

**28 John Street
London
WC1N 2BL**

HERITAGE STATEMENT

August 2016

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Our Ref:

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CONTENTS

	Page
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 History and development of the Conservation Area	1
3.0 Statement of Significance	3
4.0 Heritage Planning Policy Context	5
5.0 The proposal for 12-14 Northington Street	10
6.0 Heritage Impact Assessment	11

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The property that is the subject of this application is a six storey building, comprising lower ground, ground and four upper floors on John Street, and is Grade II listed as part of a terrace of mid-18th Century houses from 22-28 John Street. The property is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Therefore the proposal affects two designated heritage assets – the adjacent Grade II listed building and the Conservation Area.
- 1.2 The current owner proposes to make a number of relatively minor internal alterations to the layout of this house, mostly to non-principal rooms and openings, and the re-use of the vaults to the property, which are currently used for storage but with the potential for more effective use of this space.
- 1.3 Government guidance set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* requires that proposed changes to the historic environment are based on a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset affected and its setting, providing information so that the likely impact of proposals can be assessed. The heritage asset that would be affected in this case and requiring assessment in the context of these proposals is both the Grade II listed No.28 John Street and the Conservation Area.
- 1.4 This report provides an assessment of the building within its historic context, and an understanding of its development based on historical research.

2.0 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

- 2.1 The property is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The Conservation Area is located midway between the City of London and the City of Westminster.
- 2.2 Bloomsbury represents a period of London's early expansion northwards, dating from Stuart times (around 1660), which continued through the Georgian and Regency periods to around 1840. This period of expansion, which followed the Plague in 1665 and the Great Fire of London in 1666, replaced a series of Medieval Manors on the periphery of London and their associated agricultural and pastoral land. The first swathe of building created a mix of uses with houses, a market, commercial, cultural uses (the British Museum), hospitals and churches. Later expansion of the northern

part of the Conservation Area was focussed on providing grander residential districts for wealthy families. This was carried out speculatively by a number of builders, on leases from major landowners, and followed a consistent form with terraced townhouses constructed on a formal grid pattern of streets and landscaped squares. The progression of development across the Conservation Area illustrates the subtle changes in taste and style in domestic architecture that occurred throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

- 2.3 The Victorian era saw the urban area evolve with a movement of the wealthy to newly developing urban and suburban areas to the north. New uses emerged and existing ones expanded. There was an increase in industrial uses on the eastern fringes along the Fleet Valley, the establishment of University College, an expansion in specialist hospitals around Queen Square, and the development of the British Museum. Older areas such as St Giles High Street had become notorious slums; this was addressed by the building of New Oxford Street, created as a new shopping and commercial area. New housing for the poor, often of a philanthropic nature, was built in several parts of the northern section of the Conservation Area. The development of a series of railway termini along Euston Road saw an expansion in hotel developments, and office development took place throughout the Conservation Area. Around the long established Inns of Court, dwellings were converted to offices for the legal profession.
- 2.4 During the 20th century, this change and the expansion of hospital, academic and cultural uses continued, particularly around the university and hospitals. Bomb damage from World War II led to the replacement of some older housing stock with large scale new development such as the Brunswick Centre and Lasdun's Faculty of Education. However, some redevelopment proposals failed due to both local and national concerns regarding the loss of historic buildings in the area. The area has continued to evolve and change with more recent developments from the later 20th century and the early 21st century, with some examples of national or even international architectural significance. Recent housing developments have mostly meshed sensitively with the older fabric. There are a number of recent developments, undertaken both by the larger institutions (such as the university, the hospitals and the British Museum) and by smaller scale developers, for instance in the mews, continuing the Bloomsbury tradition of development of its time as exemplars of contemporary but contextual design.

- 2.5 The predominant building type across Bloomsbury is the terraced town house, although a range of building typologies is evident. Generally, these are 3 or 4 storeys in height, although more modest two storey buildings (mostly built for workers). These townhouses generally have basements and attic storeys, and many have mansard roofs.

3.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Statutory Designation

- 3.1 The property is situated in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and is a Grade II listed Building.

