

Heritage Statement

**20 – 21 King's Mews, Holborn,
London, WC1N 2JB**



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Statement was originally commissioned by Marek Wojciechowski Architects on behalf of clients in October 2015 to accompany a pre-application consultation and was prepared by Esther Robinson Wild and Neil Burton of The Architectural History Practice Ltd.

The Statement presents a summary of the history and significance of the building and is based on archival and desktop research undertaken in October 2015. An external inspection of the building was made in connection with this report and all recent images were supplied by the architects.

Numbers 20-21 King's Mews (national grid reference TQ309820) was originally two mews properties, but is now effectively a single building. A precise date of construction has not been established. Map evidence shows that the north eastern end of King's Mews was built-up by 1799, but the earliest elements of the existing utilitarian facade are almost certainly later and indeed could date from almost any time during the nineteenth century. There were originally two separate mews buildings and each one probably had stables and a coach house to the ground floor, with haylofts and residential accommodation on the first floor. The buildings were combined at some time between 1872 and 1894. It is possible that the whole facade was also rebuilt at the same time. The property continued in use as a mews building from that time until c.1901. The building was converted to motor garage use in the mid-twentieth century and it has undergone extensive external and internal alteration since it was built. The facade retains some elements of its original character, but nothing remains of the original internal layout. The building is not included on the statutory list of historic buildings and is not locally listed, but it is situated within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

King's Mews lies to the north of Holborn and is bounded by Gray's Inn Road to the east and Theobald's Road to the south. It is situated in the south-east corner of Bloomsbury and until 1921 it was part of the Doughty Estate, one of fourteen family-owned estates which developed the Bloomsbury area at various times during the mid-seventeenth to early-nineteenth centuries. The well-documented development of Bloomsbury represents a period of London's early expansion northwards, and a change in the landscape from one characterised by farmland and open fields to one of planned residential districts.

Agas's 1591 map of St. Giles and its vicinity shows open fields where King's Mews is situated today. By the early eighteenth century the areas to the east and west of King's Mews had become more urbanised. A parish map of c.1720 (fig.1) shows a regular field pattern and a bowling green to the west of the Mews on the site of what is now John Street. There are also buildings situated part way along the Mews at the southern end but these appear not to include the site of numbers 20 - 21. The absence of a track or lane leading to the buildings suggests that they may have served as stables to the buildings fronting Gray's Inn Road.

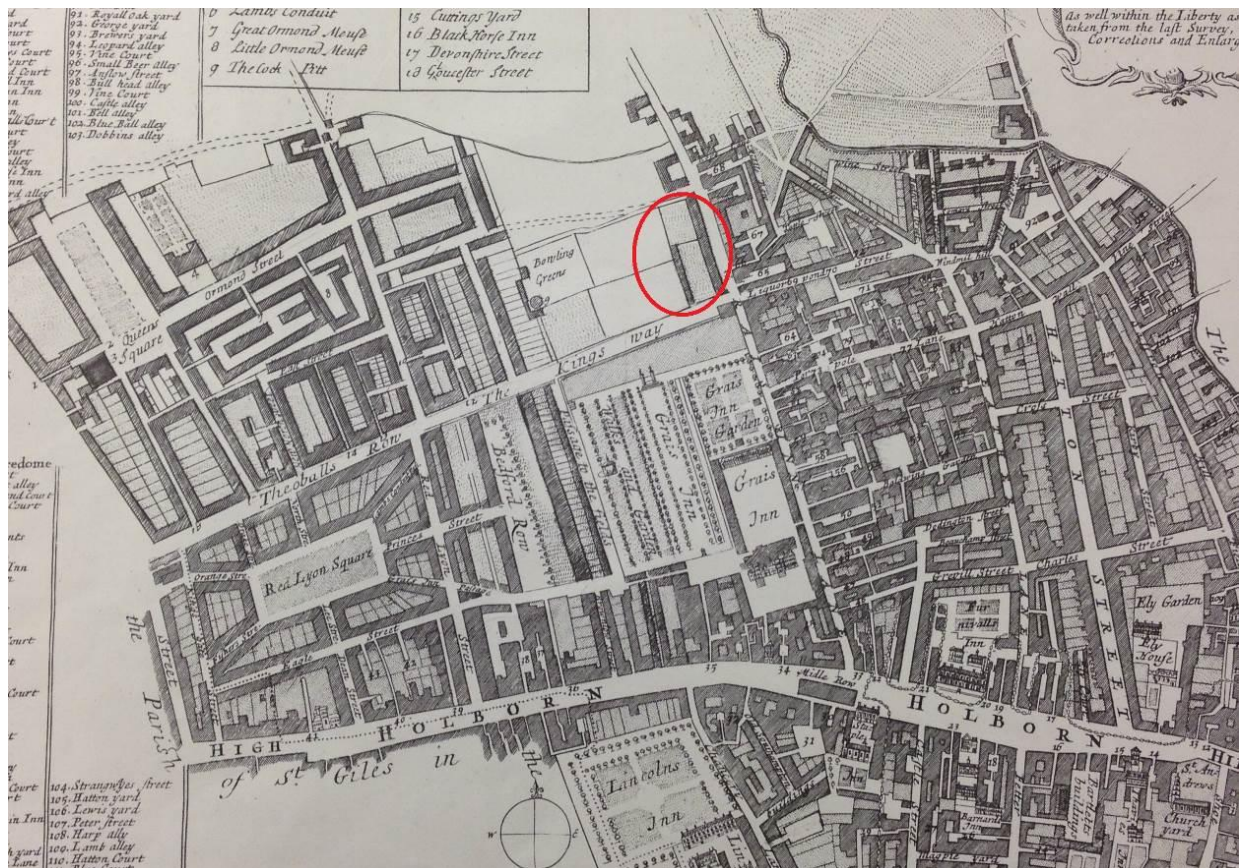


Fig.1 A detail from a map of St Andrew's Parish, Holborn, c.1720
(Camden Local History Library, 1979, ref: 052383 / class no. 85.245)

A historical map of a city block in New York City, showing streets like St. John's Church, Mulberry Street, and others. A red circle highlights a specific building on Mulberry Street.

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Some sources (UCL, 2015; Camden Local History Society, 2008) suggest that King's Mews was named for King's Road. It is possible that there was some mews accommodation for the substantial new houses on the north side of The King's Road, but Richard Horwood's 1799 map of London (fig.4) suggests that the buildings on the east side of the street served the houses in Gray's Inn Lane while the building on the west side served John Street. Horwood also shows that the northern end of the east side of the mews (the site of nos. 21 & 22) had been built up by 1799.

