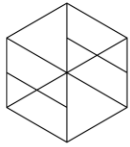


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Heritage Appraisal – Garden Café
The British Medical Association, BMA House,
Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9HW
October 2023





1 Introduction

1.1 The following Heritage Appraisal has been prepared in support of a proposed alterations to the existing Garden Café at BMA House, no. 20 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9HW (the site). The proposals represent an upgrading of an existing café that was created at lower ground and ground floor levels during works undertaken at BMA House that were approved in 2006 (2006/3572/P and 2006/3574/L) with only minor alterations to its existing fixtures and fittings and overall character and appearance.

1.2 BMA House is a grade II listed range of buildings with the earliest components of the site designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. As will be shown below, the Garden Café is located in Block E of the wider estate, on the south side of Lutyens' original building and historically the site of the BMA's Council Chamber (figure 1). Lutyens designed the room as a double-height

space between lower ground and ground floors.

1.3 The scheme approved in 2006 involved the removal of all council chamber fixtures and fittings, including the removal of a raked floor, new plaster to walls where panelling removed, opening of doors on east and west walls to accommodate new doors, a new lightweight bridge link along the full length of the north side of the room and improved access to the garden in the southern courtyard. All new café fixtures and fittings were provided. The café is designed as a flexible space so that events can be held in the café as required.

1.4 The proposals involve a light touch upgrading to existing modern fabric to include new fixtures and fittings, a new floor finish, the removal of modern banquettes seating and the provision of acoustic panels. The proposals would not affect historic fabric or the existing

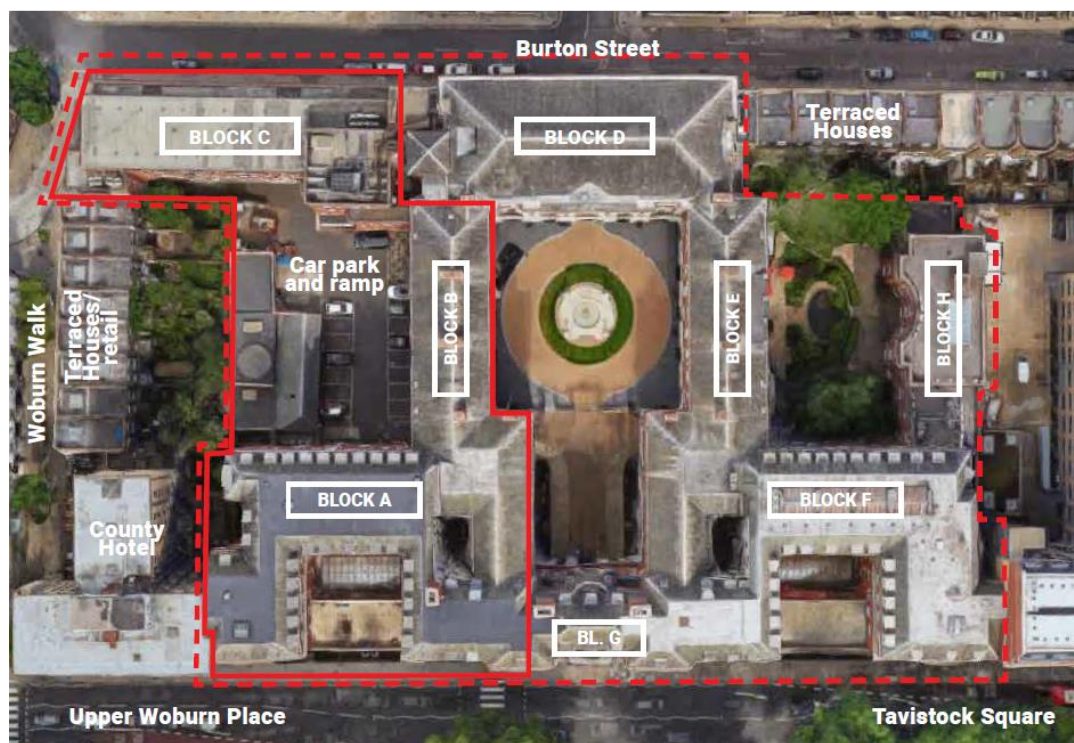
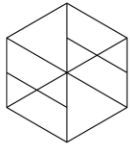


Figure 1: Estate Plan.



spatial quality or proportions of the café. The proposals allow for a more flexible use of the café area and will generally improve and update its character and appearance.

