

FAO Anja Rachny,
Empyrean Developments
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22-25 Eastcastle Street,
London,
W1W 8DE

30 March 2023

Our Ref: 2022/5321

Dear Ms. Rachny,

RE: Alford House, 50-54 Stanhope Road, London, N6 5AL

Following the submission of material outlining the proposed construction of two-semi-detached homes at Alford House, pre-application advice was received from Haringey Council (*ref: PRE/2022/0003*). In response, this letter seeks to address '*comments on design, heritage and conservation*'.

Site – The application site comprises land currently used for car parking at Alford House, 50-54 Stanhope Road, London, N6 5AL. Whilst not subject to statutory designation in its own right, it is located within the wider Highgate Conservation Area (**Figure 1**). Initially designated in 1967, the Highgate Conservation Area boundary was extended on its eastern side in 1990. It was further extended to the east, to include part of Stanhope Road in 1994. The general character of this conservation area is defined by the *Highgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (December 2013)* as follows:

'The Highgate Village has a varied townscape and character. The historic village, centred around the High Street has a relatively organic pattern of development with deep burgage type plots. The area also contains late Georgian and Victorian developments which conform to a regular plot size, typical of speculative developments of the period. The tight knit

informal development, and the early 19th Century speculative development are in marked contrast with the later suburban development where large houses are set within generous landscaped gardens’.

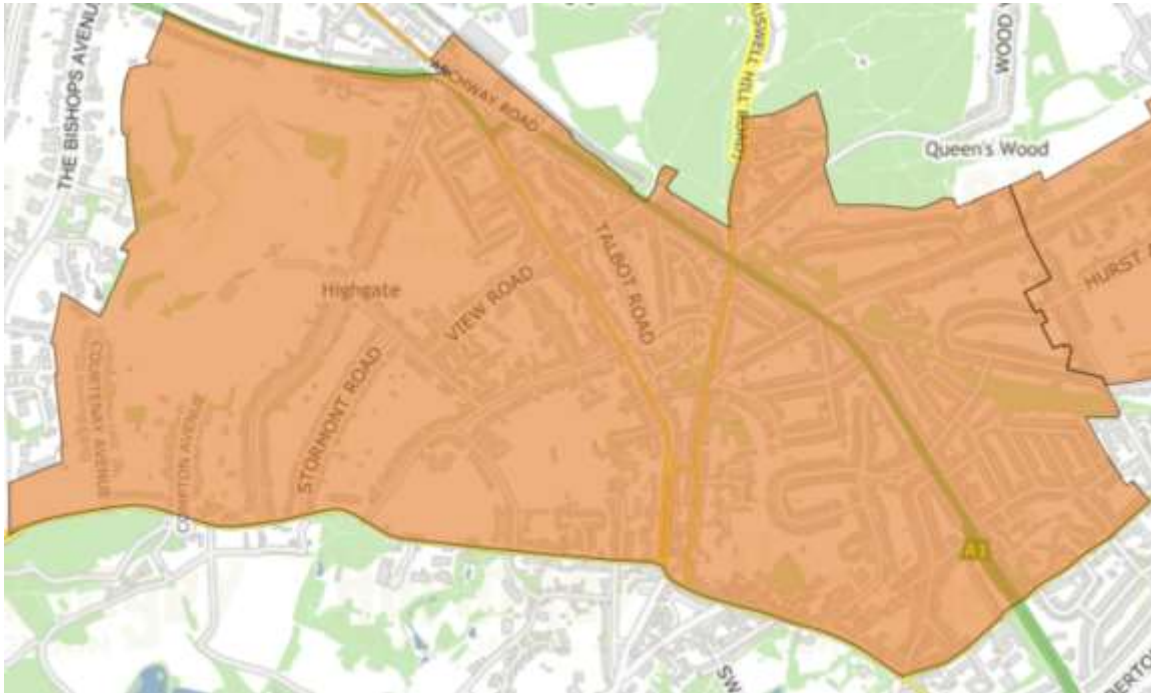


Figure 1: Highgate Conservation Area Boundary

Given the size of this conservation area it has been subdivided into seven sub areas. These sub areas are based on historic patterns of development in evidence throughout the settlement, land ownership, and the architectural styles of those buildings within them. The application site itself is located within 'sub area 5: *Shepherd's Hill*'. The general character and appearance of this sub area may be defined as follows:

'Shepherds Hill has a cohesive character by virtue of the predominant 19th / early 20th Century 3-storey detached houses, the station-side copse to the north, the allotments to the south, the leafy gardens, and the regularly spaced mature trees on both sides of the road....Some of the original houses have been replaced with blocks of flats, mostly built in the 1950s'.

Additionally, the eastern extent of Stanhope Road – abutting both the Highgate Conservation Area boundary and the application site – is located within Crouch End Conservation Area (**Figure 2**). This conservation area was initially designated in 1974 and subsequently extended in 1976, 1990 and 1994. The *Crouch End Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2010)* defines the general character of this conservation area as follows:

'The Crouch End Conservation Area's form is clearly defined by the historic street layout. The junctions between the major roads provide the focus for development and form the most densely developed part of the conservation area. The streets to the east and immediate west of the town centre are mainly lined with terraces, whilst further to the south and west the areas are less densely developed and are characterised by detached and semi-detached properties'.

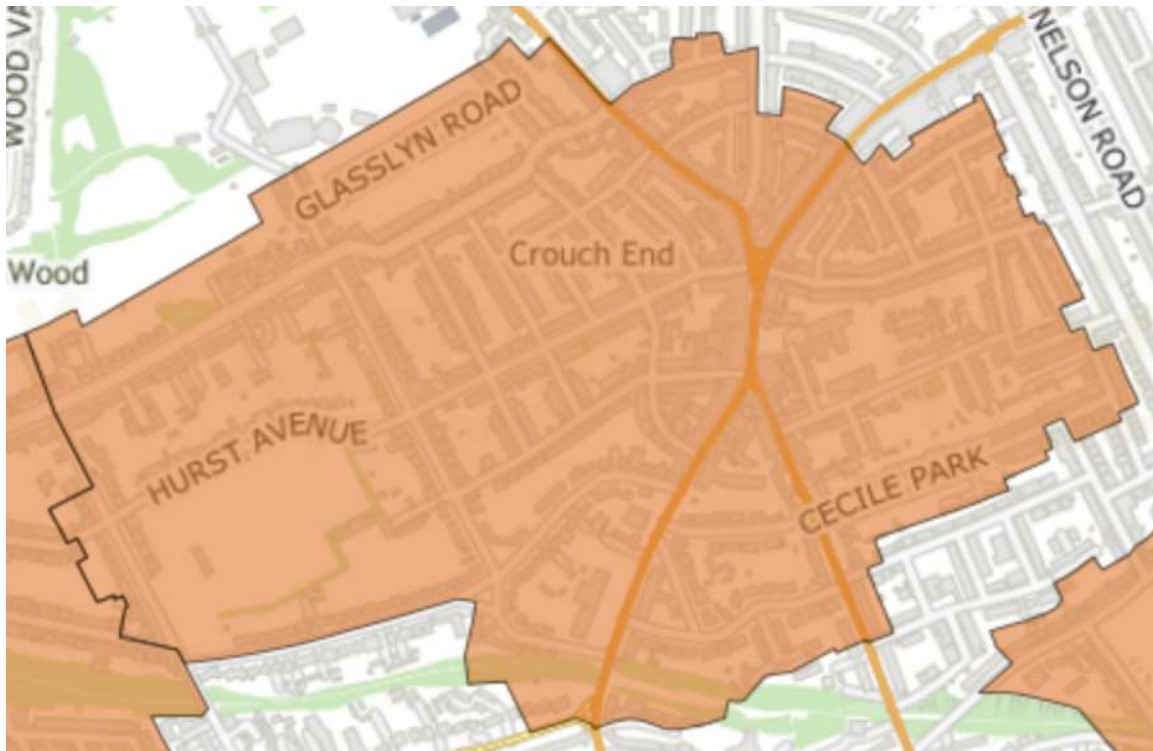


Figure 2: Crouch End Conservation Area Boundary

Again, due to its size this conservation area has been subdivided into a number of component sub areas. That in close proximity to the application site comprises *Sub area 7: Hurst Avenue to Avenue Road*. The overall character and appearance of this area is defined as follows:

'This Sub Area at the south-western corner of the conservation area includes Coolhurst Road, Avenue Road, Hurst Avenue and part of Stanhope Road. It is characterised by wide tree lined streets of large detached and semi-detached properties that are set within large mature gardens separated by regular gaps. St Aloysius' College Sports Ground is a large flat open space situated at the centre of the area that gives it a more suburban feel than areas to the east'.

With specific reference to Stanhope Road it is set out that:

'Stanhope Road is a wide road with no street trees that rises to meet Shepherd's Hill in the north and forms the western boundary of the Crouch End Conservation Area where it abuts the adjoining Highgate Conservation Area. It is lined with properties of a range of architectural styles and origins, including Victorian properties at the junction with Hurst Avenue, and more recent blocks of flats to the north and south. The south eastern section of the street is dominated by the St Aloysius' College Sports Ground and the adjacent playing field, which occupies the area to the east of Stanhope Road. The substantial front gardens are well planted and include many mature trees on front boundaries that give it a tree-lined appearance. The road retains five original cast iron lamp standards with others replaced by modern lighting columns, original granite kerbstones and interlocking artificial stone paving slabs. There is a cast iron Post Office pillar box inscribed VR on the junction with Shepherd's Hill'.

Additionally, a number of existing buildings have been identified as 'positive contribution buildings'. That in close proximity to the site are Nos. 17 to 21, located to the east, and No. 22 located to the south. Nos. 17-21 are defined within the aforementioned appraisal as follows:

'On the north side of the junction with Hurst Avenue are Nos. 17 to 21 (odd) Stanhope Road an imposing group of three Victorian villas, similar in style and materials to the other groups of properties in the street. No. 17 Stanhope Road is a grand double-fronted detached two storeys red brick property with a semi-basement and an attic floor with gable ends in a hipped clay tiled roof. It has full-height canted bays, which are surmounted by pyramidal tiled roofs surmounted by gables with elaborately fretted bargeboards. The ground floor has an arched central entrance with a white painted surround. Further north, Nos. 19 and 21 are similar two storey red brick dwellings with semi-basements and attics with gables and sloping dormers in hipped clay tiled roofs. The upper sections to No. 19 Stanhope Road have subsequently been painted white. Each house has a full-height canted bay surmounted by a large triangular gable, which in the case of No. 21 is decorated with half timber detailing. This group of buildings make a positive contribution to the conservation area'.

Additionally, the building to the south - No.22 - is described as follows:

'Nos. 46 & 48 Stanhope Road are large three storey red brick Victorian villas with an attic floor with gables and dormers in a slate roof, which are set behind tall mature trees. They have full-height canted bays and white painted lintels and central entrance doors with projecting porches. They are considered to make a positive contribution to this part of the conservation area'.

Historic Background – Highgate originated as a hamlet close by the south-eastern entrance of the Bishop of London's medieval estate. The bishop used parkland, located to the northwest of the hamlet, from 1227 until the 1660's. The Bishops of London owned this land until the late nineteenth century, utilising this in a variety of agricultural uses.

Crouch End also formed part of the holdings of the Bishops of London, with records first noting the hamlet of *Crouche End* in 1465. This derives from the Old English for 'cross-border' of 'cross-end', which referenced the medieval crosses erected to mark boundaries between adjoining estates. In Crouch End, these crosses marked boundaries between the demesne lands of Rowledge Farm and Topsfield and Fernsfield Manors.

By the late fourteenth century (1380), a new road in Highgate had been constructed and was used to provide access from the City via Holloway and up Highgate Hill. In 1386, a more direct, northerly route was opened as a toll road. Located at the top of the hill, this is understood to be known as High Gate – from which the area derives its name.

