

**Committee Report  
Planning Committee on 20 July, 2010**

**Item No. 1/04  
Case No. 09/1470**

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**RECEIVED:** 12 June, 2009

**WARD:** Dollis Hill

**PLANNING AREA:** Willesden Consultative Forum

**LOCATION:** Dollis Hill House Gladstone Park, Dollis Hill Lane, London, NW2 6HT

**PROPOSAL:** Listed Building Consent for demolition of Dollis Hill House

**APPLICANT:** London Borough of Brent

**CONTACT:** DPP Heritage

**PLAN NO'S:**  
Refer to condition 2

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**RECOMMENDATION**

Grant Listed Building Consent subject to Referral to the Government Office for West Midlands.

**EXISTING**

The application site relates to Dollis Hill House, a Grade II listed building, located within Gladstone Park. The site is accessed off Dollis Hill Lane.

**PROPOSAL**

Listed Building Consent sought for the demolition of Dollis Hill House. As referred to above, following on from the recommendation of the planning committee, the application is required to be referred to the Secretary of State.

This application was deferred from the Planning Committee meeting which was held on 3rd February 2010 to allow for further consideration of matters raised by the North London Chinese Association, regarding the potential re-use of the building.

**HISTORY**

**95/0798:** Full Planning Permission sought for internal alterations and external additions, including demolition of two-storey rear extension and change of use of existing building to provide restaurant and bar and first-floor meeting room and staff accommodation, car parking and landscaping - Withdrawn, 02/08/1995.

**95/0816:** Listed Building Consent sought for internal alterations and external additions, including demolition of two-storey rear extension and change of use of existing building to provide restaurant and bar and first-floor meeting room and staff accommodation - Withdrawn, 02/08/1995.

**LM36371377:** Full Planning Permission sought for reconstruction of garden wall - Granted, 30/04/1980.

**LM36381378:** Listed Building Consent sought for demolition and reconstruction of existing wall - Granted, 27/03/1980.

## **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **National Planning Policy Guidance**

The national policy guidance for the heritage environment is "Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment". This was adopted in March 2010 and supersedes PPG15. When the application was submitted and due to be presented to the Planning Committee on 3rd February 2010, "Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment" was the relevant legislation. Both PPG15 and PPS5 have been referred to below and a detailed assessment provided in the remarks section of this report.

#### ***Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (now replaced by PPS5 - see below).***

In essence PPG15 acknowledges a general presumption in favour of the preservation of Listed Buildings unless a convincing case can be made for alteration or demolition. Where works are proposed to a listed building that it is necessary for these to be justified, showing that they are desirable or necessary. Any proposals for alteration or demolition will, it states, be subject to "careful scrutiny".

PPG15 sets out four issues that are generally relevant to the consideration of all Listed Building Consent applications:

1. The importance of the building, its intrinsic architectural and historic interest and rarity both in national and local terms. (The historic interest is due to age and rarity.)
2. The particular physical features of the building which justify its listed status.
3. The building's setting and its contribution to the local scene, which may be very important, e.g. where it forms an element in a group, park or townscape or where it shares particular architectural forms or details with other buildings nearby;
4. Whether substantial community benefits will arise for the community, in particular by contributing to the economic regeneration of the area or the enhancement of the environment.

PPG15 consider the approach to the demolition of Listed Buildings. It notes that only "very occasionally" will demolition be unavoidable and the destruction of Listed Buildings is rarely necessary for reasons of good planning but rather the result of neglect or failure to incorporate them into new development.

PPG15 advises that consent is contingent upon a need to provide clear and convincing evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to find a use for the building, whether existing or new uses. This includes evidence that some form of charitable or community ownership is not possible; or that a substantial community benefit might arise from the replacement of the Listed Building. The case that redevelopment may be economically more attractive than repair and reuse is not necessarily a sufficient reason for consent to be granted for demolition.

The policy guidance note underlines three aspects that must be addressed in applications for total or substantial demolition of a Listed Building, namely:

1. The condition of the existing building and the cost of repair/maintenance in relation to importance and value derived from the use: this must be based upon consistent and long-term assumptions and include the possibility of tax allowances and of grants from public or charitable sources. The Listed Building may also offer proven technical performance, physical attractiveness and functional spaces that, in an age of rapid change, may outlast the short-lived and inflexible technical specifications that have sometimes shaped new developments.
2. The adequacy of efforts made to retain the building in its current use or to find compatible alternative uses: In effect, the Secretaries of State must be satisfied that real efforts have been made, without success, to continue the present use or to find compatible new uses for the building. This should include the offer of the unrestricted freehold of the building on the open market at a realistic price reflecting its condition.

