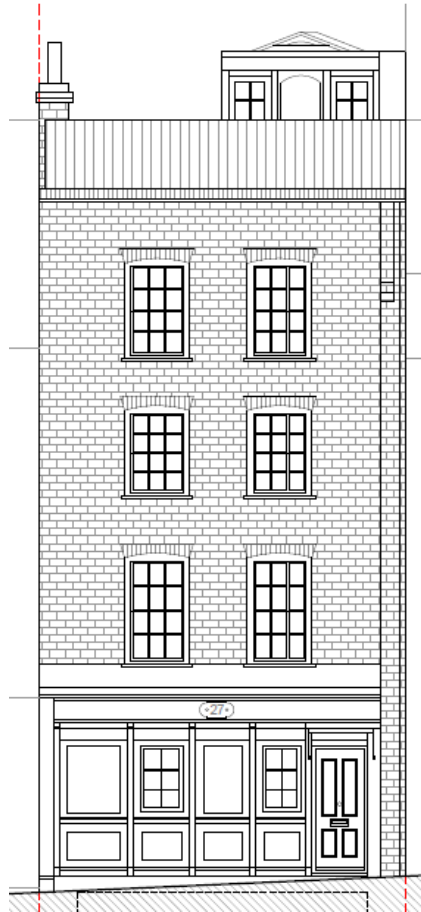


Heritage Statement



27 Mercer Street, London

July 2015

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1. Summary and introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared on behalf of *Drawing and Planning* in support of a listed building consent and planning application for 27 Mercer Street, London Borough of Camden, for internal and external alterations. 27 Mercer Street is Grade II listed and within the Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area.

The main purpose of this report is to assess the architectural and historic significance of the building, the significance of individual elements of the building, the impact of the proposals on that significance and whether the proposals comply with national and local policies and guidance relating to heritage assets.

It will be shown that while 27 Mercer Street possesses architectural and historic significance that significance has been severely comprised by substantial modern alterations, some insensitive, and that the proposals have a neutral or positive impact on the significance of the building. For these reasons the proposal will be seen to comply with national and local policy and guidance.

This report should be read in conjunction with the drawings and Design and Access Statement submitted by *Drawing and Planning Ltd*.

The author of this report is Kristian Kaminski BA (Hons), MA, IHBC, FSA. Following training as an architectural historian he acquired a broad range of experience while working in the Heritage Protection Department of English Heritage. Following this he worked as the Senior Conservation and Urban Design Officer for the London Borough of Lambeth, the Conservation Advisor for the Victorian Society and as Deputy Manager of the Design and Conservation Team for the London Borough of Islington. He is an elected Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries (FSA) and a full member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC). He is a trustee of Pitzhanger Manor Trust and sits on the committee of the influential conservation group SAVE Britain's Heritage.

2. Assessment of architectural and historic significance

The Government's national planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment are provided in Section 12 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of the NPPF. Paragraph 128 states:

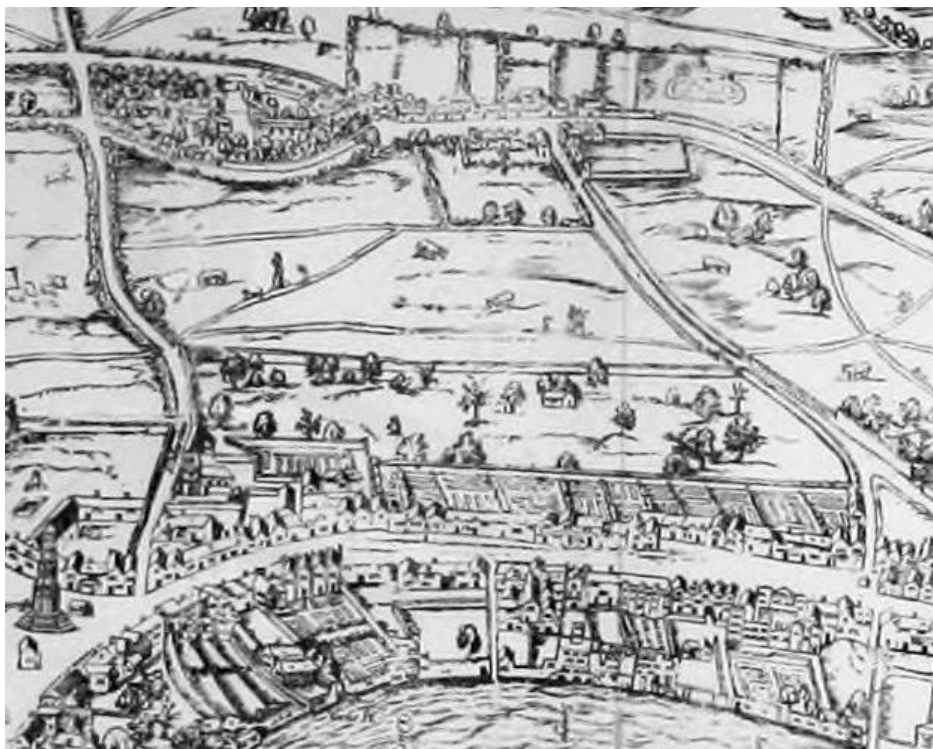
In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary

