

City of London

Finsbury Circus Conservation Area

Character Summary & Management Strategy SPD

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Introduction

The present urban form and character of the City of London has evolved over many centuries and reflects numerous influences and interventions: hence the character and sense of place is unique to that area, contributing at the same time to the wider character of the City.

This character summary and management strategy provides an understanding of the significance of the conservation area by identifying and analysing its principal characteristics. It does not include specific detail about every building and feature within the area, and any omission from the text should not be interpreted as an indication of lesser significance. The character summary and management strategy has been prepared in line with the Historic England document *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (2011).

This document is proposed to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. It should be read in conjunction with the City of London Local Plan (2015) and other guidance, including 'Conservation Areas in the City of London, A General Introduction to their Character' (1994) which has more information on the history and character of the City.



Finsbury Circus Gardens

Character Summary

1. Location and context

Finsbury Circus Conservation Area is in the north of the City, close to the boundary with the London Boroughs of Islington and Hackney. The conservation area is bounded by London Wall in the south, Moorgate in the west, Blomfield Street in the east and South Place and Eldon Street to the north. South Place forms part of the boundary between the City of London and London Borough of Islington which lies to the north-west. It shares a boundary with Bank Conservation Area to the south and New Broad Street Conservation Area to the east.



Boundary Map

2. Designation history

Finsbury Circus Conservation Area was designated in 1971 and was one of the first conservation areas to be designated in the City. It lies within Coleman Street Ward.

3. Summary of character

- Part of a planned development including Finsbury Circus, which is an unusual feature in the City of London
- A Registered Historic Park and Garden
- Impressive 19th and 20th Century commercial buildings with extensive detail, modelling, uniform height and varied rooflines
- A secluded garden with an intimate and private atmosphere created by large scale trees and planting which complements and screens the garden from surrounding buildings
- The oval plan form of the garden is mirrored by the plan of the perimeter buildings creating a strong and distinct character.
- Long views of significant 19th century buildings along the external elevations of the conservation area

4. Historical development

Early history

The area lies in the Upper Walbrook Valley, a floodplain traversed by a series of tributaries. Evidence of prehistoric human activity here was confirmed by the excavation of a flint tool and associated debris from flint-knapping. An Iron Age burial was found during the excavation of 12-15 Finsbury Circus, possibly associated with a small settlement on the western banks of the Walbrook River.

The Romans occupied this area and implemented a programme of land reclamation and drainage of the valley during the late first to early second century. Evidence of a Roman road from this period on a north-west to south-east alignment has been found as well as construction dating to the third quarter of the first century, within 25 years of the founding of 'Londinium'. The Romans occupied London from 43AD, and the City wall and ditch was not constructed until the late 2nd century. The walled defences, which defined the boundary of the town, impeding the drainage of the Walbrook and the area north of the wall was liable to flooding.

The area outside the City defences was used as a Roman cemetery from the late first to the mid second century and a number of burials (both inhumations and cremated remains in urns), have been found here. The core of this Roman cemetery is considered to lie near the eastern side of Finsbury Circus. Some graves were cut in the banks of the streams and it is thought that this may have had a spiritual significance as the bodies were gradually washed away by the water. The cemetery remained in use until at least the third century but was abandoned in the mid to late fourth century.

The marsh or fen, which became known as Fensbury and Moor Field, prevented the expansion of the City north of London Wall and development concentrated towards the west. Little is known of the use of this area from the demise of the Roman occupation until the medieval period and it is possible that the area may not have been utilised. The difficulties of occupying the land led to its use as a dump for both industrial and domestic rubbish. In 1211, a ditch, outside the wall and the Roman ditch, was excavated to defend the City and drain the marsh. At 60 metres wide, it produced large quantities of brickearth which were re-deposited on the marshland and evidence suggests that this helped to reduce the flooding.

Medieval

In 1365, the Pelterers Guild ordered that leatherworkers should live and work in the Walbrook area to the north of the City and evidence of a tanning pit and associated debris have been found here. Large trenches, evidence of horticultural activity, have also been found in the area although it is not clear what crops were cultivated here.

There were a series of schemes to reclaim this land in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In 1411 the Lord Mayor ordered that all the rubbish should be cleared from the area and drainage ditches established. This was followed in 1414 by a commission from Lord Mayor Thomas Falconer to construct a new postern gate in the City wall called Moorgate to provide access to the area for recreation. The area was used as tenter grounds for drying cloth and for gardens. Drier parts of the land

were used for sports and recreation, with ice-skating a popular pastime during winter months.

In 1477, the area was quarried for brickearth to repair the City wall and traces of lime burning were found in excavations at 4-6 Finsbury Circus. A number of brick pits have been found across the area, which suggests that brick workers moved to an area for a short period, up to a year, dug the brickearth and then moved onto another area when the pit was worked out. This had a significant impact on the area creating large pools of standing water, some of which were probably interconnected. As a result, the condition of the area deteriorated and although there were successive attempts to clear the area, rubbish continued to accumulate. In 1512, the Lord Mayor Roger Ardley attempted to drain the fen again but was unsuccessful and the area remained a wasteland used for rubbish dumping, traversed by open sewers. There continued to be some uses of the moor such as archery practice and cattle grazing. Dog kennels for the Lord Mayor's hunt were located just north of modern-day South Place. It was not until 1527 that the ground was drained successfully. In spite of this, the cycle of rubbish dumping and clearance of the ditch continued until the 17th century.

Seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

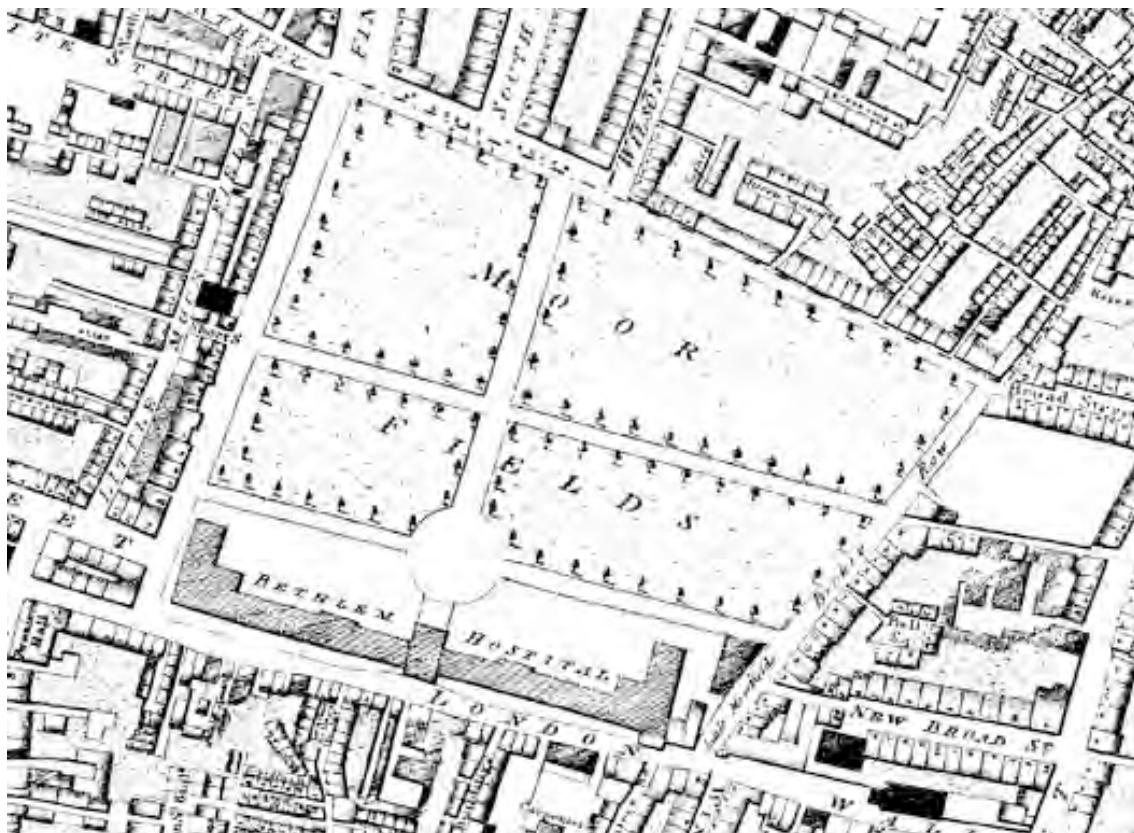
The area remained open ground until 1606 when trees were planted and a gravel path laid in a cruciform pattern to create Moor Fields, London's first public park. The northern boundary of the landscaped area follows the line of modern-day Eldon Street and South Place. In 1666, after the Great Fire, some Londoners constructed small houses on the land whilst the City was being rebuilt. However, much of the land remained open until the late 18th century. Moor Fields was re-landscaped in 1730. Finsbury Pavement to the north - west became a fashionable promenade across the marshy lands.

Bethlehem Hospital was erected between 1675-6 on the south side and to the north of modern-day London Wall. Originally founded in 1247 at the Priory of St Mary Bethlehem just outside Bishopsgate, the hospital admitted 'distracted' patients from 1377. It was established as an asylum for the mentally ill in 1547. The new Bethlehem Hospital, designed by Robert Hooke and famously known as 'Bedlam', was associated with the treatment of mentally ill patients during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The building was demolished in 1814 by which time it had fallen into serious disrepair.

Although development had generally expanded beyond the City Wall since the mid-16th century, it was not until 1762 that Moorgate was demolished and its stone used to stop London Bridge being washed away. The wall continued to be dismantled throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, to allow for further and more continuous development. Sections of the City Wall survive below ground in this area. The status of the area also improved with the construction of City Road, built to improve access between Marylebone and the City.



Ogilby and Morgan 1676-79



R Horwood 1792-99

Nineteenth century

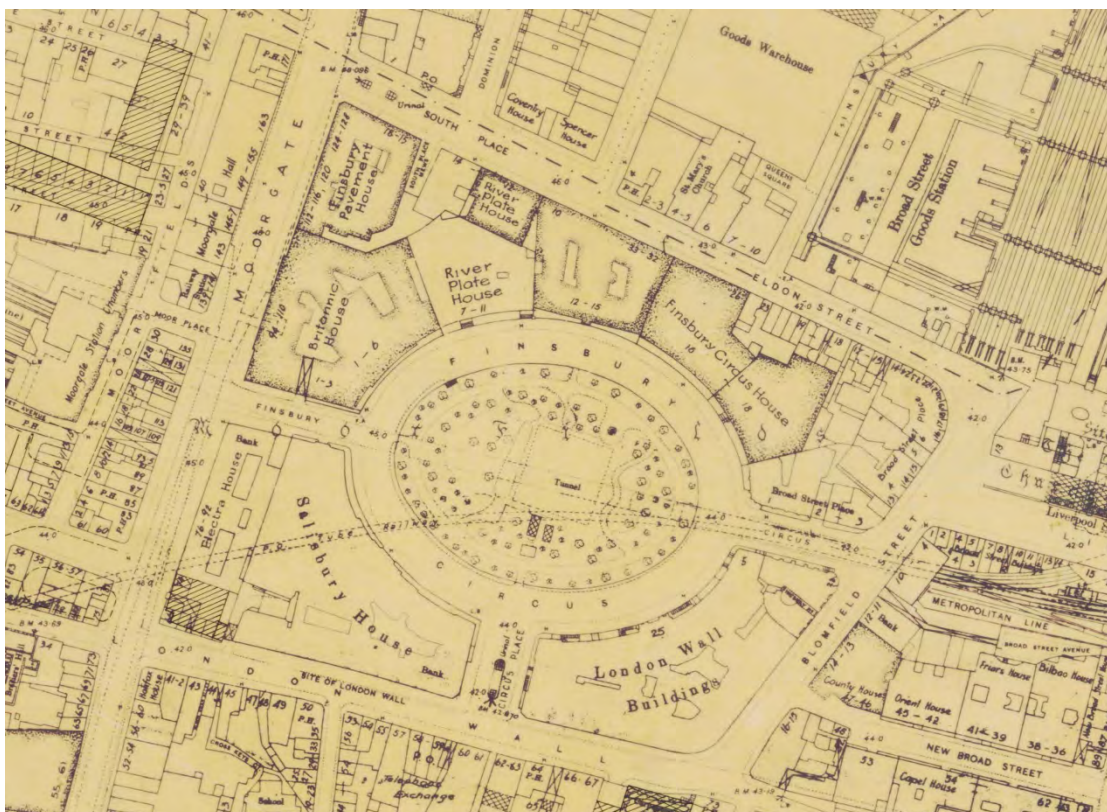
The Finsbury Estate was laid out on the area north of Moorfields as a residential suburb by the City Surveyor, George Dance the Younger, between 1775 and 1800. He was the first in London to introduce formal planning, including crescents and circuses. Dance's plan including the construction of Finsbury Circus was not implemented until Bethlehem Hospital was pulled down in 1814. This work was carried out by William Mountague (Dance's successor as City Surveyor), who laid out the area from 1815-17. The Circus is a generous oval shape enclosed by buildings which follow the oval plan form. They were influenced by the plainer houses designed by Dance in Finsbury Square to the north.