Designations

1.5 BMA House is statutorily listed at grade II (the full list description is included at Appendix A). The list description notes that presence of the former council chamber in the area now occupied by the café.

1.6 The proposed site is also located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. As the proposed alterations relate only to the interior of the building, it is considered that the scheme would have no effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area. The principal matter in this case therefore is the effect of the proposals on the special architectural and historic interest of the building.

Research

1.7 The historic development of BMA House is well documented, particularly in *BMA House and its Architects: A History and a Guide* (Jane Smith, 2013). This document has been used to inform the following appraisal as has the detailed listed description for the site provided at Appendix A. Additional research has been undertaken using the BMA's archive and the London Borough of Camden's historic planning files.

Report structure

1.8 The following report provides a brief overview of the historic development and significance of the proposed site and considers the effects of the proposal on significance and against relevant historic environment policy. Section 2 summarises the historic development of the site and Section 3 considers the proposals and their effects. The relevant statutory and policy provision is set out at Appendix B.

Author

1.9 This appraisal has been prepared by Kate Graham of The Heritage Practice. Kate Graham (MA (Hons) MA PG Dip Cons AA) has extensive experience in dealing with proposals that affect the historic environment having in recent years been Design and Conservation Manager at the London Borough of Islington and Senior Historic Buildings at Areas Adviser at Historic England. She also has a background in research, in policy analysis and in understanding historic buildings and places. She has trained as a historian and has a specialist qualification in building conservation. Kate is also a member of the London Borough of Islington Design Review Panel and the London Borough of Hackney Design Review Panel.

2 The site and significance

2.1 The following section provides an overview of the historic development of the proposed site and immediate context and considers its significance and special interest.

Historic development

2.2 The early phases of the British Medical Associations' (BMA) history can be summarised as follows:

- The BMA moved from Worcester to London in the 1870s and after sharing premises with the British Medical Journal, it moved to no. 161a Strand, a pre-existing building designed by C R Cockerell;
- In 1902, the BMA decided to redevelop the site with a building designed by Charles Holden (now Zimbabwe House, grade II* listed);
- By 1920, membership of the BMA had grown again and the organisation had outgrown its building on the Strand.

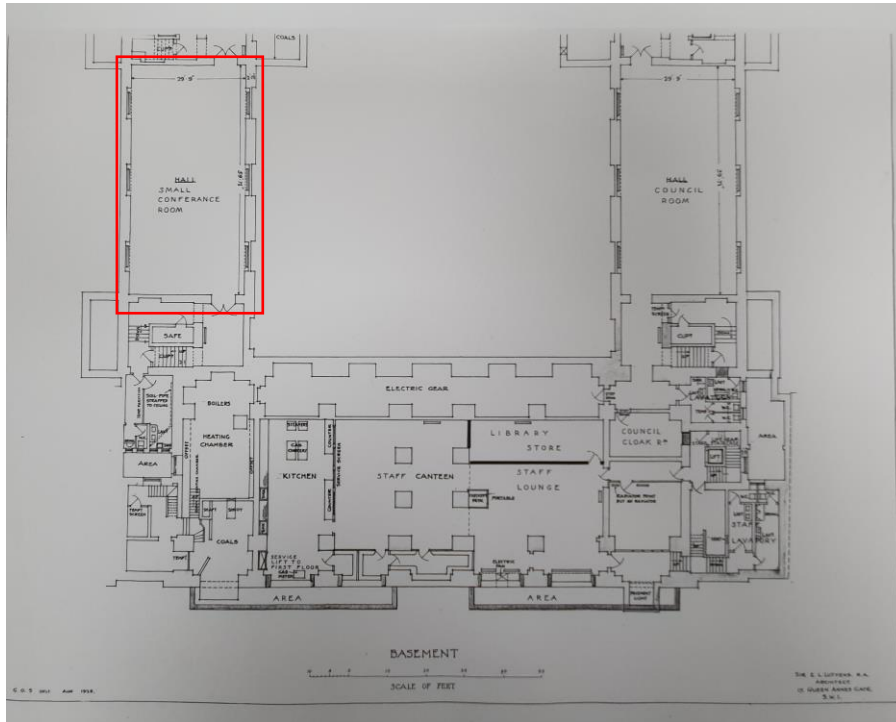
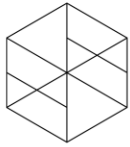