Until the early twentieth century the section of Mercer Street to the north of Seven Dials was known as Great White Lion Street and the upper part of the section to the south was known as Little White Lion Street, it was on this part of the street that 27 Mercer Street was located, in the parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields.

Early history

In the Middle Ages, the site of 27 Mercer Street belonged to the Hospital of St. Giles, a leper hospital, which was taken over by Henry VIII in 1537 as part of 'one close called Marshland'.

The 'Woodcut map' of London, formally titled Civitas Londinum, and often referred to as the 'Agas map' of London, is one of the earliest true maps of the City of London and its environs with the original map probably dating from the early 1560s. The map shows the area of the site undeveloped at this time.

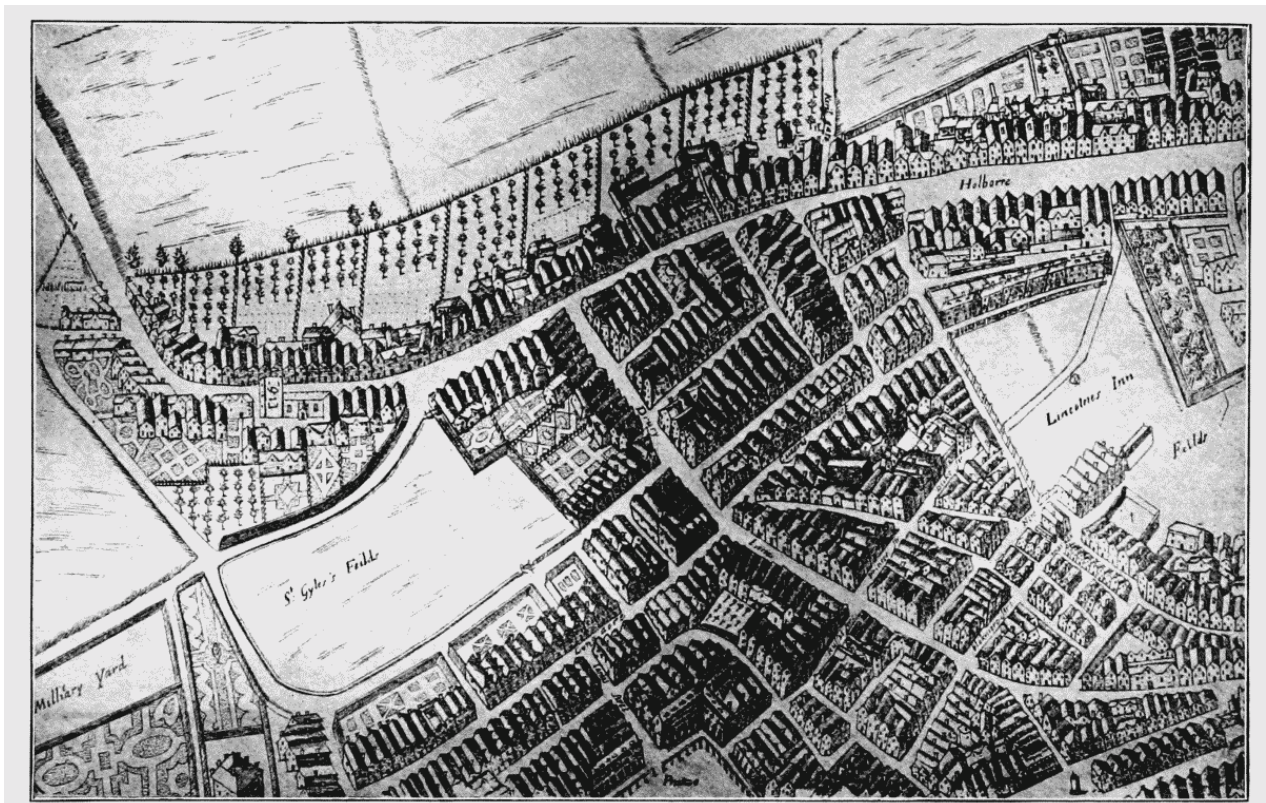


Above, 'Woodcut map' of London, 1560s

In 1594, Queen Elizabeth leased the close to Thomas Stydolph and in 1598 she leased it to Nicholas Morgan and Thomas Horne. The latter conveyed their interest to James White, and subsequently it came into the hands of Sir Francis Stydolph. In 1650, while he was still in possession of the close, it was surveyed by Commissioners appointed by Parliament. In their report the close is described as:

all yt peice or parcell of pasture ground comonly called ... Marsh close alias Marshland ... on the north side of Longe Acre, and ... betwene a way leadinge from Drury Lane to St. Martin's Lane on the north; and a way leadinge from St. Gyles to Knightsbridge, and a way leadinge from Hogg Lane into St. Martin's Lane on the west; and Bennet's Garden and Sir John Bromley and Mr. Short on the east.

These boundaries are in accord with the 1658 map showing the parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields by Fairthorne and Newcourt.



Above, map by Fairthorne and Newcourt, 1658.

In 1650 the buildings on the Close were:

- i. The Cock and Pye inn, a brick building of two storeys and a garret, standing on ground 117 feet from north to south, with a breadth of 48 feet at the north end.
- ii. A house with wheelwright's shop and shed attached, covering with yards, gardens, etc., 3 roods.
- iii. A shed of timber and Flemish wall, with tiled roof, containing two small dwelling rooms, occupying, with a garden, half an acre.
