

PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

BEDFORD ROW CHAMBERS, 29-31 BEDFORD ROW, LONDON, WC1R 4HE

MARCH 2025



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

BEDFORD ROW CHAMBERS, 29-31 BEDFORD ROW, LONDON, WC1R 4HE

INTRODUCTION

1.1	Montagu Evans have been instructed by Bedford Row Chambers Ltd to provide planning and heritage consultancy services and to produce this Planning and Heritage Statement to support a retrospective application for full planning permission and listed building consent for works to Nos 29–31 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4HE (the ‘Site’ / the ‘Property’).		
1.2	The property is a Grade II listed building in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area (the ‘CA’) within the administrative boundary of London Borough of Camden (the ‘Council’). The statutory listing description for 29–31 Bedford Row dated 13 May 1974 is reproduced at Appendix 1.0 of this report. A map of the Bloomsbury CA is reproduced at Appendix 2.0 .		
1.3	The description of development is as follows: <i>‘Retrospective application for external and internal alterations, including retention of external plant.’</i>		
1.4	The Site has a long and complex history, with extensive work in the 1930s, 1970s, 1990s, 2000s and more recently.		
1.5	Montagu Evans was appointed to review this planning history of the Site and inspect the interior and exterior of the buildings to establish any unauthorised works that require regularisation.		
1.6	Working with an architect, Duncan Mitchell RIBA Architect, we have prepared a range of drawings for submission to illustrate the consented arrangement of the buildings and identify works of removal and addition that were not covered by consented schemes.		
1.7	The works are described within the Design and Access Statement enclosed with the application submission, which has been prepared by Duncan Mitchell RIBA Architect. They are shown on the submitted drawings also prepared by Duncan Mitchell RIBA Architect. The retrospective proposals may be summarised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alterations to room layouts, especially on the lower ground and ground floor levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Removal of stud wall under eighteenth-century cantilevered stairs in No 29 and replacement with a glazed screen• Removal of double doors in the front hallway of no 29 and installation of new flooring in this area• Alterations to the layout of the central part of the basement of Nos 29 and 30• New dropped ceilings on the lower ground floor and in bathrooms• Alterations to the layouts and fittings of W/Cs and kitchenettes• Additional double doors between the front and rear conference/court rooms in No 31• Installation of downlighters in some rooms• New fitted joinery, AV units, and heating and cooling system including air conditioning• Velux roof lights on third floor• Installation of external heat pump and condenser units• Installation of external security cameras	1.10 The pre-application feedback concluded that generally the architectural and historic significance of the listed buildings has not been compromised by the recent works. However, concerns were raised regarding the installation of two external security cameras on the front façade of the buildings. It was subsequently agreed that these cameras would be removed and the façade behind made good, and that given the lack of previous consent in this instance listed building consent would not be required for the work. The applicant has subsequently removed the cameras, and they do not form part of the application proposals. Smaller security cameras have been retained and are shown on the submitted drawings.
			1.11 No changes are proposed to the use, floorspace or functioning of the Site. This report provides a full assessment of the impact of the works on the heritage assets as well as the acoustic considerations associated with the retention of the external plant (with reference to a KP Acoustics Report that is enclosed with the application submission).
		1.8 We consider that these works are relatively minor in nature and do not harm the significance of the listed building, nor do they harm the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. In some instances, notably removal of the solid wall and its replacement in glass of the screen under the cantilevered eighteenth-century stair, and the reinstatement of a solid wall between the front and rear ground floor reception rooms, replacing a glazed screen, both in No 29, the works better reveal the original significance and historic form of the building.	
		1.9 The proposals have been the subject of a pre-application submission to the London Borough of Camden and they were discussed during a site visit on 14 November 2024. The written pre-application feedback received following the site visit is provided at Appendix 3.0 . It invited the submission of applications for planning permission and listed building consent.	

2.0 SITE CONTEXT

BEDFORD ROW CHAMBERS, 29-31 BEDFORD ROW, LONDON, WC1R 4HE

SITE CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Site is located in the administrative authority of the London Borough of Camden (the 'Council'). **Figure 2.1** outlines the boundary of the Site. An aerial view of the Site is provided at **Figure 2.2**.
- 2.2 The Site comprises 29–31 Bedford Row, which was built as three houses in the mid eighteenth century (Nos. 29–30) and the early nineteenth century (No 31). All three were listed Grade II in May 1973 as part of a list entry that also includes No 32.
- 2.3 The Site is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area as part of Sub-Character Area 10.
- 2.4 The Site is perceived as part of a group of Georgian houses dating from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century along Bedford Row (many also listed) and also as part of the wider Georgian development of the area.

