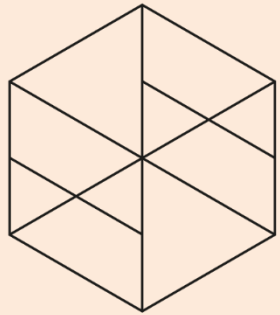


British Medical Association House, Tavistock Square, London

Heritage Appraisal March 2022



The
Heritage
Practice

BMA House

Acoustic Silencer Heritage Appraisal

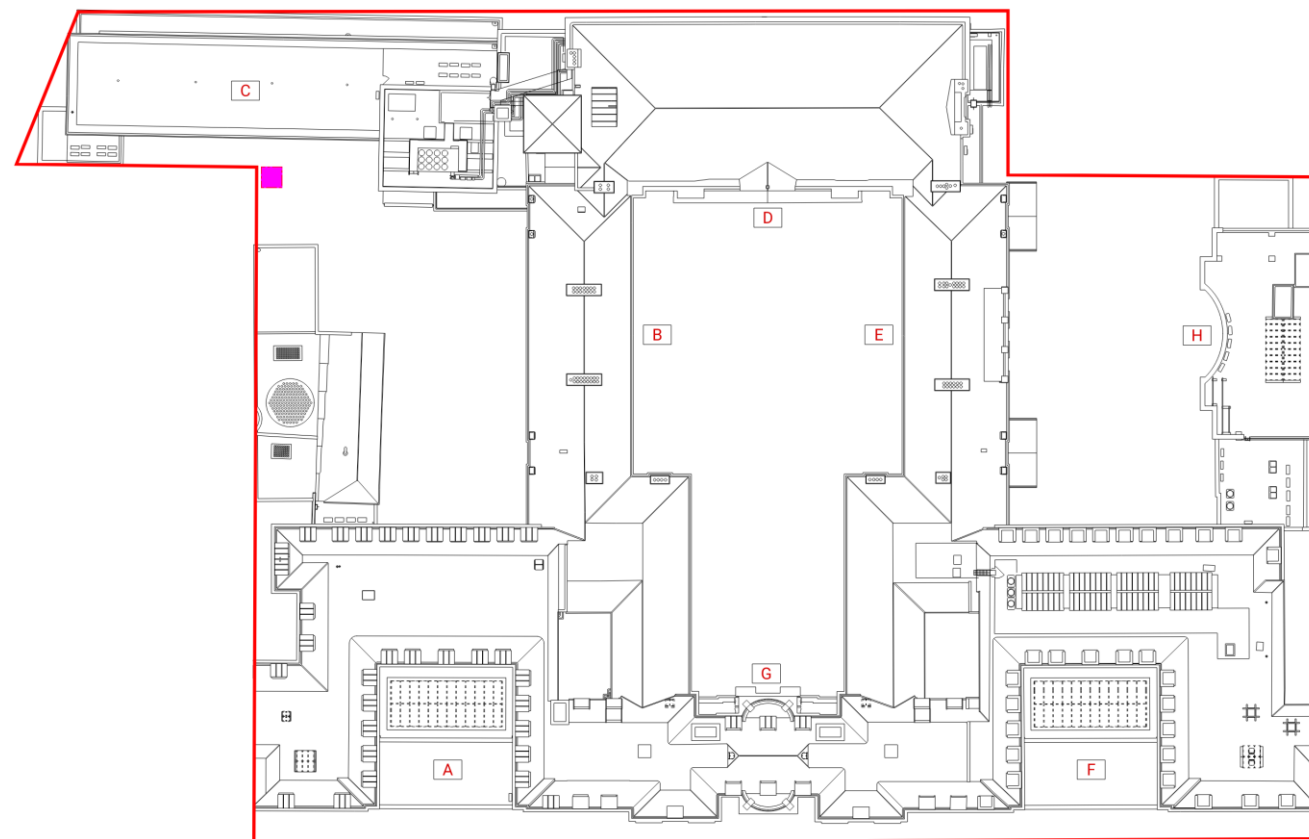
THE HERITAGE PRACTICE

March 2022

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Site location plan of BMA House with the acoustic silencer shown in purple

1 Introduction

1.1 The following Heritage Appraisal has been prepared in association with the retrospective application for an acoustic silencer (shown purple) fixed to an existing air conditioning unit, located in the inner northern courtyard of British Medical Association (BMA) House, 13 Tavistock Square, London, WC 1.

