

THE COURTYARD BUILDING

Design and Access Statement

EMRYS ARCHITECTS

24 October 2024





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SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION



1.1.1 Purpose of the report

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Emrys Architects on behalf of Knighton Estates Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Great Portland Estates Plc, for submission to the London Borough of Camden to support the planning application for the comprehensive refurbishment and extension of:

- 1-7 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7EB
- 22 Store Street, WC1E 7DF
- 220 Tottenham Court Road, W1T 7PZ
- 226 Tottenham Court Road, W1T 7QF

1.1.2 Project Brief

The Knighton Estates Limited’s brief aims to view the site holistically, preserving, repairing, and renewing the elements of the site with heritage significance to ensure their future. The design aims to enhance the character of the local area. Sustainable design aiming for BREEAM Excellent is key to create an office space suitable for the c21st that is attractive, resilient, and cares for the wellbeing of its occupants. These design aims will provide a modern, commercial building that takes advantage of the site’s proximity to key transport interchanges, to deliver floorspace that is flexible, sustainable and future proof.

1.1.3 Description of development

Refurbishment and extension of the building to provide commercial, business and service use (Class E) including infill extension, roof extension and replacement facades to Alfred Place, reconfiguration of entrances and servicing arrangements, rooftop plant equipment, PV panels, new landscaping, provision of cycle parking and other ancillary works.

1.1.4 Existing Building

Site area is 1770m2, with retail at ground and basement, and office use on upper floors. Existing structure parapet sits at 44.9m on Tottenham Court Road and 47.0m on Alfred Place.



Aerial view of the site looking south east



Knighton Estates
Limited
Client



Project Manager
& Employer's Agent



Architect



Cost Consultant



Planning Consultant



Heritage Consultant



Stakeholder of Public Engagement



Building Services Engineers



Structural Engineer



Fire Consultant



Building Control



Energy & Sustainability Consultant



Facade Consultant



Transport Consultant



Acoustic Consultant



Inclusive Design Consultant



Air Quality Consultant



Daylight & Sunlight Consultant



Vertical Transportation Consultant



Environment Consultant



Communication Consultant

1.3.1

As a practice Emrys have a reputation for delivering high quality office and residential schemes for clients such as GMS Estates, CLI Dartriver, The Crown Estate, GPE, The Berners Allsopp Estate, Western Heritable, Aberdeen Standard and Royal London.

1.3.2

A key purpose of Emrys Architects is to deliver buildings that respect the environment, enrich their context, and withstand the test of time.

1.3.3

Emrys have designed and completed projects in London Borough of Camden, most notably the refurbishment and extension to Chandler House a grade II listed building forming the Centre for Speech Sciences for University College London, and recently Stukeley Street for GMS Estates



Thirty Broadwick | Emrys Architects for GPE



Chandler House | Emrys Architects for UCL



Berners & Wells | Emrys Architects for Berners-Allsopp & Schroders



Stukeley Street | Emrys Architects for GMS Estates

1.4.1

Great Portland Estates are a leading property development and investment company focused on creating exceptional spaces in central London. With a strong commitment to sustainability, and enhancing the city’s landscape, Great Portland Estates deliver high-quality office, retail, and residential spaces that inspire and elevate the communities they serve. Through a long-term vision and strategic partnerships, Great Portland Estates continue to shape the future of London’s built environment.



48/50 Broadwick Street



Riding House & 78/92 Great Portland Street



Woolyard | Emrys Architects for Great Portland Estates



1.5.1 The site

The site fronts Tottenham Court Road, Store Street and Alfred Place. It is located within the Bloomsbury Ward within the London Borough of Camden. The site is also located within the Central London Area, Bloomsbury Conservation Area and Camden’s Knowledge Quarter.

Both buildings on the site were built around 1908 during a redevelopment of the adjoining block designed by architects Read & MacDonald. The 3 and 4 storey structures were both designed to have the collaborative function of retail and manufacturing. The gap between them in elevation on Alfred Place is currently used as an access courtyard spanned by the 90s extension that connects the two.

The Site has an excellent Public Transport Accessibility Level (‘PTAL’) with the highest rating of PTAL 6b. There are multiple underground stations within walking distance. Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Road, Warren Street and Euston Square give the site access to the rest of London on the Northern Line, Central Line, Elizabeth Line, Victoria Line, Metropolitan, Hammersmith & City Line and Circle Line. Tottenham Court Road provides a vital transport link between the West End and the City of London. Several major bus routes are within walking distance and a number of cycle hire docks exist within 500m of the site.