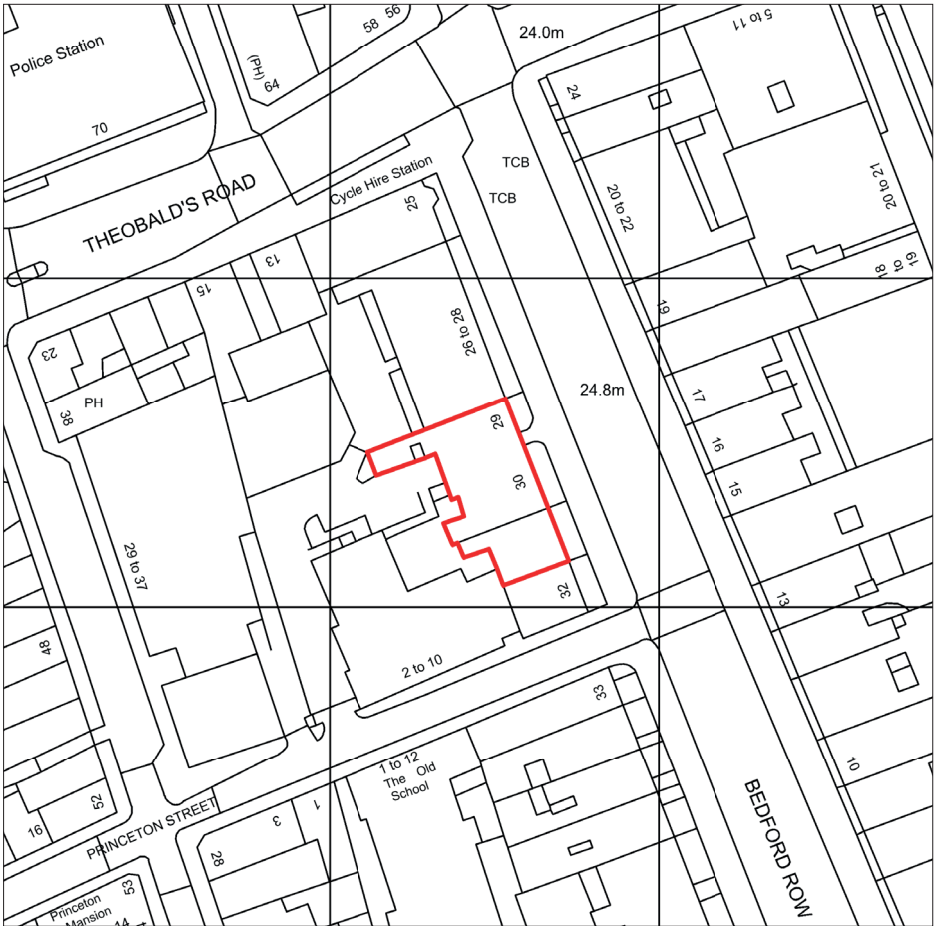


Figure 2.1 Site Location Plan



Figure 2.2 Aerial View of the Site (Source: Google Maps)

