

Pilbrow & Partners

Belgravia Design Codes

Belgravia Neighbourhood Forum

Prepared by Pilbrow & Partners
on behalf of the Belgravia Neighbourhood Forum

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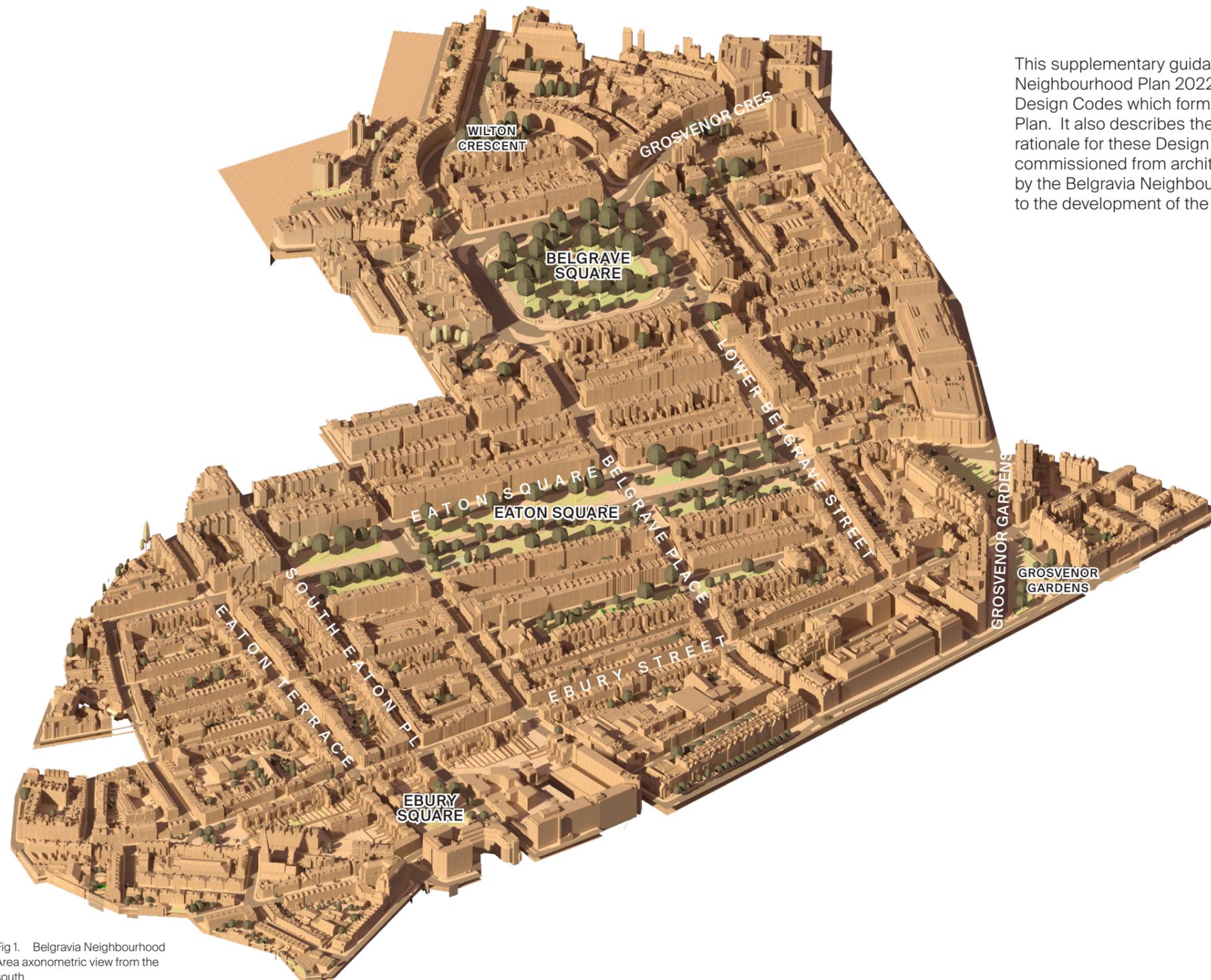


Fig 1. Belgravia Neighbourhood
Area axonometric view from the
south

This supplementary guidance for the Belgravia Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2040 contains Design Codes which form an integral part of the Plan. It also describes the evidence base and rationale for these Design Codes. The work was commissioned from architects Pilbrow & Partners by the Belgravia Neighbourhood Forum to contribute to the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Belgravia is unique in its scale, coherence and quality as an exemplar of Late Georgian town planning. The area was extended by later 19th Century development embodying classic exemplars of the design styles of their era, ranging from stately chateau-style mansions through to improved homes for the working classes, which integrate well with earlier buildings.

The 20th Century has seen the addition of some complementary buildings which form the periphery such as the listed Nos.92-98 and Art Deco coach station on Buckingham Palace Road, and on Grosvenor Place, Iron Trades House and No.33 (now Cleveland Clinic).

Thus well defined urban design principles have created a rich variety of buildings and civic spaces across the district. This study assesses the principles that informed this urban and architectural design approach and it derives from them design codes to guide contemporary development in a manner which is sympathetic to Belgravia's qualities.

The study considers:

- Building and street scale interrelationships
- Scale transitions
- Architectural treatment of fronts and backs
- Elevational design
- Windows and entrances
- Building lines and boundary treatments
- Mews and small streets
- Materials
- Shop fronts
- Green spaces
- Small features and local variations
- Uncharacterful and negative features
- Application of the Design Codes to larger new buildings and major developments.

Using the Design Codes

The design codes reflect *principles* drawn from the character of the context rather than prescriptive standards. It is proposed that these design principles apply across the whole Neighbourhood Area, serving to reinforce its existing character and quality of place.

1. Belgravia: The Context

1. Belgravia: The Context

1.1 Belgravia Neighbourhood Forum Area

The Belgravia Neighbourhood Forum was established by Westminster City Council to consult with the local community and prepare a plan for the Belgravia Neighbourhood Area. The boundary of the Belgravia Neighbourhood Area was defined by the Council in 2014 and is shown on the site plan opposite.

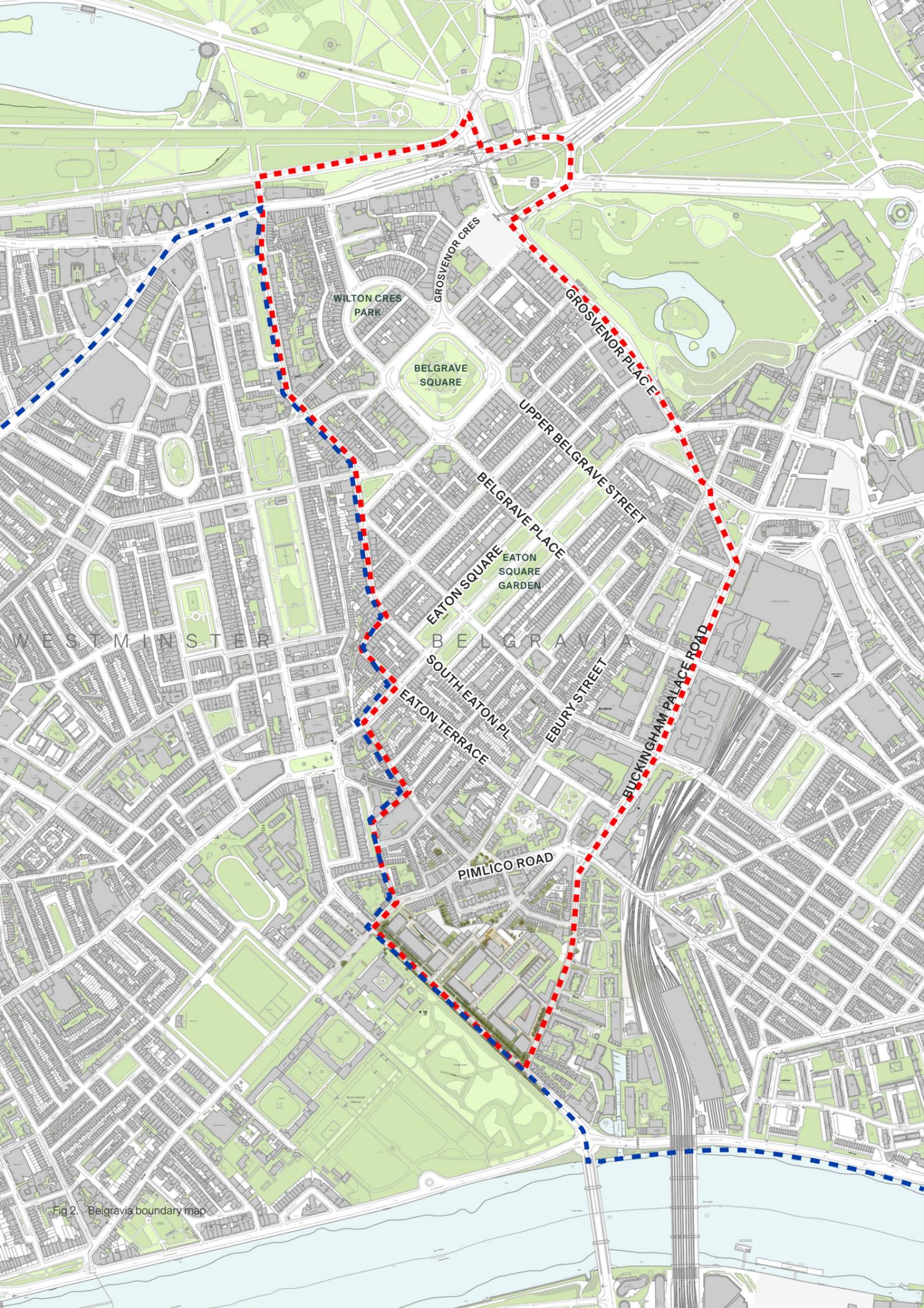


Fig 2. Belgravia boundary map

- Belgravia Neighbourhood Area
- Westminster City Council Boundary
- Neighbourhood Area: 93.8 hectares

