

8 POLYGON ROAD

CRUMPSALL

MANCHESTER

HERITAGE STATEMENT



August 2021

Introduction

This report provides a heritage statement on No. 8 Polygon Road, a villa dating to the second half of the 19th century, and an undesignated heritage asset within the Crumpsall Lane conservation area. The proposal is for the demolition of existing, later, extensions and the refurbishment and construction of new extensions to form apartments.

This report describes the heritage context and the asset, with a commentary on its significance, and the potential for impact on the conservation area due to the development proposals.

This report has been prepared by Rob Burns, an urban designer and specialist in heritage issues, who has 30 years of experience in dealing with historic townscapes and buildings. Formerly employed by English Heritage (now Historic England) as a specialist in urban conservation and regeneration/development, he has worked extensively in the north west.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. The Act also places a statutory duty upon the Local Planning Authority, in determining applications for development affecting listed buildings, to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving the special interest and setting of a listed building.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF- 2021) includes advice on heritage matters and what should be taken into account when dealing with the historic environment. It states that; *In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'.*

1. Background Context

- 1.1 The site is located within Crumpsall Lane conservation area (Figure 1), although there are no other designated heritage assets within the vicinity, and the property does not appear on a list of locally listed buildings. It is in poor repair, with a poor quality extension, and not in use, and in its current condition, it is a negative feature within the conservation area (Figures 2 and 3).

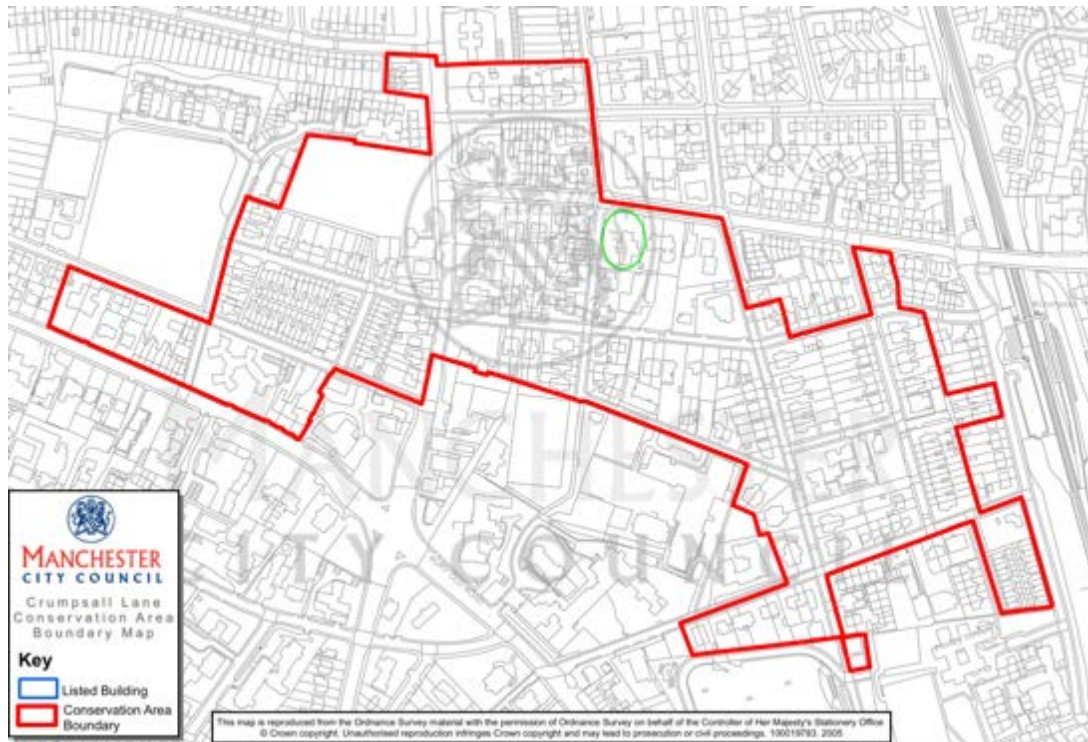


Figure 1- Crumpsall Lane conservation area, site marked with green oval (Manchester City Council).



