

Heritage Statement

6 John Street London Borough of Camden



April 2017

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1.0 Introduction

This Heritage Statement for 6 John Street was commissioned in March 2017 by M W Architects on behalf of clients. The report was prepared by Neil Burton BA FSA IHBC, a director of The Architectural History Practice Ltd. The report was prepared with the benefit of a previous Heritage Appraisal document produced in October 2014 by Indigo Planning Ltd.

6 John Street in the London Borough of Camden (Grid Reference TQ 3088 8200) was built in the 1750s as the central house in a short terrace. The original house was entirely demolished in 1959 and replaced by a new office building with a neo-Georgian facade. The whole terrace was listed Grade II in 1951 and the listing of number 6 was maintained after rebuilding. John Street lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

2.0 Background History

John Street and Doughty Street, its northern continuation, were both originally laid out on the Doughty estate. The southern part of John Street, adjoining what is now Theobalds Road but which was previously known as the King's Road, was laid out and built up with houses as far north as Little James Street in the 1750s by the carpenter John Blagrove, who apparently gave his name to the street. Horwood's 1799 map of London (fig.1) shows the land north of Little James Street as open ground. In fact much of the ground had already been let on building leases by Henry Doughty and from about 1807 onwards both Doughty Street and the northern part of John Street were built-up with substantial terraced houses. The 1819 edition of Horwood's map appears shows the street almost fully built up.

It appears from Horwood's map as if the present number 6 and the house opposite, which were the central houses in these two short terraces were intended to be slightly grander than their neighbours. Both were slightly set forward and number 6 had a full-width pediment. The house was slightly damaged during the Second World War. In 1959 consent was given for the house to be completely rebuilt as modern offices. Nothing of the original building was retained

The new building, designed by Ian Frazer and Associates of Bedford Street, Strand was a concrete-framed structure, with a red-brick neo-Georgian front of similar character to the original and a tiled mansard roof with dormer windows. The submitted plans dated 1958 are annotated to the effect that the Greater London Council had insisted on 'a dummy timber roof'. These plans (fig.2) show that the original Georgian internal arrangement, with a stair on the northern party wall, was broadly retained, but the basement and ground floor extended the full depth of the plot, and the stair was housed in a square well which also contained a lift.

According to the entry in the statutory list, the building was 'restored' in 1989. In 2014, planning permission was given for the conversion of the whole building to residential apartments. Work on site commenced and were well-advanced when the contractor went into liquidation in 2016.

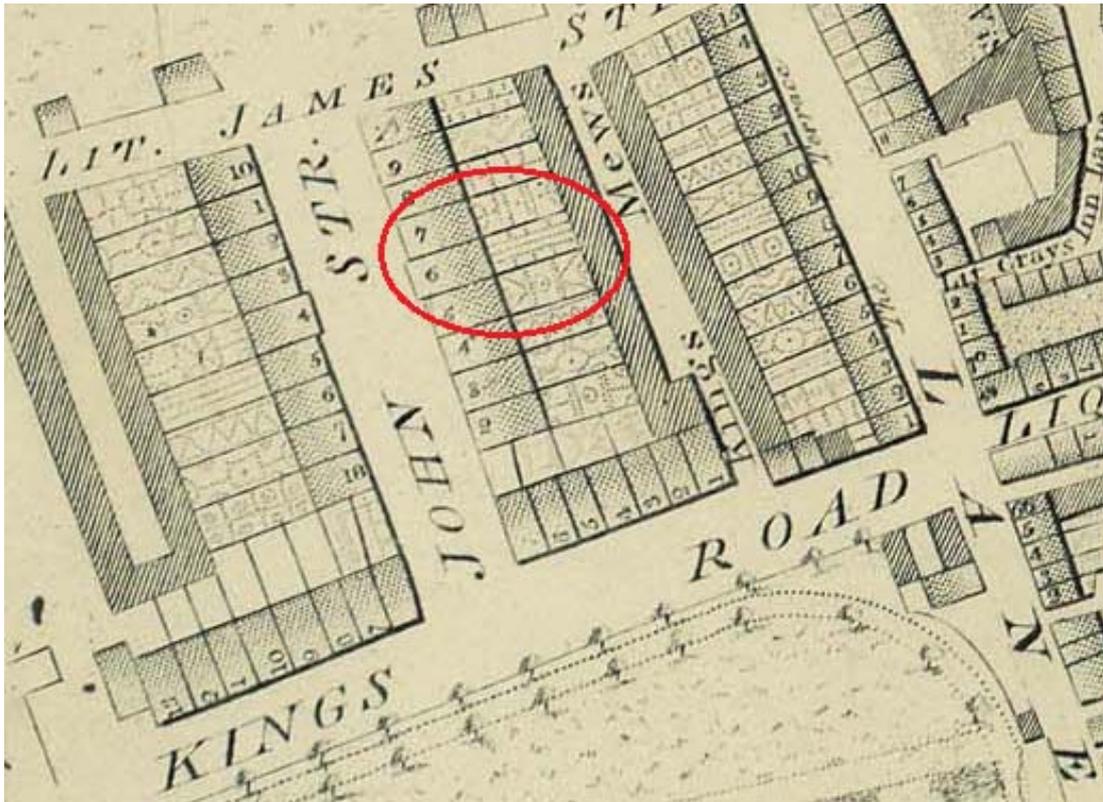


Fig.1 A detail from Horwood's 1799 map of London

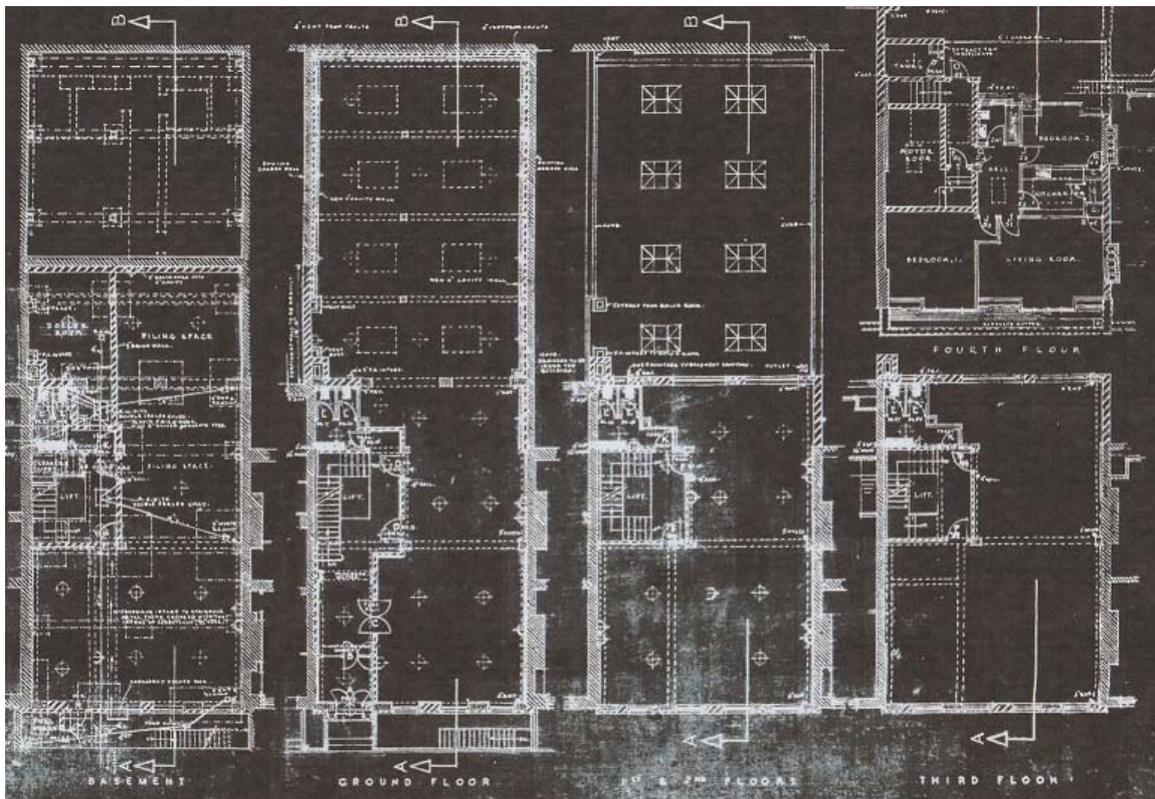


Fig.2 The basement plan of the new building as proposed in 1958
(Camden archives, drainage plans)

3.0 Brief Description & Analysis

Exterior

Number 6 John Street was built in 1959/60 as modern offices. The building has a concrete frame. Towards John Street the frame has a neo-Georgian façade which is four windows wide and four storeys high above a basement, with a front area. The façade is of brown brick laid in Flemish bond with red brick flat arches to the window openings. The front basement area is enclosed by modern iron railings (which may incorporate elements of the original railings, like the urn finials – fig.4). There are steps up to the front door which has a modern Greek Doric door surround in what appears to be cast stone. All the window openings are rectangular with small-paned timber sash windows. There is a plain stone string course above the ground floor windows and moulded stone cornices above both the second floor and the attic windows. The brick parapet has a plain stone coping. Behind the parapet rises a mansard roof with two large dormers.

The rear elevation, which is on a different line from the 1960 rear elevation, is wholly modern (post 2015) and all built of yellow brick.

Interior

At basement level, the three original (eighteenth century) vaults under the street survive, although the central vault has been filled with concrete. In the main building, the interior has been completely stripped out, in accordance with the 2014 consent. The concrete frame and probably some of the original concrete floors remain but all the existing internal partitions were removed; some new partitions have been installed (fig.5), but the work was left unfinished. The stair has been relocated from the north party wall to the centre of the main building (fig.6).



Fig.3 The main street front

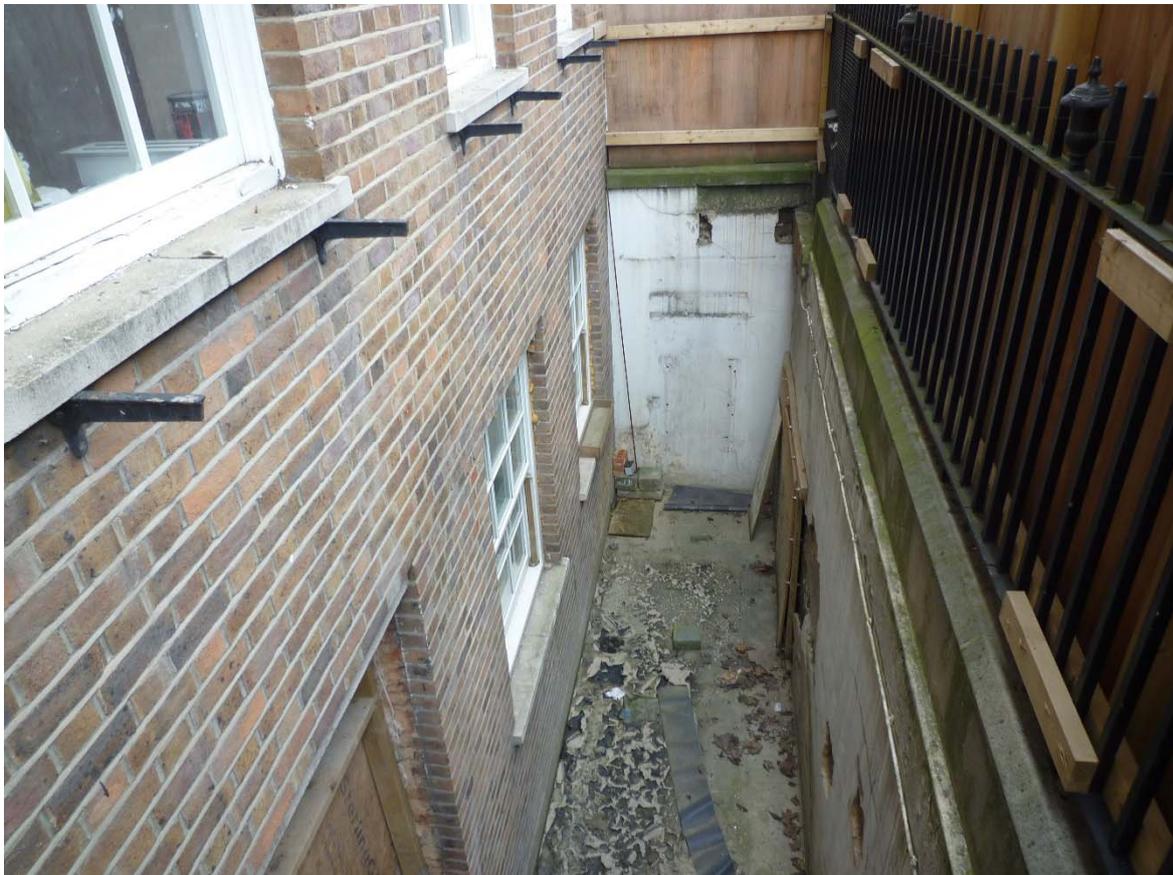


Fig.4 The front area, showing what may be the original 18th century finials on the modern railings.



Fig.5 The ground floor south front room at present (2017)

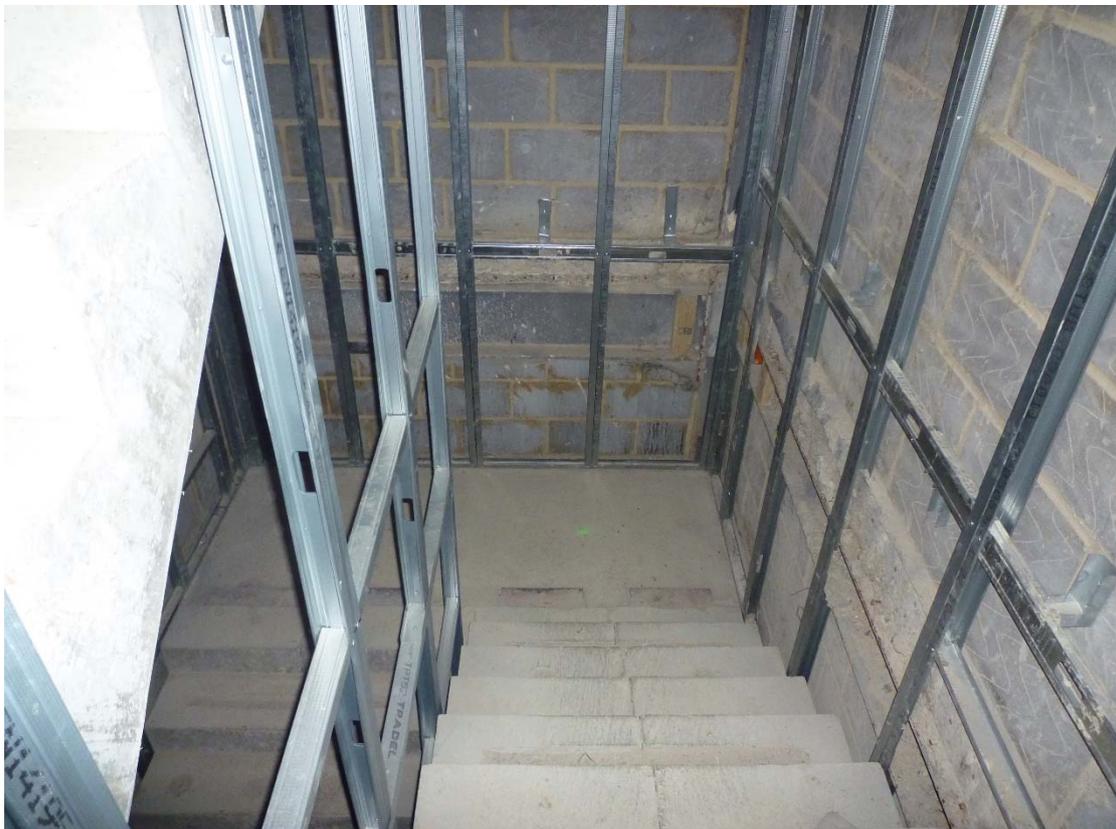


Fig.6 the new stair from ground floor to basement

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. Number 6 John Street is listed Grade II as part of a continuous terrace. This listing grade indicates that the building is of national importance, but in this case it is only the rebuilt front elevation which might be considered to have some townscape value in itself. The list description is included at Appendix 1. The building also lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area

In 2008 English Heritage 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 (mainly 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 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 are closely related to the English Heritage values) and points out that significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence but also from its setting.

Heritage 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, Historic England 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

The building was completely rebuilt in 1959/60 on new foundations and has no evidential value.

