

October 2024

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# Heritage Statement

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County Hotel, Upper Woburn Place

<i>Project number: 24.76.</i>		
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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This Heritage Statement has been prepared to support a planning application for the retention of 4no. air source heat pumps and proposed acoustic enclosure to the rear of the County Hotel, Upper Woburn Place, Bloomsbury.
- 1.2. The description of development is:
- Retention of the existing air source heat pumps and kitchen extract plant, and the erection of acoustic screening on the electrical substation and kitchen roofs*
- 1.3. The site is located on the eastern side of Upper Woburn Place, on the corner with Woburn Walk. The building has been in hotel use since its erection in 1940. The proposals form part of a wider refurbishment project that has upgraded the hotel accommodation following a comprehensive refurbishment.
- 1.4. The following planning permissions have been implemented to accomplish the internal and external upgrades:
- 2024/0217/A - Removal of 2 x non-illuminated fascia signs, 1 x non-illuminated wall mounted sign and 1 x non-illuminated projecting sign to facilitate the provision of 1 x internally illuminated fascia sign, 1 x internally illuminated wall-mounted sign, 2 x internally illuminated projecting signs and 1 x non-illuminated fascia sign
  - 2023/3680/P - Erection of a single storey extension, erection of an electrical substation, following the demolition of the existing substation & enclosure installation of new front entrance, removal of a goods lift and enclosure from the front of the building, all on Woburn Walk at ground floor level, replacement of the existing goods platform lift to the front elevation and amendments to the rear terrace (south) at basement level and erection of an open-sided canopy.
- 2023/2778/P - The replacement of single glazed windows with double glazed units across all elevations; replacement roof plant including installation of PV panels and associated works.
- 1.5. The existing building is not individually subject to any local or statutory heritage designation. It is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area with designated heritage assets within the immediate area.
- 1.6. The purpose of this report is to describe the heritage significance of any heritage assets potentially affected by the proposed development, and to consider the potential impact of the proposals on that significance. It seeks to satisfy the requirements of paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023), and to assist in discharging the duties at sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 1.7. The scope of this report deals with the above-ground heritage constraints. It has been informed by desk-top research and a site visit made in April 2023.
- 1.8. This revised version of the Heritage Statement has been produced following review of the proposals after production of CGIs which has resulted in an amended colour being proposed for the screening panels.

## 2.0 Site Context

### Heritage designations

2.1. Heritage assets are defined in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) as:

*A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decision, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).*

2.2. The site is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

2.3. Immediately to the east on Woburn Walk is the Grade II\* listed Nos. 4-18 (even) including Nos. 4A and 6A (ref. 1379210), and Nos. 1-9 (odd) and No. 9A (ref. 1379209). There are also two Grade II listed lampposts on Woburn Walk (ref. 1379211).

2.4. In the wider area is a number of other heritage assets.

2.5. Immediately to the south is the British Medical Association House including screen and gates, listed at Grade II (ref. 1378968).

2.6. On the western side of Upper Woburn Place to the north is the Hilton Hotel London Euston and attached railings, listed at Grade II (ref. 1379065).

2.7. Given the location of the proposed development, the proposed development is not considered to affect heritage assets along Upper Woburn Place and these are excluded from this appraisal.

2.8. An online search of the Greater London Historic Environment Record (HER) did not yield any additional potential heritage assets considered relevant to the proposals.

