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**44 Abbey Gardens**  
**St John's Wood London**  
**Heritage Statement**  
April 2022

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## 1.1 Reasons for the Study

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of the Full Planning Approval and Listed Building Consent Application for minor remodelling and general refurbishment work to the lower ground floor at 44 Abbey Gardens, in the St John's Wood Conservation Area, and is also subject to an Article 4 Direction controlling any development affecting the external appearance of the building. The purpose of this report is to provide an explanation of the minor alterations required to the existing fabric, and to state the need for the changes.

The Heritage Statement will demonstrate that the application proposal for the alterations to the listed building is entirely appropriate and in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Furthermore, the minor alterations proposed are entirely appropriate and preserve the character and appearance of the existing building, with no material negative impacts on the site, neighbours, or the wider area in relation to amenity and the function of the Conservation area.

In Summary the minor alterations include:

- Re-instate passage between hallway and rear of the house.
- Section of wall removed between front and rear rooms to create a larger family kitchen.
- Existing opening between kitchen and conservatory widened marginally.
- Existing kitchen door to corridor widened.
- Below stairs WC introduced with soil pipe connected to main sewer and air extract to outside.
- Front garden, one wall of raised plant bed removed to create edge to existing hard landscaping.

## 1.2 Approach and Methodology

A Heritage Statement is a document which provides an assessment of the impact of a set of proposals on the heritage interest and values of a building or site. A detailed account of the site's history and development is produced, which is then used to establish a robust assessment of its significance. The Heritage Statement also assesses the proposed works in accordance with the statutory tests provided in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990.

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (NPPF) to support the planning application. It should be read in accordance with the architectural plans and other supporting documents, which form this application.

This report has been compiled by Wai Piu Wong MA (Cantab) ARB RIBA and is based on a site visits carried out in March 2022 and desk based research.

## 1.2 Statement of Need

44 Abbey Gardens is a single dwelling house. There is evidence that there has been some major internal and external alterations over the recent decades. In the 1980's planning was approved to convert the single house into a lower ground floor flat, a raised ground floor flat and a first and second floor maisonette. We do not know if this material change of use was enacted, even if informally, but 15 years later planning was approved for internal alterations possibly to re-instate back to a single dwelling house.

Alterations in 1998 included a lower ground floor rear conservatory and storeroom.

For over 20 years there have been no major works to the building and is now in need of some general refurbishment work and minor alterations to create a usable family home, including a larger family kitchen that is easily accessible to the rear garden. Similarly a lower ground floor will allow for an accessible WC adjacent to the external spaces.

Many of the houses on Abbey Gardens have already made this alteration making the two lower ground floor spaces interconnected and taking the opportunity to create spaces suitable for contemporary family living.



Rear elevation showing rear conservatory added in 1998



## 2.1 The Site, 44 Abbey Gardens, NW8

St John's Wood is a neighbourhood in the City of Westminster, Traditionally the northern part of the ancient parish and Metropolitan Borough of Marylebone, it extends east to west from Regent's Park and Primrose Hill to Edgware Road, with the Swiss Cottage area of Hampstead to the north and Lisson Grove to the south.

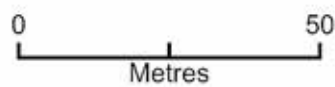
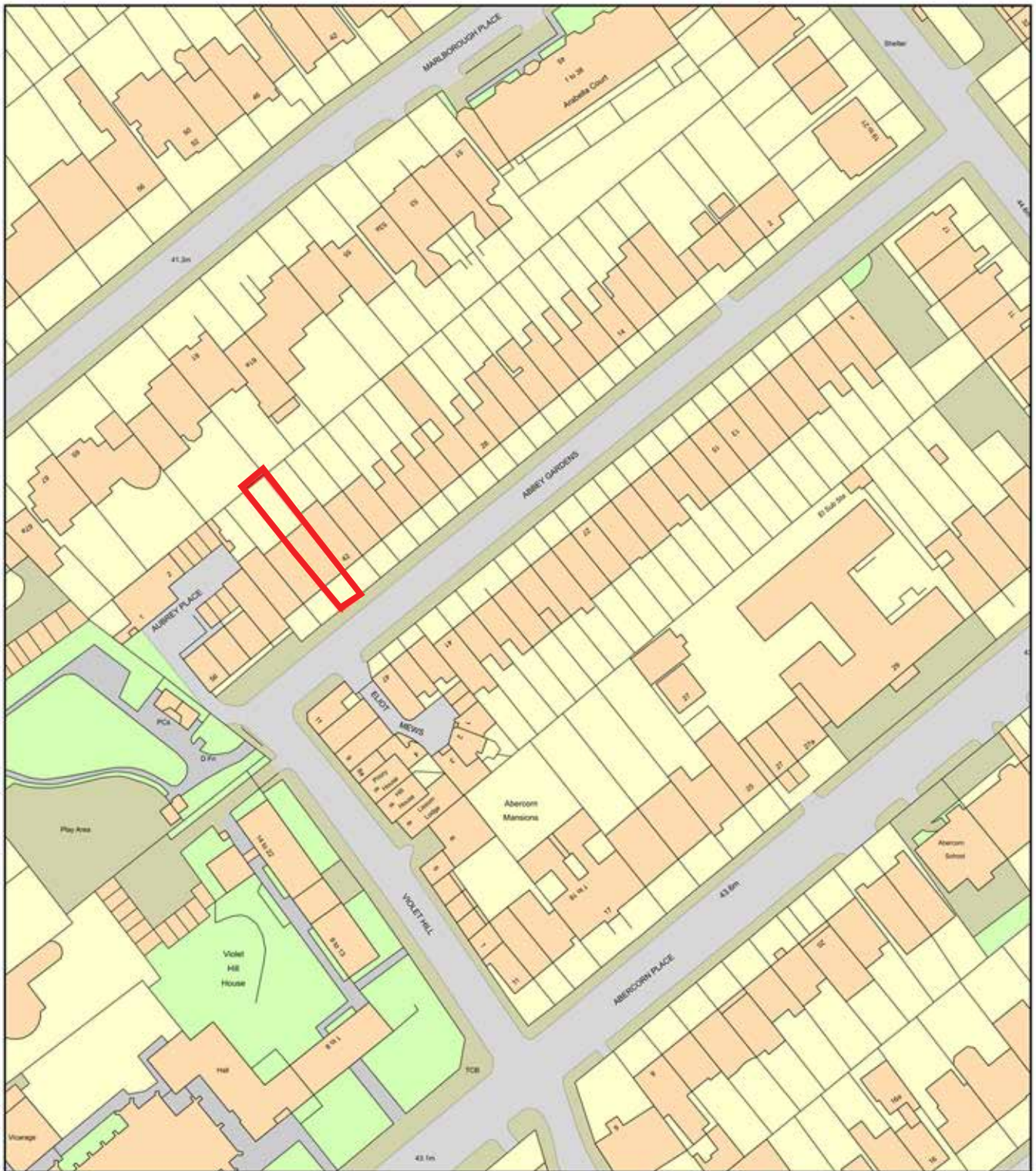
Abbey Gardens lies to the west of the St John's Wood Conservation Area, running off Abbey Road adjacent to Violet Hill Gardens. No. 44 Abbey Gardens forms a terrace of buildings constructed circa 1860, that is Grade II listed.

