

99 Camden Mews London NW1 9BU

Heritage Assessment

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1 **Scope**

- 1.1 This conservation assessment has been produced to accompany a planning application for the rebuilding of 99 Camden Mews.
- 1.2 It has been prepared by Anthony Walker, a chartered architect with a post-graduate diploma in building conservation, who is on the register of Architects Accredited in Building Conservation, has been a Visiting Professor at Kingston University and lectures on MSt courses at Cambridge and Leicester Universities.
- 1.3 It is based on a visual inspection of the location, examination of the Design and Access Statement, reference to the National Planning Policy Framework, the London Borough of Camden Local Plan, the Camden Square Conservation Area Assessment, and other similar relevant information.

2 **Background**

- 2.1 The site is located on the north-western side of Camden Mews which is within the Camden Square Conservation Area.
- 2.2 The mews is one of the longest and narrowest in the Borough, reaching from Rochester Square in the south to York Way in the north. Together with the shorter Murray Mews, it provides servicing to the large houses surrounding Camden Square.
- 2.3 Development in the area began in the 1840's with the layout of many of the roads and was substantially complete by 1870. Building in Camden Mews was spasmodic and the 1871 map shows a very irregular pattern with many gaps and variations in size of the individual properties. Many of the early properties were used for light industrial purposes.
- 2.4 The 1896 map shows that the plot now occupied by numbers 99 and 99a is wider than the general range of buildings in Camden Road. There appear to be two blocks with a linking block in between them and a small, set-back courtyard facing on to the Mews.



- 2.5 By 1915 nearly all the gaps in development along both sides of the mews remained empty and number 99/99a appears to have been developed to cover the whole area of the plot but within three bays.

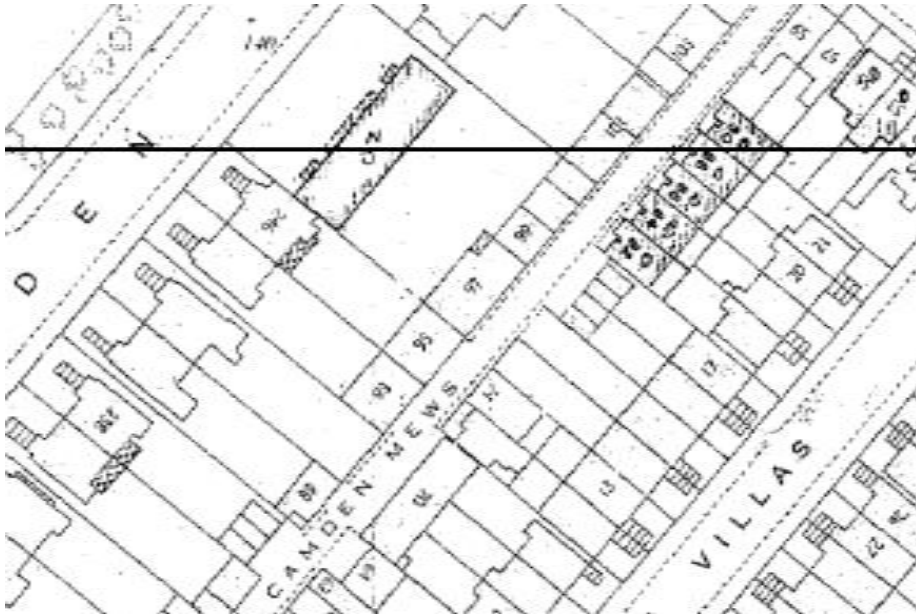


2.6 1953 shows little change to the area immediately around number 99.



2.7 The CAA refers to a social and architectural renaissance starting in the mid- 1960's. *'In particular the mews became fashionable residential areas popular with architects wishing to build innovative houses for themselves'*

2.8 This period of development is shown on the 1971 map. Behind 97-99, facing Camden Road, a new block has replaced two of the Victorian Villas, and across the mews facing 99 is a group of new mews buildings. Several of the gaps are infilled with very small units which must be garages and which reflect the growth in car ownership at the time.



What had been a fragmented scene of piecemeal development with varying uses had become even more varied, but often with high quality individual designs, primarily for residential use, leaving few open or unused sites. In the CAA description today it is noted that: *Views up and down both Camden and Murray Mews include a rich variety of inventive houses and converted workshops.* Under 'Character Zones' the CAA describes the Mews as being *'not built as intended, a slow start and an innovative outcome'*.

