



London's historic fire stations

EH and LFB Joint Guidance
March 2010



ENGLISH HERITAGE



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

FOREWORD

London Fire Brigade has been serving the capital for more than a century and in this time our city has changed almost beyond recognition. Alongside fighting fires, we now need to prepare for and deal with a wide range of incidents, from the threat posed by terrorism, to transport crashes and other major civil incidents like flooding. Fire stations play a huge role in allowing us to keep Londoners safe.

Our stations now need to allow for a more diverse workforce, as well as more advanced equipment and vehicles. As fire prevention and community safety are now a core part of our business, our stations must also provide space for firefighters to meet local people and pass on important advice.

Whilst our stations must develop at the same pace as our services, we recognise that it is also vital that we protect and preserve some of our older buildings and their heritage. These historical sites form a major part of our past and are something we are immensely proud of. It's a delicate balance to strike but we hope that our buildings reflect our heritage of public service and at the same time remain fit for purpose.

We welcome the publication of this guidance note and hope that by working closely with English Heritage and the conservation officers across London our fire stations are protected so that they can be appreciated by future generations.

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LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

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LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

The character and appearance of London has been shaped by many factors over time. One of the most significant has been the threat of fire and the early building codes established to minimise that threat have resulted in the familiar materials and valued scale that still survives in many parts of the capital. The emergence of an organised fire service in the nineteenth century has resulted in a proud legacy of civic structures that often combine architectural elegance with functional efficiency. These buildings are usually instantly recognisable and highly cherished by the communities they serve and their architectural and historic interest has been nationally recognised by designating many of them as listed buildings.

The history of the service and its buildings has been a story of constant change as the complexities of the city have evolved. New equipment, new ways of working and new responsibilities mean that fire stations are subject to constant pressure for adaptation. Often built to meet the particular requirements of their time, adaptation of fire stations presents challenges, but if they are to continue to be in effective use there has to be recognition that change is necessary. English Heritage believes that successful change in these circumstances can only be achieved through understanding the significance of the legacy.

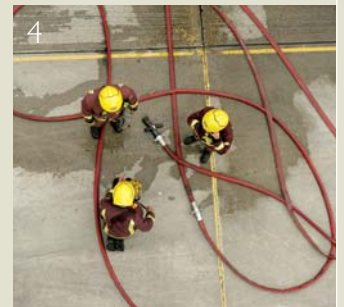
We are pleased to have had the opportunity to work with the Fire Service on this guidance. It is intended to help in formulating and deciding upon proposals for adaptation or change. There is no single solution that is appropriate for the range of different buildings across London, but there is a consistent approach that can be applied; one which relies on informed understanding. This joint guidance is provided by the Fire Service and English Heritage to help that process and ensure that these important and familiar features of London can continue to contribute positively to their communities by successfully accommodating a vital public service but also by continuing to contribute to the diverse character of the city.

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Top image: The firemen of High Barnet, in an image taken in 1922, with a 'new-fangled' motorised appliance.

Other images: Firefighters of the London Fire Brigade undertaking training exercises at Barking and Forest Hill.

I INTRODUCTION

This management guidance is intended to aid local authorities in the assessment of applications for alterations to historic fire stations whether they are listed, or unlisted and within conservation areas. By understanding what is important about these buildings, and understanding the unique requirements of the London Fire Brigade (LFB), it should be possible to successfully plan future changes that manage the delicate balance between conservation and service provision.

Whilst providing an effective fire and rescue service is an essential part of LFB's work, Listed Building Consent should be adhered to but should not cause significant restrictions to any building.

As the pressures and obligations of the service evolve, so the Brigade's buildings need to evolve with them. The purpose of this document is to enable the LFB and Local Planning Authorities to understand better the opportunities and constraints of these historic buildings, thereby enabling the process of building adaptation.

2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORIC FIRE STATIONS

To understand significance one must understand the buildings and their history. This section considers the historical development of the London Fire Brigade, focusing on architecture and service provision in order to understand what is special about these buildings.