Figure 2: Basement plan, Lutyens' office.

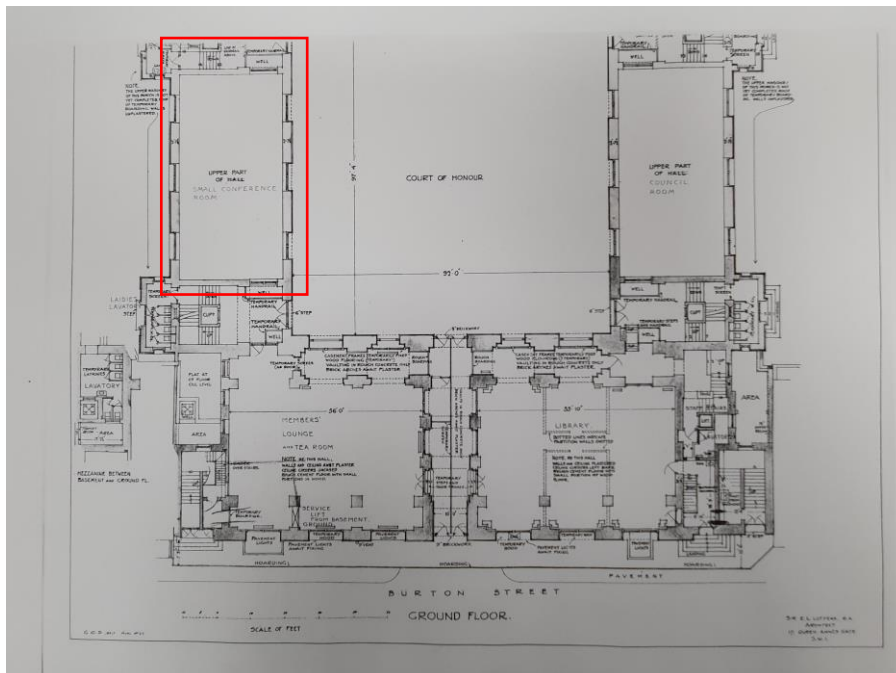
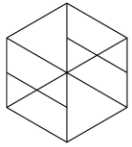


Figure 3: Ground floor plan, Lutyens' office.



- Looking around for new premises, it found the incomplete headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Tavistock Square (figure 3).

2.3 The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 and is still an international movement. Sir Edwin Lutyens was engaged by the society to build their new headquarters and temple, a commission apparently assisted by the fact that Lutyens' wife was a member of the Theosophists. According to Jane Smith in *BMA House and Its Architects*, 'the building that Lutyens designed for the Theosophists was more ambitious than the one that stands today and certainly more ambitious than the building the BMA took over in 1923'.

2.4 Lutyens ultimately completed only part of its ambitious scheme before disputes and WWI saw an end to his commission. Although Lutyens later undertook alterations to the original building for the use of the BMA further disputes ended the architect's association of the site. The architect Cyril Wontner Smith was then commissioned to complete the building, extending it to Tavistock Square. Douglas Wood later designed further extensions.

