

Consultation on Proposed Extensions to Belgravia Conservation Area.

National guidance and advice places the responsibility on the City Council to keep each of its 56 conservation areas under review. A key part of this review is a consideration of conservation area boundaries and assessment of whether additional areas are of architectural and historic interest and would warrant designation as part of a conservation area.

Following a review and appraisal of the Belgravia Conservation Area, the Council is considering extending the area. A map and analysis of the proposed extensions is set out in this report.

We welcome any comments you may have on these proposals. You can fax, email or write to us at the address below:

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The deadline for comments is 11.12.2013.

Following consultation, any comments will go forward to the Cabinet Member for Built Environment for a decision on whether or not to designate. If the extension is agreed, maps and information set out below will be incorporated within the conservation area audit for Belgravia.



City of Westminster

1 Introduction and Boundaries

1.1 Belgravia is a large conservation area located in the southwestern corner of Westminster. Its boundaries are loosely defined by Knightsbridge to the north, Grosvenor Place and Buckingham Palace Road to the east and south, and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) to the west.

1.2 The character of central Belgravia is dominated by Thomas Cubitt's opulent stucco terraces of the early 19th century. The fringes of the conservation area have a slightly different character and more mixed townscape. The southwestern part of the area in particular is characterised by smaller-scale originally workers