Figure 2



Figure 3

- 1.2 The conservation area is a historic residential area, although the site of the earliest houses constructed in the area has been incorporated into the King David's school site. Characterised by mature trees and gardens, and with a consistent scale of 3 story villas and paired, semi-detached houses, the conservation area has a cohesive townscape. Whilst there is a general texture and tone throughout the area, provided through the use of red brick, other materials and finishes, including pale render and some timber, are also used, and these provide further visual interest, acting as a foil to the general brick work.
- 1.3 The area evolved from former farmland, with the expansion of Manchester, and the earliest maps show that the site now occupied by 8 Polygon Road, was located in the fields of Yew Tree farm, which was swept away as the area expanded (Figures 4 and 5). The residential circus of Wilton and Polygon from where the street name arose, was in existence at this point to the south, and represents the earliest purpose built suburb in Crumpsall. This appears to date from the 1830's/1840's, and consisted of individual villas set in large grounds, contrasting with the denser development of Cheetham Hill. Envisaged as a circular form, with a central greenspace, the development was never completed and the north west side of the circus became the site for the Cheetham Hill Methodist church, and the existing houses were demolished to make way for King David school.



Figure 4- the area in 1850



Figure 5- general area, 1844

- 1.4 The character of the area changed rapidly from the 1840's and by the turn of the 19th century (Figure 6 and 7) it had become a fully-fledged suburban settlement, with a new grid created by merging the different geometries of the earlier field boundaries and the pre-existing Crumpsall Lane with the orientation of Bury Old Road/Cheetham Hill Road, and Middleton Road (then called Rochdale Road). Further developments following this era led to a dilution of the character of detached and paired villas, as smaller dwellings replaced the earlier houses, as different types of residential properties. In 1890, 8 Polygon Road was identified as Northwood House (later changed again to Westwood). As with many of the houses within the area, which resembled more of a garden estate than the denser residential areas around it, the property had extensive glass houses attached, as well as ancillary buildings within the grounds. The ordnance survey maps from this period illustrates the cohesive character and appearance, and the array of villa types which occupied the area. Plot sizes were generous, and allowed expansion into the grounds, with structures such as glass houses, whilst other houses were more diminutive, and occupied smaller plots, but there was a general townscape quality of large houses set in extensive grounds, which afforded glimpsed views through trees of consistently scaled three storey dwellings.

