

# Heritage Assessment

## Lynton House, 7-12 Tavistock Square, London

### Introduction

1. This Heritage Assessment has been produced by Heritage Collective on behalf of Global Holdings Management (UK) Ltd to consider the potential effects of the proposed rooftop extension, cycle centre and relocation of smoking shelter at Lynton House, 7-12 Tavistock Square within the London Borough of Camden.
2. Lynton House is not listed locally or nationally but is located within Bloomsbury Conservation Area and is adjacent to several listed buildings. Those with the potential to be affected by the proposed new extension are:<sup>1</sup>
  - 14,15 and 16 Burton Street and Attached Railings (grade II);
  - The National Institute for Social Work Training and Attached Railings and Gates (grade I); and
  - 4-13 Burton Street and Attached Railings (grade II).
3. Pre-application advice was provided by London Borough of Camden on 29 June 2018. In this they raised some concerns regarding the visibility of the new roof terrace and the proposed mansard treatment. The proposed design was amended following these comments and further advice was received on 9 July 2018. This related to further design details such as requiring a metal balustrade rather than a glass balustrade and the use of slate to clad the additional height of the structure.

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<sup>1</sup> There are additional listed buildings in proximity to the application site, but by reason of distance, existing tree screening or their reason for designation their significance will not be affected by the proposed works.

4. Following this advice, the design was further amended to respond to officers' comments. A new metal balustrade is proposed and an aluminium planter will be introduced to the edge of the terrace to provide a softer boundary feature.



*Figure 1 Application site highlighted and listed buildings denoted by a blue triangle. The whole site is within Bloomsbury Conservation Area*

*Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright [2018]*



*Figure 2: Lynton House, front elevation as seen from Tavistock Square*

## Scope of This Assessment

5. This report has been produced to accompany an application for the new roof terrace and commuter hub. It has consideration to the significance of the assets potentially affected by the proposals as identified above, and the assessment of their significance has been informed by a site visit on 23 April 2018.

## Policy and Legislation

6. The decision maker is required by section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving the character or appearance of a conservation area. There is a strong presumption against the grant of permission for development that would harm the character or appearance of a conservation area, though the presumption will plainly be lessened if the harm is less than substantial within the meaning in the NPPF 2018 as is explained further below.

7. The decision maker is further required by section 66(1) of the Act to 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.

## National Planning Policy Framework (2018)

8. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, to a proportionate level of detail.
9. Paragraph 193 and 194 of the NPPF introduces the concepts of “substantial harm” or “less than substantial harm” as follows:

*“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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”*

*“Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:*

*a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;*

*b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.”*

10. Paragraph 195 of the NPPF then goes on to describe how the balancing exercise in respect of harm and public benefit should be undertaken when dealing with cases involving substantial harm:

*"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 total 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; and*

*b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*

*c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, 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."*

11. The term "serious harm" has been held, in the Courts, to equate to substantial harm, such as to vitiate or drain away the significance of a heritage asset. It is for the same broad reason that National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) also makes it clear that substantial harm is a high test.

12. While the above relates to substantial harm, paragraph 196 of the NPPF refers to "less than substantial harm" as follows:

*"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, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use."*

13. This assessment is confined to the assessments of significance and harm, but it does not undertake a commentary on the balancing exercise – a function that is performed in other application documents.

## London Plan

14. The London Plan provides a city-wide context within which individual boroughs must set their local planning policies. A draft new London Plan has been published but this is still emerging. Existing policies of relevance to the historic environment include:
  15. Policy 7.8 – Heritage Assets and Archaeology: This policy seeks to safeguard heritage assets. The policy encourages development that (i) identifies, values, conserves, restores, re-uses and incorporates heritage assets, where appropriate, and (ii) that conserves heritage assets and their setting.

## Local Planning Policy

16. The London Borough of Camden assesses planning applications against the policy set out in the Local Plan (2017). The following policies are relevant to this application:
  17. Policy D1 Design states the council will seek high quality design in development. This will need to respect local character and context, preserve or enhance the historic environment, be sustainable, utilise high quality detail and materials, integrate with the surrounding streets and spaces, be inclusive, promote health, be secure, respond to natural features, incorporate landscaping and amenity space, preserve local and strategic views and carefully integrate building services equipment.
  18. Policy D2 Heritage says:

*"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.”*

19. This policy goes on to state that the council will not allow substantial harm to be caused to a designated heritage asset unless the nature of the asset prevents any other use, no viable use for the asset can be found, conservation by grant funding is not possible or the harm is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.
20. Further the council will require development in conservation areas to preserve or where feasible enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. LB Camden will resist the loss or total demolition of unlisted buildings that makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, resist development outside of the conservation area that could harm its character and appearance and preserve trees or garden space that contributes to its significance.
21. With regards to listed buildings this policy states that the total loss or substantial demolition of a listed building will be resisted, that changes which would cause harm to the special architectural or historic interest of the building will also be resisted and that development that would cause harm to the significance of a listed building by a change to its setting will also be resisted.