3. The merits of alternative proposals for the sites: the architectural merits of the replacement building may not be sufficient in themselves to justify demolition: The advice states that there may very exceptionally be situations whereby the community benefits that arise from the new development arising from demolition must be weighed against the arguments in favour of preservation. It continues that even in this case, it will often be feasible to incorporate Listed Buildings within new development and this must be carefully considered.

#### ***Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment***

PPS5 was adopted in March 2010 after the submission of the application to the Planning Committee and correspondences between English Heritage and the Council and now supersedes PPG15. In summary PPS5 seeks to identify and assess the particular significance of any element of the historic environment that may be affected by the relevant proposal.

PPS5 contains a number of policies in which development proposals need to be assessed against. These include policy HE7 which requires the particular significance of the heritage asset to be identified and assessed. Policy HE9 reinforces the presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets. Loss affecting an designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing evidence and should be exceptional.

A full assessment of the proposal in relation to PPS5 has been provided in the form of a supplementary report prepared by DPP Heritage and consideration against the relevant policies contain within PPS5 has been examined within the remarks section of this committee report.

#### **London Borough of Brent Adopted Unitary Development Plan 2004**

Policy BE22 - Protection of Statutory Listed Building

#### **SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT**

N/A

#### **CONSULTATION**

**29/06/2009 - 20/07/2009**

**Site Notices Displayed: 02/07/2009 - 23/07/2009**

#### **Public Consultation**

87 neighbours consulted - 13 letters of objection received on the following grounds:

- Queried as to whether a Council/private enterprise partnership could be formed to fund the restoration and to continue to finance the building.
- Queried whether there is scope to retain part of the ruin and utilise this area for plays.
- Dollis Hill House should be used as an arts centre/community use.
- Loss of an important symbol of local history.

One letter of support received. Suggested that the historic interest could be marked by a plaque or small statue.

#### **Internal Consultation**

**Landscape Team** - requested a Full Tree Protection Method Statement as there are trees in close proximity to the existing building.

#### **External Consultation**

#### **Dollis Hill Art Group**

Dollis Hill Art Group currently used the stables gallery and need room to expand. They would like to see Dollis Hill House restored and used as an Arts & Community Centre.

### **Greater London Authority**

No comments to make as the application is not one classed as strategic by the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008.

### **Brent Arts Council**

Objections raised on the following grounds:

- The demolition of Dollis Hill House as it would result in the loss of an important symbol of local history.
- Prior to the fires, the House was used as an Arts and Community facility and as a retreat for Prime Minister William Gladstone.
- Brent Arts Council is the trustee for the Stables Arts Centre and Gallery (once the stables block for the house). Existing space is limited making it difficult to expand activities in accordance with Brent Council's corporate strategy, in particular with regard to working with youth organisations and older people, due to access constraints.
- The Council has not exhausted all possible avenues for restoration.

### **Gladstone Park Consultative Committee**

Objections raised on the following grounds:

- The demolition of Dollis Hill House would result in the loss of one of the very few historic buildings left in Brent.
- Prior to the fires, the House was used as an arts and community facility by local art groups and other organisations.
- Brent Arts Council is the trustee for the Stables Arts Centre and Gallery (once the stables block for the house). Existing space is limited, making it difficult to expand activities in accordance with Brent Council's corporate strategy, in particular with regard to working with youth organisations and older people, due to access constraints.
- GPCC would like to see the House refurbished and put to both arts and community use with the Council more seriously considering undertaking the funding or part of the costs.

### **The Georgian Group**

Objections raised to the demolition of Dollis Hill House as a "convincing" case for its demolition, as set out in PPG15, has not been met as there is no structural report to demonstrate the structural imperative for demolition.

Suggest that it is feasible, in the short to medium term, for the House to be preserved as a established ruin and serve as an eye-catcher in Gladstone Park. Demolition is premature given the level of active interest in the building's preservation.

### **Dawn Butler MP (Labour MP for Brent South)**

Objections raised to the demolition of Dollis Hill House as it is not considered that there has been careful consideration of all the viable options.

### **Dollis Hill House Trust**

Objections raised on the following grounds:

- The requirements of PPG15 for demolition of a Listed Building have not been made.
- The Council has not made adequate efforts to save the building.

- The historical associations connected to the house remain today.
- Details of the cost of bringing the building back into weatherproof use are not provided. Instead the costs quoted are for complete projects which are higher than the costs to bring the building back into a usable condition.
- The effectiveness of the Council's marketing exercise has not been evaluated.
- The application does not refer to the Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) stage one grant.
- The Council has not put any of its own funds into Dollis Hill House other than the insurance monies.