1.5.2 Policies Map:

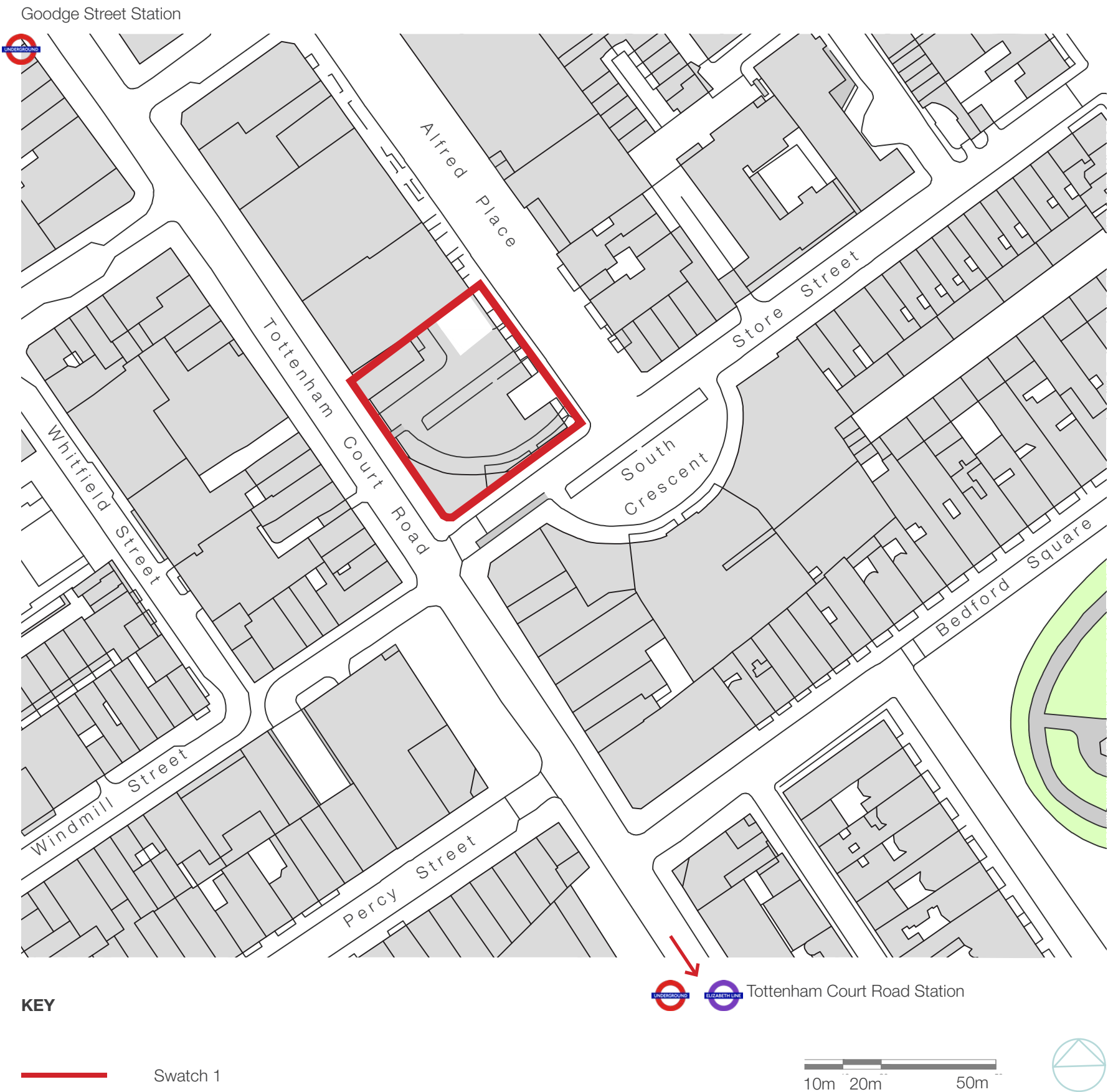
Tottenham Court Road CLF Primary Frontage
Tottenham Court Road CLF Local Plan Centre

1.5.3 Plot Size

Site area is 1770m2.