1. Belgravia: The Context

1.2 Heritage Context

- Grade I
- Grade II*
- Grade II

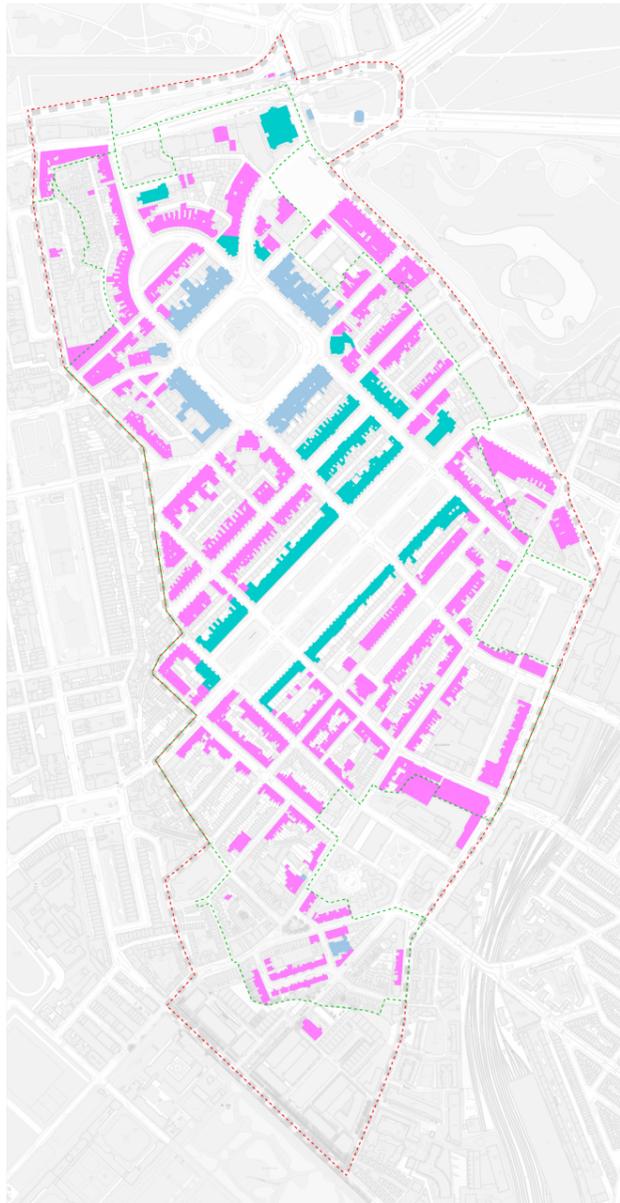


Fig 3. Listed Buildings

- Conservation area

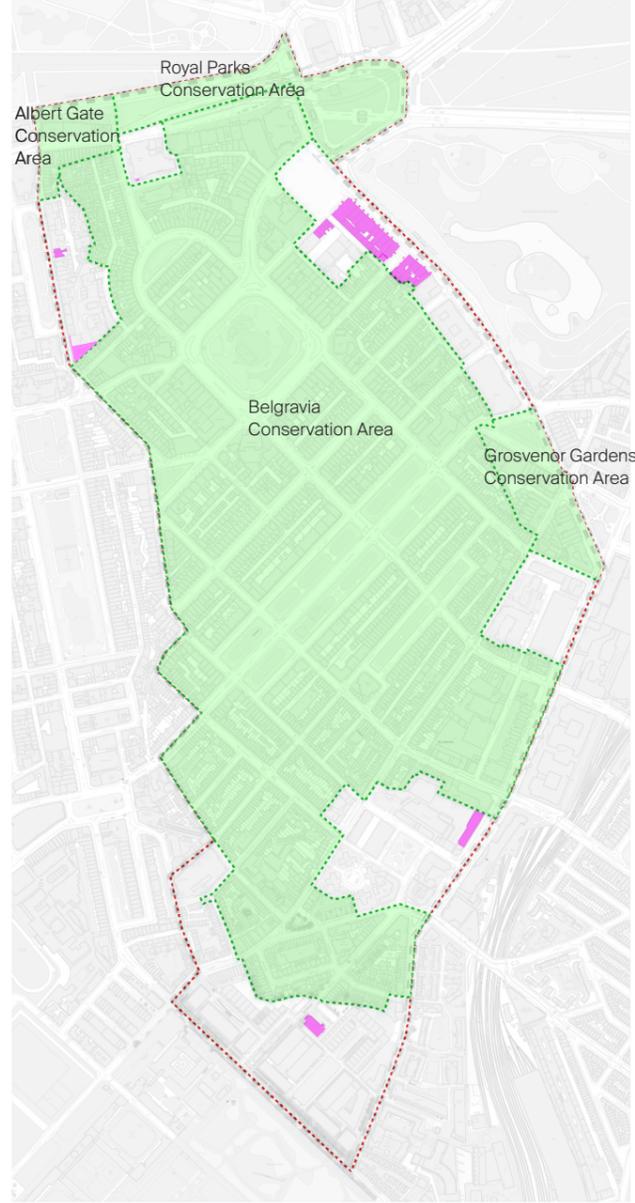


Fig 4. Conservation Area

- Building of Merit
- Neutral
- Negative
- Grade I
- Grade II*
- Grade II



Fig 5. Categorisation of key buildings outside the Belgravia Conservation Area. Source: WCC

The majority of the Neighbourhood Area is set within four Conservation Areas: Belgravia Conservation Area and parts of the Albert Gate Conservation Area, Royal Parks Conservation Area and Grosvenor Gardens Conservation Area. Guidance for some of these Conservation Areas identify listed buildings, unlisted buildings of merit and negative buildings. As a contribution to the Local Plan, this study has extended these designations into the non-Conservation Areas within the plan area.

The map on the near-left shows buildings which are not protected by either listing or inclusion within a conservation area.

1. Belgravia: The Context

1.3 Belgravia History

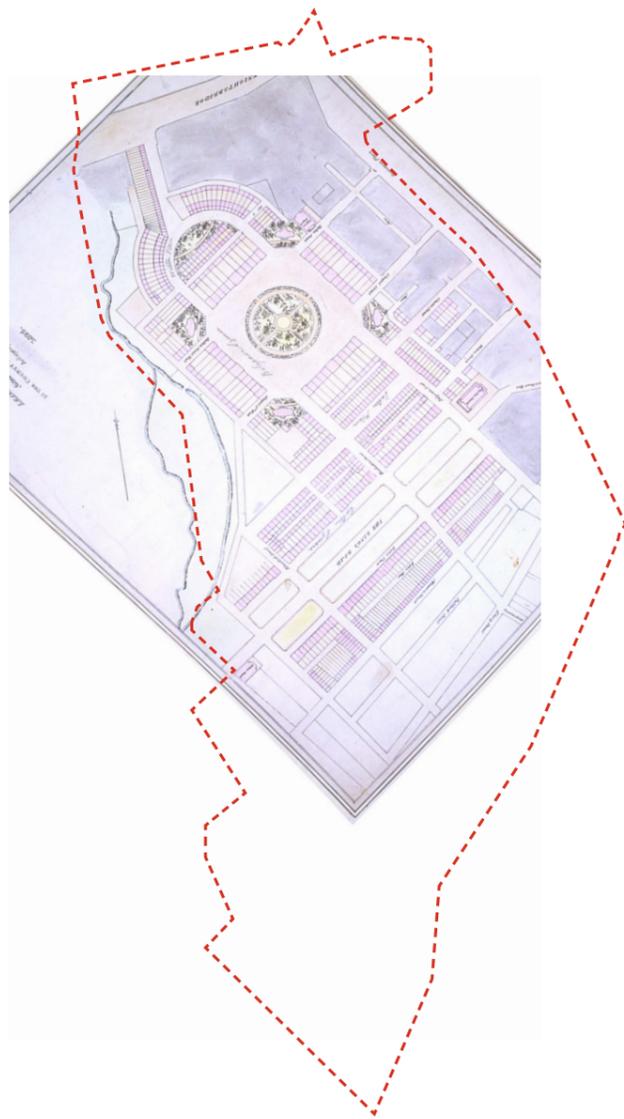


Fig 6. An early plan for Belgrave Square from 1825

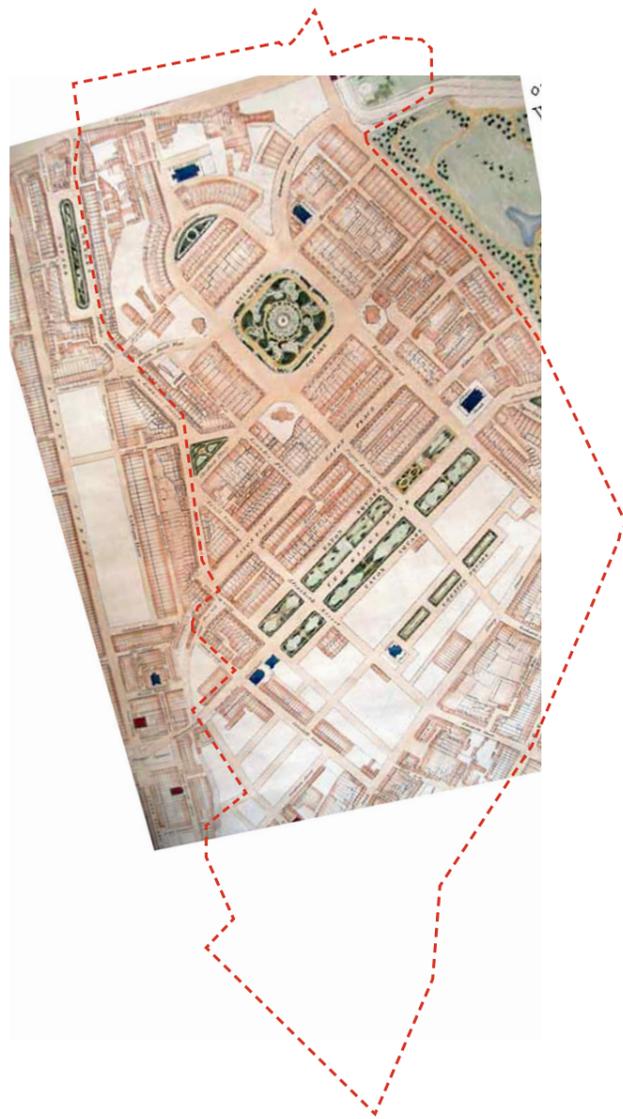


Fig 7. An 1865 plan showing the developments of Thomas Cubitt

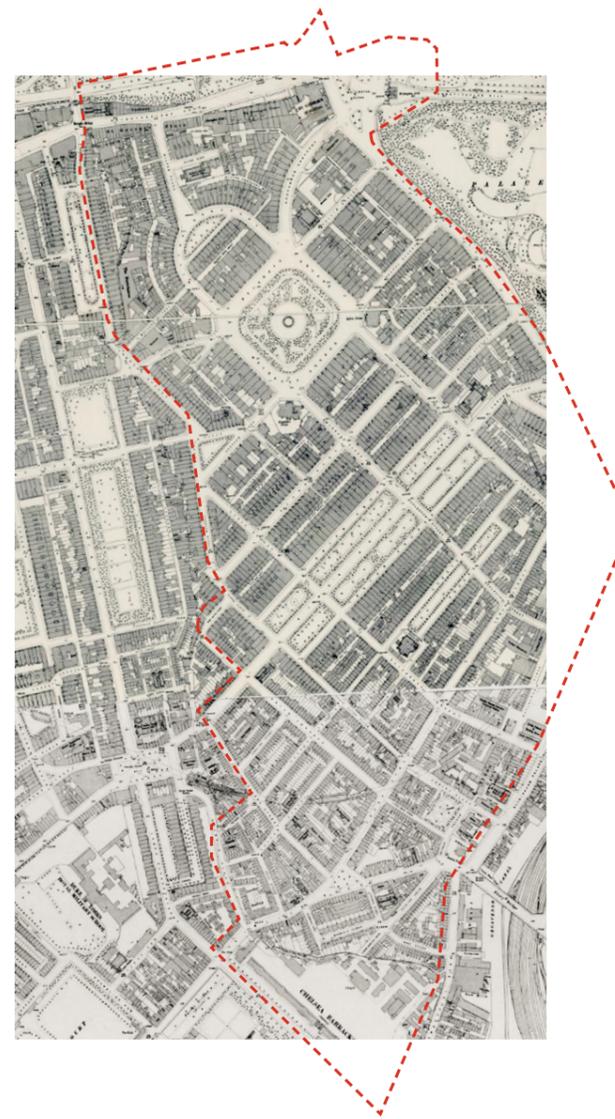


Fig 8. An 1895 Ordnance Survey map showing much of the Neighbourhood Area

The Belgravia Estate was laid out in the early 19th Century. A clear urban order defined a rich variety of spaces from grand garden squares to intimate mews.

Before its development, the area was marshland and market gardens, containing only a handful of isolated developments.

It was developed in the early 19th century by the Grosvenor family under the direction of Thomas Cundy. Belgrave Square was laid out in 1826 and largely complete by 1840 and featured work by architects Cubitt, Basevi, Hardwick and Smirke. Eaton Square, started at the same time, was completed in 1855.

Whilst individual contractors each developed different areas, each followed common principles establishing a high level of coherence. The 1825 map shows an early design for Belgrave Square and the 1865 map shows Thomas Cubitt's plan of his developments. Constructed from the north towards the south, bricks were delivered from the canal that lay in the position of today's railway tracks out of Victoria Station. Ebury Street marked the southern boundary of what was completed in the original plan.