With improved access and an elevated situation on the hill, Highgate attracted many wealthy and upper class residents. By 1664, Highgate village contained 161 houses. The further expansion of the village occurred throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the main period of development occurring over the nineteenth (**Figures 3 & 4**).



Figure 3: Highgate and Locale, John Rocque, 1761



Figure 4: Highgate and Locale, 1822

Over the nineteenth century, growth at Highgate was to predominate on the southeastern side of the settlement. The opening of Highgate Railway Station in 1867 resulted in the expansion of Highgate to the south, east and north, connecting this with the neighbouring communities of Muswell Hill and Crouch End (**Figures 5 & 6**).



Figure 5: Highgate and Locale, 1873-76



Figure 6: Highgate and Locale, 1920

Unlike Highgate, Crouch End remained little more than a rural village until the middle of the nineteenth century (**Figures 7 & 8**). Again - as with Highgate - the arrival of the railway in Hornsey acted as a stimulus for further development and expansion. Therefore, the most intensive period of development within this area occurred in the 1880's, with approximately 400 new homes being built between 1882 and 1892.



Figure 7: Crouch End, 1764



Figure 8: Crouch End, 1876

During the twentieth century, both Highgate and Crouch End were subject to residential expansion. Northerly growth within Highgate - alongside the expansion of Crouch End to the west - had effectively joined these two areas of settlement by the first half of the twentieth century. Whilst both areas were subject to bomb damage during the Second

World War, the existing street pattern - of a predominantly residential locale - had been firmly established by the end of the twentieth century.

More specifically – with respect to the application site - fields to the north of the aforementioned ridge (known as Ferne Park) were rapidly acquired for building during the mid-nineteenth century. In 1856, Rowledge Farm was divided between the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and a C. S. Dickens. As part of this development Dickens received 121 a. bounded by Shepherd's Hill, Hornsey Lane, Crouch End Hill, and an intended road (perhaps Stanhope Road); the commissioners were assigned 173 a. bounded by Churchyard Bottom Wood, Shepherd's Hill, and Park Road. From 1870 they leased land for building in Stanhope Road.

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, Dickens laid out and built new roads whilst constructing a number of large detached properties along these. In c.1885, detached Jacobean style houses in Shepherd's Hill Road were advertised; these comprised three storeys with nine bedrooms. In other roads, including Wolseley, Coleridge, Coolhurst and Crouch Hall Roads, smaller, two-storey Queen Anne-style detached houses were available.

Alongside these developments, private builders concentrated on the area between Shepherd's Hill, Crouch Hill and Hornsey Lane. In the late 1930s a few large houses made way for other buildings. These included Northwood Hall; a seven-storeyed tower of 183 flats in Hornsey Lane; and in Shepherd's Hill itself, the flats of Eton Court and the flat-roofed houses of Broughton Gardens. Between 1960 and 1976 rebuilding was widespread, with at least twenty post-war developments in Shepherd's Hill; nine each in Avenue, Crescent, and Stanhope Roads; six in Hornsey Lane; three in Waverley Road; two in Haslemere Road; and one each in Crouch Hall Road and Stanhope Gardens.

Of these developments, most are rectangular blocks of flats, of at least three storeys and standing on one or more plots, often corner sites. As each was planned independently, they vary in appearance. It was also during the twentieth century that building accelerated in other roads and included Avenue Hall in Avenue Road, Northern Heights in Crescent Road, and Alford House on Stanhope Road; all of which were built by 1964.

A map regression exercise therefore demonstrates that, until the latter half of the twentieth century, the historic configuration of built form and the subsequent urban grain of this area remained relatively consistent, comprising '*large houses set within generous landscaped grounds*'. However, three of these had been removed by 1964 to facilitate the construction of the Alford House site (**Figures 9 & 10**).



