

Christian Leigh

Chartered Town Planner

Leigh & Glennie Ltd 6 All Souls Road, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 9EA
01344 297094 | mail@christianleigh.co.uk | www.christianleigh.co.uk

16 & 17 Motcomb Street, London, SW1X 8LB

Heritage Appraisal accompanying an application for internal changes to properties at ground and lower ground floors to enable amalgamation of the two properties into one commercial unit; installation of condenser units to rear lower ground floor of No. 17 within subterranean service yard

March 2021
Our ref: 1102

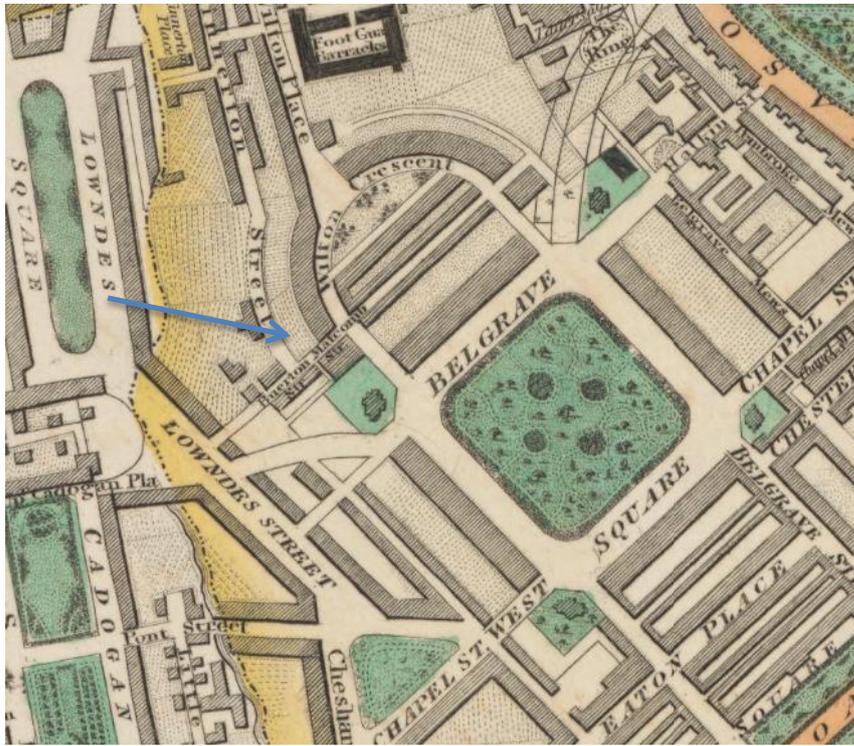
Introduction

1. An appraisal of the two properties has been undertaken following a request by Grosvenor Properties to provide an opinion and Heritage Appraisal relating to internal works that will enable the amalgamation of 16 & 17 Motcomb Street, London.
2. The statement has been prepared in accordance with guidance contained in Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and the Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (2014). Regard has been paid to the Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning 2 (2015).
3. The Statement has been prepared by Christian Leigh BSc(Hons), MPhil (Dist), MRTPI. I have over 20 years' experience on projects concerning Grade I, II* and II residential and commercial properties within central London and the South East. Wider work involves heritage appraisals, planning and listed building application and appeals, and enforcement matters. I have prepared advice relating to conservation area designations. Clients include a number of the London Estates, local and central Government, as well as major developers and householders within central London. I am currently a lecturer in planning law and practice, including heritage matters, at the Henley Business School, University of Reading.
4. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states that applications for consent affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by a description of the significance of the heritage asset affected and their contribution to their setting of that significance. This assessment was prepared following a review of the statutory records for the property, an appraisal of published documentation and an internal site visit to No. 17 in November 2020. However, due to Covid restrictions of travel and access at the time of Instructions it was not possible to visit the Westminster Archives for this project.