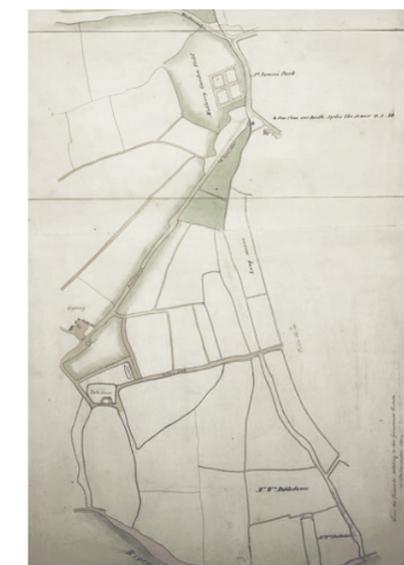


Fig 9. A copy of a 1614 map of the Five Fields, the area that would later become Belgravia

1 Belgravia: The Context

1.4 Topography and Sections

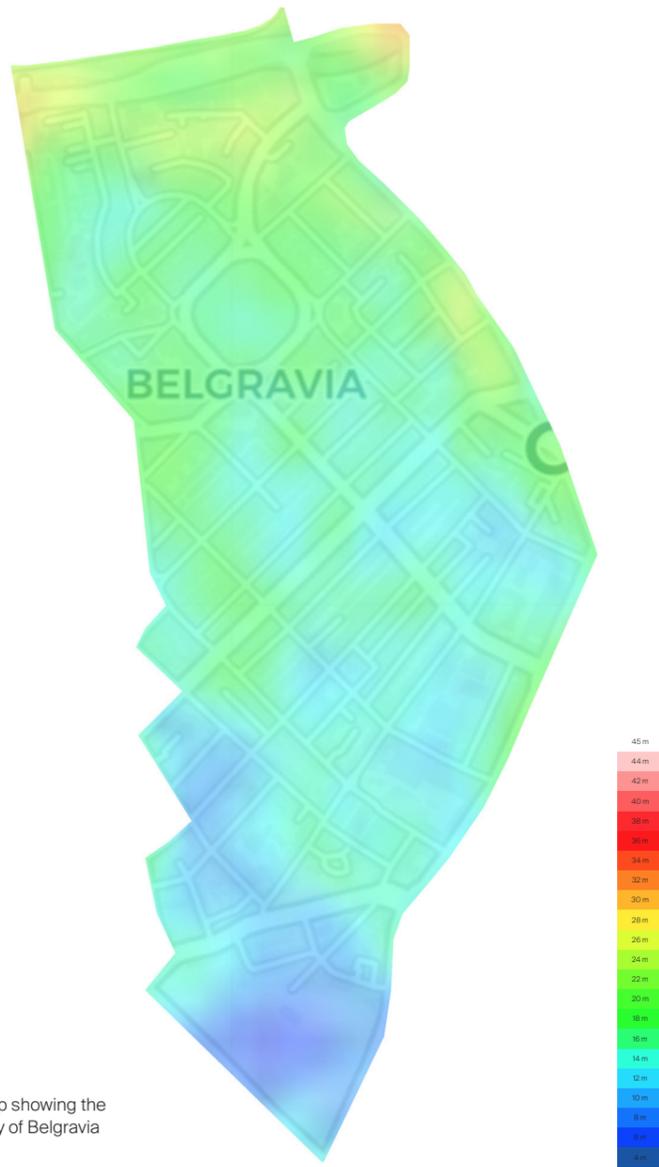


Fig 10. Map showing the topography of Belgravia in metres.



Fig 11. Section key plans for long sections on the next page.

The Belgravia Neighbourhood Area is relatively flat, with a typical height change of 10 metres between the North and South, a distance of approximately 1.75km. In general, the land rises gently as it moves north from the River Thames and the gradient increases towards Constitution Hill.

This trend is shown by the topography map, which charts heights above sea level, and the long sections below which show the heights above sea level as they pass through Belgravia.

The key plan shows the position of the two sections, AA and BB.



Fig 12. AA - North to South: Knightsbridge to Chelsea Bridge Road

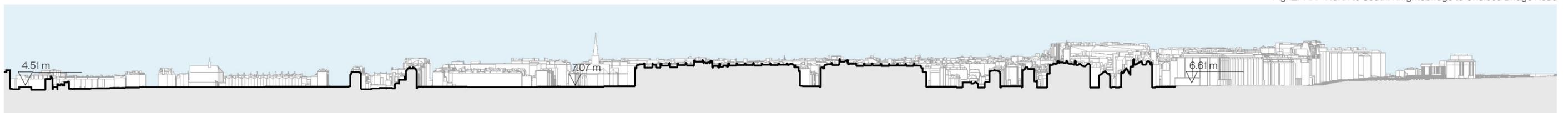


Fig 13. BB - Southwest to Northeast: Holbein Place to Grosvenor Gardens

1 Belgravia: The Context

1.5 Ground Floor Land Use

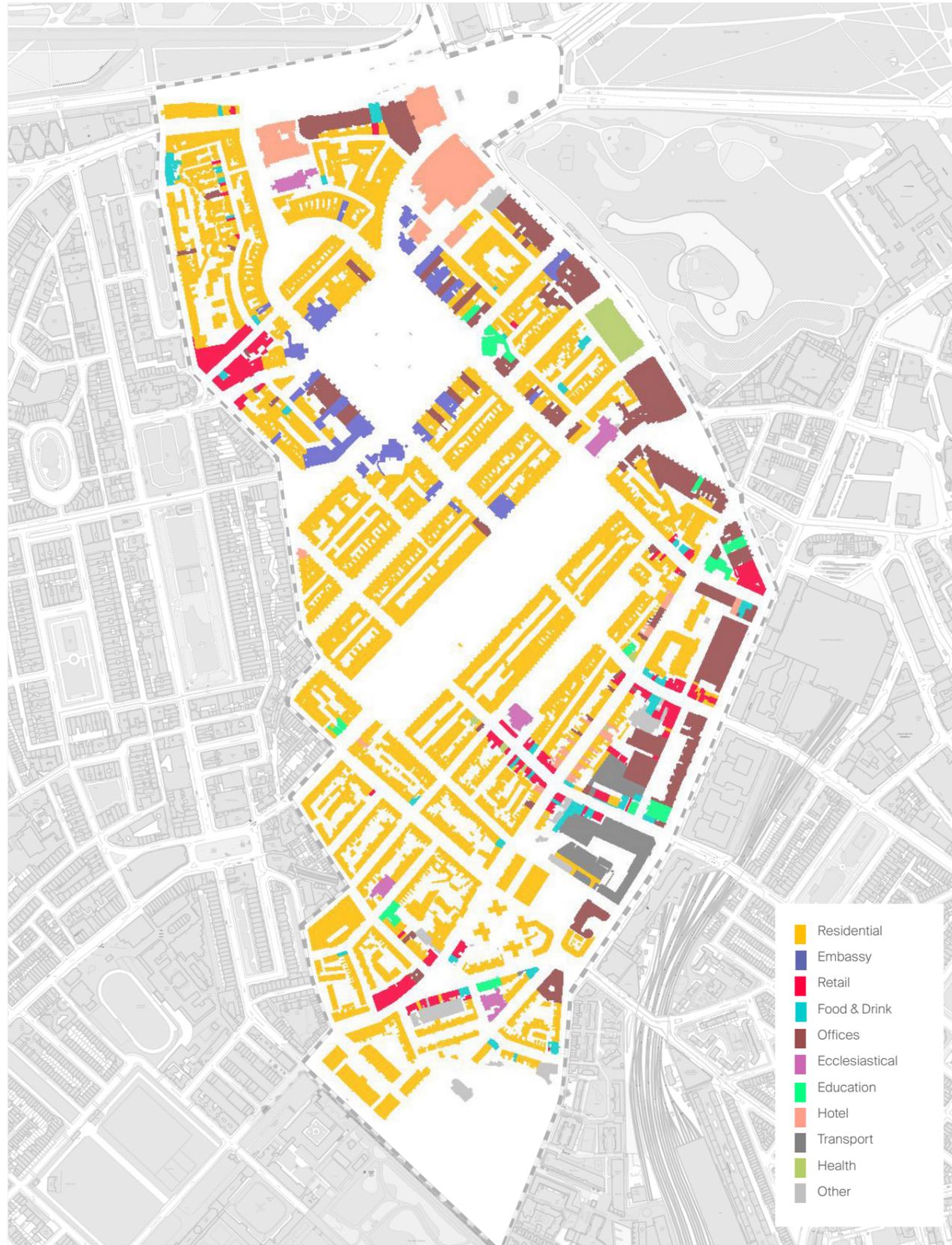


Fig 14. Map showing land use as at 2021



Fig 15. Eaton Square

Belgravia is predominantly characterised by ground floor residential uses. In the original Georgian streets these are typically detailed with raised ground floors set behind railed areas.



Fig 16. Elizabeth Street

Belgravia remains predominantly residential in character and residential uses dominate the majority of the ground floor frontages. Over time, non-residential uses have emerged within the neighbourhood, including significant numbers of embassies, consulates and ambassadorial residences.

There are three significant clusters of retail, cafes, pubs and restaurants located along: Motcomb Street and the adjoining Kinnerton Street; Elizabeth Street; and Pimlico Road, especially around Orange Square.

At the periphery of the Neighbourhood Area, offices, interspersed with some shops, are the dominant use along Knightsbridge, Grosvenor Place and Buckingham Palace Road. Along Ebury Street, between Elizabeth Street and Lower Belgrave Street, there are a number of small hotels.



Fig 17. Elizabeth Street

There are discrete centres of retail activity such as Elizabeth Street and Orange Square.



Fig 18. Elizabeth Street



Fig 19. Orange Square

2. Belgravia Design Codes

2. Belgravia Design Codes

2.1 Building and Street Scale Interrelationships



Fig 20. 1st Order
Belgrave Square, road width: 27m



Fig 21. 2nd Order
Chester Square width: 12m



Fig 22. 3rd Order
Chester Row width: 11m



Fig 23. 4th Order
Ebury Street, road width: 11m



Fig 27. 5th Order
Bourne Street, road width: 11m

Belgravia's urban order reflects Georgian town planning practice and guidance - indeed the neighbourhood remains an unusually coherent and complete realisation of this planning approach.

The width of the street determines the height of façades that frame it. Terraces of grander houses line the garden squares and primary thoroughfares, whilst smaller houses frame the secondary streets decreasing in scale to fourth and fifth order terraces on the smaller streets and mews. Cundy's masterplan integrated all scales of building across the quarter with the result that Belgravia benefits from a rich variety of well-scaled and well-connected streets and spaces.

The grandeur of houses is also expressed by their vertical grain (strong vertical lines) which becomes increasingly emphasised on higher order streets through articulation (clear definition) and modelling of entrances, windows, parapets and façade bays. The façades of terraces become increasingly plain away from primary streets.



Fig 24. Moving from left to right: grander buildings are larger and feature greater articulation, whereas, lower order buildings are smaller and plainer.



