

Part Dismantling and Rebuilding of Front Facade Justification Statement

125 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1R 5DB

October 2017

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1. Introduction

In July 2017, MBH Architects submitted a planning application for the demolition and rebuilding of the inset section of the Clerkenwell Road to where the arched entrance at the east end of the front facade is located immediately adjacent to the Grade II Listed 123 Clerkenwell Road property. The archway currently provides access through an undercroft leading to the rear yard of the property.

As discussed in the Design and Access Statement which accompanied the application, the applicants propose the temporary dismantling of this section of the facade prior to the main building works commencing for the apartment scheme (ref. 2015/6751/P). This is to allow essential access to the site for vehicles required for construction works, for the removal and delivery of materials to and from the site, providing an off road area for the loading/unloading area and space for welfare facilities for the building contractors and to reduce traffic congestion and disruption to a minimum. It will also aid pedestrian safety.

This section of elevation will then be rebuilt prior to the completion of the main construction works, to accurately match the original existing elevation using the existing bricks and other features saved from this part of the facade as detailed on the submission drawings.

Alternatively, an option has been submitted to the Council showing the section of facade rebuilt to architecturally match the style of the adjacent facade, once again re-using the existing bricks but introducing features to precisely match the window openings and other features of the adjacent facade.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Council with additional information relating to this section of the facade and further justification for its temporary removal as requested by the planning officers.

2. History

The Griffin public house at 125 Clerkenwell Road served the large Griffin brewery that existed on the site that was later developed for the Bourne Estate between 1905 and 1909. The original public house associated with the brewery was originally located slightly further east along Clerkenwell Road, then called Liquorpond Road, as is apparent from the map A included in this statement, from around 1870. The Griffin Brewery, was originally built in 1763 and by 1862, was the largest single brewery building in London. The Griffin brewery was later amalgamated with another brewery and the building finally demolished in 1898.

Looking at the three historical maps A, B and C included in this report (see pages 11 - 13), it is possible to see that a mews containing terraced cottages (presumably for workers of the brewery) named Crown Court, was located to the south of The Griffin site which was accessed by a small road from Liquorpond Road to the east of the site on the 1870 map (map A) when the public house was sited in its previous location.

On the 1896 map (map B), the mews terraced housing had been demolished to make way for further expansion of the brewery and The Griffin public house is now in its current location. By this time, a substantial yard to the brewery is situated to the rear of the public house and the map indicates that a building with an undercroft had been built providing access to the yard from Liquorpond Road as it was no longer possible from Crowns Court road which had by now been developed on by the brewery.

The building with the undercroft was located in part of what would have previously been the site of the old demolished public house. This building was then presumably demolished itself along with the main body of the brewery in 1898 to make way for the Bourne Estate development. As access was still required to the rear yard of the public house, a new infill block with an undercroft was required to be built to maintain this route. A building with an undercroft would not have been able to be constructed in the site until the Bourne estate 123 Clerkenwell Road buildings were completed as the undercroft shares the flank wall of the Bourne estate.

It can be observed that the section of the building adjacent to the flank wall of 123 Clerkenwell Road is partially supported off a steel beam to the rear yard side that spans on to the flank wall where a pad stone has been built into the wall of this neighbouring property see photograph on page 10). Also, at the street side, it appears that the projections of brick quoins to the front wall of 123 Clerkenwell Road have been cut to the corner where the public House meets the flank wall at roof level (see page 9). These elements of building work indicate that the infill section of facade forming the undercroft was therefore in all likelihood built after 1909 once 123 Clerkenwell Road was completed.

3. Analysis of Front Facade

The building is three storeys high to the Clerkenwell Road frontage (with basement) and has been largely rendered up to the level of the underside of the decorative cornice that runs the length of the street elevation just below the level of the cills of the first floor windows. There are also stone string courses above the arch of the first floor windows and in line with the spring of the second floor windows. A substantial rendered cornice decorates the top of the parapet wall.

The rendered wall at ground floor level that runs up to the indented section of facade has a painted finish with faux coursing expressed in the material. Two entrance doors with simple porticos are located in the elevation and there is a brickwork arched entrance (with a key stone) to the entrance to the passageway and rear yard on the eastern side of the facade. All the upper windows at first and second floor are also arched. The four large ground floor windows have fixed glazing. There is a section of black granite running the length of the main section of facade but stopping at the indented arched section.

To the east end of the facade is the indented section where the arch and undercroft giving access to the rear yard (originally the brewery rear yard). As is clear from the photographs included in this report, the architectural language of this indented section of facade differs considerably from the more decorative and charming language of the rest of the facade, although at some time it appears that two bands had been painted onto the brickwork now only visible as two faint smudged horizontal bands to the heads of both the first and second floor windows (see attached photographs).

