

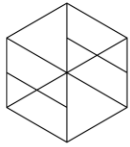
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Heritage Impact Appraisal  
Boston House, 36-38 Fitzroy Square, London, W1  
July 2019

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## 1 Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of applications for planning permission and listed building consent in relation to Boston House, 36-38 Fitzroy Square, London, W1 (Hereby known as Boston House). The following statement should be read in conjunction with the Planning Statement prepared by SM Planning and the associated set of plans.

### Report structure

1.2 The purpose of this report is to set out the history and significance of Boston House and to consider that significance against the proposed scheme and relevant historic environment policy. Boston House, is grade I listed buildings on the south side of Fitzroy Square. The buildings also form part of the Fitzroy Square Conservation Area.

1.3 This desk-based and archival research has been combined with a visual assessment and appraisal of the existing building and its context. Further sources and evidence that add to our knowledge and understanding of the site and its history may become available at a future date.

1.4 The report is divided into two main sections. The first (section 2) describes the historic development and significance of the building. This is followed by a brief description of the proposals and an assessment of the proposals against this significance and relevant historic environment policy.

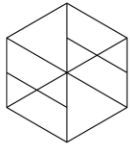
1.5 This appraisal has been prepared by Kate Graham of The Heritage Practice. Kate Graham (MA (Hons) MA PG Dip Cons AA) has extensive experience in dealing with proposals that affect the historic environment having in recent years been Conservation & Design Manager at the London Borough of Islington and Senior Historic Buildings at Areas Adviser at Historic England. She also has an extensive background in research, in policy analysis and

in understanding historic buildings and places. She has trained as a historian and has a specialist qualification in building conservation. Kate is also a member of the London Borough of Islington Design Review Panel.

### Designations

1.6 Boston House 36-38 Fitzroy Square, forms part of a group of eight grade I listed buildings on the south side of Fitzroy Square, built by James and Robert Adam c. 1792-8. Most of the terrace was listed at grade I in June 1954 as the 'London Foot Hospital and attached railings.' Nos. 33, 37 and 40 were added to the list in 1974. The buildings also form part of the Fitzroy Square Conservation Area. The list description for nos. 33-40 Fitzroy Square reads:

*Symmetrical terrace of 8 houses forming the south side of Fitzroy Square, now in use as a hospital. c1792-8. By Robert and James Adam. Nos 36, 37 & 38 facades restored in facsimile following war damage. Portland stone with rusticated ground floor. Symmetrical facade with 3 bays in the centre and at each end projecting. EXTERIOR: 4 storeys and basements. 3 windows each. Nos 33 & 40 with 5 window returns (mostly blind) to Conway Street and Fitzroy Street respectively. Round-arched ground floor openings linked by impost bands. Doorways with pilaster-jambs carrying cornice heads; fanlights (some radial patterned) and panelled doors. Sash windows in shallow, plain recesses. Upper floors with square-headed, recessed sash windows, the 1st floor with continuous cast-iron balcony. Plain 2nd floor sill band. Main cornice with enriched frieze at 3rd floor level. Cornice above attic storey with blocking course. Centre projection with 2 recessed columns in antis through the 1st to 2nd floor. Above, a Diocletian window. Each bay to either side with pilasters rising from 1st to 3rd floor supporting the main cornice. Attic storey with 5 oculi, the outer 2 enriched with swags. End pavilions; 1st floor centre bay with 2 recessed Ionic columns in antis supporting a recessed architrave and enriched frieze. To either side, shallow, rectangular niches with*



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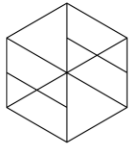
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*roundels of Classical figures above. Main cornice at 3rd floor level with moulded, enriched panel. Central Diocletian window to attic storey. INTERIORS: mostly plain with enriched ceiling cornices, stone staircases with iron balustrades and some marble fireplaces. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with urn finials to areas. Nos 33, 37 and 40 were listed on 14/05/74. (Survey of London: Vol. XXI, Tottenham Court Road and Neighbourhood, St Pancras III: London: -1949: 52-8).*

1.7 Nos 36-38 Fitzroy Square also forms part of the Fitzroy Square Conservation Area. Fitzroy Square was part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, originally designated on 19th September 1968. In 1980 the streets surrounding Fitzroy Square were designated as a conservation area and included within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Fitzroy Square Conservation Area was adopted as a separate conservation area in its own right on 16th March 2010.



## 2 Site location and description

2.1 The following section provides a brief description of Boston House and its location. The building is situated on Fitzroy Square. Fitzroy Square is located in central London, south of Euston Road and west of Tottenham Court Road. It falls in the western portion of the Parish of St Pancras. It forms part of a wider neighbourhood of central London popularly known as Fitzrovia, which extends south to Oxford Street. The Conservation Area is situated in the western portion of the London Borough of Camden, adjacent to its western boundary with the City of Westminster.

2.2 The principal focal point of the area is Fitzroy Square, planned in the latter quarter of the 18th century as the centrepiece for Charles Fitzroy's speculative development. The area was one of the last projects designed and planned by architect Robert Adam, with his brother James, who built the terraces enclosing the east side followed by the south side of the square in the early 1790s. The architectural quality and historical importance of these terraces is signified by their grade I listing.

