

27-29 Whitfield Street W1T 2SE



Heritage and Townscape Report Revised Scheme



27-29 WHITFIELD STREET W1T 2SE

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

FAÇADE ALTERATIONS AND ROOF EXTENSION

ALTERNATIVE SCHEME

HERITAGE AND TOWNSCAPE STATEMENT

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Preamble

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Philip Davies MA (Cantab), Dip TP, MRTPI, IHBC, FRHist.S, FRAS, FSA is the principal in Philip Davies (Heritage & Planning) Ltd, a consultancy specialising in conservation, urban design and planning issues in the UK and overseas. From 2004-2011 he was the Planning and Development Director for London and South East England at English Heritage responsible for two multi-disciplinary regional offices plus the Government Historic Estates Unit, which provided advice and guidance nationally across the entire government estate, including the occupied royal palaces, Whitehall, Defence Estates, and the Palace of Westminster. Prior to that, from 1997-2004 he was the Regional Director for London and the government estate. He has prepared national guidance on a whole range of heritage issues from tall buildings and heritage at risk to the public realm, the management of conservation areas, and the constructive conservation of listed buildings. He has extensive knowledge of Camden's historic environment, as between 1968-69 and 1972-74 he worked as a conservation officer at Camden Council and was responsible for the survey and designation of numerous pioneering conservation areas in the borough, including Bloomsbury and Charlotte Street.

He has over 40 years' experience of managing change to some of Britain's most sensitive historic buildings and places. He is a Trustee of the Heritage of London Trust, and the Euston Arch Trust, a committee member of SAVE Britain's Heritage, and a member of the Advisory Panel of the Railway Heritage Trust. As an expert in colonial architecture and a founder member of the International Advisory Group of the Yangon Heritage Trust, he is currently advising the government of Burma on a conservation and regeneration strategy for the city of Rangoon, the government of West Bengal on a similar strategy for Calcutta, the government of Chile on Valparaiso, and the government of Antigua on national conservation issues.

He is the best-selling author of ten major books on architecture and architectural history in Britain and overseas, and many articles for both professional and popular journals. *Lost London 1870-1945*, short-listed for the prestigious Spears book prize, is the best-selling book on London ever published. *London Historic Interiors* and *Lost England 1870-1930* have both been received with great acclaim.

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to assist the Council, the client and all interested parties to evaluate the current application for planning permission for the remodelling, alteration and extension of an undistinguished post-war building at 27-29 Whitfield Street; a building, which is neutral in terms of its contribution to the character and appearance of the Charlotte Street Conservation Area.
2. The Council considered a similar application previously. On 4 August 2017, following the execution of a S.106 Agreement, it granted conditional planning permission. Subsequently that decision was challenged by judicial review because the officer's report contained several errors. That decision has been quashed and that application remitted back to the Council's Committee for re-consideration. This current application is for a similar, but different, scheme involving an alternative design for the proposed roof extension and treatment of the facade.
3. These proposals have been tested against the requirements set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, in particular, Section 66 and Section 72, and against all relevant national, regional and local policy, advice and guidance, including Historic England advice on *The Setting of Heritage Assets*.
4. The report concludes that the proposals comply with national, regional and local policy, advice and guidance. After careful consideration of all relevant matters, it concludes that the proposals enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, and the relationship of 27-29 Whitfield Street with the adjoining listed building at No 1 Colville Place. The proposals can only be judged harmful to the wider setting of that building if any aspect of its significance or setting is harmed. It is not. There is not only no demonstrable harm to the character, appearance or setting of the listed building, or its contribution to the conservation area, but a significant enhancement of the heritage assets affected. This constitutes substantial public benefit. The report recommends that planning permission should be granted.

1.0 The Brief

- 1.1 This report relates to a new application for planning permission for the development of Cyclone House, 27-29 Whitfield Street comprising the change of use of the basement, ground and first floors to flexible uses, the second floor to office use, and the construction of a new single storey roof extension, providing *inter alia*, additional B1 office space with roof terrace and plant room above, and also façade alterations.
- 1.2 An earlier, different scheme was considered by the Council on 6 July 2017. The Council resolved to grant planning permission. On 4 August 2017, following the execution of a S.106 Agreement, planning permission was granted. Subsequently the adjoining owner, Mr Max Neufeld of 1 Colville Place advised the Council, the building owners and their agents that he intended to challenge the decision by way of judicial review on the grounds that the decision contained a number of legal errors. With the agreement of the parties a Consent Order was lodged with the Planning Court confirming that that planning permission be quashed, and the matter be remitted back to the Council for redetermination.
- 1.3 As the principal of Philip Davies (Heritage and Planning) Ltd, I have been instructed by Vincent Grebelius of Satila Holdings Ab, the owners of Cyclone House, 27-29 Whitfield Street WIT 2SE to provide expert heritage, townscape and design advice on the new application for planning permission and the current alternative proposals for the remodelling, alteration and extension of the building. This includes their potential impact on all the relevant heritage assets, including the character and appearance of the conservation area, and the setting of the adjacent listed buildings, in particular, No 1 Colville Place. I have read all the relevant application materials, studied the drawings and visited the site and its surroundings, which are well-known to me
- 1.4 This Heritage and Townscape statement is proportionate to the proposed works. Its purpose is to assist the applicant and the local planning authority in their consideration of the significance of the existing building and its townscape context, and, in particular, its relationship to the setting of the adjacent listed building at 1 Colville Place and surrounding heritage assets. It includes reference to, *inter alia*, the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990)*, the *National Planning Policy Framework*

and related *Planning Practice Guide*, English Heritage's *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning (GPA2) and (GPA3)*, and *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, as well as the *Mayor of London's Plan*, the Council's *Local Plan* and the *Charlotte Street Conservation Area Appraisal*. It should be read in conjunction with the other supporting documents and photographs submitted with the application.