2.4 Lutyens' early plans for the building provide some information on the original layout of the lower ground and ground floors (figures 2 and 3). The plans are labelled with 'Small Conference Room' with 'Hall' marked at basement level and 'Upper Part of Hall' marked at ground floor level. This indicates the same double height space as existing and has a corresponding hall on the north side of the building in Block B. The double height room in Block B is annotated as Council Chamber. This space has since been infilled to create two levels.

2.5 In 1925-1926, panelling and seating from the BMA's Strand headquarters was relocated to the hall. Both were modified to suit the proportions and volume of the room which became the BMA's council chamber. Over successive decades, the original seating was

reconfigured and increased and the historic panelling was partly replaced following damage caused by damp and subsequent repairs.

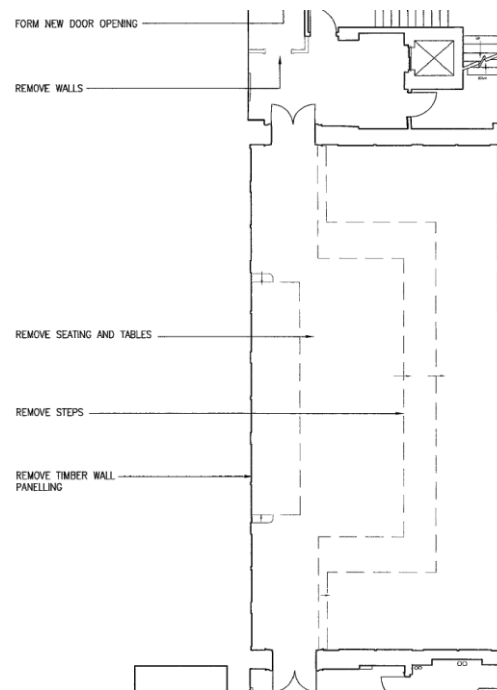


Figure 4: Lower ground floor demolition plan, 2006.

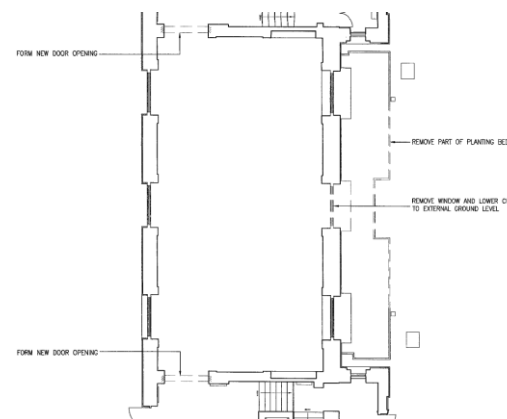


Figure 5: Upper ground floor demolition plan, 2006.

2.6 In 2006, major works to the estate were undertaken. These included the restoration the Great Hall in Block D, the relocation of the Council Chamber to the first floor of Block E and the creation of the Garden Café within the former Council Chamber (figures 4-7).

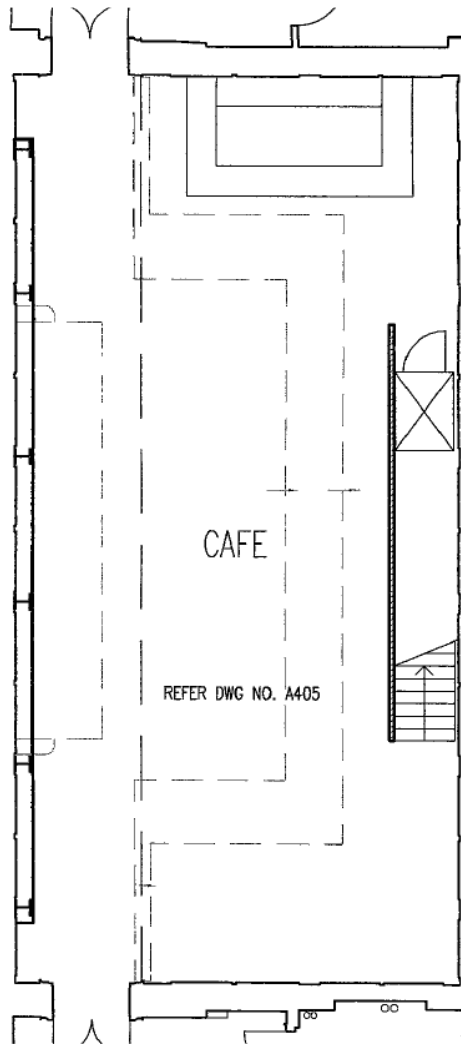
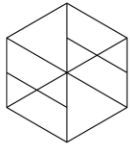


