

HERITAGE STATEMENT



20 Wilton Street London Street SW1 7AX

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APPENDIX: Photographs

Executive Summary

1. Wilton Street forms a secondary street within the Belgravia Conservation Area linking Grosvenor Place with Upper Belgrave Street. No.20 Wilton Street is a grade II listed building, which forms part of a short terrace of houses on the south side, completed in the mid-1820s as a unified composition of dwellings to the designs of Seth Smith, one of the principal builder / developers of Belgravia. Internally the house has little historic value and the original decorative details and features have been removed through previous internal alterations and refurbishments. Largely, the property internally is fitted out with modern materials and construction methods. Externally the rear of the terrace is a view of picturesque diversity with a whole series of extensions erected over the past two hundred years using modern materials and construction methods.
2. The current application is for the replacement of defective materials consisting timber framed doors to the rear of the property at ground floor level along with cast iron balustrading to the parapet wall. The existing items have been removed and the building made water-tight whilst approval is sought. The doors will be replaced with new high-performance aluminum, edge to edge glazed doors within the existing openings. Installation of new toughened glass balustrading to top of existing parapet wall.
3. The proposal accords with all relevant national, regional and local heritage policies and guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework and English Heritage's *Conservation Principles and Guidance on London Terrace Houses 1660-1860*. It is directly in line with the Council's policies set out in its Local Plan Strategic Policies and Unitary Development Plan, as well as detailed Council guidance contained in *The Repair and Alteration of Listed Buildings*. It complies fully with the checklist of items for the consideration of alterations to listed buildings set out in paragraph 10.133 of the UDP and the Council's policies for rear extensions.

1.0 The Brief

- 1.1 AMPM Design Ltd has been appointed by Martin Saffa, the principal main contractor at 20 Wilton Street, to provide historic buildings advice and guidance on proposals for the repair and reinstatement of doors & balustrading at the ground floor level.
- 1.2 The report addresses the heritage and design issues of the proposals.

2.0 The Proposals

- 2.1 The proposals involve installation of new aluminum framed hi-performance bi-folding doors with a unique edge to edge glass detail to provide an unobstructed glazed elevation, installed within the large existing opening overlooking the ground floor garden terrace. The single sized door opening adjacent the main opening will be installed with a new aluminum framed single door to match the bi-fold doors. The existing guardrails on the parapet wall are to be replaced with 12mm thick frameless toughened glass balustrading that is set within a proprietary concealed fixing channel.
- 2.2 The alterations are confined solely to the rear ground floor level and terrace area.

3.0 The Site and its Context

- 3.1 Belgravia is an important examples of late Georgian town planning in London. In 1824 the builder / speculator Thomas Cubitt reached an agreement with the Grosvenor Estate to lease nineteen acres to the south of what is now Belgrave Square, and proceeded to prepare, drain and level the land for residential development. Construction began in Belgrave Square in 1826 to the designs of George Basevi and soon proceeded rapidly across the area, largely overseen by Cubitt, but with significant components devolved to other speculative builders including Seth Smith, Thomas Cundy II and Joseph Cundy. By the mid-19th century the area had been developed in to a highly-fashionable residential enclave in close proximity to Buckingham Palace.

With the opening of Victoria Station in 1863, there was a huge increase in traffic, and with the expiry of the leases of over two hundred houses facing Grosvenor Place, the opportunity was taken to widen and rebuild Grosvenor Place.

- 3.2 Wilton Street forms one of a series of short, secondary streets on the west side of Grosvenor Place. Commenced in 1813, by the mid-1820s the houses were co-ordinated into two coherent compositions. This is most evident on the south side, designed by Seth Smith, where the centre property is raised an extra storey, and the centre and end properties are set forward; the end properties are each three window bays wide with Greek pedimented attic blocks and laurel wreath decoration to the entablatures.
- 3.3 20 Wilton Street is a grade II listed building, which was included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest on 1 December 1987. It stands close to the western end of the south terrace and comprises an early 19th century house typical of the period. Faced in yellow London stock brick with a stucco ground floor, it is two window bays wide and four storeys high over a basement with a traditionally-detailed, modern mansard roof extension. The windows are recessed in plain plastered reveals, and the sashes subdivided by glazing bars with continuous wrought iron balconies at first floor level. Nos 17, 18 21 and 22 have round headed entrances and fanlights. Cast iron railings with spearhead finials enclose the front basement area.
- 3.4 Internally the house appears to have been modernised, however access to the entire house was not available at the time of writing this report. Further checks on the planning history for the site did not reveal any past planning applications on the Westminster Council Planning site. The plan form can still be discerned, however, there is little historic value of internal finishes as most are modern. The current proposals relate solely to minor alterations to the existing ground floor rear extension.

3.5 Belgravia Conservation Area was designated in 1968 and extended subsequently.

3.6 The rear of the south side terrace has no consistency in design language or use of materials. Indeed, an integral part of its character is its very diversity, which has arisen over the past two hundred years with different building techniques and stucco brick extensions at all levels, as well as numerous conservatories, which produce a varied but picturesque heterogeneity

4.0 Planning Policies and Guidance

4.1 By virtue of Section 72 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* local planning authorities have a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework was issued in March 2012 by the Department of Communities and Local Government and updated on 19 June 2019. It sets out the government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. It reiterates the statutory test that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.3 Paragraph 131 sets out that: *"in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness"*

- 4.4 The government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Paragraph 127c affirms that developments should be

“...sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.”

