

Heritage Assessment

27 Great Queen Street, LB Islington

Introduction

1. This Assessment has been prepared by HCUK Group on behalf of the UGLE Property Investment Committee. It provides initial heritage advice and information on the site at 27 Great Queen Street, London Borough of Islington and accompanies a Planning application for change of use for that site, which is a Grade II listed building.

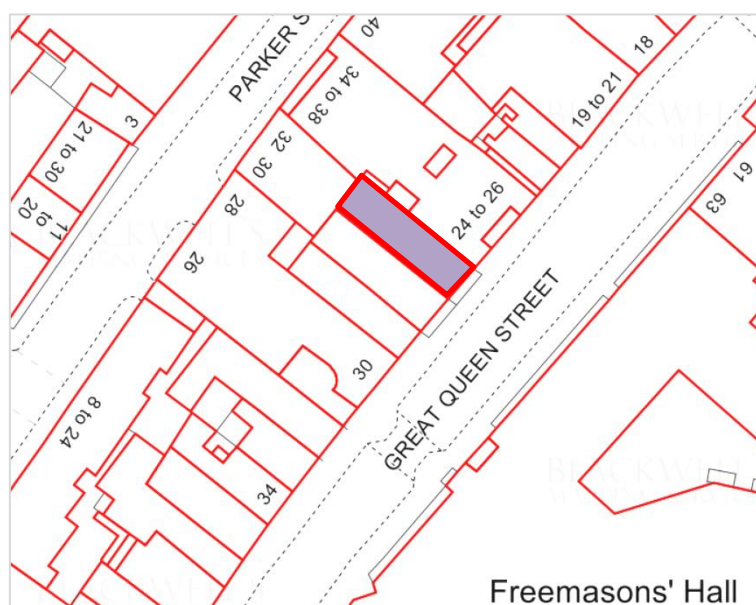


Figure 1. Site location

2. The note has developed from an advice note to the applicant's team as the first stage in an ongoing programme of assessment and information to owners to look at various options for the building, including the current change of use application. It will be expanded as necessary in the future to provide decision makers with proportionate information on heritage significance and impacts arising from any future detailed applications for listed building or planning permission. It is based on observations made during a site visit on Thursday 9 September 2021 when all areas of the building other than the vaulted cellars to the rear were visited in good

conditions and on background research into the history of the building which is included here.

3. At present this note does not provide a full legislation or policy background with regard to heritage assets but has been prepared with full knowledge of the planning framework for decision taking around heritage assets as well as relevant guidance documents.

Historic Background



Figure 2. No.27 Great Queen Street

4. Great Queen Street links Covent Garden, to the southwest, with Lincoln's Inn Fields to the northeast. The street follows the line of a royal thoroughfare used by James I when travelling between Whitehall and his favourite palace at Theobalds in Hertfordshire.
5. The earliest houses had been built on the north side of the street in the 1620s – early 1640s.¹ By c.1650 imposing terraces of brick-built houses characterised by high pilasters had been built by speculator William Newton on both sides of the street, which led to Great Queen Street being known in the 18th century as the '*first regular street in London*'.²

¹ Riley & Gomme 1914.

² Riley & Gomme 1914; Cherry & Pevsner 2002.

6. All the original 17th century houses have disappeared but some of their early-mid 18th century successors survive: Nos. 6, 27-29, 33-35 & 36-37.
7. The sites of Nos. 26 and 27 Great Queen Street were redeveloped and new houses built in the early 1720-30s; the architect and builder are unknown. Their construction dates were recorded on lead water cisterns dated 1725 (No.26) and 1733 (No. 27) (Figure 3).