Character of the Area

- 3.2 The property is in Sub Area 10: Great James Street/Bedford Row. On the map for this Sub-Area, John Street is shown as a listed building. The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy was adopted in 2011.
- 3.3 The historic built form to this sub area comprises long terraces with rear mews, and the continuous building frontage created by the terraces creates a strong sense of enclosure.
- 3.4 The main streets include John Street which leads into Doughty Street and the stretch of Bedford Row running north to south, as well as the western part of Guilford Street and the west side of Gray's Inn Road south of Guilford Street which lie in the sub area. Most of the buildings on these streets are listed, reflecting the high quality of the built environment. The streets are wide and grand, comprising mainly three- and four-storey Georgian terraced houses. A number of the corner plots were refaced in the 19th century and these alterations provide greater architectural emphasis on the street junctions.
- 3.5 The townhouses along John Street, Doughty Street and Guilford Street are of significance as they are almost complete Georgian streets, lined with terraces. John Street dates from the mid-18th century, whilst Doughty Street and Guilford Street span the late 18th century to the early 19th century. They are constructed from yellow stock brick, the earlier examples with red brick trim and the later examples

with stucco detail. Various designs of doorcases, fanlights and balconies are evident. Buildings on John Street are generally of four storeys with basements, some are stuccoed at ground floor and some have mansard roofs with dormer windows taking them, as with 28 John Street, to a total of six storeys.

- 3.6 Pevsner (The Buildings of England, London 4: North, 1998) notes the character of this street as follows:

“Built up 1756-9 by John Blagrove, carpenter. Wide and well-preserved, a good demonstration of the mid-18th Century in contrast to the earlier streets to the west. Yellow stock brick is used instead of red brick. Many pattern-book Ionic doorcases and other good details.” (page 311)

- 3.7 John Street was named after John Blagrove. The northern part of the road is notable according to Pevsner for its *“wider doorways with some good fanlights”*.
- 3.8 Many of the houses along John Street have been converted over the years to accommodate commercial uses such as offices for charities and trade associations, solicitors and accountants, quantity surveyors and the occasional publisher.

No.28 John Street

- 3.9 This building is listed as part of a group comprising Nos. 22 to 28 John Street and attached railings. The group was listed on 24th October 1951, and the List Entry Summary for this group describes it as follows:

Terrace of 7 houses. c1800-19. Yellow and multi-coloured stock brick with stucco bands at 1st floor levels. Nos 27 & 28 with slated mansard roofs and dormers. 4 storeys and basements; Nos 27 & 28 with attics. 2 windows each; Nos 26 & 27, 3 windows each; No.28 double fronted with 5 windows. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sashes, most with glazing bars; 1st floors with cast-iron balconies, except No.28. Parapets. No.22: square-headed, architraved doorway with patterned rectangular fanlight and panelled door. INTERIOR: noted to retain reeded marble fireplaces on ground and 1st floors. Stairs with square balusters.

No.23: similar doorway to No.22. INTERIOR: noted to retain

reeded marble fireplaces on 1st and 2nd floors (original centres covered in).

No.24: similar doorway to No.22. INTERIOR: noted to retain marble fireplaces with original centres on ground floor.

No.25: similar doorway to No.22. INTERIOR: noted to retain marble fireplaces on ground floor. Good marble fireplace 1st floor front room with bas relief on front panel, reeded and with rosettes; original iron centre.

Nos 26 & 27: round-arched doorways with reeded doorframes, lion mask stops, mutule cornice-heads, patterned radial fanlights and panelled doors. No.27 with lamp-holder incorporated in fanlight. No.26 with fluted lead rainwater head.

No.28: round-arched doorway with attached Doric columns carrying entablature; patterned radial fanlight and panelled door. Cornice and blocking course. Wrought-iron overthrow lamp-holder. Return to Northington Street with 1 window and mid C19 entrance with stucco surround and console-bracketed cornice. Dentilled cornices.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with urn finials to areas.

- 3.10 The presence of attic storey and mansard roof extensions to Nos. 27 and 28 is noted in this description.
- 3.11 Drainage plans of the property dating from 29th July 1901 indicate that the property was used as offices at the time. Although no floor plans are available from the Council from this date, the change of use over time from its likely original use as a dwelling to office use and, more recently, back to its current commercial use, is likely to have resulted in a degree of internal alteration.

