

32 Percy Street W1T2DE

Heritage Assessment

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1 Scope

- 1.1 This Assessment has been produced to accompany planning and listed building applications for 32 Percy Street.
- 1.2 The Assessment is based on an examination of the building, consideration of the listing, the Survey of London, the Conservation Area Appraisal and other relevant sources of information. The conservation and design legislation outlined in section 3 is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all relevant policies but rather to indicate the key aspects relevant to this Assessment.
- 1.3 It has been prepared by Anthony Walker, a registered architect with a post graduate diploma in Building Conservation who is on the register of Architects Accredited in Building Conservation. He has been a visiting professor at Kingston University and lectures on building conservation matters at the Architectural Association and Cambridge University.

2 Background

- 2.1 Location
The building is located on the north side of Percy Street and is in the Charlotte Street Conservation Area.
- 2.2 The building is listed grade II and the listing description states *CAMDEN TQ2981NE PERCY STREET 798-1/99/1300 (North side) 01/05/72 Nos.32 AND 33 and attached railings GV II 2 terraced houses. 1766-1770, altered. Partially re-faced following the original design. Built by W Franks, W Richmond, H Roydhouse and J Pritchett. No.32: multi-coloured stock brick. Slated mansard roof with dormers. Stucco 1st floor sill and floor bands. Earlier C19 shopfront with projecting shop window with entablature with projecting dentil cornice. Glazing altered. Wooden doorcase with pilasters carrying enriched console-bracketed entablature; round-arched fanlight and panelled door. Gauged red brick flat arches to recessed sashes. Parapet. INTERIOR: open tread stair with moulded, wreathed handrail, turned balusters and column newels. 1st floor front room ceiling moulded with foliated wreaths and central patera. Patterned cornice. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with torche flambe finials to areas.*
- 2.3 The Charlotte Street CAA sets out the characteristics of the area. 6.4 confirms the scale of mainly four and sometimes three stories with good town houses in Goodge Place and Percy Street. 6.5 states that *The change in the social status of the area during the 18th and 19th century from a wealthy residential suburb to a poorer, more varied area saw the establishment of various commercial and retail uses and smaller residential units on the upper floors of buildings. This is evident in the introduction of shop frontages in the ground floors in the terraces and the location of public houses, mainly at junctions.* 6.30 makes more specific reference to Percy Street as having *a mix of shops and restaurants set in three storey townhouses, however a significant proportion of the frontages are distinctly Georgian in character with arched door heads, banding details and rubbed brick window heads. Many of the railings are retained and there are a number of semi-mature trees along the street. Of note along the street are*

decorative timber porches and door surrounds, incidences of tiled steps to the front doors and the decoratively re-faced building at no.4 with its unusual faience detailing.

- 2.4 The Survey of London volume 21 confirms that Francis and William Goodge were granted building licences for the north side of Percy Street in 1766 and both sides were developed with uniform terraces three storeys high in stock brick with flat red arches. Each house had a basement with two windows. There is a stone moulded cornice with a mansard roof above which also has two windows. It is noted that most of the houses have modern shop fronts especially on the south side of the street. A number of houses were refaced during the nineteenth century and additional floors were added to others while bomb damage resulted in the demolition of 21 and caused damage to others.
- 2.5 In the Survey it is recorded that the plans of the houses were alike although the stairs were more likely to differ at least in details. The Survey continues saying that few rooms retain any special features.
- 2.6 There have been a number of planning consents granted with online records continuing from 1984 to 2014. The 1984 application which was granted was for General works of renovation and rehabilitation including the enclosing of the rear yard to provide extra toilet facilities and the raising of the rear eastern party wall. Further applications were made in 1989, 1992 and in 1999. Of these the plans in 1999 are the most comprehensive and while it is recognised that these works were not necessarily fully implemented the 'as existing' drawings for this application and those in the earlier applications provide a useful indication of the extent of alterations which had occurred over a number of years.
- 2.7 The internal works with the removal of traditional doorways from the staircase to the main rooms, the introduction of small lobbies of the main staircases, an angled lobby on the ground floor into the front room from close to the main door have all harmed the internal interest of the building. Externally there is a modern back extension which does not enhance the appearance of the building and by reducing the light well at first floor harms the appearance of the back elevation of the building. There is a miscellany of different windows including casements and an elongated window on the back façade resulting in a loss in the order and coherence of the two main elevations.
- 2.8 Thus the building while being of significance in accordance with its listing and on account of its role in the Charlotte Street Conservation Area has suffered significant degrees of harm to its significance much of which this application seeks to address.