1.5.4 Topography

There is a topographical rise of approx 1.17m from Alfred Place to Tottenham Court Road.



1.6.2 Previous Pre-Application

A Pre-application for the site was submitted in May 2023 by Nicholas Hare Architects and Savills on behalf of the City of London Corporation.

The proposal included:

1. Removal of pitched roofs to 220-226 Tottenham Court Road
2. Demolition of some internal floors to achieve consistent floor heights with increased headroom. Floors and windows aligned across the floor plates
3. Removal of significant proportion of internal structure
4. Basement clear height increased for the end of trip facilities and retail use
5. Addition of the entrance infill, courtyard glazed over and roof extension
6. Cores relocated and lightwell enclosed

Pre-application meetings were held with London Borough of Camden Planning and Design Officers. The following are extracts of the officers’ feedback:

- 1.6.3 Pre-App Feedback 5th April 2023** (meeting with head of Conservation and Design)
1. With regard to the building massing, the following can be supported by officers:
 2. The proposed infill of the Alfred Place gap, infill of the courtyard and combination of separate buildings
 3. The principle of an increase of height with a roof extension is supported, but encouraged consideration into the size/volume of roof plant.
 4. The extension up to the Tottenham Court Road (TCR) elevation to provide gentle height along TCR as a busier road and balance impact on Alfred Place
 5. The following was highlighted: Local Plan Policy H2; challenges in providing residential use at the site, including impact on residual office/retail floorspace and provision of poor quality housing. Financial viability statements were discussed.

1.6.4 Pre-App feedback 20th April 2023 (meeting with Conservation Officer)

The following can be supported by officers:

the intention to improve the current entrance off of Alfred Place which is significantly set back from the public realm.

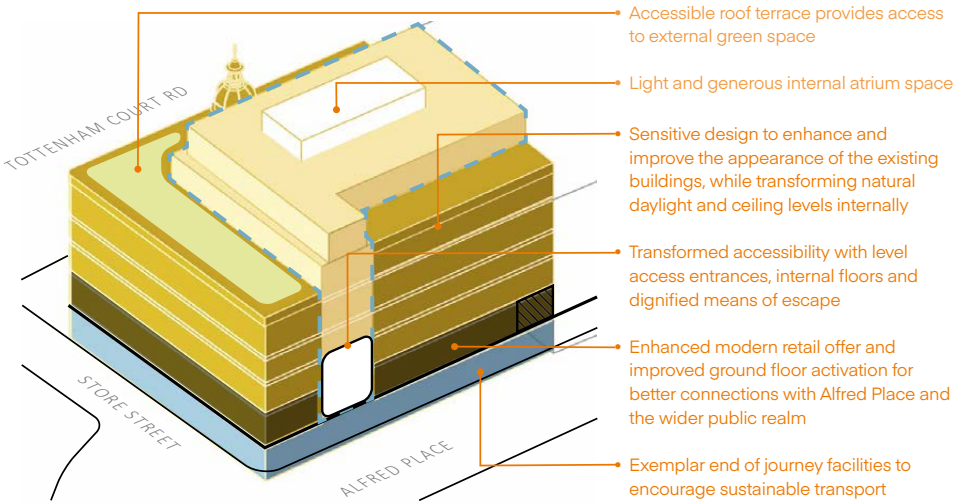
The following was noted:

This area is characterised by brick, vernacular, Edwardian style architecture and noted that a fully glazed, modern façade fronting onto Alfred Place does not reflect this.

There is capacity for additional height at roof level without causing harm.



Proposed Tottenham Court Road concept view



Key aims diagram



Proposed section



Proposed Alfred Place elevation

1.7.1 Introduction

The Knighton Estates Limited took ownership of the building in 2023 and Emrys has been instructed to prepare the design for the redevelopment of the site. The design of the scheme has undergone significant evolution throughout the course of the pre-application process, which has been fundamental in informing the design and layout of the proposed development.