4.0 HERITAGE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 Historic Environment Policies included in the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) replace Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS 5). The Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide, which accompanied PPS5, was cancelled on the 27th March 2015.
- 4.2 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Government sees three strands to this concept: economic, social and environmental, all to be regarded as mutually independent. Paragraphs 126-141 of the NPPF relate to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.
- 4.3 As with PPS5, the NPPF provides a unified approach to the historic environment and removes the previous distinctions between historic buildings, archaeology and designed landscapes. It defines the historic environment in terms of “*heritage assets*”; a term which embraces buildings, parks and gardens, buried and submerged remains, whether designated or not.
- 4.4 Paragraphs 128 and 129 of the NPPF require planning applicants and local planning authorities to assess the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be appropriate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on its significance. Local planning authorities should take this assessment into account when assessing the potential impact of proposed development.
- 4.5 Paragraph 131 states that local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of new development sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, the positive contribution that heritage assets can make to sustainable communities and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.6 Paragraph 132 sets out principles guiding the consideration of the impact of development proposals on the significance of a designated heritage asset. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. Any harm to the asset or its loss should require clear or convincing justification. Paragraph 133 provides a series of tests which should be applied in cases where substantial harm to or total loss of significance will be caused.

- 4.7 In the case of development proposals which will lead to less than substantial harm, paragraph 134 states that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
- 4.8 Paragraph 137 states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.
- 4.9 The Planning Practice Guidance sets out further policies regarding the consideration of development proposals affecting the historic built environment.
- 4.10 This Guidance acknowledges the importance of finding a viable long term use for heritage assets, so that owners (heritage assets are often held in private ownership) have sufficient incentive to ensure the long term care and maintenance of an asset (015-20140306). Any such accommodation must be balanced against the need to preserve features of characteristics of significance to the asset, and especially to avoid 'substantial harm' to the asset.
- 4.11 Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting (017-20140306).
- 4.12 The deteriorated state of an heritage asset can be taken into account in considering proposals affecting listed buildings, as long as there is no evidence of deliberate neglect or damage (014-20140306).
- 4.13 Listed building consent might not be required for some works of repair, where work is carried out using the same materials and techniques and the significance of the heritage asset is not affected.

- 4.14 Restoration works will almost always require some degree of alteration and will thus normally require listed building consent. However, restoration works can be said to normally enhance the significance of an heritage asset as they are normally intended to recover or reveal something that has been eroded, concealed or previously removed.
- 4.15 Generally, therefore, the following brief points may be made:
- 4.15.1 Retention of as much historic fabric as possible is an important but not a defining consideration.
 - 4.15.2 Where possible, it should be possible for work to be reversible. However, the reversibility of work does not determine its acceptability.
 - 4.15.3 Some adaptation of the heritage asset to accommodate reasonable standards of new uses may be acceptable, subject to the impact on the significance of the heritage asset, such as to accommodate a reasonable floor to ceiling height or sunlight and daylight to habitable rooms and internal spaces.
 - 4.15.4 The introduction of new floors to a building or removal of old floors depends on the significance of the asset and the importance of the current floor materials in contributing to this significance.
 - 4.15.5 New features added to a building are less likely to have an adverse impact if they follow the character of a building.
 - 4.15.6 The main issues to consider in proposals for additions to heritage assets, including new development in conservation areas, are proportion, height, massing, bulk, use of materials, use, relationship with adjacent assets, alignment and treatment of setting.

Conservation Principles: Policy and Guidance (English Heritage, 2008)

- 4.16 The English Heritage document *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, is intended to guide conservation as managing change in ways that will sustain the significance of places, for change in the historic environment is inevitable, whether caused by natural processes, or through use or by people responding to social, economic and technological advances.