History of the area and property

Belgravia and the vicinity of the application site

5. Motcomb Street is part of the estate now known as Belgravia, which was first a nickname to Belgrave and Eaton Squares and the streets radiating immediately from them. Motcomb Street links Lowndes Street and Wilton Crescent.
6. Originally, in Medieval times, the Belgravia area was known as 'Five Fields' as it was intersected by footpaths cutting it into five. It was marshy and flat, used for grazing and later for market gardening. The land was part of the Manor of Ebury, which was subdivided and the land passed through a succession of owners until 1656, when the ownership became established with the Grosvenor family.
7. Roque's map of 1746 shows that the land remained rural into the mid-18th century, with early development confined to the fringes of the district along Knightsbridge and Hyde Park Corner, and in the south west corner. Development in the central part of the Five Fields area came later. In 1761, George III purchased Buckingham House, just to the east of what is now Belgravia Conservation Area. More widespread development soon began to follow and by the time of Horwood's Map in 1799 terraces had grown up along Upper Grosvenor Place overlooking the Queen's Gardens, with additional new streets appearing further south, off Buckingham Palace Road.
8. Plans for the rest of the Five Fields area were drawn up by James Wyatt and William Porden in 1795, but it was not until 1821 when Lord Grosvenor appointed Thomas Cundy I as surveyor to the Grosvenor Estate that a definite plan for the Five Fields was approved, setting out criteria for building.
9. In 1824 Thomas Cubitt came to an agreement with the Grosvenor Estate to lease nineteen acres on the south side of what is now Belgrave Square. This included draining the area and massive works to the land. Other speculative builders took sites elsewhere on the estate for development. Seth Smith (1791-1860) took the ground north and south of Cubitt's and the remaining important sites in the southern part of the area went to Thomas Cundy II and Joseph Cundy.
10. From 1826 development proceeded rapidly. Building began in Belgrave Square, and then Eaton Square, Chester Square and Wilton Crescent. The Lowndes Estate, immediately to the west of Grosvenor estate land, was also developed by Thomas Cubitt between 1826 and 1855 and includes Lowndes Square, Chesham Place, Lowndes and Lyall Streets. The Greenwoods Map of 1827 shows the progress of development in the area, which by that time had reached Lowndes Street. The line of Motcomb Street had been established by that time, though it was named Matcomb Street at the eastern end and Buerton Street at the western end:



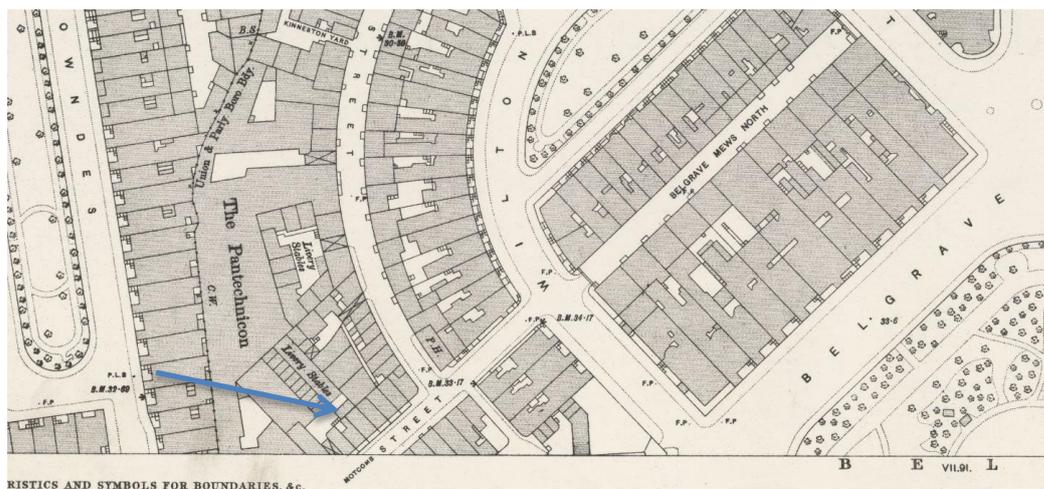
Greenwoods map 1827 (later 1830 edition), with the position of Motcomb Street marked

11. Belgravia continued to develop, and Cubitt's map of 1865 shows the road was now known fully as Motcomb Street, though at that stage not yet completely developed:



Thomas Cubitt Map, 1865

12. By the end of the 19th century Belgravia had been completely developed, as is shown in the OS map from 1896. This illustrates the terrace of buildings along the road, including the well-known Pantechnicon building:



OS map, 1894-96 survey (spread across two map sheets)

The application properties

13. The properties the subject of this appraisal form part of a terrace of Nos. 11-18. These were originally houses and adjoined the Pantechnicon: originally a building housing showrooms, hops and warehousing which burnt down in 1874 and was rebuilt behind the retained façade. The terrace is mentioned in Pevsner's Building of England as being by Seth Smith and of conventional design, dating from c1839.
14. By the early 20th Century it appears that Motcomb Street had changed to be a mix of some commercial properties along with retained family houses. The Post Office Directory of 1901 shows that in the terrace of No.11-18 there were still a number of houses but some businesses operating, including from No. 17:

**Motcomb street, Belgrave
sq. (S.W.) 1 Wilton crescent
MAP I II.**

NORTH-WEST SIDE.

