

BARTLETT FACULTY REDEVELOPMENT 22 GORDON STREET, LONDON, WC1

THE CONSERVATION CONTEXT

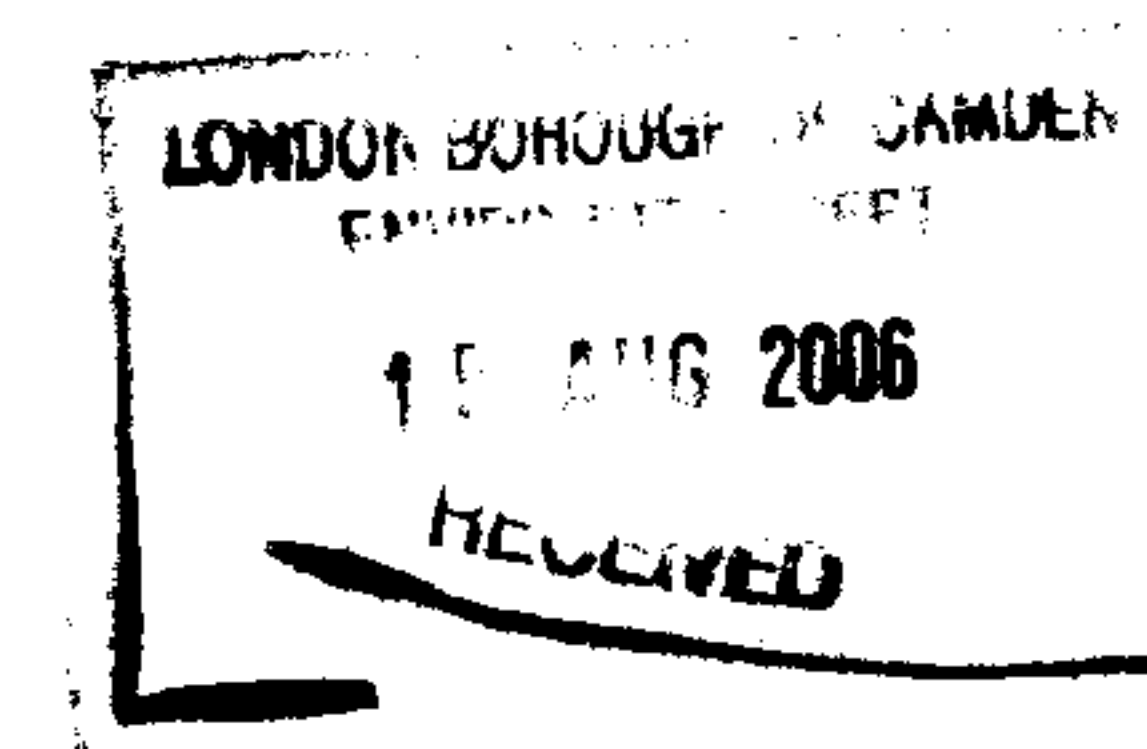
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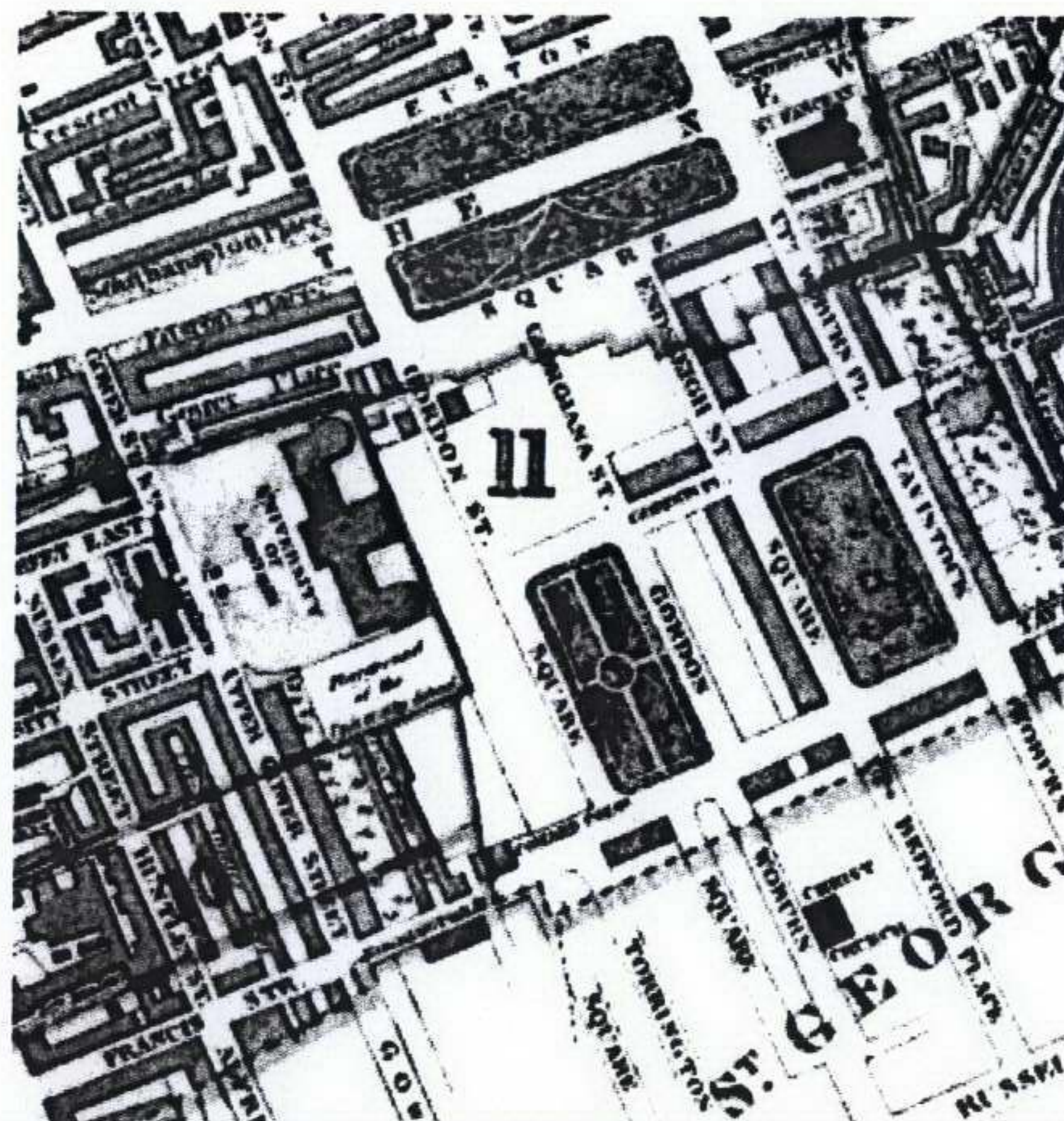


