

Tavistock House, Tavistock Square, London
Refurbishment and Fit Out: Blocks F&G, Levels 3 and 4
Heritage Appraisal Addendum April 2024



Tavistock House, Tavistock Square

Levels 3 and 4: Blocks F and G

Heritage Appraisal Addendum

THE HERITAGE PRACTICE

April 2024

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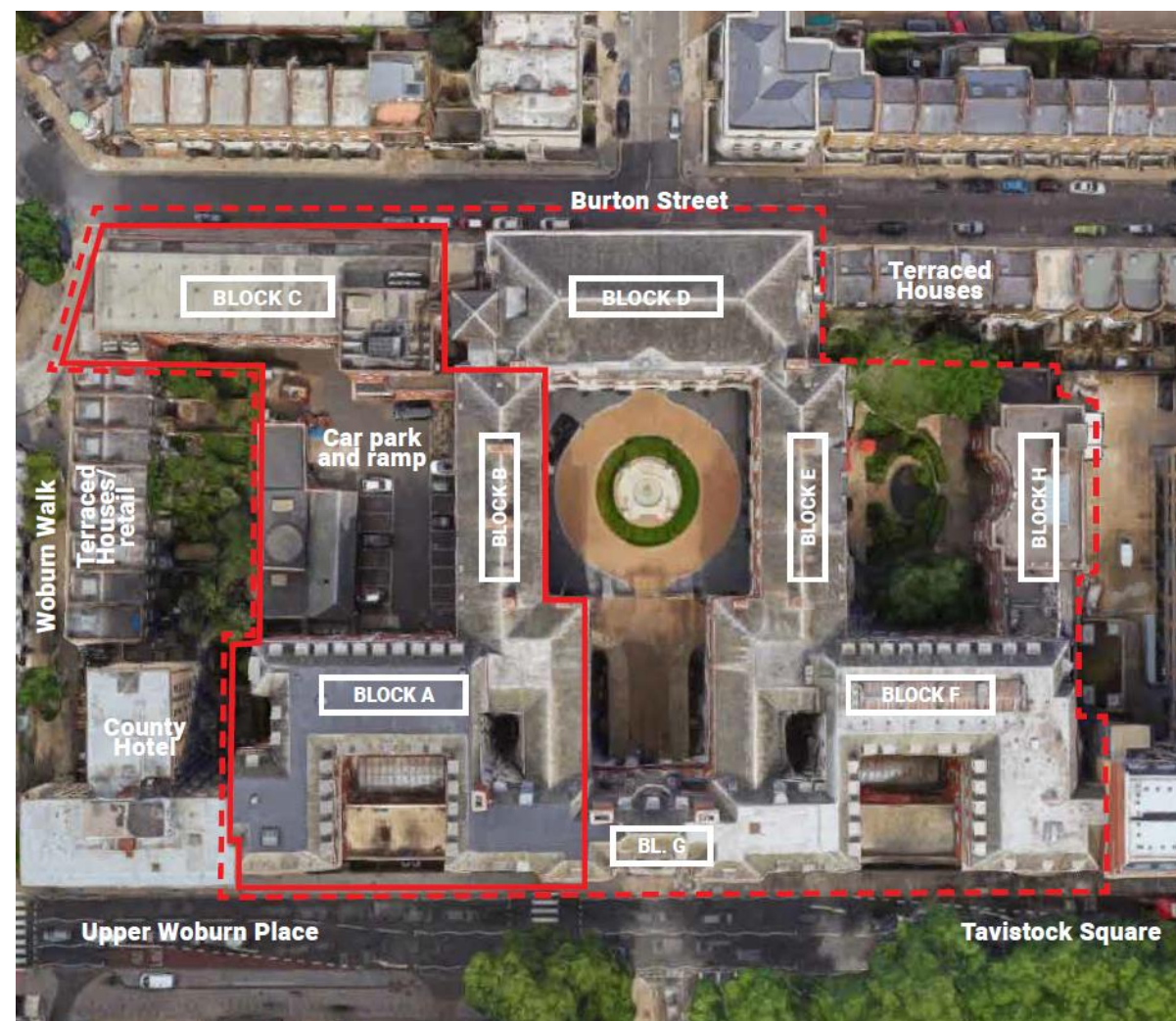


Figure 1: The BMA estate and its component blocks. The proposals relate to Blocks E, F and G.

1 Introduction

1.1 The following Heritage Appraisal has been prepared on behalf of the British Medical Association (BMA) in support of applications for listed building consent and planning permission in relation to Tavistock House, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9LG (the site) (figure 1). Tavistock House is a grade II listed building and forms part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. This report should be read in conjunction with the drawings and Design and Access Statement (DAS) prepared by John Robertson Architects (JRA).

1.2 A scheme for the alteration and refurbishment of the third and fourth floors of Block F and G together with roof level air condenser units and the creation of louvred dormer windows to Block F was approved in March 2024 (2023/3263/P and 2024/0044/L). Following the submission of the applications in August 2023 and going out to tender for the works, minor revisions are now proposed to the consented scheme.

1.3 The proposed amendments include:

- A larger area of roof demolition (to be reconstructed as part of the works) to meet the requirements of louvred dormer installation;
- Minor alterations to the setting out of roof openings needed for services penetration to roofs of Blocks F and G;
- Alterations to the approved WC layout;
- Removal of walls forming lift lobby to Block F, Level 3 and elsewhere within the floorplate;
- Strip out of brick wall to Block F, Level 3; and
- The removal of a brick pier to Block G, Level 3.

1.4 The consented scheme, which involved similar alterations, was considered by LB Camden to preserve the significance of the listed building: *'Overall the proposed works are considered to preserve the significance of the Grade II listed building and its internal features. No objection is raised by the Council's conservation officer, as such the replacement is not considered to be detrimental to the character of the building or that of the wider conservation area.'*

1.5 As part of the approved application, a detailed Heritage Appraisal was provided. The appraisal considered all aspects of the proposed scheme against the significance of the listed building (Appendix A). This addendum focuses specifically on the amendments to the consented scheme as identified above rather than reiterate all of the information previously provided.

The proposals

1.5 With regard to the louvred dormers as previously proposed, the council noted that: *'The externally proposed vents would be located in the existing lightwell roof and would not appear out of place and would only be visible from the upper floor windows. The dormer windows would not be visible from within the main courtyard or from the wider conservation area.'*

1.6 For construction purposes, the proposed dormers require a slightly larger area of roof to be demolished. The area proposed for demolition will be reinstated with existing slates and other fabric reutilised as previously consented. No changes to the approved dormers are proposed and they will ultimately remain as consented once construction works are complete.

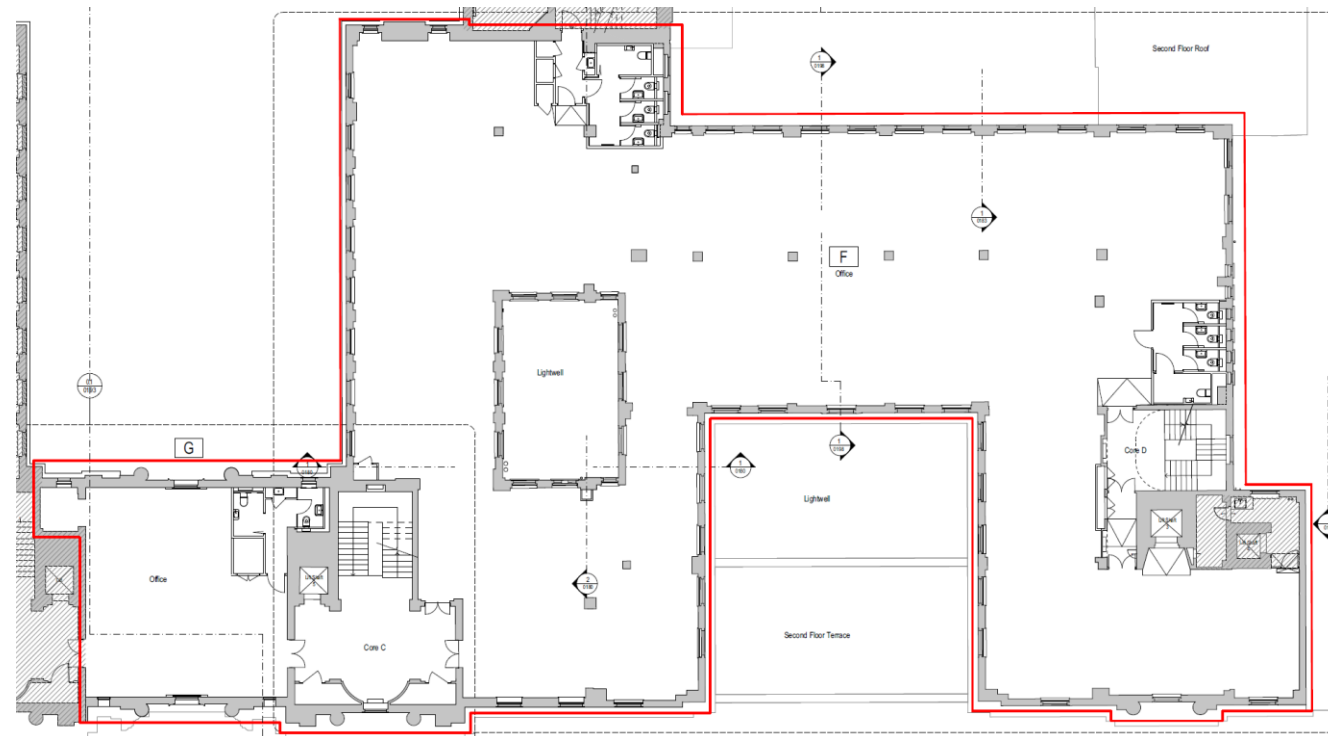


Figure 2: Proposed third floor plan, 2024.