The proposed alterations that forms the basis of this Heritage Statement and alters the fabric of the existing house is limited to the lower ground floor and the hard landscaping edging the off-street parking at the front.



Aerial photograph of application site, scale approx. 1:1250

### 2.2 Location Plan, Scale 1:1250





### 3.1 Context, Birdseye View



Birds eye view looking from the South



Birds eye view of rear gardens looking from the north



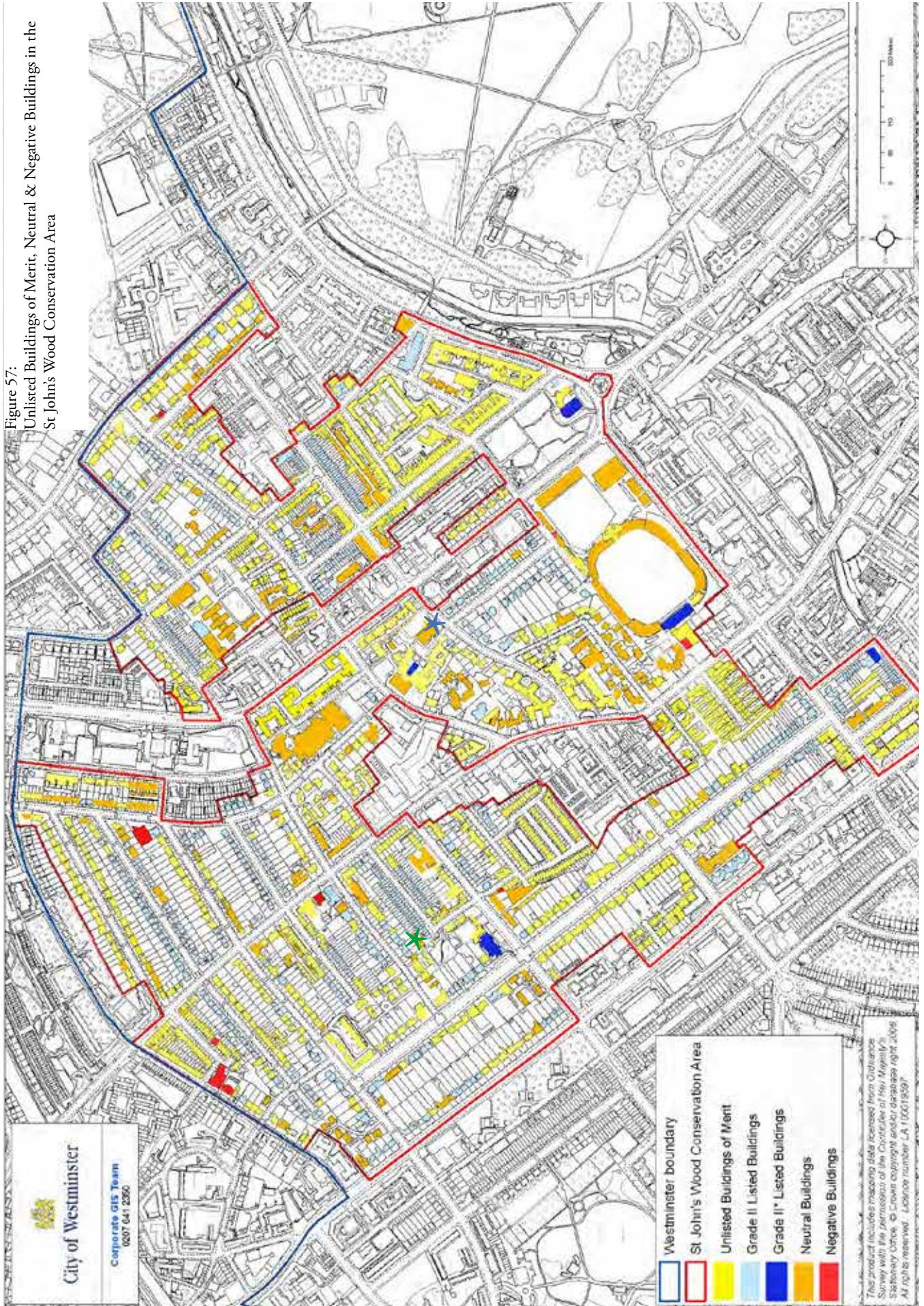


Figure 57:  
Unlisted Buildings of Merit, Neutral & Negative Buildings in the  
St John's Wood Conservation Area

★ 44 Abbey Gardens site

No Scale

3.2 St John's Wood Conservation Area Map and Listed Buildings,  
Map extracted from St John's Wood Conservation Area Audit, 2008



## 4.0 Heritage Assets

The NPPF requires that all heritage assets affected by a proposed development are identified and their significance, which includes setting, is described. The level of harm the proposed works will have to the identified heritage assets also need to be determined within the context of a Heritage Statement.

This section of the document identifies the principal heritage assets, which are St John's Wood Conservation Area and Nos 8 to 48 Abbey Gardens which is Grade II listed, and which our building forms part of.

### 4.1 St John's Wood Conservation Area

Conservation Areas are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Act requires authorities to designate and form policies to protect areas of special architectural and historic merit. The site lies within the St John's Wood Conservation Area, which was first designated in 1967, and was extended in 1979 and 2007. It is covered by the St John's Wood Conservation Area Audit, which was adopted in 2008, and provides an appraisal of the historic context and key features of the Conservation Area.

Much of the below is quoted from the St John's Wood Conservation Area Audit, 2008.

In general St John's Wood was originally envisaged as an Arcadian suburb, St John's Wood Conservation Area today retains its leafy, residential character where trees and shrubs belie the reality of its urban location.

Over most of the area, the density of buildings remains much lower than in many Westminster locations, with a mixture of detached, semi-detached and terraced properties set in generous gardens and along a network of wide, tree-lined streets. The townscape itself retains a generally consistent and domestic scale and there are few buildings which can properly be regarded as landmarks.

There are also groups of terraced houses, for example in Alma Square and Hamilton Gardens, in Belgrave Gardens and Boundary Road, and particularly grand terraces in Abbey Gardens. These dwellings are generally tightly planned, on modest plots with frontages in the region of 5.5m and limited - or indeed no - front gardens. Streets are generally narrower and there is a greater sense of enclosure.