Figure 1 Extract from parish map c. 1830

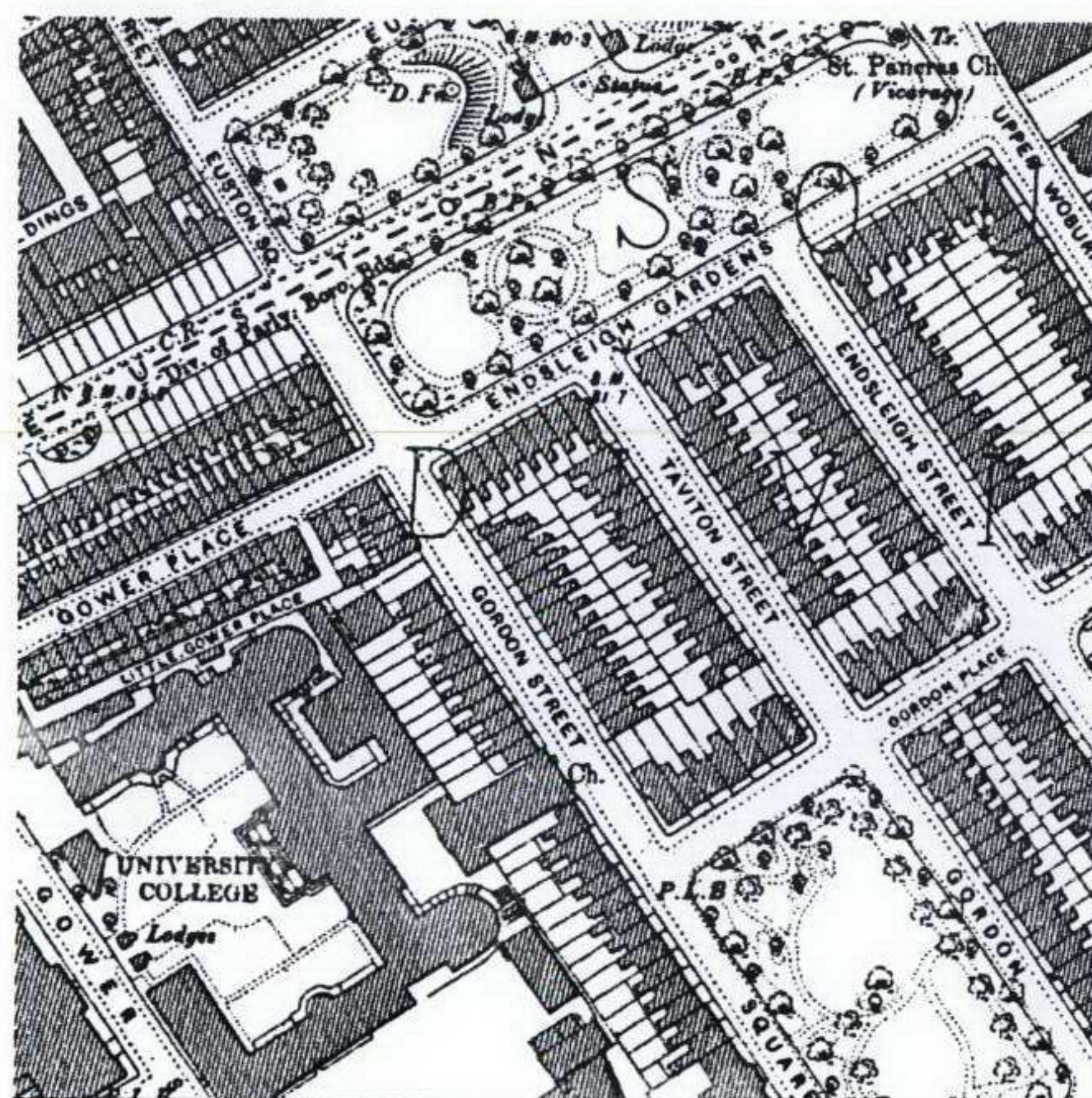


Figure 2 Extract from Ordnance Survey 1900

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report is a supplement to the Design Proposal Document dated 16.2.06 and originally submitted on 17.03.06 as part of the Planning Application for the redevelopment of University College's Faculty of the Built Environment otherwise known as the Bartlett.

It is written in response to recent consultations with English Heritage as part of the Planning Consultation exercise. Specifically the following were identified as issues to be addressed.

- 1 A consolidated Conservation report. These aspects are dealt with in sections 2, 3, 4, and 5.
- 2 Design issues specific to the relationship of the proposal to the adjoining properties, particularly Taverton Street. This is contained in sections 6 and 7
- 3 Clarification of UCL's masterplan as part of a wider 'Estates' strategy. This is dealt with in section 8.

The report is an elaboration of material already contained within the Proposal Document but addresses the above matters in more detail. Reference should be made to the Proposal Document for a more detailed statement of the elevational treatment of the building and other design matters.

2.0 NORTH BLOOMSBURY: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The north part of what later became known as Bloomsbury, was originally laid out by Thomas Cubitt as a residential area. It involved amalgamating parts of the Bedford and Southampton Estates and extended northwards to Euston Grove and the area now occupied by Euston Station. Although building commenced in the 1820s, much of area including Taverton Street (formerly Georgiana Street) and Gordon Street remained undeveloped until the late 1850s. This was partly due to a temporary downturn in the speculative housing market. Also, University College, which was built at the same time just to the west, was seen as an intrusive neighbour. Together with the building of Euston Station nearby in 1837 and increased traffic thus generated along Euston road, they all had a blighting effect on the area.