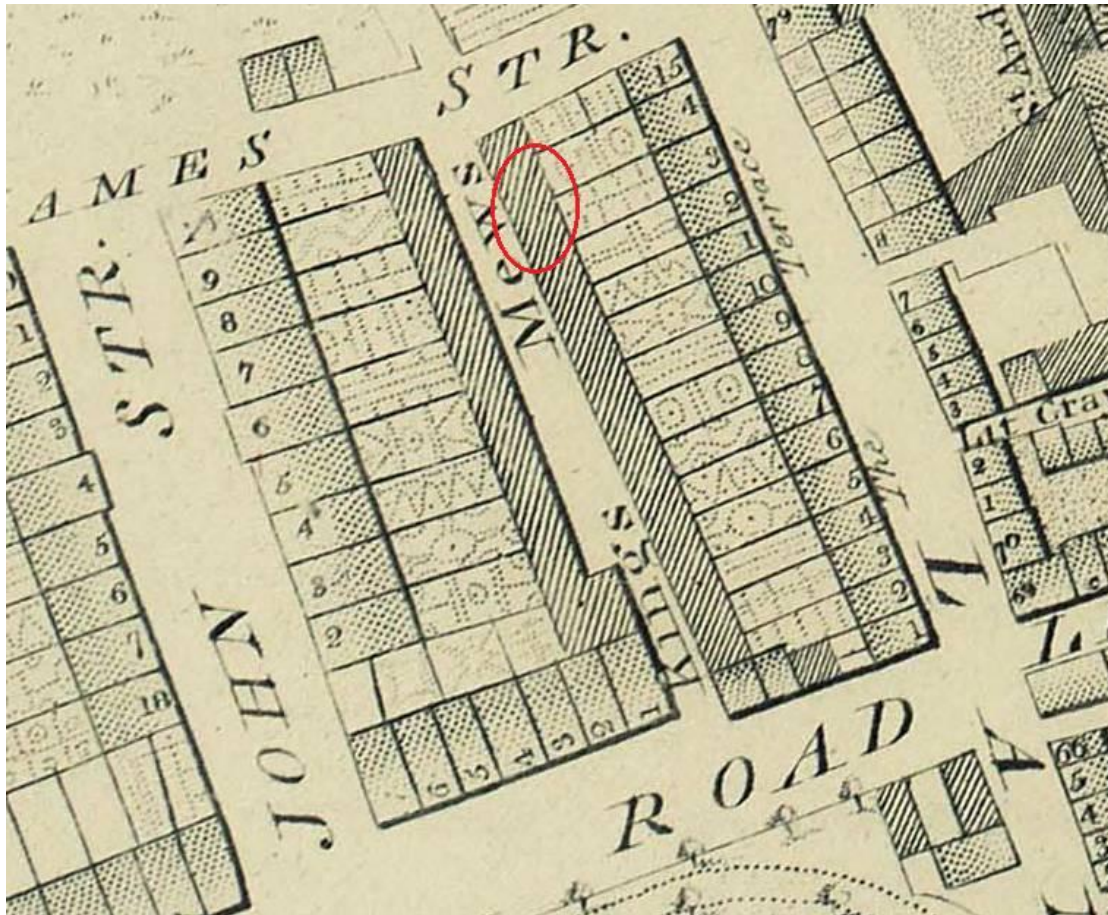


Fig.4 A detail from Richard Horwood's 1799 map of London

It does not appear, from a superficial examination, that any of the buildings now fronting Kings Mews date from the eighteenth century. Most date from the mid or late twentieth century. No documentary evidence has been found to provide a precise date of construction for the present front of numbers 20 and 21 but it has a largely nineteenth century character, although the external and internal brickwork has been painted, which makes proper analysis difficult. It is possible that the facade contains some later eighteenth century fabric but it is more likely that the building dates wholly from the nineteenth century, or the front may have been completely rebuilt when the two separate mews buildings were combined between 1872 and 1894. The interiors are almost wholly of the twentieth century.

For the whole of the nineteenth century King's Mews fulfilled its expected function of providing accommodation for horses. There is reference to commission stables owned by a Henry Osborn situated at the Mews in the Annual Post Office Directory of 1829 (Camden Archives, ref: London Directory Group 3, 96917/68, vol.237). Kelly's Post Office Directory of

1841 (Camden Archives, ref: London Directory Group 3, 96917/73, vol.250) also documents Osborn's Commission stables at the Mews. Later Post Office Directories of 1845 (Camden Archives, ref: 96917/76) and 1879 (Camden Archives, ref: 96917/127) further document the location of livery stables at the Mews.

Public transport in London improved dramatically in the early to mid-nineteenth century with the introduction of omnibuses as early as 1829, and the expansion of the railways in the 1840s. One side effect was the turning over of what were originally mews associated with private residences to be used as commission stables or livery stables, providing horses for hire.

Census records for the period 1841 to 1901 show that King's Mews was predominantly inhabited by individuals working with horses in a variety of capacities from that of Ostler, Groom, Coachman and Foreman to a commission stables. The earliest census records date from 1841 and document 10 Ostlers living in King's Mews with their families. Unfortunately, the records do not provide house numbers for the dwellings so it is not possible to accurately locate the dwellings of these individuals but from 1851 house numbers are given.

During the nineteenth century, the present numbers 20 and 21 King's Mews were numbered 11. The street numbering of the mews properties was changed some time after 1901, but the date of the change is not recorded in records of the LCC street naming section.

The 1851 census shows number 11 as inhabited by an Ostler named Robert Newman and his wife and son. The 1861 census records a stableman and groom living at the property and from 1871 to 1891 James Dewey, a Foreman to the commission stables lived at the property with his family.

The first map showing a building which can be clearly identified with number 20 and 21 is the Ordnance Survey of 1872 (fig.5) which shows two rectangular buildings on the site. At some time between 1872 and 1894 the dividing wall between the two buildings was removed (fig.6). The basic square plan form has remained unchanged since the 1890s (figs.7-8) but the interior layout has undergone significant change.

The buildings were joined during the period when the building was used as livery stables, and while James Dewey, a foreman, lived on the site. Presumably the whole of the ground floor was given over to horses, with part or all of the upper floor as living accommodation. Given Dewey's position, he may have been afforded more spacious accommodation than stablemen, and grooms.

