

VIEW 10 – RED LION SQUARE, SOUTH FROM DRAKE STREET



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Proposed View

The southwest corner and southern elevation of the proposed development would be visible. The proposed development would represent a nominal change to the existing massing on Red Lion Square. In winter, the outline of the proposed massing will be perceptible although still greatly screened by layers of mature trees arrayed in the garden of the square.

The primary façade treatment, applied on Red Lion Square is composed in an ascending double order of narrowing stone piers and reducing window sizes. These are banded with textured horizontal stone beams and capped at the seventh storey by a proposed loggia, a feature of the Italian Palazzo.

The four-storey wing turning the corner onto Old North Street is treated with a more traditional composition with ground floor stone plinth, a double storey Piano Nobile in brickwork above and an additional attic storey above a stone stringcourse.

The proposals would respond better to the historic context with appropriate vertical proportions to all elevations. The proposed building would achieve a civic presence, commensurate with its prominence on Red Lion Square, which has alluded the existing building.

The impact on this view will be minor and beneficial.

VIEW 10 – RED LION SQUARE, SOUTH FROM DRAKE STREET



Cumulative
No cumulative schemes would be visible

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VIEW 11 – RED LION SQUARE, NORTH



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Key Plan NTS

Existing View

This view is taken from the northwest corner of Red Lion Square along Procter Street. The Bloomsbury CA is in the foreground and includes Red Lion Square's garden. The boundaries of the CA exclude the large commercial buildings along Procter Street.

The view is representative of how a pedestrian making their way northwards would experience the proposals. There are no surviving historic buildings in the view. The formal gardens of Red Lion Square are a strong urban form and are lined with mature, deciduous trees.

The pink granite of the lower storeys of the existing building is visible through those trees. The upper storeys of the building, while densely screened will be outlined in winter.

VIEW 11 – RED LION SQUARE, NORTH



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Proposed View

The southwest corner and southern elevation of the proposed development would be visible at an oblique angle. The setback storeys facing onto Old North Street appear over the five storey red brick mansion house opposite. The proposed development will represent a nominal change to the massing presented to Red Lion Square. However, the elevational treatment will change, and this will impact how that massing is perceived.

The primary façade treatment, applied on Red Lion Square is composed in an ascending double order of narrowing stone piers and reducing window sizes. These are banded with textured horizontal stone beams and capped at the seventh storey by a proposed loggia, a feature of the Italian Palazzo. This lends the building a more comprehensible human scale and a less monolithic aspect.

The four-storey wing which turns the corner onto Old North Street is designed in a more traditional composition with a ground floor stone plinth, a double storey Piano Nobile above and an attic storey above a stone stringcourse.

From this position, the deeply recessed proposed roof pavilion and plant areas would not appear to be visible.

The proposals would respond better to the historic context with appropriate vertical proportions to all elevations. The proposed building would achieve a civic presence, commensurate with its prominence on Red Lion Square, which has alluded the existing building.

The impact on this view will be minor and beneficial.

