

04 Alternatives and Design Evolution

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Introduction

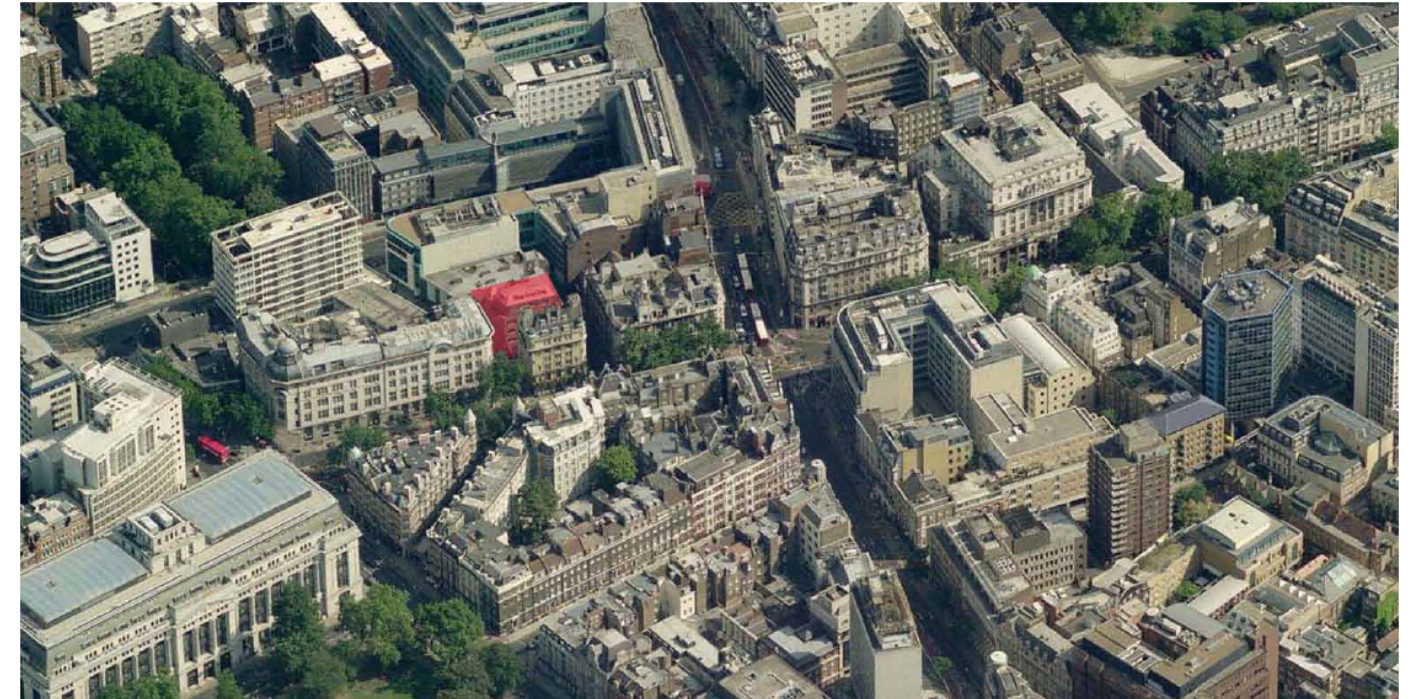
- 4.1 This chapter of the ES describes the context and background to the project and the considerations and constraints influencing the height, layout, massing and design of the Proposed Development. It provides an illustration of the evolution of the design leading to the current proposal.
- 4.2 As described in **Chapter 2: EIA Methodology** of this ES, the location of the Proposed Development is determined by the location of the Crossrail Fisher Street intervention shaft and head house. Alternative Crossrail routes and station and shaft locations were considered as part of the Crossrail EIA and documented in the Crossrail ES. Since the Crossrail works are already consented under the Crossrail Act and currently under construction, much of the design evolution and consideration of alternatives has been based on the analysis and understanding of the integration of the Proposed Development with the Crossrail works as well as the application site and urban context.
- 4.3 This chapter has been written by URS and is informed by the pre-application presentation to EH in September 2012 (Ref. 4-1) and the Design and Access Statement (Ref 4-2) which accompanies the planning application.

