

## Heritage Statement

### **63 Neal Street, Covent Garden London Borough of Camden**



**July 2016**

**63 Neal Street,  
London Borough of Camden**

**Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment**

**prepared for**

**Brooks Murray Architects**

**by**

**The Architectural History Practice Ltd**

**July 2016**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

This Heritage Statement for 63 Neal Street in the London Borough of Camden was commissioned in July 2016 by Brooks Murray Architects on behalf of clients to inform an application for planning permission. The report was prepared by Neil Burton BA FSA IHBC, a director of The Architectural History Practice Ltd.

63 Neal Street (Grid Reference TQ 300812) is a modest terrace house with a mid-nineteenth century front. The building is not listed but it stands within the Seven Dials Conservation Area, and was identified in the 1998 Conservation Area Statement as making a positive contribution to the character of the area. In addition, the building adjoins number 61 Neal Street, which is listed grade II.

## **2.0 Background History**

Neal Street was known until 1877 as King Street. The name was changed in 1877. The street was first laid out in the early 1690s as part of Thomas Neale's development of a rectangular area of mostly open ground known as St Giles's Marsh or Marshland. A plan of the proposed development dated 1691 (fig.1) shows more or less the present street layout of the area now known as Seven Dials, with a central *rond point* and streets radiating off it. King Street ran along the north eastern boundary of the site. It was originally intended that there should be a church on the east side of King Street closing the view eastwards along what is now Queen Street, but this was never built. The streets were built-up gradually after 1693, when Thomas Neale was granted a lease of the ground, and most of the frontages were fully built up by the 1720s.

The houses in the Seven Dials area were generally fairly modest in scale and from the first some of them were occupied by tradesmen as well as by private residents. Already by the mid-eighteenth century, parts of the area had acquired a dubious reputation as slums frequented by criminals. Some clearance and rebuilding began in the 1840s and continued until the 1880s. In this rebuilding, the original residential character of the area was largely replaced by commercial and industrial building, although a surprising number of eighteenth century houses still survive.

The first edition of the Ordnance Survey published in 1874 (fig.3) shows that at that date the present number 61 Neal Street was a public house. The use had ceased by the time of the second edition published in 1895 (fig.4).

The fortunes of the whole of the Seven Dials area began to revive after the departure of the Covent Garden market in 1974 and the abandoning of a plan for wholesale redevelopment of the area. Since that time there has been a great deal of refurbishment of older properties for modern uses.

### 3.0 Description

Number 63 Neal Street is a modest terrace house, two windows wide and three main storeys high with an additional garret storey in the roof. The front wall is of a common late-Georgian type of which thousands were erected in the decades after 1800, built of yellow London Stock brick laid in Flemish bond, with flat gauged brick arches to the windows. On the ground floor is a modern shopfront. The two floors above each have two rectangular window openings with large-paned timber sashes. The building shares two chimneystacks on the party wall with its neighbour Number 61. The stacks are substantial with oversailing brick courses at the head, and appear to date from the later nineteenth century.

The planform is a variant of the traditional London terrace house plan with two main rooms on each floor divided by slight partitions, with a dog-leg newel stair in the rear compartment. The rear space on each floor has a corner chimneystack.

The front of number 61 Neal Street is now faced with render and is very different in appearance from number 63, but it is possible that the two buildings were originally built as a pair, perhaps in the early eighteenth century. The planform, especially the corner chimneystack in the rear room of number 63, suggests an early origin, and the shared chimneystacks suggest a common building date. Both buildings have obviously suffered much reconstruction and alteration. Number 63 must have been rebuilt, or at least completely re-fronted, in the mid-nineteenth century and it appears that both properties have modern (that is to say twentieth century) roof structures; in the case of number 63 the roof is flat, with a tiled sloping front to Neal Street. Doubtless the upper parts of the chimneystacks were rebuilt when the roofs were altered.

### 4.0 Assessment of Significance

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.

Statutory designations provide some guide to the importance of historic buildings. 63 Neal Street is not listed, but it is identified in the 1998 Conservation Area Statement for Seven Dials as making a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. It adjoins and shares a chimneystack with number 61 Neal Street, which is listed Grade II.

In 2008 English Heritage (now Historic England) published *Conservation Principles*, which identified four principal heritage values which might be taken into account when assessing significance and which can be used to amplify the assessments in the statutory lists. These values are *Evidential*, deriving from the potential of a place to yield 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 Planning Policy 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 points out that significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence but also from its setting.

Significance is a hierarchical concept, using descending levels of value. The levels adopted by Historic England, the Heritage Lottery Fund, and others are as follows:

- *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

63 Neal Street has a street front which appears to date from the 1840s but the building may contain earlier fabric behind the facade and probably has *some evidential value*.

#### Historical value

The building is a common type of originally low status, brick-fronted terrace house typical of the central London area. All the visible fabric is of the mid-nineteenth century or later. The building has no known associations with persons of historic interest. It is of *some historical value*, chiefly for the fabric

#### Aesthetic value

The building is a very modest brick structure which has *little aesthetic value*.

#### Communal value

63 Neal Street is a private property. Some parts of the interior have been accessible to the public by virtue of a commercial use but access is restricted. The building is a familiar part of the local streetscape but otherwise has *little communal value*.

#### The setting

The setting of the building is Neal Street, a thoroughfare whose appearance has changed considerably over time. Although the original arrangement of the street, with small plots of standard width on both sides, can still be read, there has been a great deal of rebuilding, re-fronting and alteration. There is now no uniformity in the street elevations, but instead a pleasing variety which is all on a relatively modest scale, with no unduly tall buildings

#### Conclusion

63 Neal Street makes a positive contribution to the Seven Dials Conservation Area because of the mid-nineteenth century character of its street front and is of some evidential and historic value but of little aesthetic or communal value.

## **5.0 Impact Assessment in the context of the NPPF**

The proposed works are fully set out in the drawings and statements prepared by Brooks Murray Architects. In sum, they comprise the addition of an extra storey to the building and the consequent raising of the chimneystacks on the party wall with 61 Neal Street.

The building will be raised one storey in height, to four storeys plus a garret storey with dormers in the roof. The new upper part of the front will be in brick to match the existing brickwork in colour and bond and will have two rectangular window openings with flat gauged brick arches aligned with the openings below.

The party wall with number 65 will be raised to finish above the new roofline and the two chimneystacks on the party wall with number 61 will also be raised and finished with new brick cappings of the same pattern as those now existing. The new roof will be similar in profile to the existing roof, but will have two dormers instead of a single large central dormer.

The addition of an extra storey, properly detailed, will not detract significantly from the character of the building. Four-storey two-bay street fronts were very common in late Georgian London. A quick flick through *Tallis's London Street Views* published in 1838 shows many examples of such fronts in Holborn and the area around Seven Dials.

The impact on the character and special interest of the adjoining listed building, 61 Neal Street will be very limited. The shared chimneystack will be enlarged, but the upper part of the stack is clearly relatively modern. No other alterations are proposed to the building and there will be no loss of historic fabric. Raising the height of number 63 will clearly have an impact on the immediate setting of the listed building, but the rebuilding or re-fronting of number 63 has already given the two buildings a very different character. The street as a whole is typified by fronts of varied heights, dates and styles and the proposed alterations to number 63 will merely add to the variety and will preserve the character of this part of the Conservation Area.

The National Planning Policy Framework advises local planning authorities on decision-making, with Section 12 relevant to the historic environment. Local authorities are advised to take account of 'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation', and the 'desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness' (section 131). A key principle enshrined in the NPPF is the conservation of heritage assets and the presumption against substantial harm to an asset's significance (section 132). Significance must be taken into account in assessing the impact of a proposal, to avoid or minimise conflict between conservation and any aspect of the proposal (section 129).

This work will not result in 'substantial harm' to the heritage asset, so the tests in section 133 of the NPPF do not apply. Section 132 applies instead, as the harm is 'less than substantial'. The proposal causes very limited harm. The existing fabric will be retained, with the exception of the roof which is clearly a twentieth century feature and of no historic value. The proposal will help to secure the a viable use for the building in order to preserve it for future generations and this benefit outweighs the limited harm (section 132).

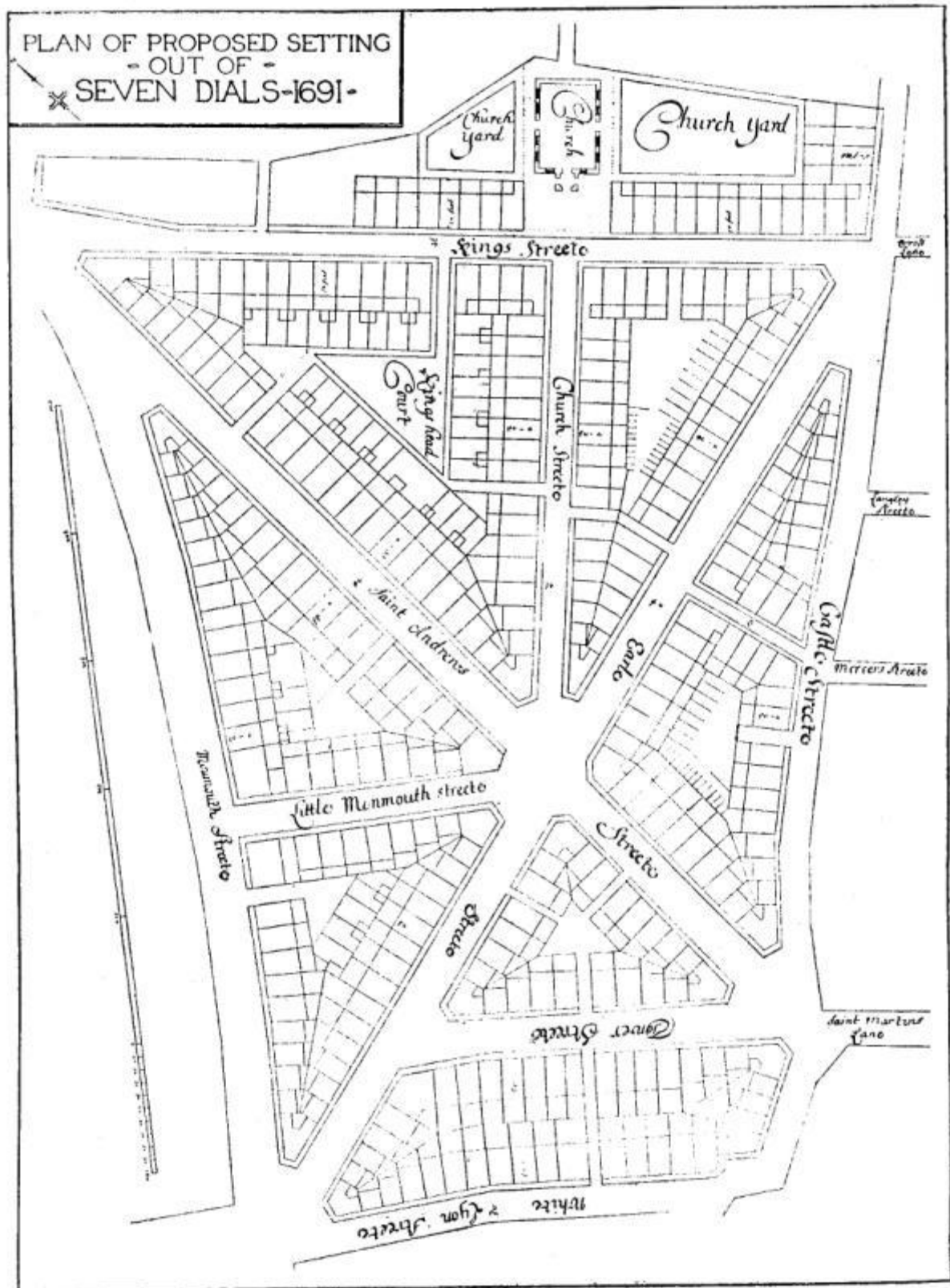
## **6.0 Sources**

Survey of London, Vol. 5, St Giles in the Fields, part 2 (1914) pp111-., 2008, p 1027.

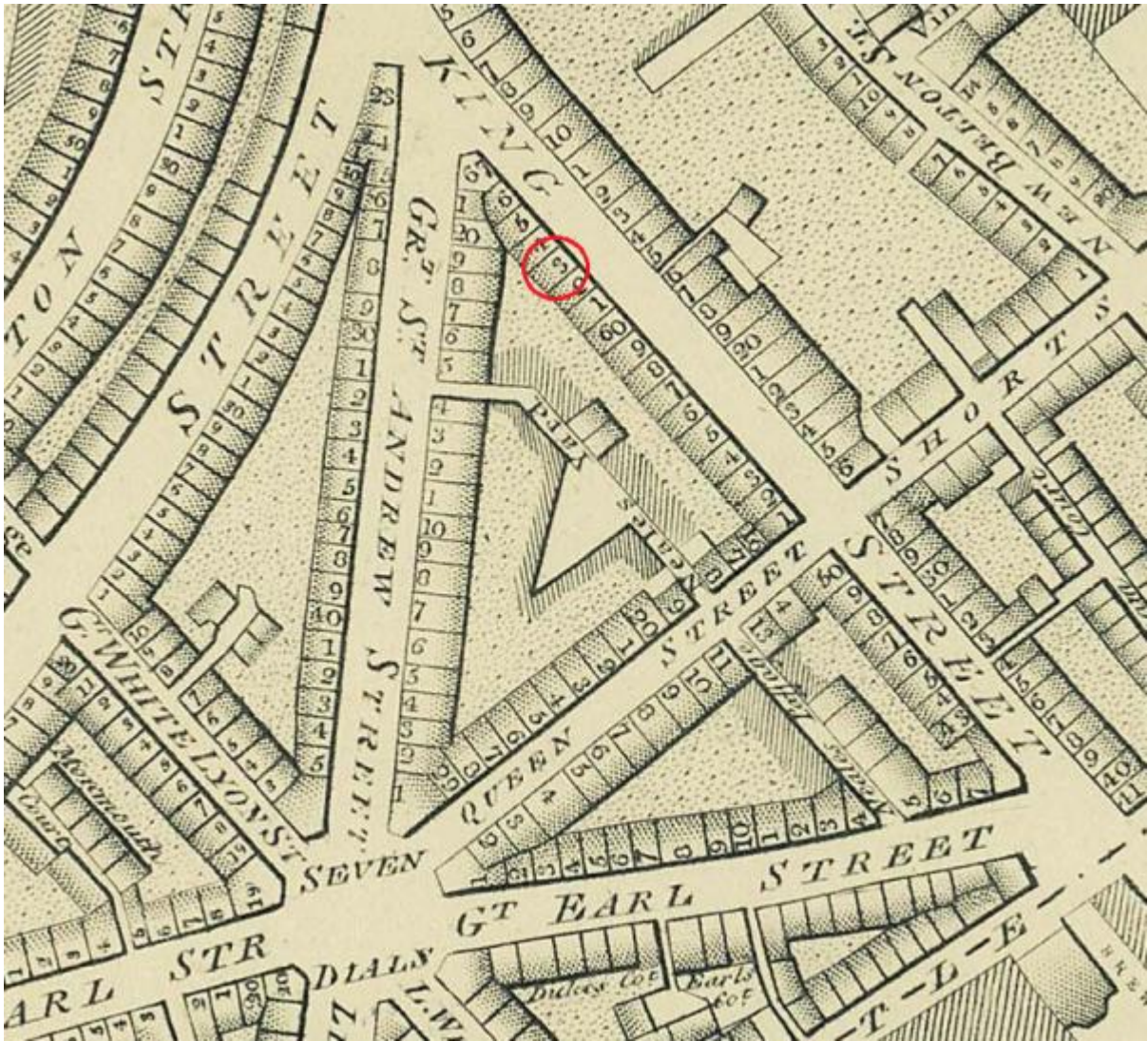
Heap, David A, *Victorian Seven Dials*, Camden History society Occasional papers No.3

Cherry & Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 4: North*, 1998.





**Fig.1 Thomas Neale's 1691 plan for laying out St Giles's Marsh**



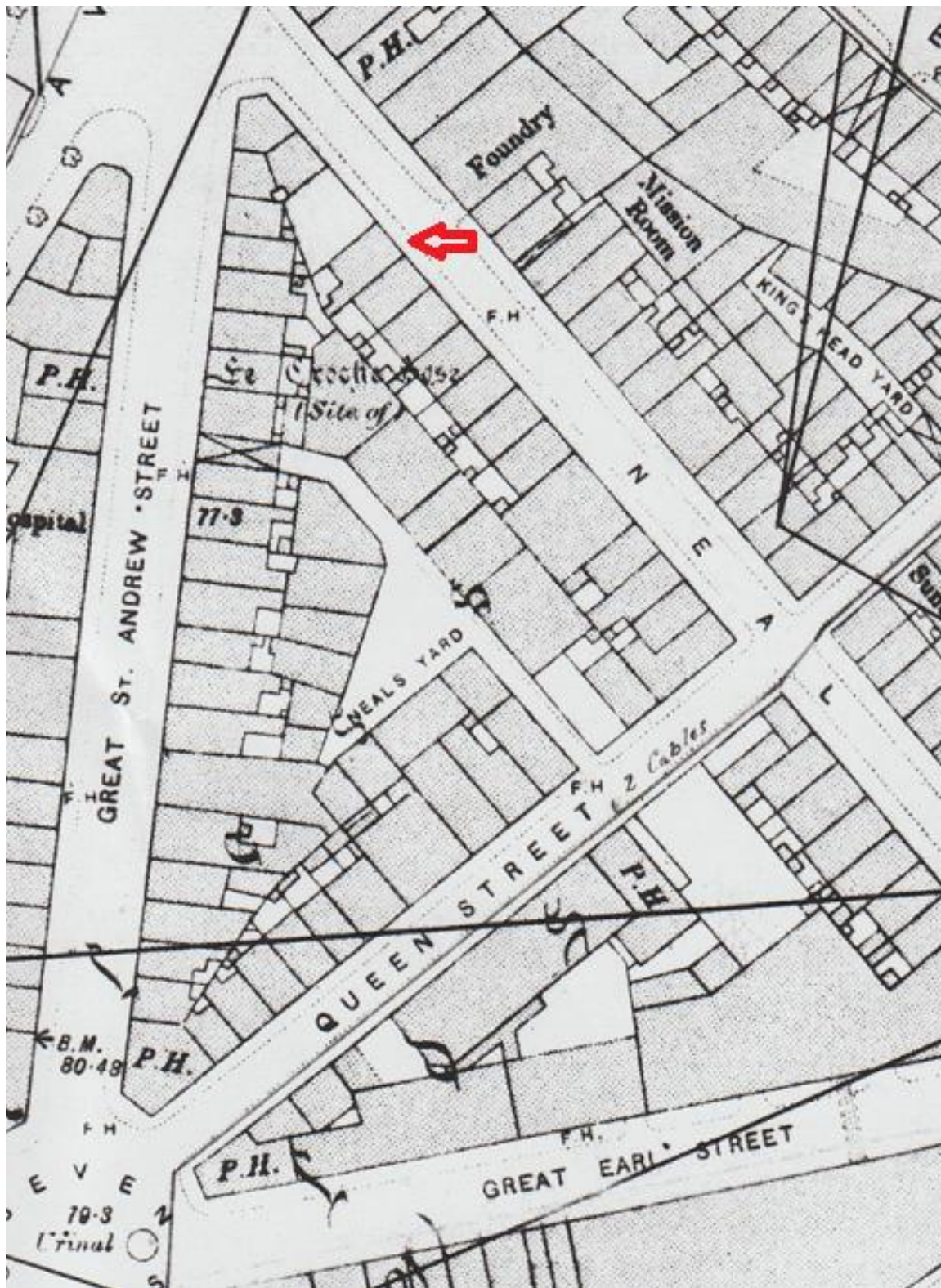
**Fig.2 A detail from Richard Horwood's 1799 map of London**



