

GLIAS

Vice-President: Dr. Denis Smith

Company No. 5664688 England
Charity No. 1113162

Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society

Please reply to : MT Tucker, 9 Blythwood Road, London N4 4EU, tel [REDACTED]

Catherine Bond
Development Control
Planning Services
London Borough of Camden
Town Hall
London WC1H 8ND

18 Nov 2014

BY E-MAIL

Dear Ms Bond

**Provender Store, Stables Market, Chalk Farm Road, London NW1 8AH,
Application Nos. 2014/6272/P and 2014/6589/L**

The Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society (GLIAS) **objects** to this application on several points – the detailing of the canopies, the proposed shutters at the upper levels and the interpretations of history and significance.

Members of this society have much knowledge of this site – in 1975-6 we undertook a photographic survey, plus documentary research in the National Archives

We append a compilation of photographs contrasting the building today with how it was in 1975-81. The fabric is relatively little altered but the crowded stalls and masses of electric cables now obscure many of the building's qualities. We note that the building was listed in 1981 and these subsequent accretions would appear to be unauthorised. They should not be used to justify alterations that would have similar impact.

1) Building Significance

1.1) The buildings around the present eastern yard were erected in 1854-6 as part of a major remodelling of the Goods Yard and were originally of 1½ storeys (as survive near the western end of Block A), with stable stalls on the ground floors.¹ The Provender Store was created by raising this range to three storeys in 1880, so that the upper two floors might provide provender storage for an enlarged stables complex.² It was still in use as a provender store in 1949, when a film was made of the care provided to the horses stabled here.³ Note that the building date given in the listed building description is wrong.

1.2) We disagree with the Design and Access and Heritage Statement's assessment on page 10 of the Aesthetic Value as 'low'. The arrangement of buildings around the yard is very neat. The original ground floor stable facades

with lunette windows under rubbed brick arches are of a high order, particularly as industrial architecture goes. The regular modulation of the Provender Store's main façade by setting forward the loading bays and emphasising them, and also the curved shape in plan, add style. The additional storeys with round heads at the middle level are neatly composed. Excepting some replacement window frames, which it is proposed to rectify, the subsequent alterations are few and localised. The present shabbiness and the recently accreted canopies and cables are what detract.

1.3) The document does not make a proper assessment of the features or significance of this building as an historic industrial structure. Relatively intact industrial stables complexes are rare and this one is exceptional in the variety of buildings and structures it contains. The arrangement of the Provender Store above former stables illustrates an important component of the group, while its historic fabric has character, which should be protected.

1.4) The assessment of Historical Value as 'medium' but Communal Value as 'high' is unbalanced, ignoring the historical contribution of the horse, which is the foundation for all that is there and what makes this a special place.

2) Glazed Canopies

2.1) We understand there is a need for canopies here to shelter customers as they enter and leave the building's entrances, and the proposed use of frameless glass does appear to be the best solution for that. But the Summary of Proposals on page 5 of the D&A and Heritage Statement refers only to canopies above the retail unit entrances, which account for a third of the lengths of the north and south walls, and we challenge their proposed provision along the whole wall length as shown on the drawings. The existing canopies are unauthorised and give shelter to a series of stalls that are not necessarily related to the internal occupiers, which clutter up the passageway and hide views of the building. These stalls should not be perpetuated and the canopies should be more limited.

2.2) The single design of canopy bracket presented for approval cannot properly accommodate the stepping forward of the front façade at each entrance. Therefore the brackets do not align one with the next at those points, and will produce a very ragged appearance. This needs to be refined for a better effect. Omitting a flashing, as we discuss below, would have the subsidiary benefit of allowing adjacent canopies to lie in a single surface, with the top level varied according to the wall position and all the eaves in one line. Having canopies only at the entrances would be better still.

2.3) We object to the flashing that is proposed at the junction of the glass and the brickwork. This will introduce a messy horizontal feature, unrelated to the architecture, and it will hide some of the brickwork including the crowns of some of the rubbed-brick arches that are a major feature of the building. So the flashing and associated closing strip will damage the building's character, and we also think it is unnecessary.

