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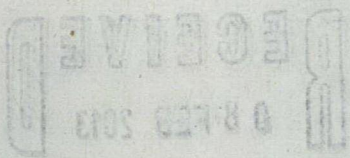
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Heritage Report
8th February 2013

63 GRAY'S INN ROAD
LONDON
WC1X 8TL

**A Heritage Appraisal of
the Building and the
Proposed Works**

**IMPORTANT NOTE: This Document
Should be Read In Conjunction of the
Cover Letter Issued by the Town
Planning Company (UK) Ltd**



Heritage Report

Property: 63 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8TL

Listing: Grade II

To: Camden Council

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Date of Inspection: December 2012

Date of Report: February 2013

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT This report will describe No. 63 Gray's Inn Road and its character and value as a heritage asset. The proposed works will be discussed with a conclusion regarding the possible affects of the changes on the heritage asset in the context of current local and national policies for the historic environment.

2. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION No. 63 Gray's Inn Road is a late 18th century terrace house that is one of a group of four similar houses. They form part of the typical terraced development along main London streets of the Georgian and Regency periods. No. 63 is faced in stock brick and is composed of three storeys over a basement and has a slated mansard roof. A distinctive feature of the main elevation is the first floor sash window being slightly recessed under semi-circular relieving arches.

The ground floor is now in restaurant use with a modern shop front that retains elements of a 19th century shop front. Originally, Nos. 63-69 Gray's Inn Road would have had domestic ground floors, but 19th century shop conversion became the norm as the area declined economically and socially in the later 19th century.

Internally, there is a ground floor enclosed staircase at one side of the shop to give access to the domestic upper floors. The planning of these upper floors is typical of the period, with the staircase to the rear against the party wall, flanked by a small back room and two rooms to the front. It is possible that the front area was originally a single room lit by two windows. Some of the room partitions are of modern studwork. The major internal change already carried out by a previous owner is the removal of the chimneybreasts on the third and fourth floors and the construction of a roof storey, this was prior to the date of building having been listed.

The house has a license for use as a HMO and is therefore laid out as a series of bedsitting rooms. Generally, the building is in poor condition and in need of major refurbishment.

3. DESIGNATIONS LISTING

Nos.63-69 Gray's Inn Road are all listed Grade II as being of special architectural or historic interest. They were listed on 30 December 1999.

Listing Description:

Nos. 63-69 Gray's Inn Road

4 terraced houses with later shops. C. 1791 altered. Multi - coloured stock bricks with some patching and refacing. Slated mansard roofs with dormers. 3 storeys attics and basements. Later 20th cen shopfront. Upper floors have gauged brick flat arches to recessed sashes. 1st floor set in shallow round-arched recesses, linked by stucco impost bands. Parapets. Nos. 63-67 with brick cornices below.

INTERIORS: not inspected likely to be of interest.

CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATION

This group of terraced houses is situated within the designated Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

4. POLICY CONTEXT

National Policies – English Heritage

English Heritage has provided guidance in the document "London Terrace Houses 1660-1860" (1996). The genesis of terraced housing and its planning is explained with guidance on suitable alteration and extension principles.

Alterations and should be restricted to a modest scale and based on a complete understanding of the structural limitations of the building. (p7).

Where more sophisticated techniques are put forward, applicants will need to justify why these are being proposed. (p7).

...in some cases consideration will be given to moderate amounts of demolition where the fabric is of limited interest or quality. (p7).

It is asserted that original features are to be protected however, nothing is written about properties that have modern additions as a result of late listing. Something of high significance in this instance.

Government Policy – National Planning Policy Framework.

This recent Government guidance renews the commitment to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.

It is advised that historic records are referred to and expert advice sought before proposals are put forward for listed buildings (p 128).

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

Local Policies – London Borough of Camden.

Camden's policies reflect national policy in seeking to preserve and enhance the historic environment.

- Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Strategy (2011)

This document describes the conservation area and its characteristics and details policies for the areas enhancement.

Alterations are predominantly internal, therefore less of a wider impact on the conservation area as a whole.