1.2 When considering the proposed works special regard to be given to:

- The special interest of the existing building;
- The setting of neighbouring listed buildings; and,
- The character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

BMA House

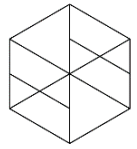
1.3 BMA House is a grade II listed building. The memorial fountain in the central courtyard is grade II* listed. The list description for the building (Appendix A) sets out that the entire site is grade II listed, including Block C, an addition of the 1960s and the war memorial gates that define the central courtyard. The list description notes that the interior is altered and now 'modern offices'. The 1960s block (Block C) is of 'lesser interest'. The summary of the site's importance is given as:

A fine, albeit incomplete, example of Lutyens' earlier work in the neo-classical idiom. The later additions by Wontner-Smith and Wood, which form the majority of the building, are dignified and well-detailed; the whole ensemble representing a distinguished and coherent complex of multi-phase buildings. Of historic interest as the headquarters of the BMA since 1925.

1.4 The list description identifies several areas where value can be attributed to the existing building:

- An example of Lutyens' earlier work albeit incomplete;
- The high architectural quality of the later Wontner-Smith and Wood additions;
- While individual elements have value, the site as a whole is a distinguished and coherent complex; and,
- The association with the BMA since 1925.

1.5 The building's list description notes that 'the interior is considerably altered'. The relatively recent listing of the building has meant that various internal and external alterations have taken place prior to listing that were obviously undertaken outside of the listed building consent regime. This has resulted in the loss of some, but not all, of the building's internal features and character. Alteration has left the interior of the building with less of a robust 1930s character than its exterior and as a result, there are clear opportunities for enhancement.



Above: Identification of nearby listed buildings (red dots). 4-18 and 4a-18a Woburn (outlined in green).
Blow: Northern part of Sub Area 6 of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area showing the site (outlined in bold red) and certain nearby listed buildings and other heritage assets.

Bloomsbury Conservation Area

1.6 The existing building also forms part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It is located within Sub Area 6 of the conservation area: Bloomsbury Square/Russell Square/Tavistock Square. Any proposed alterations, particularly external alterations, should take into account their effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

1.7 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.