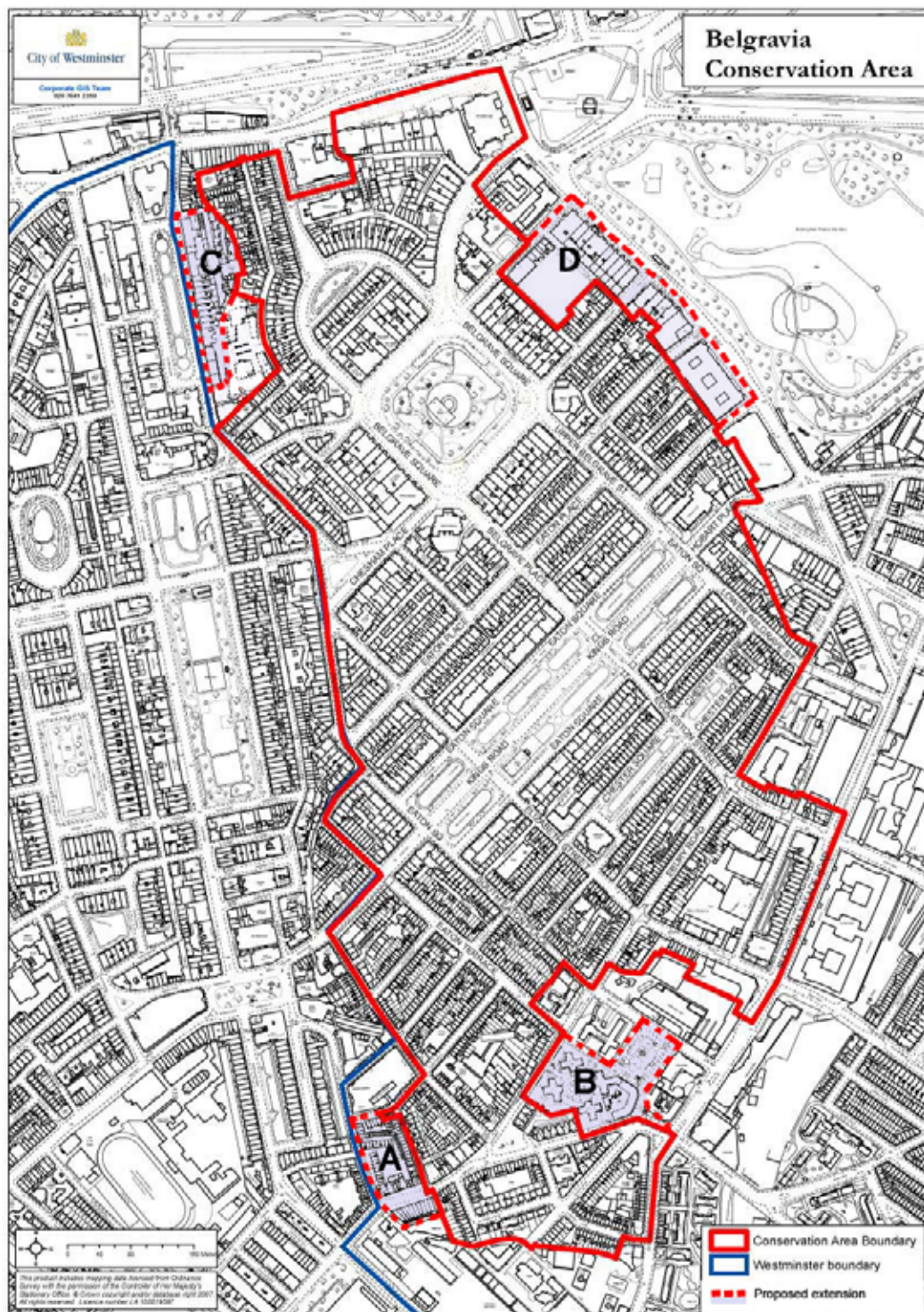


Figure 1: Belgravia Conservation Area and proposed extensions

housing mixed in with commercial premises. The draft conservation area audit subdivides the conservation area into character areas in recognition of its large size and variations in character.

1.3 Current boundaries and the proposed extensions are shown at **Figure 1**. The proposed extensions would take in four groups of buildings:

- **Area A** includes an area of workers housing in the extreme south-west corner off Pimlico Road next to the boundary with RBKC.
- **Area B** includes four 1950s blocks situated off Ebury Street and Ebury Garden Square.
- **Area C** to the north-west of the conservation area, taking in the eastern side of Lowndes Square and related mews buildings on William Mews.
- **Area D** to the north-east, including buildings to Grosvenor Place and immediately behind.

1.4 These areas are described in turn below. This also includes an assessment of which buildings are considered to be 'unlisted buildings of merit' i.e. those which contribute positively to character, as well as an assessment of roof scape and likely suitability for upward extension. If agreed all information, maps and photographs within this report will be incorporated into the final printed audit.

2 Extension Area A: 87-107 Pimlico Road, Passmore Street and Lumley Buildings

2.1 This extension includes an attractive group of buildings which are predominantly late Victorian in date. These are of similar age to the adjoining townscape and contribute to the mixed residential and retail character found in this part of the conservation area.

2.2 **87-107 Pimlico Road** is a simply detailed but attractive Victorian terrace, dating from 1897. Typical of its period, it is in bright red brick, with a distinctive roofscape of gabled dormers and tall chimneys (**Figure 3**). It retains

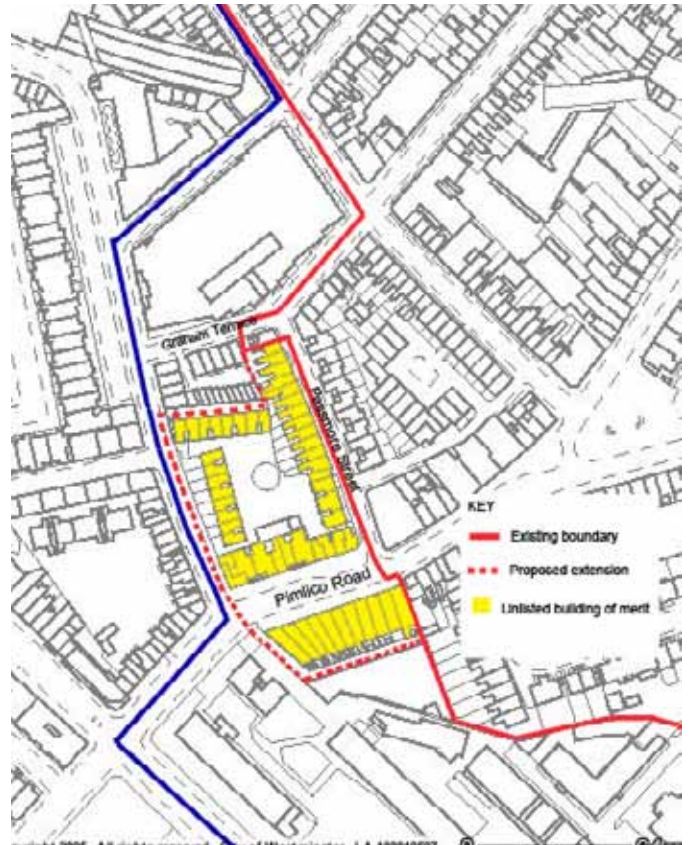


Figure 2: Extension Area A showing unlisted buildings of merit.



