

Appendix Four: Report on Extension to Dorset Square 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, to assess whether additional areas are of architectural and historic interest and would warrant inclusion within the conservation area.

Following public consultation, it is proposed to designate an extension to Dorset Square Conservation area to include the adjacent Madame Tussauds Site. This report sets out maps and analysis of the extension. All information, maps and photographs within this report will form an appendix to the Dorset Square Conservation Area Audit and will be incorporated within this at its next review.

1 Introduction and Boundaries

1.1 Dorset Square Conservation Area was first designated in 1968. It is centred around Dorset Square itself and includes a grid of Georgian terraces to the north of this. It is bounded by Marylebone Station and the railway line to the west and Park Road/ Baker Street to the east, with Baker Street Station to the far east. The Marylebone Road forms the southern boundary.

1.2 A conservation area audit for the area was undertaken in 2008 and at this time a number of large scale buildings on Marylebone Road were included within the conservation area. The audit also identified a number of distinctive 'character areas'; one of which was the area around Baker Street Station and Marylebone Road. These character areas are shown overleaf on the map at **Figure 3**.



1.3 Since the audit was undertaken it has become apparent that the contribution of the Madame Tussauds site to the character and appearance of the local area is not adequately recognised or protected, and the building was overlooked at the time of the audit. The buildings are of similar scale and age to other buildings on Marylebone Road and within this character area. The inclusion of the whole site within the conservation area is therefore proposed.

1.4 The map below (**Figure 1**) shows the buildings on the Madame Tussauds site and **Figure 2** shows the proposed extension and its relationship to Dorset Square Conservation Area and Regent's Park Conservation Area, which it adjoins to the eastern side. Overleaf (Figure 4) is a map showing the character areas in Dorset square Conservation Area. This is followed by further detail on the history and architecture of the site and buildings and the implications of conservation area designation.



Figure 2: Proposed extension and relationship to Dorset Square and Regent's Park Conservation Areas



Figure 1: Madame Tussauds site, bounded by Marylebone Road to south, Allsop Place to the west and York Terrace West to the North.