### **English Heritage**

English Heritage have provided the following observations on the application on 13th November 2009:

In their comments, they acknowledged the poor condition of the house but advised that they were not convinced that the case for demolition had been fully satisfied and wished to be satisfied that all possible options for retention or reuse, in whole or in part had been fully tested. Such options include the possibility of the retention of elements of the existing fabric, such as the Portico.

In response to comments from English Heritage, and following on from a meeting with officers of the Council, English Heritage and the Council's consultants (DPP Heritage), a detailed response was provided by DPP Heritage on 25th January 2010. A summary of the content is summarised below:

#### 1. The nature and extent of special interest

The report concluded that Dollis Hill House was not listed for its architectural interest and in light of minimal architectural interest and latterly dereliction of the building over the past 20 years as a result of extensive fire damage, the special interest of Dollis Hill House, has been completely lost. As such, its 'communal value' as a 'focus' of the public park is considered to be unjustified.

#### 2. The context of the surrounding public park

The relationship between the remains of the house and the surrounding public park have been discussed in detail. The report concluded that the weight attached to the relationship between the house and the surrounding public park is unjustified, given the description of the listing, the history of the site and its use, function and relative disconnection of plan form and principal axis from the public park as found today.

#### 3. Part retention of the building

In response to English Heritage's suggestion for the existing portico entrance to be retained, the structural viability of retaining the portico structure has been explored by a structural engineer. In the response letter to English Heritage, it was concluded that given the limited architectural value of Dollis Hill House (even at the time of listing), it is not considered how the retention of part of it, together with necessary but incongruous structural support, which has no rear value in terms of surviving fabric will provide a coherent representation of Gladstone. The report referred to the significant potential to commemorate the historical association of the site of the original house through re-use of the existing commemorative plaque in the remedial ground works and/or a new commemorative feature.

#### 4. Marketing/viability assessment

The report refers to two unsuccessful marketing campaigns that have been carried out in seeking to find a viable use for the building. Reference is also made to recent advice of Knight Frank which concluded that the value of Dollis Hill House is nil.

## 5. The merits of alternative proposals for the site

The report refers to the PPG15 and queries whether it is appropriate to consider the proposal against PPG15 criteria for the merits of alternative proposals as the application does not involve an alternative development.

English Heritage have provided a follow on response in which they advise that they remain concerned that the proposed mitigation scheme does not adequately secure the significance of the site, but they also acknowledge that the current condition of the house and the costs involved would have a serious detrimental impact on the viability of a scheme for restoration.

English Heritage have since advised that full consideration of the revised report assessing the proposal against PPS5 (in particular policies HE7 and HE9) would be carried out at the referral stage to Government Office for West Midlands.

### REMARKS

#### Deferral of application

This application was due to be reported at the Planning Committee meeting on 3rd February 2010. The application was deferred to allow for further consideration of matters raised by the North London Chinese Association, details of which are set out in section 2.0 of the remarks section of this report. PPG15, the national policy guidance for assessing applications affecting the historic environment has also been superseded by PPS5 in March 2010. A detailed assessment of the proposal in respect to PPS5 has been prepared by the Council's consultants, DPP Heritage, and further details provided below.

#### 1.0 Background and History

Dollis Hill House was statutory listed at Grade II on 23 January 1974 because of its role in the life of Gladstone. The description on the statutory list is as follows:

*"Built in 1825 by the Finches, a Willesden family, and later became the property of the Earl of Aberdeen and a favourite residence of Mr Gladstone, who stayed as a guest here for long periods between 1882 - 1896 (plaque). A square, 2-storey, 3-window House in yellow stock brick, with hipped slate roof and boxed eaves. Entrance front: wide central doorway and double door with fanlight, in stucco porch arcaded at sides, with pilaster treatment and rosettes in frieze, supporting cast iron balcony with stucco piers. To the right the front is built out to the line of the porch, with cement cornice and blocking course (probably later extension). The east front overlooking the park is plain with grounds floor windows altered to doors, and wood and glass veranda for restaurant. North front has projection to left with cornice, as entrance front. West front towards Dollis Hill has service extensions. Graded for its historic rather than architectural importance".*

Dollis Hill House was declared surplus to the needs of Brent Council in 1994. The building has unfortunately struggled to provide viable accommodation for new uses ever since. As a result of extremely destructive fires (suspected arson) in June 1995, April 1996 and a third fire in June 2003, the building is a burnt-out, derelict shell. The plight of Dollis Hill House is not unusual nationally, and is recognised in English Heritage's survey of large Houses in publicly owned parks. **"Park Mansions at Risk in London"** (2004) (The Drury Partnership).