2.1 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The construction of fire stations has historically followed a 'boom and bust' pattern, which is intrinsically tied into politics, economics and technological advancement.

Fire protection was originally organised by private insurance companies, with the first publicly funded fire service coming into existence in 1866 following an act of parliament. This was the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) and was led by Captain Eyre Massey Shaw. His political will resulted in a building boom which got into full swing by the late 1870s and continued into the 1880s. The MFB's buildings came under the Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW) and their architects, most notably Robert Pearsall, were responsible for the rich Gothic style that identified Victorian municipal buildings. None of these fire stations remains in active use by today's Brigade. After the London County Council (LCC) replaced the MBW in 1889, a decade followed where few new fire stations were built, although some large projects were completed, and a number of enlargements and adaptations were undertaken.

Another boom began at the turn of the century, with the appointment of a number of fine architects to the fire brigade branch of the LCC architects department, which designed some of the most unique and creative buildings, including Euston Road, West Hampstead and East Greenwich (all built 1901).

This boom was still underway when the concept of mechanised appliances was introduced. The first station to provide only mechanised appliances was the former Wapping station at Red Lion Street in 1905. After this, a new wave of rebuild and alteration began to bring stations up to standard.

This continued for a decade, although later stations from this time tend to follow more standardised patterns. The last horse drawn escape turned-out in November 1921, after which the use of horsed escapes and pumps ended and mechanisation was fully adopted.

The outbreak of the First World War stopped the building programme. The first inter war station was Peckham in 1925 – a very sober and functional structure. A mere six stations (including the very grand Lambeth HQ) were built in the 1920s and 1930s, and a further six in the 1960s.

In 1965 the LCC was replaced with the Greater London Council (GLC), and the Greater London area expanded. This meant former county stations now came under the LFB's remit, and a heritage of new stations was bequeathed. Many of these are Edwardian stations, although a large number were 1930s, with more from the 1950s and 1960s.

7 The Albert Embankment HQ, 1937, by E.P. Wheeler for the LCC, with the Lambeth River Station in the foreground. (This has since been replaced with a new river station.) The building is Grade II listed, but is no longer used as the administrative headquarters. An active fire station remains on the ground floor. The practice tower seen on the left is separately listed.

8 An undated image showing the stables at Knightsbridge fire station,

1907 by LCC architects. The doors on the left led directly through to the appliance bay to keep 'turn-out' time to a minimum. This fire station remains in active use although the horses and stabling are long since departed.

9 The interior of the engine room at Westminster fire station, 1901 by LCC architects, with an appliance facing the doors ready for action. This station remains in active use. 8 and 9 both show characteristic white glazed brick tiles.

A slower pace of growth continued through the 1970s, replacing outdated stations. Responsibility for this work was taken over by the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority (LFCDA) in 1986, an authority that was again replaced by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) under the Greater London Authority (GLA) post 2000.

2.2 PLAN FORM, LAYOUT AND FUNCTION

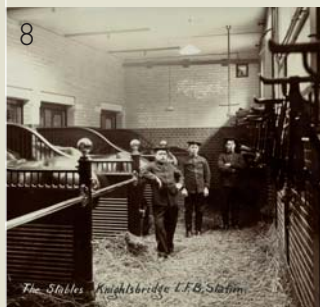
The design, style and plan-form of stations varies hugely, with unique station designs such as those at Belsize or Kensington. Some stations, such as Tooting or Waterloo (de-commissioned) follow a more standardised plan, but even these can still vary greatly from one another:

Some spatial relationships are however standardised, and form part of the intrinsic character of the fire station. The best example of this is the large open space of the 'appliance bays' (the main room on the ground floor where the fire engines, known as 'appliances' are kept). This space is usually adjoined by the watch room (the room where the communications equipment is kept and the nerve centre of any fire station). Separate entrances to the upper floors often adjoin the watch room, so one staffed room can control security for the separate parts of the building.