- 4.5 Weighing up proposals affecting the significance of a heritage asset requires sound decision-making based on a proper understanding of the relative heritage impacts arising from a scheme, and how they should be weighed against each other and other material planning considerations. Paragraphs 52 and 53 of English Heritage’s *Good Practice Advice in Planning 2 (GPA2)* highlight that *‘sustainable development can involve seeking positive improvements in the quality of the historic built environment. These include opportunities to enhance assets and their settings and local distinctiveness.’* They emphasise that *‘listed buildings may often have extensions or other alterations that have a negative impact on their significance’*.

- 4.6 Significance is a catch-all term to embrace all the qualities that form a heritage asset. It is the value of the heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from an asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. English Heritage’s *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* offers a more comprehensive approach to analysing significance by identifying four broad types of heritage value that an asset might hold – historical, aesthetic, communal and evidential value. It sets out a recommended approach for assessing significance, and how to apply the principles and policies in practice. The *Principles* offer a nationally-recognised methodology for analysing significance with some degree of objectivity, and its philosophy and reasoning subsequently informed the government’s approach in the NPPF. An

assessment of the proposals against each broad category of heritage value is set out below.

- 4.7 Decisions about change must balance the heritage values of what exists now against the potential benefits and disbenefits of any proposed intervention. Paragraph 84 of Conservation Principles stresses that *“change to a significant place is inevitable ... it is only harmful if (and to the extent that) significance is eroded”*. Paragraph 138 advises that new work or alteration to a significant place should normally be acceptable if *‘the proposal would not materially harm the values of the place...’*. Paragraph 141 emphasises that *‘quality of design, materials, detailing and execution is obviously essential in places of established value’*. Paragraph 143 emphasises: *“there are no rules for achieving quality of design in new work, although a clear and coherent relationship of all the parts to the whole, as well as to the setting in to which the new work is introduced is essential. This neither implies nor precludes working in traditional or new ways, but will normally involve respecting the values established through an assessment of the significance of the place.”* The document concludes (paragraph 163) *“every reasonable effort should be made to eliminate or minimise adverse impacts on significant places ...*

- 4.8 Policy 7.8 (Heritage Assets and Archaeology) sets out advice on the determination of planning applications affecting heritage assets:

Planning Decisions

- C. *Development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.*
- D. *Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.*
- E. *New development should make provision for the protection of archaeological resources, landscapes and significant memorials...*

4.9 Westminster City Council's policies are contained in its Unitary Development Plan, which was adopted on 24 January 2007. Parts were 'saved' by the Secretary of State on 24 January 2010, and some were replaced by the Westminster Local Plan: Strategic Policies adopted in November 2013. On 9 November 2016, the Council formally adopted the current version of the Westminster City Plan. Both documents recognize the outstanding significance of Westminster's remarkable heritage of historic buildings and conservation areas. There are robust policies in place to secure their effective management and conservation, in particular Strategic Policy S25 and DES 10 of the UDP. Guidance on development affecting listed buildings is set out in paragraph 10.133 of the UDP. This explains that in considering applications for development affecting listed buildings, the City Council will seek to ensure that:

- a) there is no loss of important historic fabric*
- b) the overall effect of a proposal is not detrimental to the architectural or historic integrity or detailing of the building*
- c) the alterations are entirely in accordance with the period, style and detailing of the original building, or with later alterations of architectural or historic interest*
- d) existing detailing and important later additional features of the building will be preserved, repaired or, if missing, replaced*
- e) all works are designed in a correct scholarly manner*
- f) the alterations or extensions relate sensitively to the original building*
- g) the historic roof structure is preserved in situ and will apply sustainable design principles which do not conflict with the above.*

In addition, detailed guidance on works to listed buildings is set out in *The Repair and Alteration of Listed Buildings* published in 1996.

- 4.10 Westminster City Council's policies are '*designed to balance conservation and modern convenience, and to ensure that new development is of the highest quality and sits happily in its surroundings.*' (10.1 UDP). Policy DES 5 relates to alterations and extensions and states that:

- (A) *Permission will generally be granted for development involving the extension or alteration of buildings in the following circumstances:*
- 1) *where it is confined to the rear of the existing building*
 - 2) *where it does not visually dominate the existing building*
 - 3) *if it is in scale with the existing building and its immediate surroundings*
 - 4) *if its design reflects the style and details of the existing building*
 - 5) *if the use of external materials is consistent with that of the existing building*
 - 6) *where any necessary equipment, plant, pipework, ducting or other apparatus is enclosed within the external building envelope, if reasonably practicable ...*

5.0 Assessment against Heritage Value

- 5.1 Before considering intervention to an historic place, it is important to consider the inter-related heritage values, which may be attached to it. *Evidential Value* derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity. In this case, given the extent of prior reconstruction and change, there is little evidential value other than the overall group value of the house and its contribution to understanding of the development of the area.

