

## Built Heritage Statement

In respect of  
Ridgemount Hotel, 65-67 Gower Street

On behalf of  
Cubic Building Surveying Limited

RPS CgMs Ref: JCH00050  
February 2017

*Secure & Stable*  
ADDING VALUE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

RIDGEMOUNT HOTEL, 65-67 GOWER STREET, LONDON

This report has been prepared in support of applications for planning and listed building consent for internal alterations associated with the provision of nine en-suite hotel bedrooms at 65-57 Gower Street. The property is located within the Bloomsbury district of Central London (Figure 1). The building is presently used as a hotel comprising 32 bedrooms, just over half of which have en-suite bathroom facilities. The en-suite rooms are predominantly located within no. 67 Gower Street which forms the other half of a handed pair of Georgian town houses at the centre of a long terrace built in 1787. No 65 comprises the main hotel reception at ground floor, manager's office and restaurant within the basement. The first, second and third floors are presently subdivided into 13 single hotel bedrooms with shared bathroom facilities provided within the short projecting closet wing at the rear of the building (see Figure 4) and on the landing to the third floor. No. 67 was upgraded a number of years ago, providing en-suite bath / shower facilities for most of the rooms. This application relates solely to the interior of no. 65 and involves no external alterations.

The building, hereafter referred to as the Site, is listed Grade II. The list description is included at Appendix A.

The Site is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, Sub-Area 5.

The Site occupies a central position within an extensive terrace comprising 18 town houses (see Figures 2 and 3). The terrace is very typical of Gower Street and this part of Bloomsbury following the development of the Bedford Estate in the 1780s as a fashionable inner city district of the Capital.

The Site plays its part in the establishment of a remarkably coherent stretch of planned 18th Century townscape and which maintains its grand urban scale in spite of the appearance of numerous much taller institutional buildings, such as the Royal Institute of Dramatic Arts (opposite), during the twentieth century and which are generally around six or seven storeys (Figure 5).

The purpose of the application proposals is to rationalise and upgrade the existing hotel room provision within number 65 Gower Street, whilst also creating an arrangement that is more sympathetic to the special interest of the listed building. At present number 65 offers 15 “boarding-house” style rooms with poor communal ablution and washing facilities for hotel guests. This diminishes both the offer of the hotel and the experience of hotel guests. The existing subdivisions are furthermore harmful to the character of the original interior by disrupting the integrity of the principal front room to each floor of the building and creating spaces which do not lend themselves well to multiple bed accommodation. The proposals seek to undo some of this harm by reducing the number of hotel rooms on each floor and thus the extent of subdivision whilst significantly improving the hotel offer by providing new en-suite bathroom facilities. The latter have been carefully designed and positioned within the new bedrooms to avoid



Figure 1: Ordnance Survey Map of north Central London. The location of the application Site is indicated by the blue star. Source: Bing maps.



Figure 2: Numbers 65-67 Gower Street, east elevation—the two properties are the six bay taller building distinguished by an elevated cornice with attic storey above. Source: Google Street View



Figure 3: Bird's eye view from the north showing the application Site outlined in red. Source: Bing Maps



1.0 INTRODUCTION

RIDGEMOUNT HOTEL, 65-67 GOWER STREET, LONDON

the loss or concealment of any original features, such as fireplaces and moulded plasterwork cornices, and thus ensure the legibility of the historic character and appearance of the building is both preserved and enhanced. The proposals will involve the reinstatement of plasterwork features that have previously been removed and allow the building to be better appreciated and experienced by customers and staff.

This Built Heritage Statement has been developed to provide sufficient information to allow the council to reach a decision about the suitability of the proposals. This report includes a brief summary of the legislative and policy context within which the proposals would be assessed and sets out the way in which they would affect the significance of the listed building. It is considered that the special interest and significance of the building would not be harmed and that the alterations proposed would further reveal and reinforce the significance of this building.

This report should be read in conjunction with other supporting documents submitted with this application for listed building consent.



**Figure 4:** View of the rear elevation of nos. 65 (right) and 67 (left) Gower Street. Note the abutting closet wings / outriggers to each property which marks the centre of the terrace and where the existing shared bathrooms / WC facilities are located within no. 65.



**Figure 5:** View south east along Gower Street showing the contrasting scale of the modern buildings opposite the Application Site. Source: Google Street View

## 2.0 LEGISLATIVE & PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 LEGISLATION & NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

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The current national policy system identifies, through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), that applications should consider the potential impact of development upon ‘heritage assets’. This term includes: designated heritage assets, which possess a statutory designation (for example Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, and Registered Parks and Gardens); and non-designated heritage assets, typically compiled by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and incorporated into a Local List.

#### Legislation

Where any development may affect designated or non-designated heritage assets, there is a legislative framework to ensure proposed works are developed and considered with due regard for their impact on the historic environment. This extends from primary legislation under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The relevant legislation in this case extends from Section 16 of the 1990 Act which states that in considering applications for listed building consent, the LPA shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the Listed Building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Section 66 further states that special regard must be given by the authority in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing listed buildings and their setting. A particularly appropriate example of upholding a S66 is in the case of West Coast Energy’s proposal for five wind turbines to be installed within the setting of the Grade I listed Barnwell Manor, Northamptonshire. The National Trust advocated that the proposals would have an adverse impact upon the heritage asset’s setting and, reinforced by local opposition, the proposal was rejected by East Northamptonshire District Council in 2010. The developers won an appeal for four turbines, however, this was overturned at the High Court. A subsequent Appeal to overturn the High Court ruling was dismissed in February 2014.

In addition, Section 72 of the 1990 Act states that in exercising all planning functions, local planning authorities must have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing Conservation Areas.

#### National Planning Policy

*National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* (Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), March 2012)

The NPPF is the principal document that sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It has been purposefully created to provide a framework within which LPAs

and the local populace can produce their own distinctive Local and Neighbourhood Plans, respectively. Such Plans consequently reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.

When determining planning applications, the NPPF directs LPAs to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development; the ‘golden thread’ that is expected to run through the plan-making and decision-making process. Nonetheless, NPPF Paragraph 14 states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development is only applied unless certain specific policies indicate that such development should be restricted; these include policies protecting sites identified as: designated heritage assets; Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs); Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); and the Green Belt.

The NPPF defines a heritage asset as: “*A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest*”. The definition of a heritage asset includes ‘designated’ heritage assets: “*A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation*”. In addition, other ‘non-designated’ heritage assets identified by LPAs are included in a Local List.

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. NPPF Paragraph 58 affirms the need for new design to: function well and add to the quality of the area in which it is built; establish a strong sense of place; and respond to local character and history, reflecting the built identity of the surrounding area.

Section 12 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* contains NPPF Paragraphs 126-141, which relate to development proposals that have an affect upon the historic environment. Such policies provide the framework that LPAs need to refer to when setting out a strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment in their Local Plans.

The NPPF advises LPAs to take into account the following points when drawing up strategies for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and preserving them in a viable use consistent with their conservation;
- the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that the conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- the desirability of new development in making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and

- opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

These considerations should be taken into account when determining planning applications and, in addition, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, including their economic vitality.

In order to determine applications, NPPF Paragraph 128 states that LPAs should require applicants to demonstrate the significance of any heritage assets likely to be affected by development proposals, including the contribution made to their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to each heritage assets’ significance and sufficient to understand what impact will be caused upon their significance. This is supported by NPPF Paragraph 129, which requires LPAs to take this assessment into account when considering applications.

NPPF Paragraphs 132-136 consider the impact of development proposals upon the significance of a heritage asset. NPPF Paragraph 132 emphasises the need for proportionality in decision-making and identifies that, when a development is proposed, the weight given to the conservation of a heritage asset should be proportionate to its significance, with greater weight given to those assets of higher significance. NPPF Paragraph 134 states that, where less than substantial harm will be caused to a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the development proposals, which include securing the heritage asset’s viable optimum use.

In relation to Conservation Areas, it is acknowledged in NPPF Paragraph 138 that not all aspects of a Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. This allows some flexibility for sustainable development to take place in or near Conservation Areas, without causing harm to the overall heritage asset’s significance.



## 2.2 NATIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE

### National Guidance

#### Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (DCLG)

This guidance has been adopted in support of the NPPF. It reiterates the importance of conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance as a core planning principle.

It also states, conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change, requiring a flexible and thoughtful approach. Furthermore, it highlights that neglect and decay of heritage assets is best addressed through ensuring they remain in an active use that is consistent with their conservation.

Key elements of the guidance relate to assessing harm. It states, an important consideration should be whether the proposed works adversely affect a key element of the heritage asset's special architectural or historic interest. Adding, *'it is the degree of harm, rather than the scale of development that is to be assessed'*. The level of 'substantial harm' is stated to be a high bar that may not arise in many cases. Essentially, whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the NPPF.

