

Heritage Statement

Installation of 7 No. New Air Conditioning Condenser Units to Flat Roof.

2 Highgate High Street, London, N6 5JL

1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the installation of seven new external air conditioning condenser units on the flat roof of the commercial premises at 2 Highgate High Street, London, N6 5JL.

The statement assesses the significance of the relevant heritage assets, considers the impact of the proposed works, and demonstrates that the proposal will preserve the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area in accordance with the requirements of Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework, and relevant local planning policies.

2. Identification of Heritage Assets

2.1 Highgate Conservation Area

The application site falls within the Highgate Conservation Area, designated on 21 December 1967. This is one of London's earliest conservation area designations, reflecting the exceptional historic and architectural interest of Highgate Village and its environs. The conservation area is administered jointly by the London Boroughs of Haringey and Camden, with No. 2 Highgate High Street falling on the Haringey side of the borough boundary which runs through the centre of the High Street.

The special interest of the conservation area derives from its historic character as a hilltop village with a fine mix of Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian, and Arts and Crafts architecture, its intimate village scale, the quality of its public realm, and its relationship with the surrounding open spaces of Hampstead Heath, Waterlow Park, and Highgate Cemetery. The High Street forms the historic core of the village and is the principal commercial and social thoroughfare.

The Highgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (Haringey) describes the key characteristics and sensitivities of the area and provides design guidance for development proposals.

2.2 Statutory Listing

No. 2 Highgate High Street does not appear on the National Heritage List for England as a statutorily listed building. The nearest listed buildings on the Haringey (even-numbered) side of the High Street are Nos. 24–40, which are Grade II listed. The application site is not within the curtilage of any listed building.

The applicant has also checked for local listing status. If the building appears on Haringey's draft Local Heritage List, it would be considered a non-designated heritage asset, and the impact of the proposal on its significance has been assessed proportionately.

2.3 Highgate Neighbourhood Plan

The Highgate Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2017) is a material consideration. It includes policies requiring that development proposals preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Highgate's conservation areas, respect the setting of listed buildings and other heritage assets, and preserve or enhance the open, semi-rural or village character where this is a feature of the area.

3. Assessment of Significance

The significance of the Highgate Conservation Area in the vicinity of the application site is derived primarily from:

- The architectural quality and historic interest of the High Street frontage buildings, which date predominantly from the 18th and 19th centuries and display a coherent character of scale, materials, and detailing.
- The village character of the streetscape, including the intimate scale of the High Street, the variety of traditional shopfronts, and the sense of enclosure created by the continuous building line.
- The contribution of the roofscape to the overall character of the conservation area, including pitched and slated roofs, chimneys, and the generally uncluttered skyline when viewed from the High Street and surrounding vantage points.
- The mixed commercial and residential character of the High Street, which contributes to its vitality and its enduring function as the social and economic heart of Highgate Village.

The flat roof to the rear of No. 2 is a later or secondary element of the building and is not a feature that contributes positively to the significance of the conservation area. It is not visible from the principal public views along the High Street, nor does it form part of the characterful roofscape that defines the area's special interest.

4. Assessment of Impact

4.1 Visual Impact

The proposed units would be located on the flat roof and set back from the parapet edges. Due to the height of the existing parapet wall and the position of the units, they would not be visible from street level. It is acknowledged that the units may be partially visible from higher-level viewpoints, including upper floors of some more distant neighbouring properties; however, any such views would be limited and would be seen in the context of the existing roofscape. The units would sit discreetly on the roof and would be largely screened by the parapet wall. The flat roof already accommodates four existing condenser units associated with the former restaurant use. The principle of mechanical plant on this roof is therefore already established, and the proposed installation would not introduce a new or incongruous element to the site. Accordingly, the proposed works would have no adverse impact on the visual character or appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area.

4.2 Impact on Setting

The nearest statutorily listed buildings are Nos. 24–40 Highgate High Street (Grade II), located further along the High Street. The proposed works are at roof level, are not visible from the public realm, and are sufficiently distant from the listed buildings to have no impact on their setting.

4.3 Impact on Character

The character of the Highgate Conservation Area is defined by the quality of its architecture, the village scale of the streetscape, and the mixed commercial and residential activity of the High Street. The proposed condenser units are concealed at roof level and have no bearing on any of these defining characteristics.

Importantly, the proposal is associated with the conversion of the ground floor from restaurant to office use. The former restaurant use generated significantly greater amenity impacts, including noise from extraction systems, ventilation fans, and condensers operating during extended evening and weekend hours, together with cooking odours, which had a negative effect on the residential amenity and the quiet enjoyment of the conservation area by neighbouring occupiers. The replacement of this equipment with modern, quiet, and efficient condenser units operating during daytime office hours only represents a positive change in the acoustic and olfactory environment of this part of the conservation area.

4.4 Reversibility

The condenser units are freestanding items of mechanical plant fixed to the flat roof. They are entirely reversible and could be removed without any damage to the fabric of the building or any lasting impact on the conservation area.

5. Policy Assessment

5.1 Section 72 Duty

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. For the reasons set out above, the proposed works preserve the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area. The duty under Section 72 is therefore satisfied.

5.2 National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 205 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset affected by a proposal, and to take this into account when considering the impact. Paragraph 208 states that where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits.

In this case, the proposal causes no harm to the significance of the Highgate Conservation Area. The units are not visible from the public realm, the principle of rooftop plant is already established, and the change from restaurant to office plant represents an improvement in amenity. If, contrary to this assessment, the Local Planning Authority were to identify any

residual harm, it would be at the very lowest end of 'less than substantial' and would be clearly outweighed by the benefits of providing a comfortable and functional office environment with modern, efficient, and quiet mechanical services.

5.3 Local Policy

The proposal accords with Haringey Local Plan Policy SP12 (Conservation of the Historic Environment) and the Highgate Neighbourhood Plan, which require that development preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area. The Highgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan does not identify flat roofs or rooftop plant as a sensitivity, and the proposed works are consistent with the ongoing commercial use of the High Street.

6. Conclusion

This Heritage Statement demonstrates that the proposed installation of seven new external air conditioning condensers on the flat roof of 2 Highgate High Street, will preserve the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area.

The units are concealed at roof level with no visibility from the public realm, the principle of rooftop plant is already established at the site, and the new Daikin equipment is significantly quieter and more efficient than the mechanical plant associated with the former restaurant use. The proposal operates during normal office hours only, delivering a material improvement in amenity for neighbouring residential occupiers compared to the previous extended-hours restaurant operation.

The proposal satisfies the duty under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, accords with the National Planning Policy Framework, and complies with all relevant local planning policies. Approval is respectfully requested.