

Heritage Statement

Alexandra Palace, South West Tower

Heritage Statement for the refurbishment and replacement of Alexandra Palaces's South West tower roof and the reinstatement of sash windows to all elevations including low level masonry repair.



Burrell Foley Fischer LLP

November 2022

Ref: 1627

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Consultation, Acknowledgements & Authorship

The Statement has been compiled in consultation with a number of individuals, their assistance and advice is gratefully acknowledged.

Authorship

The Heritage Statement has been compiled for the APPCT by Faye Davies BSc, BArch (Hons), GradDiplCons (AA), ARB, RIBA Specialist Conservation Architect (SCA) of Burrell Foley Fischer LLP. Any requirements for specialist input is identified within the Statement.

1.0 Executive Summary

This Heritage Statement forms part of the proposals to repair and refurbish Alexandra Palaces South West tower roof and reinstate and replace like-for-like the sash windows and frames to all elevations.

The document endeavours to provide accurate information and a statement of good practice in relation to the historic fabric of the South West Tower.

1.1 Introduction

Rising above the North London skyline, Alexandra Park and Palace has provided entertainment and recreation for Londoners for over 150 years. Following the success of the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the development of Crystal Palace in 1865, the Palace opened in 1873 as a private venture to provide a 'People's Palace' for public entertainment and recreation.

The Palace is listed and is on the Historic England 'Buildings At Risk' register, category F. It is 35,490sqm in size and is set in 196 acres of award-winning parkland. It has hosted extraordinary events, been home to technological innovations and played a key role in both World Wars. The People's Palace is steeped in history, in particular the birth of British broadcast television, and delivering, through the decades, a huge range of popular entertainment and recreation activities.

The Palace is currently used for a range of live entertainment events, including concerts, exhibitions and sporting events, as well as banquets and conferences. Other attractions include a national-sized ice rink (popular with community groups, sporting clubs and the general public), a boating lake and a pub/bistro. Together, these events attracted over 1 million people.

The Park itself receives c. 3m visits per year and is heavily used by the local population; it is a visitor draw in its own right, and in good weather it is a popular place for recreation. It is also used for hosting events such as the annual fireworks festival, an event that attracts c. 90,000 people over two nights. The Park is a Local Nature Reserve and a designated Conservation Area. The whole of the Park is Metropolitan Open Land and is Grade II listed on the Historic England 'Register of Park & Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England'.

By Act of Parliament, Alexandra Park and Palace Charitable Trust (APPCT) is responsible for 'upholding, maintaining and repairing the Palace and maintaining the Park as a place of public resort and recreation'. The organisation undertakes some of its activities on a commercial basis to provide essential funding to deliver its charitable purposes.

2.0 Location

The site is located within the London Borough of Haringey with the Muswell Hill and Hornsey Wards to the South, the Fortis Green Ward to the West and Alexandra Ward to the North. The site is bound by Alexandra Park Road, Vallance Road, Duke Road to the north, the railway (Great Northern) to the east,

Dukes Avenue to the west and Alexandra Palace Way, Redston Road, North View Road and Newland Road to the south. The surrounding area is predominately residential and suburban in character with a range of mainly residential properties located to the north, primarily Edwardian houses of up to three storeys in height (Dukes Avenue).

The East Wing of the Palace has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 1b (low), based on the methodology set out by TfL (www.webptals.org.uk). The edge of the Park (both to the east at Bedford Road and west at the junction of Muswell Hill) has a PTAL of 3.

Alexandra Palace is served by the W3 bus service, which connects the Palace to Finsbury Park to the south, then runs past Alexandra Palace Station and on to Wood Green and Northumberland Park to the east.

3.0 Historical Background

Alexandra Palace remains an important landmark on the North London skyline where it has stood for almost 140 years. Designed and built in 1875 as a 'People's Palace' to entertain and educate the people of London, it has been reincarnated many times over. Serious damage from fire, war, brutal adaptations, underuse, lack of resources and general neglect have presented on-going challenges to the various organisations charged with its management since 1875. Yet still this giant and impressive building dominates the skyline, and continues to fulfil its original purpose as a Palace for the people; a place of recreation, of diverse entertainment and special interest. A place with complex historical and communal values and meanings to local communities and stakeholder groups.

The current Palace is the third phoenix to have risen from the ashes. It was first completed in 1873 by Alfred Meeson and John Johnson, assisted by the builders Kelk and Lucas. This first building, a vast, largely open-plan space that re-used a significant proportion of the fabric materials from the 1862 Great International Exhibition in Kensington, was consumed by fire two weeks after opening. Johnson quickly rebuilt the Palace, amending the layout and massing to improve visitor experience and fire control. The second Palace, covering 7 acres, within parkland of 192 acres, was opened in 1875. The audience numbered 21,000 visitors who came to enjoy an astonishing range of entertainments, exhibitions, live shows, dining choices and recreational facilities.

In 1914, Alexandra Palace was requisitioned by the Government to be used first as a Belgian refugee camp and later as a German and Austrian internment camp for the duration of WWI. The Palace housed refugees and prisoners during both the World Wars and some of the fabric of the Palace was damaged during the government requisitions.

