

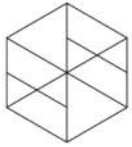
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Heritage Appraisal
55 Gower Street, London WC1E 6HJ

June 2024





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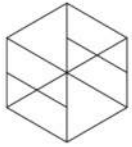
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1 Introduction

1.1 The following Heritage Appraisal has been prepared in support of an application for Listed Building Consent at no.55 Gower Street, London WC1E 6HJ.

1.2 The building is Grade II listed and is situated in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The proposals are for minor internal alterations to the plan form of the building in association with its use as a psychotherapy practice.

1.3 This appraisal has been produced using desk based and online research, combined with a visual inspection of the site.

1.4 In line with paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023, the purpose of this appraisal is to define the significance of the building and the features which contribute to its special architectural and historic interest. This assessment has been made in line with the heritage values set out in Historic England's 'Conservation Principles' (2008).

1.5 The document will describe the proposed works to the listed building and their impact. They will then be assessed in relation to the relevant statutory, national and local policy framework.

1.6 The author of this appraisal is Hannah Walker (BA (Hons) Oxon MSc IHBC) who has extensive experience in dealing with proposals that affect the historic environment. She has 15 years of local authority experience, including 10 years as a Principal Conservation & Design Officer at the London Borough of Camden. She also has experience in the private sector, preparing heritage statements and appraising the significance of historic buildings. She has trained as a historian, has a specialist qualification in historic building conservation and is a full member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).

2 Site location and description

2.1 Gower Street is a key arterial route through Bloomsbury, running in a north-south alignment and connecting Bedford Square with Euston Road. The road is lined with a combination of late 18th century terraced houses and large institutional buildings associated with the University of London, including the Wilkes Building, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the late 19th century General Block of University College Hospital.

2.2 No.55 forms part of a terrace of eighteen late 18th century houses. These consist of five storeys, including a full basement and mansard roof. The building is faced in darkened yellow stock brickwork with areas of stucco embellishment.

Heritage Assets

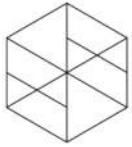
Statutorily listed buildings

2.3 Nos.51-85 (odd) Gower Street were Grade II listed on 28 March 1969. The description indicates that the buildings were listed for group value and reads as follows:

TQ2982SE GOWER STREET 798-1/94/606 (West side) 28/03/69 Nos.51-85 (Odd) and attached railings

GV II

Terrace of 18 houses. Nos 51-59 built 1786; Nos 61-85, 1787. Darkened yellow stock brick. Stucco band at ground floor level and to 1st floor sills. Slated mansard roofs with dormers. 3 storeys, attics and basements. Nos 65, 67 & 73, 4 storeys. 3 windows each. Entrances with stucco surrounds with pilasters and dentil cornices; alternating round and segmental-arched doorways with fanlights and panelled doors. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sash windows, most with original glazing bars. Ground and 1st floor windows with bracketed sills and cast-iron window guards. Nos 65 & 67 ground floor windows in segmental-arched



recesses with stucco archivolts, impostes and keys. Stone dentil cornices; Nos 65, 67 & 73 cornices at 3rd floor level. Parapets. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings, mostly with urn finials, to areas.



Figure 1: The London Borough of Camden's interactive map showing heritage assets. Grade II listed buildings are in dark blue and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area is shaded in buff. The application site is ringed in red.

2.4 The wider area surrounding the application site contains a wealth of listed buildings, many of which are terraced townhouses which also date from the late 18th century. The following buildings form part of the immediate setting to the application building.

- Nos.15a and 17-49 (odd) Gower Street – Grade II
- Nos.87-97 (odd) Gower Street – Grade II
- London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine – Grade II
- Nos.74-80 (even) Gower Street – Grade II
- Former Dillon's Bookshop, Torrington Place - Grade II

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area

2.5 The application site is located in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area which was first designated in 1968. The conservation area is

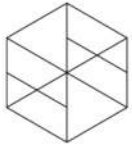
notable as an exemplary example of Georgian town planning with its layout of garden squares and inter-related streets and mews. Despite its size, it also displays a notable consistency in terms of its street pattern, spatial character and predominant building forms.

2.6 The Bloomsbury Conservation Area is very large and consequently is divided into 14 separate character areas. Great Russell Street is located within **Sub Area 5: Bedford Square/Gower Street**. This sub area is linear and includes the western side of Gower Street, as well as sections of the secondary streets running west, and Bedford Square.

2.7 The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan was adopted on 18 April 2011. In relation to the overall character of Sub Area 5 the Appraisal notes that:

This sub area is a virtually intact and exemplary piece of late 18th century town planning, consisting of terraced housing built speculatively by a number of different builders to a plan produced by the Bedford Estate. Also in the area are smaller-scale mews to the rear of the square which serviced the townhouses, and an early 20th century terrace on the south side of Store Street which is of a similar scale and grain (para 5.60)

The terrace frontages have a strong uniformity since they are of similar scale and proportion and share neo-classical architectural elements. They are of three or four storeys with mansard attic storeys, raised on basements, with iron railings around basement areas. The blocks maintain a continuous parapet line at roof level and banding at first-floor level, coinciding with decorative iron balconies to first-floor windows of the piano nobile. There is a strong urban grain: townhouses within terraces have consistent widths, containing three windows of vertical proportions. Window openings mostly have rubbed brick heads, and window frames are recessed, sliding sashes, subdivided into small panes by slender glazing bars. Doorways mostly



have semi-circular arches containing fanlights with decorative radiating glazing bars. The terraces in Bedford Square are the most ornate, whilst those in Gower Street tend to be plainer in architectural detail (para 5.61).