The 1901 census does not show any inhabitants for the building, suggesting that it was only used as a place of business. The census records suggest a gradual change in the pattern of occupation of the mews by this time with a significant number of other buildings uninhabited. This is reflective of the almost entire abandonment of horses for public transport. There was a period of some years between the change of use of mews buildings from stabling to residential use (the first known example of a conversion of a mews property to private residential accommodation apparently occurred in 1908 on the Grosvenor estate). However, in the intervening period many mews descended passed into mixed uses.

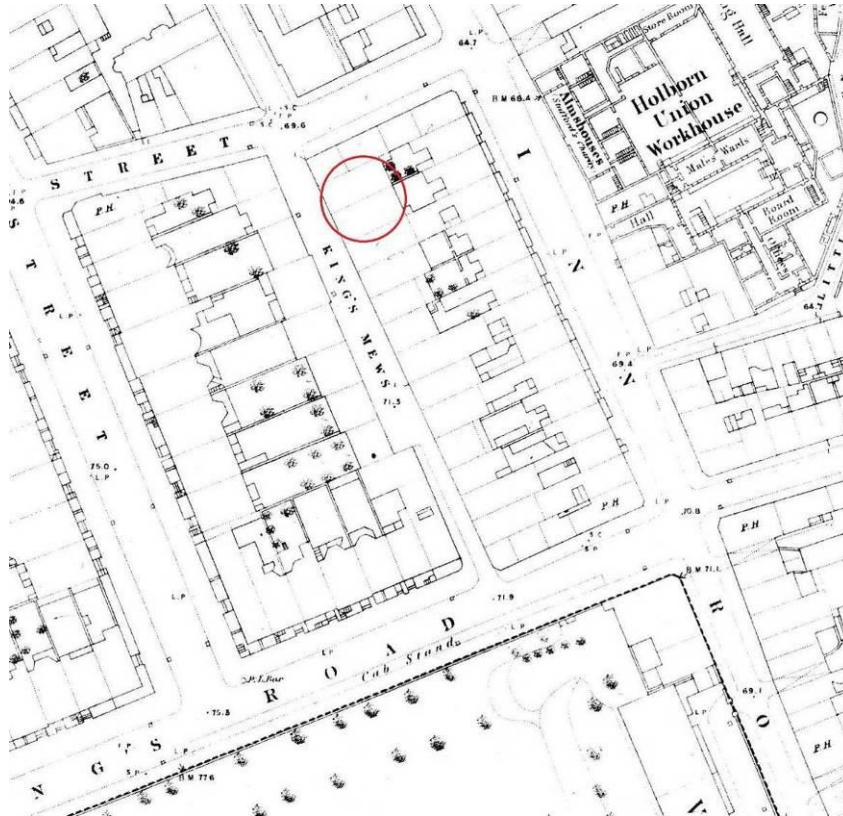


Fig.5 A detail from the 1872 Ordnance Survey, sheet VII.54

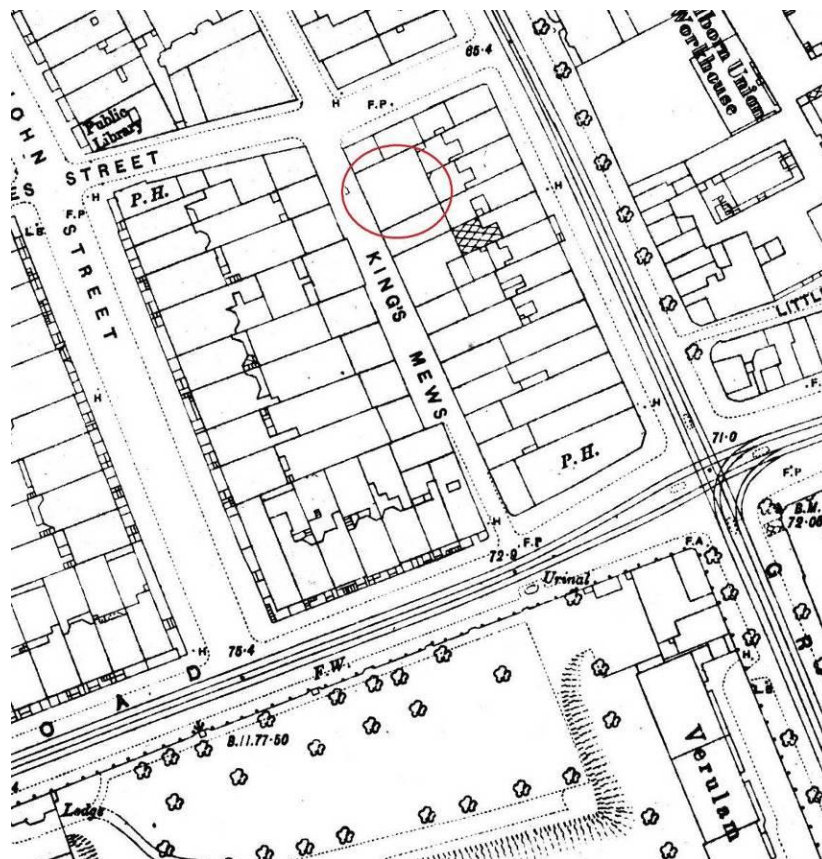


Fig.6 A detail from the 1894 Ordnance Survey, sheet VII.54

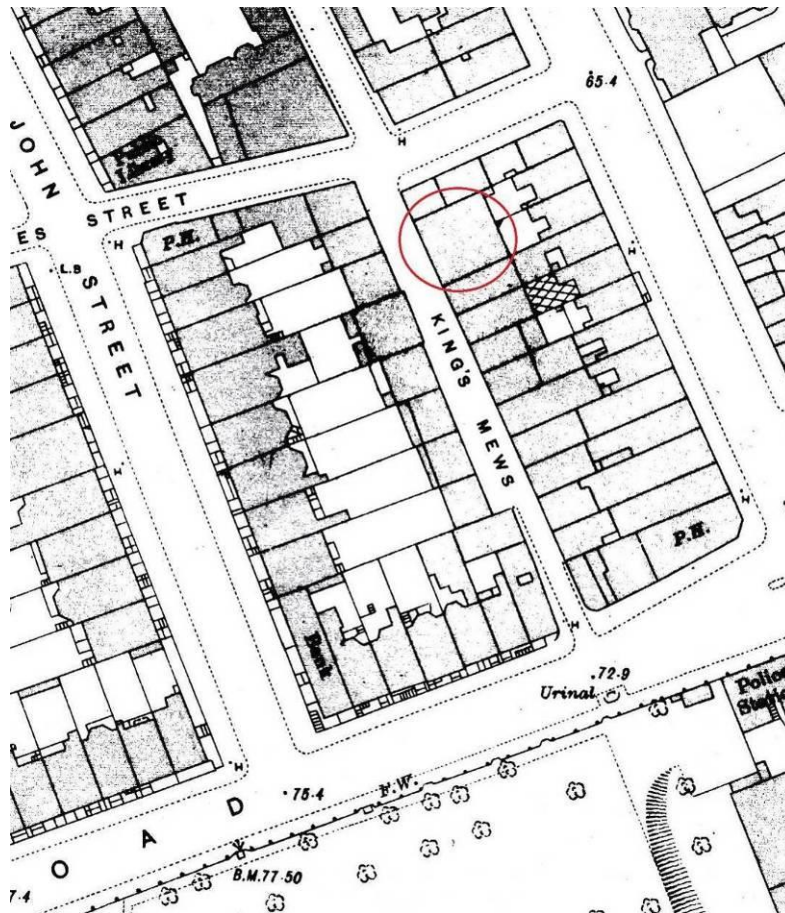


Fig.7 A detail from the 1914 Ordnance Survey, sheet VII.54



Fig.8 A detail from the 1953-1954 Ordnance Survey
(old-maps.co.uk, 2015)

In 1921, the Doughty-Tichborne family put their entire London estate (fig.9) up for auction. King's Mews was included in the fifth sale. Unfortunately, only the sales particulars for the fourth sale are available and so it is not possible to find particular information about the building at this time.



Fig.9 A plan of the Doughty-Tichborne Estate, 1921
(Doughty-Tichborne, London: Doughty-Tichborne)

