



## **Holborn Union Infirmary (CA41) Conservation Area Statement**

**March 2014**

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# Executive summary

## *Background*

This conservation area statement has been prepared to guide proposals within the Holborn Union Infirmary Conservation Area designation. The conservation area was endorsed by the Planning Committee on 5 September 2013 and designated by the Corporate Director for Environment and Regeneration under his delegated powers on 06 March 2014. Public consultation has occurred as part of the adoption of this document, which has included a consultation period of six weeks between 5 December 2013 and 15 January 2014.

This document summarises the history of the place and outlines the physical changes that have occurred over time. It also assesses the character and significance of the existing conservation area designation, which includes an audit of heritage assets within it. It concludes with an assessment of the management implications that arise and relevant policy recommendations regarding future works are provided.

The conservation area statement broadly follows the format of the English Heritage guidelines for the designation of conservation areas, which are set out in *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management*, March 2011 (revised June 2012).

## *Report content*

This statement contains three distinct parts. Part 1: Conservation Area Appraisal contains an introduction, overview history, an assessment of the character and significance of the identified area and an audit of heritage assets. Part 2: Conservation Area Design Guidelines outlines relevant council guidance, which should be followed when contemplating future works within the conservation area. Part 3: Conservation Area Management Proposals sets out relevant policies and strategies to ensure that development pressure is managed in a way that protects the identified character and significance of the conservation area.

## *Conclusions*

The Holborn Union Infirmary Conservation Area is an area of special architectural and historic interest as outlined within the Conservation Area Statement. The Holborn Union Infirmary is of high architectural significance as a fine example of a substantial Gothic revival workhouse infirmary designed by the notable Victorian architect Henry Saxon Snell.

# Part 1: Conservation Area Character Appraisal

## Introduction

### Background

#### *Purpose*

1. The purpose of this statement is to provide a detailed account of the Holborn Union Infirmary Conservation Area and of Islington Council's approach to its preservation and enhancement. It is intended to guide all those involved in ongoing change in the area, and will be used by the council in assessing the design of future development proposals.
2. This document identifies the special character and appearance of the conservation area. It provides advice and guidance, both to the owners and occupiers of buildings in the conservation area and to the council, about the way in which the area should best be managed to conserve and enhance its character. It contains an appraisal of the features that contribute to the area's character and appearance and advice on how best changes can be accommodated.
3. This Conservation Area Statement for the Holborn Union Infirmary will discuss the site included within the conservation area, the relevant planning policy, historical development, character and significance, heritage assets within the area, the conservation area boundary and finally the management of the conservation area.

#### *Location*

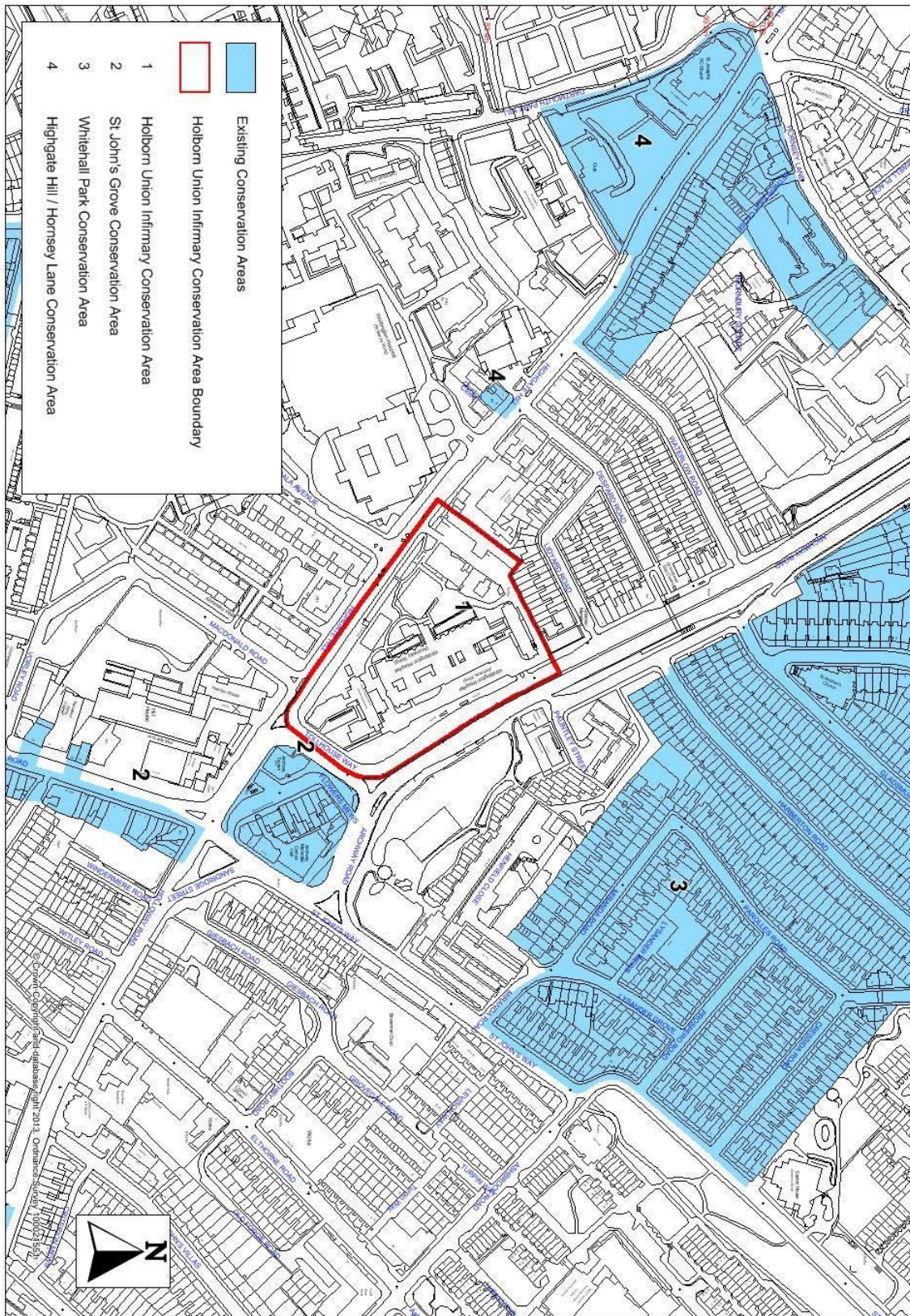
4. The conservation area is located within the northern part of the London Borough of Islington, between Archway Road, to the east, and Highgate Hill, to the west.

