



16a/b & 18 WEST CENTRAL STREET

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

TOWNSCAPE AND CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT

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I.0 INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

1.1 Richard Coleman Citydesigner has been commissioned by City & General New Oxford Street LLP to assess the redevelopment potential for part of the city block bounded by New Oxford Street, West Central Street and Museum Street. The entire block is within the southern boundary of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area in the London Borough of Camden (see plan at fig 7.1 in section 7.0). It is specific in being a later extension of the conservation area on the south side of New Oxford Street, generally thought to be the boundary of Bloomsbury. It is also north and north west of two large scale, late 20th century developments (see fig.1.3). A scheme is being considered by the architects Squire and Partners and this report should be read in conjunction with their Design and Access Statement dated May 2013. This report draws on the heritage review work carried out by Donald Insall Associates (dated June 2008) and on external and internal site inspections by the consultancy. Further historical material on the site's architecture, planning and history has been thoroughly analysed and cross-referenced in order to give a full and well balanced understanding of the history of the buildings, and their significance.

1.2 The proposal site comprises (see plan at fig.1.1):

Nos. 35 – 37 and 39-41 New Oxford Street;
Nos.16a, 16b and 18 West Central Street; and
Nos.10, 11 and 12 Museum Street.

The proposal site does not include:

Nos.43 and 45 New Oxford Street and No.16 West Central Street, which are listed Grade II;
No.33 New Oxford Street.

1.3 Of the various buildings which comprise the site identified in red at fig. 1.1, there are no significant works concerning townscape and heritage to Nos.35-37 New Oxford Street. The Planning Statement provided by DP9 explains this. Those buildings which are affected plus the designated heritage assets whose setting is affected are illustrated in the following pages. An introduction and history of each building is presented in section 3.0 of this report.

Executive Summary

1.4 Nos.16a and 16b West Central Street and No.18 West Central Street, which are both proposed for demolition, are assessed to evaluate the contribution

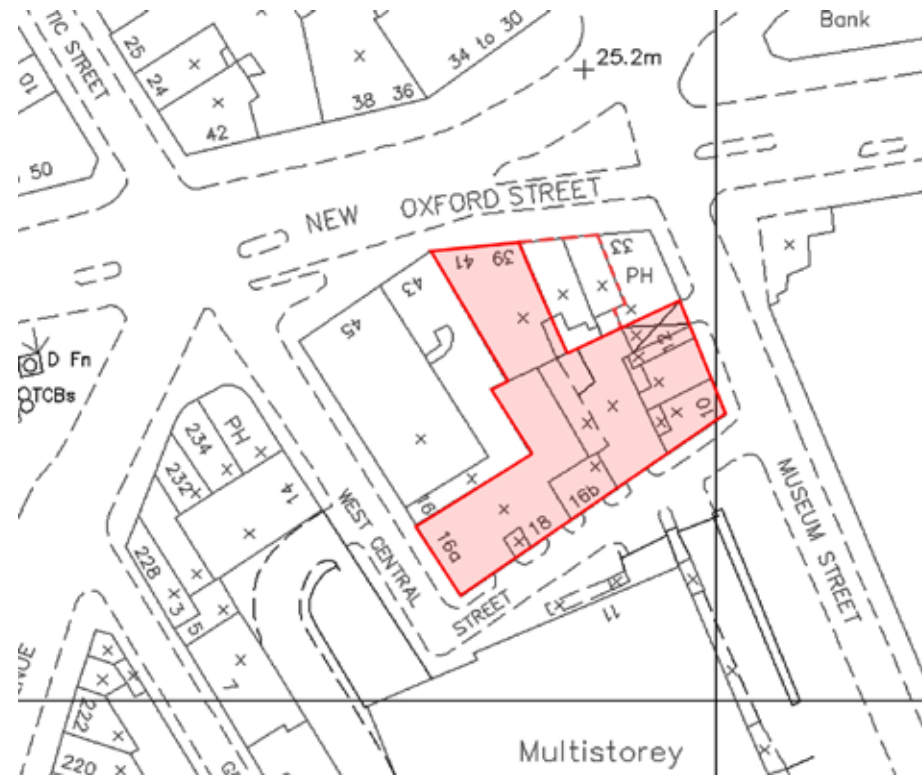


Fig. 1.1: Block plan showing the extent of the proposals site, outlined in red, and the footprint of each of the buildings which comprise the city block. The dotted line indicates those buildings within the site which are not affected significantly.



Fig. 1.2: Aerial view showing the outline of the city block of which the site forms a part, Google Maps 2013.



Fig. 1.3: Bird's eye view of the city block from the west, showing the imposing developments of the Travelodge Hotel to the south and Nos 21-31 New Oxford Street to the east, Bing 2013.



Fig. 1.4: Bird's eye view from the north, Bing 2013.

I.0 INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONT.)

they make to the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area (see section 6.0 of this report). In the case of No 39-41, only the shopfront of New Oxford Street is affected by the development and internal restoration alterations, new shopfronts and the fenestration of blind windows are the only works proposed for Nos 10, 11 and 12 Museum Street.

1.5 Much of this city block of which the site forms a part, is in a rundown state and the owner seeks to make alterations and extensions to it in order to restore and regenerate it. Nos.43 and 45 New Oxford Street and No 16 West Central Street are all grade II listed and do not form part of the site. It is believed that restoration alone would not provide a viable way forward. There are also areas within the centre of the block which have been developed in a piecemeal, unsatisfactory manner, which detract from the conservation area and prevent the most efficient use of the site. The proposition therefore is to erect a new building on the least contributing part of the city block by demolishing the facade of No 16a along the south-west and east-west flank of West Central Street which represents the lowest level of contribution to the character and appearance of all buildings in the block. By redeveloping the least valuable parts of the block with high quality design and restoring other parts which can then contribute better to the character and appearance of the conservation area, an overall enhancement is achieved.

1.6 Lying on the southern edge of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, the site is adjacent to large scale buildings of poor architectural quality which dominate the block and create a poor quality setting for it. The block is in fact overpowered by these buildings, it being 'semi-detached' from the main part of the conservation area which is on the north of New Oxford Street.

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

1.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains the Government's planning policies for England. This document supersedes and replaces all of the previous national level guidance set out in the various Planning Policy Statements and Planning Policy Guidance documents, including PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' and PPS5 'Planning for the Historic Environment'. Within the NPPF, guidance is provided on a number of key issues which relate to the delivery of sustainable development. Of these key issues, 'Requiring good design' and 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' relate directly to townscape and heritage, and are therefore examined below.

Requiring good design

1.8 This section recognises good design 'as a key aspect of sustainable development' which 'is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people'. Guidance contained within paragraph 58 of this section states planning decisions should aim to ensure that developments: 'will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development; establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks; respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation; create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping'. This development fulfils these NPPF aspirations, in particular by redeveloping with neighbourly uses, what has been, until recently, an un-neighbourly use.

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

1.9 Paragraphs 126-141 of the NPPF set out national level guidance on the conservation and preservation of the historic environment. Paragraph 128 requires the applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. In relation to the impact of a proposed development on a designated heritage asset: Paragraph 132: '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. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.' Paragraph 133: 'Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning

authorities should refuse consent, 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: the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.'

Paragraph 134: '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 securing its optimum viable use.'

Paragraph 138: 'Not all elements of a Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 133 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 134, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area.'

Finally the 1990 Act remains entirely relevant in its assertion that development in conservation areas should either 'preserve or enhance'.

1.10 The approach in this development is to demolish a non-designated heritage asset whose loss would not constitute substantial loss to the designated heritage asset, i.e., the conservation area in terms of its relative significance, would improve the setting of a listed building and would enhance the character and appearance, through high quality design. It is a case, therefore, where it is appropriate to enhance, rather than preserve.

Note: Reference is made to the Historic Buildings Architect's Report for Central Investment Properties (London) Ltd. dated June 2008, by Donald Insall Associates. Sufficient history of relevance is set out within this document for the Insall report not to need inclusion as an appendix.

2.0 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDING TOWNSCAPE

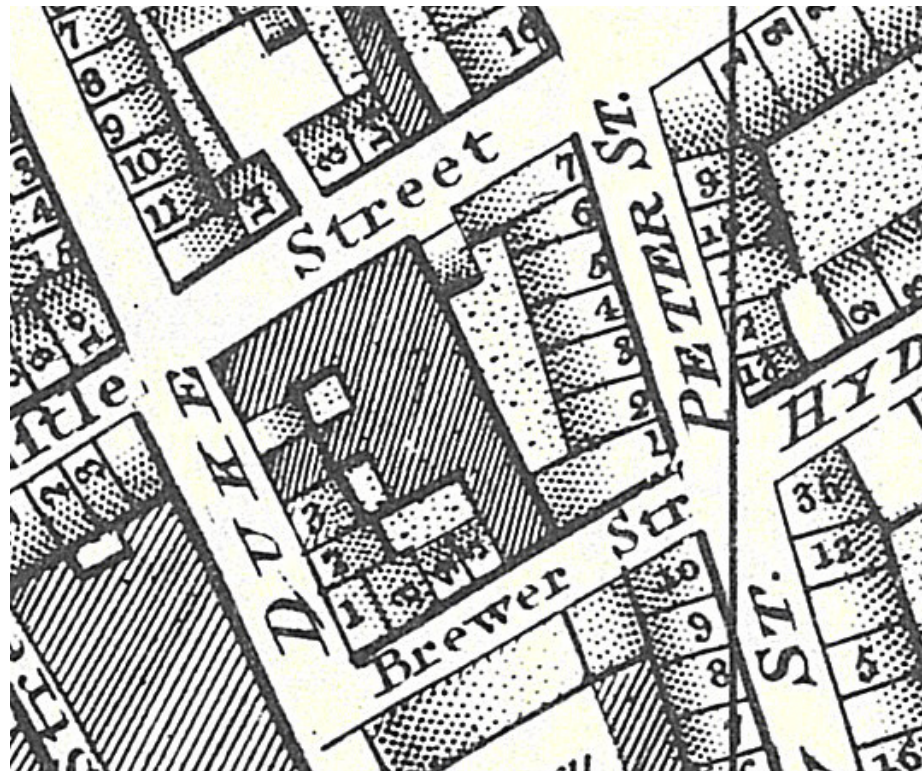


Fig. 2.1: 1813 Horwood map.