2.0 The Proposals

2.1 The current proposals are as set out in paragraph 1.1 above. The principal differences from the previous application comprise an alternative design for the roof extension, and the removal of the defective render from the façade to expose the original brickwork beneath, and the treatment of all the existing brickwork with a limewash application to lighten the tone and provide consistency across the façade.

3.0 The Historical Development of the Area and the Site

3.1 Fitzrovia is an area of central London stretching north from Oxford Street defined by the ancient boundaries of the Bedford Estate to the east and the Portland Estate to the west. Its development took place in a haphazard fashion throughout the 18th century across four fields between Tottenham Court Road and the boundary of St Marylebone – Crab Tree Field, Walnut Tree Field, Culver Close and Home Field. In the 1720s there were no buildings north of Oxford Street on either side of Tottenham Court Road - just tracks and field boundaries across agricultural land. By 1746 Rocque's map shows that development had spread as far north as Percy Street and across Rathbone Place with further sporadic development on the west side of Tottenham Court Road up to Windmill Street and beyond, while to the west the development of the Berners Estate was well underway. As development proceeded in fits and starts, it was common for terraces to lie uncompleted during times of depression and then for development to accelerate again during periods of economic growth with boom periods in the 1730s, 1760s and 1790s. A small field next to Oxford Street was the first to be developed followed by Crabtree and Walnut Tree Fields a little further north. The Bedford Estate concentrated on Culver Close or Meadow, while the northern part of the area took shape after the freehold was acquired in 1768 by Charles Fitzroy, later Lord Southampton. Fitzroy appointed Robert Adam to design the east and south sides of Fitzroy Square, one of his

last major works before his death in 1792, and one of the finest examples of late Georgian architecture and town planning in London.

- 3.2 In 1717 a large part of Walnut Tree Field was let to William Beresford for a period of 111 years. On his death, a year later, the property passed to his wife Ann, who married John Goodge, a carpenter, who together with his nephews, Francis and William Goodge, developed most of the land, which remained in the family for over 100 years. Little is known about John Goodge, or his nephews, other than he died in 1748 and was buried alongside his wife, Ann, in old St Pancras churchyard. As London's population grew in the thirty years following his death, development boomed. In 1764 Francis and William Goodge granted a building lease on the south side of Percy Street, and two years later, on the north side, almost certainly to William Franks. Franks also bought a lease from the Goodge brothers on a strip of land running from Charlotte Street to Whitfield (formerly John) Street, on which Colvill Court (later Colville Place) was laid out.
- 3.3 **Colville Place:** Colvill Court was being built in the year 1766. The *Survey of London* records 'a lease of the northern side by Francis and William Goodge to William Franks, dated 29th July in that year. The project is described as 'a new intended Court 18 feet wide to be called Colvill Court'. A house at the corner of John Street, (now the application site) was 'let to George Beavan and 15 messuages on the north side of the court.' The lease was for 61 and a half years, but on 19th November of the same year it was assigned to Edmund Pepys, when the messuages are recorded as 'now in building'. Although Pepys financed the work, it was carried out by the eponymous John Colvill, a carpenter. The south side was under construction in 1766-67, but by 1774 Colvill had gone bankrupt.
- 3.4 The houses in Colvill Court comprised a double row of modest dwellings, three storeys high above basements faced in stock brick with a plain parapet. Each house had two sash windows at first and second floor levels with a single sash window plus an entrance door with a rectangular fanlight at ground floor level. Some of the ground floors had shops. The court was paved in stone with a central drainage channel at the centre. In the 1840s its name was changed to Colville Place.
- 3.5 By the early - mid 19th century, other than around small enclaves such as Fitzroy Square and Bedford Square, the gentry had tended to gravitate westwards towards the more

fashionable districts of Regent's Park, Marylebone, Mayfair and Belgravia leaving the houses in and around Fitzrovia to be sub-let. Many were divided into lodging houses, or small artisans' workshops with shops on the ground floors. Gradually the district deteriorated. Its proximity to the new railway stations north of Euston Road at Euston, St Pancras and Kings Cross only served to accelerate its decline as large numbers of immigrants moved in, particularly Italians, French and Germans. These new arrivals opened shops, restaurants and businesses diversifying what was originally primarily a residential area into a rich mix of varied commercial and light industrial uses. By 1890 it had acquired reputation as the raffish haunt of Bohemian artists, poets, writers and European emigres. By 1914 there were over 30,000 German residents in London. So many were concentrated in Charlotte Street that it was dubbed 'Charlottenstrasse'. The concurrent emergence of Tottenham Court Road as a centre of the furniture trade and for retail emporia added further impetus to the diversity of the neighbourhood as the original Georgian houses were adapted to light industrial uses.

- 3.6 In 1878 the writer and social commentator George Gissing (1857-1903) lived with his partner Nell Harrison on the south side of Colville Place at No 22. His description of his grim lodgings epitomised the degree to which the area had deteriorated by this time, and the poor living conditions endured by so many, who lived with but a week's wages between respectability and pauperism. After living in a rundown garret on the top floor, he soon moved to the basement to save sixpence a week rent. In his novel *New Grub Street*, he recalled that his '*window, which of course had never been cleaned since it had been put in, received light through a flat grating in the alley above.*' He described how none of these '*mean apartments in back streets*' had washing facilities, which meant that the cloakrooms of the nearby British Museum were utilised, until officials put up warning notices to forbid the practice.
- 3.7 Fitzrovia suffered heavily from bombing during the Second World War. Colville Place was damaged badly in air-raids. Nos 27-29 Whitfield Street, No. 1 Colville Place, (the eastern most house on the north side), and Nos 20-26 on the south side were destroyed, while numerous other frontages needed extensive reconstruction. After the war, for many years, the vacant bomb site on the south side was used as a car park before being laid out and landscaped as a pocket park in 1985 by the GLC following a popular campaign by local residents. At Nos 27-29 Whitfield Street the existing undistinguished office building was erected c.1958 in a utilitarian style typical of many post-war

buildings when materials were in short supply. It is faced in stock brick and render with metal-framed windows. It is illustrated fully in the original Design and Access Statement accompanying the application prepared by Stagg Architects.