On 2 November 1935 the world's first regular high-definition public television broadcast took place from the BBC studios at Alexandra Palace. The BBC Studios are also hugely important in our cultural heritage. They are unique in being the only surviving early television studios in the world and tell a fascinating story of the technological and social evolution of television.

During World War II, the television transmitter was used to jam the Luftwaffe navigation systems. A bomb exploded to the north of the Palace, damaging the organ.

A huge fire in 1980 devastated much of the west and central parts of the building which were quickly rebuilt (the 'third' Palace), and it is these areas that are now open to the public and are operating successfully and profitably.

3.2 Planning Policy & Framework

Key points relevant to the impact statement are noted below and in the following section on policy.

3.2.1 National:

[The National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\) February 2019.](#)

Section 12 of the NPPF states that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Section 16 of the NPPF focuses on enhancing and conserving the historic environment. Within this section Paragraph 189 deals with the determination of applications where heritage assets are affected, and outlines the requirements where heritage assessments are to be submitted by applicants for Planning Consent, including where there is archaeological interest. The impact assessment intends to meet those requirements.

Paragraphs 192-196 outlines the decision process that the Local Planning Authority is expected to use in determining applications, this guidance has informed the impact assessment. The key consideration in a heritage impact assessment is the harm to, loss of, or enhancement of 'heritage significance'.

The following definition in the NPPF Glossary has been used in framing discussions of significance in the impact assessment: 'Significance (for heritage policy): 'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, Architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.'

3.2.2 Local Planning Policy and Framework

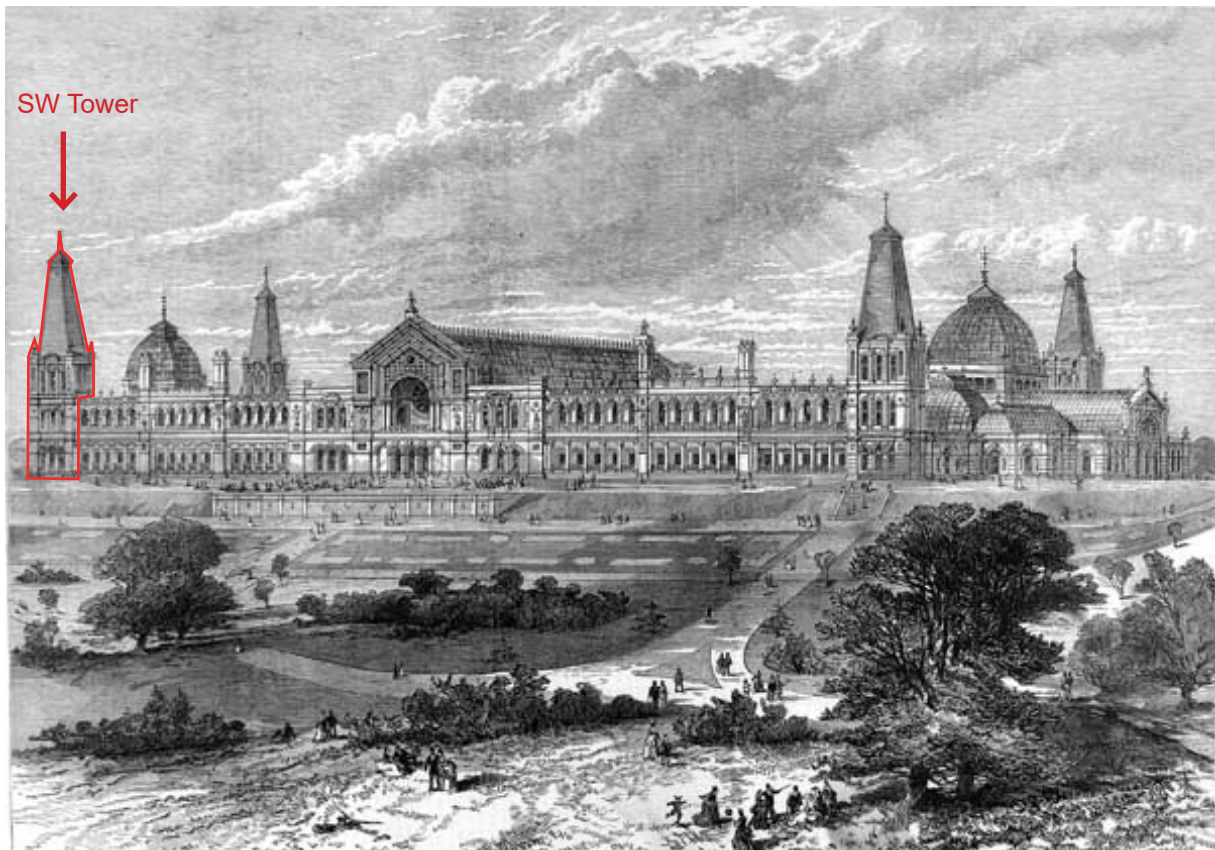
SP12: Conservation

- The Council shall ensure the conservation of the historic significance of Haringey's heritage assets, their setting, and the wider historic environment. The borough's heritage assets include Statutory Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens, Archaeological Priority Areas, and other locally important heritage assets such as Locally Listed Buildings, Local Historic Green Spaces and Sites of Industrial Heritage Interest. Where archaeological excavation is required, findings should be published, disseminated, and used as the basis for archaeological interpretation on site.
- The Historic Environment should be used as the basis for heritage-led regeneration and as the basis for good design and positive change. Where possible, development should help increase accessibility to the historic environment. All development shall protect the Strategic view from Alexandra Palace to St Paul's Cathedral as protected in the London Mayoral "London View Management Framework" Revised SPG, July 2010, and key local views.