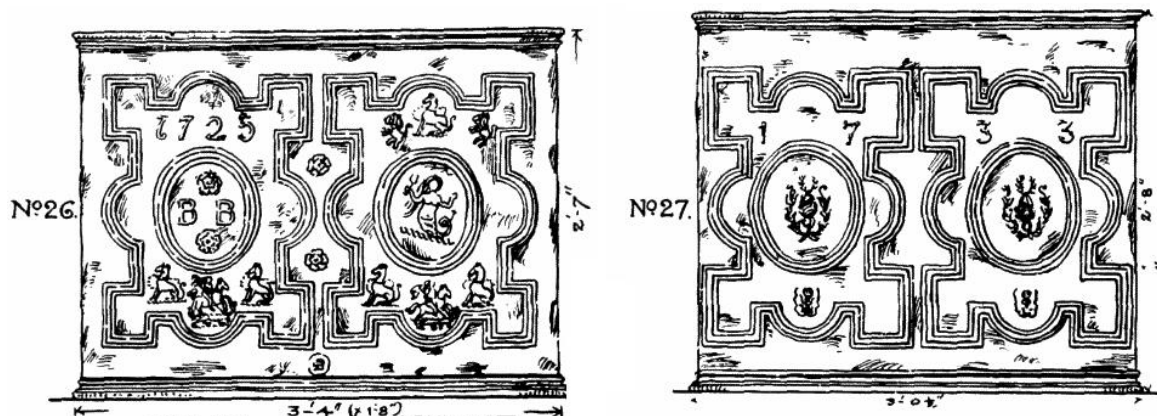


Figure 3. Dated lead water cisterns³ (not identified as yet within building)

8. *The Survey of London*, published in 1914, provides measured surveys not only of the water cisterns shown above, but also the doorcases of Nos. 27 and 28 (No. 26 had been demolished by this date) (Figure 4), and a stair bracket to the outer string of the staircase at No. 27 (Figure 5).

³ Riley & Gomme 1914: Plate 15.

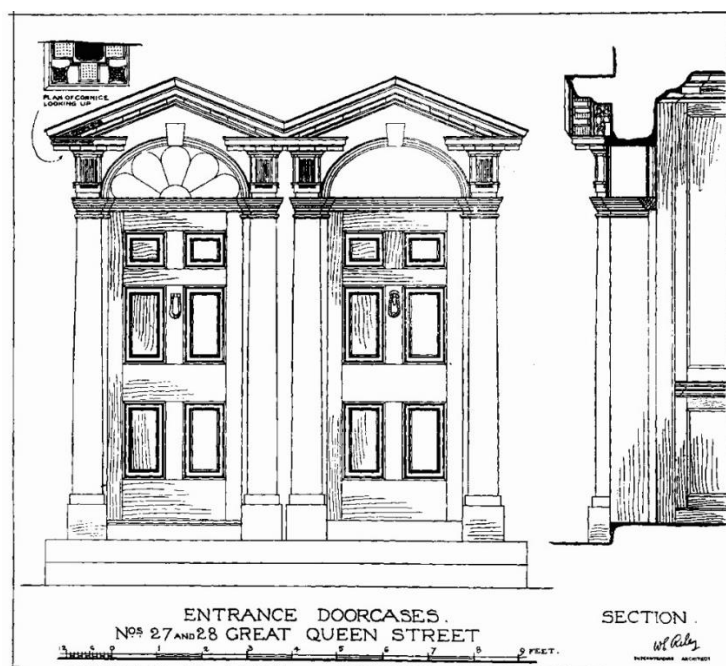


Figure 4. Entrance Doorcases to Nos. 27 & 18 Great Queen Street⁴



Figure 5. Deal stair bracket to outer string, 27 Great Queen Street⁵ and string today.

9. Contemporary maps, such as Stowe's Survey of the Parish of St Giles in 1720 and the 1746 Map of London by John Rocque, show blocks of buildings but not their individual footprints. The earliest to give such detail is Richard Horwood's map of 1792-9 (Figure 6). No. 26 was separated, at least at ground level, from No. 27 by an alley leading to a yard and outbuildings (probable stables) at the rear.

⁴ Riley & Gomme 1914 Plate 14.

⁵ Riley & Gomme 1914: Figure 5.