VIEW 11 – RED LION SQUARE, NORTH



Cumulative
No cumulative schemes would be visible

Image © Miller Hare - 2024

VIEW 14 – THEOBALD’S ROAD, OLD GLOUCESTER STREET

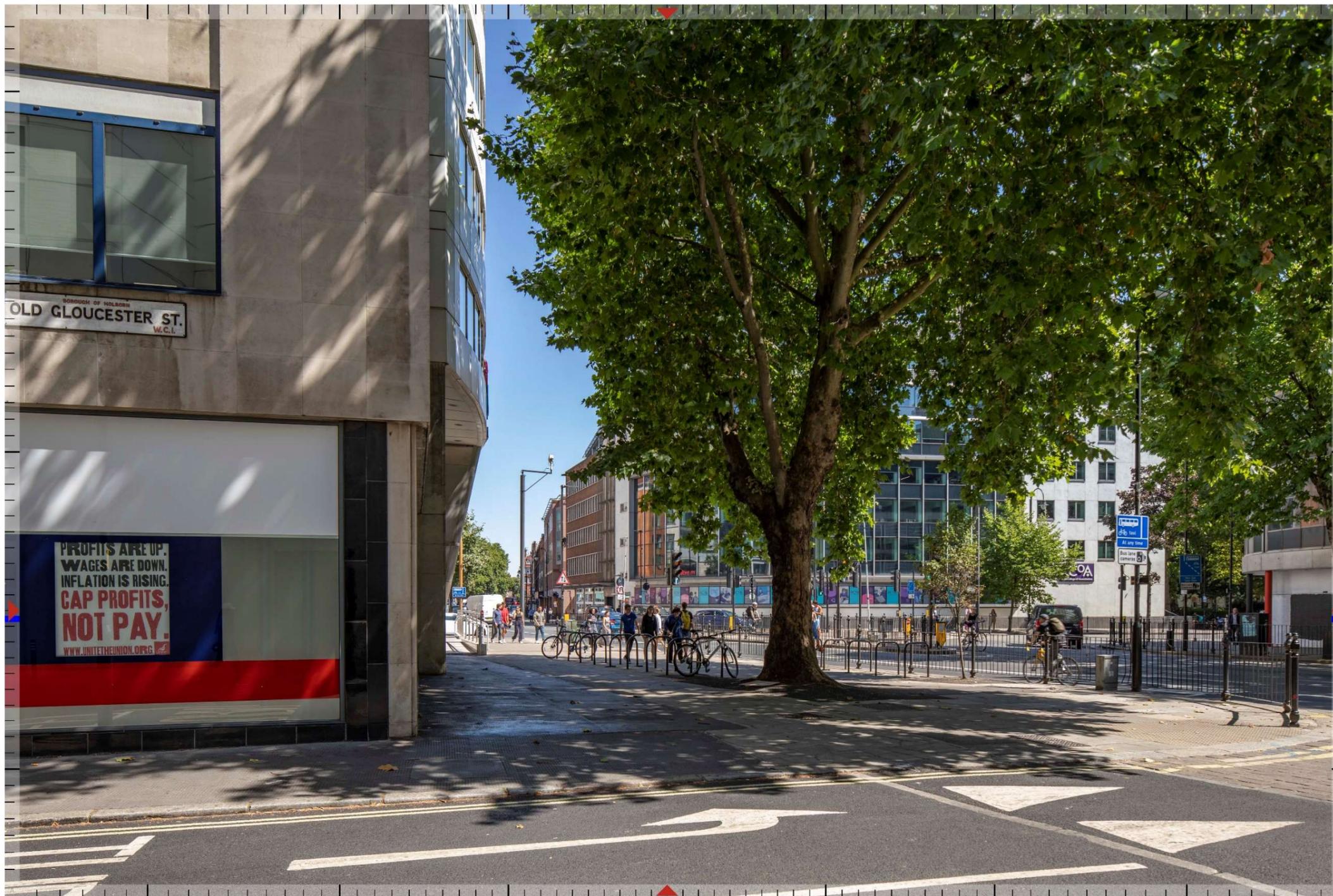
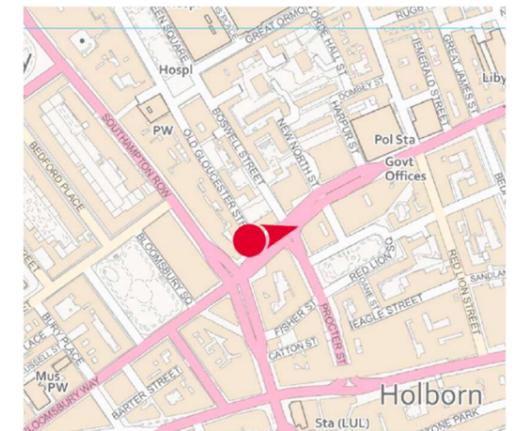


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Key Plan NTS

Existing View

This viewpoint is located on Theobald's Road, adjacent the Nyx Hotel.