A drainage application of 1936 (figs.10-11) (Camden Archives, ref: Drainage Application for 1, 1A, 2-7, 7a, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17-19, 21, 24 King's Mews, October 1936) suggests that with the introduction of sanitary services the Mews was coming back into use for both commercial and residential services. A block plan attached to the application is dated 1901 and shows the present numbers 20 and 21 as having one main access point to what appears to be the open plan ground floor. Where there are garage doors currently, which also lead into the open space, a doorway leads into a small separate area, the use of which cannot be ascertained from the plan.



Fig.10 1901 block plan attached to a drainage application of 1936
(Camden Archives, ref: Drainage Application for 1, 1A, 2-7, 7a, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17-19, 21, 24 King's Mews, October 1936, plate 1)

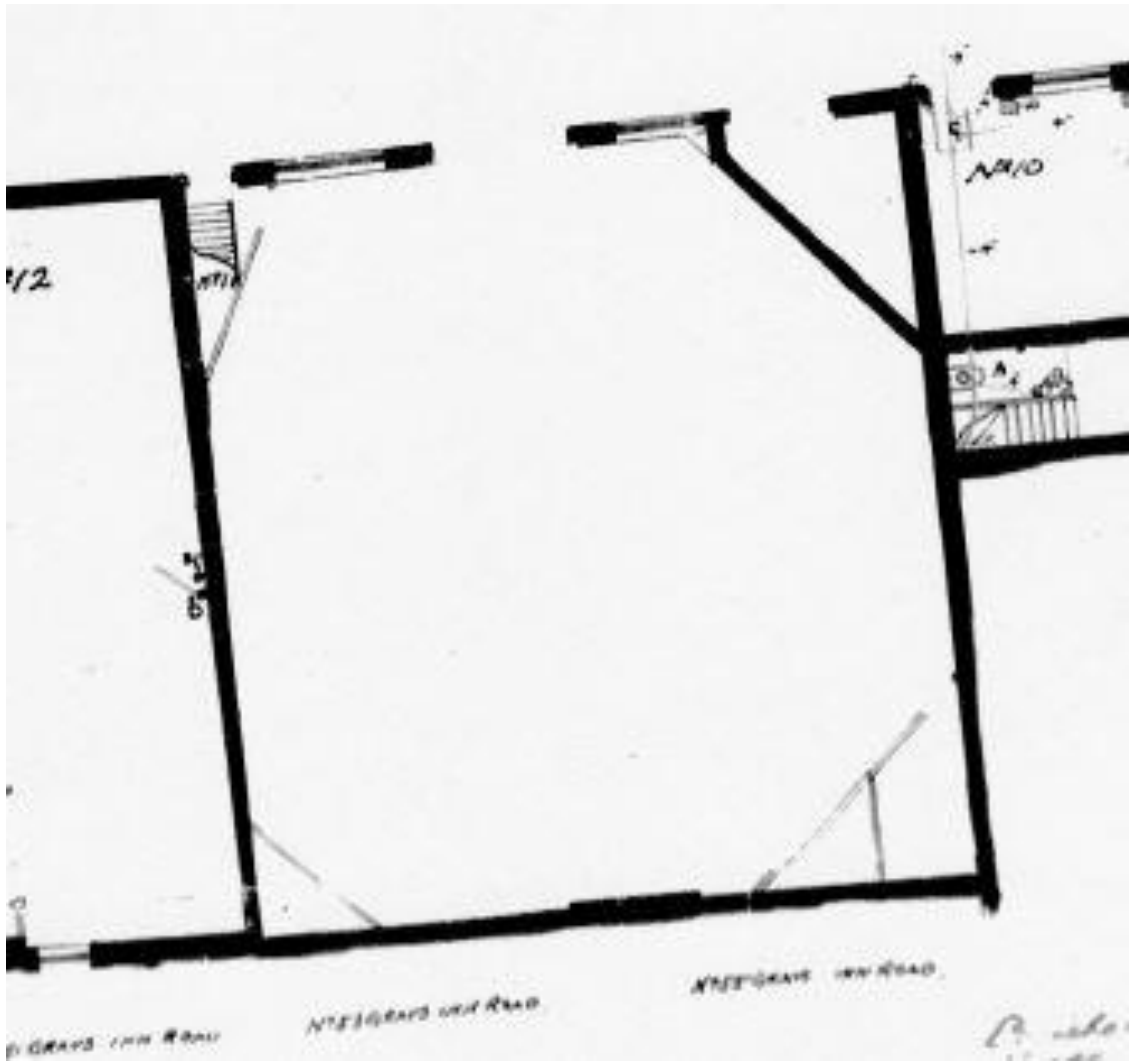


Fig.11 A detail of the present No.21 from a 1901 drainage plan attached to a drainage application of 1936 (Camden Archives)

During the early twentieth century, many mews buildings were used as storage units or motor garages as the relatively open plan form and large and multiple means of access allowed for easy conversion to accommodate these alternate uses. Numbers 20 – 21 were converted to motor garage use in the mid-twentieth century and the building continues in this capacity to date.