3 Legislation

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

3.1.1 In Section 66 of the Act it is stated that *'in considering whether to grant permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting the local planning authority..... shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving*

the building or its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'

- 3.1.2 In Section 72(1) regarding Conservation Areas, it is stated that '*special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.*'
- 3.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- 3.2.1 It is stated in policy 14 that at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.
- 3.2.2 Section 12 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. There are a number of paragraphs relevant to this assessment including the following:
- 126. Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment,29 including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:*
- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- 131. In determining planning applications, local planning authorities 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;*
- 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 benefit.*
- 3.3 National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, paragraph 3.
'Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in everyday use to as yet undiscovered, undesignated buried remains of archaeological interest'.
- 3.4 London Plan
Policy 7.8 Heritage Assets
A London's heritage assets and historic environment, including listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and other natural and historic landscapes, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields, scheduled monuments, archaeological remains and memorials should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be taken into account.
- B Development should incorporate measures that identify, record, interpret, protect and, where appropriate, present the site's archaeology. Planning decisions*

C Development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.

D Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.

Policy 7.9 Heritage led Regeneration

A Regeneration schemes should identify and make use of heritage assets and reinforce the qualities that make them significant so they can help stimulate environmental, economic and community regeneration.

B The significance of heritage assets should be assessed when development is proposed and schemes designed so that the heritage significance is recognised both in their own right and as catalysts for regeneration. Wherever possible heritage assets (including buildings at risk) should be repaired, restored and put to a suitable and viable use that is consistent with their conservation and the establishment and maintenance of sustainable communities and economic vitality.

C Boroughs should support the principles of heritage-led regeneration in LDF policies.

3.5 Camden Local Plan

CS14 Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage

The Council will ensure that Camden's places and buildings are attractive, safe and easy to use by:

- a) requiring development of the highest standard of design that respects local and character;*
- b) preserving and enhancing Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens;*
- c) promoting high quality landscaping and works to streets and public spaces;*
- d) seeking the highest standards of access in all buildings and places and requiring schemes to be designed to be inclusive and accessible;*
- e) protecting important views of St Paul's Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster from sites inside and outside the borough and protecting important local views.*

4 Proposals

4.1 The proposals are shown on the architect's drawings and described in detail in the Design and Access Statement.

4.2 For the purposes of this Heritage Assessment they can be summarised as the restoration of the principle elevations including repair and conservation, the removal of internal interventions such as the introduction of miscellaneous lobbies to allow the reinstatement of the main features of the historic room layouts and the demolition and reconstruction of the modern back wing so as to better reveal the back elevation of the main building.

- 4.3 In preparing the proposals the design team have been aware of the need to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, or its setting, and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

5 Impact of the proposals on the building

5.1 Interior

5.1.1 Basement

The existing basement has been opened up across the whole of the front of the building. A more appropriate subdivision is proposed providing space for a shower room directly upon entry from the bicycle store in one of the front vaults. It is considered that this produces a more appropriate scale of room at the front while assisting the provision of a sustainable use for the building. The partition with door at the foot of the stairs is considered inappropriate and will be removed. This will enhance the historic and architectural interest of the building.

5.1.2 Ground floor

The modern door just inside the front door leading to the front room will be removed and the opening blocked up. The nibs on either side of the opening in the midwall will be extended and the combination of these will reinforce the original layout of the ground floor. The doors at the foot of the stairs which are considered inappropriate will be removed and the staircase will be restored to achieve uniform balusters and handrail. This will enhance the historic and architectural interest of this floor.

5.1.3 First floor

The intrusive lobby off the staircase will be removed and the traditional layout with a main room across the front of the building accessed directly off the staircase with a smaller principle room behind also with direct access off the staircase will be restored. This will restore the architectural and historic interest.

5.1.4 Second floor

The intrusive modern lobby will be removed and the partition dividing the front and back rooms will be restored to a more traditional location indicated by the existing end of the cupboard. The small room directly off the staircase will be retained and a modern casing removed to provide lavatory accommodation for people at this floor level. The partition to the smaller room at the front of the building will be retained with the existing opening enlarged. This will substantially restore the original layout. Photograph showing modern structure and finishes to the partition is included below.



5.1.5 Third floor (Attic)

The maze of partitions on this floor will be rationalised retaining the original line of the partition from the front to back with a small room at the front with direct access from the staircase and a similar room at the back subdivided to provide lavatory accommodation. The partition between the main front and back rooms will be retained and the existing opening will be enlarged. It is considered this will return the layout to substantially what would have existed originally. The existing ceiling is not original as can be seen from the photograph below and is very low. It is proposed to reconstruct the ceiling at a slightly higher level. Overall this will reinstate the historic and architectural interest of the floor.



5.2 Exterior of main building

5.2.1 Front façade

The smaller dormer casement window and the two over two later windows on the first floor will be replaced with windows to match other properties in the street and create a greater harmony while retaining the hierarchy of the first floor as the principle floor. The modern interventions in the shopfront will be restored to accord with the rest of the front and modern fanlight over the door and added detail to the door case will be replaced. These changes will enhance the architectural and historic interest of the building and by making it accord with the nearby buildings will enhance the appearance and character of the conservation area.