1.8 The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Management Strategy describes Sub Area 6 as

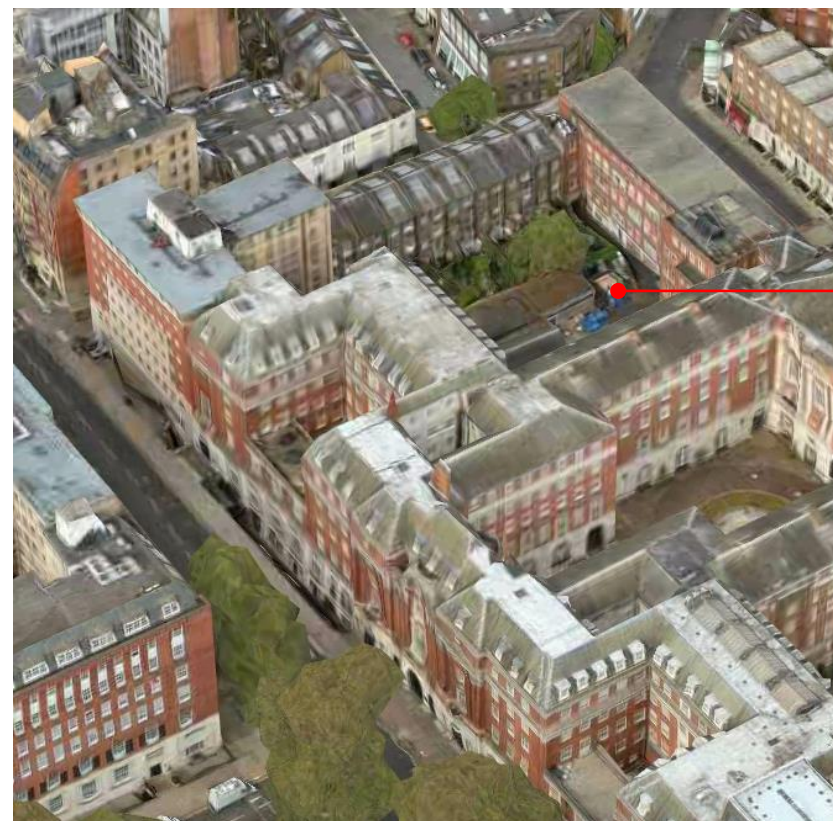
“largely made up of three- and four-storey late 18th and 19th century terraces surrounding a sequence of linked formal spaces, namely Bloomsbury Square, Russell Square and Tavistock Square. A series of north-south vistas visually connect the three squares. Moving through the area, there is a transition 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.”

Setting adjoining heritage assets

1.9 There are also a number of nearby listed buildings in close proximity to the site. These include:

- Nos. 4-18 and 4a-18a Woburn Walk – grade II*;

1.10 This is a terrace of 8 shops with accommodation over dating from 1820s. The proposed silencer extends above the high brick boundary wall of no. 18 Woburn Walk.



Position of the silencer

Above: Location of the silencer (purple) in context of the listed terrace of Woburn Walk (rear gardens shown in green)
 Below: Aerial view of the site

2 Setting

2.1 The setting of heritage assets is a relatively broad concept. It is defined in the Glossary to the NPPF as ‘The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.’

2.2 This means that setting includes how an asset is experienced in its context and that aspects of its setting can contribute to overall significance.

2.3 Historic England’s Good Practice Advice Note 3: Setting of Heritage Assets (GPA3) was issued in July 2015 and replaced an earlier similar document of 2011. The guidance advocates an approach to assessing the effect of development proposals on the setting of heritage assets against the background of the NPPF and the associated Planning Policy Guidance.

2.4 It sets out that at paragraph 9 that ‘Setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, though land within a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset. This depends on a wide range of physical elements within, as well as perceptual and associational attributes pertaining to, the heritage asset’s surroundings.’

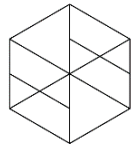
2.5 The importance of setting, and the degree to which it can be affected, is inextricably linked therefore to what setting contributes to the significance of the heritage asset. In this case – the contribution the silencer makes to the setting of nearby listed terrace on Woburn Walk. In order for setting to be important and to be appropriately protected in planning decisions, it must contribute to the overall significance of the listed building.

2.6 For example, the significance of a listed church could be enhanced or diminished by works undertaken to an associated Vicarage but works undertaken to a neighbouring unconnected residential property would not impact on the setting of the listed church in the same way. Setting can be considered partly, but not solely, through visual consideration but it cannot be limited to such matters. Physical attributes and historic associations should also be taken into account. The effect of the application proposal on the setting of relevant listed buildings as explored below therefore takes into account what the existing site contributes to the significance of the listed buildings in question.

2.7 The proposed **Acoustic Silencer** is located within a private courtyard of the BMA House (this also happens to form part of a listed building) which itself is part of a densely developed complex of buildings. The specific location of the Silencer forms part of a varied palette, scale and elevational treatment, viewed as a peripheral territory apparatus within an enclosed yard which also houses large waste bins and other utilitarian and ‘back of house’ items.