Alterations to the external facade proposed (windows/doors) are non-historic additions installed pre-property listing (1999), therefore, in keeping with wider heritage and planning guidance they may be exchanged like for like.¹

- Camden Development Policies, Local Development Framework(2010)

Policy DP25 – the local authority will seek to preserve and enhance Camden's listed buildings:

e) prevent the total or substantial demolition of a listed building unless circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention (p117).

- Retrofitting Planning Guidance (2011)

Alterations to the external facade proposed (windows/doors) are non-historic additions installed pre-property listing (1999), therefore, in keeping with wider heritage and planning guidance they may be exchanged like for like.

Development proposals issue "less than substantial" harm to the building, where a wider assessment has been made as to the wider public benefit the proposals would bring to the viability and quality of the building as a HMO facility.

The proposals seek to make the property more energy efficient in line with English Heritage Good Practice Guidance.

5. THE PROPOSALS

The building is currently used as licensed HMO accommodation on all floors above the ground floor shop. The proposals involve upgrading of the present use, involving the making new openings in existing partitions (all of which are modern stud and plasterboard) and the erection of some new partitions. The property would be fitted with new electrical and plumbing services and fully redecorated.

The chimneybreasts have already been removed some years ago on the third and fourth floors. This leaves inoperative chimneybreasts on the first and second floor, which it is now proposed to remove to gain extra living space.

Alterations to the external facade are low key localised techniques of repair and alteration concerning replacement of non-original features like for like and are therefore wholly supported in principle (as listed in English Heritage Guidance.²

¹ Retrofitting Planning Guidance, June 2011 and DP25 (e) of Camden Development Policies, 2010).

² London Terrace Houses, 1660-1860- A guide to Alterations and Extensions, 1996, p10 and Retrofitting Planning Guidance, June 2011).

**6. HERITAGE
SIGNIFICANCE**

This building is a relatively humble house of the late 18th century. The austere elegant neo-classical architectural idiom of this period would have meant the interior of the house would have had a pleasing restrained simplicity, relying on simple finishes and joinery details as well as a clear readable plan.

This character has been disrupted, firstly, by the insertion of a ground floor shop, probably in the late 19th century. The rooms above have been greatly altered to accommodate the HMO conversion, including a roof storey with a new section of connecting stair.

All these internal HMO alterations are now in a poor state of repair and there are only fragmentary remains of original details. What does survive, however, is the principle element of the historic plan form, i.e. the staircase serving the rooms on each floor.

The heritage significance of the building resides in two primary characteristics;

(i) The contribution to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

No. 63 Grays Inn Road forms part of a terrace of houses that constitute a quintessential part of the special character of this conservation area. The conservation area is very largely made up of streets and squares of terraced housing of various scales and classes.

(ii) The degree to which the architecture of the house and its interior has heritage significance as a listed building.

The greatly altered interior of what was always a simple house results in the heritage significance of the building residing in its group value with its neighboring terraced houses. Apart from the plan form of original staircase and rooms, there is little of heritage significance within the interior.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposals to alter this building will not adversely affect its heritage significance. Indeed, the present unused state and poor condition of repair is a matter of concern regarding the future of the listed building.

The continuing HMO use will ensure a future viable use of the building with minor impact on its heritage significance. The National Planning Policy Framework advises:

"Part 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Paragraph 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 ."

The minor changes proposed to the internal partitions would have very little affect on the heritage significance of the building. Removing chimneybreasts would normally be considered a destructive alteration to a listed building. In this case of a building already so altered internally, the removal of the remaining chimneybreasts is acceptable as this buildings significance now resides in its street presence and general surviving floor plan rather than in the quality or completeness of its internal features. All the chimneypieces have been removed many years ago and the surviving two sets of chimneybreasts represent fragmentary remains.

There is clear social benefit in maintaining and improving HMO accommodation, which in this case can be achieved with "less than substantial" harm to the heritage asset. It is considered that the proposals conform to both local and national policy for managing the historic environment. The current proposals represent the best hope of getting this neglect listed building back into a viable and sustainable use.

8. Verification

Whilst we trust that this report is satisfactory for your immediate purposes, should you have any queries or points which require further clarification we shall be pleased to hear from you.