2.9 The variety of buildings is demonstrated in the DAS section 4 and is not repeated here.

3.0 **Setting**

3.1 The CAA describes both Camden Mews and Murray Mews as *'areas of artists/architects studio houses which became fashionable from the early 1960s. Parts of the mews remained unfinished, and years later, as traffic on main roads and land values increased, the relative seclusion and cheapness of the land made them popular places for architects to build their houses. This accounts for the inventiveness and variety that is characteristic of these mews.'*

The majority of plots have been built as independent dwellings and/or workshops at the ends of the gardens of the frontage houses. The original character of the mews as subsidiary to the Square has largely been respected in the modern redevelopments, which are generally of two or two-and-a-half storeys and of a high design standard. They take an imaginative approach to development in the spirit of a mews' scale, form, and variety of styles and materials'.

3.2 The section of the Mews which is relevant to number 99 is that which lies between Canteloves Road to the south, and Camden Park Road to the north. On either side, facing Camden Road to the north-west and North Villas to the south-east, are rows of substantial villas and in the case of North Villas one short and one longer terrace.

3.3 The buildings in the immediate vicinity of number 99 are primarily considered as making a positive contribution to the area. The block immediately behind 99 and facing Camden Road is not considered to be of positive value but there is a nationally listed building further to the south, on the eastern side of the mews.

3.4 Due to the narrow width of the mews, views of the properties are generally oblique and do not provide overall views of the individual buildings. A mews was of course originally a place where hunting birds were kept and James Curl in the Encyclopaedia of Architectural Terms refers to their later development as 'subsidiary ranges of stables or coach houses

with living quarters above, commonly associated with grander town houses'. They were often built on an individual basis but could also form a comprehensive group of terraces. Due to the nature of the access needed to the lane or yard around which they were constructed, they were built up to the edge of the carriageway and had a relatively uniform appearance, with brick walls rising to two and sometimes three storeys, with a pitched roof above.

- 3.5 In the Conservation Area Appraisal it is confirmed that although Camden and Murray Mews were laid out to serve the larger houses from the back as described in 3.2 above, in fact this use was not implemented as intended and only a few mews buildings were in fact built to serve the larger houses. In practice there were many gaps left and these were not developed until the second half of the twentieth century when they often provided sites for notable individual houses.
- 3.6 As a result of this the form of development created has a number of features which are unusual. The facades, rather than presenting a flat, uniform appearance, are generally articulated often with upper floor set back from the street frontage. Many of the properties have small walled areas with access directly from the carriageway which would not of course have been practical with the traditional development of stables or coach houses.
- 3.7 Although the majority of buildings are basically brick structures there is a wide variety of design and thus no consistency of character overall. The main characteristic which they have in common is the scale of the buildings which has retained the essence of the original plots.

4.0 Planning background

- 4.1 Examination of planning applications over the last thirty years provides useful information regarding the changes to 99 and 99a.
- 4.2 A planning application in 1975 for two two-storey houses with integral garages was refused. This was followed in 1977 by an approved application to convert the northern wing and infill section into a house with a sculptor's studio and terrace, over the infill between the main body of 99 and 99a. The accompanying plans show the ground level openings between the two as blocked up which is also the case with the front opening to number 99. The ground floor wall between the central, single-level block and the northern one is opened up to extend the studio across the whole width of the unit, and a new double door is formed with access from the Mews. At first floor level the southern flank wall to the northern block is reconstructed to provide windows and doors overlooking the terrace.
- 4.3 In 1982 an application was approved which provided for the infill of the terrace area to provide an additional bedroom, together with reconstruction of the roof.
- 4.4 An application was submitted in 2014 which took into account the poor condition of the fabric of the building and it was agreed that this justified the demolition of the existing building and the complete reconstruction.
- 4.5 The proposals at this stage were to retain the three bays, two of which are number 99 and the third is the retained structure for 99a.

5 Proposals

- 5.1 The proposals have been prepared following receipt of pre-application advice, dated 26th July 2017, which also refers to the earlier advice given on the 20th February 2017.
- 5.2 The detail of the proposed development is set out in the architect's DAS and drawings. For the purpose of this heritage statement the proposals are as shown below.

