

Harcourt House, 16-17 Haringey Park, London, N8

HGY/2024/0921

- 1.1 I have reviewed the information provided as part of the application including, in particular, the Heritage Impact Assessment and Design & Access Statement. This Note does not intend to replicate the historical information and background but to comment on the proposals and their impact on heritage significance.
- 1.2 Harcourt House, 16-17 Haringey Park lies within the Crouch End Conservation Area. The Council's Conservation Area Appraisal provides a summary of the character of the area. In particular it notes the following regarding Harcourt House:

Nos. 16 and 17 Haringey Park have been substantially altered to form Harcourt House, a utilitarian white painted rendered three storey block of flats with a parapet. Whilst originally of Victorian origin, the architectural interest of this building has been diminished by the replacement of gable ends and pitched roof with a continuous additional floor the removal of ornamentation and new windows. An archway through this property provides access to an early 21st century development of live-work units and flats, Nos. 1-28 Primezone Mews to the rear. Harcourt House and Primezone Mews have a neutral effect on this part of the conservation area.
- 1.3 I agree with this summary. 16-17 Haringey Park have very clearly been much altered, removing much of their original architectural style, detailing and character. Perhaps the most regrettable element has been the loss of the roof pitches to create a flat roof across the top of the building, the joining of the two, previously separate houses creating one large block and the incongruous way that the previously symmetrical pair (17&18 Haringey Park) has been lost.
- 1.4 The immediate context, especially on the northern side of Haringey Park, is one of buildings with pitched roofs, often with gables facing the street. The plain straight parapet is not characteristic either of the buildings' origins or neighbours.
- 1.5 Nevertheless, Harcourt House's Victorian origins are still loosely legible and their mass/height remains broadly in-keeping with their immediate neighbours – both the locally listed 13-15 Haringey Park and conjoined 18 Haringey Park – where the building's context is most apparent (Haringey Park is a broad 'avenue' with buildings set back and often behind mature street trees - meaning that the nature of the buildings on the northern side form a lesser part of the building's immediate visual context).

The Proposals

- 1.6 The proposals are for an asymmetrical (from front to back) single-storey extension across the top of Harcourt House.

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- 1.7 Whilst effort has been made to reduce the visual impact of the proposal from the street, the reality is that the proposal will simply further exacerbate the most incongruous element of the existing building- the horizontal conjoined mass rather than vertical emphasis of the building.
- 1.8 The proposals raise the front parapet to 17 Haringey Park to create a continuous line that will further emphasize this horizontality and remove the current stepped form. The step is important in breaking up the mass of the building and further blurs the historic reality that these were once two separate buildings. It also creates a unusually large area of blank façade above the second floor windows of 17 Haringey Park that does not 'improve' the elevational appearance.
- 1.9 The effect will create further disharmony between 17 and 18 Haringey Park – once a pair of mirrored semi-detached houses.



Figure 1: Illustrative picture that shows the importance of the step between 16 & 17 Haringey Park

- 1.10 Harcourt House is already the tallest on the northern side of Haringey Park in this part of the road and the extension will further heighten the building. This additional height is all the more inappropriate in the context of the locally listed 13-15 Haringey Park and conjoined 18 Haringey Park.
- 1.11 The extension will still be visible from various locations along Haringey Park and Sandringham Gardens – drawing further attention to the bulk created by the previous alterations to the originally two houses.
- 1.12 The asymmetrical roof form is not traditional, and the use of metal roof covering is also not typical and would be the only one of this type on Haringey Park. The window openings do not appear to relate to those below (and the use of aluminium frames is not traditional to the host building) and the Velux rooflights appear ad hoc and numerous.

- 1.13 Whilst some of the chimney stacks will be raised, making them more visible, the most prominent set – between 17&18 Haringey Park will now sit oddly low alongside the additional height created by the proposed extension (see figure 2).



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Figure 2: Extract from the Application DAS showing the ad hoc positioning of the rooflights and the uncomfortable relationship between the proposed extension and the chimneys between 17&18 Haringey Park

- 1.14 Overall, Harcourt House has been assessed by the Council as making a Neutral contribution to the conservation area. This means that it is not regarded as ‘detracting’ but that there could be scope to ‘enhance’ its contribution. It is clear that these proposals will not achieve this – rather they will accentuate the elements of the building that are incongruous, alter the proportions even further from their historic form and therefore further harm the already damaged historic relationship between 17 and 18 Haringey Park. The proposals will also prevent the likelihood of enhancements being able to be undertaken in the future.
- 1.15 In terms of the legislation governing conservation areas, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 72(1) requires decision makers with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area to pay ‘special attention...to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of that area’.
- 1.16 For the reasons given above, the proposals will Not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. It will also fail to make a ‘positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness’ as referred to in paragraph 203 of the NPPF.
- 1.17 The proposals will lead to an element of less-than-substantial harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area by virtue of the fact that it will detrimentally impact the neutral contribution that Harcourt House already makes to the conservation area.

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- 1.18 The additional height also has the potential to affect the setting of the adjacent locally listed building – altering a mass and scale that is (and always historically been) broadly similar.
- 1.19 In terms of Haringey's Local Plan the proposals fail Policy DM9: the development will fail to conserve and enhance the significance of the conservation area and does not have regard for 'the preservation or reinstatement of original or historic form, fabric, function or character of the asset...'. The proposals do not 'complement' the existing building – creating a long continuous horizontal parapet that further draws attention to the previous loss of architectural form and detailing and also creates a discordant blank area of façade at the top of 17 Haringey Park.

The author of this report is Nick Collins BSc (Hons) MSc MRICS IHBC. Nick is a Director of Portico Heritage. He has thirty years experience in the property sector, including working with KMHeritage and as a Project Director in the conservation team at Alan Baxter & Associates.

Nick spent nine years at Historic England where he was an Inspector of Historic Buildings & Areas leading a specialist team of historic building inspectors, architects, and archaeologists on a wide range of heritage projects in East & South London. Previously a Conservation Officer at the London Borough of Bromley, Nick began his career at real estate consultancy Jones Lang LaSalle as a Chartered Surveyor.

Nick is a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and sits on the Historic England London Advisory Committee.

Phone	+44 (0) 7899 895 194
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Email	nick.collins@porticoheritage.co.uk
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Website	www.porticoheritage.co.uk
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