3.8 In 1964 the vacant site at No 1 Colville Place was infilled with the current building designed by Max Neufeld for his own use as a house in the form of a three-storey maisonette above an art gallery or photographer's studio, which was available to rent. It was built as an infill on the 15ft. wide plot of the original house, which had been destroyed by enemy action. A timber and steel balustrade at street level protects the light well to the basement with the door to the maisonette to the right, both under glazed top lights and set back under a concrete beam approached up two steps. At roof level, there is a terrace with a sliding timber screen at the front of which is a concrete beam with opaque wired glass.

3.9 Colville Place lies within the Charlotte Street Conservation Area, which was designated by Camden Council (based on my own survey work and analysis) on 1 November 1973, incorporating the earlier designation of an enclave around Windmill Street, and subsequently extended in 1984, 1985 and 1999. A detailed Conservation Area appraisal was adopted by the Council on 24 July 2008 replacing an earlier version prepared in 1996. Nos 11/11A-13 and 14-16 Colville Place, all with original shopfronts, were included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, grade II on 14 May 1974. No I Colville Place was added to the statutory list on 12 April 2000.

3.10 **Planning History:**

* An established use certificate for the use of the second floor of 27-29 Whitfield Street as offices was granted on 3 April 1984.

* On 1 March 2004 planning permission was granted for the retention of a radio mast on the existing Class B1 office building.

* On 22 October 2012 planning permission was granted for the change of use from a courier hub and taxi control office (sui generis) to offices (Class B1a).

* In 2013 pre-application advice was issued in response to proposals for improvement works to the façade of the building, office use at basement to third floors, a two-storey roof extension and a duplex residential unit at fourth and fifth floors.

* Subsequently a full planning application was made for the change of use of the basement, ground and first floors to office (Class B1) and second floor to Class C3 residential use, a single-storey roof extension to create two self-contained residential units at second and third floor levels, façade alterations, infill of light well at basement level, installation of roof plant enclosure and other associated works. The application was recommended for approval, subject to a S.106 agreement, but subsequently it was withdrawn.

* On 4 August 2017, the Council granted planning permission for the proposals set out in paragraph 1.1 above, following the execution of a Section 106 agreement. Subsequently this decision was subject to judicial review because the officer's report contained several errors. The decision has been quashed and the application remitted back to the Council's Committee for re-consideration.

4.0 Policy and Guidance

- 4.1 The proposed development should be assessed against all relevant national, regional and local policy and guidance to assess whether harm will be caused to the designated heritage assets and, if so, whether such harm is outweighed by any public benefits arising. In this case, the heritage assets are the designated conservation area, the setting of the adjacent listed building, and the wider group of which it forms part.
- 4.2 Section 72 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* confers a general statutory duty on any planning authority in respect of conservation areas in the exercise of its planning functions. It states: *'In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any powers under any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.'*
- 4.3 Section 66 of the 1990 Act also states that *'in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local*

planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interests which it possesses’.

- 4.4 Change, including development, can sustain, enhance or better reveal the significance of an asset as well as detract from it or leave it unaltered. For the purposes of spatial planning, any development or change capable of affecting the significance of a heritage asset, or people’s experience of it, can be considered as falling within its setting.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.5 The National Planning Policy Framework, issued in March 2012 by the Department of Communities and Local Government, and its associated *Planning Practice Guidance*, set out the government’s planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. It reiterates the statutory test that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.6 Section 12 of the *Planning Practice Guidance* sets out the government’s policies for *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*.
- 4.7 Paragraph 129 of the *Planning Practice Guide* states that ‘*local planning authorities should...identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment in to account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.*’ The purpose of this report is to assist the applicant, the local authority and other interested parties to assess the proposals in relation to the relative significance of all the relevant heritage assets.
- 4.8 Paragraph 132 emphasises that ‘*when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be placed on the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification*’.

- 4.9 Paragraph 134 explains that: *'Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.'* That is the relevant test to apply as a starting point – and it has been used in this analysis to guide the assessment, although here the assessment concludes that this is a case where no harm is caused to any aspect of the heritage.
- 4.10 Weighing up proposals affecting the significance of a heritage asset requires sound decision-making based on a proper understanding of the relative heritage impacts arising from a scheme, and how they should be weighed against each other and other material planning considerations. Paragraphs 52 and 53 of English Heritage's *Good Practice Advice in Planning 2 (GPA2)* highlight that *'sustainable development can involve seeking positive improvements in the quality of the historic built environment. These include opportunities to enhance assets and their settings and local distinctiveness.'* I would contend that that is the case here.
- 4.11 The setting of heritage assets is defined in the appendix to the NPPF as *'the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance, or may be neutral.'* Detailed national advice on the setting of heritage assets is set out in English Heritage's *Good Practice Advice in Planning (GPA3)*. This is considered more extensively in paragraphs 4.21- 4.24 below.

Conservation Principles

- 4.12 Significance is a catch-all term to embrace all the qualities that coalesce to make a heritage asset. It is the value of the heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from an asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. English Heritage's *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* offers a more comprehensive approach to analysing significance by identifying four broad types of heritage value that an asset might hold – historical, aesthetic, communal and evidential value. It sets out a recommended approach for assessing significance, and how to apply the principles and policies in practice. The *Principles* offer a nationally-recognised

methodology for analysing significance with some degree of objectivity, and its philosophy and reasoning have subsequently informed the government's approach in the NPPF.

