

52-53 Russell Square
London WC1

Heritage Appraisal

May 2018

Consultancy for the
Historic Built Environment

KMIHeritage

Contents

1	Introduction.....	3
	Purpose	3
	Organisation.....	3
	Author	3
2	The history of 52-53 Russell Square.....	5
	Development of Russell Square	5
	Nos. 52-53 Russell Square	8
3	The heritage significance of the site and its context	14
	The heritage context of 52-53 Russell Square.....	14
	Unlisted buildings of merit	14
	The heritage significance of the site and its context.....	14
	The relevant heritage assets	14
	Assessing heritage significance.....	15
	‘Historic interest’, ‘Historical value’ and ‘Evidential value’	16
	‘Architectural interest’, ‘artistic interest’ or ‘aesthetic value’	17
	Summary.....	18
4	The policy context.....	19
	The National Planning Policy Framework.....	19
	Camden Council’s Local Development Framework	23
5	The proposed scheme and its effect	26
	The proposed scheme and its effect on heritage significance	26
	Smoke Lobbies.....	26
	Other proposed internal alterations.....	27
	Mews Building.....	28
	Acoustic Control Measures	28
	External Works	29
	Summary	29
	The effect on the conservation area and other listed buildings	30
6	Compliance with policy and guidance	31
	The level of ‘harm’ caused by the proposed scheme.....	31
	The National Planning Policy Framework.....	32
	Camden’s Local Development Framework	33
7	Summary and conclusions.....	34
	Appendix A: List description	35

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to support the planning and listed building consent application for 52-53 Russell Square, London, WC1. The report has been prepared on behalf of Ecole Jeannine Manuel UK.

Purpose

- 1.2 The purpose of the report is to set out the history and heritage significance of 52-53 Russell Square, and to comment on the emerging proposals for its alteration.
- 1.3 This report should be read in conjunction with all other relevant documents.

Organisation

- 1.4 This introduction is followed by a description of the history of 52-53 Russell Square. Section 3 analyses the heritage significance of the listed building and its context. Section 4 sets out the national and local policy and guidance relating to the historic built environment that is relevant to this matter. An outline is provided in Section 4 of the merits of the scheme in heritage terms. Appendices include a location plan, bibliography and references and historical mapping.

Author

- 1.5 The drafting of this statement was undertaken by Nick Collins BSc (Hons) MSc MRICS IHBC. Nick has been a Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings & Areas in the London Region of English Heritage. Most recently he was a Director of Conservation at Alan Baxter & Associates. Nick has extensive experience in dealing with proposals that affect the historic environment and also has a background in research, in policy analysis and in understanding historic buildings and places.
- 1.6 Historical research for this report was undertaken by Dr Ann Robey FSA, a conservation and heritage professional

with over twenty years experience. She has worked for leading national bodies as well as smaller local organizations and charities. She is a researcher and writer specialising in architectural, social and economic history, with a publication record that includes books, articles, exhibitions and collaborative research.

2 The history of 52-53 Russell Square

- 2.1 This section of the report describes the history and development of 52-53 Russell Square and its surroundings.



Figure 1: The south side of Russell Square showing from right to left, Nos. 52-60 (consecutive)

Development of Russell Square

- 2.2 The land on which Russell Square¹ was built remained undeveloped until the end of the 18th century. Known historically as the Long Fields, the land originally supplied arable crops, but by the mid-18th century was cut for hay. The fields were crossed with footpaths, and used for general recreation by Londoners. Once a place for archery, kite flying, cricket and boxing took place there in the later 18th century.² The land had not been developed as it lay immediately to the north of Bedford House³, the Duke of Bedford's mid-17th century London residence on the north side of Bloomsbury Square, and by remaining

¹ The square was named after the ground landlords the Russell family, Dukes of Bedford

² The Sportsman's Magazine, March 1845

³ Which was until 1734, known as Southampton House

rural had preserved the open views to the north towards Hampstead and Highgate (see Figure 2).

- 2.3 In 1799 Francis Russell, the 5th Duke of Bedford (1765-1802), commissioned James Burton (1761-1837) to develop his estate. By then Bloomsbury was no longer fashionable with the upper classes, and the Duke moved to St James's. Bedford House was demolished in 1800, to allow the lands to be speculatively developed. The Duke obtained two Acts of Parliament in 1800 for developing his estate.⁴ James Gubbins, the Duke of Bedford's surveyor, drew up an estate plan in the same year, issued for the benefit of potential investors. James Burton was named as the person from whom further particulars might be obtained. Burton had a background as a surveyor and architect, and first came to prominence with the building of nearly 600 houses on the neighbouring Foundling Estate.



