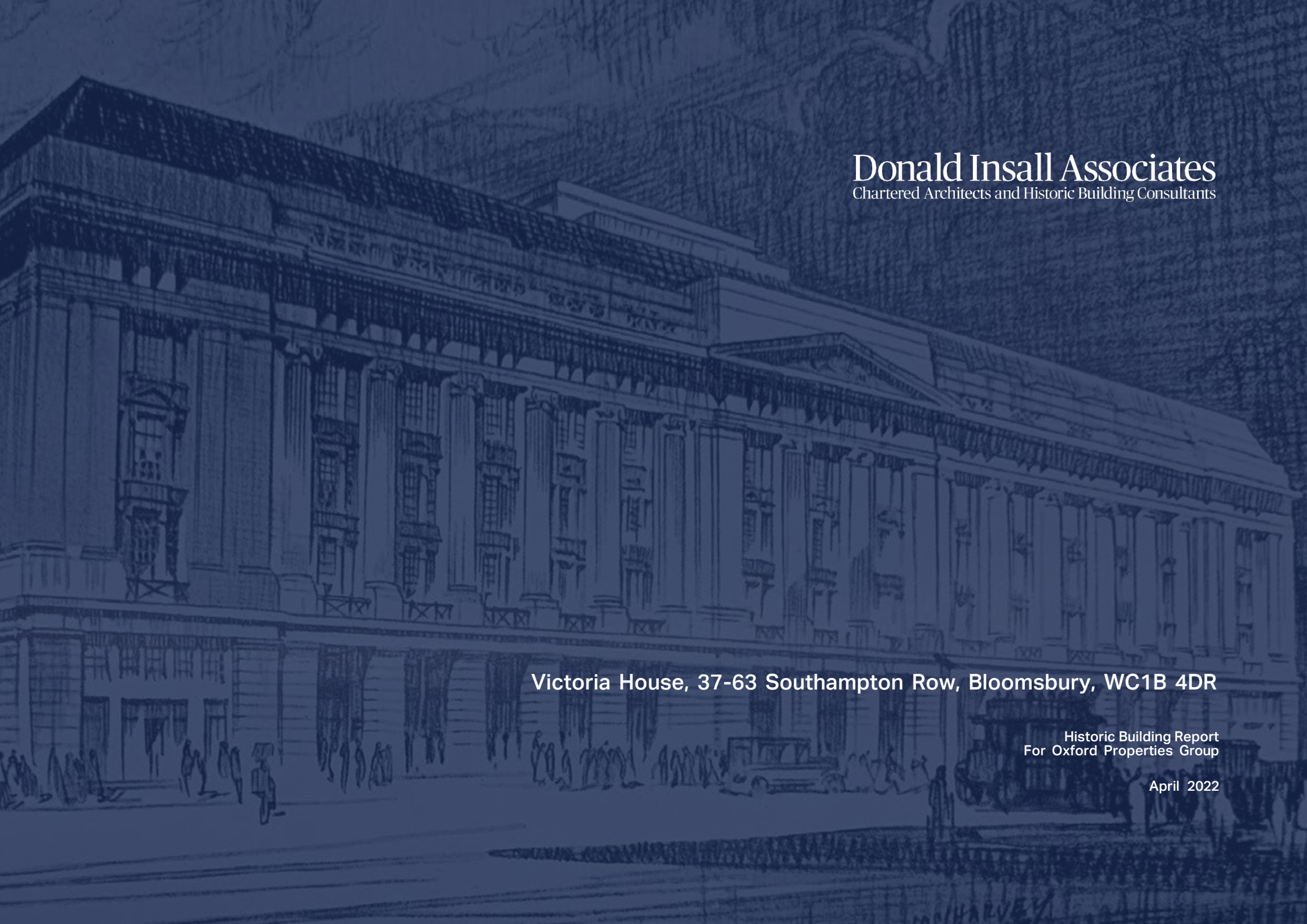

Donald Insall Associates
Chartered Architects and Historic Building Consultants

Victoria House, 37-63 Southampton Row, Bloomsbury, WC1B 4DR

Historic Building Report
For Oxford Properties Group

April 2022

Contact Information

Cordula Zeidler IHBC (Director)
E: cordula.zeidler@insall-architects.co.uk
T: 020 7245 9888

London Office
12 Devonshire Street
London, W1G 7AB
www.donaldinsallassociates.co.uk

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Contents

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1.0 Summary of Historic Building Report: Investigative Works

1.1 Introduction

Donald Insall Associates was commissioned by Oxford Properties Group in September 2021 to assist them in the development of proposals for Victoria House, 37-63 Southampton Row, Bloomsbury, WC1B 4DR, to designs by Corstorphine and Wright Architects. The investigation has comprised historical research, using both archival and secondary material, and a site inspection. A brief illustrated history of the site and building, with sources of reference and bibliography, is in Section 2; the site survey findings are in Section 3. The investigation has established the significance of the building, which is set out in Section 1.3 below and in Section 4. The specific constraints for this building are summarised below.

1.2 The Building, its Legal Status and Policy Context

Victoria House is a Grade II-listed building located in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area in the London Borough of Camden

Alterations to a listed building generally require listed building consent; development in conservation areas or within the setting of a listed building or conservation area requires local authorities to assess the implications of proposals on built heritage. The statutory list description of the listed building is included in Appendix I and a summary of guidance on the Bloomsbury Conservation Area provided by the local planning authority is in Appendix II, along with extracts from the relevant legislation and planning policy documents.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision-making on applications that relate to the historic environment. Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Act impose statutory duties upon local planning authorities which, with regard to listed buildings, require the planning authority to have *'special regard to the desirability* of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses' and, in respect of conservation areas, that '*special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area*'.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan applicable to the site comprises the Camden Local Plan (2017) and The London Plan (March 2021).

The Camden Local Plan has policies that deal with development affecting the historic environment, such as Policy D2: Heritage, which states that '*The Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings...*'.

Policy HC1 Heritage Conservation and Growth of The London Plan (March 2021) stipulates that *'(C) Development proposals affecting heritage assets,and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings.... Development proposals should avoid harm and identify enhancement opportunities by integrating heritage considerations early on in the design process.*'

The courts have held that following the approach set out in the policies on the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 will effectively result in a decision-maker complying with its statutory duties. The Framework forms a material consideration for the purposes of section 38(6).

At the heart of the Framework is *'a presumption in favour of sustainable development'* and there are also specific policies relating to the historic environment. The Framework states that heritage assets are *'an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations'.*

The Framework, in paragraph 194, states that:

> *In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to 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.*

Section 4 of this report – the assessment of significance – meets this requirement and is based on the research and site surveys presented in sections 2 and 3, which are of a sufficient level of detail to understand the potential impact of any proposals. Section 5 explains the proposals and their impact.

1.3 Summary Assessment of Significance

A detailed assessment of significance with guidance on the relative significance of elements of fabric and plan form and the extent to which these elements are sensitive to alteration is included in **Section 4** of this report. The following paragraphs are a summary explaining why the listed building and conservation area are considered of nationally –important architectural and historical interest.

Victoria House is of special interest as a Grade II listed inter-war office building for its intact and richly detailed main exterior with classically inspired and detailed Beaux-Arts elevations and applied sculpture, and its sumptuous surviving interiors, namely its entrance halls, staircases and panelled directors' suite of offices which all reflect the considerable standing of the Liverpool and Victoria Friendly Society who commissioned and partly occupied this building. Little is known about its architect, Charles William Long, but the quality of the design including its composition, and the quality of craftsmanship in the surviving original spaces are high.

Victoria House was remodelled several times in the late-20th and early-21st century, and now has vast areas of open-plan office space, a visible modern roof extension and modern shops on Southampton Way, as well as plain basement areas, and none of these elements are of special interest. Insertions by Alsop Architects of the early-21st century into the building's two atria are sculptural and typical for Alsop's work, and may be seen in time to have more significance in their own right than would be attributed to them today.

The significance of the relevant part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area lies in its planned layout of streets and squares, and its surviving historic building stock; this includes Georgian terraces which are largely listed, and the best later buildings, including Victoria House and Lutyens' British Medical Association, also listed. The site is in the setting of listed buildings and listed structures, their significance varies, and includes Georgian town houses and later buildings, predominantly listed for their architectural interest.

2.0 Historical Background

2.1 The Development of Bloomsbury

The development of Bloomsbury was a result of London's early expansion northwards. Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the Manor of Bloomsbury had been assigned to Thomas Wriothesley, 1st Earl of Southampton, in 1550. In 1640, the 4th Earl of Southampton obtained a royal license to build his residence. However, development was delayed by the outbreak of the Civil War, as shown in Fairthorne and Newcourt's map of 1658 **[Plate 2.1]**. Widespread development only commenced following the Restoration, when in 1661 the 4th Earl of Southampton was granted a building license for the construction of Southampton Square (now Bloomsbury Square). This was one of the first London squares to be built and the Earl's own house, Southampton House, was erected on the north side **[Plate 2.2]**. The other sides were lined with typical terraced houses of the time, which were initially occupied by members of the aristocracy and gentry.

Development continued when the estate passed to the Russell family (the Dukes of Bedford) after the 4th Earl's daughter married William Russell in 1669. Southampton House became Bedford House and other notable developments of this period included the formation of Great Russell Street and Southampton Row (c.1670), and the construction of Montague House, which became the home of the British Museum in 1759. Smaller houses for artisans and workmen were provided in the hinterland along with a market to the south-east of the church (around Barter Street), although this was less successful than the earlier Covent Garden and was subsequently abandoned. East of Southampton Row, both Red Lion Square and Queen Square were built from the late 1680s by speculator Nicholas Barbon. By the end of the 18th century, Richard Horwood's *Map of London, Westminster and Southwark*, 1792-9, shows that the street pattern, comprising wide streets and grand squares, extended northwards from Great Russell Street in two prongs along Tottenham Court Road to the west and Lambs Conduit Street to the east **[Plate 2.3]**. In between, the land to the rear of Bedford House and the British Museum remained open fields, bordered on the east side by Southampton Row and King Street.

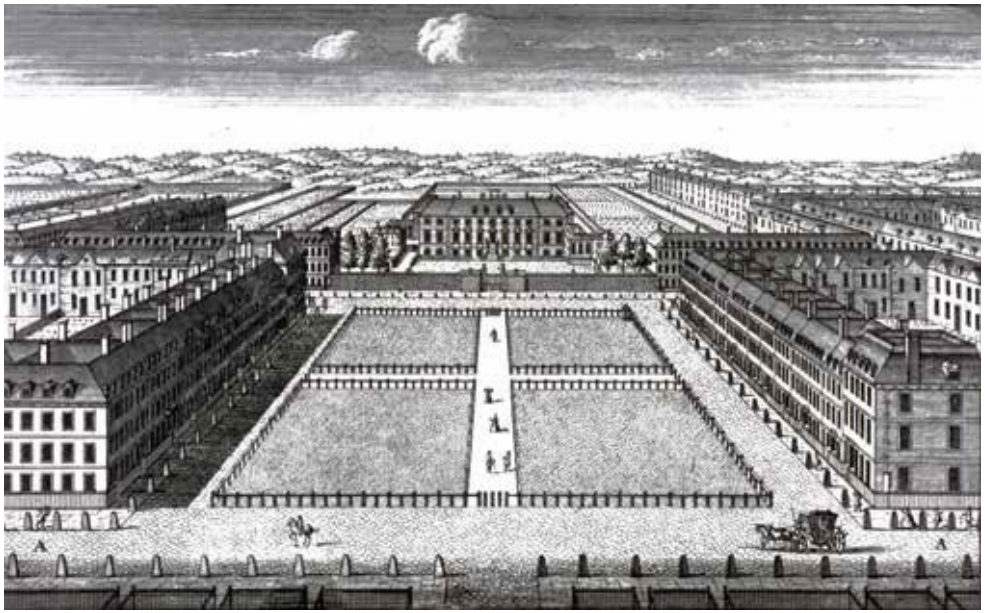
Later expansion in Bloomsbury focussed on providing grander residential neighbourhoods for the upper middle-classes and was carried out speculatively by different builders, on leases obtained from major landowners.[1] In 1800, Francis Russell, the 5th Duke of Bedford, demolished Bedford House and redeveloped the site and gardens along with his landholdings to the north. The redevelopment of the Bedford Estate was carried out during the first half of the 19th century. Bedford House was replaced by Bedford Place, a thoroughfare running north from Bloomsbury Square to Russell Square, a large garden square enclosed on all sides by fine terraced houses built between 1801 and 1804 to the designs of James Burton. Russell Square formed the centrepiece of the Duke of Bedford's redevelopment. He subsequently commissioned the renowned landscape gardener, Humphrey Repton, to design the gardens. By the time of the 1880-82 Ordnance Survey map, Bloomsbury's formal grid pattern of streets and garden squares had been extended to Euston Road **[Plate 2.4]**.

During the latter half of the 19th century, the unlawful conversion of large townhouses into various commercial uses became endemic to such an extent that by 1892 the steward of the Bedford Estate had come to regard whole streets, such as Montague Place, as a lost cause.[2] Three major railway stations, London Euston (1837), Euston Square (1863), and Russell Square (1906), were built around the edge of Bloomsbury and the removal of the gates and lodges surrounding the Bedford Estate in the 1890s subsequently opened the area up to a steady flow of pedestrians and traffic. With the decline in demand for residential properties, and the advent of the railways, large-scale hotel, educational and office redevelopments began to appear by the turn of the 20th century.

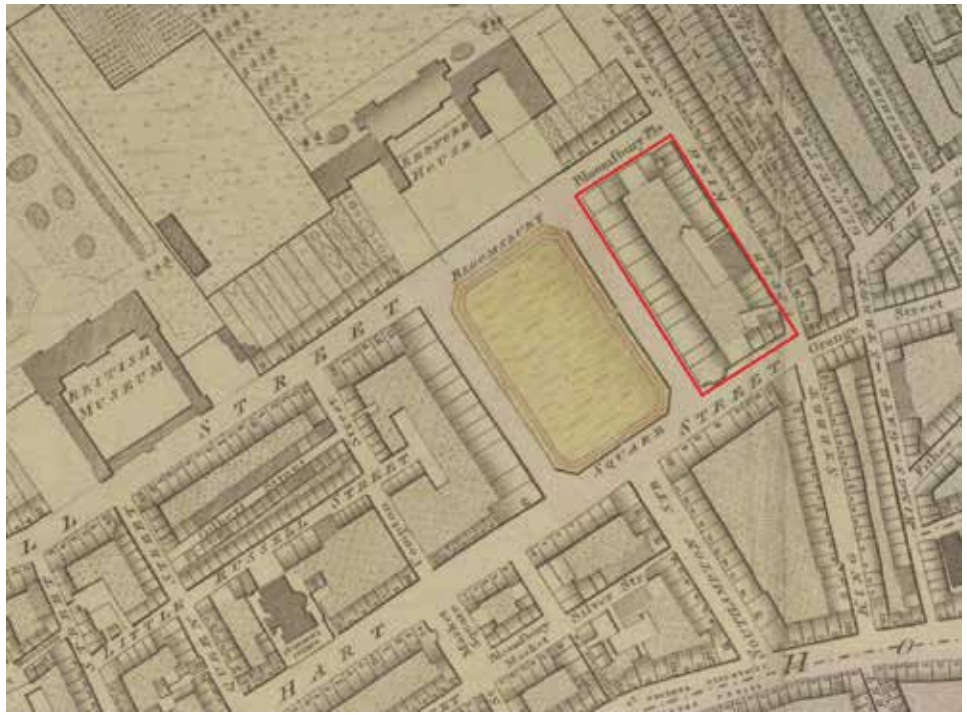
1 London Borough of Camden, Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (April 2011), p. 5.

2 'UCL Bloomsbury Project', University College London, https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/streets/bedford_house(1).htm [accessed September 2021].