Evidence of documented changes to the building is limited to a 1965 drainage application for the insertion of a W.C. at the front left hand corner of the garage. The accompanying drainage plan (fig.12) shows two sets of double garage doors and an office to the right. This layout with the exception of the W.C. remains today.

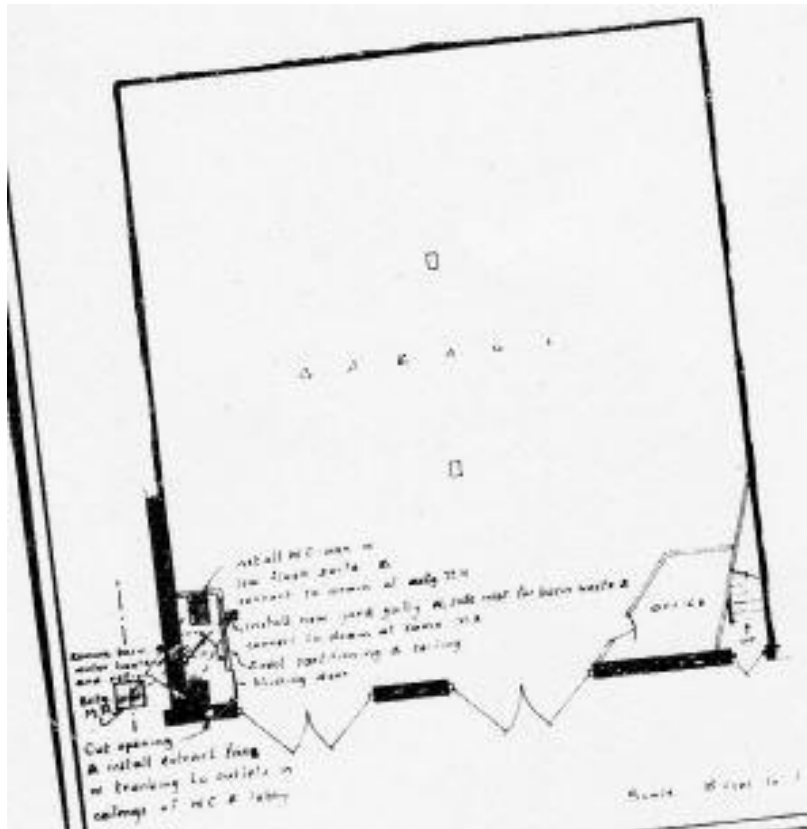


Fig.12 Drainage plan attached to a drainage application of 1965
(Camden Archives, ref: Drainage Application for 20 - 21 King's Mews, January 1965, plate 2)

The change of use to a motor garage has had a limited negative impact on the exterior of the building with the important historic openings retained. Although there is no documentary evidence relating to the original internal layout of the ground floor, it is likely that up until at least 1901, it retained much of the stables layout. The conversion to a motor garage probably resulted in the complete stripping out of what remained of the original interior.

3.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Numbers 20-21 King's Mews were built in the early to mid-nineteenth century and originally consisted of two mews buildings probably with stables and a coach house on the ground floor, and a hayloft and residential accommodation on the first floor. The buildings were combined at some time between 1872 and 1894 and continued in use as a mews building from that time until c.1901. The building was converted to motor garage use in the mid-twentieth century and continues to operate as a garage.

3.1 Exterior

As the building is "land-locked" only the front elevation has been observed and described. The building has a simple utilitarian façade dominated by large garage doors, is two storeys high and fronts directly onto the mews. It is constructed of brick and the front elevation is painted white with a green painted band at the bottom of the building's façade. The brickwork is laid in English bond with later stock brick alterations laid in stretcher bond (fig.13). The ground floor has two large timber and part glazed double garage doors giving direct access into the garage. These are likely to be in the place of the original openings and where the coach house and stable doors once stood. Three of the doors are of a plank and batten style with the fourth door on the far right incorporating a small door. The planks are regular and appear to be machine sawn and are probably of twentieth century date. The doors appear to have Collinge's strap hinges (fig.16) which were used on the majority of mid to late-nineteenth century stable and coach house doors and it is likely that these have been re-used.

Above the garage doors is a steel beam running along the centre of the façade. Originally, timber bressumer beams would have run above the coach house and stable doors. A surviving timber bressumer can be seen on the façade of number 22 adjoining. A photograph dating from 1980 (fig.15) shows that there was a large half height single-pane window to the right of the garage doors. This has subsequently been bricked up. There is also a timber entrance door which dates to after 1980 to the far right of the garage doors giving direct access to the staircase to the first floor.

The first floor has two timber casement windows above which there is also a single steel beam running along the centre of the facade. The windows date from after 1980 as the photograph (fig.15) shows larger window apertures and now evidenced by the large sills and the slightly recessed stretcher bond brickwork. The original windows would probably have been timber sashes. The first floor retains the original winch-door opening which gave direct access to the hayloft.

The building has a modern double hipped roof now covered with corrugated sheets, possibly containing asbestos and lead flashing (figs.18-20) behind a plain parapet. The hipped roof to the left has two skylights. The building does not retain any of the architectural details associated with its original use. However, it does retain a single nineteenth century cast iron hopper head located above the right downpipe (fig.17).