The two windows are much plainer, with a gently arching brick head to the windows as opposed to the more flamboyant semi circular first floor windows and the decorative paired windows to the second floor of the adjacent main section of facade. The cill levels are also different to the levels of the adjacent cills to the main building. Also missing to this 'plot' are the bands to the brickwork at the heads of the first and second floor windows. The only flamboyant feature to this inset section is the decorative floral frieze above the head of the arch at first floor level.

The brickwork to the undercroft section is also different in appearance having a lighter mortar to the brick joints as opposed to the red mortar to the adjacent main facade which has created a significant contrast in the appearance of the brickwork of the two different elements. The red mortar to the main part of the facade is in poor condition and is not original.

The cornice at the head of this section of facade is also very different and although features dentils, is far less modelled in its configuration and makes little attempt to line through with its neighbouring cornice.

It is possible to observe that there have historic repairs to the indented facade section as there are patches where red brindle bricks have replaced the yellow stock bricks, particularly at the top left hand section below the parapet cornice.

4. Site Development Issues

The site is located on Clerkenwell Road which is a Transport For London route and is immediately adjacent to a set of traffic lights and a pedestrian crossing close to the junction with Rosebery Avenue. This is a busy cycle and bus route and loading is restricted in front of the building and around the site at any time (refer to site constraints drawing on page 14).

Without the temporary removal of the undercroft section of facade, large vehicles will have to stop and unload/load to Clerkenwell Road which would cause significant disruption and inconvenience to the street to both the very busy traffic flow and pedestrians using the pavement as well as create issues of health and safety concern and would require closure of one of the lanes by the traffic lights.

As described in the Design and Access statement submitted under this application, the arch to the facade is too low at 3.2m at the apex of the arch (at only 2.9m at the spring of the arch) to allow the passage of loading/unloading vehicles and other plant onto the site, through the passageway and to the rear yard.

Secondly, a scaffolding/temporary structure would be required to support this eastern section of the facade wall once the existing building behind it has been demolished which would be located on the pavement immediately in front of the arched opening and would reduce the width of it preventing any vehicle accessing the site. The width available in the passageway (a clear width of 3.5m) is just sufficiently wide enough to allow the passage of delivery vehicles and the reduction of the opening by a facade support structure would prevent access to most vehicles.

The removal of this facade section would therefore provide an unhindered route for safer access to the site and allow the parking of vehicles off road therefore facilitating the safe unloading and loading of vehicles directly onto the site considerably reducing disruption to the road and pavement. This would also reduce the likelihood of prolonged road or traffic lane closures that would otherwise be required as a consequence of deliveries that would otherwise have to be made in Clerkenwell Road adjacent to the site during the construction works, especially for elements of large plant including crane parts and welfare accommodation elements arriving to site which are essential for the construction process.

The proposal to temporarily remove this section of the facade has come about as a consequence of detailed analysis and discussions with building contractors of how the eight dwellings that have been given planning permission by the Council (ref. 2017/6751/P) could be constructed safely with as little inconvenience or disruption as possible to Clerkenwell Road and the wider environment.

5. Proposals

Notwithstanding the less architecturally attractive treatment of the indented undercroft section, as previously set out in the design and access statement of this application, it is proposed that this section of facade is carefully dismantled and the existing bricks, cills, decorative frieze, keystones as detailed on the application drawings are carefully set aside and placed in safe storage until they are required to be re-used to rebuild this section of facade.

It is proposed that prior to the dismantling of this section of facade, a detailed photographic survey of the street facade of this section (along with measurements) would be undertaken to ensure that all the existing features are recorded in situ prior to their dismantling to ensure that they are incorporated in the facade to exactly match the precise existing locations.

As set out in the Design and Access document, due to the poor condition of the cornice and parapet, it is unlikely to be possible to reuse the elements which make up this feature so it is proposed that this would be replaced to exactly match the existing one including the dentil detailing to the cornice.

The whole front facade is to have new triple glazed windows in accordance with the original planning application (ref. 2017/6751/P) to meet the required thermal levels and the new joinery of the frames will be constructed to match the exact style of the existing sash windows.

The facade section would then be carefully rebuilt under strict supervision to the precise dimensions and appearance of the existing building with the mortar to brickwork matching the colour of the existing mortar joints. All features would be rebuilt in their original locations to match the existing.

It is in our interest that the section of facade is reconstructed as existing as our office is directly opposite the site and we have to look at it every day! Please note that we have been appointed as architects on the project all the way through to completion of the construction works.

6. Conclusion

As we have set out in the Design and Access Statement that was submitted with this application, we wish to reiterate that the proposed dismantling and reinstatement of this later addition to the front facade will greatly assist with the significantly safer, least disruptive and efficient construction of the housing development permitted under the planning decision previously granted.