Figures 2 & 3: Bedford House and the open fields to the north on the site of Russell Square on Roque's plan of 1746 and Langley & Belcher's Map of London of 1812 showing the newly built Russell Square

⁴ John Summerson, *Georgian London*, (1991 edit), p.170

- 2.4 James Burton was one of the most significant builders of Georgian London, responsible for large areas of Bloomsbury, as well as St. Johns Wood and Clapham Common. As the architect to the Bedford Estate, he changed the face of Bloomsbury by extending it to the north of Bloomsbury Square, starting with the two rows of houses that were to form the south side of Russell Square (including Nos. 52-53)⁵, some houses on the west side of the square and Bedford Place, which connected Russell Square with Bloomsbury Square, all built between 1801 and 1805. A view of the two rows of houses which were to form the south side of Russell Square, appeared in the Royal Academy exhibition of 1800 under Burton's name.⁶ In fact it appears that No. 53 Russell Square was completed by 1802, as it was being insured by the Sun Insurance Office from December, 1802.⁷ No. 52 was also completed at the same time, as it formed part of the terrace.
- 2.5 The building agreements ensured formal architectural compositions of the houses arranged in uniform terraces around the four sides of the square. Burton was the key figure in the initial execution of the plan from 1800, designing the facades and laying out the basic garden square. But in 1805 Burton engaged Humphrey Repton to design and plant Russell Square at a cost of £2570. Repton, a leading landscape architect, designed a broad perimeter walk (with high hedges to screen the walk from the street) and a horseshoe-shaped central walk under two rows of clipped lime trees. There was a trellis-covered shelter at the centre, with eight seats, which cleverly concealed the gardeners' shed in a small courtyard at the centre.⁸ Burton dominated development in Bloomsbury until 1817, acting as the principal developer, building

⁵ John Summerson, *Georgian London*, (1991 edit), p.170

⁶ John Summerson, *Georgian London*, (1991 edit), p.170. Burton never again exhibited at the RA

⁷ London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/426/740643

⁸ <http://www.londongardenstrust.org/mobile/stage.php?tour=Bloomsbury&stage=6.00>

some houses himself and sub-leasing many more to smaller builders, whom he would also provide with loans when necessary.⁹ Russell Square was the largest square in London at the time, larger even than Grosvenor Square.

- 2.6 In 1829 it was stated that the square had a ‘magnificent appearance’ and ‘it has, from its first formation, been a favourite residence of the highest legal characters; and here merchants and bankers have seated themselves and their families, the air and situation uniting to render it a pleasant retreat from the cares of business’.¹⁰

Nos. 52-53 Russell Square

- 2.7 The property is located on the south side of Russell Square on the corner with Bedford Place. Although originally two separate properties, they are today joined as a single unit with openings through the party walls. Nos. 52-53 are Grade II listed, as part of the terrace comprising Nos. 52-60 Russell Square, and lie within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.¹¹ The houses were designed as ‘first-class’ houses of the best sort, as defined by the Buildings Act of 1774. These large terraced houses were aimed at upper-middle-class families. Nos. 52-53 Russell Square are amongst a number of the original houses to survive. Original Burton houses survive unchanged at Nos. 38–43 and also (with terracotta embellishments dating from the 1890s) at Nos. 21–24 and 52–60.¹²

⁹ Dana Arnold, *Rural Urbanism: London landscapes in the early nineteenth century*. (2005), p.28

¹⁰ Rowland Dobie, *The History of the United Parishes of St Giles in the Fields and St George Bloomsbury*, (1829), p. 171

¹¹ See Appendix One for the listing description

¹² Camden History Society, *Streets of Bloomsbury & Fitzrovia*, (1997)

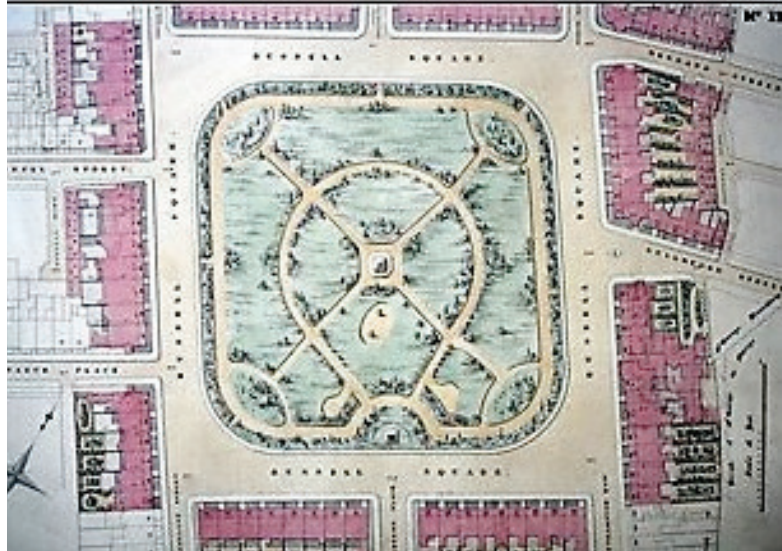


Figure 4: Plan of 1866

- 2.8 Nos. 52 & 53 were built in 1802, with James Burton as their builder as well as designer. When first erected they comprised a simple block with an open garden to the south and a narrow rear wing, probably one-storey in height, going back from the south-west corner of the houses. This is clearly shown on a plan of 1866 (Figure 4). In 1867, consent was granted by the Bedford Estate for a substantial extension at the back of No. 52, along the pavement frontage on Bedford Place and comprising three new rooms, a lavatory and a passage to a new main door.¹³ This is clearly shown on the first edition OS Map of 1875-78 (Figure 5).