Application Site Analysis and Consideration of Existing Conditions

Application Site Description

- 4.4 The application site is located within the LBC and is bound to the north by Fisher Street, to the east by the UK Power Networks building, to the south by Catton Street and to the west by 8 – 10 Southampton Row. The application site is approximately 0.05 hectares (ha) and is located at National Grid Reference (NGR) 530533, 181605. An aerial view of the application site location is provided in Figure 4-1.
- 4.5 The application site is situated approximately 100 metres (m) to the north of Holborn Station, which provides Central Line and Piccadilly Line services, and frequent bus services run along Procter Street, High Holborn and Southampton Row. In addition, Barclays Cycle Hire points are available within walking distance of the application site.
- 4.6 Currently, the application site is undergoing significant changes due to the Crossrail works for the Fisher Street intervention shaft and head house. At the time of writing, there are no permanent buildings on the application site, as the previous 1 and 2 Fisher Street, and 2 to 6 (even) Catton Street have been demolished to allow for the below ground works for the Crossrail intervention shaft.
- 4.7 The Proposed Development will be built upon the new Crossrail intervention shaft and head house, creating a new residential building for the area. There will be no below ground works associated with the Proposed Development. Further details are provided in **Chapter 6: Construction** of this ES.
- 4.8 The vicinity of the application site primarily comprises of office and commercial units, along with some residential units.

Figure 4-1 Aerial View of the Application Site Location (Facing East - Shown in Red)



Policy and Designations

- 4.9 The application site is located within the London Suburbs Archaeological Priority Area. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments at the application site and it is not located within a World Heritage Site. There are no listed buildings on the application site; however, several listed buildings in the surrounding area include the Grade II listed Carlisle House, otherwise known as 8 – 10 Southampton Row (directly adjacent to the western extent of the application site), Grade II* listed Baptist Church House Kingsgate House, Grade II* listed Central St Martins College of Art and Design, Grade II listed Avenue Chambers, 6-20 Sicilian Avenue, 1-29 Sicilian Avenue, Numbers 25-35 and 35a and attached screen to Sicilian Avenue and 15-23 Southampton Row, Grade II listed 114 and 115 High Holborn, Grade II listed Summit House, Grade II listed 14-17 Red Lion Square, Grade II listed Kingsway Tram Subway (northern section only) and the Grade II listed Victoria House.
- 4.10 Further details of the surrounding built heritage are provided in **ES Volume II: Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment**.
- 4.11 The application site is not located within a Conservation Area (CA); however, it is directly adjacent to the Kingsway CA (to the east of the application site), with additional CAs nearby. These include:
- Bloomsbury CA located approximately 100m east and west of the application site, and approximately 350m north of the site;
 - Covent Garden CA located approximately 500m southeast of the application site;
 - Strand CA located approximately 250m south of the application site;
 - Chancery Lane CA located approximately 500m east of the application site; and
 - Seven Dials (Covent Garden) CA located approximately 200m southeast of the application site.

04 Alternatives and Design Evolution

4.12 The application site is located within an Environment Agency Flood Zone 1, as it is not at risk from flooding from the River Thames or from open Rivers.

4.13 The application site is located within the Holborn area, which is identified by the London Plan 2011 (Ref. 4-3) as suitable for large scale redevelopment or significant increases in jobs and homes, and is based around transport interchanges where increased capacity is planned. It is proposed that the Holborn area will provide a minimum of 200 homes and 2000 new jobs by 2026.

Urban Context

Historical Context

4.14 Although the Proposed Development is a new scheme, it is linked by association with 8 – 10 Southampton Row and has formed its volume, height and massing to be sympathetic to its surroundings.

4.15 8 – 10 Southampton Row is a Grade II listed Edwardian Renaissance, stone faced, commercial building, of six storeys plus two dormer storeys, and was originally built in 1905-6 by Bradshaw Gass and Hope. It is freestanding to the front and sides in an Edwardian Baroque manner and is an early example of a substantial building of steel framed construction. The building also has two levels of basement, with the lower basement being situated beneath the main basement at the rear of the building, and the roof consists of steeply pitched slated roof to eaves with 2 levels of dormers.