Figure 9: Application Site and Locale, 1915

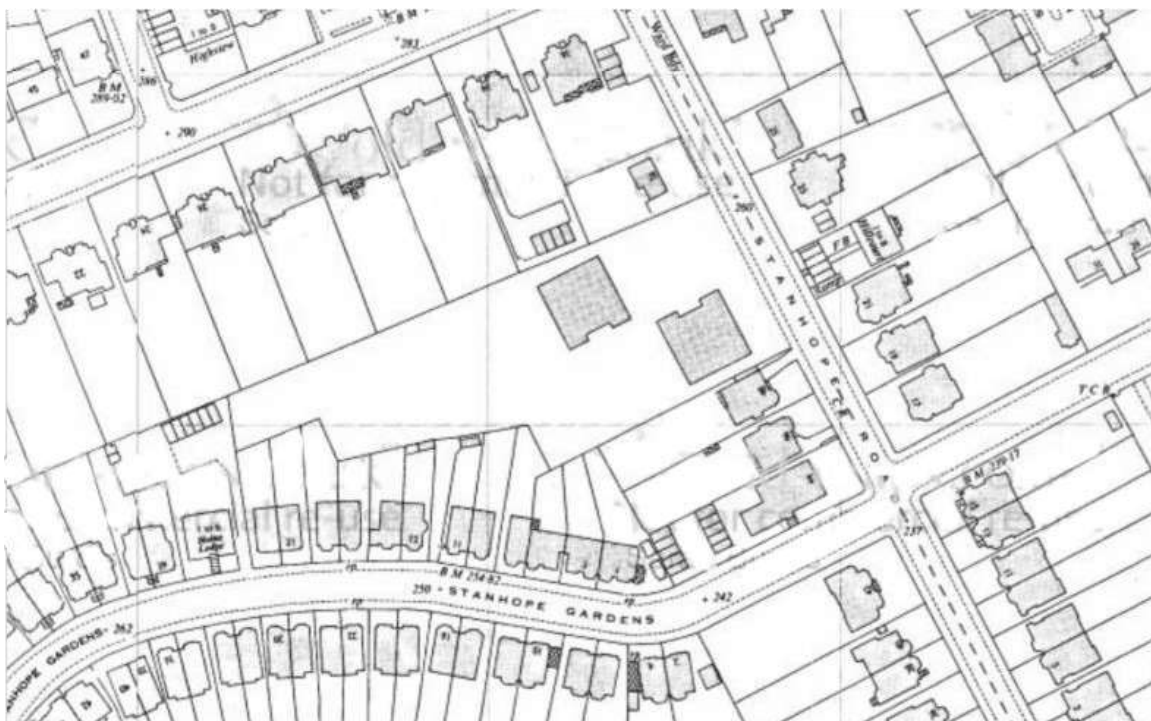


Figure 10: Application Site and Locale, 1964

The map extract above (**Figure 10**) shows that the construction of these blocks resulted in the introduction of large scale, fundamentally utilitarian blocks that were at significant odds with the prevailing and therefore clearly identifiable character and appearance of

the locale. As such, the '*predominant 19th/early 20th century 3 storey detached houses*' were removed with no reference being made to otherwise prevalent architectural forms or detailing such as – for example - '*double-fronted detached two storey red brick properties*' with '*gable ends in a hipped clay tiled roof*'.

Therefore within such a context, the application site is not considered representative of the overarching character and appearance of Highgate Conservation Area – either historically or presently - where it's essentially utilitarian appearance comprises a negative impingement upon both this and the setting of Crouch End Conservation Area, whilst impinging upon *positive contribution buildings* of relevance.

It is of further relevance to note that the eastern extent of Stanhope Road is noted to comprise '*large detached and semi-detached properties that are set within large mature gardens separated by regular gaps*'. It is also acknowledged that this is lined with properties of a '*range of architectural styles and origins (including) more recent blocks of flats to the north and south*'.

It is therefore demonstrable that the Alford House site is explicitly of its time, and, whilst not uncharacteristic of its more immediate environs, exhibits a significant departure from the historic and architectural interest exhibited by both the wider conservation area of which it forms part, and the adjoining conservation area to the east.