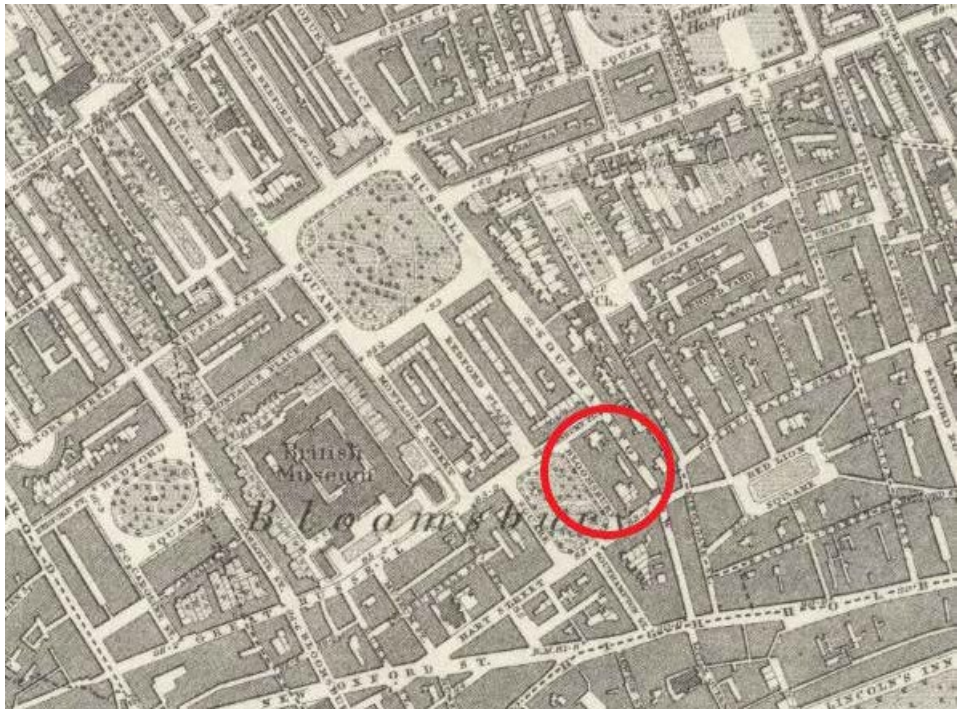
2.1 *Fairthorne and Newcourt's map of London, showing Bloomsbury Square prior to development, 1658.*



2.2 *Simplified view of Bloomsbury Square from the south, by William Angus, c.1750 (London Metropolitan Archives).*



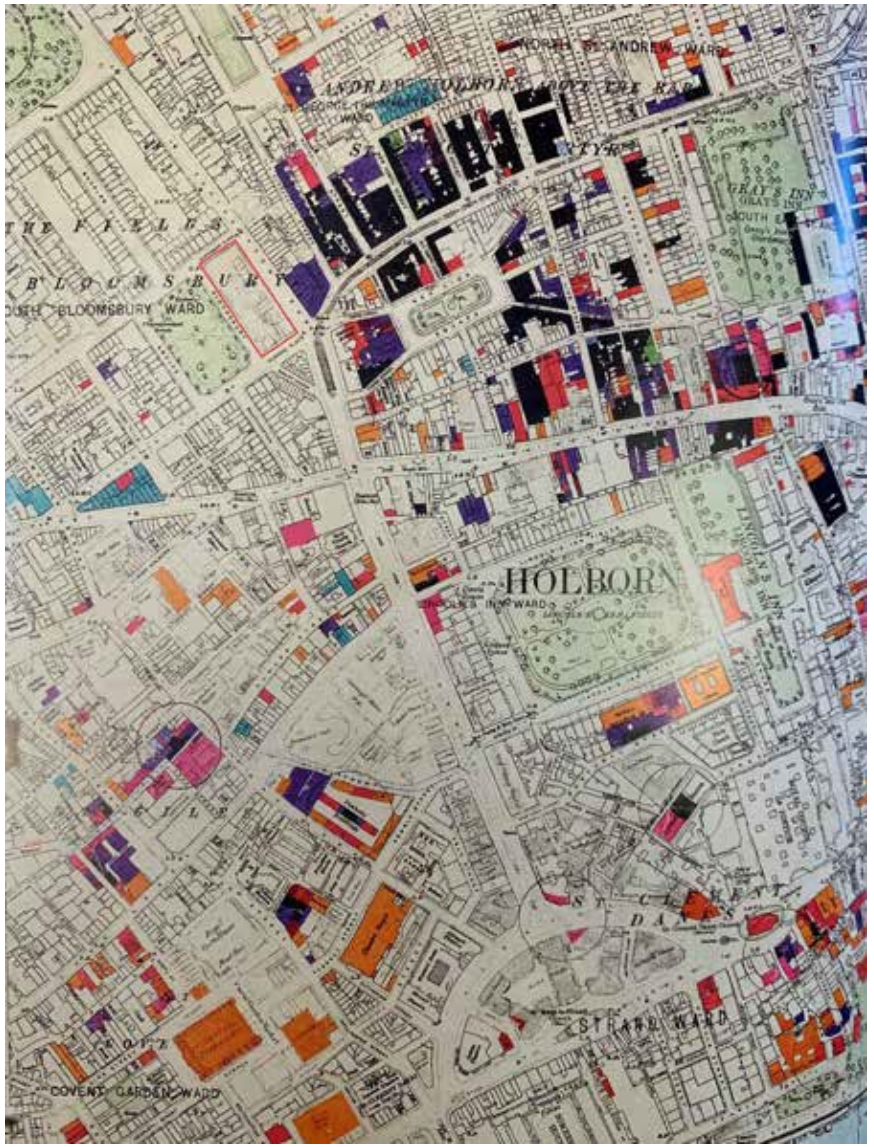
2.3 *The study site on the corner of Bloomsbury Square in Horwood's Map of London, 1792-99.*



2.4 *Bloomsbury as shown in the Ordnance Survey map, 1880-82.*

Bloomsbury's reputation as a fashionable, residential suburb for the upper-middle classes evaporated during the early 20th century. The first major redevelopments were largely associated with the expansion of the University of London in the area between Gower Street and Russell Square, the continuing development of hospitals around Queen Square, and a proliferation of offices, hotels and shops along the main arterial routes of High Holborn and Southampton Row. The latter of which coincided with the construction of the Kingsway in 1903-05, a major thoroughfare from High Holborn to Aldwych, which could accommodate greater movement into central London. The large new Kingsway road not only incorporated spacious pavements and specialist retail units, but also featured a tram subway into the city centre. Bloomsbury experienced widespread destruction during the Blitz, which led to the loss of large areas of its older housing stock **[Plate 2.5]**.

After the Second World War, the areas of greatest destruction underwent major redevelopment, comprising a mix of social housing, offices, and replacement buildings. Elsewhere, bomb damaged buildings and earlier housing stock was replaced with larger-scale residential, office and institutional development. The University of London continued to develop its precinct to the north of Senate House between 1955 and the 1960s. A number of large footprint hotel buildings were also constructed in the vicinity of Russell Square, Woburn Place and Southampton Row. More recently, growing demand for mixed-use redevelopment has resulted in a series of contemporary interventions by Bloomsbury's various institutions, as well as by residential and commercial property developers.



2.5 *London County Council Bomb Damage Map for Bloomsbury, 1939-45.*

2.2 The Building: Victoria House

2.2.1 Design and Construction

Victoria House was built in phases between 1926 and 1932 for the Liverpool and Victoria Friendly Society to use as their London headquarters. Designed in an imposing Grecian Beaux-Arts style by Charles William Long, Victoria House was eight storeys high and built using a steel-framed construction. At the time of its completion it was the largest office building in London and occupied a large rectangular urban block with classically inspired and detailed Beaux-Arts Portland stone frontages to Bloomsbury Square to the west, Southampton Row to the east, Bloomsbury Place to the north and Vernon Place to the south **[Plate 2.6]**. Its construction necessitated the demolition of an entire terrace of Georgian townhouses on the east side of Bloomsbury Square, along with a mix of residential, commercial and light-industrial premises on the surrounding streets.

The building's grandiose exterior was designed to reflect its status as the new headquarters of the Liverpool and Victoria insurance company. Originally founded in Liverpool in 1843 as the Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society, the firm began as a burial society offering savings schemes for funeral expenses to the working classes. By 1863, the Society's operations had spread as far north as Newcastle and as far southwest as Plymouth but only had an 'outposts' in London and the south-east. In 1884, it had been decided to move the chief office to St Andrew Street in the City of London. In 1890, members were informed that the Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society was 'now the largest Collecting

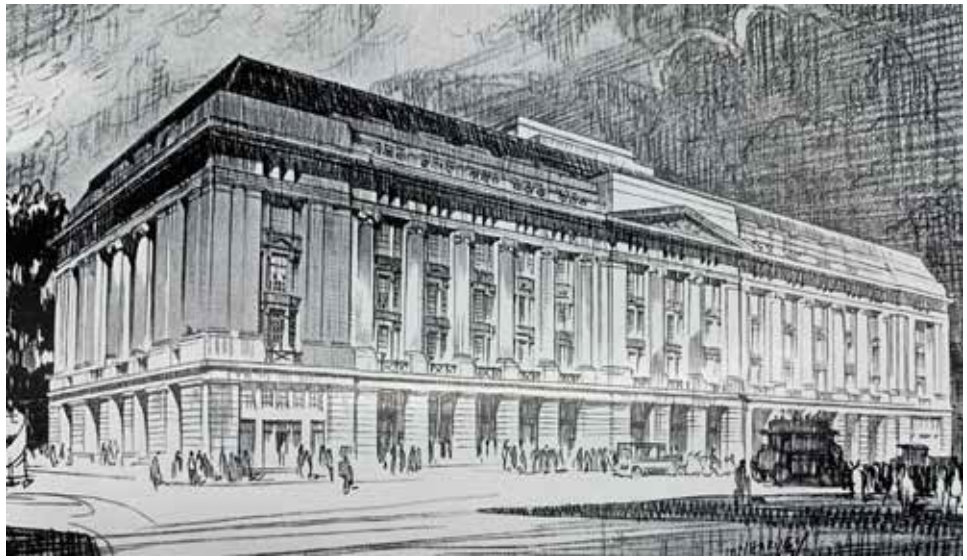
2.6 *Ordnance Survey, 1895 (National Library of Scotland).*

Friendly Society in the United Kingdom'.[3] In response to the National Insurance Act of 1911, which implemented a system of health insurance for workers based on contributions from employers, the government, and the workers themselves, the Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society had constituted a separate Approved Society to assist with the administration of National Health Insurance. By the 1920s, the increasing success of the Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society and Approved Society meant that the Chief Office in St Andrew Street had become inadequate. In a Special General Meeting in August 1922, it was announced that a site for a new Chief Office had been purchased in Southampton Row, 'upon which it was hoped to build within two years the first section of a structure which would add "to the dignity and beauty of the Metropolis".'[4]

The purpose-built headquarters comprised long 15-window bays to Bloomsbury Square and Southampton Row. The Bloomsbury Square elevation had a tall channelled ground floor and mezzanine level. A central distyle-in-antis Ionic portico rose through first to fourth floors and was flanked by a colonnade of giant Ionic columns set on channelled piers. The pediment above the portico contained a tympanum with sculptures by artist H.W. Palliser on the theme of nature. To either side, there was cornice surmounted by an attic storey protected by a parapet featuring panels of open ornamental brasswork. The Southampton Row façade featured a similar elevational treatment, albeit the ground floor was designed as an arcade of shops divided by the channelled stone piers **[Plate 2.7]**. Furthermore, the tympanum sculptures on this side were based on themes of navigation and new forms of industry. The return elevations to the north and south were five-bays wide but similar in style with distyle-in-antis centres and paired pilasters, but notympana. Ground floor entrance doors to all elevations were of panelled bronze. The building was surmounted by a dormered mansard roof storey with a centraltwo-storey extension above containing plant and services **[Plate 2.8]**.

3 Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society, *Centenary Celebration: 1843-1943* (London, 1943), p.14.

4 Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society, Centenary Celebration: 1843-1943, p.25.



2.7 *Illustration depicting Victoria House shortly after completion, 1943 (Centenary Celebration).*

2.8 *Victoria House from the air, 1943 (Centenary Celebration).*

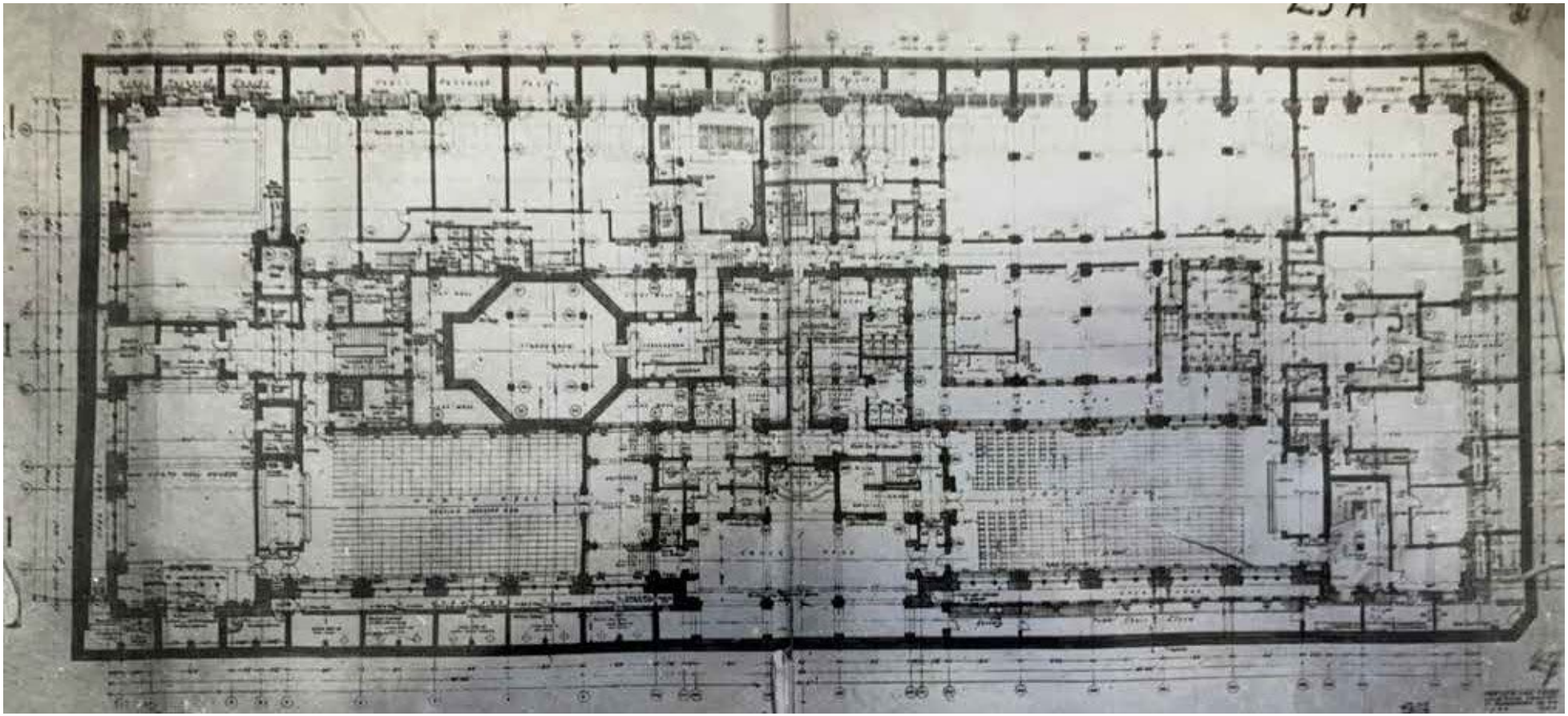
Despite the incredible success of the Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society, they only required the northern part of the building for their offices. A set of floorplans held by Camden Archives show the original internal layout of the building comprised a mix of offices, meeting rooms, shops and entertainment venues which could be let out **[Plates 2.9a-2.9i]**.[5] At lower ground floor level, there were three halls located on the west side of the building **[Plate 2.10]**, as well as a large octagonal strong room. The ground floor plan shows the four entrances from each side of the building had large lobbies, which were reportedly faced in Subiaco marble, with brass details. A central ground floor public area was open through three floors and featured marble flooring and an elaborate coffered ceiling **[Plate 2.11]**. It also appears from the ground floor plan that the shop units facing Southampton Row at ground floor and mezzanine level were originally recessed behind an arcade of channelled piers.[6] The mezzanine level extended above the units on the east and south sides of the building only. Above the first floor level, the upper floors were arranged around two large rectangular lightwells and accessed by four staircases. The principal offices and meeting rooms of the Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society were located on the north side of the third and fourth floors **[Plate 2.12-2.13]**.

