

Heritage Impact Assessment for

110 WALM LANE, WILLEDEN GREEN LONDON NW2

For Martin Robeson Planning Practice



Cover photo: 110 Walm Lane from south at Walm Lane bridge,
Willesden Green Tube Station

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Bob Kindred Heritage Consultants were commissioned by Martin Robeson Planning Practice on behalf of Redbourne (Willesden) Ltd to undertake a Heritage Impact Assessment in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF] in support of planning proposals for the replacement of 110 Walm Lane, Willesden with residential-led mixed-use development.

1.2 The site is situated within the Mapesbury Conservation Area and closely adjacent to the south west is the Willesden Green Conservation Area that has Willesden Green Tube Station a Grade 2 listed building within it and the setting of which has a bearing on the development. The listed building and the two conservation areas all constitute designated heritage assets and the NPPF requires a heritage impact assessment to evaluate the impact of the proposals on the setting of these types of heritage asset.

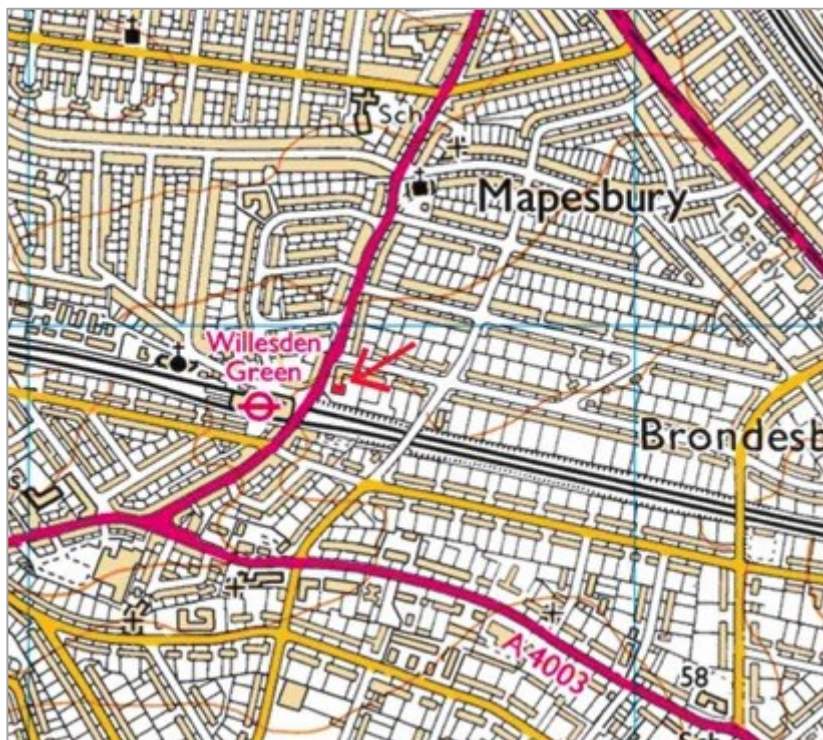


Fig. 1 Location Plan

1.3 Walm Lane is a main local route that runs between the busy commercial centre of Willesden Green in the south and Cricklewood in the north. The development site lies immediately to the northeast of the point at which Walm Lane crosses the railway line and is diagonally opposite Willesden Green Underground Station.

1.4 The rationale behind the design approach to the scheme is set out in the Design and Access Statement and the application drawings by GML Architects and the Planning Statement by Martin Robeson Planning Practice and associated documents and should be read in conjunction with this heritage impact assessment.

1.5 An inspection of the site and its immediate environs to evaluate the setting was undertaken on 24th August 2016.

1.6 The report may be deposited with Greater London Historic Environment Record and a copy sent to the National Monuments Record maintained by Historic England if required.

2. NATIONAL POLICY

2.1 The Heritage Impact Assessment to accompany the proposals is intended to comply with the requirements of the NPPF. It is considered that paragraphs 128, 129, 134, 135 and 137 of the NPPF are particularly germane to this scheme in relation to the character and appearance of the Mapesbury and Willesden Green Conservation Areas; and to the setting of the Grade 2 listed Willesden Green Tube Station.

