18-20 BOROUGH ROAD, KINGSTON UPON THAMES
ASSESSMENT FOR POTENTIAL DESIGNATION AS A BUILDING OF TOWNSCAPE MERIT

for
ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES

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May 2015
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report supplements the report entitled *Borough Road, Arthur Road and Princes Road, Kingston Upon Thames: Assessment Of Potential For Heritage Designation*, by Drury McPherson Partnership for the Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames, 2015. It has been produced by Michael Copeman. In addition to the sources cited in the initial report, it draws on and to the Council's historic planning and building control plans, leases and other material in the Borough archives and published sources.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 18-20 Borough Road (part of Park Works) Kingston upon Thames, was identified as a building potentially meriting inclusion on the local list of Buildings of Townscape Merit during the process of evaluating of Princes, Borough and Arthur Roads for possible designation as a Local Area of Special Character.

2.2 Buildings of Townscape Merit (or locally listed buildings) are those, which although not of the special architectural or historic interest quality that would justify their inclusion on the statutory list, nonetheless add to the richness of the local built environment and contribute to local distinctiveness. The Council has formulated policies for their protection (CS8 and DM12) and a guidance document *Procedure for Designating Buildings of Townscape Merit (BTM)*, June 2014, which supports the implementation of the Core Strategy policies.

2.3 This report assesses the eligibility of 18-20 Borough Road, against the designation criteria contained in the document, and recommends that the building should be added to the local list as a Building of Townscape Merit.

2.4 Buildings of Townscape Merit in Kingston are designated according to the following criteria:
   1. Any building, not statutorily listed, which can be proved to date from before 1840.
   2. Selected buildings, not statutorily listed, dating from between 1840-1939 of definite quality and character. These are assessed by whether a building comes under one or more of the following categories:
      (a) was included as Grade III\(^1\) on the former statutory list;
      (b) retains a substantial portion of original features;
      (c) has group value;
      (d) has association with well known characters or events;
      (e) displays special value within a certain type or illustrates social, economic or industrial history (e.g. railway stations, schools, almshouses, etc);
      (f) by reason of its appropriateness to the site and inter-relationship with

\(^1\) The non-statutory listing category abolished in 1970.
other buildings makes a unique contribution to the townscape.

2.5 Post 1939 buildings, not statutorily listed, which are exceptionally good examples of the architectural output of the period and/or are the work of principal architects.

3 HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

3.1 18-20 Borough Road forms part of a factory known as Park Works, which occupy the backlands between Borough Road and Brunswick Road. 18-20 Borough Road, along with 14-16 and 22-24, all now part of Park Works, were originally occupied by three pairs of semi-detached houses, built before 1865 and demolished in the mid-20th century to make way for Symonds enlarged factory.

3.2 18-20 Borough Road itself is a small building attached to the industrial premises known as Park Works. It dates from the late 1930s but its special interest and townscape merit derive principally from the World-War Two air-raid watchers' post that surmounts the street (approximate north) elevation, which was built in 1939\(^2\), either as a single phase of construction or as an addition to a recently constructed office building. The watching post is a small rectangular tower in the same English Bond brickwork as the rest of the factory, with concrete -framed viewing slits, designed to offer some protection for shrapnel, to each elevation.

3.3 The earliest parts of the factory complex date from the late 19th century, but most was built during the 1930s. From c1922\(^3\) it was the premises of HD Symonds & Co. Ltd., insulating material manufacturers. The 1932 Ordnance Survey map shows that the works occupied the 16-18 Park Road and a large shed to their rear. By 1959 the works occupied almost the whole of the backlands between Park Road and the former school (now Greek Orthodox Church) on the east side of Borough Road, adjacent to no. 24. The Council's planning and building control records show that the principal existing building to the rear of 16-18 Park Road with a tall chimney on its east side, was enlarged between 1930-32\(^4\). A workshop with a north-light roof was built behind what were then three pairs of semi-detached houses at 14-24 Borough Road in 1933.\(^5\)

3.4 Plans for the replacement the pair of houses at 18-20 Borough Road and their gardens were submitted to the Council in September 1939- almost

\(^2\) Kingston upon Thames Building Control application ref. 1941: 11367
\(^3\) Kelly's Directory Kingston Upon Thames, 1920, 1922
\(^4\) Kingston upon Thames Building Control application ref. 1930-32: 8551
\(^5\) Kingston upon Thames Building Control application ref. 1932: 8997
immediately after the outbreak of war (Fig. 2). The new building included the present 18-20 Borough Road and four largely windowless areas marked "Refuge". Refuge no. 1 was on the ground floor of the block to at 18-20 Borough Road, Nos. 2 and 3 flanked the store behind that and No. 4 was a detached building in the rear yard. The watchers' post was added to the roof of 18-20 Borough Road in early 1941 (Fig. 3).

3.5 All of these 1930s buildings are constructed in utilitarian, hard orange-red brick, with a concrete floor slabs and steel-framed "Crittal" windows, typical of their date. The circular window to the ground floor west elevation of no. 18-20 is an unusual feature in this industrial context. 18-20 Borough Road has a flat roof and banded decoration to the first floor balcony doorway characteristic of the 1930s Moderne style.

