



JUNE 2018

Brunswick Centre: Painting Scheme

Heritage, Design and Access Statement

Iceni Projects Limited on behalf of
Lazari Properties 2 Limited

June 2018

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HERITAGE, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

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A1. SITE PHOTOS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage, Design and Access Statement provides an assessment of the significance of the Brunswick Centre, a Grade II listed building within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Specifically, it assesses the contribution of the end walls, fronting Bernard Street to the south and Handel Street to the north, to that significance, to support a Listed Building Consent application for painting them cream. This will match the colour of the existing (consented) cream-painted sections of the building, which was carried out for the 2005-6 refurbishment.
- 1.2 This Listed Building Consent application is part-retrospective, for the area of the south end wall that was painted in April 2018, but also seeks to paint the remainder of the south and north end walls, which were treated to give the appearance of being unpainted in the 2005-6 refurbishment. This treatment involved applying a grey-coloured product, the manufacturer's details for which survive in the Brunswick's records.
- 1.3 The driving force behind the application is a desire on the part of our client, the owner of the building, to provide a more attractive and consistent finish, in line with the original architectural vision for the building as a piece of high quality modernist design by architect Patrick Hodgkinson.
- 1.4 The existing Site and surrounding area was appraised during site visits in May 2018, desk-based study, archival research in the Camden Local Studies Library and the RIBA Library. Furthermore the project team met the Twentieth Century Society on 25th May, including Stuart Tappin, an engineer who was involved in the 2005-6 refurbishment of the Brunswick Centre, and David Levitt, who also provided a note on Paint Specification, on 13th June.
- 1.5 Design and Access considerations are dealt with in Chapter 8 following CABE guidance.
- 1.6 The report is produced by Icen Projects. Specifically, it is authored by Tom Brooks BA (Hons) MA PGDip, Senior Heritage Consultant, with guidance and review by Laurie Handcock MA (Cantab) MSc IHBC, Director – Heritage.

2. RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICY, AND GUIDANCE

Legislation

- 2.1 Where any development may have a direct or indirect effect on designated heritage assets, there is a legislative framework to ensure the proposals are considered with due regard for their impact on the historic environment.
- 2.2 Primary legislation under Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the Local Planning Authority or Secretary of State, as relevant, shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.
- 2.3 Section 72(1) of the Act, meanwhile, states that:

'In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any functions under or by virtue of 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 that area.'

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

- 2.4 In March 2012, the government published the National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF"), which immediately replaced the previous policy regime, including the design and heritage policies set out in Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS1), and Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5).
- 2.5 This national policy framework encourages intelligent, imaginative and sustainable approaches to managing change. Historic England has defined this approach, which is reflected in the NPPF, as 'constructive conservation': defined as 'a positive and collaborative approach to conservation that focuses on actively managing change...the aim is to recognise and reinforce the historic significance of places, while accommodating the changes necessary to ensure their continued use and enjoyment' (Constructive Conservation in Practice, Historic England, 2009).
- 2.6 The NPPF promotes sustainable development as a fundamental theme in planning and sets out a series of 'Core Planning Principles' (Paragraph 17). These core principles highlight that planning should be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives; that it should secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity; and that

heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

- 2.7 Section 7, 'Requiring Good Design', reinforces the importance of good design in achieving sustainable development, by ensuring the creation of inclusive and high quality places. This section of the NPPF affirms, in paragraph 58, the need for new design to function well and add to the quality of the surrounding area, establish a strong sense of place, and respond to local character.
- 2.8 The guidance contained within Section 12, 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment', relates to the historic environment, and developments which may have an effect upon it.
- 2.9 Heritage Assets are defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. They include designated heritage assets (as defined in the NPPF) and assets identified by the local planning authority. Listed buildings and Conservation Areas are both designated heritage assets.
- 2.10 'Significance' is defined as 'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.'
- 2.11 The 'Setting of a heritage asset' is defined 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.'
- 2.12 Paragraph 128 states that, when determining applications, local planning authorities should require applicants to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected and any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the significance of the asset and sufficient to understand the impact of the proposal on this significance. According to Paragraph 129, local planning authorities are also obliged to identify and assess the significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal and should take this assessment into account when considering the impact upon the heritage asset.
- 2.13 Paragraph 131 emphasises that local planning authorities should take account of: the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; 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.