2.2 Applicants must describe the impact of proposals on the significance of any heritage asset to a level of detail proportionate to the assets' importance but no more than is sufficient to understand the potential of that impact on the significance.

2.3 Paragraph 132 of the NPPF apportioned great weight to a designated asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. The NPPF notes that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration and any harm requires clear and convincing justification.

2.4 The NPPF also attaches great importance to matters of design. Paragraph 17 sets out twelve core planning principles, one of which is to 'always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings'.

2.5 Paragraph 58 states that planning 'policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments are well designed' and paragraph 60 states that planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles - notwithstanding the desirability of promoting or reinforcing local distinctiveness.

2.6 NPPF paragraph 137 also states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favorably. Taken with the government's desire to promote good design while respecting local distinctiveness (as referred to in NPPF Section 2) it is considered, that the scheme would have the potential to fulfill those objectives.

2.7 It is worth noting that NPPF paragraph 138 states that not all elements of a Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance and that proposals that cause less than substantial harm eventually fall to be considered under paragraph 134, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the elements affected and the contribution (or otherwise) to the significance of the conservation area as a whole.

3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE SITE

3.1 The arrival of the Metropolitan Railway in the 19th century and the opening of a new station in 1879 as a temporary terminus of the Metropolitan and St. John's Wood Railway extension from West Hampstead saw rapid urban development in this location. This was a catalyst for transforming the area from agriculture into the present modern residential suburb. (Fig. 2)



Fig. 2 Ordnance Survey Six Inch Series map 1881 (pub. 1884) Not to scale
Site of 110 Walm Lane arrowed

3.2 Public transport improvements were accompanied by the completion of new commercial developments along the lower part of Walm Lane and High Road. Contemporaneously the construction of St. Andrew's, Church, vicarage and school (the only listed group of building in the area other than the Tube station) were intended to serve the needs of a new middle class population.

3.3. The speed of development in the late 19th and early 20th centuries meant that by around 1910 Willesden Green had largely coalesced with the districts of Brondesbury, Cricklewood, and Kensal Rise.

3.4 The original intention of the Mapesbury estate was to cater for commuters seeking a pleasant edge of countryside lifestyle but within easy reach of central London via the railway stations at Willesden Green and Kilburn. The houses on the estate date mainly from between 1895 to 1905 and were built by a dozen firms including Callow & Wright, Charles Cheshir and John Neal and Co. Some dwellings were completed later and date from 1908 to 1920 to the designs of C.W.B. Simmonds and G.A.C. Bridge.

3.5 The area suffered severe unemployment during World War I and was subjected to heavy bombing during World War II. This resulted in a period of decline exacerbated by post-war traffic congestion. Some revival of the area has taken place in recent years through the use of targeted heritage regeneration measures resulting in economic uplift and increasing property prices.

3.6 The only noteworthy modern development within the Willesden Green Conservation Area is Erin Court situated immediately to the southeast of Willesden Green Underground Station and this tall block has a prominent return frontage to the railway tracks.

3.7 Erin Court is located at the uphill end of the commercial centre of Walm Lane and dominates the view in the main street from the southwest. (Fig.4) At seven storeys and with facades in off-white self coloured render it is considered not only out of scale with the Victorian commercial buildings to which it abuts and forms a backdrop, but also

unsympathetic in the choice of facing materials as all the adjacent buildings and those opposite (with the exception of the listed station) are built of red brick and thus presenting an otherwise homogeneous local character.

3.8 The contrast of scale and materials used at Erin Court makes it an uncomfortable and insensitive addition to the townscape, out of context with its immediate surroundings and the character of the conservation area within it is situated and in relation to the character of the adjacent conservation area.

4. THE DEVELOPMENT SITE AND IMMEDIATE ENVIRONS

4.1 The development site, No.110 Walm Lane is a wide-fronted mainly three-storey building with a front forecourt raised above street level to provide an outdoor seating area. To the south side and rear of the building there are several later unsympathetic extensions in poor condition and a separately operated area of contract parking bounded by the railway cutting. There are only limited views to the rear along the side of the building from the bridge over the railway and Walm Lane and the site is only otherwise indistinctly visible from the railway bridge in Lyndford Road to the east-southeast.