Nevertheless, the area when completed with its characteristic squares and brick and stucco clad terraces, was seen as one of the finest examples of late Georgian domestic architecture although it should be noted that some of the later terraces were completed in a slightly more contemporary style. The surviving houses in Endsleigh Gardens, nos. 9 – 14, show this clearly. These houses and those on the Wates House site originally faced onto Euston Square South. The residential development to the north of Euston Square was eventually replaced by the station development.

2.2 THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

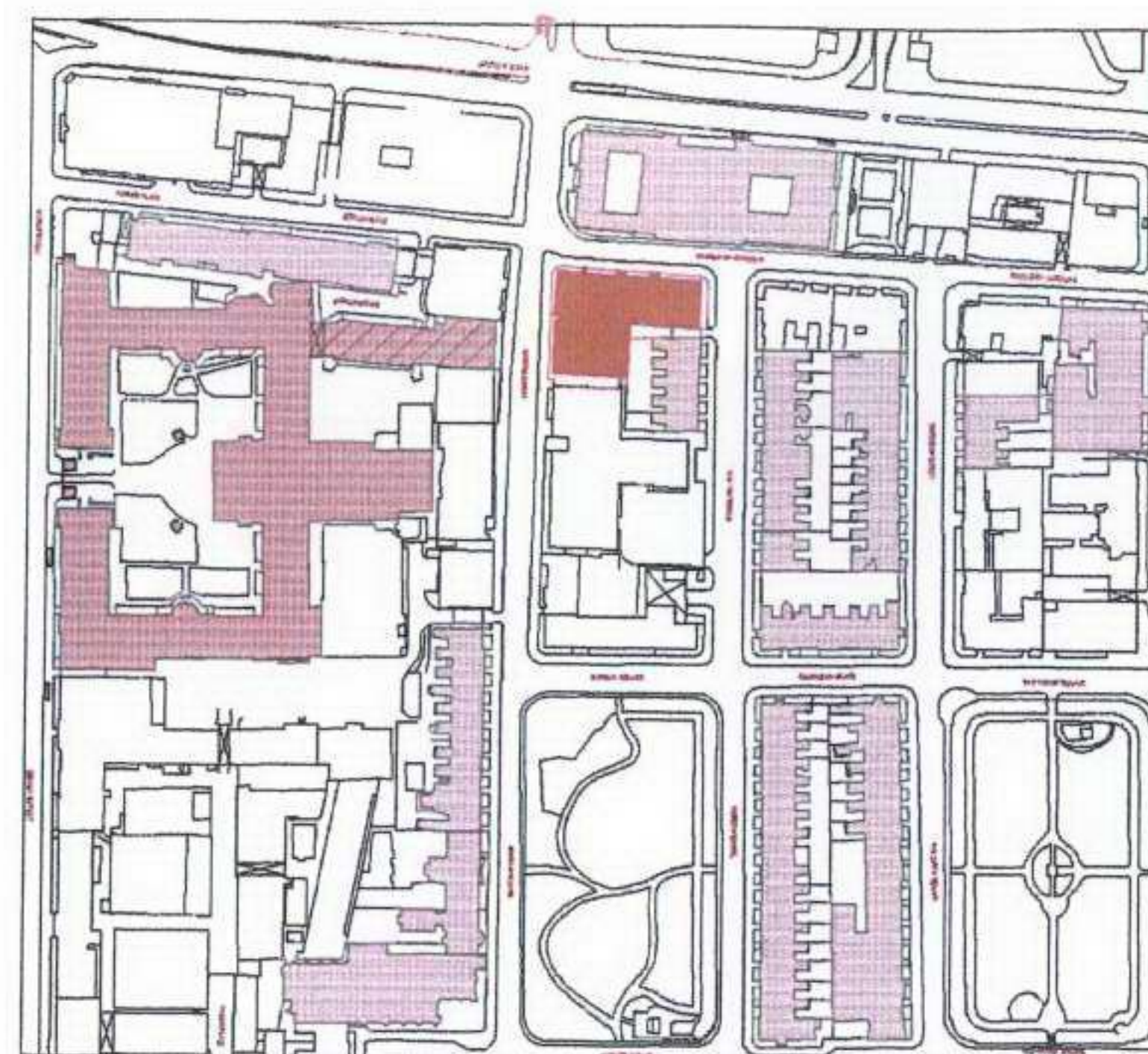
At the beginning of the twentieth century the character of north Bloomsbury began to change. Many of the terraces were converted into hotels including the eight houses on the Wates House site, and a new 9-storey hotel was built on the other side of Gordon Street. By the inter war period, the exclusive residential nature of Bloomsbury was in decline as hotels, offices and the nearby University exerted new pressures and domestic use became more or less extinct in the immediate post war years. The original gated entrances were removed in the 1920s.

University College was founded in 1828 in Gower Street with the completion of the original building by William Wilkins. The site backed onto the residential area and over the next hundred and fifty years, development has extended throughout the entire block between Gower Street and Gordon Street. The University suffered much war damage particularly the buildings on the Gordon Street frontage, legacies of which remain today.

Since the war the University has acquired or leased properties on both sides of Gordon Street, including the entire block bounded by Gordon Street, Taverton Street, Gordon Square and Endsleigh Gardens, much of which had been damaged in the war. Over the past fifty years this block has been progressively developed and is now become a major focus of University College. The only original houses are nos. 21 – 24 Taverton Street, which survive as a fragment of the original terrace. Of the other surviving terraces in the area, the majority have been acquired by the University and most have been converted into student halls of residence.

