

1.1 WIDER URBAN CONTEXT & LOCATION

1.1.1 Bloomsbury Site

The Museum Estate is located in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area in the London Borough of Camden.

The site is accessed at the south from Great Russell Street and at the north from Montague Place. Both streets have opportunity to improve the public realm and the Museum’s relationship with the street.

All three of the Energy Centre Programme sites are accessed off the internal road perimeter network within the Estate. The South-West Energy Centre (SWEC) site, in the south-west corner, off the West Road, and the East Road Building (ERB) and Incoming Substation (ISS) off the East Road. The ISS site also fronts onto Montague Street, though access to the street is blocked by the listed railings at the site perimeter.

Regarding wider context, the Museum also sits in close proximity to the Senate House Library and other University of London (UoL) department buildings.

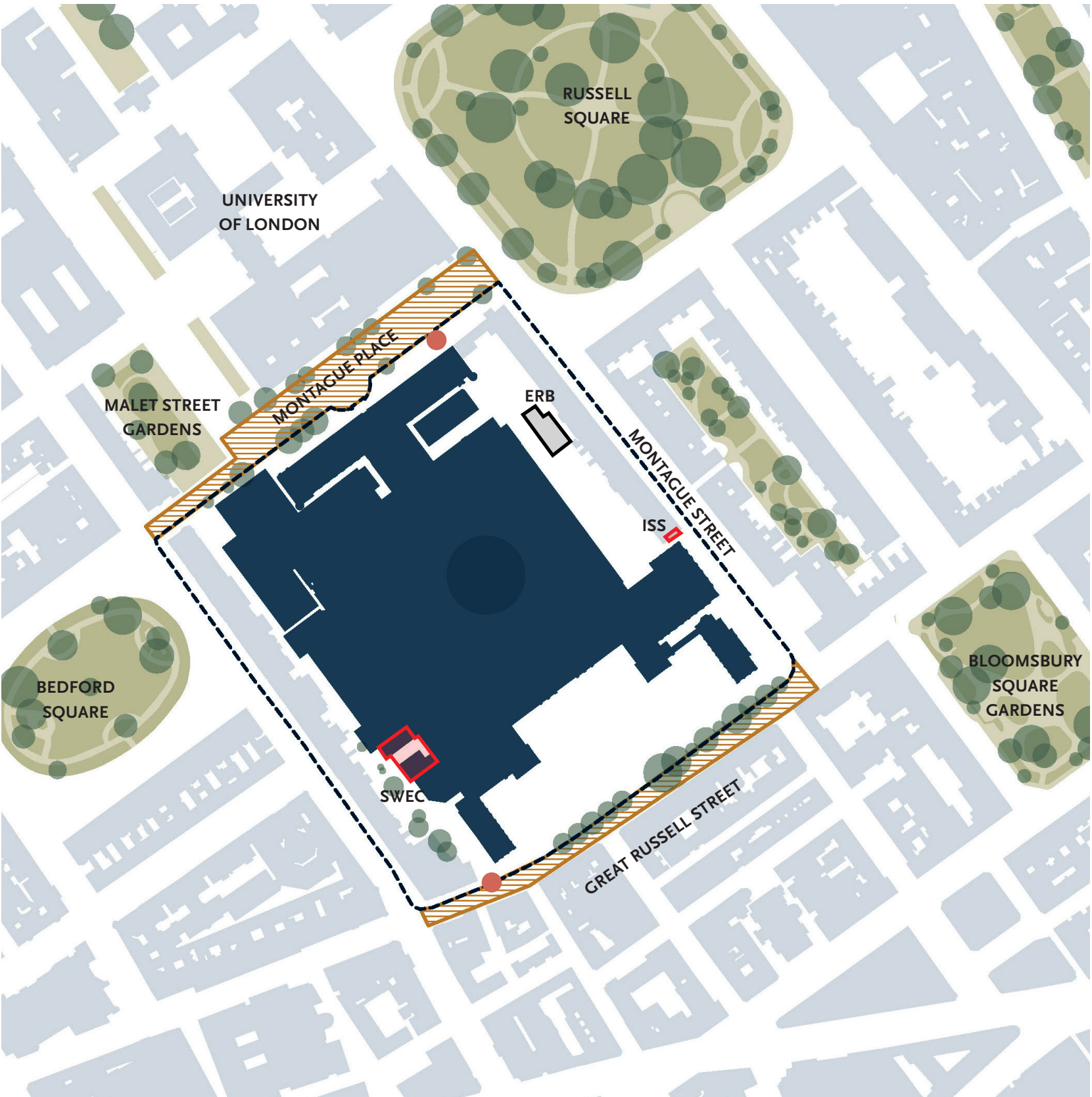


Key:

- Museum Estate buildings footprint
- Perimeter property and wider context building footprints
- SWEC and ISS proposed building sites
- ERB proposed building site (part of a separate application made in April of 2024)
- Location of existing principal back-of-house entrances to the Museum

Right:

Site context plan with wider borough planned improvement locations and proposed development building sites. The East Road Building shown in black is part of the Energy Centre Programme but is an advanced package of work submitted for planning permission in April 2024.



National & International Rail

The Museum lies close to three key regional, national and international transport interchanges:

- Tottenham Court Road
Crossrail links to Heathrow, Paddington & Reading
- Euston