Importantly, it is stated harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting. Setting is defined as *'the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may be more extensive than the curtilage'*. A thorough assessment of the impact of proposals upon 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.

Importantly, the guidance states that if *'complete or partial loss of a heritage asset is justified, the aim should then be to capture and record the evidence of the asset's significance, and make the interpretation publically available.'*

#### Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (English Heritage, April 2008)

Outlining Historic England's approach to the sustainable management of the historic environment. While primarily intended to ensure consistency in their own advice and guidance through the planning process, the document is commended to LPAs to ensure that all decisions about change affecting the historic environment are informed and sustainable.

This document was published in line with the philosophy of PPS5, yet remains relevant with the NPPF and PPG, the emphasis placed upon the importance of understanding significance as a means to properly assess the effects of change to heritage assets. Guidance within the document describes a range of 'heritage values' that constitute a heritage asset's

significance to be established systematically; the four main heritage values include: aesthetic, evidential, communal or historical. The document emphasises that 'considered change offers the potential to enhance and add value to places...it is the means by which each generation aspires to enrich the historic environment' (Paragraph 25).

#### Overview: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning

In March 2015 Historic England (formerly English Heritage) withdrew the PPS5 Practice Guide document and replaced with three Good Practice Advice in Planning Notes (GPAs): 'GPA1: Local Plan Making', 'GPA2: Managing significance in Decision-Taking in the historic Environment', and 'GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets. A fourth document entitled 'GPA4: Enabling Development' has yet to be adopted.

These GPAs provide supporting guidance relating to good conservation practice. The documents particularly focus on how good practice can be achieved through the principles included within national policy and guidance. As such, the GPAs provide information on good practice to assist LPAs, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties when implementing policy found within the NPPF and PPG relating to the historic environment.

#### GPA1: The Historic Environment in Local Plans (March 2015)

This document stresses the importance of formulating Local Plans that are based on up-to-date and relevant evidence in relation to the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of an area, including the historic environment, as set out by the NPPF. The document provides advice on how information in respect of the local historic environment can be gathered, emphasising the importance of not only setting out known sites, but in understanding their value (i.e. significance). This evidence should be used to define a positive strategy for the historic environment and the formulation of a plan for the maintenance and use of heritage assets and for the delivery of development, including within their setting, which will afford appropriate protection for the heritage asset(s) and make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Furthermore, the Local Plan can assist in ensuring that site allocations avoid harming the significance of heritage assets and their settings, whilst providing the opportunity to *'inform the nature of allocations so development responds and reflects local character'*.

Further information is given relating to cumulative impact, 106 agreements, stating *'to support the delivery of the Plan's heritage strategy it may be considered appropriate to include reference to the role of Section 106 agreements in relation to heritage assets, particularly those at risk.'* It also advises on how the heritage policies within Local Plans should identify

areas that are appropriate for development as well as defining specific Development Management Policies for the historic environment. It also suggests that a heritage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in line with NPPF Paragraph 153 can be a useful tool to amplify and elaborate on the delivery of the positive heritage strategy in the Local Plan.

#### GPA2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (March 2015)

This document provides advice on the numerous ways in which decision-taking in the historic environment can be undertaken, emphasising that the first step for all applicants is to understand the significance of any affected heritage asset and the contribution of its setting to its significance. In line with the NPPF and PPG, this document states that early engagement and expert advice in considering and assessing the significance of heritage assets is encouraged, stating that *'development proposals that affect the historic environment are much more likely to gain the necessary permissions and create successful places if they are designed with the knowledge and understanding of the significance of the heritage assets they may affect.'*

The advice suggests a structured staged approach to the assembly and analysis of relevant information, this is as follows:

1. Understand the significance of the affected assets;
2. Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance;
3. Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF;
4. Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance;
5. Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance and the need for change; and,
6. Offset negative impacts on aspects of significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.

The advice reiterates that heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Assessment of the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting at an early stage can assist the planning process resulting in informed decision-taking.

This document sets out the recommended steps for assessing significance and the impact of development proposals upon a heritage asset, including examining the asset and its setting and analysing local policies and information sources. In assessing the impact of a development proposal on

## 2.2 NATIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE

the significance of a heritage asset the document emphasises that the cumulative impact of incremental small-scale changes may have as great an effect on the significance of a heritage asset as a larger scale change.

Crucially, the nature and importance of the significance that is affected will dictate the proportionate response to assessing that change, its justification, mitigation and any recording which may be necessary. This document also provides guidance in respect of neglect and unauthorised works.

### GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (March 2015)

This advice note focuses on the management of change within the setting of heritage assets. This document replaces 'The Setting of Heritage Assets' (English Heritage, March 2011) in order to aid practitioners with the implementation of national policies and guidance relating to the historic environment found within the NPPF and PPG. The guidance is largely a continuation of the philosophy and approach of the 2011 document and does not present a divergence in either the definition of setting or the way in which it should be assessed.

As with the NPPF the document defines setting 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'. Setting is also described as being a separate term to curtilage, character and context. The guidance emphasises that setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, and that its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset. It also states that elements of setting may make a positive, negative or neutral contribution to the significance of the heritage asset.

While setting is largely a visual term, with views considered to be an important consideration in any assessment of the contribution that setting makes to the significance of an asset, setting, and thus the way in which an asset is experienced, can also be affected by other environmental factors including noise, vibration and odour, while setting may also incorporate perceptual and associational attributes pertaining to the asset's surroundings.

This document provides guidance on practical and proportionate decision making with regards to the management of proposed development and the setting of heritage assets. It is stated that the protection of the setting of a heritage asset need not prevent change and that decisions relating to such issues need to be based on the nature, extent and level of the significance of a heritage asset, further weighing up the potential public benefits associated with the proposals. It is further stated that changes within the setting of a heritage asset may have positive or neutral effects. It is stated that the contribution made to the significance of heritage assets by their settings will vary depending on the nature of the heritage asset and its setting and that different heritage assets may have different abilities to accommodate change within their settings without harming the significance

of the asset and therefore setting should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Although not prescriptive in setting out how this assessment should be carried out, noting that any approach should be demonstrably compliant with legislation, national policies and objectives, Historic England recommend using the '5-step process' in order to assess the potential effects of a proposed development on the setting and significance of a heritage asset, with this 5-step process continued from the 2011 guidance:

1. Identification of heritage assets which are likely to be affected by proposals;
2. Assessment of whether and what contribution the setting makes to the significance of a heritage asset;
3. Assessing the effects of proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset;
4. Maximising enhancement and reduction of harm on the setting of heritage assets; and,
5. The final decision about the acceptability of proposals.

The guidance reiterates the NPPF in stating that where developments affecting the setting results in 'substantial' harm to significance, this harm can only be justified if the developments delivers substantial public benefit and that there is no other alternative (i.e. redesign or relocation).

### Overview: Historic England Advice Notes in Planning

In addition to the above documentation, Historic England has published three core Heritage Advice Notes (HEAs) that provide detailed and practical advice on how national policy and guidance is implemented. These documents include: *HEA1: Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (February 2016), *HEA2: Making Changes to Heritage Assets* (February 2016), *HEA3: The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans* (October 2015), and *HEA4: Tall Buildings* (December 2015). Previously adopted documentation by Historic England that provide further information and guidance in respect of managing change within the historic environment include *Seeing the History in the View* (May 2011), and *Managing Local Authority Heritage* (June 2003).

### *HEA1: Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (February 2016)

This document forms revised guidance which sets out the ways to manage change in order to ensure that historic areas are conserved. In particular information is provided relating to conservation area designation, appraisal and management. Whilst this document emphasises that '*activities to conserve or invest need to be proportionate to the significance of the*

*heritage assets affected*,' it reiterates that the work carried out needs to provide sufficient information in order to understand the issues outlined in Paragraph 192 of the NPPF, relating to the assessment of any heritage assets that may be affected by proposals.

There are different types of special architectural and historic interest that contribute to a Conservation Area's significance. These include:

- Areas with a high number of nationally designated heritage assets and a variety of architectural styles and historic associations;
- those linked to a particular industry or individual with a particular local interest;
- where an earlier, historically significant, layout is visible in the modern street pattern;
- where a particular style of architecture or traditional building materials predominate; and,
- areas designated on account of the quality of the public realm or a spatial element, such as a design form or settlement pattern, green spaces which are an essential component of a wider historic area, and historic parks and gardens and other designed landscapes, including those included on the Historic England Register of parks and gardens of special historic interest.