4.0 General History

1875

Alexandra Palace remains an important landmark on the North London skyline where it has stood for almost 140 years. Designed and built in 1875 as a 'People's Palace' to entertain and educate the people of London, it has been reincarnated many times over.



1980

A huge fire in 1980 devastated much of the west and central parts of the building which were quickly rebuilt (the 'third' Palace), and it is these areas that are now open to the public and are operating successfully and profitably.



5.0 Statement of Significance

In order to identify and assess the contributions that these values make to the overall significance of Alexandra Palace South West Tower the following ratings have been implemented:

High: An aspect, feature, space or theme that strongly contributes to the significance of the place. These values may be important at either a national or international level and will have a high cultural value and will form an important element of the building or the site.

Medium: An aspect, feature, space or theme which has some cultural importance and makes a moderate contribution to the significance of a place at regional level.

Low: An aspect, feature, space or theme which will make a slight contribution to the significance of a place or adds something to the heritage value.

Neutral: An aspect, feature, space or theme which has no cultural importance, which neither adds or detracts from the significance of a place is not considered intrusive to the heritage value.

Detrimental: An aspect, feature, space or theme which detracts from the heritage value.

5.1 Evidential Value

The potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity;

The concept of Alexandra Palace designed and built in 1875 as a 'People's Palace' to entertain and educate the people of London, although reincarnated many times over still yields important evidential value in regards to the history, life and design of Palace. The building including the tower has been slightly diluted by the later repairs and inappropriate installations. Therefore it holds MEDIUM evidential value.

5.2 Historical Value

The ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present, both illustrative (visual) and/or associative;

Alexandra Palace and the South West Tower were conceived on a grand scale and designed to convey a sense of spaciousness. The spaces tell a story of different parts of national history, however the palace has undergone many alterations and therefore provides MEDIUM value. The historical value of the SW Tower has been significantly reduced due to the loss of fabric and unusable space.

5.3 Aesthetic Value

The ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a heritage asset or place;

