

124

Theobalds Road  
Camden Council

## Statement of Community Involvement

Prepared for Theobald Investment Ltd.  
June 2024

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared in support of an application for full planning permission submitted to Camden Council under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) on behalf of Theobald Investment Limited (the "Applicant").
- 1.2 This SCI outlines the pre-application public consultation activity undertaken by the Applicant regarding the refurbishment and extension of 124 Theobalds Road prior to the submission of a planning application, seeking:  
  
*"Refurbishment and extension of the existing building to provide additional commercial, business and service use (Class E) including external alterations, introduction of a rooftop terrace, new hard and soft landscaping, provision of cycle parking, provision of publicly accessible café space, and other associated works."*
- 1.3 The Applicant conducted a programme of public consultation and stakeholder engagement with regards to its proposal from May to June 2024. Utilising traditional and digital forms of engagement ensured that comprehensive and meaningful engagement took place. This included an in-person Public Exhibition on Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024. A dedicated project website, [www.124theobalds.co.uk](http://www.124theobalds.co.uk) also allowed the consultation to take place digitally where members of the public could submit feedback and reach out to the project team, and an in-person Public Exhibition to present the plans.
- 1.4 The Applicant committed to early engagement with local residents and representatives and began contacting local stakeholders, including ward members and neighbouring business, prior to the community consultation to inform them of the plans and invite them to engage in the pre-application consultation.
- 1.5 The comments received during the public consultation are detailed in the feedback section of this report.
- 1.6 The SCI has been written in line with Camden Council's Statement of Community Involvement (2016), the Revised National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and the Localism Act (2011).
- 1.7 This statement forms part of a portfolio of documents submitted as part of the planning application for the scheme.

## 2. CONSULTATION POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Effective and meaningful engagement is a key part of the Applicant's approach to planning. By working with communities and having proactive discussions about proposals, Theobald Investment Ltd. works to improve development plans using local input, wherever possible.

2.2 The consultation programme was undertaken at the pre-application stage. It has been carried out in accordance with Section 122 of the Localism Act 2011, which requires developers to carry out pre-application consultation with local communities.

2.3 The consultation programme was also carried out in accordance with the Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023. The pre-application consultation was carried out under the NPPF 2023, which was updated in December 2023. There were no changes that are relevant to the design of this consultation. The NPPF encourages proactive community engagement. Paragraph 137 of the NPPF 2023 states that:

*"Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot."*

2.4 Additionally, it followed the guidelines of Camden Council's Statement of Community Involvement (2016), which sets out the importance of involving statutory bodies and the community in pre-application consultations and planning applications. Section 3 of the SCI states:

*"We strongly encourage all applicants to consult any neighbours who may be affected by their proposals before they submit a planning application. We encourage other groups such as local Conservation Area Advisory Committees (CAACs) and any other local interest groups to be consulted. It is especially important to undertake consultation on a wider scale for major, or potentially controversial, proposals where:*

- the proposals are likely to have a significant impact on the environment or on the local community, and*
- the nature of the development is likely to attract significant local interest."*

## 3. CONSULTATION ACTIVITY

3.1 The Applicant has undertaken the process of pre-application consultation in line with national and local guidance and requirements. This provided an important opportunity to engage with the Council, key stakeholders and the local community to gather feedback and enable issues and concerns to be addressed prior to the submission of the planning application, where reasonably possible.

3.2 The proposals have been through a pre-application consultation process in relation to the design development of the proposals. The following pre-application meetings have taken place with London Borough of Camden:

- Pre-application meeting 1 – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023
- Pre-application meeting 2 - 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024

### CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES

3.3 The Applicant contacted local stakeholders on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024 to seek feedback on plans for consultation with the wider community. This included reaching out to ward councillors Cllr Julian Fulbrook, Cllr Awale Olad and Cllr Sue Vincent, local community groups such as the Tybald's Estate Residents Group, Friends of Red Lion Square and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and local businesses such as Unite the Union, Warner Brothers, Conway Hall and the Royal College of Anaesthetists. (Appendix 1).

3.4 The applicant met with Cllr Sue Vincent and Warner Brothers separately on Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> May, while representatives of the Friends of Red Lion Square and Unite the Union came to the public exhibition.

### COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

3.5 The Applicant opted to undertake a hybrid consultation which included a digital consultation on a project website and an in-person Public Exhibition for people to meet the team and view plans in detail.