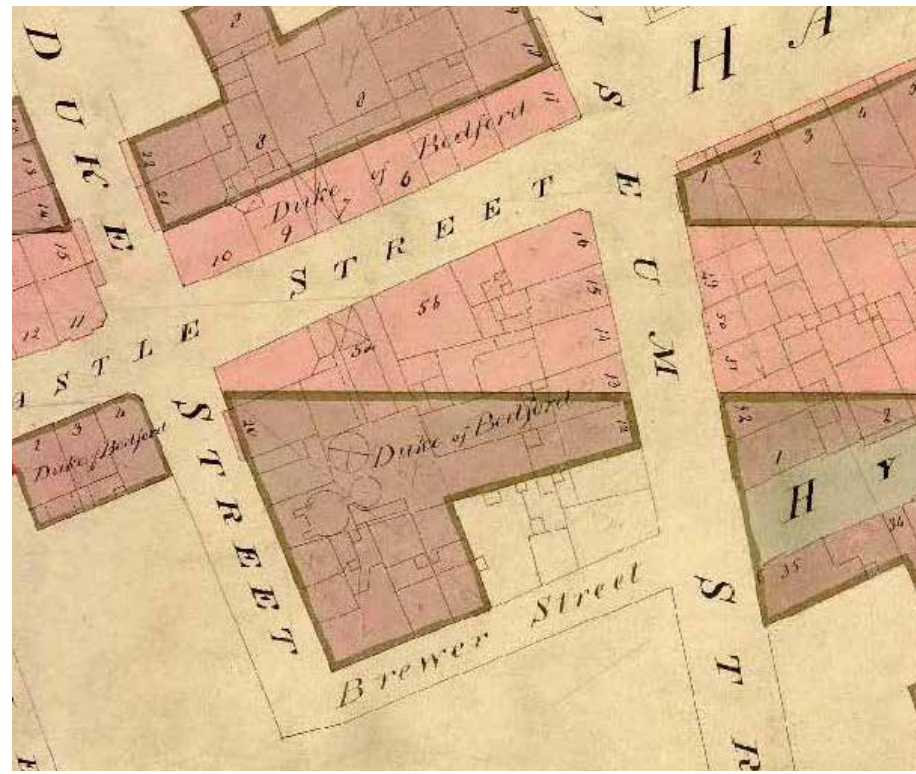


Fig. 2.2: Undated proposals for the laying out of New Oxford Street.



Fig. 2.3: 1873 Ordnance Survey map.



Fig. 2.4: 1914 Ordnance Survey map.

- 2.1 The buildings on New Oxford Street, Museum Street and the west side of West Central Street were developed as part of a Metropolitan Improvement Scheme carried out in the 1840s. The works involved the laying down of a new road, New Oxford Street, to ease traffic congestion and the cutting through of slums in the hope of regenerating the area by offering updated commercial and residential premises. The 1813 Horwood map at fig. 2.1 shows the built fabric as it was before the works, and the undated drawing at fig. 2.2 illustrates early proposals for the course New Oxford Street was to take.
- 2.2 The Office of Forests, Land Revenues, Works and Buildings had the overall responsibility for planning the improvements and James Pennethorne, their chief architect at that time, oversaw the scheme. Although in charge of the Metropolitan Improvements, it is suggested the buildings in the city block were not directly designed by Pennethorne (Donald Insall report p.18).
- 2.3 The 1873 Ordnance Survey map at fig. 2.3 shows the new footprint and alignment of the city block after New Oxford Street was completed. The Ordnance Survey map at fig. 2.4 shows a yard still existed in the city block in 1914. Due to the piecemeal development of the city block the history of each building is described in detail in section 3.0 of this report.



Fig. 2.5: Current Ordnance Survey map.

3.0 THE EXISTING BUILDINGS

Nos.39-41 New Oxford Street



Fig. 3.1: Front elevation of Nos.39-41.



Fig. 3.2: Plan showing the location of Nos.39-41.



Fig. 3.3: 1897 Ordnance Survey map showing Nos.39-41 as consolidated into one building.

Nos.39-41 New Oxford Street

- 3.1 Nos.39 and 41 New Oxford Street were originally part of the range which also included Nos.33, 35 and 37 New Oxford Street. They would have been built at the same time, by 1845, in the same style and using the same materials. The rear extension of number 41 is single storey, while the rest of the building is four floors.
- 3.2 Nos.33, 35 and 37, Nos.39 and 41 were originally two buildings which were merged to become one larger building by 1897 (see Ordnance Survey map at fig. 3.3). Donald Insall's report suggests this consolidation may have been carried out for the firm of P & P Campbell, silk dyers, which occupied part of both buildings from c.1880. It is also suggested that the partitions between the buildings were re-erected, but then removed in 1927, when Nos.39-41 were refronted by the architect Harold Baily for the Hackney Furnishing Company Ltd. Research in building directories for London do not list Baily as the architect of any other known works. The shopfront which dated from c.1928 was replaced later in the 20th century.
- 3.3 An internal inspection indicated that the building's structure was probably renovated at the time of the refronting of the building as the concrete frame is expressed and no 19th century features remain evident. The staircase, main entrance and shopfront reflect the aesthetics of the late 1920's. Vaults which date from 19th century survive at basement level.
- 3.4 This building will be retained and restored, but will receive a new retail front at ground level.

3.0 THE EXISTING BUILDINGS CONTD.

No.43 New Oxford Street



Fig. 3.4: Front elevation of No.43 New Oxford Street, listed at Grade II. This building is outside the proposal site.

No.43 New Oxford Street

- 3.4 The history of No.43 (fig. 3.4) is closely linked to that of its neighbour No.45 (fig. 3.6). The buildings were statutorily listed together (with No.16 West Central Street) in 1999 (see listing citation on this page). The history of the two is linked to the Castle Brewery which stood on the site before the 1840s laying out of New Oxford Street. Donald Insall's report suggests that the buildings would not necessarily have been completely demolished to make way for the new road and that they may have been refronted keeping some of the original fabric behind new facades aligned with the new street. Findings in the Donald Insall's report indicate that the existing brewery building at the corner of Duke Street and New Oxford Street was not included in the plots offered in 1845 to public tender, suggesting that that the owners had already agreed to rebuild the frontage to New Oxford Street, or that the brewery was not rebuilt as 43 and 45 until after 1845. It is likely that 43 and 45 New Oxford Street were completed by c.1847 (as the listing citation suggests).
- 3.5 Even if 43 and 45 were not developed exactly at the same time as Nos.33 to 39 it is clear No.43 was part of an overall design which included Nos.33 to 43. Donald Insall's report states that No.43 served as the manufacturing premises for a printing firm from c.1850 and in the late 1900s was used as a railway company office (first by the Continental and General Railway and later by the London and North West Railway). Drainage plans suggest that in the 1920s the upper floors were used as flats while the ground floor was largely used as offices. The ground floor of the building has been used as a restaurant from c.1959 and is still in that use today.
- 3.6 No.43 New Oxford Street does not form part of the redevelopment site.



Fig. 3.5: Plan showing the location of No.43 New Oxford Street.

Listing Citation for 43 AND 45 NEW OXFORD STREET (south east side) CAMDEN, LONDON

Date listed: 11 January 1999
Date of last amendment: 11 January 1999
Grade II

Includes: No.16 WEST CENTRAL STREET. Terrace of shops and offices. 1843-7. Under the direction of James Pennethorne as Architect and Surveyor for Metropolitan Improvements appointed following a House of Commons Select Committee in 1836. Stuccoed brick with banded quoins and rustication, slate roofs. A group of commercial premises on a canted site treated as 2 distinct units. The premises survive well above C20 ground-floor shops, the upper floor having sash windows with small-paned glazing bars in moulded architrave surrounds, under heavy cornices and parapets, that to No.45 with balustrade. No.45 has arcaded first floor fenestration, which continues along return to West Central Street on ground floor also. INTERIORS not inspected. The group is the most prominent intact survival of Pennethorne's most important Metropolitan Improvements Commission for the Commons Select Committee. (Tyack G: Sir James Pennethorne and the Making of Victorian London: Cambridge: 1992-: 50-64).

(Camden's plan at fig. 7.2 shows the extent of the listing)

3.0 THE EXISTING BUILDINGS CONTD.

No.45 New Oxford Street and No.16 West Central Street



Fig. 3.6: Elevation of No.45 onto New Oxford Street. This building is listed at Grade II, and is outside the proposal site. The dominant and poorly designed Travelodge Hotel appears as a backdrop to the listed building from most views of it.



Fig. 3.7a: The three storey elevation of No.45 New Oxford Street abuts the two storey 16 West Central Street. The latter ends approximately where the vertical drain on the right hand side of the image marks its boundary with No.16a West Central Street. Both No.45 and No.16 are listed at Grade II, and are outside the proposal site.



Fig. 3.7b: The facade of 45 New Oxford Street and 16 West Central Street.



Fig. 3.8: Plan showing the location of No.43 New Oxford Street.

