

Kensington Court, Newport

Heritage Note

edp5413_r001c

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Note summarises an assessment of the potential historic environment impacts arising from the development of land at Kensington Court, Newport (**Plan EDP 1**). Specifically, the assessment focusses on the potential for impacts to the significance of the Grade II listed building Cambrian House (**3034**) resulting from change within its setting. It references Cadw guidance *Conservation Principles* (Cadw, 2011) and *The Setting of Historic Assets in Wales* (Cadw, 2017).
- 1.2 The assessment was carried out in response to a pre-application consultation issued by Vicky Quinn at Newport City Council on 08 June 2018, which stated simply that the proposed development is *‘too close to the listed building’*. It should be noted that this comment was in relation to a prior scheme to develop the site and not to the current proposals. In this respect, the assessment presents a robust and considered appraisal of the potential for the proposed development to change the setting of the listed building, such that there is an impact upon its significance. The assessment has been carried out following a site visit on 09 January 2019.
- 1.3 Development proposals, as referred to in this assessment, are illustrated on the plan, Site Layout Rev. H (DWE Architecture, 01/21 Drawing number 0005).

2. Description of the site

- 2.1 The site (illustrated on **Plan EDP 1**) consists of the buildings and the northern part of the associated grounds of the former Kensington Court Healthcare centre, which closed in 2015. The building is currently in a derelict condition, with the formerly landscaped grounds also overgrown and dilapidated. The site evidently suffers from anti-social behaviour, which has resulted in substantial damage to the healthcare building from vandalism, and the dumping of rubbish.
- 2.2 The site was originally the location of a Victorian villa, Oaklands, which was constructed in the mid-19th century. The villa was set within gardens which extended across the entire site, and further to the south across the location of present-day houses. This villa was one of several built in the Maindee area, on the edge of Newport at the time, reflecting the development of an affluent suburb of high-quality villas and terraces.
- 2.3 The Oaklands villa was located roughly on the footprint of the existing healthcare centre (which is a modern building that replaced the villa). An Ordnance Survey (OS) Map of 1884 shows the layout of the original gardens, which were narrower than at present at the southern end. Later

maps indicate that prior to 1920 the gardens were expanded eastwards to a new boundary, which reflects the present site boundary on this side of the site. In the mid-20th century, housing was built across the southern end of the plot. It is not known precisely when Oaklands was redeveloped as a modern healthcare centre, although OS maps suggest that the original house was extant up until the mid-1990s.

- 2.4 It is evident that very few features of the original Victorian gardens are extent within the site. Most notable are boundary walls on the east, north and part of the west side (**Image EDP 1**). Although some parts are now in a damaged condition (resulting from anti-social behaviour within the derelict site), these walls (made of random coursed, dressed local stone) are fairly complete and represent an original feature of the mid-19th century plot.
- 2.5 Another wall, of a similar construction, runs north-south (**Image EDP 2**), to the immediate east of the healthcare building. With reference to historic maps, this represents part of the original boundary wall, prior to the eastward expansion of the grounds in the early 20th century. This wall acts as a revetment against higher ground to the east and formed a back wall to the platform on which the original villa was constructed, i.e. the location of the present-day healthcare centre.
- 2.6 Two large, mature trees, a Turkey Oak and a Copper Beech, are located to the south of the healthcare building which are not located within the site boundary. It is not possible to be specific as to whether these represent features of the original gardens at Oaklands, whilst the map of 1884 does show trees in their general location, its does not specifically indicate these two. None of the trees within the site can be directly compared with equivalents shown on historic maps, and it is not suspected that any of these are remnants of the 19th century gardens.
- 2.7 Given the above, it is apparent that the site has changed considerably since it was originally laid out, with very few historic elements remaining. Housing now occupies the former southern extent of the grounds, and the original villa was completely replaced with a modern building with a healthcare function, albeit in the same location. The grounds have been entirely changed in their layout, with modern features such as a terraced modern car park to the north of the building, probably related to the healthcare centre.
- 2.8 The 19th century maps show several small ancillary buildings within the site, none of which now exist. The gardens to the south of the house (which are not within the site) are probably also a modern creation, displaying features such as crazy paving, although the terraced form of these gardens, due to them being set on a steep slope, probably does reflect a practical form likely to have been employed in the original layout. As such, the Victorian landscape, related to the Oaklands villa, is only preserved for certain as the remnants of boundary walls.