The appliance bays historically were organised with 'returns' so that appliances could be driven out of the main doors and brought in from a separate entrance, back through the yard and into the bays (the reason for this was that horses could not be reversed).

However, post-mechanisation, 'returns' were often either infilled, amended or the land was sold off. Physical evidence of this historic adaptation can often be seen, and the subsequent reordering of the station understood. Most stations retained access from the appliance bay to the rear yard.

The ground floor would have accommodated stables for horses, sometimes within a section of the appliance bay (such as at Euston or Knightsbridge,) and sometimes as separate buildings within the yard (such as at Fulham).

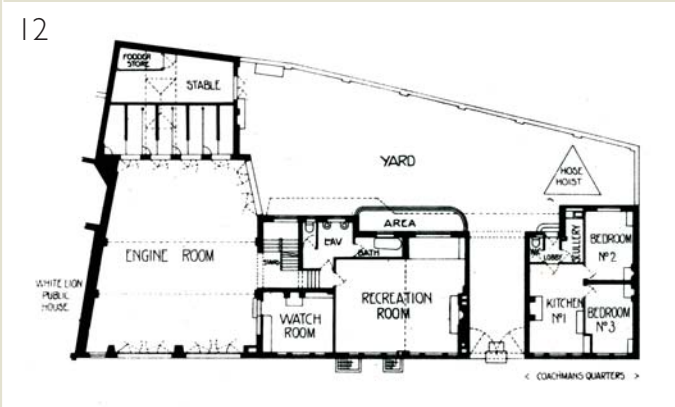


The yard would always have contained a range of outbuildings, for the store of fuel, feed and supplies integral to service provision. In some stations a workshop, often over two stories, would be incorporated. These have in many cases been cleared to provide parking spaces or to enlarge the yard, although some survive in whole or in part.

Separate firefighters' cottages within the yard were also once a common feature, although few survive and none are in use.

Drill towers are a common feature, especially in Victorian stations. They were historically used as practice towers and as hose hoists to dry out the old-fashioned hoses. Often these are described in historic documentation as 'watch towers', although it is widely believed that this is an inaccuracy and was an honorary title only. Hose hoists can sometimes be seen as separate pulley-and-hook systems either on the external faces of buildings, or within the stairwells.

A well known element of the fire station is the pole. These were introduced after 1904 following an LCC 'fact finding' trip to the New York Fire Department. They subsequently became a feature in every station. They would commonly run a floor at a time from the very top floor of the building down to the appliance bay. In larger stations there may have been two or three poles arriving on the ground floor.



The pole is still used by today's firefighters although the older pole houses are no longer in operation as they fall below modern safety requirements. Whilst some stations have seen them removed, remnants can often be located, such as the opening in the ceiling, the joinery details that once formed the closet in which they were housed, or even the ceiling brackets, which often survive in situ. The associated joinery is commonly of a good quality, and often features characteristic detailing or lettering, such as at Westminster station or the Lambeth station part of former Brigade headquarters.

Most stations feature a mess room or recreation room, which will often be fitted out with a good quality fireplace and over-mantle or timber panelling, and could be located on the ground or first floor. The first of these spaces will usually adjoin a kitchen, with larger stations often having more than one of these spaces. The second mess room would commonly be a billiards room. Built-in benches and storage for billiard cues can sometimes still be found, for example at Knightsbridge or Belsize.

Upper floors were originally laid out as residential accommodation for staff, with a mix of cubicles and flats of varying sizes. Communal facilities such as laundry rooms and washing facilities were also a common feature.

Many stations, particularly those from circa 1900 onwards, are organised with balcony access to the rear, allowing separate entrances for flats located above the station and originally designed for use by station staff.

10 Former fire station in Tranquil Vale, Blackheath, 1871 by the MBW under superintending architect Alfred Mott. This building shows that the style of earlier stations was far more industrial than the LCC stations. This building survives, de-commissioned.

11 Lee Green fire station of 1905 by LCC architects, the first station built for motorised appliances. This building is characteristic of the standard house-style of the LCC, with red brick and Portland

stone dressings. This fire station remains in active use.