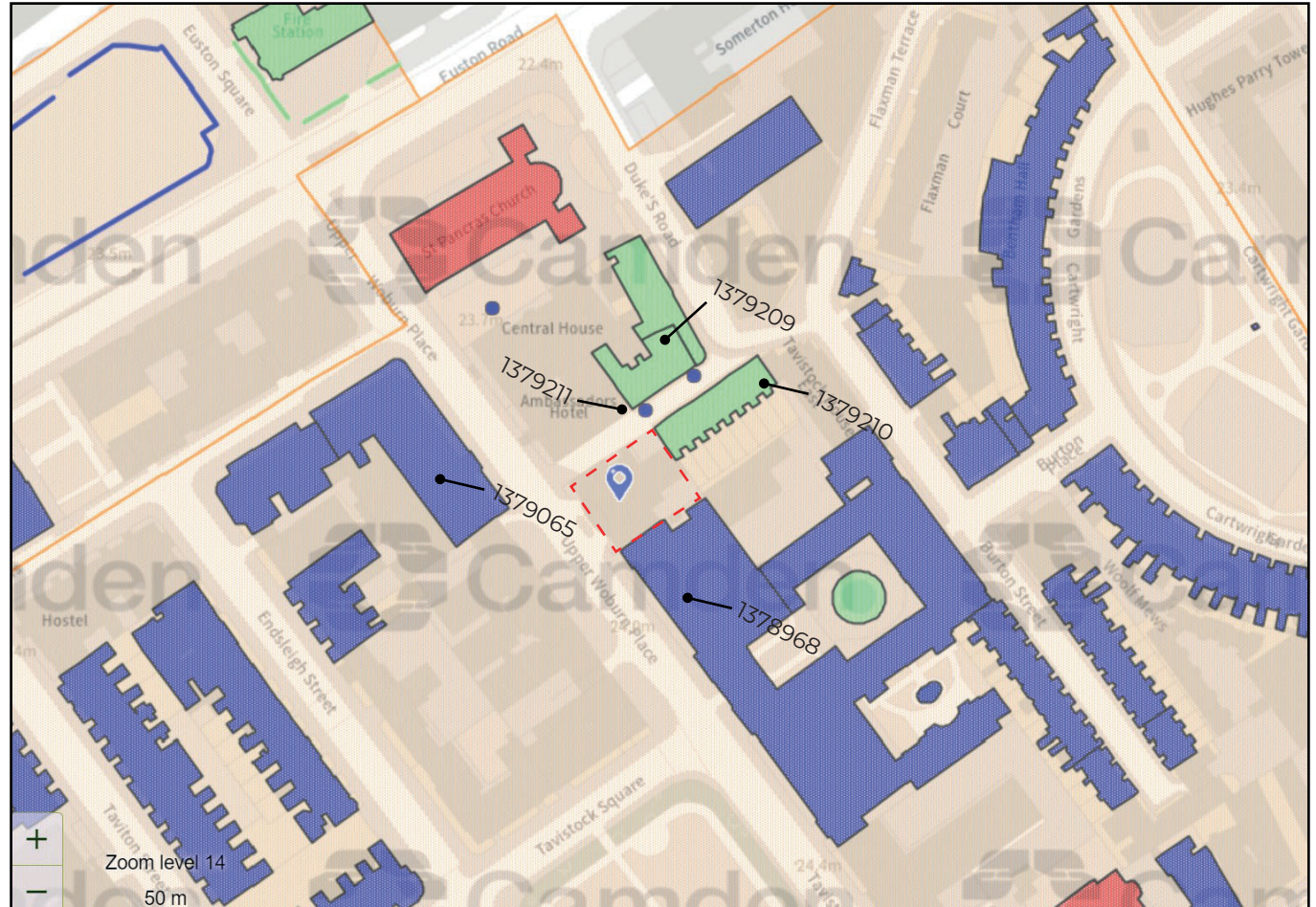


Fig.1. Heritage Constraints, London Borough of Camden interactive map, London Borough of Camden

<b>LocalList</b>	ListedBuilding
Building or Group of Buildings	Grade I
Natural Features or Landscape	Grade II
Street Feature or other Structures	Grade II*
	ConservationArea



### 3.0 Legislation, Policies and Guidance

3.1. This section sets out a summary of the core heritage decision-making framework. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

#### Legislation

3.2. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 establishes powers to designate listed buildings and conservation areas together with a statutory duty to consider the impacts of proposed development in the determination of planning applications.

3.3. Section 1 makes provision for the Secretary of State to compile lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Section 5 defines a 'listed building' to include any object or structure fixed to the building, and any object or structure within the curtilage of the building which forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1948.

3.4. Section 66 establishes a similar duty with respect to the determination of planning applications. In considering whether to grant planning permission which affects a listed building or its setting, local planning authorities 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.

3.5. Section 69 of the Act establishes powers for local planning authorities to designate areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance as conservation areas.

3.6. Section 72 establishes a general duty in the exercise of planning functions with respect to any buildings or other land within a conservation area to pay special attention to

the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

#### Local Plan

##### Camden Local Plan (2017)

3.7. The Camden Local Plan sets out the policy provision against which planning applications in Camden are determined. It was adopted in July 2017 and replaced the Core Strategy and Camden Development Policies documents.

3.8. The primary heritage policy reads as follows:

##### *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*

*Designated heritage assets include conservation areas and listed buildings. The Council will not permit the loss of or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, including conservation areas and Listed Buildings, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or 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;*

*b. no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation;*

*c. conservation by grant-funding or some form of 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.*

*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.*

#### *Conservation areas*

*Conservation areas are designated heritage assets and this section should be read in conjunction with the section above headed 'designated heritage assets'. In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management strategies when assessing applications within conservation areas.*

#### *The Council will:*

*e. require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area;*

*f. resist the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area;*

*g. resist development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character or appearance of that conservation area; and*

*h. preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character and appearance of a conservation area or which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.*

#### *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:

i. resist the total or substantial demolition of a listed building;

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; and

k. resist development that would cause harm to significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting.

#### Archaeology

The Council will protect remains of archaeological importance by ensuring acceptable measures are taken proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset to preserve them and their setting, including physical preservation, where appropriate.