In the 1840s, Finsbury Pavement was laid out to give easier access to London Bridge. Following the establishment of the Estate, many doctors and surgeons set up practices in the area around Finsbury Pavement and in Finsbury Circus. They served the wealthy professionals and their families that lived in the area. The Royal Ophthalmic Hospital, which was founded in 1804, moved to Blomfield Street at the corner with Eldon Street in 1822 to accommodate the increasing demand for its services. It was the first hospital in England to specialise in the treatment of eye diseases. Rising rents from the increased pressure for financial services in the City in the late 19th century led to the removal of both wealthy residents and the medical profession to the West End, particularly Harley Street. The hospital moved to its current location on City Road in 1899 and whilst generally known as Moorfields Eye Hospital, it was not given this name formally until 1956.

Twentieth and twenty-first centuries

Shortly after the establishment of Finsbury Circus, the London Institute moved here from a house on Old Jewry. The new building, with a Grecian portico, was designed by William Brooks and housed an educational institute and private library 'for the Advancement of Literature and Diffusion of Useful Knowledge'. It stood on the north side of the Circus until its demolition in the late 1930s due to the increasing provision of public libraries and educational institutions and residential decline in the area.

After the Reformation in the 16th century, the only places of worship allowed within the City were Protestant churches of the Church of England. The area just outside the City walls therefore attracted a number of non-conformist chapels and other places of worship. The Presbyterian Albion Chapel stood at the junction of Finsbury Pavement and London Wall, a Unitarian chapel on South Place and a Welsh Baptist chapel on London Wall close to New Broad Street. A Jewish Synagogue was located on London Wall, close to the Welsh Baptist Chapel. A Congregational chapel and St Mary's Catholic Chapel stood opposite, north of East Street. The latter was an imposing, Italianate style church, built in 1820, which served as a cathedral until the construction of Westminster Cathedral. All of these places of worship were demolished between the late 19th and early 20th centuries when congregations diminished as a result of the decline in the residential population and new churches were built outside the City. The Catholic Church of St Mary Moorfields, rebuilt in Eldon Street in 1902, is the only church to survive in the area.



1916-1920 Ordnance Survey

The pressure to develop larger, buildings in the late nineteenth century led to the demolition of many domestic scale Georgian buildings in the area. None of the Georgian houses that once stood on Finsbury Circus remain. The area became the focus for several important companies who designed and built headquarters around the Circus. Lutyens designed Britannic House with a Westmoreland slate roof between 1921-5 for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, later to become known as British Petroleum (BP). The elevation facing Moorgate incorporated an entrance to the Great Northern Electric Railway, and is an entrance to Moorgate Underground Station. Similar to other developments in the City at this time, these buildings were classically inspired and the buildings on Finsbury Circus were amongst the largest to be built in the area at that time. Salisbury House, designed by Davis and Emmanuel in 1899-1901, occupies the south west quadrant of the Circus and had entrances on several street frontages as does London Wall Buildings on the south east corner. Electra House designed in 1900-3 is a distinctive frontage on Moorgate and is now occupied by the London Metropolitan University. It was also at this time that the section of Finsbury Pavement within the City boundary was renamed Moorgate. Many of the buildings in the conservation area are important individual examples of Victorian and Edwardian architecture and together define the built character of the area today.

Other developments, such as the expansion of the Underground, also impacted on the area and in 1864, the Metropolitan Railway cut a tunnel through the gardens at Finsbury Circus. The local street pattern was affected by the growth of the commercial banking sector in the City. In 1901, London Wall was widened on the

south side resulting in the demolition of the nineteenth century buildings which had previously stood there.

The gardens within Finsbury Circus were maintained as an open space by a committee of leaseholders who contributed to their upkeep. However, as the area became more commercial, the City sought to obtain the land and open it to the public. This was secured through an Act of Parliament in 1900. A pink granite drinking fountain was constructed in 1902 with a shelter inspired by the well head designed by Philip Webb for the Red House in Bexleyheath, the home of William Morris. The Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association erected another drinking fountain made from Peterhead granite with brass spouts in the gardens next to the bandstand close to the west entrance. The gardens were re-landscaped in 1909 retaining the serpentine paths and plane trees established in the early nineteenth century. In 1925, a bowling green was added in the centre of the garden and extended in 1968. The pavilion which serves this was built in 1966 replacing earlier twentieth century garden structures on this site and adapted for wine bar use in 1985.

5. Spatial analysis

Layout and plan form

The Circus is a generous oval shape and the buildings that were constructed there were influenced by the plainer houses designed by Dance in Finsbury Square to the north. Finsbury Circus is the only space in the City which is similar in scale and character to other 'London Squares'. The essential elements in this formal composition are the building frontage lines, building heights and unity of the architectural and garden design. Although the buildings have been rebuilt, the form of the space maintains the design of George Dance the Younger. It was implemented by City Surveyor, William Mountague, who laid out the area from 1815-17 based on Dance's 1802 plan. The planting of the central garden and the tall mature Plane trees are important and one of its most attractive features. It is the largest public open space in the City at 0.5 hectares.

Building plots

The area is dominated by large, fine, classically inspired buildings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and modern buildings on the north side. Building plots are spacious following the oval of the interior circus garden and the line of the street plan around the exterior edge.

Building heights

The buildings are in general 6 stories high, with steep mansard roofs set back from a parapet. The roofline is uniform across the conservation area punctuated by pavilion roofs, chimneys and dormer windows.

Views and vistas

The significant views are from within the Circus itself, both looking into the gardens from around the edge, and looking outwards from the gardens to the buildings beyond. Whilst formal in its design and composition, the gardens are used informally throughout the year particularly by local office workers and the lawns are very popular for picnics in the summer months.

From within the gardens to the east and the south, along Circus Place, there are glimpses of the City beyond this area, but the impact of these tall structures is reduced by the sense of enclosure provided by the unified townscape of the circus buildings. However, from a variety of points in the gardens and around the edge of the circus, there are important views of the City beyond that contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Tall buildings outside the conservation area may become visible and, due to their particular location and design, these views could have a detrimental effect on the character of the area, if they are not carefully considered at the planning stage. Areas adjacent to, but outside the conservation area have seen the emergence of tall buildings in recent years, in particular to the west and to the east. Such tall developments should be designed to clearly appear as part of the background and unobtrusive in views from and within the conservation area so as to not encroach on the conservation area and affect the appreciation of the buildings and garden that forms the intrinsic character of the area. For example, the demolition of Drapers Gardens which was prominent in views to the south and its replacement with a lower building has enhanced the setting of Finsbury Circus and views within the conservation area. City.



