

26 CECIL ROAD, ENFIELD

**HERITAGE STATEMENT
IN SUPPORT OF
APPLICATION FOR PLANNING
PERMISSION**



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Commission

- 1.1.1 This heritage statement have been prepared by me, Michael Copeman MSc, BA. DipArchCons, IHBC in support of the application for the redevelopment of 26 Cecil Road Enfield. I was commissioned by Peter Petrou of 26 Cecil Road Ltd. on 1 September 2020 and I visited the site on 2 September 2020.

1.2 Summary

- 1.2.1 The proposal is for the replacement of the present house of c1930 at 26 Cecil Road with a small block of flats. The site is with Enfield Town Conservation area.

2 HISTORY AND URBAN CONTEXT

2.1 Historical development

2.1.1 Enfield has early origins, as a settlement on the Roman Road north from London Silver Street. It was known from the medieval period as Enfield Green, centred around what is now The Town. By the 17th-century it had expanded along Church Street, and by the 19th-century it was a substantial town. Its growth accelerated with the arrival of the railway from London in 1849. During the late-19th-and early-20th-century it acquired the usual range of civic buildings, public parks and much of the surrounding area was developed for suburban housing. Significant open spaces remained, such as Town Park to the south-west.



Figure 1: Ordnance Survey 1896 © Landmark information Services

2.1.2 Cecil Road was created in two stages. The first part was laid out c1850, as a cul-de-sac from London Road to what was then open land just to the west of Sydney Road. It served a grid of new residential streets known as Enfield New Town, that includes the present Sydney, Raleigh and Essex Roads.

2.1.3 Cecil Road (the A110) now forms a continuous loop from south-east to north-west, bounding the largely pedestrianised historic centre. It functions as a one-way inner by-pass for east-west through-traffic. At its eastern end, it is dominated by unattractive modern developments including the Palace Gardens Shopping Centre and the Dugdale Centre, each rising to roughly six storeys. The multi-storey car parking in the Dugdale Centre to the south is linked to the shops by a pedestrian

bridge. The south side of the original (eastern) section of the road retains some two-storey late-19th-century Enfield New Town housing, with modern infill such as Enfield Free Evangelical Church (2011) and the adjacent four-storey flats.

- 2.1.4 The second section of the road, running west from Sydney Road and north to Church Road, dates from 1900. Its north side is dominated by the library, which was to have been part of a more extensive, but unrealised, civic centre. The buildings extant here are mainly public or civic, including the Baptist Church and the former Telephone Exchange. The south and west sides of the road are lined with two-storey early-20th-century housing.
- 2.1.5 Today, Cecil Road is dominated by traffic, and especially to the east, it has the character of a back-land service area to the town centre. Sarnsfield Road serves the Palace Gardens multi-storey car park. This character is only slightly relieved by the presence of street trees, and some front garden planting on the south and west sides of the road. The overall effect of later 20th century development has been to create a distinct boundary between the town centre and the residential zones and parkland to the south, the northern side of Cecil Road forming the edge of the commercial town centre.
- 2.1.6 The urban context is primarily the civic buildings such as the library, Baptist Church and the former telephone exchange and the over-bearing Palace Gardens complex, rather than the housing to the south.



Figure 2: Streetscape, Site to centre, Library to left, Telephone Exchange to right

2.2 The site

2.2.1 OS maps show that the site now containing the nos. 24, 26 and the telephone exchange was an undeveloped plot on the 1912 OS map. It was built up (including another house on the site of the car park entrance in Sarnsfield Road) by 1935.



Figure 3: Ordnance Survey 1913 © Landmark information Services

2.2.2 The proposed development site (no. 26) and its neighbour, no. 24 on the corner of Sarnsfield Road are anomalous, as the only remaining small-scale houses on the north side of the road (albeit partly in commercial use today). No. 24 appears to be of a slightly later date than no. 26. It has applied 'timber-framing' in a crude neo-vernacular style typical of 1930s suburbia, now somewhat out-of-place. The eastern bay is an extension. It retains most of its front garden, although the dwarf wall to the street may be later. There is nothing to suggest that the two properties are part of the same development or a conscious urban plan, and they have little in common apart from their scale and date.