- iv. A piece of ground, half an acre in extent, "late converted into a garden, beinge very well planted wth rootes."
- v. Three tenements of timber and Flemish wall, with thatched roof, on the north side of what was afterwards Castle Street, occupying, with gardens, etc., half an acre.

vi. "All that conduit scituate and adjoining to the aforesaid 3 tenements, and standeth on the southeast corner of the aforesaid Marsh Close, consistinge of one roome heirtofore used to convey water to the Excheqr. Office, but of late not used."

Sir Francis Stydolph died in 1655 and was succeeded by Sir Richard Stydolph who extended the lease until 1687. By this date a considerable amount of building had taken place on the close.

Late seventeenth century

In 1690 Thomas Neale, obtained a lease of the close until 1731 undertaking to build within two years sufficient houses to form ground rents amounting to £1,200, the ground rents to be calculated at from 5s. to 8s. a foot of frontage, except in the case of houses fronting King Street (now Neal Street), Monmouth Street (now Shaftesbury Avenue), St. Andrew Street and Earl Street, where the amount was to be from 8s. to 12s. a foot.

Plans submitted in 1692 to Sir Christopher Wren, the Surveyor-General, for a building licence showed at least 311 houses and an estate church, the latter never being built as aspirations were reduced in favour of profit. Construction began in March 1693 and most of the surviving building leases are dated 1694. However, construction does not seem to have been completed until well into the 18th century.

By adopting a star shaped plan with radiating streets Neale dramatically increased the number of houses which could be built on the site and maximized the ground rents that could be collected given that these were based on the width of the frontage. Neale's plan attracted considerable notice at the time. John Evelyn records in his Diary under date of 5th October, 1694 'I went to see the building neere St. Giles's, where 7 streets make a star from a Doric pillar plac'd in the middle of a circular area'.

The pillar was designed by Edward Pierce and topped by six sundial faces as originally only six streets were proposed, Little White Lion Street being a later amendment. The pillar was removed in 1773. The pillar would give the area its name of Seven Dials.