The building is has been included on English Heritage's "Heritage at Risk Register" since 1993; the 2008 entry for the building identifies it as a vacant property and its condition is recognised as "Very Bad". The House is currently listed at the "Priority Category A", which is defined by English Heritage as the highest priority for a building which is deteriorating rapidly with no solution to secure its future.

Since 1994, officers have made a number of attempts to secure partners to deliver the

rehabilitation of the listed House but none of these options have proven to be successful and/or viable. Unfortunately the application for the demolition of the structurally compromised Dollis Hill House has become the only realistic safe option.

## **2.0 Reasons for Decline**

Dollis Hill House has suffered the same way as many Houses in public parks throughout the country. Its vulnerable location has made it the victim of vandalism and arson attacks and its situation within publicly owned Metropolitan Open Land means that its development potential is severely limited. The viability of the House for reuse is also seriously compromised by its relatively remote location in terms of public transport; the lack of parking also restricts the accessibility and versatility of the site. These constraints mean that the Council has found it extremely difficult to secure development partners to find a viable new use. Unfortunately, the House has also suffered from a sustained insidious decline described below:

A summary chronology of the recent history of the building from this time is set out below:

<b>1994</b> June	Declared surplus to needs by Council.
<b>1994</b> October	Proposal by Whitbread PLC for reuse as a public House restaurant was resisted by a significant lobby of local residents.
<b>1995</b> June	First arson attack.
<b>1996</b> June	Application submitted for Whitbread proposal (withdrawn August 1995).
<b>1996</b> April	Second arson attack.
<b>1999</b> June	Torkilsden & Barclay Leisure Management report concludes that reuse is unlikely to succeed without substantial subsidy from Council.
<b>2000</b> March	Property marketed on open market for nine months.
<b>2000</b> November	Council agreed a four-month delay to allow setting up of Dollis Hill House Trust (DHHT).
<b>2001</b> November	Council agrees £30,000 from insurance fund for DHHT to develop business plan and funding applications.
<b>2002</b> September	Council agrees £28,350 from insurance fund to further develop DHHT business plan.
<b>2003</b> June	Third arson attack.
<b>2003</b> December	Council Executive considers future of Dollis Hill House. Decision to demolish.
<b>2004</b> Spring	Brent Primary Care Trust (PCT) expresses interest in site as a community health centre.
<b>2004</b> June	Gladstone Park Heritage Lottery Funded restoration scheme completed.
<b>2005</b> May	Brent PCT decides not to progress their proposal.
<b>2005</b> September	DHHT agrees to submit revised business case for consideration.
<b>2006</b> October	Council agrees to second marketing exercise.
<b>2007</b> June	Marketing exercise completed and no viable proposal obtained. One of the bidders, Training for Life (TFL), given three months to submit a feasibility study

for the future of the House.

- 2007** September Council officers instructed to prepare application for Listed Building consent to demolish subject to outcome of TFL study
- 2008** February Council Executive gave TFL twelve months to develop full business plan, secure capital funding and obtain planning permission.
- 2008** December TFL not able to progress their proposal due to funding constraints.
- 2009** March Council instruct DPP Heritage to submit application for Listed Building consent for demolition of House.

### **3.0 Efforts to secure Retention and/or Adaptive Reuse**

Planning guidance advises that consent for demolition is contingent upon a need to provide clear and convincing evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to find a use for the building, whether existing or new uses. This includes evidence that some form of charitable or community ownership is not possible; or that a substantial community benefit might arise from the replacement of the Listed Building.

The Council has committed significant financial resources in trying to identify a suitably experienced and resourced partner to help in securing a future for the House. The Council has tried two major marketing exercises advised by experienced estate consultants. The two exercises in 2000 and 2007 were rigorous, comprehensive and open but did not attract a partner with a sustainable, viable proposal for the future of the House that would have complied with the planning requirements of the House's Public Park setting. Unfortunately most of the proposals submitted to the Council were predicated on the transfer of the House ownership for a nominal minimal sum and a large grant to support the restoration. In 2005 the GLA indicated that they would match funding of any monies invested by the Council in the restoration. However, the grant aid was never forthcoming and the offer was withdrawn.