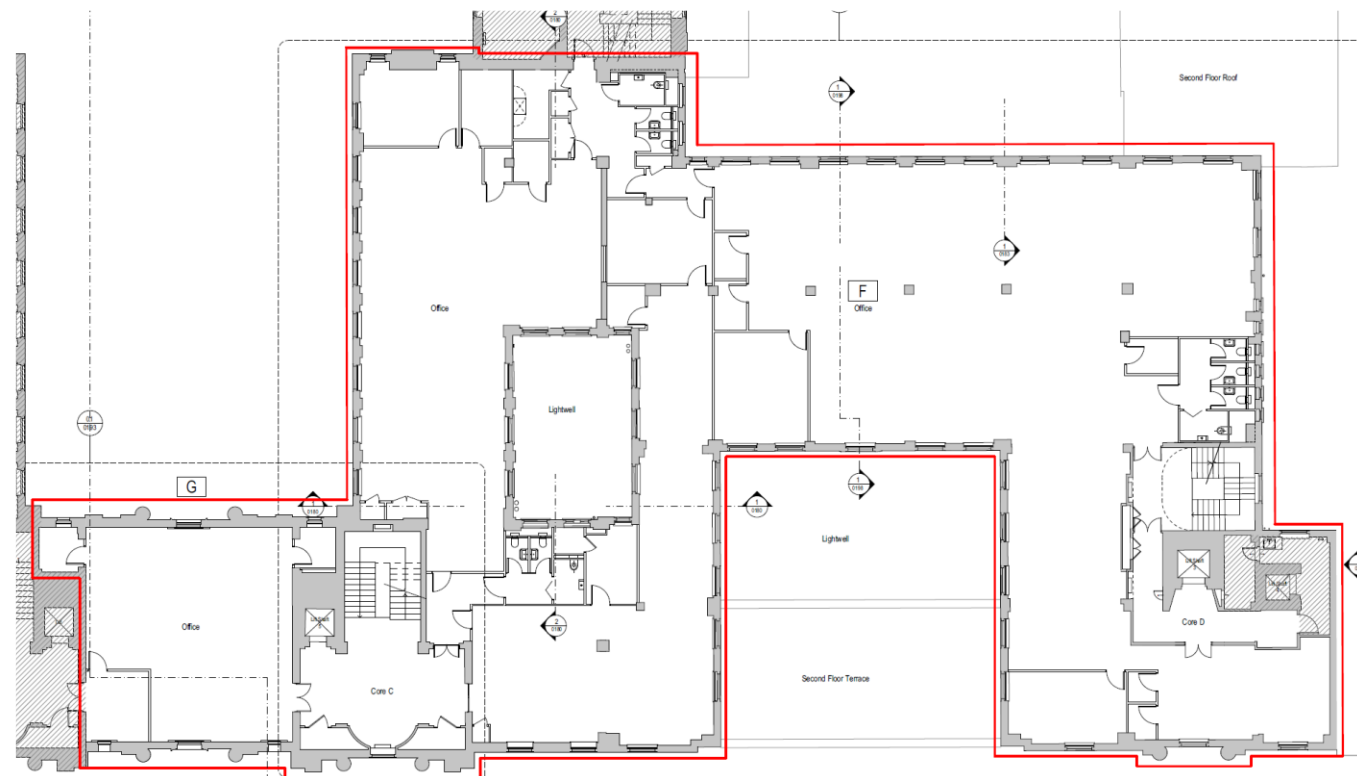


Figure 3: Approved third floor plan.

1.7 The consented WC layout and general floor layout will also be revised (figures 2 and 3). Modern walls and subdivision will be removed to create a more open floor plate. The layout of the WCs will be revised at the southern end of Block F and in the north-eastern corner. Additional WCs will be provided in Block G at third floor level. At fourth floor level, existing and consented WCs will be relocated from the west side of the building to the east. Additional modern partitions will be removed from the fourth floor to create a more open floor plate.

1.8 At third floor level, a single historic wall is retained that is likely to date from the period of the building's construction in the post-war period. This will be removed in order to facilitate a more open floor plate. Currently, the wall extends east to west, blocking potential for a more simplified floorplate. Columns marking the position of the wall will be retained. In order to accommodate new WCs on the third floor level of Block G, a brick pier will be removed that currently forms part of small cupboard on the south side of the central office.

1.9 The proposed amendments form part of a larger consented scheme of reordering and configuration intended to deliver exemplary workspaces with a high level of environmental performance, in line with the BMA's objectives for its estate overall.

Research and report structure

1.10 The following appraisal has been informed by desk based and archival research. Research has been undertaken using a variety of online sources, the BMA's own archives, the London Metropolitan Archive, the RIBA Library and the London Borough of Camden's historic planning files.

1.11 The historic development and significance of the relevant areas of Blocks F and G are considered in Section 2 of Appendix A. The following section provides an outline of the proposed scheme and assesses the current proposals against the significance of the building and the relevant historic environment policy context as set out in Appendix A.

Author

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

2 Assessment

2.1 The following section provides an assessment of the proposed scheme against the significance of the BMA House as a whole and of the affected areas particularly. It also takes into account relevant historic environment policy as set out in Appendix A. The following section should be read in conjunction with the drawings and Design and Access Statement (DAS) prepared by JRA.

2.2 As set out above, in seeking to achieve the refurbishment of the relevant areas of Levels 3 and 4 and in targeting BCO 2019 compliant standards for office refurbishment, the proposals involve amendments to the consented scheme:

- A larger area of roof demolition (to be reconstructed as part of the works) to meet the requirements of louvred dormer installation;
- Minor alterations to the setting out of roof openings needed for services penetration to roofs of Blocks F and G;
- Alterations to the approved WC layout;
- Removal of walls forming lift lobby to Block F, Level 3 and elsewhere within the floorplate;
- Strip out of brick wall to Block F, Level 3; and
- The removal of a brick pier to Block G, Level 3.

Dormer construction

2.3 The proposed louvred dormers to the lightwell were considered acceptable under the consented scheme. No issues were raised in terms of the construction of the dormers other than to provide details of their appearance under Condition 4 of the listed building consent. In investigating the construction of the dormers and the provision of plant, it is now considered necessary to create larger openings in the existing roof for construction purposes (figure 4). The proposed dormers do not exceed in size beyond that already consented.

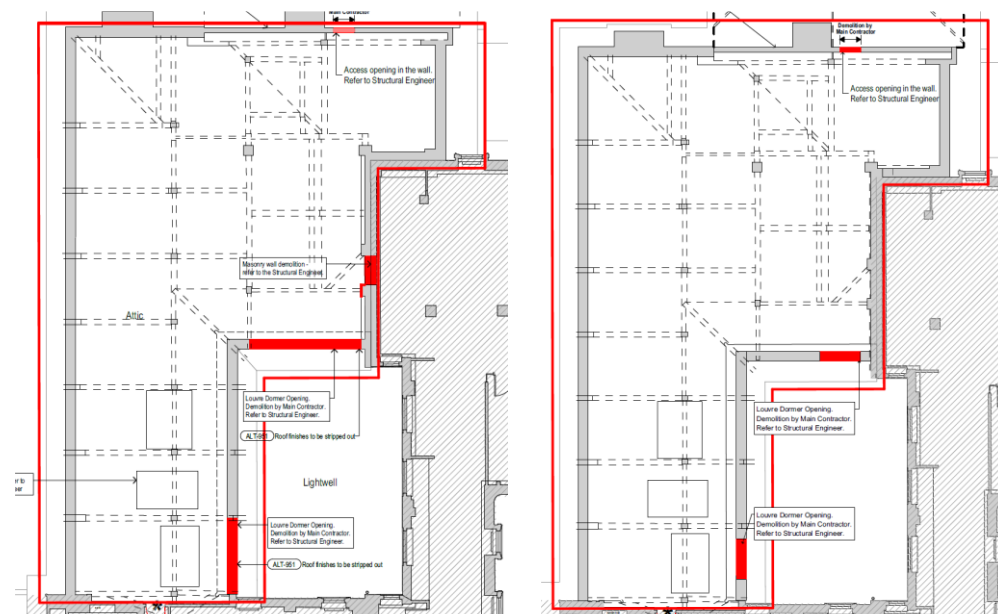


Figure 4: Left: proposed 5th floor strip out plan; Right: Consented 5th floor strip out plan.

2.4 Once installation of plant is complete, the openings at roof level will be reconstructed reusing existing slates and other materials. The finished result will be as per the consented scheme with no change to the permitted lightwell elevations. The main change is obviously a larger, but temporary, area of demolition, necessary to facilitate construction and the overall aims and objectives of the proposed scheme.

2.5 The proposed demolition is effectively a temporary measure and in reconstruction, existing materials will be reused. As such the proposals minimise the removal of historic fabric and would preserve the consented appearance of the listed building. Therefore, the proposals would not cause harm to the significance of the listed building or its architectural or historic interest.