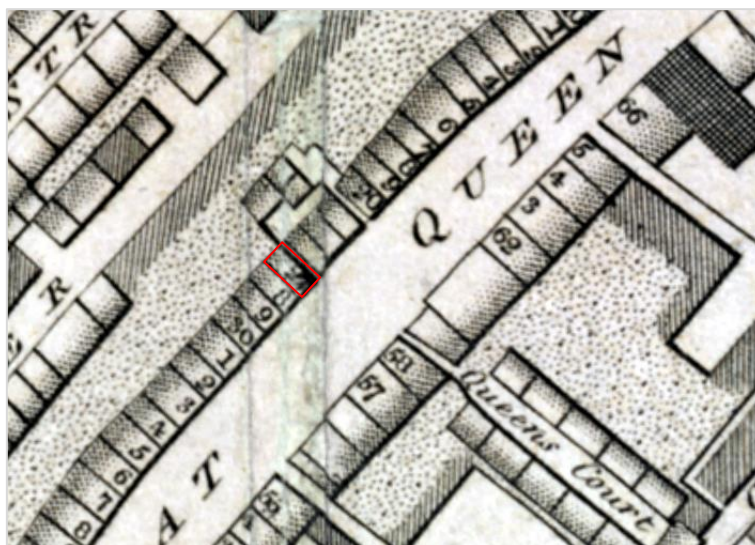


Figure 6. 1792-9. Richard Horwood's Map of London

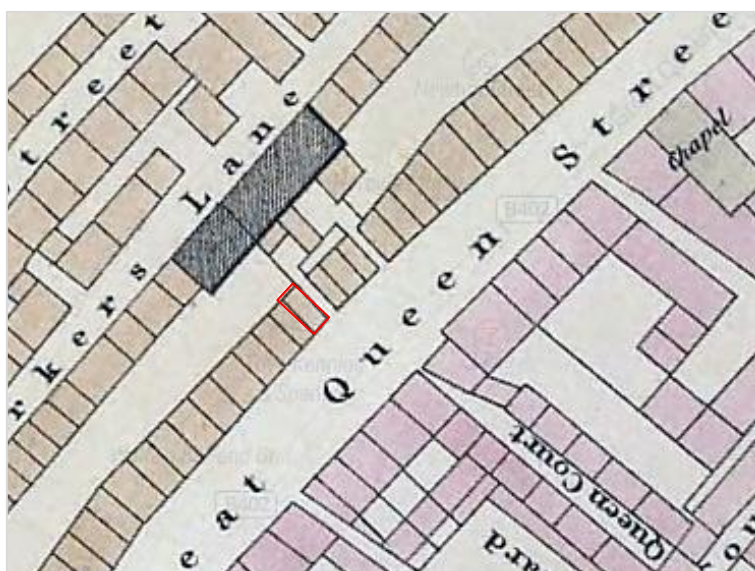


Figure 7. 1815. Plan of the Parishes of St Giles & St George Bloomsbury

10. The 1815 Plan of the Parishes of St Giles & St George Bloomsbury shows a similar layout with the alley between Nos. 26 and 27 leading to a yard with outbuildings at the rear. The land on the adjoining plot to the north, on the south side of Parkers Lane had been built-up by this time with two adjoining large buildings; they are shown hatched black on the plan indicating non-residential use (Figure 7).



Figure 8. 1875. Ordnance Survey 1:1056 scale map

11. There is no further large scale mapping available until the 1875 Ordnance Survey 1:1056 scale (Figure 8). In the intervening 60 years, the alley between Nos. 26 and 27 had been built over, as had the majority of land at the rear of the properties on the north side of Great Queen Street and south side of Parkers Lane.
12. The Insurance Plan drawn up by Chas E. Goad Ltd in 1887 provides details of the individual properties for the first time (Figure 9). The houses on the north side of Great Queen Street were brick built (shown in pink), 3½-stories in height under tiled roofs. No. 27, which extended as far as the rear property boundary to the north, with a light well and timber building to the south, was occupied by a bookbinder. Its neighbours were: No. 26 - Boot Last Factor, No 28 - Refinery & Smelting Works, and No. 29 – shop. The two large buildings backing onto these premises on the south side of Parker Street were identified as 'stables & warehouse' and a vacant warehouse.

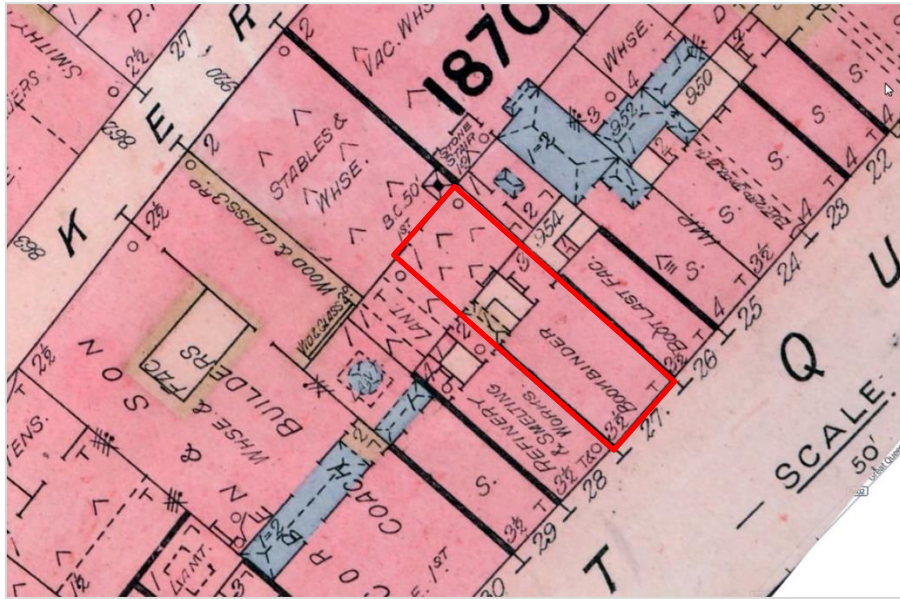


Figure 9. Charles E. Goad Ltd. Insurance Plan of London.