9 Kennedy Capt. James Bowles
10 *Turk's Head*, George Way
..here is *Kinnerton street*...

- 11 Hendrick Charles, baker
- 12 Crook Frederick, china wares
- 12 Baden-Powell Rev. James, M.A
- 13 Crumpton Misses A.S. & M. druggists
- 13 Lush & Cook, The London & Provincial Dye Works Ltd
- 14 Sykes Henry Arthur
- 15 Jones Charles, builder
- 15 Milligan Miss
- 16 Artis Anthony, poulterer
- 17 Phillips Brothers, fruiterers
- 17A, Wimbush & Co. job masters
- 18 Arthur Fredk. house decorator
The Pantechmicon
- 20 *Irish Industries Association Ltd*
- 21 Forder Jas. Chas. & Son, grocers
- 22 Patterson Edward Temple
- 23 Gunter & Co. confectioners
- ... here is *Lowndes street*...

15. The form and layout of the terrace appears to have remained the same through the mid part of the 20th Century. To the rear of the terrace – on the north western side of Motcomb Street – was a collection of commercial buildings accessed via a yard opening under No. 18. The OS mapping from 1951 shows this area, and the original rear building line of the terrace, which still shows the same line as the 1896 mapping:



16. There was major redevelopment of the area in the early 1970s. The collection of commercial buildings to the rear of Motcomb Street and fronting Kinnerton Street were demolished and the new Halkin Arcade built. This saw the demolition of projections to the rear of the terrace of 11-18 Motcomb Street and the erection of a new two-storey extension, with basement and service yard, to provide the commercial space fronting the Halkin Arcade and the Square behind. This was part of the wider scheme for the area that saw underground parking, commercial properties fronting Kinnerton Street and Greville House. Photographs from the Metropolitan Archives show this under construction:



Rear of terrace of 11-18 Motcomb Street, seen from Kinnerton Street, showing extent of demolition to the area and the new two storey (with basement) addition to the terrace (Photo taken 1970. Source: London Metropolitan Archive)



The extension to the rear of the terrace, showing reinforced concrete construction for the two storey and basement addition to the terrace. (Photo taken 1970. Source: London Metropolitan Archive)



Front of terrace of 11-18 Motcomb Street. All properties in commercial use at that time with modern shopfronts, including Nos. 16 & 17 (marked). The former access to the rear commercial yard that went through No. 18 is in the process of being converted to part of that building, which became a restaurant (Photo taken 1970. Source: London Metropolitan Archive)