The later terraces at Abbey Gardens date from the 1860s and are more conventional mid-Victorian buildings. These three storey yellow brick buildings are half stuccoed with cast iron balconies supported on pillars and a pronounced cornice. Windows are embellished with consoles and pediments at first floor level, and simple surrounds at second floor.



From the Conservation Area Audit 2008, Abbey Gardens is pictured from Violet Hill Gardens.

## 4.2 Listed Buildings

44 Abbey Gardens is listed at Grade II. Due to their special historical or architectural interest, listed buildings are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Statutory listing is now a preservation order and does not prevent change, however, Alterations to listed buildings require listed building consent, which allows local authorities to make decisions that have been informed by careful research and a thorough understanding of the building or site's significance. National and local planning policies also recognise that changes to other buildings or sites in the vicinity of a listed building can affect its special interest. There are a number of listed buildings in the immediate vicinity of 44 Abbey Gardens. These include:

- *8-48 Abbey Gardens (Grade II) (of which our site forms part)*
- *9-41 Abbey Gardens (Grade II)*
- *2-6 Abbey Gardens (Grade II)*
- *50-56 Abbey Gardens (Grade II)*
- *61 and 63 Marlborough Place (Grade II)*
- *65 and 67 Marlborough Place (Grade II)*
- *57 and 59 Marlborough Place (Grade II)*
- *St Marks Church (Grade II\*)*

The latter being the most significant and is to found at the other side of Violet Hill Gardens.



The Historic England listing text for 8-48 Abbey Gardens reads as follows:

TQ 2683 SW CITY OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY GARDENS

Nos 8 to 48 (even) 9.1.70 GV II

*Terrace of houses. Circa 1850. Stucco brick, stucco dressings.*

*Roof not visible. 3 storeys and basement. Each house 2 windows wide. Balanced composition; centre and end pairs of houses break forward slightly. Channelling to ground floor. Slightly projecting Ionic porches to right of each house. Panelled doors. First floor continuous bombé balcony. Square-headed windows; architraved above ground floor, corniced to first floor with pediments to centre and end houses. Sashes, margin glazing. Console cornice above second floor. Parapet. 1 of 2 matching terraces lining Abbey Gardens.*

## 5.1 Historic Development

At the time of the Domesday Book in 1086, the area lay within the ancient Manor of Lilestone (now Lisson). In 1238 the Manor was given over to the Knights Templar and following the suppression of the order in 1323 was bestowed on the Knights of the Order of St John of Jerusalem; hence the origin of St John's Wood.

The land around St John's Wood remained forested throughout the medieval period. However, after the dissolution of monastic orders in 1539, the land reverted to the Crown. Henry VIII established hunting grounds nearby at Marylebone Park (now Regent's Park) and the trees of St John's Wood were felled to meet the demand for timber to build ships and royal palaces.