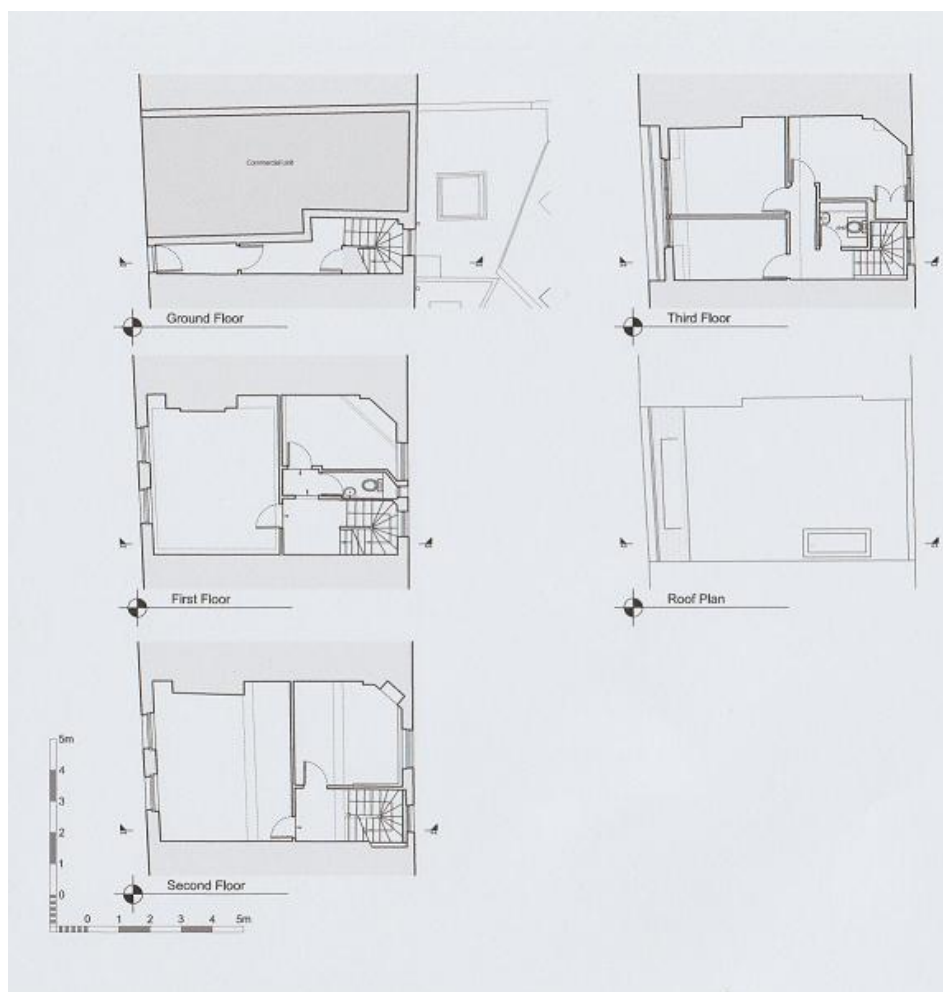


**Fig.3 A detail from the Ordnance Survey of 1874 (sheet VII.63)**





**Fig.4 A detail from the Ordnance Survey of 1895 (sheet VII.63)**



**Fig.5 Plans of all floors as existing (Brooks Murray Architects)**



**Fig.6 A view along the west side of Neal Street with numbers 63 and 61 in the centre (AHP)**

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