The new Chief Office premises of the Liverpool and Victoria Friendly Society was opened on 3rd June 1926 by Sir William Pryke, Lord Mayor of London. However, the northern section covering a third of the site was still under construction at the time and the remainder of the site was still awaiting development. Nevertheless, the Head Office staff and records belonging to the Society were subsequently transferred from St Andrew Street to Victoria House. In August 1932, Victoria House was officially completed and formally opened in ceremony by the Chairman of London Victoria, Mr S.H. Payne, who announced that the building '*contained 125 miles of electric wiring, 5000 tons of steel framework, 5 ¼ million bricks, and had provided 642 weeks' work for an average of 300 men during a period of very acute depression in the building industry*.'[7] On the same day, a war memorial to London Victoria staff who had fallen in the First World War was also unveiled.

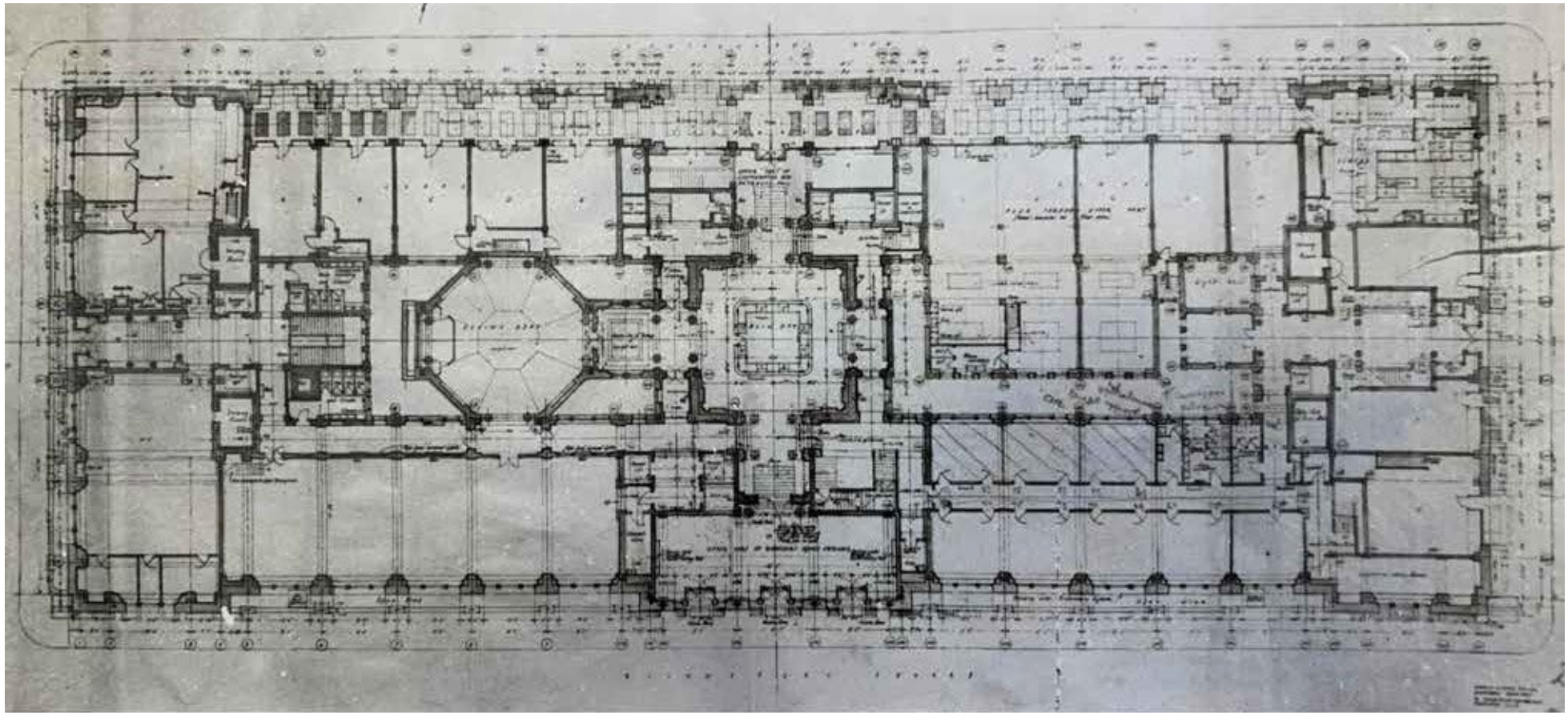
5 'Plans of buildings: Victoria House, Southampton Row', Camden Archives, B/HO/00001/MP/4/25

6 Bridget Cherry, Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 4: North - Pevsner Architectural Guides: Buildings of England* (Yale University Press, London, 1998), p. 327.

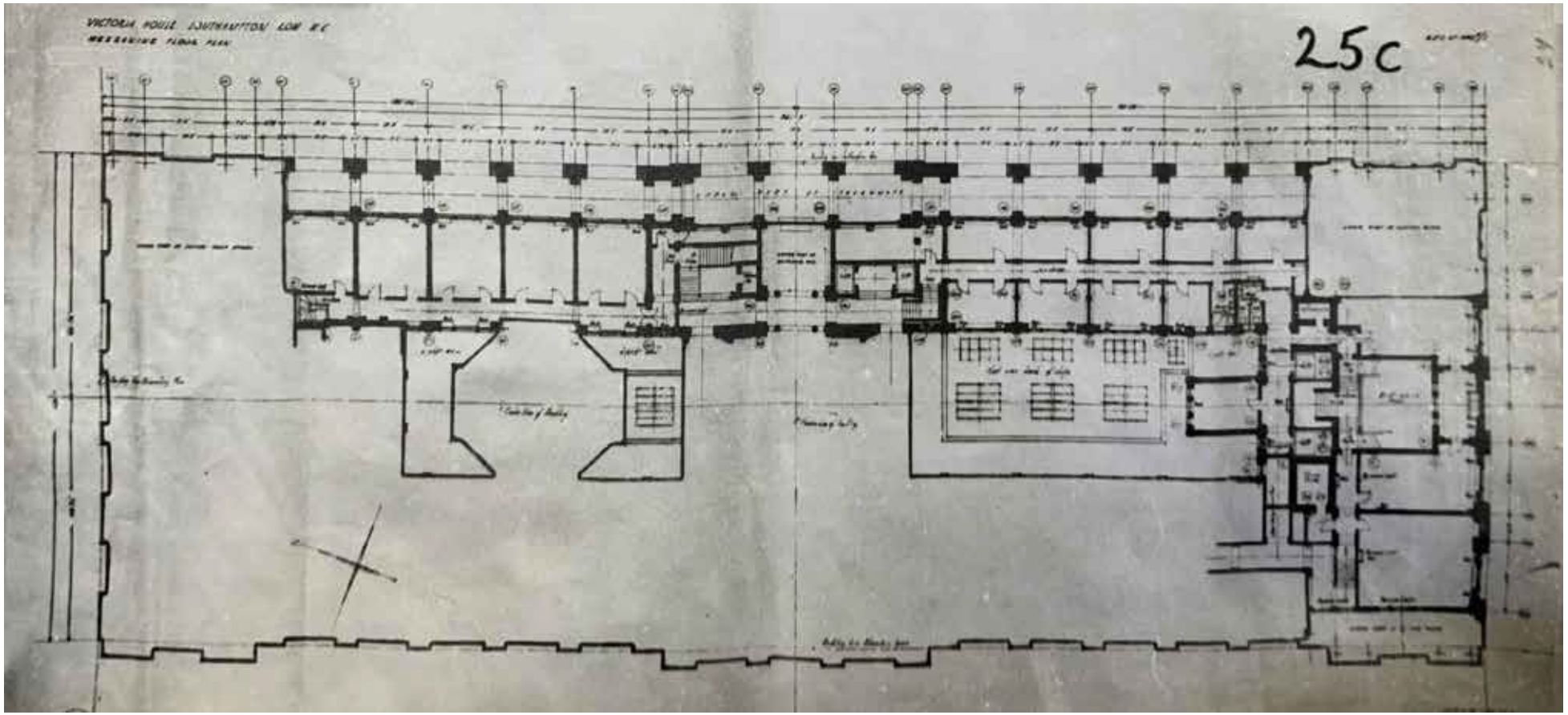
7 Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society, *Centenary Celebration: 1843-1943*, p.35.



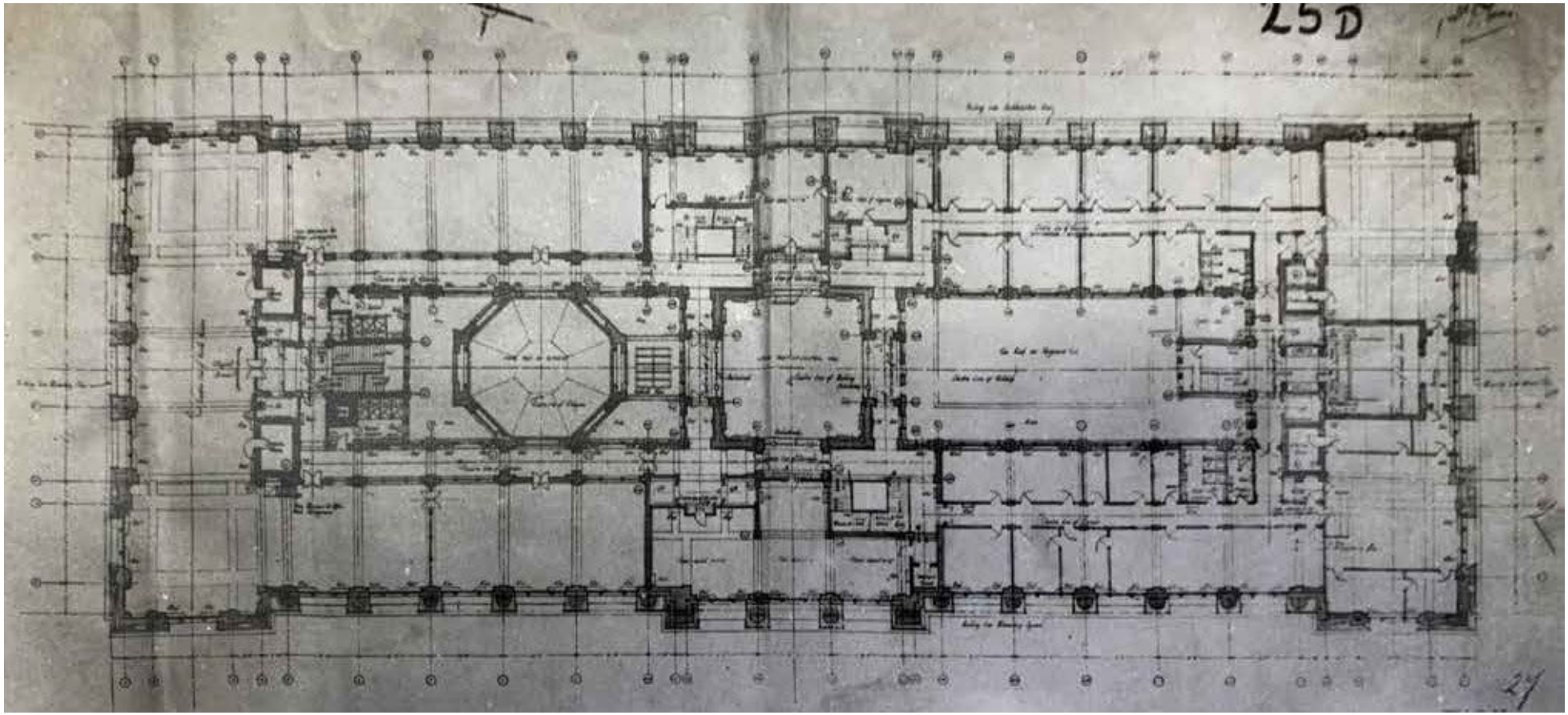
2.9a *Lower ground floor plan by Charles William Long, c.1926-32 (Camden Archives).*



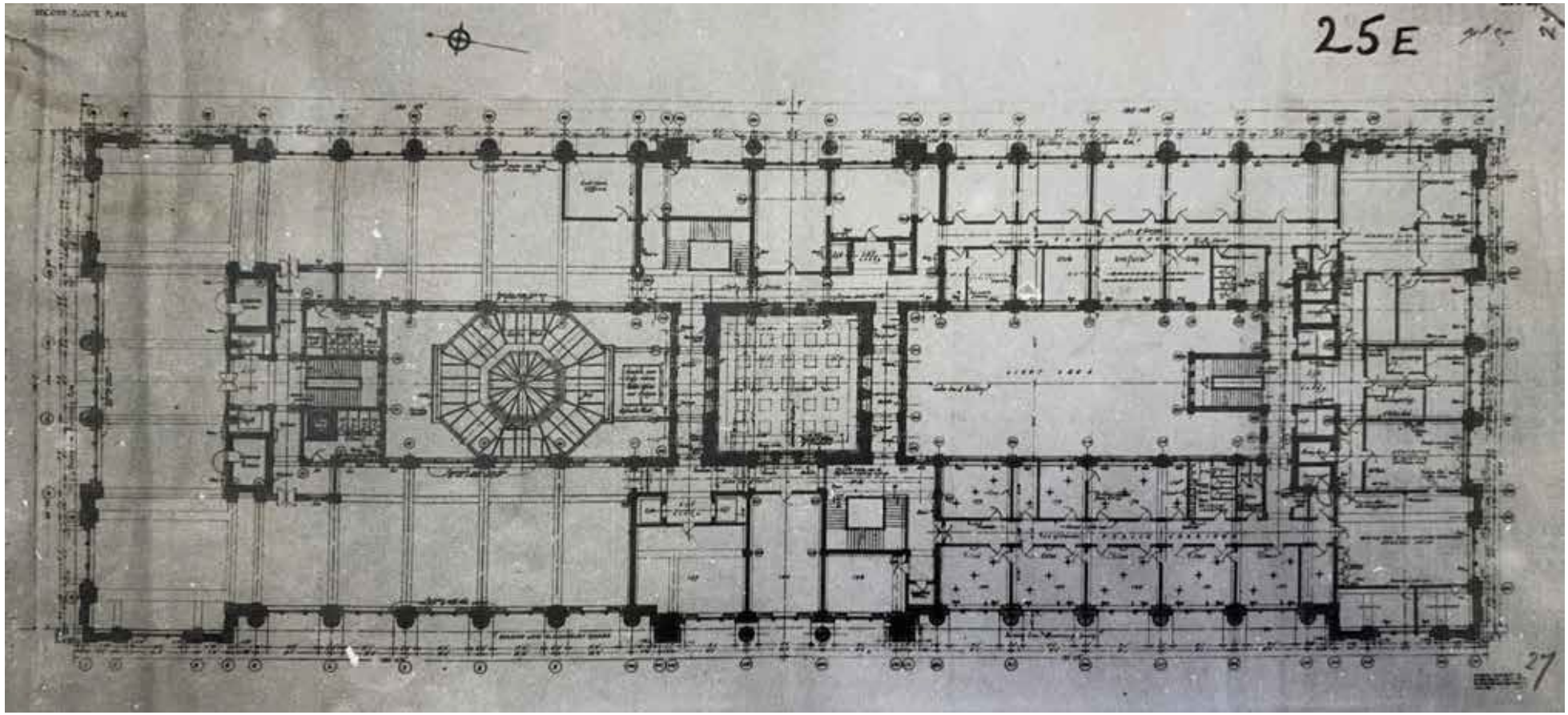
2.9b *Ground floor plan by Charles William Long, c.1926-32 (Camden Archives).*