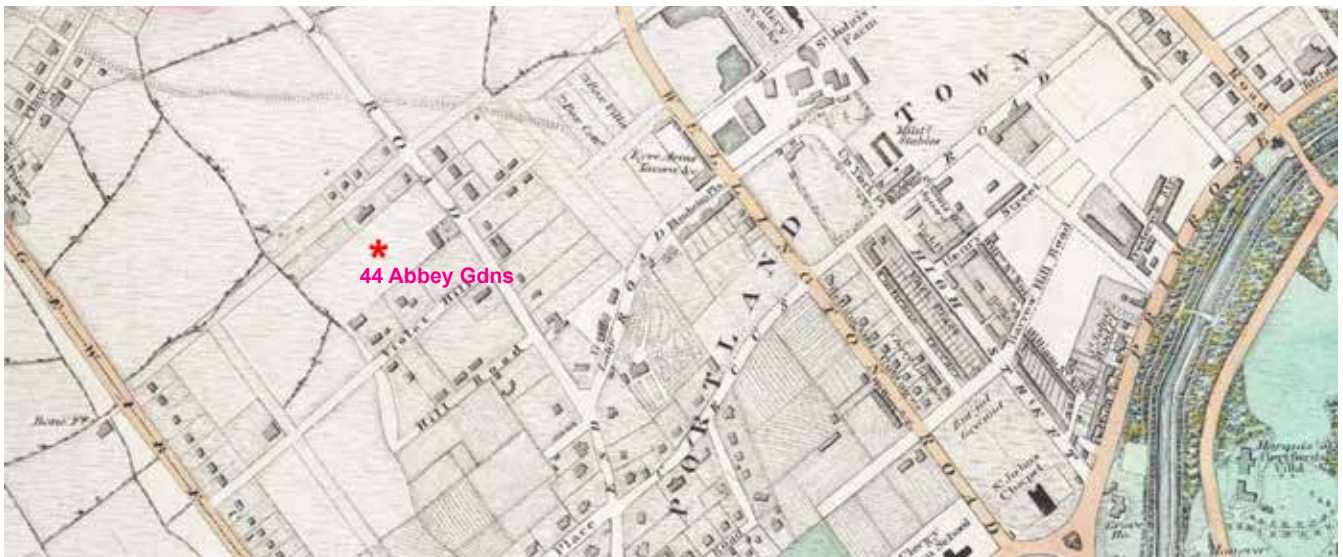
Apart from a strip of land along the Edgware Road that had been acquired by John Lyon in 1574, the land around St John's Wood remained in Crown ownership until the late 17th century. By the mid-17th century most of the remaining trees had been felled, leaving acres of meadow and grassland to provide hay for the City's resident horses. St John's Wood remained as open fields dotted with a few mature trees, well into the 19th century. William Hyett's map of 1809 show the open meadow land that could still be found.

The Crown began selling off land in St John's Wood in the early 18th century. Henry Samuel Eyre acquired the largest portion in 1732, a 500 acre estate that stretched roughly from what is now Rossmore Road to Swiss Cottage, bounded by Hamilton Terrace to the west and Avenue Road to the east; enclosing what is today Abbey Gardens.

The area would remain farmland for some years after coming under the ownership of the Eyre family, and it was not until 1802 that architect John Shaw was employed to draw up plans for the area. In addition Col. Eyre began the first of several attempts to promote the construction of a public road through his estate in 1819, and eventually succeeded in the Finchley Road Act of 1826. By 1828 Abbey Road had also been laid out, and building began to spread slowly northwards throughout the late 1820s and 30s.



William Hyett's 1809 Map show string development along Maida Vale / Kilburn High Road.



1830 Map showing a rectangular open ground which we presume is Violet Hill Archery field.



Abbey Gardens begins to appear on maps from 1870 with only small changes to the urban grain since.



Despite being subdivided in the early 1700s, without the infrastructure, the land of St John's Wood remained primarily as agricultural holdings until the end of the 18th century.

John Roque's Map of 1746 shows the land subdivided into small fields to the east of Edgware Road with no development other than a few smallholdings. St John's Wood Farm lies roughly on the site of St John's Wood Station, on the corner of the present-day Wellington Road.

The development of St John's Wood over the 19th century coincided with an upsurge of interest in gardening; large nurseries established nearby at Maida Vale and the generous gardens afforded scope for display and experimentation. It was in this age of wanting to escape the soot and grind of the industrial world that St John's Wood became one of the first London suburbs with lower density villa housing and grand terraces but with fewer communal gardens.

The Eyres commissioned a plan for a neighbourhood of villas and cottages, retaining the rural charm of the area through the careful retention of green spaces, gardens and tree-lined avenues. Many have suggested the intention to create a more 'rural' neighbourhood was a forerunner of the garden suburb movement.

However, slightly earlier from 1823, Regency architect John Nash was implementing a Neo-classical scheme for nearby Regent's Park which included unique detached and semi-detached houses with private gardens that became Park Village East and Park Village West and has a better stake in being the prototype for all Victorian suburbs that came after.

Nash's masterplan of a stretch from St James' Park upto Regents Street, and Regents Park including the construction of the Regent's Canal between 1811 and 1829, provided the stimulus for developing the land of St John's Wood.

It seems Henry Eyre sought to develop his estate as a modest reflection of Nash's scheme – a rustic housing estate for the middle classes and an elegant suburban retreat that enjoyed close proximity to the capital.

