1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 No. 14 Pelham Street is an unlisted building located within the Thurloe Estate and Smith’s Charity Conservation Area. The owner of the property is seeking to make some alterations to the building requiring planning consent. A pre-application enquiry was made to the local planning authority, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (PRE/AR/19/01394/LEV3) which advised that the proposals were acceptable in principle subject to certain revisions and provision of additional supporting material including a Heritage Statement.

1.2 Forum Heritage Services has been commissioned to make an assessment of the heritage significance of the house in relation to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, to consider the potential impact of the proposals upon that significance and to prepare a Heritage Statement in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

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1.3 This report will provide a description of the exterior of No. 14 Pelham Street and the terrace of which it forms a part and then will consider the character of the area relevant to the proposals followed by an assessment of the significance of the Pelham Street part of the Conservation Area. The impact of the proposals will then be considered.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Thurloe Estate and Smith’s Charity Conservation Area is a large area, the core of which was first designated in 1968 with various smaller later extensions. The terrace including No. 14 Pelham Street lies within part of the 1968 designation with the area of South Kensington Underground station to the north being included in the designated area in 1990.

2.2 According to the Conservation Appraisal, the 3½ storey blocks either side of the four taller red brick houses (2-10 and 20-26) were built in 1843 (although Fig 1.2 Dates of Development assigns 1843 to the whole terrace). The earlier editions of Ordnance Survey maps show that the houses of the terrace had a consistent line to their rear elevations with only small additions projecting off the back of the houses apart from two houses to the west of No. 14. This arrangement had changed by considerably by 1895 by which time the central four houses extended back from the line of the houses to the east by a considerable distance which may suggest that Nos. 12-18 were rebuilt or substantially extended in the late 19th century. Although of the same design to the front, the projecting block to the rear of No. 18 always appears to have extended further back than those of Nos. 12-16. The houses to the west had also experienced change to the rear in the late 19th century with extensions resulting in some of these houses being of a similar length to Nos. 12-18.
3.0  DESCRIPTION

3.1  No. 14 Pelham Street is a 4½ storey terraced house, including the basement constructed in red brick laid in Flemish bond. The house is one of the series of four red brick houses with lower, 3½ storey including basement, rendered terraces of three houses either side, forming a designed group.

3.2  The red brick, terraced houses have canted bays to basement, ground and first floor levels with decorative terracotta panels between ground and first floor levels (Figure 2). The windows of No. 14 have been replaced at ground floor level and the main lights have been replaced at first floor level with original diamond leaded top-opening lights with coloured glass surviving. The four-panel door is to the left of the bay with a narrow stair light above. At second floor level are sash windows with three above two panes to the upper sashes and a single pane to the lower sash. This form of window is also found on No. 12 to the right and No. 18 at the east end of this central block of four houses indicating that this is the original window form. At attic floor level there are three over two sashes which are possibly original windows also. The mansard roof is of slate with brick up-stands and chimney stacks between each house. To the front, the basement well is defined by a low brick wall with iron railings and gates which survive to all four houses in this section the terrace. The tops of the canted bays have moulded brick and dentilled decoration above the stone lintels and caps with nail head decoration to the caps of the piers between the windows. At second floor level there is a stone pier between the pair of sash windows with stone lintels over.

Figure 1 The terrace Nos. 6-24 Pelham Street. No 14 is the second red brick house from the camera.
3.3 To the rear of No. 14 is a small courtyard garden which is set at between ground and basement floor levels. Modern French doors give access from the ground floor to the courtyard garden via a set of modern metal steps (Figure 3). Above this, at first floor level is a three-light casement, the outer lights being narrower than the central light and having diamond leaded top lights. Beneath the French doors at ground floor level is a further set of French doors from the basement.

3.4 Forming the major part of the rear elevation is a projecting block constructed in typical pale gault London brick laid in Flemish bond and with cement pointing. At courtyard level is a small store with a wide opening infilled with a door and window with panelling below. At a raised ground floor level there is a three-light casement with leaded top lights. At a raised first floor level the block is stepped back from the ground floor level which also has a three-light casement with smaller lights above. This appears to be a modern replacement and does not have the leaded top lights.
3.5 The terrace looks over the site of South Kensington Underground station which is open but set at a lower level leaving a void in the townscape at street level. The station is screened from view by a 2.0 m high brick wall (Figure 4). Beyond station the rear of the buildings on the south side of Thurloe Street can be seen which present an irregular mixture of altered elevations with extensions and alterations to windows.
3.6 To the rear of the plots of the terrace on Pelham Street were the rear plots of the terrace along the north-east side of Onslow Square. A large section of the northern part of this terrace has been replaced by two blocks of flats, a mid-20th century block of eight storeys and a late 20th six storey block. Due to the acute angle between Onslow Square and Pelham Street, the rear elevations of these blocks look to the rear elevations of the Pelham Street terrace. The land within the angle between the buildings along these streets is land originally associated with a large building later known as Park House and Park Cottage. This area includes a large number of trees as can be seen on Google Maps (Figure 5). Together with the slightly sunken and highly enclosed nature of the rear courtyard of No. 14 (Figure 6), the extent of vegetation to the rear means that the rear elevation of the house is wholly screened from ground level and with only a small number of windows to the upper floors of the flats on Onslow Square having any opportunity to glimpse the rear of No. 14.