- 2.14 Paragraph 132 states 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. It emphasises that the weight given to an asset's conservation should be proportionate to its significance, and that clear and convincing justification will be required for loss and harm to heritage assets.
- 2.15 Paragraphs 133 and 134 address the balancing of harm against public benefits. If a balancing exercise is necessary (i.e. if there is any harm to the asset), considerable weight should be applied to the statutory duty where it arises. Proposals that would result in substantial harm or total loss of significance should be refused, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss (per Paragraph 133). Whereas, Paragraph 134 emphasises that where less than substantial harm will arise as a result of a proposed development, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Planning Practice Guidance ("PPG") (Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2014)

- 2.16 The guidance in the PPG supports the NPPF. It reiterates that conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core planning principle. It states that conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change that requires a flexible and thoughtful approach, and that neglect and decay of heritage assets is best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation.
- 2.17 The PPG refers to key elements of a building's special architectural or historic interest when assessing harm. If proposed works adversely affect a key element of the heritage asset's special interest, then those works could amount to substantial harm. It is the degree of harm rather than the scale of development that is to be assessed by the decision taker. Substantial harm is stated to be a high test that may not arise in many cases.
- 2.18 Harm may arise from works to the heritage asset or from development within its setting. Setting is stated to include the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced, and may be more extensive than its curtilage. A thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.
- 2.19 The PPG also provides clear guidance on the meaning of 'public benefits', particularly in relation to historic environment policy, including paragraphs 132 to 135 of the NPPF. The PPG makes clear that public benefits should be measured according to the delivery of the three key drivers of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental outcomes, all of which are reflected in the roles of the planning system (per Paragraph 7 of the NPPF).

Strategic Policy

The London Plan

- 2.20 Regional policy for the London area is defined by the London Plan (Greater London Authority/ Mayor of London 2011), Revised Early Minor Alterations to the London Plan (Greater London Authority/ Mayor of London 2013) and Further Alterations to the London Plan 2014 Consultation Draft (Greater London Authority/ Mayor of London 2014), and defined by the London Plan Consolidated with Amendments (2016).

London Plan Consolidated with Amendments (2016)

- 2.21 The London Plan (2016) incorporates the changes made in the Revised Early Minor Alterations to the London Plan (2013), Further Alterations to the London Plan (2014), and Minor Alterations to the London Plan (2015). The Revised Early Minor Alterations to the London Plan (REMA) set out minor alterations in relation to the London Plan and changes to UK legislation including the Localism Act (2011) and the NPPF. The revisions amend and split paragraph 7.31 supporting Policy 7.8 Heritage Assets and Archaeology with regard to developments affecting the setting of heritage assets, the need to weigh developments causing less than substantial harm on heritage assets against the public benefit and the reuse or refurbishment of heritage assets to secure sustainable development. The Glossary for the REMA also contains definitions for 'Heritage Assets' and 'Substantial Harm'. The Further Alterations to the London Plan (2014) updated policy in relation to World Heritage Sites in London and the assessment of their setting.
- 2.22 The London Plan deals with heritage issues in Chapter 7, London's Living Spaces and Places – Historic environment and landscapes.
- 2.23 London Plan Policy 7.4 requires development to have regard to the form, function and structure of an area and the scale, mass and orientation of surrounding buildings. The design of buildings, streets and open spaces should provide a high quality design response enhancing the character and function of an area.
- 2.24 London Plan Policy 7.6 notes that the architecture should “make a positive contribution to a coherent public realm, streetscape and wider cityscape. It should incorporate the highest quality materials and design appropriate to its context”.
- 2.25 London Plan Policy 7.8 states that development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.

- 2.26 Policy 7.8 'Heritage assets and archaeology' establishes the following clauses regarding heritage assets in London:

Strategic: London's heritage assets and historic environment, including listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and other natural and historic landscapes, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields, scheduled monuments, archaeological remains and memorials should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be taken into account.

