

HERITAGE INFORMATION

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The Winter House, 81 Swain's Lane, London, N6 6JP – Supplementary Heritage Statement

1.0. Introduction

- 1.1. This supplementary Heritage Statement has been produced to inform pre-application discussions for a proposed skylight above the existing central staircase at the Grade II* listed Winter House, 81 Swain's Lane, London, N6 6JP. It has been authored by Dorian Crone and Daniel Cummins of Heritage Information (see Appendix 1 for authors' CVs).
- 1.2. This document should be read in conjunction with the full Heritage Statement (October 2018), also prepared by Dorian Crone and Daniel Cummins, which accompanied previous applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent (refs. 2018/5731/L and 2018/5730/P) and set out the detailed heritage significance of the Winter House, the local context and character, and an impact assessment and justification for a number of internal and external alterations.

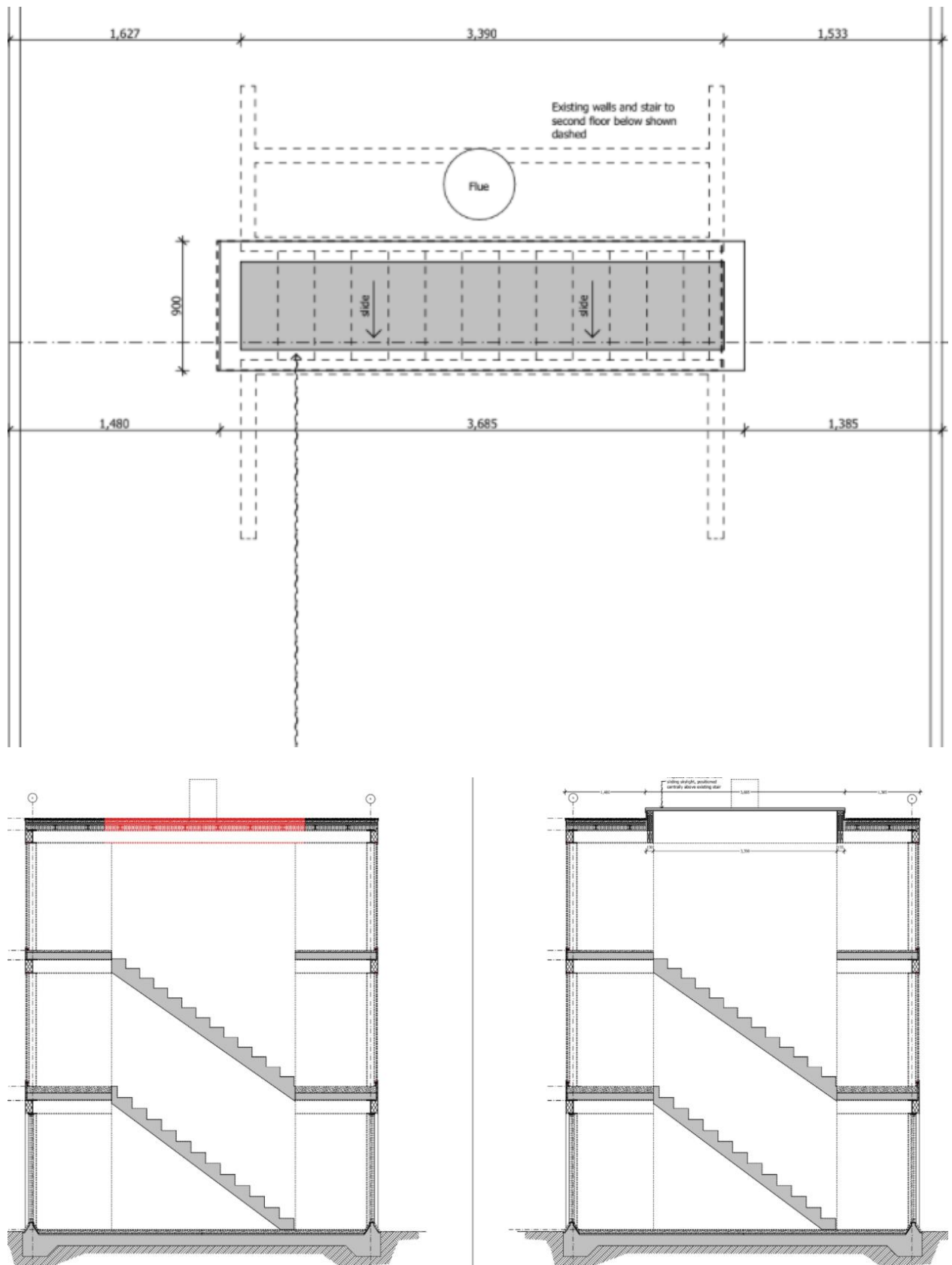
2.0. Summary Background and Significance