Figure 5 Google Maps image showing the area to the rear of Pelham Street (No. 14 is marked by an arrow). © Google Maps

Figure 6 The rear courtyard of No. 14 showing the highly enclosed character of the plot meaning that there are few opportunities to gain visual access to the lower part of the rear elevation of the house.
4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 The Thurloe Estate and Smith’s Charity Conservation Area is a designated heritage asset and the houses forming the terrace including No. 14 Pelham Street are considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

4.2 Historic England’s Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2 (March 2015) states that understanding the nature of significance is important for understanding the need for and best means of conservation. Understanding the extent of that significance leads to a better understanding of how adaptable a heritage asset may be and provides the essential guide as to how policies should be applied. The following descriptive appraisal will evaluate the heritage against Historic England’s criteria outlined in ‘Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance’ which encompass the following values:

- **Evidential Value** – relating to the potential of a place to yield primary evidence about past human activity;
- **Historical Value** – relating to ways in which the present can be connected through a place to past people, events and aspects of life;
- **Aesthetic Value** – relating to the ways in which people derive sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place;
- **Communal Value** – relating to the meanings of place for the people who relate to it, and whose collective experience or memory it holds.

4.3 There is no doubt that covers an area of generally high-quality houses predominantly built between the late 18th century and the late 19th century resulting in some areas of highly significant townscape. The development of the area is thoroughly discussed in the local authority’s 2016 Conservation Area Appraisal document.

4.4 The terrace on Pelham Street consists of houses built in 1843 with the four red brick houses to the centre of the terrace (Nos 12-18) possibly representing a late 19th rebuild. The houses represent a more modest phase of development of the area compared to some of the finer terraces and crescents built in this area. They have moderate evidential and historical value as part of the development of this part of London. Their aesthetic value is also moderate; the four houses Nos. 12-18 are good quality Victorian terraced houses but they are not of an exceptional quality of design or execution that would mark them as particularly ‘special’. As such, they have not been designated as listed buildings. These values, particularly the aesthetic value, relate to the front elevations; the elevation to the rear were not intended to be ‘public-facing’ and their treatment is accordingly relatively plain and are of considerably lower aesthetic value and cannot be considered as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, even if they were more visible from the public realm than is the case.

5.0 PROPOSALS & ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Proposals

5.1 The proposal for No. 14 Pelham Street is to construct a small single storey extension off the projecting element to the rear of the house and to infill the area to the west of the projecting element with a lightweight structure providing an enclosure to a new stair between ground and attic floor levels with a small office/study space. Both elements are to have
predominantly glazed walls with the single storey element having painted timber panelling to lower level, and solid flat roofs with rooflights.

Assessment of Impact

5.2 The proposed single-storey addition will stand as a clearly modern light-weight addition to the rear of the house. The addition is modest in scale and will not impose itself on the rear courtyard garden area. The design includes a glazing pattern that picks up on, but does not copy, the fenestration of the main house with the use of smaller top lights above larger tri-partite panes with the central pane being wider than the outer panes.

5.3 The fact that this courtyard area is substantially screened and there are no publicly accessible views into the plot, combined with the fact that the rear elevation of the house is not considered to contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area means that the proposal will not harm the designated heritage asset.

5.4 An application for an extension at lower ground floor level of the closet wing of No. 20 Pelham Street was made in 2011 and approved in 2012 (PP/11/02703). The drawings of this scheme are not accessible on the RBKC web site but from the brief description it would appear to indicate that such an extension to the rear is acceptable in principle.

5.5 The infill element of the proposals is a substantially glazed structure with a shallow mono-pitched roof set into a recess between the projecting blocks of No. 14 and No 12. Therefore, it will be even less visible than the single storey addition. The proposal will result in the removal of the existing metal stair which is a functional but relatively unattractive feature which is a positive change. It is relevant that a similar infill structure was approved for the neighbouring No. 16 Pelham Street in 2010 (PP/10/00233) which was designed with a glazed roof. Therefore, given the close similarity in the proposals, it is considered that the proposed scheme should also be considered as not representing harm to the character and appearance of the designated Conservation Area.

5.6 The Council cited Policy CL11 relating to views in the pre-application comments. There are no views to the rear of No. 14 due to the extent of screening around the courtyard garden and certainly there are no views to the property that would be considered significant in the context of the designated Conservation Area.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the statutory approach to the management of historic buildings and areas. Section 72, relating to Conservation Areas requires that ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’. The statutory approach is reflected in Policy CL3 of the RBKC Consolidated Local Plan 2015. Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF says when considering the impact of development on the significance of a heritage asset, great weight should be given to its conservation whilst para. 190 states that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into
account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

6.2 It is considered that the proposed extensions to No. 14 Pelham Street will not cause harm to character or appearance of the designated heritage asset, the Thurloe Estate and Smith’s Charity Conservation Area and will not impact on any views of significance to the townscape quality of the area. Accordingly, I can find no conflict in the proposed development with the statutory duty in Section 72 of the Act, National Policy in the NPPF or Policies CL3 or CL11 of the RBKC Consolidated Local Plan 2015 and conclude that the application should be allowed.