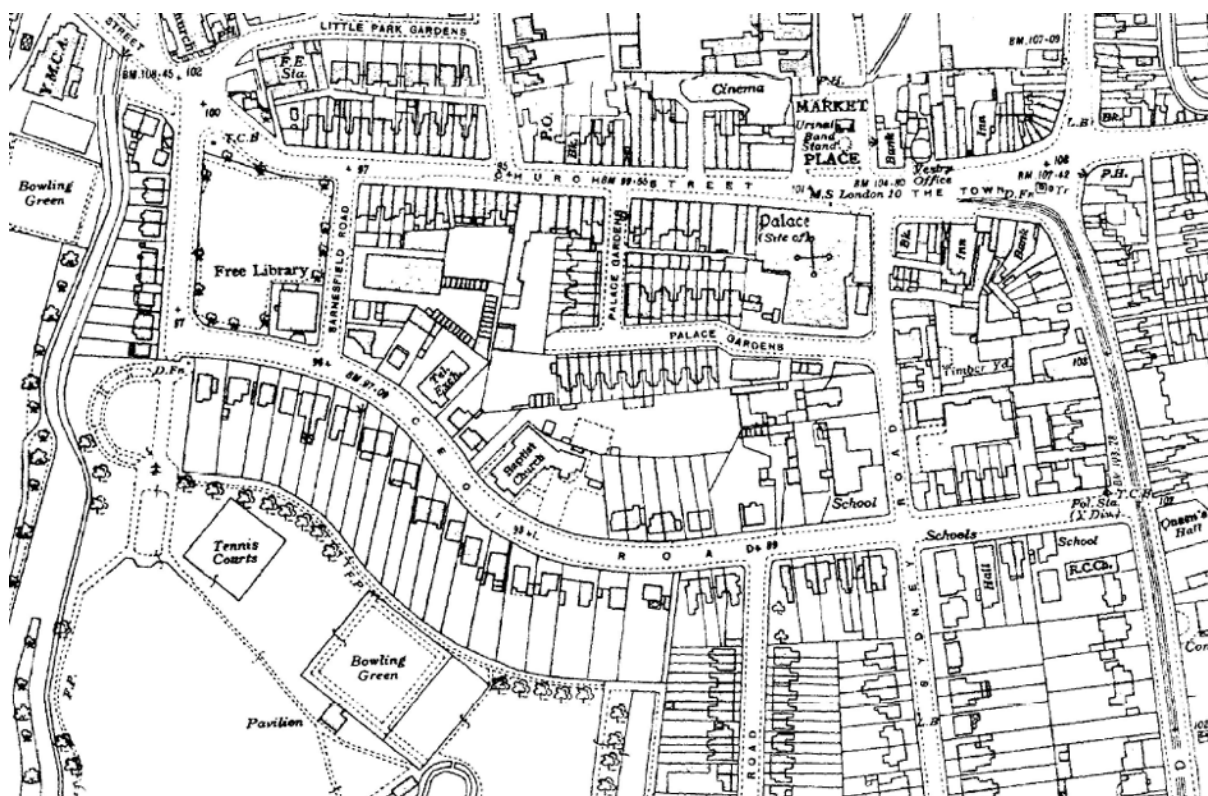


Figure 4: Ordnance Survey 1935 © Landmark information Services

2.2.3 26 Cecil Road is a detached house of c1920-30. As first built, it appears to have been almost square in plan, two bays wide, including the extant front entrance and bow window. It seems to have been brick-faced to the ground floor with the extant rough-cast render to the first floor from the outset. The eastern bay is a post-1945 extension, and one or more chimneys were presumably removed when it was added. The elevations of the original section are largely primary to eaves level. The dormers, rear lean-to extension and conservatory are modern. The front garden has been hard-surfaced for parking but the section of garden wall in brick and slag rubble is probably primary. The house has no special architectural or historic features.



Figure 5: 26 Cecil Road from south-east

2.3 Heritage significance & designations

- 2.3.1 Cecil Road is within the central core of Enfield Town Conservation Area, but makes a limited contribution to its special character or appearance. The library is a good example of its type in the neo-Baroque Style. It is locally listed. Its contemporary-style 2010 extension is identified as a landmark building in the conservation area appraisal. The modern Free Evangelical Church is locally listed; as are Town Park, its gates and Library Green open spaces. The mid-late 19th-century 'Enfield New Town' houses opposite it on the south side of the road are identified as making a positive contribution to the conservation area.
- 2.3.2 No. 26, is (with no. 24) categorised in the Council's 2015 *Enfield Town Conservation Area Appraisal* (see Fig. 6) as making a 'neutral' contribution to the conservation area; in other words they have no intrinsic heritage significance. The inter-war houses on the west side of the road, the Baptist Church (1925) and the former Telephone Exchange (c1920s) are also identified as 'neutral'. Although it is not included in the 2018 local list, the Baptist Church is a building of good quality that may be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset. The former Telephone Exchange is architecturally unexceptional, but has a simple neo-Georgian character that echoes that of the library. The Palace Gardens Shopping Centre and car park, and the inter-war houses opposite the Baptist Church are categorised as having a 'negative' impact on the area.