- 4.13 Decisions about change to significant places must balance the heritage values of what exists now against the potential benefits and disbenefits of any proposed intervention. Paragraph 84 of Conservation Principles stresses that *'change to a significant place is inevitable ... it is only harmful if (and to the extent that) significance is eroded'*.
- 4.14 Section 138 offers further guidance on new work and alteration. It states that *'New work or alteration to a significant place should normally be acceptable if:*
- a. there is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the place;*
 - b. the proposals would not materially harm the values of the place, which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed;*
 - c. the proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future;*
 - d. 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.'*
- 4.15 The current proposals have been designed to accord fully with Conservation Principles and the checklist in 4.14 above. There is no demonstrable harm to the heritage assets affected for the reasons set out in section 6.0 below.

Mayor of London's Policy

- 4.16 The latest *London Plan*, published by the Greater London Authority in March 2016, sets out the Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London. Section 7.4 provides guidance on local character:

'Strategic.

- A. Development should have regard to the form, function and structure of an area, place or street and the scale, mass and orientation of surrounding buildings. It should improve an area's visual or physical connection with natural features....*

Planning Decisions

B. Buildings, streets and open spaces should provide a high-quality design response that:

- a) has regard to the pattern and grain of the existing spaces and streets in orientation, scale, proportion and mass.*
- b) contributes to a positive relationship between the urban structure and natural landscape features, including the underlying landform and topography of the area.*
- c) is human in scale, ensuring buildings create a positive relationship with street level activity and people feel comfortable with their surroundings.*
- d) allows existing buildings and structures that make a significant contribution to the character of a place to influence the future character of an area.*
- e) is informed by the surrounding historic environment.'*

4.17 Policy 7.8 (Heritage Assets and Archaeology) sets out advice on the determination of planning applications affecting heritage assets:

'Planning Decisions

- C. Development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.*
- D. Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.*
- E. New development should make provision for the protection of archaeological resources, landscapes and significant memorials...'*

The Council's Core Strategy and Local Development Framework

4.18 Camden Council's Local Plan was adopted on 3 July 2017. It replaced the Core Strategy and Camden's development policies documents as the basis for planning decisions and future development in the borough. It sets out the Council's policies for the management of change, including well-considered sections relating to Managing the

Impact of new development (Policy A1), Design (Policy D1) and Heritage (Policy D2). Paragraphs 7.42 and 7.43 acknowledge that *'the Council has a proactive approach to conserving heritage assets'*, and that *'development can make a positive contribution to, or better reveal the significance of, heritage assets and will encourage this where appropriate'*. Policy D1 makes it clear that the Council will seek to secure high quality design in development, and will require that it complies with a checklist of requirements set out in D1 (a) – (o). The current application has been crafted to take these requirements fully into account. Although the Local Plan was adopted in July 2017 the document was largely in its adopted form when these proposals were formulated and tested against relevant policy.

4.19 Further guidance is given in paragraphs 7.2 – 7.5 on Local Context and Character, in particular, 7.4 which states that *'Good design takes account of its surroundings and preserves what is distinctive and valued about the local area. Careful consideration of the characteristics of a site, features of local distinctiveness and the wider context is needed in order to achieve high quality development which integrates into its surroundings.'* The following criteria are emphasised in paragraph 7.2:

- character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings;
- the character and proportions of the existing building, where alterations and extensions are proposed;
- the prevailing pattern, density and scale of surrounding development;
- the impact on existing rhythms, symmetries and uniformities in the townscape;
- the composition of elevations;
- the suitability of the proposed design to its intended use;
- inclusive design and accessibility;
- its contribution to public realm and its impact on views and vistas; and
- the wider historic environment and buildings, spaces and features of local historic value.

4.20 Paragraph 7.3 continues *'The Council will welcome high quality contemporary design which responds to its context.'* This is amplified, together with other generic Council

policies, in the Charlotte Street Conservation Area appraisal. The current application complies fully with all the relevant criteria set out in 7.2 and quoted in paragraph 4.19 above.

The Setting of Heritage Assets

- 4.21 As indicated in 4.11 above, national guidance on the setting of heritage assets is set out in English Heritage's *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning (GPA3)*. Its purpose is to assist local authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested Parties in implementing historic environment policy in the NPPF and the related National Planning Practice Guide. As this lies at the heart of the current issue of the potential impact of the proposal on the setting of the listed building at No 1 Colville Place, and given the statutory requirements of Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, it is worth considering its provisions and the methodology for assessing harm.
- 4.22 Section 4 of GPA3 states that '*Setting in urban areas, given the potential numbers and proximity of heritage assets, is therefore intimately linked to considerations of townscape and urban design and of the character and appearance of conservation areas. The character of the conservation area, and of the surrounding area, and the cumulative impact of the proposed development adjacent, would suggest how much impact on the setting should be taken in to account.*'
- 4.23 Section 9 of GPA3 explains that '*setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation ... its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset*'. It continues '*settings of heritage assets change over time. Understanding the history of change will help to determine how further development within the asset's setting is likely to affect the significance of the heritage asset.*' A primary purpose of section 3 of this report is to explain how the setting of the heritage assets – in particular, the conservation area and the adjacent listed building - has changed over time.
- 4.24 Section 11 is particularly relevant to this case. It states that '*Protection of the setting of heritage assets need not prevent change; indeed change may be positive, for instance where the setting has been compromised by poor development. Many places are within the setting of a heritage asset and are subject to some degree of change over time.*'

GPA3 sets out a 5 step approach to assessment, which has informed the consideration in section 6.0 below.

