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Coram's Fields, 93 Guilford St, London WC1N 1DN
178 DOC 02 - Heritage Statement & Impact Assessment

January 2021

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Purpose of this report

This Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment relates to the demolition of an existing park building (known as the Tractor Shed) and construction of a new substation within the footprint of the existing structure, within Coram's Fields, London.

This report seeks to:

- Understand the heritage context of the existing building
- Identify elements of significance
- Outline the design approach to preserving and enhancing these elements
- Evaluate the effect of the proposals on the building's heritage

This document should be read in conjunction with the:

- 178 S1-series (existing) and 178 P1-series (proposed) drawings
- 178 DOC 01 - Design & Access Statement
- 178 DOC 03 - Traffic Management Plan
- 170110-PD-12 Arboricultural Method Statement by Tim Moya Associates

Executive Summary

“Coram’s Fields provides a range of community services for local children and families and as part of this, has for a number of years delivered a large programme of community events aimed at improving community integration and cohesion. These include our annual fireworks display, Play Day Event and the Camden Mela to name a few. In total, over 15,000 people attend community events at Coram’s Fields each year and over 150,000 people visit our park and playground.

In order to maintain our park, playground and facilities and to continue the delivery of our free programme of events for local children, we are reliant on the income that we receive from the hire of our space. For the last ten years, part of this income has included the residency of a corporate marquee that each year, generates around £90K of vital funds for the charity (5% of annual income). To date, the corporate marquee and many of our community events have required the use of diesel generators. The now known implications of diesel on children’s health means that this practice can no longer continue however, without the marquee each year, Coram’s Fields would find itself in a perilous financial position, a position that has been exacerbated by the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic over the last nine months.

As a result, for two years we have been working tirelessly to make Coram’s Fields diesel free, so that the local community can, without compromise, continue to benefit from our unique green space dedicated to local children and young people. Having now secured the funding required to deliver on this ambition, we are now seeking planning permission to construct a new building that will house an electrical sub-station on site. The project will be transformational in every sense and will enable Coram’s Fields to become one of the first green spaces to make such a change.”

Stuart Woods, CEO, Coram’s Fields and the Harmsworth Memorial Playground

1.0 Context

1.1 Site location and history

Coram's Fields is located in the London Borough of Camden, on the north side of Guilford Street in the south of the borough.

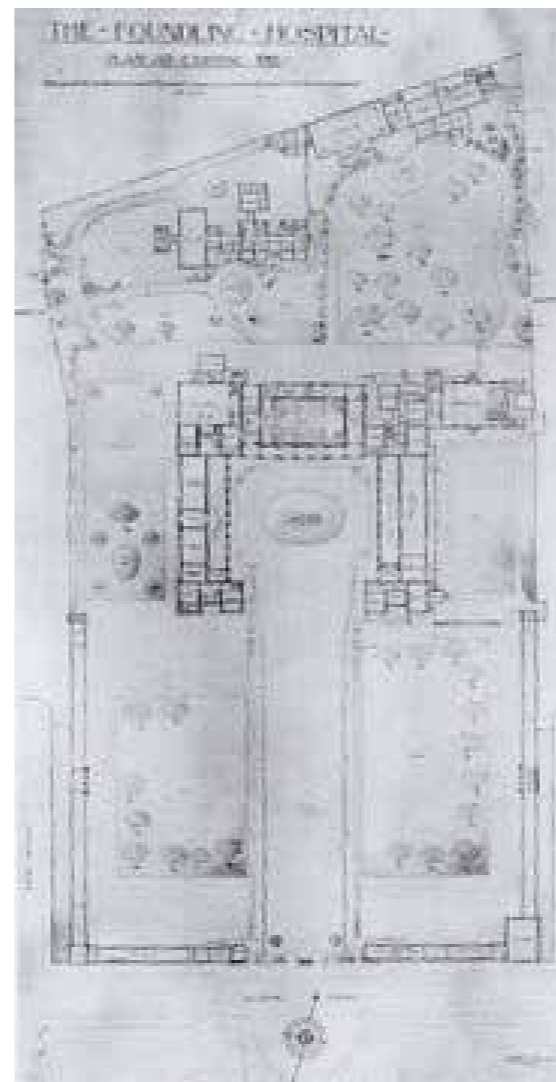
The site as depicted in John Rocque's map of London from 1746, illustrating open land and a carriageway which led to the site of the former burial ground for the church of St George's, Bloomsbury and St George the Martyr.

The site was later home to The Foundling Hospital (designed by Theodore Jacobsen), which was founded in 1739 by the philanthropic sea captain Thomas Coram. The hospital was a children's home established for the "education and maintenance of exposed and deserted young children." The priorities of the Foundling Hospital was children's health, as they combated smallpox, fevers, consumption, dysentery and even infections from everyday activities like teething that drove up mortality rates and risked epidemics. Sites around the hospital were slowly sold off by the hospital for development into housing estates during the late 19th and early 20th century. The hospital remained at the centre of the emerging community which was constructed around its boundary, caring for and raising orphaned children.

The hospital moved in the 1920's to premises outside of the city and hospital building was later demolished in 1926, leaving only the Georgian colonnaded forecourt to the sites southern boundaries, now grade II listed.



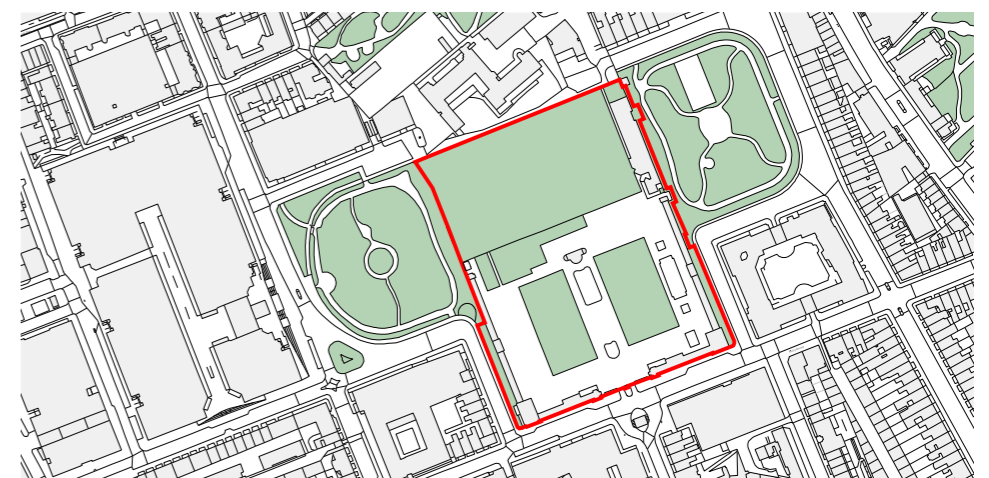
Extract from John Rocque's Map of London, 1746



1912 Site Plan



Coram's Fields 1870 OS Extract - Illustrating the Foundling Hospital



Site Location Plan (present day) - 1:5000

1.0 Context

1.1 Site location and history (cont.)

Today, the site is named Coram's Fields and the Harmsworth Memorial Playground, and is a registered Charity which serves as a safe place for children from local communities to learn and play. A seven acre park and playground, it is today defined by a large open artificial sports pitch to the north and more open and soft landscaped gardens to the south with mature trees edged by the aforementioned Georgian forecourt. It is bound on its eastern and western edges by the public green spaces of Brunswick Square Gardens and Mecklenburgh Square.

