



**BLOOMSBURY
CONSERVATION AREAS**

Advisory Committee | Est. 1968

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2021/2766/P

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Formal Objection to Application 2021/2766/P regarding replacement of front elevation of 18 Grafton Mews and reconfiguration of roof terrace.

The Fitzroy Square CAAC formally objects to this application on the basis of harm caused to the historic and architectural significance of the Fitzroy Square Conservation Area through loss of historic fabric and poor and inappropriate design.

Architectural and Historic Significance

Grafton Mews is an example of a well-preserved Central London mews street, where the historic scale, plot-width, fine grain, and general vernacular of traditional mews-style architecture is clearly legible along its full length.

Typical of streets of this kind, existing buildings have been altered considerably since their Georgian inception with many having been converted from stables into workshop uses and thereafter to residential. Visual remnants of these historic uses such as upper storey doors and winches, and stable openings at ground floor are important reminders of the historic evolution of these places and their preservation is of utmost importance to their conservation.

Buildings along Grafton Mews are typically of two to three storeys and are clearly restrained and functional in their architectural form and expression, originally designed to be ancillary to the grander houses on Fitzroy Square and the surrounding residential streets. There is an absence of ornament and detail, with façade treatment typically being plain brick (London stock) either bare or painted white, a trend shared with the wider Central London area. While fairly little survives of original Georgian fabric, subsequent development (both Victorian and contemporary) has retained this functional and simple architectural expression.

18 Grafton Mews retains much of the architectural character of a typical mews building, with a first floor door and original bressumer beam and coach entrance. Brickwork has been substantially altered along the façade although bricks appear to be reclaimed and window openings/proportions retained. The window and door joinery is clearly non-original although some framing and the first floor windows appear to date from the early 20th century. Although the interior was not inspected an exterior site visit was conducted and interior photos inspected and it is likely that original Georgian fabric survives especially along the southern party wall.

Overall, 18 Grafton Mews is a good example of mews architecture and its incremental alterations are a reminder of the historic evolution of this street, and is one of only a few survivors of buildings close to their original form and general appearance along this mews street.

Impact of Proposals Upon Significance

It is our opinion that the proposals in their current form are completely unacceptable and would impact severely upon the architectural and historic significance of 18 Grafton Mews and consequently harm the wider Fitzroy Square Conservation Area.

Substantial Reconfiguration of Façade Openings and Black Painting of Façade

It is our view that the reconfiguration of the façade entirely erases the architectural and historic significance of this building as viewed from the public realm, while the overall ‘modern’ design approach is completely unacceptable for a building of significance in a conservation area.

The wide and long window openings are contrary to the accepted solid-to-void ratio along this street and wider area. To avoid harm window and door openings at first floor should be retained as existing or restored to a previous state as evidenced by historic research. At ground floor the bressumer beam and wide opening should be retained to preserve the historic form of mews architecture. The long double storey window is particularly objectionable. The distinction between the ground and second floor should be clearly legible from the exterior.

The painting of the façade in black paint draws undue attention and causes the building to look unattractive. Preferably brickwork should be retained and reinstated where possible in brick and bond to match the existing.

To avoid drawing objection any alterations to the façade should aim to preserve and preferably restore the historic appearance of this building. There are many buildings in mews streets throughout the area (particularly Doughty Mews, Brownlow Mews, and King’s Mews) where original buildings can be inspected and used for design precedent.

Long rooflight at rear

The long rooflight proposed along the rear of the mews property is similarly inappropriate for an historic building of this type. An array of three conservation rooflights would be acceptable.

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