¹³ Conservation Assessment in Camden online Planning Application 2007/1410/P

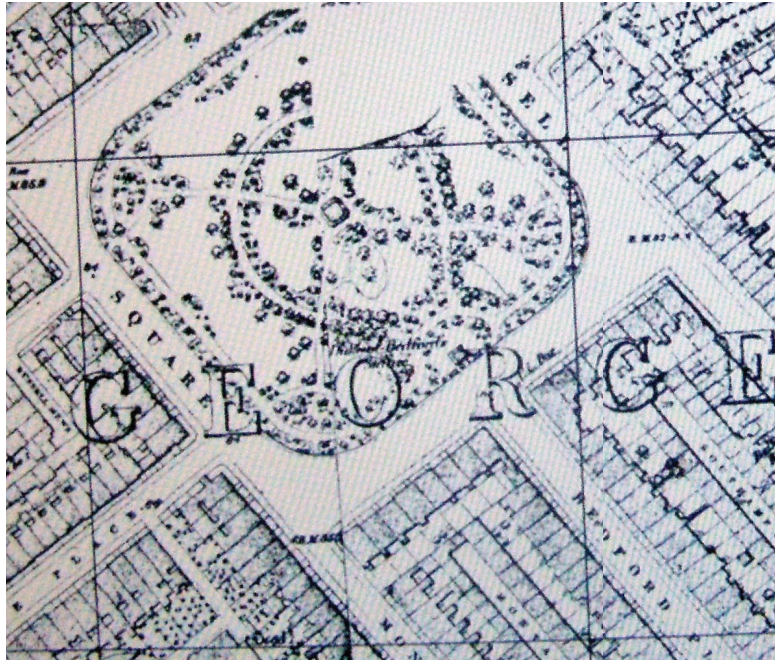


Figure 5: OS Map of 1875-78 showing extension to the rear of No.52

- 2.9 In the 1880s, in an attempt to stop an exodus by the better-off residents, the estate took steps to improve the square and its surroundings. Gower Street was smartened up and as the original leases of Russell Square fell in, an attempt was made to modernise the houses (including Nos. 52-53), through the addition of terracotta ornaments and fancy ironwork designed by Philip P. Pilditch. This was mainly done in the late 1890s (see Figure 6). As Pevsner states in *The Buildings of England*, the houses were 'beautified with terracotta bits'.¹⁴ On the east side of the square, two enormous late 19th century hotels were built in red brick and terracotta, to the designs of C. Fitzroy Doll.¹⁵ The Russell Hotel is now Grade II* listed – the highest designation of any building in the Square, and is a tall terracotta building, in the style of a late 19th century French chateau.

¹⁴ Bridget Cherry & Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 4: North* (1998), p.326

¹⁵ Today just the Russell Hotel survives, the Imperial Hotel was demolished in the 1960s



Figure 10: The terracotta embellishments at Nos. 52-3 Russell Square that date from c.1898

- 2.10 In 1907, No. 52 underwent substantial alterations, to the designs of W. A. Lewis, Architect and Surveyor of Finsbury Square. The building was split into a number of bedrooms (6), with a shared dining room and writing room on the ground floor, and with kitchen and staff facilities in the basement. Thus, it was in multiple occupation and probably used as student accommodation, being close to the University of London and various hospitals.¹⁶ However, in 1928 there were further changes which resulted in the property becoming a mixture of office and residential accommodation.
- 2.11 In 1957, an application was made by the Bedford Estate to redevelop the site of Nos. 52-60 Russell Square for office purposes. No. 52, was mainly in office use, but at that time there was residential accommodation in the

¹⁶ Conservation Assessment in Camden online Planning Application 2007/1410/P

building.¹⁷ In 1962, an application was made to demolish Nos. 52-60, which was refused as it 'would involve the loss of the existing special character of the substantial part of the old Bedford Estate Development'.¹⁸

- 2.12 By 1979, Nos. 52-53 were a single unit. In that year, Nos. 52-58 Russell Square underwent extensive refurbishment and strengthening of the fabric of the buildings and consolidation and upgrading of the standards of both the residential and office accommodation.¹⁹
- 2.13 The strengthening seems to have been inadequate as in 1985-6, Gerald Shenstone and Partners drew up plans for major alterations to the building at Nos. 52-53. Alan Baxter and Associates were the structural engineers on the project, which involved the removal of the 20th century flank walls and the insertion of a full five-storey steel frame into No. 52 on the original spine wall. All floors were either replaced or strengthened with additional steel beams.²⁰
- 2.14 A two-storey extension was added to the rear and the existing balcony and balustrades to the properties were overhauled. A new concrete pad foundation was inserted under the Bedford Place extension.²¹ A new lift shaft was installed adjacent to the party wall between Nos. 52 and 53, and new openings into the party walls made on each floor. These were lined with individual box frames.²²
- 2.15 All services were renewed and new joinery including architraves, skirtings and similar features were used in both buildings. The refurbishment programme received Listed Building Consent, indicating that by that time little original fabric remained in the two properties.²³ After the 1986 strengthening works, it seems unlikely that there

¹⁷ Camden Planning online TP 7559/005531 (1957)

¹⁸ Camden Planning online HB 31 (1969)

¹⁹ Camden Planning online PA 29153 (1979); elsewhere in the terrace, there remained a few flats on upper floors

²⁰ Camden Planning online PA 8670077 (1986)

²¹ Camden Planning online PA 8670077 (1986)

²² Conservation Assessment in Camden online Planning Application 2007/1410/P

²³ The terrace had been listed in 1969

was any original fabric at Nos. 52-53 other than that in the exterior walls, apart from the main staircase at No. 53.