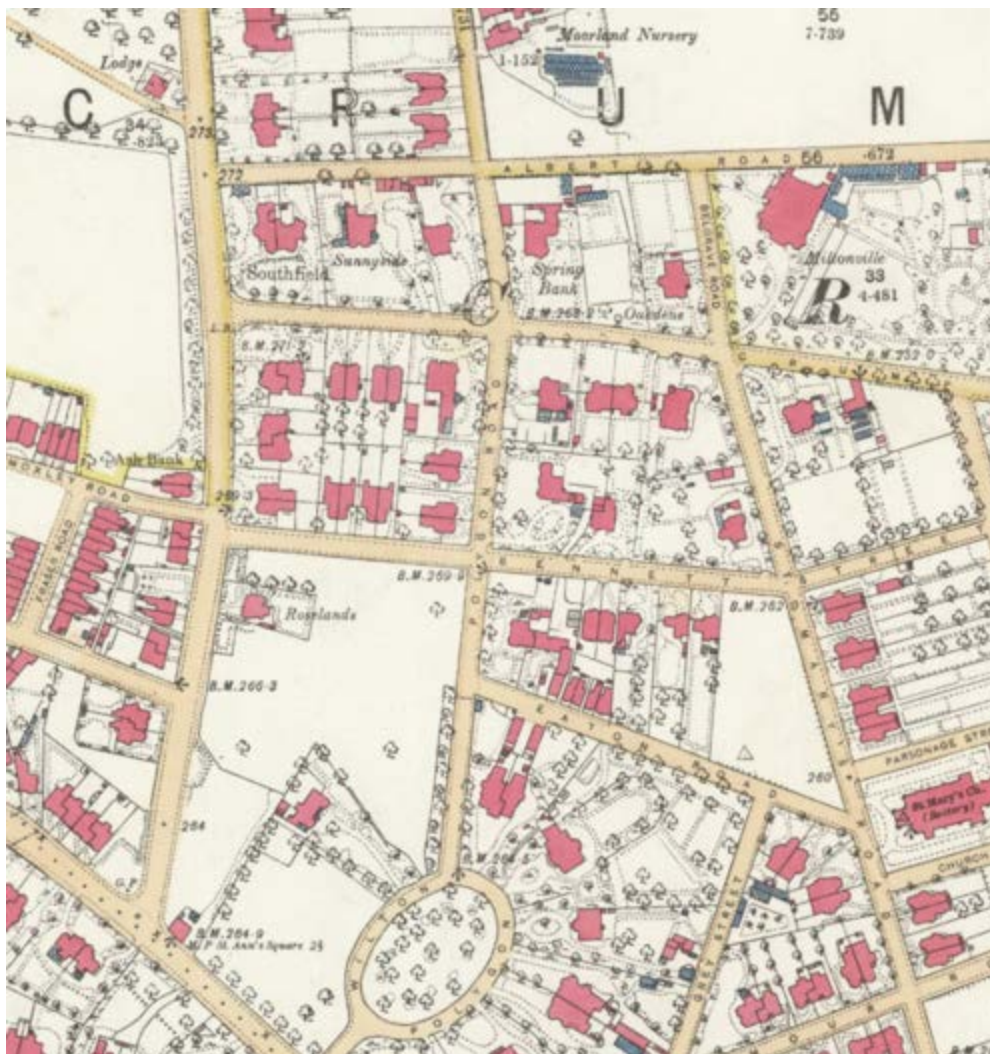


Figure 6- 1893



Figure 8- Israel Sieff Care Home, to the south of 8 Polygon Road

- 1.6 Adaptations, changes to boundaries and some new build properties have also impacted on the continuity of the conservation area, and reduced the townscape quality (Figures 9- 13).



Figures 9 and 10- more recent buildings are of a different form to the underlying villas



Figure 11- property on the corner of Crumpsall Lane and Polygon Road- directly opposite the application site



Figures 12 and 13- Eaton Road, showing difference in scale and form of older properties and newer houses, and the King David school on the edge of the conservation area.

- 1.7 However, the conservation area generally provides a consistency, which underlines its special character and appearance, not least through the planting, which is a feature of the area. This helps the area coalesce, and reduces the impact of some of the negative changes to the historic detailing, acting as a residual feature of the large plots and mature gardens (Figure 14).



Figure 14- Bennett Road- landscaping

- 1.8 The application site has a strong tree line to the boundary (Figures 15 and 16) which affords glimpsed views into the plot. Located on Crumpsall Lane, the trees provide a structural component to the street view, with the width of the road significantly larger than other streets within the conservation area, and acting as a main artery in the hierarchy network of routes through the area. The application site visually relates to this zone within the conservation area, with its main frontage to the wide street, rather than some of the narrower roads within the hinterland of the area.



Figure 15- application site from Crumpsall Lane, set within the trees



Figure 16- application site from Crumpsall Lane

2.0 Policy Context

2.1 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- 2.2 This remains the primary legislation governing the historic built environment, and in relation to conservation areas, a Local Planning Authority must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

- 2.3 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Government sees three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental, and these roles should be regarded as mutually dependent. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. The planning system is therefore expected to play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions. Policies 189 -208 are related to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The NPPF describes the historic environment in terms of “*heritage assets*.” It defines the significance of a heritage asset as its value *‘to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.’*
- 2.4 Paragraphs 194 and 195 of the NPPF require planning applicants and local planning authorities to assess the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be appropriate to the assets’ importance and no more than sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Local planning authorities should take this assessment into account when the potential impact of proposed development to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 2.5 Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states that where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of or damage to a heritage asset the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.
- 2.6 Paragraph 197 states that local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of new development sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets; the positive contribution that heritage assets can make to sustainable communities; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local distinctiveness.
- 2.7 Paragraph 193 sets out policy principles guiding the consideration of impact of development

on the significance of a designated heritage asset. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Any harm to or loss should require clear or convincing justification.

- 2.8 Paragraph 199 provides a series of tests which should be applied in cases where substantial harm to or total loss of significance will be caused. In the case of development proposals which will lead to substantial harm or loss, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 2.9 Paragraph 201 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
- 2.10 Paragraph 203 states that the effect of a development on a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 2.11 Paragraph 206 states that local authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets 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 favourably.
- 2.12 Paragraph 207 states that not all elements of a World Heritage Site or Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 194 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 195, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or the World Heritage Site as a whole.
- 2.13 Policy 208 concerns enabling development and the need for LPAs to assess whether the benefits of this would outweigh planning policies if the future conservation of a heritage asset is secured.