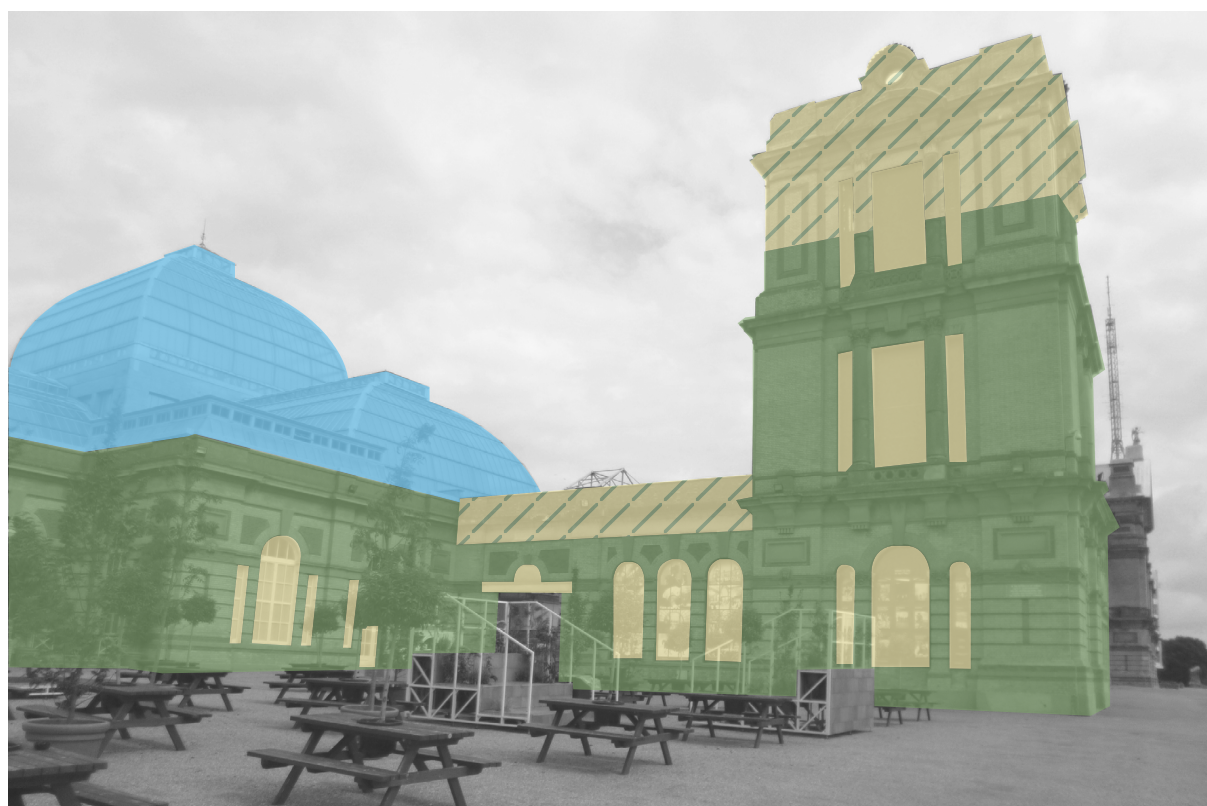
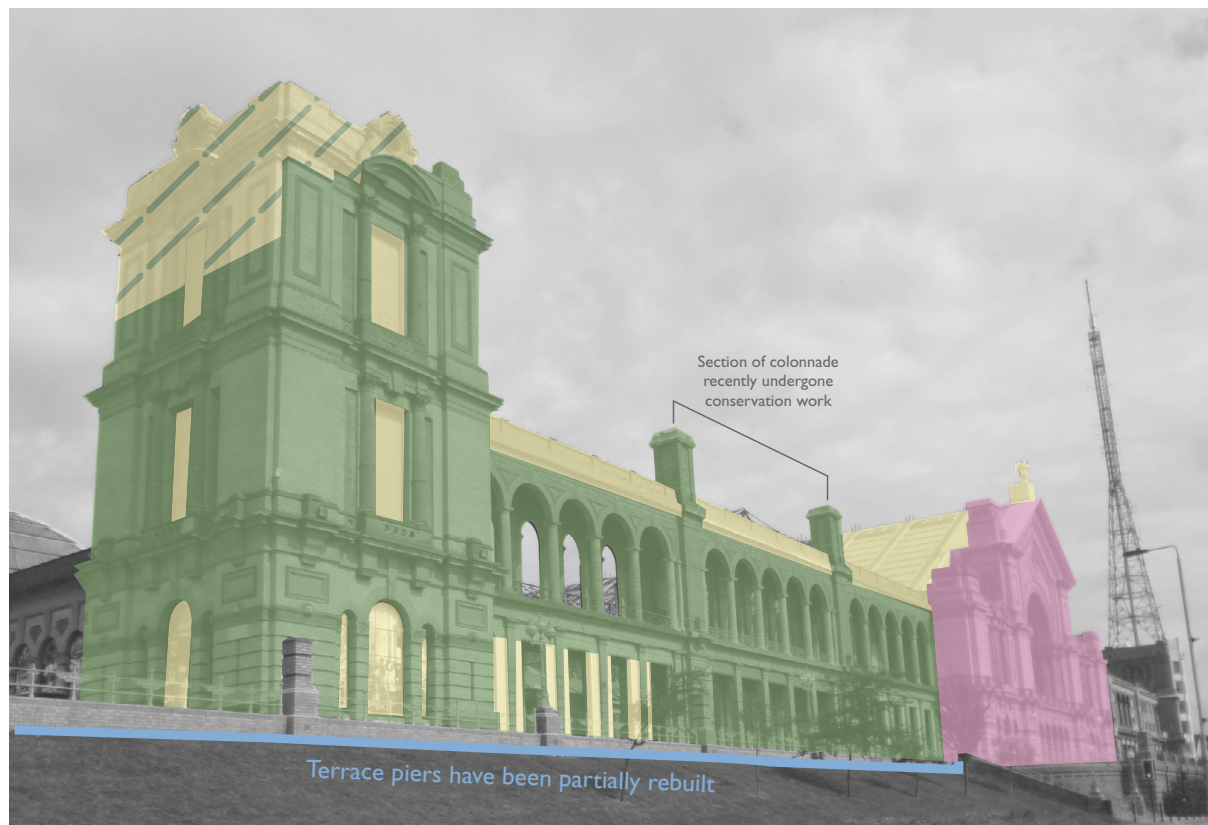
The South West tower historically had a 'mansard' steep pitched roof as shown in the 1875 image above. However, the majority of the South West Tower exterior has remained unaltered since the previous iteration and therefore has HIGH aesthetic value. The interior of the South West Tower is NEUTRAL due to the poor condition of the fabric.

5.4 Communal Value

The associated meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. Communal values can embrace both social, spiritual and inspirational values;