This location is just south and east of the Bloomsbury CA, the boundaries of which excludes the large commercial buildings along Theobald's Road. The view is representative of how a pedestrian making their way eastwards would experience the proposals.

The existing building of the proposed development site is visible with its pink granite frontage on the opposite corner to the red brick faced 121 Old North Street.

The existing building's two toned grey clad upper storeys and plant room, both capped with a dummy pitched roof, are set back from the street line and appear above No. 121 Old North Street, No. 69 - 73 Theobald's Road and 35 Red Lion Square which turns the corner onto Proctor Street

VIEW 14 – THEOBALD’S ROAD, OLD GLOUCESTER STREET

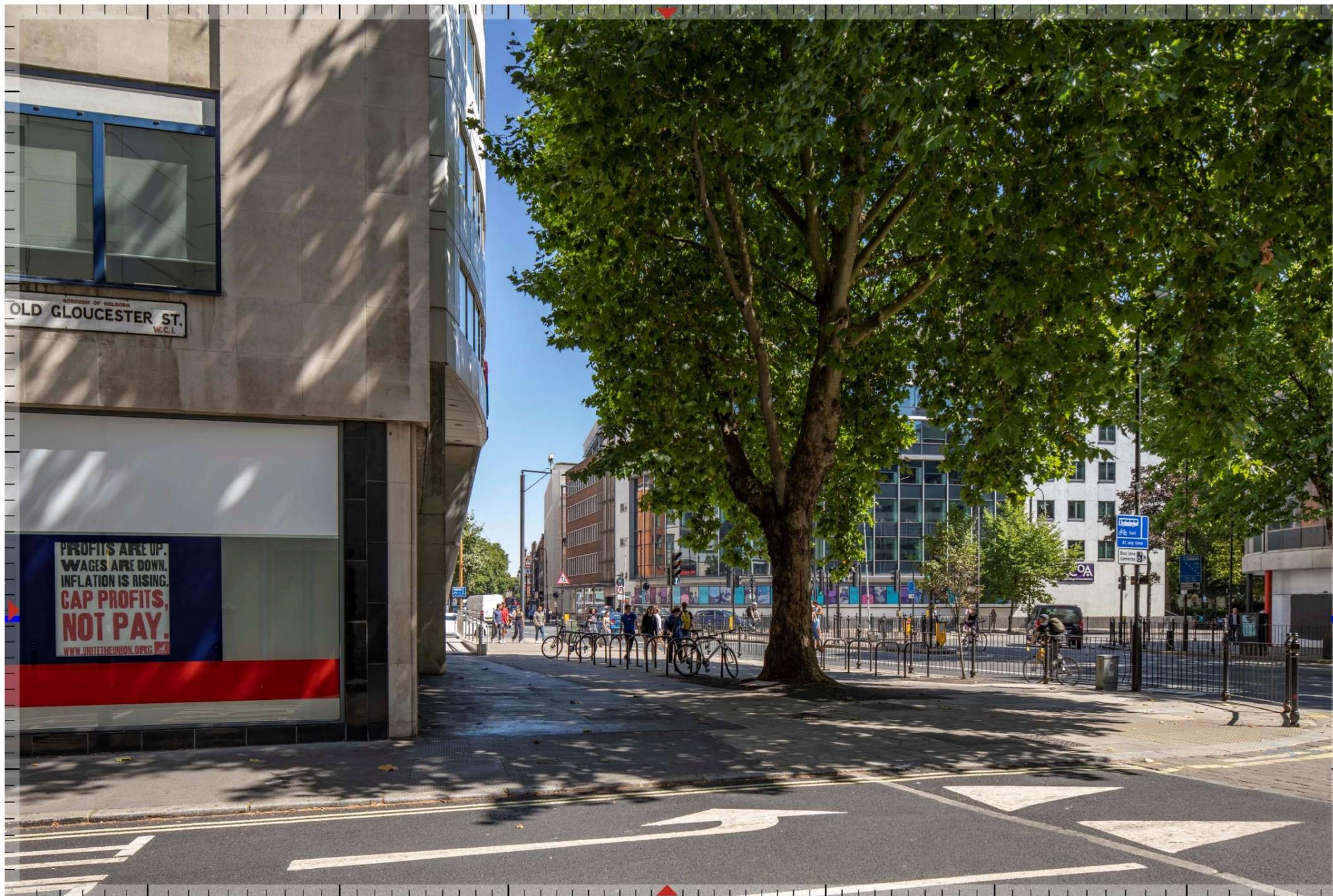