5.2.2 Back façade

The wider and inappropriate dormer window will be replaced with one of a similar scale to the existing smaller window. The tall first floor window which is out of character with the rest of the façade will be replaced with one to match the adjoining window at this level. The staircase windows and those on the ground floor will be replaced with traditional six over six pane sashes. This will create a more ordered façade and one which will enhance the appearance of the conservation area.

5.3 Back wing

5.3.1 At the back of the building there is a small light well with three low vaults which are too restricted in headroom. Above these at ground level there is a modern extension with a flat roof containing a random pattern of large and smaller roof lights. This roof cuts off the view of the back of the historic building from properties to the north and does not enhance the view of 32 nor looking out northwards from 32. This modern accommodation is of no architectural or historic significance. There is pitched glass roof over the light well which destroys the distinction between the historic main building and the modern ground level extension.



5.3.2 It is proposed to retain the front to the vaults which will read well in conjunction with the historic back façade to the main building and with the removal of the glass leant roof will reinstate the historic form of the light well. The floor behind the vault frontage will be lowered to provide a workable headroom and extended back to the site boundary. A new ground floor will be constructed retaining the light well at the back of the building and with a small link directly behind the main staircase in a traditional arrangement. This reconstructed ground floor will have an innovative roof form which is further described in the DAS. This form will lower the southern edge of the roof thus revealing more of the back façade of the main building. The form of the roof is of interest in its own right and with its angled slopes is more in keeping with the surrounding pitched roof lights. It is recognised that the removal of the back structures of the vaults does result in the loss of some historic fabric. None of it is of special significance but in accordance with the NPPF 132 consideration has been given to the benefits which arise from the works. These include making a viable use of the back wing, the enhanced view of the back façade of the main building and the significantly improved light well at the back which benefits from the removal of the glazed roof. In addition there are other benefits arising from the works to the building internally as set out above and to the front façade which are considered in total in section 6.

5.4 External works

5.4.1 In addition to the above it is proposed to replace the utilitarian modern service stair to the front light well with one in an appropriate period design. In the back light well there is a large intrusive flue which will be removed. The inappropriate tiling at the front will be replaced with York stone paving and riser.

6 Summary

6.1 Consideration of the building as a whole

6.1.1 The evidence from sources such as the Survey of London, the 'as existing' drawings as part of several planning applications together with investigations on site confirm that there have been substantial changes to the building both internally and externally. Many of these have been detrimental to the architectural and historic interest of the building and are addressed as part of the current proposals.

6.1.2 As set out above in section 5 it is considered that the proposed layout of the building substantially increases the architectural interest of the building while the alterations to the main elevations and in particular the replacement of inappropriate dormers and casement windows will enhance the proper hierarchy of the facades and their appearance.

6.2 Consideration of the building in the conservation area

6.2.1 The building is consistent with the description of Percy Street in the Conservation Area Audit which comments on the significant terraces in this area which have been less affected by later development than in other areas.

6.2.2 The retention of the key elements of the front and back facades will therefore make a particularly useful contribution to maintaining and enhancing the

appearance and character of the area. It is for this reason that it is proposed to modify some of the dormers which in their present form are inappropriate in design and scale, the casement windows and the more modern windows so as to achieve a consistency with the surrounding buildings where possible. This includes both the front and back elevations.

6.2.3 The replacement of inappropriate modern modifications to the shop front and the detailing of the front doorcase and skylight.

6.3 Compliance with legislation

6.3.1 The proposals have given special regard to the desirability of preserving the building as required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990.

6.3.2 The proposals take account of the extract from the NPPG in paragraph 3.3 above and paragraphs 131 and 134 of the NPPF. The proposals for the layout of the building will reinstate much of the harm caused under previous alterations. It is acknowledged that there is less than substantial harm to the building as a result of the alterations to the vaults at the back of the building however consideration has been given as set out above to the many benefits which arise as part of this application including public benefits which affect the building as seen from the public realm and from the back across the Conservation Area. These include the restoration of the front façade and the significant benefits at the back which better reveal the appearance of the building seen from within the Conservation Area. The NPPG makes it clear that change is part of the proper management of designated heritage assets and it is considered that the proposed changes in this instance substantially enhance its interest and restore previous harm.

6.3.3 The proposals do preserve the building in accordance with Policies 7.8 and 7.9 of the London Plan and CS 14 of the Camden Local Plan.

6.4 It is therefore concluded that the proposals comply with both National and Local Policy and guidance for the preservation and protection of listed buildings.

Anthony Walker November 2015