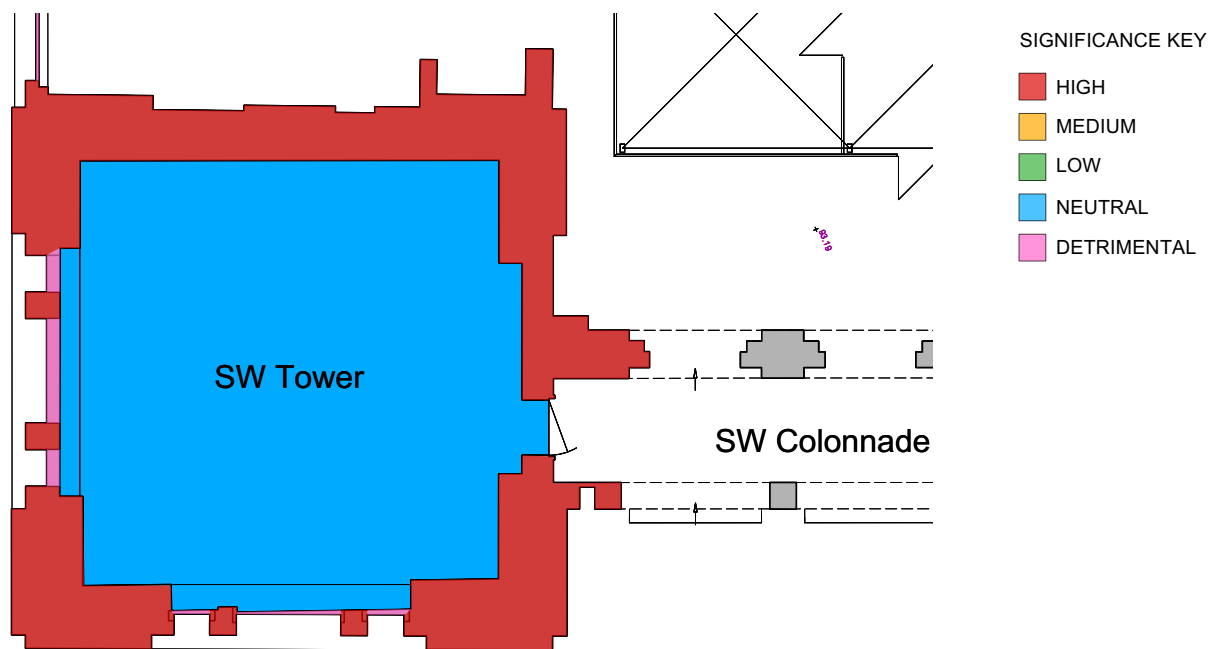
The SW Tower is NEUTRAL as there is currently no safe public access. These works are to be a possible catalyst for bringing this part of the palace back into use.

5.5 Extracts from 2014 Conservation Management Plan



- 1875 WITH POST 1980 REFURBISHMENT
- MODERN - POST 1980
- HISTORIC ROOF STRUCTURE WITH MODERN COVERING
- 1873
- AREAS REBUILT AFTER 1980 FIRE

5.6 Significance Plan



6.0 Impact of Proposed Alterations

6.1 The impact of new proposals are addressed in following table:

	Proposal	Significance of existing fabric	Impact	Reversibility	Reason
1	Reinstate existing timber sash windows from NE Tower with Douglas fir and float glazing.	Medium	Low	It would not be appropriate to reverse this change	To bring the SW tower back into use and secure it's future
2	New Sash windows to match existing windows from the NE Tower with Douglas fir and float glazing.	Medium	Low	It would not be appropriate to reverse this change	To bring the SW tower back into use and secure it's future
3	New timber roof structure with insulation and single ply membrane, including surrounding gutter and 4 x RWP's	Detrimental	Low	It would not be appropriate to reverse this change	To bring the SW tower back into use and secure it's future
4	Brick, stone and render repairs to parapet.	High	Low	It would not be appropriate to reverse this change	To bring the SW tower back into use and secure it's future
5	Internal Brick repairs to window surrounds	Medium	Low	It would not be appropriate to reverse this change	To bring the SW tower back into use and secure it's future
6	New access hatch to roof	Detrimental	Low	It would not be appropriate to reverse this change	To future-proof internal access to the roof for maintenance and repair.