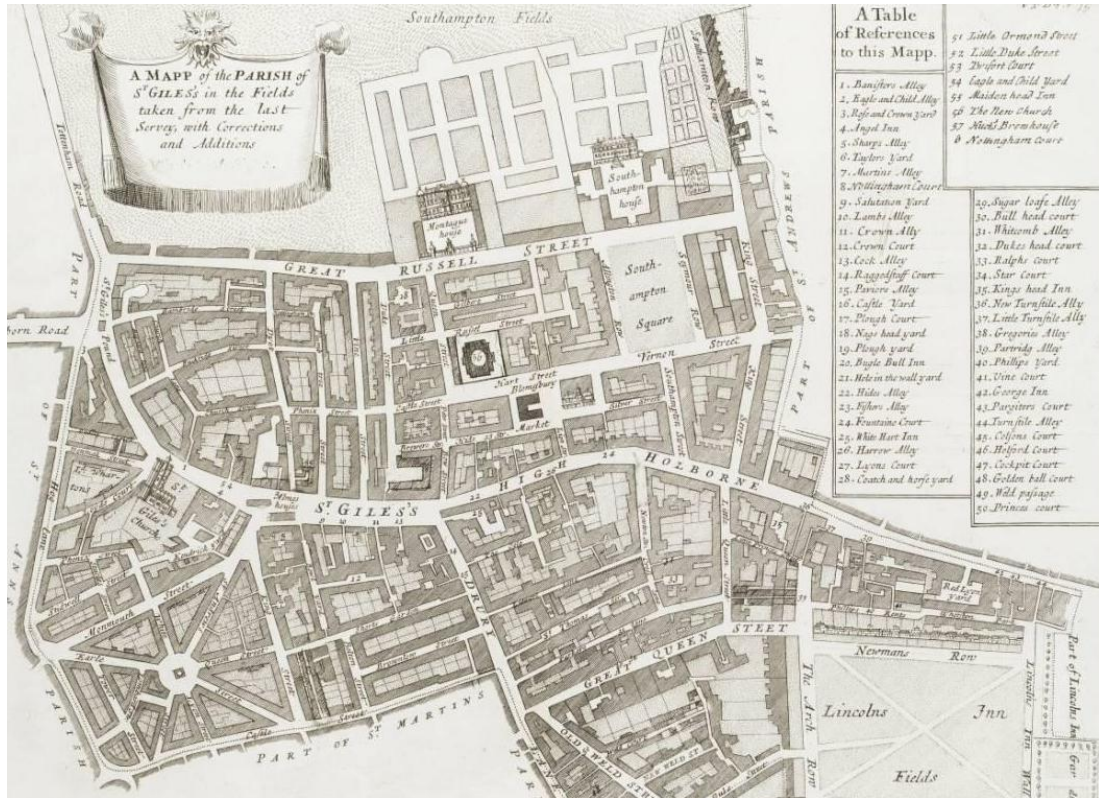
The first inhabitants were respectable, if not aristocratic, comprising of gentlemen, lawyers and prosperous tradesmen. However, in 1695, Neale disposed of his interest in the site and the rest of the development was carried out by individual builders over the next 15 years.

Eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

In the 1730s, the then owner, James Joyce, broke up the freehold, selling off the triangular sections separately. In the absence of a single freeholder, there was no-one to enforce Neale's restrictive covenants. The area became increasingly commercialised as the houses were sub-divided and converted into shops, lodgings and factories.

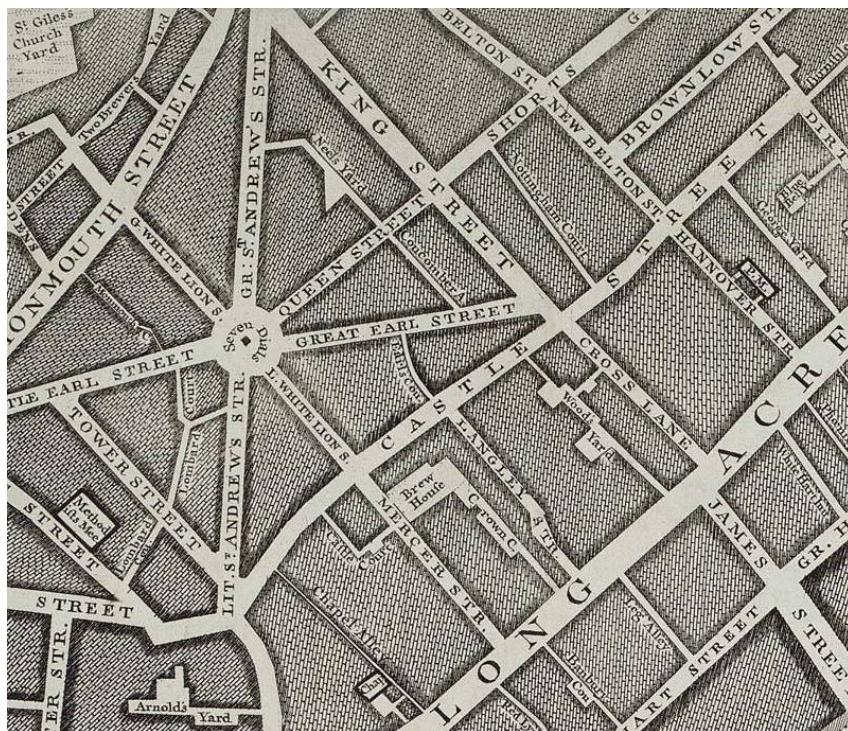
The Woodyard Brewery was started in 1740 and during the next hundred years spread over most of the southern part of Seven Dials. Comyn Ching, the architectural ironmongers, were in business in Shelton Street from before 1723, and elsewhere there were woodcarvers, straw hat manufacturers, pork butchers, watch repairers, wigmakers and booksellers, as well as several public houses. By the middle of the 18th century, the area had declined to the extent that 39 night-watchmen were needed to keep the peace. By the early 19th century the area became famous, together with St. Giles to the north, as the most notorious rookery in London.