The site currently offers a range of children's services, from a pre school nursery, sports development programmes, sports pitches and after school clubs. The charity also hires out its grounds for events which forms a significant part of the annual revenue, allowing for the continued maintenance, upkeep and investment into the ongoing children's services.

The primary function and mission of Coram's Fields has remained unchanged since its inception in 1739, in that it provides a core community service specifically for the health, well being and continued education and care of children within the wider community. Though the forms of service & facility may have changed and adapted over the decades to be more appropriate to the community it serves, the philanthropic nature has remained the same.



Marching on the parade ground, early 1900's.



One of the sites playgrounds today

1.0 Context

1.2 Designations

- Bloomsbury Conservation Area, Sub Area 12

The area is categorised as follows:

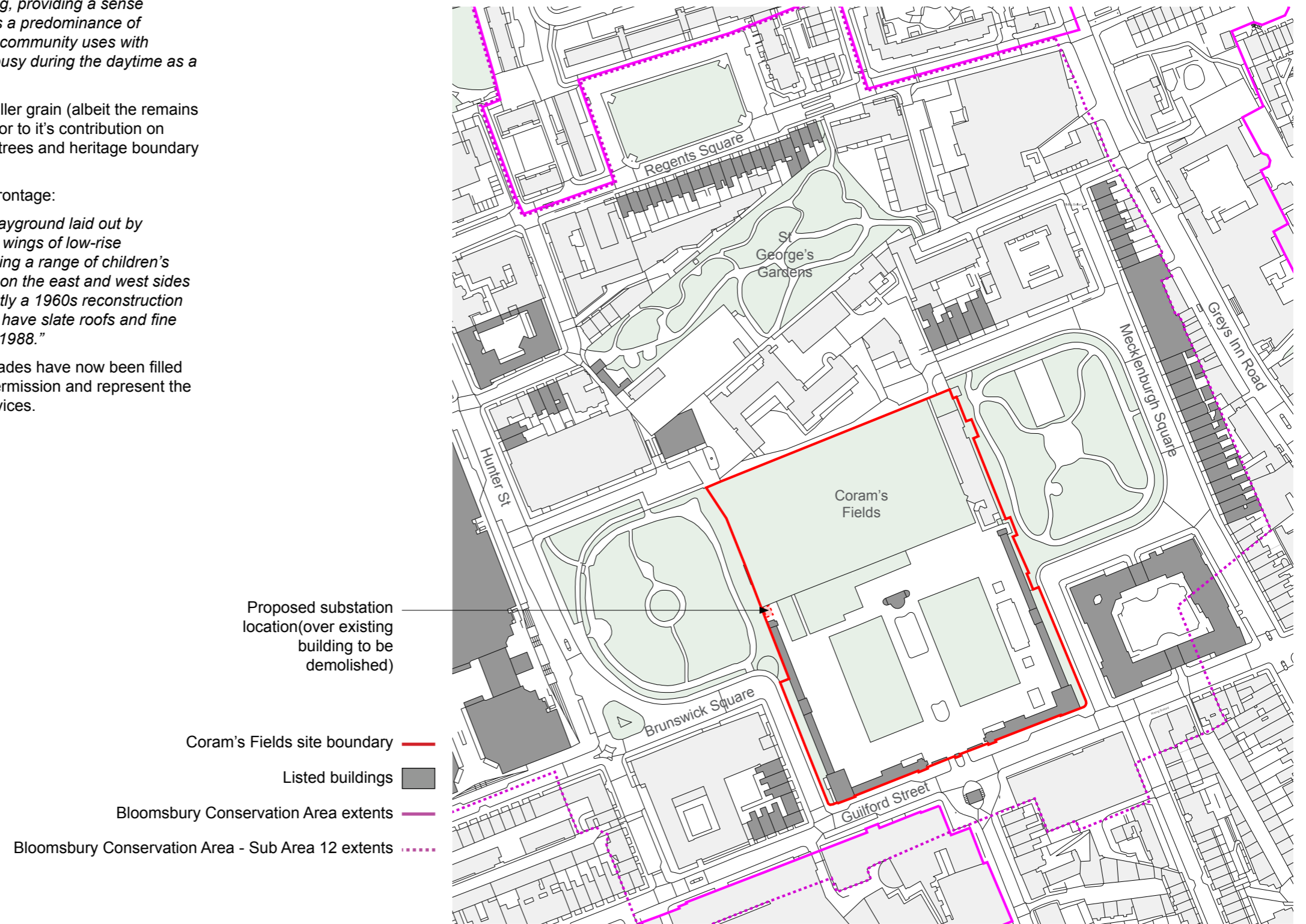
“This sub area is dominated by large-scale, green open spaces of historic significance in and around Coram’s Fields. The spaces act as a green lung, providing a sense of openness which contrasts with surrounding areas. There is a predominance of institutional (hospital, university, education), recreational and community uses with secondary residential and office uses. The area is relatively busy during the daytime as a result of these uses.”

The Georgian forecourt of Coram’s Fields is noted for its smaller grain (albeit the remains of an approach to a grander building). The site is also noted for its contribution on visual amenity through the large green open spaces, mature trees and heritage boundary walls and railings.

The sub area also makes specific note of the Coram’s Field frontage:

“The front boundary treatment to Coram’s Fields children’s playground laid out by the London County Council in 1936 (grade II), comprises two wings of low-rise accommodation which enclose and screen the space containing a range of children’s facilities including a nursery and small farm. The colonnades on the east and west sides are 18th century survivals, whereas the front entrance is mostly a 1960s reconstruction by G Bryant Hobbs. They are finished in a stucco render and have slate roofs and fine joinery details. They were restored by English Heritage circa 1988.”

Though noted for its importance, many of the original colonnades have now been filled in. The animal pens and small farm were granted planning permission and represent the sites continued commitment to community and children’s services.



Conservation Areas & Listed Buildings Plan - 1:2500

1.0 Context

1.3 Existing heritage listings

Historic England listings associated with Coram's Fields as follows:

1. Listed Buildings

01 (Ref 1271627) - Grade II

Coram's Field Playground, Former Foundling Hospital and Gates And Railings, Guilford St
-Forecourt buildings, gates & railings to the former Foundling Hospital

02 (Ref 1271629) - Grade II

Coram's Fields Playground Memorial Pavilion, Guilford Street
- Memorial pavilion forming a playground shelter. 1936. By LH Bucknell, built in memory of Harold Vyvyan and Vere Harmsworth. Brick and render with copper roofs.