Planning Decisions: Development should identify value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.

- 2.27 *Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.*

Local Development Plan

- 2.28 The lead document of the Camden's Local Development Plan is the Core Strategy, which sets out the key elements of the Council's planning vision and strategy for the borough and contains strategic policies. The Core Strategy contributes to achieving the vision and objectives of Camden's Community Strategy and helps the Council's partners and other organisations deliver relevant parts of their programmes.
- 2.29 Camden Development Policies contributes towards delivering the Core Strategy by setting out detailed planning policies that the Council will use when determining applications for planning permission in the borough, in order to achieve the vision and objectives of the Core Strategy.

Camden Development Policies 2010

- 2.30 DP24 – Securing high quality design - The Council will require all developments, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, to be of the highest standard of design and will expect developments to consider:
- a) character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings;
 - b) the character and proportions of the existing building, where alterations and extensions are proposed;
 - c) the quality of materials to be used;
 - d) the provision of visually interesting frontages at street level;

- e) the appropriate location for building services equipment;
- f) existing natural features, such as topography and trees;
- g) the provision of appropriate hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatments;
- h) the provision of appropriate amenity space; and
- i) accessibility.

2.31 DP25 – Conserving Camden's heritage

Conservation areas

In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will:

- a) take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;
- b) only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area;
- c) prevent the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area where this harms the character or appearance of the conservation area, unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention;
- d) not permit development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character and appearance of that conservation area; and
- e) preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of a conservation area and which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.

Listed buildings

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

- e) prevent the total or substantial demolition of a listed building unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention;

- f) only grant consent for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building; and
- g) not permit development that it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building.

Core Strategy 2010

2.32 CS14 - Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage - The Council will ensure that Camden's places and buildings are attractive, safe and easy to use by:

- a) requiring development of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character;
- b) preserving and enhancing 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;
- c) promoting high quality landscaping and works to streets and public spaces;
- d) seeking the highest standards of access in all buildings and places and requiring schemes to be designed to be inclusive and accessible;
- e) protecting important views of St Paul's Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster from sites inside and outside the borough and protecting important local views.

Guidance

- Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2. Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England, March 2015)

3. HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

Conception and design

- 3.1 The Site is located within Bloomsbury, an area of London that expanded during the period 1660–1840. Prior to this it had been largely in agricultural and pastoral use. The Site fell within the land of the Foundling Hospital (built to the north of the Site in 1745), which was released for housing in the late 18th century and laid out by Samuel Pepys Cockerell as a series of streets and squares.
- 3.2 A full historical account of the development of the Brunswick Centre has been written up by architectural historian Mark Swenarton.¹ This explains how the land was acquired in the late 1950s by property developer Alec Coleman's Marchmont Properties, in a joint venture with Sir Robert McAlpine & Company, for a speculative housing development.
- 3.3 After a high-rise proposal failed to secure planning permission, Coleman employed Sir Leslie Martin's architectural practice to design a new scheme, which was developed primarily by Patrick Hodgkinson in Martin's office. Hodgkinson's design set two long stepped blocks facing each other across an open courtyard, which was intended to reflect the form of the Georgian terraces and squares that characterise the wider area. It was granted planning permission in February 1963.

Omissions to the scheme, including lack of external paint

- 3.4 However, as Swenarton puts it, 'at this stage the history of the project was overtaken by national political developments'. At the same time as building for rent became less attractive for developers like Coleman, the newly formed Borough of Camden was looking for new social housing schemes, and a deal was struck whereby they acquired the flats, and their own architects became involved.
- 3.5 Hodgkinson had designed the Brunswick Centre as a private modern development which would be sympathetic addition to Georgian Bloomsbury. He later wrote several articles explaining his design ideas in this respect. 'London needed new housing forms that would blend with its existing stock and street patterns', he wrote in a 2002 article, which goes on to reference the Adam Brothers' Adelphi, and the Palais Royale in Paris as genteel precedents for the Brunswick Centre.²

¹ Mark Swenarton, 'Politics, property and planning: building the Brunswick, 1958-74', in *Town Planning Review*, Volume 84, Issue 2, pp. 197-226 (2013).