- 2.16 In 2007, De Metz Forbes Knight, Architects undertook relatively minor alterations to the building for the Bedford Estate, which included two new single door openings in the party wall at ground floor level. The alterations to the main building included new structural openings through the original party wall between the main front buildings, removal of the existing roof structure to No.53 to create a new lower roof plant area and demolition of some internal walls which were constructed in the 1980's.
- 2.17 The existing link building between the front and rear buildings was demolished and replaced with a new three-storey link building, together with some minor alterations to the main building. A further two to three-storey rear extension was accessed from Bedford Place, which was refurbished.²⁴
- 2.18 Today Nos. 52-53 Russell Square is the home of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, with a number of rooms available to hire for lectures, events and meetings. James Burton's terrace is simple but elegant, in the Neoclassical style, with decorative door cases, recessed sash windows and stucco ground floors. The addition of the 1890s terracotta to the fronts of the houses perhaps distracts from the purity of the design, but is typical of late Victorian fashion and as such, indicative of the reuse and refashioning of older structures. The buildings have retained their external appearance as Georgian houses, but have been almost completely modified internally.
- 2.19 An application (2017/2285/P) for change of use from office to educational received a resolution to grant at the Development Control Committee on 26th October 2017.

²⁴ Camden Planning online 2007/1410/P; <http://www.elliottwood.co.uk/project/52-53-russell-square-london-wc1b-4hp/>

3 The heritage significance of the site and its context

- 3.1 This section of the report describes the heritage significance of 52-53 Russell Square and its surroundings.

The heritage context of 52-53 Russell Square

- 3.2 52-53 Russell Square were listed Grade II in March 1969 as part of a wider designation of '52 – 60 Russell Square and attached railings'; the list description is contained in Appendix A. The listed buildings are located in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area on the southern side of Russell Square. The Bloomsbury Conservation Area was first designated in 1984 and the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy was adopted in April 2011. Russell Square is within Sub Area 6.
- 3.3 In the vicinity of 52-53 Russell Square are a number of other listed buildings, including 44-49 Russell Square and railings, 1-20 Bedford Place and railings and the Russell Square Garden is a Grade II Registered Park & Garden.

Unlisted buildings of merit

- 3.4 The conservation area appraisal for the Bloomsbury Conservation Area identifies a number of buildings in the vicinity as being 'positive contributors' to the conservation area, including 9, 10-16 Russell Square House, 32 Stewart House and Brunei Gallery. A number of coal hole covers are also identified on Bedford Place. The mature trees within the central open space, granite kerbs, coal holes, York stone paving and Edward VII post box are also noted as being 'Elements of Streetscape Interest'.

The heritage significance of the site and its context

The relevant heritage assets

- 3.5 In terms of the assessment of the proposals for 52-53 Russell Square, the heritage assets within Camden most

relevant to considering the effect of the scheme are the listed buildings themselves, nearby listed buildings, and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

- 3.6 The effect of the proposed scheme on these assets will be first and foremost on the special architectural and historic interest of 52-53 Russell Square and its setting, and then secondly on the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of other listed buildings.

Assessing heritage significance

- 3.7 52-53 Russell Square, the listed buildings in the vicinity and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and are 'designated heritage assets', as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF). Other buildings and structures that make a positive contribution to the conservation area - such as unlisted buildings of merit - can be considered as 'non-designated heritage assets'.
- 3.8 'Significance' is defined in the NPPF as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic'. The Historic England 'Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide' puts it slightly differently – as 'the sum of its architectural, historic, artistic or archaeological interest'.
- 3.9 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment' (Historic England, April 2008) describes a number of 'heritage values' that may be present in a 'significant place'. These are evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.
- 3.10 Historical value is described as being illustrative or associative. 'Conservation Principles' says that:
- Illustration depends on visibility in a way that evidential value (for example, of buried remains) does not. Places with illustrative value will normally also have evidential value, but it may be of a different order of importance... The illustrative value of places tends to be greater if they incorporate the first, or only surviving, example of an

innovation of consequence, whether related to design, technology or social organisation.