Appendix A

Existing photographs



Figure 1: West elevation SW Tower



Figure 2: South elevation SW Tower



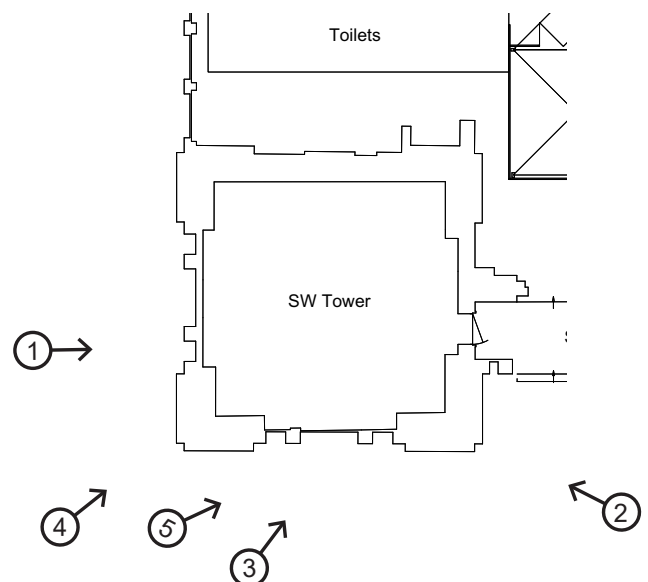
Figure 3: South elevation SW Tower



Figure 4: West and South elevations SW Tower



Figure 5: South elevation SW Tower



Existing photographs

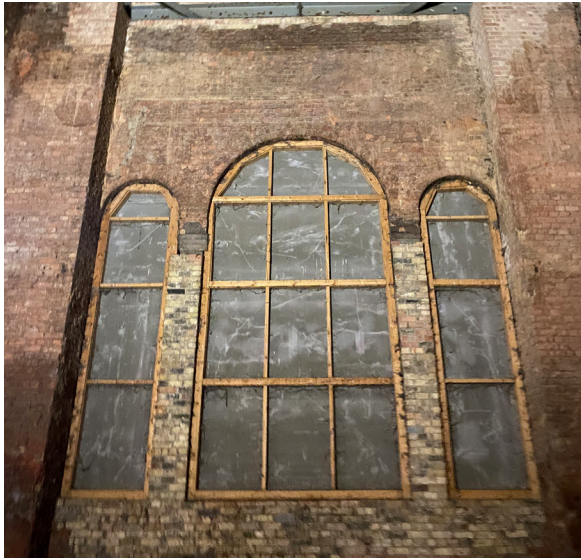


Figure 6: South West tower interior windows



Figure 7: South West tower interior windows & roof



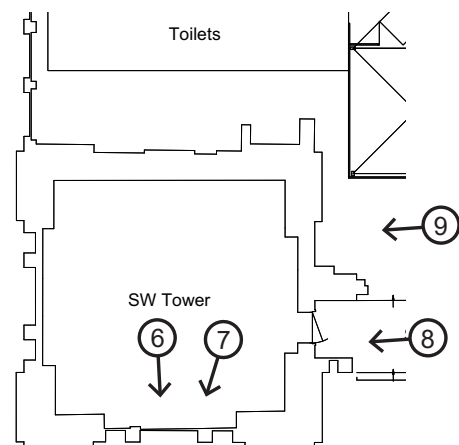
Figure 8: South West tower entrance



Figure 9: South West tower blockwork infills



Figure 10: NE tower windows boxed up, to be repaired and reinstated in the SW tower



Existing photographs



Figure 11: Damage to parapet coping



Figure 12: Corrugated iron roof

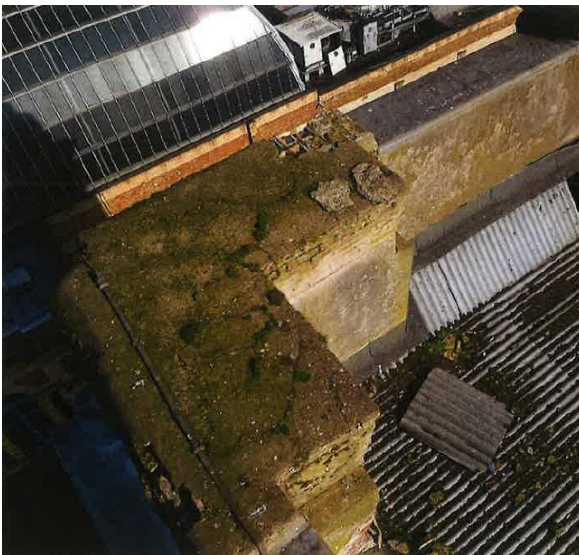


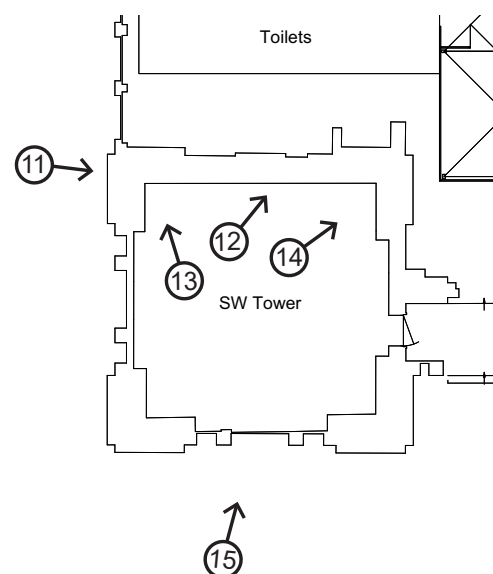
Figure 13: Corner junction to parapet



Figure 14: Corner junction to parapet



Figure 15: MEWP examines the roof of the tower



Existing photographs



Figure 16: MEWP examines the internal roof structure



Figure 17: Internal void. MEWP examines the internal roof structure



Figure 18: Cast Iron beam detail with 'A' frame roof structure and junction with brickwork.



Figure 19: Cast Iron beam detail with 'A' frame timber roof structure and corrugated iron roof

Alexandra Palace including former Alexandra Palace Station to North

Overview

Heritage Category:

Listed Building

Grade:II

List Entry Number:1268256

Date first listed:01-Oct-1996

Date of most recent amendment:30-Jan-2012

Statutory Address: Alexandra Palace including former Alexandra Palace Station to North, Muswell Hill, London Borough of Haringey N22

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Location

Statutory Address: Alexandra Palace including former Alexandra Palace Station to North, Muswell Hill, London Borough of Haringey N22. The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Greater London Authority, District: Haringey (London Borough), Parish: Non Civil Parish