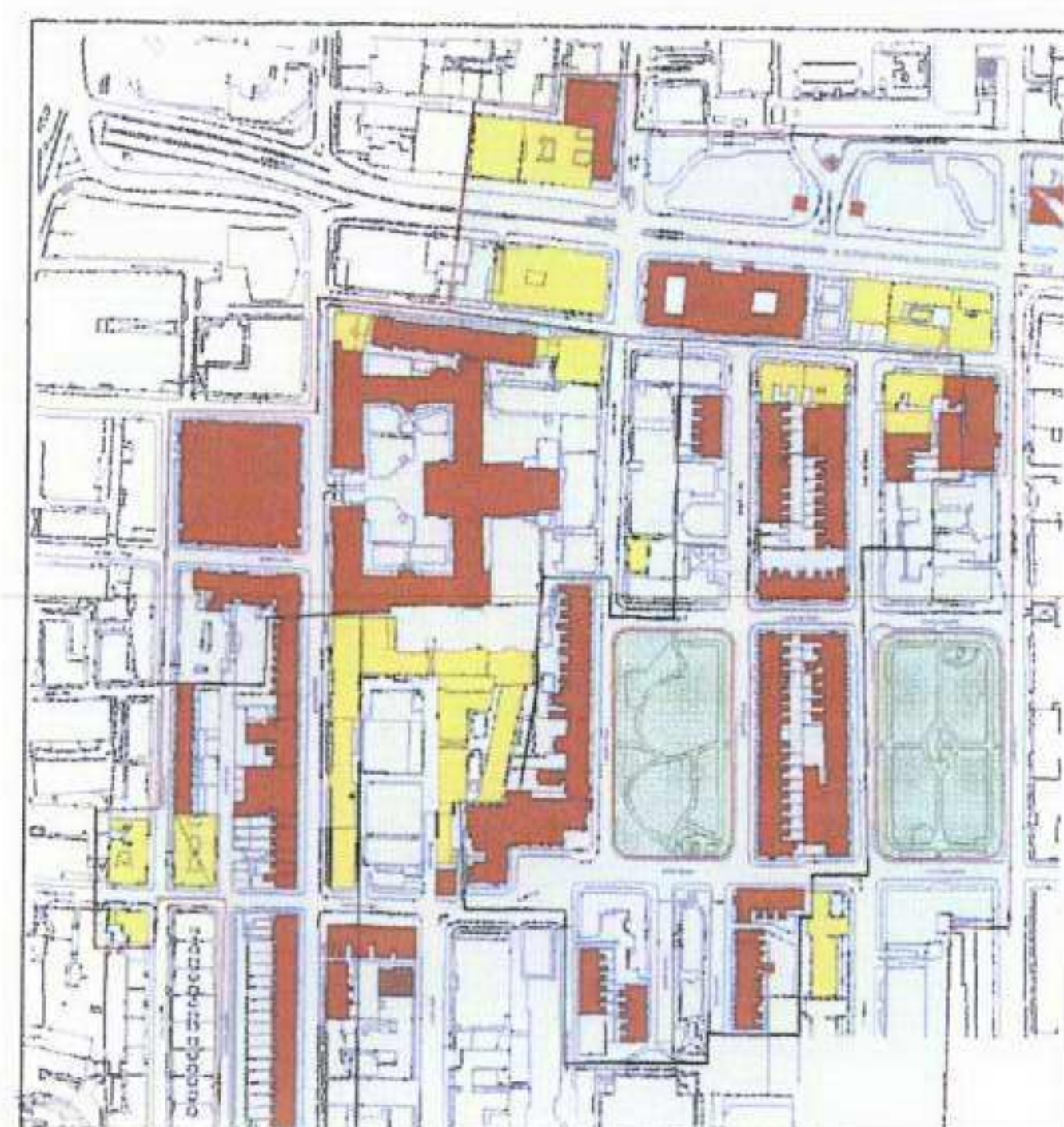
Further development took place when the leases of Euston Square fell vacant in 1924 and Euston Square Gardens were built on and renamed Endsleigh Gardens. Drayton/Friends House dates from this period. The adjoining building occupied by the Wellcome Foundation was built in the mid 1930s and replaced houses facing onto Euston road. Wates House itself was built in 1975 replacing a short terrace of the original houses, which had been converted into a hotel at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In summary the character and land use of North Bloomsbury has been in a state of continual evolution since originally built. The catalysts of change being commercial use, University expansion and an inner urban setting confined within the ring road and the west end on the other side. The University will continue to be the main driver of development and the challenge for the future will be to ensure this is consolidated in a progressive sustainable manner.



Grade I
Grade II
Listed by virtue of attachment to Wilkins Building
Bartlett Site

Figure 3 Location Plan showing adjacent Listed Buildings



Listed buildings
Positive Contributors
Squares on Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest

Figure 4 Bloomsbury Conservation Area (West)

3.0 CONSERVATION AREA AND LISTED BUILDINGS

The site lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area (West). The relationship of the site to the Conservation Area and to the listed buildings within the Conservation Area is shown in figures 3 and 4.

The listed buildings fall into two broad categories, namely the original residential terraces and selected landmark buildings including the Wilkins Building, the original UCL main building. The majority of the terraces are in UCL or ULU ownership and have been converted to student hostels. The main UCL site has been progressively extended and developed from the original William Wilkins building (Grade I listed), although none of the buildings immediately overlooking the site from the west side of Gordon Street are separately listed. Drayton House and the original Taverton Street houses are listed (Grade II).

For a detailed description of the relevant buildings adjoining the proposed site, refer to sections 4 and 5 below.