‘Historic interest’, ‘Historical value’ and ‘Evidential value’

- 3.11 52-53 Russell Square, the listed and unlisted buildings nearby, and their relationship to one another and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area collectively illustrate the development of this part of London. They tell us about the nature of the expansion of London in the 18th century, the suburbanisation of previously open land by means of estate development to the west of the late 17th century development around Covent Garden, the nature of society at the time and the market for such residential development, and about how the housing built in the 18th century was adapted and changed to suit occupation in the Victorian and Edwardian periods. It tells us also about social and commercial transformations during the late 19th and 20th century, and about the dynamics of post-war change and its effect on older buildings. The area and its buildings area a record of social and economic change and lifestyles in various periods, and illustrate the effect these things had on the historic building stock and urban grain.
- 3.12 In terms of Historic England’s ‘Conservation Principles’ the listed buildings and conservation area provide us with ‘evidence about past human activity’ and, by means of their fabric, design and appearance, communicate information about its past. Subsequent alteration, demolition and redevelopment has not entirely removed the ability of the older townscape and intact historic buildings to do this; the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and its listed buildings clearly retains sufficient historic character and appearance to convey the area’s historical ethos. Despite the many changes that are described earlier in this report, 52-53 Russell Square, externally and internally, retains its ability to convey its historical value – particularly through its interconnection. In fact, the presence of many phases of work together in a single building is part of its special historic interest, providing

evidence about the historical changes that occurred to it over time.

‘Architectural interest’, ‘artistic interest’ or ‘aesthetic value’

- 3.13 It is clear that the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and 52-53 Russell Square referred to above have ‘architectural’ and ‘artistic interest’ (NPPF) or ‘aesthetic value’ (‘Conservation Principles’). In respect of design, ‘Conservation Principles’ says that ‘design value... embraces composition (form, proportions, massing, silhouette, views and vistas, circulation) and usually materials or planting, decoration or detailing, and craftsmanship’.
- 3.14 The part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area in the vicinity of 52-53 Russell Square possesses these heritage values to a considerable degree. The contributing elements of the aesthetic significance of the area as a piece of historic townscape are the nature of older (listed and unlisted) structures and their contribution to the historic streetscape, including Russell Square Gardens, and that streetscape itself.
- 3.15 The special architectural and historic interest of 52-53 Russell Square as a listed building lies principally in its Georgian architectural style as updated and ‘smartened up’ in the 1880s with the addition of the terracotta ornaments and fancy ironwork, as well as new windows on the front elevations. Externally, the elevation facing Russell Square remains largely unaltered from this period. To the rear there has been considerable alteration to the rear former service block – that for No.53 entirely re-built in 1985 and that for No.52 much altered and refurbished as modern office space.
- 3.16 Internally, whilst there is some vestige of plan form remaining, the reality is that very little historic detailing remains in the building. The principle staircase at No.52 has been entirely removed and a lift inserted. Major floor strengthening works in 1979 and 1985 meant a full five-

storey steel frame was inserted and all floors were either replaced or strengthened.

- 3.17 All services were renewed and new joinery including architraves, skirtings were replaced with similar features used in both buildings.
- 3.18 As a consequence the special interest of the interior of the building has been considerably reduced.
- 3.19 The listed buildings near 52-53 Russell Square have, by definition, special architectural and historic interest and in respect of proposals on the site of 52-53 Russell Square that might affect their setting, that special interest has to do with their external architectural design as part of a set piece Square, their scale, massing and roof profiles. Their internal special interest would clearly not be affected by adjacent development.

Summary

- 3.20 52-53 Russell Square have clear historical and evidential value, and this value is expressed in the narrative of the building's history and how it has changed - this is set out earlier.
- 3.21 In terms of architectural or aesthetic value, this is limited primarily to the external appearance of the listed building, the layout of some of the principal spaces and the remaining staircase. Otherwise the building has been structurally much altered with the removal of the principal staircase in No, 52, the insertion of the lift and with all services, joinery, skirting and architrave being modern replicas.

4 The policy context

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

Legislation

- 4.2 The legislation governing listed buildings and conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 66 (1) of the Act requires decision makers to ‘have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses’ when determining applications which affect a listed building or its setting. Section 72(1) of the Act requires decision makers with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area to pay ‘special attention...to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.3 In March 2012, the Government published the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which replaced Planning Policy Statement 5: ‘Planning for the Historic Environment’ (PPS5) with immediate effect.
- 4.4 The NPPF says at Paragraph 128 that:
- In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.
- 4.5 A description and analysis of the heritage significance of Nos. 52-53 Russell Square and its context is provided earlier in this report.

- 4.6 The NPPF also requires local planning authorities to ‘identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into 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’.
- 4.7 At Paragraph 131, the NPPF says that:
In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
 - the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.8 Paragraph 132 advises local planning authorities that ‘When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to 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’.
- 4.9 The NPPF says at Paragraph 133 ‘Good design ensures attractive, usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning.’ Paragraph 133 says:
Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse

consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

4.10 Paragraph 134 says 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.

4.11 Further advice within Section 12 of the NPPF urges local planning authorities to take into account the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset when determining the application. It says that ‘In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset’.

4.12 Paragraph 137 of the NPPF advises local planning authorities to ‘look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites 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’.