- 2.1. The subject site was previously in the garden of the cemetery superintendent's house called St James' Villa and now forms part of the Grade I Registered Highgate Cemetery and is within the Highgate Conservation Area. It also forms part of the streetscape setting of the Grade II listed main east entrance to Highgate Cemetery on Swain's Lane. The three-storey building was designed in the Modernist style of architecture by the highly significant 20th century architect John Winter and built between 1967 and 1969. It is listed Grade II* primarily for its high architectural and artistic interest and historic interest - it is one of the best-known and most influential modern steel houses in England, noted for the pioneering use of Cor-Ten steel for domestic construction and the use of heavily glazed Miesian-inspired windows. The internal layout of the house is very typical of the open-plan living which was starting to become fashionable in the 1960s. The unique setting within the Highgate Conservation Area also includes the verdure of the Registered Highgate Cemetery; the palette of materials (Cor-Ten steel) has weathered to a rust finish to harmonise with the landscape character of the Registered landscape in which the Winter House and its garden are located.

- 2.2. In terms of the fabric affected by the proposals, the flat roof, characteristic of the modern house design, is insulated with wood, wool and polystyrene with glass fibre felt and wood chippings. A circular chimney flue from the central fireplace island projects above the clean horizontal line of the elevations and is visible in views along Swain's Lane into the Registered Cemetery, within the Conservation Area and within the setting of the Grade II listed eastern cemetery entrance. It is considered that the flat form and horizontal appearance of the roofline rather than its fabric contribute positively to the architectural and historic interest of the listed building, which is derived from the key elements of significance as set out above in 2.1. Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent were given in 2020 to provide an appropriate and sympathetic balustrade to the central stairs to enhance its safety whilst retaining the original timber stairs. However, the staircase and first floor landing within the core of the building remain poorly lit and are somewhat architecturally "mean" in contrast to the sense of space and light of the primary living spaces.

3.0. Impact Assessment

- 3.1. The proposed skylight above the staircase can be seen in the drawings below.
- 3.2. The proposal will necessitate some loss of fabric to the flat roof to create an opening, but this minimal loss is not considered to harm an appreciation and understanding of the key elements of architectural and historic interest; the fabric of the roof itself is of minimal interest in the overall significance of the Grade II* listed building. The skylight has been designed with a minimal frame to reflect the heavily glazed Miesian-inspired windows of the Winter House and the clean horizontal lines which define the form and external appearance of the building. It has been positioned centrally above the staircase and will align with the existing staircase enclosure walls and so will not be discernible from within the significant open-plan space of the second floor. Externally, it has been designed with a low profile that sits well below the level of the circular flue and is set well back from the edge of the roof; it will therefore be imperceptible from within the Conservation Area on Swain's Lane and within the setting of the Grade II listed east entrance to Highgate Cemetery, despite the fall in land levels giving prominence to the upper storeys of the Winter House. In views uphill from the south, the skylight will be obscured completely by the neighbouring unlisted house at No. 79. An appreciation and understanding of the flat roof form and external experience of the Winter House will therefore be sustained with no detrimental heritage impact. Internally, the quality of the core of the listed building containing the staircase will be enhanced substantially by the provision of natural light, which will enliven and add architectural drama to the currently dark and somewhat architecturally mean space.
- 3.3. The proposed skylight is considered to provide a high-quality and subservient addition to the roof of the house by nature of its minimalist design, profile, siting and materiality, all of which make it an addition which integrates comfortably by avoiding harm to the architectural and historic interest of the listed building and having little if any visual impact within the sensitive heritage context. **The impact of the proposed skylight on the significance of the Winter House and on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is considered to be minimal and neutral.**



Proposed roof plan and demolition plan for the skylight above the staircase.