Building was speculative with various architects and builders employed, although the Eyre Estate set a standard by issuing building leases specifying properties must have gardens and be surrounded by walls at least 6 feet high. It was the construction of broad avenues of detached and semi-detached villas in substantial grounds which has given St John's Wood its distinctive character and established a new model of suburban style.

The property on Abbey Gardens is thought to be constructed on the site of the Violet Hill Archery Grounds. Archery in the Violet Hill area of St Johns Wood in the late 1700's had become very popular, long before the residential development. Around the year 1834, a bowyer, called Mr. David Freeman, constructed a pavilion in a convenient location within the archery grounds, which became the Abbey Tavern which today is Violet Hill Studios. In 2002 a painted mural was discovered under the old wallpaper with the inscription 'Royal Toxophiletes Society 1834.'

The first map to show Abbey Gardens fully laid out is the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1862-72. In 1891 Charles Booth's *Inquiry into Life and Labour in London*, and the 'poverty maps' produced illustrate a neighbourhood which was firmly 'Middle-Class, Well-to-do,' as outlined in red, and 'Upper-Classes, Wealthy,' in yellow.



St John's Woods, Charles Booth's Poverty Map, 1892.



Fragment of mural found in Violet Hill Studios, formerly the Abbey Tavern



## 5.2 Architectural Development

The National Heritage List for England states the 'building' listed as Grade II is the entire terrace Nos. 8 to 48, and the historic interest and architectural merit lies largely in the entire group of houses creating an ensemble. The terrace on the opposite side of the street Nos. 9 to 41 are similarly listed as a 'Terrace of houses' creating a handsome streetscape in the Conservation Area.

We make the point here that any internal changes approved under Listed Building Consent within individual houses to the listed terrace buildings sets a precedent for similar work to be carried out to other house within the terrace, and the minor alterations proposed are similar to alterations already made on the street.

After being constructed, No.44 became occupied around 1860 as a single home for a middle class family, by 1891 like many on this road, No.44 became multi-occupancy. It is worth noting that in the Booth poverty map of 1892 the street was still considered middle class even if rooms were sublet; we can only imagine the demand for housing in the Capital of the largest Empire in the World must have been great during this period when the population was surging.

The house when built consisted of nine rooms and a closet wing over four floors which made it immensely flexible as a lodging house, a status it appears to have maintained well into the twentieth century with many houses on this street classed as a 'lodging house' in multiple census records.

In 1980s permission was granted to convert the house into three flats; a lower ground flat, raised ground floor flat and an upper maisonette; 88/05487/LBC.

We do not know if the building work was carried out for this conversion formally, or whether informally in an effort to move away from sub-letting rooms to individual flats, but we understand ten years later many changes were made internally including a rear conservatory in the 1994 planning application; 94/04638/FULL.

Further internal work was carried out in 1998, 98/07443/LBC, which appears to have created the interior layout we have today including the reinstatement of a bedroom from a living a room.

As identified above, because the proposed development is situated within the St Johns Wood Conservation Area, and the building is Grade II listed along with the terrace Nos 8 to 48, any works that affect the character or appearance of this designated asset should be assessed against the relevant legislation and national and local policies.

## 6.1 Legislation

6.1.1 The legislative framework for the preservation and enhancement of listed buildings and conservation areas are set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Historic England, defines preservation in this context, as not harming the interest in the building, as opposed to keeping it utterly unchanged.

6.1.2 In May 2017 a Court of Appeal judgment emphasised the relative importance of sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in making planning decisions in relation to development that affects listed buildings and conservation areas.

6.1.3 These sections of the Act provide the statutory tests against which planning permission affecting a designated heritage asset should be assessed by the Local Planning Authority.

6.1.4 As the proposed development is situated in a conservation area, the development needs to satisfy section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which states, 'In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any ... special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.'

6.1.5 As a minimum, works should preserve the character or appearance of the conservation area.

## 6.2 National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

6.2.1 As mentioned above, there is a need to carry out a balancing exercise of judging harm against other planning considerations as required under the NPPF.

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are to be applied. The guiding principle of the document is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and the protection and enhancement of the historic environment is embedded in this approach.

6.2.2 Sustainable development is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF breaks down this definition into three objectives: economic, social, and environmental. Within the environmental objective, sustainable development needs to contribute to 'protecting and enhancing our natural, built, and historic environment.'

6.2.3 Paragraph 20 of the NPPF contains Strategic Policies, which provide an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development and make sufficient provision for the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built, and historic environment.

6.2.4 Section 16 of the NPPF contains policies relating to conserving and enhancing the historic



environment. Within this section (paragraph 189), the Local Planning Authority requires the applicant to describe the significance of any affected heritage asset including any contribution made by their setting as part of an application.

6.2.5 Significance is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF, as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its archaeological, architectural, artistic or historical interest. Significance also derives not only from the asset's physical presence but also from its setting. Setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings in which the heritage asset is experienced, the extent of which is not fixed and can change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to significance of an asset.

6.2.6 Impact from a proposed development to the significance of a designated heritage asset needs to be evaluated and NPPF paragraph 193, states, 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'.

6.2.7 NPPF paragraph 194 identifies that alteration, destruction or development within the setting of a designated heritage asset can result in harm to, or loss of, the significance of the asset and that such loss requires a clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building should be exceptional and substantial harm or loss of grade I and grade II\* listed buildings should be wholly exceptional.