Proposals – Proposals for which consent is sought comprise the construction of two semi-detached, three-bedroomed houses at Alford House; on an area currently used for car parking. As noted, the site is located within a conservation area and within the setting of a number of '*positive contribution buildings*'.

It is therefore demonstrable that proposals have responded to the historic evolution and resulting built form of the locale, whilst accounting for relevant planning policy. As such, aspects of the scheme including the scale, massing, density and siting of proposed built form, have appropriately *preserved or enhanced* the character and appearance of the conservation area, along with the settings of all other heritage assets of relevance.

As noted, the historic urban grain of this area comprised large scale dwellings set back from the vehicular route within verdant grounds. **Figures 9 & 10** show that this morphology remained relatively intact to the south and east of the application site, whilst the recessed block at Alford House demonstrably departed from this wider, established characteristic.

Figure 11 therefore shows that the construction of a structure in the location proposed would effectively reinstate this long established - but now compromised - urban grain and associated regular gaps between built form. Additionally, a proposed building line that directly reflects that already established across historic built form, demonstrably

and unequivocally references identified characteristics of both conservation areas of relevance.

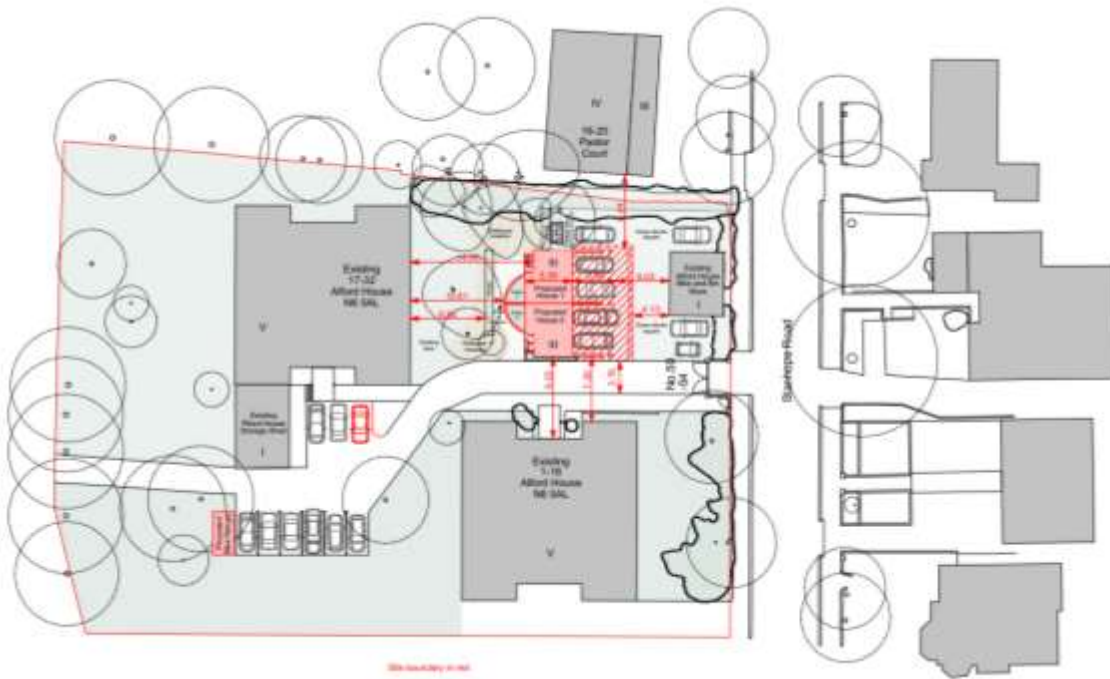


Figure 11: Proposed Site Plan

The height of the proposed structure has also sought to respond to not merely the site-specific scenario in evidence at Alford House, but also the wider designated locale. As such, it is proposed to rise to three storeys. This ridge height will ensure a subserviency when considered against not merely Alford House, but will also ensure that wider aspects of character and appearance are preserved i.e. *'3 storey detached houses'*.