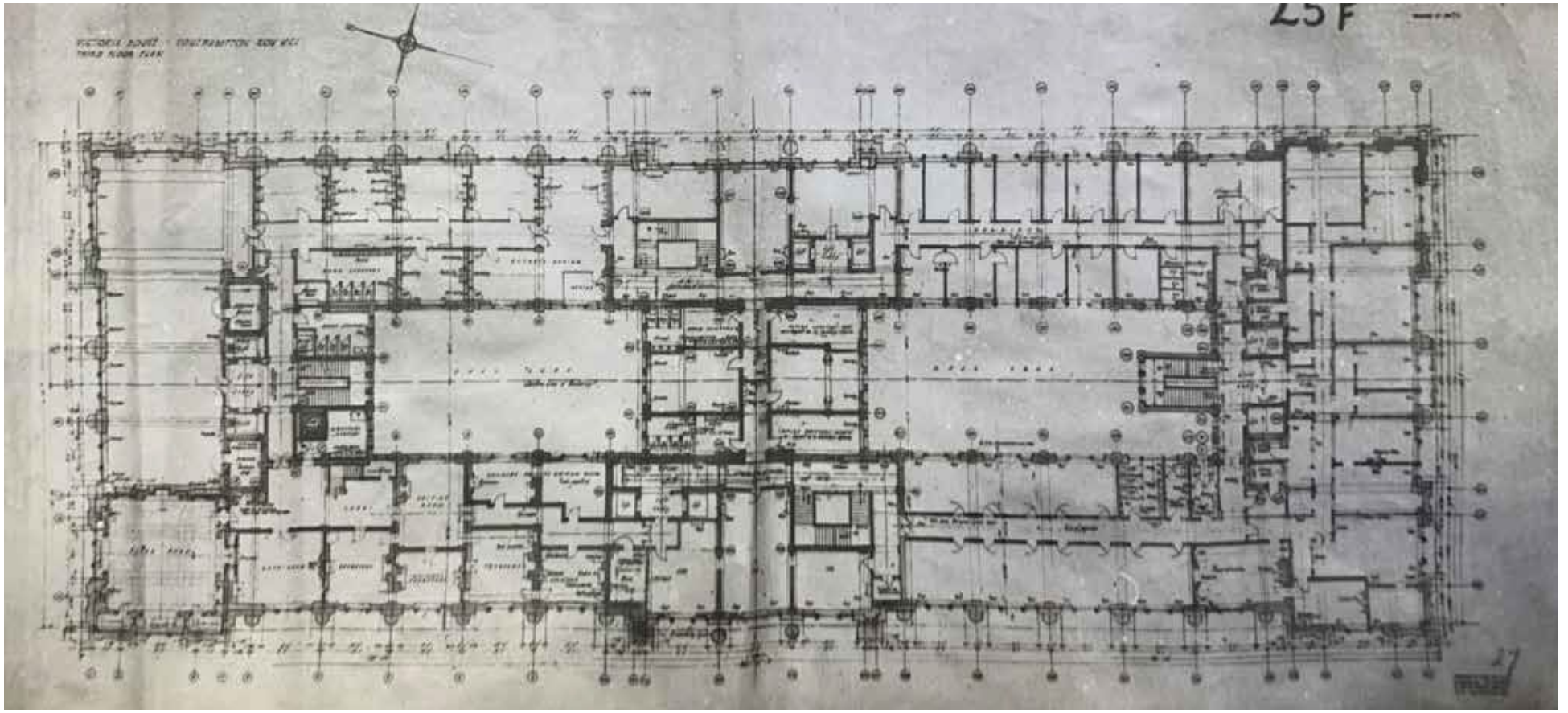
2.9c *Mezzanine floor plan by Charles William Long, c.1926-32 (Camden Archives).*



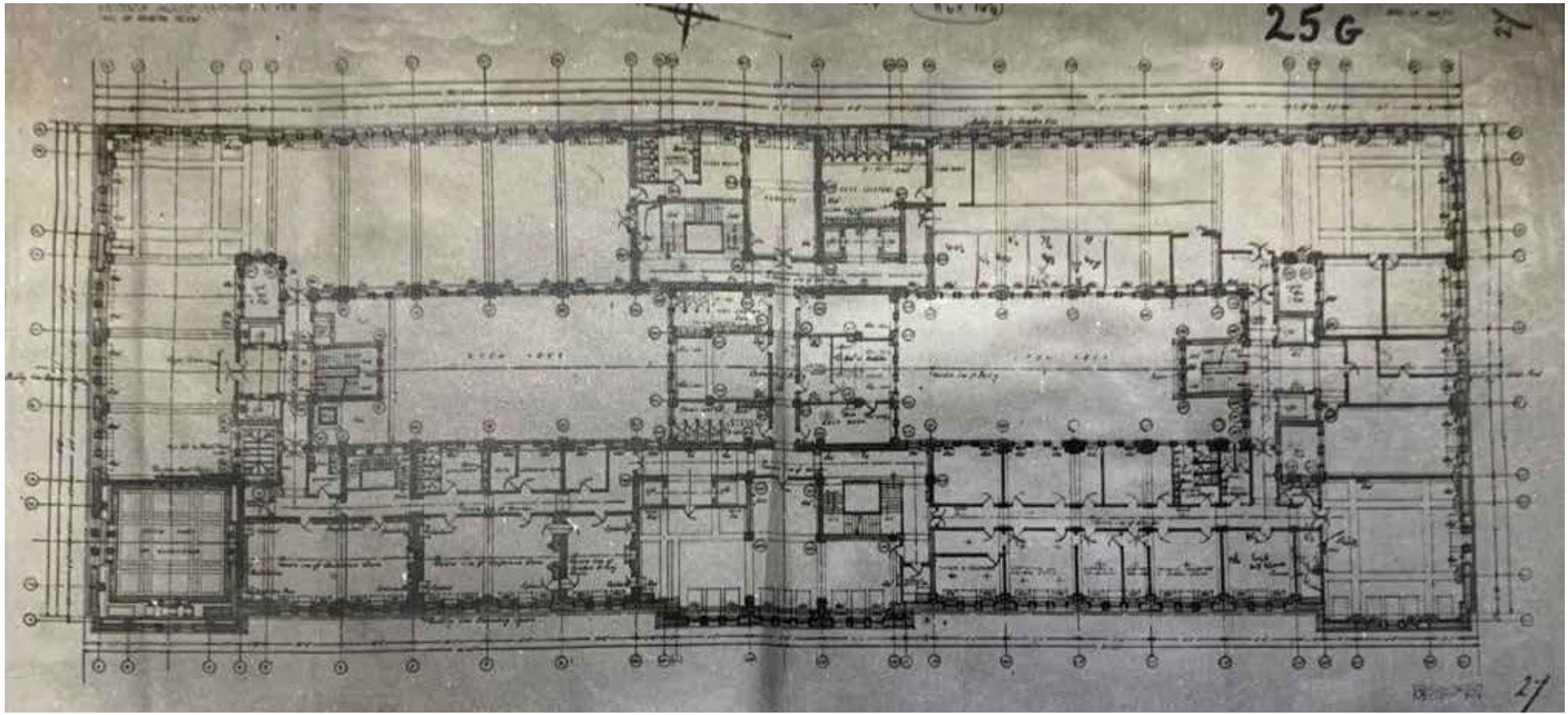
2.9d *First floor plan by Charles William Long, c.1926-32 (Camden Archives).*



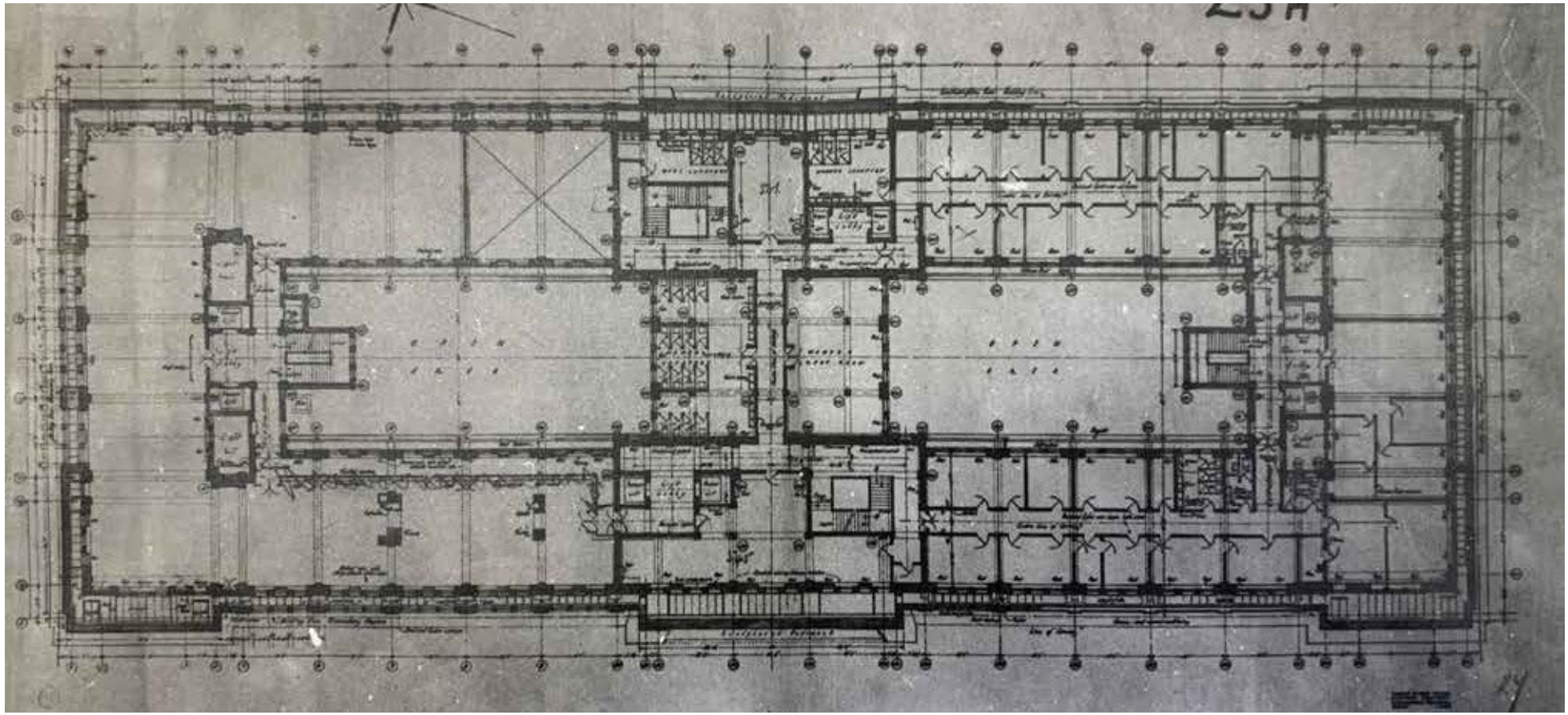
2.9e *Second floor plan by Charles William Long, c.1926-32 (Camden Archives).*



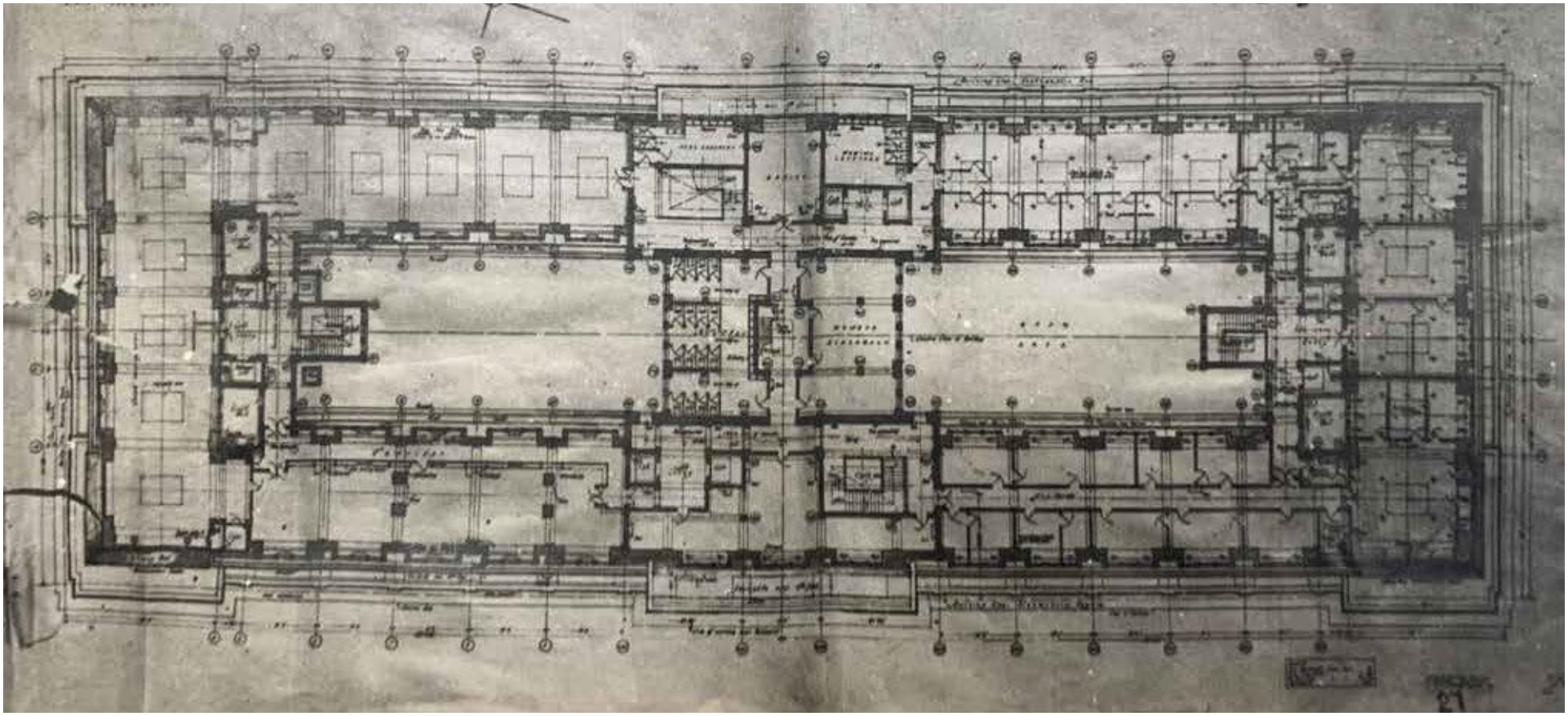
2.9f *Third floor plan by Charles William Long, c.1926-32 (Camden Archives).*



2.9g *Fourth floor plan by Charles William Long, c.1926-32 (Camden Archives).*



2.9h *Fifth floor plan by Charles William Long, c.1926-32 (Camden Archives).*



2.9 i *Sixth floor plan by Charles William Long, c.1926-32 (Camden Archives).*

2.10 *Interior of the South Hall at lower ground floor level, 1943*

2.11 *Section of the public hall at the centre of the ground floor, 1943 (Centenary Celebration).*

2.12 *Interior of a London Victoria board room, 1943 (Centenary Celebration).*

2.13 *One of the head office departments of the London Victoria Friendly Society, 1943 (Centenary Celebration).*

2.2.1 Later Alterations

During the Second World War, a Staff Fire Brigade was formed to maintain a 24-hour watch over the building. At some point during the War, a large fire opposite Victoria House was tackled for 14 hours solely by the Liverpool Victoria Fire Brigade using the building's water reserves and equipment. As a result of this action, the building appears to have survived the war relatively intact **[Plate 2.14]**. The London Victoria Friendly Society continued to occupy the northern section of Victoria House until 1996, when the company relocated its headquarters to Bournemouth.

Due to it being under a single ownership for a large proportion of the 20th century, the majority of the building remained largely unaltered and was listed Grade II in 1990.[8] A series of photographs of Victoria House from 1974 show that the Portland stoneexterior had been maintained, while many of the shopfronts had clearly been modernised **[Plates 2.15- 2.16]**. According to the planning records held by the London Borough of Camden, the majority of planning applications from this period relate alterations to signage, services, and the shop units as well as minor refurbishment schemes or changes of use applying to individual floors, presumably to suit the needs of individual tenants (see Appendix III). In 1997, planning permission was granted for London Victoria to relocate their staff war memorial from Victoria House to their new premises in Bournemouth.

Between 1998 and 2001, Victoria House was earmarked for a series of extensive refurbishment schemes. The first plan was drawn up in 1998, when Blackfriars Investments was considering Victoria House as a home for the Greater London Authority. Will Alsop and Jan Stormer were commissioned to design the proposals for converting the building for the GLA, but their scheme lost out to Foster and Partners' design for the GLA to relocate to a new 'glass bubble' building on the south side of London Bridge.[9] A year later, Victoria House was acquired by the German developer Garbe, which had worked with Alsop's previous Anglo-German practice in Hamburg and planned an upmarket shopping centre. However, its location between the City and the West End meant that it failed to win support from the retail market. Garbe instead opted for a speculative office development, with a restaurant and health centre to replace the old ballroom in the basement, and the refurbishment of the shop units on Southampton Row.

Due to its large open floorplates, generous storey heights and load-bearing steel frame, Victoria House was considered adaptable to modern speculativeoffice space. Alsop's scheme centred on the conversion of the two utilitarian lightwells to create modern oblong atria enclosed by glazed roofsand window walls, which allowed the offices to be extended into the heart of the building **[Plate 2.17]**. New lift cores and services risers were inserted into the corners of the two atria, in order to retain the original grand classical staircases while still improving vertical circulation and services distribution. The atria were finished off with curvilinear pods, two to each atrium **[Plate 2.18]**. The upper pods resembled giant larvae with eight tubular-steel legs propped off the curtain walls on either side. Their biomorphic forms and outstretched steel legs resembled Archigram's iconic Walking City images of the 1960s.[10] The lowertwo pods were described as 'more like open dinghies bobbing about in the sea'.[11] Constructed as double skins of glass-reinforced plastic in a Southampton boatyard, the pods housed meeting rooms andwere reached by narrow bridges leading off from the central core or the office floors on either side **[Plate 2.19]**. Each of the two upper pods comprised two rooms in double-deck formation, and the twolower pods comprised open seating areas. The pods created an additional 150 m2 of lettable floor space, whilst enabling daylight to reach the office floors on either side.

