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HERITAGE

Project

**Tavis House**

Title

**Heritage and Townscape Statement**

Client

**Tempus Reality Holdings 1 (Jersey) Limited**

Date

**April 2024**







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Heritage & Townscape Statement	Tavis House, 1-6 Tavistock Square, Camden	Tempus Reality Holdings 1 (Jersey) Limited
Report Version: V3a	Project Reference: 00229	© Jon Lowe Heritage Ltd



# Introduction

1. This Heritage and Townscape Statement has been prepared in support of an application at Tavis House, 1-6 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9NA for Section 73 amendments for:-
- "Variation of conditions 2, 9, 13 and 15 approved under planning permission reference 2021/6105/P on 1 December 2023 for 'Refurbishment and extension of the existing building to provide new entrances, a new roof top pavilion, roof top plant equipment and enclosures, rear extension and cycle parking associated with Class E use together with new hard and soft landscaping and other ancillary works'. NAMELY amendments to external rear facades, rooftop plant and other associated works."*

### Purpose of the Statement

2. The purpose of this statement is to assist with the determination of the application by informing the decision maker, Camden London Borough Council, on the effects of the proposed design amendments to the approved development on the historic built environment. Value judgements on the significance of the heritage assets affected are presented and the effects of the proposals on that significance are appraised. The statement is an updated version of the Heritage and Townscape Statement (December 2021) submitted in support of approved development (2021/6105/P).
3. Specifically this statement assesses the capability of the site to absorb change without negatively impacting on its significance and will highlight and describe the heritage benefits of the proposed scheme. Consideration is given to the effects of the proposed alterations on the significance of Tavis House, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings and to the visual impact of the proposals on the area's townscape character. It will demonstrate that the proposed amendments are minor and do not affect the findings of the 2021 Heritage and Townscape Assessment.

### Proposed Scheme

4. As Tavis House is not statutorily listed the proposed internal changes, where they will not impact or change the external appearance of the building, will not require planning permission and are therefore not assessed in great detail here. The proposed external changes will take account of the significance of Tavis House and its contribution to the setting and significance of affected heritage assets.

### Methodology

5. Tavis House and surroundings have been observed and assessed by the author during a number of site visits undertaken in November 2020, June 2021 and February 2024. The findings have informed design development. Value judgements relating to significance and interest have taken into account the architecture, history, materials and context.
6. To understand heritage significance and sensitivities the extant building and context were inspected during the development of the proposals. Value judgements based on observation of the building fabric, form and features were made and these were further supported by documentary research. Observations were also undertaken to better identify the sensitivity of the building and site to change, together with opportunities for enhancement. Working with the design team, proposals that include enhancements are proposed. The changes at the site are considered to be within the building's tolerance for change.

### Pre-application & Design Evolution

7. Prior to the submission the applicant team engaged in pre-application consultation with Camden Borough Council, as set out in the Design and Access Statement. Changes to the design of the scheme were made in response to design comments raised. All changes built upon the approved 2021 proposals and have sought to avoid or minimise harm to the historic environment, promote good design and to regenerate the site to accord with national, regional and local planning policy and guidance relating to the historic environment.



Figure 1: Aerial view of Nos. 1-6 Tavistock Square, Tavis House, shaded red



Figure 2: Front and south elevations of Tavis House





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## Understanding the Site

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# Understanding the Site

## Location & Context

- 8. Tavis House occupies a site at the south-east corner of Tavistock Square, at the junction of Tavistock Square and Tavistock Place and is located in the London Borough of Camden. Tavis House's context is dominated by the adjacent garden square and the large scale, multi-plot properties that surround it. These later buildings, which are in a variety of uses, are the result of the area's extensive redevelopment throughout the 20th century.
- 9. To the immediate east, to the rear of Tavis House, the context quickly transitions to a townscape comprising the area's original early 19th century street pattern and relatively intact surviving terraces of houses. There is a more varied character here, with buildings of varying scales, forms and ages present. Of note is the former Mary Ward Settlement building, which is grade I listed. It was built as an institute in the late 1890s in an advanced Arts and Crafts manner by Alan Dunbar Smith and Cecil Brewer.

## Tavis House

- 10. Tavis House is a large building that fronts onto Tavistock Square and occupies a L-shaped footprint. It is eight storeys in height with the top three levels staggered inwards from the build line of the front and side elevations. The building's return elevation faces south onto Tavistock Place whilst the rear opens onto a car park, access road and the west elevation of Mary Ward Hall.
- 11. Tavis House is faced in Portland stone at ground and first floors and red brick above whilst the rear is built-up in yellow stock brick. The main entrance, located on the Tavistock Square side, is accented by a simple surround and cantilevered entrance canopy, with further articulation provided by an ironwork balcony and simple consul brackets above at first floor level. Windows across the building are simple and have no decorative surrounds save for those within the central bay.

- 12. The rear elevation has a reduced presence in the townscape and this reflected in its utilitarian character and lower overall quality when compared to the frontage.