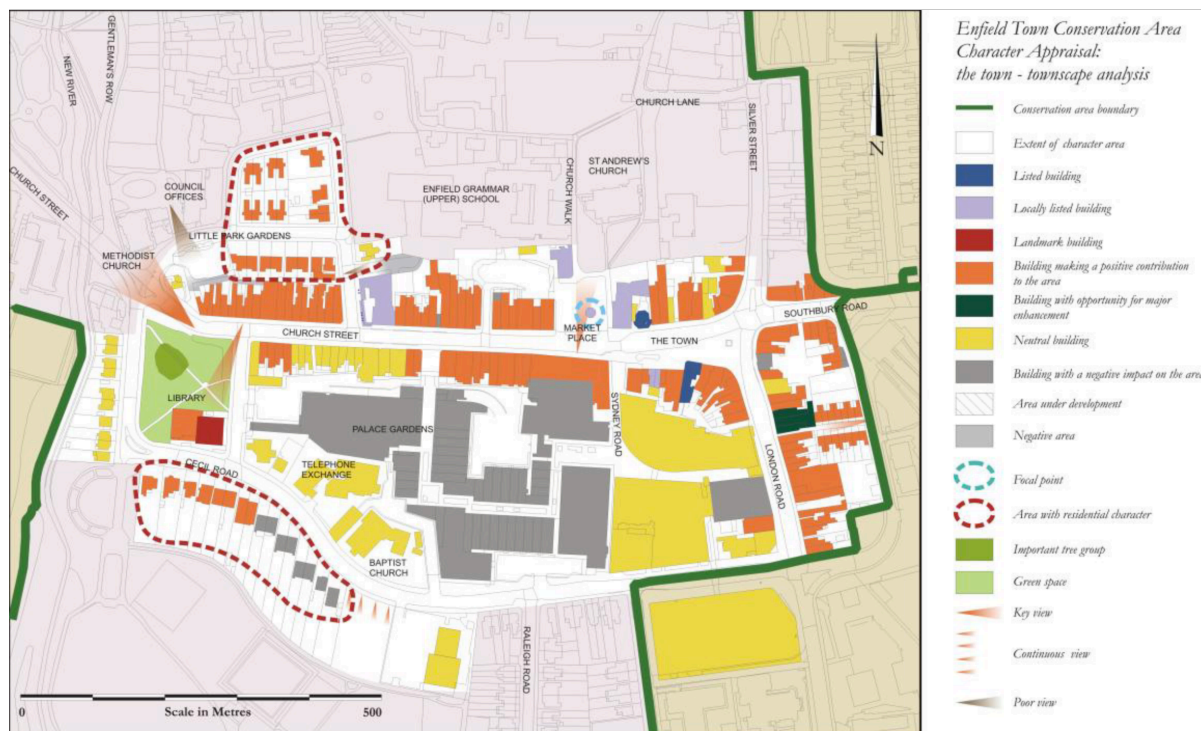


Figure 6: Townscape analysis map reproduced from Enfield Town Conservation Area Appraisal (2015) (LBE)

2.3.3 The conservation area appraisal notes that many of the houses in Cecil Road have ‘suffered damaging alterations, and have front gardens poorly converted to parking areas’. It also notes that the houses at the west and south-west end of the road ‘provide the backdrop to a fine view across Library Green from Church Street, and a setting for the Baptist church and the library... it is only at the western end where the road narrows that its attractive domestic character is fully evident... the street trees have an important role in moderating the effects of heavy traffic.’ The view referred to is shown in the conservation area appraisal as southwards from the northern side of Library Green. 26 Cecil Road is not visible from that location. In views southwards along Cecil Road, the curve of the street, the street trees and the bulk of the former Telephone Exchange mean that nos. 24 and 26 contribute very little to the long view of the Baptist Church. The development site does not appear in any other key views identified in the CA appraisal, such as those from Town Park. It has a limited presence in the streetscape. It forms a small part of the setting of the library in views from north and south.

2.4 Archaeology

2.4.1 The area surrounding Enfield town centre is an Area of Archaeological Priority. As 26 Cecil Road is a previously developed site, its redevelopment is unlikely to have high archeological potential but this would be evaluated as part of any planning application.