4.16 Further details of the historical context of the application site are provided in **ES Volume II: Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment**.

Urban Scales

4.17 The urban scale of the application site within the surrounding area is shown in Figure 4-2. The building heights in the surrounding area are typically medium rise (between 4 and 9 storeys). The Proposed Development is designed to be in line with 8 – 10 Southampton Row. As such, the Proposed Development will be of similar height to the buildings within the surrounding area.

The Public Realm

4.18 Prior to any Crossrail works, whilst Fisher Street acted as a connecting route, providing access from Procter Street and Red Lion Square to Southampton Row and Sicilian Avenue, there was a poor permeability through this road.

Figure 4-2 Urban Scale of the Application Site within the Surrounding Area (looking east)



Approach to the Design

4.19 Taking into account the policies within the LBC Core Strategy document, the design team set out an approach to the design which would:

- Contribute to LBC and central London housing needs;
- Produce a high quality building appropriate to its setting;
- Create an identifiable urban landmark adjacent to Red Lion Square;
- Contribute to strengthening the character of Bloomsbury residential neighbourhood;
- Maximise the use of Holborn's transport infrastructure whilst providing a secure cycle store to accommodate all building residents bicycles;
- Develop a scheme which is inclusive in its design and provide adaptable units for occupants of the building;
- Consider the Crossrail intervention shaft as a functional element of the building which has specific operational requirements; and
- Contribute to enhancing public safety and security of the area.

04 Alternatives and Design Evolution

Key Planning Issues

- 4.20 A number of pre-application meetings with LBC planners took place which highlighted the key planning issues for the Proposed Development. These are the items which had the most influence on the development of the design of the Proposed Development compared to earlier proposals:
- Reducing the height of the Proposed Development to ensure that it suits the neighbouring listed buildings on Southampton Row. In particular, the Proposed Development should be in line with 8 – 10 Southampton Row;
 - The separation distance between the existing windows of 8 – 10 Southampton Row and those of the Proposed Development should be increased to mitigate overlooking;
 - The design and the articulation of the upper storeys should be refined to improve the appearance of the Proposed Development from Red Lion Square; and
 - The ground floor should be refined so that it is better incorporated into the façade design of the residential uses above.

Constraints and Opportunities

Constraints

- 4.21 The Proposed Development has been strongly influenced by a number of important constraints, associated with both current and future uses of the application site and surrounding context, that must be taken into account. These include (but are not limited to):
- Listed buildings in the surrounding area (including the Grade II listed 8 – 10 Southampton Row directly adjacent to the application site and Grade II* listed Baptist Church House);
 - Conservation Areas adjacent to and nearby the application site (e.g. Kingsway and Bloomsbury Conservation Areas);
 - Consideration of the existing UKPN building due to the party wall and existing utilities which pass through the application site;
 - Structural considerations of the Proposed Development, which had to be developed to link with the head house and intervention shaft below. This will be used as intervention and maintenance access for emergency services for the Crossrail network; and
 - Environmental considerations such as noise and vibration, due to the proximity of the adjacent UKPN substation building.

Opportunities

- 4.22 In addition to the constraints identified, there are a number of opportunities at the application site, as follows:
- Exploitation of the application site's excellent PTAL;
 - Potential re-use of the application site as a viable alternative to an intervention shaft and head house only;
 - The opportunity to provide high quality residential units;
 - The opportunity to meet national, regional and local planning policy; and
 - The opportunity to improve the public realm and connectivity from Red Lion Square and Procter Street to Southampton Row and Sicilian Avenue, via Fisher Street.

Alternatives Analysis

- 4.23 Under the EIA Regulations (Ref. 4-4) the ES is required to provide “an outline of the main alternatives studied by the applicant or appellant and an indication of the main reasons for his choice taking into account the environmental effects”. In accordance with this requirement, the sections below present those alternatives to the Proposed Development which have been considered, including:

- The ‘no development’ alternative;
- ‘Alternative sites’; and
- ‘Alternative designs’.