Figure 3: above, view of 87-107 Pimlico Road and **Figure 4 below** the date stone set between two lions in the red brick pedimented gable.



well-proportioned timber shop fronts to the ground floor, subdivided by brick pilasters.

2.3 **The Lumley Buildings** opposite are flats dating from 1875 which were built by the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company as model dwellings.

2.4 The blocks are in yellow stock brick with red brick and stucco detailing, and slate mansards with dormers. Intervening bays are recessed with access balconies to the Pimlico Road elevation. The street frontage also has attractive timber shopfronts to ground floor



Figure 5: above the Pimlico Road elevation with shopfronts and **Figures 6- 8** below The Lumley Buildings, viewed from the courtyard



separated by stucco pilasters and access stairways.

2.5 Their design and materials is very similar to the 1871 Coleshill Flats, already within the conservation area and they were designed by the same architect, William Ward Lee.

2.6 They are of historic significance as part of the late Victorian drive to improve living conditions for the working classes. Each dwelling was entirely self-contained having their own lavatories and sculleries behind the living-rooms no matter how small the flat and blocks were laid out around a courtyard to provide light and open space.

2.7 **5-19 Passmore Street** is lined with small-scale terraced houses in yellow stock brick with rusticated stucco to ground floor. Although largely rebuilt in the 1960s, historic photos and maps show the scale and form of the original terraced houses along this stretch,



Figure 9: above the 1890s OS map shows Union Street was laid out with small-scale terraced houses. **Figure 10:** below, 5-19 Passmore Street today.



formerly known as Union Street was very similar to the buildings which are there today.

2.8 Their design fits in well with surrounding workers housing, which is characteristic of the western part of the conservation area.

Unlisted Buildings of Merit and Roof Extensions

2.9 All the buildings proposed for inclusion within Extension Area A are considered to be unlisted buildings of merit. Due to the prominent roofscapes of gables and pediments to the Victorian buildings and the consistent unbroken roofline to the terraces on Passmore Street, none of these buildings are likely to be suitable for roof extension.

Reason for Proposed Designation-

2.10 87-107 Pimlico Road is a typical late Victorian terrace which relates well to the townscape in this part of Belgravia. The attractive shopfronts at ground floor level also contribute to the character and vibrancy of this part of the area.

2.11 The Lumley Buildings are a good example of late Victorian model worker's housing, very similar in design to the Coleshill flats which are listed and already part of the conservation area. These are an important part of the social history of the area.

2.12 Although rebuilt, the small scale of housing at 5-19 Passmore Street is also in keeping with the character of the small-scale terraced housing found on the western edge of Belgravia.

3. Area B – Cundy Street Flats and Ebury Square

3.1 The striking **Cundy Street Flats** were designed by T.P. Bennett in 1950-52 in a moderne style, but with some classical detailing. The upright red brick elevations are softened by thirties inspired long rounded balconies and coloured cylindrical columns typical of the fifties while the sash windows add a more contextual detail (Figures 12-15).

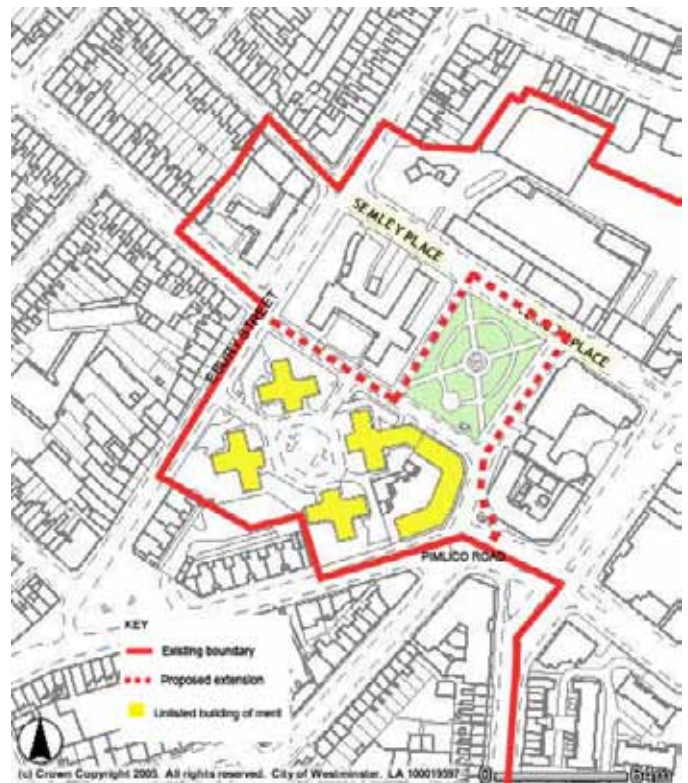


Figure 11: Cundy Street Flat and Ebury Square, proposed boundaries and unlisted buildings of merit



Figures 12-15:
The Cundy Street Flats





Figure 13: 1890s OS map of Ebury Square

3.2 The four blocks stand in attractive landscaped grounds surrounded by brick and stone retaining walls. They are elegant examples of postwar apartment blocks.