3.6 On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2024, the Applicant issued a consultation invitation (Appendix 2) to 582 addresses within a consultation zone surrounding the proposed development (Appendix 3). The invitations introduced the proposals and provided details of a project website and the upcoming Public Exhibition event, as well as ways to get in touch with the project team.

3.7 An email address was also included in consultation advertisements so that residents could contact the project team to find out more about the proposals, no emails have thus far been received.

3.8 A public consultation event took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024 at Mercury House (Appendix 4) where the local community were able to find out more about the proposals from the project team. The Public Exhibition provided members of the local community the opportunity to meet the project team and give feedback on the proposals. A total of 6 people attended the Public Exhibition. Attendees were handed feedback forms and encouraged to write down their views of the scheme. Two feedback forms were received at the Public Exhibition. All materials that were displayed at the Public Exhibition are available in Appendix 7.

3.9 A project website ([www.124theobalds.co.uk](http://www.124theobalds.co.uk)) (Appendix 5) was also created ahead of the public exhibition and enabled residents to learn more about the proposals and submit feedback. The webpage also detailed how to get in contact with the project team. Between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> June, the project website included a virtual exhibition where visitors could view all information on that was on display at the Public Exhibition and provide an opportunity to give feedback. The consultation website received a total of 32 unique visitors during the consultation period.

## 4. FEEDBACK

### INTRODUCTION

4.1 Local residents were given the opportunity to submit feedback either by filling out a feedback form on the dedicated project website or at the Public Exhibition, or by getting in touch through email.

4.2 The Public Exhibition survey gave attendees space to provide feedback (Appendix 6). A total of 2 surveys were received at the Public Exhibition. At the time of writing, 1 survey has been returned via the website. All written feedback is available below.

### QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

4.3 The feedback form had three multiple-choice questions and a space to provide comments. Below is a quantitative analysis of the responses to the first three questions.

	Do you support the principle of refurbishing the building to make it fit for modern use?	We are proposing a new coffee shop on the ground floor. Would you be interested in using it?	Do you support our aims to minimise the refurbishment's impact on the environment? (This will be done by reclaiming stone from the existing building for use in new external walls, sending existing windows for high-grade recycling so the glass may be reused, and refurbishing internal raised access floor tiles.)
Yes	3	1	3
No	0	1	0
Maybe/Unsure	0	1	0

### QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

4.4 At the Public Exhibition and on feedback form, consultees were asked to submit written feedback on a range of elements of the plans. As well as this, residents had the option to email their comments and questions.

4.5 3 consultees submitted written feedback through the feedback form at the Public Exhibition, online survey or by post.

4.6 The three comments we received can be seen below in full:

- *"Keen that the bulk at top level is reduced as much as possible, including removal of existing "clutter". Please show solar panels if you are proposing them. Construction Management Plan needs to co-ordinate with GOSH redevelopment & Theobalds Estate regeneration."*
- *"Impressed by intention to upgrade but also restore building to original design."*
- *"I am the Pre-Construction Director of Make One Group (we are building a refurbishment business that is based just behind Mercury House) the coffee shop would benefit the local area"*

*and be used by our staff, we'd also like the opportunity to Tender the project of the refurbishment works – we deliver projects for clients between £5m and £53m in London – www.makeonegroup.com – thank you”*

## VERBAL FEEDBACK AT PUBLIC EXHIBITION

4.7 6 people attended the Public Exhibition at Mercury House on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024. This provided a valuable opportunity to discuss the proposals with the local community. The Applicant and consultants that attended the consultation spoke with the local community and received generally positive feedback, including:

- Happiness that the refurbishment was happening
- Desire for the Applicant to coordinate with other redevelopments happening in the local area.
- Queries about whether the development would reduce the height of the building.