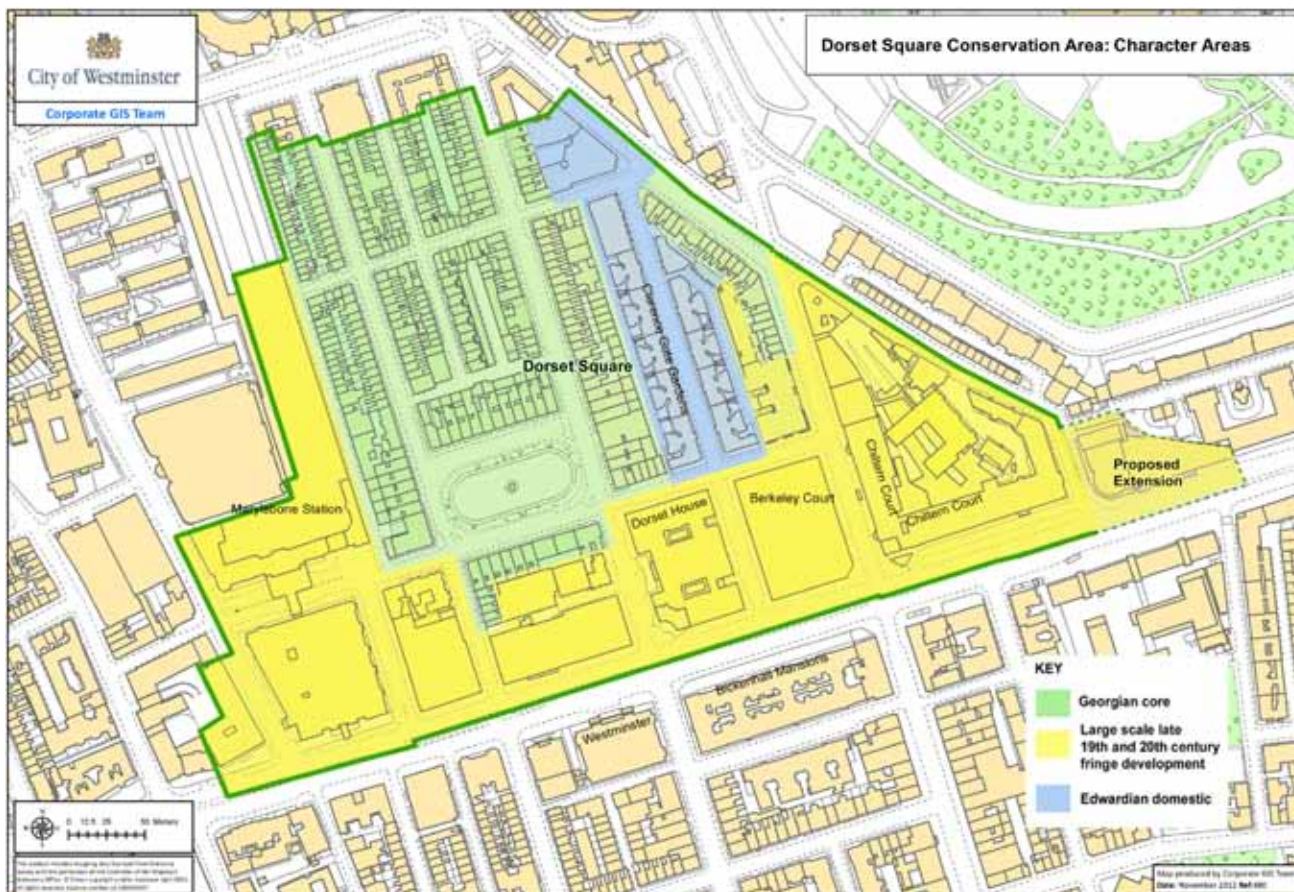


Figure 3: Dorset Square Conservation Area: character areas

2 History

2.1 The Marylebone Road was originally called the New Road from Paddington to Euston. It opened in 1757, and developed rapidly from the late 18th century. Horwood's Map of 1799 (*left*) shows terraces with generous gardens fronting the New Road; these built on land leased from the Portman Estate. Some development is evident on the site now occupied by Madame Tussauds.

2.2 By the time of Greenwoods Map (**Figure 5, overleaf**), Regent's Park has been developed and the street pattern resembles that of today with Allsop Place visible. Union Place is shown on the site which was subsequently occupied by Mme Tussauds.

2.3 Madame Tussaud's exhibition was not housed on the site until the late 19th century and has its origins in a travelling waxwork exhibition. It was first established as a permanent exhibition in the area in 1835, when Marie Tussaud moved the waxworks and her family to Baker Street. The waxworks were exhibited on the upper floors of the Baker Street Bazaar until 1883 when Mme Tussauds



Figure 4: Horwood's Map, 1799 shows development along the Marylebone Road (New Road). To the north of this the area remains rural, with fields beyond the Mme Tussauds site to the NE, in the area which was subsequently to be developed as Regent's Park.