Roof openings to roofs of Blocks F and G

2.6 As part of the consented scheme, an access opening on the east elevation was approved. An additional opening is now proposed between Blocks F and G as indicated on figure 4. This is a practical move, necessary to adequately manage and supply the consented new servicing. The proposal would involve the minimal removal of fabric which is likely to date to the post-war period. The proposed openings facilitate the consented scheme's wider objectives and would not cause harm to the significance of the listed building or its architectural and historic special interest.

Proposed layout changes

2.7 As shown in figures 3 and 5, it is now proposed to amend the consented layout to create a more open plan office area at Levels 3 and 4. The vast majority of the existing partitions are modern. With regard to the consented scheme, the Heritage Appraisal noted at paragraphs 3.3 that: *The partitions to be removed from the existing open plan layout are all modern and do not relate to any form of historic layout seen over the second half of the 20th century. There would therefore be no harm caused to the special interest of the listed building through their removal.*

2.8 The decision notice for the consented scheme noted that: *'The proposal involves internal alterations to the third and fourth floors of blocks F and G. These floors have previously been altered with most historic walls already being removed. The proposed internal works would involve re-ordering of the space and leave the character unaltered.'*

2.9 The consented scheme proposed the removal of modern partitions and the provision of some new subdivision. It is now proposed to have a more fully open plan layout. On the whole, the proposed new layout removes partitions that were included under the consented scheme and also existing modern subdivision, except where identified below. The existing office space has a modern character and appearance and the scheme now proposed would maintain the general feel and experience of the areas in question.

2.10 Changes are also proposed to the consented/existing WC layout. At third floor, the existing WC provision is located at the southern end of Block F, to the west of the lightwell and to the east of the floor plan adjacent to Block E. Under the consented scheme, the WCs to the south were retained with some reconfiguration as were the WCs to the east and adjacent to the lightwell.

2.11 The scheme now proposed seeks to amend the layout of the WCs to the south and to simplify the layout of the WCs to the east. Those adjacent to the lightwell will be removed entirely, better revealing one of the floor's more interesting features. Accessible WCs will be located within the central office space of Block G.

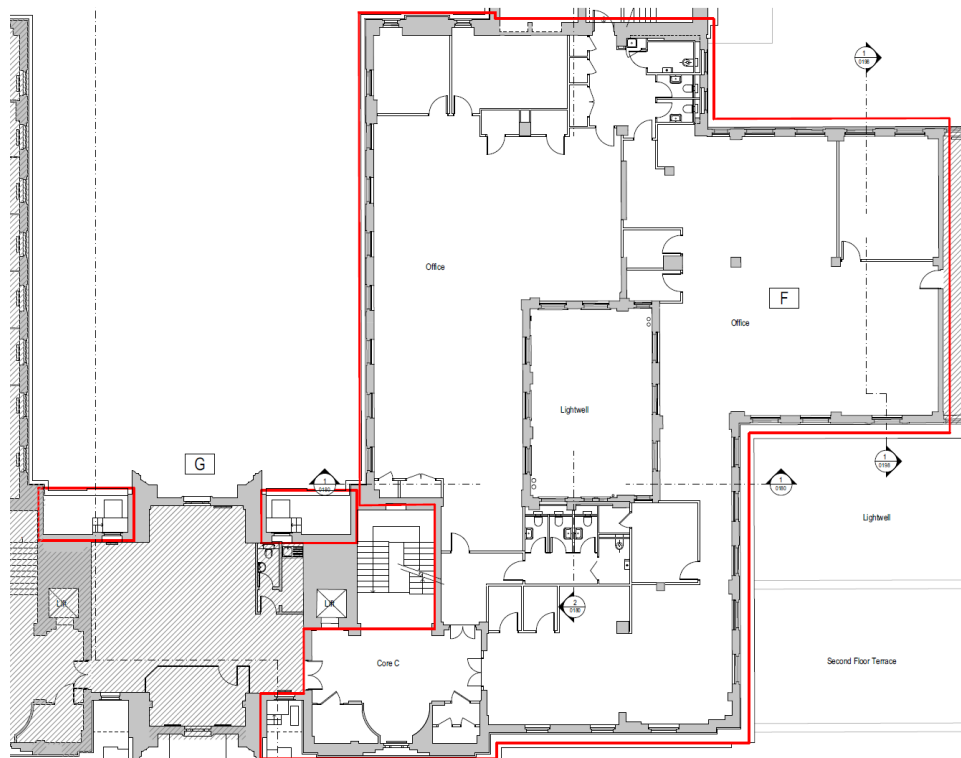
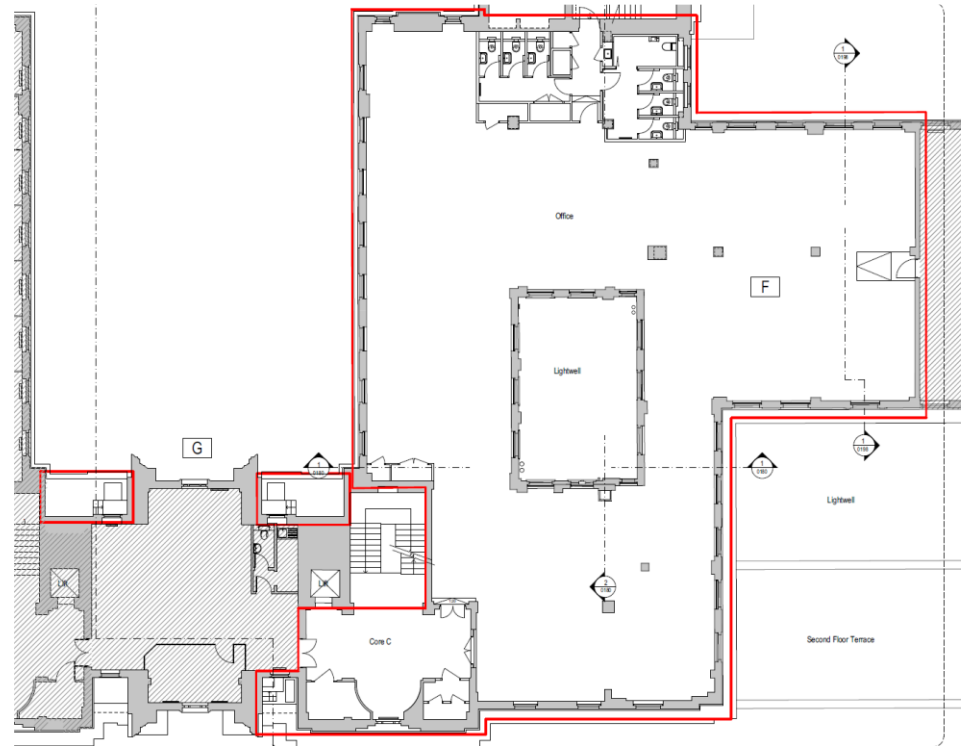
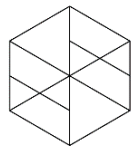


Figure 5: Above: proposed fourth floor plan. Below: consented fourth floor plan.

2.12 The proposed layout changes will result in simplified appearance, particularly in regard to the better organisation of WCs. The proposed layout will allow for greater flexibility and the potential for the high quality office space to appeal to a variety of potential tenants. The historic layout of this part of the building has long been eroded and the existing layout has no meaningful relationship with the historic plan form (figure 6).

2.13 Remaining historic walls or modern walls on the line of historic partitions will also be removed from within the centre of the space. These include walls at the southern end of Level 4 and a dividing wall running east to west further to the north of the same level. These are very much fragments of the original plan form and in themselves reveal little about the historic layout of the building. As such, and in the context of the listed building as a whole, the walls in question have a low level of significance. As with previous partition removal, columns are retained at fourth floor level so that the historic layout could still be understood.

2.14 At third floor level, walls forming the current lift lobby layout will also be removed. These are mostly modern walls that are not located on the line of a historic partition as shown in figure 6. Further to the north, a brick wall will be removed (close to the existing WC provision on the east side of the floor plate). This aligns with a similar wall on the fourth floor level above. Both walls previously define a corridor linking rooms that no longer exists. The wall is therefore a fragment of a much more substantial historic floor plan and has a very low level of significance as a result.

2.15 At Level 3, a shallow brick pier will be removed from an existing ante-room or cupboard so as to accommodate servicing for the proposed accessible WCs. This area is now much degraded in terms of its heritage significance and the pier itself already appears to have been cut back. Its removal would represent a departure from the historic plan form but has the benefit of facilitating accessible WCs.

Conclusions

2.16 Tavistock House as a whole is clearly a building of genuine architectural and historic significance. There are clearly components of the site that have a higher significance than others and this is expressed across the site with the Lutyens' blocks being of more significance historically and architecturally than the Wood extensions although of course, these do have heritage value.

2.17 Similarly, the interior of Levels 3 and 4 of Blocks F and G are of little significance historically or architecturally in comparison to other areas within the wider site. The existing modern finishes and the resulting appearance of these areas lack the distinction or quality of the building's exterior or the principal spaces within the building as a whole. The areas do have some interest as being representative of the BMA's more commercial endeavours and were conceived as flexible office spaces for a variety of potential occupants. The scheme now proposed is in line with the BMA's past and current ambitions and objectives and refurbishment has the potential to recreate more up to date and adaptable lettable office space.