The ‘No Development’ Alternative

- 4.24 The ‘no development’ alternative refers to the option of leaving the application site in the state that it will be in once the Crossrail works are completed (i.e. intervention shaft head house protruding above ground). This option is not applicable as the OSD is ‘committed’ in the Crossrail Act (Ref. 4-5) (Section 14) and the subject of an Undertaking to Parliament, and therefore is not considered further.

Alternative Sites

- 4.25 Due to the primary purpose of the Proposed Development, in that it is an OSD, no alternative sites have been considered.

Alternative Designs

- 4.26 The design of the Proposed Development has undergone a number of iterations in response to consultation and the key planning issues outlined above.

- 4.27 The pre-application meeting with English Heritage (Ref 4-1) was positively received. The presentation given at this meeting showed how the design of the Proposed Development had developed in consideration to the adjoining Conservation Areas and the listed building at 8-10 Southampton Row. The design has evolved so that it relates to the historical buildings through building lines and through the scale of the development and materials used.

- 4.28 The remainder of the chapter details the design evolution of the Proposed Development, in relation to building height, massing, façade articulation and the public realm.

Design Evolution

Height, Massing and Core Development

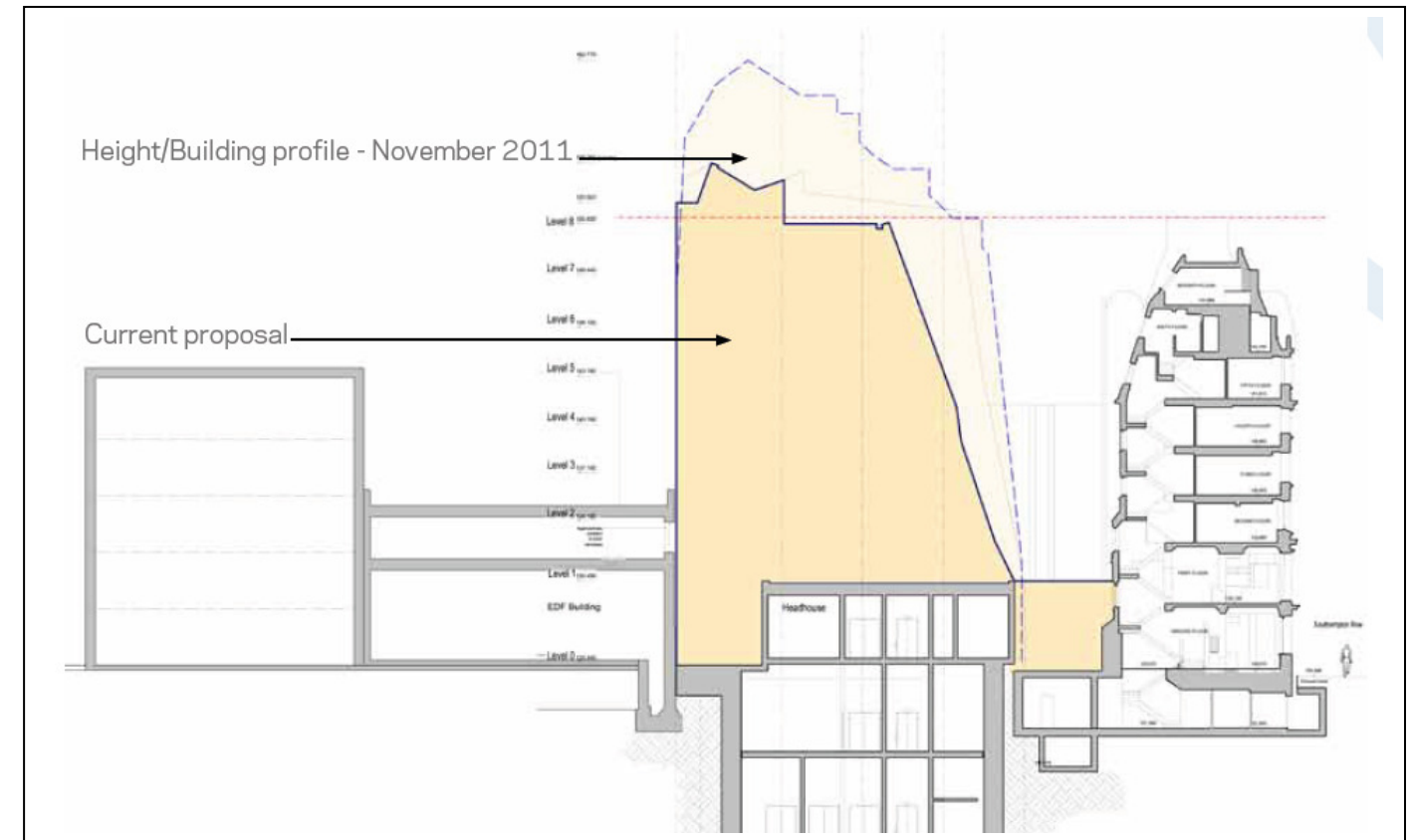
- 4.29 From November 2011, the form, height and massing as well as the articulation of the façades of the Proposed Development has evolved as shown in Figure 4-3, which shows the evolution of the design from concept through to the Proposed Development.