## Heritage Context

- 13. The Site is located in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The conservation area was designated in 1968. An Area Appraisal and Management Strategy document, adopted in April 2011, summarises the character of the area as such:

*Bloomsbury is noted for its formally planned arrangement of streets and the contrasting leafy squares. The urban morphology comprises a grid pattern of streets generally aligned running north-west to south-east and south-west to north-east, with subtle variations in the orientation of the grid pattern. The quintessential character of the Conservation Area derives from the grid of streets enclosed by mainly three and four-storey development which has a distinctly urban character of broad streets interspersed by formal squares which provide landscape dominated focal points.*

- 14. The conservation area is divided into fourteen character sub areas; Tavis House is located on the edge of Sub Area 6: Bloomsbury Square/ Russell Square/Tavistock Square, but has a presence in the adjacent Sub Area 13: Cartwright Gardens/Argyle Square.
- 15. Within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Audit and supporting documents Tavis House is identified as a 'Positive Building' and is therefore considered by Camden Borough Council to contribute to the character and quality of the local area.
- 16. There are a number of listed buildings in close proximity to the Site, highlighted by the map in Figure 3. Whilst present within the setting of these nearby listed buildings, the Site's central location on a secondary street results in it having an incidental role within the setting of these nearby listed buildings.

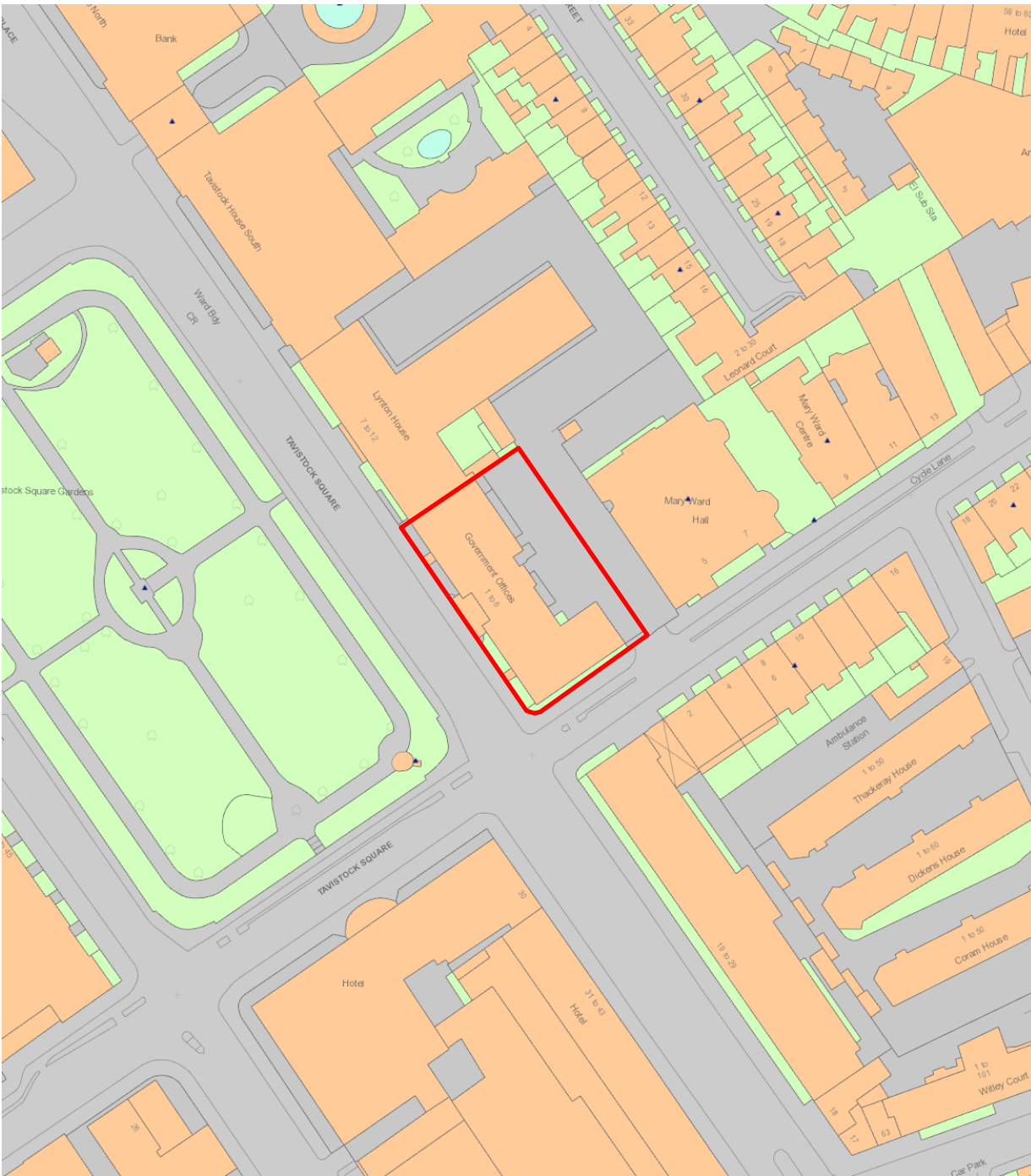
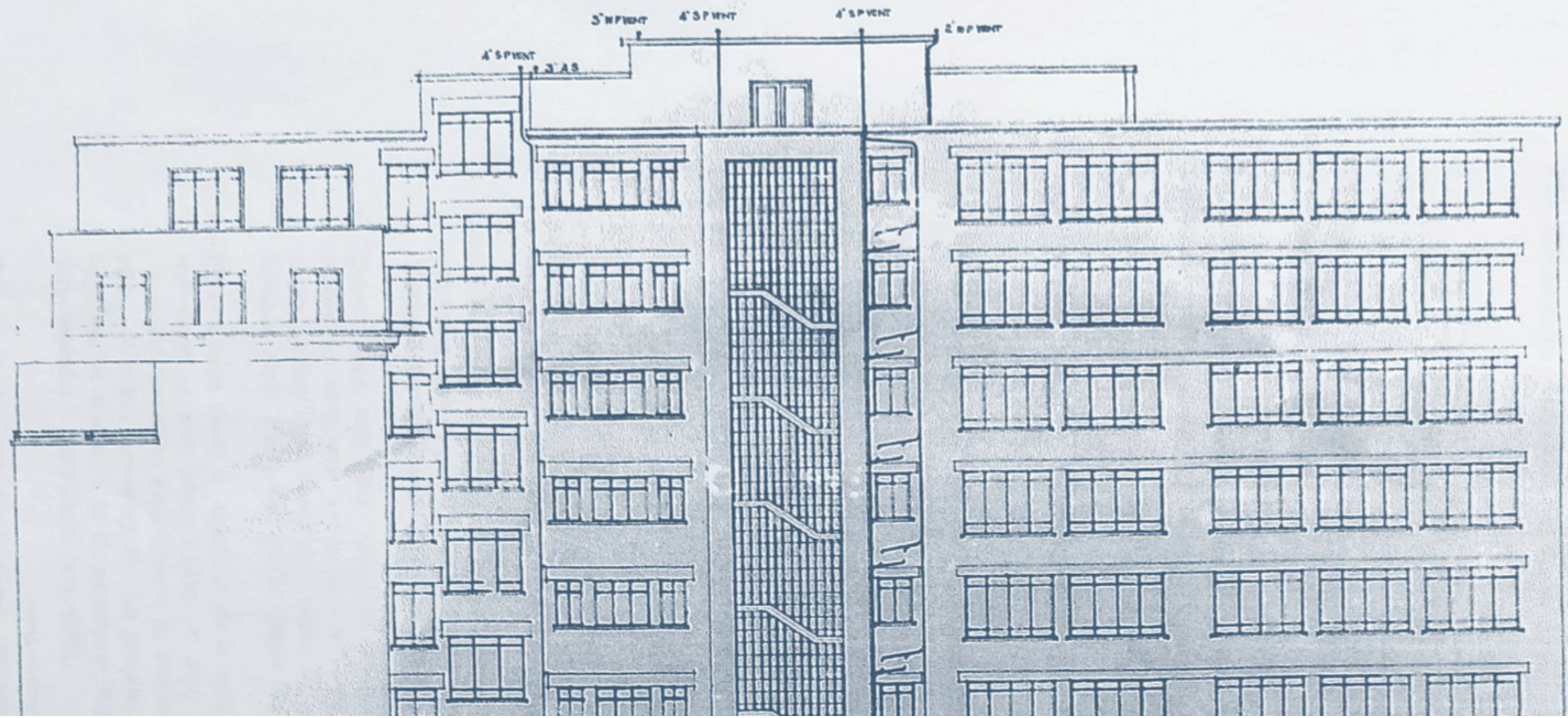


