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2.0 Site Context and Analysis

2.1 Site Location

This chapter analyses the Site in its immediate and wider context in terms of location, townscape and its historical place setting.

Located in Zone 2 Centric Close is located approximately 400m due West of Camden Town Underground station. The Site lies within the Camden Town with Primrose Hill ward in the London Borough of Camden. Both Regents Park to the South and Primrose Hill to the West are in close proximity.

The Site is bounded to the east by Oval Road and to the west by the mainline West Coast railway line. The northern boundary of the site abuts 35 Oval Road a tall high density modern development dating from 2006. An historic commercial building, number 31 Oval Road, has a rear frontage onto the site and relies on fire escape egress through the site. The Southern narrow site boundary is bounded by the rear garden of an adjoining Villa on Oval Road.

The site is currently occupied by 6 steel framed and sheet metal clad light industrial and warehouse buildings dating from the early 1980's providing circa 2400m2 of office and warehouse spaces.



2.0 Site Context and Analysis

2.2 Public Transport Accessibility

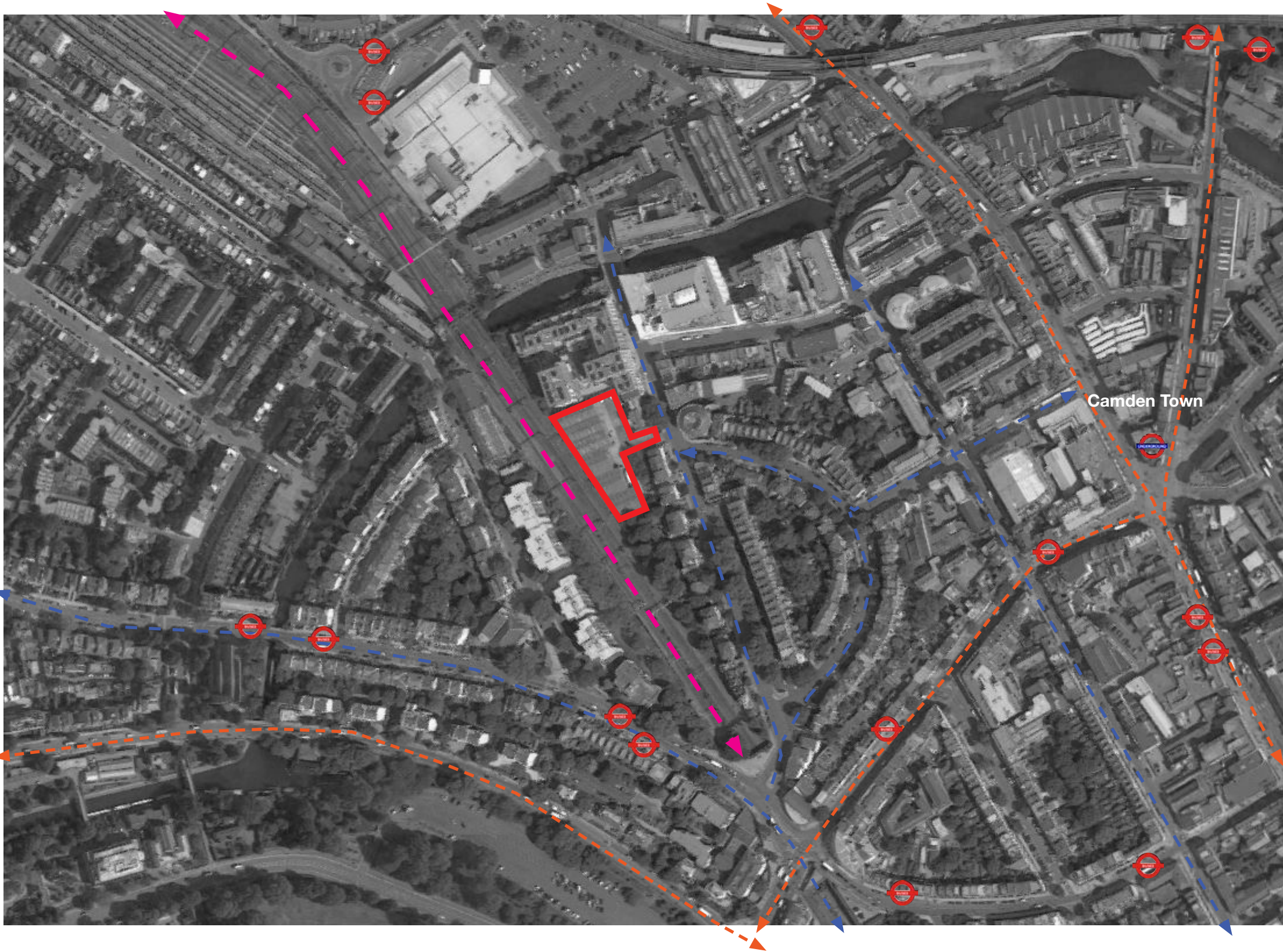
The Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) rating has been calculated for the Site on the basis of the existing public transport timetables, and it has been found to be level 6a. A rating of 6a is classified as ‘Excellent’.