2.8 Specifically in relation to the application site, paragraphs 5.66 and 5.67 of the Appraisal outlines that:

Along the west side of Gower Street is a significant stretch of grade II listed terraced houses, between Bedford Square and UCL Medical School. Development progressed northwards from 1780 to 1820.

The west side of the street is characterised by the repeated yellow stock brick fronts with tuck pointing, fenestration pattern, window detailing, the frontage railings, stucco banding and parapets, chimney stacks and pots, and the shared height of the threestorey blocks with mansard roofs (with the exceptions of Nos 25, 39, 91 and 103 which are of four stories). The most notable variation is the treatment of doorways.

2.9 In relation to use, the Appraisal notes at paragraph 5.68 that:

Whereas the street was originally entirely residential, its uses now consist of a combination of university halls of residence, other educational uses, hotels and offices (many of the university buildings are situated on the east side of the street, which falls in Sub Area 3). There are also a few townhouses which have been converted to flats, and an increasing but small number returning to single family dwellings.

3 Relevant planning history

2018

Planning permission (2017/5623/P) was granted on 14 February 2018 for 'Installation of a/c units to rear basement lightwell.'

Listed Building Consent (2017/6125/L) was granted on 14 February 2018 for 'Installation of a/c units to rear basement lightwell and internal alterations including installation of new internal a/c system, replacement kitchen at basement level, alterations to WCs, replacement lighting and general works of refurbishment.'

1978

Listed Building Consent (HB1826) was granted on 24 February 1978 for 'Internal alterations including new partitioning in the basement and ground floors and new opening on the ground floor.'

1977

Listed Building Consent (HB1596) was granted on 23 March 1977 for 'The erection of a bronze nameplate.'

1974

Listed Building Consent (HB.786) was granted on 11 June 1974 for 'The demolition of a glazed screen and partition in the ground floor, front room of 55 Gower Street, W.C.1.'

1972

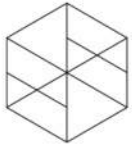
Planning permission (12954) and Listed Building Consent (HB.376) was granted on 27 June 1972 for the 'Erection of single-storey rear extension for office and storage use at 55 Gower Street, W.C.1.'

1969

Listed Building Consent (HB57R) was granted on 20 November 1969 for 'The erection of internal partitions and removal of a hoist at 55, Gower Street, Camden.'

1956

Planning permission (N13/5/C/25812) was refused on 12 June 1956 for 'The use of the third



floor at No.55, Gower Street, Holborn, for office purposes.'

1955

Planning permission (10/03/55) was refused on 25 April 1955 for 'The use of the top (third) floor at No. 55, Gower Street, Holborn, for office purposes.'

4 Historic development of the site and area

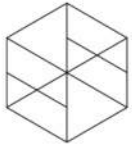
4.1 Gower Street forms part of the Bedford Estate. This began to be developed in the mid 17th century by the 4th Earl of Southampton, who laid out Bloomsbury Square in 1665 as a piazza for his mansion, Bedford House. The estate passed to the Russell family in 1669 through the marriage of the Earl's daughter to William, Lord Russell, later the 1st Duke of Bedford. In 1673, Montagu House was built directly to the west of Bedford House by the Duke's brother-in-law, Ralph Earl of Montagu.

4.2 Roque's map of 1746 shows Bloomsbury Square and the two grand mansions of Bedford House and Montagu House, set to the north of Great Russell Street and Bloomsbury Square. Beyond this, development gave way abruptly to open fields. Tottenham Court Road was in place to the west, continuing north as the road to Highgate.



Figure 2: Roque's map of 1746.

4.3 Horwood's map of 1799 still shows open land to the NW of Bedford House and Montagu House, the latter now marked as the British Museum. However, Gower Street had been laid out to just beyond Francis Street, now Torrington Place, and was lined with terraced townhouses along both sides.



Figures 3 & 4: Horwood's map of 1799 (top) and Greenwood's map of 1828 (bottom).

4.4 Greenwood's map of 1828 shows the expanded British Museum site and the completion of the Bedford estate to the north. This was developed with swathes of good quality terraces and set piece compositions, in the final decades of the 18th and early years of the 19th centuries.

4.5 The context to the site altered little during the later years of the 19th century, however by the time of the 1914 Ordnance Survey map, changes were beginning to take place. Terraced housing had been removed to the north of the British Museum, prior to the redevelopment of this space with the University of London's Senate House. The eastern side of Gower Street opposite the application site had also begun to sustain change, with Warwickshire House replacing some of the terraced

townhouses, and the site on the corner of Gower Street and Keppel Street cleared in anticipation of the construction of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine in 1926-28.

4.6 The Royal Academy for Dramatic Arts was built in the 1920s on the eastern side of Gower Street, with an extension added to the north of Warwickshire House in the 1930s. Thus, the east side of Gower Street changed dramatically during the first decades of the 20th century, with the scale and grain of its buildings increasing substantially, and the widespread use of red brick rather than traditional yellow London stocks. This creates a striking contrast in character between the eastern and western sides of this section of Gower Street.