3.3 **Ebury Square**, to the north-west of the Cundy Street Flats, was laid out as a garden square in 1820 at the same time as the rest of Belgravia was being developed. It was formed from the old Avery Green and was initially a private square surrounded by terraced housing but opened to the public in 1872. The houses on the east side of the square had been replaced by St Michaels School by 1870 and



Figure 14: *above* Ebury Square view;
Figure 15: *below left* The fountain at the centre of Ebury Square; **Figure 16:** *below right* The drinking fountain



remained there until 1944 when it was demolished by a flying bomb. The Grosvenor estate leased Ebury Square Gardens to Westminster City Council in 1949 and it was restored and reopened within the same year.

3.4 Today the square is an attractive public park. Its original 19th century layout remains, in the form of a St Andrew's cross, with a central fountain (**Figure 15**).

3.5 Just to the south of these small gardens stands a tall Neo Renaissance drinking fountain of 1871, by T.H. Wyatt, commemorating the 2nd Marquess of Westminster, which is a feature of some interest and is also proposed for inclusion (**Figure 16**).

Unlisted buildings of merit

3.6 All of the Cundy Street flat blocks are considered to be unlisted buildings of merit and the square is also an important feature which contributes to the character of the area. If included it will be further described in the public realm section of the audit.

Reason for Proposed Designation

3.7 The Cundy Flats are significant as a good example of 1950s flats, which are part of the story of the evolution of the area and demonstrate changing fashion in housing design.

3.8 Although no longer surrounded by terraces, Ebury Square is of significant historic interest as a remnant of the original layout of the area. It also makes an important contribution to local townscape and is an attractive open space, which retains its original layout and mature trees and as such, contributes to the character of this part of Belgravia.

4. Area C – Lowndes Square

4.1 **Lowndes Square** is a long rectangular square, part of the original Lowndes Estate and half located within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Thomas Cubitt obtained the building lease here in 1825 and it was developed between 1836 and 1849. The square

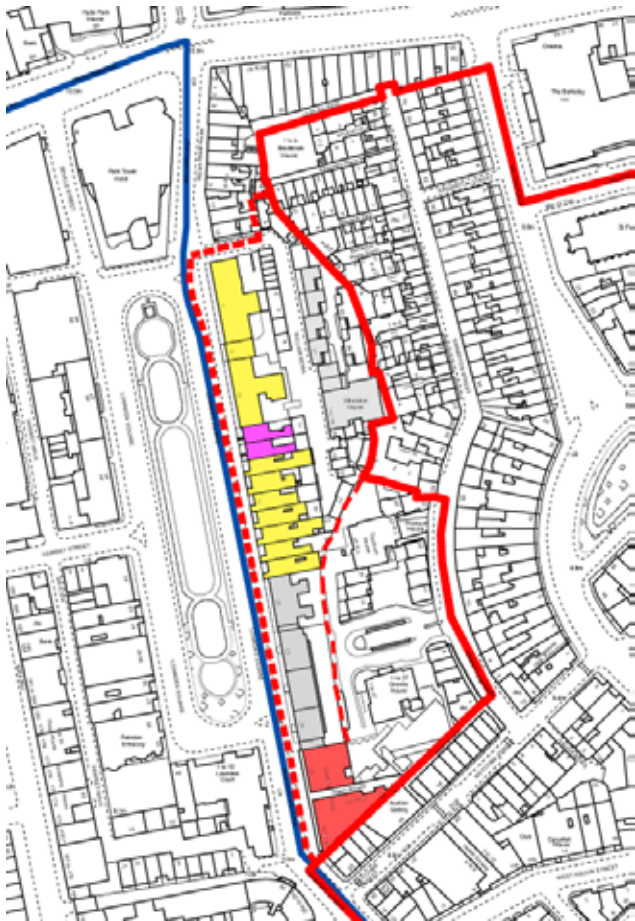


Figure 17: Lowndes Square extension showing proposed boundary and unlisted buildings of merit

was originally surrounded by stucco terraced housing, some of which still remains today. However, the uniformity of the square has been disrupted by a number of 20th century infills of varying quality. The garden at the centre of the square is surrounded by 1930s railings, but the original gate piers on both sides are intact.



