

- 3.15 Stephenson Way is essentially a back street in nature, its southern side formed of the rear parts of the buildings facing Euston Road. A variety of buildings of different uses, ages and appearances line the northern side. The street has no particularly distinctive character.
- 3.16 The draft revised Bloomsbury Conservation Area Character Appraisal identifies Bentley House as being a 'positive contributor' to the character and appearance of the conservation area in Sub-area 1 (Euston Road). It is similar in age, design and use to many of the 'university, hospital and institutional buildings' referred to in the Character Appraisal, and that is a factor in assessing the contribution of a building to the character and appearance of a conservation area.
- 3.17 194A Euston Road/1 Melton Street is a large Grade II* listed building at the junction of Melton street and Euston Road, facing onto Euston Square. It is internally connected to the 11-bay 1930s building between its three-bay pedimented front on Euston Road and 200 Euston Road - this technically renders the building to be listed (by physical connection, and by ancillarity of original purpose and subsequent use), though it is shown in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area draft conservation area appraisal as an unlisted 'positive contributor'. On Melton Street, No. 9 Melton Street, though linked internally to 194 Euston Road/1 Melton Street, is separately listed Grade II. On the southern side of Euston Road is the Grade II Friends' Meeting House at Nos.173-177 Euston Road and 30 Gordon Street.
- 3.18 To the west is the 1980s office building at 210 Euston Road. Both 210 and 104 Euston Road are taller than Bentley House, and the difference is considerable: 194 Euston Road is taller by three storeys, and 210 Euston Road by at least four.

The significance of 200 Euston Road and its context

- 3.19 194 Euston Road/1 Melton Street and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area are 'designated heritage assets', as

defined by Annex 2 of Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment. Buildings identified as ‘positive contributors’ in the draft Bloomsbury Conservation Area conservation area appraisal can be considered as undesignated heritage assets, and in the present context these are 200 Euston Road, 183-193 Euston Road (the original Wellcome Trust headquarters building on the southern side of Euston Road at the junction of Gordon Street).

- 3.20 ‘Significance’ is defined in the PPS as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic’. The ‘Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide’ that accompanies and explains the PPS puts it slightly differently – as ‘the sum of its architectural, historic, artistic or archaeological interest’.
- 3.21 These assets and their significance are composed of clear *historical, aesthetic and communal value*¹. In terms of *historic value*, the buildings and their relationship to one another and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area *illustrates* the development of Bloomsbury’s educational institutions and commercial/governmental buildings, and the gradual transformation of this area of London to accommodate them over an extended period. They are a physical record of the transformation of the Euston Road. The individual buildings are *associated* with a notable University publishing house, a major research charity and a religious denomination. The buildings are also associated with important architectural figures: Curtis Green in the case of 200 Euston Road and Arthur Beresford Pite in the case of 194 Euston Road/1 Melton Street. Similarly 193 Euston Road is associated with the American-born pharmaceutical magnate Sir Henry Wellcome.

¹ Reference is made here to the Heritage Values discussed in *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance*, English Heritage, April 2008

- 3.22 The buildings have obvious *aesthetic* value. 194 Euston Road/1 Melton Street is in particular a fine example of the Edwardian use of the Greek style. Though not his finest building, 200 Euston Road is a good example of the work of Curtis Green's transition between a more historicist style and the more modern work he undertook later. The listed and unlisted buildings and the conservation area in which they are found have *communal* value: Bloomsbury is an important quarter of London and the Euston Road an important thoroughfare.

Potential effects on heritage assets

- 3.23 In terms of potential effect on the heritage assets surrounding the site, the most immediate will be that upon the 200 Euston Road itself. Views of 200 Euston Road from the southern pavement of the Euston Road looking west inevitably include the Grade II* building at 194 Euston Road/1 Melton Street. The rear parts of the listed building can be seen in the context of the rear of 200 Euston Road when looking east along Stephenson Way. The impact on the setting of this listed building would be the second principal impact. The third would be the effect, collectively, on the other buildings mentioned above and the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Conclusion

- 3.24 The building was built for an academic publisher during the period that saw the erection of similar academic buildings in Bloomsbury in a style that sought to combine classicism with modernity, the result being a stripped-down, art deco appearance. Examples include Senate House and Birkbeck College by Charles Holden, and the Wellcome Building.
- 3.25 The building occupies a peripheral location in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, the boundary of the conservation area being drawn to specifically include it and the listed buildings immediately to the east. The

contribution that the building makes to the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area is in its frontage to Euston Road: Bentley House is part of a continuous wall of buildings on the northern side of the Euston Road at this point, and nothing is visible of any other part of the building from within the conservation area. The rear elevation of the building to Stephenson Way is approximately consistent with the overall style of the building, but is very clearly not as significant as the front, and has nothing that makes a distinct contribution to the overall character of the building. The building behind its elevations is unremarkable and largely utilitarian in its appearance and layout.