6. Character analysis

London Wall and Moorgate are key routes through the City and the retail activity along them contributes to the character and vibrancy of the area, distinguishing it from the offices and banks in the southern part of Moorgate towards the heart of the City and the Bank of England. The scale of the buildings is offset by the relative width of the streets; this is in contrast to the Circus itself. Within Finsbury Circus the scale of the buildings, the largely continuous frontages together with the extent of the gardens, their shape and planting, the street widths and York stone paving all contribute to a sense of intimacy and seclusion.

On the south, east and west sides of Finsbury Circus, the gardens and interior of the conservation area can be appreciated from an external standpoint on London Wall, Blomfield Street and Moorgate respectively. However, the north side of the Circus is fully enclosed, resulting in the north side of the area (Eldon Street and South Place) having a distinct character and feeling more separate from the rest of the conservation area. The whole area is, at present affected by Crossrail works which will continue until 2018.

Finsbury Circus

Finsbury Circus was laid out in 1815-17 by William Mountague to the designs of George Dance the Younger, as the City's only counterpoint to the London squares of Mayfair and Marylebone (built in the 18th century). Prior to this, the site had been partially occupied by Bethlehem Royal Hospital, and the remainder was an open field with gravel walks for promenading. Nothing remains of the early 19th century houses, the replacements were grandiose classical office chambers, larger than anything seen before in the City. These buildings, with well-judged 1980s insertions, still dominate the circus and form the central character of the conservation area. They are mostly of Portland stone with a giant order above a tall ground storey raised above pavement level. The earlier blocks have pavilions which emphasise their several entrances on different sides of the blocks.

Many of the buildings are raised up at ground floor level, with perimeter railings enclosing a light well at the lower ground floor. This feature contributes to the formality of the space and emphasises the curve of the circus as it follows the railings that surround the gardens.

The garden has tall plane trees and serpentine paths from the 19th century layout, with a bowling green that was laid in the centre in 1909. The circular pavilion for a drinking fountain, by John Whitehead & son, 1902 (north side), is notable. It has a tiled, conical roof and Gothic woodwork. The entire garden is surrounded by railings, and is on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England.

An impressive range of buildings encircle the gardens which form the central character of the conservation area and an important townscape group.

Salisbury House, by Davis and Emmanuel, 1899-1901, occupies the whole south-west quadrant. It is a French-style building in Bath stone, with extensive embellishment and the cornice in straight sections against the concave front.

The south-east quadrant is occupied by one building, London Wall Buildings, 1901-2 by Gordon & Gunton. It is a more Baroque interpretation of the time, with pedimented pavilions. The central pavilion roof was destroyed during the Blitz. On the first floor there are alternating pediments on low columns, and towards London Wall are smaller-scale motifs of blocked columns and Gibbs surrounds.

At the north-east corner of the Circus is No. 1-2. It was begun by G.D. Martin in 1903, and extends east to Blomfield Street and north to Eldon Street. It is built in Portland Stone, with rusticated giant columns resting on the bays below and broken pediments to the attic blocks. It was re-built behind retained facades by T.P Bennett Partnership, 1983-9, and retains the original inset door-cases of coloured marble.

Nos. 16-18, Park House and Garden House, by Gordon & Gunton, was designed in 1915 and begun in 1921. This building is more consciously monumental and symmetrical than others on the circus. In No.16 a brown marble-lined entrance hall survives, with a screen of columns and an Imperial staircase (restored 1988).

Finsbury Circus House is the centrepiece of the north side, visible from London Wall across the garden. This stone-faced building was originally designed by GMW Partnership for the Bank of Tokyo, 1987-92. It was extensively refurbished in 2012, including alterations to the entrance, fenestration and the addition of a new double mansard roof.

Nos. 7-11, River Plate House - The 1986-90 building by Kenzie Lovell Partnership was demolished in 2013. The new development designed by Wilkinson Air includes a retained façade of 1927-9 on the South Place elevation

On the NW corner leading on into Moorgate, the Circus's most outstanding building which is reflected in the Grade II* status, is Edwin Lutyens' Britannic House. It was built for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (later B.P), 1921-5, with care and at great expense, and is comparable with the former Midland Bank, Poultry (also by Lutyens and built at a similar time). The low ratio of void to solid is particularly striking, with mostly small windows which are deeply set. There are six storeys below the top cornice, divided horizontally into two stages of three. The lower stage projects slightly towards Finsbury Circus. The rusticated ground floor, with a few accentuated first floor windows are flanked by recessed columns in a very typical way. Above, a storey behind a balustrade makes a plinth to a giant Corinthian order, with the cornice broken forward above each column and garlands between the capitals. The building has a plain attic and plain hipped Coniston-slatted roof. There are carved figures by Derwent Wood, distributed about the various corner set-backs, and some fine lesser carvings by Broadbent & Son. The plainer south elevation is without the giant order. The Moorgate front (west side) is a straight, slightly over-extended version of that to Finsbury Circus. Britannic House has been modernised several times, and part of the original interior remains including the stair core, the ground floor, and the original board room which has been moved to the basement. On the Moorgate elevation there has been some opening up of the shop front in a

sensitive way, which successfully preserves the original atmosphere of the building. The building won a City Heritage Award in 2009.

Circus Place

On the south side Circus Place is unusually wide because Dance planned a new road south to Lothbury from here. The side elevation of Salisbury House is on the west side and London Wall Buildings on the east. The obelisk in the centre of the street is a decorative feature, erected in 1997. It houses a ventilation stack for the gas chamber beneath.

From London Wall, looking north to Circus Place a gradual slope is discernable from south to north. This affects the appreciation of Circus Place and Finsbury Circus beyond from this viewpoint.



London Wall

The east end of London Wall dates from the medieval period but is older than its first mention in 1388 (it was first called London Wall in 1547). It was widened on the north side circa.1900, in connection with the rebuilding of Finsbury Circus, and the building line is set back through post-war rebuilding on the south side.

On London Wall is the southern elevation of Salisbury House and London Wall Buildings, which make a fine pair of buildings along an extended elevation, broken only by the intrusion of Circus Place providing a wide view into Finsbury Circus.

Salisbury House includes shop fronts at ground floor level, and above there are groups of three bays that are alternately ornamented. The high level balustrades are characteristic of the conservation area as are the formal arrangement of windows and bays.

London Wall Buildings is little altered, has no modern intrusions, and makes a strong contribution to the streetscape.