Existing national connectivity
HS2 will improve connectivity to the Midlands & the North
- King's Cross St Pancras
National and international connectivity.

TfL Underground Stations

The Museum is approximately 10-minutes walking distance from four TfL London Underground stations serving three Tube lines (Piccadilly, Northern & Central).

Holborn Station capacity upgrade project, consulted on in 2018 and expected to start in 2023/24, includes the proposal for an additional entrance and exit to the Underground station.

Public Transport Access Level (PTAL)

The British Museum estate is within zone 6B which is the best level of accessibility based on PTAL credentials. This means the development will have good access to sustainable transport options.



Key:

Museum Estate buildings footprint

Perimeter property and wider context building footprints

SWEC and ISS proposed building sites

ERB proposed building site (part of a separate application made in April of 2024)

Bus Stop

Cycle Hire Racks

Right:

Site location plan

1.2 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

1.2.1 Site Designations



Right:
London Borough of Camden
Policies Map, updated August
2021.

S.38(6) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) (As Amended) requires applications to be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the development plan comprises:

- The London Plan 2021
- The Camden Local Plan 2017
- The Camden Local Plan Proposals Maps.

Neighbourhood Plans also form part of the development plan but there are none in force which cover The British Museum.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out Government Policy and approach to planning and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, as is the National Planning Practice Guidance.