- 3.26 Bentley House is far from being a notable work by Curtis Green, who was responsible for many fine buildings. His reputation justifiably lies in his set-piece Piccadilly projects and later examples such as the moderne-style Queen's Hotel and railway offices in Leeds (listed Grade II). Though containing some interesting compositional features, it is an uneasy building in stylistic terms, and could be seen as a slightly unsuccessful attempt by Green to move towards a more stripped and modern approach. The building seems to lack a satisfactory vertical termination – it stops rather suddenly at the screen wall. This situation isn't helped by the presence of a large and prominent plant room that was added later on the Euston Road frontage.

4.0 The proposed development

- 4.1 The proposed redevelopment of Bentley House are illustrated in the design drawings of TP Bennett Architects, and described in the accompanying Design & Access Statement.

The scheme

- 4.2 The proposed development involves the retention of the portion of the building facing Euston Road, to the depth of the rooms that presently sit behind that façade. This will include the retention of the towers in the round and the brick screen wall that runs between them.
- 4.3 The building behind, including the rear elevation, will be removed and be replaced by new accommodation providing student housing in a mix of unit types. A new elevation will be made to Stephenson Way. Additional, set-back floors will be placed on the building, taking advantage of the stepped nature of the existing frontage to Euston Road, and the greater height of the neighbouring properties.
- 4.4 The architectural expression of the additional floors to the Euston Road elevation draws upon the aesthetic principles of Curtis Green's design for Bentley House, and the proposal is based on the idea of extending his building in a manner that is consistent with its style and proportions.
- 4.5 Given its separation from the Euston Road elevation, and the proposed full replacement of what exists, the new rear elevation of the building will be in a discernibly contemporary style, but linked to the in design spirit, in choice of materials and in selected details to the southern elevation.

The Euston Road frontage

- 4.6 The existing main front Portland stone and brick façade is retained. Some minor adjustment will be made to the principal entrance to facilitate level access. Above, the

towers remain unaltered but the brick screen wall is removed.

- 4.7 Set back between the towers, a new two storey wall is placed slightly forward of the line of the existing screen wall, but still behind the central opening to the inner-facing (east and west) elevations of the towers at parapet level of the screen wall. It extends over third, fourth and fifth floor levels. It is composed of five bays of windows, echoing the building below. The two levels of windows at third and fourth floors in each bay are held within a Portland stone architrave. Within the architrave the windows are surrounded by a matching brick; between the bays the façade is in Portland stone.
- 4.8 At fifth floor level, groups of three narrow windows take their place directly above each of the five windows below, occupying the width of the area defined by the stone architrave to the windows at third and fourth floors. There is a slim architrave around each of these narrow openings and a string course and coping to the roof parapet above. This level is clad in a brick that matches that around the windows below.