8 'VICTORIA HOUSE AND ATTACHED RAILINGS', Historic England, https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1378788 [accessed September 2021].

9 Robert Booth, 'Mayoral hopefuls savage Foster's GLA building plans', Architects Journal Online, https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/archive/mayoral-hopefuls-savage-fosters-gla-building-plans [accessed September 2021].

10 Martin Spring, 'Mr Blobby strikes again', Building, https://www.building.co.uk/focus/mr-blobby-strikes-again/1030858.article [accessed September 2021].

11 Martin Spring, 'Mr Blobby strikes again', Building.

2.14 *Liverpool Victoria Insurance offices from Southampton Row, 1951 (LMA).*

2.15 *Liverpool Victoria Insurance Offices from Southampton Row, 1974 (LMA).*

2.16 *Liverpool Victoria Insurance Offices from the corner of Southampton Row and Vernon Place, 1974 (LMA).*

2.17 *View inside one of the new atria, 2003 (aLL Design).*

2.19 *Bridge from offices to one of the smaller pods in the new atria, 2003 (aLL Design).*

2.18 *View of a large pod inside one of the new atria, 2003 (aLL Design).*

Across the rest of the building Alsop's scheme combined restoration with innovative high-techelements. Much of the original fabric, including the classical Portland stone exteriors, the grand marble staircases and central hall, and the mahogany panelling of the original Liverpool Victoria offices and meeting rooms were retained. The grand marble public hall was refurbished by Alsop to serve as the main reception area to the offices above **[Plate 2.20-2.21]**. A modern floor in clear glass was floated above the original marble floor, which was set 700mm belowthe office floors surrounding it, to improve disabled access while retaining the bases of the recessed columns and mouldings on the pilasters.

At ground level, a new retail area and shop frontage was added on the Southampton Row elevation, and an internal loading bay accessed from a modified entrance in the Bloomsbury Square facade. A health club was created in the basement and the ballroom was restored and converted to a restaurant. Theexternal appearance of the building was changed very little, though the open arcade on Southampton Row was reinstated with the removal of shop units built during the 1950s.

At the top of the building, the sixth and seventh floors were reconstructed with extra headroom in the original mansard roof. The former plantroom at the top of the central tower was converted to a conference room, with spectacular views on all four sides. And a new eighth floor was added to accommodate the plant,stretching across the whole length of the building. According to an article in *Building*, Alsop's approach was approved by the conservation authorities. Paddy Pugh of English Heritage was quoted as saying: 'Our view was that, as long as the exterior and the best of the interior was kept and reused, there was an ideal opportunity to introduce modern design into thelightwells. We didn't feel the scheme was controversial and we were happy to approve it.'[12] The refurbishment scheme was completed in 2003.[13]

In 2019, Victoria House was acquired by workspace provider LABS with the intention of transforming the building into a modern workspace.[14] In 2020, listed building consent was granted for a refurbishment scheme designed by architects Hutchinson & Partners to create a new flexible workspace and lifestyle destination. The refurbishment scheme introduceda modern palette of natural hard-wearing materials – including marble, terrazzo, patinated brass, bronze, oak timber and leather surfaces – throughout the modernised parts of the building. The ground floor's grand spaces were reworked to host a series of social spaces, including a central bar, members' lounge and informal meetings spaces. The upper levels were updated to provide flexible, open-plan workspaces with communal lounges, kitchens, libraries, meeting rooms and phone booths clustered around central timber-lined axes. However, the office interiors at third and fourth floors were preserved in the northern section of the building.

The project also included more than 750 sqm of space within three communal suites. The Alsop Suite and The Long Suite provided meeting or recreational space for the office tenants, while The Heritage Suite contained a gym, multi-use studio alongside a lecture room, boardroom and meeting room suite. Some of the major interventions introduced by Alsop during the 2001-03 refurbishment, such as the suspended office pods, were left untouched. Other later insertions were removed, such as the floating glazed platform in the ground floor public reception area, and were replaced with a monolithic terrazzo alongside roughly hewn travertine slabs. The British designer Fred Rigby was also commissioned to create a bespoke furniture collection for the project. In Summer 2021, LABS planned to open an outdoor roof terrace.

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12 Martin Spring, 'Mr Blobby strikes again', Building.

13 'Victoria House', aLL Design, https://all.design/posts/victoria-house [accessed September 2021].

14 Ali Morris, 'Hutchinson & Partners completes "modern and minimal" refurbishment of neoclassical Victoria House', Dezeen, https://www.dezeen.com/2021/08/03/hutchinson-partners-victoria-house-office-interiors/ [accessed September 2021].

2.20 *Ground floor public hall and reception area, 2003 (aLL Design).*

2.21 *Upper level of the public hall and reception area, 2003 (aLL Design).*

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3.0 Site Survey Descriptions

3.1 The Setting of the Building and the Conservation Area Context

Victoria House forms the eastern enclosure of Bloomsbury Square. To its west is the square itself, enclosed to the north, west and south by Georgian terraced houses, many now in office use, built as part of the development of the Bedford Estate. Whilst a number of houses have been altered or indeed re-built, the square substantially survives as it was laid out as part of the Duke of Bedford's development of Bloomsbury in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Southampton Row to the east is entirely different from Bloomsbury to the west **[Plates 3.1 and 3.2]**; a major traffic artery, it leads from Euston to the Strand and has mostly tall commercial buildings on wide footprints, many in use as hotels, constructed in the later 19th and the 20th century. Victoria House is very much part of the commercial character ofSouthampton Way rather than the fine residential grain of the Bedford Estate.

3.2 The Building Externally

Victoria House is an inter-war purpose built office building that occupies an entire city block **[Plate 3.3]**. It rises above its Georgian neighbours to six main storeys, and is set over two basements with a double mansard slate-covered roof and modernglazed roof extensions **[Plate 3.4]**. It is constructed as a steel frame and clad in Portland stone with metal fenestration. It has a symmetrical classically inspiredBeaux-Arts composition with giant order Ionic pilasters dividing the frontages into bays; there are projecting end pavilions and a central tympanum with sculptures by Pallister on each of the two long elevations. At ground floor level are entrances, one on each side,and shops facing Southampton Way with modern replacement glass frontages. The exterior is largely unaltered, safe for the shops and the roof additions which sit either side an original central stone pavilion and which are clearly visible in longer views. There are front lightwells with original metal balustrades on three sides, but not on Southampton Way.

3.1 *View from the north*

3.2 *South and east elevation*

3.3 *West elevation from Bloomsbury Square*

3.4 *Western roof with modern extension*

3.3 The Building Internally

The building has two main types of internal spaces namely: surviving highly finished original rooms, entrances and staircases which have heritage significance; and modernised office space and back of house areas which have no significance **[Plates 3.5 and 3.6, 3.16]**. A possible third layer, the expressive sculptural insertions into the two atria by Alsop Architects, may gain significance over time **[Plate 3.7]**. Other than at third and fourth floors where there is a suite of intact fine panelled rooms with 1920s and some C18 chimney pieces, and which include the original board room and directors' offices as well as intact lavatories **[Plates 3.8-3.14]**, the upper floors are in the form of modernised office space, largely open plan, with recent replacement finishes which are generally of high quality but not of heritage significance.

3.5 *Interior of original roof pavilion*

3.6 *Sixth floor interior*

3.7 *Atrium with modern enclosure and meeting pod*

3.8 *Fourth floor historic landing in west wing*

3.9 *Fourth floor panelled large director's room*

3.10 *Fourth floor panelled room with C18 chimney piece*

3.11 *Third floor historic corridor to panelled rooms*

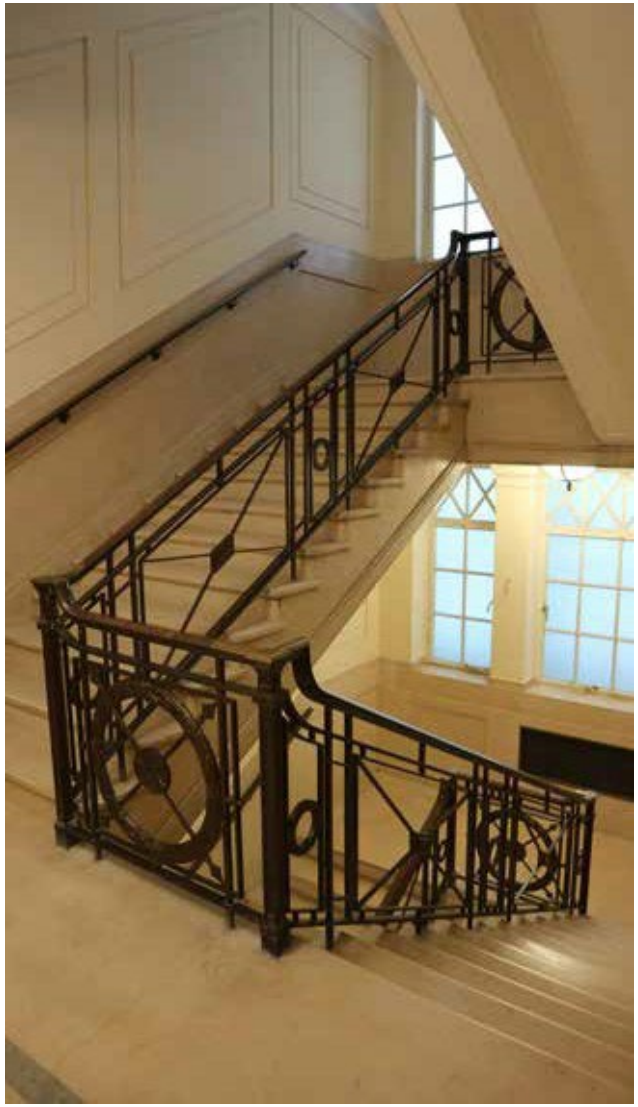
3.12 *Third floor eastern panelled room*

3.13 *Third floor original staircase to panelled fourth floor rooms*

3.14 *Third floor double height northwest corner room*

The upper floors are accessed by four main open- well decorative staircases with metal balustrades, laylights and terrazzo-finished walls and stairs; these are original to the 1920s construction phase **[Plate 3.15]**. There are two central atria which have been roofed over in recent times and feature bubble-shaped meeting pods supported by cantilevered metal legs to designs by Alsop Architects.

At ground floor level is a magnificent intact double height central reception area **[Plate 3.17]**, originally the public till area, which is adjoined by an altered octagonal room **[Plate 3.18]** and which is accessed from all four sides via intact, richly detailed entrance halls **[Plate 3.19]**. There are modernised offices at upper ground floor overlooking Bloomsbury Square **[Plate 3.20]**, and modernised shops onto Southampton Way. In the upper basement is a ballroom **[Plates 3.21-3.23]**, located on the west side, with its own foyer space and separate staircase. The ballroom is relatively intact but has somewhat plainer finishes and materials of lower quality. The basement area otherwise is plain and altered, and other than an original tiled area below Southampton Way **[Plate 3.24]** has no historic interiors.



3.15 *Original staircase at upper level*

3.16 *First floor modern offices*

3.18 *Ground floor altered octagonal room north of central atrium*

3.17 *Central double height atrium above ground floor*

3.19 *Vernon Place entrance hall*

3.20 *Upper ground floor modernised offices facing Bloomsbury Square*

3.21 *Staircase to basement ballroom*

3.22 *Basement ballroom in Bloomsbury wing*

3.23 *Basement ballroom foyer*

3.24 *Basement 1 eastern range*

3.25 *Basement 2*

4.0 Assessment of Heritage Significance

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide an assessment of significance of Victoria House, so that the proposals for change to the buildings are fully informed as to their significance and so that the effect of the proposals on that significance can be evaluated. This assessment responds to the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework to 'recognisethat heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance'. The NPPF defines significance as:*'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological (potential to yield evidence about the past), architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'.*

4.2 Assessment of Significance

Victoria House is of special interest as a Grade II listed inter-war office building for its intact and richly detailed main exterior with classically inspired and detailed Beaux-Arts elevations and applied sculpture, and its sumptuous surviving interiors, namely itsentrance halls, staircases and panelled directors' suite of offices which all reflect the considerable standing of the Liverpool and Victoria Friendly Society who commissioned and partly occupied this building. Little is known about its architect, Charles William Long, butthe quality of the design including its composition, and the quality of craftsmanship in the surviving original spaces are high. Victoria House was remodelled several times in the late-20th and early-21st century, and now has vast areas of open-plan office space, a visible modern roof extension and modern shops on Southampton Way, as well as plain basement areas, and none of these elements are of special interest. Insertions by Alsop Architects of the early-21st century into the building's two atria are sculptural and typical for Alsop's work, and may be seen in time to have more significance in their own right than would be attributed to them today.

In more detail, the building has the following hierarchy of significance:

Of **very high significance** and very sensitive to change are:

- the decorative street elevations in Portland stone with metal fenestration and the original mansard roof and central roof pavilion
- the central ground floor atrium and the four entrance halls connected to it, all intact and richly detailed
- the four original staircases with laylights and lined landings, of similar quality to the intact ground floor spaces
- the directors' suite of panelled offices with chimney pieces and other decorations, with adjoining corridors and lavatories and intercommunicating stairs, at third and fourth floors on the north side in the west wing

Of **high significance** and sensitive to change are:

- the basement ballroom with foyer in the south section of the west wing, because it has some original but lower quality decorations and more alteration than the spaces of very high significance
- the part-modernised ground floor octagonal room north of the central atrium

Of **low to moderate significance** and adaptable with justification are:

- the Alsop Architects' sculptural bubble insertions into the two atria

Of **neutral** significance and readily adaptable are:

- the modern office interiors outside of the decorative historic spaces
- the Southampton Row shops
- the basements other than the ballroom area
- the glazed roof additions

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area is large and takes in Georgian terraced streets and garden squares developed by the Earl of Bedford, large university buildings of the 20th century, commercial buildings including hotels on the main road (Southampton Row) leading to Euston Station, and a substantial area east of Woburn Place/ Southampton Row. The site is in sub-area 6, Bloomsbury Square/Russell Square/Tavistock Square, as defined in the London Borough of Camden's character appraisal. This is described as an area of predominantly Georgian buildings set around garden squares:

> *This sub area is largely made up of three- and four-storey late 18th and 19th century terraces surrounding a sequence of linked formal spaces, namely Bloomsbury Square, Russell Square and Tavistock Square. A series of north-south vistas visually connect the three squares. Moving through the area, there is a transition between the enclosed, urban nature of the streets and the more open squares which are softened by trees and green landscape. In places, the original terraces have been replaced with 20th century development, mostly of a larger scale and urban grain; this is particularly noticeable around Tavistock Square, Bedford Way and Upper Woburn Place. [...] Victoria House provides a transition between the busy Southampton Row and the quieter square.*

The significance of this part of the conservation area lies in its planned layout of streets and squares, and its surviving historic building stock; this includes Georgian terraces which are largely listed, and the best later buildings, including Victoria House and Lutyens' British Medical Association, also listed.

The site is in the setting of a number listed buildings and listed structures, their significance varies, and includes Georgian terraced town houses and later buildings, and these are predominantly listed for their architectural interest; change to their setting through new external alterations, extensions or other development at Victoria House would have to be considered carefully to avoid harm or provide a harm/ benefits balance.

5.0 Assessment of the Proposals

5.1 Introduction

The proposals entail investigative works which will help to ascertain the structural make-up and capacity of the building, to ensure that the planned new use for lab-enabled offices, currently being discussed with Camden Planning officers at pre-application stage, can be accommodated without having to retrofit the building's structure at a later date.