12 Floorplan of the former Vauxhall fire station, built 1902 by LCC architects. This building was de-commissioned and demolished. The 'return' (gated entrance to the yard) was once a common feature used to bring horses through, as they were stabled facing towards the engine room doors. 'Returns' and stables have long since gone, but the centralised watch room remains a feature of fire station design.

2.3 ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The architectural language used to express the fire station has been through a number of changes of fashion. Stations of the 1860s and 1870s are plain with flat façades and simple roof profiles. They have the appearance of the cart shed or, if larger, the warehouse. None of these remains in use, although examples may be seen in Renfrew Road, SE11 or Clapham Green.

Later Victorian stations, from about 1880 onwards, become much bigger and more decorative. The former stations at Manchester Square or Bethnal Green demonstrate this very well. The only station from this time that remains operational is Fulham, built 1895-6 and still dominating the streetscape today.

After 1900, and under the LCC architects department, a revolution in fire station design began. The former station at Redcross Street, EC1 used the designs successfully applied by the LCC to large scale housing projects. This was an expression of British design and civic pride, intended as the development of a new architectural style. Form and material were of critical importance, hence the instantly recognisable 'brand' of London's early 20th century civic buildings. It is from this period, 1900 to 1916, that the vast majority of today's operational historic fire stations date, and whilst materials and details are formulaically repeated, the architectural style of fire stations of this time varies considerably.

The deployment of architectural detailing ranging from Classical and Queen Anne through to Arts and Crafts can be seen producing stations that resemble suburban mansions. The crucial emphasis seems to be designing for the location – hence Cannon Street station of 1906 had a façade like a city bank, whilst Belsize of 1916 emulates the artists' studios of its neighbourhood.

2.4 MATERIALS

Fire stations are characterised by plain, robust and functional elevations.

The appearance of the street frontage, and often also of the return elevations of a fire station are without

13 Characteristic brown glazed brick tiles in the stairwell of West Hampstead fire station of 1901 by W.A. Scott. Also the black banisters and the arched-headed opening on the left are typical details that can be seen repeated throughout the LCC's pre-war fire stations. This station remains in active use.

14 The repeated use of the same materials is evident here at the Westminster fire station, 1901

by LCC architects, where banded Portland stone and red brickwork sit between red brick pilasters over a Portland stone ground floor treatment. The timber window surrounds are unusually painted green here. Also note the attractively applied individual bronzed lettering, another typical detail seen at many active and former fire stations.

exception a considered and balanced design. Red brick and Portland stone dressings are the typical elevational materials, although this does vary with some of the more exceptional designs. Ground floor treatment externally is almost exclusively banded or rusticated Portland stone. Many original appliance bay doors have been replaced in modern materials and with self-opening mechanisms, to benefit turn-out times.

Within the appliance bays, original sets and ironstone floors have been systematically replaced with modern, cream coloured, non-slip tiles.

Original internal wall coverings traditionally feature glazed brick tiles. These are practicable, functional and characteristic of the use, history and design intentions of the Brigade historically. For reason of their practicality, these usually survive.

Staircases tend to be plain concrete with very simple black handrails, fitting into the robust and functional character of the buildings.

A commonly used device for internal walls was the part-glazed timber screen. These are often seen between the watch room and the appliance bay, and in other locations where internal light or views were of importance. These screens are characteristic and of interest, although they have often been left as remnants as the operational use of the buildings has changed.

A feature once standard was the fire lamp, appended to the outside of the building, or positioned on a stone gate or railing pier. These have fallen from use, and therefore they are becoming rarer.

2.5 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

As adaptations to historic fire stations have often been made in an honest and robust fashion, stations are commonly rich in physical evidence that demonstrates the former function of their spaces. Blocked in doorways, fragments of stable fittings and pole-drops, remnants of former layouts and redundant features such as communal washing facilities often



survive. These yield evidence of the history of the Brigade and the building. This evidence has value and future adaptations should respect, retain and add to this historic development.