## Bloomsbury Conservation Area

22. First designated in 1968 the Bloomsbury Conservation Area has been extended on several occasions to include development beyond the Georgian core of the area. An appraisal was produced by LB Camden in 2011 and is adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). The area covers up to 160 hectares and incorporates what is an internationally important example of town planning based on formal landscaped squares located on a grid of streets. There is much uniformity in the townscape of the area, despite changes in the use of the buildings from residential

to office and commercial uses during the 19th and 20th century. Cultural institutions and educational establishments also form a significant part of the area.

23. This is a conservation area with very high architectural and historical importance and interest. Its architectural value is derived not only from the variety of built form, but also the quality of the design of the terraces and individual architectural details that make up the area and its built environment. Listed buildings within the area possess the most important architectural interest but other unlisted buildings also contribute to the architectural value of the place.
24. Historical value and importance is derived from the people associated with the development of Bloomsbury and the past inhabitants of its buildings, including significant composers, artists, scientists, authors and members of parliament who lived and worked in the centre of London during the 18th and 19th century. Historical interest is also derived from the development of the street scene and the buildings over time and the overall town planning concept that underpins the entire character of the area.
25. Bloomsbury is additionally of archaeological significance given its location and potential for as yet unknown archaeological evidence of past occupation. It is also of high artistic value as an area which contains works of art and sculpture in and around the institutions within the area. The British Museum elevates the special architectural and historical interest of the area due to its international import.

## Contribution of the Application Site

26. The application site makes a limited contribution to the characteristics defined above. It is a post war building of little architectural merit; 7 Tavistock Square dates to the 1960s and only contributes to the street scene by being of similar scale and proportions to other modern buildings on the eastern side of Tavistock Square.



## The National Institute for Social Work Training and Attached Railings and Gates

27. This building was listed grade I on 7 April 1960 and is located approximately 50m to the south east of the application site. It is of outstanding architectural and historic interest. Built in 1896-98 and designed by Arnold Dunbar Smith and Cecil Brewer for Mrs Humphrey Ward (1851-1920), the building has associative interest with these individuals which contributes to its special interest. There is illustrative value found in the original purpose of the building which was to restore social interaction between different social classes. The building was intended to provide accommodation for the young middle classes in a working-class area to improve social cohesion.
28. The building is of outstanding architectural interest internally and externally there is a good level of survival to the elevations and interiors. The list description notes:

*'The combination of Arts and Crafts detailing, a Lethaby-inspired symbolism, and the demonstration of its social purpose through the well-preserved interior makes this an exceptional building.'*
29. The setting of this building makes some contribution to its significance. Although the area has changed over time, especially after bomb damage was sustained to large areas in the Second World War, there are still several properties which demonstrate the former social make-up of the area including the surviving Mary Ward building immediately to the north-east/ east of the building, which all contribute to its original design and philosophy.
30. The application site as a 1960s building in a plain architectural language makes no contribution to the significance of this building, other than to serve as part of the urban backdrop/ townscape.



*Figure 3: Buildings along Burton Street*

## 14, 15 and 16 Burton Street (and Attached Railings)

31. These buildings were listed grade II on 14 May 1974 and are located approx. 35m to the east of Lynton House. They have group value as three modest town houses dating to the 1820s. The buildings reflect the prevailing architectural style of the late Georgian/ Regency period and although relatively modest buildings they retain their original proportions and features including fanlights, doors, windows and brickwork. These buildings have some interest in being a lower class of residence than the other buildings located on this street and their slightly later date suggests they were not part of James Burton's (1761-1837) original development.

32. The setting of these buildings is primarily found in their relationship with the other terraced buildings on Burton Street, especially the listed buildings to the north, which are of four storeys and reflect the early development of the street.
33. The application site is located immediately behind these buildings to the west and there is already some visibility to the upper floors of Lynton House behind this set of listed buildings. The application site makes a limited contribution to the significance of these listed buildings, its primary contribution is as part of the dense development of the area.

#### 4-13 Burton Street (and Attached Railings)

34. These buildings were listed grade II on 14 May 1974 and are located approximately 35m to the north/ north east of the application site. This terrace has illustrative and associative historic interest as part of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century development of the area being a collection of early townhouses designed by the property developer James Burton. The buildings are of architectural interest as Georgian town houses with some surviving features including the original fanlights to numbers 7 and 8. Other buildings have 20<sup>th</sup> century replicas.
35. The setting of these buildings is primarily found in their relationship with the other terraced buildings on Burton Street, especially the listed buildings to the south, which are of two storeys and reflect the slightly later development at this end of the street. The difference in the height of the buildings adds interest to 4-13 Burton Street by differentiating between the original development by Burton and the smaller, later houses to the south.
36. The application site is located immediately behind these buildings to the south-west and there is already some visibility to the upper floors of Lynton House and Tavistock House to the south behind this set of listed buildings. The application site makes a very limited, if any, contribution to the significance of these listed buildings, its primary contribution results from being part of the dense development of the area.