John Strype's 'A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster' (1720) shows the development of the area.



Above, John Strype's 'A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster', 1720

John Rocque's 'A plan of the cities of London and Westminster, and borough of Southwark' (1746) clearly shows the street names at this time.



Above, John Rocque's 'A plan of the cities of London and Westminster, and borough of Southwark', 1746

In the 1790s, there was considerable re-facing or reconstruction as leases were renewed. It is likely that 27 Mercer Street was re-faced or reconstructed at this time and at some point in the late eighteenth or nineteenth an extra storey was added.

The original late 17th century house need not have complied with the London Building Act of 1667 as this applied only to the City of London. However, the rebuilding will have complied with the Building Act of 1774. The Act required that all houses were to be built in brick or stone, the number of storeys and width of walls were carefully specified, timber cornices were prohibited, brick parapets were required to rise two and half feet above the garret floor, and doors and windows had to be recessed at least four inches from the front of the building.

A painting of Seven Dials viewed from Little White Lion Street towards Great Lion Street by William Hodges (figures by Julius Caesar Ibbetson) provides a good understanding of the buildings typical to the area c.1790.



Above, Seven Dials viewed from Little White Lion Street towards Great Lion Street c.1790

Shaftesbury Avenue was cut through along the north-west side of Seven Dials in 1889 as a combined work of traffic improvement and slum clearance. The Woodyard Brewery closed in 1905 and its old premises were converted into box, fruit and vegetable warehouses serving Covent Garden Market.

The 1898 Booth's Poverty Map shows that the residents in the immediate vicinity of the site were between 'Fairly comfortable. good ordinary earnings' and 'Mixed. Some comfortable others poor'



Above, Booth's Poverty Map, 1898

Twentieth Century

In 1914 The Survey of London (Volume 5, St Giles-in-The-Fields, Pt II) stated that 'little of architectural interest now remains in the district of Seven Dials' on account of the demolition and replacement of a number of the late 17th century buildings and the rebuilding of others.

27 Mercer Street was listed at Grade II on 15-Jan-1973 along with 25 Mercer Street. The list description from the 1999 resurvey of Camden by English Heritage states:

Pair of terraced houses. Late C17, altered, with shopfronts renewed 1978-85 by Terry Farrell as part of his refurbishment of the Comyn Ching Triangle. Multi-coloured stock brick with parapets. No.25 with weatherboarded attic under a pantile roof. No.25: 3 storeys, attic and basement. 2 windows. Wooden panelled and pilastered shopfront with panelled door to right and single, centrally placed, sash window, under a slightly projecting upswept cornice. To first and second floor gauged segmental brick arches to flush sash windows with exposed boxing and original glazing bars. No.27: 4 storeys (4th storey a C19 addition) and basement, 2 windows. Wooden panelled and pilastered shopfront with panelled door to right and 2 sash windows under a cornice. To 1st and 2nd floor gauged segmental brick arches to flush sash windows with exposed boxing. To 3rd floor gauged flat arches to recessed sash windows. INTERIORS: not inspected.

Photographs taken at the time of listing in 1973 record the building in a poor state prior to later refurbishment works. Timber sash windows had been replaced with modern metal windows. Notably they show the historic shopfront and two entrances doors, one to what had once been a shopfront (at that point being used as a garage entrance) and the other to the residential accommodation above.



Above, 27 Mercer Street, 1973

Covent Garden Market moved out in 1974 which led to many changes of ownership and uses and dereliction to the surrounding area but was also to become a catalyst for regeneration.

The site was included in the Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area on 1st May 1974. Since the mid-1970s much restoration has been carried out within the parameters of the former GLC Covent Garden Action Area Plan, one aim of which was to safeguard and improve the existing physical character and fabric of the area. The reconstruction of the Sundial Pillar in 1989 is a symbol of the regeneration of the area.

