

18 GRAFTON MEWS

EXISTING FAÇADE HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Context

18 Grafton Mews is part of the Fitzroy Square Conservation Area as is noted in the local planning authority appraisal as making a positive contribution to the character and the appearance of the broader Conservation Area. It is designated as part of a group alongside No. 19 Grafton Mews which sits opposite it.

Fenestration

The fenestration to the façade of No. 18 Grafton Mews appears to have been most heavily altered at ground floor level where the rhythm of separate window and door openings present at No. 19 Grafton Mews has been converted into a combined 'shop front' arrangement. At first floor level metal windows have been installed below a concrete beam.

Given the age of and location of the property it can believably be assumed that arched brick window heads and historic timber windows and doors were removed to accommodate these alterations. The Fitzroy Square Conservation Area confirms this stating that 'shallow brick arches to the window and door heads' are characteristic of the original architectural fenestration within the mews.

The horizontal fascia panel may have historically protected a continuous timber (oak) bressummer beam as is present at No. 4 Grafton Mews. At No. 18 this is not the case as the original timber beam has been replaced with a modern flitch beam presumably during the wider remodelling works undertaken in the 20th Century.

Masonry / Brickwork

The existing masonry façade appears to have been re-build in the mid to late 20th century to accommodate an imitation shop front at ground floor with a domestic style front door to the left-hand side of timber framed glazing. During this remodelling it appears that the brickwork has been heavily altered both in the construction of the infill brick apron beneath the ground floor timber framed window but also in completing the interface with No. 16 Grafton Mews. This would presumably have been to alter the stretcher bond brickwork that was continuous with the facade of 16 Grafton Mews. Lapped bricks appear to have been removed and replaced with new cut fletton brickwork before finishing the interface with a vertical mortar joint.

Although there is no planning history for these works the fact that the re-construction of 16 Grafton Mews was consented in 1978 it can be safely assumed that they would have been undertaken after this date given their nature. The use of fletton bricks in the construction of the masonry apron below the ground floor glazing would indicate that these works were undertaken at the same time.

The workmanship of the new and replacement brickwork during these modifications is poor with little consistency in the brick stock used or uniformity of the pointing the façade. It would appear that cheaper, more readily available, fletton bricks have been used alongside London Stocks to patch repair existing brickwork and create new infills.

The resulting appearance deviates from the other mews buildings with London stock brick facades, most noticeably that of No. 19 Grafton Mews which sits opposite No. 18. The only other 'shop front' style arrangement within the mews is at No. 17 Grafton Mews where a combination of softwood timber framed glazing and UPVC windows has been more recently added. This further supports the deduction that the façade of No. 18 has been heavily altered from its original design.

Comparing the colour, tone and aggregate present in the yellow London brick stock used across the rest of the façade to that at No. 19 Grafton Mews it is clear that the materials are unlikely to be original to the site. The yellow London stock used at 18 Grafton Mews are much lighter and are likely to have been reclaimed from another building and used to reconstruct the façade following the introduction of the concrete beam high level on the first floor. Their colour and tone bare more similarity to the modern residential development present at No. 11 Grafton Mews which has also had historic brick arches and timber windows removed in favour of modern construction techniques.

Whilst lead dressings have been used to line the rainwater hopper outlet in the front parapet wall and above the head of the projecting timber fascia panel little original detail has been retained.

Roof

It may be reasonable to assume that the glazed skylights were added during this prior remodelling of the façade and the original slate roof replaced with the composite imitation slate tiles currently present. The rooflights have since been covered with felt which is nailed in place under a previous ownership.

Conclusion

In line with the analysis above it is our opinion that the brick façade to 18 Grafton Mews was likely reconstructed in the 20th Century to replace un-maintained historic timber windows, doors and structural elements. At ground floor separate door and window openings have been combined to form a single timber framed glazed frontage with modern brick apron. At first floor level timber windows and brick arches have been removed and the façade re-built with a continuous horizontal concrete beam and metal framed windows. The colour and tone of the brickwork and mortar demarks it as more recently constructed than that present in the other historic buildings within the mews, most notably No. 19. Following this more modern fletton bricks have been used to create further infills and repairs to the London stock brickwork. The aggregate impact of these alterations results in an unsatisfactory appearance that is anomalous with the surrounding architectural context, any proposed alterations should seek to remedy this.