## 5. Evolution of the proposal

- 5.1 The proposal has evolved through the pre-application process based on discussions with Camden Council and stakeholders.
- 5.2 In the first pre-application meeting, the Applicant presented a proposed single residential unit to accompany the scheme. However, the applicant and Camden Council agreed that it was not a reasonable requirement for this project and would instead support a payment in lieu. The applicant also discussed reducing the massing scheme with approximate GIA uplift of 390 metres squared.
- 5.3 In the second pre-application meeting with Camden Council, the Applicant discussed a change in the brief to deliver a higher quality space ready for the end user. The Applicant also showcased an improved entrance design and updates to the Pavilion design. The design of the entrance has evolved from hammered slabs in Portland stone, to a terrazzo coverage made from recycled stone from the old façade, and lastly chromed metal fluting as a literal reference to mercury also being a liquid metal. The proposed material is robust and adds visual appeal which offsets the natural texture of the stone on the wider façade.
- 5.4 The second pre-app meeting also saw discussion of the Applicant's proposal to replace all the windows while retaining the Portland stone façade. The present windows were found to have significant thermal inadequacies. The new window proposal will significantly improve the visual appearance and allow for passive ventilation and increase thermal performance of the building.
- 5.5 The Applicant is also proposing a GIA uplift area of 598 metres squared, as a result of maximising existing basement area, without adding additional above ground mass.
- 5.6 Alongside these changes, the consultation showed an appetite amongst public attendees to the consultation event for cooperation with those bringing forward the regeneration of the Tybalds Estate. The Applicant is committed to engaging with both the redevelopment team and the Tybalds Estate Residents' Association throughout the development process.



## 6. CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

6.1 This SCI demonstrates the pre-application consultation undertaken with local residents and stakeholders for the redevelopment of 124 Theobalds Road.

6.2 The initial proposals were designed in response to a thorough analysis of the 124 Theobalds Road site, and the surrounding area.

6.3 The consultation process allowed the Applicant to further understand local views on the proposals, prior to submitting a planning application to Camden Council.

6.4 The feedback indicates that local residents and representatives are generally supportive of our plans and had limited, if any, criticism.

6.5 The project team has reviewed all feedback received during the consultation and, where possible, has responded to this in the final plans.

6.6 The development team will continue its discussions and engagement with local residents and stakeholders as the application progresses.

## 7. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTRODUCTION LETTER

Hi [REDACTED]

I hope all is well with you.

I am working on a project to refurbish Mercury House, 124 Theobalds Road involving the infill of the atrium and the removal of a core in the north wing to provide additional office floor space. There are also proposed changes to the basement to create a co-working hub, cycle store and changing area.

The architects are Orms, and we would very much like to present the proposals to you and hear your thoughts.

Would it be possible to arrange a convenient date to meet over the next few weeks?

Many thanks

Regards

[REDACTED]

## APPENDIX 2: CONSULTATION INVITATION



Dear Neighbour,

**Plans to refurbish Mercury House, 124 Theobalds Road, WC1X 8RX**

I am writing to invite you to an Open Day to see plans for the refurbishment of Mercury House, 124 Theobalds Road.

The refurbishment aims to enhance the existing qualities of the building, by removing poorly designed modern extensions and making minor external changes that have been sensitively designed to ensure minimal impact on our neighbours. The plans include a new main entrance and high quality office space in an improved landscaped setting.

A coffee shop will also be provided at ground floor, which will be open to the public with access direct from Theobalds Road.

**The Open Day will be at Mercury House (main entrance on Theobalds Road) on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June from 5pm – 8pm**, where our team will be on hand to explain our plans and answer your questions.

We aim to submit a planning application over the coming months, and before we do, we would very much like to present the proposals to you and your neighbours to hear your thoughts.

We hope you will be able to attend, but if not, the plans will be available to view on a website [www.124theobalds.co.uk](http://www.124theobalds.co.uk) from the day of the Open Day, where you can also leave comments.

If you would like further information or have any questions, please contact me at [pdimoldenberg@quatro-pr.co.uk](mailto:pdimoldenberg@quatro-pr.co.uk).