The nearest Underground Station is Camden Town on the Northern line which serves both the Bank and Charing Cross branches. Camden Town station is situated between Mornington Crescent to the South and Chalk Farm and Kentish Town to the North.

The station is located with a walking distance of approximately 450 metres from the Site which at a normal walking speed would take just over five minutes. Peak hour frequencies are in the order of 22/24 per hour. Camden Road Station, providing Overground services lies 800m to the West.

The nearest National Rail stations are Kentish Town to the North providing Thameslink services and Euston, St Pancras and King Cross to the South providing mainline services country wide and the Eurostar service to Paris and Brussels.

Circa eight bus routes pass within 450 metres of the site. The nearest bus stops to the site are on Parkway and Regents park Road to the South.



Key

Application Site: Centric Close

Mainline railway

Primary Vehicular Routes

Secondary Vehicular Routes

Underground Station

Bus Stop

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2.3 Cycle Route Accessibility

Oval Road is a relatively quiet thoroughfare and at the time of writing is designated as a proposed Quietway route for local engagement.

This route connects to a North bound Quietway route at the junction with Jamestown Road to the North of the site and connects with the inner ring of Regents Park and towards Oxford Street at the South of the site.

Santander cycle hire stations are located at Camden Town Underground Station to the East and at Gloucester Crescent and Regents Park Road to the South East and South West respectively.

Key

Application Site: Centric Close

Cycle Routes / Quietways

Santander Cycle Hire Station



2.0 Site Context and Analysis

2.4 Site History and Heritage Context

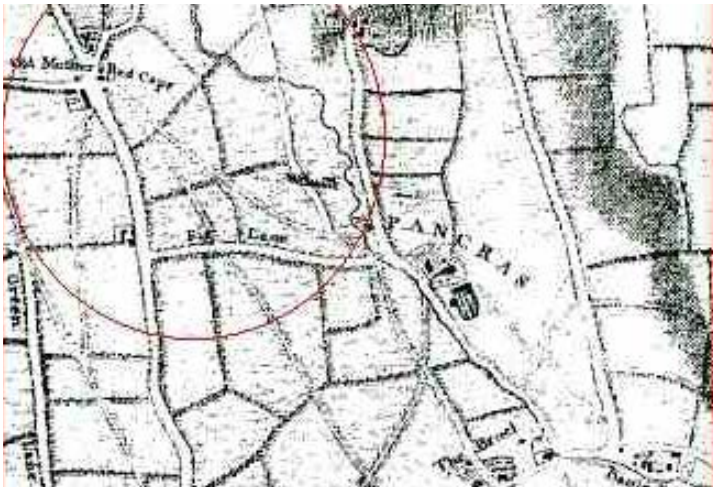
Historical development of the site

From medieval times the area surrounding the site was open fields. The land was owned by a Lord Southampton. Not until the mid-19th century did the area begin to develop with the completion of the Regents Canal in 1820, which was followed by the building of the London and Birmingham Railway in the 1830's. In 1840 Lord Southampton's Estate was sold in freehold portions for development. The subsequent development largely consisted of generous semi-detached or detached villas set in large gardens. The layout of the development is generally reflected in the current street pattern of the area.