National Grid Reference: TQ2959890039

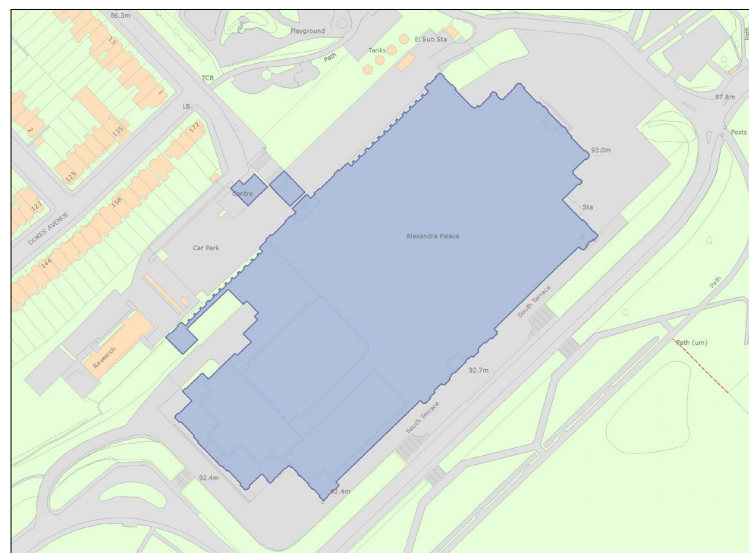
Summary

Former International Exhibition Hall and 'People's Palace'. Rebuilt 1873-5 by John Johnson and Alfred Meeson following fire damage to the first building of 1868-73 by the same architects. Built by Kelk and Lucas. Restored 1980-88, following second fire in 1880, by the Alexandra Palace Development team led by Dr Peter Smith. Various C20 alterations before the second fire.

The former Alexandra Palace Station building of 1873 stands immediately to N of the Palace. No platforms or other associated structures survive. Reasons for Designation:

Alexandra Palace and the former Alexandra Palace Railway Station are designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- Historic interest: a rare survival of a large-scale Victorian exhibition and entertainment complex, and for the surviving BBC studios where the world's first high-definition television programme was transmitted in 1936; also the complete set of Victorian stage machinery in the theatre;
- Architectural interest: for the surviving Victorian fabric and internal spaces, as described above
- The former railway station has special interest as a well-detailed building in the Italianate style, and for close historical associations with Alexandra Palace; it has strong visual group value with Alexandra Palace



Name: Alexandra Palace including former Alexandra Palace Station to North

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History

The spectacular success of the Great Exhibition of 1851 inspired similar events worldwide. The idea of a 'People's Palace' in north London was propagated by the architect Owen Jones (1809-76) who had designed much of the interior décor of Paxton's Crystal Palace. Although his plans for a vast iron and glass building never materialised (mainly on grounds of cost), in 1863, after five or six years' planning, a former dairy farm on high ground between Muswell Hill, Wood Green and Hornsey began to be developed by the Alexandra Park Co Ltd as a north London rival to the Crystal Palace. The building from the Great International Exhibition of 1862 was then being dismantled in South Kensington, and this was acquired by the company, although financial difficulties delayed its re-erection. Work did not actually begin until 1868 when parts of that structure, designed by Captain Fowke, were reused in the new building designed by Alfred Meeson and John Johnson. Only in 1873 did the Alexandra Palace open as 'The Peoples' Palace', a recreation centre and visitor attraction for north Londoners. This was serviced by a new railway line from Highgate Station which terminated at a station alongside the north terrace. Two weeks later the palace was virtually destroyed by fire. A replacement building opened two years later, also designed by Meeson and Johnson. Covering seven acres it was centred on the Great Hall with its immense steam-powered Willis Organ, while four corner towers each supported 16,000 gallon water tanks supplied by steam pumps from the New River Company's reservoirs.

Palace and park faced successive financial difficulties, closure and changes in ownership. The theatre/music hall had been unsuccessful from the outset, partly due to poor sight lines and acoustics. No provision was made for moving scenery on or off stage. A mechanised timber stage was designed and installed by the Grieve family of stage carpenters and scenic artists and was ingeniously adapted to compensate for the idiosyncrasies of the theatre design. The theatre however only began to return a profit once film shows were introduced in the early 1900s, which also attracted more people to the palace complex as a whole. The Palace closed during the Great War and was used for the internment of German prisoners of war. The theatre was refurbished under the management of W Macqueen-Pope and reopened in 1922, but it ceased to be used as a cinema the following year when it was leased to Archie Pitt - Gracie Fields' first husband - who used the stage for rehearsals.

The BBC's involvement with Alexandra Palace dates from June 1935 when it leased the eastern part of the building - 31,840 sq ft within the south-east wing and a further 24,525 sq ft comprising the theatre and associated rooms - following advice from the government-backed Television Advisory Committee that it was the most suitable site for the development of high-definition television, including the testing of two rival systems. To facilitate broadcasting, the cupola on the south-east tower was removed and a 225 ft lattice mast was erected, which gave an aerial height of 460 ft above sea level. Below, the tower was converted to offices and the colonnade arches were bricked up. On the ground floor two former coffee rooms became transmitter halls for the two companies, while the tea room between them housed the shared transmitter. The first floor was converted to two studios separated by control rooms and rooms for film scanning, with dressing and make-up rooms across a corridor. Test transmissions took place in August 1936.