Many thanks

Kind regards

Paul Dimoldenberg

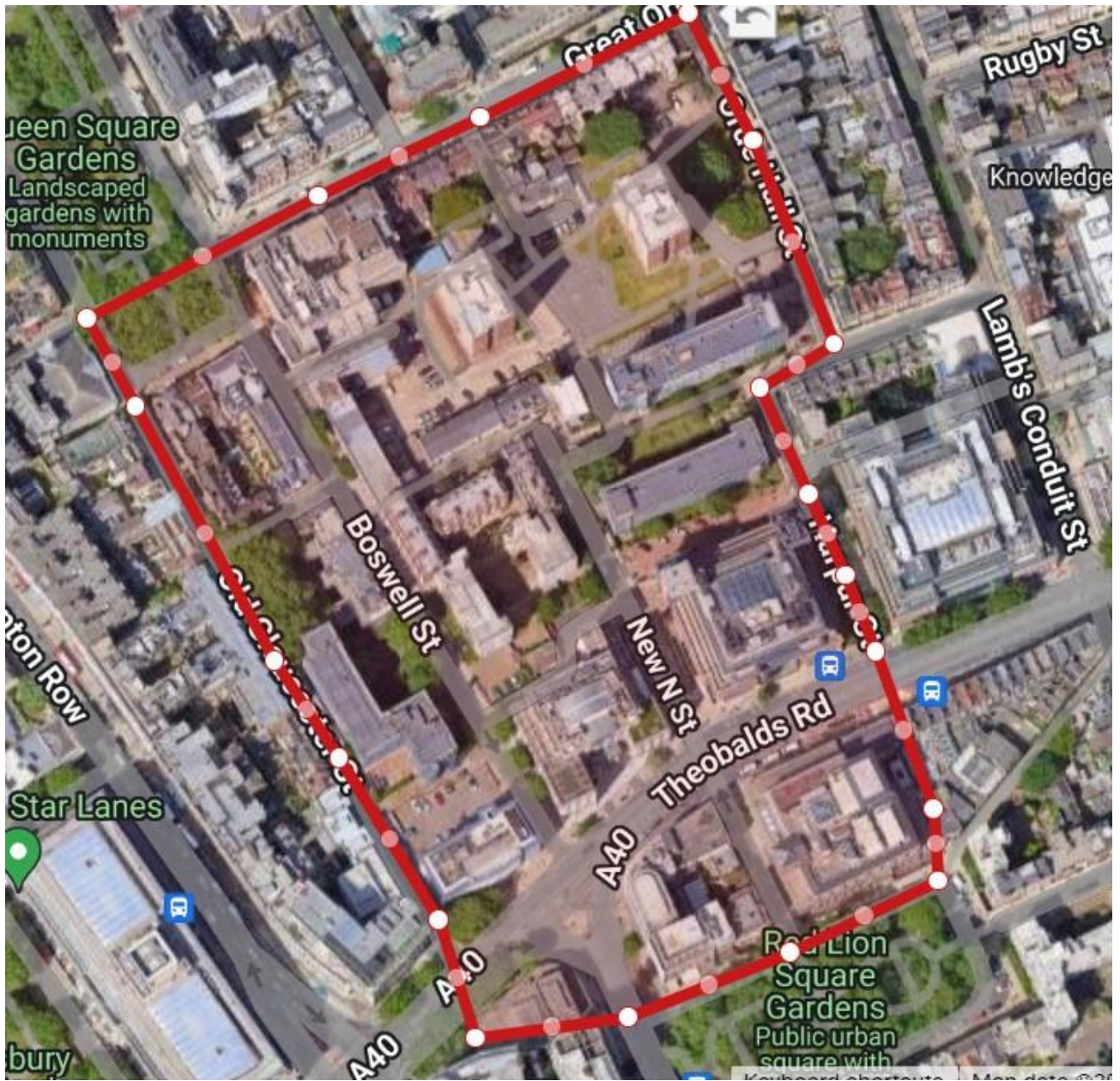
Quatro Public Relations Ltd  
Tel: 020 7566 7979  
Email: [info@quatro-pr.co.uk](mailto:info@quatro-pr.co.uk)  
[www.quatro-pr.co.uk](http://www.quatro-pr.co.uk)

20 Red Lion Street  
Holborn  
London  
WC1R 4PS

Registered in England and Wales No. 00990211. Registered Office: King's House, 9-10 Heymarket, London, SW1Y 4BP

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## APPENDIX 3: CONSULTATION INVITATION DISTRIBUTION AREA (582 addresses)





APPENDIX 4: PUBLIC EXHIBITION PHOTO



APPENDIX 5: PROJECT WEBSITE - <https://124theobalds.co.uk/>

## Welcome to the project website for 124 Theobalds Road

We are planning to refurbish Mercury House at 124 Theobalds Road.

The refurbishment aims to enhance the existing qualities of the building, by removing poorly designed modern extensions and making minor external changes that have been sensitively designed to ensure minimal impact on our neighbours.



### Our proposals include:



Refurbishing the existing building to deliver new high-quality office space.



Improving the rear service yard, creating an attractive landscaped garden, and reducing and covering the servicing area.



Removing low quality 1990s additions to the building.



Sensitively extending the front central façade and creating a new entrance to the building which will include trees and planting.



Opening a new café, open for the local community to enjoy.



Providing better private amenities within the building with a basement cycle store, showers, a gym and a communal rooftop terrace.