No.45 New Oxford Street and No.16 West Central Street

- 3.7 The history of No.45 is closely linked to that of its neighbour No.43. The building was rebuilt in 1845-50 or refronted keeping some of the original fabric belonging to the existing Castle Brewery. The Donald Insall report states that "Having been re-fronted with the arrival of New Oxford Street, the brewery continued business at its renumbered premises on 45 New Oxford Street: Thomas Mantell, of Castle Brewery, is listed as the occupier of the building in 1860. The wine and spirit distilling company of Marshall and Elvy occupied the premises from c1870 until the early 1900s. By c1925 the distillers had left and the premises were part-occupied by Lloyds Bank. In 1992 the ground floor of number 45 was the London Fine Yarn Centre and is now a computer shop. Its shop front was presumably part of a remodelling which was consequential on the bank's occupation." The shop is currently empty.
- 3.8 No.16 West Central Street is considered by the listing citation as being part of No.45 New Oxford Street. A separation of the two buildings is not apparent from the exterior, and the history of the two buildings is closely associated, as stated in Donald Insall's report: "The long building to the rear of 45 New Oxford Street, now known as 16 West Central Street, was part of the Castle Brewery and its surviving structure may predate New Oxford Street. One storey lower than the corner building at number 45 New Oxford Street, it is now in a similar style and materials, and was probably refronted at the same time as number 45 New Oxford Street was constructed."
- 3.9 Neither No.45 New Oxford Street nor No.16 West Central Street form part of the redevelopment site, though their setting is affected by it.

3.0 THE EXISTING BUILDINGS CONTD.

No.16a West Central Street



Fig. 3.9: West elevation.



Fig. 3.10: South elevation including Nos.18 and 16b West Central Street.



Fig. 3.11: Plan showing the location of No.16a West Central Street.

No.16a West Central Street (west)

- 3.10 The history of No.16a West Central Street (west) is closely linked to that of its neighbour No.16 West Central Street, and the other buildings on the western side of the cityblock. It is likely it was one of the ancillary buildings associated with the brewery, and later spirits distillery, based at No.16 West Central Street and No.45 New Oxford Street. Donald Insall's report suggests that the building "affects some of the architectural style of No.43 New Oxford Street but in two storeys subservient to the main street buildings" indicating it may have been built or refronted at the same time as No.43 in c.1845.
- 3.11 Although reflecting some of their features (fig.3.9) the building is not as cohesively designed as its neighbours at Nos.45 and 43 New Oxford Street and No.16 West Central Street. It appears to have been developed in more of a piecemeal fashion, probably as the brewery or later occupants required additional space or alterations to the layout. The double height arched entrance with voussoirs and the early crane at first floor level indicate a use as stabling and/or warehousing.
- 3.12 Some of the fenestration is galvanised metal framed casements which may date from the early 20th century. The two door openings are modern metal shutters and the entrance in the southernmost bay has an early 20th century wrought iron grille, oak half-glazed doors and panelling linings with modern steel chequer plate steps.
- 3.13 The interiors which are otherwise unremarkable retain some historical features such as a metal crane (fig.3.12), a timber staircase (fig.3.13) and simple timber panelling on walls and ceilings.
- 3.14 The contribution that this building makes to the conservation area is limited. It is far removed from the Bloomsbury Georgian core and forms part of a sub-area of extremely varied architectural provenance. It has some value in providing the setting to the listed No 45 New Oxford Street and no 16 West Central Street.
- 3.15 The proposals envisage the demolition of this building.



Fig. 3.12: Early metal crane on the first floor elevation.



Fig. 3.13: Early timber staircase.



Fig. 3.14: Deteriorated condition of roof, showing timber trusses.

3.0 THE EXISTING BUILDINGS CONTD.

No.16b and No.18 West Central Street



Fig. 3.15: First floor interior of No 18.



Fig. 3.16: No 18 viewed from adjoining terrace of 16a.



Fig. 3.17: Roofscape viewed from the terrace of 16a, looking north at the hipped roof in the foreground and the parapet of Grade II listed 45 New Oxford Street and 16 West Central Street.



Fig. 3.18: The gap created between Nos.16 West Central Street and development on Museum Street, caused by the low level development of Nos.18 and 16b West Central Street.



Fig. 3.19: Modern interiors in No.16b West Central Street.



Fig. 3.20: Metal frame remedial support in No.16b West Central Street.

3.0 THE EXISTING BUILDINGS CONTD.

No.16b and No.18 West Central Street



Fig. 3.21: Location plan of No.18 West Central Street.



Fig. 3.24: Location plan of No.16b West Central Street.



Fig. 3.22: The extent of No.18 West Central Street.



Fig. 3.23: The extent of No.16b West Central Street.

No.18 and No.16b West Central Street

- 3.16 The findings included in Donald Insall's report seems to indicate No.18 and No.16b West Central Street were developed as a single storey facade in the early 20th century (see maps at figs.2.3 and 2.4) and were, before then, used as a yard. Donald Insall's report suggests that the external wall which closed in the yard may have been rebuilt or re-finished "partially to reflect the construction at No.16 West Central Street, but with early 20th century affectations in the way of door cases" and that it may date from around 1915. Although "the large arched opening with voussoirs" reflects a stable use, the style of this feature is considered in line with early 20th century detail. In 1915 the yard was taken over by the railway company based at No.43 New Oxford Street and this may have prompted the construction or renovation of the retained wall. 1926 drainage plans referred to in Donald Insall's report show a mainly open yard with little development enclosed by the wall other than temporary structures.
- 3.17 The interior site inspection of Nos.18 and 16b showed no evidence of historic fabric, both buildings appearing as modern structures behind the one storey facade (figs. 3.19 and 3.20). The staircase which forms No.18 appears modern and leads to a nightclub at basement level. The interior of No.16b reflects its use as a nightclub with a mezzanine level and skylight.

- 3.18 The exterior of the two buildings is a piecemeal and fragmented composition "which dates from the late 19th/early 20th century, but has been altered in the later 20th century leaving it with little architectural value and no real charm." (Quote from Donald Insall)
- 3.19 The one storey development of this section of the site creates an unappealing 'gap' within the city block between Nos.18 and 16b West Central Street like 'a missing tooth' from the volume of the city block. While some blocks within the Conservation Area exhibit differentials of height at the 'rear' perimeter of blocks, later development has built it up, leaving some minor drops in height. The gap at West Central Street is extreme and uncharacteristic, particularly of the sub-area number 8 which it is in.
- 3.20 The contribution this building makes to the conservation area is low. It is envisaged that the building will be demolished.

3.0 THE EXISTING BUILDINGS CONTD.

Nos.10, 11 and 12 Museum Street



Fig. 3.25: Nos.10 to 12 Museum Street.



Fig. 3.27: 19th century staircase.



Fig. 3.28: Cramped interiors.



Fig. 3.26: Location plan of Nos.10-12 Museum Street.

Nos.10, 11 and 12 Museum Street

- 3.21 Due to their similar style and scale it is likely that Nos.10 to 12 Museum Street are contemporary with the terrace comprising Nos.33 to 43 New Oxford Street and the laying out of New Oxford Street and were completed by 1845.
- 3.22 The buildings would have been built with shops at ground floor and it is likely they originally had domestic accommodation above. They retain the original sashes to the windows above ground floor and some features of the original shopfronts remain at Nos.10 and 11. Below No.12 there is the entrance to the accommodation above and one which allows access to the rear of the properties. The latter entrance coincides with the entrance visible in the historical maps at figs. 2.3 and 2.4, although in Donald Insall's report it is suggested post-war additions may have been carried out to it.
- 3.23 The elevation onto West Central Street (fig.3.25) reflects the Museum Street elevation although all the window openings are blind. The entrance to the accommodation above appears original, but has been heavily re-modelled.
- 3.24 The interiors retain only staircases (fig.3.27) and no other significant features survive. The bedsit accommodation is cramped at the upper levels (fig.3.28).
- 3.25 Though these buildings make a positive contribution to the conservation area, they are not assisted by the drop to the single storey wall in West Central Street. This contrast leaves them without a satisfactory context.
- 3.26 The proposals will not affect the exteriors other than providing glazing to some of the blind windows and new shopfronts which will retain a traditional style. Interiors will be remodelled.

4.0 ANALYSIS & HERITAGE BRIEF FOR THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER BLOCK

The following advice is based on an analysis carried out at a recent site visit and sets out both the existing phenomena and guidelines for consideration in the context of renewal.



- 4.1 The subject site, where it faces west, combines to form a composite elevation with the two-part listed building to its north. It is of the same architectural style, materials, form of fenestration and rhythm as the listed buildings. Its main differences are: the semi-blind window openings; the poor quality internal spaces which they serve and; the subtle difference in the parapet detail.



- 4.2 It would be possible to amend all these differences so that the fenestration matches the listed buildings. More generously appointed spaces could also be created behind it, such that it continues to support the setting of the adjacent listed buildings. Extending this architecture upwards would be inappropriate. A large setback and a contrasting attic element would be necessary, but this would present an over-complex neighbour to the listed building.

4.0 ANALYSIS & HERITAGE BRIEF FOR THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER BLOCK (CONTD.)



4.3 Considering the particular characteristics of the two parts of the listed building, it is clear that No 45 facing New Oxford Street is the principal element. It is embellished, it is symmetrical about the corner and its primary embellishments even return around its southern upper elevation. It can therefore be experienced as a definitive three dimensional entity. The middle element, slightly set back from the first, has a more subdued level of detail but clearly related to the first building. Following more studious consideration, however, it is apparent that a large single space exists across the whole of the first floor, beneath a voluminous timber trussed roof structure. It is in fact crowned with a roof hipped at the northern and southern ends. It is also, therefore, identifiable as a three dimensional entity. The third element, in relation to those which are listed, is ambiguous in its expression, purporting to extend the form but only in the facade. This is why it is not listed.

4.4 The hierarchy between No 45 on the main street and the minor building on the side street could still be better maintained if a larger, authentic and plainer building balanced it. Rather than extending upwards in the same historic style, which would dominate the middle section, a higher contemporary building at the southern end could set back, as indeed the middle section sets back from the principal building. This is a proposition which the architects Squire and Partners is pursuing.