Although the marketing exercise did not secure a new owner and/or appropriate reuse for the building, the Council and technical officers have supported the initiation and development of two serious proposals for the House. Unfortunately, although much effort has been expended to guide these proposals towards a successful scheme; the financial viability and poor structural condition of the building have prevented resolution and delivery. The schemes were:

#### *PCT Health Centre*

The Health Centre scheme, based on a Conservation Management plan and initial survey work in collaboration with the Preservation Trust, proposed a full conversion and restoration with some sensitive reticent extension. The scheme was fully developed but after consideration by Quantity Surveyors, the cost of the historic restoration made the project too expensive.

#### *Training For Life*

Training for Life (TFL) represented the best opportunity for the future of Dollis Hill House, the organisation is experienced in the sensitive rehabilitation of Listed Buildings and has completed a number of projects elsewhere in London and the Country. The proposal by TFL was for the conversion of the House into a catering training facility. After a year's work, the organisation and Council officers came to the conclusion that the cost of restoration, the difficult location and withdrawal of the GLA funding offer, meant a scheme was not possible at Dollis Hill House.

A number of surveys have been undertaken to assess the condition of the House and the cost of repair and reconstruction. The House was assessed in July 2003 by WPG Surveys where it was reported that "the basic condition of the building is that the brick remains, but the timber elements (floors, roof, staircase, etc.) and finishes are either destroyed or badly damaged (except in the cellar and parts of the north extension)". In 2003 -2004 Integrated Surveying Partnership

(Commissioned by the Dollis Hill House Trust) estimated that the costs of repairs to bring the ruined building back into a secure and weatherproof shell where further fit-out would then facilitate a new use, were in the order of £2.8 million. Subsequently in 2007, it was established that these costs had risen to £5.5 million (survey commissioned by Training for Life).

Unfortunately, after so much work, the Council has come to the conclusion that if the PCT and TFL, with all their resources, experience and skill, cannot deliver a future for the House, then it is difficult to see which organisation can. Whilst the Council were developing its response to the criterion of PPG15's sequential test, the Chinese Welfare Trust (CWT) approached the Council in October 2009 with some suggestions for a new proposal. Officers invited the organisation to come and explain their scheme but they were unable to develop their ideas and withdrew from the meeting.

As referred to above, the application was deferred from a previous committee meeting to allow further consideration of the proposals put forward by the CWT. In February 2010 the CWT approached the Council with a scheme for the conversion of the remains of Dollis Hill House into an elderly persons care home. They presented their scheme to officers from Environment and Culture. The CWT proposals were assessed using the same criteria matrix used on the competition selection process in 2007 when considering the Training for Life scheme. Unfortunately, their scheme scored poorly in comparison to other proposals and the Council cannot be confident that their ideas could be realised within the financial and planning constraints. As such, a viable alternative scheme has not been brought forward to enable the retention of the building.

#### **4.0 Future Commercial Viability**

The Council's property consultants who carried out the 2007 marketing exercise also assessed the future of Dollis Hill House as a commercial proposition. Unfortunately their conclusions do not suggest a positive future for the remaining derelict structure. They suggested:

"Even if the property was offered at a nil premium, potential leaseholders would not be confident of being able to generate sufficient income or secure appropriate funding to pay for the long-term maintenance of the property. Should the building be refurbished then the cost of undertaking such works (the Training for Life Study budgeted for £5.5 million, though this did include an extension) would represent a significant 'conservation deficit'."

#### **4.0 Testing the Policy Case for Demolition - PPG15**

The case for demolition can only be made if the demands of the sequential test are strictly met - National Policy Guidance PPG15 sets out the fundamental issues that need to be considered for all applications calling for the demolition of a Listed Building. Whilst it is acknowledged that during the course of this application, PPG15 has been superseded by PPS5, the revised guidance is considered to reinforce that set out previously in PPG15. As such, consideration against PPG15 is considered useful to assist in the assessment of the proposal. The criteria are set out below, together with a summary of the Council's consultants' assessment of the application for demolition of Dollis Hill House in relation to these issues. The cases are made in more detail in the Design and Access statement and letter to English Heritage by the Council's consultants DPP Heritage. The sequential test requires assessment of:

#### **PPG 15 (Para. 3.5) Criteria (i) "The importance of the building, its intrinsic architectural and historic interest and rarity, in both national and local terms."**

Dollis Hill House was listed for its special historical interest and association with William Ewart Gladstone. The listing was not initiated by the architectural character of the House, indeed Dollis Hill House is considered to be an unexceptional piece of architecture. The Council and its consultants argue that the listing was made because of an association with an historic person, so although the demolition of the building is regrettable, it does not remove the historic association or the celebration of Gladstone, as the park is named after him. The Council is proposing that some interpretative material will be available either on an independent display or attached to the

surviving stables complex.