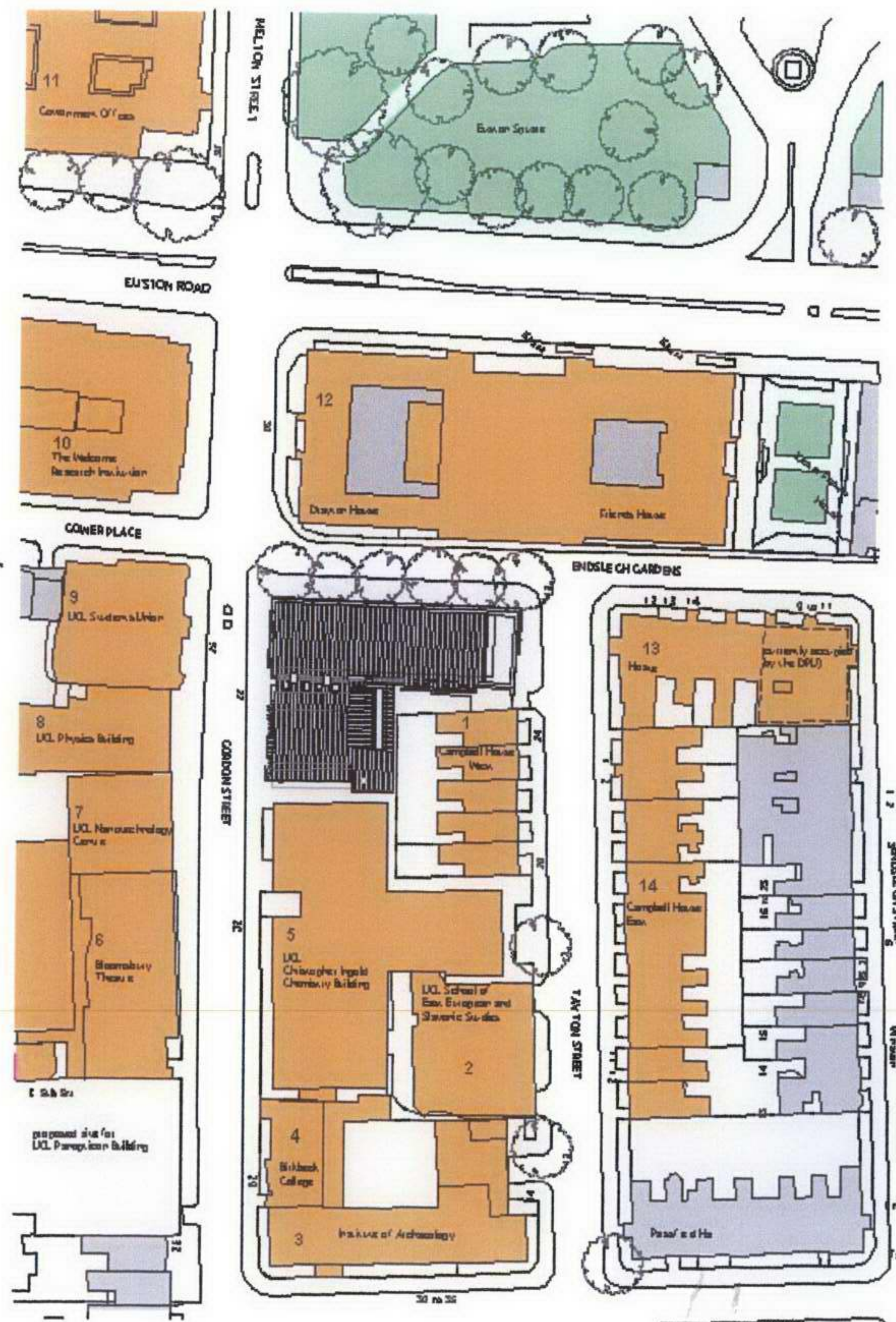


Figure 5 Context Map showing adjacent buildings

4.0 SCHEDULE OF ADJACENT BUILDINGS

- 1 Campbell House (West) (20 - 24 Taverton Street)
- 2 School of East European and Slavonic Studies (16 Taverton Street)
- 3 Institute of Archaeology (Gordon Square)
- 4 Birkbeck College (29 Gordon Square)
- 5 The Christopher Ingold Building (20 Gordon Street)
- 6 Bloomsbury Theatre (15 Gordon Street)
- 7 Nanotechnology Centre (17 - 19 Gordon Street)
- 8 Physics Building (21 Gordon Street)
- 9 The UCL Students Union (25 Gordon Street)
- 10 Welcome Building (Euston Road)
- 11 Government Office Building (9 and 30 Melton Street)
- 12 Drayton House (30 Gordon Street)
- 13 9 - 14 Endsleigh Gardens
- 14 Campbell House (East) (1 - 12 Taverton Street)



1

**Campbell House (West)
20 – 24 Taviton Street**

These buildings date from c.1855 but probably designed much earlier. They form part of an original terrace on the west side of Taviton St. adjacent to Wates House and in recent years they have been converted by UCL for use as a student Hall of residence. The buildings are 4 stories high plus Basement and are grade II listed. Although somewhat plainer in style than other Cubitt terraces, the houses have stuccoed Basement & Ground Floors, plain brickwork above and a prominent cornice line. Together they display a declension of elevational scale wholly characteristic of the very best of the original development.



2

**SEESS Building
16 Taviton Street**

The new building for the School of East European and Slavonic Studies was opened in 2005 on what had previously been a vacant site in the block. It is conceived as a state of the art sustainable building and its defining architectural characteristics derive from its reliance on passive ventilation systems giving it a dominant roofline of chimneys and flues. It is built of brick with whimsical post-modern fenestration giving it an idiosyncratic aesthetic very different from the classical articulation of the original houses in Taviton Street.



3

**Archaeology Institute and
Examinations Halls
Gordon Square**

This was one of the first post war developments in the block and is a plain seven-storey brick building with concrete to ground floor level and surrounds to some of the windows. It may be seen as a 'bookend' to the block. It has housed the Archaeology Institute since 1948.