Figure 3: Area plan of the Site, delineated in red, and its surroundings. Nearby designated heritage assets denoted by a blue triangle.





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## Historic Background

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# Historic Background

## Area Development

- 17. Tavistock Square was set out as part of a planned development on land historically owned by the Dukes of Bedford, with plans for development conceived by Francis Russell, the 5th Duke of Bedford. Tavistock Square is named for the subsidiary titles of the Duke of Bedford—Marquess of Tavistock, which had been traditionally gifted to the eldest sons of the Dukes of Bedford since 1694.
- 18. Development began from around 1806 with the east side of the Square, led by the speculative property developer James Burton. Later the western side was developed by Thomas Cubitt 1825–6, which largely drew upon the existing design, and proportions of the Burton portion of the Square. This occurred early in the career of Thomas Cubitt who went on to develop many other of the formally arranged squares across London. .
- 19. The square underwent largescale redevelopment in the late 19th and early 20th Century. Many of the Georgian terraces which formerly occupied all edges of the square were cleared on the north, east and south sides.
- 20. These later buildings were considerably larger in scale and mass and occupied multiple plots. What is now the administrative headquarters British Medical Association, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in the early 1910s, inspired much of the later development of the area. Buildings constructed as part of this early 20th century phase of development include Tavistock Court and Woburn House on the north side. The Tavistock Hotel on the south side and Lynton House and Tavis House (the application site) on the west side.

## Tavis House

- 21. The site was originally occupied by a terrace of late Georgian townhouses (Nos 1-12 Tavistock Square), designed by James Burton.

Descriptions of the lease available from the National Archive reveal the plots 1-6 Tavistock Square have been known as Tavis House from at least 1940. Aerial photographs in Figures 4 and 5 date from 1939 and 1946 respectively - that from 1939 shows a cleared site and that from 1946 show Tavis House, indicating a build-date of the early to mid 1940s. Tavis House was built to the designs of Trehearne, Norman, Preston & Partners and constructed as the 'London Appointments Office' for the Ministry of Labour and National Service.