Change is inevitable, however, this document provides guidance in respect of managing change in a way that conserves and enhances areas, through identifying potential within a conservation area. This can be achieved through historic characterisation studies, production of neighbourhood plans, confirmation of special interest and setting out of recommendations. NPPF Paragraph 127 states that '*when considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest*,' this document reiterates that this needs to be considered throughout this process.

Section 71 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Area) Act 1990* places on LPAs the duty to produce proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. This document provides guidance for the production of management plans, which can '*channel development pressure to conserve the special quality of the conservation area*'. These plans may provide polices on the protection of views, criteria for demolition, alterations and extensions, urban design strategy and development opportunities. Furthermore, it includes information relating to Article 4 Directions, which give the LPA the power to limit permitted development rights where it is deemed necessary to protect local amenity or the well-being of an area.

# 2.2 NATIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE

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## HEA2: Making Changes to Heritage Assets (February 2016)

The purpose of this document is to provide information in respect of the repair, restoration and alterations to heritage assets. It promotes guidance for both LPAs, consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in order to promote well-informed and collaborative conservation.

The best way to conserve a building is to keep it in use, or to find an appropriate new use. This document states that *'an unreasonable, inflexible approach will prevent action that could give a building new life...A reasonable proportionate approach to owners' needs is therefore essential'*. Whilst this is the case, the limits imposed by the significance of individual elements are an important consideration, especially when considering an asset's compatibility with Building Regulations and the Equality Act. As such, it is good practice for LPAs to consider imaginative ways of avoiding such conflict.

This document provides information relating to proposed change to a heritage asset, which are characterised as:

- Repair;
- restoration;
- addition and alteration, either singly or in combination; and,
- works for research alone.



## 2.3 STRATEGIC AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY & GUIDANCE

### Strategic Policy

*The London Plan: The Spatial Development Strategy for London Consolidated with Alterations since 2011* (Greater London Authority (GLA), March 2016)

Adopted in March 2016, policies set out in this document are operative as formal alterations to the London Plan; the Mayor of London's spatial development strategy and form part of the development plan for Greater London. In particular, this document encourages the enhancement of the historic environment and looks favourably upon development proposals that seek to maintain heritage assets and their setting.

The importance of local character outlined in Policy 7.4 *Local Character* states that:

*'Development should have regard to the form, function, and structure of an area, place or street and the scale, mass and orientation of surrounding buildings.'*

Policy 7.5 *Public Realm* states that:

*'Development should make the public realm comprehensible at a human scale, using gateways, focal points and landmarks as appropriate to help people find their way.'*

Policy 7.6 *Architecture* states that:

*'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.'*

This policy also sets out a list of requirements of new buildings and structures, the most relevant to heritage, townscape and visual assessment are listed below:

- *Be of the highest architectural quality;*
- *be of a proportion, composition, scale and orientation that enhances, activates and appropriately defines the public realm;*
- *comprise details and materials that complement, not necessarily replicate, the local architectural character; and*
- *not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of surrounding land and buildings, particularly residential buildings, in relation to privacy, overshadowing, wind and microclimate. This is particularly important for tall buildings; and optimise the potential of sites.*

Policy 7.8 *Heritage Assets and Archaeology* provides the relevant policy with regards to development in historic environments and seeks to record, maintain and protect the city's heritage assets in order to utilise their potential within the community. It states that 'Development affecting

heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.' Policy 7.8 also further supports Policy 7.4 by requiring LPAs to formulate policies that seek to maintain and enhance the contribution of built, landscaped and buried heritage assets to the environmental quality, cultural identity and economy, as part of managing London's ability to accommodate change and regeneration.

### Local Policy

*Camden Core Strategy 2010-2025* (Camden Council, 2010)

The Local Development Framework (LDF) is a group of documents setting out planning strategy and policies in the London Borough of Camden. The principle LDF document is the Core Strategy, which sets out key elements of the Council's planning vision and strategy for the borough and contains strategic policies. The following Core Strategy policies relate to development concerning the historic environment in the borough:

Policy CS14 *Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage* seeks to ensure that places and buildings are attractive, safe and accessible by: requiring development of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character; 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; promoting high quality landscaping and works to streets and public spaces; seeking the highest standards of access in all buildings and places and requiring schemes to be designed to be inclusive and accessible; protecting important local views.

*Camden Development Policies 2010-2025* (Camden Council, November 2010)

As part of Camden Council's LDF, Development Policies 2010-2025 set out detailed planning criteria that are used to determine applications for planning permission in the borough. Policies pertinent to the historic environment include the following and are to be read in conjunction with the Core Strategy document:

DP24 *Securing high quality design* states that the Council require all developments, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, to be of the highest standard of design and will expect proposals to consider: the local character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings; the quality of materials to be used; the provision of visually interesting frontages at street level; the appropriate location for building services; the provision of appropriate hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatments; the provision of appropriate amenity space; and accessibility.

DP25 *Conserving Camden's heritage* emphasises that where development is proposed within a conservation area the Council will: take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications; only permit development that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area; 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; not permit development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area it is in; and preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of a conservation area and which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.

With regard to the setting of Listed buildings this policy states that the Council will not permit development that it considers would cause harm to the setting of Listed buildings. Additionally, the Council will seek to protect other designated or undesignated heritage assets including: Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest and London Squares.

### Local Guidance

*CPG 1 Design* (Camden Council, April 2011, amended September 2013, updated July 2015)

To support the policies of Camden's LDF, Camden Planning Guidance (CPG) forms a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), an additional "material consideration" in planning decisions, which is consistent with the adopted Core Strategy and the Development Policies. Following statutory consultation the Camden Planning Guidance documents (CPG1 to CPG8) replace Camden Planning Guidance 2006.

The Council formally adopted CPG1 Design on 6 April 2011, which was subsequently updated on 4 September 2013 following statutory consultation to include Section 12 on artworks, statues and memorials. This guidance applies to all applications which may affect any element of the historic environment and therefore may require planning permission, or conservation area or listed building consent.

With regard to proposed development within, or affecting the setting of, conservation areas in the Borough, Council will only grant permission that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area. When determining an application, guidance on such matters are set out in the Core Strategy policy CS14 and Development Policy DP24, as well as that in conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans. Totally or substantially demolishing a building or structure in a conservation area is deemed a criminal offence without first getting consent from the Council. Also, demolition would not normally be allowed without substantial justification, in accordance with criteria set out in the NPPF.

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*Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy* (Camden Council, April 2011)

This appraisal has been prepared by Camden Council and adopted on 18 April 2011 to define the special interest of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and ensure that its key attributes are understood and can be protected, with suitable measures put in place for appropriate enhancement.

The initial designation of Bloomsbury as a conservation area occurred in 1968 and sought to exclusively protect buildings dating to the Georgian and earlier eras from development. Subsequently there have been numerous extensions to its boundaries that have predominately reflected a growing appreciation of Bloomsbury's Victorian and Edwardian architecture, in addition to high quality twentieth century architecture.

Bloomsbury Conservation Area covers an area of approximately 160ha, extending from Euston Road in the north to High Holborn and Lincoln's Inn Fields in the south and from Tottenham Court Road in the west to King's Cross Road in the east.



### 3.0 ARCHITECTURAL & HISTORICAL APPRAISAL

#### 3.1 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT: BLOOMSBURY

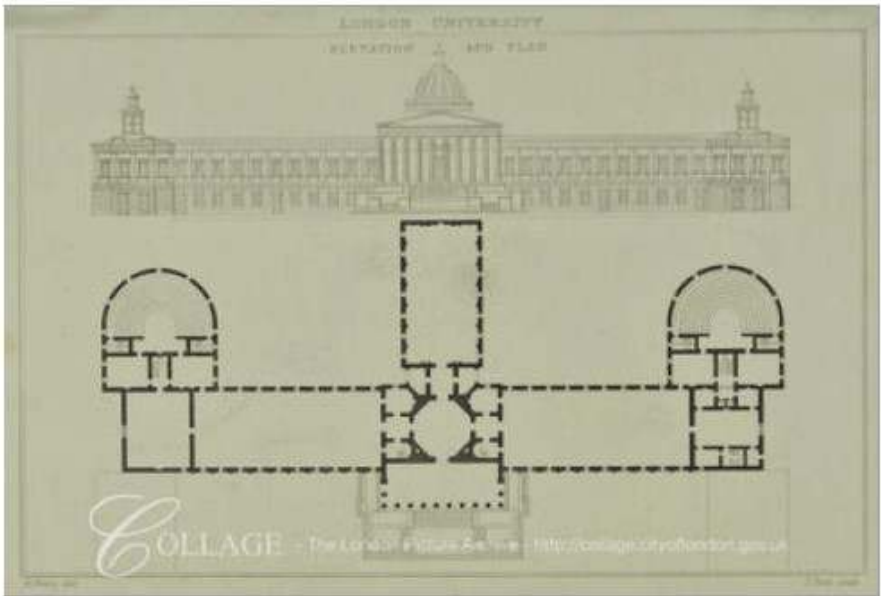
Bloomsbury represents a period of London’s early expansion northwards, dating from the mid-17th century, which continued through the Georgian and Regency periods to around 1840. This period of expansion, which followed the Plague in 1665 and the Great Fire in 1666, replaced a series of medieval manors on the periphery of London and their associated agricultural and pastoral land. The first swathe of building created a mix of uses, however later expansion northwards focused on providing grander residential districts for wealthy families.