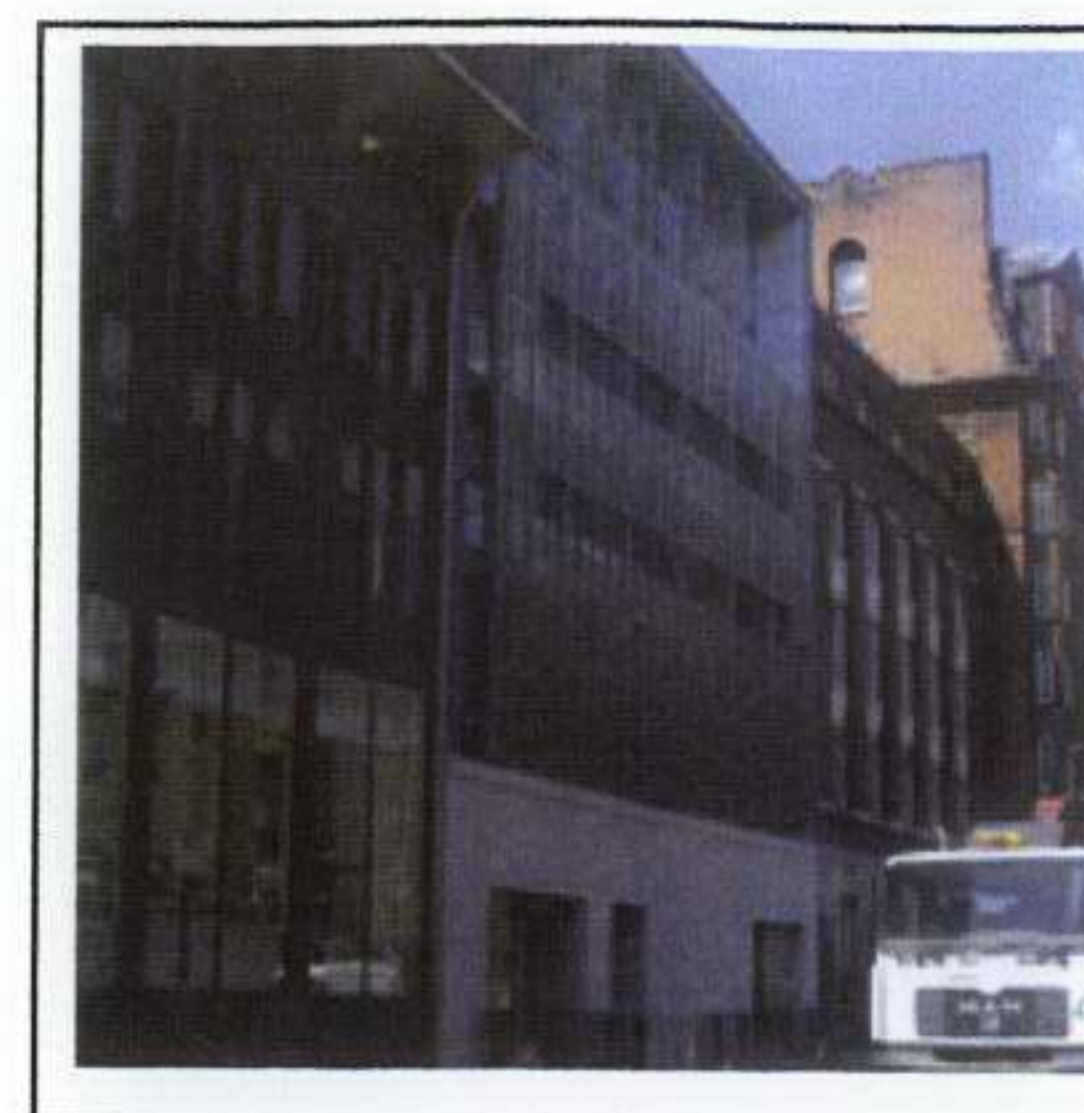
5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF ADJACENT BUILDINGS

The surrounding context is mixed, being mainly made up of the surviving terraces and recent University Buildings. This section seeks to show that the mix of buildings in the vicinity now provides a new and evolving heritage, which sets up new perspectives and challenges.



4
Birkbeck College
29 Gordon Square

Originally built in the 1930s, this is a rendered 4 storey building with classical details although in non-classical proportions and with metal casement windows. It is now occupied by a Department of Birkbeck College and sits somewhat incongruously between the Archaeology Institute and the Chemistry Department.



7
Nanotechnology Building
17-19 Gordon Street

This 5-storey building was completed in 2004 and replaced two surviving houses in the original terrace. It has a metal panel and glazed façade in Minimalist style. The Ground floor is faced in render and reflects the line of adjoining buildings.



5
Chemistry Building
20 Gordon Street

Known as the Christopher Ingold Building, this was built in 1969 and houses the Chemistry Faculty. It extends down Gordon Street forming one of the largest separate buildings within the precinct. It is a concrete panel building, four and in parts five storeys high, with extensive plant and projectile flues at roof level. As such it may be taken as a representative example of the 'brutalist' architectural style then current. The adjoining Auditorium was built in conjunction with the building the previous year.



8
Physics Building
21 Gordon Street

This was originally the Ramsey Memorial Laboratory within the Chemical Engineering Department and considered important enough to be opened by the Duke of Kent in 1931. Badly damaged in the war, the facade has now been incorporated into the Physics Department and is inaccessible from Gordon Street. It is constructed in plain classical style, predominantly in brick with Portland Stone to the ground floor and with an additional storey added at a later stage. It remains a lacuna in the street elevation.



6
Bloomsbury Theatre
15 Gordon Street

Opened in 1968 as the Collegiate Theatre, it was renamed UCL Bloomsbury in 1992 and replaced a longstanding bomb site. It is one of the few buildings in the campus designed with a transparent openness at ground level with repetitive glazed upper stories. The overhanging brick upper level completes the tripartite division of the elevation.