- 22. The 1945 Bomb Damage Map (Figure X) is based upon the earlier 1916 OS Map. While the shading in yellow in indicating light blast damage to terrace at Nos. 1-6 Tavistock Square, this is likely regarding Tavis House which had been constructed by this date. The map also shows buildings on the site of Lynton House have been marked for clearance.
- 23. The OS Map of 1951 shows the entire eastern edge of the Square to have been cleared and shows Tavis House as constructed. The plot of Lynton House has remained vacant.
- 24. Tavis House at the time of its construction housed three sections of Ministry of Labour and National Service dealing with recruitment for the nursing profession, a service providing a technical and scientific register, and the appointments office. The Ministry of Labour was renamed the Ministry of Labour and National Service in 1939 as an expansion of its duties following the outbreak of the Second World War and the passing of the National Service Act in 1939.
- 25. Throughout the 20th century Tavis House was occupied by various government departments and the building has been upgraded to meet changing needs of use and accommodation - noticeably, plant and additional enclosures have been added at roof level and the original metal-framed windows replaced. However, Tavis House retains much of its original external character.

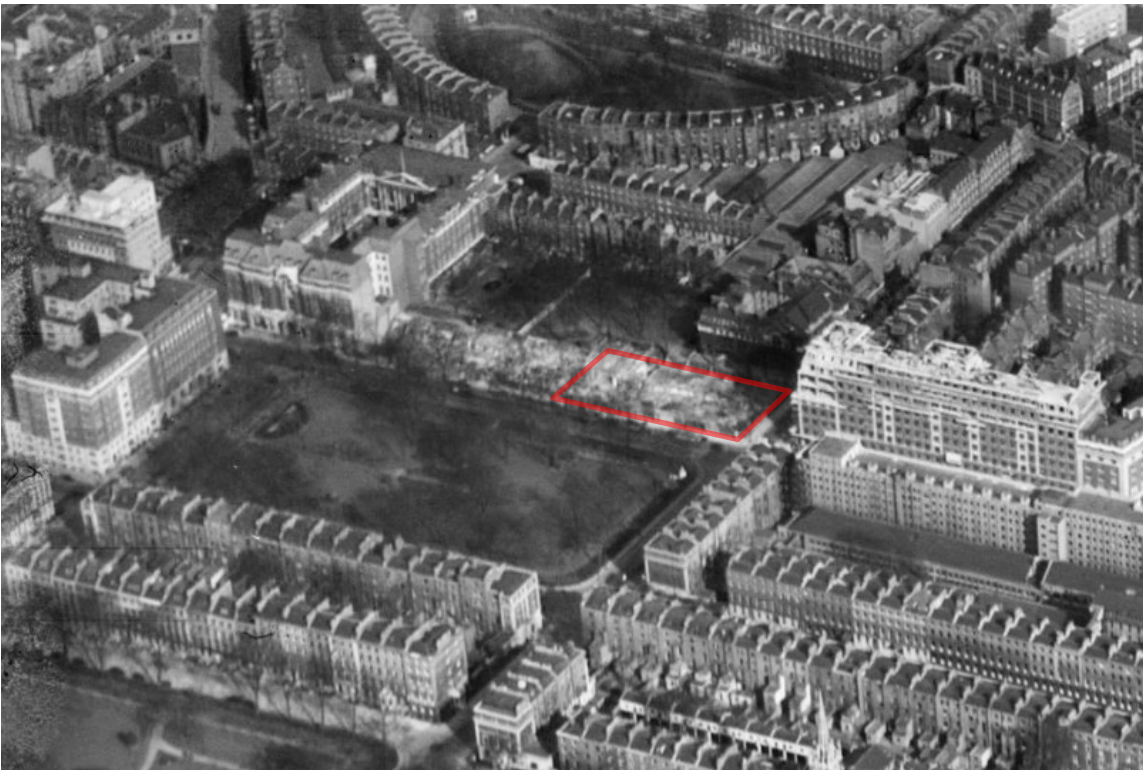


Figure 4: 1939 aerial photograph, site of Tavis House delineated in red

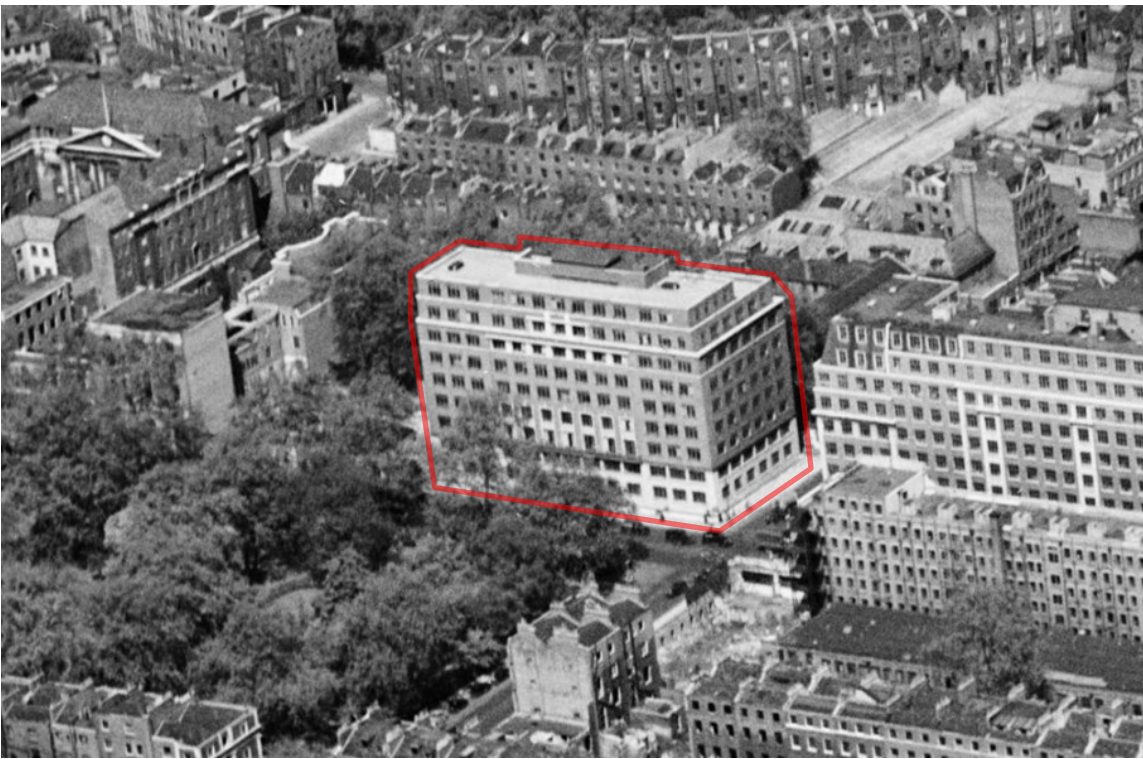


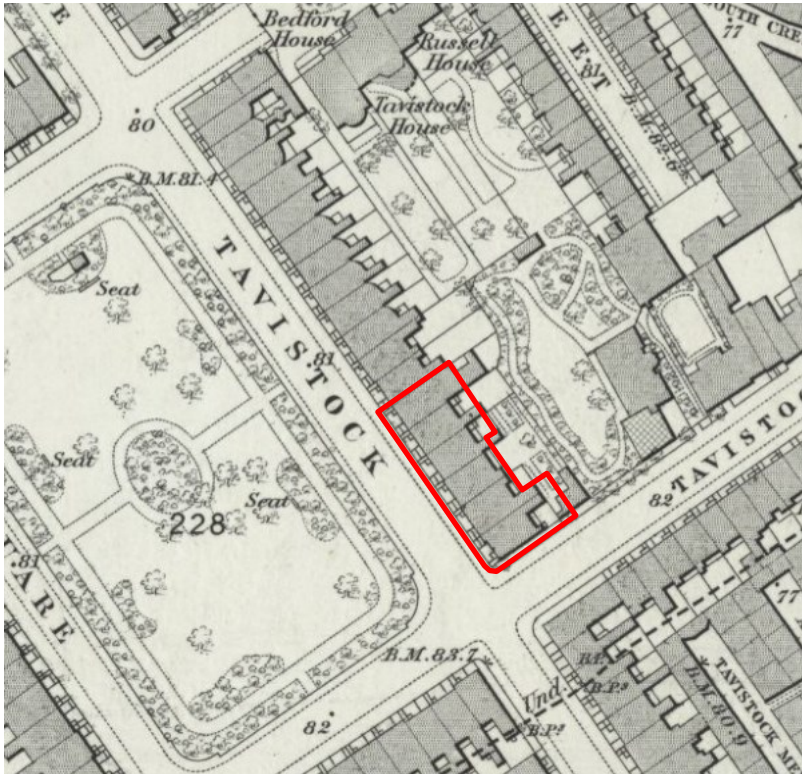
Figure 5: 1946 aerial photograph of Tavis House, delineated in red



# Historic Background



Horwood Map (1792-99)



OS Map (1876)



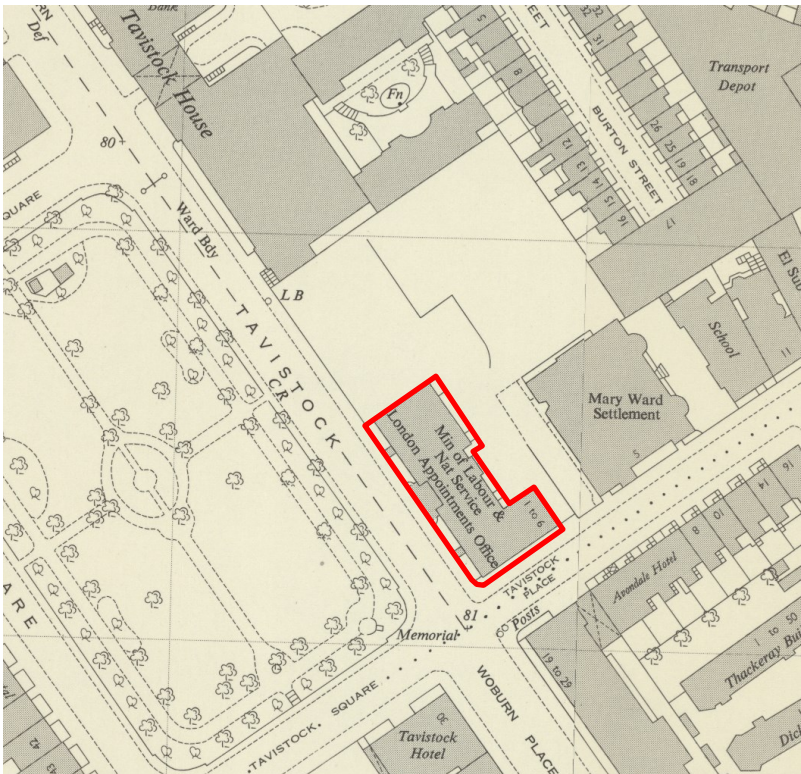
OS Map (1895)