² Patrick Hodgkinson, 'Brunswick Centre, Bloomsbury: a good bit of city', in *Twentieth Century Architecture 6: The Sixties*, pp. 81-90 (2002), p. 85.

3.6 Hodgkinson originally considered several different facing materials to help the Brunswick Centre relate to its built context, including brick and mosaic, before he designed a painted concrete scheme to address cost concerns. He stated this in a 2006 interview with the Guardian:

I didn't think we had any chance of using the same brick all along the scheme. But we did specify that the concrete would be painted. It was only after I left in 1970 that they decided not to paint it. I thought, 'That's damned stupid.' I knew that that concrete, which was very cheap, would never stay fair-faced. And of course, after a few years it started getting filthy.³

3.7 It is therefore clear that the painting of the concrete was one of the primary ways in which Hodgkinson intended to realise the Brunswick's architectural concept as a comfortable addition to its Georgian neighbours in the heart of Bloomsbury. The intention is stated unequivocally in a 1972 Architectural Review article: 'external walls, soffits, upstands and structure whether concrete or rendered, designed to be gloss-painted cream (Crown Commissioners tone)'.⁴ However, the complicated arrangement between the developer and Camden ultimately resulted in the termination of Hodgkinson's appointment, clearing 'the way for a series of economies, including the omission of items such as the paint finish to the concrete'.⁵

3.8 It is also clear, through his later writing, that Hodgkinson regarded the Brunswick Centre as being marred by its incomplete aspects, the lack of paint being chief among these:

The entire complex was being built of the cheapest concrete, which could not stand 'fair face'. It was to have been painted a cream colour, like Regent's Park and the painted dressings of Georgian Bloomsbury. [...] All this was dropped, along with many architectural details important to the concept.⁶

³ Hodgkinson quoted in 'Scrubs up beautifully', *The Guardian*, 23 October 2006:

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2006/oct/23/architecture.communities>

⁴ 'Brunswick Centre', *Architectural Review*, Volume 152, p. 205 (1972)

⁵ Swenarton, p.216.

⁶ Hodgkinson, p. 89.

- 3.9 When construction ceased in 1974, the most significant omission to the original scheme was that only two-thirds had been completed. It had been intended to link Bernard Street to Tavistock Place but the northern most part of the proposed Site was owned by the Territorial Army who refused to sell. This left the scheme truncated at Handel Street, a minor road, undermining its position as a critical link in the surrounding streets; it thus became 'a precinct rather than the high street intended by the architect'.⁷

2005-6 refurbishment

- 3.10 By the early 2000s the Brunswick Centre was dilapidated, unfashionable and struggling to attract retailers, due in part to the poor state of the concrete structure, both because it was never painted as intended and because the concrete cover over the steel reinforcement was insufficient in places.
- 3.11 A refurbishment scheme for the Brunswick's owners, Allied London Properties Ltd, was designed by Levitt Bernstein, the practice formed by two of Hodgkinson's assistants on the original scheme, David Levitt and David Bernstein, with Hodgkinson acting as consultant. This involved significant alterations to the retail and public areas including the addition of a new Waitrose store across its north end. It was granted planning permission in 2003 and carried out in 2005-6.
- 3.12 A complicated strategy of repairing, treating and painting the concrete was devised by Levitt Bernstein and Buro Happold, the structural engineers advising on the project. The main contractors were ISG Plc and the concrete repairs and coatings were carried out by sub-contractors Gunite (Eastern) Ltd. The Operating and Maintenance Manual in the Brunswick's records includes the product literature of the treatments used for the works.
- 3.13 Two different finishes were achieved:
1. Painting the external walls of the flats cream, as intended for the entire building in Hodgkinson's original design. The RAL number used is understood to be 9001, which was selected after trialling several different colours.
 2. Treating the other areas with a diluted mineral silicate paint: 'Keim Concretal Lasur'. This was used as a grey protective wash to retain the appearance of exposed concrete. Details in the O&M manual state that it was designed 'to minimise any surface variations or blemishes. The system will protect the concrete whilst still maintaining the feel and appearance of a concrete façade.'