The proposal's location and ridge height will also provide a high degree of screening with respect to the existing blocks on site, which are acknowledged by relevant pre-application advice as detracting from the character and appearance of this area by virtue of not only their *'size but also their poor design'*.

Turning to the proposed materiality, a wholly appropriate aesthetic would result, whereby the proposed flat roof, brick elevations and wider glazed openings would not fundamentally alter existing views; particularly where such an aesthetic has already been implemented across both the site itself and adjoining blocks of flats (particularly to the north), and is as such, established.

Whilst proposals would not fundamentally alter the utilitarian aesthetic already in evidence here, more contemporary detailing such as timber shutters, concrete bases to

balconies, planters, etc. would not merely serve to effect a greater degree of quality at the Alford House site, but establish an authentic and appropriate legibility of phasing when considered against that of the wider locale.

That such a composition and overall aesthetic would be suitable is highlighted by the Crouch End Conservation Appraisal which states that where this *'abuts the adjoining Highgate Conservation Area, (Stanhope Road) is lined with properties of a range of architectural styles and origins'*.

More generally, it is of relevance to highlight that the scheme has also responded to the existing landscape framework of the site, where the proposed siting and orientation of new built form ensures that no existing trees will be removed.

Otherwise, a number of features such as planters and the provision of additional boundary vegetation will both preserve the existing green infrastructure of the site, whilst enhancing its contribution toward the verdant character of the wider area, resulting from retained *'regularly spaced mature trees on both sides of the road'*.

For the purposes of health, safety and amenity, undercroft parking would be internally lit at night, facing away from Stanhope Road, neighbours and pedestrians/vehicular traffic. Elsewhere throughout the site - again for the interests of health, safety and amenity - lighting is merely low level and focused solely upon car parking and bike/bin stores.

This is however, screened from the wider public realm by entrance gates, bin stores and boundary hedging; again with the result that no undue light pollution would spill into the wider, outlying conservation area. Otherwise, lighting is similarly modest and lines paths and lights entrances; deliberately positioned to point away from neighbours.

Summary - In sum, it is considered that the scheme – by virtue of combining a recessed location, with what is a clearly referential orientation, scale and mass – would generally reinstate the historic urban grain by virtue of addressing associated gaps across the locale, particularly when considered against historic buildings to the south and east.

Furthermore, when considered against already established built form at the site and that identified as a characteristic of each relevant conservation area (i.e. *'original houses have been replaced with blocks of flats'*) a referential aesthetic has been adopted whilst effecting what is a demonstrably high-quality and considered aesthetic otherwise.

Together, such features demonstrably ensure that the site's current contribution toward the wider character and appearance of this areas is enhanced and, with respect to identified heritage assets, the implementation of proposals is therefore considered

fundamentally acceptable; particularly where these represent the logical continuation of existing built form.

Given the appropriate scale, siting and massing of the proposed structure, the settings of all heritage assets of relevance would as such remain demonstrably *preserved* following the implementation of proposals, whilst demonstrably *enhanced*. The scheme would also engender the *enhancement* of the site and a consequently positive contribution toward the wider *character and appearance* of the conservation area within which it is located.

Proposals can therefore be seen to respond to not only the relevant sections of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*, but also the wider regulatory framework, where *paragraph 206* of the *NPPF* states that the local planning authority (LPA) should actively *look for opportunities for new development within the settings of heritage assets*.

Furthermore, whilst no harm is understood to accrue from the implementation of proposals, should any harm be identified by the LPA, for the very many reasons given above this would be definitively *less than substantial* – again by virtue of what is a high-quality, considered and fundamentally enhancing scheme – and more than amply outweighed by the numerous public benefits that would accrue from wider perspectives.

The scheme is therefore understood to have responded positively toward the historic environment of the site and locale whilst achieving a high standard of design and layout that results in no adverse impacts upon identified heritage assets or their settings. For this reason, the principle of development is not considered to be at odds with the significance of the application site and/or its wider locale.

I trust this is of some assistance, but should you require anything further or wish to discuss any matter in more detail, do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



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