Image © Miller Hare - 2024

Proposed View

The proposals would be viewed obliquely from this position and would represent a minor change to this view. The oblique view would not allow an appreciation of the architectural expression of either the proposal or the existing building.

The increase in massing on Theobald's Road will make the site more prominent in views from the west. The minor changes to massing at roof level are unlikely to be perceptible by most receptors and will be screened by the mature tree in the foreground. The tone of the materials appears appropriate to the context.

The impact on this view will be neutral.

VIEW 14 – THEOBALD’S ROAD, OLD GLOUCESTER STREET

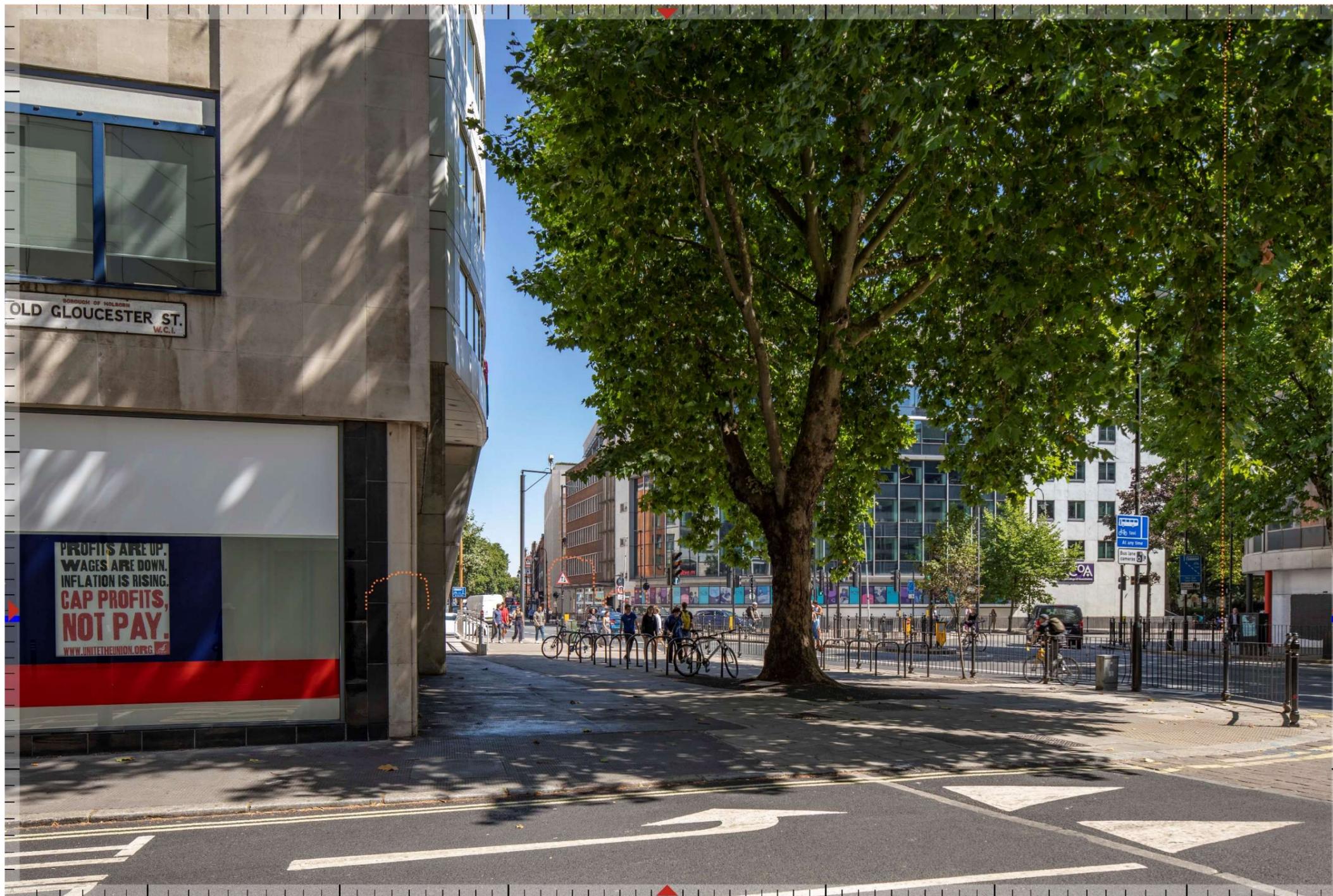
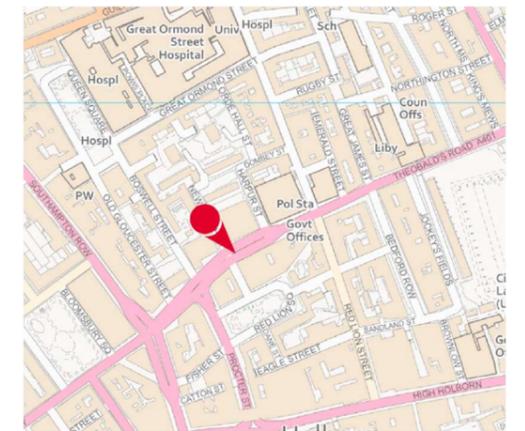