Other heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets

The Council will seek to protect other heritage assets including non designated heritage assets (including those on and off the local list),

Registered Parks and Gardens and London Squares.

The effect of a proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, balancing the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

This was adopted on 18 April 2011. The appraisal notes that the character of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area is vulnerable to negative change through the incremental deterioration of built fabric arising from neglect and lack of maintenance (paragraph 5.9).

#### London Plan 2021

3.10. The London Plan 2021 sets out policies to guide development across the London boroughs. 'Policy HC1 Heritage conservation and growth' is the principal historic environment policy. It establishes the following policies for decision making.

*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.*

*D Development proposals should identify assets of archaeological significance and use this information to avoid harm or minimise it through design and appropriate mitigation. Where applicable, development should make provision for the protection of significant archaeological assets and landscapes. The protection of undesignated heritage assets of archaeological interest equivalent to a scheduled monument should be given equivalent weight to designated heritage assets.*

*E Where heritage assets have been identified as being At Risk, boroughs should identify specific opportunities for them to contribute to regeneration and place-making, and they*

*should set out strategies for their repair and re-use.*

#### National Planning Policy

3.11. National planning policy is established in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023). Chapter 16 (paragraphs 195-214) sets out policy guidance for development affecting the historic environment.

3.12. Paragraph 195 recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner that is appropriate to their significance such that they can be enjoyed by existing and future generations.

3.13. Paragraph 200 requires applicants to describe the heritage significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposed development, including the contribution made by their setting. This should be proportionate to the assets' importance, and no more than is required to understand the potential nature of the impact on that significance. Paragraph 190 requires local planning authorities to assess the significance of any heritage assets potentially affected to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposed development.

3.14. Paragraph 203 states that 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; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

3.15. Paragraphs 205 onwards provide guidance for considering the potential impacts. Paragraph 205 states that when considering the impact of

3.9. The implementation of Local Plan Policy D2 is supported by the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy.

- a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. This should be proportionate to its significance, the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. This is irrespective of whether the harm is substantial, total loss, or less than substantial.
- 3.16. Paragraph 206 goes on to state that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, including through development within its setting, should require clear and convincing justification.
- 3.17. Paragraph 206 and 207 deal with instances of substantial harm to a designated heritage asset. Development causing substantial harm should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss, or other criteria are met. Paragraph 208 guides that where a development would lead to less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 3.18. The tests at 207 and 208 deal with designated heritage assets. Paragraph 209 provides guidance on development affecting non-designated heritage assets, stating that a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.
- 3.19. Paragraph 212 encourages local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within the setting of heritage assets and conservation areas to enhance or better reveal their significance. Those proposals that preserve elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset should be treated favourably.
- 3.20. Paragraph 213 makes clear that not all

elements of a conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance.

### Planning Guidance

- 2.1. Interpretation of the NPPF is provided by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This is a digital guidance note divided into a series of chapters which is subject to regular review; the historic environment chapter was last updated in July 2019.
- 2.2. The historic environment chapter guides that understanding the significance of a heritage asset and its setting from an early stage in the design process can help to inform the development of proposals which avoid or minimise harm (paragraph 8). Paragraph 13 provides further guidance on setting, making clear that setting is not only related to visual attributes but other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell and vibration as well as the relationship between places.
- 2.3. Paragraph 18 provides guidance on assessing harm. It is clear that proposed development may have no impact or may enhance an asset's significance such that no harm is caused. Where development would be harmful to a designated heritage asset, this needs to be categorised as either 'less than substantial' or 'substantial' harm. The level of harm can vary within these two categories. It goes to elaborate that substantial harm is a 'high test' and therefore is unlikely to arise in many cases. This harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.
- 2.4. Paragraph 19 provides guidance on how to assess the possibility of harm to conservation areas. It states that an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to a conservation area is individually of lesser importance than a listed building. The justification for a building's proposed demolition will need to be proportionate to its relative significance

and its contribution to the significance of the conservation area as a whole.

- 2.5. Guidance on the optimum viable use of heritage assets and how to determine this is provided at Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 18a-015-20190723. It states that the vast majority of heritage assets are in private ownership and therefore sustaining heritage assets in the long term often requires an incentive for their active conservation. It goes on to recognise that putting heritage assets to a viable use is likely to lead to the investment in their maintenance necessary for their long-term conservation. With regards to the optimum viable use, it guides that if there is only one viable use, that use is the optimum viable use. If however there is several economically viable uses, the optimum viable use is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset. The optimum viable use may not necessarily be the most economically viable one and is not necessarily the original use. If from a conservation point of view there is no real difference between alternative economically viable uses, then the choice of use is a decision for the owner, subject of course to obtaining any necessary consents.