Fig 25. First order houses on Belgrave Square



Fig 26. Second order houses on Chester Square



Fig 28. Fourth order houses on Ebury Street



Fig 29. Fifth order houses on Bourne Street

2. Belgravia Design Codes

2.1 Building and Street Scale Interrelationships

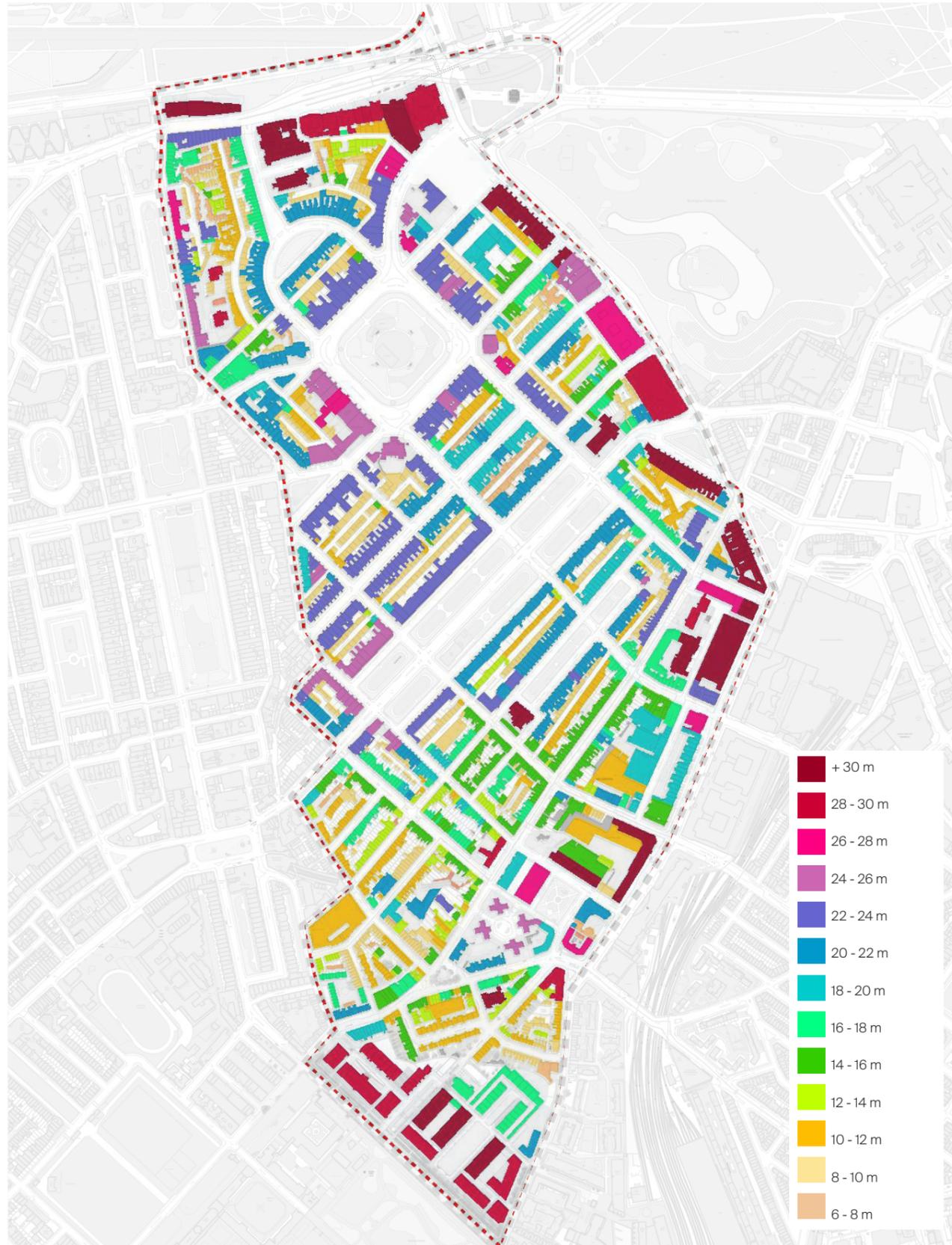


Fig 30. Map showing the height of buildings above street level

The coherent street proportion derived from these planning principles results in the larger first order houses set around the grandest spaces of Belgrave and Eaton Squares. These buildings of 18 to 24m were constructed with their own mews to the rear, with heights typically ranging between 8 and 12m.

Towards the south of Belgravia, and away from the main garden squares, the buildings become smaller and there is less variation in both the height of buildings and street widths. Here, buildings heights rarely exceed 16-18m with 8 to 10m being the typical height of most buildings.

On the periphery facing the major thoroughfares of Knightsbridge, Grosvenor Place and Buckingham Palace Road, however, more recent buildings rise to 30 metres or even more.

Both within the centre of Belgravia and on the periphery adjoining buildings tend to feature consistent rooflines (a roofline of uniform height and/or decorative treatment), especially between buildings that were constructed as part of a single terrace. The preservation of these consistent rooflines, rather than a series of irregular heights, is an important part of Belgravia's character.

Design Code 1. Building and Street Scale Interrelationships

- 1.1. Building heights for terrace buildings are to be determined by the heights of existing historic buildings in the same terrace.
- 1.2. If a building exists independent of a terrace, then its height should respond sensitively to the heights of surrounding historic buildings and the scale of the street or streets that it faces.
- 1.3. Façades on new buildings, on primary streets, may be enriched through more prominent articulation and elaboration. Façades along smaller and secondary streets should avoid over-elaboration and be plainer in façade design.
- 1.4. Consistent rooflines should be preserved with no visible structures or projections above the average roof or parapet height, Westminster City Plan Clause 40.11 should be noted in this regard.
- 1.5. The design of the roof should conceive it as an integral part of the building below. Roofs should be visually subservient to the main body of the building.

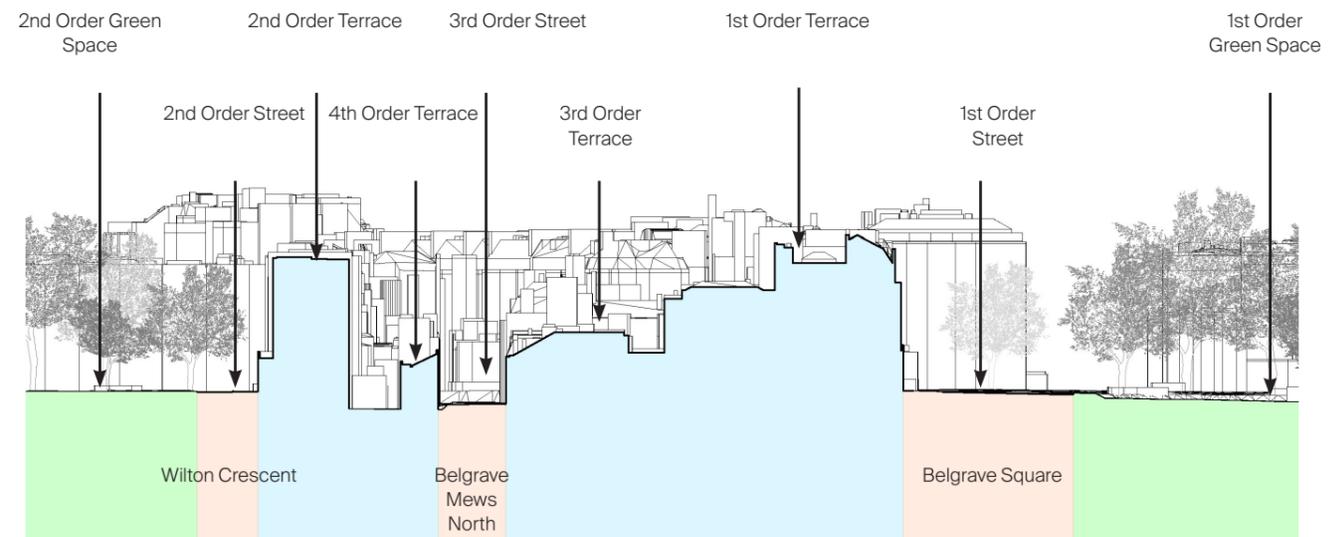


Fig 31. The section above shows an example of the relationship between street and building scale from Wilton Crescent to Belgrave Square.

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.2 Scale Transitions

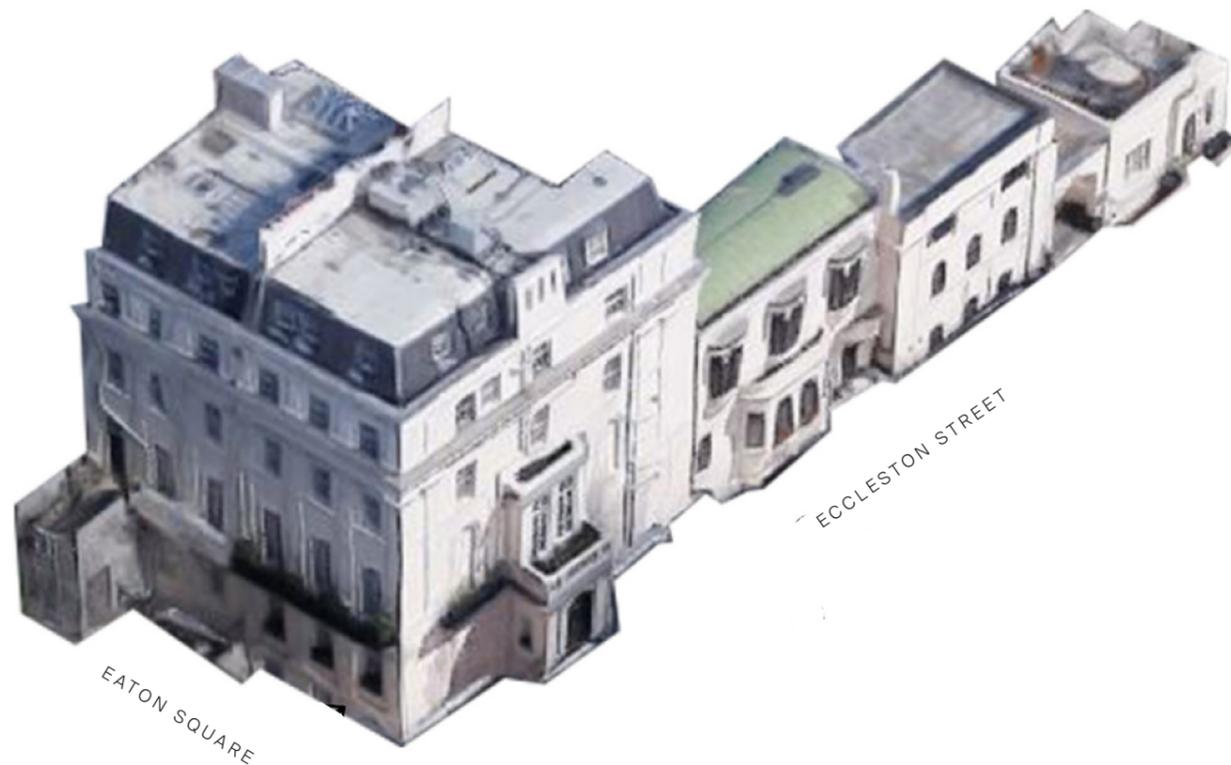


Fig 32. Building height reduces in secondary streets

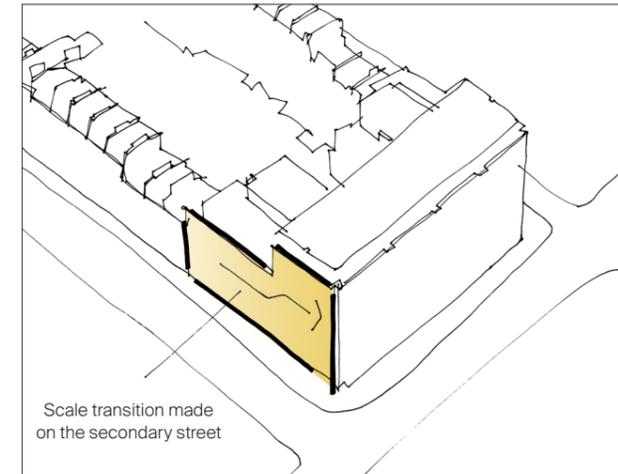


Fig 34. Diagram showing the scale transition being made on the lower order street.

Design Code 2. Scale Transitions

- 2.1. When determining building heights and massing for a building on a corner, the height of the terrace on the more significant street is to take precedence in such a way that a consistent building height is maintained along the primary terrace.
- 2.2. The scale transition to smaller terraces is to take place off the primary street and on the secondary street with the building stepping down to the lower terrace height of the secondary street.
- 2.3. Where a scale transition involves an existing gap between the rear of the buildings on the primary street and the next neighbouring building on the secondary street, such should be maintained where it is part of the historic street layout and contributes positively to the townscape character by permitting views of rear garden areas.