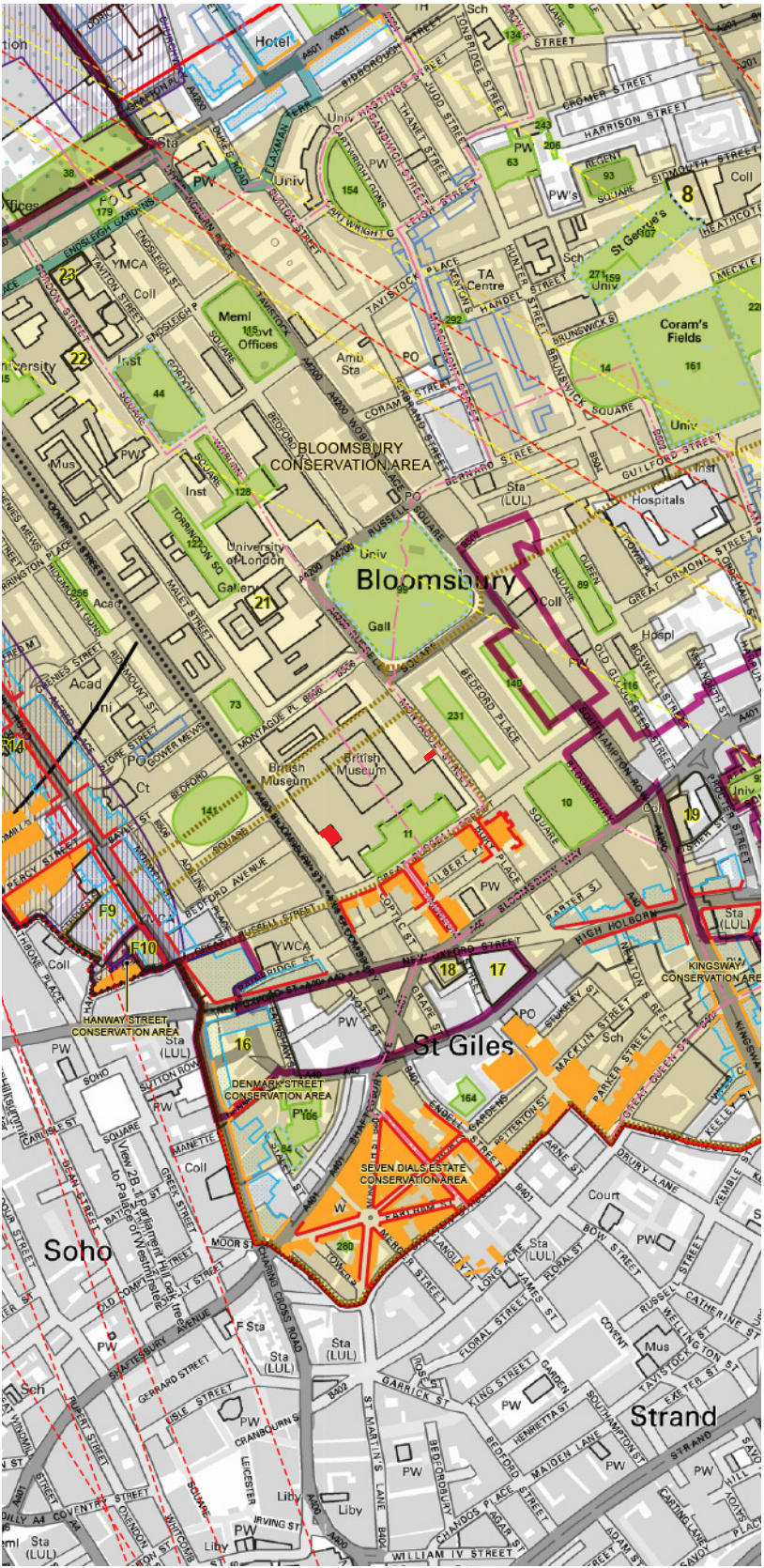
The Energy Centre Programme sites sit within the London Borough of Camden, the Central London Area (CLA), Central Activities Zone (CAZ) and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

They sit outside of any LVMF Protected Vistas, Local Plan Centers, and Local Plan Growth Areas. They do not sit within adopted Site Allocation areas nor areas covered by local Neighbourhood Plans, other specific area Action Plans, or the Crossrail 2 Safeguarding Area.

They also do not sit within or directly adjacent to designated Local Plan Open Space, Local Green Space, or Local Plan Habitat Corridors, though the ISS site will become predominantly a small hard landscaped open area. The SWEC site also sits near the rear gardens of perimeter properties which neighbour the garden party wall along the West Road.

The British Museum does provide a connection for a Metropolitan Walk route from Montague Place to Great Russell Street, though this route runs through the front-of-house areas of the Museum which sit outside of the proposed application boundary.

The proposed underground distribution routes for services does partially overlap with the Archaeological Priority Area which runs east to west from approximately No. 43 Russell Square to No. 6 Montague Street. The SWEC and ISS sites themselves sit south of this zone.