2.18 The proposed scheme offers both enhancement to the listed building and an appropriate upgrade of existing office accommodation that allows the BMA to continue its long tradition of providing high quality lettable office accommodation. The past, more cellular plan of the interwar and post-war periods is no longer suited to modern office lets and indeed, this is reflected in the past removal of partitions which allow for a more flexible layout.

2.19 The existing open plan offices lack the distinction and interest seen in the external envelope of the building and don't quite stack up in terms of the potential value and the architectural status of the site as a whole. In addition, the environmental conditions and performance of the building are poor and there is clearly an opportunity to here to improve on this situation.

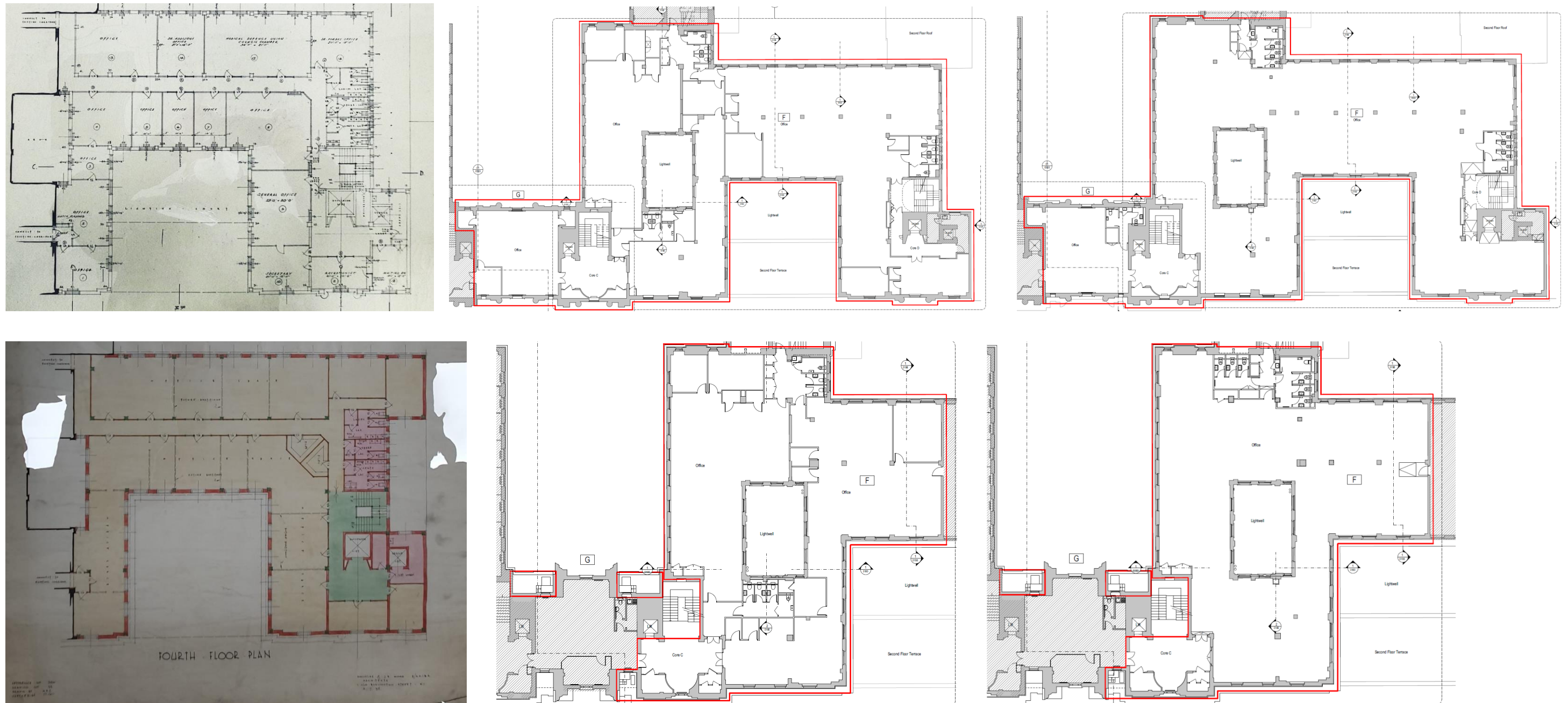
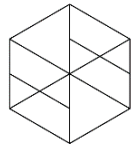


Figure 6: Above: Historic plan showing third floor layout of Block F, third floor consented scheme and third floor proposed scheme.
 Below: Fourth floor historic plan, consented fourth floor plan and proposed fourth floor plan.

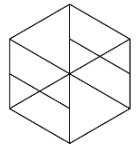


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3.23 The proposed scheme represents an opportunity to enhance the building and the office provision without causing harm to areas of genuine special interest or significance. It is therefore considered that the proposals avoid causing unacceptable harm and that enhancements are offered by the scheme in line with national and local historic environment policy and the relevant statutory provision.



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Appendix A

Heritage Appraisal July 2023

Tavistock House, Tavistock Square, London

Refurbishment and Fit Out: Blocks F&G, Levels 3 and 4

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Levels 3 and 4: Blocks F and G

Heritage Appraisal

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July 2023

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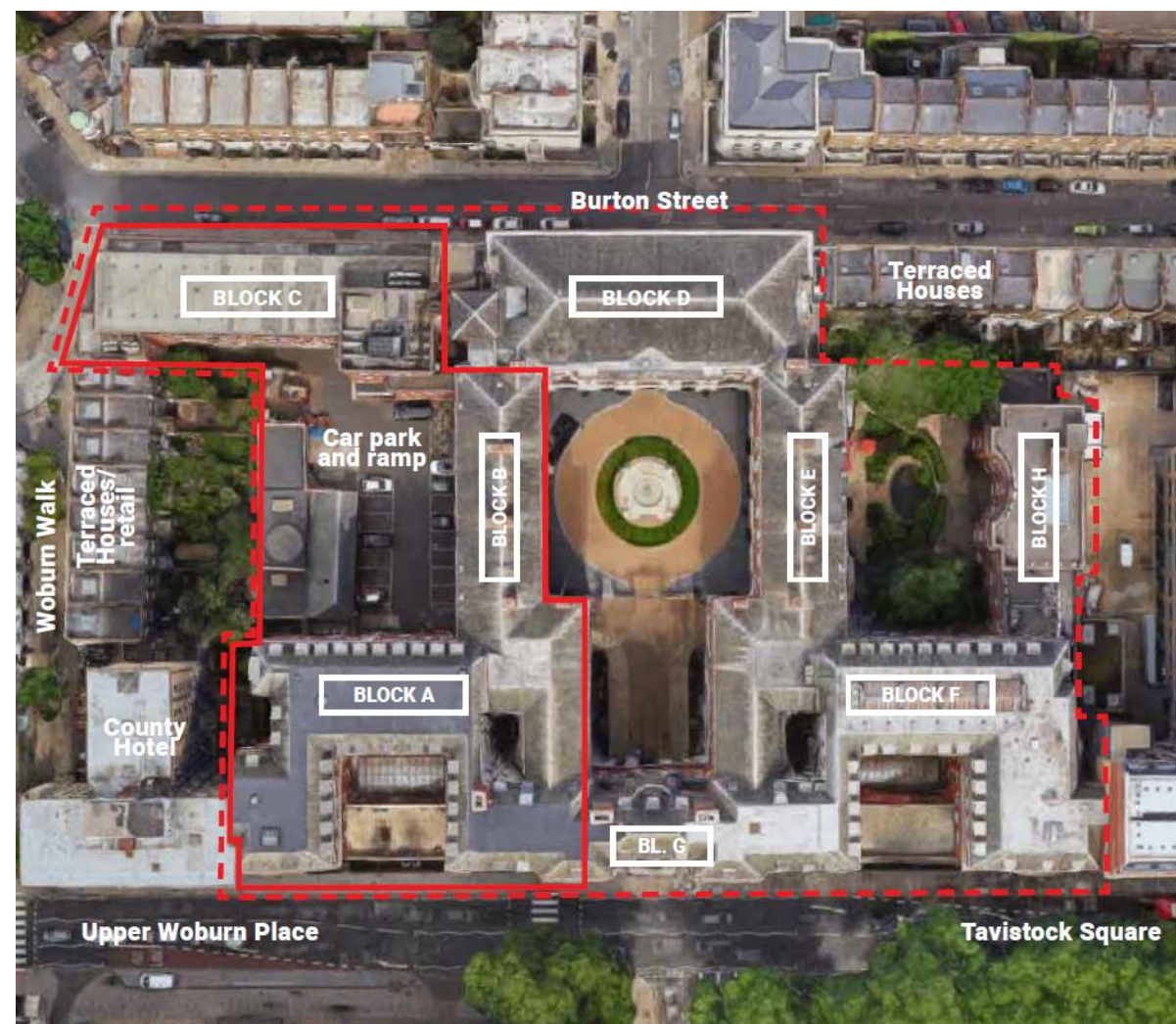


Figure 1: The BMA estate and its component blocks. The proposals relate to Blocks E, F and G.

1 Introduction

1.1 The following Heritage Appraisal has been prepared on behalf of the British Medical Association (BMA) in support of applications for listed building consent and planning permission in relation to Tavistock House, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9LG (the site). This report should be read in conjunction with the drawings and Design and Access Statement (DAS) prepared by John Robertson Architects (JRA).