03 (Ref 1271632) - Grade II

-Gates And Railings On East Side Of Forecourt To Former Foundling Hospital
-Pedestrian gates and railings. C20. Cast-iron. Railings with urn finials

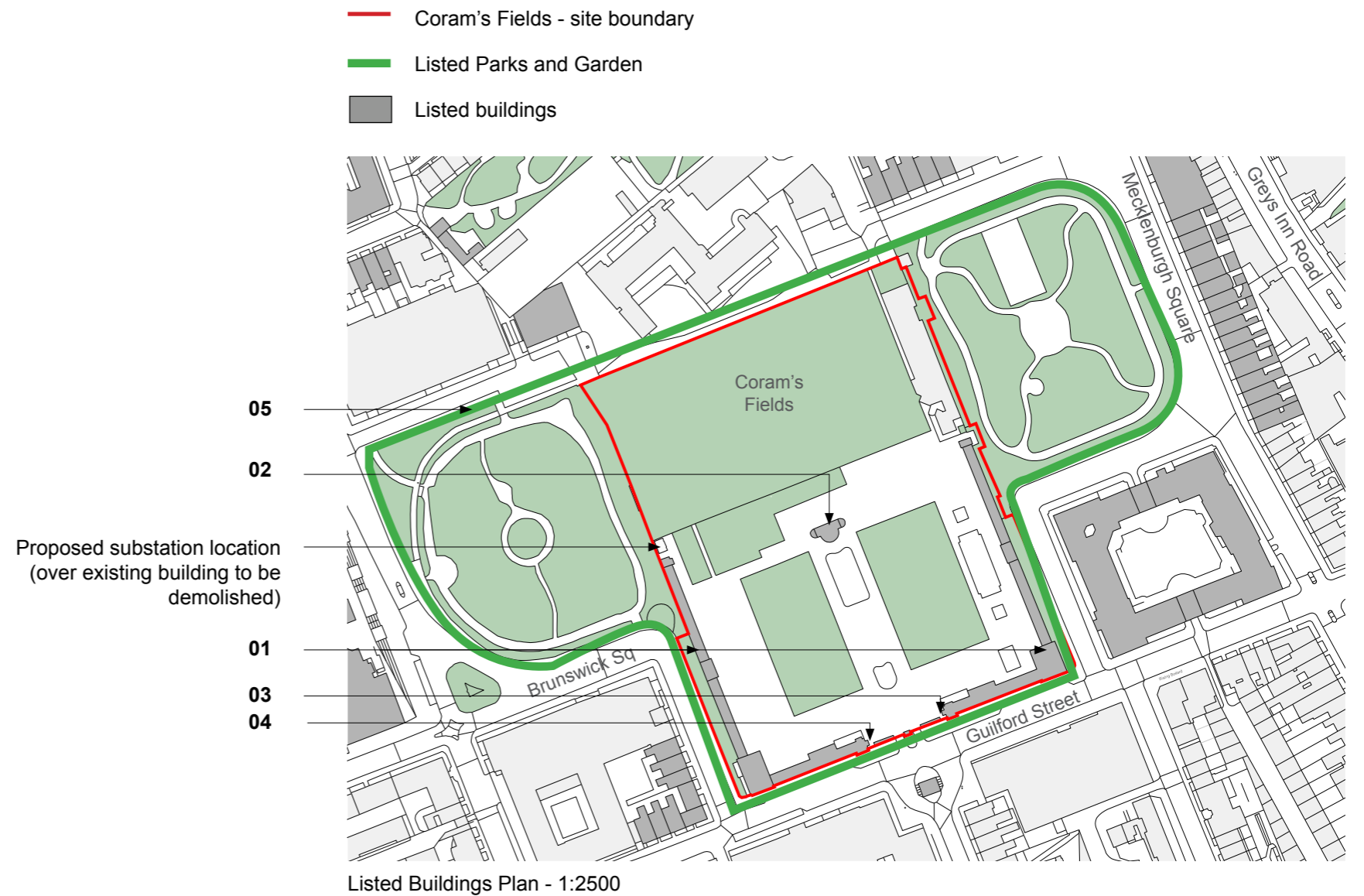
04 (Ref 1378645) - Grade II

-Gates And Railings on West Side of Forecourt to Former Foundling Hospital, Guilford St
-Pedestrian gates and railings. C20. Cast-iron. Railings with urn finials.

2. Parks & Gardens

05 (Ref 1000212)

Coram's Fields, with Mecklenburgh And Brunswick Squares
Mid C18 children's gardens, symmetrically flanked by an C18 and an early C19 squares, designed to preserve the surroundings of the Coram's Fields gardens.



1.0 Context

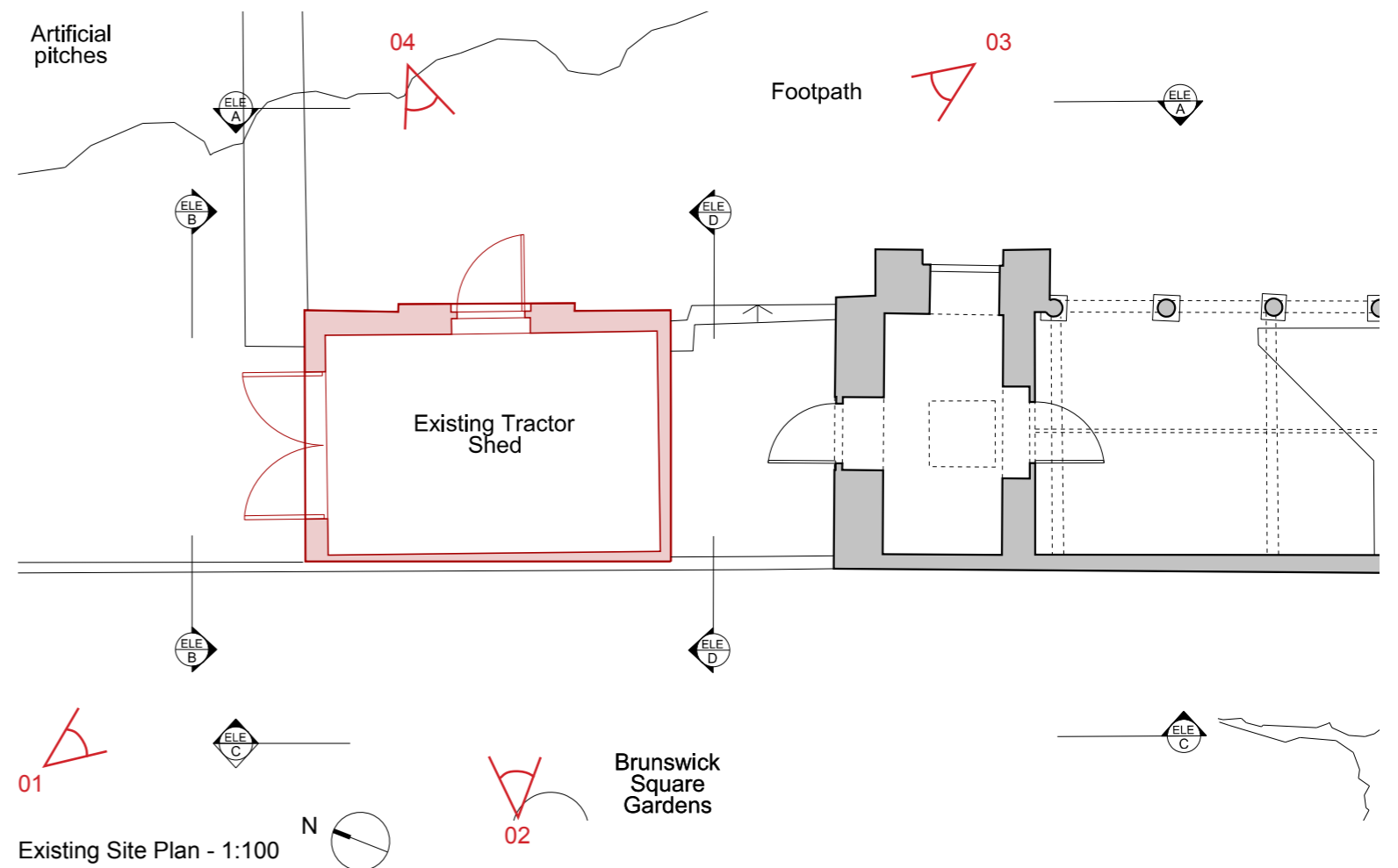
1.4 Existing structure (Tractor Shed)

