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No. 9 LEIGH STREET WC1H LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN



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

JULY 2016 (Rev D)

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 represent a development of a scheme of improvement which was the subject of an application for Listed Building Consent in 2015 and which was subsequently withdrawn (29 May 2015) following consultations with local authority officers.

4.03 Revised proposals were discussed with council enforcement and conservation and design officers. The proposals were received positively in the

officer's email of 13/4/2016. The main provisions of this revised scheme were:

- (i) a communal kitchen in the rear ground floor room.
- (ii) a utility room and W.C. in the ground floor rear extension.
- (iii) The single storey garden building to be used as studio.

4.04 The current application represents a further evolution of the proposals to upgrade and renovate this Listed Building. A commentary on the possible impact of these proposals and the question of a balance between an upgraded HMO use and preserving the heritage significance of the building is given in Section 7 below.

4.05 The current proposals envisage the removal of the unauthorised kitchens, bathrooms and associated partitions and fittings on the ground and first floor. The bathrooms would be replaced within the ground and first floors by visually lightweight glazed shower units. The proposals would not involve dividing or partitioning these rooms and the original room joinery and plasterwork details could be retained and restored.

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 Historic England provides design and conservation advice in its publication; “London Terrace Houses 1660-1860”;

....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 Historic England 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 London Plan Policies (FALP) 2015 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 ground and first floors would be restored and renovated. The existing unauthorised bathroom and kitchen facilities in the front and rear rooms on the ground and first floors would be removed.
- 7.03 The small glazed shower and basin units proposed would be visually light weight, easily reversible and would allow the whole room in each case to be appreciated without partition or other solid obstruction.
- 7.04 The use of the house as a HMO is socially important and much valued by the local authority. Providing ensuite facilities as proposed represents a minimum in terms of modern standards. Anything less will gravely depress the rental income and attract fewer tenants to the long term detriment of the listed building and

the HMO use. The proposed light weight shower units would have a minimal effect on the heritage interest of the rooms, which would be appropriately renovated and restored. This is a case where an intelligent balance must be struck between providing modern HMO accommodation, (and therefore a sustainable and useful life for the building) and appropriately respecting and restoring the heritage significance of the listed house. Both the long term interests of the HMO accommodation and the buildings heritage significance is of importance in this case.

7.05 The NPPF guidance in cases such as this is given in paragraph 134;

“Where a proposed development 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.”

8 CONCLUSION

8.01 The proposals are aimed at improving facilities for a HMO, which is an important social community asset. 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.

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