5.0 Assessment of Significance of Heritage Assets

- 5.1 **The Conservation Area:** The significance of the conservation area has been articulated very clearly in the Council's Charlotte Street Conservation Area Appraisal adopted on 24 July 2008. It would be otiose to reiterate this at length. In summary, its spatial character derives from the densely-developed grid pattern of streets in the area lined with buildings of predominantly four storeys behind front basement wells and limited open space. The tight sense of enclosure is intensified on the narrower streets. The Appraisal accurately summarises that Whitfield Street is long and relatively narrow with a notable sense of enclosure, but with contrast in the vicinity of Whitfield Gardens and Crabtree Fields where there is a greater sense of openness deriving from the open spaces that have been created from car parks and bomb sites in the second half of the 20th century. Crabtree Fields has been more successful in creating a sense of place whereas Whitfield Gardens has a fragmented, run-down character. Colville Place is an attractive thoroughfare of considerable character, even in its incomplete state. The terrace on the northern side, the surviving section on the south side, the stone paved footway and central channel, the informal planting in pots by residents, the traditional street lighting and the open space of Crabtree Fields coalesce to confer a very distinctive sense of place.
- 5.2 **The Existing Building:** In the Council's conservation area appraisal, the existing building at 27-29 Whitfield Street is identified as neutral in terms of its contribution to the conservation area. It makes neither a positive contribution nor detracts from the conservation area. In assessing the building against the heritage values set out in Conservation Principles, the building possesses minimal evidential value, no historical value, other than as an example of utilitarian post-war development, very little architectural or aesthetic value, and no communal value. Accordingly, there is scope for significant improvement in its external appearance and contribution to the area.
- 5.3 **The Listed Buildings:** The listed buildings at Nos 11/11A-13 and 14-16 Colville Place with their original shopfronts have some evidential and historical value as intact groups of late 18th century houses, which provided residential accommodation for the poorer

classes of the community, particularly by the mid-late 19th century. Architecturally they form an attractive group complemented by the surviving unlisted buildings in the street. They have some local communal value as Colville Place was a centre for the renaissance of the neighbourhood in the 1960s and 70s led by the Charlotte Street Association. However, their wider setting remains unaffected by the current proposals.

- 5.4 The listed building at No. 1 Colville Place is an interesting example of the post-war infill of an original plot, which was left as a vacant site following war damage. Designed in a minimalist modernist style typical of the 1960s by Max Neufeld in brown brick with concrete beams to the front and rear, it was rightly listed grade II as an immaculately detailed example of a modernist infill scheme of sophistication and careful taste. It warrants care and sensitivity to ensure that any adjacent development does not harm its wider setting. The proposed development at 27-29 Whitfield Street fulfils this requirement. As explained in paragraph 6.6 below, its immediate setting is very tightly confined and the proposals cause no harm to it.

6.0 Consideration

- 6.1 **Conservation Area:** In assessing the impact of the proposals on the significance of the building an objective assessment is required of the degree of harm, if any, that they will cause to the building and to the wider conservation area as a whole.
- 6.2 The proposals involve major improvements to the facade of the building. On the Colville Place elevation, the width of the windows remains unchanged, but the cills are lowered on the ground and upper floor levels, and the two small basement windows enlarged. On the Whitfield Street frontage, the cills are also lowered and the openings to the ground floor enlarged to the same level as those in Colville Place - 200mm above floor level - to create a much better relationship to the street for the proposed gallery space. Visually, this will provide a much greater degree of animation to the street scene. The defective render will be removed to expose the original brickwork beneath, and all the existing brickwork will then be treated with a limewash application to lighten the tone and provide greater consistency and cohesion across the façade.
- 6.3 The proposed roof extension has also been carefully modelled. The new third floor roof extension has been designed in a style which is complementary to the existing building, but which clearly distinguishes itself as a new addition. The attenuated proportions of

the windows to the extension echo the rectangular proportions of the adjusted ground floor windows, and thus create a much greater congruence between the two, and a greater overall sense of architectural cohesion. The roof extension is recessed 3.2 metres on the Colville Place frontage and access would be restricted for maintenance only. The plant room would be faced in horizontal zinc louvres recessed 7.9 metres from the Colville Place frontage and 2 metres from the Whitfield Street frontage. In long views from Crab Tree Fields, the roof extension and third floor would be substantially screened by trees as can be seen in photographs 12 & 13 in Appendix I. The overall proposals constitute a substantial enhancement of the conservation area for the four reasons set out in 6.4 below. This can be seen best by a simple comparison of the existing and proposed views illustrated on page 11 in the Design and Access Statement prepared by Stagg Architects.

- 6.4 First, at present there is an uncomfortable relationship with the neighbouring building immediately to the north on the corner of Goodge Street. At roof level, the neighbouring building rises abruptly above No. 27-29 Whitfield Street in a sheer wall faced in low quality Fletton brick. This is obtrusive and detracts from the visual amenity of the conservation area, the skyline and long views northward. The proposed roof extension mediates much better in terms of design, massing and scale between No. 27-29 and its neighbour and improves the articulation between them. Second, the re-modelling of the façade of No. 27-29 significantly enhances the character and appearance of the building and its contribution to the conservation area. The provision of a more rectangular window proportion to the roof extension and the upper floors, and to the ground floor frontage, creates a more coherent design, which is much better integrated into the wider townscape context. The enlargement of those at ground floor level creates visual hierarchy to the façade reminiscent of the diminishing window proportions found on the 18th and 19th century terraces in the area. It also echoes the proportions of the first-floor window on the adjacent listed building thereby enhancing the relationship between them. In addition, the larger glazed ground floor openings form a much-improved relationship to the street animating the street frontage of what hitherto has been a dead frontage. Third, the removal of the render to expose the original brickwork, the application of the limewash treatment and the replacement of the windows provide a welcome facelift for a rundown building on a prominent corner within the conservation area. Finally, in comparison with the original surviving Georgian

buildings at the junction with Charlotte Street at the western end of Colville Place, where there is a significant change of height and scale, at the eastern end, No. 27-29 Whitfield Street currently forms a weak 'book end.' By raising the height of the existing building with a recessed roof storey, the proposed extension will reinforce the prominence of the re-modelled building and provide a degree of balance to the street, thereby enhancing the wider setting of Colville Place and its contribution to the conservation area.

