

# Heritage Statement

## Heal's Building, Nos.18-26 Torrington Place

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<b>On behalf of:</b>	Castleforge Partners	<b>Ref:</b>	0264

### INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Ignus Froneman, Director at Cogent Heritage, in consultation with the Applicant, Castleforge Partners, the Landlord's representatives, and Morey Smith Architects.
- 1.2 The application involves minor internal alterations and replacement services to the two upper floors of the rear, former warehouse part of the complex of buildings that, together, constitute the grade II\* listed Heal's building. The part of the listed building subject to this application (identified in previous assessment as 'Block K') fronts Torrington Place and was built in 1936, refurbished in 1998, and again more recently in c. 2013 as part of a larger scheme that included covering of the courtyard, the insertion of new lifts, replacement windows, and overall modernisation of this part of the building complex.
- 1.3 The part of Block K subject to the changes in this application are the 4<sup>th</sup> floor frontage block and large, warehouse-like rear range, and the 5<sup>th</sup> floor over the frontage block on Torrington Place; these two areas are connected by a modern (c. 2015) inserted staircase.
- 1.4 Although this part of the building is included in the overall grade II\* listed building, it is not considered to have the same significance as the main building, fronting Tottenham Court Road and containing the famous Heal's and Habitat stores. Instead, it is a relatively unremarkable part of the building complex, with an overall low level of significance.
- 1.5 The Heritage Statement supports the listed building consent application by assessing the effects of the proposed internal alterations on the significance of the listed building. The report should be read alongside the comprehensive and detailed set of drawings that sets out the proposed changes in full.

- 1.6 The report was informed by a site visit, in December 2020, when the parts of the building subject to this application were inspected and photographed. This report does not set out the Local Plan policies, or the National Planning Policy Framework, or the provisions of the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990, focussing instead on an assessment of significance and impact, before coming to an overall conclusion about the acceptability of the proposal.

## 2 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 2.1 Heal's is listed as 'Heal and Son Limited including Habitat, 191-199, Tottenham Court Road and 18-26, Torrington Place'. The building was first listed on 14 May 1974 and, according the entry on Historic England's National Heritage List, the list description as quoted below was most recent amended on 11 January 1999:

*"CAMDEN TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD (East side) Nos.191-199 (Consecutive) Heal and Son Ltd including Habitat (Formerly Listed as: TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD Nos.193-199 (Consecutive) Heal & Son Ltd)*

*14/05/74 GV II\* Includes: Nos.18-26 TORRINGTON PLACE. Department store and warehouse. Original central section of frontage five-window bays 1914-17 by Cecil C Brewer and A Dunbar Smith; southern extension of five bays with identical style of elevation 1936-8 by Edward Maufe; northern extension of seven bays in a complementary idiom of 1961-2 by Fitzroy Robinson and Partners. Portland stone facing on a steel frame throughout. Pantiled mansard roof with dormers. EXTERIOR: Four storeys, attic and basement. Central and southern section in stripped Classical style have free-standing octagonal columns with bronze bases and caps to ground floor carrying plain entablature. Plate glass display windows are set back behind an arcade. On upper storeys, piers rise above columns to abbreviated capitals and deep entablature having enriched cornice and incised Roman lettering with the dates MDCCCX, MCMXVI and MCMXXXVII and the name "Heal and Son" (twice). The voids between the piers in alternating rhythm of single and triple lights divided by stone pilasters and filled with close-paned steel windows for two storeys, and continuous steel windows recessed on the third storey. The spandrels between first and second floors carry cast metal panels in low relief with colour designed by Joseph Armitage and depicting various wares and implements, eg. textiles, sheep shears, a bed, teazle, pottery wheel and vase.*

*The northern extension has a similar rhythm of bays and identical storey heights with the entablatures ranging through. Entrance in right hand bay with projecting hood bearing the royal coat of arms. Square piers to the ground floor, the set back display windows on the front and return to Torrington Place having curving non-reflective glass. Attic recessed with flat roof and projecting frame for window-cleaning cradle. The windows between piers of larger steel sections, the spandrels between first and second*

*floors here filled with ceramic blue and cream relief panels designed by John Farleigh and made by Kenneth Clark and depicting wares interspersed with large letters "H" for Heals. INTERIOR: notable chiefly for the circular wooden staircase within a well at the rear of the store, built as part of the Smith and Brewer work in 1914-17. Both Heals and Habitat are entered through the 1960s building at ground-floor level and their plans are confusing on the other floors; they have no division corresponding to the periods of the building but over-and-undersail each over."*