The proposals are explained in the submission documents and drawings provided by Heyne Tillett Steel structural engineers. They set out the scope and background of the proposals as follows:

Investigations are required to confirm the structural capacity and vibration characteristics of the existing building to determine its suitability for lab-enabled space. Thorough review of the existing structure is essential if we are to justify existing structure as it stands to minimise later structural interventions.
To date we have completed searches of the building archives room, London Metropolitan Archives, Camden Archives and been in contact with several members of design teams that have completed works in previous years, particularly the 'Alsop' works of circa 2001. We have gained:

- *late 1920's to early 1930's record drawings of the original steel frame partial foundation plans of the original building possible details of the 'econoflor' troughed concrete floor system partial record information of the Anthony Hunt interventions during the 2001 works historic architectural information*

Our investigations are therefore aimed at opening localised areas to confirm beam sizes and build-ups to give confidence in the historic information we have. Where beams and columns require confirmation physical opening is required. To floor slabs we have sought to minimise physical openings by using Ferro-scanning techniques that can provide bar sizes without opening up; an area needs to be opened to calibrate the equipment in the first instance.

We understand from notes on some of the historic drawings that the building was constructed in three phases/contracts; this is also the understanding of the heritage consultant. It may therefore be possible that construction involved different contractors in each phase and possibly variations construction practices. Our investigations are therefore provided across the floor plates so that we can investigate each of the construction phases. This is important as some record drawings are dates from earlier work stages only, meaning that later sections of the building were completed after the date of this drawing, and it is not possible to say that this is a record of the final construction.

[Following initial comments from the design and conservation officer, the number of intrusive investigations have been reduced.] We have updated revision 'P3' to revision 'P4', which takes account of what information we have gained since first drafting the investigations scope. In summary this is:

- *reduced material testing throughout*
- *reduced number of intrusive openings in each of the 'phases' of construction*
- *grouping of floors; where similar floors are identified on drawings we will investigate one floor more-thoroughly than others and spot-check remaining similar floors.*

5.2 The Proposals per Floor

It is proposed to take samples of elements of structure at all floor levels, namely basement 2 to eighth floor. The sample areas are without exception located in areas of low heritage significance, outside of surviving decorative rooms. Instead, they have been chosen to be in areas which are either stripped of all finishes or have been modernised with new finishes. Therefore, all physical intervention would concern elements of historic structure but not elements of historic decoration.

All opening up would be made good in materials and techniques to match, following the completion of the investigation.

The interventions are itemised and described in detail, including measurements, on the drawings and in the schedule produced by Heyne Tillett Steel engineers, and in summary they are as follows:

<u>Basement 2:</u>

- take 5 samples of brick or concrete encased steel columns to establish size of steel.
- take 3 samples of brick walls, 2 in under-pavement vaults and one under the octagonal strong room, to test brick and mortar make up and strength.
- take 2 samples from ribbed slabs in southern part of building to expose and measure reinforcement
- hand dig 3 trial pits to expose foundation, openings to be c800mm square

<u>Basement:</u>

- take 5 samples of brick or concrete encased steel columns to establish size of steel.
- take 4 samples of brick walls to test brick and mortar make up and strength.
- take 3 sample cores of the floor slab to allow for material testing.

Ground floor:

- take 6 samples of brick or concrete encased steel columns to establish size of steel.

First Floor:

- take 4 samples of brick or concrete encased steel columns to establish size of steel.
- take 2 samples at beam junctions through breaking away encasement to measure beams and record concrete/other encasement
- take 2 samples of beams at soffit level through breaking away encasement to measure beams and record concrete/other encasement
- take 1 sample of steel column in pier or wall encased in brick by exposing steel and providing measurements
- drill 6 pilot holes into floor slabs to aid non-intrusive ferroscan investigation
- take 2 samples from ribbed floor slabs to expose and measure reinforcement

Second Floor:

- take 1 samples of brick or concrete encased steel columns to establish size of steel.
- take 2 samples at beam junctions through breaking away encasement to measure beams and record concrete/other encasement
- take 3 samples of beams at soffit level through breaking away encasement to measure beams and record concrete/other encasement
- take 1 sample of steel column in pier or wall encased in brick by exposing steel and providing measurements

Break-out 1 area over 500x500mm area to confirm depth of concrete cover and size of reinforcing bars, aiding ferroscan.

- drill 4 pilot holes into floor slabs to aid non-intrusive ferroscan investigation
- take 3 samples from ribbed floor slabs to expose and measure reinforcement
- take 3 sample cores of the floor slab to allow for material testing.

Third floor:

- take 3 samples of brick or concrete encased steel columns to establish size of steel.
- take 1 samples at beam junctions through breaking away encasement to measure beams and record concrete/other encasement
- take 2 samples of beams at soffit level through breaking away encasement to measure beams and record concrete/other encasement
- in 1 area: Material Testing – Allow for steel sample to be taken from beam section to test for material strength and weldability.
- take 1 sample of steel column in pier or wall encased in brick by exposing steel and providing measurements

Break-out 1 area over 500x500mm area to confirm depth of concrete cover and size of reinforcing bars, aiding ferroscan.

- drill 4 pilot holes into floor slabs to aid non-intrusive ferroscan investigation
- take 3 samples from ribbed floor slabs to expose and measure reinforcement

Fourth Floor:

- take 3 samples of brick or concrete encased steel columns to establish size of steel.
- take 1 samples at beam junctions through breaking away encasement to measure beams and record concrete/other encasement
- take 3 samples of beams at soffit level through breaking away encasement to measure beams and record concrete/other encasement
- take 1 sample of steel column in pier or wall encased in brick by exposing steel and providing measurements

Break-out 1 area over 500x500mm area to confirm depth of concrete cover and size of reinforcing bars, aiding ferroscan.

- drill 3 pilot holes into floor slabs to aid non-intrusive ferroscan investigation
- take 3 samples from ribbed floor slabs to expose and measure reinforcement
- take 3 sample cores of the floor slab to allow for material testing.

Fifth Floor:

- take 3 samples of brick or concrete encased steel columns to establish size of steel.
- take 2 samples of beams at soffit level through breaking away encasement to measure beams and record concrete/other encasement
- in 2 areas: Material Testing – Allow for steel sample to be taken from beam section to test

Break-out 1 area over 500x500mm area to confirm depth of concrete cover and size of reinforcing bars, aiding ferroscan.

- drill 4 pilot holes into floor slabs to aid non-intrusive ferroscan investigation
- take 3 samples from ribbed floor slabs to expose and measure reinforcement

Sixth Floor:

- take 1 samples of brick or concrete encased steel columns to establish size of steel.
- Allow for 1 steel sample to be taken from columns section to test for material strength and weldability.
- take 3 samples of beams at soffit level through breaking away encasement to measure beams and record concrete/other encasement
- in 2 areas: Material Testing – Allow for steel sample to be taken from beam section to test

Break-out 1 area over 500x500mm area to confirm depth of concrete cover and size of reinforcing bars, aiding ferroscan.

- drill 4 pilot holes into floor slabs to aid non-intrusive ferroscan investigation
- take 3 samples from ribbed floor slabs to expose and measure reinforcement

Seventh Floor:

- take 2 samples of brick or concrete encased steel columns to establish size of steel.

Eighth Floor:

- take 2 samples of brick or concrete encased steel columns to establish size of steel.

5.3 Heritage Impacts

All investigative works are located inside the building in areas of low heritage significance. They are for small-scale, localised opening up works, typical for construction projects where major alterations and/ or changes of use are proposed. They have been carefully considered as to be the minimum that is required in order to gain useful information on the structural performance of the building, and the knowledge that will be gained from these works will instrumental in establishing whether structural strengthening is needed. Such information is best obtained at the outset of a project, so as to avoid later, potentially more invasive retrofitting.

The proposals do not affect areas of heritage significance, instead they concern localised areas of utilitarian fabric in areas where plan form has also mostly been lost. All works would be made good to match and would not be apparent following the works. Many of the areas for investigation would subsequently be concealed by finishes or furniture. Therefore, no harm would be caused to the heritage significance of Victoria House, and because all works are internal, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area would be unaffected.

6.0 Conclusion

The proposals are for internal localised investigative works into the structure of Victoria House. They would concern areas where historic finishes and fittings are no longer present, and they would be made good to match.

Therefore, they would fulfil the legal and policy requirements for listed buildings and conservation areas by preserving the special interest of Victoria House and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and by causing no harm to their heritage significance. They comply with sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policy D2 of the Camden Plan, policy HC1 of the London Plan, and paragraph 199 of the NPPF.

Appendix I - Statutory List Description

VICTORIA HOUSE AND ATTACHED RAILINGS

Grade: II
Date first listed: 4 December 1990
Date of most recent amendment: 11 January 1999

04/12/90 GV II Commercial building with ground floor shops on east side. c1926-32. By Charles William Long. For the Liverpool Victoria Insurance Company as their headquarters. Sculpture by Herbert William Palliser. Ornamental brasswork by the Bromsgrove Guild. Steel frame clad with Portland stone, bronze infill panels and copperlite glazing surrounds. Green slate mansard roof with dormers.

EXTERIOR: eight storeys, sub-basement and basement on a rectangular island site with facades to Bloomsbury Square, Bloomsbury Place, Vernon Place and Southampton Row. Long sides, 15-window bays; returns five-window bays. West facade to Bloomsbury Square with tall channelled ground floor, central distyle-in-antis Ionic (Erechtheion) portico through first to fourth (attic) floors. Attached columns as far as projecting end bays with paired pilasters. Ground floor to third floor windows tripartite with small panes; second floor with relief pediments. Attic windows, with small panes in plain rectangular recesses, grouped in trios in the frieze (corresponding to window beneath). Tympanum with sculpture of central robed figure with arms outstretched flanked by other figures expressing the bounty of the natural world. To either side, cornice surmounted by parapet with panels of open ornamental brasswork behind which a further attic storey with trios of windows slightly offset from parapet openings. Mansard dormers slightly offset again; all echoing shape of triangular pediment. Central two storey feature above mansard. East facade similar but with shops at ground floor level (originally recessed but now with projecting C20 shopfronts) and tympanum sculpture on the theme of navigation and new forms of industry. Returns similar in style with distyle-in-antis centres, paired pilasters and no tympana. Entrance doors on all sides of panelled bronze.

INTERIORS: virtually unaltered. Entrance lobbies on all four sides faced in Subiaco marble with Greek style decoration and much decorative brasswork. Central ground floor public area, open through three floors to elaborate coffered suspended ceiling. Basement meeting/dance hall with coloured glass light fittings, door furniture and surrounds in polished steel and radiator grilles embossed with VH monogram. Extensive mahogany panelling to third floor offices. Some rooms with C18 fireplaces from houses previously on the site.

Listing NGR: TQ3039381709

Appendix II - Planning Policy and Guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The Act is legislative basis for decision making on applications that relate to the historic environment.

Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Act impose a statutory duty upon local planning authorities to consider the impact of proposals upon listed buildings and conservation areas.

Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that:

> *[...] in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.*

Similarly, section 66 of the above Act states that:

> *In considering whether to grant permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority, or as the case may be the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.*

Similarly, section 72(l) of the above Act states that:

> *[...] with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.*

Local Policy

Camden Local Plan

The local plan was adopted by the Council on 3 July 2017 and has replaced the Core Strategy and Camden Development Policies documents as the basis for planning decisions and future development in the borough. The following policies are relevant:

Policy D2 Heritage

The Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens and locally listed heritage assets.

Designated heritage assets

Designed heritage assets include conservation areas and listed buildings. The Council will not permit the loss of or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, including conservation areas and Listed Buildings, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

a. the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site;

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

c. conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and d. the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

The Council will not permit development that results in harm that is less than substantial to the significance of a designated heritage asset unless the public benefits of the proposal convincingly outweigh that harm.

Conservation areas

Conservation areas are designated heritage assets and this section should be read in conjunction with the section above headed 'designated heritage assets'. In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will take account

of conservation area statements, appraisals and management strategies when assessing applications within conservation areas. The Council will:

e. require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area;

f. resist the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area;

g. resist development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character or appearance of that conservation area; and

h. preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character and appearance of a conservation area or which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.

Listed Buildings

Listed buildings are designated heritage assets and this section should be read in conjunction with the section above headed 'designated heritage assets'. To preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will:

i. resist the total or substantial demolition of a listed building;

j. 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; and

k. resist development that would cause harm to significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting.

Enhancing the historic environment

7.40 The Council has a proactive approach to conserving heritage assets. In addition to the application of Local Plan policies the Council protects the historic environment through the following areas of work:

• Conservation Area Management Strategies: The Council works with the Conservation Area Advisory Committees to update and support the implementation of the strategies.

• Heritage at Risk: The Council identifies buildings and structures at risk and proactively seeks to conserve and where required put them back into viable use, including identifying sources of funding.

• Local list of undesignated heritage assets: The Council introduced the local list in 2015 and it will be updated annually.

• Guidance: The Council has adopted detailed guidance for the preservation of heritage assets in the supplementary planning document Camden Planning Guidance on design, and Retrofitting Planning Guidance (for sustainability measures in historic buildings). The Council updates planning guidance as required.

• Area based work: Conservation and enhancement of the historic environment is a key objective of area action plans and the Site Allocations. The Fitzrovia Area Action Plan for example sets principles for developing key sites which retain and enhance the setting of listed buildings.

7.41 The Council recognises that development can make a positive contribution to, or better reveal the significance of, heritage assets and will encourage this where appropriate. Responding appropriately to the significance of heritage assets and its setting can greatly enhance development schemes (for example, King's Cross Central)

Designated heritage assets

7.42 Designated heritage assets include listed buildings and structures, registered parks and gardens and conservation areas. The Council will apply the policies above and will not permit harm to a designated heritage asset unless the public benefits of the proposal outweigh the harm. Further guidance on public benefits is set out in National Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 18a-020-20140306). Any harm to or loss of a designated heritage asset will require clear and convincing justification which must be provided by the applicant to the Council. In decision making the Council will take into consideration the scale of the harm and the significance of the asset.

7.43 In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework the Council will only permit development resulting in substantial harm to or loss to a grade II listed building, park or garden in exceptional circumstances

and will only permit development resulting in substantial harm to or loss to a grade I and II* listed building, grade I and II* registered park or garden in wholly exceptional circumstances.

Conservation areas

7.44 In order to preserve or enhance important elements of local character, we need to recognise and understand the factors that create that character. The Council has prepared a series of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans that assess and analyse the character and appearance of each of our conservation areas and set out how we consider they can be preserved or enhanced. We will take these into account when assessing planning applications for development in conservation areas. We will seek to manage change in a way that retains the distinctive characters of our conservation areas and will expect new development to contribute positively to this. The Council will therefore only grant planning permission for development in Camden's conservation areas that preserves or enhances the special character or appearance of the area.

7.45 The character of conservation areas derive from the combination of a number of factors, including scale, density, pattern of development, landscape, topography, open space, materials, architectural detailing and uses. These elements should be identified and responded to in the design of new development. Design and Access Statements should include an assessment of local context and character and set out how the development has been informed by it and responds to it

7.46 Due to the largely dense urban nature of Camden, the character or appearance of our conservation areas can also be affected by development which is outside of conservation areas, but visible from within them. This includes high or bulky buildings, which can have an impact on areas some distance away, as well as adjacent premises. The Council will therefore not permit development in locations outside conservation areas that it considers would cause harm to the character, appearance or setting of such an area.

Use

7.53 Changes in patterns of use can also erode the character of an area. It is therefore important that, whenever possible, uses which contribute to the character of a conservation area are not displaced by redevelopment. Two uses of particular importance to the character of conservation areas are pubs and local shops, especially when they are in located in historic buildings. The Council will protect these uses as set out in "Policy C4 Public houses" and "Section 9 Town centres and shops".

Details

7.54 The character and appearance of a conservation area can be eroded through the loss of traditional architectural details such as historic windows and doors, characteristic rooftops, garden settings and boundary treatments. Where alterations are proposed they should be undertaken in a material of a similar appearance to the original. Traditional features should be retained or reinstated where they have been lost, using examples on neighbouring houses and streets to inform the restoration. The Council will consider the introduction of Article 4 Directions to remove permitted development rights for the removal or alterations of traditional details where the character and appearance of a conservation area is considered to be under threat.

Landscape

7.55 The value of existing gardens, trees and landscape to the character of the borough is described in "Policy A2 Open space" and they make a particular contribution to conservation areas. Development will not be permitted which causes the loss of trees or garden space where this is important to the character and appearance of a conservation area.

Sustainable design and retrofitting

7.56 Historic buildings including those in conservation areas can be sensitively adapted to meet the needs of climate change and energy saving while preserving their special interest and ensuring their long-term survival. In assessing applications for retrofitting sustainability measures to historic buildings the Council will take into consideration the public benefits gained from the improved energy efficiency of

these buildings, including reduction of fuel poverty. These considerations will be weighed up against the degree to which proposals will change the appearance of the building, taking into consideration the scale of harm to appearance and the significance of the building. Applicants are encouraged to follow the detailed advice in Camden's Retrofitting Planning Guidance, the energy efficiency planning guidance for conservation areas and the Historic England website.