OS Map (1916)



Bomb Damage Map 1945



OS Map (1953)

Figure 6: Historic Map Regression. Tavis House delineated in red.





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## Assessment of Significance

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# Assessment of Significance

26.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2023) promotes understanding significance in order to judge the acceptability of the effects of a proposal upon it. Significance, for heritage assets, comprises the asset's architectural, historical, archaeological and artistic interests.
27.

This section provides a proportionate interpretation of the significance of those heritage assets potentially affected by the proposed development.
28.

Tavis House is not statutorily listed though is recognised as a 'positive contributor' to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area by Camden Borough Council. For the purposes of this heritage statement the entire site will be treated as a non-designated heritage asset.
29.

There are a number nearby listed buildings and the Tavis House forms part of their setting. None of the listed building are proposed to be altered nor would they be directly impacted upon by the works proposed at Tavis House. Any potential for the significance of designated heritage assets to be affected relates to: impacts on the character and appearance of the conservation area and impacts on the setting of listed buildings as a contributing aspect of significance. Consideration is therefore given to the way in which the setting of these listed buildings and conservation areas, and how it contributes to their significance, is affected.

## Significance of Tavis House

30.

Tavis House derives its significance principally through its architectural interest: through the quality and composition of both its front and return elevations, its relationship to the immediate context of Tavistock Square and through its association with the redevelopment of this area of Bloomsbury in the mid-20th century.
31.

Tavis House is a modest example of interwar civic/municipal architecture, displaying simple modernist and deco forms and detailing. The elevation facing Tavistock Square garden is the

building's primary feature of interest with the main entrance forming the building's focal point. The lower ground floor is opened by the lightwells which flank the main entrance and are bounded by Portland stone dwarf walls and iron railings. Portland stone cladding also extends from lower ground to first floor. This is repeated on the return elevation that fronts onto Tavistock Place.

32.

The main entrance is given prominence by a projecting canopy, a later addition, sill bands and a small second floor balcony and iron railing that is supported by simple moulded consul brackets. Above the entrance the elevation is slightly recessed up to sixth floor level. At first floor level the verticality of the seven central windows are emphasised through double-height stone surrounds which are further defined by projecting key stones and divided by textured concrete friezes. The entrance itself is modern and of no heritage or townscape value.
33.

The sixth, seventh and eighth floors are set back from each other on the front and return elevations, creating Tavis House's distinct tapered form. Each level is topped by a projecting stone cornice that defines the storey and breaks up the building's massing. The central bays of the front elevation at sixth floor level, like the ground and first floor bays below, is articulated with a series of broad deco styled columns pedimented by shallow stone canopy. This arrangement is partially replicated on the central three windows of the seventh storey, which have similar stone detailing to the sixth below, beneath a band of stonework.

34.

The roof to Tavis House is flat, utilitarian in character and of no heritage or townscape value. There is a mix of plant, plant enclosures, access areas and rooflights. Access to the roof is made through an ancillary rooftop structure that is set well back from but is visible in views of the rear elevation. It is flanked by a brick screen that surrounds several plant units although the increased requirements of Tavis House has meant additional plant is now located in unscreened areas across the roof.



Figure 7: Front entrance of Tavis House



Figure 8: Rear elevation and roof of Tavis House



# Assessment of Significance

## Bloomsbury Conservation Area

35.

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area is of significance for its architecture and history. These combined result in an area of distinct character and appearance.
36.

Tavis House is located in Sub Area 6: Bloomsbury Square / Russell Square / Tavistock Square. Paragraph 5.79 of the Conservation Area Appraisal states that Sub Area 6 is:

*... largely made up of three-and four-storey late 18th and 19th century terraces surrounding a sequence of linked formal spaces, namely Bloomsbury Square, Russell Square and Tavistock Square. A series of north-south vistas visually connect the three squares. Moving through the area, there is a transition between the enclosed, urban nature of the streets and the more open squares which are softened by trees and green landscape. In places, the original terraces have been replaced with 20th century development, mostly of a larger scale and urban grain; this is particularly noticeable around Tavistock Square, Bedford Way and Upper Woburn Place.*
37.