Figure 7: 26 Cecil Road from north-east

2.5 Summary of heritage significance

- 2.5.1 The existing building at 26 Cecil Road is not of heritage significance. Its redevelopment would not affect any statutorily listed buildings or their settings. The site has little heritage significance as part of the conservation area. It contributes to a limited extent to the setting of the locally listed library and Free Evangelical Church. Its impact on these buildings will be a consideration in determining the acceptability of new development on the site.

3 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 National policy and guidance

- 3.1.1 The statutory basis for assessment of development affecting listed buildings or conservation areas is set out in the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*. This states that the planning authority should pay special attention to ‘the desirability of preserving or enhancing the special character or appearance of that area.’
- 3.1.2 The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019) sets out national planning policy for the conservation of historic built environment. Its over-arching principle is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para. 11). The key provisions in relation to developments affecting heritage assets are that their significance (including the contribution made by their setting) should be fully understood (paras. 189-192); that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated

heritage assets (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be) (para. 193); that substantial harm to heritage significance should be justified (paras. 194, 195); that less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of a development (para. 196). Additionally ‘the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account... [and] a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm’ (para. 197).

- 3.1.3 NPPF is supported, but its provisions are not altered, by the *Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide* (2014). Relevant national guidance includes *Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management*, (Historic England Advice Note 1, 2016), and *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3, 2017). These principles are applied to individual conservation areas on the basis of conservation area character appraisals and management plans; in this case the *Enfield Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan* (2015).

3.2 Local policy and guidance

- 3.2.1 The London regional planning framework is the *London Plan* (2021). Key policies are Policy D3 (Optimising site capacity through the design-led approach) which states that development should: ‘enhance local context by delivering buildings and spaces that positively respond to local distinctiveness through their layout, orientation, scale, appearance and shape, with due regard to existing and emerging street hierarchy, building types, forms and proportions. ...’ and ‘respond to the existing character of a place by identifying the special and valued features and characteristics that are unique to the locality and respect, enhance and utilise the heritage assets and architectural features that contribute towards the local character. Policy HC1 (Heritage conservation and growth) states that ‘Development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets’ significance and appreciation within their surroundings.’ Also relevant is Policy H2 (Small sites) which states that ‘Boroughs should pro-actively support well-designed new homes on small sites (below 0.25 hectares in size)’.
- 3.2.2 Current local planning policy is contained in the Council’s *Core Strategy* (2010) and the *Development Management Document* (2014). Enfield Core Policy 31 *Built and Landscape Heritage*: states that: ‘The Council will implement national and regional policies and work with partners (including landowners, agencies, public organisations and the community) to pro-actively preserve and enhance all of the Borough’s heritage assets’, and seeks to ensure that: ‘Development [s]... that impact on heritage assets have regard to their special character and are based on an understanding of their context’, and that ‘proposals within or affecting the setting of heritage assets will be required to include thorough site analysis and character appraisal which explicitly demonstrates how the proposals will respect and enhance the asset’.

- 3.2.3 LB Enfield's key *Development Management Policies* include DMD 44 (Conserving and Enhancing Heritage Assets), which requires that: 'The design, materials and detailing of development affecting heritage assets or their setting should preserve the asset in a manner appropriate to its significance.' The Council's design policies DMD37 *Achieving High Quality and Design-Led Development* and DMD40 *Ground Floor Frontages* are also relevant here. DMD 40 notes that ground floor frontages should 'respect the rhythm, style and proportions of the building/group of buildings of which they form a part...' The Council has recently adopted a revised *Heritage Strategy* (2019) that includes a series of broad principles aimed at ensuring that the planning system should conserve and enhance the significance of the Borough's heritage assets.
- 3.2.4 The *Enfield Characterisation Study* (2011) notes that the areas urban centres are 'essentially inward-looking, their main aim is to provide an attractive, safe environment away from the perceived negative impact of traffic... [which] means that roads around both Edmonton Green and Enfield centres feel rather barren. Cecil Road in Enfield is defined on its northern side by rear elevations and service yards, although this is softened by generous planting.'
- 3.2.5 The *Enfield Town Centre Framework Masterplan* (2018) recognises the negative impact of traffic on Cecil Road, and the way in which this creates a barrier between the town centre and Town Park. One of its key recommendations under development principles for the area is the creation of 'a stronger frontage along Cecil Road through the redevelopment of sites on the southern side of the shopping centre' (p.72); and that 'Opportunities to improve the key access points to the centre should be taken, with scope to improve existing entrances from Church Street and Cecil Road, but also create new entrances from Cecil Road, connecting through to Town Park' (p.75). The former telephone exchange is identified as a potential development site, with housing as the preferred use, retaining the existing exchange combined with some new building.