Development of the application site

4.7 Horwood's map of 1799 shows the terrace soon after it was first constructed in 1787. The buildings are all shown with flat rear elevations and landscaped gardens.

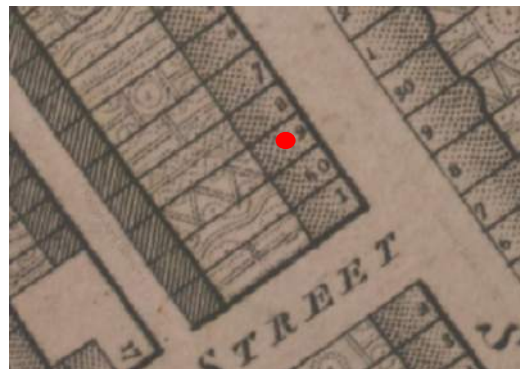
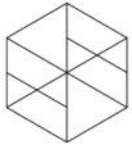
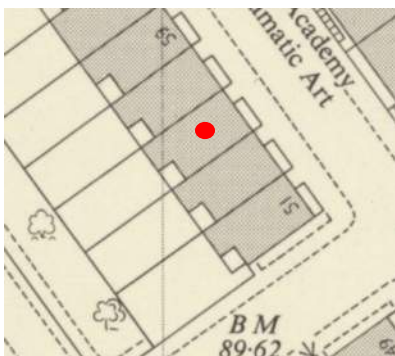
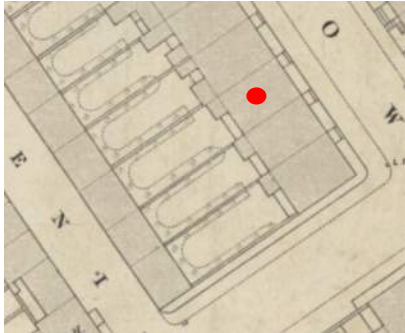


Figure 5: A detail of Horwood's map of 1799 showing the site at no.55 Gower Street, numbered differently when first constructed.

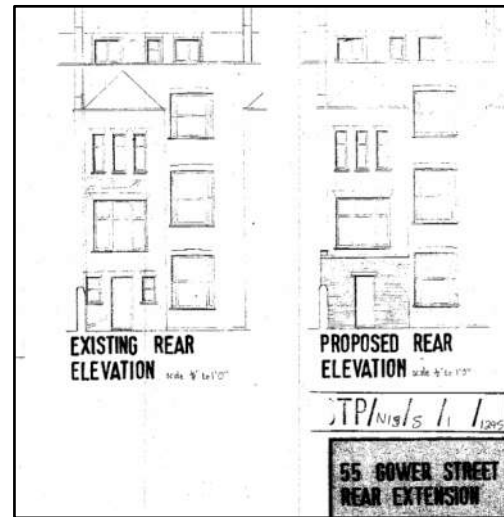
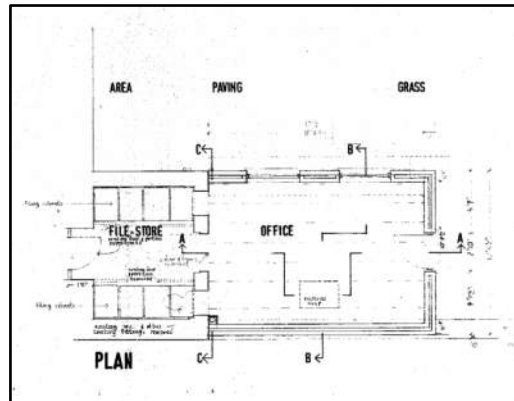
4.8 The next detailed depiction of the site is on the 1871 Ordnance Survey map. This shows the addition of shallow closet wings along the terrace. At no.55 this closet wing is situated to the northern bay, with a shallow open lightwell positioned adjacent to it.



4.9 The following maps in 1894, 1911 and 1951 all show the house with the same general layout.

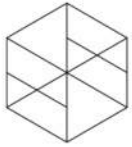


4.10 Planning permission and listed building consent were granted in 1972 for a single storey rear extension to the building, to provide additional office accommodation. This was positioned at ground floor level and projected from the existing closet wing to the northern bay. This was faced in brickwork with a flat roof and rooflight and remains in place today.



Figures 10 & 11 (above): Approved drawings for a single storey rear extension at ground floor level (12954 & HB.376).

Figure 6-9 (left): Details of the 1871, 1894, 1911 and 1951 Ordnance Survey maps (top-bottom).



4.11 Consented plans of the building in 1969 show its interior layout and how it had been heavily subdivided in order to provide small, cellular office spaces. The basement retained its original two room layout, with storerooms in vaulted areas beneath the front pavement and rear garden. The ground floor plan shows the dotted removal of existing partitions. However, these were not in their original position, indicating that the layout of the building had already been altered prior to 1969 and statutory listing. New partitions were to be inserted to the ground floor spaces, with glazing at high level, to form an office, reception and waiting area. These unsympathetically carved up the front room and installed a partition tight up against the rear room chimneybreast.

4.12 The rear rooms at 1st and 2nd floor level retained their original shape. However, the front room at 1st floor level had a smaller office and lobby and to the 2nd floor, three small offices and a corridor had been created from the front room. The front part of the 3rd floor layout appeared to be in its original two room layout, but with a narrow bathroom created from the rear room.