2.8 The visual setting of the Woburn Walk listed buildings and is one that is not unique to this area of London in its variation – it is a characteristic of areas of cities where development has taken place more organically and without the signs of comprehensive or formal planning. There is a layering and complexity within this urban environment where greater height and scale are features of the local area alongside buildings of lesser height and scale and backland development such as the open yard.

2.8 Under these circumstances, the setting of Woburn Walk listed buildings is this more varied townscape, and this can be appreciated visually. It is understood that this forms part of context. In order to adequately form part of setting however, elements of the wider urban townscape should contribute to the significance of the listed buildings. It follows that within the listed buildings’ immediate context there may be aspects that contribute to significance and to varying degrees and other elements that do not contribute to significance overall.



3 Assessment

3.1 The following section considers the significance of the listed buildings identified above and considers how the Silencer, in forming part of their wider and immediate context, contributes to that overall significance of the BMA House, Bloomsbury CA or Adjoining Listed Terrace. In understanding this, whether the site contributes to the setting and significance of the listed buildings (BMA House or listed terrace) or conservation area (and to what degree) and whether the proposed works to the site affect that setting and significance can be assessed.

BMA House

3.2 The proposed works are within the curtilage of the BMA house and therefore form part of its significance albeit to a smaller degree. However the size and nature of the existing BMA listed building complex combined with the minor nature and discreet position of the Silencer would mean the proposed works would have no harmful impact on the significant or setting of the listed building

Bloomsbury Conservation Area

3.3 As discussed above the works form part of the Bloomsbury CA and therefore has the potential to impact its special character and appearance. However, the proposed works are located in a private courtyard. It is hidden from public view and affords on limited private views the upper floors of Wobum Walk (south) terrace. The CA totals 160 Hectares of land made up of varied urban townscape. The proposal can in no way be found to harm the setting or the significance of the conservation area or disrupt its character or appearance.

Wobum Walk

3.4 4-18 Wobum Walk is a group of grade II listed terraces. They are architecturally robust and distinctive Terrace. The terrace is located to the north-west of the site beyond a rear garden boundary wall. There is no interrelationship between the site and listed terrace. While the proposed silencer is nearby and form part of a wider townscape context, their setting is not considered to be affected by proposals.

3.5 The limited view of the upper part of the silencer may be visible from the upper floors of the listed terrace. However in the context of far larger complex of buildings which form the immediate context the proposed scheme is considered to be entirely appropriate. Moreover the work has been carried out to reduce the impact of noise from the existing air conditioning unit. This provides a neighborly and therefore public benefit from the works. This would introduce a more appropriate amenity relationship between the site and the listed terrace. In line with NPPF paragraph 202, if the LPA found any visual harm from the proposed works, this would be less than substantial harm which should be weighed against the public benefits of improving the amenity through reducing noise levels.

3.6 For reasons described above, it is considered that the p scheme would not harm the setting or the significance of nearby listed buildings. It would therefore comply with relevant national statute, policy and Guidance.

Appendix A: List Description

Administrative headquarters of the British Medical Association and rented offices, begun by Sir Edwin Lutyens as the headquarters and temple of the Theosophical Society, his work unfinished. Built in phases as follows: 1913-14 and 1923-25 by Sir Edwin Lutyens (E courtyard and elevation to Burton Street); 1928-9 by Cyril Wontner Smith (central entrance block to Tavistock Square and blocks extending eastwards to form the W courtyard); 1938-49 by Douglas Wood (flanking blocks to entrance); S extension of 1947-50 (the Nuffield Wing), also by Wood and extension on NE of 1959-60. Contains re-used fittings from the previous BMA headquarters at 429, The Strand, built by Percy Adams and Charles Holden in 1908 (qv). MATERIALS: Steel-frame construction. Red brick laid in English bond, Portland stone dressings and green Westmorland slate roofs. Timber sash windows with glazing bars.