4.13 Paragraph 138 says that:

Not all elements of a World Heritage Site or Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 133 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 134, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

4.14 The NPPF incorporates many of the essential concepts in Planning Policy Statement 5 ‘Planning for the Historic Environment’. PPS5 was accompanied by a ‘Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide’, published by English Heritage ‘to help practitioners implement the policy, including the legislative requirements that underpin it’²⁵. The ‘Guide’ gives, at Paragraph 79, a number of ‘potential heritage benefits that could weigh in favour of a proposed scheme’ in addition to guidance on ‘weighing-up’ proposals in Paragraphs 76 to 78. These are that:

- It sustains or enhances the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting;
- It reduces or removes risks to a heritage asset;
- It secures the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long-term conservation;
- It makes a positive contribution to economic vitality and sustainable communities;
- It is an appropriate design for its context and makes a positive contribution to the appearance,

²⁵ PPS5 was superseded by the NPPF, but the PPS5 Practice Guide is still valid for the time being. It is intended by English Heritage that it will be replaced by good practice advice developed by English Heritage in conjunction with the Historic Environment Forum

character, quality and local distinctiveness of the historic environment;

- It better reveals the significance of a heritage asset and therefore enhances our enjoyment of it and the sense of place.

4.15 Paragraph 111 of the Guide sets out the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that local planning authorities when making decisions must 'have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses' and 'pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance' of a conservation area.

Camden Council's Local Development Framework

4.16 The Camden Local Plan sets out the Council's planning policies. It replaces Camden's Core Strategy and Development Policies planning documents (adopted in 2010).

4.17 Section 7 of the Plan deals with Design and Heritage saying that 'the Council places great importance on preserving the historic environment'.

4.18 Policy D2 Heritage deals with Camden's heritage assets. The policy asserts that:

'The Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens and locally listed heritage assets.'

4.19 In relation to designated heritage assets generally the policy says:

'The Council will not permit the loss of or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, including conservation areas and Listed Buildings, unless it can be

demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a. the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site;
- b. no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation;
- c. conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d. the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

The Council will not permit development that results in harm that is less than substantial to the significance of a designated heritage asset unless the public benefits of the proposal convincingly outweigh that harm.

4.20 In relation to conservation areas the policy says:

‘In order to maintain the character of Camden’s conservation areas, the Council will take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management strategies when assessing applications within conservation areas. The Council will:

- e. require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area;
- f. resist the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area;
- g. resist development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character or appearance of that conservation area; and
- h. preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character and appearance of a conservation area or which provide a setting for Camden’s architectural heritage.

4.21 In relation to Listed Buildings the policy says:

‘To preserve or enhance the borough’s listed buildings, the Council will:

i. resist the total or substantial demolition of a listed building;

j. resist proposals for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where this would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the building; and

k. resist development that would cause harm to significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting.

4.22 In relation to Archaeology

‘The Council will protect remains of archaeological importance by ensuring acceptable measures are taken proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset to preserve them and their setting, including physical preservation, where appropriate’.

In relation to other heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets including those on and off the local list, Registered Parks and Gardens and London Squares the policy states:

‘The effect of a proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, balancing the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.’

5 The proposed scheme and its effect

5.1 This section of the report briefly describes the proposed scheme and its effect on the heritage significance described earlier. The proposed scheme is illustrated in the drawings prepared by Ellis Williams Architects.

The proposed scheme and its effect on heritage significance

5.2 The proposed scheme is for the conversion of the listed buildings and the rear mews/service buildings into a school.

5.3 The works will comprise:

- Internal alterations including removal of existing partitions and installation of new partitions to allow occupation of the property as a school including provision of smoke lobbies
- Installation of acoustic measures to reduce noise transmission between the school and adjacent residential properties
- Cycle parking

5.4 The proposals have been subject to pre-application discussion with the council and take full account of Officer's feedback.

Smoke Lobbies

5.5 A key element of the proposals in terms of change to the listed building is the insertion of a number of smoke lobbies on each floor of No.53 Russell Square in order to protect the main remaining staircase. These have been deemed necessary by Building Control.

5.6 Alternative options have been explored and the idea of installing smoke lobbies was considered broadly acceptable by Camden through the pre-app process.

5.7 It has been concluded that these proposals will have the least impact on the remaining significance of the building

whilst being necessary for the fire protection of the building.

- 5.8 At ground floor level there appears to have been a previous partition dividing the rear room into a room and passageway at some time in the past, and the new lobbies are proposed to follow this line at each level.
- 5.9 The proposed walls enclosing the new lobbies are designed to include a full height glazed section, mirroring the position and size of the existing linking double doors between the front and rear rooms. This glazed screen is proposed in order to minimise the impact on the existing building and particularly allowing an appreciation of the plan form of the existing rear rooms from inside the lobby or room.
- 5.10 The lobby enclosing walls will be treated simply, with flush white doors and simple painted architraves around the glazed screens, so that they are read as new inserted elements and do not try to be part of the original fabric.
- 5.11 Whilst the smoke lobbies will have some impact on the original plan form at each level of No.53 Russell Square, it has been demonstrated that the intervention is necessary to provide required fire protection. The proposals are all entirely reversible and have been individually considered to ensure the minimum impact on each room. A similar solution has been agreed with the Council at the school's accommodation in Bedford Square and this has formed the basis of the approach taken here.