⁷ Swenarton, p.217

3.14 According to Levitt:

*The logic for this [strategy to paint some areas cream and leave other areas with the appearance of being unpainted] was to leave the supporting structure as a 'cradle' in which the two painted housing blocks would be held – thus the main columns at Brunswick Square, for instance, and the two end walls would remain as concrete.*⁸

3.15 This logic, of treating some of the concrete so it appeared unpainted, was contrary to the design intention of the original scheme, which was for the building to have a consistent, singular appearance by painting all the external walls cream. It is believed that the idea for this contrast between unpainted and painted concrete came from the owners of the building at the time, Allied London, and Camden's Conservation Officer does not appear to have had much involvement, based on the fact that no correspondence or specifications survives in their archives.

3.16 It is worth noting that the 2005-6 works were carried out under a very different guidance system for informing works to listed buildings to that of the significance-led approach now enshrined in the NPPF. Although a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) was produced by KM Heritage alongside the 2005-6 works, this does not provide any further explanation for the conservation philosophy behind the painting of only certain elements of the building cream.⁹

3.17 We assume that certain areas were treated with a grey product due to an aesthetic desire to retain a contrast between the grey concrete and cream-painted areas, in light of the emerging contemporary interest in concrete architecture in the 2000s. This has most commonly been discussed under the label 'Brutalism', but it is clear that the Brunswick Centre was intended not as a strongly-expressed, truly 'Brutalist' form, but as a modern design expression that was sensitive to its historic context. Hodgkinson's 2006 interview with the Guardian notes that 'To its architect, Patrick Hodgkinson, the building has no such affiliations: "I didn't hold with new brutalism, myself. I just prayed for the day we would be able to paint it."¹⁰

3.18 The 2005-6 works appear to have been driven by contemporary aesthetics, rather than a detailed understanding of the original design intention. It may also be that this programme was controlled by cost, with painting of the whole building cream potentially prevented by a lack of budget to achieve this. Therefore, we would dispute the value of the part-painting approach of the 2005-6 works, as set out in our assessment of the significance of the existing painting scheme in Chapter 5 below.

⁸ David Levitt, 'Brunswick Paint Specification' (unpublished, 2018)

⁹ KM Heritage for Allied London, The Brunswick Conservation Management Plan (unpublished, March 2006)

¹⁰ Hodgkinson quoted in *The Guardian*, 2006.

4. SITE DESCRIPTION AND IDENTIFICATION OF ASSETS

4.1 The Brunswick Centre is located in Bloomsbury in Central London. It is a Grade II listed building.

4.2 This application is for painting the north and south end walls of the Brunswick Centre cream. The south end wall faces Bernard Street and the north end wall faces Handel Street. They are concrete with horizontal and vertical lines incised in them. They are each formed of the end walls of the two sides of the original building, with 2005-6 retail extensions between.

South end wall

4.3 The south elevation comprises:

- the stepped end walls of the 'perimeter' blocks of the original building, with louvred service openings; and
- 2005-6 ground floor retail extensions, either side of the entrance to the plaza.

4.4 The end wall of the left-hand perimeter block was partially painted in cream in April 2018, for which this application seeks retrospective listed building consent.

4.5 There is an area of concrete spalling on the end wall of the right-hand perimeter block.

North end wall

4.6 The north elevation comprises:

- the stepped end walls of both the 'perimeter' and 'main' blocks of the original building, with various openings; and
- the end wall of the 2005-6 Waitrose, painted cream, with metal and glass retail units.

4.7 Part of the end walls of the main blocks were painted in the 2005-6 refurbishment.

4.8 There are various visible areas of patching and staining to the concrete.

Bloomsbury Conservation Area

4.9 The Site is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, which was first designated in 1968 to protect areas of Georgian development, but has since been extended to encompass areas of high quality Victorian, Edwardian and 20th century development.