Planning Practice Guide

- 2.14 The PPG provides further technical detail and guidance on the approach outlined in the NPPF. In relation to conservation areas, Para 18 states that the following principles should be taken into account with regard to policies and decision-making:

An unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to a conservation area is individually of

lesser importance than a listed building. If the building is important or integral to the character or appearance of the conservation area, then its demolition is more likely to amount to substantial harm to the conservation area, engaging the tests in para 199 of the NPPF. However, the justification for its demolition will still be proportionate to the relative significance of the building and its contribution to the significance of the conservation area as a whole.

- 2.15 Para 017 on the assessment of substantial harm advises that, *Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.*

Manchester City Council Policy

- 2.16 Conservation Areas

The Council will give particularly careful consideration to development proposals within Conservation Areas.

a. The Council will seek to preserve and enhance the character of its designated conservation areas by carefully considering the following issues:

- i) the relationship of new structures to neighbouring buildings and spaces;*
- ii) the effect of major changes to the appearance of existing buildings;*
- iii) the desirability of retaining existing features, such as boundary walls, gardens, trees, (including street trees);*
- iv) the effect of signs and advertisements;*

v) any further guidance on specific areas which has been approved by the Council.

b. The Council will not normally grant outline planning permission for development within Conservation Areas.

c. Consent to demolish a building in a conservation area will be granted only where it can be shown that it is wholly beyond repair, incapable of reasonably beneficial use, or where its removal or replacement would benefit the appearance of character of the area.

d. Where demolition is to be followed by redevelopment, demolition will be permitted only where there are approved detailed plans for that redevelopment and where the Council has been furnished with evidence that the development will be undertaken.

e. Development proposals adjacent to Conservation Areas will be granted only where it can be shown that they will not harm the appearance or character of the area. This will include the protection of views into and out of Conservation Areas.

2.17 Core strategy- Policy EN 3 Heritage

Throughout the City, the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the City Centre. New developments must be designed so as to support the Council in preserving or, where possible, enhancing the historic environment, the character, setting and accessibility of areas and buildings of acknowledged importance, including scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, conservation areas and archaeological remains. Proposals which enable the re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset.

3 Significance

- 3.1 No. 8 Polygon Road is a residual element of a large suburb of villas, constructed in the second half of the 19th century. Whilst the conservation area has lost some qualities, it remains of historic merit, and the townscape retains a sense of place, and distinctive.
- 3.2 Appraised against the methodology for assessment of cultural significance in *Conservation Principles* (English Heritage, now Historic England), the following values are identified:

Evidential Value

- 3.3 The current building appears to date from the 1870's/80's, and formed part of the complex of villas which collectively provide the conservation area with a group value. Constructed in red brick, a prevalent building material for many of the buildings in the area, it has been extended in the past with a poorly designed and formed in a quasi-historic, pastiche approach. The building is also redundant and in poor condition, and currently has a negative impact on the conservation area. Nevertheless, it helps to demonstrate the evolution of the area from bucolic, to an upmarket residential area for merchants and the upper echelons of Manchester's professional classes.
- 3.4 The evidential value of the Crumpsall Lane conservation area relates to the typologies established as part of its development as an early example of an exclusive residential area for the merchant and professional classes of the city, from the early decades of the nineteenth century onwards. The presence of large houses, with ancillary building such as glasshouses, the landscaped and verdant grounds which are part of their setting, and the streetscape of boundary walls and mature trees which provide visual buffers and afford glimpsed views, are all fundamental to establishing the character of the area.

Historic Value

- 3.5 The building is of historical interest for its association with the building typologies of villa and ancillary buildings, which were the dominant settlement pattern from the mid-nineteenth century. It has some intrinsic architectural and historic value, but not enough to warrant its inclusion on the National Heritage List for England. Its historic value relates to the narrative of the development of a merchants' suburb, and the subsequent changes in social and economic circumstances which led to parts of the area being re-developed, with the loss of some of the villa buildings and their ancillary structures and grounds. No 8 Polygon Road represents part of the changing face of the area, from its early beginnings as a merchants' residential quarter, to a more institutional and multi-occupation usage. The building is a manifestation of this changing environment.

- 3.6 As an enclave for merchants and professionals, the area is an early example of establishing a residential community as Manchester evolved as a commercial centre. They allowed for an essentially rural existence within easy reach of the offices located in the city centre, and were almost a series of mini-estates. The development of the area, and its gradual dilution with smaller houses, and the fragmentation of the grounds and the conversion of the villas into other uses, is part of the evolutionary narrative of Manchester.