4 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Background

- 4.1.1 The proposal is for a four-storey block of flats, to replace the existing house at 26 Cecil Road. The rationale for the proposed design is explained in detail in the *Design and Access Statement* submitted with the application
- 4.1.2 The planning policy context, combined with the poor quality of the existing building and its immediate setting, indicate that the site has good potential for redevelopment, and provides an opportunity to enhance the townscape in this part of the conservation area. We do not believe that the present building has sufficient architectural or historic merit to justify its retention, subject to an acceptable replacement.

4.2 Assessment against policy

- 4.2.1 The proposal is a sustainable development that will cause no harm to the surrounding heritage assets. Therefore it meets the two overarching criteria of NPPF. The design has been carefully developed to reflect the broadly contextual approach encouraged in the Council's *Development Management Document*, (DMD) Section 6. It has evolved from the understanding of the physical and historic context of the site set out in the preceding sections of this report.
- 4.2.2 The area has no dominant historic or locally distinctive architectural character that would determine style of a new building. Therefore a broadly contemporary architectural approach has been adopted, as for the library extension (designed by the same architects as the current proposal), the nearby church and new flats. This reflects the guidance of DMD para. 6.5.5 that 'where uniform style is not necessary to conserve the significance of the asset (for example in a conservation area featuring development representing a number of ages and styles), a contemporary response that nevertheless respects aspects of the design, form and/or materials of the asset may be appropriate to provide a clear distinction between new and old.' Cecil Road epitomises the sort of conservation area context to which the guidance refers.
- 4.2.3 In line with DMD 37 and *Enfield Town Centre Framework Masterplan*, the new building will- intentionally- be slightly more prominent in the streetscape than the present building. It is intended to be a more sympathetic part of the setting of the library and other locally listed buildings nearby than the present house, and to strengthen the character and appearance of what is currently a fragmented streetscape. The new building will have a semi-formal relationship with the streetscape. The scale and proportions of its street frontage acknowledge the character of the site as an urban 'edge'.
- 4.2.4 It has been assumed that any redevelopment of the former Telephone Exchange site is likely to retain the existing building, and the new building will be slightly lower than the existing Telephone Exchange, 'mediating' between it and the 1912 Library. This height is also low enough not to overwhelm the retained no. 24, but at the same time, it is hoped, provides a reasonable precedent should the site be redeveloped in the future.
- 4.2.5 In line with DMD 40, the new building has been sited well back from the pavement, allowing for a slightly deeper forecourt than exists at present, but generally maintaining the established building line. The existing mature trees on the street frontage will be protected and retained. The new building will extend slightly further into what is now the rear garden, an area that is tightly enclosed and overshadowed by the adjoining buildings. The garden does not contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area, and creating a slight larger forecourt/front garden offers a greater enhancement to the area than would result from simply preserving the space to the rear of the block.

- 4.2.6 In line with DMD 44, the front elevation will have traditional proportions, echoing those of the Telephone Exchange and Library. Red brick is a predominant material in the area and has been chosen so that the new building is in keeping with its neighbours. The elevation will be articulated through relief (including the deep window reveals) and subtle brick detailing.
- 4.2.7 With reference to DMD para. 6.5.4, the proposed building will not form part of any key views identified in the conservation area appraisal but its appearance in townscape views has been carefully considered. It is possible, in winter at least, that the roof of the block may be glimpsed from Town Park, to the south. From this direction it will be in the foreground of the modern shopping centre, and to the extent that it enlivens this view, it may be regarded as an enhancement. In views of the shopping centre from the south side of Cecil Road, the new block would screen the unprepossessing elevation of the car park. In views east and west along Cecil Road the new building would become one of a varied series of buildings seen between street trees; following the gentle curve of the road and marking the edge of the town centre.
- 4.2.8 The proposed development will help to strengthen the frontage along Cecil Road, in line with the recommendations of the *Enfield Town Centre Framework Masterplan*.

4.3 Conclusion

- 4.3.1 The building to be demolished does not contribute positively to the conservation area, and therefore no harm to heritage significance will result from its demolition. The proposed new building will be of high architectural quality, and carefully sited to fit discreetly into the existing town- and street-scape, reinforcing positive features of the area, and screening negative ones. It will provide much-needed, high quality, new housing. It conforms to the relevant national and local planning policies. The design is a sensitive, contemporary response to best elements of its context, that will preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.