This was carried out speculatively by a number of builders on leases from major landowners and followed a consistent form with terraced townhouses constructed on a grid pattern of streets and landscaped squares. The progression of development across the Conservation Area illustrates the subtle changes in taste and style in domestic architecture that occurred throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The Victorian era saw the establishment of University College and an expansion in specialist hospitals around Queen Square.

Much of the Bloomsbury area was held by the Bedford estate, which held 112 acres in the 18th century. The holdings of the Duke of Bedford originated as the estate of Thomas Wriothesley, later Earl of Southampton, who acquired them at the dissolution of the monasteries in 1545. This estate was inherited by Rachel (née Wriothesley), daughter of the fourth Earl of Southampton. When the Southampton title became extinct, the land passed to the Russel family, the Dukes of Bedford, through her marriage.

It was the widow of the fourth Duke, Gertrude Leveson-Gower, who was a prime mover in the residential development of the estate in the late eighteenth century. Gower Street is named after her. Much of this development was in the form of “wide streets and grand squares fit for the gentry”. It was a well-timed development; the Bedford Estate’s Bloomsbury rental was worth about £13,800 in 1805, but jumped to £17,242 in 1806 because of all the new buildings.

Following a slump in the 1830s, when many houses had been converted into private boarding houses, the area was revived as a popular location for institutions. The area saw a great deal of rebuilding after the 99 year leases from the 1770s expired; the Bedford estate seized the opportunity for wholesale redevelopment of streets no longer suited to their location. For example the mews properties to the rear of the Site were torn down in 1880. The vacant land was mostly let to institutions for rebuilding from this time. However, many of the terrace houses remained in hotel use.



**Figure 6:** Nineteenth century elevation and plan of University College, Gower St by Benjamin Ferrey

Source: London Metropolitan Archives Collage. Collage Record No.: 305293.



**Figure 7:** Photograph of the front of 51-85 Gower Street

Source: London Metropolitan Archives Collage. Collage Record No.: 71918



**Figure 8:** Charles Booth's Poverty Map of London, 1898.

The Site (circled in blue) and surrounding terraces are marked red, indicating 'Middle class. Well-to-do' occupants.



3.2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT: 65-67 GOWER STREET

The Site is within 61-85 Gower Street, a group of properties developed in a single period of development with a completion date of 1787. Gower Street itself had been developed from 1780. The houses in this development were aimed at upper-middle class residents.

The Bedford Estates records efforts to preserve the genteel residential character of the area in the mid-19th century, with efforts to ‘prevent or at least discourage the conversion of dwelling houses into private hotels, boarding houses, institutions, offices, and shops’ (Olsen, 1984). Efforts to retain the character of the area included preventing the passage of traffic with strategically placed gates (for one at the north end of Gower Street, see figure 4). These were removed by Act of Parliament in 1890.

The Pevsner Guide *London 4: North* describes the terraces on Gower Street as being:

‘long, almost wholly unadorned brick terraces, even, soothing, dignified, and with a sense of overall planning, although certainly without much imagination....The Bedford Estate made concessions to the nineteenth century taste by adding some stuccoed entrances (nos. 51-85).’ (p. 325)

The 1901 census shows that no. 65 was a private home, owned by furniture makers. By 1911 no. 67 was run as a boarding house by Laura Cook, and no. 65 was leased to a corsetiere who also sub-set rooms (ridgemounthotel.co.uk). In 1992 the two buildings were joined to form one hotel by the current owners.

Planning records show that through the latter part of the twentieth century, as part of nos. 65-67 Gower Street’s use as a hotel, a number of internal alterations have taken place.

In 1974 conditional consent was granted for alterations including the sealing of a ground floor door and the formation of new lobbies at no. 65 (Camden Planning Records, N13/5/2/HB802).

In 1975 and 1992 permission was granted for alterations to conform with fire regulations, including the insertion of fire doors (Camden Planning Records, N13/5/2/HB1008 and 9270022).

In 1992 and 2009 consent was granted for the installation of bathrooms at basement and ground floor of no. 65 (Camden Planning Records, 9270022 and 2009/0605/L). Additionally, in 1997 consent was granted for the rearrangement of internal partitions at first floor level (Camden Planning Records, LS9705113). Further consent was granted in 2003 for the creation of an opening through a basement wall (Camden Planning Records, 2003/1469/L).



Figure 9: 1835 Gower Street, looking south from Grafton Street.



Figure 11: Photograph of the entrance hall and staircase of 65 Gower Street  
Source: London Metropolitan Archives Collage. Collage Record No.: 71838



Figure 10: Photograph of the ground floor rear room chimney piece at 67 Gower Street  
Source: London Metropolitan Archives Collage. Collage Record No.: 71869



Figure 12: Photograph of the ground floor front room at 65 Gower Street  
Source: London Metropolitan Archives Collage. Collage Record No.: 71837