### Professional Guidance

- 2.6. Historic England has produced a series of best practice guidance notes to assist in the identification of assets, assessing significance and managing change. Those of particular relevance include:
- Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (2008)
  - Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 (2015)
  - The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in



- Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) (2017)
- Statements of Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets Historic England Advice Note 12 (2019)

## 4.0 Brief History

- 4.1. The area of Bloomsbury developed from the mid-17th century onwards as London expanded northwards. The later expansion was carried out speculatively by builders with leases from major landowners, with the aim of attracting the wealthier classes through the construction of grander residences. This created an area of townscape which follows a relatively consistent form characterised by terraced houses on a formal gridded arrangement punctuated by landscaped squares.
- 4.2. In the later 19th and into the 20th century, institutions began to characterise areas of the district, creating a hub of medical, academic and cultural uses.
- 4.3. In the late 19th century, the site and its surroundings very much formed part of the earlier 18th and 19th townscape for which Bloomsbury is renowned. The site was occupied by a terrace of houses which characterised this stretch of Upper Woburn Place, echoed on the opposite side of the road. The gridded spatial arrangement of the townscape is evident, with a landscaped square to the rear of the site.
- 4.4. Much the same arrangement is shown on the 1896 Ordnance Survey (OS) plan (Fig. 3)

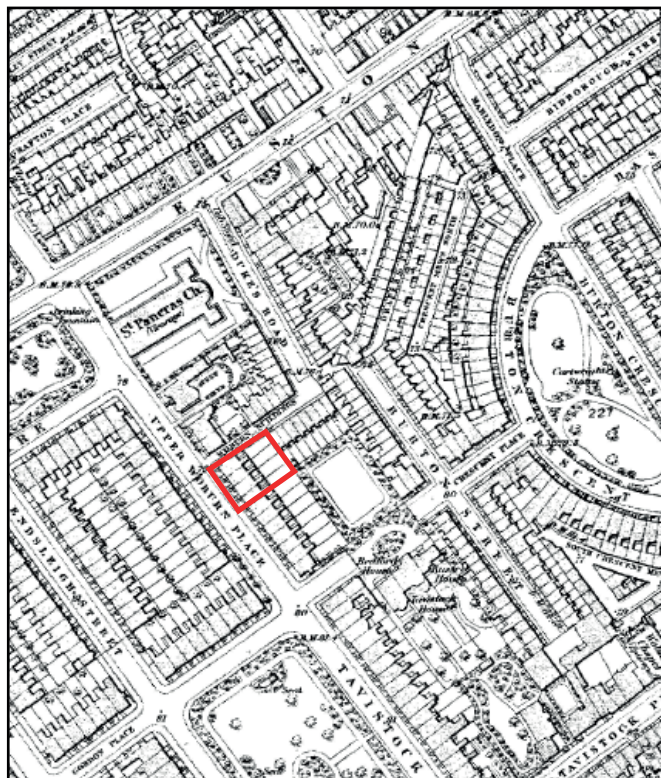


Fig. 2. 1875-1878 Ordnance Survey

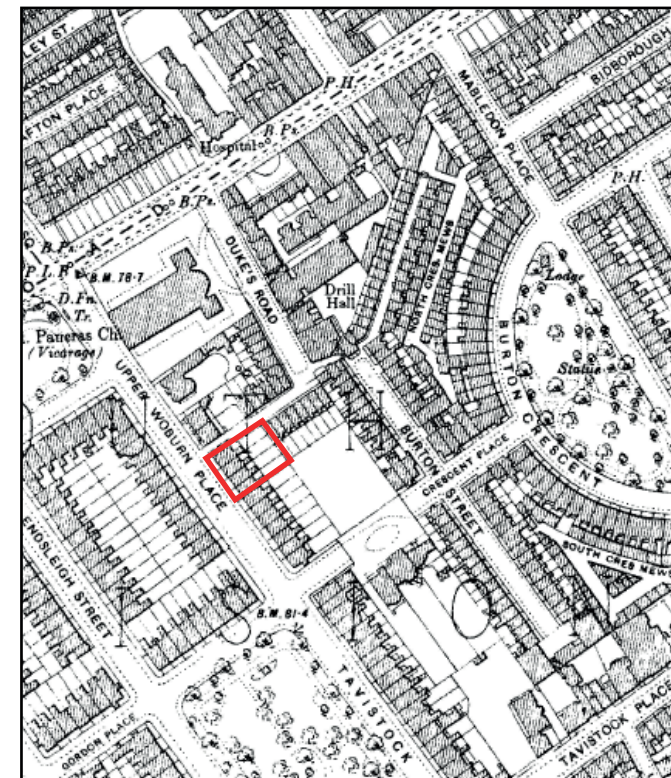


Fig. 3. 1896 Ordnance Survey



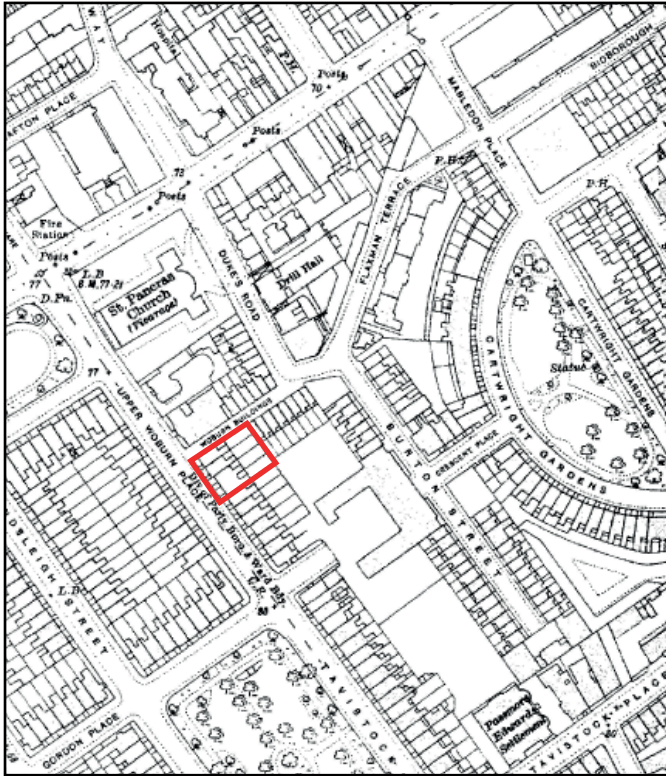


Fig. 4. 1916 Ordnance Survey

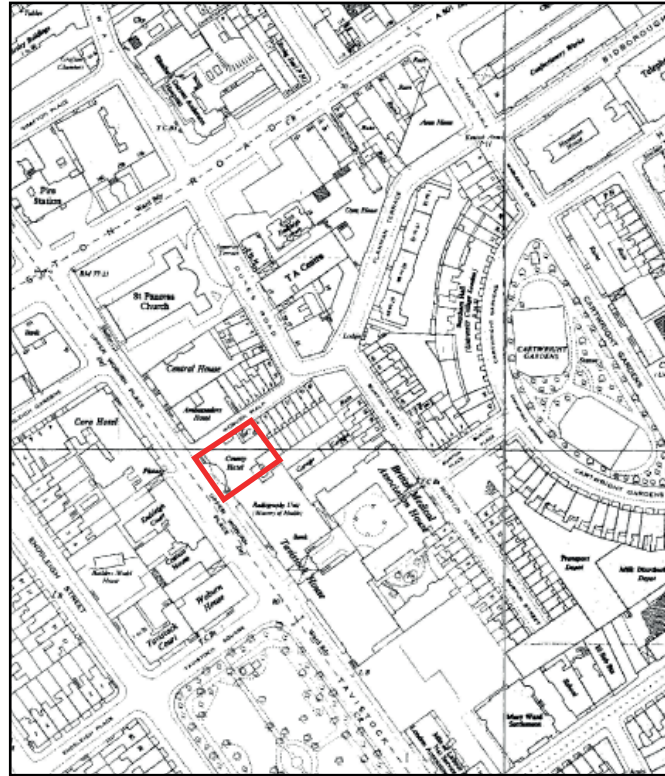


Fig. 5. 1953-54 Ordnance Survey

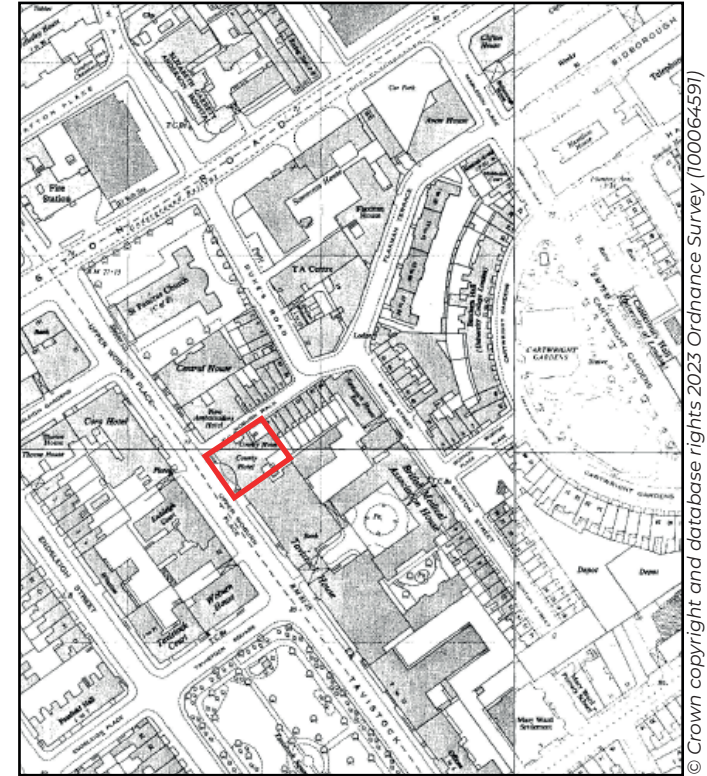


Fig. 6. 1965-70 Ordnance Survey

4.5. By the time of the First World War, the first phase of the headquarters of the British Medical Association had been constructed on Burton Street to the south east of the site (Fig. 4). The site itself remained occupied by the four terraced properties.

4.6. The houses on the site were demolished to make way for the County Hotel which opened in 1940 to a design by C Lovett Gill. It forms part of a wider townscape transformation along Upper Woburn Place and Tavistock Square which also saw the continued expansion of the British Medical Association and the redevelopment of the western side of the road with larger footprint buildings in place of the terraced development, including Endsleigh Court immediately opposite the site.