As has been highlighted in this statement, great care will be taken to ensure the section of facade will be reconstructed using the existing bricks and other existing features to precisely match the existing appearance and we therefore hope that this proposal will be acceptable to the Council.

7. Photographs



Two images of the junction of the undercroft section of facade to the left and remainder of facade at right. Note the half brick set back and marked contrast between the appearance of the brickwork due largely to the red mortar at right. In the more detailed image, note the poor condition of the red mortar joints



Front facade of 125 Clerkenwell Road showing the infill section in the context of the full elevation. The proposed section of the facade to be dismantled and then re-built is the eastern-most section of the elevation (within red dotted line) which is set back by half a brick.

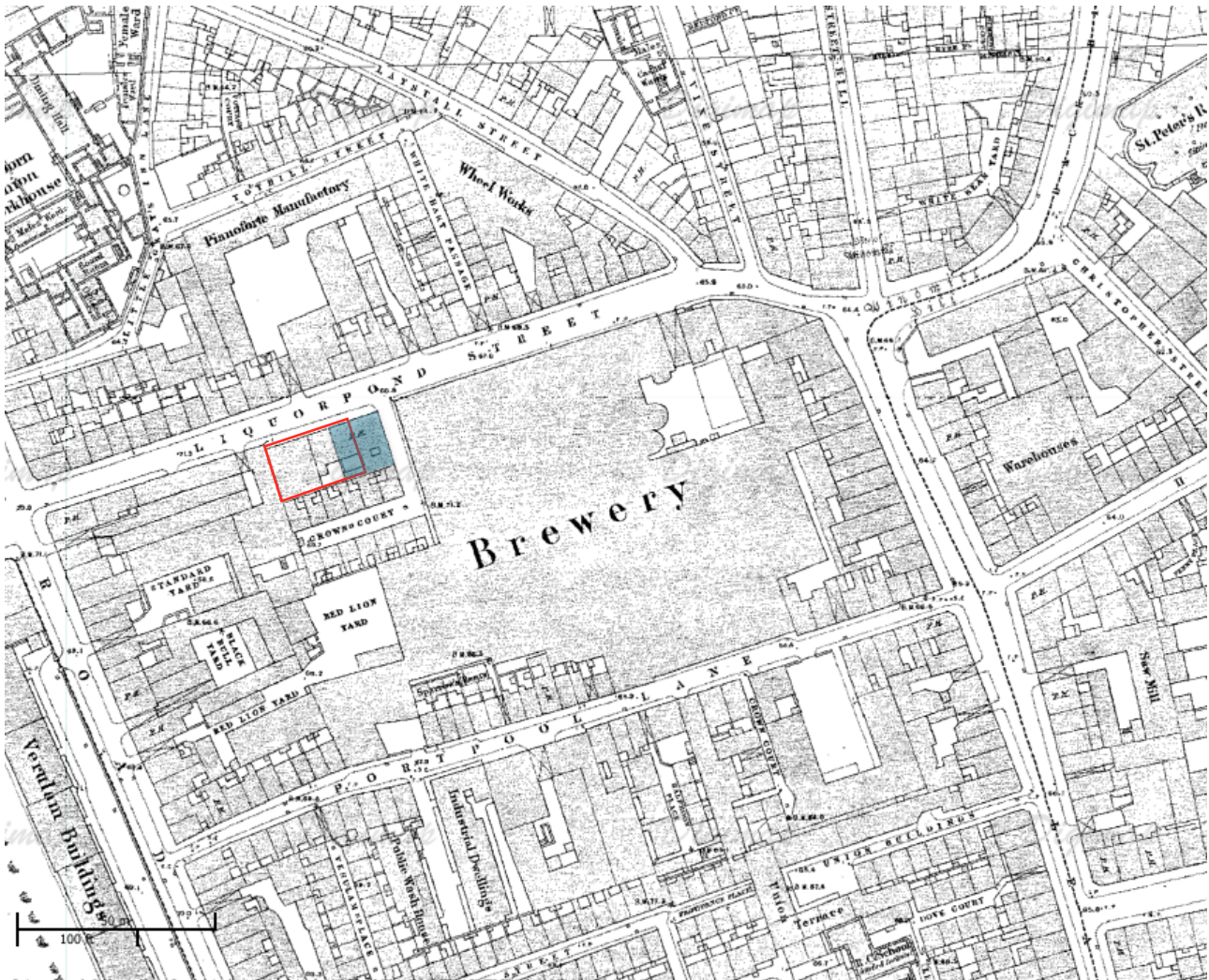


Photographs looking up at the parapet and dentil featured cornice, and second floor window head. Note the patchy historical brick repairs to the wall with red brindle bricks. Note also the smudged areas where the decorative string bands had been painted onto the brickwork.