4.13 The closet wing at ground floor level was subdivided to form a WC and cupboard, flanking a corridor leading to the back door. At 1st floor level there was an office and the 2nd floor housed two separate toilets.

4.14 Consented plans from 1974 show the removal of a service lift which had been positioned to the right-hand side of the rear room chimneybreast, connecting the basement and ground floor. The partitions to the ground floor were also to be removed. As in 1969, the double doors in the 1st floor spine wall were to be fixed shut, with insulation board installed to the rear room side of the opening. Elsewhere the layout appears to have remained the same.

4.15 By the time of the 1978 consented plans, the basement had received a cranked partition to the front room. The ground floor had been reinstated to something close to its original layout, although the wall between the front and rear room was not in the correct position and remained tight against the rear room chimneybreast rather than aligned with the crank in the hallway partition. The front rooms at 1st and 2nd floor level were still subdivided, and the overall 3rd floor layout remained the same as in 1969 and 1974.



Figure 12: The consented plans from 1969 (Listed Building Consent (HB57R)).

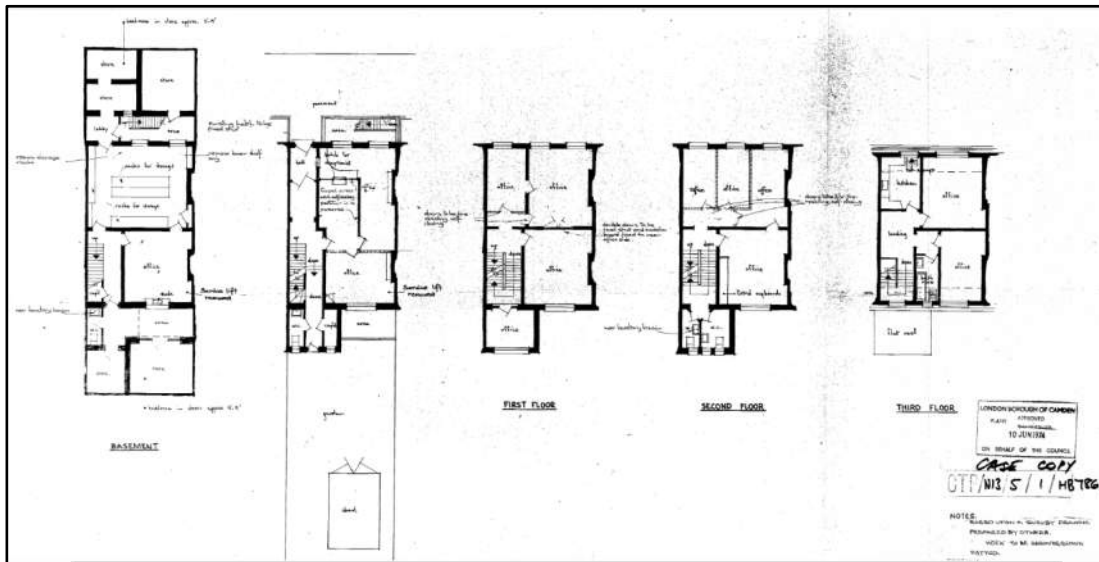
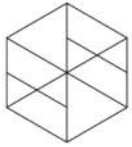


Figure 13: The consented plans from 1974 (Listed Building Consent HB.786).

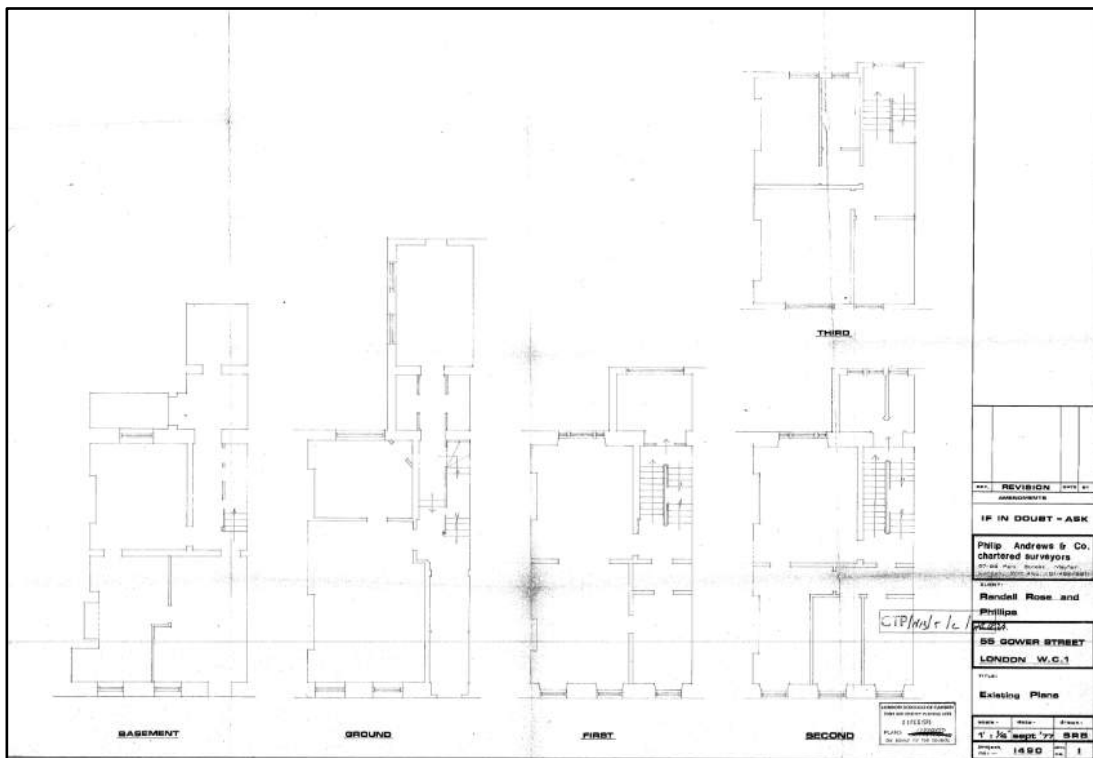
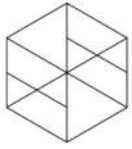