27 Mercer Street was redeveloped in 1977-85 by Terry Farrell as part of his Comyn Ching Triangle scheme. The Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area Statement describes the the scheme:

The site was owned by Comyn Ching & Co (est.1723) an entirely British architectural ironmongers who retained a showroom at Nos.15-21 Shelton Street until July 1995. The 'triangle' which is bounded by Mercer Street, Shelton Street and Monmouth Street is a good example of the changing character and vitality of Covent Garden. The 1980s development placed Terry Farrell designed corner buildings adjacent to restored Grade II listed 17th century buildings and created a mix of residential, retail and office use. The Shelton Street frontage has a particularly good restoration of 19th century shopfronts. A public courtyard was created at the centre of the triangle, an important urban space for the area. The scheme demonstrates how modern design can successfully integrate with the historic environment. The yard has a restrained, semi-formal air with crisp Yorkstone paving, wall top benches and ornamental trees in iron grilles.

Modern planning history

There is a complex planning history associated with Comyn Ching Triangle site but the two applications of most relevance to 27 Mercer Street is the initial 1977 granting of consent for the 'rehabilitation' of the wider site and the 1986 approval for the 'fitting out' of the property.

Approved 4 October 1977

Planning Ref 011580/011745

45-71 Monmouth Street, 19-31 Mercer Street and 1-21 Shelton Street, WC1

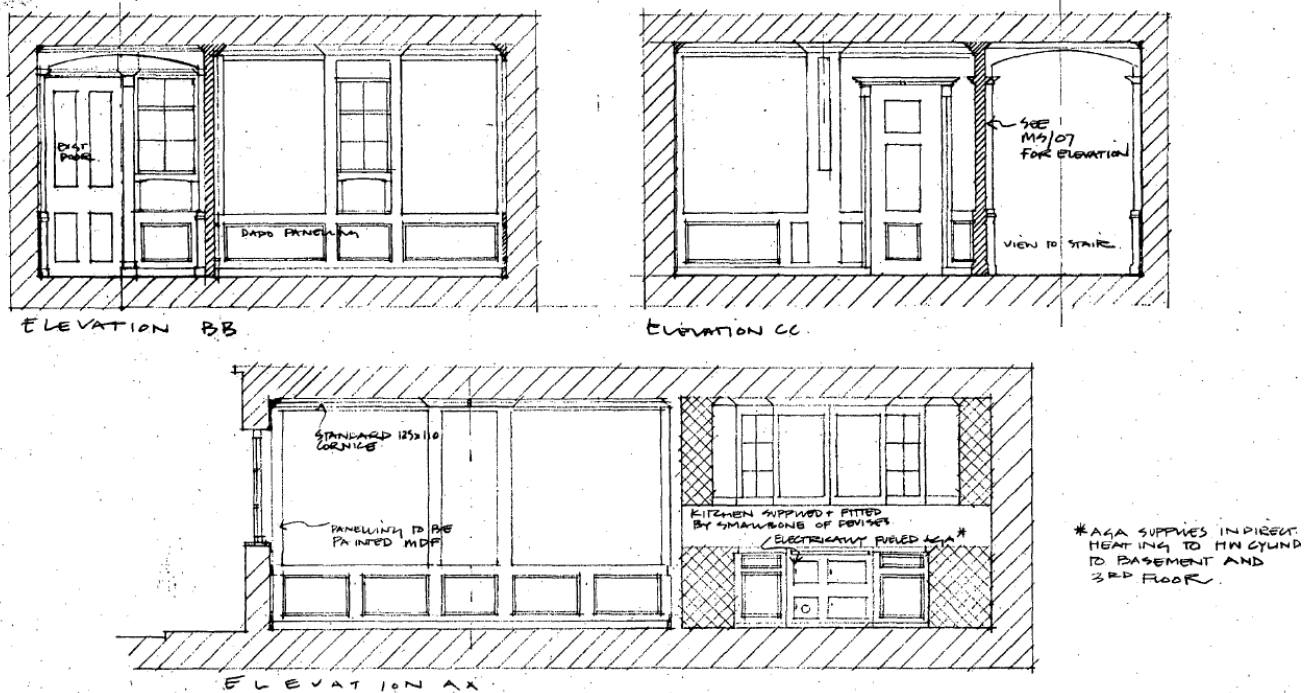
Rehabilitation of existing buildings and construction of two new buildings at 45-71 Monmouth Street, 19-31 Mercer Street and 1-21 Shelton Street, WC1 to provide residential, retail, light industrial, office and warehouse uses.