Figures 18: 20th century development in Lowndes Square

4.2 Only the eastern side of the Square is within Westminster. On this side, 11-19 reflect the original design of the square and are in stucco with projecting porticos (Figure 20-21). 11-12 Lowndes Square are Grade II listed, dating from the 1830s.

4.3 Nos. 1-10 and 20 are mid-20th century neo Georgian buildings with dark red brick facades but they are consistent height with the earlier buildings on the square.

4.4 Although of mixed quality, the mews behind Lowndes Square is also proposed for inclusion. It has a variety of buildings from different eras but has generally retained its scale and Mews character. 1-18 Williams Mews form an attractive group, with nos.



Figures 19-20: Lowndes square



Figure 21: View of the Westminster side of Lowndes Square

4-5 and 16-17 retaining their original mews character, despite some alteration.

Reason for Proposed Designation

4.5 This historic square was laid out by Thomas Cubitt at the same time as the rest of Belgravia to provide connections between Hans Town to the east and the new Grosvenor Estate development.

4.6 Although the original uniformity has been lost, it retains a number of stucco buildings, which give an idea of the original appearance of the Square. The 20th century frontages are of sufficient height and presence to adequately enclose and frame the Square and create a sense of consistency.

4.7 The adjoining buildings to the other side of the Square are within the Hans Town Conservation Area in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and it is considered the Square should be considered as an entity and as such be protected by conservation area designation in its entirety.

5 Area D – Grosvenor Place

5.1 This extension (Figure 25) includes a mixed area on the eastern fringes of the conservation area lining Grosvenor Place between Wilton Street and Halkin Street and which forms the backdrop to Buckingham Palace Gardens. It was initially developed before most of Cubitt's Belgravia, after Buckingham House had become a Royal Residence. Little remains of this phase of development. However, it was subsequently redeveloped - first in the mid-late 19th Century,

following road re-widening and then in the 20th century, when a number of good quality larger office developments were built.

5.2 It includes a number of fine examples of Victorian terraced housing. The large, elaborately detailed stone townhouses at **6-16 Grosvenor Place** (Figure 24), date from 1867-9 by T Cundy III and are in the same 'Parisian' style as those to Grosvenor Gardens, with prominent mansard roofs and



Figure 22 (top left): 19 Grosvenor Place, **Figure 23 (top right):** 17 Grosvenor Place and **Figure 24 (below):** 6-16 Grosvenor Place