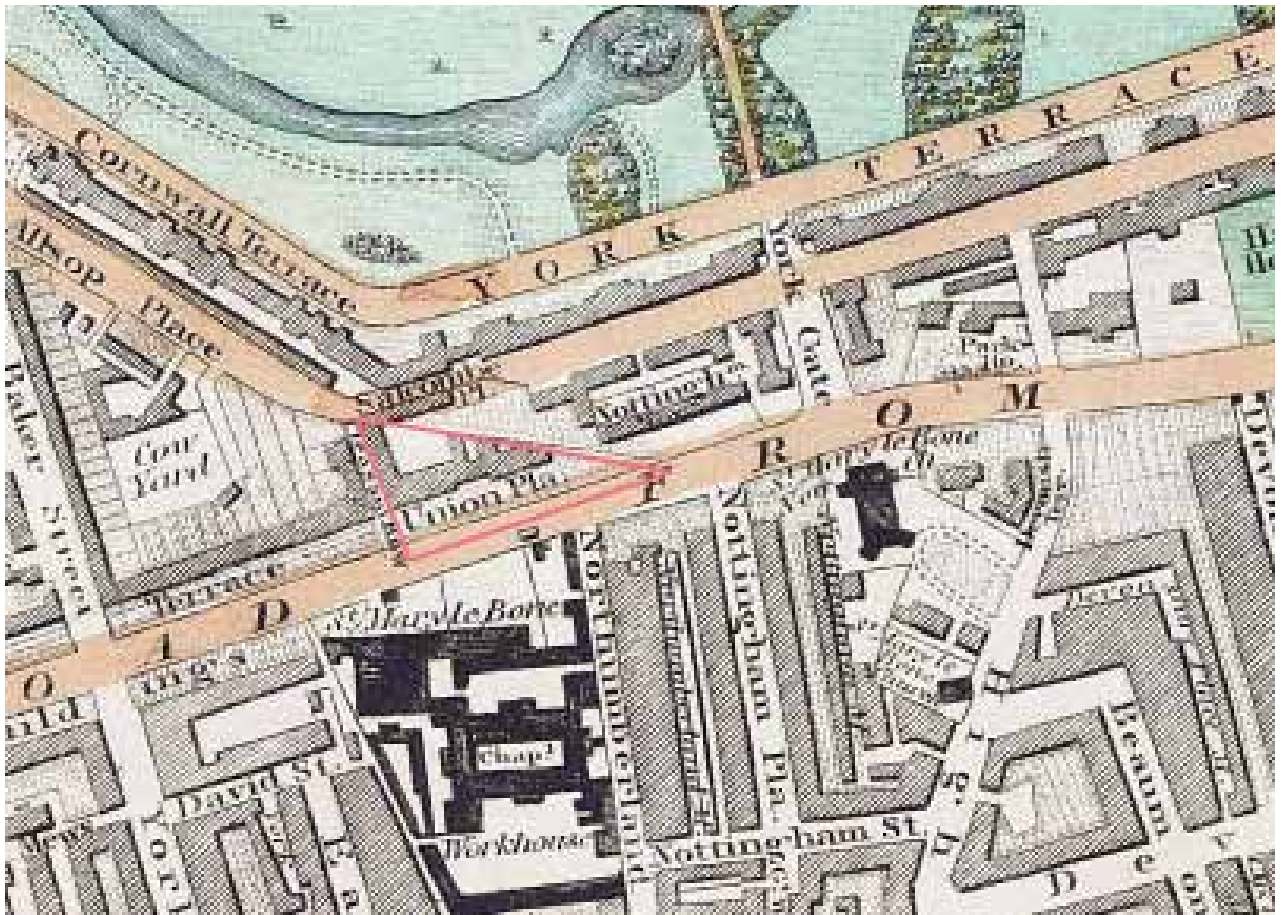
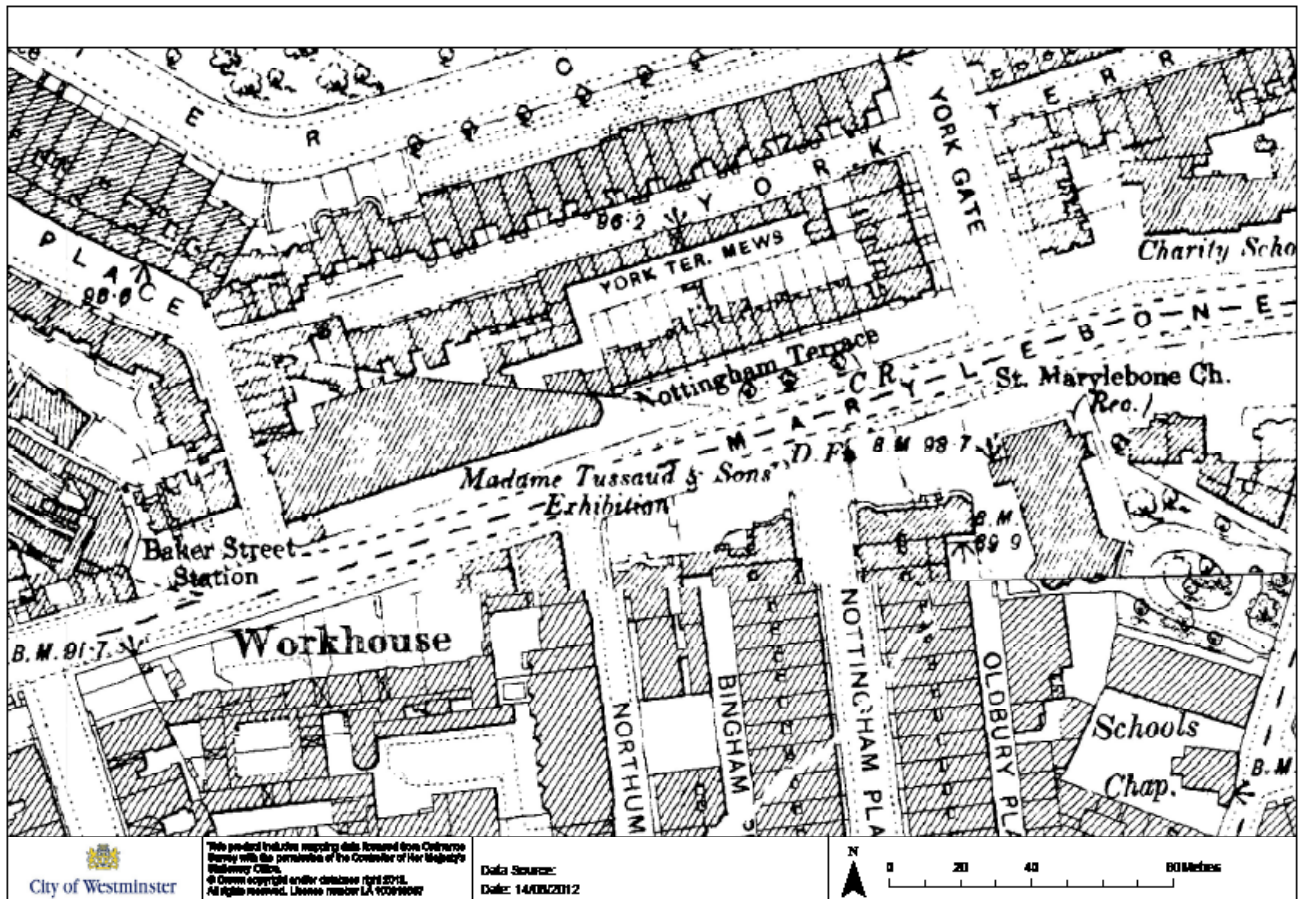


Figure 5: *above* Greenwoods Map, 1830, opposite the Marylebone Workhouse shows Union Place (the site now occupied by Mme Tussauds) and **Figure 6** *below* the 1890s Ordnance Survey Map showing the newly constructed Madame Tussauds building, next to Nottingham Terrace.