6.2.8 NPPF Paragraphs 195 and 196 define the levels of harm as substantial or less than substantial. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) provides useful guidance on assessing harm in relation to these definitions and gives the following example, 'In determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed.

The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.

The NPPG quantifies substantial harm (NPPF paragraph 195) as total destruction, while partial destruction is likely to have a considerable impact but, depending on the circumstances, it may still be less than substantial harm or conceivably not harmful at all. Anything less than total destruction needs to be evaluated on its own merits, for example, the removal of elements to an asset which themselves impact on its significance may therefore not be harmful to the asset. The NPPG advises works that are moderate or minor in scale are likely to cause less than substantial harm (NPPF paragraph 196) or no harm at all'. However, it is important to consider each development in its own context as the NPPG also identifies that minor works have the potential to cause substantial harm to

the significance of an asset.

6.2.9 Paragraphs 195 and 196 refer to 'public benefit' as a means to outweigh the loss of or harm to a designated heritage asset. The NPPG identifies that public benefit may follow many developments and as such this benefit could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress which are the dimensions to sustainable development defined by NPPF Paragraph 8. The NPPG states, 'Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefit'. Public benefits may include heritage benefits such as:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting.
- Reducing or removing risk: to heritage asset.
- Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long-term conservation.

6.2.10 The three points above relate to NPPF Paragraph 192, which requires the Local Planning Authority to take these points into account when determining applications. Although, there is no defined list of public benefits, examples of public benefit for a designated heritage asset may include:

- The restoration of a listed building.
- The improved setting of a listed building.
- The enhancement of a conservation area.

### **6.3 Local Planning Policy**

6.3.1 As well as legislation and national planning policies relating to the historic environment, the local planning authority (LPA), City of Westminster, have relevant policies contained in their Strategic Plan (adopted 2019).

Westminster's current heritage policy framework is set out in the adopted Westminster City Plan (November 2016) and Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The City Plan includes a single strategic Heritage Policy S25 and other detailed policies on heritage are 'saved' as part of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), which was adopted in 2007. The latter includes four specific policies in relation to each individual type of heritage asset (conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeology and the Westminster World Heritage Site). Other policy is not specific to heritage assets but includes heritage considerations, most notably in policy in relation to design, views and parks and gardens.



### 6.3.2 Westminster City Plan: Strategic Policies

#### POLICY S25 HERITAGE

Recognising Westminster's wider historic environment, its extensive heritage assets will be conserved, including its listed buildings, conservation areas, Westminster's World Heritage Site, its historic parks including five Royal Parks, squares, gardens and other open spaces, their settings, and its archaeological heritage. Historic and other important buildings should be upgraded sensitively, to improve their environmental performance and make them easily accessible.

#### Reasoned Justification

The intrinsic value of Westminster's high quality and significant historic environment is one of its greatest assets. To compete effectively with other major, world-class cities the built environment must be respected and refurbished sensitively in a manner appropriate to its significance. Any change should not detract from the existing qualities of the environment, which makes the city such an attractive and valued location for residents, businesses and visitors

### 6.3.3 Unitary Development Plan (2007) Saved Policies

#### POLICY DES 9: CONSERVATION AREAS

##### (A) Applications for outline planning permission in conservation areas

In the case of outline planning applications within designated conservation areas it may be necessary to require additional details to be produced in order that the physical impact of the proposed development may be fully assessed.

##### (F) Setting of conservation areas

Development will not be permitted which, although not wholly or partly located within a designated conservation area, might nevertheless have a visibly adverse effect upon the area's recognised special character or appearance, including intrusiveness with respect to any recognised and recorded familiar local views into, out of, within or across the area.

### 6.3.4 POLICY DES 10: LISTED BUILDINGS

##### (A) Applications for planning permission

Applications for development involving the extension or alteration of listed buildings will where relevant need to include full details of means of access, siting, design and external appearance of the proposed development in order to demonstrate that it would respect the listed building's character and appearance and serve to preserve, restore or complement its features of special architectural or historic interest.

##### (D) Setting of listed buildings

Planning permission will not be granted where it would adversely affect:

- a) the immediate or wider setting of a listed building, or b) recognised and recorded views of a listed building or a group of listed buildings, or
- c) the spatial integrity or historic unity of the curtilage of a listed building.

##### (E) Theft or removal of architectural items of interest

In order to reduce the risk of theft or removal of architectural items of interest or value from historic buildings during the course of development, the City Council may require additional security arrangements to be made while buildings are empty or during the course of building works.

#### 6.3.5 POLICY DES 15: METROPOLITAN AND LOCAL VIEWS

Permission will not be granted for developments which would have an adverse effect upon important views of

- (A) listed buildings
- (B) landmark buildings
- (C) important groups of buildings
- (D) monuments and statues
- (E) parks, squares and gardens
- (F) the Grand Union and Regent's Canals (G) the River Thames.

### 6.4 London Plan (2016)

Also relevant to the application are policies contained within the London Plan.

The London Plan is the overall strategic plan for London. It sets out a fully integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of the Capital to 2031. The local plans for London Boroughs need to be in general conformity with the London Plan, and its policies help guide planning decisions by councils and the Mayor. The Plan was revised in 2011, with alterations in 2013, 2015, and 2016, and there is a new draft London Plan currently under consultation. Key policies to be considered in relation to our site include:

- Policy 7.8 Heritage Assets and Archaeology
- Policy 7.9 Heritage-led Regeneration

#### 6.4.1 Policy 7.8 Heritage Assets and Archaeology

##### Strategic

A. London's heritage assets and historic environment, including listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and other natural and historic landscapes, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields, scheduled monuments, archaeological remains and memorials should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be considered.