17. The terrace was listed Grade II at this time, in February 1970. The list description reads as follows:

*TQ 2879 SW CITY OF WESTMINSTER
MOTCOMB STREET, SW1 (north side)
97/6*

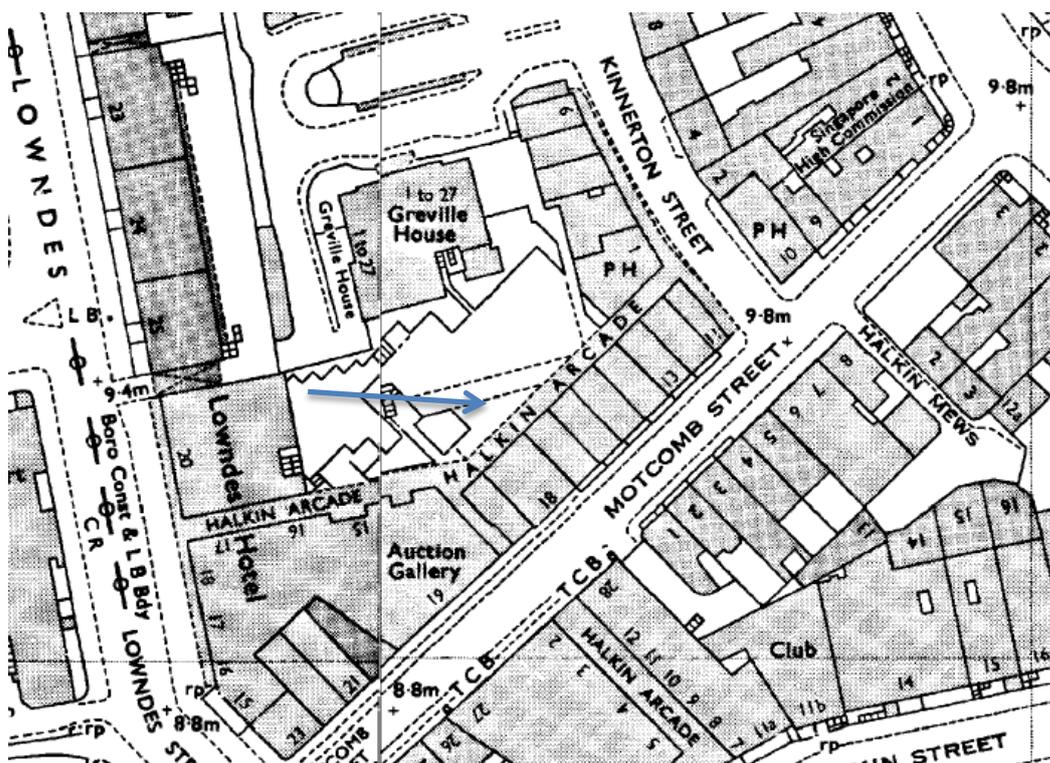
Nos 11 to 18 (consec) 5.2.70 including 17a

GV II

Terrace of houses. Circa 1829 - 30, altered. Yellow brick. Stucco to No 14.

3 storeys plus attic, each house 2 windows wide. Ground floors altered, C19 to C20 shopfronts; except No 14, which retains something of the original arrangement, with square headed door and channelling. Balconies to first floor, those to 14 and 16 to 19 probably not original. Square gauged headed windows, sashed, retaining glazing bars. No 11 largely reconstructed. Stucco cornice surviving to Nos 14, 16 and 17; otherwise rebuilt parapets.

18. The result of this redevelopment in the early 1970s can be seen in the OS mapping for 1972, which shows the Halkin Arcade to the rear with the new flat building line to the Motcomb Street terrace:



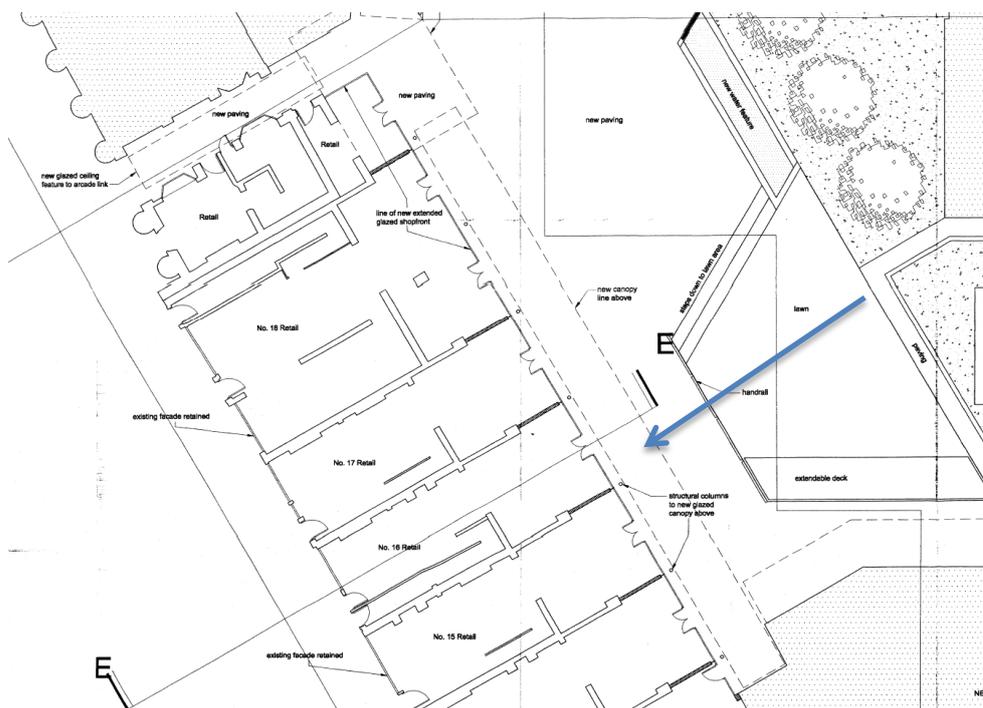
OS map, 1972

19. In 2002 planning permission and listed building consent were approved for a rear ground floor extension to the terrace of 11-18 Motcomb Street (ref. 02/04971/FULL & 02/04972/LBC). This proposed the removal of the rear elevation built as part of the 1970 scheme and a rearward projection with an overhanging canopy. This was part of a wider

scheme to redevelop and upgrade the Halkin Arcade commercial area. Extracts from the drawings show the approved work:



'Existing' ground floor plans from 2002, showing rear building line of properties (from 1970). Application properties marked.



'Proposed' ground floor plans from 2020, showing further rear extension

20. However, it appears not all this work was undertaken, as the rearward extent of the properties are not as deep as that shown in the scheme and the shopfronts remain. There is, though, a revised canopy to the rear. Photographs are attached to this Statement that show the interior and exterior.

Appraisal of properties

Exterior of properties

21. The properties lie within a terrace of early 19th Century houses, built by Seth Smith, that are important to the Conservation Area due to their representation of domestic buildings of that time in a good state of preservation at upper floors. The front elevation of these buildings still displays the architecture and character that are set out in the list description. This exterior is an important part of the character and appearance of the Belgravia Conservation Area. The quality of the architecture contributes to the Area, and they form a good foil to the exuberance of the Pantechnicon that adjoins and dominates the street.
22. The positive role the building plays in views along the street are being emphasised by the context is supported by the Council's own appraisal of the Area. The Belgravia Conservation Area Audit identifies the terrace of buildings as having a positive contribution to the Area (marked in pink):



23. The rear of the two properties, and the terrace of Motcomb Street, are of less significance. As can be seen in the map extract above, the Square behind the terrace lies outside the Conservation Area. The area to the north west, outside that Conservation Area, has been redeveloped in the past as evidenced earlier and the rear of the terrace is seen in this context. The alterations and modern extension to the terrace are subdued in design and scale but, with the canopy and other works to the area there is clearly less to the original character of the property and area in such views.
24. The rear of the property also sees, at lower ground floor/basement, the service yard that is accessed via the Halkin Arcade development. This can be seen in the attached photographs which show the full commercial access to the retail units provided.

Interior of property

25. An inspection was undertaken of the interior of No. 17 at ground and basement levels. Due to Covid restrictions at the time no access was possible in No. 16, though views of the ground floor through the windows were possible.
26. The interior of both properties has been adapted to retail and commercial requirements, with any vestiges of original domestic layout or ornamentation gone; presumably, since the properties have evidently been in commercial use since the mid 20th Century, that was many years ago.
27. However, there is some limited semblance of the original form of the property. The rear extension from the 1970s can be appreciated in the building due to a change in levels within the basement, whilst at the ground floor there is an opening up from the original part of the building to the wider rear extension. The modern works at the rear of the property are further evident through the service door access at the rear basement level, which enters into the below ground area of the Halkin Arcade redevelopment scheme. Thus, the interior at ground and basement remains of limited significance to the property as a heritage asset.