The extant stations have value in the information they can provide by association. The pattern and spread of their locations across the city, and the size of certain stations in certain places, can tell the story of where there was a greater or lesser need for stations historically, and how London has grown and changed.

Also, the pomp and pride expressed in the historic design of fire stations has value, as it enshrines the ambition, design sensibilities and drive of both the Brigade and its architects. The evolution in architectural design of fire stations correlates to the changes in the governing bodies responsible for delivering their architecture – from the Victorian ambition of the MBW to the confidence of the Edwardian LCC and the functionalism of the 20th century GLC, LFCDA and now LFEPA.

Architectural and artistic expression adds a great deal of significance. The designs of stations are often exuberant and stylized. As both an historical document and an artistic expression they have value on an individual basis, as a thematic building type, and as part of the streetscape and townscape into which they are individually built.

It is clear that fire stations are often highly tailored design solutions that respond to their localities, exploiting plan form and materials to create a contextual link to different areas and locations.

Station interiors are generally rather plain, although this is considered part of their robust and functional character. The contrast between plain interiors and some of the more decorative exteriors, such as Brixton or Euston, has significance in its own right.

The Brigade's unique civic capacity means that historic station buildings often play an important role in a community's shared memory. Collective local experience and memory add an additional layer of significance to these buildings.

3 CONSTRAINTS

The evolution of service provision has been rendering stations obsolete since the earliest days of the Brigade. This is not a new phenomenon. From the Brigade's oldest active station, Clerkenwell, through to those that are relatively recently built, the changing requirements of service provision can exceed the capacity of historic buildings.

The preferred use of stations has changed over time. Prior to the introduction in 1920 of the non-residential shift system, firefighters usually lived full-time in the upper floors of the station. Stations were therefore constructed with self-contained flats for married firefighters, and in addition, cubicles for single firefighters. These cubicles were subsequently cleared in preference of dormitories, which in turn needed to be adapted to accommodate increasing numbers of female firefighters.

Because of these histories, upper floors tend to contain a mixture of large dormitory rooms or small cubicles for single firefighters, and in addition, self-contained flats varying in size but commonly containing small compartmentalised spaces – usually accessed from rear balconies and/or by a single common staircase. Accommodation above second floor level is usually of little or no use operationally given the remoteness from the operational areas on the ground floor of the station.

In some larger stations grand apartments can be found. The fourth floor at Euston fire station in Euston Road demonstrates this. These heavily compartmentalised spaces do not often lend themselves easily to alternative uses, which is a problem that has faced the Brigade since the 1930s.

The former flats have often been given over to office accommodation and in many cases have been significantly amended. This has led to awkward layouts, redundant spaces and inoperable floor plans. In two stations,

Knightsbridge and Euston, some parts of the upper floors have successfully been separated into private flats. Whilst this can work well, it does depend upon separate access and circulation, which has not been achievable in other operational stations.

Often incremental growth of a station, such as at Clerkenwell or Southwark, means the layout of spaces can become irregular or illogical, and can cause certain parts of the building to either be very over crowded, or under used.

The Brigade went through a transition in the early part of the 20th century from horse-drawn to mechanised appliances. All stations designed prior to 1921 were originally intended to accommodate horses. Remnants of this tradition, in plan-form, materials and details, remain as redundant features in many stations today.

The development of motorised appliances has led to an increase in their size. Historic stations were not expected to accommodate such large appliances, and as such, the appliance bay doors are frequently too small. Internally, the bays are often insufficiently wide, with structural piers causing obstacles to the safe accommodation of modern appliances. Additionally, the limited size of bays causes problems with health and safety requirements for working spaces around appliances, and space for proper manual handling procedures.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF MODERN FIRE BRIGADE SERVICES

Common problems arising are:

- Doors and structural bays constrain the width and operation of appliances. In many cases doors and even door-openings have been altered historically. If this is the case, further alterations that are designed within the spirit of the building may be acceptable.
- Doors, entranceways and passing traffic restrict the reversing in of vehicles. Although highway configuration is not strictly an historic buildings matter, this issue is of vital importance to the Brigade. The inability to adapt historic buildings necessitates the continued operation of difficult and dangerous ingress and egress points for appliances and other vehicles.
- Ground floor stores – modern stations need a number of stores and wash-down facilities to be located directly adjacent to the appliance bays, which is often not possible in constrained historic buildings. These include gear rooms, drying rooms, specialist

15 The practice tower at West Hampstead fire station, 1901 by W.A. Scott. The roughcast render and red bricks tie in with the architectural treatment of the whole building, although the tower's copper roof structure stands out, giving this otherwise very discrete building

a distinctive landmark. The practice tower is currently unused as it is restrictively narrow and located on the edge of this tightly hemmed-in site.

16 A modern firefighter undertaking a practice exercise at Barking fire station.



equipment stores for resilience units, sandbag stores and breathing apparatus rooms. Incorporating these as close as possible to the appliance bay should be a priority. Listed building consent practice would normally place retention of historic plan form in precedence over the incorporation of these needs; however, flexibility should be applied.

- Circulation – buildings that have been significantly altered are often impractical in terms of circulation and use. Rationalisation of circulation could be considered in relation to other organisational restructuring, but should be sympathetic to the original plan form of the building where possible.

At some stations with balcony access to the rear, a glazed atrium has been considered to improve internal circulation and create additional internal space at ground level. Proposals for these should be individually assessed, but not dismissed out of hand, as in some locations this could be a logical and successful modern intervention. At Westminster, the balconies have been glazed in. Whilst the handling of this is not, in this instance, sympathetic to the historic building, the principle could work well as a modern lightweight intervention.

- Training facilities – training rooms and yards for physical training are commonly insufficient in terms of space. The use of space in a flexible manner should be considered.
- Accommodation space – layouts of historic buildings can cause constraints to person and office accommodation. Creative solutions should be sought and encouraged.
- Signage is an important and necessary factor for an operational fire station. When applying new signage and graphic to stations of historic interest, it will be necessary to consider the most appropriate way to clearly display new signs without compromising the building's setting or sacrificing any historic signage that may be of significance. Even where it is redundant, historic signage normally contributes to an historic building, and should be retained. Whilst new signage will be of a consistent design, signage strategies

(positioning, location etc.) for each historic station will need to be considered carefully on a case by case basis. Local authorities should help applicants to identify suitable solutions that deliver the wayfinding needs with the least harm.

- Out dated towers and hose hoists that have become redundant require maintenance but have no function or benefit. These are highly characteristic details of historic stations and normally should be retained.
- The Brigade is committed to green issues and sustainability. Applications for energy saving features such as secondary glazing, solar panels, micro-generation and wind turbines will be increasingly submitted. General support of the principle of cutting carbon emissions would be expected, and local authorities should help applicants to identify solutions that deliver climate change mitigation with the least harm to the significance of the heritage asset and its setting.

As each station is organised differently, and each station raises different issues, therefore each of the points above will require sensitive, flexible and creative design solutions on a case by case basis.



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The Local Authority conservation officer and design team will need to work with the LFB to solve any potential conflict between historic conservation and operational necessity. They will need to apply flexibility and consider bespoke solutions to the needs of individual stations.

4 STATUTORY CONTROLS

As Heritage Assets, any statutorily listed buildings are protected by national legislation as laid out in Government Guidance PPS15, which means that works to alter them may require listed building consent.

The relevant sections from Part Three of this document relate to Listed Building Controls, and can be found here: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/ppg15>

Local Authority Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) on Listed Building Controls may have been adopted and therefore may apply to certain stations in certain boroughs; although SPDs are usually generic and not specifically written in relation to buildings that provide emergency services.

This building type and the particular issues of service provision may mean that it is necessary not to comply with local SPD policies. This must be considered on a case by case basis. Local Authorities should be prepared to consider circumstances where designs do not comply with SPD guidance.