4.0 ANALYSIS & HERITAGE BRIEF FOR THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER BLOCK (CONTD.)



- 4.5 It is, therefore, worth considering how a new building might be expressed in replacing the third element. It could better honour the nature of the two listed buildings and provide an improved setting to a level which is clearly an enhancement. Such a building should be higher than the existing, proclaiming its own three dimensionality and providing the volumetric balance in the street facade. It might be less richly modelled but articulated instead in a contemporary manner. The set back, from the middle section, ensures that it takes its place in the hierarchy. It could express its own three dimensionality clearly and return fenestration detail around the two corners, but in a less symmetrical way than No 45.

5.0 SCHEME PROPOSAL

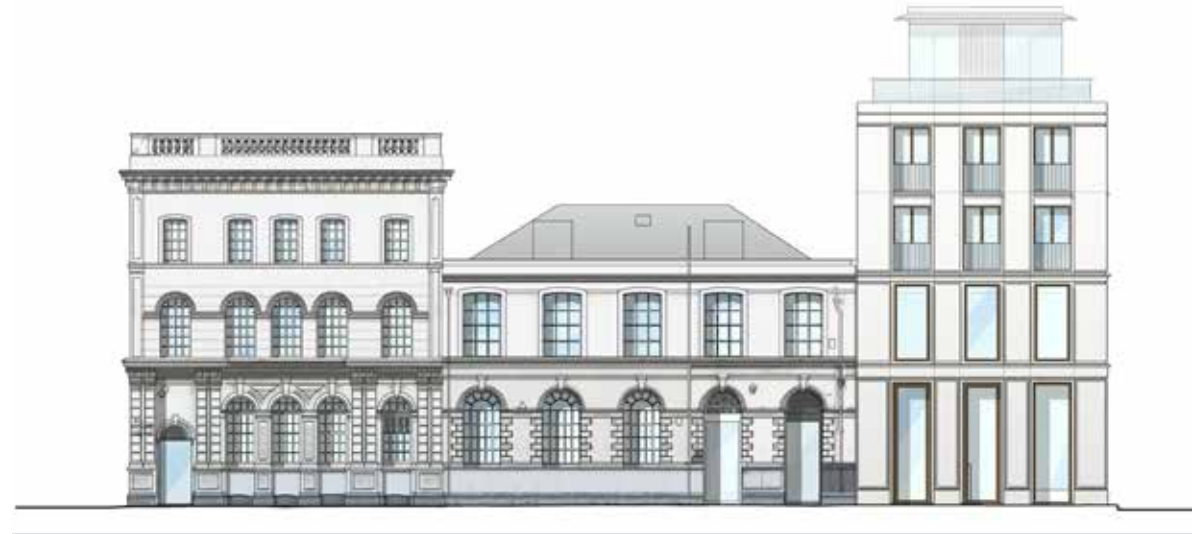


Fig. 5.1: West Elevation.



Fig. 5.2: South Elevation.

- 5.1 This development proposes: some demolition; strengthening of the character and appearance by refurbishment and restoration and; a substantial element of 'new build'. The conservation area status of this city block, bearing in mind its sub-area status, and the listed buildings which form its north-west corner, have both controlled and inspired this design.
- 5.2 A significant investment and the creation of high quality working space is a prerequisite to the successful regeneration of this site. A careful analysis took place, therefore, to ascertain which of the existing elements could yield to enable high quality spaces to be integrated into the city block. The southern perimeter was identified. While the existing elements on the south section of West Central Street, which are proposed for demolition, make some contribution to character appearance, it is concluded that the contribution is limited and the least valuable elements of the block. The demolition

drawings can be referred to in the Appendix of the architect's Design and Access Statement dated May 2013.

- 5.3 While the replacement five storey contemporary building contrasts with the rest of the block, its design has been developed to harmonise with its neighbours and consists of a refined cast masonry detailing of much greater quality than the large scale slab blocks to the south of the site. The composition of the West Central Street facade expresses these stages of treatment according to the different uses. The main element of five storeys is divided into bays of double order pilasters. The ground floor is higher than individual floors thus providing a visually strengthened base, and the upper storey takes the form of a pavilion, well set-back. The middle floors express a 'piano nobile' of offices and two floors of residential.
- 5.4 In views from New Oxford Street, looking south along West Central Street, the five storey building forms a handsome backdrop to the lower part of the listed buildings, exhibiting a small scale in the forms of its elevational grid.

It also has the beneficial effect of reducing the visual impact and intrusion of the larger slab blocks further to the south.

- 5.5 Other improvements to the existing buildings on Museum Street make little difference apart from restoration, while enhancing the appearance of the terrace on the south elevation by introducing proper windows.
- 5.6 This development proposal regenerates the city block, enhances the conservation area, enhances the setting of the listed buildings and enhances the townscape views where larger adjacent blocks form a backdrop.

5.0 SCHEME PROPOSAL (CONTD.)



Fig. 5.3: Existing south New Oxford Street elevation. Where windows need to be restored, they would be replaced with identical windows, but doubleglazed to adhere to ecological standards.

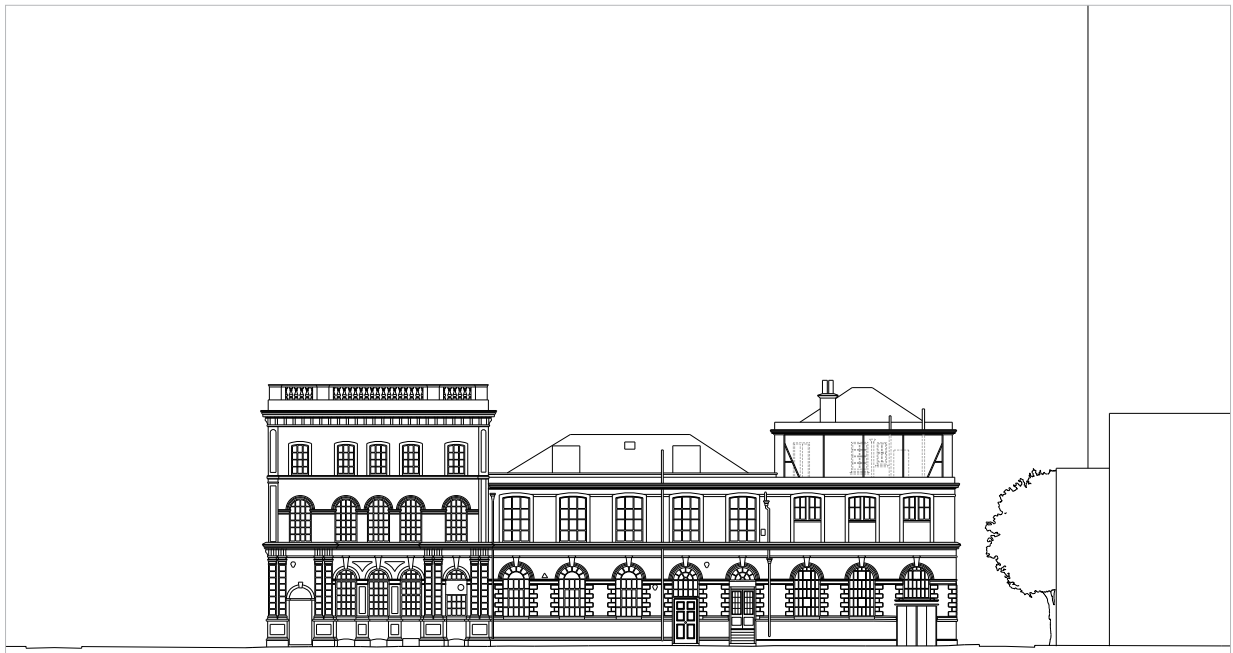


Fig. 5.4: Existing west elevation.



Fig. 5.5: Proposed south section of West Central Street elevation.



Fig. 5.6: Proposed west section of West Central Street elevation.

5.0 SCHEME PROPOSAL (CONTD.)

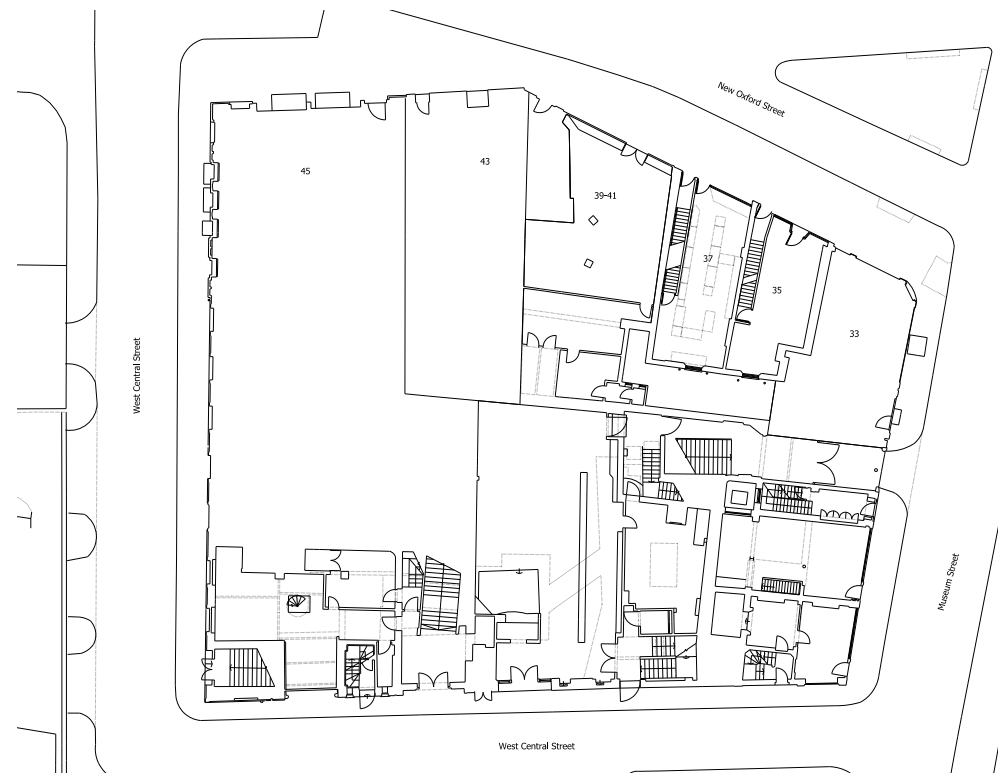


Fig. 5.7: Existing ground floor.