Paragraph 5.98 describes the buildings along the east side of Tavistock Square, focusing on the British Medical Association, but also mentions Tavis House and adjacent Lynton House:

*To the south, Lynton House and Tavis House are substantial mid-20th century blocks built in red brick with a stone base and central entrance. Both have seven main storeys on the frontage, a consistent parapet level.*
38.

Tavis House is representative of mid 20th century commercial and residential architecture that typifies much of the area around Tavistock Square, and by virtue of its scale, facing materials and design sits comfortably in its context and contributes modestly to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

## Listed Context

39.

Nearby listed buildings assessed in this section are recognised as being of special architectural or historic interest. They each contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area and are important features within the immediate street scene around Tavis House.
40.

**Mary Ward House, Grade I:** Built in 1890 as one of London's first "settlements" run by socially-conscious middle-class educators for the benefit of local working people and their children. It was designed by Arnold Dunbar Smith and Cecil Brewer and constructed in an advanced Arts and Crafts manner. Its impressive Arts and Craft design, degree of preservation and its original social purpose make it a building of high significance.
41.

The building's wide frontage and detached form gives it a degree of prominence in a context of largely terraced properties, though it sits lower than the majority of the buildings surrounding it, making it somewhat overshadowed. To the north and west its setting is dominated by Tavis House and other larger 20th century developments. To the south and east Mary Ward House is experienced as part of the Georgian and Victorian terraced streetscape along Tavistock Place.
42.

Given the overall quality of the townscape around Mary Ward House, the setting of the building makes a modest contribution to its significance. An exception to this townscape quality is the presence of the access and service area to the rear of Tavis House, whose utilitarian character and low quality detracts from the setting of the listed building.
43.

**Mary Ward Centre, Grade II:** Built just after Mary Ward House in the early 20th century to the designs of the same architects though carried out in a Neo-Georgian style. It has broadly the same setting as Mary Ward House, though its principal elevation does not front the public realm and the building is set behind a tall boundary wall and it is

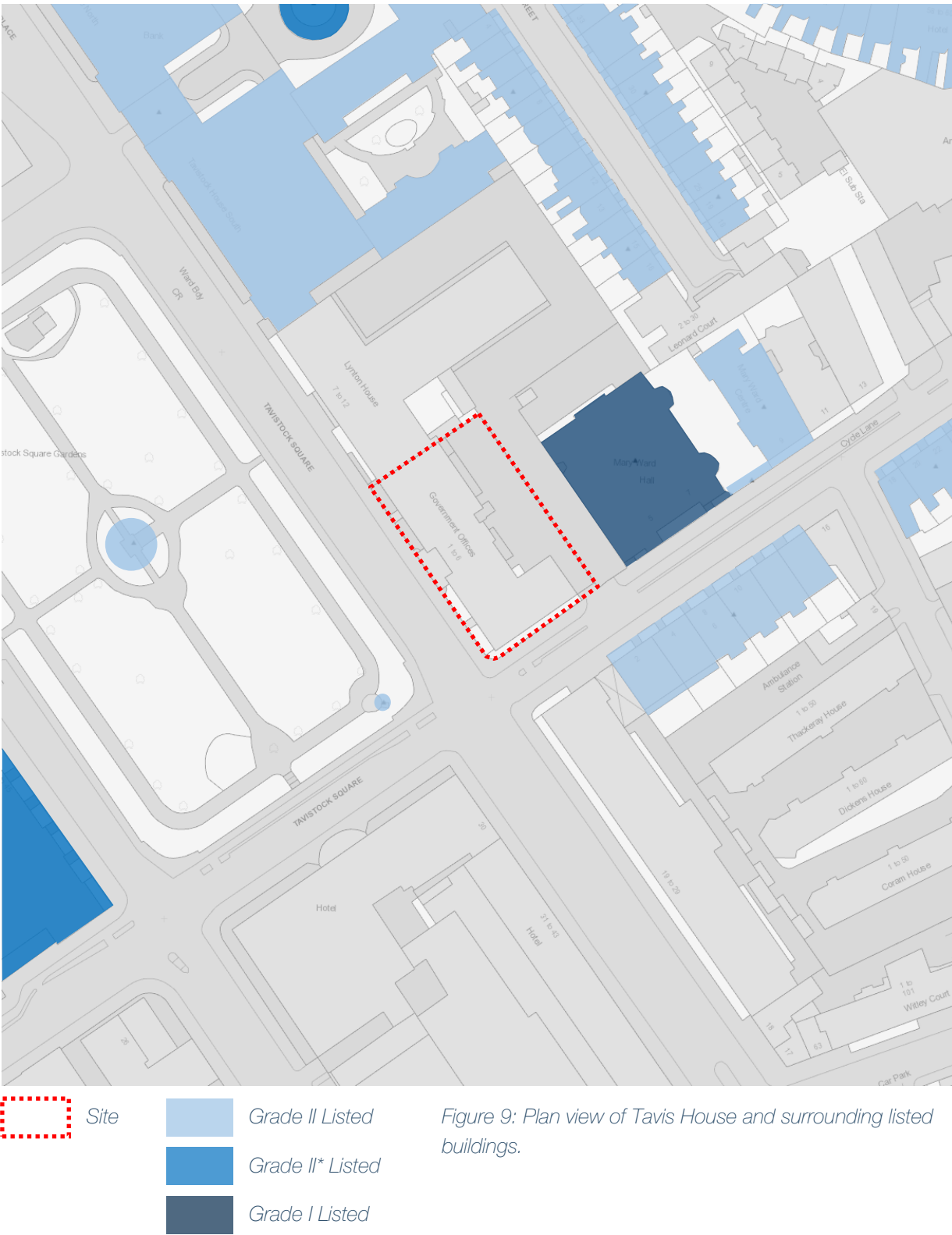


Figure 9: Plan view of Tavis House and surrounding listed buildings.