- 2.2 **Historic background overview:** Heal's moved to a terraced house at 196 Tottenham Court Road in 1818, eventually expanding to take over adjacent terraced houses. The first purpose-built building for the firm was designed by J Morant Lockyer, in 1854. This was one of many retail, manufacture and storage facilities built by Heal's on the site over a span of around 150 years. As the retail trade expanded and diversified, Heal's has responded by developing the buildings on the site, to provide both retail and production space.
- 2.3 In 1916, a new building by Smith and Brewer replaced part of the Lockyer building, as well as the building at No. 196. When they had completed this new store, and a new bedding factory to the rear, Smith and Brewer turned their attention to areas acquired by Heal's towards the north of the site and alongside Francis Street, now Torrington Place.
- 2.4 In 1937, Edward Maufe designed a replacement for the remains of the Lockyer building along Tottenham Court Road, incorporating the White Hart public house at the corner of Alfred Mews.
- 2.5 In 1962, Fitzroy Robinson designed an extension to the north on the site of a cinema that was damaged during the war. This gave Heal's much needed new showrooms and completed the development of the site.
- 2.6 The Heal's buildings were overhauled during 1983 and 1984. The office spaces to the rear and upper levels of the building have undergone localised refurbishment by tenants, while the refurbishment of the common areas was carried out in 1998.
- 2.7 **Significance:** As set out above, the building has evolved and developed since its origins in 1854 and comprises of a complex arrangement of built form; whilst some areas are of high significance and great sensitivity, other parts are of little or no significance. A thorough assessment of the building's significance was carried out by John McAslan and Partners in 2008, as part of their Historic Structures Report for the owners. That analysis has in turn formed the basis of the approach taken for previous interventions and stands a benchmark assessment of significance.

2.8 The overall significance of the building can be summarised as:

- i. The Tottenham Court Road elevation is of very high significance. It is an outstanding example of the stripped classical style, complemented by a respectful contextual extension. The list entry describes the elevation in some detail, and *Pevsner* describes it as the best commercial front of its date in London.
- ii. The spiral staircase at the rear of the 1916 Smith and Brewer building is the architectural highlight of the interior. Its dramatic geometry and high quality finishes make it one of the most important elements of the store.
- iii. The staircase and twin lifts at the southern end of the 1937 Maufe building is of high significance, principally because of the dramatic window, which rises through four storeys. Externally, the window is detailed to a very high standard, and compares with Maufe's work at Guildford Cathedral.
- iv. The atrium above the first floor to the south of the spiral staircase is the last remaining part of the original 1854 building by Lockyer, and is therefore historically significant.
- v. The Mansard Gallery (now no longer within the Heal's store) is an attractive room that was used to promote new designs and designers. It is historically significant as a reflection of Heal's position at the centre of good design.
- vi. The Alfred Mews buildings, particularly Smith and Brewer's 1913 bedding factory, are significant because they reflect the inter-relationship between manufacture and design, which was central to Heal's ethos. They also make a considerable contribution to the character and appearance of this part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, where manufacture and industry has all but disappeared.

2.9 The parts of the building to which the application relates, Block K, was identified by John McAslan and Partners as dating to 1936 and was the subject of refurbishment in 1998, before more recent refurbishment in 2013 and again with subsequent changes, including the insertion of a staircase to connect the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> floors. These floors are identified as areas of 'low significance' in the McAslan and Partners drawings, replicated below. **(Figures 1 & 2).**



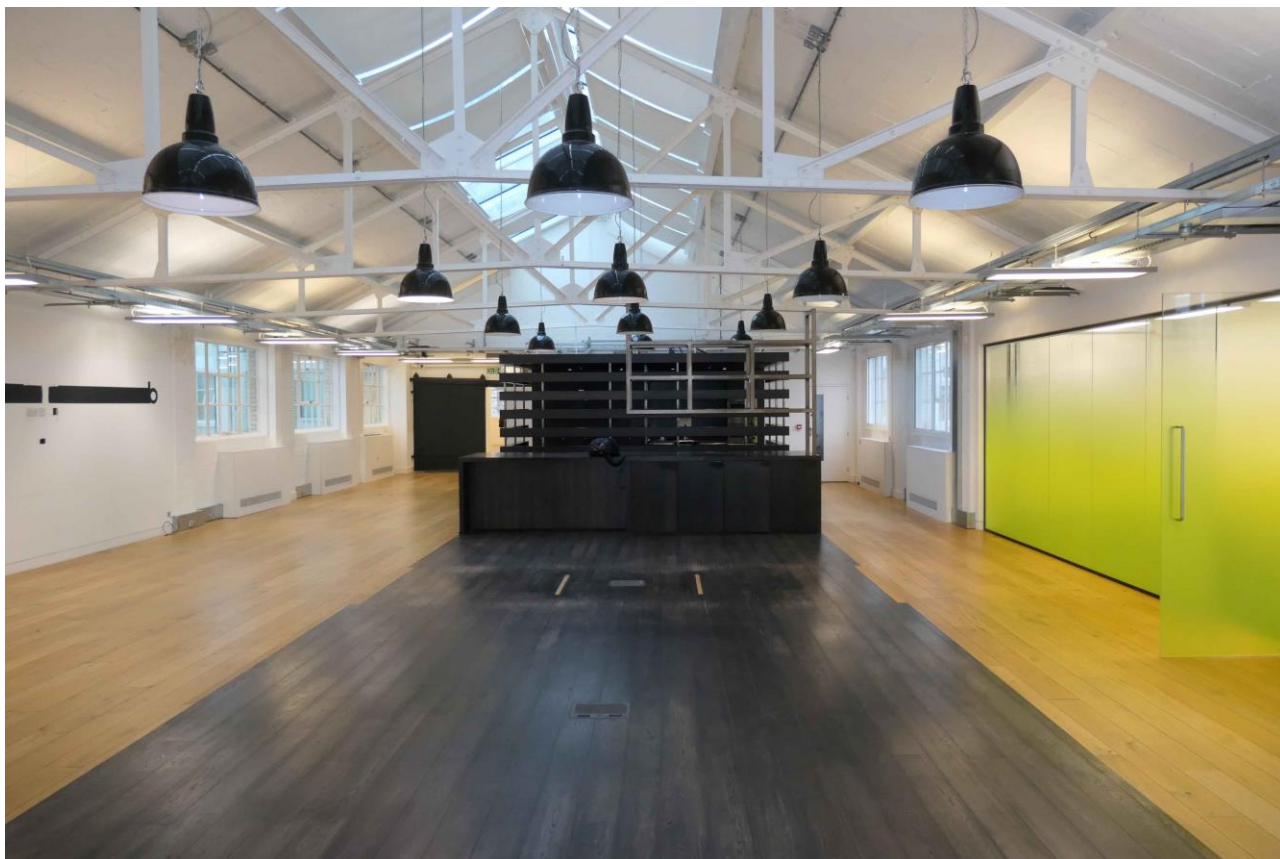
**Figure 1:** A significance plan of the fourth floor, from John McAslan and Partners, showing low significance areas in yellow. The application site is highlighted in dotted red line.