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## 5.0 Statement of Significance

### Introduction

- 5.1. Determining significance is a professional judgement taking into account the designation status, desk-top research and fieldwork. The assessment should seek to understand the nature, extent and level of significance, and should be proportionate to the relative importance of the asset.<sup>1</sup>
- 5.2. The NPPF defines significance as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest'. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. An understanding of significance must therefore derive from the heritage interest/s of the heritage asset.

### Bloomsbury Conservation Area

- 5.3. The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy was adopted on 18 April 2011. At section 3.0 it sets out a summary of the special interest. It describes that Bloomsbury is representative of London's early expansion northwards from c1660 through to the Georgian and Regency periods, replacing medieval manors and open land with a mix of houses, a market, commercial, cultural uses, hospitals and churches. The northern part of the conservation area represents the later expansion and focussed on creating grander residential areas for London's wealthy. Much of the construction was carried out speculatively on leases from major landowners, following a consistent form which has given rise to the formal grid pattern and terraced houses with landscaped squares.
- 5.4. Over the Victorian period and into the 20th

century, new uses emerged including first an increase in industrial and commercial uses and later the expansion of hospital, academic and cultural uses.

- 5.5. At paragraph 3.8 of the Appraisal, it defines the quintessential character as being derived from the grid of streets enclosed by mainly three and four storey developments giving the area an urban character, punctuated by formal squares which create focal points. These streets have a hierarchy, matched by the scale of the built form.
- 5.6. The appraisal divides the area into a series of sub-areas, of which the site forms part of Sub-Area 6: Bloomsbury Square/Russell Square/Tavistock Square.
- 5.7. This sub-area is characterised by 18th and 19th century terraces, but with pockets of later scale and urban grain 20th century redevelopment which is particularly noticeable around Tavistock Square, Bedford Way and Upper Woburn Place.
- 5.8. Of Upper Woburn Place, the conservation area appraisal makes the following comments:

*5.100 The eastern side of Tavistock Square continues north along upper Woburn Place. Along both sides of Upper Woburn Place and to the north, east and south sides of Tavistock Square, 20th century buildings replaced earlier four-storey terraces. There is a strong consistency in the scale and massing of the buildings and the use of red brick with a contrasting stone or stucco base and minimal banding. Window openings are mostly vertically-proportioned. Many properties have mansard roofs above their parapet line with small dormer windows.*

*5.101 Central House and the New Ambassadors Hotel, to the south of St Pancras Church, which are of five and six storeys respectively, have a consistent parapet line and*

*similar massing and materials. Both contribute to the character of the street, although the New Ambassadors Hotel has some prominent plant that detracts from the roofscape. The County Hotel by C Lovett Gill (opened in 1940), immediately to the south and adjacent to the British Medical Association, steps up to eight storeys and has a greater bulk. On the west side of Upper Woburn Place is the grade II listed London Hilton Euston Hotel, a survival of the original early 19th century terraces. This building is of four storeys, but is of a smaller scale, four storeys in height and relates to the scale of development along the south side of Endsleigh Gardens. It is built in yellow stock brick with a stucco base and decorative stucco pilasters and banding and has frontage railings around the front basement area. To the south, Endsleigh Court is a 1930s neo-classical design by Sir Albert Richardsdon, which represents a significant step up in height to eight and nine storeys exposing its plain brick gable. This building forms a group with similarly scaled blocks on the opposite side of the street which provide a significant degree of enclosure to this end of Upper Woburn Place.*

### Contribution made by the site

- 5.9. The site is not identified on the townscape appraisal analysis as a positive contributor, but is listed at Appendix 3 as both an element of streetscape interest and a positive contributor to the conservation area.
- 5.10. The building forms part of the 20th century phase of redevelopment that saw the replacement in some areas of the historic terraces with buildings of greater scale and footprint. These accommodated the general trend of new and expanded uses within the conservation area, in this case the growth in hotel use as part of a cluster in this area north of Tavistock Square. In this sense, it does not form part of the 18th and 19th planned development that lies at the core of the conservation area's

<sup>1</sup> Historic England, 'Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2' (2015) p. 2.



special architectural and historic interest, but is aligned with its continued evolution and 20th century trends.