Figure 6: Lower ground floor plan, proposed (2006).

2.7 The works to create the café involved the removal of all the seating, flooring, top table and panelling. New work included the provision of a new access between basement and ground floors with stairs and a platform lift. Also included was the provision of a lightweight bridge on the north side of the room at ground floor room to create a continuous internal walkway around the building, connecting into Block D to the east and Block F to the west. New banquette seating was added below the bridge. A new counter was added at the café's eastern end. The cill of the central window in the

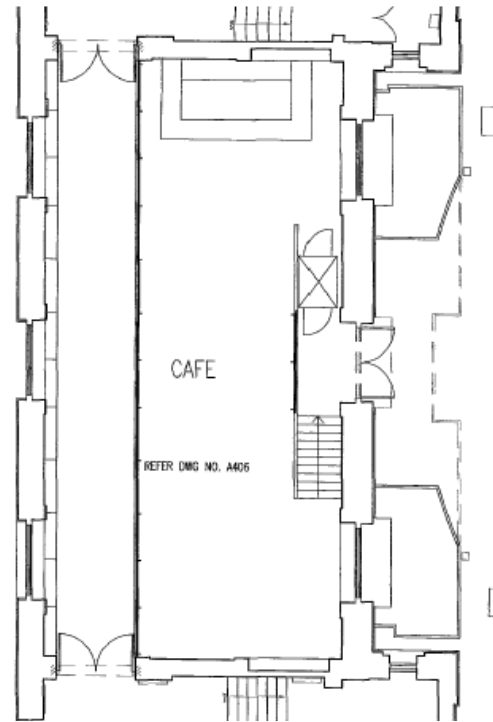


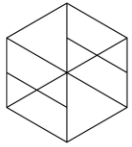
Figure 7: Ground floor plan, proposed (2006).

garden elevation was dropped to create a new door.

Significance

2.8 The existing café is unchanged since work was undertaken in 2006 and it retains the same layout. The fixtures, fittings and finishes are almost entirely modern. The significance of the space is derived principally from the retention of its double height volume which can still be readily appreciated and for the fact that this is now the only double height secondary space originally designed as such by Lutyens – the principal double height space of the Great Hall is of course also retained.

2.9 The café has an appearance of a modern café inserted within a historic volume. The café is sensitively designed and finished so as to respect the historic character of this part of Block B (figures 8-11). However, its fabric and fittings are of no historic or architectural interest.



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Figure 8: Existing café looking east.



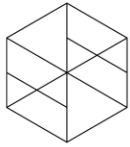
Figure 10: Existing café from the bridge.



Figure 9: Existing café looking west.



Figure 11: View of the bridge and seating beneath.



3 Assessment

3.1 The following paragraphs provide a brief description of the proposals and considers their effects against the significance of the site and relevant historic environment policy (Appendix B).

The proposals

3.2 The proposals involve:

- Removal of existing front and back counter, banquette seating on the north side of the café at basement level, existing modern flooring,
- Provision of new rear counter and boxing for bifold doors to close up the rear counter, new mobile front counter, new dado height panelling to lower ground floor, new tracks to underside of bridge for curtains, new track framework for faux planting on underside of bridge, new modular mobile banquette seating, new wall lighting and shelving and new acoustic panels to the existing stairs.
- Redecoration of existing wall finishes, skirtings, architraves and doors.