Other proposed internal alterations

- 5.12 At basement level proposals are limited to replacement of existing modern fittings and providing a location for new plant and IT services. This will have no impact on the special interest of the listed buildings.
- 5.13 On the ground floor it is proposed to create an opening between the former hallway and front reception room. The existing two openings in the wall that this would replace are not original and the opening would take the

form of an 'archway' to ensure that the historic proportion of the space is retained and obvious.

- 5.14 At first floor level it is proposed that a partition will be re-instated in No.52 dividing the room as it originally would have been. A further classroom will be created in the modern rear service/mews extension.
- 5.15 On the second floor the currently open plan room in No.52 will again be sub-divided as it once would have been.
- 5.16 The third floor has previously been entirely opened up in each of the buildings – creating modern open plan office space. It is proposed that this will be re-sub-divided to combine laboratory space with necessary preparation rooms and storage. The proposed alterations will not impact any historic plan form and new mechanical ventilation and services will not affect any historic fabric.
- 5.17 Only No.52 Russell Square has a fourth floor – which similar to the floor below, has been opened up to create modern office accommodation. This will be divided to create a staff room and a meeting room. Again not affecting any historic fabric.

Mews Building

- 5.18 As has been described earlier in this report, the rear mews to No.53 Russell Square was completely rebuilt in 1985 and the Mews to No.52 heavily altered to provide modern office accommodation. Externally the elevations have been modified and rendered leaving little or originality.
- 5.19 No changes are proposed to this space.

Acoustic Control Measures

- 5.20 Following extensive consultation, it is proposed that additional independent acoustic wall linings will be inserted along the separating wall in rooms proposed to be used for classrooms to upgrade the acoustic performance of the wall between the existing chimney breasts.

- 5.21 The linings will sit underneath the existing cornices but will require a new skirting in a matching pattern to the existing to be fitted.
- 5.22 None of the skirting or cornices in No. 53 are original – all having been replaced during previous refurbishment works. Therefore this element of the proposal will not lead to any loss of historic fabric.
- 5.23 The linings have also been designed to be fully removable so that should the School move out then the linings could be removed and the original fabric revealed.
- 5.24 At fourth floor level the independent lining is proposed in the loft space and additional acoustic sealing is proposed to the modern connecting door.

External Works

- 5.25 Externally it is proposed that 10 ‘Sheffield’ type cycle stands will be discreetly placed behind the railings to the side of the building. These will not impact the ability to appreciate the listed building.
- 5.26 Louvered grilles are proposed at basement level in the front courtyard to provide the necessary ventilation intake/extract to the lower ground floor rooms. These will be contained within the spandrel panel of brickwork below the existing windows and finished in white to match the existing walls. Similar white powder coated metal louvres are proposed to be inserted above the existing rear-facing patio doors replacing the existing glazed overlights. Set down at basement level these should not be visible in the wider conservation area.

Summary

- 5.27 Overall, the proposed scheme represents a balanced approach to the listed building, taking into account the heritage significance of 52-53 Russell Square and the extent of change that has taken place with the various works to permit suitable educational accommodation for the school. Changes will be made to the listed building to

facilitate this, but these are considered to be sensitive, appropriate and, on balance, acceptable.

- 5.28 The proposals are a minimal intervention to allow for the practical and safe use of the building. The majority of the interior has been altered within the last 30 years and scheme will not impact any historic fabric of significance.
- 5.29 Where interventions such as the smoke lobbies are required, these have been deemed necessary and their impact has been mitigated through thoughtful design and reversibility.
- 5.30 Other interventions such as the installation of partitions on the upper floors will actually return the building to a more historic cellular plan form.

The effect on the conservation area and other listed buildings

- 5.31 The effect on the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and on the setting of other listed buildings will be negligible but positive. The proposed alterations will not be visible from within the wider conservation area or nearby listed buildings (other than the cycle stands discretely placed behind the railings alongside the Mews and the ventilation louvres tucked away in the lower courtyard), but will give the buildings a new vibrant use, which will in turn provide vibrancy and activity in the conservation area.

6 Compliance with policy and guidance

- 6.1 This report has provided a detailed description and analysis of the significance of 52-53 Russell Square and its heritage context, as required by Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework. In addition, the report also describes how the proposed scheme will affect that heritage significance. The effect is positive, and for that reason, the scheme complies with policy and guidance.

The level of ‘harm’ caused by the proposed scheme

- 6.2 As outlined in Section 4, the NPPF identifies two levels of potential ‘harm’ that might be caused to a heritage asset by a development: ‘substantial harm...or total loss of significance’ or ‘less than substantial’. Both levels of harm must be caused to a *designated* heritage asset – in this instance, 52-53 Russell Square, other listed buildings and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and their settings.
- 6.3 The proposed scheme, in our considered view, preserves the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and thus complies with S.66(1) and S.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It does not lead to ‘substantial’ harm or any meaningful level of ‘less than substantial’ harm to the listed building at 52-53 Russell Square, or any other heritage assets.
- 6.4 The only potential for ‘less than substantial’ harm would be the loss of something in 52-53 Russell Square that had a direct relationship to what is central to special architectural and historic interest in the listed main building. There is nothing about the proposal that would give rise to this level of harm. Other changes to the listed building, individually or cumulatively, do not reach the threshold of harm that would cause the scheme to fail to preserve the special interest of any listed building or