Blomfield Street

Blomfield Street

Blomfield Street was originally the east boundary of Lower Moorfields. It was called Broker Row until c.1860. Later it was renamed after Charles James Blomfield, Bishop of London in 1838-57, who had been rector of St Botolph without Bishopsgate earlier in his career.

The west side of the street is dominated by the imposing Edwardian offices of Finsbury Circus including **London Wall Buildings** which continues from London Wall round the corner into Blomfield Street.



Salisbury House, London Wall

31 Blomfield Street is a 19th century Portland stone building which was redeveloped in the 1980s but the original façade has been retained. There are shopfronts between rusticated columns which have been sensitively refurbished. There are arched windows and further rustication at first floor, followed by a giant order further up, including bays and Corinthian columns. The giant order is repeated on the curved corner of the building as Blomfield Street becomes Eldon Street. This building is highly prominent on the corner as longer views are possible from within the Broadgate complex.

Eldon Street

This was part of Dance the Younger's redevelopment of Lower Moorfields and formed the northern boundary of the City of London. It was built at the end of the 18th century as part of the City's former Finsbury Estate, and named after Lord Eldon, Lord Chancellor 1807-27. Eldon Street and South Place have a transitional character which begins with historic and contextual buildings at the east end, and become modern and larger towards the more commercial west end as it feeds into Moorgate.

6 Broad Street Place occupies the corner of Blomfield and Eldon Streets (see Blomfield Street above). It was designed by Gordon, Lowther & Gunton, in 1893-4. As Blomfield Street becomes Eldon Street, the façade changes in character, with the use of London stock brick above the first floor and plain window treatments reflecting the more domestic scale of Eldon Street.

Nos. 15-17 Eldon Street, New Liverpool House is an accurate modern recreation of a Flemish style building of the 19th century, by T.P. Bennett Partnership, 1988-91. It partners **Nos. 18-19 Eldon Street**, by Delissa Joseph circa 1893. This is five storeys plus triangular gables, with piers and floor strings in a mechanical grid. From this building there is then a step up to much taller 20th century rear ranges to Finsbury Circus.



Finsbury Circus garden prior to Crossrail temporary works

South Place

Eldon Street widens to the west and becomes South Place.

Nos 18-25 is a modern building in Portland Stone (1993) which takes much influence from no. 26-31, its listed neighbour, making it a good contextual building.

No 26-31 is the north elevation of No.16 Finsbury Circus (see Finsbury Circus above).

Further west, the 1980's north elevation of **Finsbury Circus House** was replaced in 2012 with a Portland stone facade articulated by large, projecting window bays. The contemporary appearance of the South Place elevation more closely reflects its modern counterpart on the north side of the street, than its listed neighbour to the east.

River Plate House has been demolished to make way for a new development designed by Wilkinson Eyre Architects, but part of the façade from the 1920s building on the site has been retained and incorporated into the new design. As part of the redevelopment scheme, 3 historic cast iron roundel crests that related to the Buenos Aires Great Southern Railway were removed from the railings and retained. 2 of the roundels will be mounded internally and a third will be fixed to the return of the new entrance with an explanatory plaque.

Moorgate

The street's northern section originated in 1415, when a causeway was built from the new gate along the west side of the marshy open space called Moorfields (hence its older names Moorfields Pavement or Finsbury Pavement: the latter still current for the part outside the City). Moorgate was named after the postern gate in the City wall leading out to the fens which was built by Thomas Falconer. The gate was repaired in 1472, rebuilt in 1672, and was later raised so that the Trained Bands could march through with their pikes upright. It was demolished in 1762 and the stones were used to prevent London Bridge being washed away by the tide. The modern street was laid out in the 1840s to give access to the New London Bridge.

For centuries this area was used only for winter skating or quarrying brick-earth for the City wall repairs of 1477. Drainage was achieved by dumping rubbish to raise the ground. A part of the area was set aside for archery in 1498, and when Stow wrote (1598) Moorfields was 'a garden to the City...for citizens to walk and take the air and for merchants' maids to dry clothes in.' In 1605-13 it was laid out as a park, with formal avenues and trees. Hooke's Bethlehem Hospital rose on its south side in 1675-6, but wholesale development began only in 1778, when Finsbury Circus was laid out on the north part, to Dance the Younger's plan.

No. 110-120 Moorgate is a modern block that is uncharacteristic of the conservation area in terms of materials and horizontal emphasis. Permission has been granted for a replacement building on the site which is more contextual in terms of its massing and materials.

See Finsbury Circus above for **Britannic House**

Electra House, 84 Moorgate – (now part of London Guildhall University), dominates the street. It was built in 1900-3 by Belcher & Joass, for the Eastern Telegraph Company. It comprises six storeys, with a giant order high up, and an octagonal central dome set over a concave section above the main cornice. The relief diminishes from bulging stone bands on the ground floor to degrees of channelling above, but the effect is not subtle. There is sculpture dotted about the facade, but its impact is slight on such a scale. There are free Ionic columns to the portal, with little dolphins in the bronze capitals, and more columns to the double-height barrel-vaulted entrance hall. The building has been subject to some internal refurbishment and further work is proposed. The heavily modelled ground floor contains narrow shops, an arched double height central entrance with niches in the reveals and decorative glass panels in the upper part.

No. 72 Moorgate/115 London Wall - Following bomb damage, an extension to Electra House designed by RE Enthoven and RJ Monk was built in 1959. Described by Pevsner as well composed and attractive, the buildings later style contrasts with the character of the conservation area, although the materials are sympathetic and the heights of the elevations are consistent with its neighbours.



Bandstand in Finsbury Circus Garden

7. Land uses and related activity

The area is mainly commercial in use with some educational use, with a large landscaped open space/garden which is mostly used by office workers and extremely popular at lunchtimes. Music festivals are hosted here during the summer months using the bandstand that was erected in 1955 close to the west entrance.

8. Architectural character

The area is dominated by fine, classically inspired buildings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These buildings are mostly designed in Portland stone with steeply pitched slate roofs although there are other materials, particularly Bath Stone used on Salisbury House and brick used in some buildings on Eldon Street which reflect the lower and more domestic scale of the streets between Finsbury Circus and Finsbury Square. There are a number of late twentieth century buildings which have sought to respect the scale and pattern of development in this area.

The frontages to Finsbury Circus are set back from the back edge of the pavement by front areas, some of which are defined by railings. Many of these buildings have raised entrances and grand scale ground floors although the impact of these are off-set by the solid to void ratio, regular window openings, rusticated columns and other detailing such as string courses. In general, the scale and proportions of the buildings respond to the classical proportion and layout of the Circus and the form follows the oval design of the garden.