6.5 For the reasons, set out in paragraphs 6.2 – 6.4 above, cumulatively the proposals result in a significant enhancement of the existing building and its contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and its wider setting. They comply fully with the statutory provisions set out in S.72 of the 1990 Act.

6.6 **The Listed Buildings:** Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires decision-makers to give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of all listed buildings. The proposals would have no impact on the immediate setting of Nos 11/11A-13 or 14-16 Colville Place. No 1 Colville is not a commanding free-standing building, nor an architectural set-piece, its special interest is defined in the listing description as an example of modernist infill on the original plot width. Its setting is tightly confined to its immediate context. After careful consideration of all aspects of its context and relationship to the wider area, in my opinion there would be some modest enhancement to its wider setting for the following reasons.

6.7 First, the improvements to the elevations of 27-29 Whitfield Street will significantly enhance the relationship between the two buildings and the conservation area. The use of the ground floor of No.27-29 as a gallery space and the enlargement of its windows provides a much greater congruence with the adjacent listed building not only in terms of their complementary uses, but also their physical inter-relationship. The enlarged windows will complement the similar approach adopted in the original design of the ground floor gallery at No 1. Such a relationship will be far better in terms of the wider setting of No 1 than the current adjacent dead frontage. Second, as indicated in 6.4 above, the adjustments to the window proportions of No.27-29 create a stronger rectangular proportion, particularly at ground level, which on the Colville Place frontage echoes the window proportion used at first floor level of the listed building

thereby conferring better integration between what at present are two very disparate buildings. Finally, at roof level the new roof extension aligns precisely with the roof storey of the listed building. The only impact on the setting of the listed building would be in an oblique view from Crab Tree Fields, and from the west side of the footway in Whitfield Street. Even in winter, both views are screened heavily by tree cover. After careful consideration, I do not believe that the proposals would cause any harm to the significance, special interest, heritage values or setting of No. 1 Colville Place, or to any of the inherent qualities which warranted its addition to the statutory list.

- 6.8 The Council is right to attach great weight to the setting of the heritage asset. However, even if the Council contends that in listed building terms, there is some slight harm to the wider setting of the listed building at No. 1 Colville Place in relation to oblique views of the building, (which is difficult to discern), then this is decisively outweighed by the wider public benefits conferred on the setting of the listed building by its better integration with No. 27-29 Whitfield Street through the re-modelling of the façade, the adjustment of its window proportions, its comprehensive facelift, the improved relationship of the ground floor with the street and the animation of the street scene arising from that. In conservation area terms, these constitute a substantial enhancement of No.27-29 Whitfield Street and its contribution to the conservation area.
- 6.9 Paragraph 84 of English Heritage's *Conservation Principles* stresses that '*change to a significant place is inevitable ... it is only harmful if (and to the extent that) significance is eroded*'. Paragraph 102 concludes '*Ideally, proposed changes will cause no harm to any of the values of the place, and the right decision will be obvious*'. This is just such an instance.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises that, when assessing the alteration of a listed building, local authorities are required to consider fully the relative heritage impacts arising from a scheme and to weigh them carefully against each other, and other material planning considerations. This report is intended to assist that process.
- 7.2 The proposed development has been assessed fully against the statutory provisions of Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and the objectives of all relevant national, regional and local planning policy and

guidance, including specific national advice on the setting of heritage assets prepared by Historic England.

7.3 In this case, no harm caused to any aspect of the significance of No 1 Colville Place as a listed building, its wider setting, or of the wider group of which it forms part. The proposals involve an enhancement of the setting of the adjacent listed building, and a substantial enhancement of the conservation area.