conservation area and where change is required it is being carried out in a way that is reversible and visually unobtrusive.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 6.5 In respect of Paragraph 131 of the NPPF, the proposed scheme can certainly be described as ‘sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation’. It secures the ‘positive contribution’ that 52-53 Russell Square makes to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and the setting of other listed buildings, and it preserves the essential elements of its special architectural and historic interest as a listed building.
- 6.6 The proposed scheme complies with Paragraph 133 of the NPPF - it certainly does not lead to ‘substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset’. It also complies with Paragraph 134 for the reasons given in detail earlier in this report – the scheme cannot be considered to harm the listed building, but rather alters it in a fashion that gives it a sustainable and active future use. Any ‘less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset’ (Paragraph 134) - if any - that can be ascribed to the scheme is outweighed by the benefit of allowing the works to assist in sustaining the life of the listed building. This is a use that will sustain the listed building for the long term and the works are a means of facilitating that use.
- 6.7 The majority of the interventions proposed are entirely reversible and will have no long term impact on listed building. Nevertheless they have been designed to ensure that the important elements of the remaining heritage significance are still legible and appreciated within the buildings.
- 6.8 It is our view that none of the individual interventions that make up the overall set of proposals can reasonably be considered to cause harm to the listed building when the cumulative extent and impact of the intervention involved

is measured against the overall listed building and the relative amount of historic fabric that remains within them. The interventions - individually and taken as a whole – help secure the ‘optimum viable use’ of the listed building. The scheme very definitely strikes the balance suggested by Paragraph 134 of the NPPF – it intervenes in 52-53 Russell Square in a manner commensurate to its significance as a listed building. This balance of intervention versus significance is described in detail earlier.

Camden’s Local Development Framework

- 6.9 In positively addressing the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, the works also meet the policy requirements of the London Borough of Camden’s Local Development Framework relevant to the historic built environment.
- 6.10 In terms of Core Strategy Policy CS14 and its accompanying commentary, and Local Plan Policy DP25, the proposals ‘would not cause harm to the special interest of the building’ or to ‘the setting of a listed building’.
- 6.11 Equally, the proposals will ‘preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area’.

7 Summary and conclusions

- 7.1 Whilst still of great importance, 52-53 Russell Square has seen considerable change – particularly in the last 30 years. This resulted in the considerable re-building of the structure of the buildings, the loss of the main staircase in No.52, insertion of a lift and the replacement of all internal detailing – skirting, cornices, doors etc. The rear mews to No. 53 has been re-built and that to No.52 has been completely refurbished and re-configured to provide office accommodation. The proposed scheme has been designed to make minimum intervention into the historic buildings whilst providing modern and viable educational accommodation for the future. New interventions, including the acoustic upgrade, have been kept to a minimum, focussed to the rear of the building and have been designed to be reversible.
- 7.2 The interventions proposed would be made in a sensitive way that ensures the surviving elements of its special architectural and historic interest are protected and enhanced.
- 7.3 The effect of the works on the heritage significance described earlier is therefore positive. The works will preserve and enhance the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and its setting – its historic fabric and features are retained, where they remain, and the appearance and layout of the listed building remains legible and appreciable. The proposals will also preserve and enhance the setting of other listed buildings and the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.
- 7.4 For these reasons, the proposed scheme complies with the law, and national and local policy and guidance for listed buildings and conservation areas.

Appendix A: List description

CAMDEN

TQ3081NW RUSSELL SQUARE 798-1/100/1421 (South side)
28/03/69 Nos.52-60 (Consecutive) and attached railings

GV II

Terrace of 9 houses. c1800-03. By James Burton, altered c1898 by PE Pilditch. Multi-coloured stock brick with rusticated stucco ground floors. Later terracotta dressings. Slated mansard roofs with dormers. Symmetrical terrace with projecting end bays (Nos 52 and 60) and central bays (Nos 55, 56 and 57). EXTERIOR: 3 storeys, attics and basements. Projecting bays 4 storeys. 3 windows each. No.52, 4 window (blind) return to Bedford Place and single storey, 5 window, 1 door stuccoed extension. Round-arched doorways with pilaster-jambs, cornice heads, fanlights, sidelights and double panelled doors; Nos 52, 55, 57 and 60 with terracotta surrounds. Recessed, architraved, mostly casement windows; 1st floor with cornices and central window of each bay pedimented. No.56 with semicircular pediment; Nos 55 and 57 with pedimented, canted bay windows. Continuous cast-iron balconies to 1st floor casements. Projecting bays with 3rd floor

cornice and enriched frieze below. Parapets. Dormers with terracotta cornices and alternating triangular and semicircular pediments; Nos 53, 54, 58 and 59 with semicircular pediments to centre dormers only.

INTERIORS: not inspected.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached mid C19 cast-iron railings to areas. HISTORICAL NOTE: the Duke of Bedford was inspired to add terracotta to these houses following the building of The Russell Hotel (qv).

KMHeritage

72 Pymer's Mead
London SE21 8NJ
T: 020 8670 9057
F: 0871 750 3557

mail@kmheritage.com
www.kmheritage.com

© 2018