Fig. 5.9: Proposed ground floor.

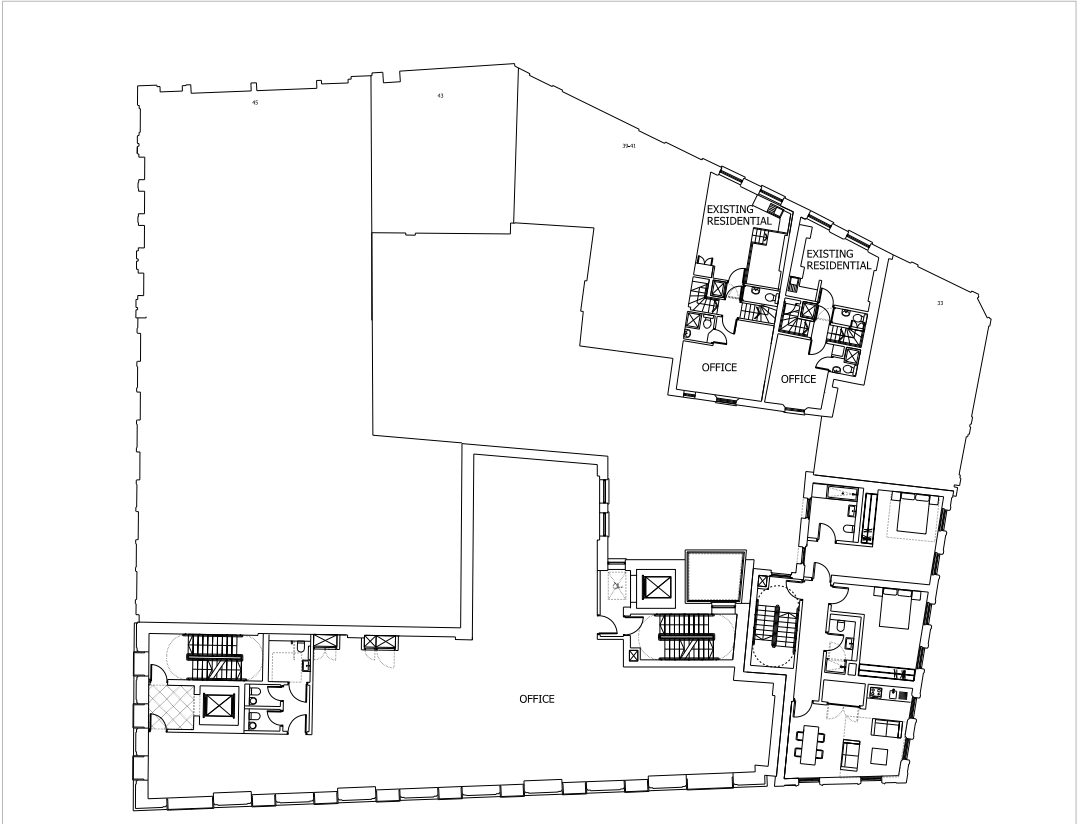


Fig. 5.8 Proposed first floor.



Fig. 5.10: Proposed third floor.

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF THE BUILDINGS PROPOSED FOR DEMOLITION

Nos.16a, 16b and 18 West Central Street



Fig.6.1: No.16b West Central Street

Nos.16a, 16b and 18 West Central Street

6.1 The first assessment to establish the level of contribution to the conservation area is carried out below, following the 10 tests previously found in English Heritage's *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals* which remain appropriate.

1. Is the building the work of a particular architect of regional or local note?

No. The architect of the different facades of the different buildings is not known. It consists of both refacing older buildings and the addition of other less consistent treatment. James Pennethorne only planned the overall layout. The western frontage to West Central Street appears to have been carried out in a piecemeal fashion over time and was therefore not the work of one particular architect. The utilitarian nature of the yard bounded by the wall which forms the facade of no.16b does not have any architectural value. The architect of the more modern building behind the facade is also not known. This part of the building is not visible to the public and makes no contribution to the conservation area. It is a simple space used as part of a nightclub and has no aesthetic value and was never intended to be seen as it is hidden behind a facade.

2. Has it qualities of age, style, materials or any other characteristics which reflect those of at least a substantial number of the buildings in the conservation area?

No. The facades reflect some of the aesthetics of earlier buildings which contribute to the conservation area, but in a superficial and imitative way. There are not a substantial number of commercial/light industrial buildings which date from the early 20th century in the conservation area or in the sub-area it falls in.

3. Does it relate by age, materials or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings, and contribute positively to their setting?

Yes. It relates historically, by age and material to the nearby Grade II listed buildings at Nos.43 and 45 New Oxford Street, which date from c.1845, but in a stripped down manner which confuses the identification of the listed elements.

4. Does it, individually or as part of a group, serve as a reminder of the gradual development of the settlement in which it stands, or of an earlier phase of growth?

No. As the aesthetics of the facade are mostly imitative, it does not reflect a phase of development with integrity.

5. Does it have a significant historic association with established features such as the road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?

No. It follows the alignment of the street but does not have any other significant historical associations.

6. Does the building have landmark quality, or contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces, including exteriors or open spaces within a complex of public buildings?

No. The building has no landmark qualities. It is located on a very minor street and its one storey facade is essentially a gap site within the city block. It does not relate to nearby spaces or public buildings.

7. Does it reflect the traditional functional character of, or former uses within, the area?

Yes to a minor extent. The facade of the building does reflect a commercial/light industrial use which may have historically been the function of other

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF THE BUILDINGS PROPOSED FOR DEMOLITION (CONTD.)

buildings in the area, but does not directly reflect the characteristics of a substantial number of buildings in the conservation area or the sub-area it falls in. Most of the buildings in the sub-area were generated by the construction of roads and front busy thoroughfares and were built as shops, offices and/or domestic use.

8. Has it significant historic associations with local people or past events?

No specific historical associations are known.

9. Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area?

No, the recent use a night club did not contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

10. If a structure is associated with a designed landscape within the conservation area, such as walls, terracing or a minor garden building, is it of identifiable importance to the historic design?

No. The buildings do not relate to any designed landscape.

6.2 Conclusion: the contribution made by Nos.16a, 16b and 18 West Central Street

The assessment shows that the contribution made is minor given it only partially meets two of the criteria listed above. The building does relate to neighbouring listed buildings but in an imitative and poorly executed way. It also reflects the area’s former and current commercial use, although the yard wall relates more to the light industrial nature of the brewery and railway company. The degree of contribution made can only, therefore, be described as limited.

National Planning Policy (NPPF) Tests

6.3 Only a negligible contribution is evident through exercising the former 10 tests but, for the avoidance of doubt, we test the proposition for demolition under the broad criteria for assessing heritage assets.

6.4 (i) Condition:
The condition of the building is not of concern.

(ii) The adequacy of efforts to retain the building in its use:
The building was in use as a nightclub but has now been vacated.

(iii) The merits of alternative proposals for the site, including community benefit:

Whilst the guidance notes that “*subjective claims for the architectural merits of proposed replacement buildings should not in themselves be held to justify the demolition of any listed building*”, or by implication, any unlisted building in a conservation area which makes a contribution to it, the guidance also states that “*there may very exceptionally be cases where the proposed works would bring substantial benefits for the community which have to be weighed against the arguments in favour of preservation*”. This is fundamentally the case here as the proposed demolition of this building would benefit the area by providing modern and efficient office accommodation.

6.5 English Heritage’s Conservation Principles values:

Evidential Value

The evidential value of the buildings is limited to its appearance, style and materials, none of which are of an extraordinary or significant nature. The style in particular is imitative of other buildings and does not reflect the age of the building. The status of the gap site to the south east is not attractive and forms a negative condition within its surrounding townscape. This gives rise to a low evidential value.

Historical Value

No special associations to historical events or people are known other than passed uses such as a brewery, a railway office, a post office and most recently a night club.

Aesthetic Value

The exterior of the building reflects some of the features of adjacent buildings, but the architecture is derivative and unimpressive. The general quality of the composition, materials and detailing are not of great significance. The design is not by an architect of note and the aesthetic value is does not grant any particular attention.

Communal Value

The site is a commercial building which has no landmark or symbolic qualities and does not provide any wider community service. In fact, recent legal use as a night club has been at the detriment of the community.

6.6 The assessment under English Heritage’s Conservation Principles shows that there is very little cultural value to the buildings.

6.7 A balance between preservation and the desire and need to regenerate the site, which offers it a viable future and improves the surrounding area, can be achieved by comparing the loss represented by demolition with the benefits to the environment and the commercial, domestic and retail provisions which would result from redevelopment.

The Case for Demolition

6.8 In summary, the argument that the facades of the unlisted No.16a, 16b and 18 West Central Street should be removed to make way for the proposed redevelopment is a strong one. These are unlisted buildings which make limited contribution in a relatively isolated position within a sub area of the conservation area which is characterised by post Georgian commercial buildings, brought about by the laying out of New Oxford Street and therefore not part of the heart of the conservation area. Though the tests for demolition of undesignated heritage assets should be considered carefully where, as in this case, the loss is found to be less than substantial, the benefit of the regeneration can be balanced against it. The relatively low status of the buildings and their limited contribution to the area as a whole, are material facts to be considered broadly when weighing the balance. In addition, the proposed replacement would allow for the provision of a high quality development which would provide extensive commercial and domestic accommodation as well as retail and would considerably enhance the vibrancy of the area.