4.2 The building was completed in c.1893 but the original designer is not known and it may have been completed by one of the several house-builders working locally noted in paragraph 3.4. It originally served in part as a doctor's surgery and partly as a private house and as such has a dual entrance, reflecting this original mix of medical and domestic uses. Subsequently the property was converted to use as a Constitutional Club, then as a members' club and in 2001 part of the building was used as the Queensbury Public House.

4.3 As one of the earliest buildings on the northeast side of the railway bridge, the building reflects the scale and use of materials associated with those properties most characteristic of the Mapesbury Conservation Area but although the style of the building can be loosely described as 'Arts and Crafts' or 'Queen Anne Revival', the many subsequent alterations and changes of uses have diminished the original architectural interest.

4.4 To the north of No. 110 are two apartment buildings: No.112 Walm Lane a recently erected narrow-fronted five-storey red brick apartment building; and Westly Court a larger post-war apartment block originally of three storeys with its principal frontage facing Dartmouth Road, to which a further, slightly recessed timber-clad residential storey has recently been added.

4.5 The development site No.110 Walm Lane sits at the southwest extremity of the Mapesbury Conservation Area.

5. DESIGNATED & UNDESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

Listed Buildings - Willesden Green Station

5.1 In the near vicinity to the southwest of No.110 Walm Lane is situated Willesden Green Tube Station listed Grade 2 in November 2006 [List entry: No.1391808 UID: 496402 National Grid Reference: TQ 23430 84864]. This is an Underground station with integral shops rebuilt at street level in 1925 and designed by Charles W. Clark the architect for the Metropolitan Railway Company. It has similarities to his designs for other listed stations at Great Portland Street (1912, Listed Grade 2) and Farringdon (1925 Listed Grade 2).

5.2 The full and extensive listing description is not reproduced here as it includes a description of the interior and the history of the development of the station site that are not germane to the proposals, but it is sufficient to note regarding the relationship local landmark standing in isolation at the crest of a shallow hill where Walm Lane Bridge crosses six sets of railway tracks.

5.3 The front and side return elevations of the station are faced with a distinctive cream terracotta tiling and moulded terracotta architraves, quoins, and raised panels in the same colour with metal-framed casement windows with cross mullions paired along the front. (Fig. 2)



Fig. 3 Willesden Green Tube Station (Grade 2 Listed)

5.4 The main façade is in 5 parts with slightly canted end bays holding the entrance canopies. There are three centre bays each with two windows above ground floor shops (now largely replaced). There is a pronounced continuous cornice with modillions and frieze that features the original station lettering and the building retains its original cantilevered canopies over each entrance but modified with late-20th century dark blue London Underground fascias and lettering.

5.5 In terms of its historic context the station was designed to project a strong corporate image for the inter-war development of the Metropolitan line and built in a traditional neo-Classical style prior (following earlier precedents) prior to a dramatic change of style that saw a move towards Modernist stations introduced to the Piccadilly Line by Charles Holden.

Listed Building Setting

5.6. In terms of townscape impact, the station was intended to make a distinctive architectural statement in materials and form (if not in scale) quite different from its surroundings and marking a sharp contrast to the late Victorian two and a half and three

storey red brick shops to the south and the three storey gabled, rendered and half-timbered shops on the north side on Station Parade. The station building illustrates that scale is not crucial to achieving a distinctive presence in the street scene and its positioning 'in free space' enables it to be fully appreciated in views from several different directions including the local bridges, and flanked by the visually over-dominant Erin Court apartment block to the south and the lower scaled developments including the site at No.110 to the north.

5.7 The station stands out in marked isolation from its surroundings partly because of a combination of the space required to accommodate the track layout in the cutting below and partly from the rising and/or falling curved alignment of nearby roads.

5.8 In views in Walm Lane from the south within the Willesden Green Conservation Area the station is largely concealed and on the west side in particular the position of the commercial building on the corner with St Paul's Avenue hides the station until the last moment when the east entrance canopy and then the short south elevation of the station are then revealed. The proposed development site in Walm Lane has no impact from this location.