3.3 HISTORIC MAP PROGRESSION



Figure 13: 1875 1:1,056 OS map

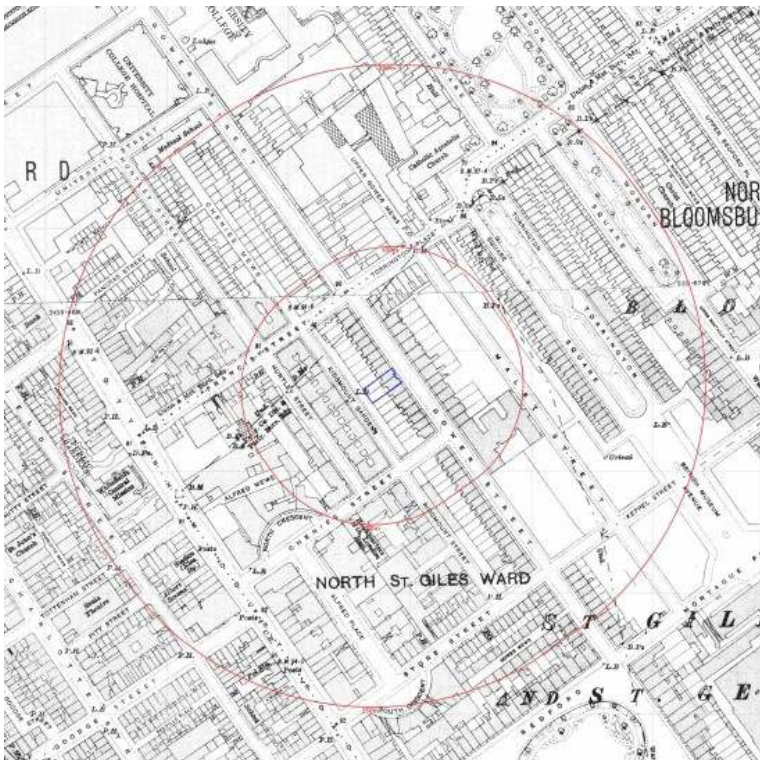


Figure 15: 1916 1:2,500 OS map

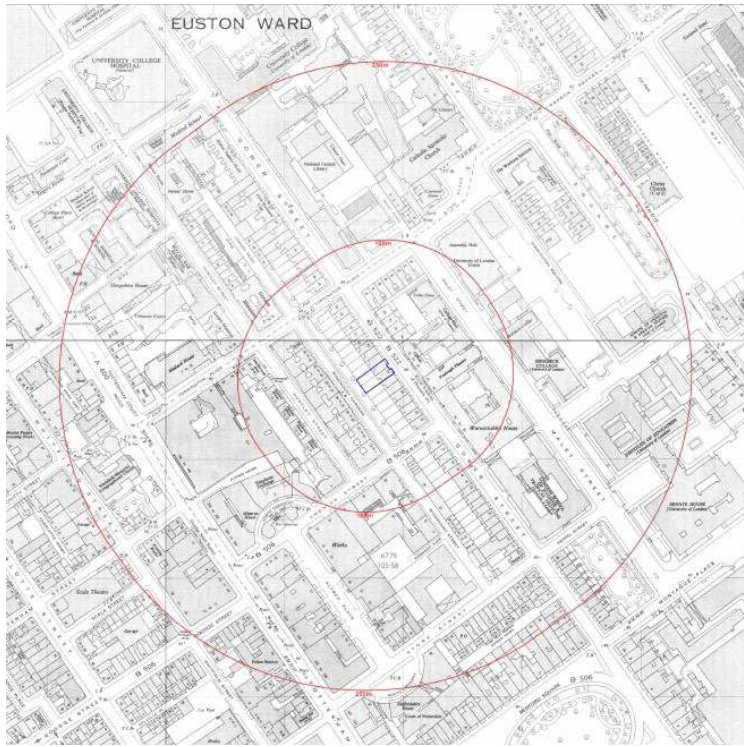


Figure 17: 1970 1:2,500 OS map



Figure 14: 1896 1:1,056 OS map



Figure 16: 1951 1:1,250 OS map

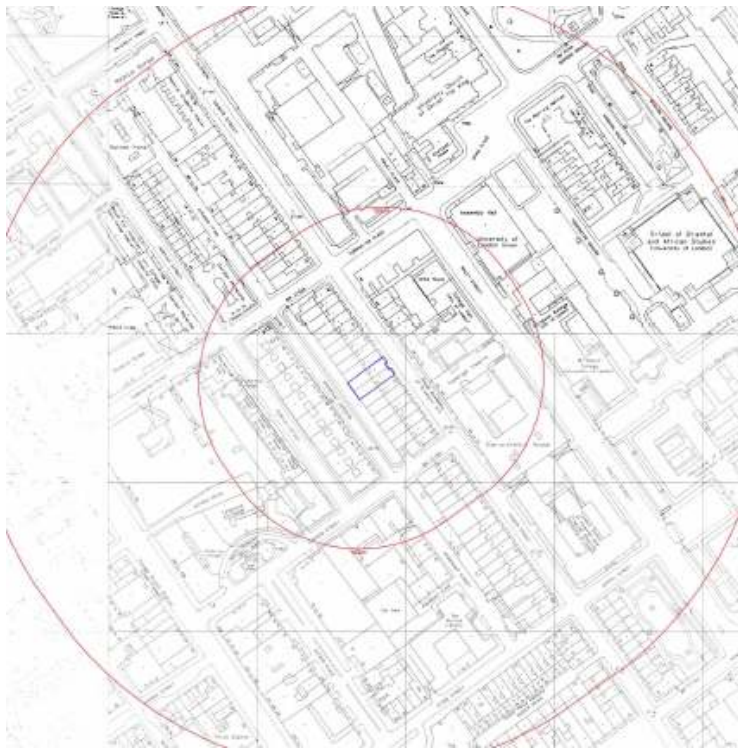


Figure 18: 1993 1:1,250 OS map



### 3.3 HISTORIC MAP REGRESSION

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- The 1875 OS map (figure 13) shows that the surrounding area has been laid out and is well established as a residential neighbourhood. The Georgian planning of this area resulted in a grid street pattern of long, straight axial roads with shorter terraces between. The terraces are generally flat fronted with shallow closet wings to the rear. The larger houses have relatively long gardens, often terminated in mews. The terrace in which the Site is located backs onto Chenies Mews. The front elevation faces another terrace, similarly laid out although with slightly wider frontages and bowed rear elevations.
- The 1896 OS map (figure 14) shows the overall road layout and population has not changed. The section of Chenies Mews to the rear of the Site has been renamed Ridgemount Gardens and redeveloped with larger blocks replacing the finer grain of the mews houses on the western side of the street. The mews houses on the eastern side appear to have been demolished and not replaced.
- The 1916 OS map (figure 15) shows that some redevelopment has taken place on the opposite side of Gower Street to the Site. The southern part of this terrace has been demolished and a much larger building has been built on part of this land.
- By 1951 (figure 16) the immediate surroundings of the Site have not been further developed. No buildings have replaced the houses on the eastern side of Ridgemount Gardens (formerly Chenies Mews). More of the terraced houses opposite the Site have been replaced with large, institutional buildings, notably the Ministry of Supply Offices is now located immediately opposite the Site and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts to its south.
- The 1968-70 OS map (figure 17) shows the footprint of the Site not to have changed. The east side of Ridgemount Gardens, at the rear of the Site, remains a planted strip of land.
- The 1991-1993 OS map (figure 18) shows no further development has taken place in the immediate vicinity of the Site.



# 4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

## 4.1 SITE ASSESSMENT

### Location and Setting

The Site occupies a central position within an extensive terrace comprising 18 town houses (see Figures 2 and 3). The terrace is characteristic of Gower Street and this part of Bloomsbury following the development of the Bedford Estate in the 1780s as a fashionable inner city district of the Capital. The length and uniformity of the terrace is almost unchecked, each house being of three principal storeys above a basement with railings and light wells the front and of three bays width. Moulded stucco doorcases, painted stringcourse and eaves cornice provide the only relief to the plain stock brick frontages which feature flat rubbed brick arches to all the window openings. The terrace also has a Mansard roof above the cornice with projecting dormer windows to all the properties apart from nos. 65-67.

The Site plays its part in the establishment of a remarkably coherent stretch of planned 18th Century townscape and which maintains its grand urban scale in spite of the appearance of numerous much taller institutional buildings, such as the Royal Institute of Dramatic Arts (opposite), during the twentieth century and which are generally around six or seven storeys (Figure 5).

### Architectural Interest and external features

A noteworthy feature of the terrace is the deliberate near-symmetry that was originally applied and in which nos. 65-67 provide the fulcrum at the centre of the terrace. The entrances to the Site are paired so that all the houses to the right feature doorways positioned to the left hand side and those to the left feature their doorways on the right hand bay of each house. The paired doorcases to 65-67 themselves are distinguished by taller Doric pilasters supporting a full entablature. The fanlights above the doors are also very slightly segmental in contrast to the semi circular fanlights to the majority of single entrance doorcases along the remainder of the terrace. The ground floor windows are also enriched by stucco work to the segmental architraves with blind tympana and raised keystones above each window. Nos. 65-67 are also distinguished by the raised ground floor level, being two steps above the other houses in the terrace. This pushes everything upwards culminating in an eaves cornice which oversails and returns above the blocking course of the flanking properties to either side. Above this a six bay attic storey with simple capping detail provides the main accent at the centre of the terrace. But for the addition of a 3 bay attic to no. 73, probably built during the early twentieth century, the terrace would have retained its subtle but fully designed symmetry.

The external joinery to the majority of the terrace, including nos. 65-67, is likely to be of Victorian date due to the size of the window panes and the widespread one over one or four over four sash window configuration. Some of the original six over six sash windows can be seen to the properties at each end of the terrace. Nos. 65-67 retain their handsome original six panel solid timber doors and attractive cast iron railings with urn



Figure 19: Entrance hall of 65 Gower Street viewed from the staircase with the main reception located in the original front parlour to the right of the photo.



Figure 20: Upper flights of the staircase between second and third floors

finials and moulded balusters to the angles with concave ramping adjacent to the front steps. There are also low decorative wrought iron balustrades to the projecting window ledges at first floor. These are a common feature throughout the majority of the terrace and were likely intended to support window boxes for flower and shrub arrangements.

### Internal layout and features of interest

The internal layout of the building reflects a traditional late eighteenth century townhouse and survives essentially intact. This comprises a short entrance lobby (installed in 1974) and hallway with a front parlour opening off the hallway to the left through an elegant convex curve in the wall as the main lobby widens to accommodate the staircase (figure 19). The main stair lobby is enriched by a delightful frieze of bukrania and roundels with swags and which crosses the hallway above an inserted round arch resting on scroll corbels. Skirting boards, dado rails and architraves are simply moulded but are in keeping with the building's original character. The elegant staircase is a narrow open well with open string and stick balusters supporting a swept and moulded timber handrail (figure 11). The staircase reverts to a dogleg with closed string to the upper floors of the building (figure 20)

The former reception room at the rear to the building to the ground floor is the hotel manager's office. The main reception / guest waiting room within the former front parlour has a planned symmetry with concave curves to each inner corner of the room (figure 21). The deeply moulded cornice and chandelier rose give the room a sense of charm but also avails a useful void to the south west corner through which waste drainage from the proposed en-suite bathrooms above can be directed without the need to under-draw this well preserved ceiling.