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Cumulative

The proposed redevelopment at the former Central St Martin's Building will hold the west corner of the junction of Theobald's Road and Proctor Street. This proposed development provides many townscape improvements and would restore the historic diagonal street pattern at the northwest corner of Red Lion Square.

VIEW 15 – NEW NORTH STREET



Key Plan NTS

Existing View

This view is taken just south of the Bloomsbury CA, the boundaries of which excludes the large commercial buildings along Theobald's Road. The view is representative of how a pedestrian making their way southwards would experience the proposals as part of the northern entrance into Red Lion Square.

The existing building occupies the southeast corner of the junction between Theobald's Road and Old North Street.

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VIEW 15 – NEW NORTH STREET



Image © Miller Hare - 2024

Proposed

The proposed development would have a unified architectural expression and materiality. The massing would be extended at fourth floor towards the street frontage. The new massing would provide a more gradual incline between the four-storey element turning the corner onto Old North Street and the setback eight storey height of the existing building.

The upper storeys would appear the natural upward extension of the re-elevated Theobald's Road frontage. Vertical stone piers would be a consistent feature of the composition, tying the various planes of the elevation together. This would contrast favourably with the split character of the existing building's massing.

The existing stair tower, a prominent feature of the existing building, will continue the unifying architectural expression of vertical stone mullions and stone bands.

The proposed "shop fronts" would address Theobald's Road and permit the coffee bar / retail unit to engage with the public realm. The elevations above are proposed to be re-fronted in reconstituted stone, vertically proportioned windows and coated metal cladding. The mechanical plant enclosure would be softened by a perforated screen. Both are unified with the existing elevation by equally spaced vertical mullions in metal and stone.