1.2 Tavistock or BMA House is a grade II listed building, added to the statutory list in 1982. As set out below, Tavistock House was built in four principal phases and although cohesive in character and appearance, it is comprised of blocks of varying ages and by differing hands that reflect different periods of extension and expansion. Much of the site was constructed for the BMA as lettable office space and with a degree of in-built flexibility to suit a wide potential range of tenants. The list description for the building (Appendix A) sets out that the entire site is grade II listed and notes that the interior is much altered and now 'modern offices'. The summary of the site's importance is given as:

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.

1.3 The list description identifies several areas where value can be attributed to the existing building (although of course this is not exhaustive):

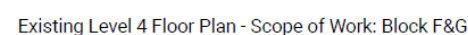
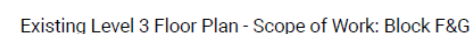
- An example of Lutyens' earlier work albeit incomplete;
- The high architectural quality of the later Wontner-Smith and Wood additions;
- While individual elements have value, the site as a whole is a distinguished and coherent complex; and,
- The association with the BMA since 1925.

1.4 The proposed site also forms part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and is split between Sub Areas 6 and 13. The Conservation Area Appraisal (adopted 2011) sets out in relation to Sub Area 6 that: 'The British Medical Association (BMA) is the most notable building overlooking the eastern side of the square. This fine red brick, grade II listed building with a stone banded base, entrance feature and dressings is an important feature in the street and terminates the view looking east from Endsleigh Place and from the north side of Gordon Square, which is framed on the south side by trees within the square. This five-storey building has a symmetrical composition with a central arched entrance, with two set-backs to the lower three storeys which help to relieve the mass of the building in views along the street.'

1.5 With regard to Sub Area 13, the appraisal notes that: 'The focal point of the crescent terminates in views west along Burton Place to Douglas Wood's 1950 extension to Sir Edwin Lutyens' British Medical Association building (listed grade II*), which was built on the site of Burton's House. Its large-scale red brick facades contrast with surrounding development. The buildings have lower wings which form the frontage to Burton Place (the principal frontage is on Tavistock Square).'

The proposals

1.6 The proposed scheme is described in detail in the accompanying DAS and in outline in Section 3 below.



The scheme involves the refurbishment of Levels 3 and 4 of Blocks F and G, remediating certain building defects, and new plant for Level 3 and 4 offices (figure 2).

1.7 As noted above, all parts of the site are grade II listed (full list description included at Appendix A). The existing building also forms part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It is located within Sub Area 6 of the conservation area: Bloomsbury Square/Russell Square/Tavistock Square. The proposals relate largely to internal changes, with the exception of the proposed plant enclosures. As shown in Section 3 below, the proposed plant is discretely located and design to have a limited effect on the host building and also on the character and appearance of the conservation area. While it is considered that listed building matters are the main focus in this case, the effects on the conservation area are noted in Section 3 below.

1.8 There are also a number of nearby listed buildings in close proximity to the site. As the external impact of the proposed scheme is very limited, the setting of these listed buildings is not considered to be affected by the proposals.

Research and report structure

1.9 The following appraisal has been informed by desk based and archival research. Research has been undertaken using a variety of online sources, the BMA's own archives, the London Metropolitan Archive, the RIBA Library and the London Borough of Camden's historic planning files.

1.10 The historic development and significance of the relevant areas of Blocks F and G are considered in Section 2 below. Section 3 provides an outline of the proposed scheme and assesses the current proposals against the significance of the building and the relevant historic environment policy context (Appendix B).

Author

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



Figure 3: Above: As purchased by the BMA in 1923.
 Below: In 1925, prior to the westward extension.

2 Historic development and significance

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

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 further increased and the organisation had outgrown its building on the Strand. 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 Smith writes that: 'Lutyens had designed the Theosophical Society Headquarters in a neoclassical style. It was intended to be a quadrangular building with a large cupola on the western side of the courtyard, over its arched entrance. The entire building would have extended from Burton Street in the east to Tavistock Square in the west. When building stopped only three sides around the courtyard had been built, with the Great Hall in the centre, flanked by two wings of rooms and offices to the north and south. These buildings have Portland stone façades with large arched openings on the ground floor, red brick above with Portland stone dressings, and green Westmorland slate roofs. The north and south wings have no further decoration except for pediments and balustrades on the first floor windows, but the main façade of the Great Hall is surmounted by a pediment supported by stone Corinthian columns. The buildings are classical in their proportions and austere in the best classical traditions, and they concede little to their steel-frame construction.' The existing Blocks B, D and E comprise the incomplete Lutyens scheme.

2.5 The BMA intended to finish the courtyard on the west side but was unable to do so until 1926. It asked Lutyens to finish off the end walls with hung tile and to design the interiors. Lutyens was also commissioned to design the ornamental gates that would close off the west side of the courtyard as a WWI memorial. These gates are still *in situ* but it is likely that they were moved slightly east when the front wing was completed in the late 1920s.

2.6 It was at this time that land either side of BMA House, up until the 1920s occupied by housing, became available for development. In 1926-7 Cyril Wontner-Smith was invited to prepare sketch plans for the completion of the courtyard to the west. The new wings between the courtyard and Tavistock Square were completed by 1929. For the north and south extensions along Tavistock Square the BMA chose Douglas Wood in 1938 as more nearby leases became available. Although due for completion in 1940, the north and south wings (Block A, F and H) were not completed until after the war in 1950 (figure 4).

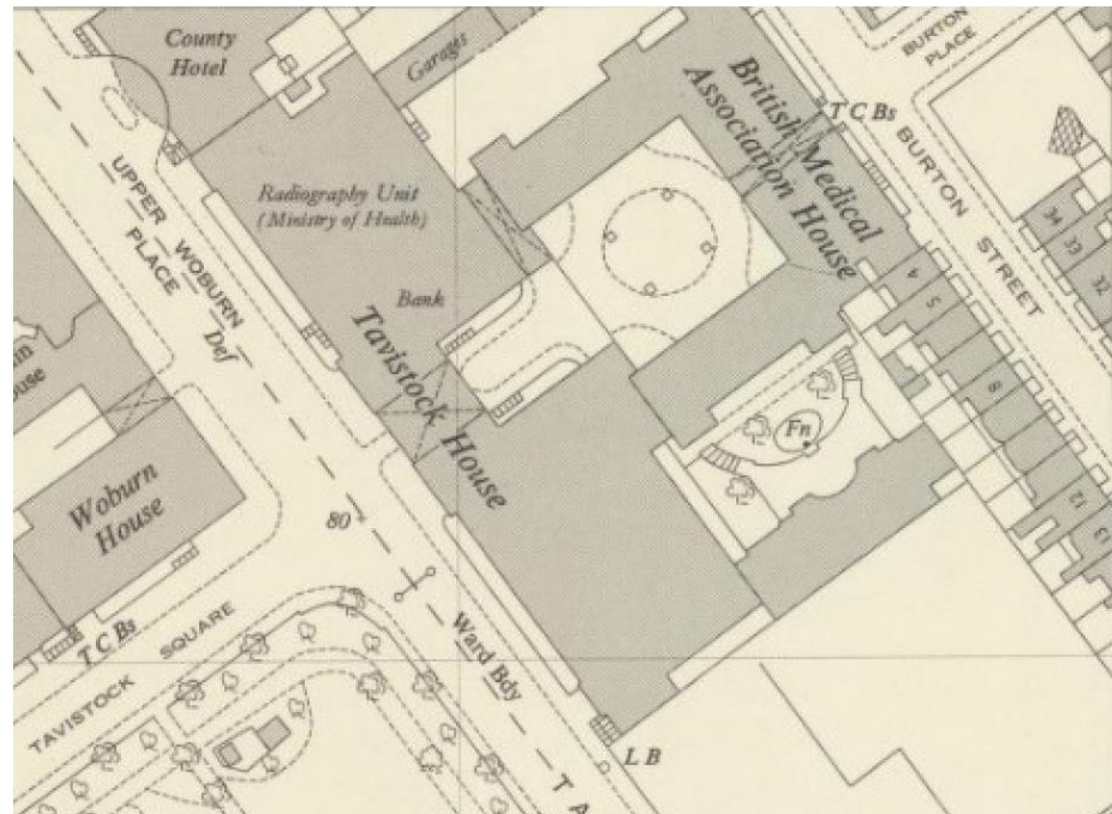


Figure 4: Above: The site as completed in 1950 without the 1960s Block C.
Below: The LCC Bomb Damage Map – pink showed serious damage with orange being slightly less so.

2.7 The building was badly damaged by bombing in WWII with the north-west corner of Wontner-Smith's Tavistock Square range and Lutyens' Block B and part of Block D being very seriously damaged (figure 4). Considerable repair and rebuilding work was required including stairs at the building's north-west and north-east corners.

2.8 In 1959-1960, Douglas Wood undertook further work at the BMA, extending Block D northwards along Burton Street to form Block C.

2.9 Since the 1960s, significant alterations have been undertaken internally to most areas within the building. While the footprint hasn't changed significantly since the 1960s, the various blocks that form Tavistock House have undergone considerable change internally. The most recent significant phase of internal works were carried out 2006-2008. These saw the reconfiguration of the reception area, council chamber, meetings rooms and other important internal spaces.

Levels 3 and 4 Block F

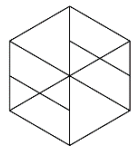
2.10 As noted above, Blocks F and G were constructed as later phases following the acquisition of Lutyens' Theosophists headquarters in 1928-29 and from the late 1930s. Wontner-Smith's central range (Block F) was constructed partly as the completion of Lutyens' original concept for a quadrangle and monumental entrance and partly to increase the BMA's income from lettable, flexible spaces. Wontner-Smith's work is, externally, beautifully compatible with Lutyens' earlier building and together, the two earliest components of the site create a successful and impressive whole.