3.3 As already noted, the proposals are intended to upgrade and refresh the café's decorative finish and to support its flexibility and use as a café and events space. The proposals are light touch and would not affect historic fabric of interest (figures 12 and 13).

Effects

3.4 The proposed site is currently in use as a café and events space and this use will continue. No structural changes are proposed and generally, and as noted above, the proposals relate to superficial fixtures and fittings. The provision of new furniture and mobile fittings do not require listed building consent. However, other elements of the proposals such as new panelling and flooring



Figure 12: Proposed view of the café from the east.

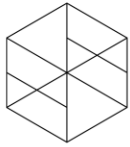


Figure 13: Proposed view of the café from the east.

should be considered through the listed building consent process.

3.5 The proposed removal of existing fixtures and fittings relates only to modern fabric introduced following the 2006 consent. This element of the proposals would not therefore affect or cause harm to the special interest of the listed building.

3.6 The proposed new fixtures and fittings are light touch and decorative and help to make the café a more functional, flexible and attractive space for users of the building and the events operation of the BMA. The proposed new features effectively replace existing decorative features so that the layout and form of the café is largely unchanged. New panelling



will be fixed to the wall where banquette seating is currently located and where the wall was replastered as part of the 2006 scheme.

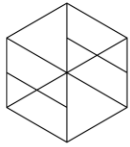
3.7 The existing flooring is modern and dark in colour. The proposed flooring will represent an upgrading and have a lighter finish that will create a generally lighter and more attractive space. The proposed acoustic panels are well designed and subtle and will help to address the transference of sound within this large room.

3.8 The most significant aspect of the café is that it is located within one of the former halls designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. The underlying form and volume of the original hall is retained, albeit with more significant interventions undertaken following the 2006 consent, as is surviving historic fabric and features of interest.

3.9 The proposed new fixtures and finishes will subtly change the appearance of the café but in a way that protects those elements of the space that contribute to the special interest of the listed building. No harm would be caused by any aspect of the proposals and therefore the significance of the space and the listed building as a whole is maintained.

Conclusion

3.10 For these reasons and for others explored above, it is considered that the proposed scheme would not cause harm to the significance of the listed building and would be consistent with its retained architectural, historic and communal values. For these reasons, the proposals would accord with the relevant historic environment policy and the statutory provision as set out at Appendix B.



Appendix A:

List Description

CAMDEN, TAVISTOCK SQUARE (East side),
British Medical Association House including
Screen and Gates

09/03/82

GV II

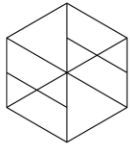
Administrative headquarters of the British Medical Association and rented offices, begun by Sir Edwin Lutyens as the headquarters and temple of the Theosophical Society, his work unfinished. Built in phases as follows: 1913-14 and 1923-25 by Sir Edwin Lutyens (E courtyard and elevation to Burton Street); 1928-9 by Cyril Wontner Smith (central entrance block to Tavistock Square and blocks extending eastwards to form the W courtyard); 1938-49 by Douglas Wood (flanking blocks to entrance); S extension of 1947-50 (the Nuffield Wing), also by Wood and extension on NE of 1959-60. Contains re-used fittings from the previous BMA headquarters at 429, The Strand, built by Percy Adams and Charles Holden in 1908 (qv). MATERIALS: Steel-frame construction. Red brick laid in English bond, Portland stone dressings and green Westmorland slate roofs. Timber sash windows with glazing bars.

EXTERIOR: SW elevation to Tavistock Square. Central entrance block by Wontner Smith, comprising centre bay and 2 slightly projecting bays. 4 storeys, attics and basement. Ground floor Portland stone with 3 round-arched openings with keystones and impost bands to each bay. Central opening with vaulted porte-cochère, flanked by lower pedestrian passageways to courtyard. Plain stone 1st floor band. Centre bay with distyle-in-antis attached Corinthian columns (brick shafts, stone capitals) rising from 1st to 4th floor and supporting a modillion entablature with open segmental pediment, flanked by architraved sashes with keystones in attic storey. Above the vehicle entrance, a tall architraved sash with bracketed