Fig 1: The proposed elevation

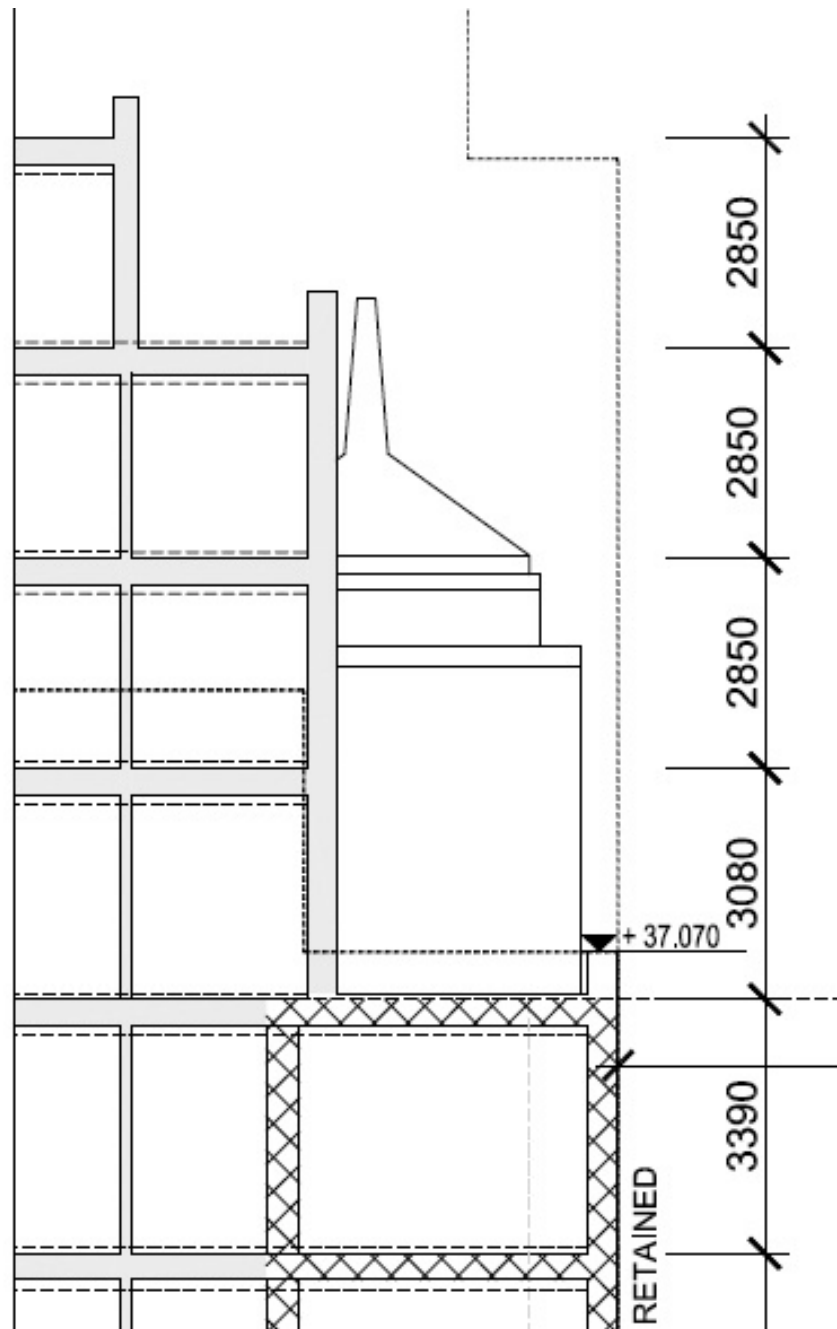


Fig 2: Schematic proposed section through the Euston Road frontage at high level

- 4.9 To either side of the central five bays a set-back brick wall rises behind the towers, separated from their rear wall by a gap. It contains at fifth floor the same narrow windows as to the central bays at fifth floor. A further set-back sixth

floor level is clad entirely in a metal material, in the manner of traditional roofs.

The elevation to Stephenson Way

- 4.10 This elevation is, as discussed earlier, of notably lesser quality than that to Euston Road. Its inherent value and contribution to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area is discussed in the next section of the report when the merits of replacing it are considered.



Figures 3 and 4: the Stephenson Way elevation, existing and proposed



Figure 5: the proposed Stephenson Way elevation

- 4.11 Whereas it is possible to work with the levels created by the fenestration of the front elevation to Euston Road in order to provide residential accommodation, the difference in level between Euston Road and Stephenson Way, and internal level changes, makes it difficult to create level floor plates in a new building while retaining the rear elevation. In any case, the lesser quality of the Stephenson Way elevation does not justify the consequent impact on the efficiency of the development.
- 4.12 The elevation is defined by a brick grid, within which is the lighter, opaque or transparent panels that form the glazing of the rooms. The grid is organised in pairs of openings. A stairs is contained in one of these openings, but not specifically expressed on the facade. Within the openings that provide light to the student rooms are lighter materials: coloured opaque or transparent panels above brick inset spandrels. Some of the openings have coloured glass fins that project at right angles to the

façade. The discipline of the regular masonry grid will thus be counterpointed by the asymmetry and colour of the openings, not to mention the actual evidence of life that will be present in them.

- 4.13 The elevation is made of the same brick as that in the new elements on the Euston Road elevation. The openings are edged with the same slim architrave. At ground level, the opening extends vertically across the slightly raised basement and the ground floor. Above the third floor windows there is a deep brick parapet before the set-back fourth floor. This is composed of pairs of windows – without an architrave – directly above each pair of windows below. The vertical composition, as well as the arrangement of bays and windows, is thus given a visually satisfying hierarchy, with a colonnaded base created by the line of taller openings, a middle of suitable proportions and a top floor that is fenestrated in manner that visually lessens its significance in relation to the base and middle.
- 4.14 At fifth floor, a glazed study lounge sits lightly above the solidity of the fourth floor. It is constrained in width, occupying the width of the central pair of openings below and half the pair (i.e. one opening) to either side.
- 4.15 The overall height of this new elevation is less than that of the adjacent listed building, and roughly the same as that of the rear part of 210 Euston Road. The central part of the building, rising to six storeys, is set well behind the Stephenson Way elevation and will be invisible from the street.
- 4.16 The overall effect of the new elevation to Stephenson Way will be to improve the visual quality of an unremarkable street. While it was sensible to draw the line of the conservation area around the building as a whole, Stephenson Way can hardly be said to have anything to do with the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area as a whole.