4.0. Policy Compliance and Justification Statement

- 4.1. The design, detailing and use of materials for the skylight will enable it to be a subservient addition with minimal physical and visual impact. The minimal loss of fabric to the flat roof structure is not considered to harm the architectural and historic interest of the Grade II* listed building, whilst the design of the proposed skylight echoes the clean horizontality and glazing which provide the Winter House with its distinctive and significant form and appearance; the quality of the currently somewhat architecturally mean core of the building will be enlivened by the provision of natural light. The proposal will be imperceptible from the public realm within the Highgate Conservation Area, the Registered Park and Garden and within the setting of the Grade II listed eastern entrance to the cemetery because of its low profile and setback from the edge of the roof. There will therefore be no harm caused to the significance and settings of any heritage assets. The design of the proposed skylight is therefore considered to have responded positively to the sensitive heritage context and avoided causing harm to any heritage assets, and so complies with Policies D1 and D2 of the Camden Local Plan (2017).
- 4.2. The proposal therefore also complies with Policies D3 and HC1 of the London Plan (2021) by nature of its contextual and considered design response. The fact there will be no loss of significance to the Grade II* listed building and the proposed skylight will represent a sympathetic approach respecting the significance of the site and its surroundings means there will be a minimal and neutral impact on the special architectural and historical interest of the Highgate Conservation Area and on the Grade I Registered cemetery. The proposals therefore also satisfy Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF in achieving well-designed places and conserving and enhancing the historic environment.
- 4.3. The proposals adhere to the Camden Planning Guidance on *Design* (January 2021) and *Home Improvements* (January 2021). The former document emphasizes the importance of context and character – development should respond positively and sensitively to its existing context, and should integrate well with the existing character of its surroundings. Roof alterations in particular should be architecturally sympathetic with the age and character of the building and retain the integrity of the roof form (5.13). The latter document in relation to rooflights emphasizes the need to be subordinate to the overall roof form and to be aware of visibility in streetscape views (3.5). The proposed skylight is considered to be subordinate to the horizontal form, materiality and appearance of the flat roof of the Winter House and will be imperceptible in views north and south along Swain's Lane and so complies with the requirements of both these Planning Guidance documents.
- 4.4. ***The National Design Guide* (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019)** and the ***Building in Context Toolkit* (English Heritage and Design Council, 2001)** have both been used to inform the proposals (the architectural quality of the proposed skylight, as well as its sensitivity to the significance of the Winter House, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and settings of nearby heritage assets). The National Design Guide and Toolkit have also been considered in this assessment when evaluating the design of the skylight, and its impact on the significance and settings of nearby heritage assets. No heritage assets or their settings would be affected adversely by the proposals. The skylight as proposed is considered to relate to the context of the site by nature of adopting an appropriate low profile and minimalist design so that it sits comfortably and is imperceptible within the Highgate Conservation Area and within the settings of nearby heritage assets.

- 4.5. **The proposed skylight is therefore considered to sustain the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II* listed building, the Conservation Area and the Registered landscape because there will be no harm to any element of their significance.**

5.0. Conclusion

- 5.1. The impact of the proposed skylight is considered to have a **minimal and neutral impact on the heritage significance of the Grade II* listed Winter House, the Grade I Registered Highgate Cemetery and the Highgate Conservation Area**. The fact that no significant fabric will either be harmed or lost by the proposals and that the exterior appearance of the building will be sustained means the proposals will sustain an appreciation and understanding of the significance of these heritage assets.
- 5.2. The proposals have been based on a detailed understanding of the site and its context, recognising the special architectural and historic interest of the Winter House and its unique landscape setting within the Grade I Registered cemetery and Highgate Conservation Area. It is concluded that the proposed works satisfy the relevant clauses of local, regional and national planning policy because the skylight is considered to be a contextual addition that will have minimal impact by nature of its visual and architectural subservience to the Grade II* listed Winter House whilst continuing to reflect and respect its distinctive architectural design, materiality, form and appearance.

Appendix 1: Brief Summary CVs of Authors

DORIAN A.T.A. CRONE BA. BArch. DipTP. RIBA.MRTPI. IHBC

Chartered Architect & Town Planner - Heritage Design Consultant

Dorian has been a Chartered Architect and Chartered Town Planner for over 30 years. He has also been a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation for 25 years. Dorian is a committee member of The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the International Committee on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), ICOMOS UK and Institute of Historic Building Conservation. He has been a court member with the Worshipful Company of Chartered Architects and a trustee of the Hampstead Garden Suburb. He is Chairman of the City Heritage Society and is a member of the City Conservation Area Advisory Committee. Dorian is also a Scholar of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

Dorian has worked for over 30 years as Historic Buildings and Areas Inspector with English Heritage, responsible for providing advice to all the London Boroughs and both the City Councils. Dorian has also worked as a consultant and expert witness for over 20 years advising a wide variety of clients on heritage and design matters involving development work, alterations, extensions and new build projects associated with listed buildings and conservation areas in design and heritage sensitive locations. He is a panel member of the John Betjeman Design Award and the City of London Heritage Award, and is a Design Review Panel member of Design: South West, the London Boroughs of Richmond upon Thames, Lewisham, Islington and Wandsworth, and the Design Council. Dorian has also been involved with the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition Architectural Awards and the Philip Webb Award along with a number other public sector and commercial design awards.

Dr DANIEL CUMMINS MA (Oxon) MSc PhD IHBC

Historic Environment Consultant

Daniel is an historian with a BA and Master's in History from Oxford University and a doctorate from the University of Reading. Daniel has a Master's degree in the Conservation of the Historic Environment and provides independent professional heritage advice and guidance to leading architectural practices and planning consultancies, as well as for private clients. He has an excellent working knowledge of the legislative and policy framework relating to the historic environment. Daniel has extensive experience in projects involving interventions to listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas, providing detailed assessments of significance and impact assessments required for Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission.