

Gower Mews Mansions

Planning Statement including Design and Access Statement and Heritage Appraisal

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document has been prepared to accompany a planning application to replace the windows at the back of Gower Mews Mansions with new double glazed aluminium framed units to match the existing glazing pattern .
- 1.2 The site is located on the north side of Gower Mews which lies in between Bedford Square to the south and Store Street to the North. It has a narrow access alley between numbers 7 and 9 Gower Street.
- 1.3 There are 30 flats with 10 on each floor.
- 1.4 The proposed works are for the replacement of the windows along the northern side of the Mansions facing the back of the southern side of Store Street.
- 1.5 The building is not listed but is in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. In the Conservation Area Appraisal the Mansions are noted as being positive contributors to the Area. The description in the BCAA states that Gower Mews Mansions is *on the north side, dates from the 1930s and is a symmetrical composition built in an Art Deco style, employing red brick with white banding and a strong horizontal emphasis to the windows.* This does provide a positive face to the Mews but is not replicated at the back which has no special architectural merit and abuts the extended ground floor of the properties in Store Street.

2 Planning Statement

- 2.1 The building which comprises Gower Mews Mansions was first built as set out in the Heritage Appraisal in 1936 to designs by GM Sheppard. The buildings were on ground first and second floors as shown on the drawings in the Heritage Appraisal. There are in effect one and a half floors of the Mansion Block visible from the properties in Store Street. The windows which are visible are those to the bathroom, kitchen and second bedrooms of each flat.

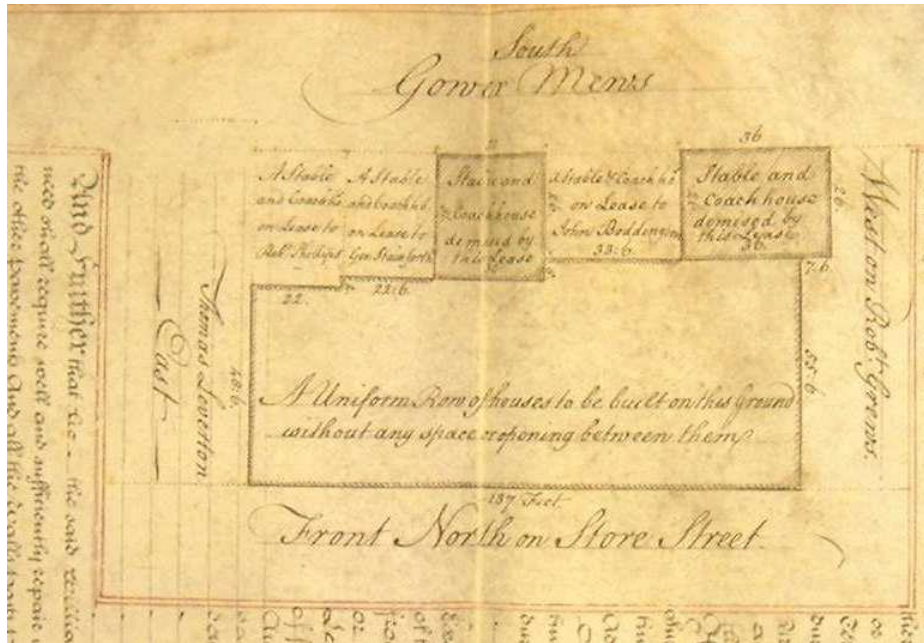
- 2.2 Planning consent was granted TP8749/4710 in 1946 for the restoration of a portion of Gower Mews Mansions following bomb damage. This appears to have been on a like for like basis.
- 2.3 Planning consent was granted in 2011 ref 2009/3752/P for a full length third floor with access from the existing staircases which already rose to this level. The façade facing the Mews was set back leaving a terrace at the front and the roof curved down to meet the vertical face along the back where there are no windows. The new doors and windows were white aluminium insulated construction.
- 2.4 Discharge of conditions including samples of materials and details of windows doors and railings were covered by application 2012/1583/P which was granted 29th March 2012.

3 Design and Access

- 3.1 It is proposed to change the existing windows at the back of the Gower Mews Mansions block. There is no change in the size of the window openings and the prime purpose is to allow energy efficient double glazing to be installed. At present there are several variations in the windows as installed.
- 3.2 The pattern of the glazing will be unchanged.
- 3.3 The windows are from the Smart Alitherm Heritage range developed for situations where there is a need to replace steel window frames particularly in listed buildings. The frames will be white aluminium in accordance with the details submitted numbers 12323/201 and 12323/202 and fitted with Polyamide thermal break
- 3.4 Access to the properties will remain via the existing staircases.