Approved 4 March 1986

Planning Ref HB/8570346

27 Mercer Street

The fitting-out of the dwelling house to include 2 rear balconettes and the erection of a roof structure, providing access to the flat roof



Above, proposed ground floor elevations (1986)

Summary of alterations to 27 Mercer Street

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Late C17th | Constructed. |
| Late C18th-C19th | Re-faced and or reconstructed, 4 th storey added. |
| Early-mid C20th | Sash windows replaced with metal windows and shopfront converted in part to a garage. |
| 1977-1986 | Rehabilitated, works included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shopfront replaced in post-modern style as opposed to historically accurate replica. - New internal layout - All internal architectural detailing replaced in post-modern style as opposed to historically accurate replicated detailing - Roof extension added to existing flat roof - Reconstruction of the rear elevation, alterations to fenestration and addition of post-modern style balconettes - All windows replaced - The removal of rear projections and boundary walls, severing the property from its historic plot size and creation of a combined communal courtyard to the rear of all properties |

Summary of architectural and historic significance

27 Mercer Street is of architectural and historic interest as a rebuilt late C17th townhouse with shop. However that significance has been severely comprised by substantial modern alterations.

No late C17th fabric is visible either externally nor internally. Externally only the brickwork is of pre-1986 date, likely to be late C18th or early C19th at which time an additional storey was added. The window openings are as historically to the front but have been altered to the rear with post-modern style balconettes added. The original roof form has been lost, it is a modern flat roof with 1986 roof extension. The shopfront is a 1986 post-modern style interpretation of a traditional timber shopfront. No pre-1986 fabric is visible to the interior and much of what is concealed, such as spine walls, and chimney breasts date to 1986. Only the party wall is likely to be pre-1986 fabric.

The entire interior consists of inappropriate post-modern style architectural detailing as opposed to either historic or historically accurate replicated detailing. The detailing of staircase dates to 1986 however the form/layout of the staircase does not conform with what would be expect of a late C17th or C18/C19 house and is highly likely to have been replaced either in the C20 or as an early phase of the works approved in 1977 and carried out before the details of the internal fit out proposed in 1986.

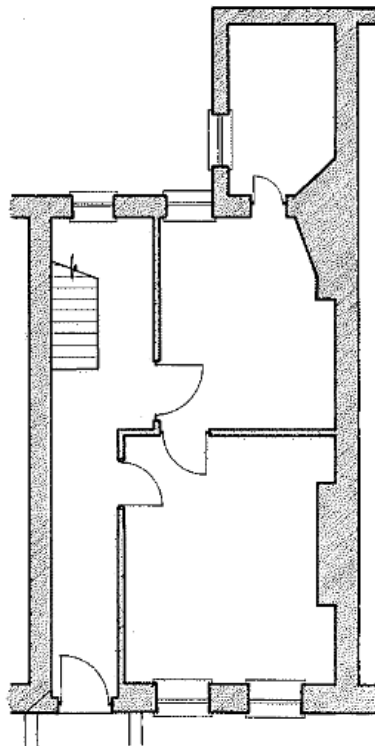


Figure 1: typical house plan of c 1700

Above, taken from 'London Terrace Houses 1660-1860' by English Heritage (1991)

Basements were not a common feature of late 17th century houses and it is also likely that the basement and rear lightwell dates to 1977-1986. Historically there may have been a shallow basement but unoccupied with the kitchen likely to have been located to a rear projection now demolished. In any case the basement layout dates entirely to 1986 with no evidence of an historic plan-form. The ground floor also has a 1986 layout with an unusually

wide entrance hall, the same width as the stairwell, divided in to a lobby to the front part. The 1973 photograph (see above) shows that the historic shopfront had two entrance doors, one to what had once been a shopfront (at that point being used as a garage entrance) and the other to the residential accommodation above. The width of the latter is evidence of a narrower entrance hall. The upper floors also have 1986 layouts not conforming to an historic plan-form.

As part of the 1977-86 works the rear boundary walls were demolished and the property severed from its historic plot size when a combined communal courtyard to the rear of all properties was created harming its setting and undermining its significance.

The significance of 27 Mercer Street is therefore principally derived from its external appearance, the properties proportions, plot width, historic brickwork and what survives of the historic fenestration pattern. The interior is of very limited significance due to a complete lack of historic fabric, a modern plan form and highly inappropriate modern architectural detailing.

