

HERITAGE STATEMENT

June 2020

Highcroft, North Hill Road, London, N6 4RD

989.HS01

Prepared by Clements and Porter Architects

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement has been produced on behalf of the applicant Church Road Estate Ltd in support of the application to provide six new flats at rooftop level at Highcroft, North Hill London N6 4RD.
- 1.2 The applicant approached Clements and Porter Architects to look at development potential for the roof for the purposes of dealing with the unsightly rooftop telecoms installation and to fund necessary repairs to the fabric of the building
- 1.3 The agents for the application are Clements and Porter Architects, a well-established, RIBA Chartered Practice with a long history of working on heritage assets. This report has been prepared by an RIBA Accredited Conservation Architect who has a wealth of experience of working on listed buildings and within conservation areas, as well as voluntary activities associated with conservation.
- 1.4 The applicants are Church Road Estates Ltd, a company wholly owned by the existing leaseholders, who share the freehold of the building.

2. DEVELOPMENT SITE

- 2.1 The existing building is a four storey L shaped block located on the corner of Church Road and North Hill, Highgate London N6, with main facades facing both roads. It is constructed of dark red brick with white painted strings course with a rear elevation of plain white brick and a flat roof. The string courses and projecting balconies form a strong horizontal element to the building. It has a prominent splayed main entrance addressing the corner and painted metal windows.
- 2.2 Based on historical maps there was a large villa and garden on the site prior to the construction of the existing block.

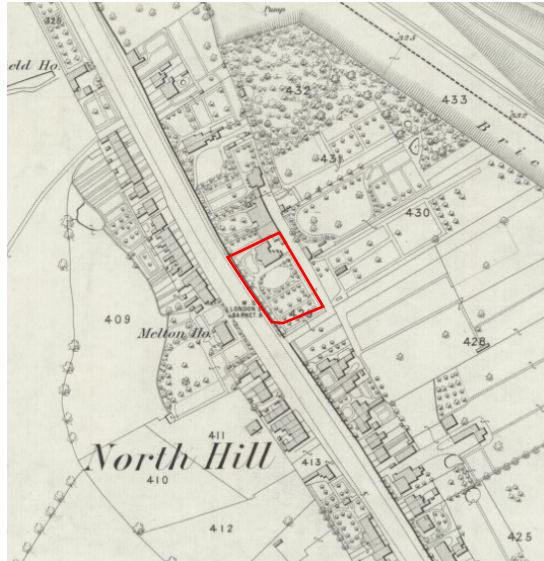


Figure 1: Historic map from 1870



Figure 2: Historic map from 1935

- 2.3 The block was built in the 1920's and is the first block of privately leased flats in Highgate.
- 2.3 The condition of the block is poor requiring substantial improvements both externally and internally.



Figure 3: Existing building

3. CONTEXT

- 3.1 The block has a prominent position within the Highgate Conservation Area which was originally designated in 1967. Highgate is split into 3 conservation areas under two local authorities, the application site being in the London Borough of Haringey whilst the other two elements are in Camden.
- 3.2 Haringey's Highgate Conservation Area Appraisal was published in 2013. Highcroft is described in this under section 4.4.63. However, although the building is described under section 4.8.1 as a positive contributor, section 4.4.63 does add the following note:
- "the placing of intrusive cell phone aerial boxes on its roof is a negative factor".*
- 3.3 Highcroft is set on North Hill. This road runs northward from the centre of Highgate Village downhill to the junction with the A1 and was originally a toll road as reflected in some of the set-back earlier houses (see below).
- 3.4 North Hill is arguably one of the most architecturally diverse streets in the UK and possibly in the world with properties varying from early 18th century to the modern day. Its eclectic mix contains modernist highlights such as Berthold Lubetkin's Highpoint 1 and 2 as well as Georgian cottages, all set in a road lined with mature lime trees. The street can boast that twelve different monarchs have been on the throne over the time the dwellings were built and arguably has a greater range of different form of domestic architecture than any other street in the UK.