1.7.2 Key aspects of Pre-Application 1

1. Pre-application 1 was submitted on the 18th April 2024
2. The proposal included:
3. Join the two buildings on the site in a more sensitive manner than the existing glass extension installed in 1999. The infill section will form a more engaging entrance to the office that will enhance the character of the area.
4. Resolve a number of access issues by rebuilding the slab in one section of 3-7 Alfred Place to simplify the levels.
5. Retain and repair the existing building fabric, improving interior build-up to update to C21st sustainability targets.
6. Improve street frontage to better engage with the surrounding context and contribute to the area.
7. Provide new End of Journey that supports workers in cycling/running to work.
8. Place more emphasis on the existing heritage value of the cupola by raising it to be visible at street level.
9. Rebuild areas of the roof in poor condition, providing opportunities for amenities, urban greening, and consolidation of plant to improve street views.
10. Create additional roof massing surrounding the cupola to draw attention to it and to reflect diversity in form and material at this level.
11. Sustainable Design and Biodiversity improvements of enhancement to building and amenity offer.
12. In summary it looked at consolidating 1-7 Alfred Place, 22 Store Street and 220-226 Tottenham Court Road to provide a high quality c21st office space that expressed both the historical value and the future of Bloomsbury as an area whilst mitigating carbon impact and creating amenity spaces at roof level with a positive impact on biodiversity.



Tottenham Court Road view



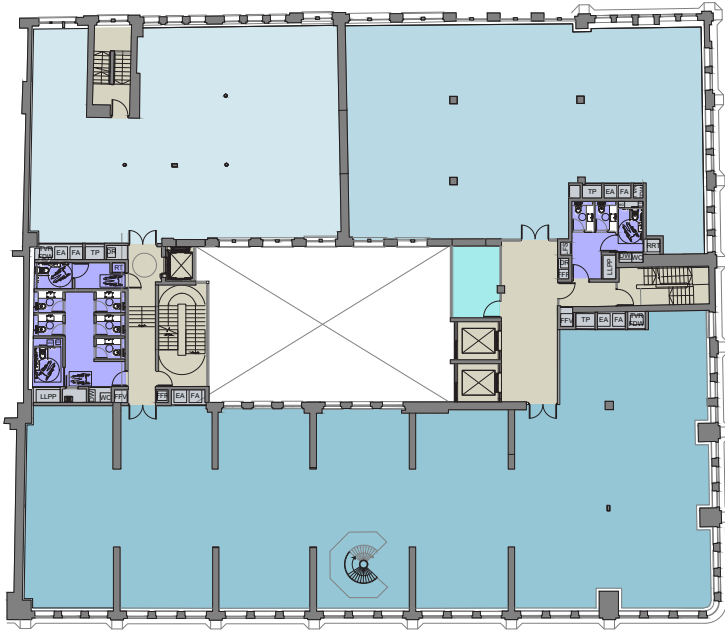
Pre-application 1 - Tottenham Court Road elevation



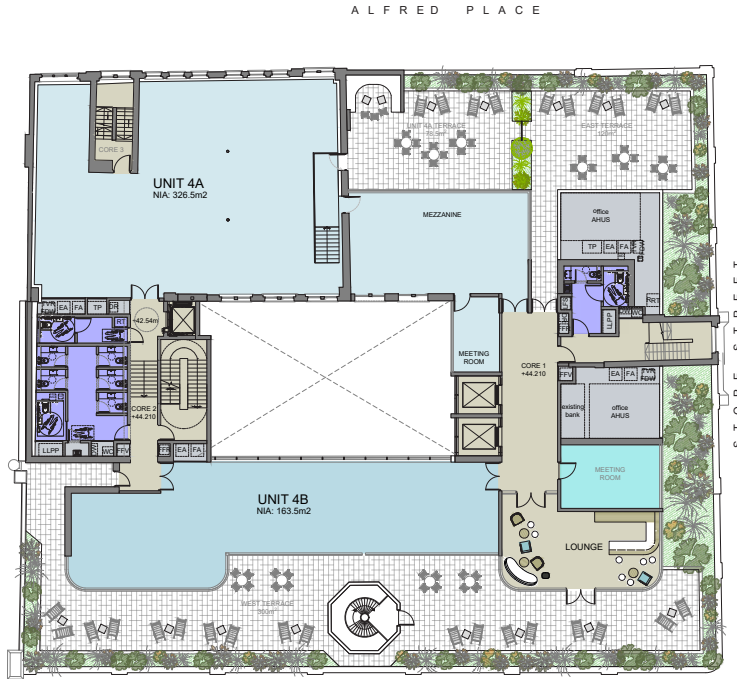
Pre-application 1 - Alfred Place elevation