Listed Buildings

7.57 Camden's listed buildings and structures provide a rich and unique historic and architectural legacy. They make an important and valued contribution to the appearance of the borough and provide places to live and work in, well known visitor attractions and cherished local landmarks. We have a duty to preserve and maintain these for present and future generations.

7.58 The Council has a general presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings. Total demolition, substantial demolition and rebuilding behind the façade of a listed building will not normally be considered acceptable. The matters which will be taken into consideration in an application for the total or substantial demolition of a listed building are those set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

7.59 In order to protect listed buildings, the Council will control external and internal works that affect their special architectural or historic interest. Consent is required for any alterations, including some repairs, which would affect the special interest of a listed building.

7.60 The setting of a listed building is of great importance and should not be harmed by unsympathetic neighbouring development. While the setting of a listed building may be limited to its immediate surroundings, it can often extend some distance from it. The value of a listed building can be greatly diminished if unsympathetic development elsewhere harms its appearance or its harmonious relationship with its surroundings. Applicants will be expected to provide sufficient information about the proposed development and its relationship with its immediate setting, in the form of a design statement.

Bloomsbury Conservation Area

Bloomsbury Conservation Area covers an area of approximately 160 hectares 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. The initial designation of Bloomsbury as a conservation area in 1968 sought to protect elements of development from the Georgian and earlier eras, but excluded areas where there had been significant later redevelopment. There have been numerous subsequent extensions that have mostly reflected a growing appreciation of Victorian and Edwardian and high quality 20th century architecture.

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy was adopted in April 2011. This document describes the character of the Bloomsbury Square area as follows:

Sub Area 6: Bloomsbury Square/Russell Square/ Tavistock Square

5.79 This sub area is largely made up of three- and four-storey late 18th and 19th century terraces surrounding a sequence of linked formal spaces, namely Bloomsbury Square, Russell Square and Tavistock Square. A series of north-south vistas visually connect the three squares. Moving through the area, there is a transition between the enclosed, urban nature of the streets and the more open squares which are softened by trees and green landscape. In places, the original terraces have been replaced with 20th century development, mostly of a larger scale and urban grain; this is particularly noticeable around Tavistock Square, Bedford Way and Upper Woburn Place.

5.80 Like Sub Area 5: Bedford Square/Gower Street, there is strong consistency in the architectural vocabulary of the original terraced development, albeit here it is some decades newer. Terraces in the sub area are either of three or four storeys in height with a basement below street level with iron railings to the frontage and small dormer windows set back in a mansard roof. The first floors of the townhouses which act as the piano nobile, are emphasised by banding and decorative iron window balconies. The terraces occupy standard plot widths, resulting in three-bay house widths, with windows of vertical proportions. Window openings generally have brick heads, with window frames recessed behind deep reveals containing sliding sashes which have been sub-divided into small panes by slender glazing bars. Doorways generally have semi-circular arches containing fanlights with decorative radiating glazing bars. The architectural and historical importance of these terraces is reflected in their listing, mostly at grade II. The Bloomsbury Square Area

Southampton Place leads into Bloomsbury Square from High Holborn and has three and four-storey three-bay early Georgian fronts in multi-coloured brick with stucco banding at parapet and first floor levels. Designed by an eminent 18th century architect, Henry Flitcroft, they are notable grade II listed classically-ornamented stucco frontage of No 19 which contains an archway through to Barter Street.*

[...]

5.83 Bloomsbury Square is so-called because it is the oldest square in the district, laid out in the late 17th century by Lord Southampton to the south of his residence Southampton House (re- named Bedford House). The square is thought to have been inspired by Inigo Jones' piazza at Covent Garden. Today, the entire east side of the square is dominated by the enormous, six-storey, neo-classical 1920s Victoria House fronting Southampton Row, which was designed by Charles William Long for the Royal Liverpool Insurance Company. Listed grade II, this building comprises a steel frame and is clad in Portland stone with bronze infill panels, a rusticated base and a giant classical order. In 2001-03 the building was re-fitted by the architect Will Alsop, and glimpses from the square can be seen of the striking pods which were inserted into the interior to form new office spaces. Victoria House provides a transition between the busy Southampton Row and the quieter square. Otherwise, the buildings surrounding the square, and leading into it from Southampton Place, are of a smaller-scale, terraced form. The range of architectural styles reflects the differing dates of construction. Nevertheless, there is general consistency in building heights: four storeys to the north and west sides, and three storeys to the south and along Southampton Place. The buildings are predominantly constructed from yellow brick with stucco decoration, although there are some fronts which are entirely stucco-faced. Window openings are vertically-proportioned, diminishing in size above large first-floor openings, with recessed sliding sashes subdivided with slender glazing bars. The majority of properties have iron boundary railings around basement areas.

5.84 The square is a unifying element and, owing to its comparatively small size and relatively narrow peripheral streets, has a strong relationship to the buildings facing it. Enclosed by iron railings, the public gardens have a periphery of mature trees, which together with grassed and paved areas make it a relatively peaceful space. The trees define both the streets and square framing views around the perimeter, filtering the views across the space and providing an attractive setting for the surrounding buildings. There is an underground car park under the square, which is well disguised due to skilful landscaping.

Looking north, Nos 18-22 (consec) and Nos 23-27 (consec) Bloomsbury Square are two terraces of grade II listed brick townhouses by James Burton, dating from 1800-1805, which frame the vista along Bedford Place. Flanking these are Nos 1-5 Bloomsbury Place and Nos 74-77 Great Russell Street, two stucco-faced terraces of the same height; of 17th century origin they were re- fronted in the mid 19th century and have a more decorative, classically-influenced elevational treatment. The gable of No 77 has an intricate first- floor iron verandah which adds visual interest in views along Great Russell Street.

5.85 Along the western side of the square there is greater variation in building widths, heights and elevational treatment. At the northern corner, No 17, the grade II listed Royal Pharmaceutical Society, is a stucco-faced block of 17th century origin which was remodelled by John Nash in circa 1777-78. This block has a symmetrical frontage and classically-influenced detailing, acting as a distinctive feature at the junction with Great Russell Street. No 15 has a rusticated stucco base, red brick band to first and second floors, with a stuccoed attic storey with decorative panels between the windows. Although this later insertion is of a different style to its neighbours, it is considered to be a positive contributor. Nos 9-14 (consec) are stucco-faced terraced properties that form a group within the street, having consistent three-bay frontages, a continuous cornice detail at parapet level and rusticated base. The original 17th century houses were re-fronted in an Italianate style in the mid 18th century (with the exception of No 14). Nos 7 and 8 are two unlisted terraced houses in a yellow brick with stone detailing that continues a relatively consistent parapet line. They carry through the three-bay pattern of fenestration and vertically-proportioned openings and contribute to the overall varied character of the terrace. At the southern end of the western side, Nos 5 and 6 are a pair of notable grade II listed houses designed by Henry Flitcroft in 1744. They are of three storeys with a mansard roof and are constructed in yellow stock brick with simple contrasting stucco banding. No 5 turns the corner to form a symmetrical facade at No 23 Bloomsbury Way.*

*5.86 The south side of Bloomsbury Square is formed by blocks of predominantly four- storey, three-bay terraces either side of Southampton Place. To the east, is a mid-18th century listed terrace of three townhouses in yellow stock brick with added 19th century stucco ornamentation. On the west side, Nos 46 and 47 are a mid-19th century symmetrical group in a yellow stock brick with a rusticated stucco ground floor. Nos 20 and 21 Bloomsbury Way are a similar pair of terraced properties. Between these groups, Nos 2 and 4a are two red brick late 19th century buildings, with some decorative brick elements. Nos 2 and 3 are grade II listed and have ashlar dressings, whereas Nos 4 and 4a have terracotta ornam*entation.

Regional Policy

The London Plan (March 2021)

In March 2021 the Mayor adopted The London Plan. This is operative as the Mayor's spatial development strategy and forms part of the development plan for Greater London. Policies pertaining to heritage include the following: Policy HC1 Heritage Conservation and Growth Development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance andappreciation within their surroundings. The cumulative impacts of incremental change from development on heritage assets and their settings should also be actively managed. Development proposals should avoid harm and identify enhancement opportunities by integrating heritage considerations early on in the design process.

National Planning Policy Framework

Any proposals for consent relating to heritage assets are subject to the policies of the NPPF (July 2021). This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. With regard to 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment', the framework requires proposals relating to heritage assets to be justified and an explanation of their effect on the heritage asset's significance provided.

Paragraph 7 of the Framework states that the purpose of the planning system is to 'contribute to the achievement of sustainable development' and that, at a very high level, 'the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

At paragraph 8, the document expands on this as follows:

> *Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives:*
>
> *a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
>
> *b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and*
>
> *c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.*

and notes at paragraph 10:

> *10. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).*

With regard to the significance of a heritage asset, the framework contains the following policies:

> *195. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.*

In determining applications local planning authorities are required to take account of significance, viability, sustainability and local character and distinctiveness. Paragraph 197 of the NPPF identifies the following criteria in relation to this:

> *a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
>
> *b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
>
> *c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*

With regard to potential 'harm' to the significance designated heritage asset, in paragraph 199 the framework states the following:

> *…great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*

The Framework goes on to state at paragraph 200 that:

> *Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:*
>
> *a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;*
>
> *b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.*

Where a proposed development will lead to 'substantial harm' to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset paragraph 201 of the NPPF states that:

> *…local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:*
>
> *a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
>
> *b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
>
> *c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
>
> *d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use*

With regard to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, of the NPPF states the following;

> *202. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*

In terms of non-designated heritage assets, the NPPF states:

> *203. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*

The Framework requires local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and world heritage sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Paragraph 206 states that:

> *… 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.*

National Planning Practice Guidance

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was published on 23 July 2019 to support the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 and the planning system. It includes particular guidance on matters relating to protecting the historic environment in the section: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment.

The relevant guidance is as follows:

Paragraph 2: What is meant by the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment?

Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in every day use and as yet undiscovered, undesignated buried remains of archaeological interest.

In the case of buildings, generally the risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time. In the case of archaeological sites, many have no active use, and so for those kinds of sites, periodic changes may not be necessary, though on-going management remains important.

Where changes are proposed, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out a clear framework for both plan-making and decision-making in respect of applications for planning permission and listed building consent to ensure that heritage assets are conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner that is consistent with their significance and thereby achieving sustainable development. Heritage assets are either designated heritage assets or non-designated heritage assets.

Part of the public value of heritage assets is the contribution that they can make to understanding and interpreting our past. So where the complete or partial loss of a heritage asset is justified (noting that the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted), the aim then is to:

- capture and record the evidence of the asset's significance which is to be lost
- interpret its contribution to the understanding of our past; and
- make that publicly available (National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 199)

Paragraph 6: What is "significance"?

'Significance' in terms of heritage-related planning policy is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

The National Planning Policy Framework definition further states that in the planning context heritage interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. This can be interpreted as follows:

- **archaeological interest**: As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
- **architectural and artistic interest**: These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.
- **historic interest**: An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history,

but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

In legislation and designation criteria, the terms 'special architectural or historic interest' of a listed building and the 'national importance' of a scheduled monument are used to describe all or part of what, in planning terms, is referred to as the identified heritage asset's significance.

Paragraph 7: Why is 'significance' important in decision-taking?

Heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset, and the contribution of its setting, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals.

Paragraph 13: What is the setting of a heritage asset and how should it be taken into account?

The setting of a heritage asset is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework.

All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. The setting of a heritage asset and the asset's curtilage may not have the same extent.

The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual/physical considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part in the assessment of impacts on setting, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each.

The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights of way or an ability to otherwise access or experience that setting. The contribution may vary over time.

When assessing any application which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change. They may also need to consider the fact that developments which materially detract from the asset's significance may also damage its economic viability now, or in the future, thereby threatening its ongoing conservation.

Paragraph 15: What is the optimum viable use for a heritage asset and how is it taken into account in planning decisions?

The vast majority of heritage assets are in private hands. Thus, sustaining heritage assets in the long term often requires an incentive for their active conservation. Putting heritage assets to a viable use is likely to lead to the investment in their maintenance necessary for their long-term conservation.

By their nature, some heritage assets have limited or even no economic end use. A scheduled monument in a rural area may preclude any use of the land other than as a pasture, whereas a listed building may potentially have a variety of alternative uses such as residential, commercial and leisure.

In a small number of cases a heritage asset may be capable of active use in theory but be so important and sensitive to change that alterations to accommodate a viable use would lead to an unacceptable loss of significance.

It is important that any use is viable, not just for the owner, but also for the future conservation of the asset: a series of failed ventures could result in a number of unnecessary harmful changes being made to the asset.

If there is only one viable use, that use is the optimum viable use. If there is a range of alternative economically viable uses, the optimum viable use is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset, not just through necessary initial changes, but also as a result of subsequent wear and tear and likely future changes. The optimum viable use may not necessarily be the most economically viable one. Nor need it be the original use. However, if from a conservation point of view there is no real difference between alternative economically viable uses, then the choice of use is a decision for the owner, subject of course to obtaining any necessary consents.

Harmful development may sometimes be justified in the interests of realising the optimum viable use of an asset, notwithstanding the loss of significance caused, and provided the harm is minimised. The policy on addressing substantial and less than substantial harm is set out in paragraphs 199-203 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Paragraph 18: How can the possibility of harm to a heritage asset be assessed?

What matters in assessing whether a proposal might cause harm is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset. As the National Planning Policy Framework makes clear, significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Proposed development affecting a heritage asset may have no impact on its significance or may enhance its significance and therefore cause no harm to the heritage asset. Where potential harm to designated heritage assets is identified, it needs to be categorised as either less than substantial harm or substantial harm (which includes total loss) in order to identify which policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 199-203) apply.

Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated.

Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision-maker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.

While the impact of total destruction is obvious, partial destruction is likely to have a considerable impact but, depending on the circumstances, it may still be less than substantial harm or conceivably not harmful at all, for example, when removing later additions to historic buildings where those additions are inappropriate and harm the buildings' significance. Similarly, works that are moderate or minor in scale are likely to cause less than substantial harm or no harm at all. However, even minor works have the potential to cause substantial harm, depending on the nature of their impact on the asset and its setting.

The National Planning Policy Framework confirms 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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It also makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification and sets out certain assets in respect of which harm should be exceptional/wholly exceptional (see National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 200).

Paragraph 20: What is meant by the term public benefits?

The National Planning Policy Framework requires any harm to designated heritage assets to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 8). Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit.

Examples of heritage benefits may include:

- sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting
- reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset
- securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation

Appendix III – Planning History

2021/3582/L 11-08-2021 REGISTERED
Internal refurbishment works to existing offices from 7th to 9th floor

2021/2775/L 12-07-2021 Granted
Refurbishment and upgrade of cycle parking and changing facilities in Basement Level 1

2020/4089/L 07-10-2020 Granted
Details of the doors between lift lobby to southern lightwell required by condition 4 of listed building consent ref: 2020/2896/L dated 13/08/2020 for the "Internal refurbishment works to upper and lower ground floors of Victoria House comprising replacement of later floors, re-cladding of later plaster finishes, light cleaning of historic stone surfaces, refurbishment of existing light fittings and enhancement of the lighting scheme, and associated mechanical and electrical improvements".

2020/3919/L 09-09-2020 Granted
Relocation of existing pendant bowl light within northern lift lobby at ground floor level and addition of contemporary light features.

2020/2896/L 21-07-2020 Granted
Internal refurbishment works to upper and lower ground floors of Victoria House comprising replacement of later floors, re-cladding of later plaster finishes, light cleaning of historic stone surfaces, refurbishment of existing light fittings and enhancement of the lighting scheme, and associated mechanical and electrical improvements.

2020/1262/L 11-03-2020 Granted
External and internal alterations to refurbish and install new MEP services at 1st to 3rd floors and 6th to 9th floors of Victoria House, replacement plant at roof level and other associated works.

2020/1238/P 11-03-2020 Granted
External alterations to refurbish and install new MEP services at 1st to 3rd floors and 6th to 9th floors of Victoria House, replacement plant at roof level and other associated works.

2020/0798/L 18-02-2020 Granted
Insertion of duct work through four window openings at 5th floor level to north and south elevations and associated ducting to serve two existing plant rooms within the building.