4 Heritage Appraisal

- 4.1 The Mews is lined with two rows of buildings the one on the south from the later part of the 19th century and one on the north, the subject of this planning application, from the earlier part of the 20th Century. The original development of both sides was carried out by William Scott and Robert Grews under a contract granted in 1776. While those on the south side align approximately with the properties in Bedford Square it appears that they did not necessarily link to them. On the north side the subdivision does not match the ownerships in Store Street and the records show these as originally being developed independently.

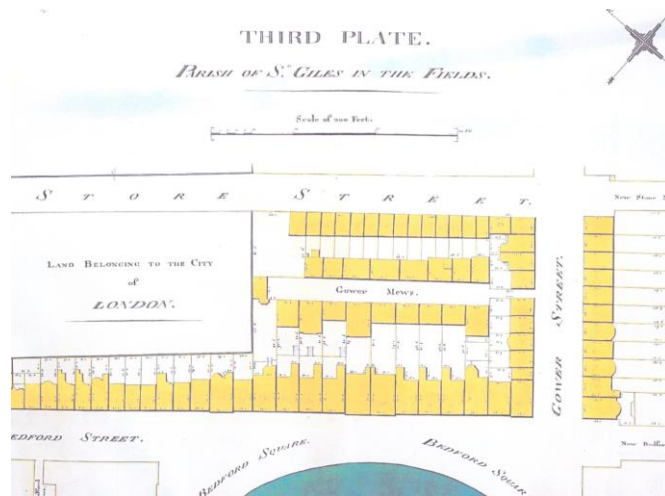


4.2 To the north the building in Store Street has lower ground, ground and three upper floors with a back elevation of no architectural merit. The back elevation of the Gower Mews Mansion block is seen before an additional floor was consented by application 2009/3752/P This has now been added.

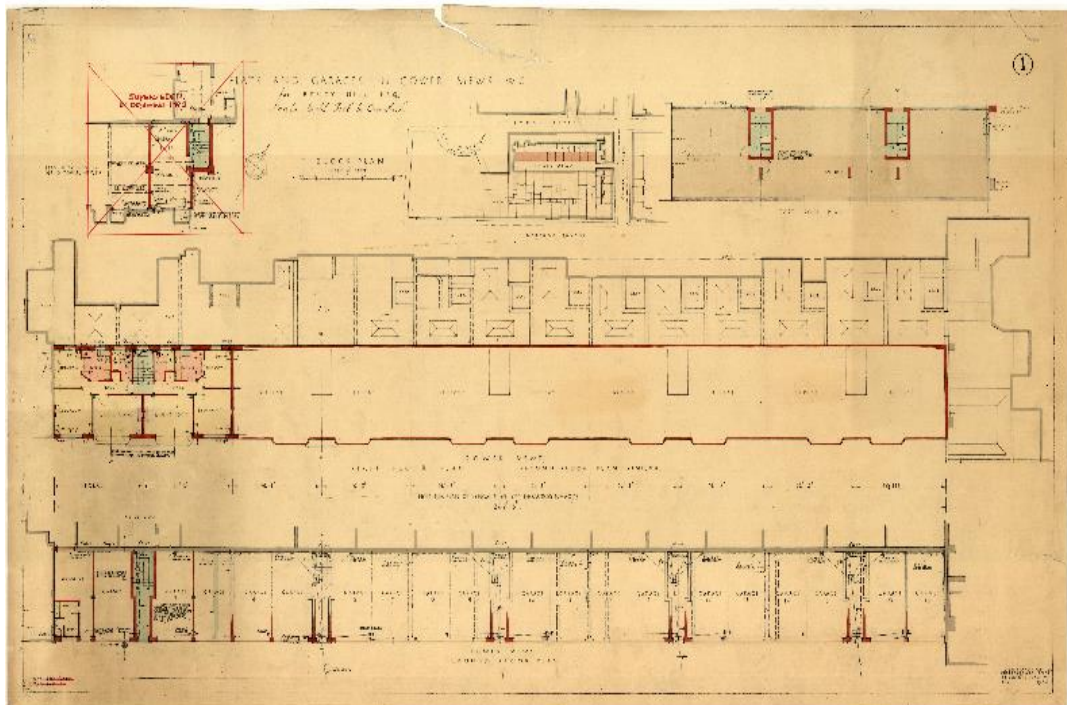


4.3 The buildings in Gower Street backing onto the site are numbers 9 and 11 which are both basement, ground and three upper floors and are listed grade II. They are both part of the terraces which line the western side of Gower Street. This terrace does not overlook the back elevation of Gower Mews Mansions and are therefore not affected by this application.