Historical value

6 John Street dates entirely from 1960 or later. In itself it has little or no historical value

Aesthetic value

The house is of little aesthetic value in itself. The style of the John Street façade is neo-Georgian, and there was some attempt to replicate the general appearance of the original façade, but the detailing is fairly coarse.

Communal value

The house has no communal value, except as part of a valued street scene and an element in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Setting

John Street/Doughty Street is one of best-preserved Georgian streets in Camden. There have been some modern intrusions, but very few. The principal value of number 6 John Street is that the modern façade uses the same scale, materials and architectural language as its mid-eighteenth century neighbours.

5.0 Bibliography and Sources

Indigo Planning, 6 John Street Holborn Heritage Appraisal, October 2014

Camden Local Studies Library & Archive (drainage plans)

Historic England Photograph Library

London Metropolitan Archives

The Survey of London *Vol XXIV, The Parish of St Pancras pt.IV* (1952).

APPENDIX : List description

List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: JOHN STREET, NUMBERS 2 TO 9 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS

List entry Number: 1379155
County: Greater London Authority
District: Camden
District Type: London Borough
Grade: II
Date first listed: 24-Oct-1951
UID: 478522

Details

CAMDEN
TQ3082SE JOHN STREET 798-1/96/942 (East side) 24/10/51 Nos.2-9 (Consecutive) and attached railings
GV II

Terrace of 8 houses. 1754-59. Built by J Blagrove with W Barlow, J Bosworth, S Room and R Meel. **No.6 rebuilt in Neo-Georgian style, restored 1989.** Multi-coloured stock brick with evidence of tuck pointing and later patching. Plain brick bands to 1st and 2nd floors except No.6. 4 storeys and basements; No.6 with attic dormers. 3 windows each except No.6 with 4. Gauged red brick flat arches to recessed sashes, most with glazing bars. Parapets. No.2: Greek Doric wooden doorcase with mutule cornice; patterned fanlight and double panelled door. Cast-iron overthrow with lamp. INTERIOR noted to retain panelled ground floor and good marble fireplaces on ground and 1st floors. Modillion cornices. Staircase at front of house with cast-iron trellis pattern with continuous balustrade. Iron balustrade to stone stairs. No.3: round-arched doorway with architraved, stucco surround, small head on keystone and panelled door. INTERIOR: noted to retain staircase with curly wrought-iron balusters in panels under continuous timber handrails. No.4: Doric wooden doorcase with open pediment, archivolt with keystone, arched fanlight and panelled door. Original lead rainwater head with lion mask. Large bay to garden front. INTERIOR: noted to be partly remodelled although retaining stairs with turned balusters, shaped ends, column newels and scroll brackets to treads. No.5: wooden Ionic doorcase with modillion cornice and pediment, pulvinated frieze, panelled reveals and panelled door. Original lead rainwater head with lion mask and pipe. Refronted from mid 1st floor. Large bay to garden front. INTERIOR: noted to retain panelled rooms and original fireplaces. Chinese balustrade and scroll bracket to treads of stairs. **No.6: slightly projecting. Stone Greek Doric doorcase. Stone band and iron balconies at 1st floor level. Stone cyma bracketed cornice at 3rd floor.** No.7: ground floor refaced. C20 reproduction Doric wooden doorcase with triglyph frieze, dentil cornice, open pediment, archivolt with keystone, radial fanlight and panelled door. Wrought-iron lamp-holder on railings. INTERIOR: noted to retain open well stairs with turned balusters and carved brackets to treads. Plain moulded fireplace on 1st floor. No.8: Doric wooden doorcase with triglyph frieze, dentil cornice, open pediment, archivolt with keystone, radial fanlight and panelled door. Cast-iron balconies to 1st floor windows. Wrought-iron overthrow with lamp. INTERIOR: noted to retain carved wood fireplace to 1st floor back room; elliptical arch on fluted Ionic columns on ground floor. Stairs with turned balusters and shaped ends. No.9: Doric wooden doorcase similar to No.8. INTERIOR: noted to retain marble fireplaces to ground and 1st floor rooms and egg-and-dart mouldings. Stairs with turned balusters. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with torch flambe finials to areas.

Listing NGR: TQ3088882002



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