Aesthetic Value

- 3.7 The building is not a locally listed building, its only designation relates to the group value of the conservation area, and has seen adaptations and changes since its construction. It is now, and is in a poor condition. Nevertheless, its soft tones provided by the red brick and some stone architecturally detailing, its simple form and playful language, provide a mannered and pared back aesthetic. The later extensions in brick are less successful, and the building has also received unsympathetic windows.
- 3.8 Whilst Crumpsall Lane conservation area no longer retains an almost bucolic aspect, the large areas of trees and landscaping, which are an essential part of its character, help to provide a distinctive character. The gardens with mature trees afford glimpsed views of the properties set within the grounds, and the hierarchy of former villas, paired houses followed by more diminutive structures, acknowledge the changing circumstances of the area, and its evolution.

Communal Value

- 3.9 The communal value of the building is limited, but relates to the recognition of the building as part of a larger complex which is still legible within the area as a few example still remain of intact villa house types. The building remains as part of the narrative of the evolution of the area as a merchants' suburb, and its simple aesthetic still has some value to the community, despite its poor condition.
- 3.10 Communal value of the conservation area relates to the mature landscaping and sequence of villas, with glimpsed views of the houses and buildings beyond. The verdant quality of the area, and the established townscape which contrasts with the streets and terraces of other nearby neighbourhoods, helps define a distinctive place and provides a communal identity. The significance of the heritage assets relates to the associational and visual relationship of the buildings and the landscape, the narrative of the evolution of the area as initially a rural settlement, which became an enclave of the urban expansion of the city, and the aesthetic qualities of the townscape.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 The proposal is to replace the existing poor quality extensions, and to convert the existing buildings into apartments. Whilst the application is accompanied by fully detailed plans and elevations, illustrations are provided here as references (Figures 17 and 18). The new extensions are proposed in brick, which will provide acknowledge the general textures of the materials palette within the conservation area, although the brick will be of a different colour. This will allow the extension to act as a foil to the original structure, and provide integrity to the new work. The upper floor of the extensions, and an intervention into the roof on the northern elevation, are proposed as dark grey, which resonate with the slate covering, and provide balanced and proportionate elevations. The top floor to the southern extension is also set-back, allowing the storeys beneath to align with the proportions of the existing building, with the top floor aligning with the eaves line.



Figure 17- Studio Tashkeel Architecture



Figure 18- Studio Tashkeel Architecture

- 4.2 The re-purposing of the building via the new extensions, would provide the funding to ensure that the original building is properly conserved, and also acknowledges the changing context of the villas within the conservation area as a series of adapted buildings, from single occupancy originally, to hotels and apartments. This reflects the changing social and economic evolution of the area, and responds to the contemporary needs of users.
- 4.3 The site forms a gateway into the conservation area, and the current condition of the building, the unmanaged garden, and the general appearance of decline are significant negative attributes which dilutes the significance of the assets. The existing extensions, whilst smaller in scale than the proposal, are of poor architectural quality, and in attempting to pick up on visual cues relating to the original building, they are simple reductive structures which are neither good copies of period architecture, or high quality contemporary extensions.
- 4.4 The poor condition of the building, and its low quality extensions, are negative in the contribution to the conservation area, and this is exacerbated by the non-contextual design of the care homes directly to the south of the site, and the apartments directly opposite on the corner of Polygon Road/Crumpsall Lane (Figures 8 and 11). Whilst these are contemporary buildings, they lack integrity and neither acknowledge nor respect the conservation area. The proposal works with the grain of the original building, but does so in an honest and contemporary manner, adding further interest to the parent building, as a contrast. It will help lift the quality of this part of the conservation area, by allowing the original building to once again provide a positive contribution, whilst also demonstrating how good modern design standards can add to the historic character. At the moment, the poor condition of the building, its low quality extensions, and the proximity of the anonymous new developments to the south and opposite, all conspire to present a much denuded quality to the conservation area.
- 4.5 The proposal will rescue the building from further deterioration, and also demonstrate how good quality contemporary architecture can complement the historic environment. The building has little intrinsic merit, and its significance relates to the cumulative value of the villas within the conservation area. The extensions will allow for the sustainable refurbishment of the building, as well as acknowledging the changing social and economic context of the conservation area.
- 4.6 In terms of impacts on heritage assets, there is no heritage harm, the proposal is **beneficial** to the conservation area, and complies with national and local policies.