- 4.4 On the north side of the Mews the original buildings were redeveloped following 1875 and this more uniform treatment is reflected in the Estate map from 1910.



This was then redeveloped in 1936 to designs by J M Sheppard as a long terrace with more emphasis on its linear nature although the general arrangement of garage openings on the ground floor with entry doors and staircases leading up to the first and second floors was retained.



- 4.6 Between the rear elevation to the Mansions and the upper floors in Store Street there is a flat roof to the extended ground floors of the shops in Store Street. These have been fitted with large and irregularly placed glazed rooflights to provide daylight to the workspace below.
- 4.7 When the third floor was added to the Mansions building the windows did not match the historic windows below but were specifically selected from a range of heritage windows designed to replace metal windows where necessary including those in listed buildings to achieve higher standards of insulation. These were approved and a similar range of heritage frames are proposed for the back range of windows even though they have no direct relationship with either the original 1936 windows or the later 2011 third floor extension.

6 Photographs of the back of the building

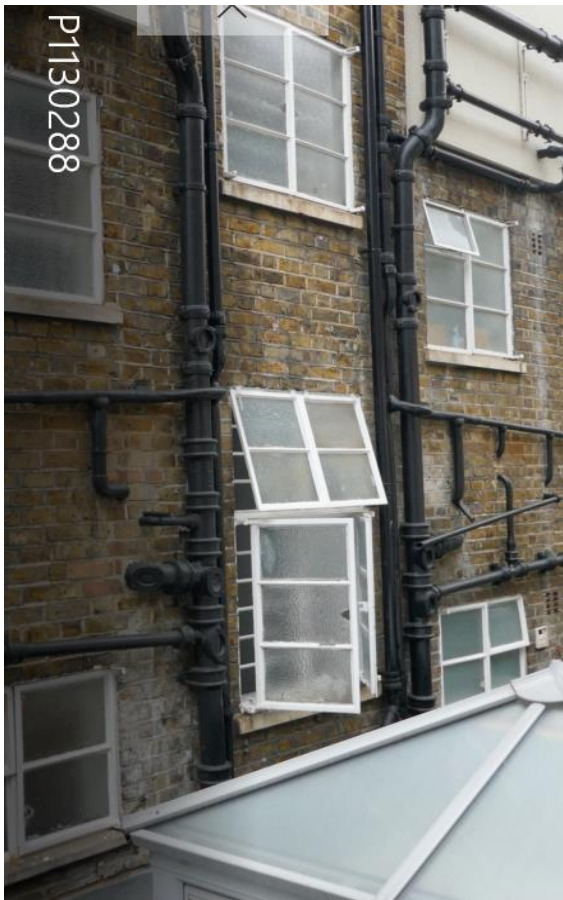
- 6.1 View of the back of the building looking west. Note the change in proportion of the building and the relationship with the buildings in Store Street as well as the increased invasion of plumbing set against the plain face on the new third floor.



6.2 Extended building facing east



6.3 Staircase windows



6.4 Various existing windows



7 Summary

- 7.1 The Gower Mews Mansions are not listed. While the buildings are described in the CAA this description is limited to the front elevation which does have some merit. The description does not in any way reflect the back elevation where the changes are proposed.
- 7.2 The back elevation of the Mansions is concealed from general view and does not form part of the general character of the subarea as described in the CAA. Comparison between the view of the original building in paragraph 4.2 with the current image in section 6 above showing how the back of the building has been significantly altered as part of the rooftop extension. While the extension on the southern façade has taken considerable care to create an integrated façade at the back there was clearly no concern to provide a similar degree of similar treatment.
- 7.3 By replacing outdated single glazed windows with ones with thermally broken frames glazed with double glazed units there is no harm to the principle façade of the building nor to the surroundings while at the same time there is a general benefit by improving the thermal performance of the windows.
- 7.4 The present range of windows along the back of the building exhibit some variations in the types of frame used. The proposed replacement frames will provide a public benefit by unifying all the windows along the back of the building.



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