B. Development should incorporate measures that identify, record, interpret, protect and, where appropriate, present the site's archaeology.

##### 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. The physical assets should, where possible, be made available to the public on-site. Where the archaeological asset or memorial cannot be preserved or managed on-site, provision must be made for the investigation, understanding, recording, dissemination and archiving of that asset.

#### 6.4.2 POLICY 7.9 HERITAGE-LED REGENERATION

##### Strategic

H. Regeneration schemes should identify and make use of heritage assets and reinforce the qualities that make them significant so they can help stimulate environmental, economic and community regeneration. This includes buildings, landscape features, views, Blue Ribbon Network and public realm.

##### Planning decisions

I. The significance of heritage assets should be assessed when development is proposed and schemes designed so that the heritage significance is recognised both in their own right and as catalysts for regeneration. Wherever possible heritage assets (including buildings at risk) should be repaired, restored and put to a suitable and viable use that is consistent with their conservation and the establishment and maintenance of sustainable communities and economic vitality.

### 6.5 Heritage Guidance

Guidance documents published by Historic England have been consulted in the preparation of this report, notably in terms of assessment. These include:

- *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008)*

This document sets out a method for thinking systematically and consistently about the way heritage values can be ascribed to a place

- *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3 - The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017)*

This advice note (which supersedes *The Setting of Heritage Assets (2011)*) offers good practice advice on the setting of heritage assets within the context of the NPPF and revised local policies.

## 7.1 Assessing Significance

7.1.1 Significance of a heritage asset is defined by the NPPF as the value of a heritage asset placed on it by current and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological; architectural; artistic or historical. The setting of a heritage asset also contributes to its significance and is defined by the NPPF as the surrounding in which a heritage asset is experienced. In comparison, Historic England's Conservation Principles (2008) uses evidential; aesthetic; historical and communal values to define significance. These different set of values have been combined for the purpose of this report.

7.1.2 Part 4 of British Standard 7913:2013 Guide to Conservation of Historic Buildings provides information on heritage values and significance. In context, this document states, 'A wide range of factors can contribute to the significance of a historic building.

As well as physical components, significance includes factors such as immediate and wider setting, use and association (e.g. with a particular event, family, community or artist and those involved in design and construction)'.

7.1.3 Identifying the values of an asset allow us to understand the degree of significance and inform us of the potential impact the proposed works will have the heritage asset and its setting. These values may be tangible, the physical fabric of the building, capable of being touched, or view such as its landscape. Also, the value may be intangible through a past event or an association with a person.

- Evidential (archaeological) value relates to physical aspects of the site which provide evidence from the past. This can be with built form or below ground archaeology.
- Historical value is the extent to which the asset is associated with or illustrative of historic events or people.
- Aesthetic (architectural/artistic) value includes design, visual, landscape and architectural qualities.
- Communal value includes social, commemorative, or spiritual value, local identity and the meaning of place for people.

7.1.4 The assessment of significance draws upon information contained in the section on Heritage Assets and uses the values defined above to establish the level of significance detailed below:

- Features of the asset which contribute to the principal historical and architectural interest are considered to be of high significance.
- Features of the asset which noticeably contribute to the overall architectural or historical Interest and may include post construction features of historic or design interest are considered to be of medium significance.



- Features of the asset which make a relatively minor contribution to the historic and architectural interest are considered to be of low significance.
- Features which do not contribute to the historic and architectural interest of the asset, and in some cases may even detract from the significance are therefore considered to be either neutral or detracting.

## 7.2 Assessing Setting

7.2.1 The primary guiding document for assessing setting is *The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3 (2017)*, produced by Historic England.

7.2.2 Setting varies from asset to asset and cannot be generically defined. Changes to the setting of heritage assets may be positive such as replacing poor development which has compromised the asset's setting. It is likely that the setting of an asset has changed over time from the dynamics of human activity and natural occurrences such as weather.

7.2.3 The importance setting makes to the contribution to the significance of the heritage asset is often related to how the heritage asset is seen in views. This can include views looking towards the heritage asset or from the heritage asset looking outwards and may include relationships between the asset and other heritage assets, natural or topographical features. Assets may also be intended to be seen from one another in designed landscapes for aesthetic reasons.

7.2.4 Historic England's *Good Practice Advice 3, The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017)*, notes a staged approach to proportionate decision-taking, with relevant NPPF paragraphs, along with guidance contained in the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) for their implementation, providing the framework for the consideration of changes affecting the setting of heritage assets which should be assessed proportionately and based on the nature, extent and level of the heritage asset's significance.

7.2.5 The Guidance recommends a five-step approach to the assessment of the effect of development on the setting of heritage assets as follows:

Step 1: identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected.

Step 2: assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s).

Step 3: assess the effects of the proposed development whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance.

Step 4: explore ways of maximising enhancement and avoiding or minimising harm.

Step 5: make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

### 7.3 Significance of St John's Conservation Area

As established the site lies within the St John's Wood Conservation Area, which was first designated in 1967, and was extended in 1979 and 2007. It is covered by the St John's Wood Conservation Area Audit, which was adopted in 2008, and provides an appraisal of the historic context and key features of the Conservation Area.