The existing tractor shed is located on the northern gable end of the western Georgian colonnaded forecourt buildings. It's used for storage of maintenance vehicles for the site artificial pitches and has one pedestrian doorway on its western elevation and large double leaf doors for access onto the pitches on its northern side. Planning permission was granted for the structure in 1999 for 'a small store building at the northern end of the west colonnade building (application no. PS9805049R1).

The building is constructed from concrete block-work and render, white painted. Some extruded horizontal banding has been expressed in the render to mirror the detailing within the Georgian forecourt building. There are no windows and the only openings are wooden boarded doors. The roof is timber construction, with slate tiles and boxed eaves which have a wide overhang to replicate existing buildings to the south.

Entry is flush into the shed from the site, but the building site approximately 800mm lower than the adjacent Brunswick Gardens. The level discrepancy is retained with a red brick retaining wall, concrete coping and black railings. There is one very large mature London Plane tree several metres from the building in Brunswick Gardens.

The Tractor Shed forms a far more basic utilitarian structure on site and is not part of the original formal architectural forecourt arrangement. Its roof structure has in part fallen away and the building is in a poor state of repair. Whilst the design of the structure in part fits in with the existing collection of heritage buildings, the lacks of windows, the boxed eaves and the plain boarded door are unsympathetic details against the adjacent heritage assets.