4.10 Although the mega-structure scale, and use of concrete rather than brick, is at odds with the prevailing historic character of the conservation area, the high-quality modernist architecture of the Brunswick Centre is recognised by the 2011 Conservation Area Appraisal.¹¹

Nearby Heritage Assets

4.11 The Brunswick Centre is close to a number of other heritage assets including listed buildings and positive contributors to the Conservation Area identified in the appraisal. Most relevant to an assessment of the end walls of the Brunswick Centre are:

- a Grade II listed terrace of 1799–1803, at 11–28 Bernard Street, directly opposite the south elevation of the Brunswick Centre; and
- the Grade II listed Russell Square Underground Station, to the south east of the Brunswick Centre.

¹¹ London Borough of Camden, Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (2011)

5. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Methodology

- 5.1 The assessment methodology used here for assessing the significance of the identified heritage assets and their settings is the framework set out in Historic England's best-practice guidance document *Conservation Principles, Policies, and Guidance* (2008).¹² Broadly, this proposes the use of four key heritage values – evidential, historical, aesthetic, and communal – in assessing what makes a place and its wider context special.

The four values are defined summarily as follows:

Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative.

Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. Communal values are closely bound up with historical (particularly associative) and aesthetic values, but tend to have additional and specific aspects.

Summary significance of the Brunswick Centre

- 5.2 In summary, the significance of the Brunswick Centre as a Grade II listed building relates primarily to its historical and aesthetic value as a high-quality example of modernist architecture. Hodgkinson's interest in sympathetically integrating the building into its historic urban context by using low, stepped forms – a reaction against the slab and point blocks that had dominated London's post-war housing developments previously – was progressive for the time and influential on later developments. Indeed, although it was designed as a private development, it demonstrated many of the traits of the

¹² <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/conservationprinciplespoliciesguidanceapr08web.pdf/>

low-rise, megastructure housing that would characterise the output of Camden Council's architects' department in the late 1960s and 1970s under borough architect Sydney Cook.

Contribution of the grey concrete elements to the significance of the Brunswick Centre

- 5.3 Many of the contemporaneous social housing schemes by Camden which have a similar layout and massing to the Brunswick Centre, the best known being the Alexandra Road Estate by Neave Brown (1968-78), are celebrated as being 'Brutalist' partly for their use of high-quality exposed concrete. It is important to note that, while the Brunswick Centre is similar in its layout and massing to these schemes, its exposed concrete was the result of cost-cutting rather than Hodgkinson's design intention, and is therefore clearly not an integral part of its significance. Unlike social housing schemes such as the Alexandra Road Estate, it was never intended to demonstrate the Brutalist aesthetic of exposed concrete, as proved by comments made by Hodgkinson cited in Chapter 3 above.
- 5.4 We do not consider that the grey-treated concrete elements of the Brunswick Centre have any aesthetic value, because the poor quality and flat finish does not add to the tactile or visual effect of the building. The surfaces are, in this respect, of a vastly different character to buildings of the period that were designed explicitly to be left as exposed concrete (*béton brut*), which often featured surface treatments such as board-marking or bush-hammering to emphasise their 'concrete-ness'.
- 5.5 Furthermore, treating some of the concrete with a grey finish to appear unpainted does not add to the historical understanding of the building because intended by Hodgkinson not as a Brutalist object but as a modern interpretation of the surrounding genteel architecture, painted in cream to fit in with its surroundings.
- 5.6 Though the grey-treated concrete areas of the building do have some limited historical value as one of the illustrations that the scheme was never completed as planned, it is considered here that the part-cream paint, part-grey concrete approach of the 2005-6 refurbishment detracts from an understanding of the significance of the building. This is because it is contrary to one of the primary design intentions of the original scheme, that it should appear as a single, consistently-coloured megastructure.

Contribution of the end walls to the significance of the Brunswick Centre

- 5.7 The south and north end walls contribute to the significance of the Brunswick Centre primarily because they survive largely as built, demonstrating the building's expressive stepped massing in section, with the addition of the 2005-6 extensions to the retail units and public realm improvements.
- 5.8 The south end wall was intended by Hodgkinson to terminate the building, but the north end wall is, to some extent, less significant, because it was not the original design intent of the scheme to

terminate the building here. This is why it features the end elevations of both the main blocks and the perimeter blocks, as a slice through the stepped bowl of the Centre, rather than just the perimeter blocks which feature at the south end wall.