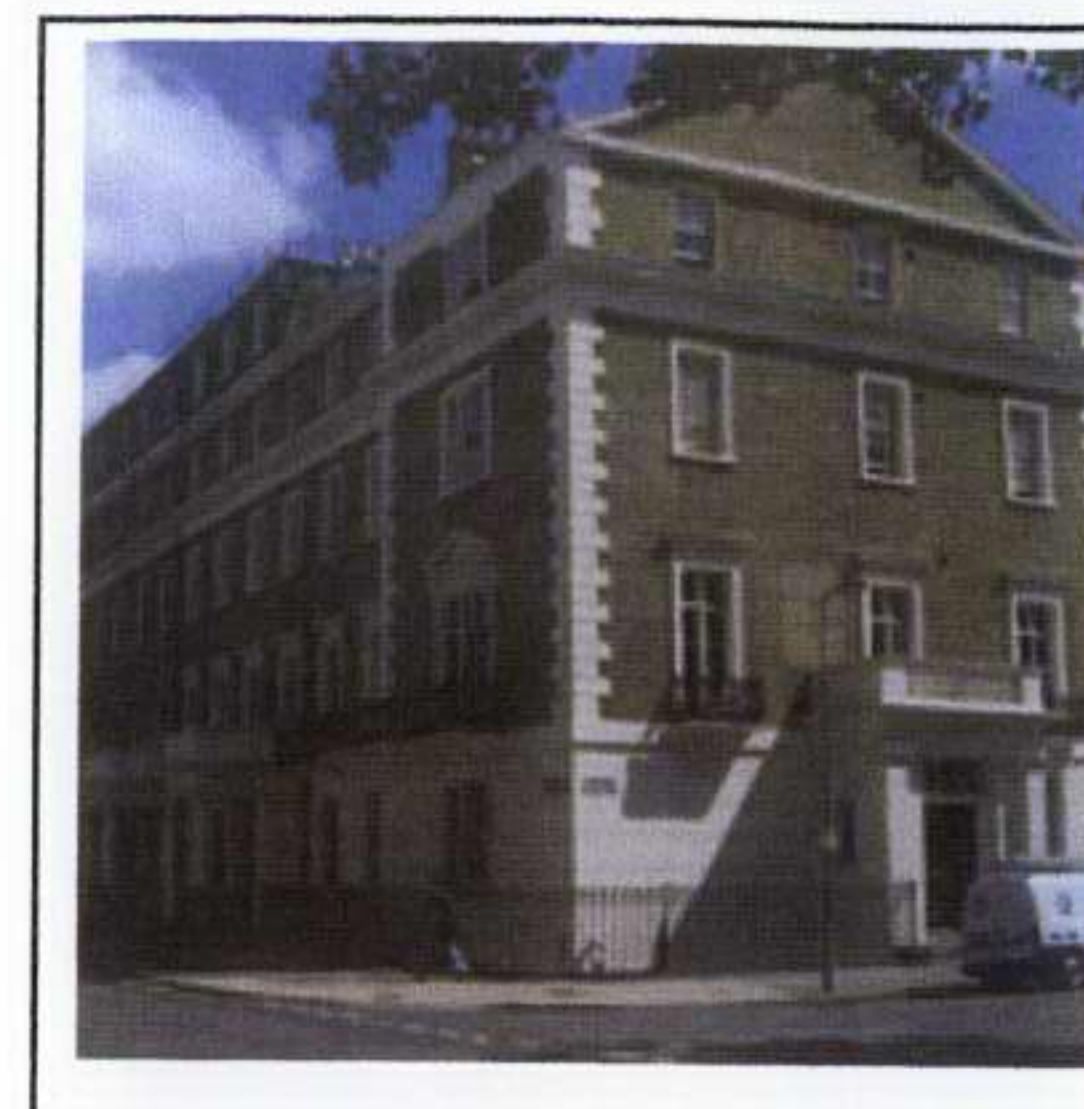
9
UCL Students Union
25 Gordon Street.

A predominantly brick building with stone dressings, on the north-east corner of the main University block and is believed to have been built as a hotel c.1894 and later converted into a Seaman's' Hospital. It was refurbished for UCL use in 1959. At nine storeys, it would have been seen as a tall building when built. It has echoes of the Arts and Crafts style and is distinguished by a dominant double dormer roofline. The repetitive facade is an early attempt to deal with how to reflect a regular room plan behind.



10
Welcome Building
Euston Road

In heavy classical format, this Portland stone building has dominated the corner of Gordon Street and Euston Road since it was built in 1931. A 10-storey extension to the west effectively creates a tall backdrop to the Gordon Street block.



13
9 – 14 Endsleigh Gardens

These houses were one of the last terraces to have been built as part of the original development in 1860, and show significant architectural changes from the original. There is more extensive use of stucco and external porches and an extra storey appears to have been added to some of the houses. It is assumed it is for these reasons the buildings remain the only terrace not to be listed. UCL occupies numbers 9 – 11, and the others are used as a homeless hotel. All houses appear in poor state of repair.



11
Office Buildings
9 and 30 Melton Street

Originally an Insurance Building, this is now a Government Office Building. It is a 5 storey Portland stone classical building dating from 1906 and subsequently extended in 1932. It is part Grade II* and part Grade II listed. Together with the Welcome Building opposite it forms an important gateway at the junction between Euston Road and Gordon/Melton Street.



14
Campbell House (East)
1 - 12 Tavito Street

These buildings date from c.1855 but probably designed when the area was originally laid out in 1828. They are similar in style to the houses opposite and are one of the few terraces extant that survives in a more or less original condition. They are now converted by UCL for use as a student Hall of residence. The buildings are 4 stories high plus Basement and are grade II listed. Although somewhat plainer in style than other Cubitt terraces, the houses have stuccoed Basement & Ground Floors, brickwork above and a prominent cornice line.



12
Drayton / Friends House
30 Gordon Street

This 4-storey building dates from 1927 and built on the site of Euston Square. Part of the building is now in University use as the Department of Economics: Friends House occupies the remaining part. It is of composite brick construction in classical style with Portland stone porticos. Although classical in detail, the overall bulk of the building, being comparatively low and squat, is non-classical in proportion. The complete building is grade II listed and it is suspected this is because of its interior qualities and/or its historical associations rather than its external features.

6.0 THE BARTLETT PROPOSAL: THE SETTING

For a more detailed account of the external façades and overall architectural massing of the building, reference should be made to section 4.3 (External Envelope: Summary), within the Proposal Document. Similarly Section 4.2 (Design Development) deals with the way the elevations have been modified in response to feedback during the design process. This section and the following one are therefore concerned with the historic context, and in particular the response from English Heritage to the latest Planning Application.

The Bartlett site is unique in its location, close to Euston Road and Euston Station but not immediately visible from the major thoroughfare except at the road junction with Gordon Street. The location is a semi-island site tightly defined by the grid pattern of the surrounding roads and means the new building is rarely viewed in flat elevation.

Although the immediate architectural context is eclectic, the surrounding buildings as described in section 5.0 above, can be seen to fall into roughly three categories.

- 1 The original nineteenth century five story terraced houses together with the 9 storey brick built UCL Student Union building.
- 2 Early twentieth century redeveloped sites such as Drayton House and The Welcome Building constructed in classical style albeit to differing scales.
- 3 Modern post Second World War developments by the University, which reflect ongoing architectural changes. Here the Chemistry Building in 'brutalist' style concrete is characteristic of the 1960s, the Nanotechnology building is a minimalist glazed infill building and the SEES Building reflects the current emphasis on sustainability, both the latter buildings reflecting current architectural concerns.

The site stands at the interface of all these types with the surviving original houses mostly grouped to the east and the later buildings on the other sides. The building takes its cue principally from the architectural heritage, which has evolved along Gordon Street and intended as a gateway building into an evolving part of the University precinct. The Bartlett building is intended as the next twenty-first century buildings proposed for the area and expects to continue the ideal of 'state of the art' building within Bloomsbury.