Rear view of infill element illustrating that it was built up against the flank wall of 123 Clerkenwell Road and showing the steel beam supporting the upper floors which spans onto a pad stone built into the flank wall of the adjacent property.

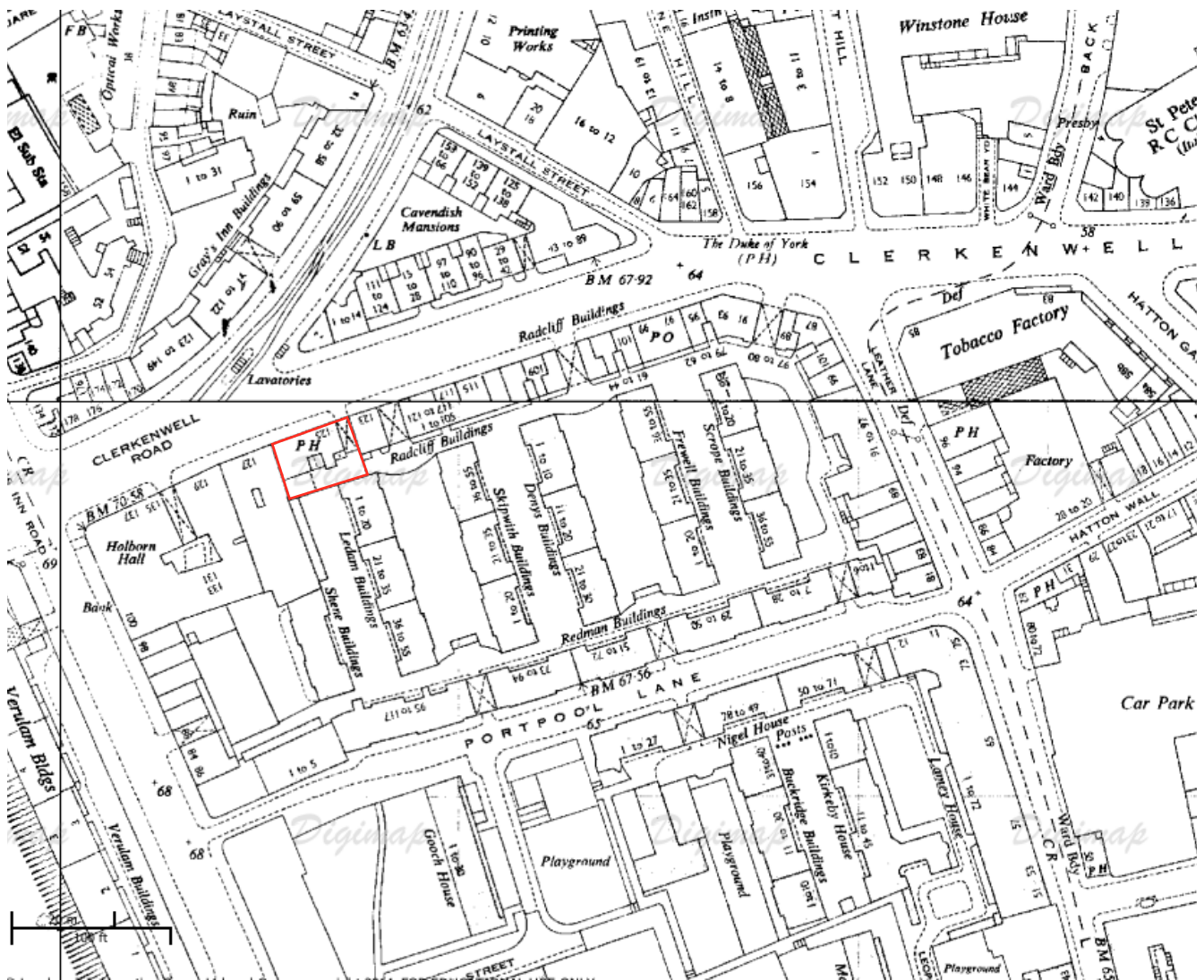
8. Maps



Map A: Map of the site dating from 1870s. Note the original location of The Griffin Public House indicated in blue tone which was at this time slightly to the east of the existing site. Note also the mews Crowns Court containing terraced cottages to the rear of the existing public house site.



Map B: Map of the site dating from 1896. Note that by this time the public house on the original site had been demolished and had been replaced with a new building providing an undercroft for access to the large yard behind the public house. Also note how the cottages to the rear of the site have been demolished as has Crown Court itself with the access road to this now built on by the brewery.



Map C: Map of the site dating from 1950s showing the infill undercroft section now built up to the flank wall of 123 Clerkenwell Road from the Bourne Estate development.

9. Site Constraints Plan

Plan showing the constraints of the site including issues of health and safety identified for the site including issues of access to the site and the support of the front face during the building works.