3.6 HD Symonds & Co. Ltd. made specialist glass fibre fabrics for aircraft insulation. The products were significant to the war effort, as it is understood that the insulating materials were used in the manufacture of aircraft, a key industry in the area, the best known local company being Hawker Siddeley. Symonds is listed in Emergency Control File Controllers File 5 ("list of factories where any damage caused by enemy action was reported to the government"). Factories such as this, making products that were important to the war effort, were expected to maintain production even during air raids and only when there was immediate danger would staff shelter. For this reason, air-raid watching posts were built, to be used in association with the air raid shelters, to ensure that production was halted only when there was imminent danger in the immediate locality and the gap between the air-raid warning and all-clear was as short as possible. Here the shelters or refuges occupy much of the ground floor and were evidently designed to be as close to the production areas as possible, rather than underground, and as a result they can have offered only limited protection.

3.7 The detached shelter in the rear yard was converted to use as a workshop in 1946. The present building at 14-16 Borough Road was built between 1946 and 1955. Although 14-16 Borough Road is of a very similar design to 18-20, it is of later date and without the air-raid watcher's post it is not of architectural or historic interest. The present 22-24 Borough Road is first shown on the 1969-71 Ordnance Survey map. The 1955 Ordnance Survey identifies the works as producing "Electrical Insulation". Symonds continued to occupy the site until 1971.

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6 Kingston upon Thames Building Control application ref. 1935: 11325
7 Kingston upon Thames Building Control application ref. 1939: 11367
8 Butters S., That Famous Place, Kingston University Press, 2013 p.363
9 Kingston upon Thames local history archives ref. KT33/1/1
11 Kingston upon Thames Building Control application ref. 1946: 11572
4 ASSESSMENT

4.1 The criteria that apply to 18-20 Borough Road are 2(b); 2(c); 2(d); 2(e) 2(f) and 3. The building was not included on the old grade III list, which was extremely selective with regard to 20th century industrial architecture. Neither the factory itself nor its war-time additions would have been considered for listing prior to 1970.

4.2 Criterion 2(b)
The block at 18-20 Borough Road appears to be substantially unaltered externally. The watching post appears to be intact. The building retains its steel-framed windows.

4.3 Criterion 2(c)
18-20 Borough Road has group value with the rest of the street, despite its an industrial and civil defence functions. The building occupies the site of a pair of mid-Victorian houses. Its scale and materials conform broadly to the scale and height of the surrounding proposed Local Area of Special Character that encompasses Princes, Borough and Arthur Roads. It forms part of a group with the rest of the factory.

4.4 Criterion 2(d)
As a World War Two civil defence structure that served a factory contributing to the war effort, 18-20 Borough Road is associated with both a great national event that is still deeply resonant today, and with the local community's part in the war. The aircraft industry is particularly significant locally and to the national struggle. The building sheds light on the way in which the war effort was inseparable from the Home Front. The factory brought the danger of the front line to a quiet residential backwater, and the watching post is a visible monument to those times and helps tell the story of this community.

4.5 Criterion 2(e)
There has not been a comprehensive national survey of factory watching posts or similar buildings\textsuperscript{12}, so its rarity in the national context is difficult to judge. Its design is fairly standard, albeit as an unusual building type. Wartime design and construction aimed at utility and strength-decoration was superfluous- and these are expressed in this example. However, such buildings are certainly uncommon today, and no other examples are known to survive locally.

4.6 Criterion 2(f)
The building is an unusual building type. It is a prominent landmark and can be seen from both ends of the street. As noted, its scale is sympathetic to

\textsuperscript{12} Listing Selection Guide, English Heritage, 2011
the residential neighbourhood of which it is a part. As such it adds historic interest and resonance to the area.

4.7 Criterion 3
Although 18-20 Borough Road is a relatively recent structure, the survival of the watching post and its association with the local community's experience of the Second World War gives it much greater interest than other buildings of this date such as the rest of the factory complex.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 18-20 Borough Road meets most of the Council's designation criteria for Buildings of Townscape merit. It has considerable local historic interest as a relatively rare survival of a building type that directly connected with the role of the area in World War Two and the history of the aeronautical industry. It has a distinctive appearance in the streetscape, marking the location of the former factory in this otherwise residential neighbourhood and adding variety and interest to the street scene. For the reasons, the block at 18-20 Borough Road as far back as the line of the northern entrance to the covered way, merits consideration for inclusion on the local list of Buildings of Townscape Merit.

5.2 It should also be noted that the research undertaken for this report, which assessed the building in the context of the Council's own criteria for local listing, has revealed that the buildings associated with World War Two, particularly if their interiors survive substantially intact, may have special architectural and historic interest in the national context, possibly sufficient to lead to statutory listing. Statutory listing could cover a rather greater proportion of the site than would be appropriate for a Building of Townscape Merit, since BTM's are listed principally for their contribution to their appearance in the townscape rather than their interiors or their interest as industrial archaeology. It is understood that a listing request has been made to Historic England and therefore it is recommended that any planning application should be deferred until the outcome of that application is known.
Figure 1: Location plan
Figure 2: Plan of Park Works factory extension, 1939, RBKC Building Control ref. 11325
Figure 3: Plan of watchers' post, 1941, RBKC Building Control ref. 11367