Architects, styles and influences

Lutyens has a major influence on the area, with Britannic House a significant building on the north western corner, with elevations to the garden, West Street and Moorgate.

Building ages

The majority of the buildings date from the 19th century, with some 20th and 21st century insertions.

9. Local details

Iron railings delineate and emphasise the boundaries throughout the area.

Sculpture and carving embellishes the facades throughout the conservation area. Notable examples are the sculptures on Electra House (now part of London Guildhall University), by George Frampton, F.W Pomeroy, Alfred Drury and William Goscombe John. There are also fine examples of sculpture on Britannic House, by Francis Derwent Wood and Messrs Broadbent & Sons.





10. Building materials

The predominant building material in the conservation area is Portland stone. The exception being Salisbury House which is constructed in Bath stone. Some buildings have brick elevations, in particular on the north side of the conservation area, which indicates it was historically of lesser importance and constructed in a more domestic scale.

11. Open spaces and trees

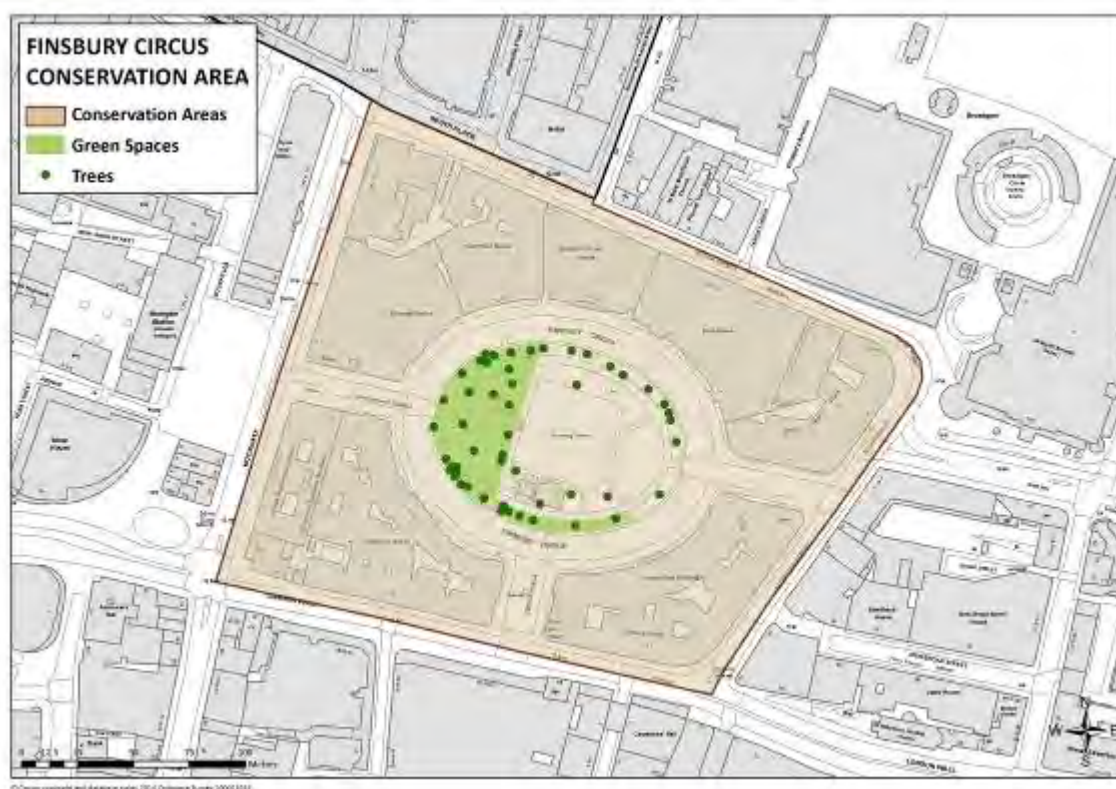
Finsbury Circus Garden is at the centre of the conservation area geographically, but also in terms of its character. The Grade II listing as a Registered Historic Park and Garden by Historic England for its Historic interest reflects this importance. There are entrances to the gardens on the north, west, south and east sides through early C20 gates set in the railings. The original arrangement was through gates in the north-west, south-west, south-east and north-east corners and was altered to the present layout in the early C20. Following the boundary, but separated from the encircling roads by a ring of dense shrubbery and tree planting, is a perimeter walk, as laid out in the early C19.

The central area of the gardens is occupied by a lawn, with serpentine paths, following the early C19 pattern, leading off the outer walk, across the lawn which has randomly placed beds of shrubs to the west, and formal bedding to the north and east. The centre of the gardens is occupied by a bowling green (1925) surrounded by a low box hedge, and a pavilion (built in 1968, when the bowling green was enlarged, as a bowling pavilion and wine bar) to the south. This pavilion replaced an early C20 bowling hut, greenhouse and tool shed. To the west of the Bowling Green is a bandstand (erected in 1955 and restored in the 1990s), with a railed seating area, which was part of the early C20 developments that replaced the shrubbery in this area. It is paved with York stone (laid out in the 1990s to replace asphalt) and surrounded by low walls. On the lawn to the north of the bowling green is a pink granite drinking fountain (listed grade II), designed by John Whitehead and Son, Westminster, in 1902, with a shelter based on the design of a well by Philip Webb for William Morris' 'Red House' in Bexley Heath.

The large mature Plane trees provide contrasting patterns of light and shade over much of this space throughout the seasons and provide scale against the buildings surrounding the Circus. In some measure the trees contribute to lowering the noise level within the garden. The gently sloping grassed area with formal flower beds in the central eastern area of the gardens is one of its main features and there are further grass areas and flower beds throughout the space.

The Crossrail project is having an effect on this area as there are major works in progress which are envisaged to be completed by 2018. As a result of these works, part of the garden has been closed to facilitate the construction of an access shaft for the new Liverpool Street Station as part of the Crossrail development. The

Crossrail Act requires that the garden be reinstated.



Green Spaces and Trees

12. Public realm

The public realm within the conservation area is dominated by the railings which delineate the gardens at the centre of the area, and the surrounding buildings, many of which also have railings at their boundaries. Elsewhere on the more commercial fringes of the conservation area there is less public realm embellishment as the streets are more functional and less decorative.

Within the gardens the public realm is enhanced by a drinking fountain, gazebo and bandstand which contributes to the character of the garden as a London square.

Management Strategy

The management strategy sets out the position regarding the wider policies and guidance concerning the preservation and enhancement of Finsbury Circus. Future development schemes and enhancement projects will need to take account of these policies in relation to the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area, as detailed in the above character summary. Significant characteristics of Finsbury Circus include its 19th century buildings and their relationship with the garden at the centre of the area.