We do not see that a flashing is needed, since the amount of rain that can pass between the glass and the wall will be relatively small and these are not

intended to be enclosed spaces – for instance significant gaps are left between adjoining canopies. The gap between the glass and the wall is wider than it might be so as to allow downpipes to pass, yet on the main, northern façade that ought not to be a consideration at all, because all the rainwater pipes are in the gaps between the canopies, so not interfering with the glass, and there are no soil pipes. So the glass on that façade, which is the most prominent and architecturally impressive, can be taken close up to the brickwork with only a small gap. (Incidentally, the mis-alignment of the front wall near the north-west corner as drawn on plan is a graphical error.)

2.4) On the rear wall, canopies are shown up to 4 panels long, in which length we estimate the curve of the wall bows out by more than 60mm, yet the drawn details do not accommodate that variation in wall position. The brackets will have to be varied in length to suit. To accommodate this, the lead flashing will have to be set slightly higher to clear all brackets and the pressed-metal closing piece will have to be specially formed to the curve and more than a foot wide to span the gap where it is widest. This will make the detail still more obtrusive and is another reason for not having the flashing.

3) Treatment of Loading Doors on North Elevation

3.1) The proposed half doors on the upper floors that would fold back as shutters will be particularly objectionable in appearance, and contrary to the claims on page 12 of the D&A and Heritage Statement they will NOT enhance the building's historic character and appearance. But, what is worse, they misrepresent the character of the building's loading doors (as explained in 3.2 below). We remind you this is a listed building and the loading doors are an essential feature of it as a provender store, so need to be respected. The only functional justification provided for the new windows is they would let in more light, but in the case of the top floor roof lights could be made instead. An alternative would be to set back the new windows so that the doors can fold inwards and retain their original relationship to the building – the small loss of floor space would be offset by the higher quality of the design. The proposed detailing is also ill thought out – some of the doorways have bullnosed reveals, so that the proposed flush joinery could not be fitted. And how would the outside of the window glass be cleaned with the lower sash fixed?

3.2) The half doors proposal may stem from a lack of understanding of the building's archaeology, and if approved they will certainly misinform future generations of lay people. Whereas stables often did have half doors, traditionally these opened inwards, not outwards. But these upper floors were built for storage and not stables at all, and their loading bays have full-height doors which open of necessity inwards rather than swinging into the wind. The idea of a flush door with external hinge straps and opening outwards might have been taken from one particular door, in the second doorway from the south on the middle floor, but that is a recent replacement – compare pages 11 and 12 of my photo compilation. The previous, nearly flush-mounted door at that point was itself the result of a mid-20th-century alteration, where the doorway can be seen to have been widened.

Except in that one instance, all the existing loading doors are set back from the wall face and their hinge lines recessed behind reveals, in the traditional London manner as was required historically to reduce the spread of fire.

3.3) The proposals remove the characterful steel hoisting beams that have been added to the building in the 20th century, during the time when it was still used as a provender store, which is regrettable. The one original wooden hoisting beam, a valuable relic, is retained but left unprotected from the weather. Page 7 of the photo compilation shows that an attractive protective shelter was still in place in 1981, around the time the building was listed. This needs to be reinstated.

4) Conclusion

The more one looks into this scheme, the more it appears unsatisfactory. More thought needs to be given, and the present proposals need to be considerably modified before they can be approved.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Tucker
Caseworker for the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society

cc Claire Brady, English Heritage

¹ The National Archives, RAIL/410/2072, plan of goods yard, 1856.

² The National Archives, RAIL410/1024, drawing (12816) dated 1880.