**PPG 15 (Para 3.5) Criteria (ii) “The particular physical features of the building which justify its inclusion in the list.”**

As the statutory listing description establishes, even in good condition, the House was not included on the list for its architecture. Therefore, now that the building has been significantly altered and ravaged by three fires there is nothing physical left to justify retention of the seriously compromised derelict structure.

**PPG 15 Criteria (iii) The building's setting and its contribution to the local scene**

Dollis Hill House does not form part of or contribute to the character and quality of an associated group of other Listed Buildings. The House stands within what would originally have been its own landscaped grounds, independent of the Park. The House was not laid out to respond to any part of Gladstone Park or any axis or landscape and natural features. The House is at the top of the Hill but was not composed to be the focus of views from around the park location.

**PPG 15 Criteria (iii) The extent to which the proposed works would bring substantial benefits to the community. In particular by contributing to economic regeneration.**

The demolition of the remains of Dollis Hill House will not in itself bring a regeneration benefit to the community of Brent. However, the building is in a very poor structural condition and is difficult to keep secure, therefore posing a threat to anyone who might get inside. At present the security and structural stability of the House is a financial burden to the Council and the demolition of the remains would enable an area of the Park to be brought back into public access and provide amenity for park users that is not now available behind the security fence.

Should the consent be granted for demolition, it is proposed to landscape the remaining space expressing the footprint of the building in a combination of hard and soft landscape surfaces. This will indicate that the building once stood on the site. A plan has been submitted providing an indicative landscape though full details would be required by condition.

It has been suggested by English Heritage that an element of the remaining structure, in particular the entrance Portico, should be retained as a memory of the House. The Council has appointed structural engineers to assess the surviving elements of the House and they are of the opinion that the most suitable elements for retention are structurally compromised and their condition has deteriorated too much for viable restoration. In any event, the basement beneath the remaining structure makes the retention of walls and/or the Portico a very complex and difficult construction problem.

## **5.0 Testing the Policy Case for Demolition - PPS5**

Any consideration of listed building consent for demolition would now need to be measured against the new criteria as outlined in PPS5. The relevant policies are HE7 and HE9. In light of the need to assess the proposal against PPS5, a supplementary report has been prepared by DPP. This report is intended to be read in conjunction with the Design & Access Statement that was submitted for the planning application.

Consideration of the proposal against policies HE7 and HE9 are discussed below:

***Policy HE7: Policy Principles Guiding the Determination of Applications for Consent relating to all Heritage Assets***

This policy requires local planning authorities to identify and assess the particular significance of any element of the historic environment that may be affected by the proposal. In considering the impact of a proposal on any heritage asset, local planning authorities should take into account the particular nature of the significance of the heritage asset and the value that it holds for this and future generations. It goes on to refer to the positive contribution that conservation of heritage

assets and the historic environment can make to the establishment and maintenance of sustainable communities and economic vitality.

As referred to above in Section 4.0 (PPG 15 (Para. 3.5) Criteria (i) and (ii) and the Design & Access Statement accompanying the application, the case has been made that even at the time of listing, Dollis Hill House was considered to be of limited significance in terms of architectural interest. Its significance has since been further eroded after serious fire damage and loss of fabric. This has been noted by English Heritage. As described in the listing, the historic interest is associated with William Ewart Gladstone, but there is no tangible evidence of this association evident in the remaining seriously fire damaged fabric of the building.

As referred to above in Section 4.0 (PPG 15 Criteria (iii)), the impact of the proposal upon the community has been discussed. It recognised that the building is currently in a very poor strictly condition and is difficult to keep secure, therefore posing a threat to anyone who might get inside. The scaffolding around the building are considered to be an eyesore when viewed from the park. The demolition of the remains would enable an area of the Park to be brought back into public access and provide amenity for park users that is not now available behind the security fence.

Given that the significance of Dollis Hill House is now very limited, and despite repeated efforts by experienced and well-resourced professionals (refer to Section 3.0 above), it has been impossible to develop a viable, sustainable, long-term commercial proposition for the remaining structure. This illustrates that conservation of the heritage asset is not viable. English Heritage recognise that the current condition of the house and the costs involved would have a serious detrimental impact on the viability of a scheme for restoration.