Belsize fire station, Lancaster Grove, 1914-15 by C.C. Winmill. This building abounds with unusual detail, making it one of the most intact and interesting of all of the LCC fire stations. This fire station remains in active use.

17 The appliance bay front with tall dormer windows above that relate the building to its architectural context.

18 A tiled overmantle panel to the chimney breast of the recreation room.

19 Disused halter pegs, originally used to hang harnesses in the appliance bays. These commonly survive as they are unobtrusive and handy to hang ladders and other equipment from.

20 Hand painted individual lettering demarks a run of pegs in the kit room. This is a rare survival, as these details have mostly been replaced. Where items like this do survive, their retention adds to the character of the building, and should be preserved.

5 WHAT SHOULD BE PROTECTED?

When planning or assessing proposed alterations to historic or listed fire stations, it is essential that their significance is understood, and that new work or adaptation preserves or enhances the special interest of the building.

This section discusses special interest, and considers how, in some common situations, steps may be taken to preserve this without compromising modernisation.

5.1 PLAN FORM

The plan form of stations is an important aspect of their significance. However, adapting stations to modern use would usually necessitate some alterations to plan form. A balance must, therefore, be struck.

The relationship of appliance bay, watch room, entrances and stores is of historic importance and presumption is in favour of retaining this form where possible. However, the majority of older stations have problems with the size of the appliance bay, and if modern requirements cannot be accommodated they can remain a hindrance to efficient operation and may need to be adapted. Additional accommodation or amendments may be successfully designed within this historic framework, for example the new public entrance at Kensington. The provision of the necessary ground floor stores should be given some priority, as discussed in section three.

The mess room, billiard room or other recreation spaces should be kept intact – subdivision of these spaces should be avoided where possible. Reuse of a mess room as a dormitory, locker room, training room or other use that keeps the open space intact should be considered.

In respect of upper floors, usually built as residential flats, there are often characteristic, if plain, details here – in particular fireplaces and built-in alcove cupboards. In reordering upper floors, consideration should be given where possible to the retention of these items, and efforts made to avoid compromising them.

These spaces have often accommodated alterations historically, and future alterations should be (where possible) designed in previously compromised spaces, leaving historically intact spaces as they are.

If major alteration is unavoidable, then the potential for one 'flat' to be kept within a station as an illustration of the historic layout should be explored. There may then be more flexibility with regard other spaces, although it should be noted that the solid masonry walls are likely to be load-bearing and difficult to move and such major intervention would require thorough justification.

5.2 REDUNDANT DETAILING

Where possible historic details that have fallen out of use should be retained as they have value and significance. Items such as halter pegs, hose hoist hooks, signage (be it external stone cut or bronze lettered station signage or rare survivals such as internal hand painted signage or numbering), poles and associated joinery, fireplaces etc. should be retained.

When it comes to larger redundant spaces, for instance the historic communal laundry facilities at Clerkenwell, their historic and illustrative values should be carefully considered. Where they cannot be brought back into use, they will need to be retained.

5.3 MATERIALS

The historic palette of materials for fire stations reinforces the functionality from which their character is derived. These materials should be respected, and modern interventions should respond to them e.g. glazed brick, non-slip tiles, timber and glass partitions, plain concrete stairs and corridors, plain black railings, timber doors and windows.

Materials should be retained wherever possible, or replaced on a like for like basis. New work should aim to use these materials if possible.

Alterations to main street elevations or prominent flanks are unlikely to be acceptable. Some stations which are of unique and unusual designs may well be impossible to extend. If this is the case the LFB has only two options – demolition and rebuild or the purchase of an alternative suitable site within the station's coverage area.

5.4 FUNCTIONALITY

Historically fire stations were constructed in a plain and functional manner, to be robust, working spaces. For this reason, services are commonly run across ceilings in appliance bays. This is a tangible part of the character of these spaces, and therefore new service routing should be allowed to follow this historic precedent.