#### *Description*

5. The conservation area comprises one main site (Figure 1), currently known as Archway Campus. The key buildings on this site were built between 1875-1885 as a workhouse infirmary for the Holborn and Finsbury Union. These include a main range, a front range, a north wing and a south wing (subsequently significantly extended) as well as laundry and workshop buildings. The buildings were designed in a Gothic Revival style by the notable Victorian architect Henry Saxon Snell. The buildings are locally listed in recognition of their significance as important non-designated heritage assets. The site also includes important areas of open and green space, notably to the east and west of the site. There are also a large number of trees; both within the site and street trees.

## Report structure

6. This statement contains three distinct parts. Part 1: Conservation Area Appraisal contains an introduction, followed by an outline history of the area. A broad appraisal of the character and appearance of the area is also included, with particular reference to the range of building typologies, materials and historic details found in the area, open space, gardens and trees and archaeological potential. Specific reference is made to architectural and historic qualities, views and streetscape, the character and relationship of public and green spaces, and any elements that detract from the character of the conservation area. An audit of heritage assets is also included.
7. Part 2: Conservation Area Design Guidelines contains relevant council guidance, which should be followed when contemplating future works within the conservation area.
8. Part 3: Conservation Area Management Proposals sets out relevant policies and strategies to ensure that development pressure is managed in a way that protects the identified character and special interest of the conservation area.



**Figure 1** Map showing Holborn Union Infirmary Conservation Area boundary (marked by red line). Note that other conservation areas in the vicinity are shown.



## Legislation & planning policy

### *Relevant legislation*

9. Section 69 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* requires all local authorities to identify 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance and designate them as conservation areas.' A conservation area normally has historic buildings, open spaces, or an historic street pattern that makes a positive contribution to an area. It is, however, the character of areas, rather than individual buildings that such a designation seeks to preserve or enhance.
10. Conservation area designation brings with it additional planning controls, control over demolitions and the protection of trees. Section 72 of the Act places a duty on the council and other decision makers to pay special attention in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. This includes exercising control over development proposals that are outside the conservation area but would affect its setting, or views into and out of the area.
11. Once a conservation area is designated the Council has a statutory obligation to:
  - From time to time, publish proposals for the preservation or enhancement of the character and appearance of the conservation area.
  - Pay special attention to preserving or enhancing the character of the area when considering planning proposals affecting the area.
12. Conservation is about making sure that any future change conserves or enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area. To achieve this, the council uses its planning powers to manage change in a careful and sensitive manner.

### *National guidance*

13. Policy 12 of the *National Planning Policy Framework (2012) – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment* - is the national policy on the protection of the historic environment. Paragraph 127 states that:

When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.

Paragraphs 137 and 138 are also of direct relevance to conservation areas.

14. Throughout this report the word 'significance' has consistently been used in place of 'special interest'. While significance is the predominant term used in the NPPF the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* uses the term special interest when describing the important qualities and features of heritage assets including conservation areas.

15. The Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide to *Planning Policy Statement 5 – Planning for the Historic Environment* (2010) provides the guidance for the national policy on the protection of the historic environment. Paragraph 14 states that:

Conservation areas will be designated if they are of special historic or architectural interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance

16. *Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (English Heritage, 2008) provides guidance in accordance with English Heritage on conservation principles. Paragraph 25 states that:

Conservation areas will continue to be designated at local level, alongside non-statutory local designations, and much of the archaeological resource will continue to be managed by policy, rather than designation.

17. *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (English Heritage 2011) provides guidance for local authorities and others on buildings within conservation areas. Paragraph 3.4 states:

Guidance (both published and available online) which explains why the area has been designated, what constraints and opportunities result from designation, and what policies the local authority has adopted will help home owners, businesses and developers understand how the community wants the area to develop.

18. *Valuing Places: Good Practice in Conservation Areas* (English Heritage, 2011) provides a good practice guide for conservation areas using existing conservation areas as case studies, it states that:

Actively managed, conservation areas are a highly effective and popular way of protecting the character of places. (Page 3)

## *Local policy and guidance*

19. The Development Plan is comprised of the *London Plan (2011) - Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London*, *Islington Core Strategy (2011)*, *Islington Development Management Policies (2013)*, *Site Allocations* and *Finsbury Local Plan (2013)*.
20. The London Plan is the overall strategic plan for London, setting out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of London over the next 20–25 years. Policy 7.8 of the London Plan relates to Heritage Assets and Archaeology, and states in part D:

Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail

21. Policy CS9 of Islington’s Core Strategy sets out the Council’s strategic policies on Protecting and Enhancing Islington’s Built and Historic Environment. Part B states:

Active management of conservation areas will continue through a programme of proactive initiatives for the conservation-led regeneration of historic areas, and potential designation of new conservation areas.

22. Policy DM2.3 of Islington’s Development Management Policies outlines the Council’s Development Management Heritage policies. It states that:

### B. Conservation areas

- i) The council will require that alterations to existing buildings in conservation areas conserve or enhance their significance. Similarly, new developments within Islington’s conservation areas and their settings are required to be of high quality contextual design so that they conserve or enhance a conservation area’s significance. Harm to the significance of a conservation area will not be permitted unless there is a clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to the significance of a conservation area will be strongly resisted.
- ii) The council will require the retention of all buildings and structures which make a positive contribution to the significance of a conservation area. The appropriate repair and re-use of such buildings will be encouraged. The significance of a conservation area can be substantially harmed over time by the cumulative impact arising from the demolition of buildings which may *individually make a limited positive contribution to the significance*

of a conservation area. Consequently, the loss of a building which makes a positive contribution to a conservation area will frequently constitute substantial harm to the significance of the conservation area.

- iii) The council will resist the loss of spaces, street patterns, views, vistas, uses, trees, and landscapes which contribute to the significance of a conservation area.
- iv) The council will use its statutory powers to ensure that buildings and spaces within conservation areas that are at risk from neglect or decay are appropriately maintained and repaired.
- v) Planning applications are required to include a Heritage Statement which demonstrates a clear understanding of the significance of any heritage assets affected by proposals and the impact on their significance.

### *Existing constraints*

23. The Holborn Union Infirmary site is currently subject to the following designations/restrictions:

- Local View 4: View from Archway Road to St Paul's Cathedral
- Local View 5: View from Archway Bridge to St Paul's Cathedral
- Locally Listed buildings
- Close proximity to St John's Grove Conservation Area
- ARCH3 Site Allocation
- Controlled Parking Zone

24. Islington's Local Plan: Site Allocation (June 2013) mentions the Archway Campus site i.e. The Holborn Union Infirmary site. Site Allocation ARCH 3 states:

The Archway Campus, Highgate Hill

Ownership – University College London and Middlesex University  
Current use – educational, clinical and health services research

Allocation and Justification

Consolidate and improve the site for existing education and related uses. This would include additional institutional D1 use (educational, health and clinical services) and ancillary office (B1) uses. Continued education and ancillary uses are supported in the Core Strategy. This could be delivered through a mixed-use scheme, including residential.