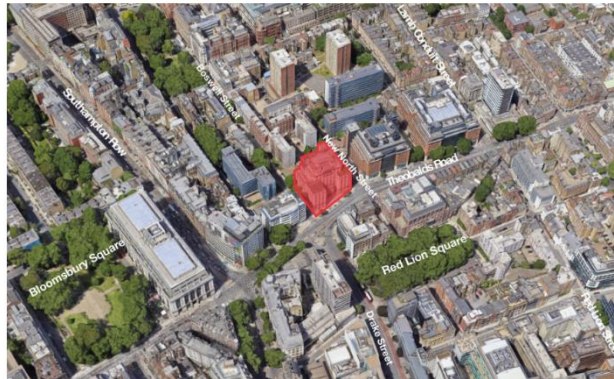
We are preparing a planning application for these changes to the building, but first would like to hear from local residents and businesses on our proposals.

## Introduction

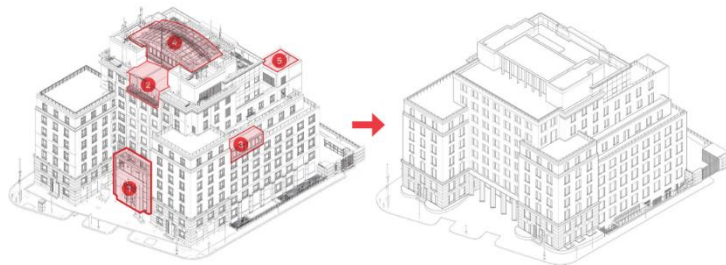
124 Theobalds Road was built in 1955 as the headquarters for Cable & Wireless and was known as Mercury House.

In 1990, the building was refurbished, including several low-quality additions.

Mediacom moved to the building in 2006.



- 1 Entrance to front
- 2 Balcony and roof to front
- 3 5th floor enclosure
- 4 Atrium
- 5 Plant enclosure roof

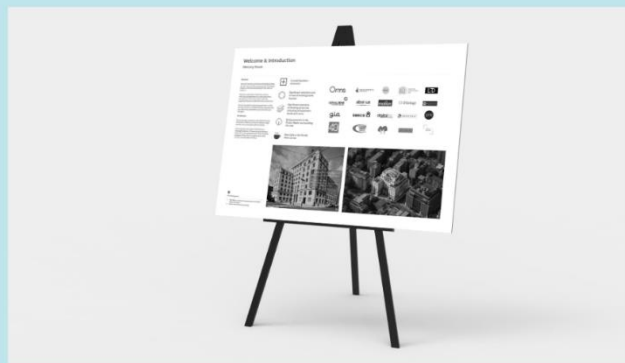


## View our consultation material

We arranged an Open Day for residents and businesses to see the plans on Monday, 3rd June, from 5pm-8pm, at Mercury House.

If you were unable to attend our public exhibition or would like to see the material again, you can view our exhibition boards [here](#).

**Please let us have your comments by 14th June.**



## Have your say

### Theobalds Road - Feedback Form

You can use this form to let us know your views on the proposals. You can also email us at [mercuryhouse@quatro-pr.co.uk](mailto:mercuryhouse@quatro-pr.co.uk).

1. Name

2. Address

3. Postcode

4. Do you support the principle of refurbishing the building to make it fit for modern use?

- Yes  
 Unsure  
 No

5. We are proposing a new coffee shop on the ground floor. Would you be interested in using it?

- Yes  
 Unsure  
 No

6. Do you support our aims to minimise the refurbishment's impact on the environment? (This will be done by reclaiming stone from the existing building for use in new external walls, sending existing windows for high-grade recycling so the glass may be reused, and refurbishing internal raised access floor tiles.)

- Yes  
 Unsure  
 No

7. Do you have any other comments on the proposals?

Would you like to receive project updates? If yes, please leave your contact details below:



8. Phone

9. Email

This information is compiled by Quatro Public Relations Ltd. on behalf of Theobald Investment Ltd.; it will be treated in strict confidence and will not be used to identify you personally. The feedback you provide will be analysed on an anonymous basis. Please note that anonymised comments will be published in summaries of the consultation.

Done

## Theobalds Road – Feedback Form

Thank you for attending our public exhibition. You can use this form to let us know your views on the proposals.  
You can also email us at [mercuryhouse@quatro-pr.co.uk](mailto:mercuryhouse@quatro-pr.co.uk). To view the materials you have seen today scan the QR code to visit [124theobalds.co.uk](http://124theobalds.co.uk).