Fig.4 View to Erin Court adjacent to 52 High Road - No.110 Walm Lane is concealed

5.9 In longer views the townscape is dominated by the enhanced scale of Erin Court in the middle distance while the existing building on the proposed development site at 110 Walm Road is revealed as a subsidiary presence in the street scene and is framed by tall mature trees to the road frontage and the trackside embankment with clear sky above. (Fig. 5) To the northern side of the development site is the recently built five-storey flat-roofed apartment block to Walm Lane referred to in paragraph 4.4.

5.10 It is considered that the height of the proposed development will generally equate to the level of the ridge of the existing Queensbury Public House with the main bulk of the scheme, that is up to 4th floor, remaining essentially the same height as the Queensbury's ridge but with the set-back upper floors extend slightly higher - although in street level views from Station Parade and oblique views in Walm Lane, with the foreshortening of perspective, the set-back for the upper elevation will read as essentially the same overall height.



Fig.5 View from junction with Rutland Park & dominance of Erin Court. No.110 Walm Lane is just visible centre left

5.11 In middle distance views in Walm Lane from the north, within the Mapesbury Conservation Area, the station is again largely concealed until the viewer is in close proximity. The station building is angled back from the main road frontage and is largely obscured by the large, regularly spaced mature trees that line Walm Lane. Closer to the station the large two-storey extension to Nos. 2-6 Station Parade (Messrs. Foxtons) also screens the building. The listed building is not fully revealed until the view opens out to the west along Station Parade, at which point the development site would sit behind and to the right (east) of the viewer.

5.12 In summary, with regard to the impact on the setting of the listed building, the distinctly physically separated location of the station above the tracks, being viewed from the front without the distraction of any commensurately scaled buildings and angled back from Walm Lane allows it to be appreciated in isolation. As the scale of the proposed development scheme would approximate to the ridge of the existing building on the site, it is considered that the proposals would have a broadly neutral impact in heritage terms, further mitigated by the presence of the street trees and extensively landscaped land adjacent to the embankment.

5.13 It is worth making the observation that strategic or specifically defined significant views to local landmark buildings are sometimes identified in character appraisals and may have a heritage value in making places memorable but neither of the two Conservation Area appraisals for Willesden Green or Mapesbury defines any such views.

5.14 Although places may be experienced from single viewpoints townscapes are appreciated dynamically and viewpoints constantly change when the public realm is traversed. Buildings that may appear prominent in one location can 'disappear' merely, for example, by the viewer crossing from one side of a street to the other.

Listed Buildings - St Gabriel's Church

5.15 St Gabriel's Church is situated well to the north of the development site on Walm Lane and sits within the Mapesbury Conservation Area. It was Listed Grade 2 in July 1951 [List entry Number: 1188738 UID: 198788 National Grid Reference: TQ 23647 85229]. The church was designed by R.P. Day and W. Bassett Smith in c.1898 and so is contemporary with much of the surrounding housing. Although the listing description of 65 years ago stated that the building was: "Conspicuous among surrounding buildings" this is much less the case today as a consequence of the extensive, mature, street tree planting.

5.16 Although the slender tower of St Gabriel's is a landmark on Walm Lane it is visible primarily in winter when the street trees are not in leaf. The setting of the church is considered to be too distant and largely obscured by trees to be affected by the development proposals.

Mapesbury CA

5.17 The Mapesbury Conservation Area was originally designated in December 1982 and the character and appearance is well described in the Council's Character Appraisal published in March 2006. Since that date there appears to have been limited change to the residential component of the conservation area, partly as a result of additional planning controls over permitted development rights introduced via an Article 4 Direction.

5.18 It is worth noting in passing, that Brent Council initially published an undated rudimentary four page conservation area Design Guide for the Mapesbury Conservation area containing simple practical advice and information to assist homeowners in undertaking repairs and improvements that it considered would help to preserve or enhance the character of the area. Between late June and early August 2017 the council consulted on a revised and much expanded, fully illustrated Design Guide for Mapesbury. The guide is directed at alterations proposed by householders and is not directly relevant to the present proposals.