Active frontages may be encouraged – particularly along Highgate Hill and Tollhouse Way. Uses should support the Core Strategy policy for Archway such as retail, employment and business use.

The university are currently considering their estates strategy, which could involve the relocation of existing health and education facilities to other sites. Should this occur, and subject to the justification of the loss of the educational use on the site, the site is considered appropriate for residential-led mixed use development including open space, with small-scale retail and commercial uses on the southern top which respond to and integrate with the town centre.

### Design Considerations and constraints

Proposals should contribute to an improved public realm and linkages to the rest of the town centre. The site occupies a prominent location at the north of Archway Junction and is highly accessible due to its close proximity to Archway Underground Station and several bus routes. Given its prominent location any future development should be of high quality design. A significant redevelopment should involve the preparation of a masterplan.

The Whittington Hospital (Archway Wing) is a locally listed building. Any development should recognise the value and enhance the historic significance of this building and other buildings of character within and adjacent to the site. Development will also need to conserve and enhance the significance of the St John's Grove Conservation Area (which lies at the southern tip of the site), including its setting.

Thames Water has indicated that there may be issues with water supply capability associated with this site. As such applicants must demonstrate that early engagement has been undertaken with Thames Water and that appropriate measures have been agreed to mitigate any potential problems associated with water supply.

Development should mitigate any impacts on Archway Park, a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) of Local Importance which is within the vicinity of the site.

Part of the site falls within a protected viewing corridor defined by Development Management Policies.

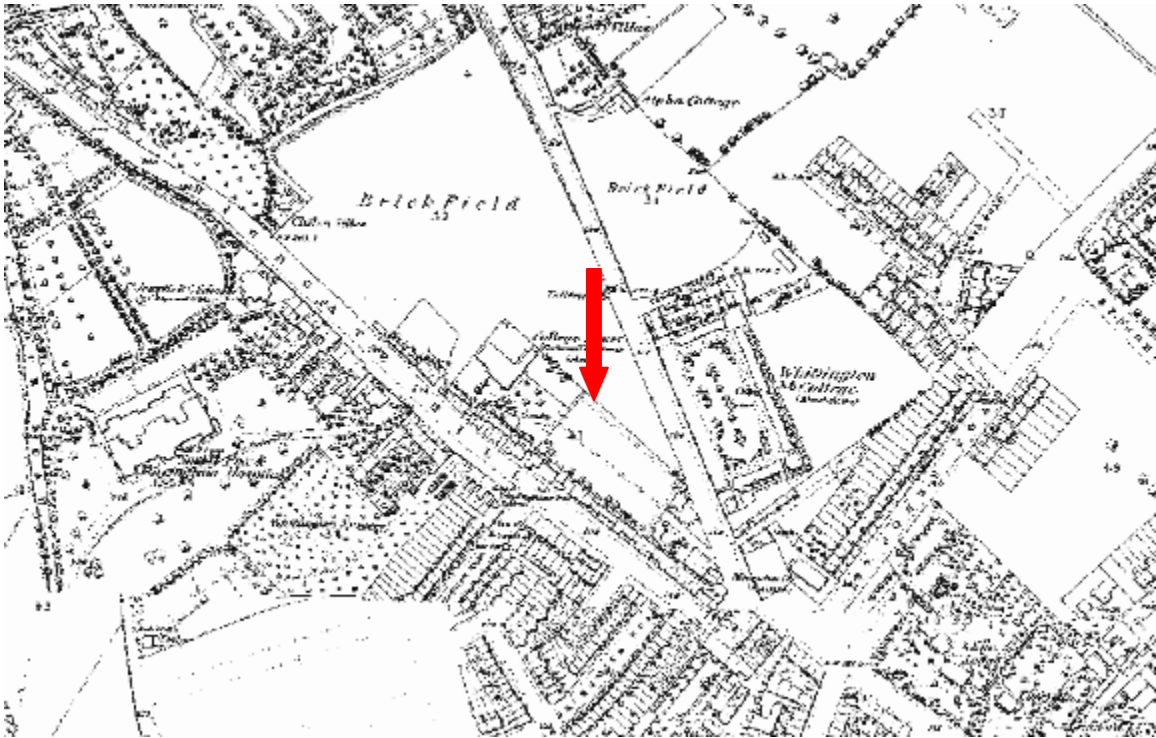
## **Historic development**

### **Early history and development**

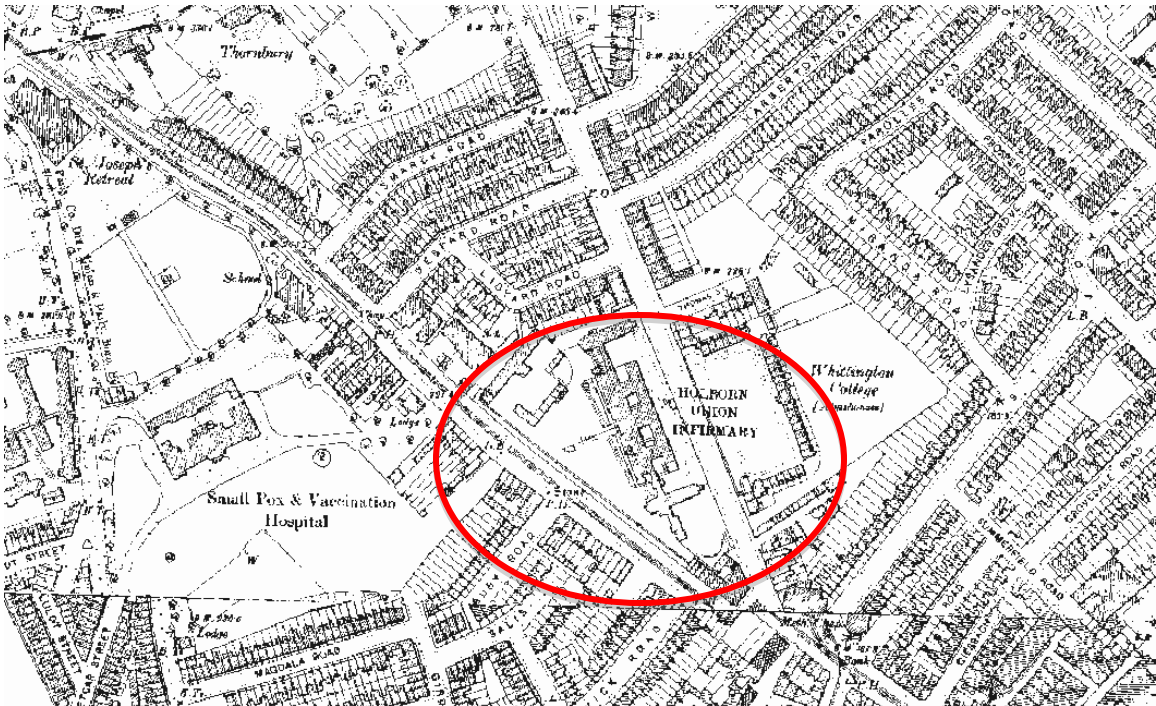
25. Until the late eighteenth century the area was largely open fields with few small areas of development, some on or around the site. The northern part of the site itself was a brickfield.
26. By 1829 there had been an increase in small scale development and College House (Clerkenwell Workhouse Schools) had been built on the site.
27. In 1836 the Holborn Poor Law Union was formed and became responsible for the running of the workhouse on Gray's Inn Road. Workhouses were set up to provide accommodation and food for the poor in return for their labour.
28. The Metropolitan Asylums Board was formed in 1867, in order to establish infirmaries for the poor, separate from the workhouse. Initially the Holborn Poor Law Union restructured its existing sites to separate the workhouses and infirmaries.
29. By 1867 further small scale development had taken place on the site and College House (Clerkenwell Workhouse Schools) had been expanded. It is likely that the site remained much like this until the Holborn Union Infirmary was built in 1879. There was also much development in the surrounding area by the mid-nineteenth century with the small pox hospital opposite the site and further development to upper Holloway and along Archway Road.