Assessment of proposed works

28. The proposed works to the two properties would see amalgamation of the premises through a connection at the rear ground and basement levels through the party wall. This work would be contained within the later rear extension to the property. Thus, there would not be the removal of any original fabric in the property.
29. By keeping to the later extension to the property these works would not intrude upon the layout of the original form of the property. At basement level the opening would be in the area of the properties physically distinct from the original building due to the existing steps down. At ground floor the rear extension currently opens up to the full width of the building in both properties. The drawings show that the new opening would retain nibs to the line of the party wall, and this would ensure there is a perception of where the properties were once divided.
30. The works would see some minor changes to the remaining layout of the properties at basement level, and new shop fittings at ground floor. At basement level this includes a new partition within No. 17 to provide improved retail space and service space. As noted earlier, these basement areas have been heavily altered due to past changes with the commercial use of the building and the extension into the redeveloped Halkin Arcade scheme and service yard. Due to the extent of changes already undertaken to the properties these alterations would not have any effect on the interest of the buildings, and the new partition at basement level is a reversible feature.
31. The exterior of the buildings would not see any changes as part of this proposal. A rear door to Halkin Arcade at ground floor would be fixed shut but retained, and this would have no effect upon the appearance of the building. At lower ground floor/basement service yard there would be the installation of three a/c units to the rear of No. 17. This is on an area specifically allocated for such service facilities (see photos) and is seen at No. 16. As a modern service yard, whose purpose is to accommodate such facilities in order that they need not be installed on the main building, this approach is sensible. (Incidentally, we understand that the noise levels within this entirely self-contained subterranean service yard mean that no noise assessment is necessary, or would serve any useful purpose, in this application).
32. The works to the interior of the building are considered to not be harmful to the significance of the listed buildings as a heritage asset. The significance of the buildings has been identified as their contribution to the Conservation Area and their appearance as original dwellings in the street, albeit modified to commercial premises. These features would not change as a result of the proposed works.
33. The new opening at ground floor would be visible in close views from the rear, within Halkin Arcade. However, as also noted this area lies outside the Conservation Area and the modern rear elevation of the terrace – which has been extended, along with the canopy – plays a lesser role in any significance. The change to the interior that might be seen in any view from this location therefore similarly does not affect the significance of the buildings as heritage assets.
34. The amalgamation of the two buildings through the creation of an opening in the party wall is considered to not affect the significance of the buildings. The openings will occur only in the modern part of the building that exists purely as a result of the comprehensive 1970s redevelopment scheme. This will be clear to the observer when inside the building

(when it will also be seen in the context of the modern commercial retail space) and when outside the building. Hence there will not be any perception of an unacceptable disruption to the plan form of the buildings or hierarchy of rooms. Thus, there would not be any effect on significance.

35. The drawings setting out services within the building show these would be provided within the modern parts to the rear of the building, or within bulkhead areas of the ceiling and so not involve any intrusive works to the original fabric of either property.
36. The works to buildings are therefore considered to not cause any harm to significance: as defined by paragraph 017 of the Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. There are also public benefits arising from the proposed works by enabling an active and viable commercial business to expand into the neighbouring property, so bringing economic benefits to the area and securing the long-term viable use of both buildings.

Conclusions

37. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 contains the statutory duty in relation to heritage assets that, *'In considering whether to grant planning 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.'*
38. In conservation areas, the statutory duty is set out in Section 72(1) that *'In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any functions under or by virtue of any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2)3, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.'*
39. The National Planning Policy Framework says that the strategy for plans should take into account *'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation'* (paragraph 185). Paragraph 193 advises that *'great weight should be given to the [designated heritage] asset's conservation'* and that *'the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be'*.
40. The heritage significance of the properties stems from the exterior and contribution in the group value to the Conservation Area. The interior of the ground and basement floors of the properties do not display any features that contribute to the significance as a heritage asset. The alterations proposed in this application would not harm the recognised significance of the properties. There would be public benefits arising from the provision of space for an expanding, viable business and thus economic benefits.
41. These matters therefore satisfy the test of paragraph 020 of the PPG, in that the significance of the heritage asset would be sustained and enhanced and the use would support the long term conservation. Thus, in accordance with the guidance at paragraph 196 of the NPPF, there are benefits that outweigh any harm.
42. It is therefore concluded the works would be consistent with the NPPF. There would consequently be no conflict with Policies DES1, DES9 and DES10 of the Westminster UDP, or Policies S25 and S28 of the City Plan, and so listed building consent and planning permission can be granted.

Photographs of properties



Front of Nos. 16 (right) and 17 (left), which remain unaltered in this application



Rear of Nos. 16 (left) and 17 (right) seen from Halkin Arcade, showing 1970s two storey extension, further altered on ground floor with canopy. Photograph taken from standing in area outside designated Conservation Area.



View into No. 17 from Halkin Arcade towards wall within which opening is proposed (marked with blue arrow)



View into No. 16 from Halkin Arcade towards wall within which opening is proposed (marked with blue arrow)



Within No. 17 ground floor (1970s extension) looking towards wall where opening proposed to No. 16



Basement to No. 17 showing drop in levels between original property and 1970s extension (top photograph) and opening from rear of basement to Halkin Arcade service yard (bottom photograph)



Location of proposed opening in wall to No. 16 at basement level



Existing a/c units to rear of No. 16, to be retained. Photo is taken in the subterranean service yard to the rear of the properties, at lower ground/basement level



Location of proposed new a/c units to rear of No. 17: the area of wall hatched in red, which is the allocated area for this property. The photo also shows the extent of the modern service yard under Halkin Arcade