04 Alternatives and Design Evolution

Figure 4-3 Summary of Design Principles Governing Height and Massing



Figure 4-4 Reduction in Height following November 2011



4.30 The broad scale of the development has been reduced to be more in keeping with that of its surroundings.

4.31 Figure 4-4 illustrates how height has been a key consideration in the design evolution. The overall height of the building has been reduced by two storeys from the initial concept in November 2011, so that it is more in line with the listed building 8 – 10 Southampton Row. However, the roof top feature is raised slightly above the line of 8-10 Southampton Row to compliment the other surrounding roofscape.

4.32 Figure 4-4 also shows the consideration given to the massing of the Proposed Development. The massing, angle and profile of the proposed building has been adjusted to create a greater distance between the building and the listed building 8 – 10 Southampton Row.

Façade Development, Facet Form and Materials

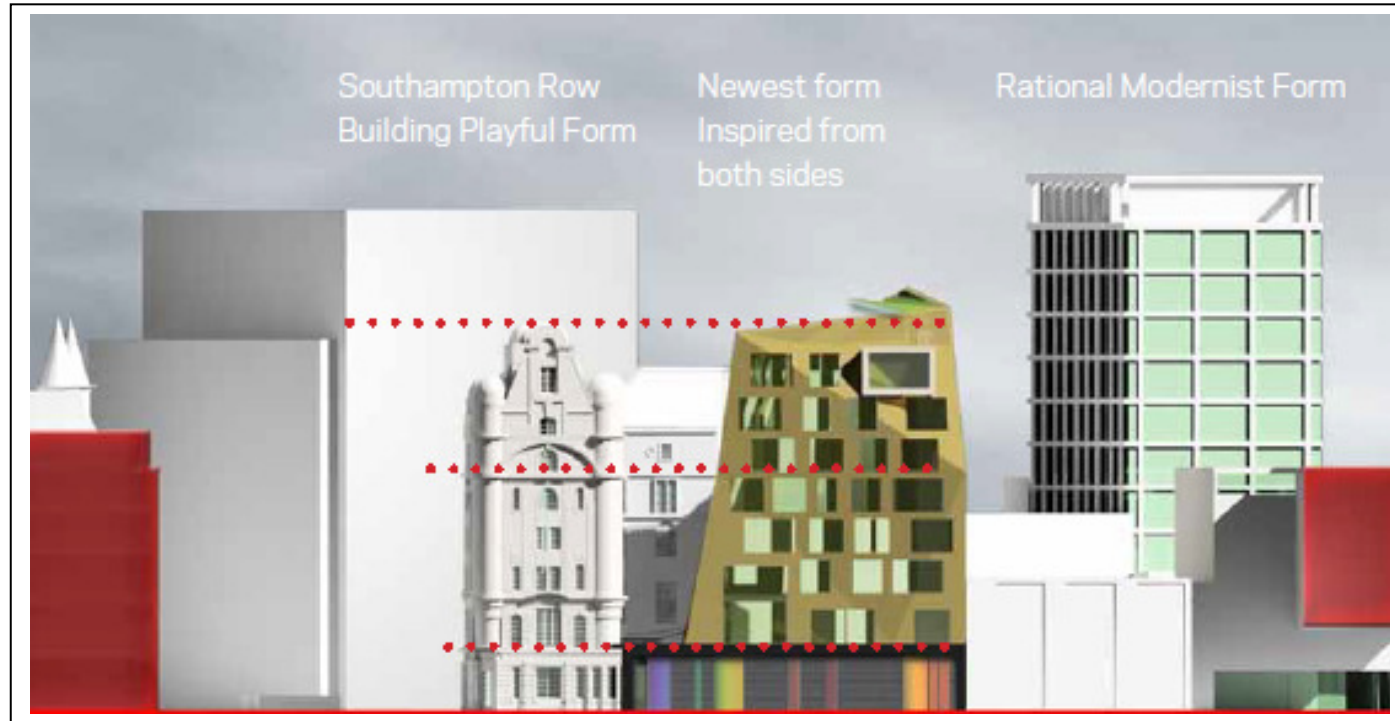
4.33 Once the massing and organisation of the building's use was ascertained, further work was then required to develop the form, façades and public realm of the Proposed Development. The listed building at 8 – 10 Southampton Row has helped influence the façade design.