Figure 4&5: Contrast of Highpoint (left) with 18th century cottages (right)

- 3.5 Immediately to the north of the application site are nos. 50-54 North Hill, Grade 2 listed cottages set well back from North Hill. This is an interesting feature possibly relating to the days when North Hill was a toll road and a 200yd distance from the road was proscribed to deter highwaymen.
- 3.6 To the south on the other side of Church Road, is Highgate Group Practice, built in the 1980's and award winning in its time. Adjacent to this is to the east is a two storey arts and craft building ancillary to the doctor's practice and to the south is Bramalea Gardens, a modernist terrace of white painted brick houses built in the 1970's

- 3.7 Opposite on the north side of the junction between North Hill and View Road is an undistinguished recently built house in red brick, pastiche style. Adjoining this to north is Mary Fielding House, a similarly undistinguished 4 storey brick built care home and beyond this on the raised section of road is the early Victorian Prospect Terrace,
- 3.8 On the opposite south side of North Hill is 50-54 consisting of a row of Victorian cottages and Rowlands Close, all designated as positive contributors
- 3.9 Meanwhile Church Road is a mixture of building types with views towards Highgate Woods and marked at the junction with Archway Road by a recent 7 storey housing development.



Figure 6: 109-119 North Hill, Grade II listed late Georgian terrace of town houses



Figure 7: 50-54 North Hill, Grade II listed houses set back from the street

4. RECENT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 Two planning applications were made in 1985 and 1988 for roof extensions to the block both of which were refused. No details of these applications are available.
- 4.2 There was also an application from 2018 for the replacement in flat 17 of the windows and balcony doors with upvc which was granted.
- 4.3 All other applications relate to installation of telecommunications equipment on the roof. The companies applying have included Orange, Vodafone, Mercury One-2-one, Cellnet and others. The majority of these have been refused. In spite of this a substantial amount of equipment remains on the roof, fixed to the walls at the rear and in the communal garden.
- 4.4 The latest application, HGY/2019/1625 was submitted in 2019 and refused. This application was made by MBNL (EE&H3G) and was for a very considerable increase on the plant currently in place, namely

“The replacement of 6 no antenna with 3 no roof pod structures each supporting 4 no antenna apertures, 4 no dishes together with the installation of 8 no MBNL equipment cabinets to be installed on new freestanding grillage on roof level and ancillary development thereto.”

4.5 The grounds for refusal were cited as:

“The telecommunications infrastructure would by reason of their siting, size and height be visually obtrusive features detrimental to the appearance of this building, its roofscape and the skyline as seen on approach from North Hill and View Road, failing to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of Highgate conservation area.”

4.6 However there is real concern about the Government’s policies to improve internet and mobile phone connectivity. The clients have made the following statement regarding this:

“The flat owners are concerned about the powers now given to telecommunication companies by the Digital Economy Act 2017 which would enable them to impose New Code Rights on an unwilling landlord such as at Highcroft by creating new extended leases.

“The Highcroft flat owners have been advised by Telecomms industry professionals and lawyers that the only way to prevent the imposition or continuation by EE or Vodafone of new masts and telecomms equipment on the roof at Highcroft is for the building owners to have plans in place to use the roof for a development of their own. The development would need to be genuine, substantial and practical by the time of lease termination.

“The recent planning application by EE thankfully refused by Haringey was for a massive increase in the size and number of aerials and equipment. Notwithstanding that Haringey might continue to oppose similar applications, the Highcroft owners are concerned that there will inevitably be statutory appeals and compromises made. They believe there is a real risk that if the building owners development proposal is not in place, the telecommunication companies development aided by government policy to strenuously support the G5 and broadband ‘roll out’ would be enabled to happen by default”.

4.7 There is a very real risk of what is already determined within the CA Appraisal as a negative factor could be replaced by default with a very much larger and more intrusive installation. Its prominent position and the fact that this is a relatively low block will inevitably lead to severe harm to the Heritage Asset of this element of the Highgate Conservation Area



Figure 8-10: Examples of the telecoms equipment existing on the roof and at ground level

5. PRE APPLICATION RESPONSE

- 5.1 A pre-application submission was made on 25th September 2019 and a report was received following a meeting on 28th October 2019. Section 5 of this dealt with the “Impact on the character and appearance of the building and Conservation Area” and it is the items raised in this which it is hoped are dealt with below.
- 5.2 The first paragraph states that removal of the existing rooftop structure would be a welcome benefit but a sensitively designed proposal would be required. It is hoped that this application will fulfil this.
- 5.3 The design of the new extension and the rationale for this design is detailed below, particularly in section 6.6 of this report, as well as in the Design and Access Statement. It explains the approach which is to respond to the existing building’s character and reinforce the subservience of the extension while integrating with building as a whole
- 5.4 In the report, an increase in set back was requested of between 1-2m on the front façade and this has been incorporated with a 1.2m set back from the projecting eaves established following further investigation – see section 6.4 below.