Name  Postcode

Address

**1. Do you support the principle of refurbishing the building to make it fit for modern use?**

Yes  Unsure  No

**2. We are proposing a new coffee shop on the ground floor. Would you be interested in using it?**

Yes  Unsure  No

**3. Do you support our aims to minimise the refurbishment's impact on the environment?** (This will be done by reclaiming stone from the existing building for use in new external walls, sending existing windows for high-grade recycling so the glass may be reused, and refurbishing internal raised access floor tiles.)

Yes  Unsure  No

**4. Do you have any other comments on the proposals?**

**Would you like to receive project updates? If yes, please leave your contact details below:**

Phone  Email

This information is compiled by Quatro Public Relations Ltd. on behalf of Theobald Investment Ltd.; it will be treated in strict confidence and will not be used to identify you personally. The feedback you provide will be analysed on an anonymous basis. Please note that anonymised comments will be published in summaries of the consultation.

# 1. Welcome & Introduction

## Mercury House

### Welcome

Theobald Investment Limited are developing ideas for the future of Mercury House (124 Theobalds Road), a commercial building in the heart of Holborn.

We have undertaken initial discussions with local stakeholders to understand their perceptions of the site, help to identify opportunities and understand the constraints.

We are preparing a planning application for these changes to the building, but first would like to hear from local residents and businesses on our proposals.

### The Scheme

The proposals include the refurbishment and extension of Mercury House to deliver a high-quality and sustainable office building.

The proposals have been informed by a thorough analysis of the existing building to determine the constraints and opportunities, analysis of the site's immediate and wider context, and the site's history.



A small extension to Theobalds Road frontage



Significant retention and re-use of existing stone façades



Significant retention of existing structure, including all basement levels and cores



Enhancements to the Public Realm surrounding the site



New Cafe in the South-West corner



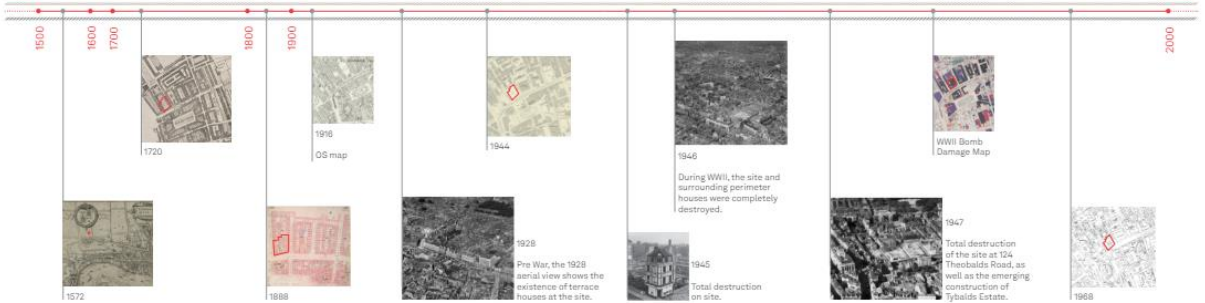
Site photographs

- 1 Aerial view of existing building
- 2 1850's sketch of Mercury House development
- 3 1955 Mercury House, headquarters building for Cable & Wireless

# 2. Site Research & Context

## Mercury House

### Site History



- Conservation Area
  - Bloomsbury Conservation Area
  - Kingsway Conservation Area
  - Seven Dials Conservation Area
  - Denmark Street Conservation Area
  - Hatton Garden Conservation Area
  - Archaeological Priority Zone



- Listed buildings
  - Grade I listed building
  - Grade II\* listed building
  - Grade II listed building
  - Grade II registered park & garden
  - LBC Locally Listed Building & Features

- Streetscape
  - Main street presence
  - Set back plane from road
  - Background plane