Fig.13 Front elevation to King's Mews



Fig.14 Detail of brickwork



Fig.15 A photograph of the building in 1980
(Camden Archives, ref: 89.3 KM, 032325, Neg.755. P.D. Barkshire)



Fig.16 One of the double doors with Collinge hinges



Fig.17 Detail of cast-iron hopper head



Fig.18 Detail of roof



Fig.19 Detail of roof interior (1)

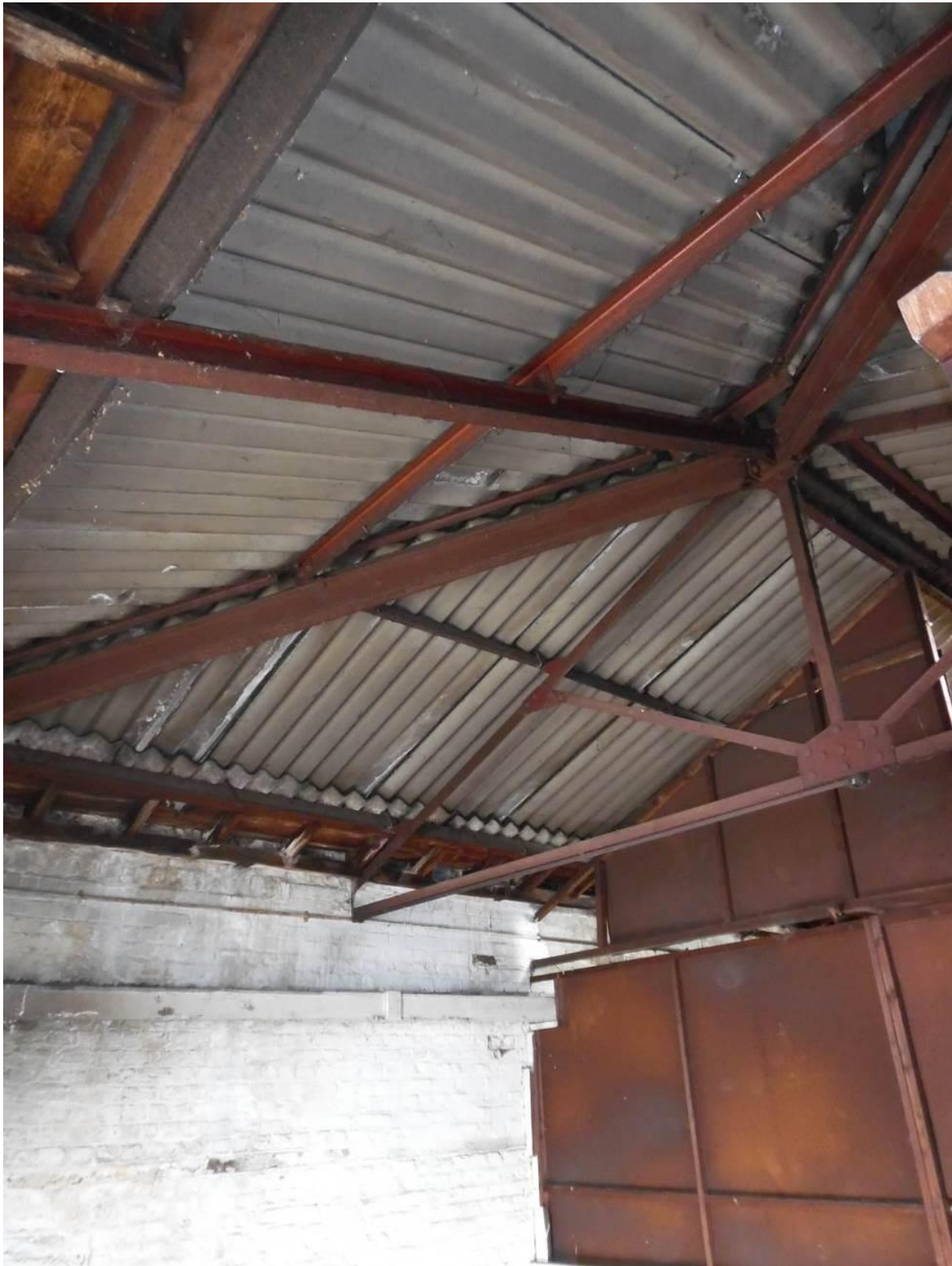


Fig.20 Detail of roof interior (2)

3.2 Interior

When in use as a Mews building, the interior had a simple plan form characterised by a ground floor of which half accommodated the coach house and half the stalls. The first floor was divided between a hayloft with its own access through the winch-doors and a room for the coachman. The original demarcation of space would have mainly been non-structural with the ground floor layout determined by stabling fixtures and fittings. The plan form has been altered to accommodate the change of use for motor garage purposes and the ground floor now consists of a large open plan space. The first floor has been partitioned at the front of the building and the rear of floor is open plan and runs the width of the building

Ground floor

The ground floor is formed of a large open plan space interspersed in the centre by two posts, one timber post to the front of the garage and one modern metal post to the rear (figs.21-22). The front timber post also has a spine beam and braces and is probably of nineteenth century date. The metal post has a metal beam above (fig.24). The ceiling is of modern plasterboard and is coming away in parts. The walls are painted brick and follow the colour scheme of the exterior. The party walls appear to be original to the early to mid-nineteenth century building (fig.25) although the paint covering impedes proper and close assessment of the brickwork. The floor is of modern concrete.

A small office is located in the front right section (fig.23) of the garage. An office has been accommodated in this space since at least 1965 (fig.12). There is also an internal doorway in this section that leads to a timber straight flight staircase (figs.26-27) to the first floor. The treads and risers are regular and uniform and appear to be of twentieth century date. At the front left section the ceiling opens up to full height in order to accommodate the car lift.

The ground floor has been heavily altered to accommodate motor garage use in the mid twentieth century and extant original fabric appears to be limited to the brick party walls, and the timber spine beam, post and braces.