- 5.9 The contribution of the end walls to the significance of the listed building is limited by the fact that they were never painted cream, as originally envisaged by Patrick Hodgkinson, and the resultant poor condition of the concrete, with visible patching, staining and spalling.
- 5.10 As recent additions, the end walls of the 2005-6 retail units do not contribute to the significance of the listed building, though their design and materials is broadly sympathetic to the character of the original building.

Contribution of the end walls to the significance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and nearby heritage assets

- 5.11 The Brunswick Centre is recognised in the Conservation Area Appraisal as a high-quality piece of modernist architecture that contributes to the character and appearance of the area. However, the use of grey concrete is alien to this historic context, and its poor condition at present detracts from the experience of the wider conservation area, and from the setting of the nearby heritage assets, including the Grade II listed buildings at 11–28 Bernard Street and Russell Square Underground Station.

6. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Summary of proposals

- 6.1 It is proposed to paint the north and south end walls of the Brunswick Centre cream, to match the colour of the existing cream-painted sections of the building, which were painted in 2005-6.
- 6.2 This Listed Building Consent application is part-retrospective, for the area of the south end wall that has been painted, but also proposes to paint the remainder of the north and south end walls, and the return edges of the south end walls on the east and west elevations. For more details of the proposals please refer to the drawings prepared by Debbie Flevotomou Architects.

Methodology

- 6.3 The impact assessment uses as its basis the assessment methodology set out in Paragraphs 132 to 134 of the NPPF, and is applied in line with the interpretation established in current case law.

Principle of painting the Brunswick Centre

- 6.4 Every external surface of the Brunswick Centre was intended by its original architect, Patrick Hodgkinson, to be painted cream, but, along with many other elements of the scheme, this was not carried out due to cost cutting when construction ended in 1974.
- 6.5 The Brunswick Centre is historically and architecturally important for its demonstration of contextual modernist design as a new low-rise city block, in contrast to the plaza and tower schemes that had dominated large-scale British post-war architecture up to that point. Its proposed painting in cream was an important part of the proposed way in which the building was supposed to relate to the colour palette of the surrounding historic environment, as a genteel private development. This is notably unlike the Brutalist social housing schemes that were developed by Camden in the late 1960s and 1970s, which otherwise have some similarities with the Brunswick Centre in terms of their low-rise layout and stepped massing.
- 6.6 Therefore, the principle of painting more areas of the Brunswick Centre's walls cream is in line with the original architectural concept, and better reveals the wider historical significance of the building.
- 6.7 The principle of painting the building cream will not cause any harm to the significance of the building because it was always intended to be painted in this way, and the concrete that appears unpainted has in fact already been treated with a grey product, because the concrete mix used was not of sufficient quality to be left unpainted.

Aesthetic and physical benefits of painting

- 6.8 The aesthetic character of the end walls, and their contribution to the significance of the listed building, is as a flat, evenly coloured surface. This aesthetic character is at present negatively affected by visible patched repairs, staining, spalling and scars from previous alterations. This will be improved by returning the surfaces to a single, consistent colour, in line with Hodgkinson's modernist aesthetic vision for the building. In this respect the 2005-6 patching and grey treatment of the walls was not successful and a better aesthetic result would be achieved by painting the surfaces in cream.
- 6.9 The areas of concrete to be painted are spalling in several places and this will be repaired following best practice techniques, halting decay to the building and preserving its significance. This is clearly beneficial.

Precedent of 2000s scheme

- 6.10 The colour of the repair and painting works will follow that which was established during the 2000s refurbishment by Levitt Bernstein architects, with Hodgkinson acting as a consultant.
- 6.11 According to David Levitt, the aesthetic rationale for only painting certain areas of the building cream was 'to leave the [grey-treated] supporting structure as a 'cradle' in which the two painted housing blocks would be held'.¹³ It is clear that painting the end walls would maintain this aesthetic logic, because the cream-painted flats would still be evident with their grey concrete structural columns in views of the main east and west elevations. The painted end elevations would create a terminating structure to the 'cradle', creating a better set of relationships with their immediate context, and leaving the more broadly set side elevations to be appreciated in their current 'cradled' form. It has also been decided to paint the return edges of the south end walls above ground floor level to fit with the painting scheme previously carried out.