### **Nineteenth century**

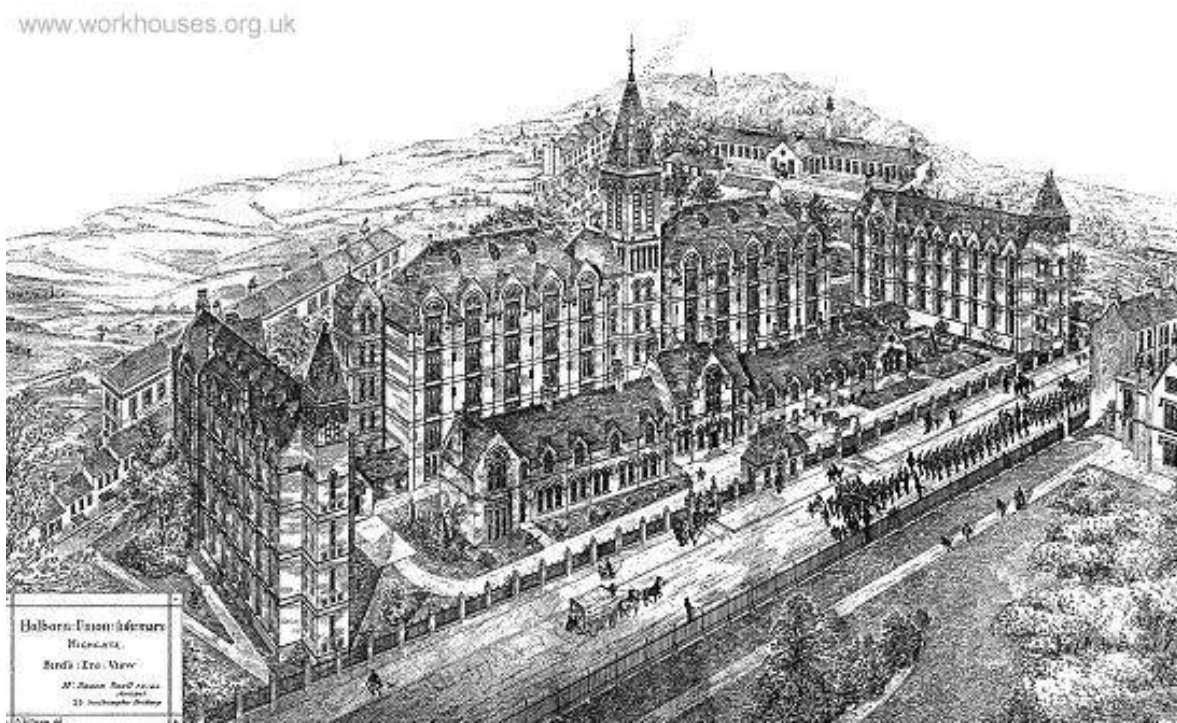
30. Following the Union's restructure, a new infirmary (Holborn Union Infirmary) was established on a triangular piece of land sandwiched between two highways (Archway Road and Highgate Hill). It is likely that the design of the buildings and their relationship with the open space within the site was constrained by the shape and size of the site. The new infirmary was designed by the notable Victorian architect Henry Saxon Snell (1830-1904). Saxon Snell was known for his hospitals and healthcare facilities. His buildings include the grade II listed St Charles' Hospital in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.
31. The building is not shown on the 1869 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 2), but has appeared by 1895 (Figure 3). It is believed that the building was built around 1879 as this was the date shown on Snell's drawing.
32. The building comprises of four storeys with a long range and projecting wings to the north and south, which are linked to the main range by corridors, resulting in a pavilion plan hospital (Figure 5 and Figure 4). There was a block at each end of the main range, now only the southern block survives.



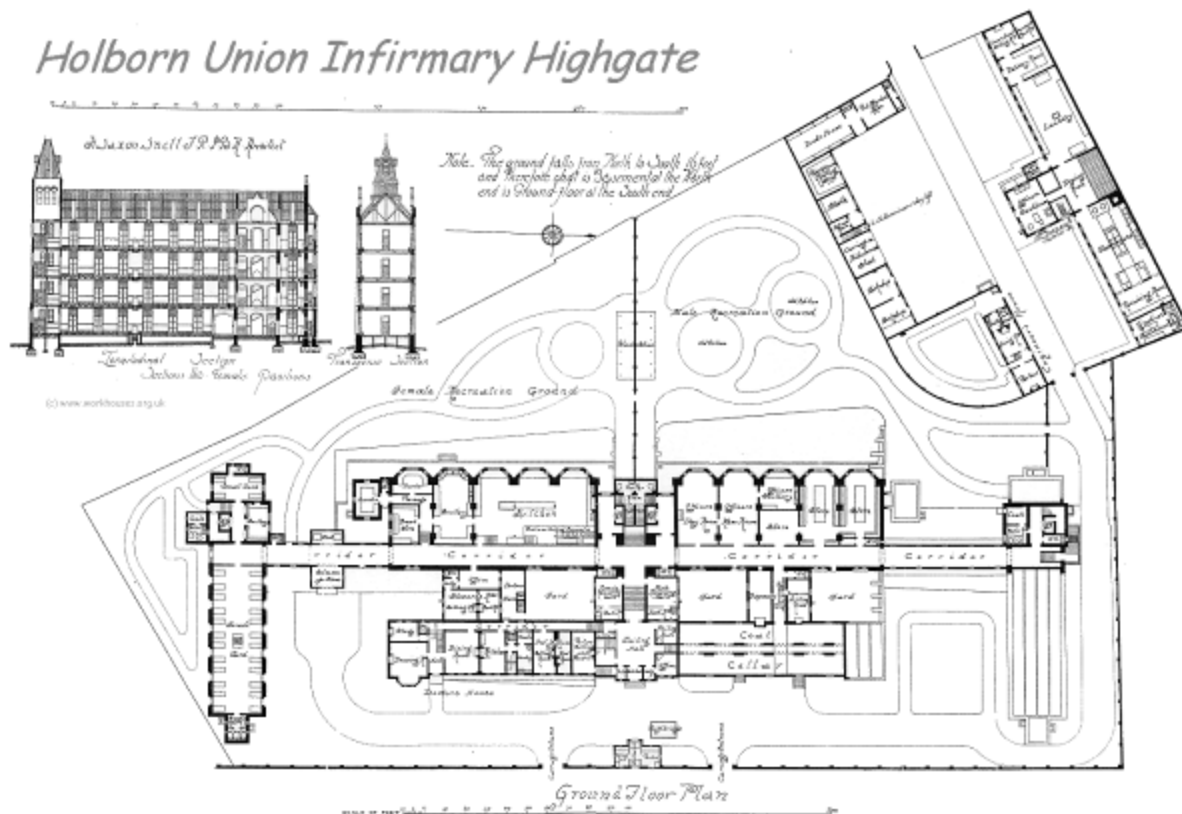
**Figure 2** Ordnance Survey map of 1870. Note that the Holborn Union Infirmary has not been constructed at this stage (site is marked by red arrow).