Fig.21 Ground floor interior looking north east



Fig.22 Ground floor interior looking south east

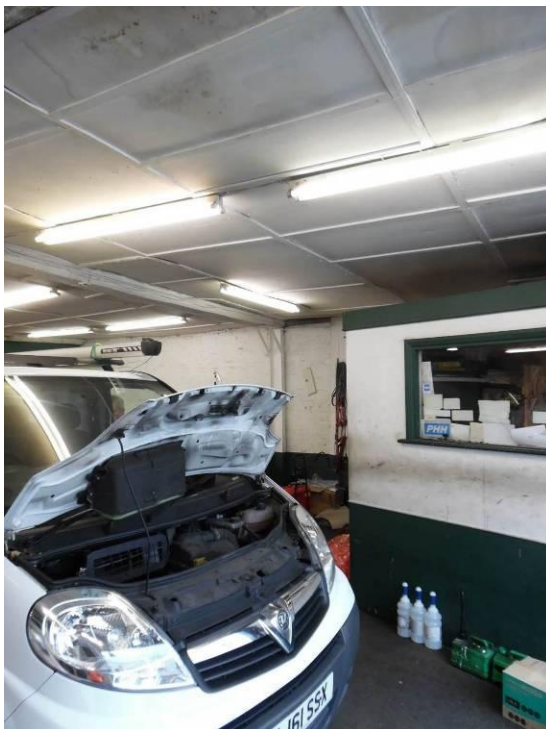


Fig.23 Ground floor interior looking south east showing the corner office



Fig.24 Ground floor interior looking south west

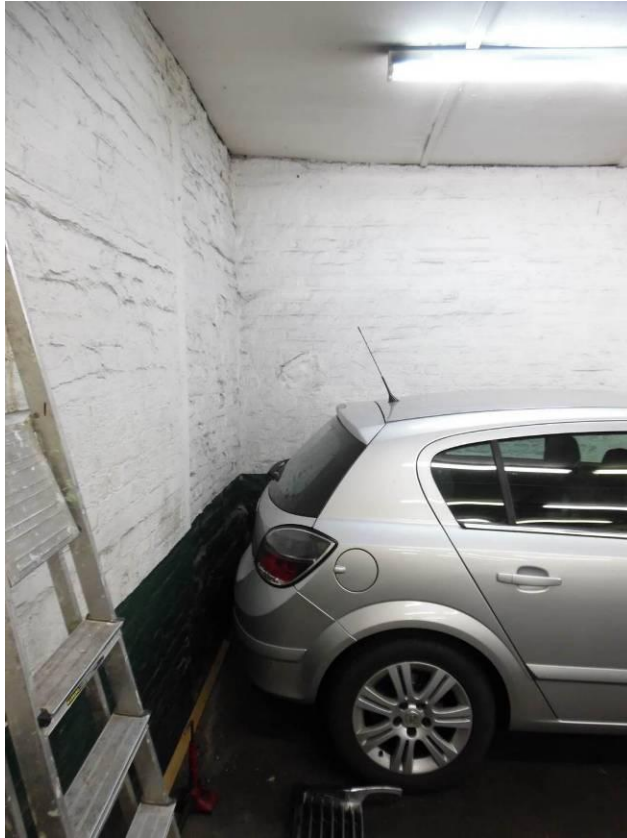


Fig.25 Ground floor, detail of east and west party walls

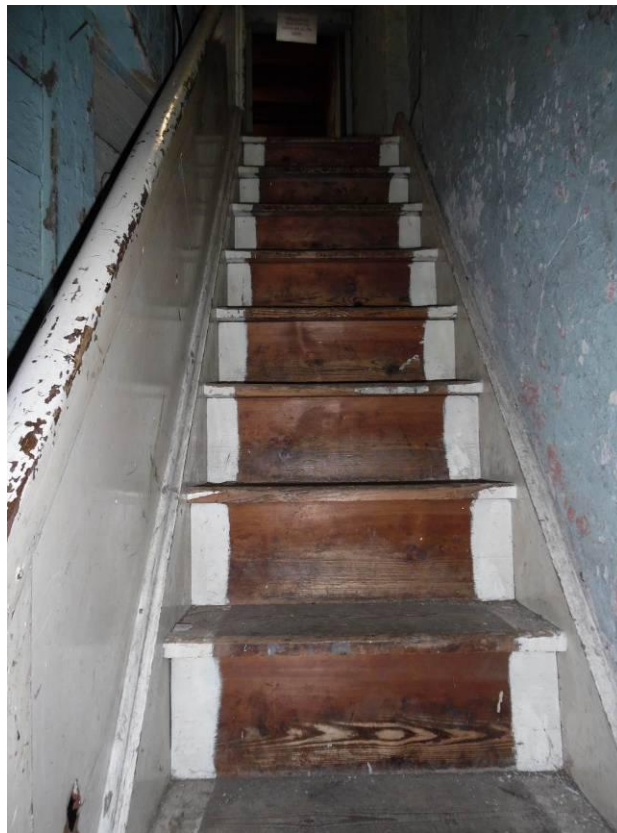


Fig.26 Straight flight timber staircase leading to the first floor

First Floor

The original first floor plan would have consisted of two spaces, one given over to the hayloft at the front and the other accommodating the Mews staff which dealt with the horses. The hayloft was accessed directly from the Mews below through the winch-doors (fig.31).

Two doorways lead off the staircase landing. Both doors are modern with the door to the left at the top of the stairs leading to the front partitioned section of the building and the door directly in front of the stairs leading to the open plan rear section (fig.32). The front section has a timber bead and butt partition to the staircase. The ceiling is of timber planks. The walls are of painted brick and there is a slightly recessed blocked opening in the party wall to number 22 at the top of the stairs (fig.31). The enlarged windows inserted when the building was converted to a garage have been partly in-filled with Fletton bricks (figs. 29 and 31)

The front left section of the building contains three partitioned spaces. The first space is separated from the right side of the floor by partition boards with a plasterboard false ceiling (figs.29-30). The partitioned section has a felt floor covering. It is possible to clearly see where the post-1980 timber casement window has been inserted (fig.29) in this front area. The new brickwork has not been painted white as with the original brickwork. This section of the floor does not appear to be in use and is in a poor state of repair.

The second central space is delineated by partition boards to the left and the right (figs.30 & 32) and it has exposed floorboards. As with the third far right section which is full height from the ground it is open to the roof (figs. 31-32). All of the beams and roof structure are modern.

The timber winch-door lintel and jambs are exposed and these appear to be original to the building. The doors are faced with modern plywood boards (fig.31).

The central partitioned area also appears unused and is in a poor state of repair.

The rear open plan section runs the width of the building. It has exposed red brickwork (fig.34) in parts. The ceiling of boards and timber beams appears to be relatively new (fig.33-36). As with the front section, the exposed supporting beams and posts are modern and the floor is of exposed timber floorboards. It also appears to contain a trapdoor (fig.33). The space is used for storage and is in a relatively good state of repair.

The first floor does not appear to contain any significant historical features.



Fig.27 First floor landing looking down the staircase



Fig.28 First floor landing looking east



Fig.29 First floor partitioned space at the front of the building looking south east



Fig.30 First floor partitioned space at the front of the building looking north-west



Fig.31 First floor part partitioned space at the front of the building looking west



Fig.32 First floor part partitioned space at the front of the building looking north east



Fig.33 First floor rear open plan space looking north east



Fig.34 First floor rear open plan looking east



Fig.35 First floor rear open plan space looking north



Fig.36 First floor rear open plan space, platform to roof void

4.0 SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

The assessment of the significance of historic buildings and their settings is not an exact science. The assessment of the significance of buildings is based on detailed knowledge of the building type, a comparison with what exists elsewhere, and the extent to which it may be distinctive or have special meaning for different groups of people.