EXTERIOR: SW elevation to Tavistock Square. Central entrance block by Wontner Smith, comprising centre bay and 2 slightly projecting bays. 4 storeys, attics and basement. Ground floor Portland stone with 3 round-arched openings with keystones and impost bands to each bay. Central opening with vaulted porte-cochère, flanked by lower pedestrian passageways to courtyard. Plain stone 1st floor band. Centre bay with distyle-in-antis attached Corinthian columns (brick shafts, stone capitals) rising from 1st to 4th floor and supporting a modillion entablature with open segmental pediment, flanked by architraved sashes with keystones in attic storey. Above the vehicle entrance, a tall architraved sash with bracketed pediment surmounted by a cartouche, a small architraved sash with keystone and keyed oculus in the pediment. Cornice at eaves level and hipped roof, behind which 2 tall moulded brick slab chimney-stacks. Flanking bays with similar columns and entablature. Architraved 1st floor windows with balustraded balconies and bracketed segmental pediments; 2nd and 3rd floor, architraved sashes with an oculus in the attic storeys. Cornices at eaves level and hipped roofs. Courtyard facade similar to centre bay but flanked by extra bays with 2 brick pilasters and narrow architraved sashes. Attached blocks forming the western courtyard of 4 storeys; stone ground floors with 2-light round-arched openings. Plain 1st floor sill band. Architraved sashes; 1st floor with alternating segmental and triangular pediments with balustraded window guards. Stone entablature at 4th floor level; architraved attic windows with keystones, above which a stone cornice. Eastern elevations with brick chimney-stacks rising from 1st floor.

Douglas Wood's extension blocks of 1928-9, flanking the entrance, are 3 bays and 2 storeys each, plus 2-bay, 4-storey pavilions. Stone ground floors with square-headed, square pillar arcading and 2 square-headed, metal framed windows to each bay. Stone-capped parapet at 1st floor level. Square-headed architraved sashes in each bay on 1st floor, above which the cornice. Stone-capped parapet. Each pavilion with slightly projecting stone entrance surround with impost bands, fanlight and 2-leaf wooden doors. Above, tall architraved sash with bracketed pediment and balustraded balcony flanked by similar columns and entablature to the central entrance. Cornice at eaves level and hipped roof. Wood's red brick Nuffield Wing joins on to the southern extension. 3 storeys with single-storey bay to N. Elegant red brick façade in restrained Baroque style, with concave section of 5 bays to the N framed by pilasters. Horizontal rustication to ground floor, parapet with recessed panels.

E courtyard. The wings to the N, S and E of this courtyard are the original block designed by Lutyens. W façade 'Renaissance' style; 3 storeys and 5 bays. Portland stone faced ground floor with round-arched openings linked by impost bands, except those flanking the central entrance which are square-headed. All with keystones. Hexastyle-in-antis stone Corinthian columns from 1st to 2nd floor supporting a modillion pediment with a clock in the tympanum. Entablature continued one bay each side, supported at angles by Corinthian pilasters. Each bay with architraved sash with bracketed pediment. Small, architraved sashes with keystones in attic storey with stone cornice. North and south blocks, forming the sides of the courtyard, similar to those of western courtyard. E façade to Burton Place: Handsome elevation in manner of Renaissance palazzo. 2