The BBC Television Service shut down two days before war was declared in September 1939, closing with a Mickey Mouse cartoon. Transmitters were adapted to radio counter-measures against German bombers, using settings derived from Enigma intercepts to jam or 'bend' German navigational radio beams known as the 'Knick-ebein', and later the X- and Y-Gerät Systems, thereby giving important protection to London and the Home Counties from Luftwaffe attacks, notably during the Blitz. This was one of a number of installations for this purpose. Broadcasting resumed on the day of the Victory parade on 7 June 1946, and although take up was slow due to post-war conditions, there were technical advances such as the recording of outside events which, for instance, allowed film of the 1953 coronation to be rushed by plane to America. After the BBC acquired the former Gainsborough film studios in Lime Grove, Shepherd's Bush, Alexandra Palace closed as a production centre, apparently for good, in 1954. However, it reopened months later as the home of BBC TV News, which it remained until 1969, colour television being launched in 1967. Then, until 1981, Alexandra Palace was from where the Open University was broadcast.

In 1980 a second major fire seriously damaged the Palace (only Palm Court and the area occupied by the BBC escaped damage). After restoration of the central hall and west end the Palace reopened in 1988.

The former Alexandra Palace railway station was the terminus of a short branch line from Highgate station and stands immediately adjacent to the north-west of the Palace. It was built by the Muswell Hill Railway and opened in 1873 along with the Palace. In 1911 the line was taken over by the Great Northern Railway (GNR), becoming part of the London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) in 1923. In 1935 London Underground planned to take over the line from LNER together with the LNER's routes from Finsbury Park to Edgware and High Barnet, modernise it for use with electric trains and amalgamate it with the Northern Line. Works were completed from Highgate to High Barnet and Mill Hill East and that section was incorporated into the Northern Line, but further works on the Highgate and Alexandra Palace section were postponed and the line continued under the operation of the LNER. Wartime economies meant that services were reduced to rush hours only, so that after the war the dwindling passenger numbers and a shortage of funds led to the cancellation of the unfinished works. Passenger services to Alexandra Palace station and the other stations on the line ceased on 3 July 1954.

Alexandra Park is included in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

Details

MATERIALS: cast-iron and steel columns with walls of white Huntingdon and yellow stock brick embellished with patterned red brickwork in the Italianate style. Classical mouldings and ornaments such as cornices, volutes, keystones, lions' heads etc. made of Portland cement.

PLAN: the Palace covers about seven and a half acres. Symmetrical plan about a great central hall which corresponds with the central transept of the original building and runs between the N and S frontispieces that survived from that building. Flanking the great hall were an Italian garden to the W and an exhibition hall to the E, beyond them were 2 conservatories. The entire south front was occupied by refreshment rooms including a large banqueting hall; the corresponding spaces on the N front held a concert room and a large theatre. Most of the internal walls defining this plan survive, but the roofs have been replaced, and open areas roofed over. The concert hall and refreshment rooms have gone. The theatre auditorium to the NE and the BBC studios to the S, adapted from former refreshment rooms in 1935, survive.

EXTERIOR: N elevation: Least fire-damaged area. Central frontispiece with pedimented gable and large, recessed rose window (now blocked) above entrance porch which connected to the approach from the former railway station. E and W elevations: entrance fronts and vestibules behind largely rebuilt 1980-88 following original form and reusing structural ironwork in part. Palm Court entrance, now main public entrance, to W has pedimented gable and arcaded ground floor. S elevation: Central pedimented and gabled frontispiece with large recessed rose window (reinstated after fire) above entrance porch. Patterned brickwork in gable. Arch flanked by tall 3-light windows separated by half columns with segmental pediment above. 2-storey, 15-bay colonnade either side, divided into 3 sections and terminating in square towers. The upper colonnade is arched with stone columns, the lower has flat arches resting on brick piers. The tower at the SE corner was adapted in 1935 to house offices and studios for the BBC with metal canted bays and the addition of a tall steel latticed girder mast on top.

INTERIOR: survival of the original interior is patchy. The principal areas of interest lie in the eastern part of the building: the theatre auditorium in the NE and the television studios in the BBC wing in the SE corner. The former BBC studios 'A' and 'B' have historic rather than architectural interest. Some areas of the Palace have been demolished and are therefore of no interest; these are the unroofed spaces at the SW and NW corners, and the area occupied by the skating rink. The Great Hall has been renewed sympathetically following its almost total destruction in the 1980 fire. The columns and glazed roof were not reinstated; instead a new pitched roof slung below tubular lattice girders was constructed, with a ceiling of tensioned acoustic fabric imitating a barrel vault. It is the overall spatial quality of this interior and that of the west hall which are of interest. The original Willis organ, restored in the 1980s, stands to the N of the Great Hall. The Palm Court to the W, originally a conservatory, escaped serious fire damage, has cast-iron columns and piers with foliated capitals. Roof has been reglazed.

FORMER RAILWAY STATION: now a community centre. The style is Italianate to complement that of the Palace. Small, single-storey building with gabled cross wing and pitched slate roof, built in white bricks with red brick banding and dressings. Round-headed keyed windows linked by string courses; segmental headed entrance. Rusticated angle piers. Cross wing has roundel in gable and moulded brick parapet. Moulded brick chimney stacks. The interior has no features of interest.

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number: 462017

Legacy System: LBS

Sources

Books and journals

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Gay, K, *Palace on the Hill*, (1992)

Mackintosh, I, Sell, M, *Curtains or New Life for Old Theatres*, (1982)

Smith, P, 'Hornsey Historical Bulletin No.24' in *Alexandra Palace And Park*, ()

Other

Thorne R, *Alexandra Palace*, November 1989,

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.