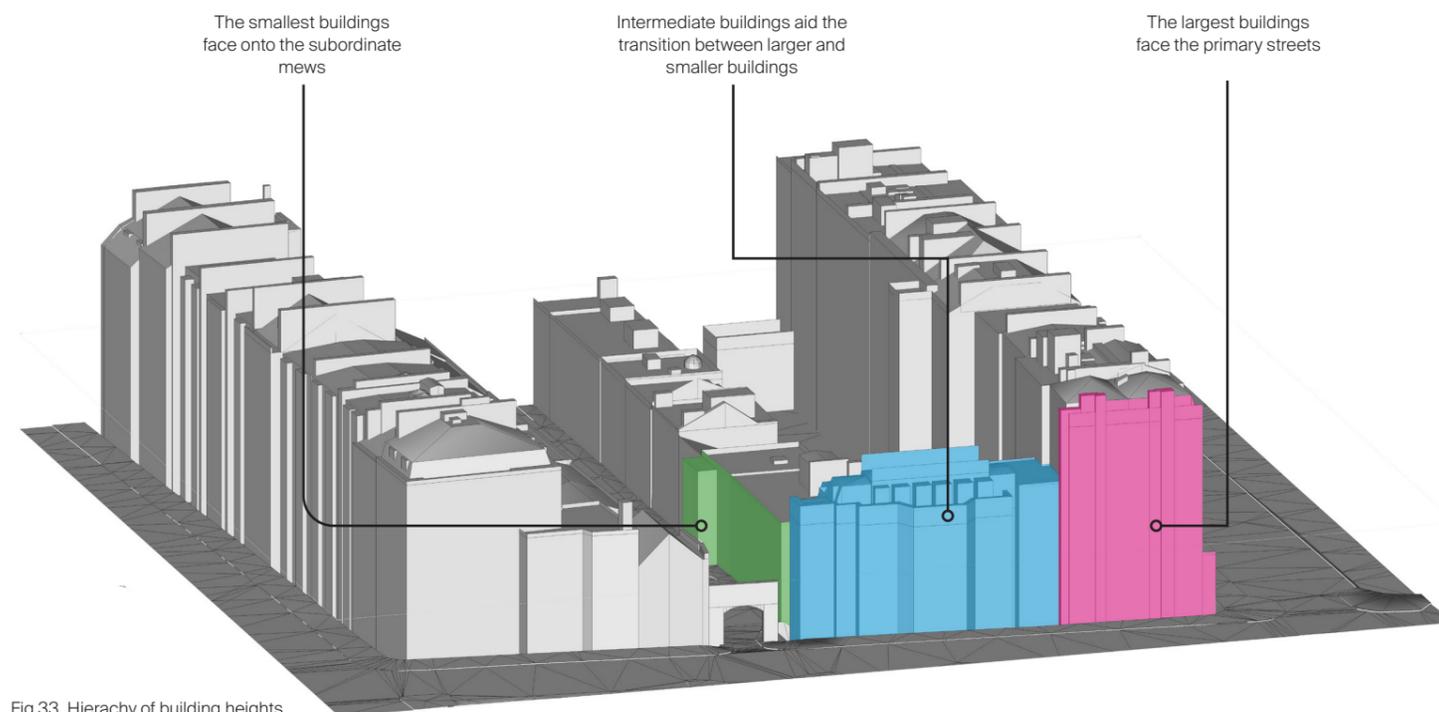


Fig 33. Hierarchy of building heights

Taller buildings face on to wider primary streets whereas lower order buildings face on to smaller secondary routes. Typically, the scale transition (the change from one building height to the next) is made on the secondary street, maintaining the coherence of the primary street frontages. Once the scale transition is made, building heights typically vary little along each terrace row creating consistent rooflines.

In the image above, the primary frontage on Eaton Square returns along the secondary frontage of Eccleston Street before the scale reduces.

Many larger terraces have openings (see picture on this page) between the rear of the terrace on the primary street and the first house on the secondary street. These spaces are characteristic of Belgravia and permit open views of garden trees and skyline.



Fig 35. Example of a 'Belgravia gap'

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.3 Fronts and Backs

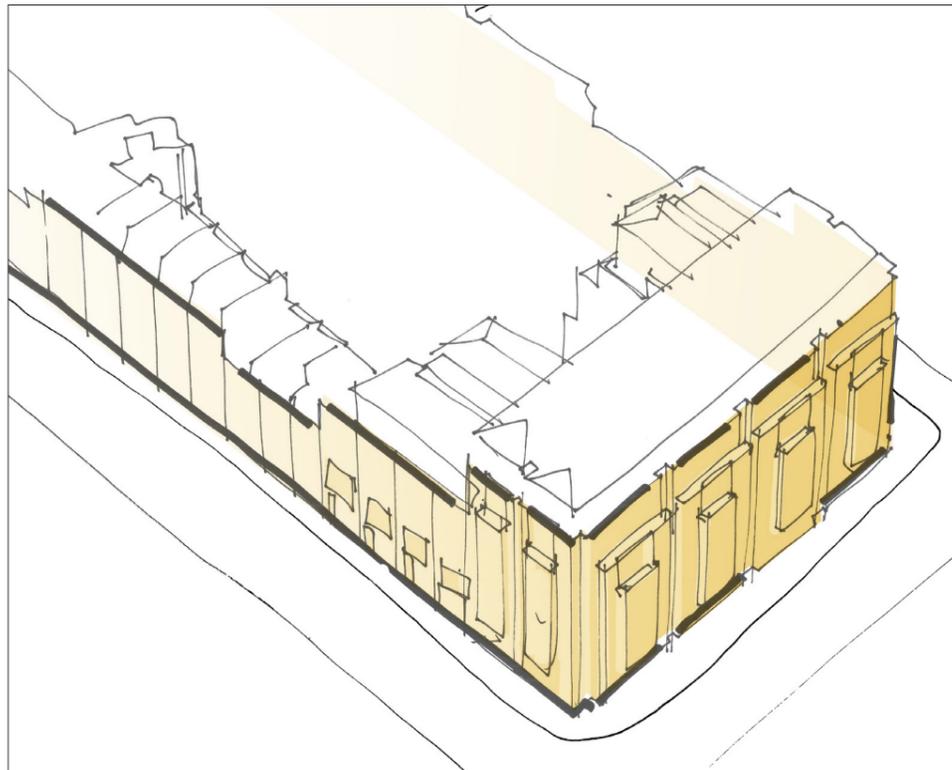


Fig 36. The exterior façades to the streets are carefully ordered.

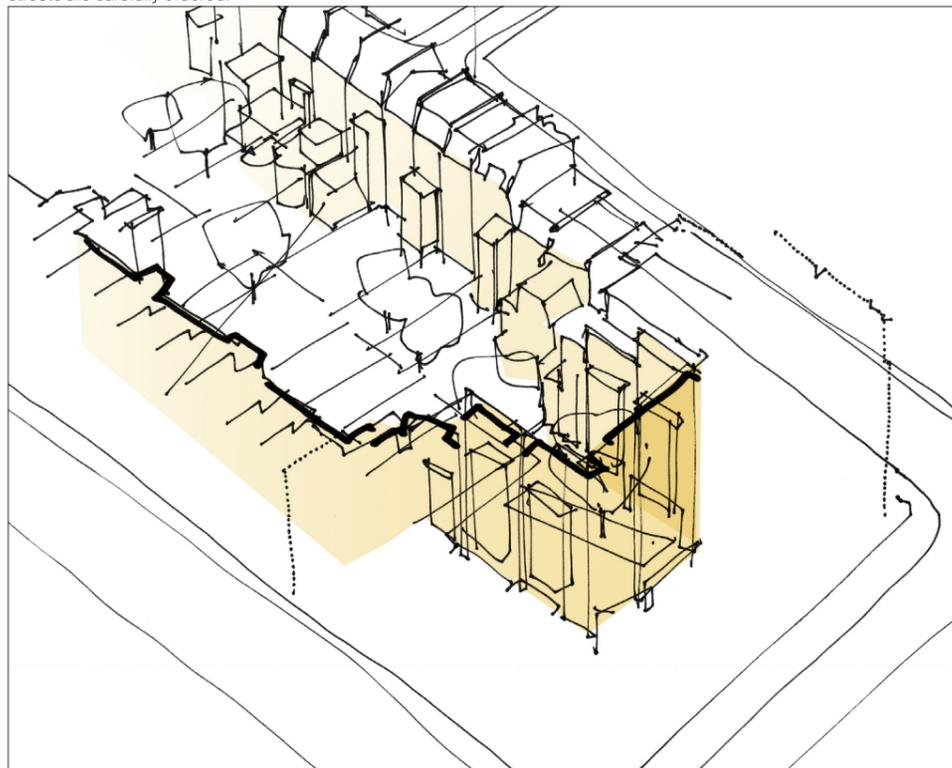


Fig 37. The interior façades to the garden are more modelled.



Fig 38. **Street Elevations**
The street elevations on Eaton Place are ordered and the street design of individual buildings is developed in reference to its neighbours.

Belgravia's urban blocks are clearly delineated to their exterior, offering consistently scaled and well-defined edges to the streets and squares of the quarter. The elevational detail to this 'public' face of the buildings is also well-defined, formal and ordered.

By contrast, the interior of the block is typically more informal in character and directly expressive of the internal planning of individual buildings. There is greater variety to massing, material and elevational detail.

The differences between the front and rear elevations contribute to Belgravia's character.



Fig 39. **Elevations to the interior of the block**
As this example to the rear of Belgrave Square shows, rear elevations are informal in character, varied in scale, details and material reflecting internal planning.

Design Code 3. Fronts and Backs

- 3.1. The street-facing frontages of buildings should adhere to the prevailing building line and elevations should respond to the order of the context. Buildings should neither project nor be set back unduly.
- 3.2. Extensions to the backs of properties, whilst freer to use more expressive modelling, should still be of appropriate scale to the backs of other buildings in the same terrace.
- 3.3. All extensions should be sensitive to the overall scale of the original building and neighbouring properties.
- 3.4. The detail and materiality of extensions should similarly be informed by, and sensitive to, the qualities of their context.

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.4 Elevational Design



Consistent lines tie the different buildings into a coherent terrace

Fig 40. Upper Belgrave Street

Belgravia's Georgian town planning order is underpinned by classical architectural principles. Building elevations are ordered by similar principles, even when the presence of classically ordered columns is implied.

Townhouse elevations typically detail the ground floor as a plinth to the columns that frame the main body of the elevations, above which an attic storey terminates the facade. This tripartite division of base, body and attic is most forcefully expressed on first rate buildings where the ordering columns typically spring from the first floor Piano Nobile to encompass the second and, occasionally, third floor. On more modest houses the columns' presence is implied rather than directly constructed with the hierarchy of diminishing windows on the upper levels standing in for the entasis of the classical column.

The lines that articulate the base, body and attic are often consistent between buildings, even if built at different times. This further contributes to the architectural order of the neighbourhood. This order is reinforced along terraces through use of consistent rooflines, cornices, string courses, fasciae, entablatures, balconies and glazing heights.

Buildings constructed after the Georgian period within Belgravia often demonstrate similar compositional approaches.

Upper Belgrave Street



Fig 41. Upper Belgrave Street

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.4 Elevational Design



Fig 42. Subtle manipulations to the street wall add interest to long terraces.

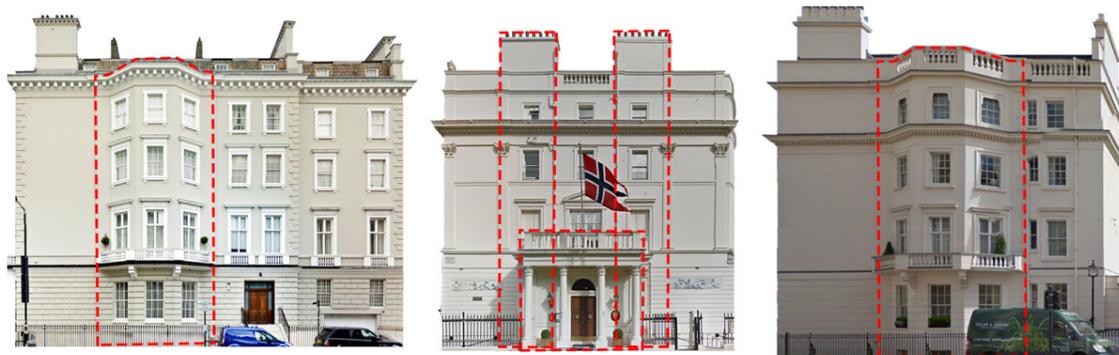


Fig 43. Bays enrich first order houses but are used sparingly.