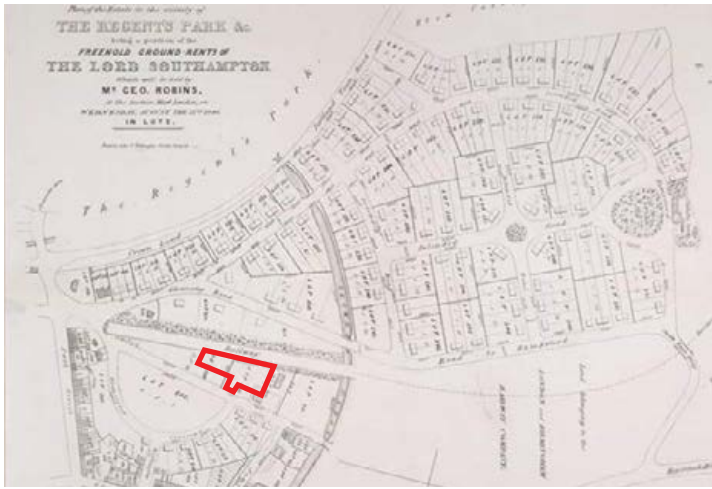
The importance of the railway grew throughout the 19th century and as the trains became more powerful the track area increased and a number of large new structures for trade, the Camden goods yard, notably the Pickfords goods interchange shed, were erected alongside the Railway to the North of the site.

Alongside trade, manufacturing played a large part in the development of the site surrounds. The area became a centre for piano manufacture most notably the Collard and Collard company who had premises occupying the north of the site.

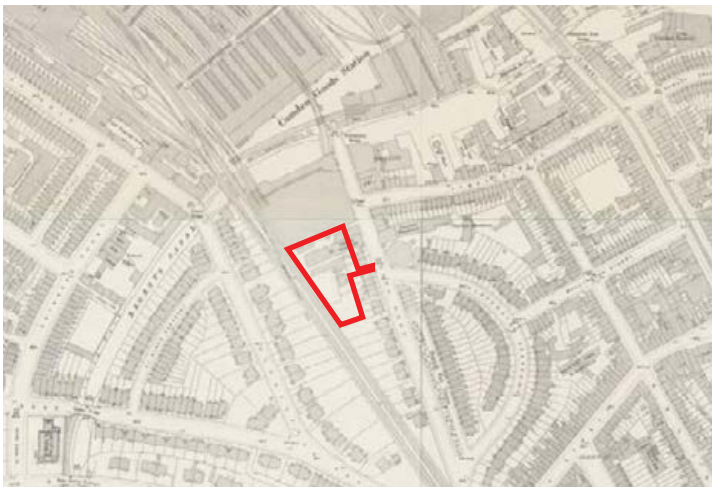
During the 20th century the area experienced a decline. The piano manufacturing industry dwindled and many of the buildings next to the railway fell into disrepair mainly due to the effects of the polluting trains. World War II brought significant bomb damage. The trend of decline began to reverse in the 1970's with the introduction of electric trains and an increased pressure for development due to the broader economic successes of London.