pediment surmounted by a cartouche, a small architraved sash with keystone and keyed oculus in the pediment. Cornice at eaves level and hipped roof, behind which 2 tall moulded brick slab chimney-stacks. Flanking bays with similar columns and entablature. Architraved 1st floor windows with balustraded balconies and bracketed segmental pediments; 2nd and 3rd floor, architraved sashes with an oculus in the attic storeys. Cornices at eaves level and hipped roofs. Courtyard facade similar to centre bay but flanked by extra bays with 2 brick pilasters and narrow architraved sashes. Attached blocks forming the western courtyard of 4 storeys; stone ground floors with 2-light round-arched openings. Plain 1st floor sill band. Architraved sashes; 1st floor with alternating segmental and triangular pediments with balustraded window guards. Stone entablature at 4th floor level; architraved attic windows with keystones, above which a stone cornice. Eastern elevations with brick chimney-stacks rising from 1st floor.

Douglas Wood's extension blocks of 1928-9, flanking the entrance, are 3 bays and 2 storeys each, plus 2-bay, 4-storey pavilions. Stone ground floors with square-headed, square pillar arcading and 2 square-headed, metal framed windows to each bay. Stone-capped parapet at 1st floor level. Square-headed architraved sashes in each bay on 1st floor, above which the cornice. Stone-capped parapet. Each pavilion with slightly projecting stone entrance surround with impost bands, fanlight and 2-leaf wooden doors. Above, tall architraved sash with bracketed pediment and balustraded balcony flanked by similar columns and entablature to the central entrance. Cornice at eaves level and hipped roof. Wood's red brick Nuffield Wing joins on to the southern extension. 3 storeys with single-storey bay to N. Elegant red brick façade in restrained Baroque style, with concave section of 5 bays to the N framed by pilasters. Horizontal rustication to ground floor, parapet with recessed panels.

E courtyard. The wings to the N, S and E of this courtyard are the original block designed by

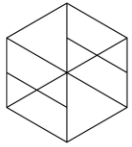


Lutyens. W façade 'Wrenaissance' style; 3 storeys and 5 bays. Portland stone faced ground floor with round-arched openings linked by impost bands, except those flanking the central entrance which are square-headed. All with keystones. Hexastyle-in-antis stone Corinthian columns from 1st to 2nd floor supporting a modillion pediment with a clock in the tympanum. Entablature continued one bay each side, supported at angles by Corinthian pilasters. Each bay with architraved sash with bracketed pediment. Small, architraved sashes with keystones in attic storey with stone cornice. North and south blocks, forming the sides of the courtyard, similar to those of western courtyard. E façade to Burton Place: Handsome elevation in manner of Renaissance palazzo. 2 storeys, 7 windows, framed by pilasters. Round-arched ground floor openings of 2 lights with stone architraves, soffits and keystones, linked by impost bands. Centre opening with 2-leaf doors and fanlight. Plain stone band and stone string at 1st floor level with carved stone shell motifs above each keystone. Tall piano nobile with large square-headed, architraved windows with alternating triangular and segmental pediments. Central window with bracketed cornice surmounted by a multi-layer feature of rectangular blocks. Projecting stone cornice. The pilaster capitals and a stone tablets above central first-floor window left uncarved as boasted work. The adjacent block to the north of this is by Douglas Wood, in an austere neo-Georgian style. This is of lesser interest. INTERIOR: Much of the interior now modern offices. Interiors of note include the Great Hall (intended as the Theosophist's temple), occupying the entire length of the first floor Lutyens E courtyard block. This was subdivided by the insertion of a floor in 1985 to provide a library with offices. 5 bays with aisles; frieze at dado height has series of roundels. Marble columns with Corinthian capitals supporting entablature; beamed compartmented ceiling inserted above cornice level. Above this is the barrel vaulted ceiling, of which only the coffered end bays were finished. The Hastings Room, originally planned by Lutyens as a library. Contains mahogany panelling and