3. The Grade II listed building Cambrian House (3034)

- 3.1 The listed building (**Image EDP 4**) is an Italianate villa constructed in 1854 for Thomas Spittle, a local foundry owner. The citation describes how the building was part of the mid-19th century development of the suburb of Maindee, comprising modest terraced houses near the river and

more stylish terraces and villas on the hillside. It was one of a group of Italianate villas, as shown on the 1884 OS map, set within large gardens, on two cul-de-sac roads, and was contemporary with Oaklands. The building's modern plan closely resembles that on the 1884 map, although it is also apparent that the northern extent of its original grounds is now occupied by modern houses. The citation describes how the building was listed as it represents '*...a fine example of a mid-19th century villa, representative of this favoured style in this Newport suburb development*'.

- 3.2 It also identifies a group value with two other contemporary listed buildings (both Grade II), the Church of St John the Evangelist (**3035**), located c. 80m to the west and The Lawns (**18273**), located c. 130m to the south-west (shown on **Plan EDP 1**). It should be noted that Cambrian House (and the site) are not located within the Kensington Place Conservation Area, which does encompass the other two assets and has its boundary c. 70m west of the building.
- 3.3 Cambrian House's heritage significance is primarily derived from the evidential value inherent in its architecture, as a large suburban, Victorian villa; its historical value illustrating the suburban development of 19th century Newport and its aesthetic value, as a decorative building, displaying architectural features reflecting an Italianate style, including a prominent tower.
- 3.4 The building's aesthetic value is especially apparent in its front, south and west-facing elevations (**Image EDP 4**), which were clearly designed to be seen as the building was approached from St Johns Road. On this side the building has an ornate veranda, arched windows set on gables which display various details, overhanging eaves displaying moulded brackets and decorative bargeboards, and a small belvedere tower, over the porched entrance, which is approached by a flight of steps. The aesthetic quality of its other elevations (such as the eastern and rear elevations) is more limited, with minimal decoration, although some windows are set in arched recesses and overhanging eaves (with moulded brackets), are evident around the whole building. As such, all parts of the building possess some aesthetic value, but with this most strongly expressed on the south and west facing sides.
- 3.5 As such, it is apparent that the villa's significance is mainly derived from its physical presence as a building and is expressed as the values outlined above. The asset's setting also contributes to its significance, but to a lesser degree.

The villa's setting and its contribution to its significance

- 3.6 The villa is set within grounds defined, for the most part, by a stone wall, with a garden hedge and railing on the south side. The southern end of this space is occupied by a garden, containing bedded shrubs and trees (**Image EDP 5**). The villa extends to the northern boundary, with the space to the west utilised for parking cars, and the space to the east occupied by a yard. The gardens are situated adjacent to the front, south-facing elevation of the building which is the most decorative, and which is experienced on entering the grounds. The decorative nature of the gardens complements the aesthetic value of the south facing elevation. As such, the gardens to the front of the house are considered to contribute highly to its significance. The spaces to the west and east have a more functional association with the building, and in this way also

contribute to its significance, but, given the house's aesthetic value is an important aspect of its significance, this is to a far lesser degree.

- 3.7 In views from St Johns Road to the south, the house's, front, south and west facing elevations are highly prominent (i.e. **Image EDP 5**). From the street, the house's aesthetic value is best experienced, with its attractive gardens in the foreground. As such, as a setting of the house, the adjacent street, and the views along it, are considered to contribute to a moderate degree to its significance. Such views also include views of the adjacent church and more distant (and now derelict) Lawns villa, which as described above have a group association with the building.
- 3.8 The wider setting largely comprises modern houses, which lie adjacent to the villa to the west, east and north. These reflect the residential character of the locality but are of a much later date than the villa and have little relevance to its historic significance. As such, these dwellings, as elements of the setting of the villa, are considered neutral in terms of their contribution to its significance.