Pre-app Submission

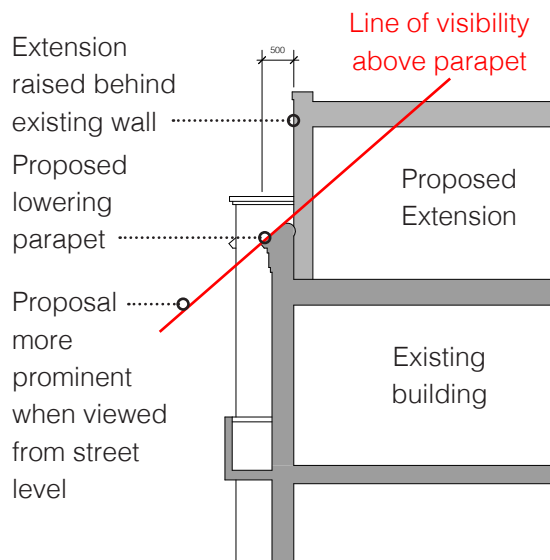


Figure 11: Typical section from pre-app submission

Amended planning submission

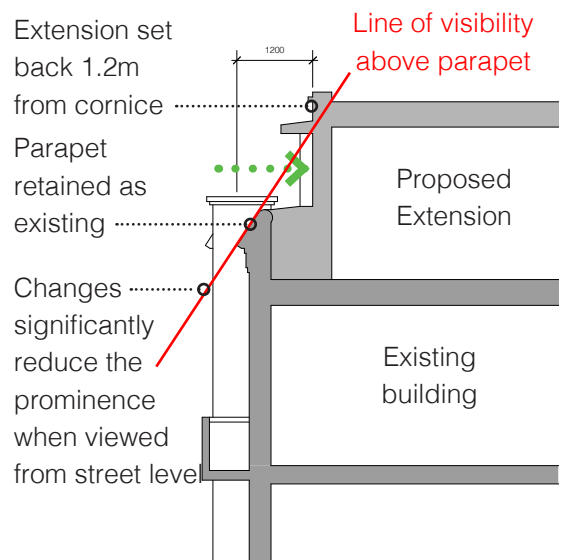


Figure 12: Typical section showing increased set back following pre-app response

- 5.5 Extensive set backs have also been incorporated on the two side elevations to the degree that the extension is no longer visible when approach from Church Road and is barely visible from North Hill.
- 5.6 The second floor extension above flat 38 has now been removed from the proposals.
- 5.7 The extension is proposed in brown oxidised finish on the street and end façades.

6. THE EXISTING BUILDING

- 6.1 The existing building is an L shaped block consisting of 37 flats spread over 5 floors with a single flat at the north end of the block at current roof level. The upper floors are served by two vertical service cores with lifts and lift motor rooms projecting beyond the roof. The roof is flat.
- 6.2 The front elevation of the existing building has two principle facades facing Church Road and North Hill with a splay addressing the corner at the junction between the two facades. At ground level central to the splay is a white painted art deco style entrance feature.
- 6.3 The street facade is made up of horizontal bands at each floor level of dark buff bricks edged with white string courses. These extend into projecting balconies. There are matching projecting vertical pilasters set forward from the principal facade enclosing bays of the same brickwork and carried up above parapet level. Between the areas of buff bricks are lighter red brick infill panels. The windows are white painted metal and the whole is topped by a projecting white painted cornice with pantile infills between the pilasters.
- 6.4 The rear elevation is white brick with black metal windows and down pipes representing a reversal of the darker brick and white windows of front elevation. However, the quality of this elevation is heavily degraded by the presence of vertical metal ducts running from ground to roof together with aerials serving the telecoms equipment on the roof.
- 6.5 The side elevations are plain unadorned red brick with a natural render band at parapet level. These are not impacted by the proposals
- 6.6 A mews runs from Church Road to the rear of Highcroft serving a house, 6A Church Road and the Highcroft's garages as well as an access for refuse and servicing. There are no proposals to alter this.
- 6.7 There is a rear amenity space at ground floor. This is well maintained and landscaped but is again, as with the rear elevation, degraded by the presence of telecoms equipment. It is proposed that the space occupied by this will provide additional bicycle storage as well as landscaping.