The design has been through several iterations of design and a summary of this up to the current application is shown in Appendix 2, Design Development. The most recent response from English Heritage acknowledged the positive changes to the use of material, the reduction of fussy articulation to the east and west elevations, changes in scale and setbacks, the articulation of the building as two separate elements and the relationship with the facades in Taviton Street. There were still concerns about aspects of the relationship with Taviton Street and Drayton House and these are further addressed and clarified in section 7 below.

It is recognised that any innovative intervention should reflect the setting already established by its immediate neighbours and the following section sets out how this has been attempted,

7.0 THE CONSERVATION AND LISTED BUILDINGS CONTEXT

- 7.1 **Drayton/Friends House.** There is concern that the roofline of the Bartlett would have an overall intrusive impact on Drayton House when seen from the Euston Road/ Melton Street junction although it should be noted this is only marginally true as shown in the view from Euston Square Gardens (see in the Proposal Document). It should be further noted that Drayton House faces away from the University buildings, its main frontage being on Euston road and as stated in section 5 above, its scale is not reflected in the other surrounding buildings. The proposal is only seen in the context of Drayton house from oblique views along Gordon Street as it is only adjacent to the rear of the building.

It is difficult therefore to consider Drayton house as being a particularly positive contributor in this context. The Bartlett Building stands at the corner of the main Gordon Street/Taviton Street block and should be regarded as the main gateway building into the area. At the same time the roofline has been modified at this point since the original planning submission, the copper roof cladding now being reconfigured and a more transparent approach adopted as described in figures 6 and 7 below. The roof has in any case been lowered by approximately one storey to more nearly correspond to the height of Drayton House and the backdrop to the oblique views of Drayton House formed by the upper storeys are glazed to lessen this impact.

- 7.2 **20 –24 Taviton Street.** Although these houses are now a fragment of an original terrace, they are a particularly attractive group, and concern was expressed that the new building would be overbearing as an immediate neighbour. Setting back the upper storey by approximately 6 metres and redesigning the adjacent elevation into two vertical planes initially addressed this. One half would have translucent cladding and the other would be in white render with incised shadow gap lines that reflect the scale and vertical proportioning of the elevation to these houses. When viewed from the junction of Taviton Street and Endsleigh Gardens, the upper storey roofline would now be concealed, but in the light of continuing concern that this roofline would still be viewed from further down Taviton Street, it has now been taken back a further 2 metres. In addition the glazed line reflecting the adjoining cornice line has now been returned along the south elevation. The metal mesh panel that echoes the first floor balcony to the houses also returns to the elevation. It is suggested these give an added emphasis to the render as a reflection to the houses. Figures 8 and 9 show this below.

- 7.3 **Gordon Street Elevations.** It has been suggested many of these 20th Century buildings retain some affinity with the more traditional elevations and in particular there is a certain tripartite hierarchy to many of the newer buildings. Whereas this proportional subdivision is derived from the classical orders and the Taviton Street houses exhibit this feature very sensitively, it is doubtful that this 3-part division is a deliberate attempt to echo the classical model. It more likely derives from a simple emphasis commonly given to ground floors which together with an obviously differing roofline creates an impression of a tripartite divide. Nonetheless the Bartlett elevation has an equivalent separation on the Gordon Street side. The Ground floor spaces are open and are clearly articulated in a different manner from those above with a roofline both set back and in different materials. Similarly the vertical configuration reflects the rhythm of the concrete panels to the adjoining Chemistry building.

8.0 UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ESTATE STRATEGY

Following the damage to the main buildings during the war, a master plan was drawn up by Sir Albert Richardson, Professor of Architecture at the Bartlett, covering the rebuilding and extension of UCL within the original Gower Street/Gordon Street block. In the event it took many years for the damaged sections to be refurbished and the original plan that followed the broad style of the classical Wilkins building had to be considerably modified and in part abandoned. This was partly because of lack of funding at the time but also because UCL realised the difficulty of containing long term expansion within a rigid masterplan.

Meanwhile the University acquired and began developing the Taviton Street/Gordon Street block in the 1960s as detailed in section 5 above. The resulting heterogeneity of architectural style is an inevitable consequence of the University responding opportunistically as and when pressures arose and finance became available. The result is an overall architectural aesthetic which is eclectic and is an historic response to the particular requirements of each individual building. Gordon Street houses a wide diversity of building types, including laboratories, a theatre and a students union, and UCL has been loathe to dictate a common architectural approach. It is of note however that the Bartlett proposal, the Bloomsbury Theatre and the proposed Panopticon building adjoining the latter, all make contributions to the idea of encouraging public access to and within the area.

With the final development of the University precinct in this area, in which it is expected the Bartlett building will play a significant role, UCL has now recognised there is a need to consolidate its portfolio to encourage a more cohesive environment and an Estates Strategy is currently being developed by Drivers Jones (Surveyors) and McCormac Jamieson (Architects). The aim is not just to identify further development opportunities but also to identify a contextual setting in which open space and landscaping might play a much bigger role. This will look in particular at pedestrian routeways throughout the campus including linking the Gordon Street buildings with the main block. This will be subsumed within an overall policy of environmental sustainability and will include reference to the long term plan being developed by Terry Farrell and Partners and supported by London Borough of Camden, to look at the future of Euston/Marylebone Road as a distinctive 'place' rather than as an urban motorway serving through traffic.



Figure 6. Original Planning Submission showing folded copper clad roofline and coloured façade.



Figure 7 Current Planning Submission showing glazing substituted for the copper cladding.

Figure 8 Views of the main University Building showing the extensive use of copper as a roofing material.



Figure 9. View at junction of Taviton Street & Endsleigh Gardens: current Planning Submission showing rendered façade with horizontal banding adjacent to existing houses.



Figure 10. View at junction of Taviton Street & Endsleigh Gardens: revised detail showing further setback of upper storeys



Figure 11 View looking up Taviton Street: current Planning Submission showing visible roofline above cornice to existing houses.



Figure 12 View looking up Taviton Street: revised detail showing further setback of upper storeys.