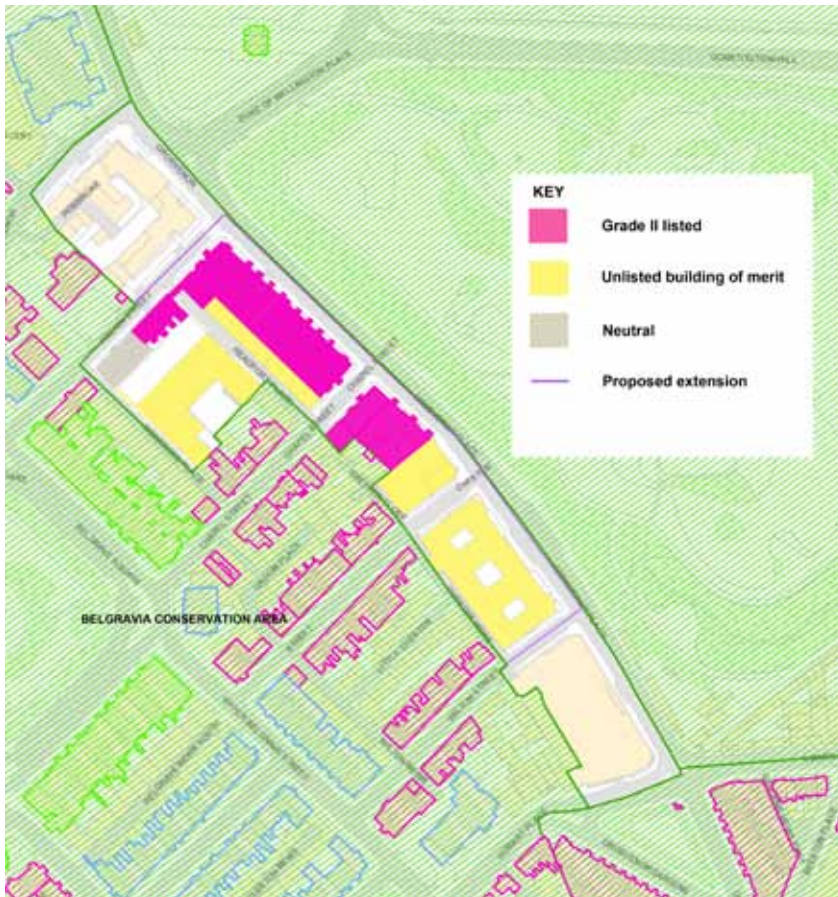


Figure 25 (left): Map showing extension Area D - listed buildings, unlisted buildings of merit and neutral buildings.

chimneys. Similar in style but later in date is **17 Grosvenor Place** (Figure 23), on the corner with Chapel Street. All are listed Grade II.

5.3 Behind these are an attractive row of unlisted mews buildings on **Headfort Place** (Figure 26), accessed through a brick built archway from Halkin Street, which is itself of interest. These retain many original features.



Figure 26: Mews buildings on Headfort Place

5.4 Also with a frontage to Headfort Place is the Montrose Place development, of 2007. Designed by Hamiltons, it was commended in the 2008 Civic Trust Awards and includes a



Figure 27: Montrose Place striking slate wall by artist Andy Goldsworthy to Montrose Place.

5.5 **Nos 18-20 Grosvenor Place** are earlier terraced houses with similar characteristics to some of the stucco terraces of Belgravia. These are by T Cundy II and date from the 1840s, in stucco, with heavy Italianate detailing. These are also listed Grade II.

5.6 The adjoining **nos. 21-24 Grosvenor Place, Iron Trades House** (Figure 28) is a simply detailed corner office block in stone dating from the 1930s, with later replacement windows. It fits in relatively well in its context in terms of its scale and materials.



Figure 28 (above): Iron Trades House and **Figure 29** (below): 33 Grosvenor Place



5.6 No. 33 Grosvenor Place is another large stone-faced office block, dating from 1956 by Simpson and Fyffe, with Sir Albert Richardson as consultant. It has some interesting detail, including sculpture to the eaves by Maurice Lambert, and relates sympathetically to its context in terms of its scale and materials. It was substantially altered in the 1990s.

5.7 Unlisted Buildings of Merit and Roof Extensions

All of the buildings to be included within the conservation area are listed or considered to be unlisted buildings of merit, with the exception of 5-6 Halkin Street, which has been identified as 'neutral'. Designations are shown on the map at **Figure 25**. Similarly, none of the buildings are considered suitable for roof extension.

5.8 Reason for Proposed Designation

This extension includes an attractive and high quality area of townscape which forms the eastern edge to Belgravia. It includes some good examples of grand Victorian townhouses and their associated mews, which are similar

to some of the later examples already within the conservation area. It also includes some high quality, contextual office development. As a whole, the area is of particular significance as it forms the edge and backdrop to Buckingham Palace Gardens and is prominent in local views along Grosvenor place from the Lanesborough.

6. Implications of Designation

6.1 This designation would recognise the importance of these areas in the local townscape and ensure their protection and encourage future enhancements.

6.2 When considering any future development proposals affecting the area and areas adjacent to it, the Council will consider the impact any proposals would have on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

6.3 Where buildings are identified as of merit there will be a presumption against their demolition, unless substantial public benefit can be demonstrated following the guidance on heritage assets in the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.4 However, it should also be noted that conservation area status does not prevent development but should guide new development and change to ensure that this is undertaken sympathetically, in keeping with the prevailing character of the area.

7. Further Information

7.1 Further information on the Belgravia Conservation Area can be found in the draft conservation area audit, available on the Westminster website at: www.westminster.gov.uk/environment/planning/conservationlistedbuildings/areaprofiles.

7.2 Further information on conservation areas in general can be found in Westminster's guidance note, *Conservation Areas: A guide for Property Owners and Development and Demolition in Conservation Areas*, available at: www.westminster.gov.uk/environment/planning/conservationlistedbuildings.