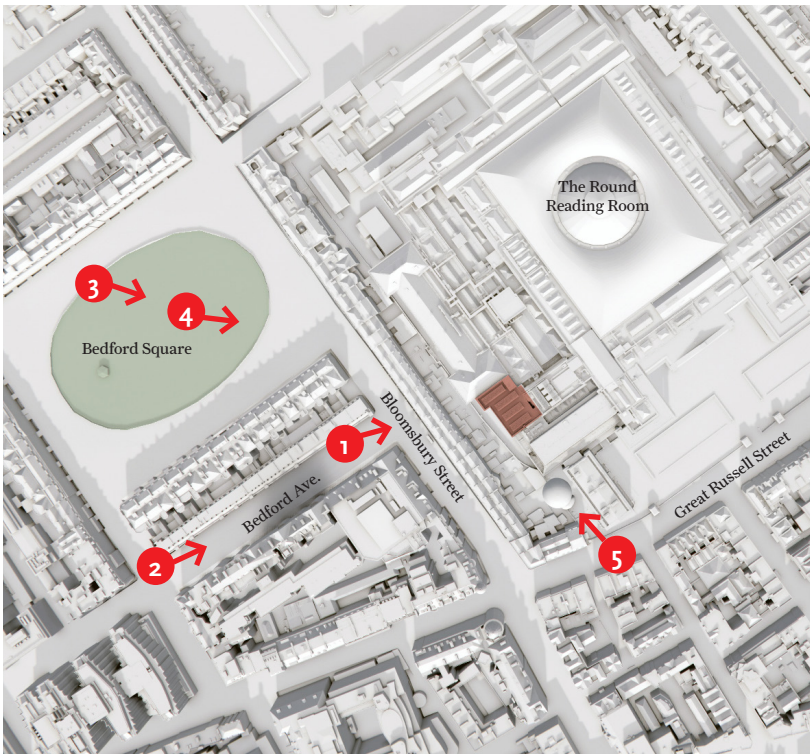
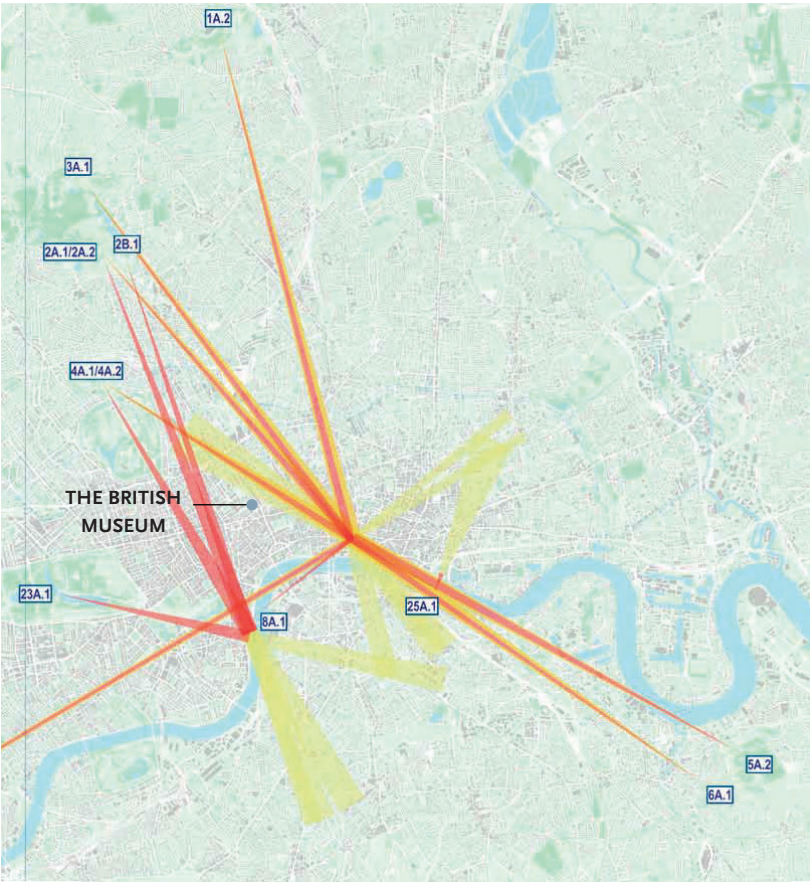
LVMF Designated Views

The London View Management Framework, which is a Supplementary Planning Document to the London Plan, sets out key views of London and some of its most important landmarks to preserve the city’s character through policies aiming to manage the impact of development on its panorama. The direction of protected views and panoramas relates to two Strategically Important Landmarks within central London – St Paul’s Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster.