***Policy HE9: Additional Policy Principles Guiding the Consideration of Applications for Consent relating to Designated Heritage Assets***

This policy advocates the presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets. Loss affecting an designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing evidence and should be exceptional. In the case of demolition Policy HE9 has a series of criteria for which the proposal needs to be considered against. Details of which are set out below:

**(i) the substantial harm to or loss of significance is necessary in order to deliver substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss**

As discussed above, Dollis Hill House is recognised to be of limited significance. It is considered that the loss of significance is outweighed by the public benefits of the proposals in enhancing the appearance of Gladstone Park by removing the currently scaffold ruin which detracts from the visual amenity of the public park and the creation of new, safe and fully accessible public space within the park.

The historic association or the celebration of Gladstone, is not considered to be lost as the park is named after him. The Council is proposing that some interpretative material will be available either on an independent display or attached to the surviving stables complex or a commemorative plaque.

**(ii)(a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site**

The ruinous condition of the building and the costs associated with basic repair serve to prevent all; reasonable use of the site. As referred to above a number of surveys have been carried out to establish the costs to bring the ruined building back into a secure and weatherproof shell where further fit-out would then facilitate a new use. The latest survey prepared for Training For Life in 2007 established that the costs were in the order of £5.5 million.

**(ii)(b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term that will**

## **enable its conservation**

As described in Sections 2.0 and 3.0 above, extensive and successive efforts have been made since 1990 to find a new use for the building and these have been hampered by the severe damage caused by three fires, the associated costs of reconstruction, limitations posed by the building's location in Metropolitan Open Lane and the objective of a community-based use being found. Successive marketing attempts, last conducted by Knight Frank, have also failed to find a viable interest in a new use of the building.

### **(ii)(c) conservation through grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is not possible**

The detailed chronology of the efforts made to secure a future of use Dollis Hill House, including actions undertaken to access funds over previous years is set out in Appendix 3 of the Design and Access Statement and discussed above in Sections 2.0 and 3.0 of this report. It is considered from the details accompanying this application that the failure of efforts to secure appropriate and sufficient capital to repair and reconstruct the building to facilitate a new use has not been due to any deficiency in searching widely for sources of potential funding.

### **(ii)(d) the harm to or loss of the heritage asset is outweighed by the benefits of bringing the site back into use**

As discussed above, the loss of the limited significance of the designated heritage asset (Dollis Hill House) is outweighed by the opportunity to return the site to wider public park, where it will be brought back into use a public amenity.

In summary, it is considered that the application proposal addresses and meets the objectives of PPS5, and that a full case has been made and justified in respect of the proposal to demolish Dollis Hill House.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

The recommendation to seek consent for the demolition of Dollis Hill House has not been reached easily and is the regrettable but inevitable result of a series of factors, they are:

1. The architecture of the House is not exceptional and, as the 1974 statutory listing describes, the significance of the House is through an historic association, not its built fabric and architecture.
2. The House's role in the Park has always been secondary and, because of vandalism and fire, it is now a significant blight on the local landscape.
3. The original, undistinguished House is now a burnt-out, derelict shell which seriously reduces its architectural relevance and structural integrity.
4. The building cannot provide the accommodation, location and development potential for a viable reuse.
5. Despite repeated efforts by experienced and well-resourced professionals, it has been impossible to develop a viable, sustainable, long-term commercial proposition for the remaining structure.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Refer to Secretary of State

- (1) The proposed development is in general accordance with policies contained in the:-

Brent Unitary Development Plan 2004  
Central Government Guidance

Relevant policies in the Adopted Unitary Development Plan are those in the following chapters:-

Built Environment: in terms of the protection and enhancement of the environment  
Open Space and Recreation: to protect and enhance the provision of sports, leisure and nature conservation

#### **CONDITIONS/REASONS:**

- (1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning on the date of this permission.

Reason: To conform with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- (2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawing(s) and/or document(s):

Design and Access Statement prepared by DPP Heritage  
Supplementary (PPS5) Heritage Statement prepared by DPP Heritage  
Biodiversity Survey Report prepared by Aspect Ecology)  
1035708/01;  
573/03;  
8772/SK1  
Unnumbered "Site Interpretation"

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- (3) Prior to works commencing on the demolition of Dollis Hill House, details of the hard and soft landscaping works which form part of the site interpretation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved landscape scheme shall be implemented within six months of the demolition of Dollis Hill House. Such details shall include:

(a) the identification and protection of existing trees and shrubs not directly affected by the building works and which are to be retained;

(b) soft landscaping planting schedule and layout plan (including details of species, size, location, density and number);

(c) areas of hard landscape works and proposed materials;

(d) details of the proposed arrangements for the maintenance of the landscape works.

Any planting that is part of the approved scheme that within a period of five years after planting is removed, dies or becomes seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the next planting season, and all planting shall be replaced with others of a similar size and species and in the same positions, unless the Local Planning Authority first gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance and setting for the proposed development and ensure that it enhances the visual amenity of the area.