The site in relation to the villa's setting

- 3.9 The site is located c. 25m from Cambrian House to the north-east. As described, the site consists of part of the former grounds of Oaklands, a villa constructed as part of the same historic development as Cambrian House. In this respect, elements of the site which reflect this shared history are considered historically associated with Cambrian House, and the historic townscape that it represents. As such, it is considered that the remaining original features, the stone boundary (and former boundary) walls, are features of the setting of Cambrian House, which are historically associated with it, and their presence contributes to its significance to a small degree.
- 3.10 The villa can be experienced visually from the site. This experience is restricted to a view towards the villa's rear and side elevations but is heavily screened by a modern house on Oaklands Road and an intervening line of coniferous trees and shrubs. As such, views are restricted to glimpsed views, either from the southern end of the site, or from certain locations further to the north, where only the house's tower and part of its roof are visible (i.e. in **Image EDP 3**).
- 3.11 Given that this experience of the listed building is possible, it is apparent that the site, in particular its southern edge, is part of the setting of the asset because Cadw guidance states that the setting of a historic asset includes the '*surroundings in which it is understood, experienced and appreciated...*'. However, given that the experience of the listed building consists of only glimpsed views of its tower and part of its roof this experience is considered to make, at most, only a very small contribution to the house's significance, representing a very limited experience of the house from the grounds of its historically related neighbouring property.

Impact of the proposed development

- 3.12 It is proposed to construct eight houses in the site in two groups comprising five detached houses and a block of three terraced house, in addition to landscaping and access. All proposed

buildings will be of three-storeys and of a traditional 'townhouse' design reflecting the character of the surrounding area. The houses will be finished in red brick with stone dressings and have natural slate roofs.

- 3.13 The proposals include retention of the site's stone boundary wall, much of which is original. In this respect, the proposals would retain this element of the site which dates from its original Victorian function as the grounds of a suburban villa. As described, these elements represent part of the setting of Cambrian House which contribute to its significance through their historic association. Following development, this contribution would continue to be made.
- 3.14 Due to the conifers adjacent to Cambrian House, modern house on Oaklands Road, the mature trees in the plot to the south of the site and a proposed hedge boundary to the south of the proposed houses, the development would not be visible from Cambrian House. Furthermore, the proposed houses would also not be visible in any view towards Cambrian House's decorative front facing elevations (and ornamental front gardens) from the front garden, roadside and approach to the house from the south; views towards the site from the road would be entirely screened by vegetation adjacent to Cambrian House and this key aspect of the house's setting would be unaffected (i.e. **Image EDP 6**).
- 3.15 The glimpsed views of the tower and part of the roof at Cambrian House from the site would remain much as they are at present, with the view from the southern edge unchanged and glimpses from elsewhere in the site also still achievable. As such, the very small contribution to the significance of the house made by the land at the site on account of these views would be unaffected.
- 3.16 In conclusion, the proposed development would not result in any change to the setting of the Grade II listed building Cambrian house that would result in an adverse effect on its significance.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 In conclusion, the proposed development would not result in any direct or indirect effects on the significance of Cambrian House, and thus the heritage values possessed by its physical form, which represents most of its significance, and its setting, which makes a lesser contribution to its significance, would remain intact.
- 4.2 The proposed development acknowledges and respects the historic setting of Cambrian House by retaining surviving Victorian elements of the gardens of the Oaklands villa, which have an historic association. In this respect, the small contribution to the listed building's significance made by these features would continue after the development of the site. Likewise, the ability to appreciate the tower and roof of the listed building would continue as it presently does from the site.
- 4.3 The proposed development would not be visible from the listed building nor would it be visible in the views to the listed building from St John's Road, which contribute to the house's

significance to a moderate degree. The key aspects of this view, which form the basis of this contribution: the house's decorative elevations, set within their ornamental front garden, would be still be viewed, as they are at present, as prominent features of the streetscape.

- 4.4 As such, the assessment concludes that the proposed development would not result in any adverse impact upon the significance of Cambrian House. Therefore, the proposals accord with historic environment legalisation and planning policy and should be looked upon favourably by Newport City Council.

Images



Image EDP 1: View of the original, northern boundary wall at the site.



Image EDP 2: View of the original boundary wall to the rear of the healthcare centre.



Image EDP 3: View from the southern edge of the site towards Cambrian House, with vegetation in the foreground illustrating how only the tower and part of the roof is visible from the site.



Image EDP 4: View of the west and south elevations of Cambrian House.