Conclusion to Section 6.0

6.9 On balance, it is concluded that the gains from the regeneration of the site and providing viable accommodation outweigh the loss the historic fabric which, make only limited contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

7.0 THE BLOOMSBURY CONSERVATION AREA AND THE DEVELOPMENT SITE

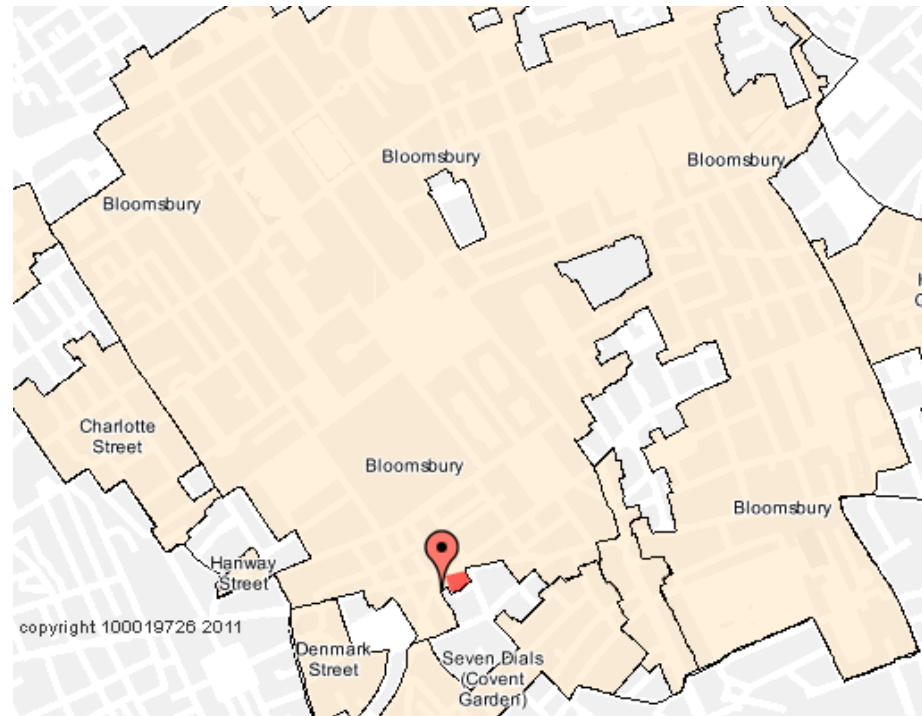


Fig. 7.1: Plan obtained from London Borough of Camden's website (dated October 2012) illustrating the extent of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the location of adjoining conservation areas. The city block, part of which forms the proposal site is highlighted in red.

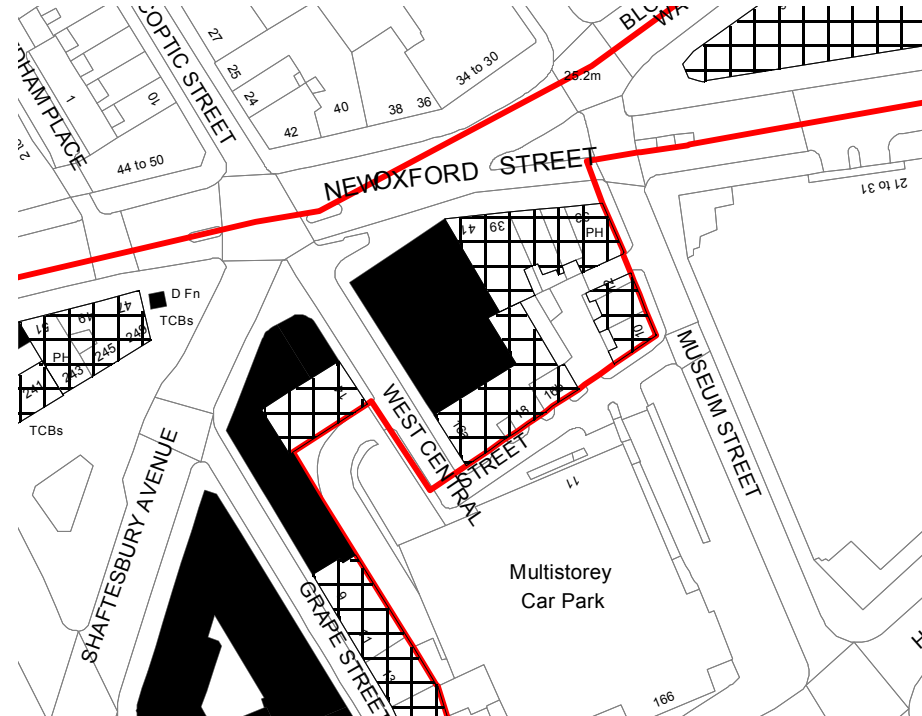


Fig. 7.2: Plan extracted from the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Character Appraisal adopted 2011 of Sub Area 8 illustrating buildings considered 'positive' (in black cross-hatch) and listed buildings (in black).

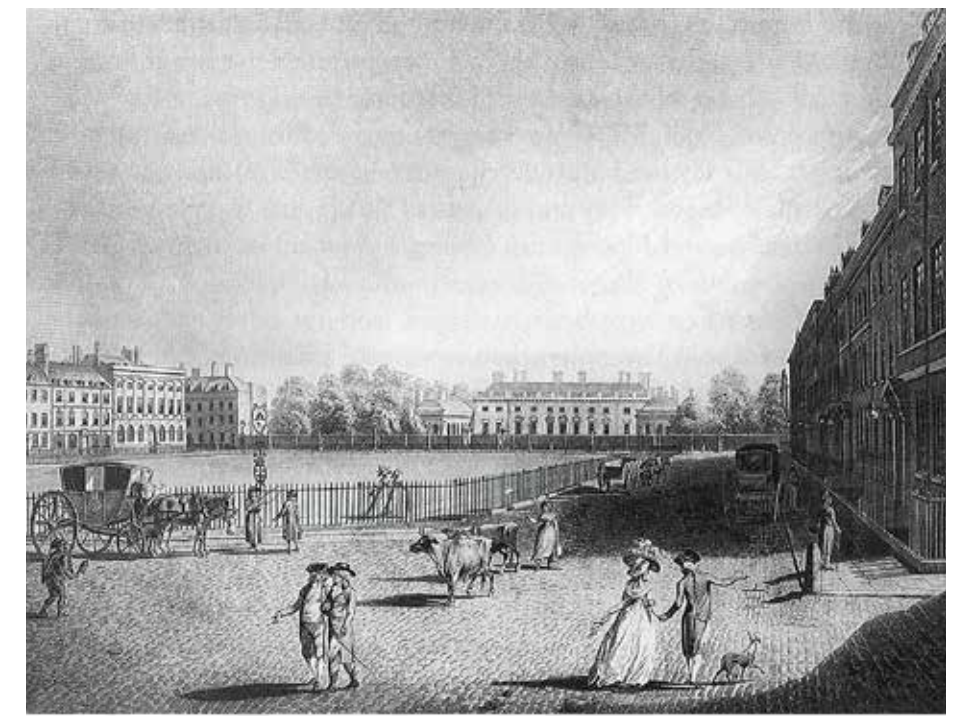


Fig. 7.3: Illustration of Bloomsbury Square dated 1787.

7.1 The following section sets out the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and its townscape and the relationship of the city block (part of which is the development site) to the conservation area. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Statement was adopted in 1998. A revised draft was produced in 2000 but this was not consulted on or adopted. A further draft appraisal management strategy was produced in January 2008; and after consultation and incorporation of several boundary adjustments and extensions, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (BCAAMS) was adopted in April 2011, which is referred to in this report.

7.2 The following descriptive text is sourced from the BCAAMS as well as other publications listed in the bibliography. The assessment has been produced by the author of this document.

Location and Designation

7.3 The Bloomsbury Conservation Area (fig. 7.1) is located in the London Borough of Camden, beyond the eastern edge of the City of Westminster. The area was originally designated in 1968 to protect Georgian and earlier fabric. Original boundaries have been amended subsequently to include a growing appreciation of Victorian, Edwardian and 20th century development.

Historical Context

7.4 Bloomsbury expanded rapidly between the mid 17th and mid 19th centuries. At this time, new London suburbs started forming to accommodate the shift of population from more central areas, which had been affected by plague and the Great Fire of 1666. The new fashionable suburb of Covent Garden provided a model for new development in Bloomsbury, nearby. Covent Garden Piazza had been designed in the 1630s by the classically inspired architect, Inigo Jones. The concept of development, focused around a square and brought over from Italy by Jones, influenced the design of the new estates built on undeveloped fields on the edge of the capital. The new estates were built as

terraces of houses around open spaces in a perfectly straight grid of streets, in contrast with the haphazard arrangement of medieval winding streets, alleyways and courtyards which survived in the older areas of town.

7.5 Bloomsbury Square was laid out in 1661 (fig. 7.3) and two terraces of houses were designed to flank its east and west sides. Development around the square continued when it was acquired in c.1669 by the Russell Family. Great Russell Street formed around 1670, with Red Lion Square and Queen Square built from the 1680s. 18th century development continued northwards towards the Euston Road or 'The New Road' as it was called at the time. Bedford Square was created as a unified composition in 1775-6, with strict controls over the design of frontages. The Bedford Estate imposed uniformity through regulations included in the contracts handed out to the builders and developers who carried out construction. The narrow facades of the townhouses built during the 18th century reflected the desire to put as many dwellings as possible along a stretch of street. The major development of the squares that we see today started around 1800 when the 5th Duke of Bedford removed Bedford House and developed the land to the north with Russell Square as its centrepiece.