To the upper floors the original simple room layout is discernible. On each floor this consisted of a large room occupying the full width of the property to the front of the building overlooking Gower Street. A smaller square shaped room adjacent to the main stairwell was behind (see figure 30). This was lit by a large tripartite sash window overlooking the back garden and evidently communicated with the main front reception room by means of a double / concertina door opening, the architraves of which remain intact (partly visible in figure 22). To each half landing at first and second floor levels a small room is accessed within the closet wing. Planning records indicate that the existing partitions were inserted in 1974, with subsequent alterations made in 1997. These partitions essentially created three narrow bedrooms within the large front room with further subdivision to form lobbies and corridors off the landings either within the front or rear room spaces. These various partitions interfere with the original plasterwork cornices and also double door architrave (figure 22) to the first floor. Original moulded plasterwork cornices to part of the large first floor room have been damaged (figure 23). These would need to be reinstated as part of the proposed re-configuration works to establish the coherence



## 4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### 4.1 SITE ASSESSMENT

of the original front room decoration (figure 24) and improve the legibility of the historic layout. Accordingly the significance of the building would be further revealed and reinforced as a consequence of the intended works.

#### Historic Interest

Original built as family houses for the well to do and increasingly affluent middle classes in the late eighteenth century, many of the Gower Street properties had been illegally converted into private boarding houses by the middle of the nineteenth century. By 1892 Stutfield (the Bedford Estate steward) had come to regard nearby Montague Place as a lost cause (Donald Olsen, Town Planning in London, 2nd edn, 1984). The Bedford estate struggled, mostly in vain, to close down these establishments in a bid to maintain the locality's reputation as a place of 'genteel residences'. No. 65 became the home in retirement of John Bannister, formerly a successful actor, who dies there in 1836, and his wife Elizabeth (née Harper), formerly an actress and singer, who also died there in 1849 (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography)

According to the 1901 census, the houses were still being used as private residences. Number 65 Gower Street was owned by a family who were furniture makers. During the 1900s a wide variety of lodgers from army captains to families of 'private means' lived in the two houses. Nos. 65-67 Gower Street has been used as a boarding house and hotel since the early twentieth century. This follows the pattern established by a large number of similar residences in the area. By 1911 number 67 Gower Street was a boarding house leased to Laura Cook, whose long term guests included a ship owner and a furrier. No. 65 was leased to an American; Mary Heriot, corsetiere (allegedly) to the Royal Family, who rented rooms to a pianoforte instructor and his family.

The present hotel owners acquired the lease of the no. 65 Gower Street in 1965. In 1992 they purchased the lease of no. 67 and knocked through to connect the two properties to form one hotel. The buildings are still referred to as 'The Ridgemount' and 'The Georgian'.

#### Future use

Securing a viable long term use for a historic building ensures its future preservation and enjoyment. The upper floor rooms, particularly those to the front of the building are of a mediocre quality and ill-suited to the hospitality trade. Their narrow configuration and appearance detracts from the building's special interest. More generous room sizes with improved bathroom facilities would help to secure a consistent client base at a higher rental and thus help to secure the building's future as a well used and popular hotel. Wherever historic features and architectural details have been identified the proposals will incorporate these and adapt the existing arrangement, which is largely unsympathetic to the building's special interest, in order to further reveal and reinforce the integrity of the original



**Figure 21:** Former front reception room showing the curved walls to the inner corners. On the left this provides a void through which waste water could be routed from the proposed en-suite bathrooms to the rooms above without the need for any intervention through the ceiling or potentially harmful under-drawing.



**Figure 22:** The former rear reception room at first floor level showing the harmful impact of the lobby partitions on the moulded plasterwork cornice and double door architrave which formerly opened into the front reception room.

plan form and its historic character.

The building is well maintained and there are no obvious signs of stress or wear within the structure. However, the hotel rooms on the upper floors and their rather outdated appearance detracts from the building's special character and one's experience of the building. The proposed alternative room configuration with en-suite bathroom pods will serve to optimise both its heritage significance and long term economic viability.

#### Summary of the building's significance

No. 65 Gower Street is a good example of a fashionable London townhouse built during the 1780s as part of speculative development within a newly laid residential estate in Bloomsbury. The building's original plan form with front and rear reception rooms to ground floor, open well staircase and principal reception rooms to the first floor is still legible, although the latter has been significantly diminished due to the partitioning inserted during the 1970s. The interiors retain the majority of decorative plasterwork to the ground and first floors, with simpler details applied to the second and third floors in keeping with the traditional hierarchy of room function found in this type of eighteenth century London residence.

The building retains much of its original character to the external elevations and expresses architectural pretensions and stylistic traits typical of the late Georgian period, still very much under the influence of the neo-Classical style with its predilection for astylar frontages, Classical proportions and chaste detailing.

Subsequent alterations to the interior have changed the building's private residential character to that of a semi-public building which operates as a guesthouse and has done so for the past fifty years. The changes at first floor level in particular have eroded the building's architectural and historic interest through the introduction of intensive subdivision and consequent concealment of decorative plasterwork and loss of legibility. As a result the building's original layout survives intact but is overlaid with unsympathetic modern interventions. Those elements which give expression to the original domestic plan form and circulation within the residence make a substantial contribution to the building's significance due to their evidential, historic and aesthetic values.



4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 SITE ASSESSMENT



Figure 23 (above) and Figure 24 (below) - original part of the same front room the moulded plasterwork cornice has been partially removed within the northern compartment (above) this being the ornamental soffit shown below around the chimney breast. The removal of partitions would necessitate the restoration of the plasterwork soffit to ensure the legibility of the original space is suitably revealed and reinforced.



Figure 25: Many of the existing small front rooms are cramped and narrow with items of furniture placed in front of original historic features such as the marble chimney pieces which detracts from the appearance of the interior and how it is experienced.



Figure 26: Plasterwork cornice to the rear first floor reception room with acanthus leaf and frond motifs.



Figure 27: Original door way to rear second floor bedroom is presently stopped up. This would be reopened as part of the internal refurbishment proposals



# 4.3 CONSERVATION AREAS

## Bloomsbury Conservation Area

### Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (adopted 18th April 2011)

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area was first designated in 1968 to protect the Georgian parts of the surrounding area, and has been extended a number of times since to reflect an increases appreciation for Victorian and Edwardian architecture.

The Conservation Area covers approximately 160 hectares between Euston Road in the north and High Holborn in the south; and between Tottenham Court Road in the west and King's Cross Road in the east.

The town planning in the Conservation Area is of importance as much of the area was formally planned as part of the northward extension of London from the late seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century. As a result, there is a dominant grid layout of the roads in the Conservation Area with broad streets lined with three and four storey development creating the dominant built form. There are garden squares and smaller streets, some originally mews, filling in the gaps in the grid pattern. These create focal point and street hierarchies within the Conservation Area.

The dominant building type is brick terrace houses. The Georgian buildings being predominantly of London Stock brick, whilst earlier and later buildings are more generally of red brick. Where stone is used, it is largely for institutional buildings, or detailing on residential. There is also some stucco on Georgian residential buildings. From the late nineteenth century faience and terracotta became more common on (non-residential) buildings such as public houses.

Whilst the majority of buildings are in a classical style, the features which are prevalent in Georgian terraces include the vertical and horizontal regular rhythm of openings in the main, front elevation. Windows are generally sliding sashes, and cast iron railings feature at ground floor street frontage and some higher level, small balconies.

### Sub Area 5: Bedford Square/Gower Street

#### Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (adopted 18th April 2011) pp 38-42

'This sub area is a virtually intact and exemplary piece of late 18th century town planning, consisting of terraced housing built speculatively by a number of different builders to a plan produced by the Bedford Estate...

The terrace frontages have a strong uniformity since they are of similar scale and proportion and share neo-classical architectural elements. They are of three of four storeys with Mansard attic

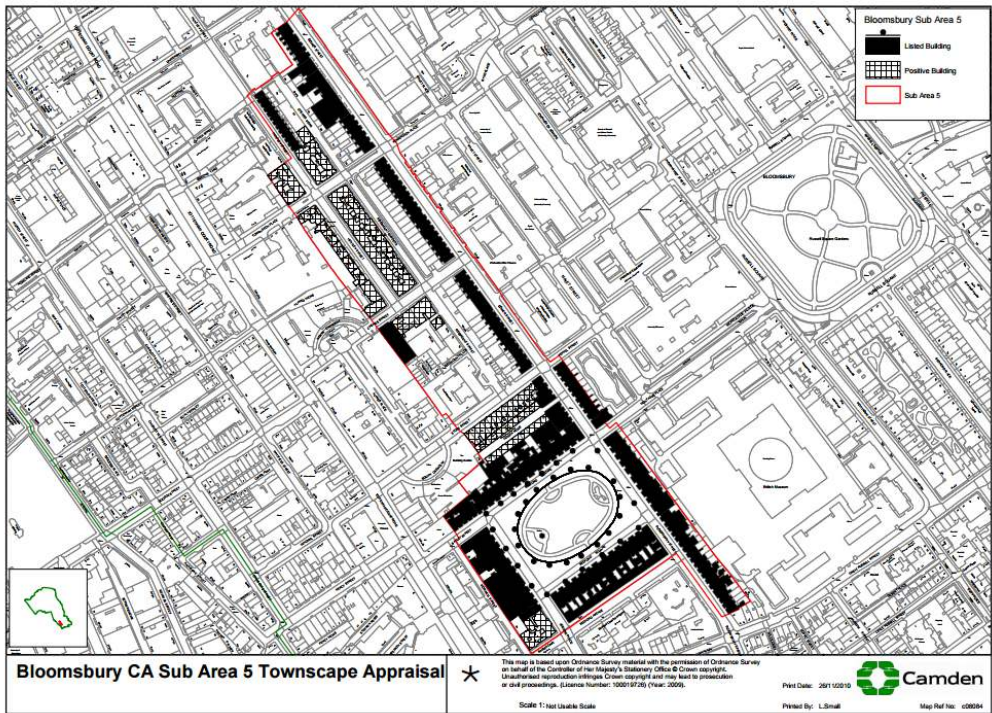


Figure 28: The Site is situated within Sub Area 5 of Bloomsbury Conservation Area shown above