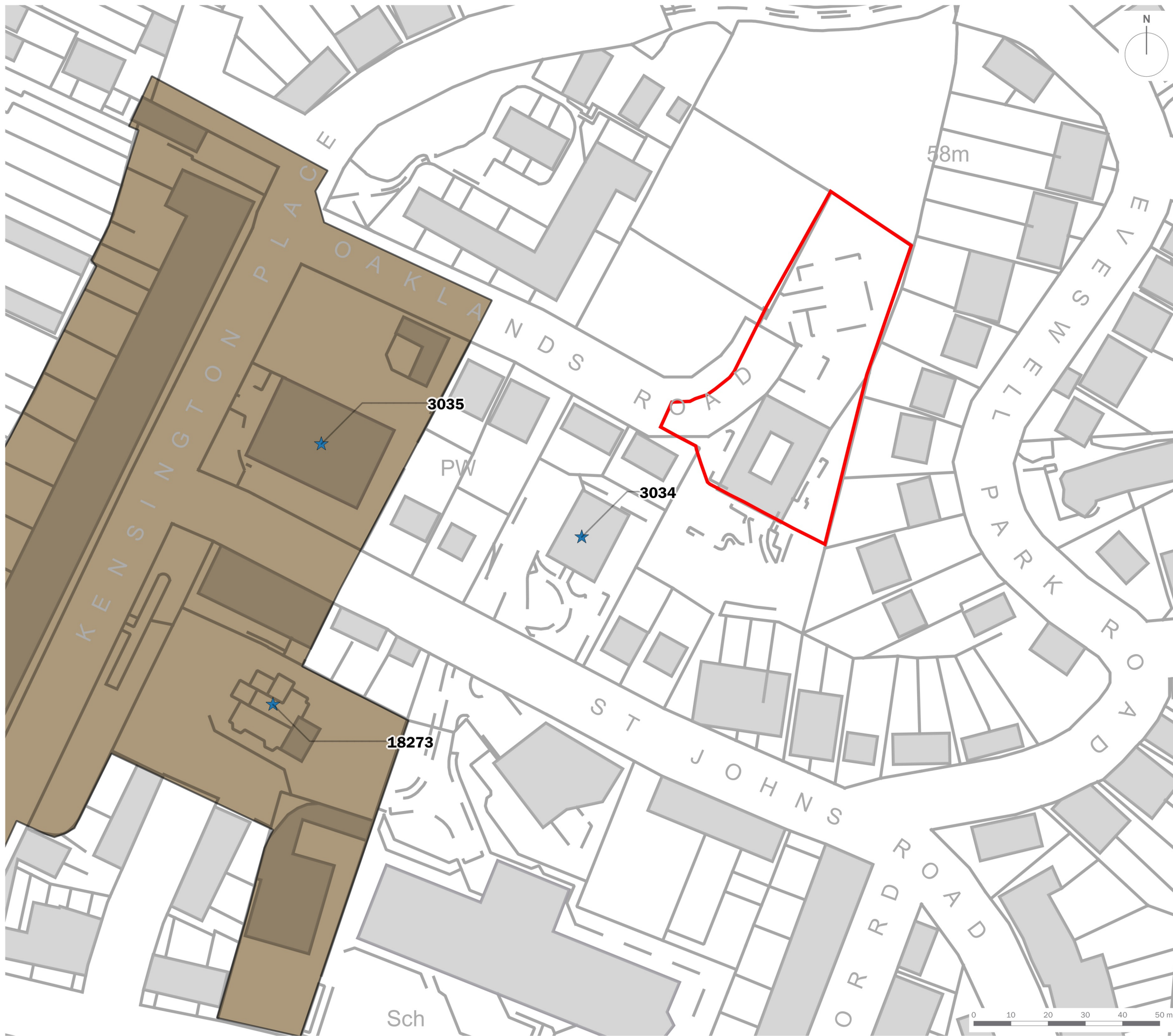
Image EDP 5: View of Cambrian House from St John's Road to the south.



Image EDP 6: View towards the site from the front gardens at Cambrian House illustrating how such views are screened by garden vegetation.



Plan EDP 1
Heritage Assets
(edp5413_d001a 12 February 2021 MH/RS)



- Site Boundary
- Kensington Place Conservation Area
- Listed Buildings
- ★ Grade II Listed Building

client
Townscape Homes Ltd

project title
Land at Kensington Court, Newport

drawing title
Plan EDP 1: Heritage Assets

date	12 FEBRUARY 2021	drawn by	MH
drawing number	edp5413_d001a	checked	RS
scale	1:1,000 @ A3	QA	RB



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