7.0 THE BLOOMSBURY CONSERVATION AREA AND THE DEVELOPMENT SITE (CONTD.)

7.6 The building pace slowed down somewhat during the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815) and after a brief hiatus during the 1820s it remained slow during the 19th century. A decline in the desirability of Bloomsbury as a residential area in the 1800s led to an increase in commercial uses. Educational, medical and cultural uses began to establish themselves from c.1830. In 1840 New Oxford Street was laid out to ease traffic congestion and cut through slums which had formed in the St Giles area. Shops to serve the growing population became more common during the 19th century. Many were inserted in the ground floors of existing dwellings. Light industrial buildings and warehouses replaced some domestic buildings. It is at this time that the development site was erected.

7.7 Around the turn of the century hotels and offices increased in number, while the residential demand decreased. The first half of the 20th century saw the expansion of University College in the area between Gower Street and Russell Square, the continuing development of hospitals in the east of the conservation area and offices, hotels and shops along the main arterial routes. Following wartime bomb damage, the areas of greatest destruction underwent major redevelopment, with social housing in some places, offices in others, and further university developments replacing older fabric.

Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area and the City Block

7.8 The general character of the conservation area is noted for its formally planned arrangements of streets and squares. A hierarchy of different scales of streets is apparent with larger scale buildings along wider roads contrasting with narrower secondary streets, mews and lanes. The grain of the fabric tends to be smaller in the older parts and larger scale in the north part of the area and on major routes. The prevailing form is of townhouses arranged in terraces, which give a distinctive, repeated grain in many areas in the conservation area.

7.9 The BCAAMS subdivides the character of the conservation area into 14 sub-areas. The character and appearance of the sub-area where the development site lies, is described below:

Sub-Area 8: New Oxford Street/High Holborn/Southampton Row-

The area is dominated by late 19th and early 20th century blocks fronting busy thoroughfares, generated by the construction or widening of the roads

which cut through the earlier 17th and 18th century street pattern. The blocks comprise mainly commercial uses such as shops, banks, offices, hotels and theatres, while residential uses are mainly accommodated in mansion blocks.

7.10 The development site is located in Sub Area 8 of the conservation area (Southampton Row, High Holborn and New Oxford Street Sub Area, see plan at fig. 7.2) and is included in the following description at p.58 and p.59 of the BCAAMS:

"5.127.....Nos 33-45 (odd) are a group buildings of three to five storeys which date from the 1840s, with the exception of Nos 39-41, which were re-fronted in an Art Deco style in 1927 for the Hackney Furnishing Company Ltd, by architect Harold Baily (although the shopfront has been altered, the period entrance to the upper floors survives). They are stucco-faced and have classically influenced details, with Nos 33-37 (odd) and No 43 being identical (although the original shopfront has been replaced with a 'chi chi' early 1960s café front in rusticated render with pantiled weathering). The whole group is unified by horizontal banding at upper floor and parapet level, with taller five-storey units (Nos 33 and 45) marking either end like flanking columns.

5.128 Immediately behind these buildings in Museum Street and West Central Street are some smaller-scale somewhat utilitarian mid 19th century buildings of group value in conservation area terms. West Central Street takes its name from the former late 19th century 'West Central' post sorting office which stood in the vicinity. However, the grade II listed No 16 West Central Street, a long two-storey building to the rear of No 45 New Oxford Street, was part of the Castle Brewery until the mid-19th century and its surviving structure may predate New Oxford Street. Subservient in height to the corner building at No 45 New Oxford Street, it is now in a similar style and materials, and was probably refronted in stucco when the frontage building was constructed, with later alterations including early 20th century steel casement windows; up to the end of the 19th century it was utilised by Marshall and Elvy, Spirit Distillers. It should be noted that these buildings are located adjacent to the southern boundary of Bloomsbury Conservation Area; the neighbouring buildings immediately outside the boundary are of a scale and design which harms the setting of these buildings and the wider Conservation Area. However, West Central Street benefits from views north of New Oxford Street towards the more intact streetscape of Museum Street, with glimpse views of the British Museum."

7.11 In Appendix 3 of the BCAAMS, positive contributors on West Central Street are listed as Nos.14,16a,16b and 18 (NB - there is no No.14), but the extracted plan (Fig. 7.2) defines most of No.16b West Central Street as making a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The other buildings in the block are considered to make a positive contribution (cross-hatched) or are statutorily listed (solid black).

Assessment

7.12 The block which forms part of the proposal site does not have associations to the important early development of the Bloomsbury area or the significant social and architectural innovations which form the history of the conservation area. The city block is linked to a much later development caused by metropolitan improvements aiming to ease congestion and improve the slum situation near St Giles's. The character of the sub-area where the site lies is significantly commercial and the block reflects this, with retail and other commercial uses. It is also one of the diverse characteristics including the completely contrasting Grape Street area shown below (Fig. 7.4).



Fig. 7.4: Grape Street.

8.0 ASSESSMENT OF BEFORE AND AFTER VIEWS

8.1 The following section provides a detailed assessment of how the proposed development performs in the townscape.

8.2 Three viewpoints were chosen to analyse the visual effect of the proposed scheme on townscape receptors. The map in Fig. 8.1 shows the location of the viewpoints selected and the following pages provide assessments of these views.

8.3 Each assessment consists of a fully surveyed photograph showing the existing condition and a second photograph showing a computer model accurately superimposed onto it, rendered to produce a photorealistic view. A further photograph shows an enlarged version of the photomontaged condition. The viewpoints are the positions from where the computer generated images (CGIs) have been produced. The methodology for the production of these views can be found in Appendix 1.

8.4 A commentary accompanies the images, analysing first the existing condition, and second the view as proposed. It concludes with a further analysis, the effect, as to whether the development constitutes an enhancement. The analysis of the proposed is carried out objectively. The analysis of the effect is carried out subjectively.

8.5 The following verified views are now considered:

View A: West Central Street, looking south

View B: New Oxford Street, looking south.

View C: Museum Street, looking west towards West Central Street.



Fig. 8.1: Plan showing the location of the viewpoints selected.

8.0 ASSESSMENT OF BEFORE AND AFTER VIEWS

View A - West Central Street, looking south

EXISTING



PROPOSED



Existing

The street is formed of a composite elevation with the two parts of the listed building in the foreground. The un-listed component at the far end is of the same architectural style, materials, form of fenestration and rhythm as the listed buildings. Its main differences are: the semi-blind window openings; the poor quality internal spaces which they serve; the subtle difference in the parapet detail and the lack of a crowning roof form.

Rather than support the setting of the listed buildings, it diminishes their value by continuing rhythm, but in a diluted fashion. The impact of the Travelodge behind, is profound and disturbing, and has a direct impact on the setting of the conservation area and on the skyline of the listed building.

Proposed

The new four storey element provides a distinct end to the street facade. It defines the extent of the listed buildings. It is made of material which is superior to the current painted surfaces. It embodies a vertical hierarchy within the elevational treatment. It reduces the impact of the Travelodge, seen as a backdrop, on the listed elements of the street. It enhances the street and therefore the sub-area of the conservation area. The fifth storey pavilion is largely obscured.

Effect

The new building means that the character and appearance is enhanced rather than preserved, at a point where the appearance is particularly fragile and vulnerable to its aggressive setting.





VIEW A: PROPOSED

8.0 ASSESSMENT OF BEFORE AND AFTER VIEWS

View B - New Oxford Street, looking south



Existing

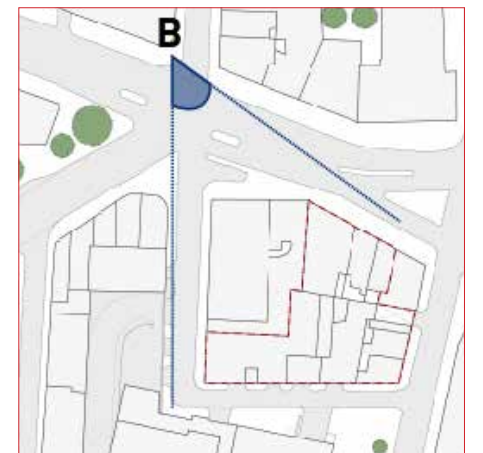
Looking south across New Oxford Street from the main conservation area towards the satellite block which forms part of it, the townscape scene is one of a rather incoherent group of buildings with a backdrop of taller buildings. The listed buildings in the foreground have a challenging wider setting but are strong enough in character and as a group, to maintain their dignity. The adjoining buildings, to their right provide a fragmented immediate setting, being of diminutive height. This allows the Travelodge Hotel to radically intrude on the group. The skyline is a stark assemblage of contrasting parts with little value.

Proposed

The proposal adds greater substance to the foreground group. First, the terrace to the left of the listed buildings is made complete and of greater substance. The elevation to West Central Street is added to, effectively balancing the composition in relation to the listed buildings. As a taller element in the backdrop it adds to the skyline such that there is less of an intrusion from the Travelodge Hotel. The traditional drop in height between the frontage buildings and the developed rear is maintained.

Effect

The change enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area and improves the setting of the listed buildings. The balancing of the elevation on West Central Street supports the setting of the listed buildings and reduces the intrusion of the higher building beyond the site to form a better foreground composition. It is also a building of considerable architectural quality, and provides a mediating element between the otherwise over contrasting existing elements.