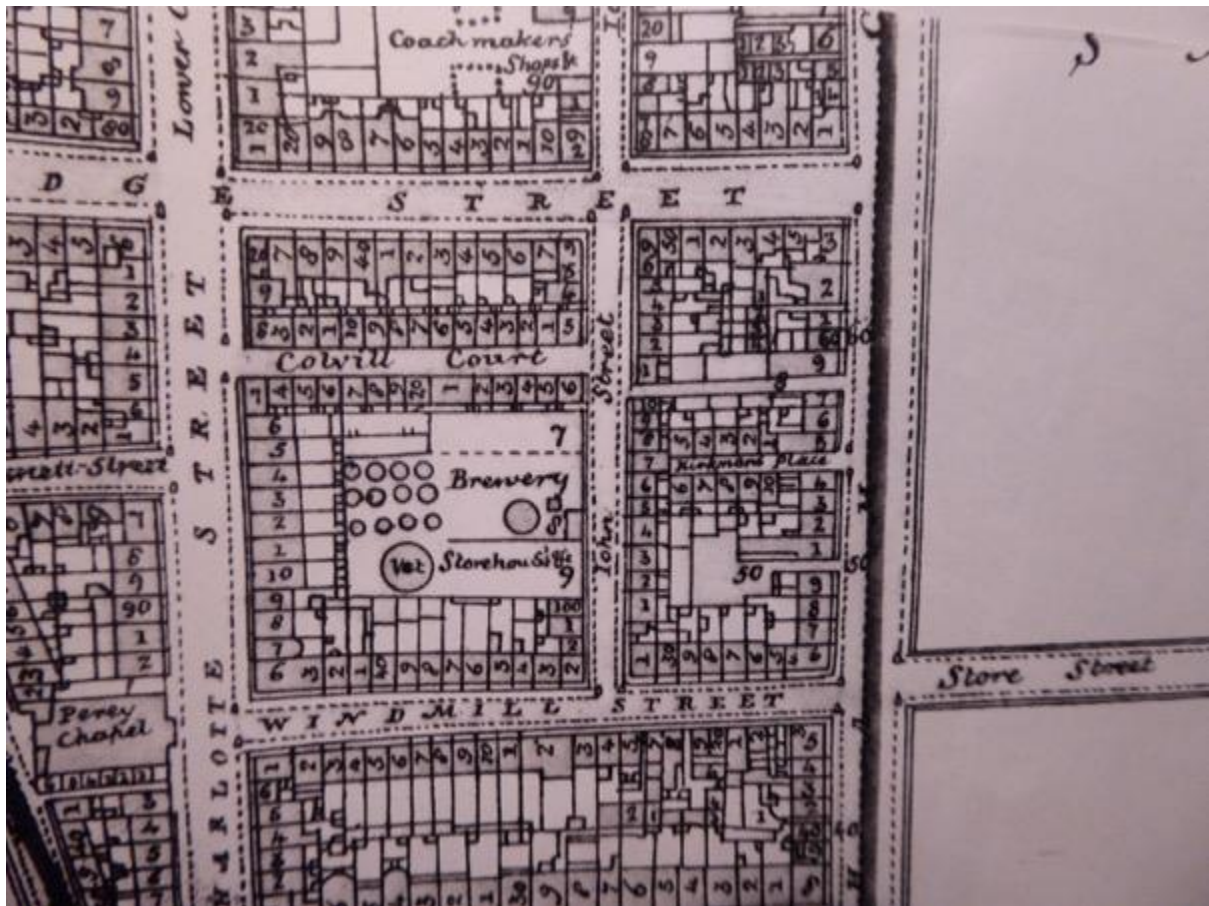
7.4 The proposals involve a considerable investment in the adaptation and remodelling of an undistinguished, utilitarian post-war building. They enhance its contribution to the conservation area and make a demonstrable improvement to the wider setting of the adjacent listed building at No. 1 Colville Place. I conclude that not only is no harm conferred on any of the heritage assets, there is significant enhancement. This constitutes substantial public benefit, which more than outweighs the policy test of any perceived 'less than substantial' harm. The proposals confer benefits which should be warmly welcomed, and for which planning permission should be granted.

Philip Davies

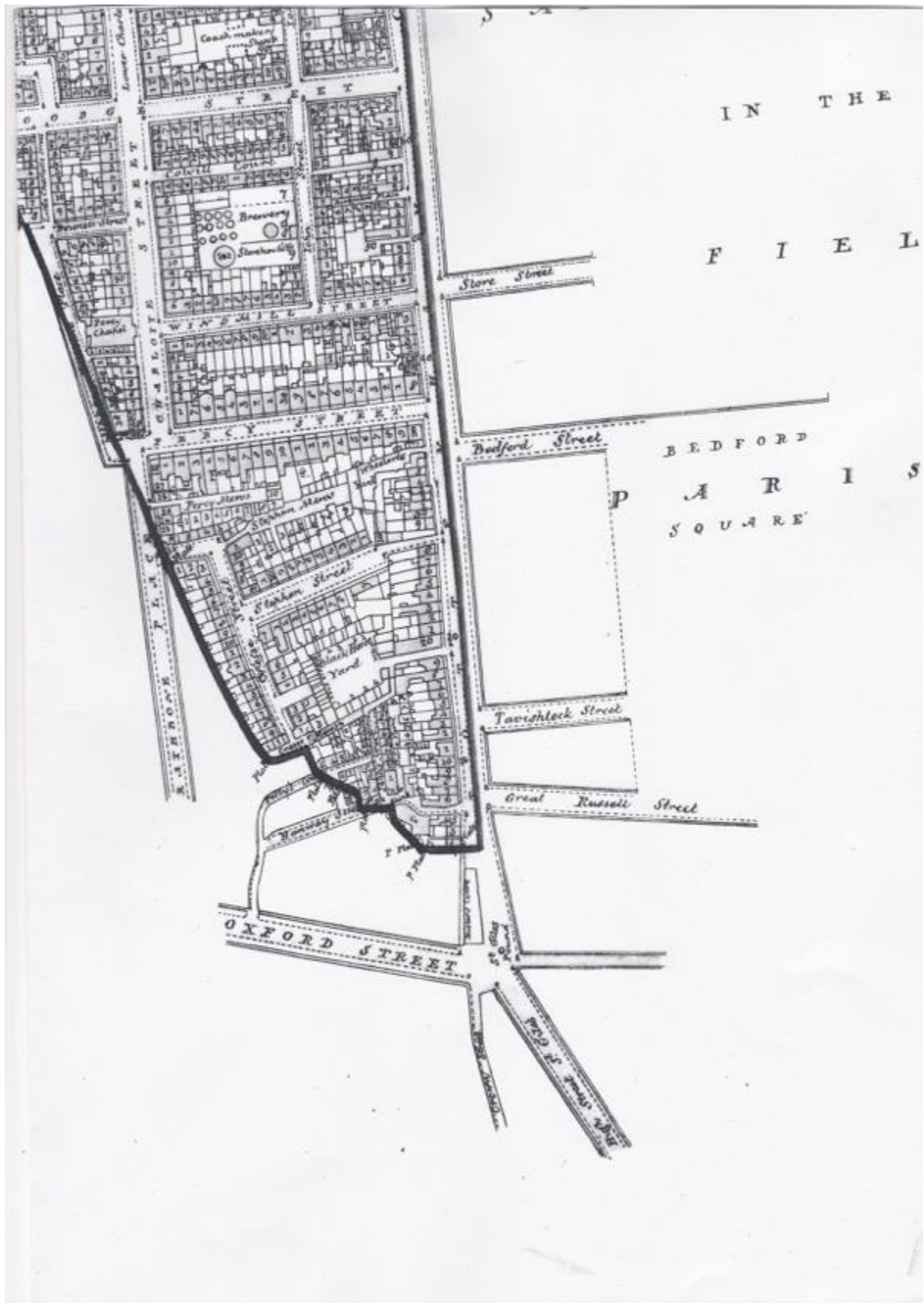
Philip Davies (Heritage and Planning) Ltd