Figure 14: The consented plans from 1978 (Listed Building Consent HB1826).



5 Significance of the site

5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework Annex 2 defines significance as *“The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.”*

5.2 A heritage asset is defined as *“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).”* In this case the heritage assets are the statutorily listed no.55 Gower Street and the surrounding Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

5.3 Historic England’s document ‘Conservation Principles – Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment’ (2008) identifies a series of values that can be attributed to a heritage asset and which help to appraise and define its significance. Paragraph 3.3 of the document outlines that:

“In order to identify the significance of a place, it is necessary first to understand its fabric, and how and why it has changed over time; and then to consider:

- *who values the place, and why they do so*
- *how those values relate to its fabric*
- *their relative importance*
- *whether associated objects contribute to them*
- *the contribution made by the setting and context of the place*
- *how the place compares with others sharing similar values.”*

5.4 In assessing the significance of no.55 Gower Street it is therefore necessary to examine their origins, history, form, architectural

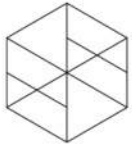
design, layout, materials and relationship with surrounding buildings. In making this assessment, consideration has been given to their intrinsic architectural merit, completeness, the extent of any alterations and their impact, the contribution of the buildings to the character of the area and the degree to which the buildings illustrate aspects of local or national history.

5.5 The application site form part of a long terrace of eighteen houses, dating from 1787. Each house is of three main storeys, with a full basement and mansard accommodation. The building is situated at the back of the pavement, with a lightwell, bounded by cast iron railings.



Figure 15: The front façade of the building.

5.6 The façade of the building is of heavily darkened yellow London stock brickwork. It is three window bays wide, with the entrance bay to the north. The main entrance door is set within an arched stucco surround, with a dentil cornice and rusticated pilasters. The door itself is timber, with six panels and flanked by slim pilasters, set beneath a large, plain glazed fanlight.



5.7 The upper part of the façade is a well-ordered composition, with aligned window bays and fenestration which diminishes in height as it rises over the façade, creating a traditional sense of hierarchy and proportion.

5.8 The windows on the front façade are later replacements, in a four over four configuration to the ground and 1st floors, and one over one sashes at 2nd floor level. The windows at ground and 1st floor level have deep projecting cills with cast iron window guards. A flat stucco cill band runs across the width of the building beneath the 1st floor windows. The composition is topped with a deep projecting dentil cornice. The basement façade is faced in painted stucco, with two windows set beneath arched heads.

5.9 The house has an original two planed mansard, clad in slate, which forms a subordinate element within the overall architectural composition. This has two modern dormer windows to the front slope, one of which has been widened. Both have modern casement windows.

5.10 The building shares common characteristics with other buildings within the wider terrace. This includes their height, scale, building line and consistent parapet level, as well as the repetition of features such as the 1st floor cill band and stuccoed entrance porches. Together the terrace has a very strong, uniform character, with only minor differences to features such as window glazing bar configuration, and the addition of attic storeys to nos.65, 67 and 73.

5.11 The terrace has a strong sense of verticality due to its height and the aligned window bays to the façade, providing enclosure to the street and a fine urban grain. Only the downpipes provide any formal vertical differentiation between the houses. Horizontal emphasis is created by the well-defined parapet line and strong dentil cornice, aligned fenestration and repetitious entrance bays.

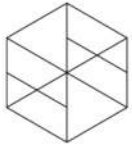
5.12 Gower Street is a long arterial route through Bloomsbury and in large parts is defined by the uniformity of its late 18th century townhouses. As a part of this consistent and cohesive townscape, the front facades of the building are of high architectural and historic significance and make a demonstrable positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

5.13 The rear façade of the building is constructed in yellow London stock brick and has a lighter and less weathered appearance. This elevation is plainer and simpler than the front, reflective of its lower architectural status. The window openings to the rear rooms at ground, 1st and 2nd floor levels have been widened, probably during the late Victorian or Edwardian period. These now have tripartite window arrangements, with a central sash and narrower flanking sidelights.

5.14 A shallow, half width closet wing was added to the building during the 19th century and was in place by the time of the 1871 Ordnance Survey map. This is also of yellow London stock brickwork, with a hipped, slate clad roof. The fenestration here is modern and reflects the internal layout of the building, for example the narrow windows at 2nd floor level which light the WC spaces. Projecting from this Victorian closet wing at ground floor level is the single storey extension added in the 1970s.