It is proposed to replace the existing two-bay building with a new building on ground and first floor levels with a roof terrace above and an ensuite master bedroom set back from the main frontage at roof level.

The historic two-bay division of the facades to both the Mews elevation and the back elevation, facing the properties in Camden Road, will be retained .

The scale of the development is consistent with that of the surroundings and provides a link between the existing buildings along the western side of the Mews. This is demonstrated in the long elevation 0316/CM/212C.

The gable end facing the Mews retains both the historic form of the building and the articulation which is a feature of many of the more modern buildings along the Mews.

- 5.3 The proposals involve the demolition of the current building. This was addressed as part of the 2014/3907 application which was approved, having taken into account the condition of the existing building. This provides a three-bedroom dwelling which, according to the pre-app advice of 20.02.2017, is consistent with the prevailing context of the site which is characterised by two and three bedroom dwellings.

6 Impact of the proposals

- 6.1 The building is not listed but is within a Designated Heritage Asset in the form of the conservation area. It is identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal as making a positive contribution to the conservation area and, as such, it is a 'non-designated heritage asset' and is subject to the guidance in paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework in respect of any harm to the Conservation Area, and to that in paragraph 135 with regard to the non-designated heritage asset itself, or adjoining non-designated heritage asset. It is stated in 135 that: *'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset'*.
- 6.2 Impact on the Conservation Area. The test of this lies in balancing public benefits including securing the optimum viable use of the designated heritage asset. In the 20/02/2017 pre-app advice it is recognised that there is a contribution to the Conservation Area in the form of the two-storey gable facing the Mews, and in the Officer's report for the approved proposals in 2014 the retained historic detail was welcomed as was the improved fenestration and it acknowledged the public benefits from the replacement of defective foundations, structural stabilisation and continuing beneficial use. The Officer also referred to the second floor roof terrace with the balustrade set back from the frontage, and to an appeal for number 97 next door where the Inspector considered that a break in the roof line contributed to the varied skyline which he considered was an integral part of the character of the Mews. Those benefits have been retained in the current application.
- 6.3 Impact on the non-designated heritage asset. The form of the development retains the historic two-bay frontage with the brick gable on the northern side. The two storey frontage is also retained, following similar examples elsewhere in the Mews, with a second floor terrace and a bedroom set well back so that it is barely visible from the Mews which is demonstrated by the CGI on page 8 of the DAS. The articulation of this top level provides the varied skyline referred to above and allows the front brick gable to remain as the dominant element of the façade as seen from the street. Views from the upper floors on the opposite side of the mews will show the broken line of the roof but due to the taller buildings behind on both sides of the Mews the subservient role of this building and adjoining buildings will be confirmed.
- 6.4 The façade facing the buildings on the Camden Road frontage also retains the two-bay articulation, reflecting the historic form and the scale of other elements along the back of the properties on the western side of the Mews. From this view, 99 is more evidently a three storey building but it would be less obvious when seen from Camden Road against the taller buildings on the other side of the Mews, and in the distance the four storey buildings along North Villas.

- 6.5 The proposals clearly retain their subservient role in relation to the substantial villas in Camden Road and on the western side of North Villas. See 6.3 above.
- 6.6 The scale of the two bays which make up the front and back elevations of 99 reflect the similar scale of the other buildings along this part of Camden Mews.
- 6.7 The articulation of the buildings and the varied materials reflect the similar diversity of the existing buildings in the Mews.
- 6.8 The Local Plan policy D1 (Design), and D2 Heritage, requires that any development should respect local character and context to integrate with surrounding streets, and to incorporate outdoor amenity space.

7 Summary

- 7.1 The dwelling is of a scale appropriate to the Mews and maintains the tradition in the area of the use of varied building forms and styles, while also maintaining the hierarchy of the surroundings.
- 7.2 The principle of three interrelated plots of land which retain the two principle masses has been maintained.
- 7.3 The historic form of the gable wall has been reinstated which is a welcome principle as it relates to that adopted at 99a.
- 7.4 The rich palette of materials relates well to the varied materials used elsewhere in the Mews, and also differentiates between the traditional materials used in the historic forms.
- 7.5 The reinstatement of the historic areas of brickwork is a public benefit in stabilising the structure and thus the future of this non-designated heritage asset. At the same time it maintains the character and varied appearance of the Conservation Area.

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