**Figure 3** Ordnance Survey map of 1896 showing Holborn Union Infirmary (marked by red circle).



**Figure 4** Holborn Union Infirmary from the east, 1879. © Peter Higginbotham  
Source: [<http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Holborn>]



**Figure 5** Holborn Union Infirmary original ground-floor plan, 1879. © Peter Higginbotham  
Source: [<http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Holborn>]



33. From 1870 onwards, the design of workhouses focussed on accommodating inmates in separate blocks or pavilions linked by covered walkways. The change in plan form coincided with widespread efforts to improve sanitary conditions and reduce the spread of disease. The new layouts became known as "Nightingale wards", comprising of long wards with pairs of opposing windows to allow a through-draught. Sanitary facilities were placed in towers attached to the outer ends of wards, only accessed by a cross-ventilated stem. Most wards to new infirmaries were long, rectangular rooms with two rows of beds, but the Holborn Union Infirmary included double-width wards, a plan which was usually seen in wards for the aged or for healthy workhouse inmates. As a result of this unusual planform, the building was heavily criticised at the time it was built.
34. The original design for the infirmary showed the building split into two symmetrical halves on plan – one half for male patients and the other for female patients. It is thought that the south wing was built with an extra element or alternatively was extended soon after construction.
35. To the rear of the building fronting Highgate Hill, was a recreation ground with serpentine paths. There were workshops and a laundry to the northern end of the site, including the surviving single storey building, along with a collection of buildings, which were on the site now occupied by the Furnival Building.
36. At some stage between 1879 and 1895, the south wing was extended with a three-storey extension to the south. This extension was enlarged or replaced following the existing building style and heights by 1915.

## **Twentieth century**

37. From 1900 onwards, fresh air and sunshine were accepted methods to aid recovery and cure disease. As a result verandas were often built on the south sides of ward buildings. The fresh air was considered particularly beneficial to those suffering from tuberculosis. At some stage before 1935 four storey veranda extensions were added to both the north and south wards (**Figure 6**). Both the veranda; now glazed and the fire escape stair survive to the north wing. The fire escape stair may still survive to the south wing, but has been enclosed within a corrugated metal structure. **Figure 7** also shows a general view of the west elevation circa 1920s. The rear entrance to the main building from the gardens fronting Highgate Hill was also either extended or enclosed. Small additions were constructed to the workshops and an access route was created through the boundary wall to the north side of the site.
38. In 1944 the building was amalgamated with other hospitals in the surrounding area under the London County Council. The complex was named Whittington Hospital and the Holborn Union Infirmary became known as the Archway Wing. It appears that generally only very minor changes were undertaken on the site at this time. **Figure 8** shows the Holborn Union Infirmary in the 1950s. By 1953

various alterations had been carried out, including the addition of fire escape stairs to both wings, the enlargement of the corridor between the main range and south wing, further infilling between the front range and main range as well as additional buildings within the workshop complex to the north of the site.

39. By 1970 there had been a change to the southern boundary of the Infirmary, due to the creation of the Archway Gyratory and Tollhouse Way. During the 1970s the outbuildings to the north-west corner of the site were partially demolished and the Furnival Building was built in their place. The north block was substantially altered and extended to the east during the 1970s. Around the same time the extension to the rear of the original south block was also built.
40. The south wing was extended following removal of the veranda, sometime after 1971, with a two storey extension.
41. The Ely Building was built in the 1980s.
42. During the late twentieth century, likely during the 1980s, the stair towers between the single storey front range and the main range were rebuilt to accommodate lifts. At this time it is thought that the open air corridors were removed and two additional blocks at either end of the main range were built. This extension along with the two additional blocks built adjacent to the original south and rebuilt north blocks were built very sympathetically, closely following the proportions and materials of the original building.
43. Historic maps suggest that the recreation ground to the rear of the site (fronting Highgate Hill) was still there in the mid 1950s. At some point the gardens were largely covered over with a car park. The site was purchased by University College London with Middlesex University in 1998 and used as a campus focussing on initiatives in Multiprofessional Education, Informatics, Clinical Research and Health Services Research – retaining its links with health and welfare.
44. The key phases of development within the Holborn Union Infirmary Conservation Area are shown in Figure 9.