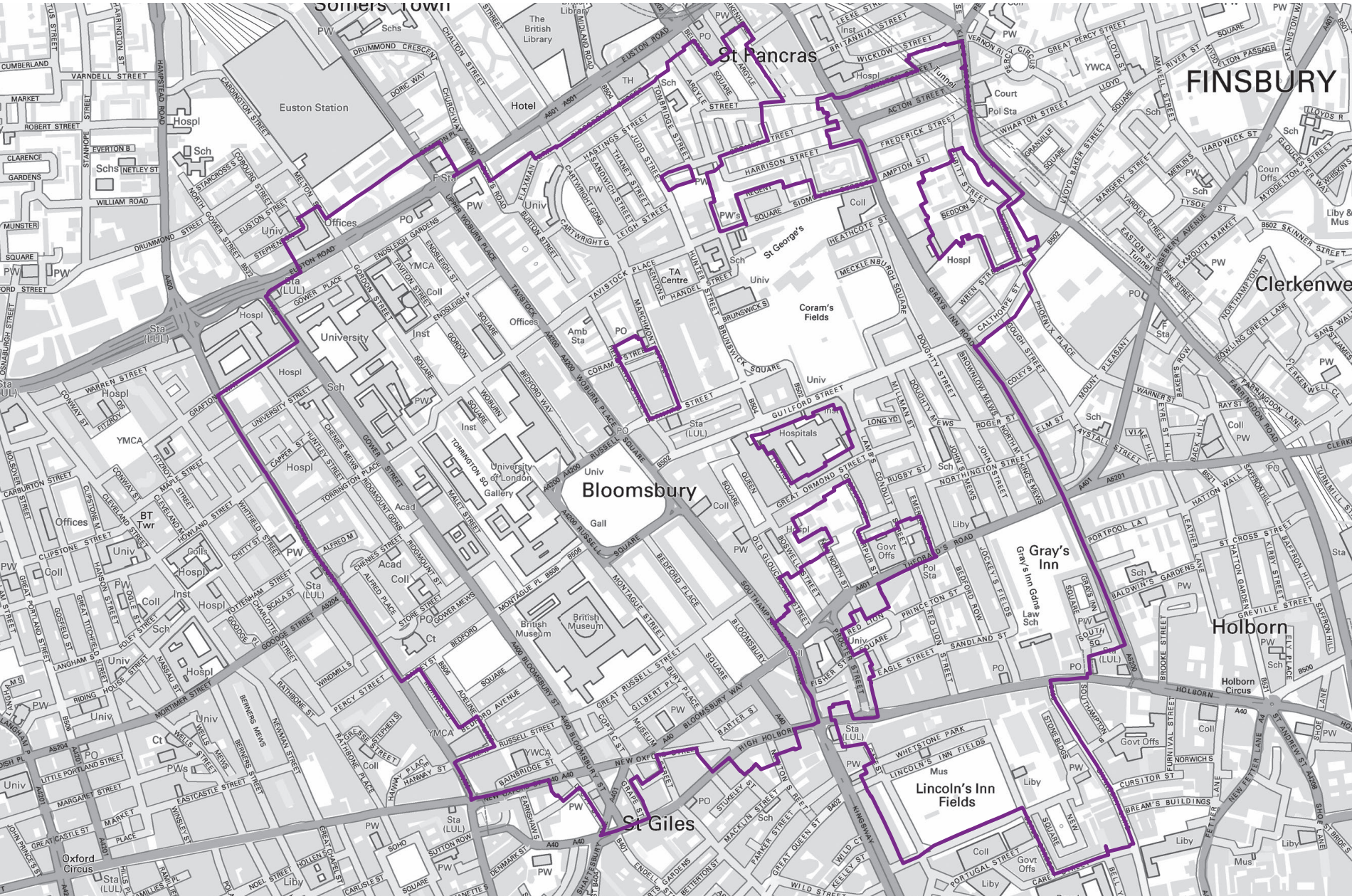


Figure 2.3 Bloomsbury Conservation Area map



Figure 2.4 Bloomsbury Conservation Area Sub-Character Area 10 map

- 2.5 All three houses have been in use as offices (mainly but not exclusively for legal purposes) since at least the early nineteenth century.
- 2.6 Nos 29–30 were laterally converted to a single unit in the 1930s and now share a single door and staircase at No 29. No 31 was laterally converted with the others under consents granted in 1995 but retains its own front door and stairs. The present barristers’ chambers has occupied the Site since the early 1990s, and continues to do so. The cellular nature of the buildings is well suited to the confidential nature of legal work.

3.0

LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

BEDFORD ROW CHAMBERS, 29-31 BEDFORD ROW, LONDON, WC1R 4HE

LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1 This section sets out the legislative and planning policy context for the Site.

3.2 Nos 29–31 Bedford Row are statutorily listed buildings and are located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

LEGISLATION

PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990

3.3 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (‘the Act’) sets out the statutory context for works to listed buildings and in conservation areas.

3.4 Section 16(2) of the Act states that:

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

3.5 Section 66(1) makes similar provisions for the grant of planning permission in respect of a listed building.

3.6 With regard to conservation areas, Section 72(1) states that:

“special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area”.

3.7 Principally, this is a s.16(2) case because development relates to internal changes to a Grade II listed building.

3.8 There is also some very minor change to the external appearance of the building through the introduction of security cameras, heating and cooling units and roof antenna, which in turn, has the potential to affect the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. In that case Sections 66(1) and 72(1) are also engaged.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

3.9 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 stipulates that when making any determination under the Planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, and the determination must be made in accordance with that plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The following documents form the statutory development plan:

- London Plan 2021
- Camden Local Plan 2017

LONDON PLAN (MARCH 2021)

3.10 London Plan Policy HC1: Heritage Conservation and Growth states that:

“Development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets’ significance and appreciation within their surroundings.”

CAMDEN LOCAL PLAN (JULY 2017)

3.11 Policy D2 Heritage of the Local Plan states that:

“The Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden’s rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas [and] listed buildings”.

3.12 Policy D2(a–d) on Designated Heritage Assets sets out a set of balancing tests to weigh any potential harm to a designated heritage asset against the public benefits of the works.

3.13 Policy D2(i–k) on Listed Buildings states at D2(j) that the Council will:

“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”.

3.14 Policy A4 on Noise and Vibration seeks to control the impact of new development on amenity. The policy states that development will only be approved if plant and machinery ‘can be operated without causing harm to amenity’.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.15 The National Planning Policy Framework (‘the NPPF’, revised December 2024) sets out national policies; Chapter 16 relates to the historic environment, and Paragraphs 212–215 deal specifically with proposals affecting the significance of a designated heritage asset.