Fig 44. Strong, uniform rhythm ensures that terraces work effectively as a larger composition.

Long façades are enriched by subtle manipulations (changes to the direction of a line) of the street wall to establish a larger scale architectural order. Thus, individual townhouses are drawn together into a larger coherent composition.

These manipulations lend these long horizontal façades a more vertical proportion.

Elevations, especially to the larger first order houses, are enriched by bays and porticos. Bays typically denote the principal rooms within the interior, aiding the legibility of the elevation. They are not typically used repetitively.

Along terraces a strong rhythm is achieved through the use of consistent vertical lines, exemplified most particularly in window arrangements. The regularity of the vertical emphasis across multiple buildings and sometimes across multiple architectural styles contributes to the order of the whole terrace.

Strong rhythm is most prominent on large terraces but is also important to smaller terrace and mews buildings.

Design Code 4. Elevation Design

- 4.1 New buildings should be sensitive to the classical underpinnings of Belgravia's architecture in terms of *order, proportion and material*, with *base, body and attic* zones articulated. Modern interpretations are acceptable if they are sympathetic to their context.
- 4.2. Consideration should be given to continuity of horizontal features to be carried through into new developments from adjacent buildings.
- 4.3. A greater degree of elaboration may be judged appropriate for grander structures, buildings of smaller scale should be restrained in their detail.
- 4.4. Buildings should have an elevational design approach that is consistent with the design principles of adjacent terrace buildings. Context matters - where a site within a terrace is to be infilled, the neighbouring historic buildings should be followed more closely.

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.5 Windows and Entrances



Whilst there are variations in window design over Belgravia, there are consistent approaches characteristic of the neighbourhood's historic buildings. The largest and most impressive windows are found on the ground and first floors, denoting the most important rooms in the terrace houses. Windows above the first floor become progressively smaller with each floor.

First floor windows often feature larger panes of glass, increasing their grandeur. Some ground floor windows are arched, though this feature is not common in mews.

Historically, windows would be single glazed clear float glass. Environmental considerations require double and triple glazing to new buildings and non-listed refurbishments. Here, careful consideration needs to be taken in regard to the colour and reflectivity of new glazing. Tinted and mirrored glass can have a dramatic and negative impact on the building appearance. Clear low iron glass may be appropriate in multi-layer glazed installation to minimise its visual impacts.

Fig 45. The green and black tints of the windows shown below are uncharacterful and have negative visual impacts on the area.



2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.5 Windows and Entrances



Fig 46. Entrance portico on Eaton Square. The portico performs a number of interrelated functions clearly denoting the position of the entrance, spanning over the ground floor and accommodating the step up to the raised ground floor. At first floor level the top of the portico provides external terrace space.



Fig 47. Infilled porticos have a negative impact as they are not sympathetic to the historic character of the area.



Fig 48. In the above image the door is overly large for its context and the metals, e.g. bronze, used are inconsistent with the traditional door materials used in Belgravia.

Porticos are a key historical and architectural feature of many of the grander buildings in Belgravia. The design of these porticos varies across the area though they all share classical features and are generally consistent along each terrace. Some have been infilled detracting from the balance of the elevation and order of the wider setting.

Steps to some entrances in the area have been replaced by unsympathetic materials, such as tiling or low-quality granite. These small changes to the consistency of these features erodes the character of Belgravia.

Wood accounts for the material of almost all doors in the area, of which most are painted black with brass detailing. More complex metal work is reserved for the doorways of the grandest buildings. Door sizes are also respectful of a building's importance. The largest doors are reserved for mansions, such as those on Belgrave Square, whilst more modest buildings have smaller doors.

First floor balconies are a common feature. Usually stucco on the grander terraces and iron on more modest buildings, they form consistent horizontal lines along terraces.



Fig 49. Small negative changes and the use of low quality and inappropriate materials, such as marbled granite in the above example, leads to the erosion on the area's character.

Design Code 5. Windows and Entrances

- 5.1 The dimensions and scale of windows on new developments are to reflect and, as far as possible, align with those on adjacent historic buildings.
- 5.2. Strongly tinted and reflective glass is to be avoided and low iron glazing specified on new buildings.
- 5.3. Window frames are to be made from wood or high quality metals with slender mullion profiles. Plastics and broad profile aluminium profiles should be avoided;
- 5.4. Glazing patterns on historic buildings are to be preserved.
- 5.5. New designs are to be sensitive to the historic proportions of solid building material area to glazing areas, and glazing bars are to be considered to break up large areas of glass.
- 5.6. Open porticos are to be carefully preserved and not infilled. On new buildings porticos may make a positive contribution where appropriate where the immediate local context suggests their inclusion.
- 5.7. Door sizes and materials are to be in keeping with the scale, importance and context of the building.
- 5.8. First floor balconies can be permitted if they are in keeping with the materials, heights and patterns of adjacent buildings.
- 5.9 Steps are preferably of natural stone. Where marble or tiling is used this should be of discreet colour and design.
- 5.10 Considerations of accessibility and sustainability should inform the design and it is recognised that the above principles should also be shaped by these factors.

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.6 Residential Boundary Treatments



Public Boundary treatment Private

Fig 50. Typical ground floor residential detail with a raised ground floor accessed from entrance porticos which span across a lower ground floor area.



Fig 51. Ebury Street, Example of non-Georgian ground floor residential.

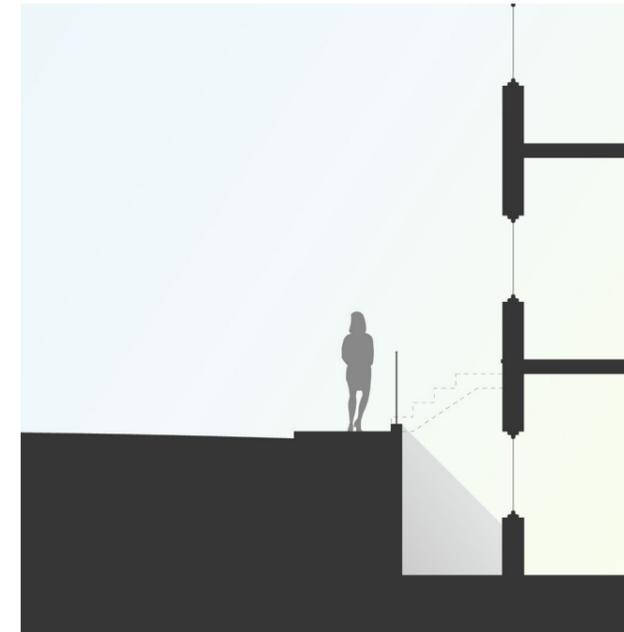


Fig 52. Railings to areas afford an element of privacy to accommodation at the base of a building whilst preserving good daylight levels to upper and lower ground floor levels.

The majority of Belgravia's ground floors are residential with retail concentrated in discrete streets and clusters.

Residential buildings typically feature raised upper and lower ground floors set behind a railed front area. This arrangement, with clear boundary treatments, creates a distinction between the private and public space.

Raised entrances improve privacy of ground floor rooms and increase sunlight levels in basements. Balanced against these advantages, are challenges for wheelchair user accessibility; discreet stair lifts integrated into entrance steps provide a potential approach to enhancing accessibility.

Design Code 6. Building Line and Boundary Treatments

- 6.1. Existing railings should be retained and new developments should incorporate appropriate railings around residential buildings as possible.
- 6.2. Upper and lower ground floors set behind a railed area may deliver high-quality residential accommodation in appropriate locations. Considerations of disabled access should be integrated into design proposals.
- 6.3. New proposals within Belgravia should be sensitive to the characteristic established land uses. Ground floor residential is likely to be appropriate where neighbouring residential buildings are also residential at this level; equally, active ground floors should be encouraged where a site contributes to an existing retail cluster.

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.7 Shopfronts



Fig 53. Retail frontages in Belgravia are typically concentrated in clusters such as Elizabeth Street illustrated above. Here, ground floor levels are flush with the street and historic shopfronts sensitively resolve the overall elevational order with this active ground floor use.



Non-residential frontages are typically level with the external pavement and many of the clusters of retail characteristic of Belgravia retain fine examples of historic shopfronts. The scale, detail and materiality of these shopfronts serve to harmonise with the historic residential facades above.

Shops in the neighbourhood's historic Local Centres are characterised by small boutiques and cafes. Like Belgravia's architecture their shopfronts display variety within order.

Horizontal emphasis is created through the use of consistent fascia, transoms, glazing heights and stallriser heights from shop to shop. These consistent horizontal lines tie together the unique character of each shop to create a unified composition. Vertical emphasis is created on some shops through the use of pilasters, columns, consoles and fenestration that lead existing lines on building façades down to the ground.

Traditional materials include wood, glass, brick, stucco, stone and occasionally iron work.

Important original details, including pilasters, fascia, fenestration and stallrisers have generally been preserved or restored well in Belgravia. Glazing patterns should reflect the period of the building. Georgian shopfronts are typified by smaller window panes whereas the early 20th Century saw the introduction of plate glass with larger pane sizes.

The colour palette focuses on white, creams, blacks, dark colours and pastel colours and avoids harsh and gaudy colours. The variation between adjacent shops helps to create a "village" feel whilst the careful use of a limited colour range helps to unify the shopfronts into coherent groups. Signage is carefully crafted, often hand-painted or inventively modelled. Particular consideration must be given for shopfront lighting and security. At night, shuttered shops would create an uninviting pedestrian experience.

Design Code 7. Ground Floor Land Use and Shopfronts

- 7.1. Historic shopfronts should be retained and all detail and material should be preserved or, where appropriate, restored.
- 7.2. New shopfronts (whether in existing or new buildings) are to use materials and design which is sympathetic to the immediate area.
- 7.3. Architectural details, such as fenestration, pilasters and consoles, are to be in keeping with the architectural style of the building within which the shop is situated.
- 7.4. Paint colours used on shopfronts are to be sympathetic to existing colour schemes.
- 7.5. If the frontage exists as part of a row of shops, horizontal emphasis is to be preserved through the use of fascia, transoms, glazing heights and stallriser heights consistent with the existing shopfronts.
- 7.6. Any security measures should be incorporated sensitively and every effort should be made to ensure that they are as discreet as possible. Externally fitted shutters are to be avoided.
- 7.7. Projecting or hanging signs or vertical 'blades' are to be discreet and appropriate to the context within which the shop is situated.

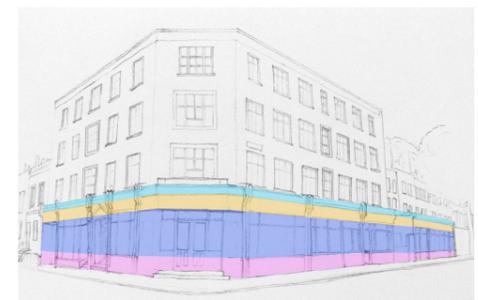


Fig 54. Consistent horizontal lines of cornices, fascia, glazing and stallrisers creates horizontal emphasis that ties together the unique character of each shop to create a unified whole. Many shops sit below first floor balconies. These further help to define the horizontal lines of rows of shops and frame the relatively ornate shopfronts from plainer brick façades.

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.8 Mews and Small Streets



Fig 55. Groom Place



Fig 56. Kinnerton Street

The mews and small streets of Belgravia, such as Kinnerton Street, contrast with the grand stucco terraces of the area but are equally as vital in creating the area's sense of place. The intimate narrow streets and shorter lines of sight are integral to the neighbourhood's 'village' feel. Meanwhile, the buildings in these areas balance the order created by consistent heights and dimensions with individuality emanating from colour and detailing.

Many of these buildings were constructed from yellow stock brick and originally left with exposed brick; however, many have subsequently been rendered or painted in white, cream or pastel colours. These colours, as well as smaller, more vivid colour details on features such as doors, window frames and plant boxes help to create distinctive and charming settings.