5.19 The conservation area boundary encompasses a cohesive essentially residential suburb and runs from Walm Lane and Chichele Road in the west; to the rear of properties in Anson Road in the north; the rear of properties in the Edgware Road in the east and is enclosed by a cutting formed by the Metropolitan and Jubilee Railway lines to the south running from Willesden Green Station eastward to Kilburn Station.

5.20 The orientation of the railway appears to have been influential in the estate layout with straight relatively broad streets in a regular pattern parallel to the railway line. Lydford Road bisects the area from north to south and this helps to reveal the spaciousness of the estate layout and disclose the rear gardens and their mature planting schemes.

5.21 The distinctive character of the conservation area is principally that of a medium density late-Victorian suburb built on predominantly flat terrain on former open agricultural land. The housing was completed within a relatively short period and this led to a degree of consistency of layout, scale and built form.

5.22 Most houses have escaped unsympathetic alterations and are closely spaced but detached villas interspersed with some semi-detached houses. Dwellings are generally of two storeys but with some large gables and attics and to a consistent palette of materials: brick, terracotta, tile hanging and applied timber framing and with much surviving original detailing. This adds a certain degree of visual interest and opulence to the street scene.

5.23 Today the area has well-established well-tended front gardens. This is reinforced by well-stocked deeper rear gardens often containing mature trees and other well established planting. The long-standing and extensive presence of specimen street tree planting also helps reinforce the landscape character.

5.24 The special character of the area is derived as much from its open, spacious appearance and tree planting as it is from the design of the houses. As the landscaping has matured, this has become an integral part of the area's setting and consequently within the residential streets the street trees largely restrict more distant or expansive views.

5.25 While the Mapesbury Conservation Area is predominantly a well-designed, coherent residential suburb and has a very consistent character in terms of plot sizes, massing, rhythm and general scale, the character and visual cohesiveness of the area in the vicinity of Walm Lane around Dartmouth Road is less harmonious and the Character Appraisal acknowledges that Walm Lane has a more varied character than roads at the core of the conservation area.

5.26 Adjacent to 110 Walm Lane on the north side is a modern five storey brick and timber-clad extension to Westly Court (known as No.112 Walm Lane). Westly Court itself is a three storey post-war block of flats to which an additional later timber-clad floor was added; while to the north on the corner with Dartmouth Road is the utilitarian Walm Lane doctor's surgery and a run of undistinguished two storey semi-detached houses. It is understood that these sites may have been redeveloped after wartime bomb damage.

5.27 Opposite No. 110 Walm Lane the setting of the conservation area is marred by the poor condition, degraded or missing architectural detailing and unsympathetic alterations of the eight shops comprising the Walm Lane frontages of Station Parade.



Fig.6 Corner of Walm Lane & Dartmouth Road (right) showing post-war development

5.28 The east side of Walm Lane marks the western boundary of the Mapesbury Conservation Area and is lined with substantial mature specimen street trees. The canopies of these restrict longer views to the development site along Walm Lane from the north and the current building on the proposed development site cannot easily be seen, particularly when the trees are in leaf.



Fig. 7 View in Walm Lane from North of Dartmouth Road with Erin Court (centre)

5.29 The dominating, substantial scale of Erin Court terminates the southward view but the residential streets such as Dartmouth Road run at right angles to Walm Lane and cannot be appreciated in the same view. From this direction and location in Walm Lane it is considered that the visual impact of the proposed development is likely to be negligible and will be neutral in terms of its impact on the conservation area. (Fig. 7)

5.30 In views of Walm Lane from the north (more adjacent to the development site) at the edge of the Conservation Area in the vicinity of Dartmouth Road, the absence of a short stretch of street tree planting to the frontage to the doctor's surgery opens up a limited oblique view. No. 110 Walm Lane is partly concealed by No. 112 which breaks forward of Westly Court to maintain a consistent building line and the main focus of the view is the substantial massing of Erin Court with its rendered façade and sloping roof line facing the viewer to the south of the railway bridge. (Fig.8)



Fig.8 View from Walm Lane looking south with Westly Court (left) & Erin Court (right)

5.31 As noted above, the height of the proposed development ridgeline would equate to approximately the overall maximum height of No.110. In the oblique views from the north, within the street scene the massing of the proposed elevations up to 4th floor facing Walm Lane will closely relate to the height the modern apartment block No.112 but the inclined setback of the proposed upper two floors including a sequence of four flat headed dormers would be largely hidden at ground level by the top floor of No.112 in the foreground and by the existing mature specimen street trees.