2020/0771/P 18-02-2020 Granted
Insertion of duct work through four window openings at 5th floor level to north and south elevations and associated ducting to serve two existing plant rooms within the building.

2019/6203/L 28-01-2020 Granted
Internal refurbishment works to existing offices from 1st to 9th floor.

2019/5696/L 12-12-2019 Granted
Repairs to mansard slate roof, leadwork and stonework and light cleaning of stonework to mansard and tower. Internal cleaning, repair and decoration of stone, terrazzo, plaster and metalwork of staircases.

2019/4278/L 05-09-2019 Granted
Internal works to improve the existing layout and redecorate the office areas in the 4th and 5th floors.

2019/2139/L 05-09-2019 Granted
Internal works to improve the existing layout, and redecoration of the commercial unit.

2018/4847/L 09-10-2018 Granted
Perimeter CCTV system including the installation of 12x mini dome cameras.

2018/3812/P 13-08-2018 Granted
Perimeter CCTV system including the installation of 12x mini dome cameras.

2018/2135/L 07-06-2018 Granted
The installation of a Public Address Voice Alarm System within the non-listed areas and the replacement of the fire alarm within the listed and non-listed areas.

2018/0020/P 04-01-2018 Granted
Re-instating of windows, divisions, cill and below-cill walling to fully match the original windows to the immediate right following the removal of the entire ATM surround shopfront-below-fascia-sign-level, replacement of etched glass pane with plane glass pane, and make good of any damage on Vernon Place elevation of the bank (Class A2).

2017/4223/L 29-08-2017 Granted
Removal of external signage and the entire ATM surround shopfront-below-fascia-sign-level to be replaced with new windows, divisions, cill and below-

cill walling, all to fully match the original windows to the immediate right, replacement of etched glass pane with plane glass pane, and make good of any damage.

2017/1420/L **14-03-2017** **Granted**
Installation of partitions to basement to provide secure storage and associated works to electrical and mechanical services.

2016/6548/L **30-11-2016** **Granted**
Installation of internal signage, addition of internal partitions and associated alterations with hair dresser equipment.

2016/5058/L **16-09-2016** **Granted**
Alterations to existing shopfront.

2016/4753/P **16-09-2016** **Granted**
Alterations to existing shopfront.

2016/4620/L **22-08-2016** **Granted**
Display of signage and installation of DDA sensor.

2016/3654/A **09-08-2016** **Granted**
Display of 1 x non-illuminated, internally placed fascia panel, 1 x externally illuminated projecting sign, internally applied vinyl lettering, internally applied vinyl manifestations and 1 x internally applied opening hours vinyl.

2014/5720/L **11-09-2014** **Granted**
Internal and external alterations in association with the display of 1 x internally illuminated projecting sign, 1 internally illuminated sign behind fascia glazing and 2 x window vinyl graphics applied to shop front.

2014/5491/A **11-09-2014** **Granted**
Display of 1 x internally illuminated projecting sign.

2013/6646/A **29-10-2013** **Granted**
Installation of one internally-illuminated projecting sign to shopfront (Class A1).

2013/6645/L **29-10-2013** **Granted**
Installation of one internally-illuminated projecting sign to shopfront (Class A1).

2013/2830/L **06-08-2013** **Granted**
Works in association with installation of 3 x condenser units behind recess wall to Southampton Row elevation.

2013/2783/P **06-08-2013** **Granted**
Installation of 3 x condenser units behind recess wall to Southampton Row elevation.

2013/0547/A **20-03-2013** **Granted**
Works in association with the display of 3x internally illuminated fascia signs, 2x internally illuminated projecting signs, 1x internally illuminated ATM surround and 5x small non illuminated signs to bank (Class A2).

2013/0548/L **18-03-2013** **Granted**
Works in association with the display of 3x internally illuminated fascia signs, 2x internally illuminated projecting signs, 1x internally illuminated ATM surround and 5x small non illuminated signs to bank (Class A2).

2013/0807/P **13-02-2013** **Granted**
Installation of an additional air-conditioning condenser unit within existing roof plant enclosure at roof level.

2013/0500/L **30-01-2013** **Granted**
Installation of 1 air-conditioning unit, 3 condenser units and extract vent to the north side roof level.

2013/0478/P **30-01-2013** **Granted**
Installation of 1 air-conditioning unit, 3 condenser units and extract vent to the north side roof level.

2012/6008/L **13-11-2012** **Granted**
Internal alterations to existing building involving the installation of three support beams associated with the installation of a lift.

2012/5572/P **08-11-2012** **Granted**
Replacement of existing side doors with automated doors excluding middle door to front elevation at the ground floor level.

2012/5565/P **08-11-2012** **Granted**
Installation of 1 air-conditioning unit and 3 condenser units to the roof level.

2012/5562/L **08-11-2012** **Granted**
Internal and external alterations including replacement of existing side doors with automated doors (excluding middle door) to front elevation at the ground floor level, installation of external plant comprising air-conditioning unit and fan condenser units to the roof level, display of 2 internally illuminated fascia signs, installation of new lift, reinforcement and extension of mezzanine floor and relocation of staircase.

2012/0258/L 27-01-2012 Granted
Internal alterations at ground floor, lower mezzanine and upper mezzanine levels.

2011/6402/P 21-12-2011 Granted
Change of opening hours to: 07:00-02:00 Mondays to Thursday, 07:00-03:00 Fridays and Saturdays and 07:00-01:00 Sundays pursuant to condition 1 of planning permission 2006/3681/P dated 29/09/2010 for: The retention of use of part of upper basement level (with ground floor entrance lobby) as an events promotion venue and public bar (sui generis) as an amendment to planning permission ref. PSX0004957 dated 18 July 2001.

2011/3965/P 07-09-2011 Granted
Change of use of ground floor level retail unit (Class A1) to restaurant / café use (Class A3).

2011/2489/L 21-07-2011 Granted
External works including cleaning, localised repairs and re-pointing to the elevations, roof and crittal windows.

2009/2300/L 31-07-2009 Granted
Removal of internal partitions at fourth floor level (Class B1).

2009/1843/P 08-07-2009 Granted
Retention of change of use from sandwich bar (Class A1) to restaurant use (Class A3) on ground and mezzanine floors.

2009/0842/L 31-03-2009 Granted
Installation of an internally illuminated projecting sign.

2009/0841/A 31-03-2009 Granted
Display of internally illuminated projecting sign.

2008/0573/L 15-02-2008 Granted
Installation of 3 internally illuminated fascia signs and 2 externally illuminated projecting signs.

2007/4301/A 15-02-2008 Granted
Display of 3 internally illuminated fascia signs and 2 externally illuminated projecting signs.

2007/4301/A 15-02-2008 Granted
Display of 3 internally illuminated fascia signs and 2 externally illuminated projecting signs.

2007/5721/L 21-12-2007 Granted
Internal and external alterations associated with the lowering of existing Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) on the Vernon Place elevation.

2006/3681/P 06-09-2006 Granted
The retention of use of part of upper basement level (with ground floor entrance lobby) as an events promotion venue and public bar (sui generis) as an amendment to planning permission ref. PSX0004957 dated 18 July 2001

2006/3092/L 21-07-2006 Granted
Alterations involving the insertion of new glass doors into existing south atrium glass wall at the upper ground floor entry level.

2006/3016/P 07-07-2006 Granted
External alterations to the existing office (Class B1) at 5th floor level including retention of two external air conditioning units, and installation of associated air handling plant and one extract fan to be mounted behind the parapet wall at 5th floor roof level.

2006/2828/L 07-07-2006 Granted
Internal alterations to the existing office (Class B1) at 5th floor level and retention of two air conditioning units, installation of associated air handling plant and extract fan to be mounted behind the parapet wall at 5th floor roof level.

2006/2555/L 12-06-2006 Granted
The retention of works relating to the refurbishment and refitting of basement ballroom, bars and ancillary spaces to incorporate an events/promotions venue, associated works to the ground floor comprising the installation of bronze pin -mounted lettering to one side of the Bloomsbury Square entrance.

2006/2554/A 12-06-2006 Granted
Display of annodised letters on the fabric of the building.

2005/2626/L 01-08-2005 Granted
Internal alterations in connection with use of lower basement level as bowling alley (Use Class D2).

2005/2490/P 28-06-2005 Granted
Proposed use of lower basement level for bowling alley [Use Class D2 of the Town and Country (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended)].

2003/3437/L 10-02-2004 Granted
Internal alterations to the fourth floor including internal partitions, secondary glazing and installation of plant at seventh floor.

2003/1328/P 31-07-2003 Granted
Change of use of 2nd floor offices (Class B1) to use as offices and/or tribunal rooms (Class B1 and Sui Generis mixed/composite use) together with ancillary uses

PSX0304162 14-03-2003 Granted
Alterations to ground floor, elevations including removal of 3 sets of doors and installation of glazed panels, as shown by drawing numbers: 0208wd01b, 09b, 20b & 48d

PSX0204119 07-02-2002 Grant Cert. of Lawful Proposed Use
Application for certificate of Lawfulness for Proposed use as Class B1 offices with ancillary tribunal rooms, always provided that the use of the tribunal rooms remains ancillary and subservient to the primary use of the premises and does not become a separate or dominant use at any time, as shown on drawing numbers; Location plan; PM11357/3033/ 21F; 3055/2D; 3066/2B; 3011/2B.

PSX0004957 & LSX0004958 22-01-2001 Grant Full Planning Permission (conds)
Refurbishment of the listed building including alterations at roof level; alterations to the shopfronts; the formation of an internal vehicular loading bay at the north end of the Bloomsbury Square elevation; the erection of a roof over the two existing two light wells to form atria, with new internal walls, and the insertion of pods in the atria. The use of the building to involve:- retention of office use on part of the ground and all the upper floors; double height Class A1 retail units on the Southampton Row frontage; retention of the existing bank on the southern corner and introduction of new restaurant use (with entrance and bar on Vernon Place); and a new health club on the basement floors. as shown on drawing numbers and documents listed on the schedule dated 18.1.2001, reissued on 6.4.2001

LS9704882 21-08-1997 Grant L B Consent with Conditions
The removal of the existing World War I marble memorial. (as shown on drawing nos. B736-400, 401, 402 & 406)

9570191 19-06-1995 Grant List. Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Internal alterations to remove existing ducts for refurbishment of toilets as shown on drawing numbers P124/646-649 651 655 657 659A 666 667A 669 673 677 680A 683A.

9570139 09-05-1995 Grant List. Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Internal alterations to install a new loading door at sub-basement level. as shown on drawing numbers P124/644 and /645.

9470215 11-07-1994 Grant List. Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Internal alterations to second floor level. as shown on drawing numbered P124/632 and the second floor plans and as described in the Schedule of work dated June 1994.

9470076 14-03-1994 Grant List. Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Internal alterations to Southampton Row entrance lobby and replacement external signage. as shown on drawing numbers P124/592A 600 601A 604A; 976A; P124/8 P124/214 and unnumbered Southampton Row elevation drawing.

9370266 14-12-1993 Grant List. Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Replacement of timber doors to goods lift with bronze finish fire resisting doors as shown on one drawing numbered P.124/599A

9370201 01-10-1993 Grant List. Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Internal alterations incorporating removal of glazing and security bars to the island unit in the public hall and the installations of new windows and a new counter service. as shown on drawing numbers P124/527A 530 561 562.

9370136 07-07-1993 Grant List. Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Refurbishment of ground floor entrance at Vernon Place (south) facade as shown in drawing numbers P124/515 516 533 540 541 543 544 545 547 548 and ELM-FD-0413/2

9300768 24-06-1993 Grant Full or Outline Planning Permissn.
Relocation of 2 air conditioning condenser units from basement area on south elevation to first floor gallery level on east elevation as shown on location plan dated 4th December 1987 and drawing numbered OPUS SK No E1879B/1.

9370125 24-06-1993 Grant List.
Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Relocation of 2 air conditioning condenser units from basement area on south elevation to first floor gallery level on east elevation as shown on location plan dated 4th Decmeber 1987 and on drawing numbered OPUS SK No E1879B/1

9270216 04-12-1992 Grant List.
Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Fire precaution works including new doors and signage as shown on fourteen un-numbered floor plans and drawings nos. P124/487B and 489B.

9270215 04-12-1992 Grant List.
Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Victoria House 37-63 Southampton Row WC1
Erection of eight external service riser ducts in internal lightwells as shown on drawings nos. 13510/ 4301 4302 4303 4304 and 4305.

9270214 04-12-1992 Grant List.
Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Remodelling of the south part of the fourth floor to create open plan offices as shown on drawings nos. P124/467 470C 471A 477 478 479A 491 492 493 494 and 506 (parts 1 and 2).

9270213 04-12-1992 Grant List.
Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Refurbishment and partial remodelling of part of the north part of the sixth floor offices as shown on drawings nos. P124/485B 469E 472A 473A 474E 476C 485B 486B 490A 495 496 497 parts 1 2 and 3 498 499 500 501 502A 503A 507 and 508.

9170102 24-05-1991 Grant List.
Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Repairs to metal balustrade on Vernon Place as shown site plan no. TQ3081 NW and list of specifications no. IAD/P124/5706.

9170096 20-05-1991 Refuse List.
Build. or Cons Area Consent
The internal refurbishment of sixth floor offices as on drawings nos. P124/458 459 460 461 462 and schedule of works.

9170090 30-04-1991 Grant List.
Build. or Cons.Area Consent
Internal alterations in the sub-basement involving demolition of sertaion internal walls as shown on drawing numbers5593/SK1 and SK2.

9080029 10-04-1990 Grant
Approval for Advertisement
The display of an internally illuminated projecting sign at fascia level as shown on drawing numbered B/CT/1491-1.

8900514 19-10-1989 Grant Full
or Outline Planning Permissn.
Alterations at ground floor level on the Bloomsbury Square frontage consisting of the replacement of two external goods hoists as shown on drawings numbered FS13211/A/3002 3003 3004 and letter dated 19th December 1989.

8880068 01-07-1988 Grant
Approval for Advertisement
Replacement of existing signs by the display of the following:- a. Three internally illuminated fascia signs one measuring 8250mm long x 450mm deep on the Southampton Row elevations and two measuring 3900mm long x 450mm deep on the Vernon Place elevations. b.Two internally illuminated projecting signs one sited on the Southampton Row elevation and one on the Vernon Place elevation as shown on drawing numbers 1634009/SK1 and 2.

8800073 10-02-1988 Grant Full
or Outline Planning Permissn.
Alterations at ground floor level in connection with the replacement of a goods hoist from basement to ground floor. Formation of new access point as shown on drawings numbered P124/342 and 343.

8800008 08-01-1988 Grant Full
or Outline Planning Permissn.
Alterations to existing ground floor elevation as shown on your drawiug 1634009/01.

8701953 19-06-1987 Grant Full
or Outline Planning Permissn.
Alterations to the ground floor entrance including the installation of a new canopy. As shown in drawing numbered 505/06.

8602471 29-12-1986 Grant Full or Outline Planning Permissn.
Change of use of part of 7th floor office space to residential (Housekeeper's accommodation) as shown on drawing numbered P124/317 and seventh floor plan.

8602458 29-12-1986 Grant Full or Outline Planning Permissn.
Formation of a vehicular means of access on to Bloomsbury Square as shown on 1 unnumbered drawing.

CTP/N14/20/1/A 30-03-1965 permission
Erection of 2 fire escape stairs at Victoria House, Southampton Row, Camden.

TP2424/789 05-04-1963 conditional
The use of the North Dance Hall, Victoria House, Southampton Row, Holborn for office purposes.

TP2424/4569 23-05-1960 conditional
The erection of an extension to a lift motor-room at Victoria House, Southampton Row, Holborn.

TP2424/10998 21-08-1959 permission
The installation of a new shop-front at No. 9 Victoria Colonnade, Victoria House, Southampton Row, Holborn.

TP2424/11247 14-03-1947 permission
Victoria House, Southampton Row, W.C.1, The erection of a sign at Victoria House, Southampton Row, W.C.1, as shown on the said plan, subject to compliance with the Council's requirements under the London Building Acts.

TP2424/134058 07-09-1937 permission
The erection of a fan on the roof of the premises known as Victoria House, Southampton Row, Holborn,.

TP2424/123573 15-10-1935 permission
Claude General Neon Lights, Limited, to erect three neon signs at Victoria House, Southampton Row, Holborn.

TP2424/123542 07-12-1934 permission
You to execute alterations and to erect additions to the premises known as Victoria House. Southampton Row, Bloomsbury.

Donald Insall Associates