- 5.11. The building itself is not subject to any statutory or local designation such that relative to its designated neighbours, it makes a lesser contribution to the interest of the conservation area.
- 5.12. It is nevertheless a respectful building that sits comfortably within its 20th century evolved townscape context on Upper Woburn Place. In its scale and massing, the building sits comfortably within the townscape context of this part of Upper Woburn Place which is characterised by larger, urban scale buildings. Its materials palette also reflects the neighbouring buildings, as does its use of Classical detailing.
- 5.13. The main elevation fronts Upper Woburn Place. It is a symmetrical facade of 11 bays in red brick and stone. The ground and first floor are in stone which extends to a central 7-bay panel extending upwards from second to fourth floor. This is enriched with stone pilasters and cornice. A stone band runs across the building at attic level, with the attic level windows dressed in stone and sitting beneath an overhanging eaves. The detailing is Classically influenced and forms part of a cluster of Classically detailed 20th century buildings, including most prominently the neighbouring British Medical Association building.
- 5.14. It has a regular arrangement of matching 6/6 sash windows from first floor upwards to the attic level. The glazing bars are arranged with slimmer margin lights on a horizontal and vertical plane. The attic floor windows are wider casements. This original pattern has been replicated in the recently installed new windows.
- 5.15. The front section of the side return is plainer but continues the same materials palette. The



Fig. 7. County Hotel, Upper Woburn Place (July 2024)



rear elevations fronting Woburn Walk are not however of the same quality, using a plain brick with none of the stone embellishment and a mix of 1/1 sash windows and casements. It very much has the character of a secondary elevation despite fronting onto Woburn Walk with its collection of fine 18th century shop fronts.

- 5.16. The contribution made to the character and appearance of the conservation area is therefore concentrated in the principal elevation fronting Upper Woburn Place, with potential for enhancement on its side elevations fronting Woburn Walk.

### **Woburn Walk (Grade II\*)**

- 5.17. Nos. 1-9 and Nos. 4-18 are a terrace of shops with accommodation at the upper floor levels. They were built in the early 19th century by Thomas Cubitt who was instrumental in the development of the Bedford Estate north and east from Russell Square. Their heritage significance is primarily derived from their architectural and historic interest as a high quality surviving group of shopfronts forming

an early example of a pedestrianised shopping street, and association with Cubitt.

### **Setting**

- 5.18. The flank elevation of the County Hotel forms part of the townscape along the narrow and intimate passage known as Woburn Walk. The rear elevation of the hotel is not of the same quality as the front elevation, compounded by its tired and dilapidated appearance. It does



*Fig. 8. Woburn Walk (April 2023) Listed lamp post visible in centre of street*

not contribute positively to an experience of the highly graded heritage assets along Woburn Walk.

**Lamp posts, Woburn Walk (Grade II)**

5.19. These two 19th century lamp posts are positioned in the centre of Woburn Walk between the two listed terraces, with another unlisted example with a plain standard set adjacent to the rear of the County Hotel.

5.20. Although more recent than the historic listed terraces of Woburn Walk, the lamp posts have group value with these buildings. They are from a similar era and their traditional design and scale complements each other. The County Hotel forms a more modern, and largely neutral backdrop at the western end of this historic townscape. Its large scale contrasts sharply with the more traditional streetscape which contributes positively to the setting and significance of the lamp posts.



Fig. 9. County Hotel as seen from Woburn Walk (April 2023)



Fig. 10. Listed lamp post between County Hotel and 1 Woburn Walk (April 2023)



## 6.0 Heritage Impact Assessment

### Proposed Development

- 6.1. This application forms part of a wider refurbishment project to upgrade the building necessary to sustain its hotel use.
- 6.2. The proposals are for the retrospective installation of ASHPs on the roof of the existing sub-station fronting Woburn Walk at the rear of the hotel. The ASHPs are to be enclosed by a metalwork screen of architectural design.
- 6.3. A further metalwork screen of the same design will be installed on the flat roof of the kitchen range on the north east side of the hotel, adjacent to the rear of No.4 Woburn Walk. This will conceal the existing kitchen plant which is to be retained.