5.15 The mansard has two dormer windows to its lower slope, with a third window added at some point in order to light the narrow bathroom which was created from the original rear room.

5.16 Overall, the rear façade is of only modest architectural value. The closet wings add a certain rhythmic pattern to the terrace and are visible from Chenies Street to the south. The remainder of the façade has been altered, particularly with regard to fenestration, which detracts to a degree from the original character of the listed building.



Interior

5.17 The house originally conformed to the standard Georgian two room deep plan form for terraced townhouses. This first emerged in the late 17th century and became increasingly standardised throughout London and the inner suburbs by the early 19th century. Typically, this included two rooms at each floor level, arranged off a stair compartment situated adjacent to the party wall. Consistent with the hierarchy of status within houses of this period, the principal spaces were situated at ground and 1st floor levels with areas of secondary importance for servants and children's bedrooms within the basement and over the upper floors.

Basement

5.18 This is now in its original layout, following the removal of a partition and lobby to the front room as part of the 2018 consent. To the front of the building is a lightwell providing access to the under-pavement vaults. Further vaulted spaces are contained beneath the built-up rear garden, with a shallow lightwell adjacent to the rear of the building.

Ground Floor

5.19 The ground floor rooms have sustained a high degree of change over time, initially prior to the building being statutorily listed in 1969. During the late 1960s and the 1970s the front room was subdivided to form a narrow office, reception and waiting area. The original spine wall appears to have been lost by 1969 (see Figure 12) and although the modern partitions had been removed from the front room by 1978, the dividing wall between the front and rear rooms remained in a non-authentic position, tight against the rear room chimneybreast (see Figure 14).

5.20 No existing plans for the ground floor are scanned into the Council's online records for the 2017/18 applications, however the accompanying Heritage Statement notes that the spine wall at ground floor level had been

reinstated in its original position by this time (para 4.3), with a modern partition.

5.21 The 2018 consent allowed for the creation of a double door width opening in the spine wall, as well as a similar opening in the partition between the hallway and front room.

1st Floor

5.22 This floor also sustained change during the mid 20th century, with the front room subdivided to form two rooms and a small lobby. These partitions were removed as part of the 2018 consent and a double door opening reinstated in the spine wall.



Figure 16: The front room at 1st floor level.

2nd Floor

5.23 The front room at 2nd floor level was also heavily subdivided in the mid 20th century, with three small office spaces and a corridor inserted. It could be that the front room at this floor level was originally subdivided into one large room, focused upon the chimneybreast, and a smaller room adjacent to the door from the main staircase, as was sometimes the case over the upper floors of late Georgian townhouses. However, by the time of the 2018 consent any original walls had already been removed, with a modern cranked partition between the rooms.

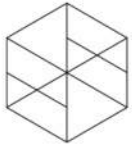


Figure 17: The modern opening in the spine wall at 2nd floor level.

3rd Floor

5.24 This space is housed within the mansard storey and appears to have originally had three rooms, with the front divided into a large and a small room, both accessed from the hallway. The rear room had a bathroom and lobby installed at some point during the 20th century and a corresponding dormer window added to the mansard in order to light this space. The partitions within the front and rear rooms were removed as part of the 2018 consent.

Decorative features

5.25 The building was comprehensively refurbished in around 2018 and it now has a very uniform internal character in terms of its finishes, decoration and architectural features, many of which appear to have been reinstated at that time. The refurbishment has been done to a good standard and level of authenticity, for example the architraves to the new openings in the spine wall diminish in terms of their width and

complexity as they rise through the floors, reflecting the traditional hierarchy within houses of this period.

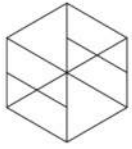


Figure 18: The open plan layout to the 3rd floor.



Figure 19: The main staircase looking towards the 2nd floor landing.

5.26 The building has cornicing throughout, some of which appears to be original given its patina of age and signs of wear. Elsewhere, this is crisper and has likely been reinstated. The



house also had dado rail, authentic skirtings and shutter boxes and timber spandrel panels to many of the windows.

5.27 The main staircase survives. From ground to 2nd floor level this has an open string with stick balusters and a ramped hardwood handrail. From 2nd to 3rd floor level the string is closed, with simpler turned newel posts.

5.28 There are attractive and ornate marble fire surrounds to the front and rear rooms at 1st floor level and simpler marble surrounds to the 2nd floor, which are either original or have been reinstated. All of the fire surrounds have later style cast iron and tiled inserts.

5.29 The internal doors to the building were replaced throughout as part of the 2018 consent, with new painted timber 6 panelled doors. This includes over the upper floors of the building where the doors would originally have been simpler, with 4 recessed panels and no mouldings.

Values and significance

5.30 As referenced at paragraph 3.16 above, Historic England's 'Conservation Principles' identifies four values that can be attributed to a heritage asset. These have been examined in turn below.

Evidential Value

This value is derived from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity (para 35) and is generally closely associated with archaeological sites and remains, with age being a strong indicator of evidential value.

The building dates from the late 18th century and is from a period when the terraced townhouse typology was becoming increasingly standardised. The building reflects upper middle-class lifestyles during this period, with accommodation for servants and a clear internal hierarchy to the house.