2.7 In 1940, the cinema at the western end of Madame Tussauds was hit by a bomb (see **Figure 8**) and this was replaced in 1957-8 with the domed planetarium designed by the architect George Watt. It was the first Planetarium of its kind in any commonwealth country. Its domed shape recalls the dome to the roof of the earlier Madame Tussauds roovescape and continued its landmark function.

2.8 In the later 20th century the building underwent much interior remodelling but this retained its external character and townscape contribution.

2.9 Today, the collection still includes examples of Marie Tussaud's own work, including the death masks that she made of executed aristocracy at the time of the French Revolution and the 1765 sleeping figure of Madame du Barry. Madame Tussaud's is internationally famous and there are now fourteen spin-offs in locations from Blackpool to Bangkok. Around 500 million visitors have visited the Marylebone Road site since its construction.

3 Architecture

3.1 The frontage of Madame Tussauds and the planetarium make a significant contribution to townscape on this part of Marylebone Road.

3.2 The main building is relatively simple in appearance, but has retained parts of its 1928 facade, which in turn retained elements of the earlier 1884 building. It is subdivided by giant paired pilasters, with painted inset brickwork panels. An attic storey is set above a projecting moulded cornice, with arched window near the centre of the elevation. .



Figure 9: The front elevation of Madame Tussauds facing Marylebone Road.



Figure 10: Some architectural detail to the front elevation remains from the original 1884 building.

3.3 To the rear of the building and to the roof, there have been significant extensions and alterations, some of which have a negative impact on the townscape, and it is only the front facade and its return elevations which are considered to contribute to the character of the area. Also to the rear is York Court, which has a blank front to Allsop Place, and circa 1960s sub-Georgian elevation along York Terrace. It does not contribute to the character of the area.

3.4 The 1958 Planetarium is a particularly striking building, with its steep copper-clad concrete dome forming a distinctive



Figure 11: The Planetarium

feature in the local townscape. At the time, it was the largest Planetarium dome in the Commonwealth. This is archetypal 1950s architecture; futuristic and optimistic for the 'space age'. It is recognised by the English Heritage report to DCMS on the potential listing of the building¹ as a *London landmark due to its bold colour and shape and of technical interest both for its unusual mode of construction and for the advanced projection technology employed within.*

3.5 Together the main Mme Tussauds building and the Planetarium forms an interesting group which make a significant contribution to the character of this part of the Marylebone Road and relate in age and scale to other buildings on this stretch, already within the conservation area.

4 Reason for Proposed Designation

4.1 This designation recognises the architectural and historic interest and important townscape contribution of this group. The buildings on the site are of a similar age and scale as those in Dorset Square along the Marylebone Road and they are therefore consistent with this character area, as identified in the conservation area audit. The iconic dome of the Planetarium also forms an important and instantly recognisable landmark on the Marylebone Road.

4.2 The group of buildings are also of historical and cultural interest. The Tussauds collection is itself a cultural asset of international significance. There is no other such collection of equivalent importance; some of Marie Tussauds earliest works remain on display. The historic value of the collection is particularly high, as the home of the collection for the last 128 years.

5 Implications of Designation

5.1 This designation recognises the architectural and historic importance of these buildings in the local townscape and

¹ English Heritage Advice Report 08 June 2012, Case Name: Madame Tussaud's (including former London Planetarium) Case Number: 47148

ensures the protection and encourages future enhancement of the area

5.2 Conservation area consent would be required for the demolition or substantial demolition of these buildings. The main Mme Tussaud's building front and side facades and the planetarium are considered to be unlisted buildings of merit and as such are considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the local area. The rear elevation of the Mme Tussauds building and York Court make a neutral contribution to the character of the area.

5.3 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 area and will seek enhancements to the area, where possible.

5.4 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.

6 Conclusions and Further Information

6.1 As set out above, it is considered that the extension area is of both historical and architectural interest, and relates in age and character to other buildings within this part of the Dorset Square conservation area.

6.2 Further information on Dorset Square Conservation Area is available on the Westminster website at: www.westminster.gov.uk/environment/planning/conservationlistedbuildings/areaprofiles.