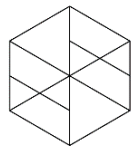
storeys, 7 windows, framed by pilasters. Round-arched ground floor openings of 2 lights with stone architraves, soffits and keystones, linked by impost bands. Centre opening with 2-leaf doors and fanlight. Plain stone band and stone string at 1st floor level with carved stone shell motifs above each keystone. Tall piano nobile with large square-headed, architraved windows with alternating triangular and segmental pediments. Central window with bracketed cornice surmounted by a multi-layer feature of rectangular blocks. Projecting stone cornice. The pilaster capitals and a stone tablets above central first-floor window left uncarved as boasted work. The adjacent block to the north of this is by Douglas Wood, in an austere neo-Georgian style. This is of lesser interest. INTERIOR: Much of the interior now modern offices. Interiors of note include the Great Hall (intended as the Theosophist's temple), occupying the entire length of the first floor Lutyens E courtyard block. This was subdivided by the insertion of a floor in 1985 to provide a library with offices. 5 bays with aisles; frieze at dado height has series of roundels. Marble columns with Corinthian capitals supporting entablature; beamed compartmented ceiling inserted above cornice level. Above this is the barrel vaulted ceiling, of which only the coffered end bays were finished. The Hastings Room, originally planned by Lutyens as a library. Contains mahogany panelling and colonnaded screen. Chimneypieces with mahogany timber overmantels, marble slips and decorative tiled insets. Some of these features are understood to have been moved here in 1928-9 from the former BMA headquarters at 429 The Strand, designed by Percy Adams and Charles Holden. The Council Chamber, on the S side of the main courtyard, also has panelling from the Strand building. Coved ceiling. Round-headed windows with imposts linked to cornice. Entrance hall to the right of Wontner-Smith's main gateway has mahogany Tuscan columns, cornice and doors with segmental pediments. The Prince's Room is a square chamber above the main gateway. Recess to corner with Corinthian columns and entablature. Decorative window architraves. Neo-Georgian chimneypiece with marble bolection moulding and lugged timber surround and mirrored overmantel to match windows. Most of these rooms have been altered.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: The E and W courtyards are separated by Lutyens' intricate wrought-iron war memorial screen and gates, opened on 13 July 1925 by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The plaque over the main gates is inscribed on the W side MEMORY AND PRAISE, and on the E side: FAITHFUL HAVE BEEN YOUR WARFARE. Statues of Sacrifice, Cure, Prevention and Aspiration of 1952 by J Woodford and S Rowland Pierce form a Second World War memorial.

A small southern courtyard, The Council Garden, between the southern wing of Lutyens' building and the Nuffield Wing, contains a garden with oval pool, set beneath curved retaining wall built in red brick with stone steps and coping. The garden design is attributed to Lutyens, but this has not been established and evidence suggests that it post-dates his involvement. Plaque to Charles Dickens surrounded by bricks from his home on the site. Parapet stones from BMA House forming wall to planting bed and inscribed to commemorate the air raid of 16 April 1940 which damaged the buildings.

HISTORY: Originally designed by Lutyens as the headquarters and temple of the Theosophical Society, incorporating offices for commercial rental. Lutyens' wife Emily had become a follower of the Theosophists. Construction began in 1913 and ceased in 1914 when the uncompleted shell was commandeered by the Army Pay Office, which fitted out parts of the interior as offices. It is unclear whether the Theosophists ever used the building. After the war ended, the Theosophists had run out of funds. The BMA, founded 1832, bought the lease in 1923, and engaged Lutyens to complete the interior, principally the Great Hall. Wontner-Smith was engaged in 1927 to complete the western part of the building, facing Tavistock Square. The building subsequently expanded as membership increased and to provide income from letting.

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANCE: A fine, albeit incomplete, example of Lutyens' earlier work in the neo-classical idiom. The later additions by Wontner-Smith and Wood, which form the majority of the building, are dignified and well-detailed; the whole ensemble representing a distinguished and coherent complex of multi-phase buildings. Of historic interest as the headquarters of the BMA since 1925.



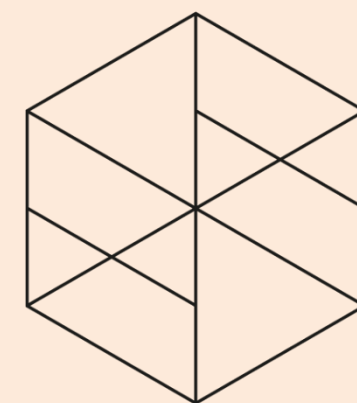
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BMA House, Tavistock Square, London
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Appendix B: Photographs of the site





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