
OUR REF: GKS/3103

STATEMENT HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE
48 BERWICK STREET, LONDON, W1F 8JD

MAY 2021

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This statement of historic significance is prepared in support of an application for Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission for works to the rear addition at 48 Berwick Street.
- 1.2** These proposals are explained in more detail in the Design and Access Statement prepared in support of this application.
- 1.3** This statement is prepared in accordance with the advice provided by Historic England in advice note 12, 2019.

2.0 DESIGNATION RECORDS OF THE HISTORIC ASSET.

- 2.1** The building is listed Grade II as described in the list as follows:

“terraced house. Early 18th-century, altered. Brown brick, slate roof, three storeys. Three windows wide. Ground floor has later 20th century shopfront. Recessed sash windows to upper floors, no glazing bar, under flat gauged arches. Parapet with coping. Cornet led rainwater head shared with number 47. Q.V, probably late 18th century. Original internal features include intact cornice to ground floor former parlour. Staircase with closed string but boxed in etc.”

- 2.2** The building was first listed on 23.11.1978.
- 2.3** The building is also located within the Soho Conservation Area and the Council has prepared a report titled Soho and Chinatown area audit and this has been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in 2005.
- 2.4** There are no specific references to 48 Berwick Street in this document. However, it is noted that it lies opposite a modern building on the corner of Noel Street and Berwick Street which is a late 20th-century six storey office building that relates poorly to the established character and scale of Soho.
- 2.5** It is noted that Number 47 the adjoining building to the south of the site is also a Listed Building and Numbers 49 to the north and also 53/54 and 55 are all identified as being unlisted buildings of merit within the conservation area.
- 2.6** It is apparent that 47 Berwick Street is also an early 18th-century house of similar style to Number 48.
- 2.7** It is also apparent that Number 46 also a Listed Building has a similar description to Numbers 47 and 48 and together they form a group and consistent terrace.

3.0 HISTORY OF THE BUILDING AND AREA

- 3.1** As noted in the list description and in the Soho and Chinatown Area Audit, the area was originally developed during the late 17th century to provide housing. The house on this site is described as early 18th-century so therefore slightly later.
- 3.2** The study indicates that the development to the west of Wardour Street where the application site is located, was generally a narrower street pattern than the area to the east of Wardour Street and with generally poor-quality housing.
- 3.3** During the 18th century, the development of London spread to the north and west and this led to the wealthier residents moving out. The buildings became occupied by less wealthy residents with the area being settled by immigrants from France and Greece in particular. It also developed an artistic community. It also states that many of the residents of the narrow narrower streets were tradesmen.
- 3.4** The application building was occupied from 1860 by W Sitch & Co., manufacturers of electrical fittings and art metal workers. They occupied the building until 2018 when they finally closed down. They apparently moved to these premises in 1860 from a nearby location so that they were a very old established business.
- 3.5** It is understood that a number of similar manufacturers occupied premises in Berwick Street. The rear yard of No 48 contained a forge as indicated by the presence of the chimney stack on the wall at the eastern end of the building. The forge was used by adjoining occupiers and there is a 'brick-up' doorway in the southern wall of the rear yard (see photo 12).
- 3.6** It is apparent that W Sitch & Co. occupied the whole of the building and that at some stage the boundary walls of the yard were raised in height (see photo 13) and the area was roofed over to provide a workshop which incorporated the forge for their metalwork activities.
- 3.7** During the company's occupation of the building over a period of almost 140 years, very little alteration was undertaken to the main part of the building other than routine repairs and some poor-quality repair work. However, there is evidence of fire damage within the building and there is anecdotal evidence of more than one fire occurring in the building.
- 3.8** It is also clear that the front and rear facades were rebuilt in about 1910 and this may have been as a result of a fire. The new doorway and windows at first floor level in the rear elevation were added at this time taking account of the design and materials used.
- 3.9** The provision of extensive storage of heavy items on the upper floors of the building led to some structural damage to the building. It is also apparent that the building suffered from water damage particularly within the roof timbers of the rear addition. There is also evidence of damage caused by leaking chemicals particularly to the rear wall and timbers of the main part of the building.
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3.10 At some stage probably during the last 20-30 years (judging by the material used) a canopy was provided on the flat roof of the rear addition to create a covered outside workspace.

3.11 The building was taken over by the present owner in 2018 who bought the premises together with all the old stock of the previous business. He has spent the best part of the year clearing the remaining stock from the building and carrying out repairs to the building to bring it into a good state.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HERITAGE ASSET.

4.1 As set out in the Guidance, the analysis of the setting of the heritage asset is only needed where changes to the setting are proposed which may affect the significance of the heritage asset.

4.2 In this case the change to the exterior of the rear of the building will occur as a result of the removal the modern canopy. This feature is of recent origin and not considered to be of any historic significance.

4.3 The rear addition is of some historic significance in that its forms part of the evolution of the building creating a covered workspace adjacent to the forge. In this context the chimney is of significance and the hood over the forge is also significant.

4.4 The various rooflights and glazed lantern were provided to allow natural light into the workspace and are therefore an important element of the building's development.

5.0 IMPACT ON THE SIGNIFICANCE

5.1 The removal of the canopy is of recent origins and will not result in any loss of historic significance.

5.2 It is considered that the removal and replacement of the existing rooflights and glazed lantern this application will not impact on the historic significance because these elements will be maintained.

5.3 The replacement of timbers and the lead flat roof covering will not result in any overall loss of significance.

5.4 The insertion of facilities for wc and washroom accommodation is in a part of the building with no particular features of historic significance and will not impact on the overall historic significance of the building.

5.5 The provision of the solar exchange panel on the roof is an upgrading that is fully reversible and will not harm the long-term historic significance of the building.

5.6 These improvements will provide a benefit to the future occupiers of this building.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1** It is therefore considered that the proposals do not involve the removal of any elements of historic significance and the works where they involve replacements will follow the pattern of the original features such that this historic significance is maintained.
- 6.2** It is not considered that this will result in any harmful impact on elements of historic significance.