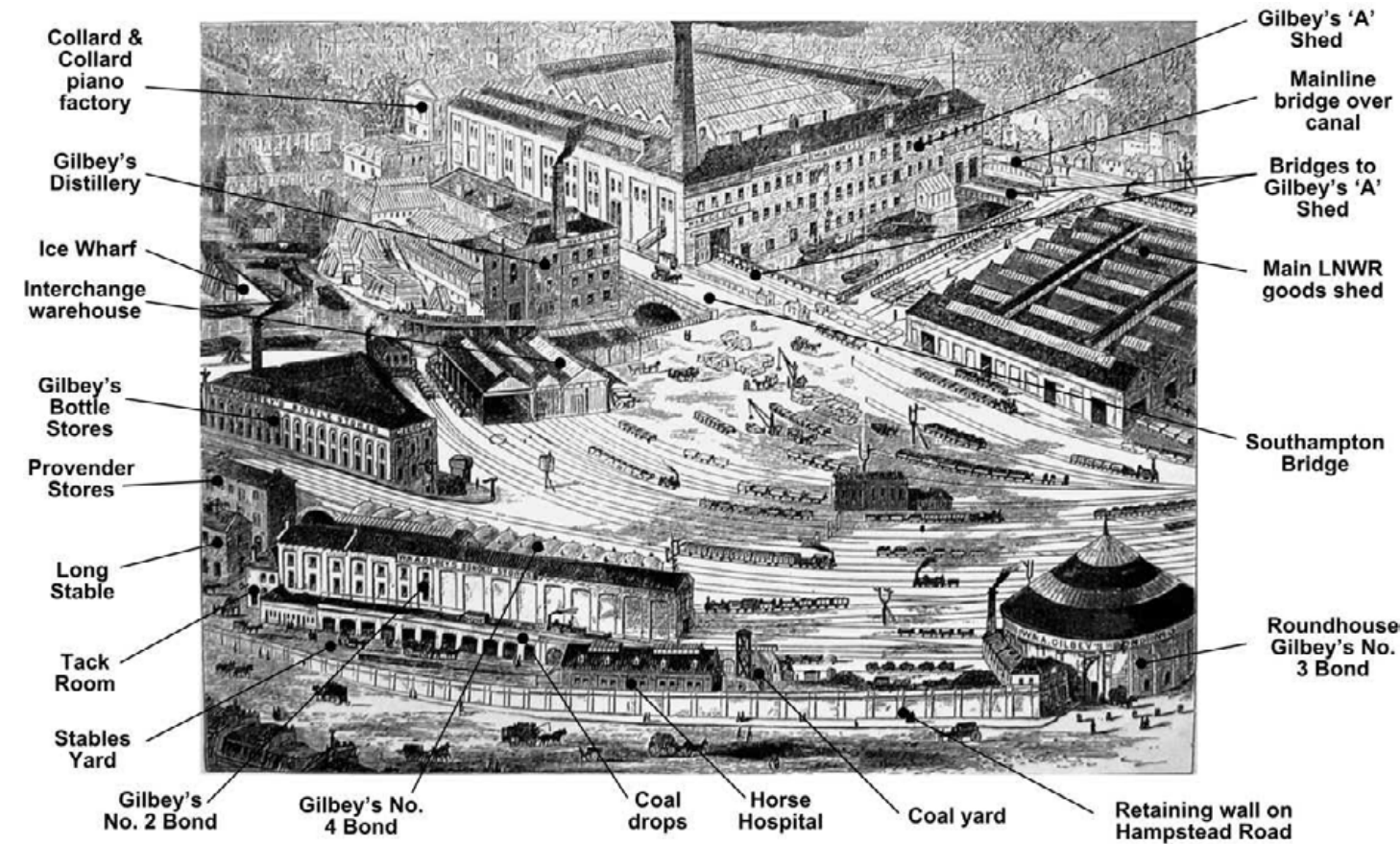
1745 John Rocque's Map of London



1840 Lord Southampton freehold sale map



1895 Ordnance Survey plan



1895 Camden Goods Yard Illustration
(source: Camden Goods Station through time Peter Darley)



1921 Aerial photograph of site with Camden Goods Yard beyond
(source: Camden Goods Station through time Peter Darley)

2.0 Site Context and Analysis

2.4 Site History and Heritage Context cont.

Previous Buildings on the Site

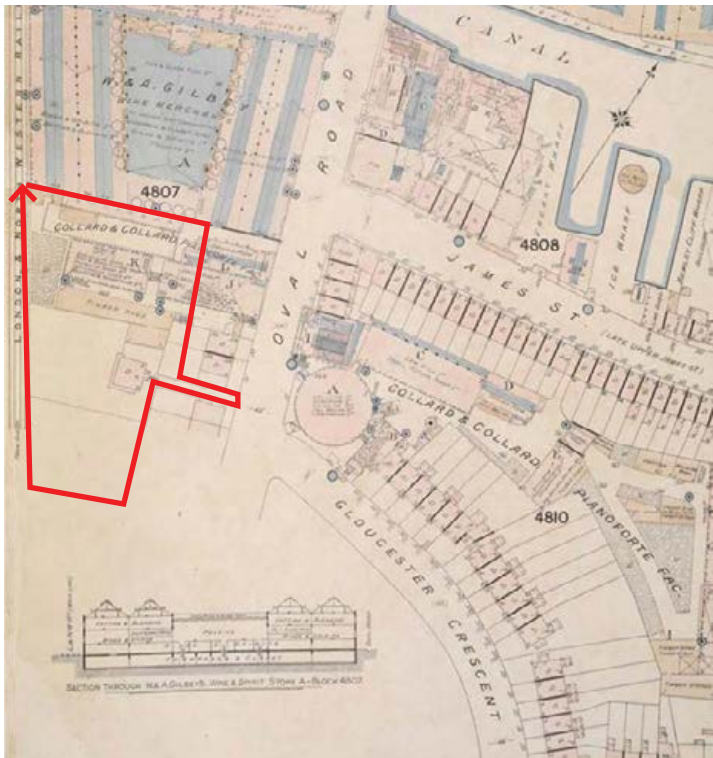
Historical maps suggest that since the sale and development of Lord Southampton’s Estate in 1840 that the site has been occupied by manufacturing buildings and structures for storage.

The first Collard and Collard piano making factory was constructed to the North of the site in the 1840’s. By 1870 the Collard and Collard piano making complex had extended East, occupying a swathe of the area from its main section in the triangular block bounded by Arlington Street, James Street and Gloucester Crescent, with the main rotunda building occupying the corner of Gloucester Crescent and Oval Road.

In the 1895 map a timber shed is discernible, as are two buildings for the manufacture of the pianos. Activities in this part of the complex included casemaking, french polishing, fret-cutting and wood turning, glue boiling, stringing and key loading.

By the 1950’s after the closure of Collard and Collard the site had been redeveloped with a large structure occupying the entire Western edge of the site following the site boundary.

The present warehouse and light industrial structures on the site were designed by Ronald Cox Associates and constructed in the early 1980’s and the site was named Centric Close.



1895 Plan of Collard and Collard complex



1952 Ordnance Survey map



1848 engraving of the Pickfords shed with original Piano Factory to the North of the site shown on the right hand side.



Photograph of site present day
(sources: Camden Goods Station through time Peter Darley)

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2.5 Wider Context

The broader site context is made up of a number of distinct architectural characters.

The ‘postcard’ Camden Town image prevails along Camden High Street, with applied three-dimensional graphics and brightly coloured retail facades giving the area a unique and distinctive identity.

To the north of the Regents Canal and to the west of Camden High Street quieter residential communities emerge. Traditional villas and townhouses provide a subtler balance to the bustle and activity of Camden Town.

The industrial and commercial heritage of Camden stretches along a belt of land created by the Regents Canal and adjacent Railway Line. Much of these uses are now gone, but many of the buildings remain giving a distinct scale and character to the area.



Camden High Street



The Interchange (Associated Press building)



