal of original fabric to the building would constitute any effect upon that significance, it is clear such harm would be less than substantial since there would not be any effect on the principal parts of the elevations of the houses, with only minor internal works. In this case there would be clear public benefits to outweigh that harm (in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF). The PPG defines public benefits as (paragraph 020):

*'Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress as described in the National Planning Policy Framework [...] Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits.'*



*Public benefits may include heritage benefits, such as:*

- *sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting*
- *reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset*
- *securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation.*

34. There are public benefits arising from the proposed works:

- The property has been altered in the past through the severing of the lower ground floor to a separate dwelling, with the removal of the internal staircase. The proposals would reinstate the building as a single house, and thus represent securing the long term future in its optimum viable use as a family dwelling. This is a substantial heritage benefit.
- The internal works to the property at lower ground floor and the external changes to windows would enable the upgrading of the building's thermal efficiency and energy use, to meet modern regulations. This is a sustainability benefit, which is of public interest.
- The Local Plan recognizes that houses in the Borough must evolve to provide living space for growing families. Thus, the works to the house to secure its future as a designated heritage represents a public benefit.

35. It is concluded that these works would therefore be consistent with the objectives set out in paragraph 131 of the NPPF, namely:

- *'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation'*. The works would enhance the significance of the property; and
- *'the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness'*. The works would enhance the character and appearance of the building through the renovation of the property back to a single family house.

36. These matters satisfy the test of paragraph 020 of the PPG, in that the significance of the heritage asset would be sustained and enhanced and the use would support the long term conservation. Thus, in accordance with the guidance at paragraph 196 of the NPPF, there are benefits that outweigh any harm. There would also be no conflict with Policies D1, D2, H3 or A1 of the Camden Local Plan 2017, guidance in the Conservation Area Statement 2002 and supplementary guidance on Design CPG1 2018.