3. Assessment of national and local policy and guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990)

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) provides the primary legislation that is used to assess the impact of development proposals on listed buildings and conservation areas.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)

The Government's national planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment are provided in Section 12 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of the NPPF.

The NPPF makes it clear that heritage assets need to be put to appropriate and viable uses to ensure their conservation, and that intelligently managed change is necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term.

The NPPF states the following:

132. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

133. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- 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.

The Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide to PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment (2010) WITHDRAWN 27 March 2015

Until recently this guidance remained in place as guidance to Section 12 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of the NPPF. However, it has now been withdrawn but the intended replacement has not yet been published by Historic England. A draft has however been consulted on.

Making Changes to Heritage Assets (Historic Englan) DRAFT (2015)

Making Changes to Heritage Assets (HEA 2) states that it is a re-publication with a fuller introduction of section 6 of the former Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (2011). Consultation on this document closed on 17 April 2015. It states:

3. A reasonable and proportionate approach to all owners' needs is essential. The advice in this document, in accordance with the NPPF, emphasises that the information required in support of applications for planning permission and listed building consent should be no more than is necessary to reach an informed decision, and that activities to conserve or investigate the asset need to be proportionate to the significance of the heritage assets affected and the impact on that significance.

41 The fabric will always be an important part of the asset's significance. Retention of as much historic fabric as possible is therefore a fundamental part of any good alteration or conversion, together with the use of appropriate materials and methods of repair. It is not appropriate to sacrifice old work simply to accommodate the new...

44 The plan form of a building is frequently one of its most important characteristics and internal partitions, staircases (whether decorated or plain, principal or secondary) and other features are likely to form part of its significance. Indeed they may be its most significant feature...

Camden Local Development Framework, Camden Development Policies (2010)

These state:

Policy DP25 - Conserving Camden's heritage

Conservation areas

In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will:

- a) take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;
- b) only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area;
- c) prevent the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area where this harms the character or appearance of the conservation area, unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention;
- d) not permit development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character and appearance of that conservation area; and
- e) preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of a conservation area and which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.

Listed buildings

To preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will:

- e) prevent the total or substantial demolition of a listed building unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention;
- f) only grant consent for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building; and
- g) not permit development that it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building.

4. Assessment of the impact of the proposals of the heritage assets and compliance with national and local policy and guidance

The Government's national planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment are provided in Section 12 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of the NPPF. Paragraph 128 states:

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Basement

Even when historic, basements are floors of lesser significance and less sensitive to change. In any case the existing layout and fabric dates from 1977-1986 and therefore the proposals to amend the layout at basement level result in no loss of historic fabric or plan form and have a neutral impact on the significance of the listed building.

It is also proposed to glaze over the rear lightwell as per 23 Mercer Street which was granted listed building consent for such works. However, the proposal is for a higher quality version with structural low-iron glazing, with no timber or metal structure, being specified. The result will be a lightweight and fully transparent structure which will allow the lightwell and rear of the property to remain visible. In any case the rear lightwell is not an historic feature as it was created as part of the 1977-86 works. At the same time the rear boundary walls were demolished and the property severed from its historic plot size when a combined communal courtyard to the rear of all properties was created harming its setting and undermining its significance. Consequently the proposal to glaze over the rear lightwell has a neutral impact on the significance of the listed building. Given the limited views of the lightwell from within the conservation area the proposal will have a neutral impact on its character and appearance.

Ground floor

The existing layout and fabric dates entirely to the 1977-1986 works with an unusually wide entrance hall, the same width as the stairwell, subdivided in to a lobby to the front part. The 1973 photograph (see above) shows that the historic shopfront had two entrances doors, one to what had once been a shopfront (at that point being used as a garage entrance) and the other to the residential accommodation above. The width of the latter is evidence of a narrower entrance hall.

It is proposed to remove the entrance lobby subdivision and reduce the width of the hall to its original width. This can be seen as a step to reinstating the original plan form of the property and therefore enhances the significance of the listed building. It is also proposed to create an opening between front and rear rooms. This may have been an original feature to the property but in any case it has a neutral impact on the significance of the listed building.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this report has been to assess the significance of the building, to assess the impact of proposed works and to consider whether they comply with national and local policy and guidance on the historic built environment.

The proposed works have been shown to be appropriate and justified resulting in either a neutral or positive impact on the significance of the heritage assets. For these reasons the proposed alterations comply with national and local policy and guidance regarding the historic built environment.