The proposed development would respond better to the historic context. The proposals would improve the street frontage creating activity and visual interest. The impact on this view would be medium and beneficial.

VIEW 15 – NEW NORTH STREET



Cumulative
No cumulative schemes would be visible

Image © Miller Hare - 2024

10. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS

10.1. This Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been prepared by Bridges Associates Architects LLP ('BA') on behalf of Railway Pension Investments Limited ('The Applicant') and presents an assessment of the proposals to alter and extend 26 Red Lion Square, an existing office building described as:

Refurbishment and re-cladding of existing building with extension at fourth floor adjacent to Theobald's Road and associated works.

The Site

10.2. No. 26 or New Mercury House is an existing office building occupying a site bounded by Red Lion Square to the South, Theobald's Road to the North and Old North Street to the West. Conway Hall and a residential property on Theobald's Road comprise the boundary to the east.

10.3. The building was designed by RHWL Architects for Stanhope circa 1988, built to shell and core specifications and then later leased to Cable & Wireless and occupied by their subsidiary Mercury Communications.

10.4. The building is one of the largest on Red Lion Square. However, in the context of Theobald's Road with similar large office buildings, it is not out of place.

Summary of Townscape Character

10.5. The townscape assessment has illustrated the varied and contrasting character of this part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The character of the area is heavily influenced by post WWII reconstruction and road planning.

Summary Heritage Assets

10.6. There are over 70 designated heritage assets in the 250m radius study area. However, the majority of these entries will be unaffected by the proposals. The closest of these are:

- Grade II Conway Hall
- Grade II Summit House
- Grade II Nos. 14 -17 Red Lion Square
- Conservation Area – Bloomsbury
- Conservation Area – Kingsway

Impact Assessment

10.7. The assessment which has informed the key townscape and heritage considerations for the proposed comprehensive refurbishment, re-cladding and fourth floor extension to 26 Red Lion Square are set out as follows:

- **Significance of the location of the site:** The site is located on the north side of Red Lion Square. Red Lion Square was developed in 1684 and is located in the Bloomsbury CA. The building occupies 7 individual house plots on Red Lion Square. There are no remnants of the original houses which

occupied the site prior to the construction of Hanway Hall and subsequently New Mercury House.

- **Scale, height, form, and density:** The prevailing height in the Square is generally four to five storeys with taller buildings of seven storeys at 33 & 34 Red Lion Square and at 32 Procter Street. The existing office building at No. 26 is eight storeys high once the substantial plant rooms and package plant is included. The east and west wings of the elevation rise to four storeys and wrap all the way around to Theobald's Road via Old North Street. On Theobald's Road the existing massing increases in steps from four storeys, roughly aligning to the adjacent terrace, up to seven and eight storeys with the plant enclosure.

The massing of the proposals is increased slightly, with additional accommodation at fourth floor level on Theobald's Road. This provides a less abrupt change in height to the setback seven storey element. A proposed rooftop pavilion is set well back from the Red Lion Square frontage. The plant equipment on the roof has been rationalised and will be screened and set back as far as possible. The overall height of the proposals will be lower than the faux pitched roof of the existing plant room.

The height of the proposals in its current context is unremarkable. Many of the largest nearby office buildings to the North of the site will exceed the height of the proposals at No. 26. The proposed additional massing would not alter the visibility of the existing building in the townscape.

- **Architecture and Materiality:** The proportions of the existing buildings façades seem disconnected from their context. The elevations do not attempt to reflect prevailing window proportions or formats. The windows of the upper storeys are of a larger scale than the lower storeys, this gives the upper storeys an ungainly and top-heavy aspect.

The existing building's cladding is of a pink toned polished granite which while muted, is not well integrated into the existing context which is mostly brickwork of various shades alongside render and natural stone highlights. The upper storeys are in a medium grey aluminium cladding which is unsuited to the character of this historic area. The existing materials detract from the setting of the adjacent CA.