**Figure 2:** A significance plan of the fifth floor, from John McAslan and Partners, showing low significance areas in yellow. The application site is highlighted in dotted red line.

2.10 The floorspace to which the application relates is of low significance. No parts of the building that are identified as making any notable contribution to the heritage significance of the building would be affected. The photos below illustrate the generally modern character of the fourth floor (**Photos 1 & 2**). The fifth floor is similar; the steel fire door seen in the distance on the left of **Photo 1** is perhaps the most significant single historic feature in this part of the building.





**Photo 1:** General view of the fourth floor, from the rear open plan area looking towards the front block on Torrington Place.



**Photo 2:** General view of the fourth floor, within the front block on Torrington Place.

### 3 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

3.1 The proposed changes are, on the whole, relatively minor; these have been carefully designed and detailed to avoid impacts, even to this area of acknowledged low sensitivity, as is borne out in the level of detail provided.

3.2 The proposed changes are now set out and assessed in tabular form below:

Intervention	Assessment
<b>Changes applicable to both floors</b>	
Removal of modern (c. 2013) glass partitions, floor finishes, built in furniture and partition walls.	These modern items are of no interest and do not contribute to the significance of the listed building. The removal of these leaves the significance of the building unaffected.
Replacement suspended overhead trays and services.	The replacement of these modern services and trays would not affect anything of significance and have a similar aesthetic to the existing services, leaving the character of the building unaffected.
<b>Fourth Floor</b>	
Replacement kitchenette, built-in seating and counter.	The modern kitchenette, built-in seating and counter do not have any interest and will be replaced by a slightly differently configured and detailed arrangement, which would not materially affect the significance of the building.
Reconfiguration of modern partitions to create a smaller 'comms' room.	This is a minor change to plan form, affecting only modern fabric. This does not affect the significance of the building.
Creation of a larger meeting room to north, with smaller rooms to NE. New partitions and ceiling under the level of the existing trusses.	The proposed partitions would be visible within the larger space, but terminate below the trusses and preserve the overall legibility of the space. It is an entirely reversible change that does not affect the significance or legibility of the building.
Slight enlargement of southern meeting room.	This affects a modern partition and would create a very minor change to the large open space of the rear fourth floor room. This would not materially affect the nature of the space or the significance of the building.
<b>Fifth Floor</b>	
New kitchenette, fitted to modern partition.	This does not affect any historic fabric, and would hardly have any effect on the plan form, leaving the significance of the building unaffected.
New floor boxes.	The floor is not considered to be sensitive, with a new staircase having recently been consented between the fourth and fifth floors. By comparison, the proposed floor boxes are minor elements that would not materially affect the significance of the building.



## **4 CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The parts of the building to which the application relates, Block K, are of low significance and low sensitivity.
- 4.2 The proposed changes are, on the whole, relatively minor; these have been carefully designed and detailed to avoid impacts even to this area of acknowledged low sensitivity. The proposals are also reversible.
- 4.3 Because no harm has been identified, there are no policy conflicts with the London Plan or Camden's Local Plan policies. Neither does the proposal trigger paragraphs 195 or 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposed development also complies with the statutory duties in s.66 of the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act, 1990. It is therefore respectfully submitted that the proposed development should be granted consent.