The British Museum does not lie in a direct line of a Designated View and is not considered a Strategically Important Landmark for London’s panorama, which means that future projects at the Museum’s site in Bloomsbury will not need to be assessed from the perspective of their impact on Designated Views.

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Views

The site does however lie within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area (CA), and the proposed SWEC building has some visibility within the CA townscape. Views for assessing the impact of visibility within the CA townscape have been agreed with LB Camden and Historic England (HE). These are shown adjacent. Please refer to Chapter 4 of this report for further information of the visibility of proposed massing from these views.



Key plan



1 Bedford Ave East



2 Bedford Ave West



3 Bedford Square North



4 Bedford Square South



5 Great Russell Street



Top left:
Map of London showing protected vistas.
An extract from London View Management Framework 2012, Part 1, p.13

Right column:
Existing photographs of key townscape views within the Bloomsbury CA agreed with LB Camden and HE. Photographs courtesy of Cityscape Digital.

1.3

SITE OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

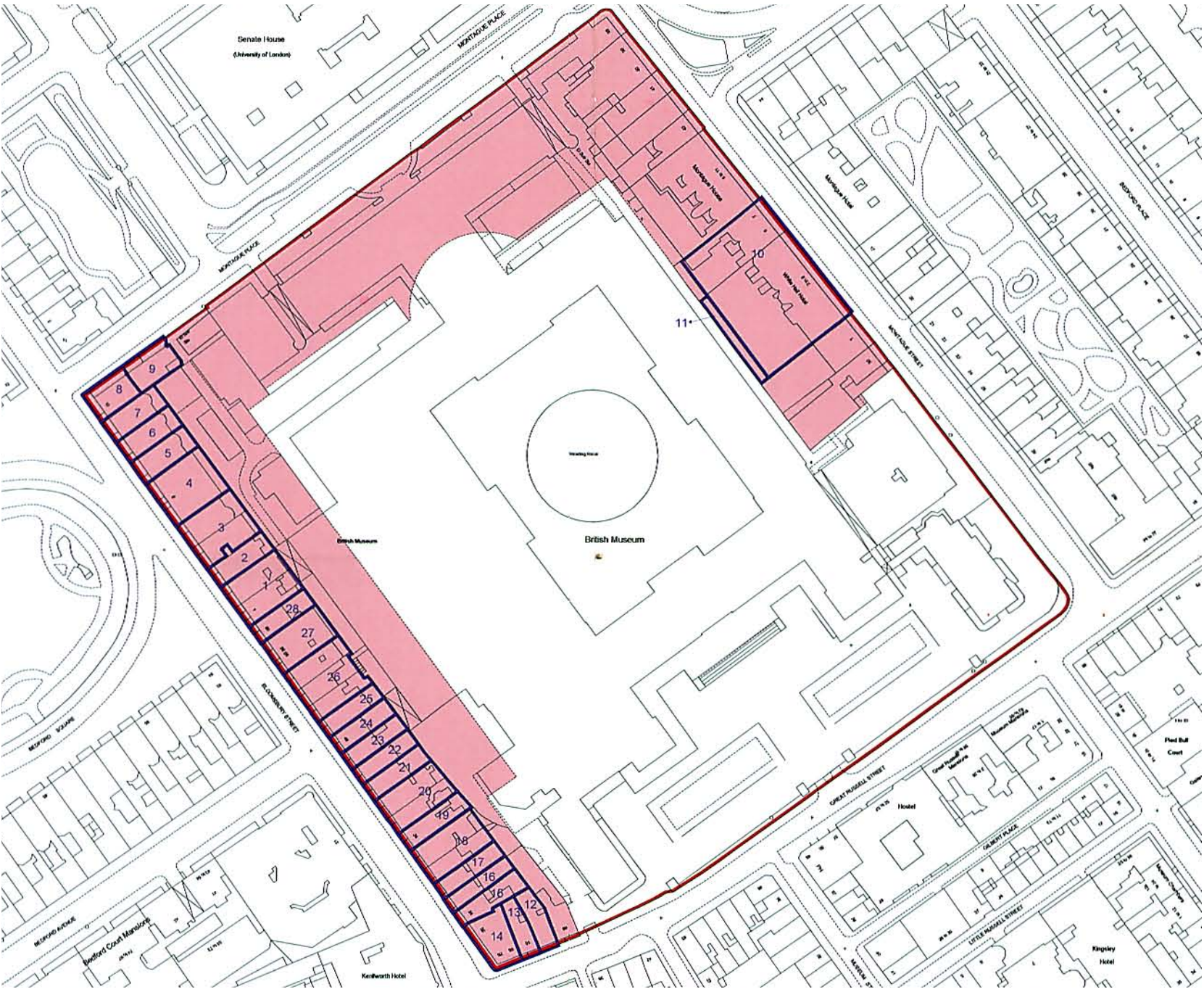
1.3.1


Site Ownership

Title Information

The Trustees of the British Museum own the freehold on the entire city block, including all of the perimeter properties.

The majority of the perimeter properties are on long-term leases.





TITLE NUMBER

NGL858468

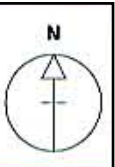
CAMDEN


ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP REFERENCE:


TQ3081NW

SCALE 1:1250

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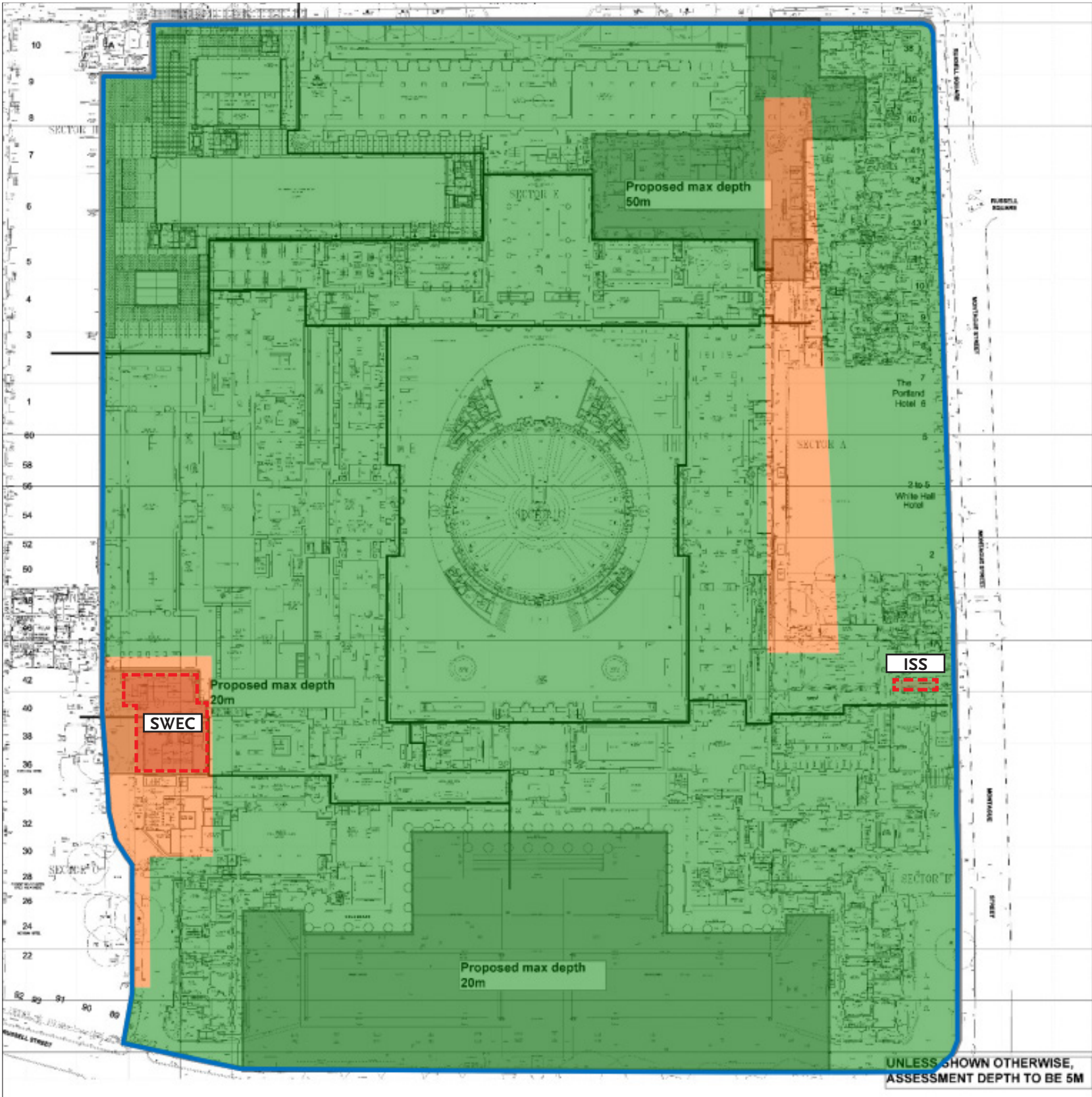
Right:

Extracts from British Museum
Title Plan NGL858468, including
original shading

1.3.2 Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)

Prepared by Alan Baxter Ltd.

Brimstone Site Investigation carried out a risk assessment of unexploded ordnance for the Museum in 2018 as part of the previously commissioned SWEC project. This report identifies that the majority of the estate is 'low-risk', with some local areas of 'medium-risk' along the East Road and by the SWEC.



1.3.4 Perimeter Properties

The British Museum Estate is bordered to its East and West by the rear elevations of a number of Georgian terraces fronting onto Bloomsbury Street and Montague Street. These are all owned freehold by The Museum and rented out for use as a number of different use classes.

The proposed ISS site shares a party garden wall with 1A Montague Street, currently used as a tertiary school education related facility.

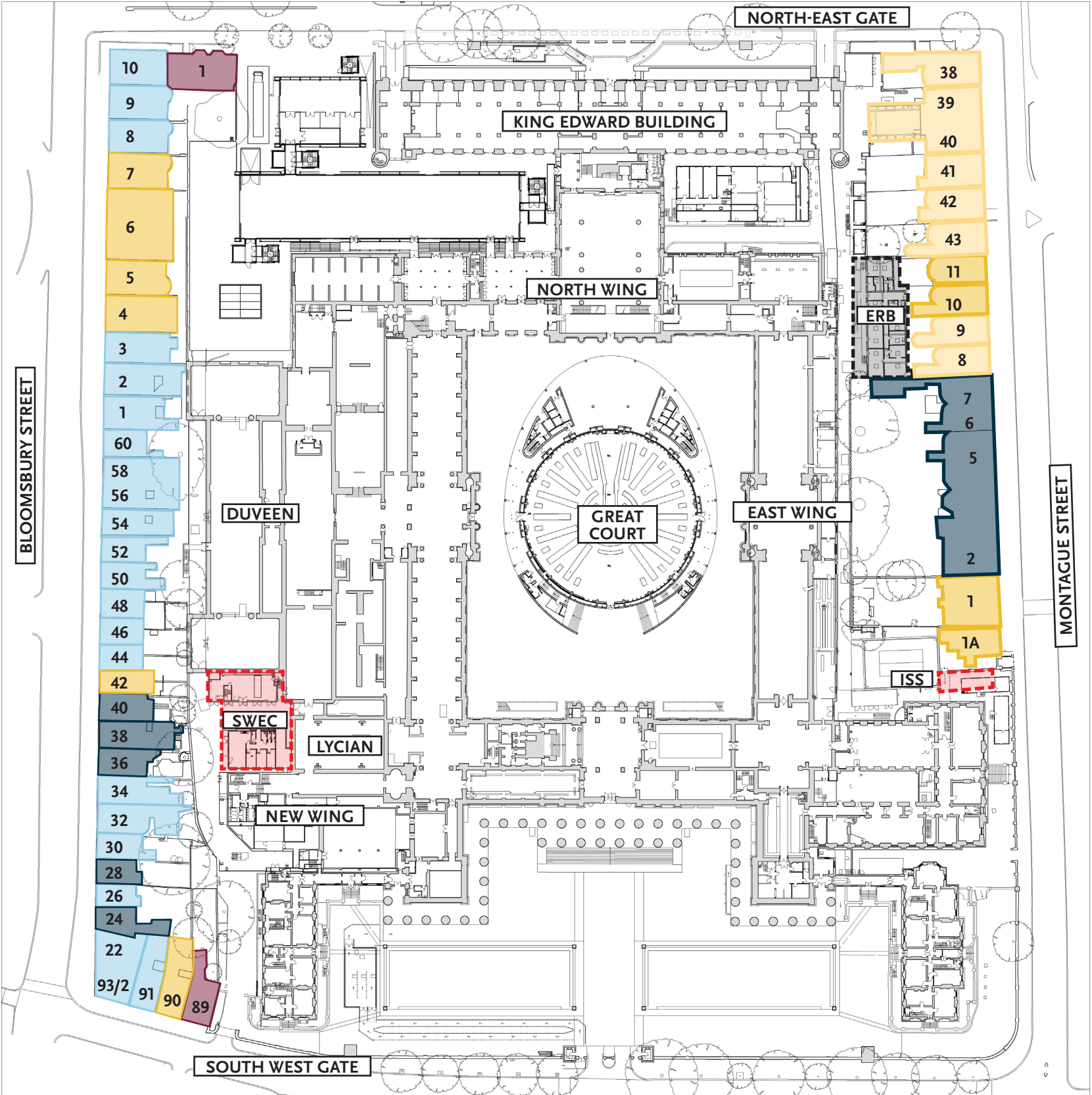
Directly West of the SWEC site sits the West Road, which shares a party garden wall with perimeter properties fronting onto Bloomsbury Street. Those that are closest to the SWEC site are:

- No.s 36-40 Bloomsbury St, currently used as hotel accommodation
- No.42 Bloomsbury St, currently used as a professional training facility.

Key to uses:

	Commercial
	Educational
	Hotel
	Offices
	Residential
	SWEC & ISS Proposed Building Sites
	Proposed ERB Site (Part of the Energy Centre Programme but does not form part of the proposed works detailed within this application).

Right:
Level 02 plan with the neighbouring properties and uses annotated



Overall, the areas of the Museum’s estate under consideration comprise back of house and servicing areas. The existing buildings on the SWEC site are comprised of a three-storey stack of portacabin temporary accommodation and the South-West Boiler House, which dates from 1997. These late 20th Century buildings are utilitarian and expedient in character. The existing SWEC site makes no contribution to the way the component parts of the Museum are appreciated or their interest; indeed, the low architectural quality of the portacabin block and the existing energy centre are detracting elements in the setting of the listed buildings within proximity such as the Lycian, the Western Range and the Duveen Galleries.

Similarly, there exists a legacy of services mounted in an industrial and unsympathetic fashion on the North elevation of the New Wing and on the West Elevation of the Lycian Building which have a detrimental impact on the Site’s setting. As part of the enabling works for the proposals, these services will be relocated. Please refer to Chapter 7 of this document for further information on enabling works proposals.

The existing buildings have considerable limitations and are not fit for re-use. The existing South-West portacabins are temporary accommodations never intended to be used on a permanent basis and offer a poor working environment. The South-West Boiler House was built for its specific utilitarian plant function and does not have the area capacity nor can it meet the ventilation requirements to support the plant for the newly proposed low carbon heating and upgraded electrical systems. Please refer to Chapter 04 of this document for further information regarding the SWEC Site proposals.

Top left clockwise:

Existing site photo looking north showing the South-West Boiler House centre (with red louvres), the Duveen Gallery and garden boundary wall left side of frame and the New Wing right of frame.

Existing sit photo looking north-east at the temporary South-West Portacabins with the South-West Boiler House beyond.

Existing site photo showing the existing external services mounted on the Lycian Building’s West facade that will be removed as part of the proposed works.

Existing office within the South-West Portacabins with no access to daylight.

Existing boiler room in the South-West Boiler House.

Existing office with poor quality daylight and cramped conditions in the South-West Portacabins.

Existing meeting room utilised also as a maintenance storage area with only a rooflight within the South-West Portacabins.