The proposed design applies vertical proportions to its fenestration, emphasised by vertical stone mullions, vertically oriented corrugated cladding in an ascending order which feels familiar and appropriate to the context. The proposed elevation would be divided into smaller

individual bays which have a more human scale, and the elevation would appear less monolithic.

The proposed materials will better compliment the context and reference those used nearby. This will better integrate the building with its brick neighbours on Red Lion Square such as Kingsgate Mansions and Kingsway Mansions, the stone elements will relate to the façades of Theobald's Road.

- **Relationship with neighbouring properties:** The existing No. 26 is based on the scale and massing of Hanway House's elevation to Red Lion Square, a building later demolished. As such the current massing and height of buildings on the site have been well established since 1938. The central seven storey office element is stepped back at the fourth-floor level, leaving a four-storey plinth to better relate to the immediate neighbours along Old North Street, at Conway Hall and on the South Side of Theobald's Road to the East.

This relationship with neighbouring properties will change slightly on Theobald's Road, the fourth-floor extension increasing the height of its street elevation. However, the existing building's relationship with the terrace must include the steep step upwards to the seven-storey block at the core of the site. The fourth-floor extension will better negotiate this step up in height.

- **The relationship with existing heritage assets,** The proposed development's elevational treatment will improve the building's relationship to its surrounding townscape, providing enhancement to the setting of Conway Hall and the appearance of the Bloomsbury CA. The settings of Summit House and 14-17 Red Lion Square would remain unaffected.

- **Existing trees, green and open space:** The proposed development does not impact on any existing trees on the site or outside the boundaries of the site. The proposed development would provide planters along the parapets of its roof terraces and to screen elements of the rooftop pavilion and plant enclosure.

- **Visibility of the proposal within the townscape:** Visibility of a building in an urban area does not automatically equate to a negative impact within the townscape or harm to the setting of a designated heritage asset (i.e., a CA). No. 26 will not be a new element in the townscape and its fourth-floor extension is modest. The re-cladding of the facade will have a beneficial impact on the townscape and nearby heritage assets. The proposals include opening up the ground floor and creating more active frontages.

Conclusion

- 10.8. Following the assessment above, it is our expectation that the settings of designated heritage assets will be preserved, thus complying with Ss 66 (1) and 72 of the 1990 P(LB&CA) Act 1990, The London Plan (HC1) and Camden Local Plan (D1 & D2).
- 10.9. In immediate views the proposals' increased massing do not appear out of scale in the context of the adjacent to numerous taller office buildings along Theobald's Road. The significant re-design of the building's elevations, improve its relationship to its context without a significant increase to the massing, represent an enhancement for the townscape and would also be of benefit to the appearance of the adjacent Bloomsbury CA and the setting of the grade II listed Conway Hall.
- 10.10. The proposals would respond well to local character and scale, striking a good balance between competing demands to the deliver additional office accommodation in a desirable and sustainable location and addressing the historically sensitive context.
- 10.11. The townscape impacts of the proposals are preliminarily assessed to be minor and beneficial.

Bridges Associates Architects LLP

December 2024

11. SOURCES

POLICY

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Camden Council (2018) Local Plan

DLUCH (2023) National Planning Policy Framework

DHCLG (2023) Planning Practice Guidance

Greater London Authority (2021) The London Plan

Historic England (2017) Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3
– The Setting of Heritage Assets (version 2)

Historic England (2017) Tall Buildings, Historic England Advice
Note 4

MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

BA Library

Camden Archives

Layers of London

National Library of Scotland

Promap

LITERARY REFERENCES

Chancellor, E. B. (1907) *The History of the Squares of London: Topographical & Historical*, London.

Hatton, E. (1708) *A New View of London; Or An Ample Account of that City, In Two Volumes, or Eight Sections*.

Walford, E. (1878) *Old and New London: Volume 4*. Originally published by Cassell, London.

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