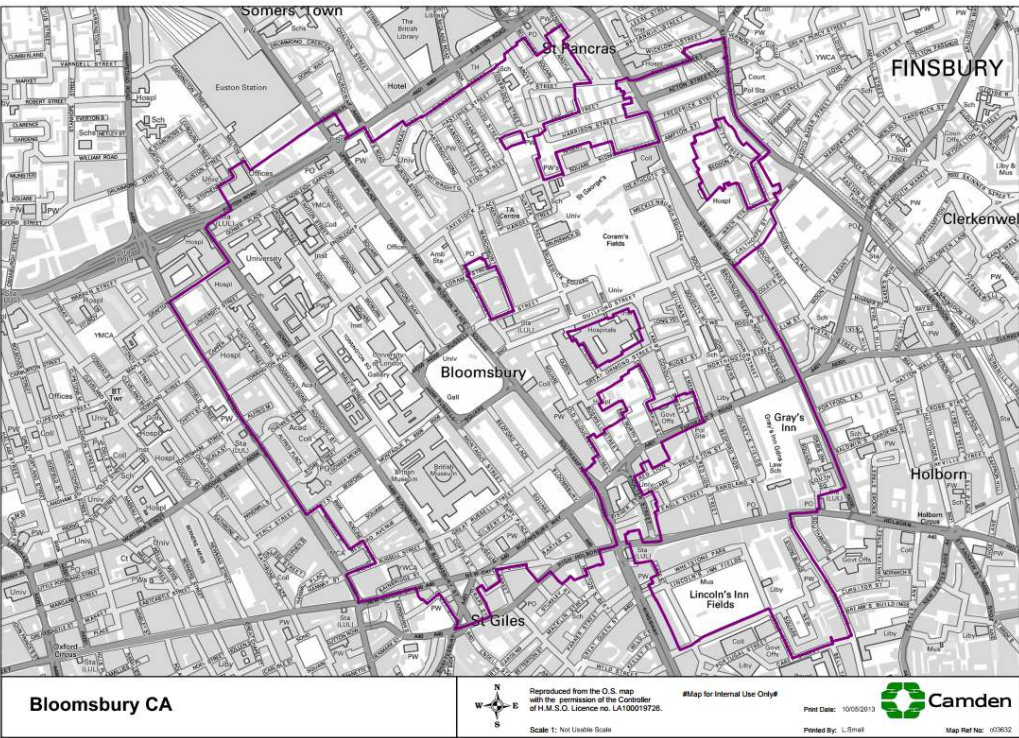


Figure 29: Plan of Bloomsbury Conservation Area

storeys, raised on basements, with iron railings around basement areas. The blocks maintain a continuous parapet line at roof level and banding at first-floor level, coinciding with decorative iron balconies to first-floor windows of the *piano nobile*. There is a strong urban grain: townhouses within terraces have consistent widths containing three windows of vertical proportions window openings mostly have rubbed brick heads, and window frames are recessed, sliding sashes, sub-divided into small panes by slender glazing bars. Doorways mostly have semi-circular arches containing fanlights with decorative radiating glazing bars. There terraces in Bedford Square are the most ornate, whilst those in Gower Street tend to be plainer in architectural detail.' pp. 38-39)

Although the west side of Gower Street is quite unified in appearance, it was built between 1780 and 1820 by a number of developers. The buildings generally display similarities in their yellow stock brick facades, fenestration pattern and window details, iron failings, stucco banding, roofs behind parapets, and chimney stacks and pots. It is noted that the doorways are the most varied features.

The east side of Gower Street has more institutional buildings, for example related to University College Hospital.



5.0 PROPOSALS & ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

5.1 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The application proposals are confined to the interior of the building and involve the removal of modern room partitions in order to consolidate the number of hotel rooms within the affected area of the building. These are to be reduced from thirteen to eleven in number with consequent improvement in the size of hotel room, standard of facilities provided and the degree to which the special architectural and historic interest of the building can be appreciated. The existing partitions and lowered ceilings with storage cupboards above were inserted c.1974. These are of no historic interest and are considered to have a detrimental impact on the building’s special interest, particularly its aesthetic and evidential values.

All the newly formed rooms are to be en-suite. New partitions and bathroom facilities have been carefully planned following comments made by the planning and conservation officers at Camden Council during the initial application process, now withdrawn (ref: 2015/6489/INVALID). Partitions have been re-positioned to avoid contact with the angles of chimney breasts and bathrooms will be carefully inserted in the form of bespoke pods to ensure the original ceilings remain fully exposed. Where partitions meet existing moulded plasterwork cornices the plasterboard is to be accurately scribed around the moulded sections to avoid any damage to the historic detailing and ensure reversibility. All original door openings and architrave detailing is to be retained. An original door to the first floor is to be re-opened and where historic doors are to be blocked, the architrave will remain exposed and also original doors where these exist, e.g. to the staircase landing / circulation space at first floor. All skirting boards are to be retained and partitions carefully scribed around them to avoid any damage and ensure reversibility.

The position of the bathrooms has been carefully planned to minimise any disruption of the historic fabric. Any service pipework or ducting will be inset to avoid disrupting plasterwork cornices and drain via existing voids through the ground floor or existing service runs within no. 67 Gower Street, thus protecting the character and appearance of the more significant rooms in the property which are at ground floor level.

The removal of the existing partitions to the front room on each floor and their replacement with a single partition reflects a net enhancement of the building’s original character and appearance by reinforcing its legibility. Although the original single space is not to be reinstated, something accepted by the Council in their comments as not essential or indeed feasible given the need to ensure the existing use remains economically viable, the restoration of missing plasterwork within the first and second floors will ensure that the legibility of the front room as a single room will be improved.

The alterations to the first, second and third floors of number 65 will yield much more attractive hotel rooms that will enhance the significance of the building’s interior by revealing and reinforcing the legibility of the original plan form.