October 2017

APPENDIX I: MAPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS



1. John Tompson's map of St Pancras (circa 1803) showing Colvill Court.



2. John Tomson's map of St Pancras showing Fitzrovia.



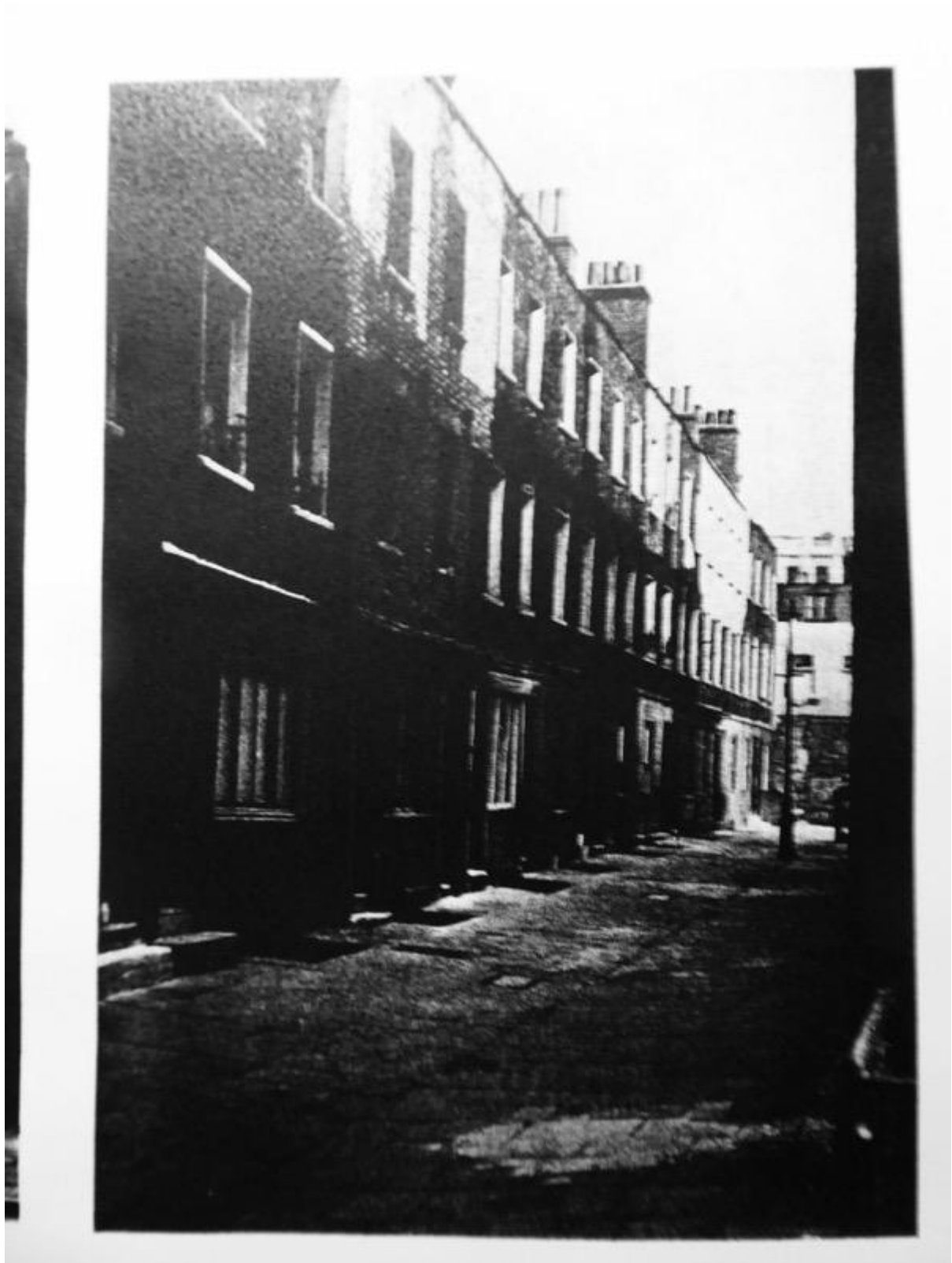
3. John Tallis 'London Street Views' showing Colvill Court 1838 – 40.



4. Ordnance Survey map 1870.



5. Ordnance Survey map 2017.



6. Colville Place looking east c.1948 from Survey of London Vol. XXI.



7. Colville Place looking east 2017.



8. Charlotte Street / Colville Place junction showing change of height and scale.



9. Colville Place at west end showing step up to Charlotte Street on both sides.



10. View of 27-29 Whitfield Street from east side footway showing abrupt change in height to adjacent building in Goodge Street and obtrusive flank wall.



11. View of site from Goodge Street.



12. View of 27-29 Whitfield Street and 1 Colville Place from Crab Tree Gardens showing dense tree cover.



13. Close-up view of 1 Colville Place and 27-29 Whitfield Street from Crab Tree Gardens.