

MARTIN O'ROURKE
CONSERVATION - REGENERATION
martin.orourke.consult@gmail.com
tel: 0044(0)7895063839

157a Mill Road Cambridge CB13AA

No. 9 LEIGH STREET WC1H LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN



An Appraisal of the Heritage Asset and the Possible Impact of the Proposals

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1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.01 This report seeks to describe the heritage significance of No. 9 Leigh Street. The proposals will be discussed in the context of both local and national policies and guidance for the management of change in the historic environment.

2 THE SITE & DESIGNATIONS

2.01 No.9 Leigh Street is a mid-terrace house in a row of houses on the south side of the street. It is a typical London terrace house of the early 19th century and of many neo-classical houses that make up much of Camden's historic housing. No. 9 is currently licensed for use as HMO accommodation.

2.02 The house is four storeys high over a basement and is two windows in width. The front elevation has a stucco-faced ground floor with London stock brick facing to the floors above, rising to a stone coped parapet, behind which is a slated roof storey which has two dormers on the rear slope. The upper half of the front elevation appears to have been refaced, perhaps after wartime bomb damage. The windows are recessed from the front face and all have glazing barred sashes, although not all the joinery is original. The house retains its original robustly detailed front door and there is a cast iron balcony serving the tall first floor windows.

2.03 Internally, the principal floors retain many features such as plaster cornices and door architraves, designed in the refined taste of the early 19th century neo-classical style.

2.04 The rear elevation from first floor level upwards is also faced in London stock brick. Below, the ground and basement floors have a two storey rear extension and both the extension and the remaining original rear wall of the house at these levels are stuccoed.



2.05 The basement rear extension appears to be of some age, but the existing ground floor is of lighter construction from perhaps during the 20th century.

2.06 At the rear of the site is an original servant's annexe. The stuccoed building is single storied with a central front door flanked by two sash windows. The annexe

is built against the rear boundary wall and has a tiled mono pitch roof.



2.07 No. 9 forms part of a terrace, Nos. 1-19 (consecutive) which forms the remaining section of the original street development. The terrace is listed Grade II. The listing description reads;

Nos.1-19 (consec)

1810-13 built by J.Payne. Yellow stock brick with extensive refacing. 4 storeys and cellars.2 windows each. No.5 wooden shop front with pilasters carrying projecting entablature with rounded ends and projecting cornice; altered shop window and doorway with overlight having margin lights and panelled door. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sash windows. Parapet. INTERIORS; not inspected.

2.08 Leigh Street is situated within the designated Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

3 HISTORY

3.01 The Skinners Company is one of the twelve historic Livery Companies of the City of London. It was granted a Royal charter in 1327 and became a rich institution by virtue of its member's wealth, initially obtained from dealing in expensive furs and then later as general merchants.

3.02 The Skinners Company have a long history of charitable enterprise. In 1572, Sir Andrew Judd vested the land known as the Sandhills Estate, (subsequently the Skinners Company Estate) for the benefit of Tonbridge School in Kent. The estate was agricultural land situated northwest of the Foundling Hospital.

3.03 By the late 18th century the urban expansion of London was casting its shadow over the Skinners Company Estate. In 1809, the Company granted James Payne, builder, of Marchmont Street, sites on the south side of the newly-laid out Leigh Street. Three adjacent plots were granted to James Richard Parry of Everett Street. The street was developed by 1813.

3.04 The original occupants of the Leigh Street houses were what were then known as the "middling class"

which included doctors, surgeons, lawyers and senior clerks.

4 THE PROPOSALS

4.01 No.9 Leigh Street is operated as a licensed HMO premises and requires updating to meet current standards, particularly as regards the communal kitchen and bathroom facilities.



4.02 The current proposals would only affect the ground floor rear room and the basement of the original house. The majority of the proposed changes would take place to the rear of the main house and within the rear annexe.

4.03 At basement level, it is proposed to provide a new improved communal kitchen by infilling the small area adjacent to the existing extension, creating a bigger space from the existing extension and the new infill. The existing bathroom/utility would be relocated to the rear bedroom within the original house.

4.04 The existing disused annexe building would become a new one bed unit by constructing a mansard-style roof to create bedroom space.

4.05 At ground floor level, it is proposed to make the existing kitchen within the extension building into a bedroom, with a new kitchen and shower room within a new extension on top of the basement infill. This extension is designed in a visually lightweight style as counterpoint to the solidity of the existing extension.