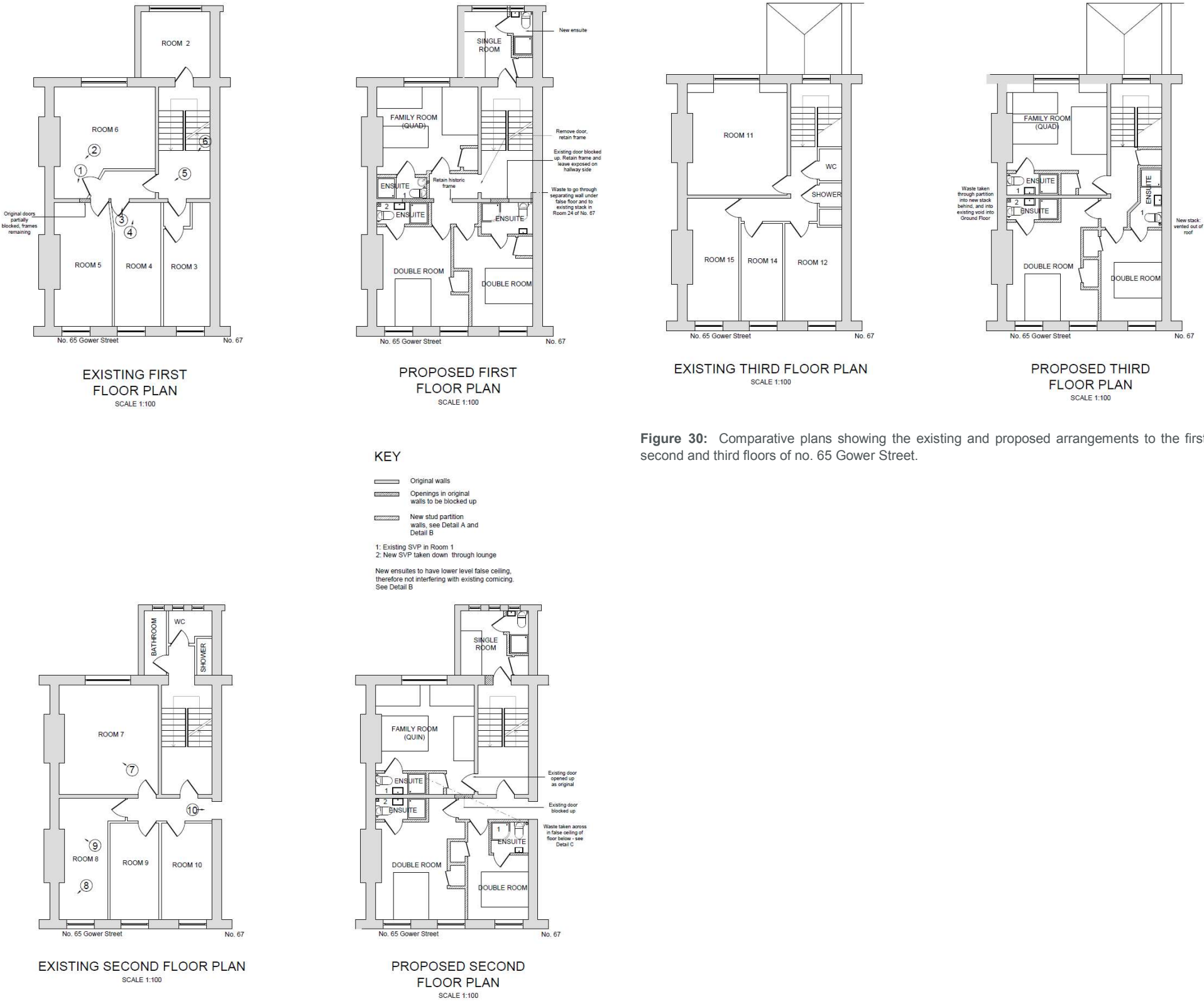


Figure 30: Comparative plans showing the existing and proposed arrangements to the first, second and third floors of no. 65 Gower Street.



## 5.2 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

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The impact of the proposals on the external appearance of the listed building and its setting within the conservation area would be imperceptible and therefore neutral.

The proposals include a number of modest alterations to the interior that are sensitive to the building's historic character and seek to enhance its evidential value by retaining historic features and through various works of reinstatement that will make the late eighteenth century plan form both more obvious and legible and therefore easier to appreciate.

Whilst the proposals seek to upgrade and modernise the accommodation within the hotel, in listed building terms they would facilitate a improved presentation of the building's original layout by removing later partitions and other features, such as modern door openings, that are not intrinsic to its special interest and tend to conceal or erode its heritage values. The proposal will reinforce the building's overall significance, derived from its original planning and decorative plasterwork, by sensitively restoring and incorporating the surviving elements and within the proposed layout.

It is considered that the proposals will greatly enhance the experience of the building above ground floor level by allowing the historic character of this part of the building to be more fully appreciated. At first, second and third floor levels they will create more attractive and comfortable guest rooms through the provision of en-suite bathrooms within much larger bedrooms. This will ensure the hotel remains competitive whilst enhancing the building's sustainability.

The proposals have been considered in a holistic manner and seek both to preserve the building's special character in accordance with Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and enhance this in accordance with Paragraphs 7 and 131 of the NPPF. The proposed alterations to the first, second and third floors are consistent with the building's conservation. It is considered that the proposals would give rise to significant economic and heritage benefits through the adaptation of the hotel room layout and sensitive modernisation of the bathroom provision for the benefit of hotel guests. The existing partitions create unattractive and cramped accommodation which reduces the perception of the historic layout and consequently how it is experienced. The removal of these partitions is a principal justification for the proposed arrangement. While new partitions will be required to create the improved hotel rooms, the amount of subdivision will be considerably less and bathrooms will be located within discreet pods within each room, avoiding any removal of historic fabric and ensuring that the shape and extent of the original reception and bedrooms remains visible. The reinstatement of missing plasterwork will further improve the legibility of the historic interior. The bathrooms have been positioned in order to minimise the impact on the existing fabric and to avoid the need to under draw any ceilings to the ground floor by accommodating service runs within existing voids. All pipework will be inset from the wall to avoid contact with any cornicing and

will be discreetly boxed in. Partitions will likewise be carefully scribed around any moulded plasterwork and also skirting board detail.

The proposed arrangement will allow the existing historic features, such as fireplaces, to be better presented without furniture being placed in front of them. Historic door openings will also be retained and re-used wherever possible.

It is submitted that no important part of the historic fabric or character would be compromised by these proposals and the significance of the building as a whole would be considerably enhanced by them. The Heritage benefits, and hence public benefits, of the proposals are considered to outweigh any harm to the building's special interest, which taken in isolation is considered to be very slight within the spectrum of less than substantial harm within the meaning of paragraph 134 of the NPPF.

# 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

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This report has been produced by CgMs Limited, part of the RPS Group, to support proposals for internal alterations to the first, second and third floors of No. 65 Gower Street. This Heritage Statement has been produced to support applications for planning and listed building consent, meeting the requirements of paragraph 128 of the NPPF by providing an assessment of the building's significance, and an assessment of the impact of the proposal on this.

The proposals, in their current form, should be read in light of comments received from Camden Council further to a previous application (ref: 2015/6489/INVALID) now withdrawn.

The building presently provides sub-standard hotel accommodation which is not competitive with the nearby hotel offerings within similar terraced property in the Bloomsbury area. It is a well established use within many of the Grade II listed terraced properties in the vicinity and highly popular with all types of visitors whose expectations of hotel accommodation continue to rise. The building is therefore in need of sensitive adaptation to ensure a viable economic future can be sustained while ensuring this is consistent with the building's conservation for the benefit of present and future generations.

The proposed reduction in the number of hotel rooms and the corresponding improvement in quality and range of offer involves very limited change to the historic fabric. Where change is to be implemented its impact is considered to be either beneficial or neutral in relation to identified heritage values. The proposal will ensure the building's future conservation by incorporating changes to the fabric which enhance the usefulness and attractiveness of the upper floors whilst revealing and reinforcing its significance.

The proposed adaptation of the hotel rooms at number 65 is considered to have an overall beneficial impact on the building's special interest through the removal of intense partitioning, elimination of low quality room space, the retention and enhancement of original openings and the insertion of new partitions in a fashion that is congruent with its special architectural and historic character. The new bathroom pods will be bespoke and of complementary design but are a potentially reversible addition. Continued public access to the building in its present use will in due course add to the building's communal value in heritage terms. The building's original layout is to be preserved and its overall legibility enhanced by the proposals.

Based on the above assessment it is considered that overall the proposals will not harm the significance of No. 65 Gower Street and its refurbishment will generally enhance the building's special architectural and historic interest. The associated public and heritage benefits comprise maintaining public access, allowing its functional history and aesthetic qualities to be

better revealed and understood, thus reinforcing its significance, and the sympathetic conservation of the historic fabric. Thus justification for the proposal is wholly in accordance with paragraph 131 which refers to enhancing the significance of heritage assets by putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation and the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality. The insertion of the en-suite bathrooms in isolation does cause a small degree of harm, which within the spectrum of less than substantial harm of paragraph 134 of the NPPF is considered to be very slight. Any visual impact would be mitigated by their design and location and appearance as self contained elements within the larger historic spaces. In the context of the application proposals any harm is considered to be outweighed by the heritage benefits of the scheme, convincing justification for which has been clearly set out in within this Heritage Statement.

It is therefore our view that the proposals are entirely in keeping with all national and local legislation and policy relating to the historic environment and there are, as such, no heritage reasons why listed building consent should not be granted.



# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: STATUTORY LIST DESCRIPTION

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Numbers 51 to 85 and attached railings

Gower Street

First listed: 28th March 1969

Description: Terrace of 18 houses. Nos 51-59 built 1786; Nos 61-85, 1787. Darkened yellow stock brick. Stucco band at ground floor level and to 1st floor sills. Slated mansard roofs with dormers. 3 storeys, attics and basements. Nos 65, 67 & 73, 4 storeys. 3 windows each. Entrances with stucco surrounds with pilasters and dentil cornices; alternating round and segmental-arched doorways with fanlights and panelled doors. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sash windows, most with original glazing bars. Ground and 1st floor windows with bracketed sills and cast-iron window guards. Nos 65 & 67 ground floor windows in segmental-arched recesses with stucco archivolt, impost and keys. Stone dentil cornices; Nos 65, 67 & 73 cornices at 3rd floor level. Parapets. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings, mostly with urn finials, to areas.

## APPENDIX B: REFERENCES

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