- 4.17 If the significance of a place is to be retained and its historic value sympathetically managed, further change will inevitably be needed. Development need not devalue the significance of the place, or its tangible values such as its historic fabric provided that the work is done with understanding.
- 4.18 The English Heritage *Principles* state that retaining the authenticity of a place is not always achieved by retaining as much of the existing fabric as is technically possible (paragraph 93). Where deliberate changes are made, however, the alteration should in some way be discernible. Integrity, likewise, depends on an understanding of the values of the heritage asset.
- 4.19 The *Principles* state that new work or alteration to a significant asset or place should normally be acceptable if:
- There is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the place.
 - The proposal would not materially harm the values of the place, which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed.
 - The proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future.
 - The long term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, or the proposals are designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future.
- 4.20 The *Principles* state that there are no simple rules for achieving quality of design in new work, which could involve either working in a traditional or contemporary manner. The important factor is to respect the values established through an assessment of the significance of the building and its setting.
- 4.21 It is also suggested that features of lesser significance offer opportunities to create heritage values of tomorrow, which can be achieved if the quality of the new work is of a high standard of design, materials, detailing and execution.

Camden Council – Local Plan Policies

- 4.22 Policy CS14 of Camden’s Core Strategy requires development to be of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character. Development should preserve Camden’s rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including

conservation areas. Schemes should be inclusive and promote the highest standards of accessibility. The Council will expect the design of buildings and places to respond to the local area and its defining characteristics and reinforce or, if appropriate, create local distinctiveness.

- 4.23 Policy DP24 requires all development to be of the highest standards of design, with regard to character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings, the quality of materials to be used, the provision of visually interesting frontages at street level, existing natural features (such as topography and trees), the provision of appropriate hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatments, and appropriate amenity space and accessibility.
- 4.24 Policy DP25 relates to development in conservation areas. Development in conservation areas will only be permitted where it preserves and enhances the character or appearance of the area. The Council will also seek to preserve landscaping and trees that contribute to the character of a conservation area.
- 4.25 Section 1 of CPG1 relates to heritage and design issues. Paragraph 3.5 of this guidance states that: "*Conservation areas are not designated to stop all future development or change but to ensure that change is managed to conserve the historic significance of the area as a whole.*"

5.0 THE PROPOSALS FOR 28 JOHN STREET

5.1 The current proposals comprise the following:

- Increase the size of the ground floor dining room and enhance the use of this principal space by moving the WC.
- Relatively minor changes to door openings to the lower ground floor.
- Open out the window to the inner lightwell to patio doors at lower ground floor and ground floor level, with a Juliette Balcony and ground floor level, but retain the sash fenestration pattern.
- Pavement lights on return elevation.
- Lowering of floor to rear of lower ground floor.
- Reuse of pavement vaults, lowering of floors to pavement vaults, and enclosing void either side of ground floor bridge so as to connect the main house with the vaults.

6.0 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

NPPF policy relating to the Historic Environment

- 6.1 The NPPF requires that planning applications affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by a reasoned justification. This should provide the local planning authority with full information to enable an assessment of the likely impact of the proposals on the significance of the heritage asset and its setting.

Impact on historic character and fabric

- 6.1 Planning permission and listed building consent were granted on 6th March 2013 (reference: 2013/0469/L & 2013/0964/P) for internal alterations to the second floor flat to No.28 John Street and access from this flat to the second floor roof terrace of No.12 Northington Street. The Heritage Statement submitted with this application noted as follows:

“The interiors of flat 5 appear not to be original and not of any particular significance. Neither Floor finishes nor the ceiling seem to be original, equally no fireplace features nor any cornicing etc are visible (refer to separate Photographs). It is however noted that the entrance door to the flat might have some significance and will therefore be nicely but sensitively restored.”

- 6.2 Further alterations to the basement and ground floor to accommodate a slight change to the use of some rooms, the movement of fireplace surrounds and internal partitions, were granted listed building consent on 11th August 2015 (reference 2015/3784/L).
- 6.3 Furthermore, evidence of previous use of the property as offices exists on old drainage plans of the property dating from 1901:



- 6.3 Therefore, with regard to the position as stated before (and as would appear to have been accepted by the Council given the grant of planning permission and listed building consent on this basis), and the lack of note of interior features of interest to this property in the Listed Building Summary, I do not think that the proposals would be harmful to the special character of No.28 John Street.
- 6.4 The building has clearly been adapted to accommodate modern living over the years. This adaptation and refurbishment has included a degree of rewiring for modern electrics and other fittings.