3.16 The NPPF places considerable weight on understanding the ‘significance’ of designated heritage assets and the contribution made by their setting as a basis for development control decisions (paragraph 207). The 2015 Historic England document titled ‘Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment’ provides guidance on how to assess the significance of heritage assets.

3.17 The historical information set out in this report provides such an understanding, proportionate to the significance of the Grade II listed buildings and the nature and impact of the proposals.

3.18 NPPF Paragraph 212 states that

“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).”

3.19 NPPF Paragraphs 213–215 deal with potential harm to a heritage asset, and Paragraph 215 states that

“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”

3.20 ‘Conservation’ is defined in the NPPF Annex 2: Glossary as:

“The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.”

OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.21 We are mindful, in forming our assessment, of the following best practice guidance and documents that are material to an assessment of these proposals:

- National Planning Practice Guide;
- Historic England, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (2015);
- Historic England, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017);
- Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (April 2011);
- Design SPG (January 2021).

4.0

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

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HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

4.1 This section sets out the history of Nos 29–31 Bedford Row.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE SITE

DEVELOPMENT OF BEDFORD ROW

4.2 The west side of Bedford Row, where the Site is located, was first built up in the 1690s. At that time it was on the very edge of the developed area of London. Bedford Row refers not to the Bedford Estate nearby but to the birthplace of Sir William Harpur, Lord Mayor of London in 1562, who gave the land in 1566 for a school and other charities in Bedford still known as the Harpur Trust. The block containing Nos 29–31 is shown as fully developed on the Senex map of 1720, but the houses on the east side, built in the early 1720s, are not shown.

4.3 No late seventeenth-century fabric survives in the any part of Site, however, and all three houses were subsequently rebuilt in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Nos 29 and 30 are late eighteenth century, and No 31 was rebuilt in the early nineteenth century and forms a pair with No 32 (not part of the Site).



Figure 4.1 Detail of the Senex map, 1720 (source: Map Co)

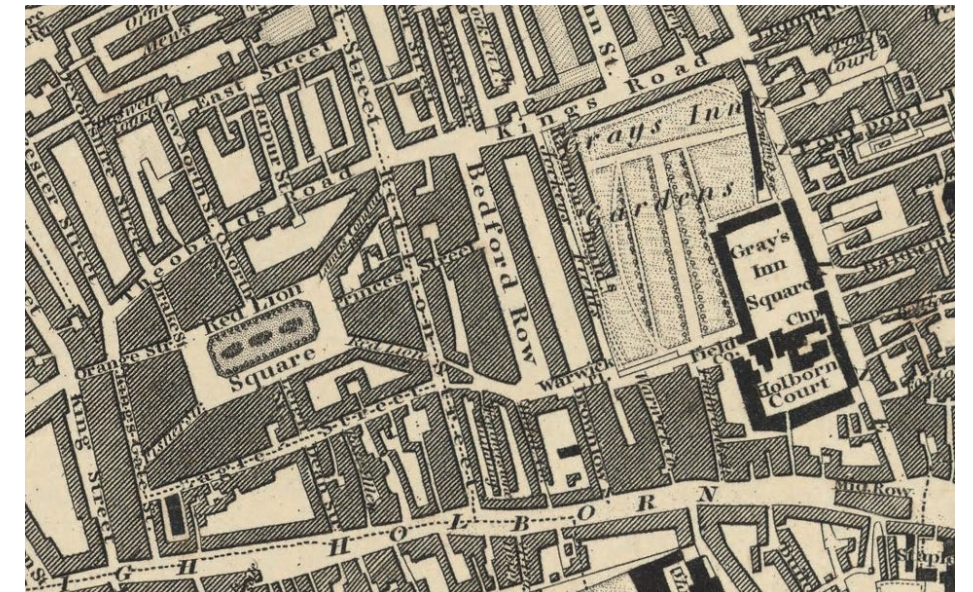


Figure 4.2 Detail of Greenwood map, 1827 (source: Harvard University)

BACKLAND DEVELOPMENT

4.4 The Greenwood map of 1828 shows the block around the Site densely built up including at the rear, with entrances into the backlands from both Theobalds Road and the present Dog and Duck Yard from Princeton Street (then called Princes Street). No detail is given of the backland structures on this map.

4.5 The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1877–78 shows the three houses still as separate units, all with extensive development at the rear.

4.6 The Goad map of 1887 shows the structures in more detail and indicates that all three houses were in office use by that date. The front parts of the houses were four storeys and a basement. Nos 29 and 31 each had a small storey closet wing at the rear, and No 30 had two closet wings, that on the south apparently a single unit with that at No 31, suggesting that Nos 30 and 31 were laterally converted at that date.