2.3 The square was laid out in 1790 and building on the east side began in 1792, followed by the south side in 1794. Adhering to the Palladian style, the four-storey, Portland stone fronts were designed to present a uniform facade to the square. For architectural emphasis, the central and end sections project forward and have more ornate surface treatment.

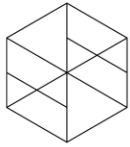
2.4 Each side of the square is treated slightly differently. The eastern terrace, built 1793-8, has large arched openings at either end with central columns that give a sense of scale to the blocks. The South side (of which Boston house forms a part) between Conway Street (Southampton Street) and Fitzroy Street, appears to have been built immediately after the east side. The treatment of the one resembles the other, but here the wings and the centre block are all narrower, corresponding to the

shorter length of the building, the centre on the south being similar to the ends on the east. The ground floors are rusticated with arched heads to the window and door openings. The terrace is set back from the pavement behind cast-iron railings enclosing basement areas. Both east and the north facades are built in Portland stone. The northern and western terraces were constructed slightly later and have and are stuccoed with plainer elevational treatment and are listed grade II\* listed. They are of the same scale and share similar common details such as the rusticated ground floor, arched ground floor openings and decorative railings at first floor level. Only St Luke's Hospital for the Clergy at Nos 13-14 (a later insertion of the 1920s) is unlisted.

2.5 Fitzroy Square is pedestrianised and is, as a result, quieter than the surrounding streets. The circular, grassed area dips down at its centre and contains a number of mature London plane trees which are a dominant and important feature of the square, especially when in full leaf in summer. These mature trees are protected by an area Tree Preservation Order. They soften and filter the views across the space and emphasise the contrast in character between the green square and the more urban streets.



Figure 1. South side of Fitzroy Square. Boston House is the cleanest section of the terrace (extending from the red door on the left to window on the right-hand side of the furthest red door).



## Boston House

2.6 Boston House comprises three former Georgian terrace houses in the centre of the south side of Fitzroy Square. The building comprises ground plus three floor and basement. The former terrace houses were three bays wide with the central house containing the projecting palace front to the terrace. The design of this central feature includes two pairs of Ionic pilasters, traversing the first and second floors, each pair enclosing a window on each floor. Between them was a segmental arch, springing from the level of the second-floor sills, and divided from a recess on the first floor below by a band of masonry. There is a triple division of the arch on the second floor and five bullseye lights (the centre unpierced) to the attic storey.

2.8 Historically the recess at first floor level containing three bay windows between the two Corinthian columns would have included a dummy window since the party wall between Nos. 36 and 37 necessitated a stone filling. The same thing occurred in the triple division of the arch on the second floor and at third floor level where the centre bullseye windows would have been unpierced.

2.9 However wartime bomb damage south of Fitzroy Square has had a severe impact (refer to figure 2) on terraces on either side of Fitzroy Street, south of Fitzroy Square. Nos. 36 to 38, were almost completely destroyed in the air-raids<sup>1</sup>. Boston House was reconstructed as a replica in terms of its street façade with modern offices constructed behind the façade employing large floor plates out-of-keeping with the original cellular floor plans.

2.10 This is similar to the east side of Fitzroy Street which was redeveloped with university buildings of contrasting modern design during the 1950s and 1960s including the Indian

YMCA Indian Student Hostel on Grafton Way, designed by Ralph Tubbs in 1952 (replacing its former home in nearby Gower Street) and no.1 Fitzroy Square which was rebuilt as a result of World War II bomb damage.

2.9 The interior of Boston House is a now completely modern redevelopment (refer to figure 3-4) which comprises large office floor plates on each level. The party walls between the former houses have been removed and there is no architectural or historic features, fabric or layout remaining. Paragraph 5.12 of the Fitzroy Square Conservation Area describes the building as “a utilitarian post-war back behind its front façade as a result of bomb damage.”



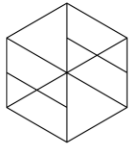
Figure 2. Extract from *The London County Council Bomb damage maps showing near complete destruction of Boston House.*

## Use

2.10 The square originally provided housing types attractive to both the aristocracy and the middle classes, served by facilities including shops and a market (in the vicinity of Whitfield Street),

2.11 However Fitzrovia declined in desirability as a residential area during the mid-

<sup>1</sup> Survey of London: Volume 21, the Parish of St Pancras Part 3: Tottenham Court Road and Neighbourhood.



19<sup>th</sup> Century which led to an increase in non-residential uses. Several houses were converted to hotel use due to their proximity to the mid-19th century railway termini at Euston and Kings Cross.

2.12 After the First World War many of the buildings turned to commercial, office and institutional use. The trend for change of use continued after the Second War. In Fitzroy Square, residential and hotel uses gave way to offices for professionals, charities, educational establishments including Nos 34-35 which was education college in the early 2000s. However, in recent years some properties have been put back to residential use, either as flats or as single family dwellings.



Figure 3. Typical modern open plan office layout in Boston House.