Impact on the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and nearby heritage assets

- 6.12 At present the end walls are stained, patched and spalling and do not contribute to the historic character of the wider area, nor to the setting of the nearby heritage assets, including, closest to the Site, the Grade II listed buildings at 11–28 Bernard Street and Russell Square Underground Station.

¹³ David Levitt, 2018.

6.13 The proposed painting of the end walls with a colour that is sympathetic to the surrounding historic environment (as indeed was the reason why it was proposed in the original scheme) will therefore be of minor benefit to the appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby heritage assets.

7. HERITAGE CONCLUSION

7.1 The Brunswick Centre was designed and built in 1958-74 but the scheme envisaged by architect Patrick Hodgkinson was never completed. Critically, the final third of the scheme was never built, and, due to cost-cutting, the external walls were not painted cream, despite being of a very cheap concrete specification that was not suitable for being left fair-faced.

7.2 The refurbishment scheme by Levitt Bernstein architects, with Hodgkinson acting as a consultant, that took place in 2005-6 involved painting some areas cream including the external walls of the flats, but treating other areas, including the end walls, with a grey product to give the appearance of exposed concrete. Our view is that the significance of the building would have been better revealed by painting the entirety of the structure cream, as was intended in the original scheme, but the 2005-6 works were carried out under a different system of identifying and protecting the significance of listed buildings.

7.3 In summary, painting the end walls of the Brunswick Centre cream will be beneficial to the significance of the listed building because:

- every external wall was intended to be painted cream in the original architectural design by Patrick Hodgkinson;
- the proposals will follow the colour of the 2005-6 cream painting, which Hodgkinson was involved with;
- the existing colour of the grey concrete end walls is not bare concrete but that of the treatment applied during the 2005-6 works;
- the proposed painting of the end walls will not be contrary to the aesthetic logic of the 2005-6 works, because the visual relationship between the painted flats and their grey concrete columns will not be affected in views of the main east and west elevations; and furthermore,
- there will be clear benefits for the long-term conservation of the listed building by repairing the concrete and returning the surfaces to a single, consistent colour, as was intended by Hodgkinson's design.

7.4 The proposed cream colour will also relate better to the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings, and so will be of minor benefit to their significance.

7.5 Therefore, from a heritage perspective, the proposals should be approved.

8. DESIGN AND ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 This chapter assesses design and access considerations under the headings set out in the 2006 CABE publication 'Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them'.

Use

8.2 The use of the building will not change.

Amount

8.3 There will be no additional floorspace on the site.

Layout

8.4 The layout of the building will not change.

Scale

8.5 The scale of the building will not change.

Landscaping

8.6 The proposals do not involve any landscaping works.

Appearance

8.7 The proposals will improve the appearance of the north and south end walls of the Brunswick Centre by returning them to a consistent cream colour that is more attractive than the existing stained and spalling concrete walls and is appropriate for its built context.

Vehicular and transport links

8.8 The proposals will not require any additional vehicular and transport links.

Inclusive access

8.9 The proposals will not have any implications for inclusive access.

9. REFERENCES

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A1. SITE PHOTOS

A1.1 South end wall, west side



A1.2 South end wall, west side



A1.3 South end wall, 2005-6 retail extension on west side



A1.4 South end wall, 2005-6 retail extension on east side



A1.5 South end wall, east side



A1.6 South end wall, detail of spalling on east side



A1.7 North end wall, east side



A1.8 North end wall, east side of 2005-6 Waitrose



A1.9 North end wall, west side of 2005-6 Waitrose



A1.10 East elevation showing painted elements and concrete columns



A1.11 North corner of east elevation showing painted elements and concrete columns



A1.12 Plaza showing internal elevations of flats with 2005-6 retail extension and public realm works