Almost all buildings in mews are two storeys with the possible addition of a third storey mansard roof set back from the façade.

Many mews buildings have kept features such as timber carriage doors that are keys to understanding the area's history. In some cases these have been replaced by unsympathetic modern garage doors made from metal or plastic.

Sett road surfaces exist in many of the mews and the buildings in these mews front directly onto the road with no boundary treatments, lightwells or pavements.

Design Code 8. Mews and Small Streets

- 8.1. Consistency of scale should be recognised as an important, positive, characteristic of mews and proposals should be sensitive to this.
- 8.2. New developments should be sensitive to prevailing heights and facade features, such as door and window placement of neighbouring buildings.
- 8.3. Historical features, such as carriage doors and sett paving, should be preserved and, where necessary, restored. Opportunities to replace modern garage doors with traditional alternatives will be welcomed. Where conversion of ground floor uses require it, the character of the historic carriage doors should be reflected in the design, even though it may not be an operational carriage door.
- 8.4 It should be recognised that basements in mews are not historically typical and are generally discouraged.

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.9 Materiality

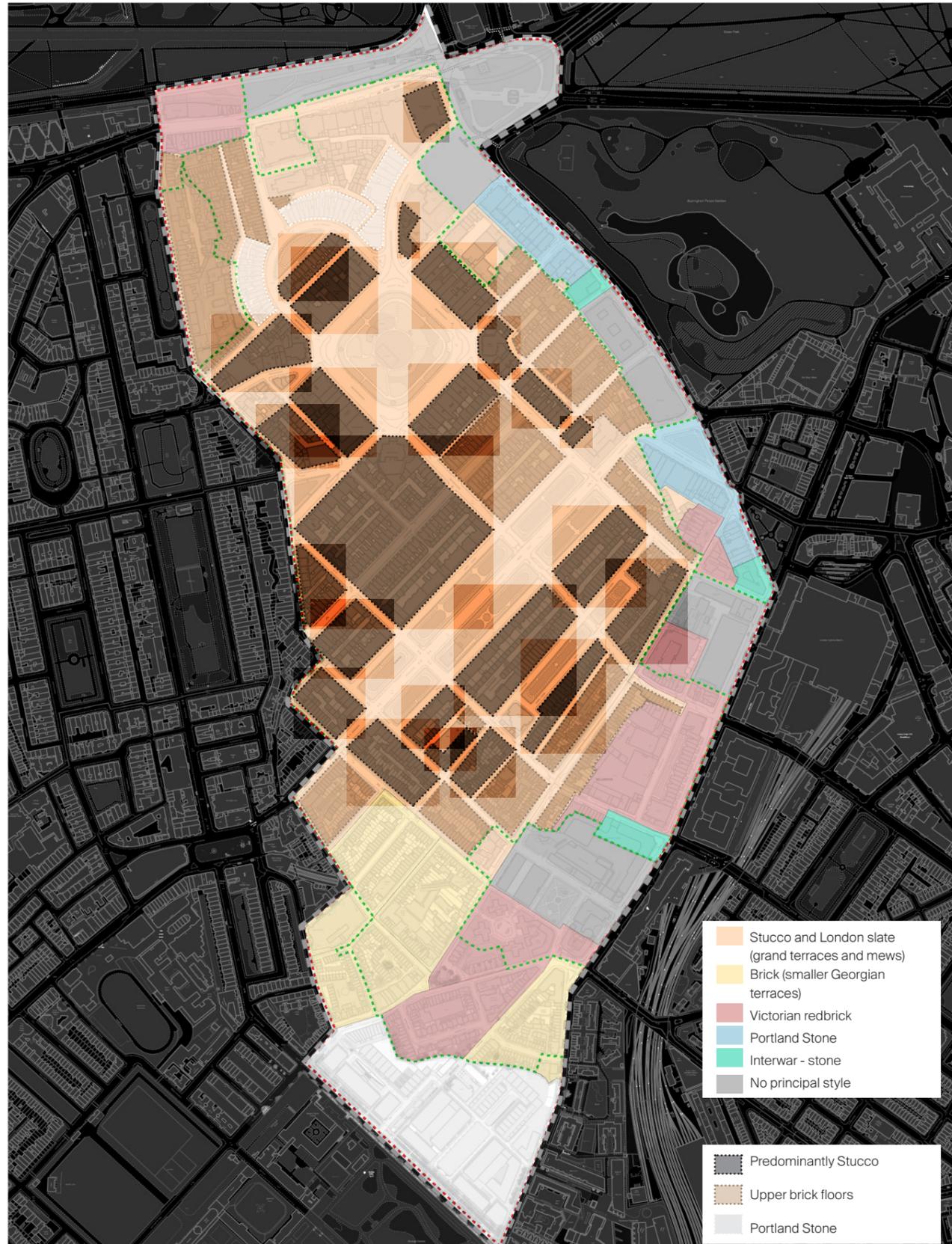


Fig 57. Materiality zones

The materiality of the original Georgian Belgravia was restricted, universally reflecting a brick-base construction with timber joisted floors, roofs and windows. Stucco over the brickwork was more commonly applied to the grander first and second order buildings. More modest structures and mews houses are more commonly characterised by exposed London stock brickwork - sometimes with a rendered ground floor. The stucco would originally have been lime-washed, now white and cream masonry paint finishes predominate. Slate roofs, lead flashings and black finished metal railings complete the typical terraced house material palette. These material choices still make a significant contribution to the character of the area even as the later generation of building has introduced a wider palette of construction materials.

As a result, the predominant colour palette across the neighbourhood remains yellow stock brick, white and cream stucco with black metalwork.

The map to the left shows different areas within the Belgravia Neighbourhood Area where there is a dominant building style and material.

In the south of the Area there is a greater prevalence of smaller, two to three storey Georgian terraces almost all with façades of exposed London stock brick.

Along the south-east boundary of the Area, the dominant building material is red brick as this area was primarily developed in Victorian times.

Along Grosvenor Place there are a series of large chateausque buildings, comprising heavily of stone, which dominate the style of the North-East boundary. Some mid-20th century, Art Deco buildings, also principally stone, sit along the East boundary.

The recent Chelsea Barracks redevelopment is characterised by the use of Portland stone and brickwork. Whilst not common in Belgravia, stone has historically been used in such locations as Wilton Crescent.

Historically, the surface treatment of Belgravia's streets carriageways would have been setts and the pavements would have been York stone with granite kerbs. John Summerson in his "Georgian London" notes *'but whatever the Cubitts did was done in magnificent style. The land drainage, the sewerage, the road surfaces, the lighting, the planting, as well as the construction of the houses and mews - everything was accurately thought out and superbly constructed'*.

However, many of the principal roads have been replaced by modern materials such as asphalt and concrete slabs. Some original surface treatments remain in mews and smaller streets. Opportunities to restore the original palette of public realm materials should be welcomed.

Roof Materials

Slate

Grand Façades

Stucco; various brick colours though majority yellow; stone, especially around Wilton Crescent; wood framed windows and doors; cast-iron railings painted black set in low stone plinths.

Mews Façades

Mostly yellow stock brick but also black brick, pink brick; and paint and render in white, cream and pastel colours; wood framed windows and doors.

Uncharacterful Materials

Concrete; glazed tiles; tinted glass; artificial slate; unsympathetic metals, such as aluminium.

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.9 Materiality



Slate

Dormer window

Brick

Window

Stucco

Door

Railings

Entrance



Yellow brick: Flemish bond



Red brick: Flemish bond



Black brick: Flemish bond

Fig 58. Selected brickwork examples from across the Neighbourhood Area. The three above images depict Georgian and 19th Century examples. They demonstrate that whilst London buff stock brick dominates, there is a wide variety of other brickwork colours within Belgravia.



Yellow brick: stretcher bond



Glazed tiles

Fig 59. The two lower, contemporary examples, might be judged to detract from the general quality of masonry architecture within Belgravia. Their machine-made profile is visually somewhat drab and the stretcher bond detailing crude in comparison with historic precedent.

The traditional Georgian palette of materials provides visual coherence and has, with appropriate maintenance, aged well. There are noteworthy positive examples of later building responding to this palette ranging from Coleshill Flats on Orange Square in a white gault brick to the Portland Stone buildings of the middle of the 20th century on Grosvenor Place. Both are characterised by a sober and restrained masonry architecture, carefully detailed and executed to a high standard. These examples provide positive precedent for new construction within the Neighbourhood Area, the design of which should seek to extend the best traditions of materiality whilst addressing contemporary sustainability considerations.

Design Code 9. Material

- 9.1. High quality natural materials should be used to ensure that local character is reinforced; the material palette should complement those of adjoining buildings.
- 9.2. The materials used should also respond to local variations in material usage across the area, such as in brick type, and new buildings should draw from existing nearby historic buildings.
- 9.3. Developments should contribute to the quality of the public realm including the restoration of York Stone paving and granite setts.
- 9.4. The quality of detail is as important as quality of material: brick bond, pointing and detailing should be considered with care.
- 9.5. In general, bright or garish colours are to be discouraged. Pale pastel colours may be acceptable in mews.
- 9.6. Material selection should be informed by embodied energy as well as operational carbon impacts. Materials should be of high-quality and durable to give long design life. Careful consideration should be given to reusing existing materials wherever possible.

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.10 Green Spaces

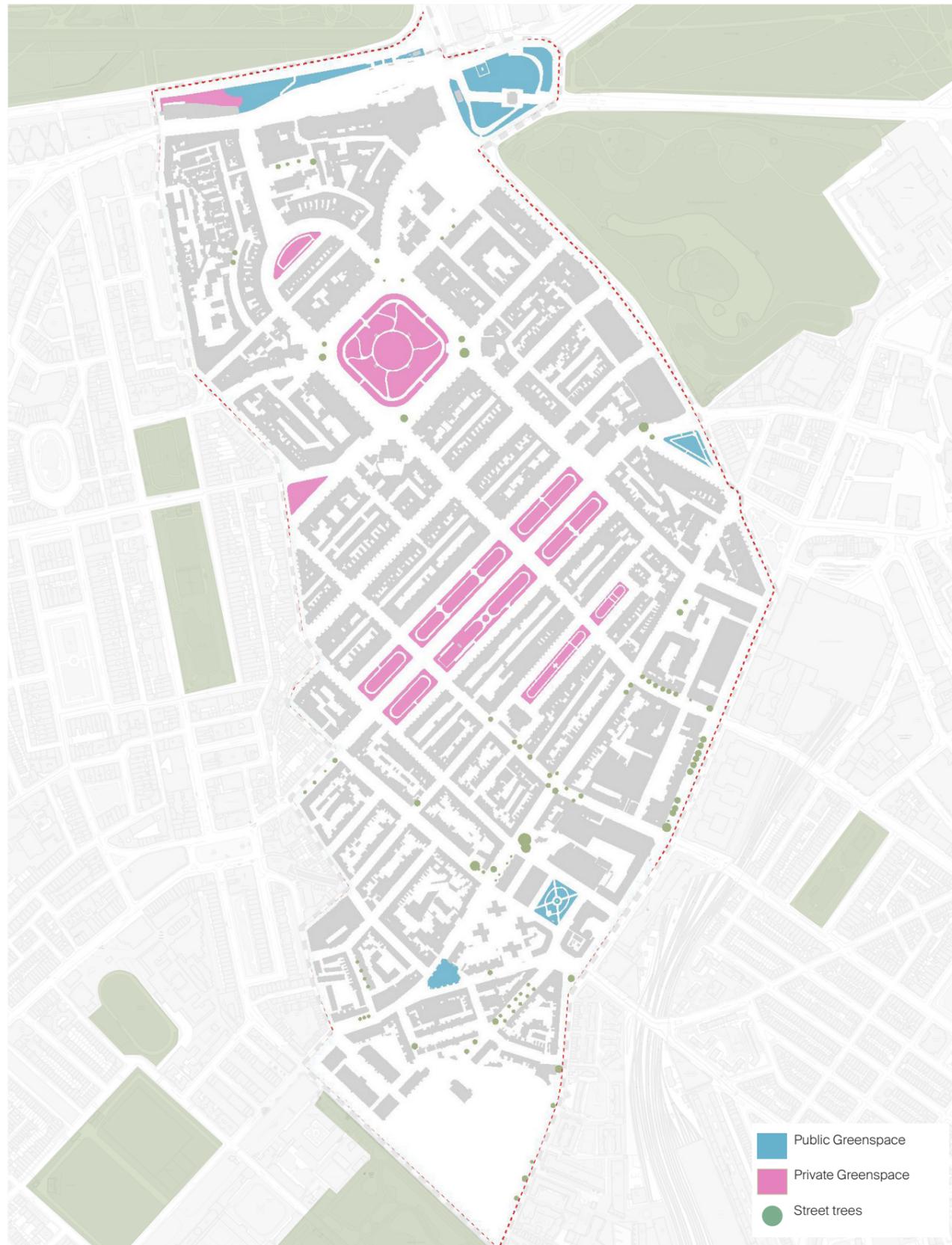


Fig 60. Local greenspaces

Belgravia's trees are focused in its densely planted garden squares and act as green centres which segregate the natural environment from the highly ordered urban grid.