### Heritage Impact Assessment

- 6.4. These works form part of a wider refurbishment programme for the County Hotel which had suffered from a lack of maintenance and investment. The purpose of the refurbishment works overall is to enhance and upgrade the quality of the internal accommodation and guest offer, update the service facilities that support the demanding requirements of a contemporary hotel, and enhance the external appearance of the building. The ASHPs provide the hot water requirements for the hotel, and thus form an integral part of the energy strategy to eliminate all gas-fired plant, and install an all-electric and renewable system.
- 6.5. The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (2011) identifies that the character of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area is vulnerable to negative change through the deterioration of built fabric arising from neglect and a lack of maintenance (paragraph 5.9). This is highlighted as being particularly acute in areas dominated by hotels, student



*Figs. 11.and 12. As installed ASHPs arrangement (June 2024)*

accommodation and hostels. The aims and objectives of this refurbishment project therefore align directly with the positive management of the distinctive character of the conservation area.

### **Works to Woburn Walk elevation**

- 6.6. The frontage to Woburn Walk is very much secondary as evidenced by its architectural treatment. The wider proposals for the hotel have enhanced both the 'back of house' and 'front of house' facilities in this location.
- 6.7. Planning permission has already been granted and implemented for the replacement of the previous substation. The installed ASHPs are

located upon the new single storey structure, and even with the proposed enclosure, will remain visually within the lower floors banding of the County Hotel so as to be clearly subservient within the streetscene.

- 6.8. The chosen location of the ASHPs is limited by the need to be sited near to the main plant in the basement floor of the hotel. On a tightly constrained site, there is little option over the positioning of the ASHPs which are an essential part of the sustainable energy strategy for the upgraded hotel.
- 6.9. The ASHPs have been temporarily screened by timber effect panelling. The proposed permanent enclosure will screen the functional

appearance of the ASHPs and will provide some artistic and architectural interest to the otherwise plain structure of the substation.

6.10. The foliage design of the metalwork decoration of the proposed screen enclosure will provide a contrast with the strong verticality of the adjacent flank elevation of the listed Woburn Walk terrace, ensuring this remains a visible and identifiable feature in views along the street.

6.11. The screen was originally proposed as a brown colour to respect the brick tones of the hotel and was considered to be a more natural colour referencing the tree inspired design of the metalwork. The use of a brick toned colour was also considered to visually tie the screen to the County Hotel in this location, differentiating it from the monochrome of the listed Woburn Walk terraces.

6.12. CGIS were subsequently commissioned in order to fully review the potential impact of the screen and two colour options, black and copper/brown, were tested. As a result, it was felt that black was the preferred option as it matches the use of black for the doors on the substation and other details at the rear of the hotel, and is visually recessive. Regardless of the colour, as an architectural feature, the screen will provide some interest to this service area of the building, enlivening its presence and contribution to the public realm.

6.13. To the rear, on the flat roof of the kitchen range of the hotel, the retained kitchen plant will be concealed by a screen of identical design and height as that to the ASHP enclosure. The kitchen roof screen will be installed against the existing parapet, enhancing views from the rear of No.4 Woburn Walk which it adjoins. The kitchen plant is an essential requirement and the proposed screen will enhance the setting of the listed terrace with the provision of a decorative element which may also relieve the proximity of the tall rear elevation of the hotel.

6.14. On balance, the works are considered to sustain the character and appearance of the conservation area and setting of adjacent listed buildings along Woburn Walk.



Fig. 13. Existing temporary screening (July 2024)



Fig. 14. Originally proposed copper/brown coloured screen



Fig. 15. CGI of revised black coloured screen proposal





## 7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1. The County Hotel is a 20th century structure not subject to any individual heritage designation but identified as a positive contributor to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It is located within a sensitive townscape with adjacent Grade II and Grade II\* listed buildings.
- 7.2. These proposals form part of an overall package to refurbish and upgrade the hotel to meet the operational needs and continue to attract guests. Much of the recently consented refurbishment works have been completed which has delivered enhancement to the character and appearance of the conservation area and setting of adjacent listed buildings.
- 7.3. The current works are part of this comprehensive upgrading of the hotel which include substantial sustainability improvements of which the ASHPs are an essential part. The proposed screen enclosure has been carefully considered and designed to mitigate the impact of the ASHPs and to contribute positively to the quality of the site's historic environment. Similarly, the retained kitchen plant is essential to the functionality of the hotel. The proposed screen will conceal this necessary paraphernalia whilst providing a decorative element in what is currently a rather utilitarian space. It will also provide some welcome separation between the listed Woburn Terrace property and the hotel. The proposals are considered to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and will have no adverse impact on the significance of nearby listed buildings.
- 7.4. The proposals are considered to be in accordance with Local Plan Policy D2, London Plan Policy HC1 and the objectives of Chapter 16 of the NPPF, and the duties at sections 66 and 72 of the 1990 Act can be satisfactorily discharged.