View 01 - from Brunswick Square Gardens



View 02 - from Brunswick Square Gardens



View 03



View 04

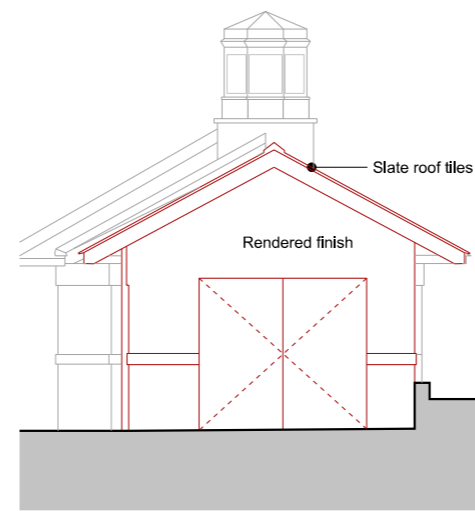
1.0 Context

1.4 Existing structure (Tractor Shed)

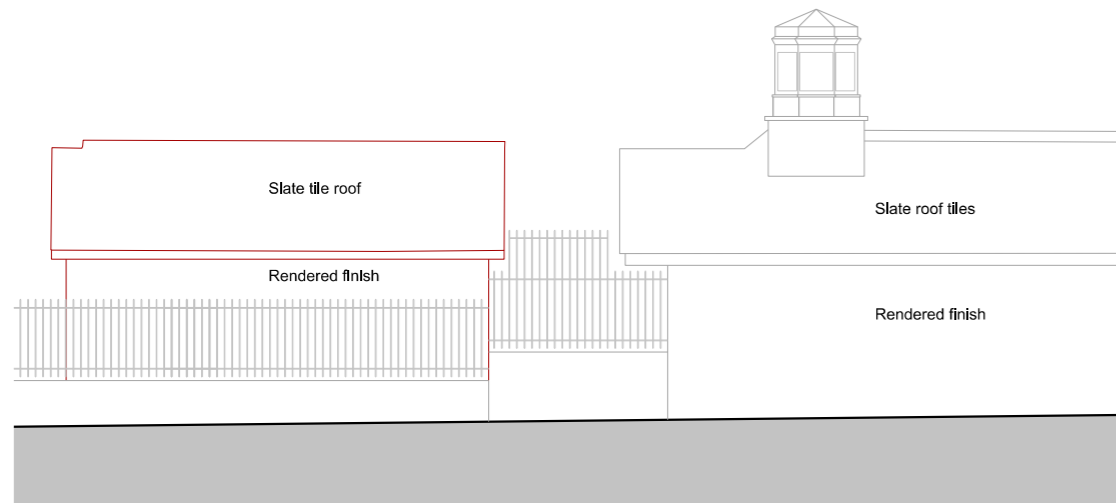
Existing Elevations @ 1:100



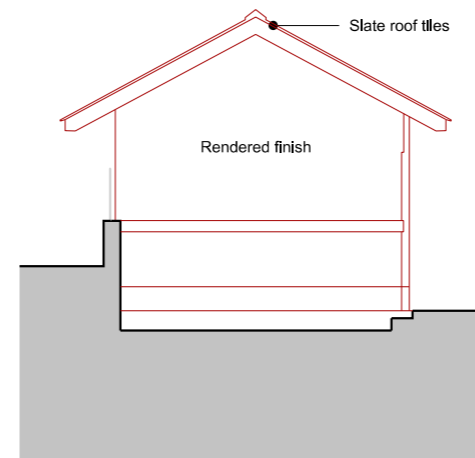
Existing West Elevation A-A



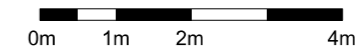
Existing North Elevation B-B



Existing East Elevation C-C



Existing South Elevation D-D



1.0 Context

1.5 Proposed substation

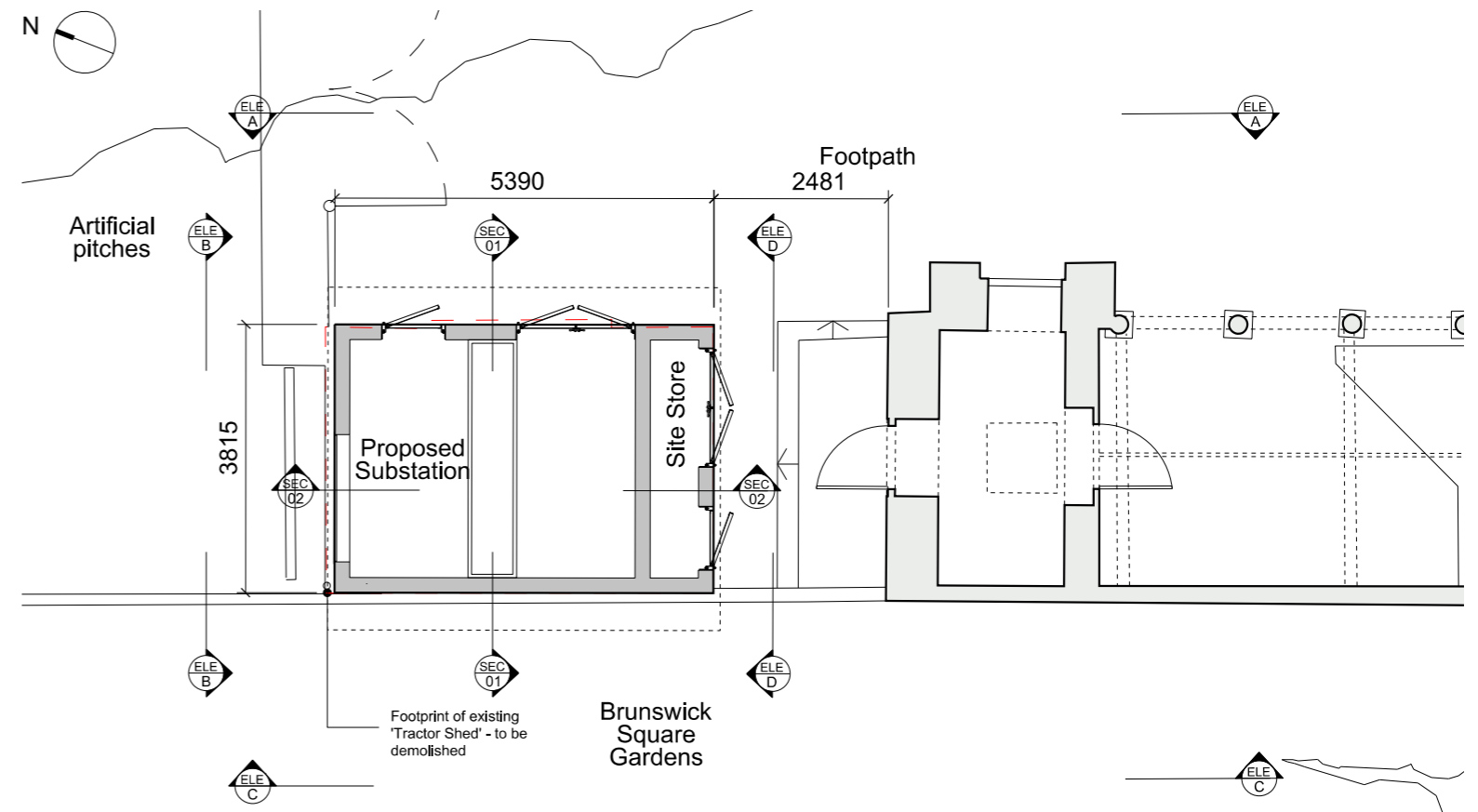
It is proposed to demolish the existing tractor shed and construct a new building within the footprint of the existing, to house a new site substation.

Existing building: 5.5 x 3.8m / 16.6m² GIA
 Proposed substation: 5.3 x 3.8m / 16.5m² GIA

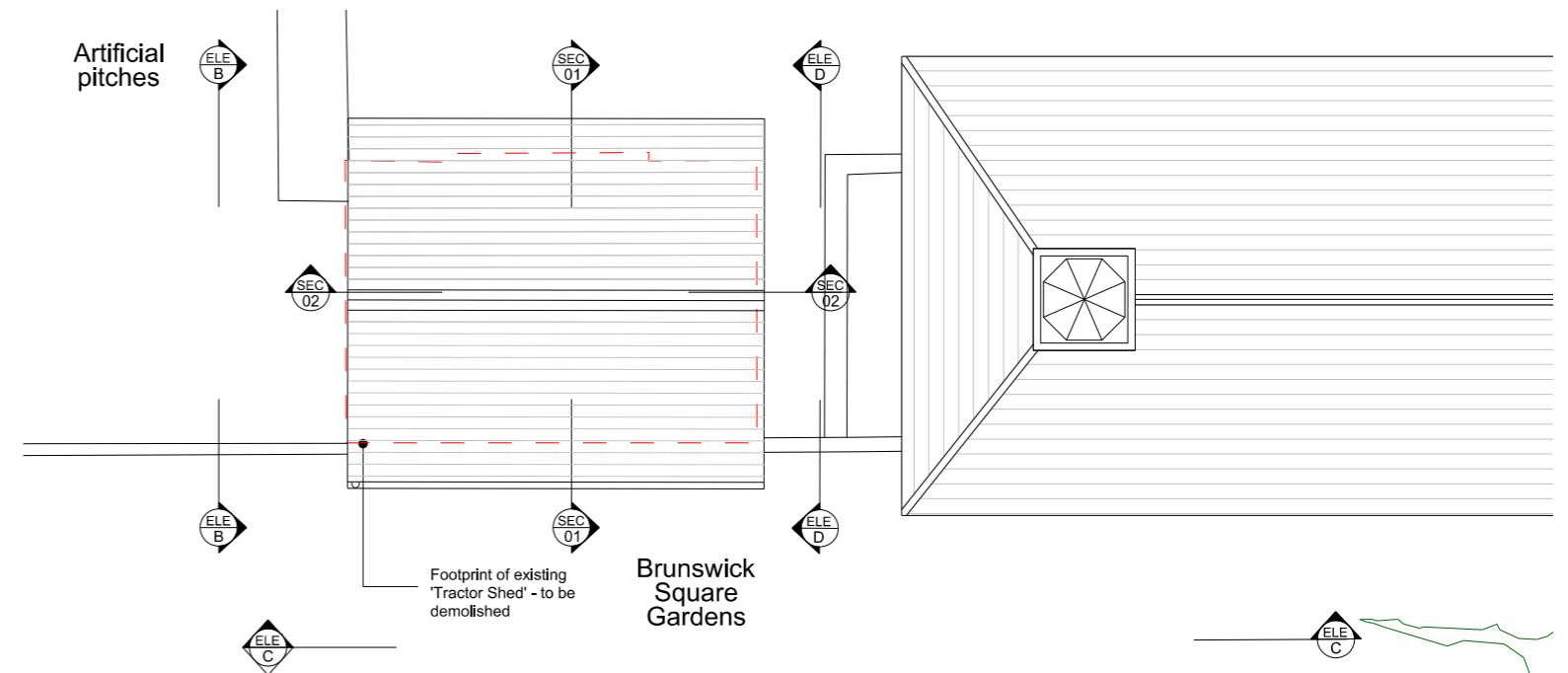
The purpose of the new substation is to provide much needed power provision to both existing site services and the annual programme of events and hires for which the site is leased out for. This site hire programme is one of the charities largest revenue streams allowing for the existing childcare provision, site maintenance and programme of community events to continue. With this new substation those events can be supported into the future.