Historical value

Paragraph 39 of the Conservation Principles document outlines that *"Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative."*

The buildings forms part of the historic local scene in this part of Bloomsbury and has been a feature of the townscape for around 250 years, thus displaying demonstrable age value. The building has historical value in terms of illustrating the development of London beyond the City confines and as an early phase in the development of one of the great aristocratic land holdings, the Bedford Estate.

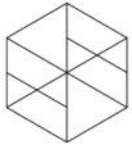
Aesthetic value

Aesthetic value is defined as *"...the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place."*

The house reflects the prevailing neo-classical style at the end of the 18th century and utilises characteristic materials for terraced townhouses of this period, including yellow London stock brick and painted stucco. Its front façade has an attractive sense of classical scale and proportion. The rear façade by contrast, is of less interest, both originally and in its evolved form.

Due to its uniformity and architectural cohesiveness, combined with its length, the front façade of the terrace has significant townscape value.

Internally the building has sustained various phases of change to its plan form and spatial quality. The front room at 3rd floor level and potentially to the 2nd floor are now less subdivided than they originally would have been. Double door openings have been installed into the spine wall at 2nd and 3rd floor levels where there would have been none, changing the circulation pattern and inter-connectedness of the rooms within the building.



The building has a range of decorative architectural features, many of which were reinstated as part of the works following the 2018 listed building consent. These have been introduced in an authentic manner and the interior of the building has a coherent and cohesive character.

Communal value

This value is derived from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience of memory. In this case, any communal value would be 'social', defined at paragraph 56 as *".....places that people perceive as a source of identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence."*

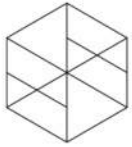
The building has communal value in so far as it has been part of the local scene for around 250 years and has thus featured in the day to day lives of those who live, work and pass through the area. However, there is little to distinguish it from many other similar buildings of the same typology and character and any communal value is limited and local in its focus.

Conclusion

5.31 In this case the key significance of the building relates to its historic and architectural contribution to the development of this part of Bloomsbury, reflecting to a small degree the development of the Bedford Estate and the gradual expansion of London beyond the confines of the City. The building has a high degree of architectural value to its front facades, reflecting the prevailing style, materials and detailing of the period, and making a demonstrable aesthetic contribution to the character of Gower Street and this part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

5.32 The building retains a good sense of its original plan form and spatial quality, albeit that some elements such as the ground floor spine wall are a later reinstatement. The cellular quality of the 2nd and 3rd floors has been slightly lost, in

favour of a more open plan layout, with double door openings through the spine wall. The building has a strong sense of period character internally, dating from the comprehensive refurbishment in 2018, incorporating both original and authentically reinstated decorative features.



6 Assessment of the proposals

6.1 This section will set out the proposals for no.55 Gower Street and will consider their impact upon its special architectural and historic interest. They will then be considered in relation to the relevant statutory, national and local heritage policy framework.

6.2 The proposals are for very modest and reversible alterations to the plan form and layout of the building. These reflect the requirements of the new tenants, a psychotherapy practice, where smaller and more private spaces will be needed, rather than the current open plan office space.

Ground and 1st Floor

6.3 Here the double door opening in the spine wall will be infilled to create separate front and rear rooms. The architrave around the opening will be retained, providing a memory of the current floor plan. The proposal is fully reversible, and the infill can be removed without harm to the listed building, allowing the front and rear rooms to be re-connected in the future if required.

6.4 The spine wall at ground floor level has been reinstated in its original position and post-dates 1978 (see Figure 14), however the double door opening was created as part of the 2018 consent. It is not clear from the historic plans whether the original spine wall had a double door opening within it or not. However, double door openings were very common to principal floors in buildings of this age and typology. The retention of the architrave will allow for the opening to remain a legible element in the spatial quality and internal character of the building.

6.5 A set of double doors in the 1st floor spine wall can be seen on the 1969 and 1974 drawings, where it was proposed to fix these shut and board over the rear room side of the opening. By the time of the 2017 listed building consent application/2018 consent, the 1st floor spine wall was depicted as solid, with no

remnants of the former opening. The consent allowed for the creation of a double door opening, surrounded by an authentic new architrave.

6.6 The infilling of the opening at 1st floor level will allow the original circulation pattern and spatial quality of the listed building to remain legible and appreciable, with the opening able to be easily re-opened in the future if required.

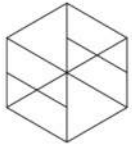
2nd Floor

6.7 Here the modern spine wall opening will be infilled, and the architrave removed. The 1978 and 2017 existing plans clearly show the spine wall as solid, without any door openings. The proposals will therefore reinstate the original layout and spatial quality of the building, which has been undermined to a degree by the creation of a more open plan arrangement at this floor level.

6.8 Partitions will be installed into the front room to create a smaller room and lobby area. The front section in buildings of this age and status were often subdivided into a larger room, focused upon the chimneybreast and two of the windows, and a smaller room lit by a single window. Therefore, the proposals are in keeping with the internal character and hierarchy of buildings of this size and typology. The partitions are fully reversible and will be scribed around the existing cornicing, allowing them to be removed without any lasting damage in the future if required. The partitions will avoid any physical intersection with the front windows or features such as the attractive marble fire surround to the front room.