In 2008 Historic England (formerly English Heritage) published *Conservation Principles*, which identified four principal heritage values which might be taken into account when assessing significance of heritage assets, whether statutorily listed or not. These values are *Evidential*, deriving from the potential of a place to yield (archaeological) evidence about past human activity; *Historical*, deriving from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present; *Aesthetic*, deriving from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place; *Communal*, deriving from the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience and memory.

In 2012 the Department of Communities and Local Government issued the National Policy Planning Framework which suggests that for planning purposes, the significance of historic buildings should be assessed under the headings of *archaeological*, *architectural*, *artistic or historic* (which in this case are essentially the same as the Historic England values) and it points out that significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence but also from its setting.

Significance is essentially a hierarchical concept, using descending levels of value. These follow guidelines established by James Semple Kerr, which have been adopted by the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage and others. The levels of significance are:

- *Exceptional* - important at national to international levels
- *Considerable* - important at regional level or sometimes higher
- *Some* - usually of local value only but possibly of regional significance for group or other value
- *Little* - of limited heritage or other value
- *Neutral* - features which neither enhance nor detract from the value of the site
- *Negative/intrusive* - features which detract from the value of the site

Evidential value

Evidential value is essentially an archaeological measure and in this case below-ground archaeology is most likely to relate to evidence of the construction of the nineteenth century stable building. A 2006 Desk Based Archaeological Assessment of the surrounding properties, specifically, numbers 22 – 30 King's Mews undertaken by the Museum of London Archaeology Service ("MOLAS") concluded that there was high potential for archaeological evidence from the sixteenth century onwards. Given the proximity, it is possible that there is also medium to high potential for post-sixteenth century archaeological evidence at numbers 20 -21 King's Mews.

As far as the standing structure is concerned, the original Mews building had a simple plan-form, with the main ground floor stable area demarcated by non-structural fixtures and fittings. None of the original historic fixtures and fittings has survived. The utilitarian façade still has some features associated with mews buildings of the nineteenth century, in particular the winch-door opening at first floor level and these contribute to an understanding of what this type of building may have looked like originally. However, the façade like the interior has undergone significant alteration, with the loss of most of the original openings and both the large openings on the ground floor are modern (20th century), with modern doors. It is likely that some alteration may have occurred when the buildings were joined in the late nineteenth century with more extensive alteration taking place in the late twentieth century when large new windows were inserted on the ground and first floors. *The building has some evidential value.*

Historical value

Map evidence suggests that there have been buildings of some form on part of King's Mews since c.1720. These buildings appear to have been located at the southern end of the Mews which in recent years has undergone significant change. The northern end of the mews was first built up at some time between 1755 and 1799. The buildings were originally probably private stables but the Post Office Directory entries and census records dating from the late 1820s through to 1901 evidence show an increasing number of livery stables. Numbers 20 and 21 were used as livery stables from the 1870s till the end of the century.

Many mews buildings in the surrounding area were demolished in the later nineteenth and twentieth century and the building's survival contributes to its historical value though this has been severely compromised by alteration. Of the existing fabric, the front wall and the brick party walls appear to be of mid-nineteenth century date. The front wall may have been partly or completely rebuilt when the two original buildings were combined at some time between 1872 and 1894. The building has also undergone extensive alteration in the twentieth century most noticeably in the modern openings to the front and the modern roof and structural supports throughout the building. All that appears to remain of the mews building is the envelope and there are no extant historical fixtures and fittings. *The building has some historical value, though the value is very much diminished by the poor survival of the original fabric.*

Aesthetic value

The building has a simple utilitarian façade which evidences the historical function; *it has little or no aesthetic value.*

Communal value

The building has always been private property and has *no communal value.*

The Setting

Since 2011 Nos. 20-22 Kings Mews have been within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The appraisal for the Bloomsbury Conservation area dated March 2011 lists the buildings as making a positive contribution to the character of the area. Para 5.190 of the Appraisal document states that *'Mews building which retain their historic interest include Nos 20-22*

Kings Mews’. It is clear that this judgement is based on the general appearance of the buildings, which do indeed retain the outlines of traditional two-storey mews premises, although a close inspection of the building makes clear that very little survives of the original fabric.

5.0 THE PROPOSED WORKS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE BUILT HERITAGE

The proposed works are set out in the pre-application statement prepared by Marek Wojciechowski Architects. In sum, they comprise the total demolition of the existing garage building on the site and its replacement with a new building.

As has been demonstrated, the existing building on the site has some modest historic interest as one of the last surviving buildings in the mews to have a direct association with horses, and to have retained something of its nineteenth century appearance, but otherwise the building is of little significance. It is within a conservation area but is not included in either the statutory list of historic buildings or the local list. The front elevation to the mews was very extensively altered and rebuilt in the mid-twentieth century to adapt it for use as a motor garage, with large new openings on the ground floor, and much of the actual fabric also dates from that period. As a result of the alterations, the elevation has lost its original appearance and mews character. The roof (both the metal roof structure and the roof covering) is wholly modern and of no interest. The original interior has been completely lost.

The new building will be a modern design of high quality, and of appropriate scale. The main elevation will be partly faced with brick and will be two storeys high, like the other buildings in the mews. An additional upper storey will be set back from the main elevation, again like many of the other modern buildings which make up the majority of the present mews frontage and determine the character of the street. The new building will, in its scale, appearance and materials, preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area

Conclusion

Nos 20 and 22 Kings Mews are identified in the 2011 Appraisal of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area as mews buildings of historic interest which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, but it is appropriate that the building’s contribution to the Conservation Area should be considered in the context of all of the values which contribute to its significance. The fabric has some historic value because its existence represents a historical touch point with the original use of the Mews, and the facade is at least the ghost of the former mews building, but in most respects the value and significance of the structure has been almost completely eroded by alteration. One or two original (probably mid-nineteenth century) features survive but they are not of sufficient historic value or significance to justify the retention of the building on those grounds alone. Demolition could be adequately mitigated by recording before demolition.

6.0 SOURCES

General

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