The new building is sized to meet requirements as dictated by UKPN. This includes a clear internal height of 2.5m. In order for the proposed roof ridge to be the same as the main adjacent existing forecourt buildings and maintain a 2.5m internal head height, the proposed eaves will not be able to project / overhang as either the existing structure of those existing listed buildings.

The substation will be brick construction with white render over a new concrete slab. The slab design will include a trench for the incoming high voltage cables which will be routed from an existing connection on Brunswick Square. The new roof will be slate tiled salvaging those existing tiles from the existing structure for reuse. The substation will have louvred single and double leaf door openings on its western elevation and a smaller louvred window opening on its northern elevation for ventilation. The southern side of the substation includes for a small site store with single and double leaf door openings. All louvred openings will be white painted.



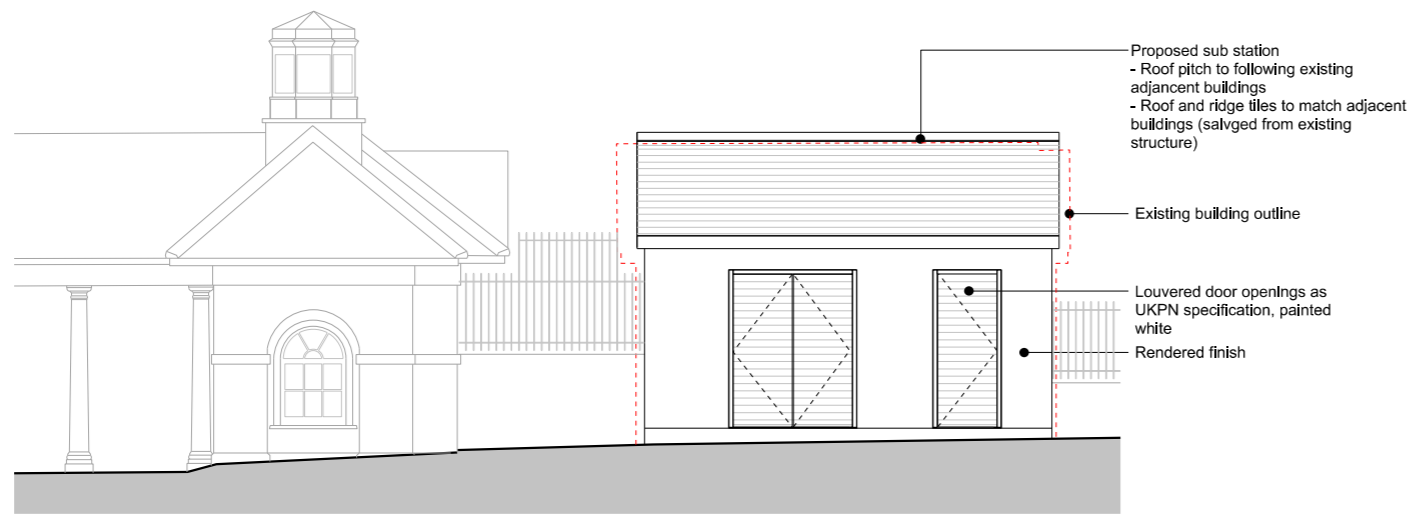
Proposed Site Plan - 1:100



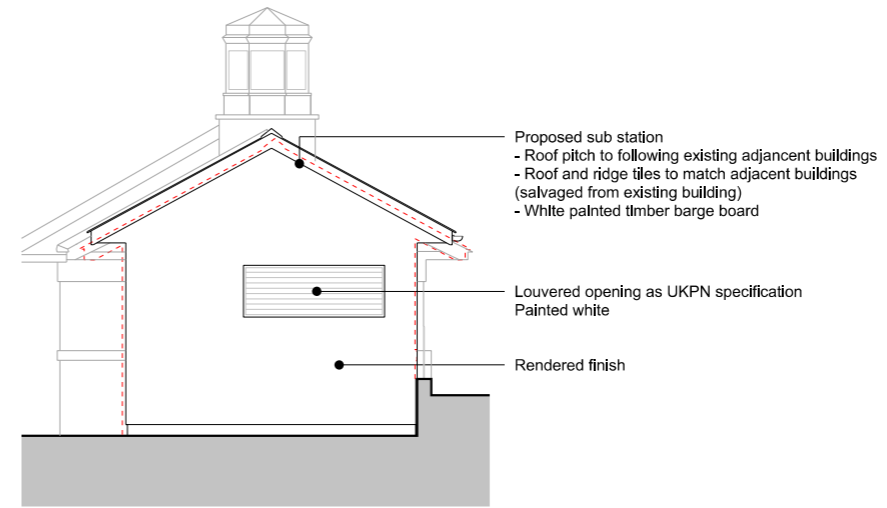
Proposed Roof Plan - 1:100

1.0 Context

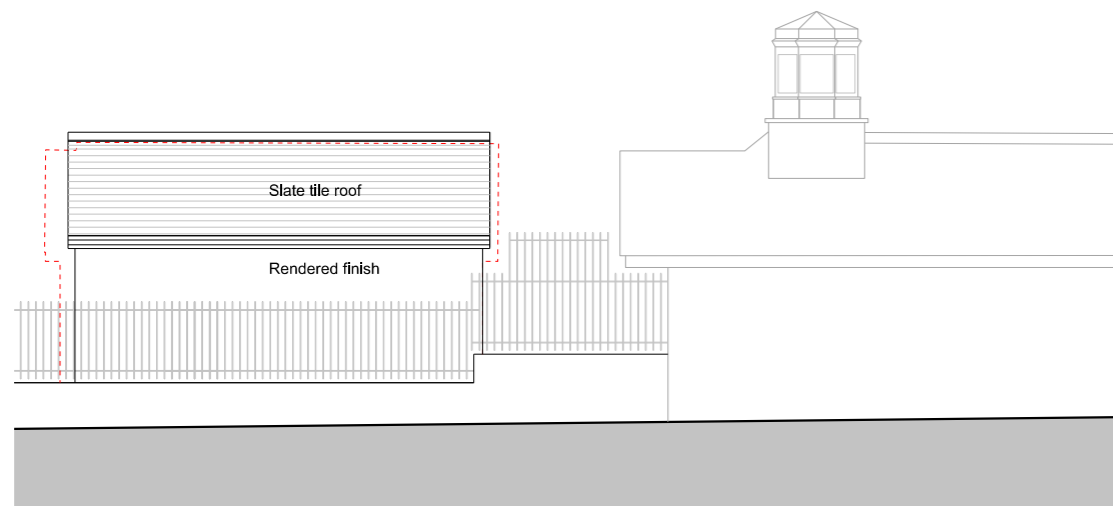
1.5 Proposed substation (cont.)