Documents produced by the City of London are available on the website www.cityoflondon.gov.uk

14. Planning Policy

National policy

The Civic Amenities Act, 1967, gave local authorities the power to designate conservation areas, and these powers are now contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Act (section 69 (1) (a)) defines a conservation area as '...an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Section 71 (1) of the Act requires the local planning authority to "...formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are Conservation Areas." See www.legislation.gov.uk

The Government's planning policies are contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which came into force on 27 March 2012. Historic environment policies are detailed in chapter 12 which sets out the requirements for local authorities and applicants in relation to the conservation of heritage assets, including conservation areas. See www.communities.gov.uk. NPPF historic environment policies are supported by the Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (2010), produced by Historic England and endorsed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. See www.english-heritage.org.uk

London-wide policy

The London Plan (2011) and Draft Further Alterations (2014) forms part of the statutory development plan for the City of London and needs to be taken into account when considering development within the conservation area. Key policies to consider are: policies 7.8 Heritage assets and archaeology and 7.9 Heritage-led regeneration. See www.london.gov.uk

City of London Corporation policy

Planning policy in the City of London is contained within the Local Plan which was adopted in January 2015. The Local Plan includes policies for Development Management, which will be taken into account when deciding applications for planning permission. See www.cityoflondon.gov.uk Development proposals within Finsbury Circus Conservation Area have to be considered in the context of the policies in the Local Plan. Within this framework, particular account will need to be taken of Core Strategic policies, CS10 'Design', CS12 'Historic Environment', CS13

‘Protected Views’, CS19 Open Spaces and Recreation, CS20 ‘Retailing’, and CS21 ‘Housing’.

In addition to policy CS10 Design, special attention should also be paid to the Local Plan policy DM10.6 ‘Advertisements’. This policy seeks to encourage a high standard of design and a restrained amount of advertising, in keeping with the character of the City, and to resist excessive or obtrusive advertising, inappropriate illuminated signs and the display of advertisements above ground level. Other key policies in the Local Plan are: DM12.1 ‘Managing change affecting all heritage assets and spaces’; DM12.2 ‘Development in conservation areas’, DM12.3 ‘Listed Buildings’ DM 12.5 Historic parks and gardens and DM10.5 ‘Shopfronts’.

Protected views

The London Plan and the Local Plan seek to protect strategic views which are defined within the Mayor’s SPG – the London View Management Framework (LVMF) 2012.

The City of London Protected Views SPD (2012) outlines protected views of St Paul’s Cathedral, the Monument, Tower of London World Heritage Site and other historic landmarks and skyline features protected and managed by planning policies in the Local Plan and Mayor’s London Plan.

In Finsbury Circus the following issues need to be considered:

Protected Vistas from Westminster Pier (8A.1) and King Henry’s Mound, Richmond Park (9A.1) are relevant to the Finsbury Circus CA. The Wider Setting Consultation Area (Background) of both Protected Vistas crosses the Finsbury Circus CA. The Westminster Pier Protected Vista consultation threshold plane rises from 68.4m AOD to 71.9m AOD as it crosses the area from SW to NE. In the case of the King Henry’s Mound Protected Vista, the consultation threshold plane is constant at 52.1m AOD as the protected vista crosses the area from SW to NE.

Relevant LVMF River Prospects to the Finsbury Circus CA include:

- River Prospect 15B: Waterloo Bridge (downstream)
- River Prospect 16B: The South Bank (Gabriel’s Wharf viewing platform)
- River Prospect 17B: Golden Jubilee / Hungerford Footbridges (downstream)

The character summary identifies a number of distant and local views that contribute to the character of the conservation area. Proposals will be assessed for their potential effect on these and other views of significant individual buildings, townscape or skylines.

Sustainability and climate change

The City of London Corporation is committed to being at the forefront of action in response to climate change and other sustainability challenges that face high density urban environments. In particular, areas will need to be resilient to warmer wetter winters, hotter drier summers and more frequent extreme weather events.

In adapting to meet these challenges, it is important that sustainable development is sensitive to the historic environment. Development, including the incorporation of

climate change adaptation measures, should have regard to the need to protect the historic significance of heritage assets.

Issues specifically relevant to Finsbury Circus include:

- Finsbury Circus garden is a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation
- The open space of Finsbury Circus, contributes to the biodiversity of the conservation area (see Management of Open Spaces and Trees). Part of Finsbury Circus Gardens has been closed for Crossrail works. The garden and landscaping will be reinstated following the completion of the works.
- In order to minimise the risks of flooding elsewhere in the City, new development schemes will be expected to make use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) including rainwater harvesting systems and green roofs. SuDS designs will need to be assessed for their wider implications beyond the conservation area boundary.

The Local Plan Core Strategic policy CS15 provides guidance on sustainable development and climate change and policy CS18 on SuDS. Associated development management policies provide more details of the City's requirements. The City has also produced a Climate Change Adaption Strategy (revised and updated January 2010).

15. Access and an Inclusive Environment

The City of London Corporation is committed to creating an environment suitable for everyone. Opportunities will be taken where possible to provide an inclusive environment and improve accessibility in ways that enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. This may include improving access to buildings and treating road and pavement surfaces in materials that are sympathetic to access and in keeping with the appearance of the area. As technology evolves and experience in finding solutions to access barriers grows the City Corporation believes that with thought and discussion a solution can be found to ensure that the needs of all users are met.

16. Environmental Enhancement

The City's Local Plan, policy DM10.4, provides guidance on the design and implementation of enhancement schemes for highways, the public realm and other spaces. The policy requires specific regard to be paid to the City's heritage, retaining and identifying features that contribute positively to the character and appearance of the City. Further detailed guidance is set out in the City Street Manual (April 2005). The main principles set out in the manual provide the framework for the City Corporation's vision for the City's streets. The principles are to:

- Rationalise street furniture.
- Improve the pedestrian experience.
- Enhance paving and surfaces.
- Introduce more trees and planting.
- Preserve historic character.
- Create an inclusive environment.
- Maximise the sustainability of each project.

These principles, detailed guidance and history and evolution of streets and spaces in the City are set out in detail in the manual.

17. Transport

Much work has already been done on reducing motor vehicle traffic in the City, including Finsbury Circus.

- The Mayor's congestion charging zone scheme has significantly reduced motor vehicle traffic in Central London.
- The Mayor's low emission zone scheme has further reduced numbers of the most-polluting heavy vehicles across London.
- In adopting its Local Plan the City Corporation has refined its highway hierarchy to further reduce the adverse impacts of motor vehicle traffic, including on the valued character of the City's conservation areas, and will continue to reduce the impact of traffic management infrastructure wherever possible.