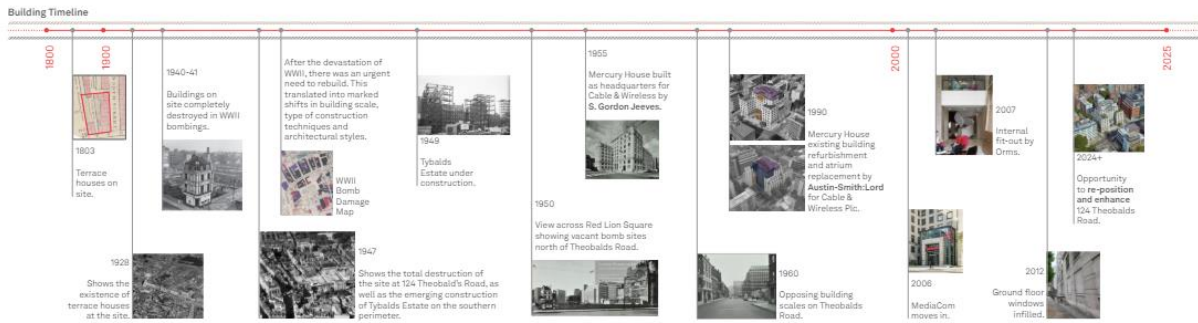


- Streetscape Materials
  - Stone
  - Concrete / glass / metal
  - Red brick
  - Other brick




### 3. The Existing Building

#### Mercury House



**Opportunities**

 **High quality materials** - The bulk of original street facing stone facades are left intact.

 **Good bones** - Constructed originally by Sir Robert McAlpine, the building is in good condition to be reused.

 **Underused space** - Small service yard area containing bin store and substation.

**Constraints**

 **Lacking street presence** - Incongruous glazed main entrance design that sits back from the prevailing building lines.

 **Limited ground plane activity** - side entry doors locked up and unused and ground floor windows blocked up.

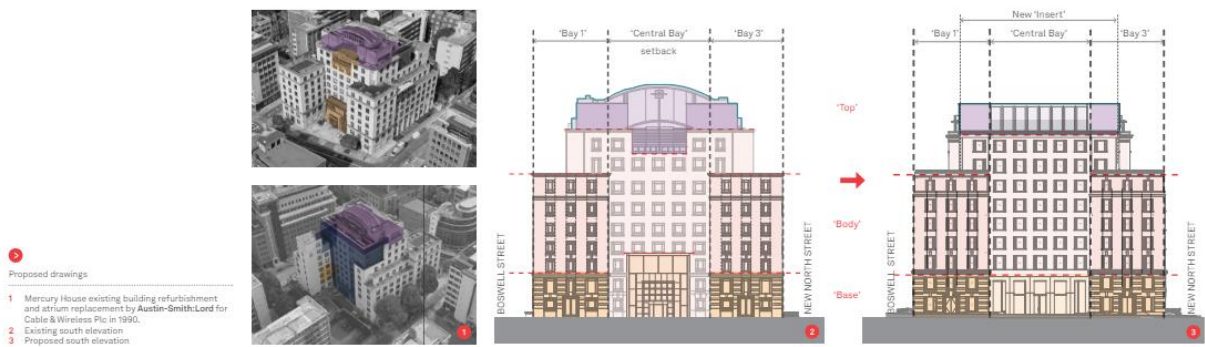
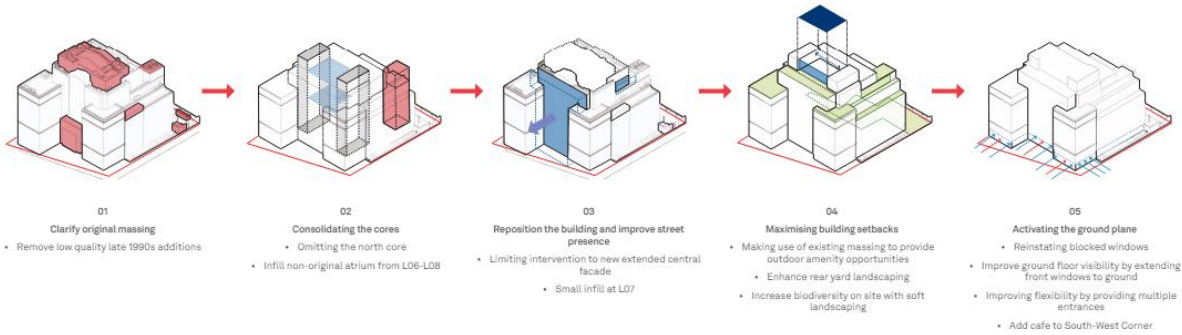
 **Low quality office space** - Inefficient core, low floor to ceiling heights and floorplates divided into wings.