2.11 Internally, the Wontner-Smith Block F was constructed as a grand entrance and circulation space with the Princes Room, a principal reception room over. The flanking blocks were less ambitious and were intended to be flexible for a variety of potential tenants. The 1928 plan for the fourth floor (figure 5) shows sketched partitions on the north side of the block with a more open plan to the south (possibly because a tenant for this space had not at that time been identified).

2.12 Over time, the interior of the Wontner Smith block has been adapted for a variety of occupants over the last c. 100 years. The resulting spaces at third and fourth floor levels in the areas that comprise the proposed site are very bland and of little architectural or historic interest. Suspended ceilings are present throughout and these obscure historic downstands for partitions that have been abruptly and unsympathetically removed at some point. The main interest with regard to the relevant third and fourth floor areas are in the external envelope of the building where historic windows are retained. Modern floor, wall and ceiling finishes characterise these areas together with modern partitions in certain areas.

2.13 Block F is clearly of significance as the first phase of extension to the site undertaken by the BMA. Architecturally the block completes the overall concept for the site, albeit for another occupier, in an architecturally robust and distinctive manner. Wontner-Smith's work admirably provides the grand entrance that is such an important component in the sequence of spaces at BMA house and encloses and defines the central courtyard.

2.14 The architectural impressiveness of Wontner-Smith's building continues its interior and principal spaces within the central entrance block. Internally, the flanking blocks lack the distinction of the central range and 20th century alteration. The third and fourth floor levels were not fitted out as an early 20th century purpose built office but were designed to be flexible with certain principal structural elements around which partitions could be organised depending on how the space was to be used. Where partitions have been removed, the legibility of past



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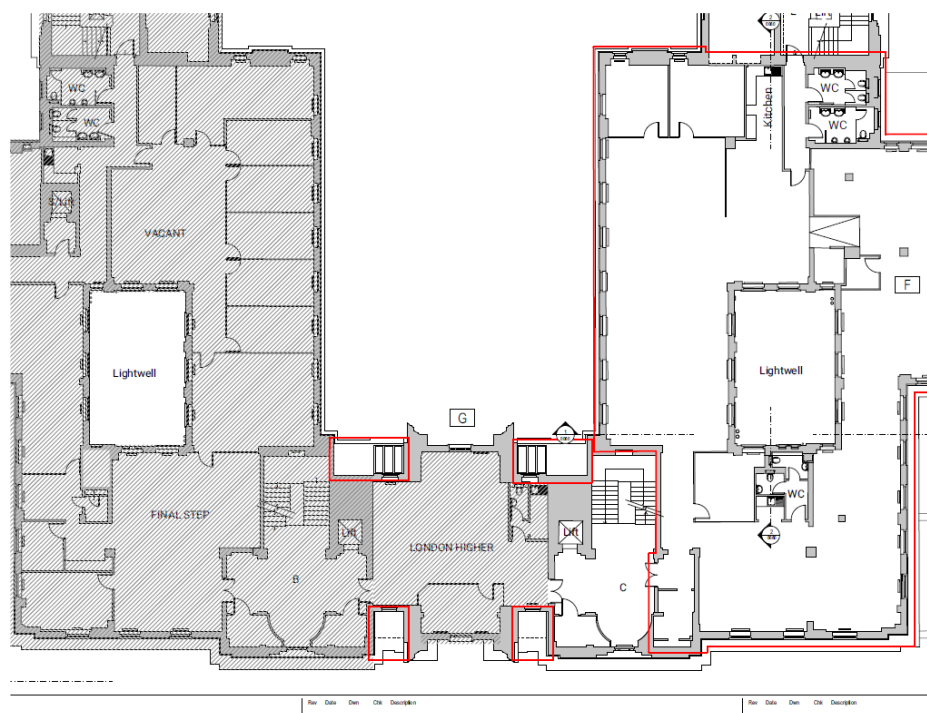
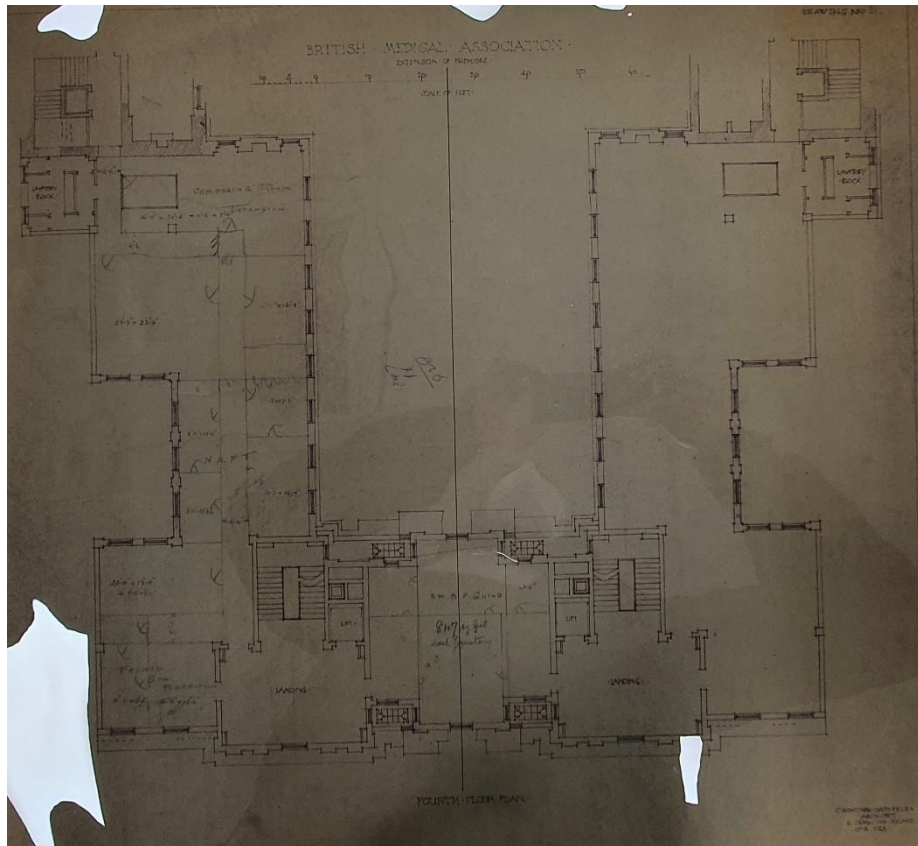


Figure 5: Above from left to right: 1928 Fourth Floor plan; 1935 aerial view of Tavistock House; the Wontner-Smith extension today. Below (left to right): Existing fourth floor plan; existing character and appearance of third and fourth floor levels.