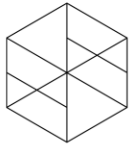
Figure 4. First floor of the former no.38 Fitzroy Square showing modern open plan layout.

## Significance

2.13 Externally the front elevation of Boston House and its neighbour which form the south side of Fitzroy Square are of exceptional historic and architectural special interest. The terraces architectural composition of the planned layout and composition of the square as a whole clearly contributes to its special interest.

2.14 However the remainder of the building has been redeveloped behind the retained façade and comprises modern open plan commercial layout which makes no architectural or historic contribution to the site, square or wide conservation area.

2.15 The building's special interest lies solely in the contribution the façade makes to the overall composition of the terrace and Fitzroy Square as a whole.



### 3 The proposals and their effects

3.1 The purpose of this section is to consider the effects of these proposed alterations on the existing buildings and their significance against relevant historic environment policy considerations.

3.2 The proposed scheme has been prepared for a new tenant who wishes to convert the building to dual B1 and D1 use. The proposal excludes any external alterations. The physical alterations relative to the interior of the building only. The proposed works are as follows:

#### Ground Floor

3.3 At ground floor level the works would include the subdivision of the open plan office space to no. 38 Fitzroy Square. This includes insertion of glass partitions to the south of the existing reception.

#### First Floor

3.4 The proposals as they relate to the first floor include the subdivision of the space to create a number of office/meeting or classrooms along the existing structural divisions of the building's concrete frame. The partitions would be glazed.

#### Second Floor

3.5 The second floor is currently completely open plan space. The proposals here include the subdivision of the space to create multiple office/meeting or classrooms as proposed for the first floor.

#### Third Floor

3.6 The alterations at third floor level would be similar to that of the lower floors. The existing open plan space would be partitioned using glass to create more cellular meeting or classrooms spaces.

#### External

3.7 There are no external changes proposed although a new door entry system will be required.

#### Summary Justification

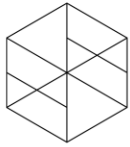
3.8 Camden 2017 adopted Local Plan policy H2 confirms that the Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks through (inter alia) Policy D2j:

*"resist[ing] proposals for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where this would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the building."*

3.9 Statutorily the Planning (listed building and conservation area) Act 1990 requires decision makers with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area to pay 'special attention... to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'.

3.10 In this context, "preserving", means doing no harm. Recent case law requires any harm to be given considerable importance and weight in the decision-making process.

3.11 The proposed change of use and the associated internal works would not disrupt, alter or affect the significance of the listed building. Indeed, many of the buildings on the square are currently in B1 use and many buildings within the square were formally in D1 use without resulting in a negative impact of the special character or significance of the buildings. In fact, it is undeniable that it is only the architectural interest of the front façade - and the contribution it makes to the wider



terrace on the south side of Fitzroy Square – that is of special interest in this instance.

3.12 The value of the building and the contribution the interior makes to the special interest is confirmed in the LB Camden delegated officer report for listed building permission dated 18<sup>th</sup> September 2009 (ref: 2009/2365/L) which states;

*“The internal layout, fabric and features are all modern and do not form part of the special character of the building. In this regard the works do not impact upon the architectural and historic interest of the grade I listed building and are therefore considered acceptable.”*

3.13 The proposed works would not therefore impact upon the character and appearance of the front façade. The proposed change of use and minor internal alterations would not cause harm to its special interest. Any impact of the internal works would enhance the understanding of the former townhouses by improving the cellular nature of the space.

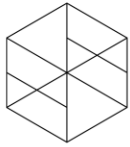
3.14 The proposed works would therefore preserve the special interest and significance of Boston House in compliance with national statute and local policy.

3.15 The preservation of the special interest of the building would also result in no harm being caused to the character and appearance of Fitzroy Square and the wider Fitzroy Square conservation area. This would comply with national statute as well as local policy H2e which requires *“that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area”*.

3.16 This Heritage Statement shows that because of the historic works to the building, namely – its rebuilding after world war II bomb damage –its significance is limited to the contribution it makes the setting, character and appearance of the terrace on the south side of the square. The proposed minor internal

alterations would not harm this special interest and therefore the proposals comply with national, local and regional policy, and should be approved.





## Appendix A

### Relevant Policy Context

The following paragraphs briefly set out the range of national and local policy and guidance relevant to the consideration of change in the historic built environment. The relevant statutory provision for the historic environment is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

#### The National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019 and sets out the government's approach to dealing with the historic environment. Section 12 of the NPPF deals specifically with this area of policy. Policies relevant in this particular case are as follows.

**Paragraph 189** states that applicants should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. 'The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.' A history of the site and its context and a statement of significance are presented in this report at section 2.

**Paragraph 192** is clear that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; and c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness

**Paragraph 193** sets out that 'when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance

can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional.'

**Paragraph 200** deals with opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and setting of to enhance or better reveal their significance. It states "Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably."

#### London Borough of Camden Local Plan

Camden's Local Plan was adopted in June 2017. The most relevant policy in this case is Policy D2: Heritage.

With regard to Conservation Areas, the policy states that the Council will:

- Require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character and appearance of the area.

With regard to Listed Buildings, the policy sets out that the Council will:

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