7.3.1 The significance of St John's Conservation Area has been examined in the section dealing with Heritage Assets (above). The character of the Conservation Area is primarily defined by a low density streetscape with wide, tree-lined streets. There is a picturesque mixture of detached and semi-detached villas, along with smaller pockets of terraced housing - as seen in Abbey Gardens. These terraced streets are generally tightly planned and have a greater sense of enclosure due to being narrower. Abbey Gardens is particularly fine with most of the houses on both sides of the street still intact. The overall level of significance is considered to be high.

### 7.4 Significance of 44 Abbey Gardens.

7.4.1 The significance of Nos 4 to 84 Abbey Gardens has been examined in the section dealing with Heritage Assets (above) and as a grade II listed the overall significance of the building is considered to be medium.

#### 7.4.2 Evidential Value

Abbey Gardens is an important terrace within the development of the Eyre Estate in St John's Wood but not significant in terms of buildings in Westminster from this period. The development of the estate is relatively well-documented, meaning the potential for No.44 to contribute new information to the understanding of the area is low. There are other houses on both sides of the street which have more original features still in place.

There has been much alteration in No. 44, and no original fireplaces remain, but near-original floorplans and plaster decorative features are known to survive in higher status spaces such as the ground and first floor living areas, which offer some potential to add to our understanding of middle-class terraced housing in this period. Consequently these spaces are of medium to high significance, and intrusive alterations which diminish their evidential potential should be avoided.

Lower status areas and spaces which have undergone a greater degree of change - such as the lower ground floor and the lower portion of the rear elevation - can be considered to have low or neutral evidential value.

There is some potential for existing earlier fabric to be preserved under later decorative schemes; such as the floor coverings. Any stripping out or opening up works may reveal new evidence of change over time or concealed earlier fabric.

## 8.0 Proposed Works

The following is a comprehensive list of the works proposed at 44 Abbey Gardens which alter the fabric of the existing building. All other works include general refurbishment and mainly painting and decorating:

### 8.1 Front garden / elevation:

- Front garden, wall of raised plant bed removed to create edge to existing hard landscaping.

### 8.2 Lower Ground Floor:

- Re-instate passage between hallway and rear of the house.
- Section of wall removed between front and rear rooms to create a larger family kitchen.
- Existing opening between kitchen and conservatory widened marginally.
- Existing kitchen door from corridor widened.
- Below stairs WC introduced with soil pipe connected to main sewer and air extract to outside.
- Ceramic floor tiles removed from existing suspended floor, replaced with hardwood timber.



inside wall and coping removed only



*above, right*, 'Raised planter to front garden, too narrow to be useful for planting and in disrepair





section of wall in front room removed to create opening to rear kitchen



original passage door currently blocked up to be re-opened



above, right, 'Raised planter to front garden, too narrow to be useful for planting and in disrepair

## 9.0 Conclusion

9.1. Paragraph 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) advises Local Planning Authorities that the particular significance, including setting, of any heritage asset is assessed. This document has concisely described the heritage asset affected by the proposed works and its significance.

9.2. The number and scope of the alterations to the front garden have been kept to an absolute minimum to avoid harm. The NPPG refers to this in the following way, 'Understanding the significance of a heritage asset and its setting from an early stage in the design process can help to inform the development of proposals which avoid or minimise harm ... appraisals or investigations can identify alternative development options, for example more sensitive designs or different orientations ... ' (Paragraph: 008 Reference 10: 18a-008-20190723).

9.3. With regards to the development meeting the statutory test provided by 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the minimum aim is for development to preserve the character or appearance of a conservation area. The works are considered to meet this test as the development will not harm the character or appearance of the conservation area. The removal of the raised flower bed wall will enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. The current flower bed which appears to have been installed in the 1980's and now in disrepair is incongruous with the conservation area.

9.4. It should be remembered that Historic England defines preservation in this context as not harming the interest in the building! (or heritage asset), as opposed to keeping it utterly unchanged.

9.5. With regards to NPPF paragraphs 193 to 196: as no harm will be caused to the designated asset, no public benefit needs to be proved. However public benefit is gained by removing the raised flower bed.

9.6. The works are almost exclusively focused on the lower ground floor which is of lesser importance, the proposal is either to re-instate or remove non original features meaning the impacts range from neutral to minor/slight adverse as a result of the loss of historic fabric and alterations to historic plan form; but all are reversible.

There are also areas of neutral/slight beneficia impacts which are largely confined to more significant areas of the site, and include enhancements by the repair or restoration of historic fabric, and the reinstatement of lost historic circulation spaces to lower ground floor corridor. Overall, the proposed works are considered to comfortably cause "less than substantial" harm, and this very low level of harm is balanced out by the many proposed heritage gains. As such, the proposed works are considered to preserve the special interest of the listed building itself and the

setting of the adjacent listed buildings, in accordance with Section 16(c) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It is considered that the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will also be preserved or enhanced by these proposals, and they are also considered to comply with NPPF paragraphs 193-200 and relevant local planning policies.

9.7 In conclusion, It is considered the proposed development meets the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990, the NPPF and local planning policies. It is therefore requested that the proposed development be approved.



**Resources**

Westminster's City Plan: Strategic Policies (2016)

St John's Wood Conservation Area Audit (2008), Statutory Document to Accompany SPD  
Unitary Development Plan (2007)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)

The London Plan (2011)

Conservation Principles. Policies and Guidance, Historic England (2008)

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3 - The  
Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic England (2017)

Westminster Archives

The National Archives

Metropolitan Archives

Westminster Planning Department