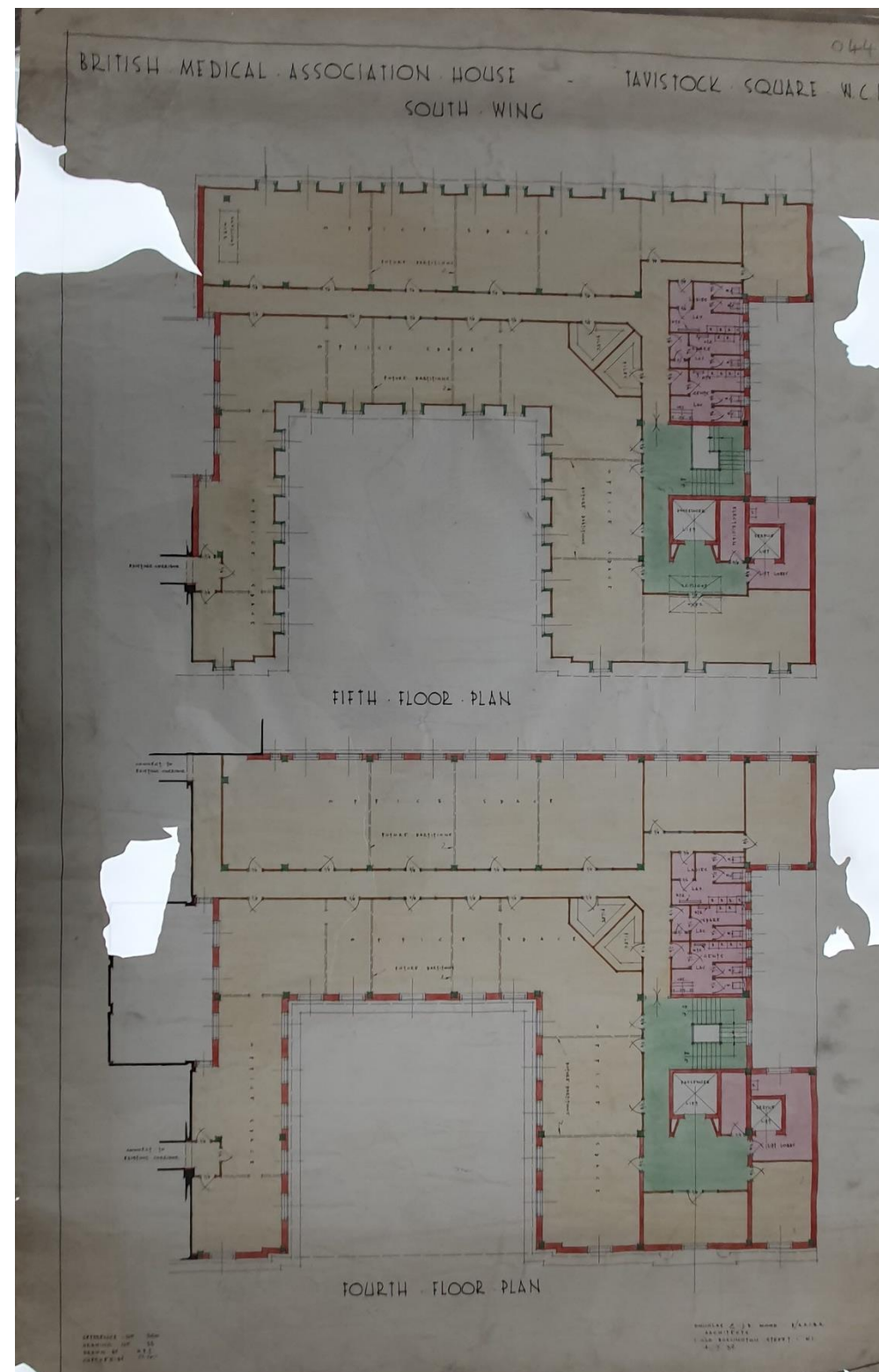


Figure 6: Original 1938 plans for the fourth and fifth floors of Wood's south wing.

uses has been reduced but modern open plan office use partially maintains the original design intent for flexible spaces that can be adapted to suit potential occupiers and securing an income for the BMA.

Levels 3 and 4 Block G

2.15 The BMA fell out with Wontner-Smith because he published designs for further extensions to the site in the architectural press without the agreement of the BMA. It therefore fell to Douglas Wood to design the additional extensions from 1938. Wood's design for Block G very much complements the Lutyens' and Wontner-Smith buildings but is simpler in detail and design. Although it incorporates the same engaged brick columns and continues Wontner-Smith's cornice the ground floor fenestration is evocative more of the interwar period in which it was devised.

2.16 Internally, a simple layout was introduced. On all floors a central corridor was formed in the deepest part of the block. The 1938 drawings indicate the location of 'future partitions' (figure 6). The corridor partitions would have incorporated historic doors and openings but all of these have since been removed.

2.17 Wood's blocks include Blocks A, F and H and all should have been finished by 1940. Only the north wing was complete at the outbreak of WWII and although the south wing and Block H were underway, they were not fully finished until 1950 (figure 7) and were damaged during WWII bombing. Figure 7, an aerial photograph of 1950, shows Block F as incomplete and without a roof.

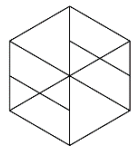
2.18 In 1949, designs for the third floor layout of the building for the Medical Defence Union were drawn up. This involved the creation of a reception and waiting room, offices and a council chamber through the construction of partitions either side of the original spine corridor. A comparison of the original and later plans of the third floor at figures 6 and 7 shows how the later fit out was shaped around the corridor but didn't rigidly replicate the line of possible future partitions as shown in 1938.

2.19 Since the 1940s, all 1940s partitions have been removed. As with Block F, a suspended ceiling has been introduced and modern partitions subdivide an otherwise open plan office to provide smaller meeting rooms. Although conceived in the immediate pre-war period, in reality, the buildings were only finalised, occupied and fitted out in the post-war years. It is likely that the immediate post-war fit out was carried out with economic efficiency and speed. The existing modern internal layout and wall, floor and ceiling finishes are of no architectural interest and the general character and quality of the relevant spaces is poor, particularly in comparison to the quality of the site's external appearance and architectural character.

Significance

2.20 Tavistock House as a whole is clearly a building of genuine architectural and historic significance. There are clearly components of the site that have a higher significance than others and this is expressed across the site with the Lutyens' blocks being of more significance historically and architecturally than the Wood extensions although of course, these do have heritage value.

2.21 Similarly, the interior of Levels 3 and 4 of Blocks F and G are of little significance historically or architecturally in comparison to other areas within the wider site. The existing modern finishes and the resulting appearance of these areas lack the distinction or quality of the building's exterior or the principal spaces within the building as a whole. The areas do have some interest as being representative of the BMA's more commercial endeavours and were conceived as flexible office spaces for a variety of potential occupants. The scheme now proposed is in line with the BMA's past and current ambitions and objectives and refurbishment has the potential to recreate more up to date and adaptable lettable office space.



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Tavistock House, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9LG
Blocks F and G: Levels 3 and 4 Refurbishment and Fit Out
Heritage Appraisal July 2023

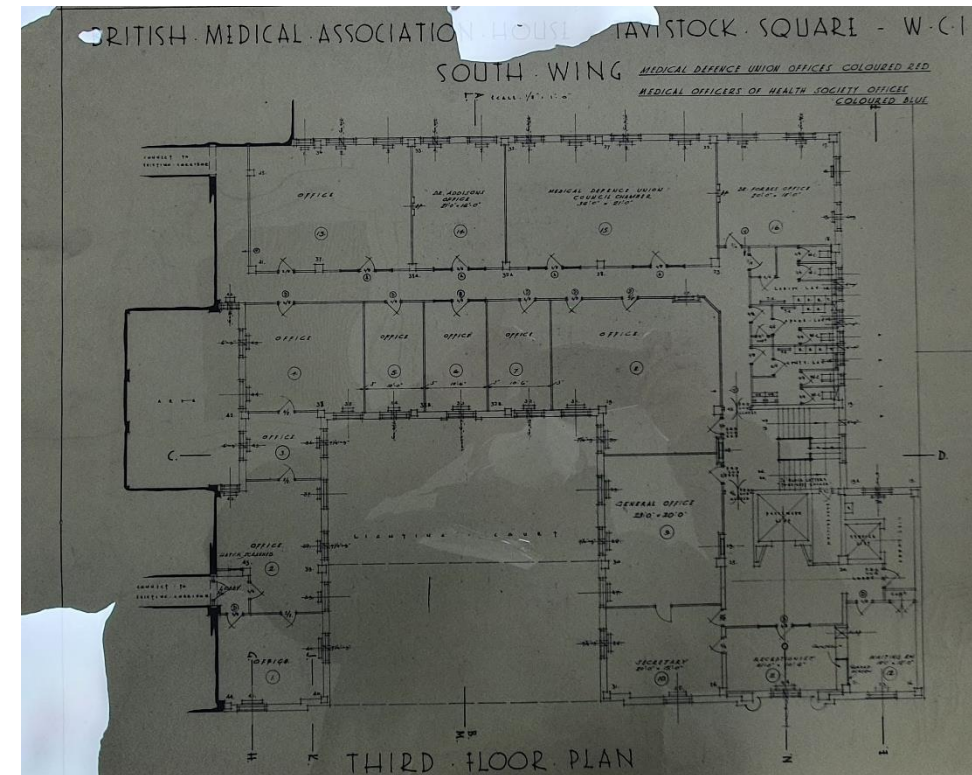


Figure 7: Above: aerial photograph of 1950 showing the incomplete south wing and the 1949 fit out plan for the third floor.
Below: Typical character of the interior of Block G.

3 Assessment

3.1 The following section provides an assessment of the proposed scheme against the significance of the BMA House as a whole and of the affected areas particularly. It also takes into account relevant historic environment policy as set out at Appendix B. The following section should be read in conjunction with the drawings and Design and Access Statement (DAS) prepared by JRA.

3.2 As set out in the accompanying DAS, in seeking to achieve the refurbishment of the relevant areas of Levels 3 and 4 and in targeting BCO 2019 compliant standards for office refurbishment, the proposals involve:

- Removal of modern office partitions, suspended ceilings and other modern office fittings;
- Provision of mechanical ventilation;
- Provision of secondary glazing and roof insulation;
- Removal of certain existing partitions to improve circulation; and,
- Provision of new plant in the Block F attic and roof and roof of Block H.

Removal of modern office partitions and associated fittings

3.3 The partitions to be removed from the existing open plan layout are all modern and do not relate to any form of historic layout seen over the second half of the 20th century. There would therefore be no harm caused to the special interest of the listed building through their removal.

3.4 The existing modern suspended ceilings were obviously introduced following the removal of historic partitions and to create a sense of a more uniform character to the open-plan offices. The removal of such ceilings and other modern office fittings would not cause harm to the special interest of the listed building and in fact, removal would better reveal the original spatial quality and proportions of the areas in question and allow for the restoration of historic cornicing and making good of soffits. The removal of the ceilings would therefore represent an enhancement of the existing building which allows for further enhancements through restoration and greater legibility of the historic character of Blocks F and G and its early plan form. Removing later fittings therefore allows for the enhancement of the listed site as a whole.

Provision of mechanical ventilation

3.5 The proposed ventilation units to each floor of Blocks F and G will be accommodated above suspended ceiling rafts with supply and extract running parallel to the external walls as necessary. These are required as part of the office fit out standards. The suspended ceilings will hang from the refurbished original ceilings with a gap that allows the original ceiling level to be appreciated. Although the ventilation proposals will have an effect on the existing character of Levels 3 and 4, as a necessary component of the scheme they have been sensitively handled and are largely obscured by the suspended acoustic rafters. In addition, the proposed approach allows for the renewed appreciation and legibility of the retained historic features and original proportions of the room. On balance, the proposals in this regard would improve upon the existing situation where plant and servicing runs above the suspended ceiling and where historic features and proportions are hidden or obscured.