3rd Floor

6.9 The accommodation within the mansard, along with the basement, were originally the areas of lowest status within the house. The front of the building would almost certainly have been subdivided into two spaces, providing bedrooms for servants and/or children. The partition at the front of the building, shown



on the 1969, 1974 and 1978 plans was removed as part of the 2018 consent.

6.10 The proposals are to reinstate a two-room layout, with a small lobby area. The 3rd floor currently has a modernised and open plan character, with no cornicing. The proposed partitions will reinstate a cellular layout to the 3rd floor, with rooms of more modest proportions. This will be in keeping with the position of this floor within the overall hierarchy of the house. The partitions are fully reversible and will have no impact upon historic fabric.

Assessment of the proposals in relation to the statutory, national and local heritage policy framework

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

6.11 The proposals are for modest plan form changes to the layout of the building, in association with the requirements of the new tenants who require smaller, more cellular spaces for their psychotherapy practice.

6.12 At ground and 1st floor level double doors in the spine wall are a common feature on buildings of this age and character. It is not clear whether there was always an opening at ground floor level, however one is shown to the 1st floor during the 1970s, albeit later blocked up. The proposals will infill the openings created as part of the 2018 consent. The infill panel will retain the architrave and thus the legibility of the opening and its relationship to the circulation pattern and spatial quality of the listed building. The infilling is wholly reversible and the double door openings can be reinstated in the future if required.

6.13 Over the upper floors double door openings are not an original feature. Here the openings consented in 2018 will be infilled and the architraves removed, reinstating the original cellular spatial quality and layout of the building.

6.14 Partitions will be installed into the front room at 2nd floor level, reflecting a typical layout in houses of this age, character and status. At 3rd floor level the original balance of spaces, and modest cellular quality of the building will be reinstated.

6.15 Taken together, the proposals will preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building in line with the s.16 statutory duty.

The National Planning Policy Framework 2023

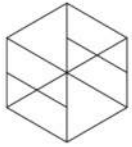
6.16 The proposals will allow the building to continue to adapt to its tenant's requirements, as it has done over time. This will support its ongoing beneficial use. The modest nature of the proposals, and the degree to which they reflect the original plan form and spatial quality of the listed building will preserve its significance. Thus, the proposals are considered to comply with the provisions of the NPPF.

The London Plan 2021

6.17 The proposals will conserve the significance of the listed building in line with Policy HC1. The retention of the architraves to the infilled openings at ground and 1st floor level will allow the original layout of the listed building to remain legible and appreciable, albeit that the ground floor spine wall opening is conjectural in this instance. The infilling of the openings in the spine wall at 2nd and 3rd floor level and the subdivision of the front rooms will reinstate the cellular quality and modest proportions of the rooms at these floor levels, in place of the currently open plan character of the spaces. This will enhance the significance and special interest of the listed building.

The London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017

6.18 The proposals comply with Policy D2 – Heritage of the London Borough of Camden's Local Plan 2017. The listed building and its



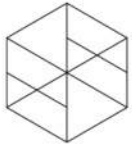
significance will be conserved, and in some respects enhanced. For the reasons outlined above there will be no harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building, in line with section (j) of the policy.

7 Conclusion

7.1 This Heritage Appraisal has been prepared in support of proposals for internal works to no.55 Gower Street.

7.2 The proposals relate to the requirements of the new tenants of the building and their need for smaller, private spaces. This can easily be achieved through the infilling of the openings in the spine wall created as part of the 2018 consent and the reinstatement of partitions to the front rooms at 2nd and 3rd floor level. These modifications are in keeping with the character of the building and its original plan form and spatial layout. There will be no harm to historic fabric as a result of the proposals and all of the partitions and infill are fully reversible.

7.3 The proposals are considered to comply with the s.16 statutory duty within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. They also comply with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023, the London Plan 2021 and the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.



Appendix A – Relevant historic environment policy

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

A1 Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that:

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

The National Planning Policy Framework 2023

A2 The revised National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF) sets out the Government’s planning policies and how these are expected to be applied. There is a general presumption in favour of sustainable development within national planning policy guidance.

Paragraph 200

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 201

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 203

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.

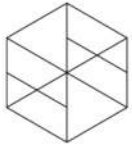
The London Plan 2021

A3 The London Plan 2021 is the Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London. It sets out a framework for how London will develop over the next 20-25 years and the Mayor’s vision for Good Growth. Policy HC1 Heritage conservation and growth part C is relevant.

C Development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets’ significance and appreciation within their surroundings. The cumulative impacts of incremental change from development on heritage assets and their settings should also be actively managed. Development proposals should avoid harm and identify enhancement opportunities by integrating heritage considerations early on in the design process.

London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017

A4 Camden’s Local Plan was adopted on 3 July 2017 and sets out the Council’s planning policies, replacing the Core Strategy and Development Policies planning documents that were adopted in 2010. The Local Plan will cover the period 2016-2031 and will play an essential role in the delivery of the Camden Plan, which sets out the Council’s vision for the borough. The relevant parts of the policies have been cited below.



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June 2024

Policy D2 – Heritage

The Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens and locally listed heritage assets.

Designated heritage assets

The Council will not permit development that results in harm that is less than substantial to the significance of a designated heritage asset unless the public benefits of the proposal convincingly outweigh that harm.

Listed Buildings

Listed buildings are designated heritage assets and this section should be read in conjunction with the section above headed 'designated heritage assets'. To preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will:

j. 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;