5 POLICY CONTEXT

5.01 The policy guidance from Government is provided in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In Section 12 “Conserving and enhancing the historic environment”, it states in paragraph 126 that local planning authority strategies should take account of:

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation can bring;*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness;*
and
- *opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of place.*

5.02 In cases where harm may be caused to a heritage asset, paragraph 133 advises that this may be acceptable if it is shown that;

** the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

134 Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

5.03 English Heritage provides design and conservation advice in its publication; “London Terrace Houses 1660-1860”;

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“.....The balance between preservation and change may not always be easy to strike. The aim should be to minimise

the impact on the building while helping the owner to adapt the property to suit reasonable needs.”

5.04 Whilst English Heritage advises that extensions should generally utilise traditional forms and materials;

“However, there may be some occasions where a more modern design approach may be acceptable.”

5.05 The Mayor of London’s Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London supports the proper management and recognition of heritage assets in London.

5.06 London Borough of Camden has policies within the Local Development Framework that echo central Government’s commitment to the preservation and enhancement of the historic environment (DP25).

5.07 Policy UDP NN31;

In pursuing the preservation or enhancement of heritage assets, the council will require applicants to provide sufficient information to properly fully describe the proposal.

5.08 The council have produced SPG in the form of “Bloomsbury C.A. Appraisal and Management Strategy”. Leigh Street is briefly described in Sub Area 13 Cartwright Gardens/Argyle Square;

“5.237 The properties on Judd Street and Leigh Street are of 4 storeys and a number have had shop fronts inserted in the 19th century, several of which retain traditional architectural details.”

6 HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

- 6.01 The heritage significance of No. 9 Leigh Street resides both in its contribution to the wider historic townscape and in its intrinsic value as an early 19th century neo-classical house.
- 6.02 No. 9 forms part of a terrace of 19 terrace houses that are a significant example of early 19th century townscape. The terrace in turn forms part of the wider grid of streets and terraces that form the particular quality of the Bloomsbury area. This is recognised by the designated Bloomsbury Conservation Area.
- 6.03 The intrinsic historic interest of No.9 as an example of an early 19th century neo-classical house is recognised by its statutory listing Grade II. The house has a virtually complete ground plan with the original hall, staircase and main rooms intact together with many original internal features. The rear elevation, however, has been altered and there is a later two storey rear extension of limited heritage significance. The single storey rear annex building is of some interest as a curtilage service building.

7 COMMENTARY ON THE PROPOSALS

7.01 This house is in use as HMO accommodation and is in need of upgrading to meet current standards. The current proposals seek to address this issue.



7.02 The front elevation will not be altered apart from necessary repairs and maintenance. The interior of the house spaces and rooms, especially on the principal floors and areas of interest will not be altered. The changes and additions would be limited to the rear extension, the rear basement and ground floor rooms and the rear annex. None of these areas are of high heritage significance.

7.03 The proposals in the basement of the house and the existing extension, including the construction of the small infill extension do not affect any spaces or

features of high heritage significance. The existing rear window in the basement would be removed but this is not original and has an eccentric pattern of sash panes.

7.04 The ground floor proposed infill to the side of the existing rear extension would be slightly set back from the front elevation of the existing extension and treated in a visually light modern design idiom. This allows the historic development of this much-altered rear house elevation to remain clearly apparent while providing necessary accommodation in a reticent modern contextual fashion. This accords with guidance in NPPF Section 12, paragraph 131;

“The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”

7.05 The proposed mansard-like roof extension to the annex building is a traditional building form in keeping with this terrace and the wider conservation area. It will permit the provision of a good standard of studio accommodation without detracting from the character of the listed building or the conservation area.

7.06 The currently mixed, poor quality door and window joinery would be rationalised with appropriate traditional designs as well as the simple modern infill design at ground floor level. A small external terrace area would be resurfaced as a general amenity for the house occupants. An external area and rear extension that is visually unattractive and neglected

will become a well-designed and pleasant oasis for the communal life of the house.

8 CONCLUSION

8.01 The proposals are aimed at improving facilities for a HMO, which is an important social community asset. The proposed alterations are concentrated in the areas of low heritage significance and are handled in a sensitive and contextual manner. Any questions concerning the cumulative impact of the proposals on the rear of this listed building can be addressed by reference to the NPPF;

“ 134 Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use”

This proposal both meets the need to improve the HMO facilities, an important social amenity, and respects the heritage significance of No 9 and the wider conservation area.

Martin O'Rourke MARCA.