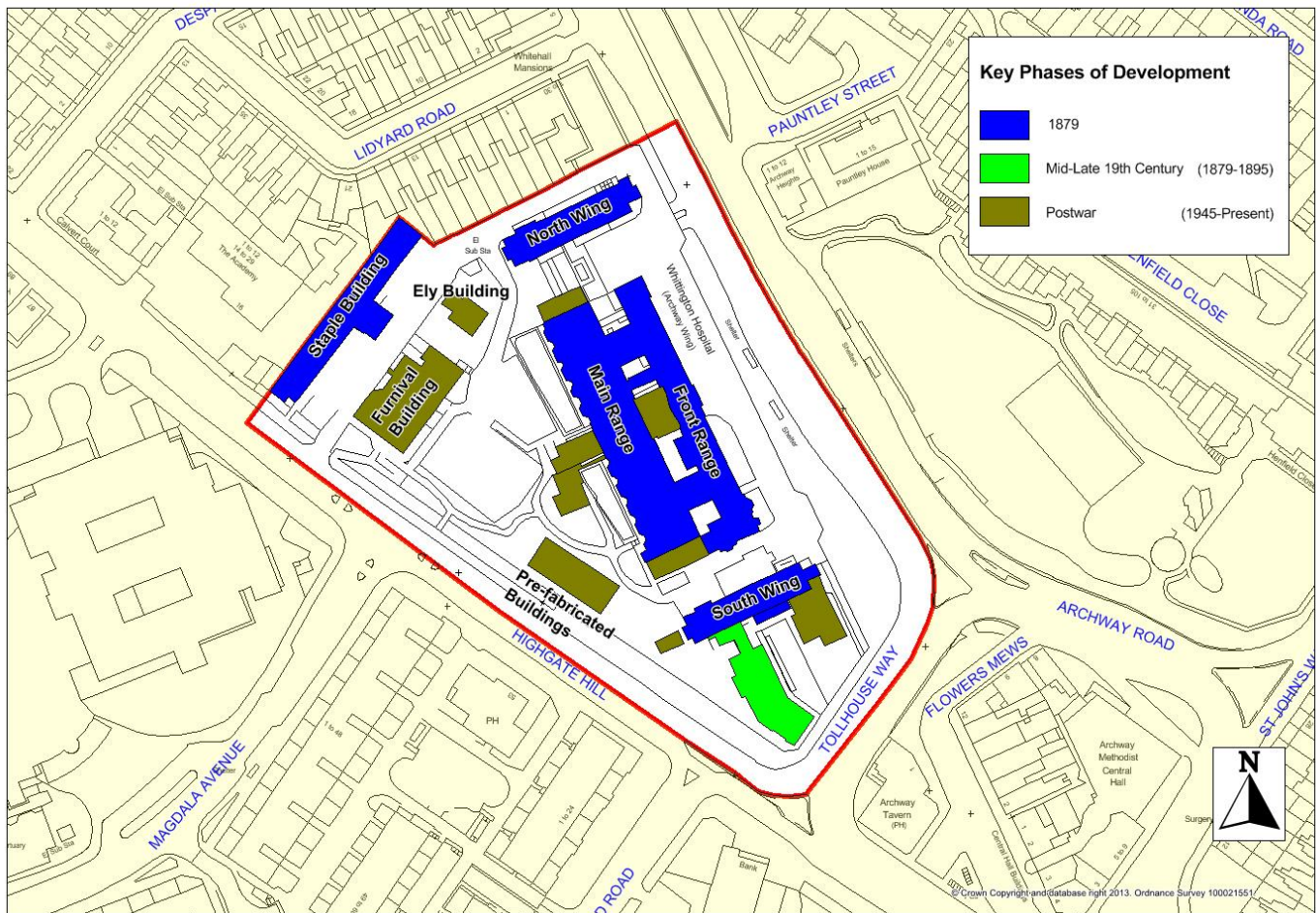
**Figure 6** Postcard showing verandas to the north wing of the Holborn Union Infirmary. Note that these were introduced circa 1920s/30s  
Source: Islington Local History Centre



**Figure 7** The Holborn Union Infirmary circa 1920s © P J Loobey  
Source: Islington Local History Centre



**Figure 8** Holborn Union Infirmary postcard circa 1950s  
Source: Islington Local History Centre



**Figure 9** Key phases of development map showing building names within the Holborn Union Infirmary Conservation Area

## Character and significance of the conservation area

### Individual elements

45. The conservation area comprises the original infirmary building, which is a large, imposing Gothic style building, constructed in yellow brick (Figure 10). It has a large four storey main range which runs from north-east to south-west, with a part one part two-storey range running in parallel fronting Archway Road, the two connected by the central entrance area. There are also four storey wings to the north and south which were originally connected via corridors at ground floor level and by cast iron walkways at upper levels. There is a building to the north west of the site, which was originally used for laundry and workshops. There are also a number of modern buildings and extensions on the site, including the Furnival Building and the Ely Building.

### *The main range*

46. The main range fronting Archway Road comprises of four-storeys over a basement with five bays either side of a central tower. The windows to the main range are set back within vertical recessed bays under a pointed arch with oculi and terminate in gabled full dormers. The windows are centrally pivoting metal-framed windows dating to the mid twentieth century. The hipped roof is covered with natural Welsh slate (Figure 10).
47. The tower was extended and adapted to incorporate two lift shafts, thought to be during the 1980s. These additions have been carefully designed to replicate the style, material and proportions of the main building. This element reads visually as one central tower, extended to the front with one tower to either side. The towers to each side are yellow brick with blocked windows and surmounted by a stone balustrade. The central element is the equivalent of eight-storeys in height, is square in plan with two louvered lancets on each face. There is rectilinear decoration in the spandrels and a pyramidal roof with gabled and louvered dormers.



**Figure 10** The main range at the former Holborn Union Infirmary

48. The rear elevation which fronts Highgate Hill comprises of five bays of four-storeys either side of the central tower, with balustrades to three storeys and the fourth storey flush with the main range. The existing windows are modern replacements. There are large brick finials with stone detailing at each end of the façade, as well as one either side of the central tower. There is an inappropriate two storey brick extension to the rear of the central tower with a flat roof and two poor quality single storey extensions adjacent
49. There are two additional blocks to either end of the main range, which were likely to have been lavatory blocks. Originally there were only two blocks, but in the 1980s another block was added to each end of the main range, following the style of the original block remaining to the south of the main range. The blocks to the south are brick built, one with curved arched windows to the fourth storey and flat arched windows below and to all those to the southern block. The windows are timber framed 4 over 4 sash windows. The two blocks to the north have been substantially altered, with the southern block of the two widened and attached to the main building with larger, metal-framed windows and a flat roof. The northern-most block retains its original form, but has lost the windows to the first and second floors.
50. There is a modern four-storey brick built extension with blocked windows, built in the 1970s, to the rear of the block adjoining the main range to the south.

#### *The front range*

51. The front range is also brick built and is largely single storey, with a two storey central element which emphasises the main entrance and two storey elements to either end of the range. This range was built to contain the administration department and a doctor's residence and follows the style and proportions of the main building with gabled dormers and a hipped slate roof. There is a louvered lantern and conical roof at the crossing of the gables to the two storey central element. The central flat-arched entrance sits beneath a round arch with bracketed pointed-arched moulding over, with a pointed-arched window either side. There is a three-light window above the entrance doors set under a pointed arch. There are five sets of windows under pointed arches in gabled full dormers

#### *The wings*

52. There are two wings; one to the north (Figure 11) and one to the south of the main range. There is now no external link between the wings and the main range and only an internal link at basement level to the north wing. Both wings are brick built and comprise four storeys with a bay under a cross-gable and seven further bays containing the wards. The windows are flat-arched under pointed arched gables with a balustraded parapet between. There are louvered dormers to the roof and towers, which follow the design of the central tower, but are reduced in size fronting Archway Road.