5.32 From this specific vantage point at the edge of the conservation area looking away from the main residential streets of detached houses, it is considered likely that that the visual impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Mapesbury Conservation Area would be very limited and broadly neutral.

5.33 In other street level views, for example from Station Parade (Fig. 9) with allowance for the foreshortening effect of perspective; the set-back for the upper floors comprising the sloping roof and dormers will appear to recede and will read as essentially the same approximate height as the existing building.

5.34 Although the overall silhouette will be slightly greater than existing adjacent to the railway cutting, it is considered that the open nature of the townscape and wide views of the sky will diminish the apparent scale and visual impact of the proposals.

5.35 There are not considered to be any significant heritage considerations in the eastward view in Station Parade.



Fig. 9 View of No.110 Walm Lane from Station Parade (west) looking east

5.36 With regard to views of the development from other specific locations, the comments in paragraphs 5.13 and 5.14 above also apply. While there is a view of the development site from Station Parade, this is outside the conservation area and the road slopes down to the north. The view is further restricted by the presence of the large street trees.

5.37 The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan concentrates on the overwhelmingly residential character of the area and the management of appropriate change to the individual private dwellings as noted in paragraphs 5.17 and 5.18 above.

5.38 Notwithstanding that the townscape impact of the development site is confined to the southwest extremity of the conservation area, the appraisal document does not specifically address the significance (or otherwise) of No.110 Walm Lane or the deleterious impact on the otherwise homogeneous architectural character of the conservation area, of the doctor's surgery, Westly Court or (in terms of setting) parts of Station Parade - a designated secondary town centre shopping frontage facing the site, or at a further distance - Erin Court.

5.39 The slight segregation of No.110 and the other post-war redevelopments adjacent from the dwellings at the core of the area, together with the physical and operational changes that No.110 has undergone over a prolonged period; and the screening of the mature specimen street trees all serve to decrease the existing building's local significance and its contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

5.40 It is therefore considered that the visual impact of the proposals in relation to the adjacent residential streets in the conservation area is neutral and that the redevelopment (to scale commensurate with the general overall height of No.110 and the adjacent No.112) would cause less than significant harm to the character and appearance of the Mapesbury Conservation Area.

Willesden Green CA

5.41 The Willesden Green Conservation Area was originally designated in January 1993 and has a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan dating from March 2006. This covers the commercial centre of Willesden Green including a continuous ribbon of properties fronting High Road from St Andrew's Church in the southwest to Willesden Green Tube Station on Walm Lane in the northeast (and including a small southeast extension covering Heathfield Park south of Willesden Lane). The boundary therefore encompasses a number of notable but un-listed Victorian commercial buildings and the

listed Metropolitan Line tube station (and its platforms) rebuilt in 1925.

5.42 The Willesden Green Conservation Area has an overtly commercial character and south of the railway bridge Walm Lane becomes a more typical urban high street, with a marked transition from the essentially suburban residential character north of the railway to the more substantial commercial scale of the shops and mansion blocks to the south.

5.43 The townscape impact of the development site on the character and appearance of the nearby Willesden Green Conservation Area has been described above (in relation to the setting of Willesden Green Station) and is set out in paragraphs 5.6 to 5.11 above.

5.44 The impact of the development proposals on the character and appearance of the Willesden Green Conservation Area would be limited to a narrowly confined view in the vicinity of St Paul's Avenue northeastward, and taken together with the foreground intrusive and unsympathetic visual dominance of Erin Court, it is considered that visual impact of the proposed development at No.110 Walm Lane on the character and appearance of the Willesden Green Conservation Area would be broadly neutral.