Provision of secondary glazing

3.6 Secondary glazing is proposed to all windows within the relevant areas of Levels 3 and 4. Almost all

windows have simple reveals of a good depth and can comfortably accommodate sympathetic secondary glazing. The proposed secondary glazing will help generally with the building's environment performance, an objective of the overall scheme, and will also assist in mitigating the effects of traffic noise and pollution on Tavistock Square.

3.9 Of course, secondary glazing is a long-standing acceptable approach to providing better insulation to listed buildings particularly where it can be easily accommodated alongside existing listed fabric. The proposed secondary windows will be sympathetically designed and will have a limited visual effect on the architectural interest of the building. Although designs are currently being finalised, they will take the form of a sliding sash to correspond to the existing windows. It is also proposed to add a solar film to the existing windows. Details are being developed but these are intended to cause no change to the internal or external appearance of the building.

3.10 There are already instances of secondary glazed windows throughout the estate and the approach is consistent in this regard. Where secondary glazing is already present, this has had a negligible effect on special interest. The proposed secondary glazing would not cause harm to the special interest of the listed building and offers environmental benefits.

Removal of certain walls to improve circulation

3.11 The removal of walls is confined to modern partitions within the existing open plan offices as described above. The Wontner Smith building was designed to have a central room over the courtyard entrance with stairwells and lobbies either side. At fourth floor level, the south lobby has been subdivided historically. It is proposed to remove this wall in order to generally improve circulation from the staircase and landing and to reinstate the form of this key space within the Wontner Smith building.

Provision of new plant to the Block F attic and roof and Block H roof

3.12 Several options have been considered for the location of the requisite new plant. In order to address matters of visibility and appropriate access for construction and maintenance, the plant has been split into a number of locations. AHU units will be located within the existing attic to Block F. The AHU units can be accommodated within the attic without compromising existing structure and there will be only a very minimal external manifestation of the proposed plant. This will be confined to two louvres located within two dormers in the roof slope above the lightwell between Blocks F and G on its north-west and north-east elevations.

3.13 There are already similar dormers overlooking the lightwell on the south-west roof slope. The proposed dormers would obviously have a very limited and confined visual effect on the lightwell and the building as a whole and relates to an area that was created in the interwar/immediate post-war period. There would only be limited views of the proposed dormer/louvres from certain vantage points from within the building. The proposed AHUs are sympathetically and appropriately located with minimal visual effect. The proposals would not cause harm to the architectural or historic interest of the building.

3.14 New condenser units are proposed to an area of flat roof above the attic of Block F. This was considered to be the most appropriate location as there are already condenser units located here and because the proposed units would not be visible from either the central or south courtyard or from any other important

vantage points. As a result, there would be no discernible visual impact on the architectural or historic special interest of the building.

3.15 Condenser units are proposed on the flat roof of Block H where there is existing plant. The condenser units are well set back from the parapet and would not be visible from the garden courtyard. As a later addition to the site, Block H is of less sensitivity than other areas and its special interest would not be harmed by this element of the proposals.

Policy compliance

3.16 The general thrust of national and local historic environment policy is to avoid causing harm to the special interest and significance of listed buildings and other heritage assets. This is based on the relevant statutory provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. As set out above, the significance of the internal spaces of Levels 3 and 4 of Blocks F and G is comparatively low. This is based primarily on the past removal of historic partitions and damage to retained features, the introduction of extensive modern fittings, fixtures and finishes and the generally late completion date of Block G. Of course, the association with the BMA's historic and current commercial activities is of value as is the hand of Wontner-Smith and Wood in the creation of these areas.

3.17 National planning policy (the NPPF) is predicated on whether harm is caused by any aspect of a proposed scheme, ensuring that any harm is justified and is potentially offset by other considerations. In this case, and as set out above, it is considered that the proposed scheme would be a significant improvement on the existing arrangement and would better reveal the historic features of the relevant areas of Levels 3 and 4. The proposed level of fit out and appropriate office standards necessitates the provision of adequate ventilation and this can be achieved via sympathetic plant locations and obscured units within the offices themselves. As a whole, the proposed scheme would not cause harm to the significance of the listed building and are therefore acceptable in listed building terms.

3.18 As indicated in the Introduction, the proposed would have no effect on the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The majority of the proposals are confined to the interior of the building and the proposed plant would not be visible in external views of the building or from within important spaces within the site. Similarly, there would be no effect on the setting of nearby heritage assets.

3.19 With regard to listed buildings, local 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.*' For reasons set out above, it is considered that the proposals improve upon the existing arrangement and allow for the repair of certain historic features together with the improved environmental performance of the building. As such, it is considered that the overall project would not cause harm to the building's special historic and architectural interest.

Conclusion

3.20 The proposed scheme offers both enhancement to the listed building and an appropriate upgrade of existing office accommodation that allows the BMA to continue its long tradition of providing high quality lettable office accommodation. The past, more cellular plan of the interwar and post-war periods is no longer suited to modern office lets and indeed, this is reflected in the past removal of partitions which allow for a more flexible layout.

3.22 The existing open plan offices lack the distinction and interest seen in the external envelope of the building and don't quite stack up in terms of the potential value and the architectural status of the site as a whole. In addition, the environmental conditions and performance of the building are poor and there is clearly an opportunity to here to improve on this situation.

3.23 The proposed scheme represents an opportunity to enhance the building and the office provision without causing harm to special interest or significance. It is therefore considered that the proposals avoid causing harm and that enhancements are offered by the scheme in line with national and local historic environment policy and the relevant statutory provision.

Appendix A: List Description

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 comparted 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.

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.

Appendix B Relevant Statutory and 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.’

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that:

‘...special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.’

The revised **National Planning Policy Framework 2018 (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. Paragraphs 189, 190, 192 and 193 are relevant to this application.

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.

Paragraph 201:

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

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

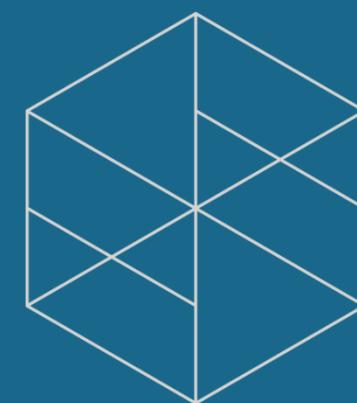
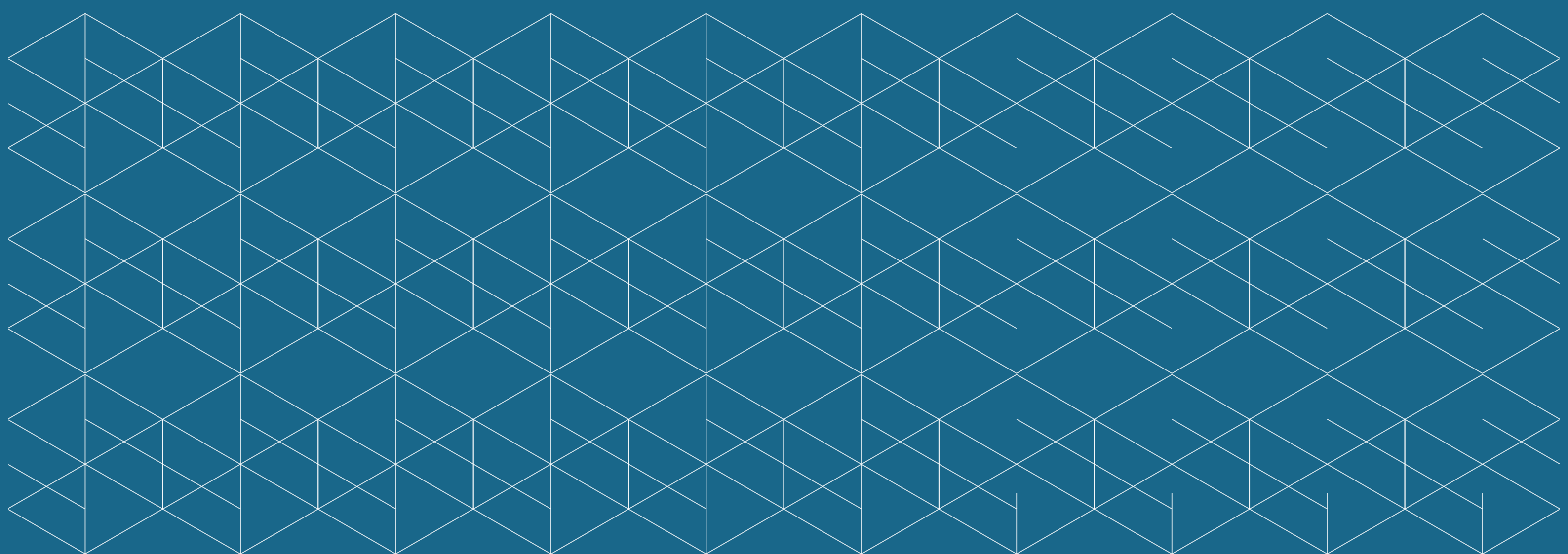
Camden’s Local Plan was adopted in June 2017. The most relevant policy in this case is **Policy D2: Heritage**.

With regard to Conservation Areas, the policy states that the Council will:

- Require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character and appearance of the area.

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.



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