There is a large extension to the southern side of the north wing, which was originally added as a four-storey veranda sometime between 1920 and 1940 and was used for tuberculosis patients and has since had the pitched roof replaced with a flat roof and has been enclosed with glazing which somewhat obscures the original south elevation.

53. There is an unattractive corrugated metal modern extension to the northern side of the south wing where an external stair, much like that to the northern side of the north wing, was installed in the mid twentieth century and may still be housed within. The external stair to the north wing remains.
54. A three-storey range of nurses' accommodation runs off the south wing to the south, following the style, materials and proportions of the main range and wings.
55. The south wing was extended again at some stage, following the removal of the veranda to the south elevation – sometime after 1971 – and replaced with a two-storey extension. The extension follows the proportions and materials of the original buildings, but is somewhat simplified, although includes three gabled dormers to the eastern elevation.

### *Laundry and workshops*

56. The original laundry and workshop buildings only partly survive and comprise of a single-storey brick built range with a pitched roof, hipped at the eastern end and various gabled elements with a projecting section. The windows have been largely replaced and comprise of a mixture of uPVC and timber framed, as well as some blocked openings. Many openings have been enlarged or reduced in size.



**Figure 11** The north wing. Note the extension on the south side (left of picture)



57. *Pre-fabricated buildings*

58. There is a single-storey range of poor quality prefabricated temporary buildings fronting Highgate Hill.

*Ely Building*

59. The Ely Building (12) was constructed in the 1980s and is a three-storey red brick building with uPVC windows.

*Furnival building*

60. The Furnival Building (13) dates to the 1970s and is an eight-storey brick building with concrete detailing with metal windows of varying designs.

61. *Site boundaries*

The original Holborn Union Infirmary site boundary generally remains. The original boundary comprises of a low brick wall with black painted iron railings and brick arches with stone copings. A section, which begins at the prefabricated temporary buildings and ends on the corner of Highgate Hill with Tollhouse Way, has been set back and replaced with a poor quality and unattractive section of concrete.

*Landscape and open space*

62. The area is distinguished by the spaces existing between the buildings, which in turn enable the buildings themselves to be fully appreciated. The open space, including the car park, to the west of the site were originally part of a landscaped garden and therefore the remaining open space is important. There is another important open space fronting Archway Road, which was originally a



Figure 12 The Ely Building



Figure 13 The Furnival Building

formal courtyard and is now used as car parking. The open space between the two extensions to the south wing is also important. The open spaces within the conservation area make an important positive contribution to its significance, character and appearance.

### *Public realm*

63. The public realm is generally uncluttered, with concrete paving slabs and granite kerbs. A poorly located bus stop on Archway Road obscures views of the building and detracts from its setting.

### *Activity and uses*

64. At the time of this appraisal the site had recently become vacant after having been used for educational, clinical and health services research by University College London and Middlesex University.

## **Assessing character and significance**

### *Definition*

65. The character of a place is defined by the style and scale of buildings and their relationship with open space and the public realm.
66. *Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance* (English Heritage, 2008) defines the significance of a place as 'The sum of the cultural and natural heritage values of a place, often set out in a statement of significance.'
67. It goes on to state that:

A 'statement of significance' of a place should be a summary of the cultural and natural heritage values currently attached to it and how they inter-relate, which distils the particular character of the place. It should explain the relative importance of the heritage values of the place (where appropriate, by reference to criteria for statutory designation), how they relate to its physical fabric, the extent of any uncertainty about its values (particularly in relation to potential for hidden or buried elements), and identify any tensions between potentially conflicting values.

68. and that:

To identify the cultural and natural heritage values of a place, its history, fabric and character must first be understood. This should include its origins, how and why it has changed over time (and will continue to change if undisturbed), the form and condition of its constituent elements

and materials, the technology of its construction, any habitats it provides, and comparison with similar places. Its history of ownership may be relevant, not only to its heritage values, but also to its current state.

### *Location and setting / landmark quality*

69. The Holborn Union Infirmary site is located at a prominent junction between two key roads, which run into Central London – Archway Road and Highgate Hill. The size and location of the original infirmary building results in it being an important local landmark.

70. Pevsner's *Buildings of England: London 4: North*, (1998) provides the following description of the original infirmary building:

One of the most striking workhouse infirmaries and a landmark of this muddled junction. It is a large hospital on a narrow site, hence the towering brick wings made bolder by tall water towers and windows rising into high dormers; alas, most of the brass plate tracery has gone. Pavilion plan; in the middle section the wards have an unusual lay-out with beds along hollow, ventilated partitions at r. angles to the windows.

71. The Holborn Union Infirmary is of high architectural significance as a fine example of a substantial Gothic revival workhouse infirmary designed by the notable Victorian architect Henry Saxon Snell.

72. Henry Saxon Snell was a well-regarded architect who specialised in Poor Law buildings. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1871, a member of the Architectural Association in 1850 and was a pioneer member of the Sanitary Institute (now the Royal Society of Health). He apprenticed in the office of Sir James Pennethorne, afterwards becoming assistant to Sir Joseph Paxton and then to Sir William Tite.

73. Saxon Snell was also known for his extensive writing on hospital design, discrediting an emerging fashion for circular wards. His book, *Charitable and Parochial Establishments* (1881), was presented to the Prince of Wales upon the opening of St Marylebone Infirmary – he was architect to the St Marylebone Board of Guardians. He also wrote a second book in collaboration with a doctor - *Hospital Construction and Management* (1883).

74. Henry Saxon Snell was the architect for the Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal and the Forres Hospital, New Brunswick in Canada. He was architect for various projects in Britain, including the Boys' School for the Royal Patriotic Fund in Wandsworth; the Convalescent Home for Children in Norbiton; St. Olave's, Tooley Street, Union Infirmary; the Hospital for the Sick Poor, and Nurses' Home, Rackham Street; and the Outpatients' Department and Nurses' Home and Dispensary, Royal Victoria Hospital for Children, Tite Street.