4.34 The facet form of the Proposed Development has also been designed to bring diagonal variations which reflect light to lower levels, complimenting the listed 8 – 10 Southampton Row. In addition, the facet form also responds to the window sizes of 8 – 10 Southampton Row.

4.35 The relationship between the listed building and the proposed building has been promoted through the introduction of horizontal reference lines to the listed building (as illustrated by Figure 4-5). Figure 4-5 shows the newest form of the Proposed Development which has been designed to reflect the animated façade character of Southampton Row.

04 Alternatives and Design Evolution

Figure 4-5 Newest Form of the Proposed Development



4.36 There has been a review of the external appearance of the Proposed Development, with investigation into a number of materials. A key driver was the fact that the Proposed Development would need to integrate with the existing head house, yet maintain the connection with the listed building. The adjacent Kingsway and Bloomsbury Conservation Areas have also influenced the material choice and colour.

4.37 Several cladding systems and finishes were investigated and designed to ensure that the Proposed Development is consistent with the qualities of the surrounding buildings, whilst also creating interest. It was decided that a contemporary material (copper alloys) which would lift and compliment 8 – 10 Southampton Row, alongside the existing surrounding brick and stone buildings, would be used.

4.38 The building has also been designed so that it acknowledges the longer distance views, through a contemporary design and sloped facets which relate to traditional roofing design.

Public Realm

4.39 The Proposed Development has a key opportunity to improve the public realm and connection from Procter Street and Red Lion Square to Southampton Row and Sicilian Avenue. The Proposed Development will enrich the pedestrian experience as the ground floor will be framed in a high quality, rich material and there will be a possible art based installation in between the head house louvers. This should encourage pedestrian flow from Red Lion Square, through Fisher Street, to Sicilian Avenue.

4.40 Fig 4-6 shows this pedestrian route which is proposed for improvement.

Figure 4-6 Pedestrian Route which will be improved (in red)



Conclusions

4.41 Analysis of the application site context, interaction with the Crossrail intervention shaft and head house, consultation with the stakeholders and consideration of constraints, opportunities and alternatives have led to the systematic evolution of the design, the outcome of which is described in **Chapter 5: The Proposed Development** of this ES.

References

- Ref. 4-1 HOK / Jacobs (2012); Fisher Street Crossrail OSD Pre-Application Presentation to English Heritage [19th September 2012]
- Ref. 4-2 HOK (2012; Fisher Street OSD Design and Access Statement
- Ref. 4-3 Greater London Authority (2011); The London Plan – Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London.
- Ref. 4-4 Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 (SI 2011/1824).
- Ref. 4-5 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (2008); The Crossrail Act (C.18)