Figure 13: Example of the ducting and antennas attached to the side of the building



Figure 14&15: Examples of the existing telecoms equipment positioned at ground floor to the rear

7. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 7.1 The proposals are to construct a single roof storey extension on the block which will provide much needed additional housing stock whilst preventing the replacement of the telecoms towers and providing funding for major repairs to the building which is currently nearly 100 years old. The Applicants have made the following statement regarding this:

"Highcroft was built in the 1920s and unfortunately it has not been well maintained and both the interior and exterior require extensive repair and refurbishment. The company sinking fund is negligible as costly fire protection work and infrastructure repairs have needed to be carried out and more building maintenance is still necessary."

- 7.2 Six flats will be produced from this development helping to provide much needed additional housing stock for the Borough. They will be accessed from a new extended central core and rear deck access with an existing secondary core at the north end of the site. It is not proposed to alter the configuration of this secondary core. Due to the design of modern lifts, the lift motor room on the roof will no longer be required.
- 7.3 The flats comply with the requirements in terms of space standards with the London Plan. All flats, bar one, have external private amenity facing south and west and there will be a small communal amenity space immediately opposite the one flat without private amenity space. There is a varied mix of units from 1 bed to 3 bed.
- 7.4 The alignment of the flats has been established to maximise the accommodation whilst minimising the impact on the façade. The face of the building is set back 1.2m from the line of the projecting eaves, this being established as the optimum distance to ensure reduced visibility from street level, without producing unusable narrow external spaces on the front, compromising the flats layouts or the width of the deck access to the rear. Various studies were carried out in 3D to examine the benefits and disbenefits of various levels of set-backs and this was felt to be the optimum, with greater setbacks not having a significant effect on visibility from street level, whilst severely impacting the scheme layout.
- 7.5 The side elevations both have considerable set-backs of 2.1m and 3.8m from the north and east respectively giving excellent full width terraces to these flats. It may be necessary to take measures to prevent overlooking from the terrace of flat 39 into the garden of no 50 North Hill.



Figure 16&17: Proposed visualisations showing the side elevations

- 7.6 On the rear there is wide deck access which gives ample space for access and avoids overshadowing to the communal garden area below.
- 7.7 The existing parapet to the front is 1.3-1.5m high so there will no requirement to raise this to meet Building Regulations. To the rear, the building edge is guarded by unsightly and non compliant Kee Clamp railings. These will be removed and replaced with metal vertical railings to the required height. Please note the parapet wall on these areas will be raised so the additional railings will be 500mm high
- 7.8 It is recognised that the major impact of the development on the surrounding area will be the street façade and the two end walls facing down Church Road and North Hill. The set back is dealt with in 7.4 above but other elements to the elevations treatment also have a bearing on the acceptability of the design. Whilst accepting that the materiality of the facade will be different from the masonry construction of the existing to reflect the lightweight construction, the form of the face of this extension has been carefully calibrated, by selective use of form and articulation, to echo the strong horizontal and vertical element of the existing façade. This has been achieved by set back balconies on the line of the projecting vertical panels, alignment of windows and with the use of a horizontal overhanging eaves detail. The existing façade, including the pantiles will be untouched. The new extension is capped with a small oversailing eave which emphasise the horizontality of the building. This is broken at each balcony to reflect the projecting panels of contrasting brickwork below
- 7.9 Meanwhile it is proposed the rear is constructed as a simple white light coloured finish to have, with the wide deck access, minimal impact on the surrounding properties and ground floor communal land. There are two areas where the brickwork will be raised in white to match existing. The first is the third bedroom in flat 44 where the existing rear extension will be raised. The second is the rear wall to flat 39 at the north end of the block adjacent to the existing fifth floor flat. The unsightly ducting and wiring relating to the Telecoms equipment will be removed.
- 7.10 Material finishes are not at this stage finalised although this is proposed as a metal cladding of a brownish hue to fit in context with the existing and a light finish render to match the brickwork below. Windows will be metal with a slim profile



Figure 18: Front elevations bay study showing the materiality of the proposed extension including the recessed bay



Figure 19: Rear elevations bay study showing the materiality of the proposed extension

8. CONCLUSION

The proposals as detailed above would comply with the NPPF Section 16 on conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

The telecoms equipment is already identified as a negative factor in the Conservation Area Appraisal. The dismantling of this equipment and the prevention of further telecoms developments on the roof will prevent substantial harm to the Conservation Area. It is hoped that this, combined with a sensitively designed extension and the provision of extra badly needed housing units would outweigh any perceived less that substantial harm to this non designated Heritage Asset. In addition, although not a planning issue, the opportunity that this development would give to update the current building would be an additional benefit.



Figure 20: Proposed visualisation looking north from North Hill