 **Limited building amenity.**



## 4. Key Moves & Emerging Ideas

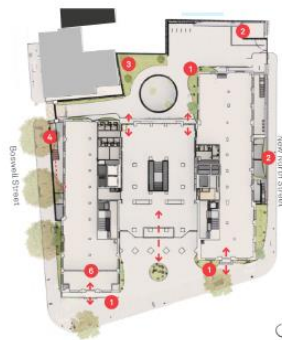
### Mercury House





## 5. Scheme Benefits

### Mercury House



Ground floor cafe accessible to the public.



New landscaped areas and significant improvements to biodiversity and urban greening.



\$106 contributions towards DMP/CMR, highways, Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood Scheme, cycle improvements, carbon offsets and travel plan monitoring/measures.



Improved amenity for building users



A refurbishment-led scheme that minimises the loss of embodied carbon.

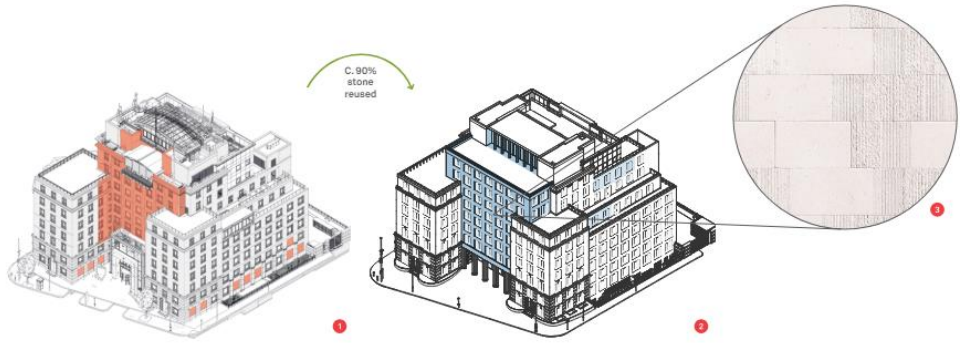
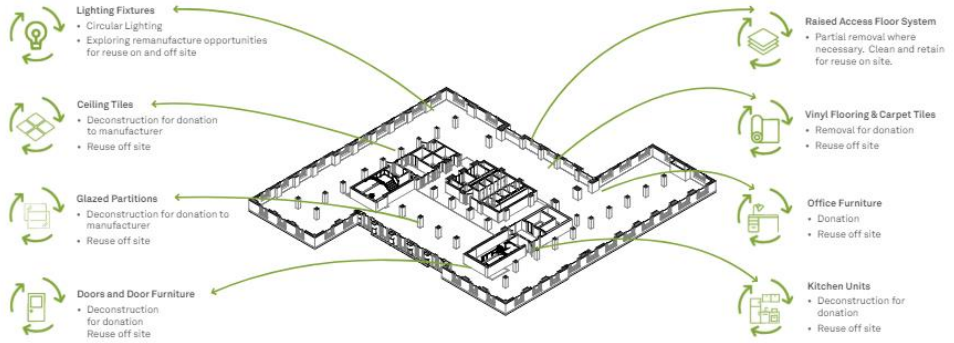
## 6. Sustainability & Re-use

### Mercury House

**95%**  
GIA retained

**90%**  
structural  
elements  
retained

**80%**  
stone facade  
retained



- Facade material reuse**
- 1 Existing stone facade for reuse
  - 2 Proposed facade with stone reuse
  - 3 Illustrative image of reused stone
- Reused Portland Stone infill to match existing
  - New building fabric with reused stone
  - Extent of stone disassembly for reuse

# 7. Townscape Views

## Mercury House



1. Theobalds Road - Looking East



Existing



Proposed

2. Theobalds Road - Looking North West



Existing



Proposed

3. Drake Street Junction - Looking North East



Existing



Proposed

4. Boswell Street - Looking South



Existing



Proposed



## 8. Summary

Mercury House

Retention and enhancement of original building fabric to reposition the building and provide next generation workspace in Camden.



A refurbishment-led scheme that minimises the loss of embodied carbon.



Provide a cafe at the South-West corner of the site, that is open to the public, to provide a much needed amenity for the local area.



Additional floor space created by a high quality front extension, infilling the existing atrium from levels 06 -08, and consolidating cores to achieve more efficient floorplates.



Stripped out Portland Stone to be reused on proposed extension facade.



Provide higher quality office floorplates with better daylighting and access to outdoor spaces.



Provide best-in-class amenities for the whole building with generous cycle facilities, co-working space, landscaped forecourt and rear yard, and sunken courtyard, and a communal rooftop terrace and event space.