13. The 1895 Ordnance Survey 1:1056 scale map shows the groundplan largely unchanged (Figure 10).



Figure 10. 1895. Ordnance Survey 1:1056 scale map



Figure 11. 1972. No. 27 and the adjacent Royal Masonic Institution for Boys⁶



Figure 12. 1936 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 scale map (1914 revision)

⁶ London Picture Archive. Collage Ref. 72234.

14. The site of Nos. 24-14 Great Queen Street was redeveloped in c.1913 by Bird & Walters as offices of The Royal Masonic Institution for Boys (now Puerum House (Figure 11)).⁷ The Ordnance Survey 1914 revision of the 1:1056 scale map, published in 1936, still shows the footprint of No.26, although the adjacent property to the northeast (Nos. 24 & 25) had been extended to include the whole plot as far north as Parker Street (Figure 12).
15. No bomb damage was recorded.⁸

Significance

16. No.27 Great Queen Street is a grade II* listed building listed in a single entry alongside the adjacent numbers 28 and 29, its list description reads (emphasis on elements relating specifically to no.27):

*Terrace of 3 houses. c1733. Brown brick with red brick cornice below later parapet. Moulded brick band at 2nd floor level. Tiled roofs with dormers. Red dressings and segmental arches to flush frame sash windows, **Nos 27 & 28 having 3 windows**, No.29, 2 windows. 3 storeys, attics and basements. **No.27: stucco ground floor with band at 1st floor level. Wood doorcase with Doric pilasters with triglyphs over and open mutule pediments. Archivolt and key to semicircular fanlights. Panelled door. 2 square-headed, recessed sash windows to right. INTERIOR: original stair.** No.28: projecting earlier C19 shopfront with console bracketed entablature, window altered. Wood doorcase with Doric pilasters with triglyphs over and open mutule pediments. Archivolt and key to semicircular fanlights. Panelled door. INTERIOR: virtually complete panelled interior and original staircase. First floor front room has moulded plaster ceiling. Some H-L hinges. Entrance door has interesting collection of locks, latches and a chain. No.29: later C19 shopfront, window and house door altered. INTERIOR: original stair and most of original panelling. Lead rainwater head and pipe between Nos 28 and 29. (Survey of London: Vol. V, St Giles-in-the-Fields: London: -1914: 23).*

17. The building, at Grade II*, is considered of more than usual special interest, most likely reflecting the survival of these three early 18th century buildings in a street that has otherwise undergone quite a considerable degree of change over time.

⁷ Cherry & Pevsner 2002.

⁸ Ward 2015.

This higher grade signals a commensurately higher degree of sensitivity within this building and the requirement that future applications are designed to be conservation led and based on a sound understanding of where significance lies within this building.

18. It has high architectural and historic interest and the below discussion describes key elements of the building today that contribute to its interest. Key aspects area as follows:

- Much of the 'original' 18th century plan survives on the main floors adding to architectural and evidential interest. The outshut almost certainly had windows looking north blocked by later uses and the later structure at ground floor level. The stair in the building is original.
- The footprint of built form on the site, particularly to the rear, appears established by the 19th century, which would tally with the slightly later character of material in the rear structure. This contributes to illustrative historic interest showing how the site evolved and developed to accommodate new uses over time, these elements have lower architectural interest.
- 1982 works are detailed in drawings, evidence to later changes and more recent uses. These appear to have lead to the building's form much as it is today. The fabric dating to this period is – on balance of little innate value and almost certainly provides opportunities for improvement and enhancement within the building – particularly in refining and clarifying historic planform.
- 1990 works which are listed on the LPA planning search as 'decision deferred indefinitely' and for which there are no drawings available online. It may be of use to try and obtain these drawings as some of the current building form (including the Air handling structures) are not indicated on the 1982 drawings.

Description of key characteristics

19. The following identifies, on a floor by floor basis, the principal elements of historic survival and character within the building at no.2 Great Queen Street which contribute to heritage interest. Features which detract and reduce heritage value

are also identified. Commentary within this section includes advice on how positive enhancement of the building's heritage characteristics could be achieved but it is important to note that this advice does not immediately relate to the current application for change of use.