VIEW B: PROPOSED

8.0 ASSESSMENT OF BEFORE AND AFTER VIEWS

View C - Museum Street, looking west towards West Central Street

EXISTING



PROPOSED



Existing

The West Central Street buildings have a certain chaotic character and moments of interesting architectural detail. They are, however, inconsistent with the character of the area which is better represented in this street by the corner building on the right (No.10 Museum Street). The centre section of the single storey wall offers the least by way of character. Behind it is an area of low level structures of an ad hoc nature. Further to the west, the form and fenestration is irregular and inadequate to provide for new uses. The east facing gable wall is blank and bland, and the overall silhouette lacks compositional virtue. The blind windows within the south wall of No.10 Museum Street on the right give the building an austere quality.

Proposed

The proposal is to demolish the single storey wall and the three storey element beyond it. A new 5 storey retail, office and residential building with a sophisticated stone clad elevation will replace it. The new architecture expresses its three uses horizontally with the pronounced office windows differentiating the different upper and lower uses. The building extends to achieve a regular parapet height which relates to the Museum Street buildings. A further storey is added in a set-back glazed pavilion. The corner building is also refurbished and sash fenestration is inserted into the openings.

Effect

The development brings a certain order to the street and the block within the conservation area. The replacement building is sympathetic to the basic style and presence of the West Central Street block as a whole. It provides a greater balance to the street and an enhanced setting for the existing structures. The height of the new building is consistent with the block and provides a townscape balance with it. Its high quality architecture and detail redeems the fact that it is the one contemporary addition to the block. It fits well into its context without causing harm to the principal buildings which make up this part of the conservation area. This constitutes a distinct enhancement to the conservation area.





VIEW C: PROPOSED

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 This report sets out to analyse the existing design quality and townscape contribution the city block makes to both the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and more specifically the sub-area of it. It shows that there are aspects of the block which do not make a sufficiently high level of contribution and it is these areas which have been chosen for replacement. The report also analyses the proposed development where the above buildings are replaced and other buildings refurbished. These changes are also assessed in relation to the setting of the listed buildings at the north-east corner of the site.
- 9.2 The history of the site is researched and interpreted and those buildings which are considered to make little or no contribution to that history or the character or appearance of the conservation area are justified for replacement under the terms of the NPPF. Equally, the designation of this city block as part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area is also researched and assessed, it being part of a sub-area which varies considerably in its character and appearance. Its relationship to its large scale neighbours to the south and east, as part of its setting, is noted.
- 9.3 The report draws upon the work produced by English Heritage, in their Conservation Principles publication, to justify the balance between the value of a building proposed for demolition and its loss. Such a balance enables sufficient new, high quality space to provide the economic environment for the regeneration of the city block while enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area, the general townscape and the setting of the listed buildings. The heritage loss is considered minor compared to the high quality replacement elements and the overall benefits of the scheme.
- 9.4 This is a fine example of a redevelopment which re-enlivens the city block and strikes an acceptable balance between demolition, restoration and the adding of high quality contemporary design. It is the author's belief that this balance is struck in a scholarly manner, in favour of the proposal and gives rise to contemporary design which is both modest and elegant in its context.

APPENDIX I - SQUIRE AND PARTNERS COMPUTER GENERATED IMAGES (CGIS) METHODOLOGY STATEMENT

Methodology for production of NON-Verified Visual Representations

Overview of Methodology.

- 1.1 The study was carried out by Squire and Partners (S+P) by combining computer generated images of the Application Scheme with Small format photographs at key/ strategic locations around the site as agreed with the project team. Certified views (AVR Images) and surveying were not requested by the client..
- 1.2 The project team defined a series of locations in London, the immediate vicinity, where the Application Scheme might create a significant visual impact. At each of these locations Squire and Partners carried out a preliminary study to identify specific Assessment Points from which a representative and informative view could be taken. Once the exact location had been agreed by the team, a photograph was taken which formed the basis of the study. The location of the camera and tripod was photographed for later use by S+P.
- 1.3 For views where a photographic context were used additional OS information was sourced, a number of features on existing structures visible from the camera location were also noted. Using these points, S+P determined reasonably accurate locations where the computer model and each individual photograph can be overlaid to match. Each photograph has then been divided into foreground and background so the Application Scheme can be inserted into context at the right visual distance for foreground and background. When combined with the computer generated image these give a reasonably accurate impression of the impact of the Application Scheme on the selected views in terms of scale, locations and use of materials.

Spatial framework and reference database.

- 1.4 All data was assembled into a consistent spatial framework, expressed in a grid coordinate system with a local plan origin. The vertical datum of this framework is equivalent Ordnance Survey (OS) Newlyn Datum.
- 1.5 By using a transformation between this framework and the OSGB36 (National Grid) reference framework, S+P have been able to use other data sets, such as OS land line maps, existing elevation surveys and topographical site surveys to test and document the resulting photomontages for accuracy.

Process - Photographic context

Reconnaissance

- 1.6 At each study location S+P conducted a photographic reconnaissance to identify potential Assessment Points. From each candidate position, a digital photograph was taken looking in the direction of the Application Scheme using a wide angle lens. Its position was noted onto an OS map and a second digital photograph was taken of the tripod position to mark the location at the Assessment Point.
- 1.7 S+P assigned a unique reference to each possible Assessment Point and photograph.

Final Photography

- 1.8 From each selected Assessment Point a series of Professional small format photographs were taken with a camera height of approximately 1.6m above ground. The camera, position, lens size, format, time of day and direction of view were recorded.
- 1.9 A digital photograph of the tripod location was taken to assist with camera matching within the 3D computer software.

Determining the alignment points for each Assessment Point without surveyed information

- 1.10 For each of the Assessment Points that were requested, the surrounding buildings were required to be built within the computer model to assist with visual camera matching.
- 1.11 The OS topographical site survey was used to determine the surrounding ground floor heights AOD. The surveyed elevations of the surrounding existing buildings complete with AOD heights were used to produce the surrounding buildings. These surrounding buildings were used to assist with the camera matching for each of the individual Assessment Point images.
- 1.12 Each of the requested Assessment Point images were taken with a specific digital camera. The lens FOV and diameter can be obtained from the digital image and accurately converted to closely replicate the camera used by the computer software..

Photo Preparation

- 1.13 From the set of photographs taken from each Assessment Point, one single photograph was taken for use in the study. This choice was made on the combination of composition, sharpness, exposure and appropriate lighting.
- 1.14 The selected photograph was then copied into a template file of predetermined dimensions. The resulting image was then examined and any anomalies with the digital image capture process were rectified.

Calculating the photographic alignment

- 1.15 The computer camera is then simulated within the computer program in the corresponding place and height AOD according to the tripod location photograph, topographic survey and the height of the camera above the ground AOD. The information from the digital capture is also used as this indicates the lens used on the camera to within 1mm accuracy, lens re-distortion has also been applied to counteract any manufactured distortions within the wide angle lens used.
- 1.16 The computer camera is then closely matched using the OS data, the Surrounding buildings were produced by S+P with elevation AOD heights, S+P also used the reference photographs and location information. When the basic camera information is placed into the software, final visual adjustments can be made to the camera position, angle and lens diameter.
- 1.17 A preliminary view was then created within the visualisation system.
- 1.18 A lower resolution version of the annotated photograph was attached as a background to this view, to assist the artist to interpret on-screen displays of the alignment model and relevant extrapolated information.
- 1.19 Using computer software for camera matching, relevant visual points were closely matched to their respective points within the photograph to create a representative computer camera match for photographic overlaying. These visual points were then refined. When using a wide angle lens observations outside the circle of distortion were given less importance for accuracy tolerance.
- 1.20 Using the preliminary view definition, a rendering was created of the alignment model at a resolution to match the photograph. This was overlaid onto the background image to compare the image created by the actual camera and the computer equivalent. Based on the results of this, adjustments were made to the computer camera.
- 1.21 This process was iterated until a match had been achieved between the photograph and the alignment model. A second member of the S+P team would then concur with the alignment process for each Assessment Point selected.

Preparing models of the Proposed Development

- 1.22 A 3D model was built by S+P to correspond to the current Application Scheme. The level of detail was sufficient to match the AVR 3 specifications as set out within the London View Management Framework.
- 1.23 The model was then located in the spatial framework using reference information supplied by the Architecture Team at S+P. Study renders are supplied to the Architecture team to confirm materials, heights and style are correct for the Application Scheme. At each stage of the design process any differing designs to the computer model are assigned a unique reference number.

Creating more photo-realistic renderings

- 1.24 Where realistic representations of the Application Scheme are required the initial model is developed to show the building envelope in greater detail.
- 1.25 For each final view, lighting was set in the visualisation system to simulate the lighting conditions at the time of the source photograph. Additional lighting was placed where required in the system to best replicate the recorded lighting conditions and the proposed materials to be used.
- 1.26 When all the above information is combined, the high resolution images were rendered and overlaid with the background photography. Further digital manipulation of colours, atmosphere and suggested life styles were applied by the artist to be indicative of the Application Scheme as it would appear under the lighting conditions as initially recorded in the photograph, resulting in the final study images.

Documenting the Study

- 1.27 The final report on the Study Location shows the existing and proposed vista. These are complemented by images of the location map, a record of the camera, focal length of the lens and AOD height of the camera used for each Assessment Point.
- 1.28 Certain images may have had vertical tilt or cropping applied after the final images have been completed.

APPENDIX I - SQUIRE AND PARTNERS COMPUTER GENERATED IMAGES (CGIS) METHODOLOGY STATEMENT (CONTD.)

12031 West Central Street. Camera Match Positions.

View A:
The camera used was a Canon
EOS 5D III
A similar view could be obtained on a small format camera in using a
18.0mm lens
This view was photographed in portrait format
The camera height would be at
26.764m AOD

View B:
The camera used was a Canon
EOS 5D III
A similar view could be obtained on a small format camera in using a
17.0mm lens
This view was photographed in portrait format
The camera height would be at
28.493m AOD

View C:
The camera used was a Canon
EOS 5D III
A similar view could be obtained on a small format camera in using a
17.0mm lens
This view was photographed in portrait format
The camera height would be at
27.004m AOD