1.7.3 Pre-Application 1 Officers’ feedback

- 1. Concerns were raised on visibility of the atrium and roof plant from street.
*Emrys response:*The townscape views demonstrate that the atrium and plant are not visible.
- 2. Residential to be provided on site. All potential options will need to be fully exhausted before Officers will consider off-site or payment in lieu. *Emrys response:* Refer to the Mixed Use Policy - Residential Analysis report.
- 3. Compromise on housing quality acceptable if it meant that it could be provided on site, particularly due to the site's location south of the Euston Road. *Emrys response:* Refer to the Mixed Use Policy - Residential Analysis report in the Appendix at the end of this document.
- 4. Approach to retention welcomed and confirmed that the more that can be retained the better. The improvements to accessibility were also welcomed.
- 5. Urban Greening Factor and Biodiversity Net Gain need to be considered.
Emrys response: These will be included and evidence provided in due course.
- 6. The infilling and adding of mass to be roof are supported in principle.
- 7. Roof extension looks a bit bland and dated, opportunity to be more creative / bolder whilst remaining sensitive to the building and context.
- 8. Opportunity to re-introduce detail and enrich the parapet.
- 9. No set back on TCR - provision of terraces to the east - more height on TCR particularly if the plant can be integrated into the architecture.
- 10. Demolition of facade elements of the Alfred Place façade - justification on basis of façade new infill proportions alone is not sufficient. *Emrys response:* The floor level alignment is the driver. Accessibility aspect positively welcomed.
- 11. Alfred Place new facade to be more expressive - Dutch gables on adjacent buildings as a reference.



Pre-application 1 - typical floor



Pre-application 1 - fourth floor



Pre-application 1 - street level plan



Pre-application 1 - section through courtyard

1.7.4 Key aspects of the Pre-Application 2

Pre-application 2 was submitted on the 4th June 2024. The scheme proposals comprised:

Improved architectural link between host building and fourth and plant level design.

Incorporation of octagonal shapes into fourth floor elevation design, derived from host building

Massing of the plant area at roof level consolidated as one-clear element and set-back from street

New design approach using the cupola as main point of reference for colour

Introduction of terrace level planting to contribute to the greening of London

1.7.5 Officers’ feedback

- 1. Concerns were raised on visibility of the rooftop plant, would it not be visible from View 3? He added a view without leaves on the trees would be useful. *Emrys response: trees can be removed on 3d view. Gerald Eve also mentioned plans for the memorial sculpture.*
- 2. Officers queried if the rooftop plant would be visible in South Crescent standing 3-4 metres to the left of View 4. *Emrys response: the plant will be set back from edge and verified views have been carried out demonstrating it is not visible.*
- 3. Officers suggested more views to be explored. *Emrys response: snapshots of additional locations can be shared and discussed before professional shots are taken.*
- 4. Officers questioned the use of mesh on the façade at fourth floor. *Emrys response: more texture than plain finish and use of two colours for the window frames to be explored.*
- 5. Officers queried the Store Street elevation from a heritage perspective and the box piece that sits on the elevation edge. *Emrys response: this is existing and will be retained. Officers accepted it is retention, just thought it looked flat.*
- 6. Fourth floor: officers welcomed the approach to enrich the facing material but were worried about use of aluminium and questioned if other materials could be considered. *Emrys response: distressed paint look could be explored.*
- 7. Officers acknowledged the need to consolidate plant but said it looks substantial on elevation, appearing as one big uniform screen. *Emrys response: Emrys highlighted its not all plant, its atrium too and need to consider views to appreciate scale of plant in street.* Officers suggested pavement level sections would be useful.