## Proposed Works

37. It is proposed to create a new roof terrace on the existing rear flat roof area of the building. Following pre-application discussions, the new terrace will be set back from the sides and rear (eastern) edge of the building. The boundary of the new terrace will be defined by aluminium planters with planting to provide a soft border to the roof edge and distinguish it from the existing mansard roof. This will also help to screen views to the terrace from the surrounding areas. Black metal railings will provide balustrading to the rear of the property for safety and to minimise the visual impact of the proposed new terrace. A new store room will be added to the rear of the existing mansard roof (see Drawing No. 1713-BG-ZZ-10-DR-A-20.203). This will be a single storey flat roofed structure that will be below the height of the existing mansard roof minimising views to this additional structure from the surrounding area.
38. It is also proposed to provide new commuter facilities within the car park area to the rear of the building. This will comprise two single storey buildings which will be clad in vertical silver timber battens with a canopy of plaster clad in black aluminium to provide a visual contrast. A new secured cycle parking area will also be provided. At pre-application stage these changes were considered "*likely to be acceptable.*"

## Effects on the Significance of the Identified Heritage Assets

### Bloomsbury Conservation Area

39. The proposed commuter facilities within the grounds of Lynton House will preserve the significance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. This heritage asset is primarily of interest due to its early forays into town planning and its representation of the diverse architectural language of the area. Although the new building will not be visible from public areas the design and materiality will ensure that the structure is a suitable addition to the conservation area that will be of a

high-quality design. It is a small addition which would not disrupt any features of the townscape, in an area of no significance. The character and appearance of the conservation area will be preserved.

40. The proposed new roof terrace will also preserve the significance of Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The new canopies on the roof will not harm the diverse architectural character and appearance of the conservation area. The use of traditional railings and soft planting will ensure where the boundaries of the terrace are visible they complement the surrounding townscape. There is no visual effect that would harm the conservation area.
41. There will be no appreciation of either the new commuter hub or terrace to Lynton House from key views within the conservation area. There is the possibility of views to the new structures from surrounding areas, but where this is possible the changes will be understood as later additions to the conservation area that preserve an understanding of its diverse architectural character or its historic interest. The proposed changes are minimal, and Bloomsbury Conservation Area is a robust heritage asset capable of undergoing change without affecting its significance.

## The National Institute for Social Work Training and Attached Railings and Gates

42. There will be no change to the significance of this heritage asset by the proposed new commuter facilities or roof terrace. The significance of this building is reliant on its historic and architectural interest which will not be affected by the proposed works. The new commuter facilities will not be visible due to the existing built form at Lynton House and the new roof terrace will not noticeably add to this, the scale or mass of the application site. Views of the National Institute for Social Work Training will be preserved by the proposed works. Where there may be glimpses of people using the roof terrace from the street in incidental views to the National Institute for Social Work Training, this will have no effect on the significance of this listed building.

## 14, 15 and 16 Burton Street (and Attached Railings) and 4-13 Burton Street (and Attached Railings)

43. The significance of these buildings will be preserved although there will be a change within their setting. There will be limited visibility to the new commuter facilities when looking to the west or south-west from the upper floors of the listed buildings, but these are currently views to the rear of Lynton House which make only a minor contribution to the setting of these buildings by demonstrating the built-up character of the area. The rear of the listed buildings are more subservient elevations and are less sensitive to change. There will still be an opportunity to view the rear of the listed buildings from the application site and the significance of these buildings will be preserved by the proposals.

## Summary

44. Lynton House is a post war building (c.1960) of no particular architectural interest but is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and within the setting of several listed buildings. Those with the potential to be affected by the proposals are The National Institute for Social Work Training (and Attached Railings) listed grade I, 14, 15 and 16 Burton Street (and Attached Railings) listed grade II and 4-13 Burton Street (and Attached Railings) also listed grade II. This assessment has been written to aid Camden Council in their decision regarding the potential effects of the proposals on the significance of these assets.
45. The proposed works are for a new roof terrace and the provision of two single storey buildings in the existing car park to provide facilities for commuters and a replacement smoking shelter. A new secure cycle parking area will also be provided. The sensitive nature of the design, location and materials of the new building and roof terrace, informed by pre-application discussions, will ensure that no harm is caused to any of the identified heritage assets.
46. There will be preservation for the purposes of the decision maker's duty under sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Act. No harm is identified, therefore paragraphs

195-196 are not engaged. The proposals are compliant with local heritage related policies D1 and D2.