**INFORMATIVES:**

None Specified

**REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:**

Brent's UDP 2004

Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment

Planing Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment

Letters of objection

Valuation Report from Knight Frank dated 19 October 2009

Letter in response to observations made by English Heritage prepared by DPP Heritage dated 25 January 2010

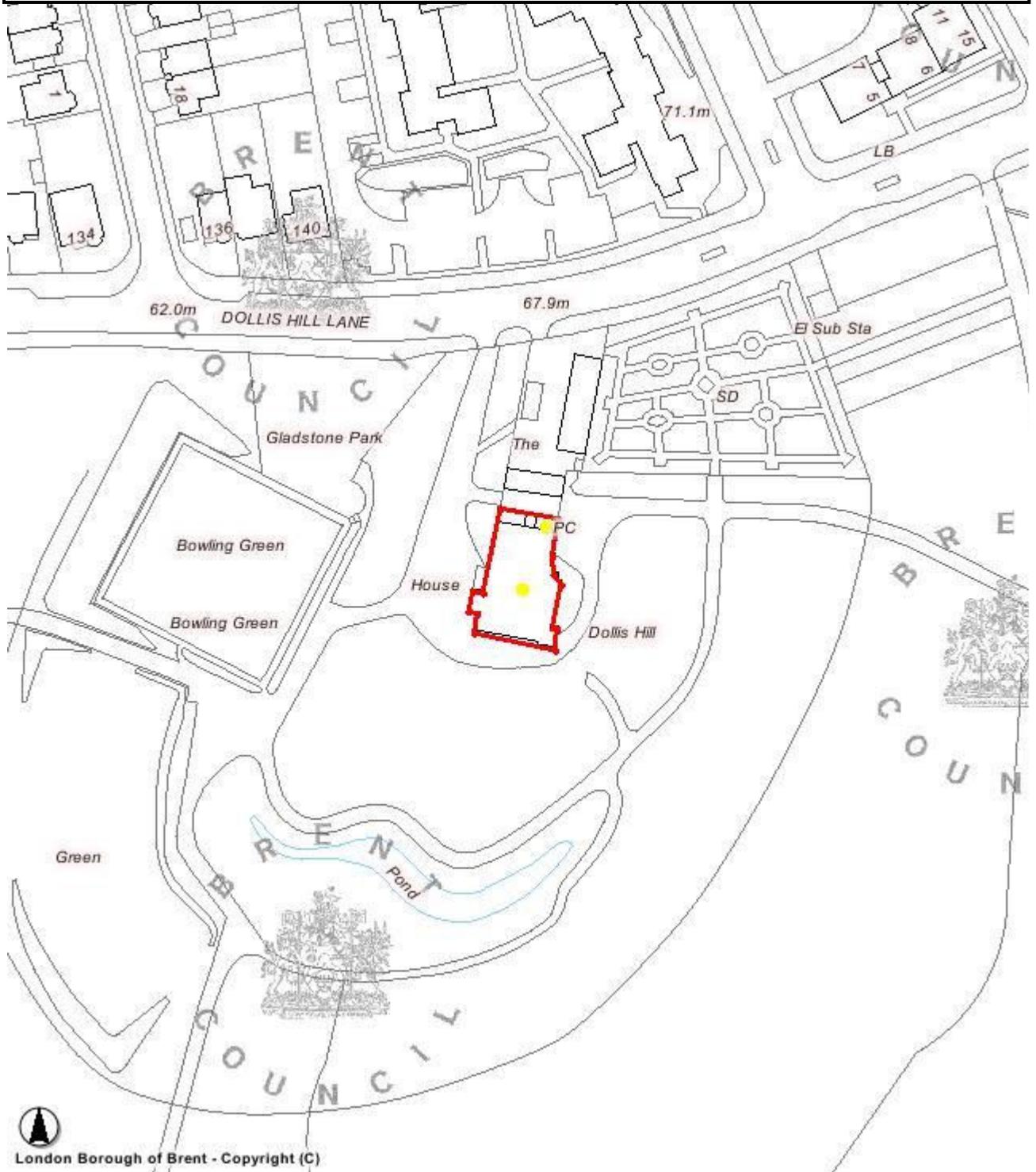
Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Victoria McDonagh, The Planning Service, Brent House, 349 High Road, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 6BZ, Tel. No. 020 8937 5337



# Planning Committee Map

Site address: Dollis Hill House Gladstone Park, Dollis Hill Lane, London, NW2 6HT

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