- 8. Officers questioned the Alfred Place infill elevation and whether the glazing is fixed shut. GPE response: windows are proposed to be fixed shut.
- 9. Officers questioned the Alfred Place elevation solid to glazing ratio and said it looks quite glazed. The windows feel huge and they want to see more solid on elevation. Now the roof top is worked up this elevation feels underdeveloped and too simplistic. They also mentioned sustainability approach to glazing.
- 10. Officers suggested additional spandrel panel on Alfred Place elevation. *Emrys response: Emrys prepared shallow bay windows spandrel option.* Officers said they would be happy to review and comment on alternative option.
- 11. Faience is accepted in principle. Officers questioned the colour red, which feels more in keeping with TCR and Oxford Street which have a different character to Alfred Place. *Emrys response: blue option suggested. Officers said not blue, worth exploring terracotta colour. Note – examples of faience discussed include: Soho Square, 30 Broadwick Street and Berners Street, 247 Tottenham Court.*
- 12. Officers asked if a setback of AP elevation infill had been tested? - a 0.5metre set back would give more flexibility on the character of the infill rather than flush. *Emrys response: team conscious of antisocial behaviour with a set back.* Officers said a balance is required and it would be helpful to test, even if discount the option.
- 13. The changes to the roof are welcomed but the materiality was questioned. It comes across a bit flimsy and needs to be a bit more sculpture, nice octagon shaping but this could be pushed more – set back glazing and have a solid wrap around. *Emrys response: there was a design in the first pre-application pack with two layer panelling.*
- 14. Adding more detail to the parapet was discussed at last meeting. Emrys response: this was explored but this didn’t work and opted for planting route instead. Officers queried if using man safe or if it will be treated architecturally. *Emrys response: it will be treated architecturally.*



Terrace view



Pre-application 2 - Tottenham Court Road elevation



Pre-application 2 - Alfred Place elevation

1.7.6 Key aspects of the Pre-Application 3

Pre-application 3 was submitted on the 27th June 2024

The cupola was lifted to emphasise its prominence in the character of the existing building and make it even more visible from street level.

Further exploration into infill design to reduce glazed area with new more solid spandrels.

The creation of a meeting room in the Cupola with the addition of glazing.

Replacement of revolving door entrance to double door arrangement with glazing.

Exploration into consistent shop frontages on Tottenham Court Road and Store Street to include Nationwide Unit.

1.7.7 Officers’ feedback

1. Officers were comfortable with the height and visibility of the plant in views, the point to note is the appearance of it and whether louvred plant or an architecture approach would be better. Could the pavilion be taller and an architectural screen/mask sit in front of the plant. *Emrys response: plant screening options to be explored. The layout of the plant could also be adjusted so it is not visible from views and therefore there would not be a requirement for further exploration of architectural appearance.*
2. The Alfred Place infill set back to be tested, even if these options are discounted to better understand this design decision. *Emrys response: Emrys agreed to show how this has been tested.*
3. Officers queried the proposed removal of one brick bay on Alfred Place. *Emrys response: this is due to floor levels being significantly out, so it is proposed to rebuild to for symmetry.* Officers said it is not to say they disagree with the removal of the bay, but if they are to allow partial demolition, they need to be able to understand the reasoning and clearly explain this. It would be useful to see an existing/proposed overlay showing the floor levels to better understand this design decision.
4. Officers queried whether an infill without the removal of the bay has been explored. *Emrys response: this has been explored and can story board this.*
5. The bay rhythm is much better, but it would be useful to see options and the journey which has led to this design decision.
6. Officers asked about the length of Nationwide’s lease. Can the shopfronts be included in the planning permission submission? *Emrys response: it would be, but not delivered right away.*
7. Officers queried the colour palette of the Alfred Place infill and asked Emrys to

demonstrate the justification for this and explore the character of Alfred Place. Officers noted the Edwardian style of the buildings either side of the proposed infill and suggested looking at 10 South Crescent and testing this material.

Emrys response: the team will review and provide a study.

8. Concerns were raised on the functionality of the fenestration of the infill. *Emrys response: the energy options for the energy model are still being explore but if natural was to be an option, it would be opening windows, not louvres.*
9. The change from mesh to a more solid appearance for the roof pavilion is preferred and the glazing set back has helped with robustness. Officers asked to see more narrative on the choice of material and questioned if a more solid form has been tested i.e. masonry rather than metal clad. *Emrys response: this can be tested.*
10. No issues with the proposed changes to cupola and the colour choice of pavilion which references the colour of the cupola but would like to see what else has been explored.
11. The tree in the courtyard has been measured and it falls below the threshold for notification to LBC prior to removal in a conservation area. *Team confirmed one has been removed.* Officers acknowledged it is an odd location for trees but wants to see replacement tree(s) in the public realm.