Archaeology

5.45 The Greater London Historic Environment Record has no records of either archaeological features or artifacts uncovered as a result of construction or development in the immediate locality, probably as a consequence of the area being farmed until the mid-19th century and in Brent Council's Unitary Development Plan, Willesden Green Conservation Area is not identified as a 'Site of Archaeological Importance' or an 'Archaeological Primary Area'.

Undesignated heritage assets.

5.46 Brent Council's website¹ notes that the council has identified a number non-designated heritage assets on an informal Local List of Buildings or Structures of Architectural or Historic Interest. These are presumed to constitute undesignated heritage assets as defined by paragraph 135 of the NPPF in making a significant contribution to the character and appearance of their locality.

5.47 The council carried out a consultation on nominations and additions to the local list in 2016 resulting in a draft list of over 100 [unspecified] buildings and structures to be formally considered in 2017, the relative significance of which would merit consideration in future planning decisions. The council's website² could not confirm progress on any formal adoption of a schedule of specific buildings.

¹ Accessed 26 August 2016

² Accessed 31st August 2017

6. HERITAGE CONSIDERATIONS IN RELATION TO THE PROPOSED DESIGN

6.1 As already noted above, the development stands in proximity to a Grade 2 listed building and is situated within one Conservation Area and is nearly adjacent to another. The NPPF paragraph 128 requires applicants to describe the impact of proposals on their significance. While the rationale behind the design approach to the scheme is set out in the Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement and the application drawings, a number of heritage related considerations are also set out here.

6.2 It is considered that the proposed development would deliver a high standard of architectural design that would take stylistic cues from the architectural language of the existing late-Victorian suburb in its predominant use of brick, the restrained modulated horizontal banding for string courses, the articulation of the projecting bays and pitched upper roof form.

6.3 It is contended that the careful consideration of location would therefore respect the spirit, context and architectural character of the Mapesbury Conservation Area; be in accord with the principles of paragraph 137 of the NPPF regarding new development within conservation areas and within the settings of heritage assets; and also be appropriate for the location in terms of its density, design, scale and the careful detailing of its elevations.

6.4 The scheme would also respond to the scale and existing immediately adjacent context of the contemporary scheme at No. 112 Walm Lane and that part of the frontage of Westly Court facing Walm Lane, and would therefore make a positive contribution to the streetscape. The site's prominent position at the junction with Station Parade, next to the railway and at the crest of rising ground from each direction demands a building with a scale necessary to offset the architectural constraint generated by contemporary (rather than 19th century) domestic floor to ceiling heights. The modeling and massing of the scheme is also offset to the south by the five-storey block facing the railway cutting.

6.5 It is considered that the proposed building on the site of No.110 would respond positively to the pivotal location of the Listed station building, accentuated by the latter's generous forecourt area on Walm Lane Bridge, its angled façade and the 'free space' to each side resulting from the position and number of the railway tracks. As the space in front of the northern entrance to the station is the larger of two pedestrian accesses, the main façade of the new development would better help create a sense of enclosure to this ill-defined space and improve the immediate townscape setting especially once the crest of the hill has been crossed from the south.

6.6 The scale and orientation of the new building would also respond to the unsatisfactory massing of the shops in Station Parade opposite stemming in part from their visually discordant and poorly proportioned shop-unit front extensions. A greater visual sense of enclosure would also be achieved than presently exists in Walm Lane, by providing a height appropriate to the overall width of the street and to a scale and massing responding to the scale of No.112 Walm Lane - with which the new building would better align in height. The new development would therefore help address the pattern of erosion of historic character that has already occurred in this southwest corner of the conservation area.

6.7 The Mapesbury and Willesden Green Conservation Areas each display respectively distinctly residential suburban and commercial urban characteristics - with the railway line acting as a distinct wide physical boundary, and with the station as a local landmark. The proposal would provide a suitably scaled transition from the commercial character and scale of the town centre that would compliment the scale and massing seen at No. 112 Walm Lane and the adjacent Westly Court.

6.8 It is considered that the proposal would also relate much better to the character of the townscape in the immediate vicinity than the existing two storey post-war buildings in Walm Lane north of Devonshire Road and the utilitarian tower of Erin Court across the railway lines to the south. It is therefore considered that the proposal for No.110 Walm Lane would be broadly neutral in terms of its impact on the character of both conservation areas and the setting of the listed building.

7. SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The development site sits within the Mapesbury Conservation Area, a designated asset dating from 1982, for which Brent Council adopted a Conservation Area Character Appraisal in March 2006. Willesden Green Tube Station, a Grade 2 listed building is located close by within the Willesden Green Conservation Area.

7.2 The area in the vicinity of the development site marks a transition between a locality primarily residential in character to the east and the commercial town centre to the west. The Mapesbury area developed rapidly over farmland after the arrival of the railway with most of the houses being built between 1895 and 1905 but with a further phase from 1908 to 1920, all built by about a dozen firms of local contractors.

7.3 The development site is located at the extreme southwest edge of the conservation area adjacent to sites at the corner of Walm Lane and Devonshire Road that were redeveloped in the post-war era but to a scale, massing, form and styles unrelated to the prevailing late-Victorian and early Edwardian character elsewhere to the northeast.

7.4 No.110 Walm Lane is a building of c.1893, serving originally as both a doctor's surgery and a private house, but later becoming a Constitutional Club; a members' club and in 2001, partly a public house. To the south side and rear of the building are several later unsympathetic extensions in poor condition and surface car parking bounded by the railway cutting.

7.5 Although No.110 Walm Lane is one of the earliest buildings on the northeast side of the railway bridge, and loosely described as being in the 'Arts and Crafts' or 'Queen Anne Revival' it has undergone many alterations and changes of use. These have diluted its original architectural interest and consequently the existing building is not absolutely integral to the quality of the conservation area as a whole and is now physically segregated from other buildings of the same era by more modern development.

7.6 In weighing up the impact of the loss of the existing building on the significance of the conservation area in which it is situated, it is considered that the degree of harm would be 'less than substantial' in terms of the tests in paragraphs 132-134 of the NPPF, but the scheme would contribute positively under the objectives regarding the calibre of new design promoted under paragraph 137.

7.7 The positioning and scale of the listed station building standing in marked isolation from its surroundings allows it to be appreciated as a stand-alone architectural set-piece and it is considered would not be detrimentally affected by the scheme.

7.8 The proposed development would emulate the ridgeline of No.110 and the scale of the adjacent No.112, particularly as the massing of the uppermost two floors would be set back and would appear to recede in views from Station Parade and the limited views in High Road.

7.9 It is considered that the scale of the proposal and its location on Walm Lane would help to create a better defined townscape on the north side; would have a broadly neutral effect on the setting of the listed Underground station; and could enhance the sense of a defined public space around it. Overall it is therefore considered that the effect on the significance and setting of the listed station building would be less than substantial.

7.10 While the loss of the existing building and its replacement by the current proposal might be argued would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Mapesbury Conservation Area and/or adversely affect the setting of the Willesden Green Conservation Area it is considered that the impact would be broadly neutral and in terms

of the NPPF should be assessed as being less than substantial.

7.11 Where the overall level of harm of a proposal is considered to be 'less than substantial', the guidance of paragraph 134 of the NPPF is that the harm should be weighed against the proposal's public benefits and these are set out in the accompanying Planning Statement by the Martin Robeson Planning Practice to which this statement should be cross-referred.

7.12 In accordance with criteria defined in paragraph 132 of the NPPF (as the basis on which the Council should determine applications) it is considered that the development proposals would positively contribute to sustaining this part of Willesden Green and its economic vitality; that the impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area [as a designated heritage asset] and the setting of the nearby listed building would be broadly neutral; and that the impact on the character and appearance of the adjacent Mapesbury conservation area [as a designated heritage asset] would be negligible.

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Authorship of this assessment

The author of this report is Bob Kindred MBE BA IHBC MRTPI.

He has been involved in front-line heritage management in the public, private and third sectors for over 37 years. He was the former Head of Conservation Urban Design & Planning Policy at Ipswich Borough Council until 2012 but latterly runs his own heritage consultancy. He was awarded the MBE for services to heritage in 1999.

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He is the former editor of the IHBC's journal *Context* and is one of the joint editors of the international *Journal of Architectural Conservation*.

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