

Heritage Statement

January 2019

20 Cleveland Street, Fitzrovia, W1T 6DY



THE SITE AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

Historic Context

This house sits on Cleveland Street, a narrow road leading North from the junction of Mortimer Street and Goodge Street. It was part of the dynamic, one could say ferocious northward growth of London in the 18th century that swallowed up London's immediate surrounds, originally made up of meadows, fields and market gardens.

Together with its neighbours on both sides, the building was listed Grade II in 1974.

As Pevsner writes in *The Building of England*:

The narrow grid of streets W of Tottenham Court Road, centred on Fitzroy Square, is the heart of the area dubbed Fitzrovia, an appealing small-scale mixture of domestic and commercial Georgiana with a Bohemian aura, which was popular with artists and writers in the C19 and early C20...

Most of the land belonged to Tottenham manor. The S part was developed piecemeal during the C18, then more consistently in the 1760s; the N part took shape after the freehold was acquired in 1768 by Charles Fitzroy, later Lord Southampton.

The name comes from Charles Fitzroy, 2nd Duke of Cleveland whose estate was connected in the 19th century with the Southampton properties.

The building next door (No22) is where Charles Dickens lived twice, first as a young child between 1815–1816 and then again as a teenager between 1828–1831. His residence in the street has led to the suggestion that the nearby workhouse was probably the inspiration for his book 'Oliver Twist'.

Character and Sense of Place

Cleveland Street was described as an area of special architectural and historic interest when it was designated a Conservation Area on 20 November 1990. Anomalously on its Camden side Cleveland Street is part of two conservation areas: the Fitzroy Square conservation area, and the Charlotte Street conservation area.

The mix of residential and business uses and a range of generally small-scale independent shops, business uses, cafes, restaurants etc. generate a vibrant

and lively atmosphere that reflects the historic bohemian quality of the area and its popularity with artists, craftsmen and immigrants.

Several plain Georgian houses survive on Cleveland Street and its surroundings. These are narrow gridded streets flanked by terraces, that in large stretches preserve their 18th century character.

From the Conservation Area Appraisal:

The area was developed speculatively as a primarily residential area in a relatively short space of time (1750-1770) with building progressing northwards across the area from the slightly earlier Rathbone Place, developed in the 1720s. As in many areas of Georgian London the three or four storey terraced townhouse was the favoured form.

...

During the later 18th and 19th centuries the area declined in popularity as a residential suburb for the wealthy and became more mixed, attracting artists, craftsmen and immigrant communities from Europe who established businesses. Shops and public houses were developed or inserted into older buildings and a mix of residential uses, cafes and small businesses established at ground level. This varied mixed use character remains and contributes to the charm of the area today.

...

Although a range of building types is evident across the conservation area the predominant building type is the townhouse in a terraced form. These are predominantly four storeys in height, most commonly along the wider streets in the area with three storey townhouses on some of the narrower streets. The original townhouse form has a basement and sometimes an attic storey. Roof forms are commonly defined by a parapet and create a strong and often consistent roof line.

...

Yellow London stock brick is the predominant material used across the conservation area, reflecting the cheapest locally available material, and was favoured in 18th and early 19th century London.... Red brick, stone and stucco are all used as contrasting detailing in the articulation of frontages. Stucco was increasingly used from the early 18th century, initially at ground floor level with rusticated stucco to mimic stone ...

...

The essential pattern of the terraced townhouses have a number of characteristic details in their design including the repeated pattern of windows that reduce in height from the first floor upwards, signifying the reducing significance of the rooms beyond. Properties are sometimes two or three windows across, mainly with sliding sashes. These range from the earliest examples set close to the face of the building and with thicker glazing bars to the more delicate detailing and recessed sashes of the late Georgian and Regency period. Doorways may have arched openings, flat roof timber porches on brackets, with pediments and occasionally porticos. Other common

SURVEY & DESIGN PARTNERSHIP

70 Cowcross Street · London EC1M 6EJ · Tel 020 7639 6255 · mail@surveydesign.co.uk

elevation details include rubbed brick arches, the use of stone banding, delicate cast iron balconies and intricate fanlights. At roof level the individual townhouses are terminated with chimney stacks and pots, and in some terraces the party wall is expressed. Roofs are mainly of slate.

There is a notable character created by the consistent use of cast iron railings along frontages to separate the pavement from the basement lightwell. The details of the railings vary with an interesting variety of classically derived motifs (urns, trefoils, spears) ...

All this perfectly describes the building in question. It is, in other words, typical of the area and contributes significantly to its character, and to that of the narrow street, which in other sections on its way northward has unfortunately suffered several modern intrusions that distract from its original character.

Building Condition

The building's front elevation has preserved its original character and most of its features, and is in relatively good condition. Internally, however, many changes have been made over the years.

The ground floor shop front, although mostly not original, has preserved its original bow-fronted shape and its wooden entablature/shop fascia, but not its window pattern.



SURVEY & DESIGN PARTNERSHIP

70 Cowcross Street · London EC1M 6EJ · Tel 020 7639 6255 · mail@surveydesign.co.uk

An example of an original shop front of similar character and size survives at No 106 – see below.



No 106
Cleveland
Street, with
its original
shop front

At No 20, the panelled, half-glazed door to the shop retains its original character, but not its fanlight, while the house entrance door on the other side is a modern flush door with faked panels, but retains its original fanlight radial pattern and consoles – see below.



Original
fanlight at
No 20
Cleveland
Street,
with
original
timber
consoles

Significance

The building is typical of the 18th century speculative northward expansion of London, when literally thousands of these terraced townhouses were built on greenfield sites. More specifically, it is also typical of the type of house that was built along narrow Cleveland Street and its surroundings.

It also retains most of its original features, as mentioned in the listing of the property in 1974.

A large proportion of these houses have not survived the war and modern developments since then, or their elevations have been altered over the years. This building, having retained its character, can be said to be of some significance.

Design Concept

There will be no changes to the front elevation of the building. The shop owner feels that it is important to retain the original ground floor features, and strengthen them with careful repairs and restoration.

The original curved wooden fascia that was recently hidden behind an illuminated plastic fascia will be restored and the entire shop front will be painted in a typical Georgian colour that is more appropriate than the light grey of the previous design.

PROPOSED WORKS

The proposed works are:

- removal of modern plastic fascia
- repair of original timber fascia, including restoration of timber beading that was removed when the plastic fascia was fitted
- repair of original consoles
- hand-painted shop signs and projecting sign
- repainting of the shop front in dark grey (similar to the shop front in a nearby building)

Impact

There will be no significant change to the appearance of the front of the building.

The most important measure is the removal of the modern fascia and of the modern light-grey colour.

We would suggest that the impact of the proposed changes is minimal, but they will enhance the historic character of the building and of this part of the street.