Alfred Place view



Pre-application 3 - Tottenham Court Road elevation



Pre-application 3 - Alfred Place elevation

1.7.8 Key aspects of Pre-Application 4

Response to fifth floor plant massing pushing back the plant screen is to ensure it is not seen from street level.

The plot width for the infill facade on Alfred Place has been tested.

The set back of the infill facade on Alfred Place has been tested. The proposal set the new facade behind the architectural detailing of the Store Street building whilst maintaining the continuity of the street frontage.

A colour palette for the infill facade has been explored.

A masonry approach at 4th floor has been tested reviewed and discounted.

1.7.9 Officers’ feedback

Pre-application 4 was submitted on the 4th August 2024

- 1. To address concerns about the visibility of the roof plant, the suggested option to push the plant back at roof level is thought to be a logical solution. Views had been tested and it would not be visible.
- 2. Officers queried the massing on the roof to the right of the infill shown in the model from the corner of South Crescent unclear what this is and would like to understand this better. Emrys response: this is the external access and canopy. Emrys to provide additional details on the roof top massing shown in the model.
- 3. Officers noted that raising the height of the plant screen was tested as requested, but this didn't feel proportionate.
- 4. It would be useful to see a townscape view from the corner of South Crescent without the trees included.
- 5. Officers queried why it is only proposed to rebuild one portion of the bay and feels it would be better to keep existing proportions and then infill. *Emrys response: this was tested but it felt busy and narrow, and demolition is due to existing levels and better symmetry.* Officers said that symmetry is not relevant as the street is not defined by symmetry and the 3 bays doesn't relate to how it has evolved.
- 6. It is difficult to support demolition in the Conservation Area– can support level access case but easier to support an elevation with the same language.
- 7. The combination of the proposed infill width and architectural materials is not working - it feels too dominant, not balanced and looks too glossy/corporate. DM suggested either:
- 8. Option 1 – Infill extension is reduced in width with 2 bays and use a different architectural material; or

- 9. Option 2 - Infill extension is kept wider with 3 bays but must be brick (muted material).
- 10. The rooftop proposals add to boldness already, careful balance. Officers referred to other Emrys examples which have been successful - Grafton Mews *Emrys response: Emrys to test options for Alfred Place infill – varying width, materials etc.*
- 11. Concerns were raised on the colour. GE response: colour/tone can be agreed later. Officers suggested ground floor could be a tile and the upper floors brick, rather than the same material throughout as it feels more Soho/Regent Street than Bloomsbury.
- 12. The officers were pleased to see that the infill had been tested but said this feeds into the wider comments on width/material testing.



Store Street view



Pre-application 4 - Tottenham Court Road elevation



Pre-application 4 - Alfred Place elevation

1.7.10 Pre-App feedback 5

A workshop was held on the 18th September 2024 at Emrys offices.

Route 1: Infill extension is kept wider with 3 bays

The balanced width of the infill creates a proportional rhythm where there are three clearly identifiable plot widths along the Alfred Place frontage. These are broken down into further sub-plots within each composition.

Route 2: Infill extension is reduced in width with 2 bays / Maintain Original Plots

This option shows the re-building of the facade with a smaller infill plot and the original plot line maintained.

1.7.11 Pre-Application 5 officers’ feedback

- 1. The 3 bay approach is more appropriate in scale with the clear change in material, the ‘shopfront’ approach and the change from the one consistent material approach.
- 2. The window proportions and openings are more suited to the context and are working better with the existing street
- 3. The lighter glazed brick above is welcomed but would like to see further studies of how and where the alternate colour is introduced.
- 4. The window depth reveals are working well and the banding to windows offer visual interest - but it would be beneficial to see further studies which remove the intermittent banding between windows (the hierarchy and change moving up is already defined by the windows). We are not looking for an exact replica of detailing of surrounding buildings, and whilst it is interesting to take reference from the suggested precedents it is perhaps currently leaning too strongly towards replicating the appearance of the Langham Hotel. The current proposal could possibly have a stronger outcome with a slightly more simple approach to the upper levels.

1.7.12 Further explorations

Following a positive workshop, further changes have been explored. These include the continuation of the parapet, taking cues from the existing Courtyard building, the ground floor lintel and the banding between windows.