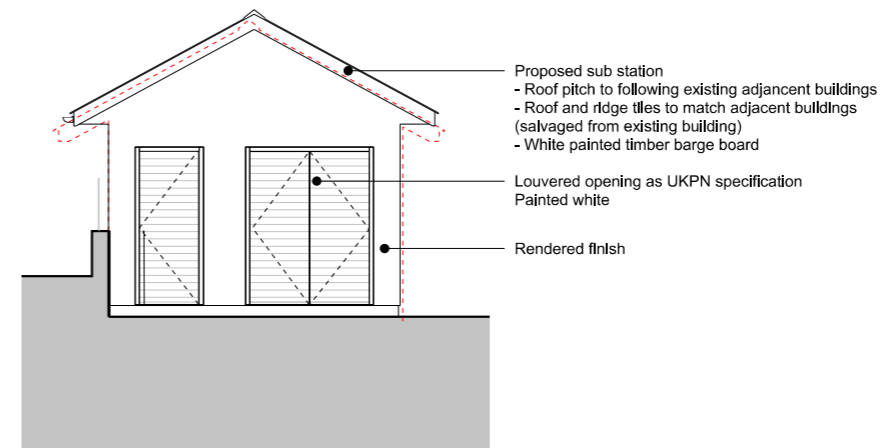
Proposed West Elevation A-A



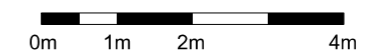
Proposed North Elevation B-B



Proposed East Elevation C-C



Proposed South Elevation D-D



2.0 Statement of Significance

This section assesses the 'significance' of the existing Tractor Shed in Coram's Fields National Planning Policy Framework defines significance as:

'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from heritage assets physical presence, but also from its setting.'

English Heritage's Conservation Principles - Evidence, Historical, Aesthetic and Communal - provides a framework to evaluate the value of a heritage asset. The significance values are rated from the most important (high) to the least (neutral) and damaging (intrusive) - see table adjacent.

Conservation principles and guidance

English Heritage set out their conservation principles, which they believe contribute to the 'significance' of a heritage asset under the following four headings:

Evidence Value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

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

Aesthetic Value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

Communal value: the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

2.1 Architectural significance

The Tractor Shed does not form part of the original overall architectural assemble of the Georgian Forecourt. It has been constructed in part sympathetically to its context with the use of slate tiled roof and white rendered finish, in order that its material aesthetic is seen to 'tie in' with those more significant historical buildings which surround it. In doing so, it does not fully distract from setting of the listed buildings but forms part of their overall placement.

As the existing shed is also slightly set away from the existing listed buildings and the pavilion which forms the end of the colonnaded structure (by approximately 2.4m), it does not distract fully from their reading as separate buildings.

The structure provides a much needed storage facility for site vehicles and therefore contributes to the important upkeep of this community facility.

Whilst the architectural significance of this single building is low, it forms an important management facility and position for a site structure to facilitate the ongoing maintenance of the site and work of the charity.

Evidence Value	= neutral
Aesthetic Value	= neutral
Aesthetic Value	= neutral
Communal Value	= Medium

2.2 Parks & Gardens significance

Coram's Fields, with Mecklenburgh And Brunswick Squares, forms a largely symmetrical 18th century children's garden. The basic layout of the gardens is much as it was established in the mid 18th century, including the central pavilion, rectangular paddling pool, shrubberies and scattered mature trees, other than the artificial all weather sports pitch to the north which is sited over the existing demolished Foundling Hospital site.

The Tractor Shed forms a small outbuilding on the sites eastern boundary. Given it's proximity to the earlier adjacent listed buildings, it largely reads as part of the forecourt colonnade and pavilion ensemble given its white render and slate tile roof. On entering the site, it is mostly screened by existing trees.

Given its position and aesthetic, the structure does not distract from the overall value of the listed status of Coram's Fields as a Park & Garden. The building is not an original feature of the Gardens as originally laid out.

Evidence Value	= neutral
Aesthetic Value	= neutral
Aesthetic Value	= neutral
Communal Value	= Medium

3.0 Heritage Impact Assessment

3.1 Assessment criteria

This section will assess the impact of the proposed alterations to Coram's Fields and its setting. This assessment is based on the research and information gathered in this report.

The heritage impact is measure according to the table, below, produced by Historic England.

Magnitude Of Impact

High beneficial	The alterations considerably enhance the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate its significance values.
Medium beneficial	The alterations enhance to a clearly discernible extent the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate its significance values.
Low beneficial	The alterations enhance to a minor extent the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate its significance values.
Imperceptible/None	The alterations does not affect the heritage assets in the view or the ability to appreciate its significance values.
Low adverse	The alterations harm to a minor extent the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate its significance values.
Medium Adverse	The alterations harm to a clearly discernible extent the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate its significance values.
High Adverse.	The alterations severely harm to a minor extent the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate its significance values.

3.2 Summary of proposals

The proposal is for a new substation on the site as detailed on section 1.5. This new provision is to aid in the ongoing income streams and community events programme associated with Coram's Fields.

The sub station will result in the loss of an existing late 20th century structure used as a maintenance store. The new substation will be constructed to meet UKPN design criteria, adapted as follows:

- A brick construction which will be white rendered to match those existing adjacent structures.
- Overall height increased (from existing structure) in order the proposed ridge line and roof pitch aligns with the adjacent existing structures to add continuity.
- Louvred frames in openings will be painted white to aid in receding there visual impact.
- Boxed eaves and barge boards painted white.
- Slate roof tiles salvaged from existing building.
- A proposed footprint which does not exceed the existing structure.
- Retention of the existing red brick boundary wall and railings with aim to retain the existing wider park aesthetic.