This would not apply to 'higher end' areas such as mess rooms or formerly residential spaces.

6 DESIGNING FOR THE FUTURE OF AN HISTORIC FIRE STATION

6.1 FOR LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

First, the Brigade must consider whether they can continue to maintain an historic or listed station in active use. If constraints on the operations are excessive, it may be necessary to decommission the station and relocate. This has many associated problems: coverage patterns, land values, building costs etc., but once a station has reached the end of its active life, it falls to the LFB to identify this.

If it is decided that operations are to continue within an historic station, a review of the accommodation should be undertaken, identifying what plan form, materials and details are of significance.

The second step is to consider what operational constraints are being caused and where, in order to try and design out problems. The third step is to decide what different uses, functions or layouts are required.

A proposal for alterations should then be designed, avoiding areas or items of significance and maintaining the characteristic materials and architectural style of the individual station. Early consultation with the local authority and English Heritage should be sought.

Creative uses for upper floor spaces must be considered. As the presumption will always be in favour of retention rather than replacement, lower impact proposals should be put forward wherever possible.

Keeping an historic fire station in active use should not be dismissed as problematic – the stations have great significance and the historical association of continued use is a valuable asset. Retaining historic stations will require creative and flexible solutions.

6.2 FOR THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

For conservation officers, it is important to understand the fire station in respect of its historic role, heritage value, and areas or items of significance. Redundant features or layouts should remain legible, items of significance should be protected, and new works or details should also be legible as alterations, whilst being designed to fit within the character of the station – both in respect of the architectural style of any particular station, and the functionalist manner characteristic of this building type.

Amendments to the main doors, and the provision of the appropriate stores at ground floor level should be prioritised, unless they would directly cause significant or unacceptable harm to an item or area of particularly special interest.

It is worth spending extra time trying to understand the need for any proposed alteration. If the need for change is fundamental to the operation of the fire station, then creative and flexible solutions that retain character should be thoroughly explored. If not, alternative solutions or locations should be considered.

The retention of use is a priority, which may mean that certain flexibilities in accommodating change should be accepted where otherwise they would not be.

7 CONVERTING DE-COMMISSIONED FIRE STATIONS

Many fire stations that are no longer operating are also listed buildings and within conservation areas. Whilst the pressures of service provision are removed from de-commissioned stations, the same layers of significance can be attributed.

Local Authorities should seek to preserve the significant qualities of former stations when handling applications relating to converted stations.

Issues for consideration:

- Can a suitable new use be found that will keep the appliance bay and yard as open spaces?
- Can the plan form of the watch room be retained for legibility?
- Can appliance bay doors be retained with modern glazing behind them?
- Presumption should be in favour of retaining internal detailing and materials unless good justification for its loss can be demonstrated.

- Upper floors were usually designed as residential flats, and the best use for a historic building will often be that for which it is originally designed. Can upper floors be put back into residential use? Subsequent alterations may have changed them – is it simpler to reinstate them? Reused flats should respect original details such as plan form, fireplaces, internal doors, skirting and cornice.
- Can the former residential entrance be reused for the upper floors? Can the circulation be organised by using the stair to give access to the rear balconies?
- The mess room and kitchen, if on an upper floor, may be difficult to handle without subdivision. Can an imaginative alternative use be found?
- Whilst historic alterations (such as blocked-in doors or evidence of stables) are of value, some may be modern alterations that detract from the special interest of the building. Can these be 'unpicked' to reinstate some of the special interest?
- Can flexibility be applied to the mix of residential units, given the importance of retaining plan form and working within the framework of the historic building?
- If there is an historic watch tower built as part of the overall design of the building, it will require retention. Is it possible or practicable to retain it as an accessible feature? Bear in mind that it will require maintenance, and if the building is in residential use, that a service charge may need to be signed up to by residents to upkeep the building.
- Roof profiles of fire stations are most commonly an integral part of the overall design. It will be unlikely that adding any additional stories or interrupting the roof profiles will be acceptable.

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