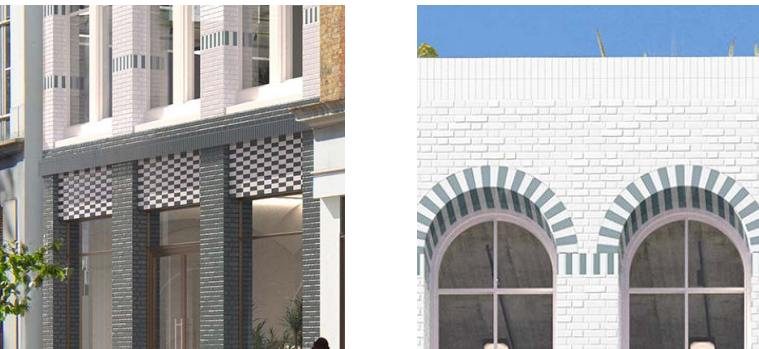
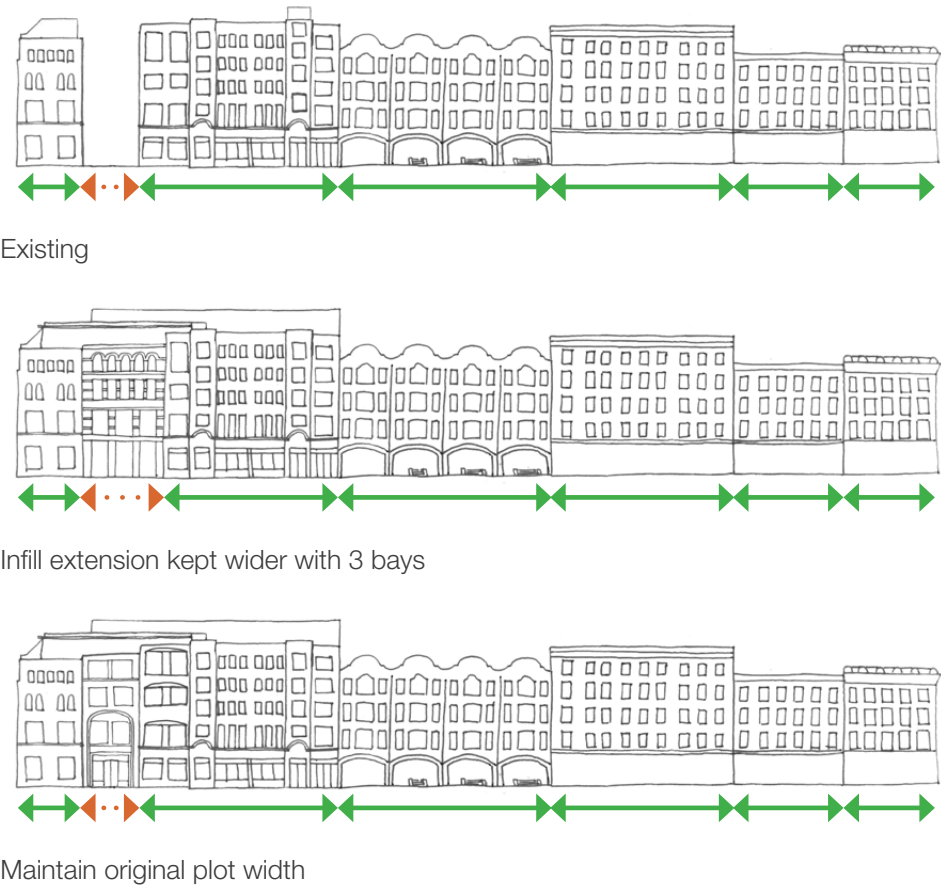
1.7.13 Officers’ feedback

To continue the narrative of an infill stitched within an existing context-rich street,

option 1B with pier banding omitted is working well, having a contrasting material and demonstrating its own identity to the surrounding buildings but using detail queues from the neighbouring buildings to create a coherent street-scene.

The expression of the base and tactile quality of the banding creates the ‘shopfront’ approach sitting well within the context with a simpler approach to the upper levels which uses the contrasting material to offer visual interest in more selective banding locations.

The hierarchy moving up the levels is determined in the window proportions and the more selective banding locations helps to tone down the ‘busyness’ of the façade in other options, working better with the adjacent building.



Pre-application 5 - Alfred Place elevation



Alfred Place view