colonnaded screen. Chimneypieces with mahogany timber overmantels, marble slips and decorative tiled insets. Some of these features are understood to have been moved here in 1928-9 from the former BMA headquarters at 429 The Strand, designed by Percy Adams and Charles Holden. The Council Chamber, on the S side of the main courtyard, also has panelling from the Strand building. Coved ceiling. Round-headed windows with imposts linked to cornice. Entrance hall to the right of Wontner-Smith's main gateway has mahogany Tuscan columns, cornice and doors with segmental pediments. The Prince's Room is a square chamber above the main gateway. Recess to corner with Corinthian columns and entablature. Decorative window architraves. Neo-Georgian chimneypiece with marble bolection moulding and lugged timber surround and mirrored overmantel to match windows. Most of these rooms have been altered.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: The E and W courtyards are separated by Lutyens' intricate wrought-iron war memorial screen and gates, opened on 13 July 1925 by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The plaque over the main gates is inscribed on the W side MEMORY AND PRAISE, and on the E side: FAITHFUL HAVE BEEN YOUR WARFARE. Statues of Sacrifice, Cure, Prevention and Aspiration of 1952 by J Woodford and S Rowland Pierce form a Second World War memorial.

A small southern courtyard, The Council Garden, between the southern wing of Lutyens' building and the Nuffield Wing, contains a garden with oval pool, set beneath curved retaining wall built in red brick with stone steps and coping. The garden design is attributed to Lutyens, but this has not been established and evidence suggests that it post-dates his involvement. Plaque to Charles Dickens surrounded by bricks from his home on the site. Parapet stones from BMA House forming wall to planting bed and inscribed to commemorate the air raid of 16 April 1940 which damaged the buildings.



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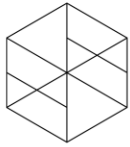
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HISTORY: Originally designed by Lutyens as the headquarters and temple of the Theosophical Society, incorporating offices for commercial rental. Lutyens' wife Emily had become a follower of the Theosophists. Construction began in 1913 and ceased in 1914 when the uncompleted shell was commandeered by the Army Pay Office, which fitted out parts of the interior as offices. It is unclear whether the Theosophists ever used the building. After the war ended, the Theosophists had run out of funds. The BMA, founded 1832, bought the lease in 1923, and engaged Lutyens to complete the interior, principally the Great Hall. Wontner-Smith was engaged in 1927 to complete the western part of the building, facing Tavistock Square. The building subsequently expanded as membership increased and to provide income from letting.

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANCE: A fine, albeit incomplete, example of Lutyens' earlier work in the neo-classical idiom. The later additions by Wontner-Smith and Wood, which form the majority of the building, are dignified and well-detailed; the whole ensemble representing a distinguished and coherent complex of multi-phase buildings. Of historic interest as the headquarters of the BMA since 1925.

SOURCES: ASG Butler, *The Architecture of Sir Edwin Lutyens*, 1950; *BMA House: a guide*, Jane Smith, 1988; Pevsner, *The Buildings of England*, London 4: North, 265-266



Appendix B

Relevant Policy Context

The following paragraphs briefly set out the range of national and local policy and guidance relevant to the consideration of change in the historic built environment. The relevant statutory provision for the historic environment is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

National Planning Policy & Legislation

Section 16 of the **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990** requires that:

“In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

The revised **National Planning Policy Framework 2023** (NPPF) sets out the Government’s planning policies and how these are expected to be applied. There is a general presumption in favour of sustainable development within national planning policy guidance.

Paragraph 194

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.

Paragraph 195

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal

(including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Paragraph 197

In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

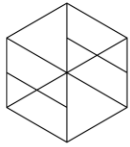
Paragraph 199

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 200

Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.



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Paragraph 202

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

London Borough of Camden Local Plan

Camden's Local Plan was adopted in June 2017. The most relevant policy in this case is Policy D2: Heritage.

With regard to Listed Buildings, the policy sets out that the Council will:

- Resist proposals for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where this would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the building.