General

20. The building retains varying degrees of historic joinery. Almost all windows appear to be later replacements though the sash boxes and internal surrounds/architraves may well be older. They are multi pane sashes, mostly with horns, which would be unlikely on actual period survivals of this type. Shutters are varied with some older panelled leaves and other much later repairs or replacements. What is key, however, is that the building retains working shutters almost throughout. Rear windows and windows on the stair appear to be fixed or painted shut. Restoration of such features in the future would offer heritage benefit.
21. Doors are very mixed with later fire doors with applied mouldings obviously distinct from true panelled historic doors. Replacement of these less sympathetic features would offer a benefit.
22. Ceilings have been much altered with little evidence of historic plasterwork.
23. Various floating floors have been inserted, most obviously in the entrance hall but also elsewhere. The quality of these is nondescript and removal would be positive – certainly from the stair and hall landings.

Basement

24. This floor level is much altered and has little 'heritage' character. There are a multitude of built out walls and subdivision that obscures and confuses the historic planform, particularly to the rear (kitchenette). The front room should have a chimney stack legible (shown on the 1982 plans) but wall has been built out over it. This floor would have had limited ornament reflecting the lower social hierarchy within the building and illustrating historic function and social status.
25. Removal of later stud walling to restore closer to the historic planform would be a positive strand as well as securing greater floor area for future use.

Ground

26. This area retains good degree of period planform and various features of interest, stair, fireplaces, cornicing, some joinery including working shutters. The rear portion of the building has a markedly more practical character that to a degree illustrates and reflects the later uses of the building for commercial and manufacturing after its early domestic origins.

First

27. This level preserves a degree of historic character including fireplaces, cornicing, some elements of historic joinery. Where properly historic all such features should be retained and preserved/restored – this is a given for all levels where they survive.
28. Inserted service runs and air handling ducting are somewhat ‘intrusive’ and have inevitably affected historic fabric. Similarly surface mounted wiring is visually obvious within spaces.

Second

29. The planform here in the rear room has been much altered subdividing historically larger spaces and a simpler plan. Much of the wall fabric appears to be modern stud plasterwork. Door off the stair landing into the front room has been blocked. Current WC off the lobby blocks the corner fireplace. There is some cornice surviving and one fireplace of an ostensibly 18th century hob grate type, though it may be a later replica.
30. Reinstatement of historic plan and features – particularly removing inserted lobby, and re-exposing the corner fireplace and possibly reinstating the traditional door to the front room off the landing could offer benefits to historic legibility.

Third/Attic

31. This floor level probably originally had a partition in the front room, since removed, and has no surviving fire places extant though blocked openings are almost certainly present within the stacks.
32. Reinstating suitably diminutive fire places/grates could be considered a benefit if such were required to add positive strands to the scheme overall.
33. The windows at this level are not historic. They would almost certainly have been 3/3 sashes as next door at no.28 and must date to post 1972 when a photo in the

London Photo Archive shows the 3/3 arrangement. Reinstatement could again be a positive element to add if needed.

Proposed change or use

34. The building has most recently been used as offices. This has come with a degree of erosive works to subdivide spaces and provide the necessary functional utilities – WCs, cabling etc. The proposal seeks to gain consent for a change of use from offices to a private members club. The proposed use as a members club would involve use of the whole building by a single group, and the desirability of restoring more of a domestic welcoming character to the building. A future tenant has been found and subsequent applications will be coming forward for this use. Information on heritage values, summarised in this report, have already been passed to the client team to inform the development of future applications.
35. Retention of an office use would almost certainly require further works to upgrade and modernise the office uses, particularly increased utility and wiring associated with provision of fast internet and communications. These would be highly likely to involve either maintaining existing rather insensitive service provision and cabling or further interventions into the fabric. There is deemed a possibility that further subdivision of the building might arise to create smaller units that could be let individually. This assessment has come following a discussion with the current owners and their awareness of requirements after seeking tenants in recent periods. Though it is possible that a sensitive office scheme might be achieved, it is considered that there is also potential for greater impacts to heritage significance arising from such a use.
36. Though specific proposals are not yet developed the proposed change of use is considered suitable for such a building as no.27 Great Queen Street and to offer distinct potential for enhancement of the building based upon its heritage characteristics and significance. The possibility of ensuring restoration of something of a more domestic character rather than the somewhat utilitarian 'office' character the building has at present is an outcome that should be welcomed and can be considered a benefit of the current application for change of use.

Jody O'Reilly – Director
February 2022