The evolution of the proposed scheme

- 4.17 While an earlier version of the scheme sought to contrast the new storeys with the architecture of the existing building with an appearance that was the opposite of Curtis Green's aesthetic, the present proposal is driven by the idea of extending and developing his concept – to provide additional accommodation in a way that may have prevailed had more accommodation been proposed in the 1930s. This is in response to comments and advice from Camden Council in pre-application discussions, and further analysis of the building.

5.0 The policy context

- 5.1 This section of the report briefly sets out the range of national and local policy and guidance relevant to the consideration of change in the historic built environment

National policy: Planning Policy Statement 5

- 5.2 The legislation governing listed buildings and conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 5.3 On Tuesday 23 March 2010, the Government published the new Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, which replaces Planning Policy Guidance 15 (Planning and the Historic Environment, 1995) and Planning Policy Guidance 16 (Archaeology and Planning) with immediate effect.
- 5.4 The PPS sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment. It is accompanied by a 'Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide', published by English Heritage 'to help practitioners implement the policy, including the legislative requirements that underpin it'. The PPS consists of an introductory section called 'Planning for the Historic Environment' and a 'Policies' section. The 'Policies' section is divided into 'Plan-making policies' and 'Development Management'.
- 5.5 The 'Government's Objectives' in respect of the historic built environment are defined as
- To deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions concerning the historic environment:
 - To conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance; and
 - To contribute to our knowledge and understanding of our past by ensuring that opportunities are taken to capture evidence from the historic environment

and to make this publicly available, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

- 5.6 The 'Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide' urges local planning authorities and applicants to consider 'the embodied energy within existing buildings and the whole-life costs of any new scheme or proposed alterations'.
- 5.7 Paragraph 10 of the 'Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide' says:
- A key feature of the PPS is its holistic approach to the historic environment. The elements of the historic environment that are worthy of consideration in planning matters are called 'heritage assets'. This term embraces all manner of features, including: buildings, parks and gardens, standing, buried and submerged remains, areas, sites and landscapes, whether designated or not and whether or not capable of designation.*
- 5.8 Annex 2 of the PPS provides a formal definition of the term 'heritage asset':
- A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment. They include designated heritage assets (as defined in this PPS) and assets identified by the local planning authority during the process of decision-making or through the plan-making process (including local listing).*
- 5.9 Policy HE3 'Regional and local planning approaches' indicates how regional spatial strategies and local development frameworks 'should set out a positive, proactive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment in their area'. It describes the contribution of the historic environment 'by virtue of':
- (i) its influence on the character of the environment and an area's sense of place;*

(ii) its potential to be a catalyst for regeneration in an area, in particular through leisure, tourism and economic development;

(iii) the stimulus it can provide to inspire new development of imaginative and high quality design;

(iv) the re-use of existing fabric, minimising waste; and;

(v) its mixed and flexible patterns of land use that are likely to be, and remain, sustainable.

5.10 Policy HE6 of the PPS, 'Information requirements for applications for consent affecting heritage assets', requires applicants 'to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance' so as 'to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset'. This information 'together with an assessment of the impact of the proposal' should be incorporated in applications.

5.11 Policy HE7 is entitled 'Policy principles guiding the determination of applications for consent relating to all heritage assets'. Paragraph HE7.2 says:

In considering the impact of a proposal on any heritage asset, local planning authorities should take into account the particular nature of the significance of the heritage asset and the value that it holds for this and future generations. This understanding should be used by the local planning authority to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposals.

5.12 Paragraph HE7.4 says:

Local planning authorities should take into account:

– the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and of utilising their positive role in place-shaping; and

– the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets and the historic environment generally can make to the establishment and maintenance of sustainable

communities and economic vitality by virtue of the factors set out in HE3.1

5.13 Paragraph HE7.5 says:

Local planning authorities should take into account the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment. The consideration of design should include scale, height, massing, alignment, materials and use.

5.14 The 'Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide' gives, at Paragraph 79, a number of 'potential heritage benefits that could weigh in favour of a proposed scheme' in addition to guidance on 'weighing-up' [sic] proposals in Paragraphs 76 to 78. These are that:

- It sustains or enhances the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting;
- It reduces or removes risks to a heritage asset;
- It secures the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation;
- It makes a positive contribution to economic vitality and sustainable communities;
- It is an appropriate design for its context and makes a positive contribution to the appearance, character, quality and local distinctiveness of the historic environment;
- It better reveals the significance of a heritage asset and therefore enhances our enjoyment of it and the sense of place.

5.15 Policy HE9 provides 'Additional policy principles guiding the consideration of applications for consent relating to designated heritage assets'. It sets out a basic presumption in favour of the conservation of designated assets, and says that 'the more significant the designated heritage asset, the greater the presumption in favour of its