# Assessment of Significance

surrounded on three sides by taller buildings. It lacks the townscape prominence of its neighbour and as such it is experienced as a more recessive element within the townscape. It derives interest from the presence of the Mary Ward House and the two together have group value though it gains little value from its wider setting.

- 44. There is no direct visual relationship between the Mary Ward Centre and the rear of Tavis House due the screening effect of Mary Ward House. The two are instead incidentally experienced as part of the wider townscape along Tavistock Place.
- 45. **Nos. 2-14 Tavistock Place, Grade II:** This short terrace, located directly south of Tavis House on the opposite side of Tavistock Place, comprises six early 19th century townhouses that were rebuilt with facsimile facades in the 1970s. Much of their significance relates to the architectural quality of the street frontages and as such the significance derived from their setting relates to how their principal elevations are experienced within the townscape.
- 46. The south elevation of Tavis House and Nos. 2-14 Tavistock are both experienced as part of the townscape along Tavistock Place. Whilst there is a visual connection due to their proximity the value of the interrelationship is limited due to difference in typology, form, style, age, massing and scale between the two. As with the setting of Mary Ward House, the overall quality of the townscape around the listed terrace ensures the setting of the building makes a modest contribution to significance.
- 47. **British Medical Association House, Grade II:** A substantial multi-phase building developed over the first half of the 20th century and comprising a number of ranges and courtyards, the earliest of which was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. It is the most notable building overlooking the eastern side of Tavistock Square, with its entrance an

important feature of the townscape and one that terminates the view looking east from Endsleigh Place and from the north side of Gordon Square.

- 48. The setting of the BMA therefore contributes to its significance. The deliberate positioning of its entrance and the relationship of the frontage with the garden square and wider townscape enhance the experience of the building. Tavis House, by virtue of its scale, facing materials and design sits comfortably in the setting of the BMA.
- 49. **Nos. 4-34 Burton Street, Grade II:** All properties within the terraces along the southern end of Burton Street, located to the north of Tavis House, are Grade II listed. Though built in the early 19th century all were heavily restored in the 1980s. Much of their significance relates to the street frontages and as such the significance derived from their setting relates to how their principal elevations are experienced within the townscape. The rear elevations of the terrace, where any visual relationship with Tavis House would occur, are subservient and experienced in a mixed and subservient context and minimal townscape value.
- 50. **Statue of Mahatma Gandhi and Memorial to Dame Louisa Aldrich Blake in Tavistock Square Gardens, both Grade II:** Both statues are of artistic value and derive some further interest from their location in Tavistock Square. Both are deliberate set-pieces that are principally experienced from within the garden square, though the Dame Louisa Aldrich Blake memorial has some presence in the street scene along the south and east sides of Tavistock Square. Tavis House, as part of the typical townscape context around Tavistock Square, contributes minimally to the statues setting and significance.
- 51. **Nos 29-45 Tavistock Square, Grade II\*:** This terrace, located on the opposite side of Tavistock Square to Tavis House, comprises sixteen early 19th century townhouses. Much of their significance relates to the architectural quality of



Figure 10: The Mary Ward Centre (Grade I) and Nos. 2-14 Tavistock Place (Grade II)



Figure 11: The BMA (Grade II), as viewed from the corner of Tavistock Square



# Assessment of Significance

their garden square frontages and as such the significance derived from their setting relates to how their principal elevations are experienced within the townscape, especially when viewed from the adjacent Tavistock Square. However, the extent of 20th century development around Tavistock Square has diminished the value of its setting.

## Townscape & Views

52. The townscape along Tavistock Square and Tavistock Place has its origins in the late Georgian period and has seen subject to redevelopment in the 20th century. It is highly varied and comprises a broad range of building types, scales, forms ages, styles and uses and spaces.
53. Around Tavistock Square the townscape is dominated by number of large-scale 20th century buildings. Those located on the north, south and east sides are between six and ten stories in height. There is some consistency in the use of materials: red brick with stone dressings predominates, reflecting the facade of the British Medical Association building, although later buildings employ a sizeable amount of concrete. The west side of Tavistock Square retains its original building stock - Nos. 29-45 Tavistock Square, which are typical Regency townhouses
54. Tavistock Place is a busy side street that is more mixed in character with a large proportion of buildings dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The height and articulation of the early 19th century four-storey townhouses on the south side is echoed in the larger scale but continuous block on the north side at No 15. Elsewhere there is a predominance of red brick and ornate detailing, as found in the larger scale mansion blocks of the later 19th century.



Figure 12: Townscape view of Tavis House and context, as viewed from the west



Figure 13: Townscape view of Tavis House and context, as viewed from the east