TV-AM building



Gloucester Crescent

2.0 Site Context and Analysis

2.6 Yards and Mews

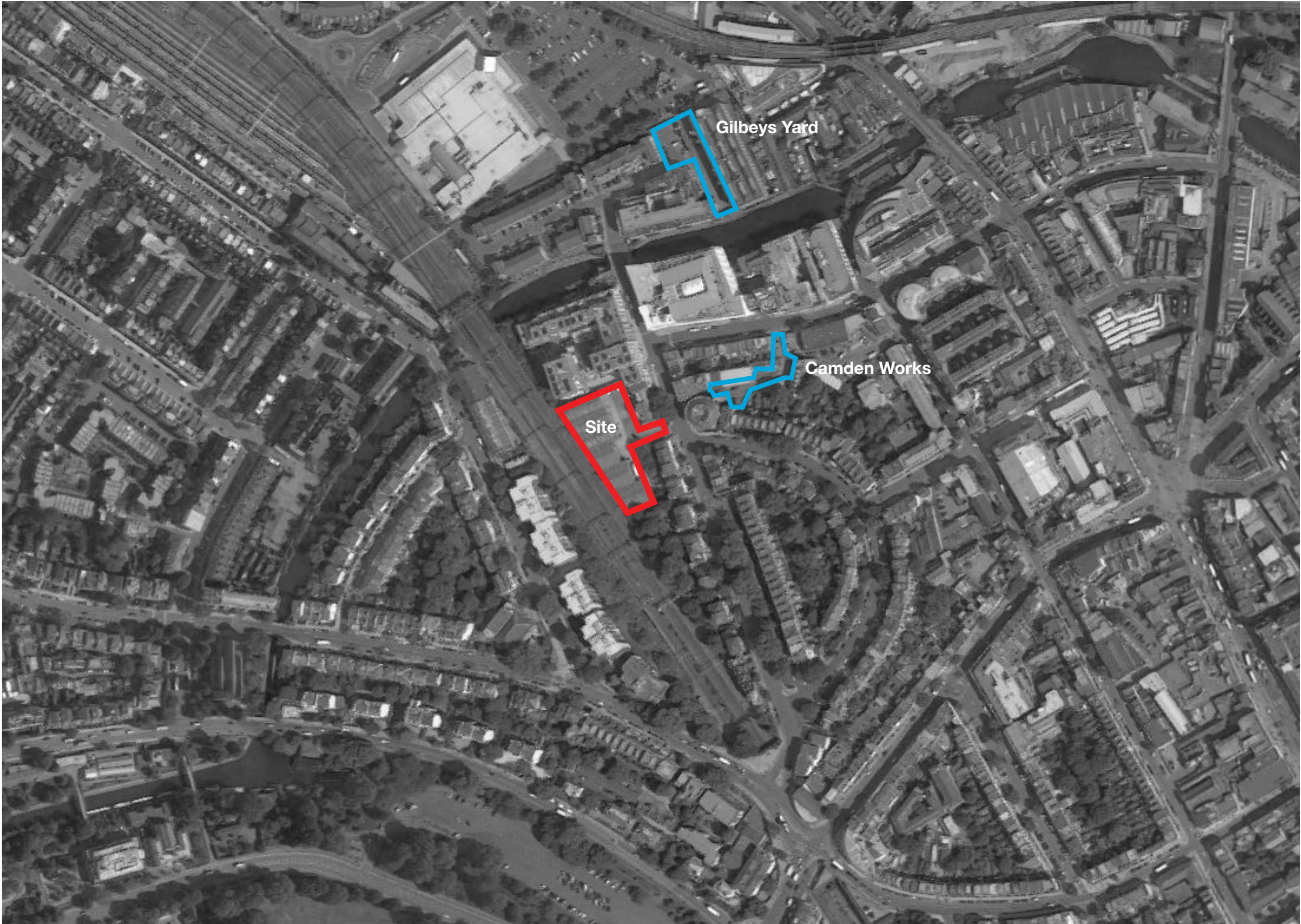
Intimate yards and mews off the main thoroughfares, remnants of Camden’s industrial and commercial heritage are a feature of the area.

These spaces can now be found given over to vibrant commerce, such as Stables yard, now part of Stables market. Or mixed use developments such as the courtyard at 42 Gloucester Avenue, the former home of the Electric and International Telegraph Company, now a mixed use development of offices and apartments. These spaces gave a precedent for early exploration of the design rational for the scheme at Centric Close.

Two further such spaces, Camden works and Gilbey’s yard are found in close adjacency to the site and are explored in further detail in the following pages.



Stables yard



Adjacent Yards Location