Further details about transport proposals, including the City of London Cycle Parking Strategy, and Rail Strategy are available on the website. See www.cityoflondoncity.gov.uk

18. Management of Open Spaces and Trees

Trees, gardens and other green spaces make a strong contribution to the character and appearance of Finsbury Circus and will be enhanced, where appropriate, when opportunities arise.

Policy CS19 in the Local Plan identifies the City of London's policy on Open Spaces and Recreation. In particular the policy commits to 'Increasing the biodiversity values of open spaces, paying particular attention to sites of importance for nature conservation...'

The City of London Open Space Strategy SPD (2015) details the existing open spaces in the City, what spaces are to be provided in future, and how these could be delivered. The City of London Biodiversity Action Plan 2010-2015 (2010) outlines the importance of the City's urban green spaces, which in Finsbury Circus includes public gardens, shrubberies and large mature London plane trees. In addition, the City Corporation has published a Habitat Action Plan (HAP) for Urban Green spaces, Churchyards and Cemeteries, and for Built Structures.

The City of London Tree Strategy SPD (2012), Parts 1 (SPD) and 2 (guidance), sets out a strategy for the protection, maintenance and increase in privately owned trees and City Corporation owned and managed trees within the City of London. The location of trees or the potential loss of trees in the townscape may have an impact on the setting and views of heritage assets. It is important that this issue is considered and that significant harm is not caused to the setting of heritage assets.

Trees in the conservation area are protected under section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). Anyone proposing to carry out works to a tree in a conservation area must give six weeks' notice to the local planning authority of their intention to do so prior to undertaking such works.

There are currently no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) in Finsbury Circus conservation area, although the City Corporation will give further consideration to TPO designation in accordance with the Tree Strategy.

19. Archaeology

The City of London is the historic centre of London and has a rich history with monuments and archaeological remains surviving from all periods. It has an historic landscape which has shaped and influenced the modern townscape. There has been almost continuous occupation of the City from the initial Roman settlement and there is some evidence of earlier occupation. The development of the City is contained in the visible and buried monuments and archaeological remains. The history of settlement has led to the build-up and development of a very complex, and in some areas, deep archaeological sequence. Later building development and basement construction has partly eroded the archaeological evidence, and in some areas remains have been lost with no record or an incomplete record of only part of a site.

Due to the complex layering of remains above and below ground, the entire City is considered to have archaeological potential unless it can be demonstrated that archaeological remains have been lost, due to basement construction or other ground works.

Where development is proposed which involves new groundworks, an historic environment assessment, including an assessment of the archaeological potential and impact of the proposals will be required as part of the planning application. Where significant remains survive, consideration will be given to amendments to the proposals to ensure that disturbance to archaeological remains is minimised or reduced.

The City Corporation will indicate the potential of a site, its relative importance and the likely impact to a developer at an early stage so that the appropriate assessment and design development can be undertaken. Developers should refer to Planning Advice Note 3: Archaeology in the City of London, and Conservation Areas in the City of London: A General Introduction to their Character for further information.

Alterations to open spaces, provision or maintenance of utilities by statutory undertakers, and road and rail proposals are also likely to affect archaeological remains. The upper layers of roads immediately beneath the pavement and road surface will have been partially disturbed by the provision of sewers and services; otherwise these areas, because they have not been built on represent a valuable part of the archaeological resource.

There is high archaeological potential in Finsbury Circus, including:

- Evidence of the upper Walbrook Valley and river system
- Evidence of Roman and medieval defences including London Wall and ditch sequences
- Evidence of Roman burials and settlement pattern, including roads
- Deposits of Moorfields Marsh, with good environmental and organic preservation
- Medieval and late medieval drainage systems, rubbish dumping and land reclamation
- Layout of Finsbury Circus and gardens.

20. Enforcement

Suspected potential breaches of planning control regulations are investigated in accordance with the City of London Planning Enforcement Standards, August 2013. This sets out the manner and timescales in which issues will be investigated, and is available on the City of London website.

21. Condition of the Conservation Area

The buildings and public realm of Finsbury Circus are generally in good condition and maintained to a high standard although part of the garden is temporarily in use as a Crossrail works site. Potential pressures in the conservation area have been identified as new development and utilities replacement works, although these do not threaten its character. The condition of the conservation area is judged to have improved in recent years, and is expected to further improve in coming years with the reinstatement of the gardens when Crossrail works are complete. Planning applications will be judged against the local, regional and national policies and guidance identified above, and the loss of buildings and features that contribute to the character of the area will be resisted accordingly.

Further reading and references

Bradley, Simon, and Pevsner, Nikolaus, The Buildings of England London 1: The City of London (1997)

Philip Ward-Jackson, Public Sculpture of the City of London (2003)

Alastair Service, London 1900 (1979)

Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert (ed), The London Encyclopaedia (1983)

Historic England, Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (2011)

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/>

Historic England, Seeing the History in the View (2011)

[Historic England website \(see above\)](#)

Historic England, The Setting of heritage assets (2011)

Historic England website (see above)

Historic England climate change guidance and resources

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/local-heritage/helm-redirect>

Historic England climate change website for property owners

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/your-home/saving-energy/>

Appendix

Designated Heritage Assets

Correct February 2015

Listed Buildings

Street	Number/name	Grade of listing
Finsbury Circus	1-6 (Britannic House/Lutyens House)	II*
Finsbury Circus	Drinking fountain and shelter, north side of gardens	II
Finsbury Circus	16 and 18, Park House and Garden	II
Finsbury Circus	25, London Wall Buildings	II
Finsbury Circus	31, Salisbury House	II
Moorgate	Business School, London Metropolitan University, 76-92 Moorgate	II
Moorgate	94 -100 (see also 1-6 Finsbury Circus)	II*
Eldon Street	26-31 (see also 16 and 18 Park House and Garden House)	II

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

London Wall: remains of Roman wall and conduit and medieval postern, Blomfield House to site of Moor Gate

Additional considerations

Finsbury Circus is listed as a Registered Historic Park and Garden at Grade II by Historic England, which is a material consideration in the planning process. It is also protected under the London Squares Preservation Act 1931.

Blue Plaques and Plaques

- Site of St Mary Moorfields – Pro Cathedral of the Roman Catholic Church, 1852-1870
- London Wall – Finsbury Circus – Site of Bethlehem Hospital
- London Wall – site of Moorgate
- Museum of London Wall walk plaque



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