- 5.2 *Historical Value* derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. The historical value of the house is limited by the extent of prior alterations. It has no known associational significance related to past occupiers, but nonetheless is an important work by Seth Smith, a notable builder / developer of Belgravia, and is an important component of the history of the area when viewed from the street.

- 5.3 The primary importance of the house is its aesthetic value. *Aesthetic Value* can be defined as the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. No 20 is a typical, early 19th century house which forms part of a wider terrace with group value forming part of a secondary street within the area. Its intrinsic special interest as a listed building has been impaired by the past re-modelling of the interior, the extensive reconstruction of the rear wall, and the loss of its original internal decorative features. While the front of the terrace forms a consistent planned composition by one of the principal architects of the development of Belgravia and helps to define the character of the eastern edge of Belgravia, an important part of its wider character is the picturesque diversity of the rear of the terrace with extensions and conservatories of different forms and dates.
- 5.4 The house possesses limited *communal value* - primarily its contribution to the wider setting of the Belgravia Conservation Area.
- 5.5 In weighing up the heritage values of a place, and discussing the impact of proposals upon these values, an objective assessment is needed of the degree of harm, if any, that such proposals will confer. In this case, the proposals are confined entirely to minor alterations to the rear extension. There is no demonstrable harm to the heritage values of the place or the picturesque diversity of the rear of the terrace. Indeed, some modest visual benefits are conferred through the removal of the enclosing guard rails and replacement with glass that provides unobstructed views from the rear garden looking back towards the house.

6.0 Consideration

- 6.1 The proposed works are entirely in accordance with the objectives of national, regional and local planning policy and guidance. The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises that when assessing the alteration of a listed building local authorities are required to consider fully the relative heritage impacts arising from a scheme and to weigh them carefully against each other and other material planning considerations. As a minor alteration to a relatively modern extension to the building, there is no harm caused to any aspect of its significance as a listed building, nor to the wider group of which it forms part, nor to the conservation area.
- 6.2 The proposal involves the replacement of existing exterior doors to the rear of the property along with replacement of some existing cast iron guarding at ground level, and thus causes no harm to the fabric or significance of the listed building. On both sides of the property the planned changes are contained entirely behind extensions on the adjacent properties of No21 & No 19. There is no visual impact on views from any public area, including the rear gardens.
- 6.3 A proposed scheme should sustain or enhance the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting. In this the works are minimal and can almost be described as a like for like materials with a modern take. The replacement of these elements, constrained by the proportions of the existing openings do not present any harm to the building, further replication of the height and width of the replaced elements should go unnoticed from that of the original and should read as it did before the remedial works. By removing defective past alterations, the significance of the asset and its special architectural and historic interest as a listed building are modestly enhanced.

- 6.4 When assessing change to significant buildings and places local authorities must balance their current heritage values against the benefits and disbenefits of any proposed intervention. *Conservation Principles* emphasises that change is only harmful where significance is eroded. In this case, there is no harm to the significance of the heritage asset and modest visual benefits, which will enhance its wider setting.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposed alterations causes no demonstrable harm to the heritage values or significance of the listed building, the wider terrace, or the character or appearance of the Belgravia conservation area. It accords with all relevant national, regional and local planning policies and guidance, including English Heritage's *Conservation Principles*, and the Council's own policies for listed buildings and extensions.

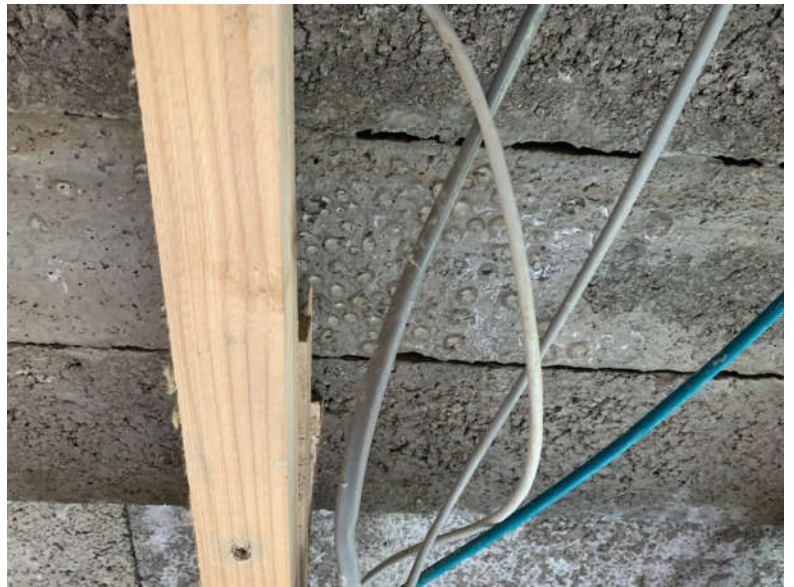
Robert McCarthy

AMPM Design Ltd

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Existing doors, terrace & guard rail at ground floor level
(Removed to allow for essential maintenance and repair works to make the building
water tight.)



Water damage to interior at both lower ground & ground floor

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