These garden squares are integral to Belgravia's sense of place and account for the majority of the area's greenery. Whilst an absence of street trees on many of the neighbourhood's streets is noticeable, in comparison with other areas in London, the straight wide roads of Belgravia mean these garden squares are visible from much of Belgravia. Therefore, the views of the garden squares are very important and must be preserved.

The map to the left shows the location of these garden squares. The garden squares are a mixture of publicly accessible areas and areas reserved for groups of Belgravia's residents. These private spaces include the garden squares of the historically grandest central and northern area.

The biodiversity, sustainable urban drainage and contributions to townscape and public realm comfort which can be made by landscape within the urban environment is well recognised. Subject to heritage and accessibility constraints, these codes strongly support investment in additional urban greening.

Design Code 10. Green Spaces

- 10.1. The importance of Belgravia's garden squares to both its visual quality and biodiversity should be recognised and views to these spaces preserved.
- 10.2. New public space and new landscape and biodiversity should be incorporated into developments.
- 10.3. Where appropriate in terms of space and context, trees which are suitable for the proposed location with other greening are to be planted to increase biodiversity.
- 10.4. Larger scale developments should consider, and positively contribute to, the quality of the public realm. Good public realm design should be informed by the quality of public space, the potential for new permeability, the selection of appropriate ground floor uses and the importance of good microclimate conditions. The contribution to amenity, townscape, biodiversity and sustainable urban drainage provided by trees and landscaping should be recognised.



Fig 61. Eaton Square private communal amenity



Fig 62. Orange Square public greenspace

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.11 Small Features and Local Variations



Fig 63. Several buildings along Ebury Street, near Orange Square, have very shallow window reveals (shown above). This is because these buildings were built in the early to mid-18th Century, before stricter fire regulations enforced deeper reveals and hence are a historic anomaly and not typical of the majority of Belgravia's buildings.



Fig 64. A variety of brick types along the northern segment of Eaton Place (shown above) creates a colourful and characterful (less characteristic) small area within the much more ordered Belgravia Estate.

Across Belgravia there are certain small, localised features to be found that diverge from the more consistent order, but nevertheless add positively to the character of the immediate area. Proposals within Belgravia should be sensitive to these local traditions.

Design Code 11. Small Features and Local Variations

- 11.1. Localised architectural features, including but not limited to shallow window reveals, round arch window reveals or brick colours other than yellow London stock brick, may inform the design of a new building if they can be shown to add to the character of the particular area.
- 11.2. These features may only be used in locations where the features already exist and these features should not be used as precedents for their use across the wider Belgravia Neighbourhood Area.



Fig 65. Round headed first floor brick window reveals (shown above) are a feature on buildings along the west side of Eaton Terrace and the north side of Chester Row. Whilst a typical feature of the period elsewhere, these round headed reveals are rare in Belgravia.

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.12 Uncharacterful and Negative Features



Fig 66. The detail, material and proportions of 40 Chester Square, left, debase the precedent set by its classical neighbours. The windows sit on a repetitive grid and do not exhibit an overall proportioning system consistent with its neighbours and the detailing is indifferent.



Fig 67. This contemporary terrace creates a serrated building line on Kinnerton Street. This approach breaks the traditional well-defined frontal order characteristic of Belgravia.



Fig 70. Image of bomb damage looking south west from the eastern end of Ebury Street

Whilst Belgravia benefits from a generally consistent urban fabric, some buildings and features detract from the order and the character of the area. These buildings reflect poor detail and material choices, inappropriate architectural design, neglect or other problems.

The majority of these buildings lie near the edges of the Neighbourhood Area and outside of the conservation areas that constitute the majority of the Area. Many of these buildings were built in bomb-damaged sites after the Second World War.

As well as complete buildings, some other features, such as poorly executed renovations, street furniture and road design, are also detrimental to local character.

Poor smaller scale details can also detract from the quality of Belgravia. Details such as fencing, signage, street lighting and landscaping need careful consideration to positively contribute to the neighbourhood.



Fig 68. Chesham Place

The overall scale and building line relates poorly to the adjacent historic terraces.

The fenestration is overscaled and relatively crudely detailed. The tone and materiality of the pre-cast facade is uncomfortable against its stucco neighbour.

The car park access is utilitarian.



Fig 69. Eaton Place

The window proportion feels uncomfortable lacking the hierarchy and gradation characteristic of neighbouring historic structures.

The tone of the selected brick relates poorly to the surrounding stucco.



Fig 71. Kilmuir House breaks the order of the local context in favour of a high-rise modernist block. The rhythm of the terraces of South Eaton Place and Eaton Terrace is broken in favour of open space dominated by surface parking at the rear. This building is an example of insensitive urban planning during the post-war era.

Design Code 12. Uncharacterful and Negative Features

- 12.1. The investment in retrofitting or refurbishing existing buildings which currently make a negative contribution to Belgravia is encouraged.
- 12.2. The negative examples cited in this section seek to guide new development in a manner sensitive to the best qualities of Belgravia.

2 Belgravia Design Codes

2.13 Design on Peripheral Sites

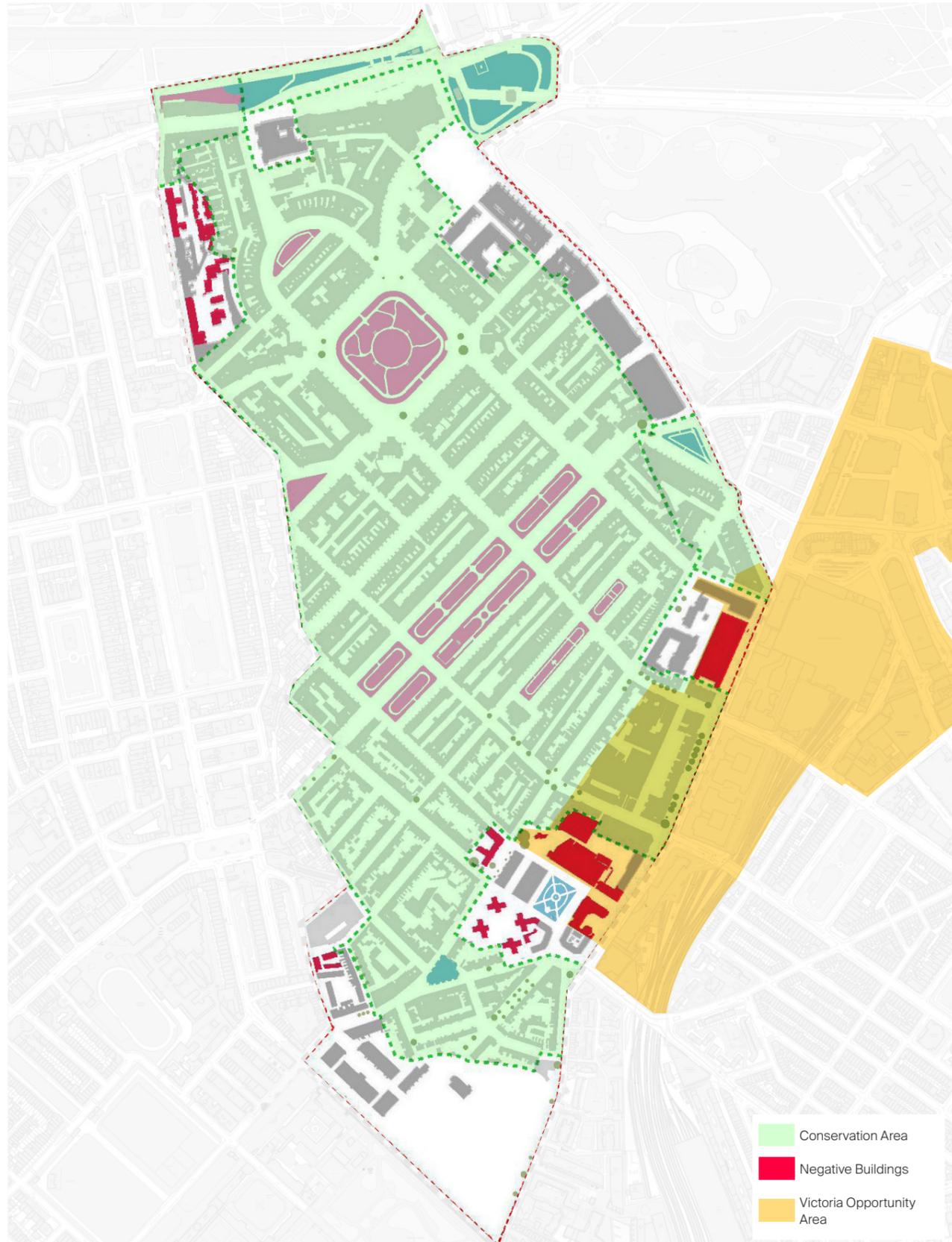


Fig 72. Negative buildings in Belgravia



Fig 73. Kilmuir House proposals. Pilbrow & Partners 2022. Here, a nine-storey post-war slab block will be replaced by a six-storey building which restores the historic definition of the urban block.

Two 20th Century examples of how new development can include elements of historic local style features.



Fig 74. Grosvenor Place, 21 Iron Trades House



Fig 75. Grosvenor Place, 33 Cleveland Clinic

The Design Codes for Belgravia seek to draw lessons from Belgravia's rich architectural heritage to inform new development that reinforces its specific quality of place. It is proposed these Design Codes be applied flexibly and appropriately. A good design calls for the judgement and insight of the appointed designer - no set of rules will guarantee a successful outcome and every proposal must properly be grounded in due consideration of the specific site circumstances.

Belgravia sits in the heart of London with change expected on its periphery. In particular this includes the Victoria Opportunity Area which covers part of the Neighbourhood Area on its south-eastern boundary, adjacent to Buckingham Palace Road. A significant increase in homes and jobs is envisaged, along with enhanced social and community facilities, public realm and integration between public transport modes. As development proposals are brought forward for the parts of the Opportunity Area within the Neighbourhood Area, it will be important that a balance is struck between the needs of development and change to deliver the vision for the Opportunity Area and the recognition that this is part of Belgravia and should remain so.

Notwithstanding the above, we believe that development proposals at the periphery of the Neighbourhood Area should not be required to place such great reliance on the need to be informed by historic precedent as within the historic core of the Area. This is not to say that such matters can be completely disregarded. Belgravia's quality is fundamentally underpinned by 'variety within order' and the measured and consistent approach to well-defined urban blocks must remain a strong influence on all developments, whether at the core or periphery. The Belgravia part of the Victoria Opportunity Area is no different.

We hope that Belgravia's qualities will be enriched and extended through development over the coming years. Such development will address new challenges including how we respond to climate change, environmental degradation and how we promote greater accessibility and inclusivity.

It is the ambition of these Design Codes that these objectives are met in a manner that contributes positively to the next century of Belgravia's evolution.

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