3.0 Heritage Impact Assessment

3.3 Impact of proposals

Proposed Works	Significance on the historic fabric / area / site that will be affected	Assessed Impact
Provision of new sub station to facilitate events and charity revenue	The overall provision of the substation will have positive effects on the running, management and income for the charity, which in turn, will allow the more communal activities and public services to thrive. Given the site was established as a site for community benefit, the change is one in line with the founding principles of Coram's Fields.	High Beneficial
Demolition / loss of an existing structure on site	The existing structure does not form part of any listing other than its existence within the curtilage of a listed building, location with the listed Parks & Garden and Conservation Area. Given the existing structure will be replaced with a new building, the change is not significant.	Imperceptible/None
Footprint / size of proposed sub station	The new structure will not exceed the footprint of the existing building (from 16.6 m2 existing GIA to 16.5 m2 proposed GIA). It's overall dimensions are marginally smaller than existing (proposed 5.3 x 3.8m against the existing building of 5.5 x 3.8m). Its position will maintain the existing gap to the listed building (2.4m), therefore the change is minimal as reviewed against the existing condition. The minor reduction in building length of the principle elevation reduces impact against the existing listed buildings.	Low beneficial
Height / scale of sub station	The new substation ridge line will match those on the adjacent existing listed building, providing a continuous horizontal alignment.	Imperceptible/None
Rendered brick walls	The white render will allow for the proposed substation to tie in with the existing heritage aesthetic.	Imperceptible/None
Louvred openings	UKPN requirements are for louvred openings to allow for free ventilation. The louvre aesthetic is a new material proposal within the heritage setting. Attempts should be made to reduce their visual impact through application of colour etc, and minimising extent as far as possible.	Low adverse
Roof pitch and materials	The proposed pitch angle has been designed to follow those of the adjacent existing listed structures (the existing pitch & ridge height is different from the adjacent buildings). Existing slate roof tiles will be reused.	Low beneficial
Eaves	Due to design constraints, the proposed eaves will not overhang to mimic those on the adjacent listed building. There will therefore be a low adverse effect on the continuity of the adjacent heritage buildings.	Low adverse

3.0 Heritage Impact Assessment

3.4 Impact on existing trees

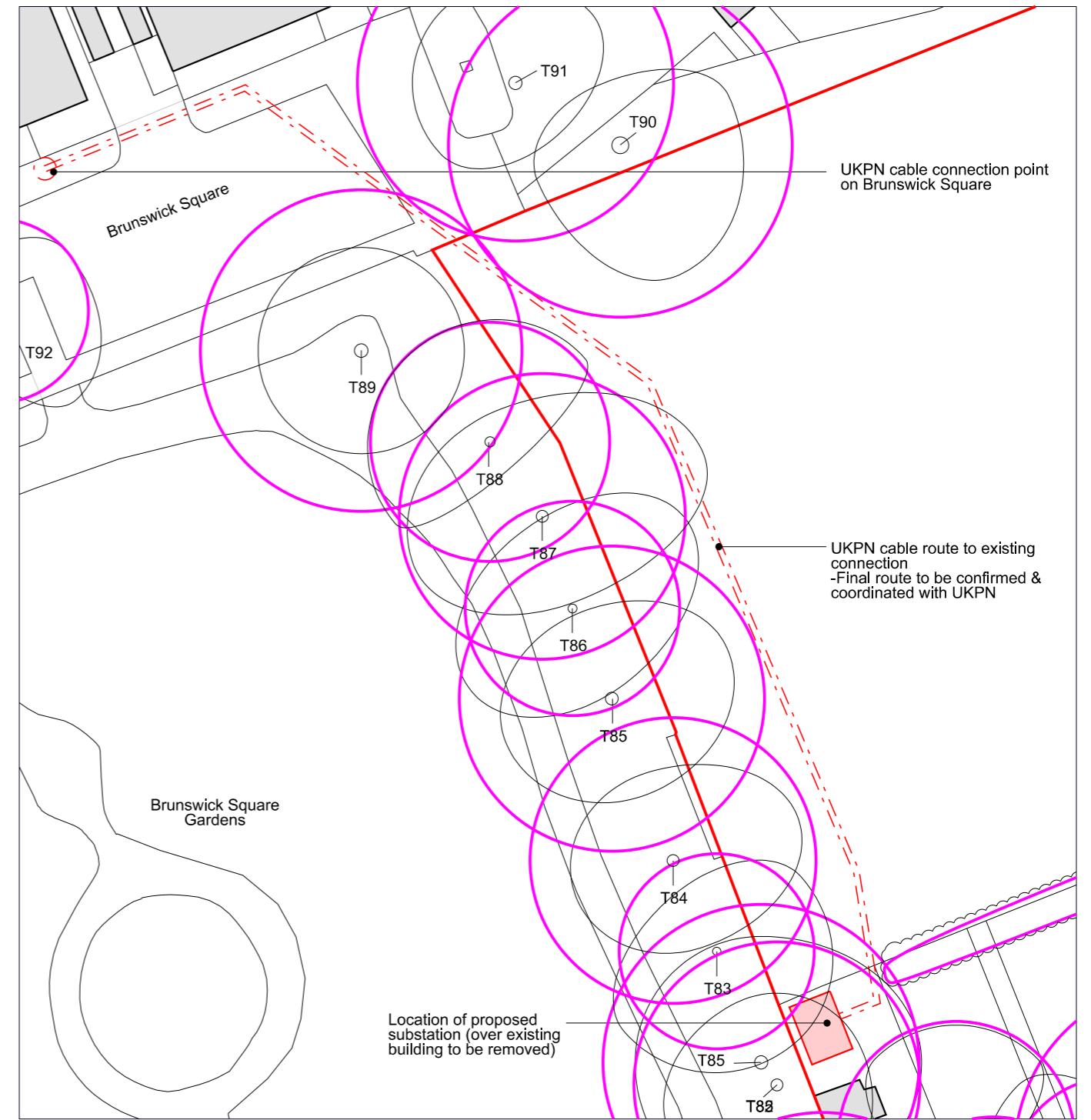
Although the proposed building will be positioned over an existing structure, the substation will require a new ground bearing slab and trench to receive incoming cables. The footprint of the proposed substation lies within the RPA of T85, an existing Grade A London Plane.

It is expected that no roots from T85 will be present under the existing tractor shed that would impede the deeper excavations for the new substation, though careful excavations in line with the Arboricultural Report will be expected.





The proposed cable route has been aligned to run outside of any RPA of existing trees.

In line with Arboricultural Report, tree protection fencing will be used to provide avoid any damage to root areas during construction.

For fuller details refer to the submitted Tree Report.



Root Protection Area Plan 1:500

- | | |
|---|--|
|  Site boundary |  Proposed substation |
|  Cable route |  Root protection areas to existing trees / hedges |

5.0 Conclusion

The existing structure (the Tractor Shed) is of a low significance from a heritage perspective, therefore its loss can be seen as a low beneficial status.

Although some minor elements of the new structure (substation) have a low adverse effect on the heritage setting (predominately the louvred doors and openings), the new structure is similar in scale to the existing building with a minimally reduced length, slightly reducing the visual impact of the principle elevation against the existing heritage buildings. The new substation will be of no greater harm to either the context of the listed buildings or wider Park & Garden setting than the existing structure.

The impact of the proposed building should also be assessed against it's social context and primary function, to provide the site with a new power supply to aid in the continued use of the site for functions in the private & public sector. As noted within the Impacts Table under 3.3 of this report, the social impact of the proposal is of a highly beneficial status, in that it secures crucial income for the sites continued management as a place for children within the community to use. This prime benefit is in direct alignment with the sites historical evolution and original intent.

It should therefore be viewed that the proposed substation should be supported and approved to facilitate the continued philanthropic running of Coram's Fields as a primary service for local children and youth groups.