³ Film cuts from newsreel story of 1949, <http://www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=56505>

Stables Market Provender Store, MTT photos 24 Oct 2014 and some (in black and white) from 1975-81



Section 1, north end, 29 Nov 1975 (MTT595_6A), showing former bridge to Tack Room



Section 1, north end today

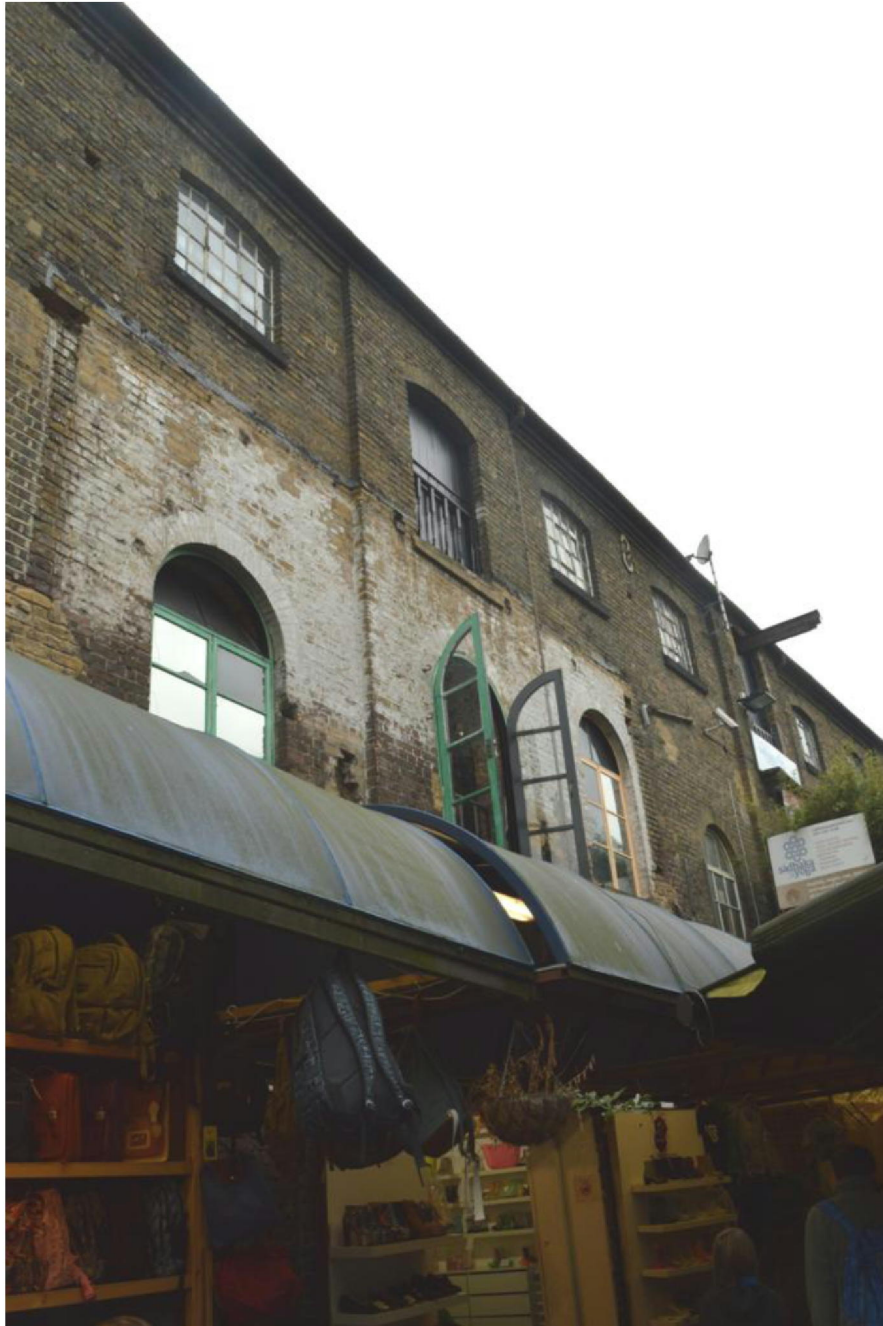




Section 1 today



Section 2 today



Sections 2 and 3 today. The whitewash on Section 3 marks the site of the 'New Provender Store', see following picture.





Sections 4, 3 and 2 today



Section 4 today. Note original timber cathead beam and blue brick reveals to these loading doors



Sections 3 to 5 today.



Section 5, 22 Feb 1975 (MTT510_5A). The loading doors here are seen to have been widened under concrete lintels during the 20th c. Note functional hinged flap at second floor. Doors fitted at first floor are less recessed than traditional doors.

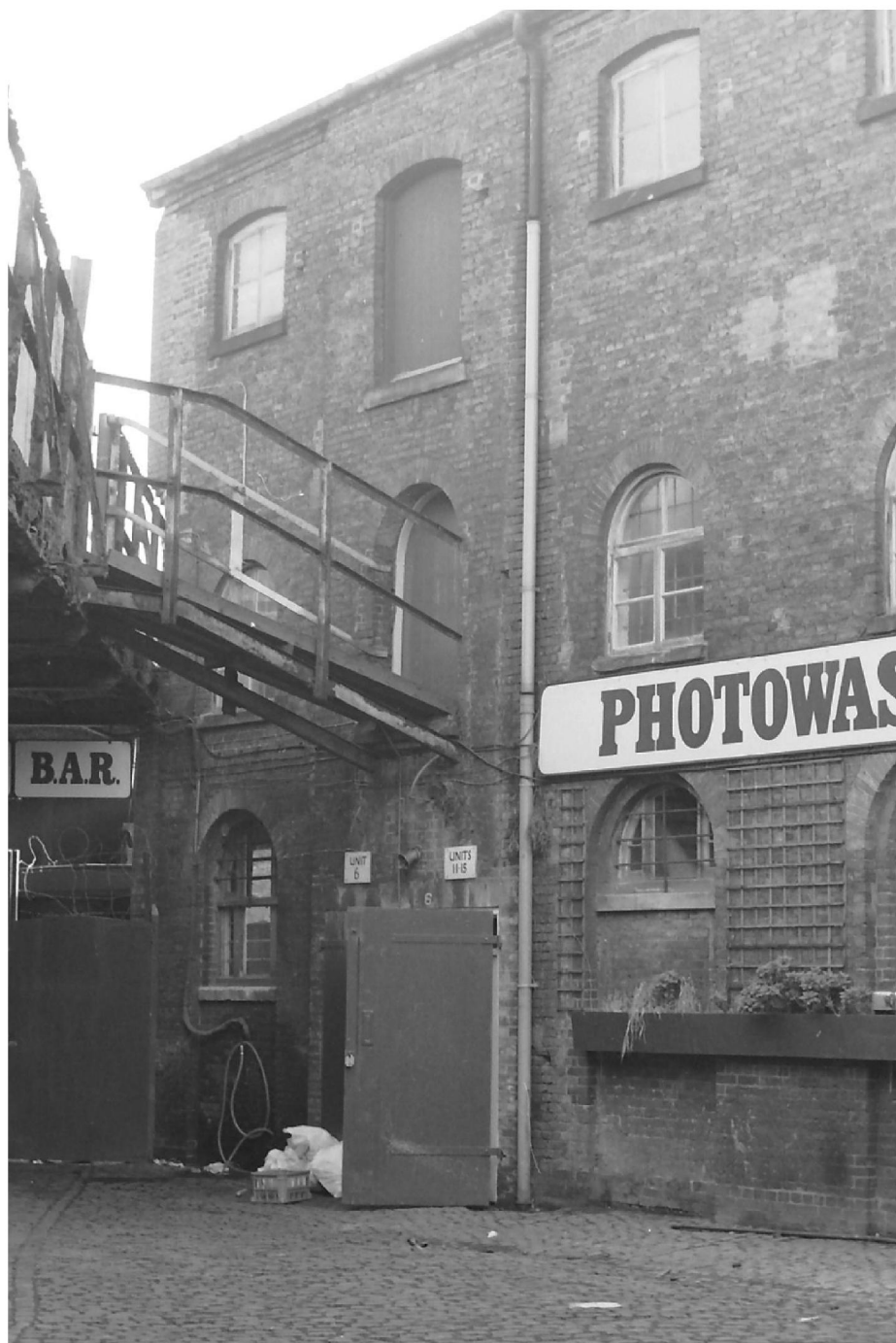


Section 5 today. Note the widened first floor doors have been replaced since 1975 and are now completely flush.



Sections 5 and 6 today





MTT 869/19, 31 Jan 1981



Roof truss, 25 Feb 1975 (MTT510_7A). Similar to the 1880 drawing in the National Archives.