75. The Holborn Union Infirmary is an important example of Saxon Snell's work.

*Historic significance*

76. The original infirmary building has high historic significance as a largely intact Victorian workhouse infirmary building. Its design follows the 'Nightingale ward' plan form with its separate wings accessed via corridors, designed to reduce the spread of disease – thought to be airborne. Originally Snell proposed a new method of arranging the beds and windows in the sick wards, but the design was opposed by the Local Government Board which insisted on the erection of wards designed on the pavilion method. Eventually a compromise was reached and the buildings were built half on one plan and half on the other.
77. Buildings for tending to the sick and aged provide strong evidence of changing attitudes to the sick and destitute through their architecture. Their design tells us a great deal about changing social attitudes, as well as about the impact of science on architecture. Hospitals show gradual acceptance of the treatment of contagious and incurable diseases; while workhouses reveal the historic segregation and stark difference in treatment of the poor and the wealthy. Health and welfare buildings are often fine architectural statements – such as the Holborn Union Infirmary.
78. Following the Dissolution, a series of Acts (notably the *Poor Law* of 1601) required individual parishes to relieve their poor and set able-bodied paupers to work in premises devoted solely to these ends – workhouses.
79. Residential workhouses developed from small buildings resembling farmhouses to larger, imposing buildings following the reforms of the 1782 *Gilbert Act*. These larger workhouses enabled parishes to group together and provide larger, shared premises for poor relief.
80. In the early nineteenth century workhouse regimes became harsher, with greater emphasis placed on segregation of the sexes and supervision. This was followed by the *Poor Law Amendment Act* of 1834. Shortly after this the Holborn Poor Law Union was formed which founded the Holborn Union Infirmary.
81. The National Health Service was formed in 1948 and brought about the rationalisation and updating of the British hospital stock. This was a hugely important step in the progress of post-war British society – encouraging equality.
82. Until the twentieth century it was widely believed that disease passed through the air and ventilation remained the determining factor in hospital design. The *pavilion plan* separated functions and provided good light and ventilation and as a result was very popular throughout the nineteenth century and was indeed used for the Holborn Union Infirmary. The first example was the Royal Naval

Hospital, Plymouth, built 1758-62 by Alexander Rowehead. The earliest true pavilion-plan general hospitals were Blackburn, Lancashire, built, 1859-61 by James Turnbull and Ashton-under-Lyne, Staffordshire, built 1859-61 by Joseph Lindley.

83. The long ward ranges are sometimes known as Nightingale wards. Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) was a prominent figure in the health reform movement and campaigned for better hygiene and planning of health and welfare buildings.
84. The Metropolitan Asylums Board was established to provide infirmaries that were separate from workhouses in 1867. The 1868 *Metropolitan Poor Law Act* permitted Boards of Guardians to open bespoke infirmaries as parts of workhouses, much like the Holborn Union Infirmary.

### *Individual elements*

#### **Main range, north wing and south wing – very high significance**

85. The main range, currently known as the Holborn Building, along with the north wing, currently known as the Charterhouse Building, and the south wing, currently known as the Clerkenwell Building are of very high significance. Built in c.1879 these buildings made up the original infirmary – with Florence Nightingale’s innovative *pavilion* plan form. Designs following the ‘*Nightingale ward*’ plan became popular with health and welfare buildings in the nineteenth century as it aimed to reduce the spread of disease by wards within wings from the main building via corridors.

#### **Workshops and laundry – high significance**

86. The Staples Building was built as part of the original design in c.1879 and is now all that remains of the original workshops and laundry buildings, as others were demolished to make way for the Furnival Building. Various inappropriate alterations (largely window relocation and replacement) have been made to the Staples Building, which has harmed its significance.

#### **Twentieth century additions - no significance**

87. The twentieth century additions have no significance; however the following have been sympathetically designed with high quality materials and respect the original building:
  - i. The extension built in the 1980s to incorporate the lift shafts to the front of the central tower.
  - ii. The two storey extension to the south of the south wing, likely built in the 1980s.

iii. The additional block to either end of the main range.

88. The following twentieth century additions detract from the building's significance:

- i. The unattractive two-storey brick extension to the rear of the main range, fronting Highgate Hill and attached poor quality prefabricated buildings (Figure 14).
- ii. The poor quality three storey extension to the south side of the north wing.
- iii. The fire escape stair to the north side of the north wing which is visual clutter
- iv. The poor quality corrugated extension to the north side of the south wing
- v. The poor quality prefabricated temporary buildings fronting Highgate Hill
- vi. The unattractive four storey extension to the rear of the block adjoining the main range to the south
- vii. The Furnival Building, an excessively high and unattractive building of eight storeys dating to the 1970s
- viii. The Ely Building, an unattractive building of three storeys dating to the 1980s

### **Boundary treatment – high significance**

89. The distinctive original boundary wall topped with railings survives to most of the site boundary (Figure 15). A section which begins at the prefabricated temporary buildings and ends on the corner of Highgate Hill with Tollhouse Way has been set back and replaced with a poor quality and unattractive section of concrete – these detract from the significance of the original boundary treatment.



**Figure 12** View from Highgate Hill with pre-fabricated buildings in the foreground.

### **Open space, gardens and trees – high significance**

90. Open spaces within the site are important as they provide an appropriate setting to the significant historic buildings and allow them to be viewed and appreciated. Most areas of open space are now used for car parking, which causes visual harm. A small area of green open space remains to the west of the main range fronting Highgate Hill. This is of high importance as it originally formed part of a large ornamental garden in this location. There is also an open space to the east of the main range fronting Archway Road. This is of high importance as it originally formed a formal courtyard setting to the building.



**Figure 13** Original railings and piers

91. There is also an important area of open space to the south of the site between the two extensions to the south wing.
92. The trees within the site are all very significant and should be retained. The trees within the site fronting Highgate Hill are covered by Tree Protection Orders (TPOs).

### **Public realm and street trees – high significance**

93. Generally the areas of public realm that surround the site are in good condition. The pavement, which surrounds the main site comprises concrete paving slabs with some smaller concrete sets and granite kerbs.
94. There are well established street trees along the corner of Archway Road and round to Tollhouse Way. There are also two smaller street trees on Highgate Hill.

The street trees make an important positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

### *Heritage values*

95. The heritage assets of the Holborn Union Infirmary Conservation Area have the following heritage values: evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal, as defined by English Heritage in Conservation Principles.

#### **Evidential**

96. Historic fabric is physical evidence, which illustrates past human activity and the historic development of an area. The Holborn Union Infirmary heritage assets, therefore, have high evidential value as survivals of infirmary buildings, which illustrate the history of London's health care service.

#### **Historic**

97. The Holborn Union Infirmary heritage assets (those buildings of high or very high significance) possess important historic value in both an illustrative and associative sense. The buildings can be appreciated in terms of their architectural quality, their age and historic interest. The original building was designed by a nationally important architect – Henry Saxon Snell.

#### **Aesthetic**

98. The Holborn Union Infirmary heritage assets have a great deal of aesthetic value as a distinctive high quality landmark building with the central tower visible from miles around.

#### **Communal**

99. The Holborn Union Infirmary heritage assets have substantial communal value, as buildings that are reflective of the social history of the community, originally built as a workhouse infirmary and later used as a hospital.

### *Setting*

100. This section sets out the contribution of the Holborn Union Infirmary setting to the significance of the heritage assets on the site. The setting of a heritage asset is described in the NPPF as:

The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the



significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

### **Highgate Hill**

101. There is a wide variety of building styles and uses on Highgate Hill, including a Victorian parade of shops. Immediately adjacent to the site is The Academy – a school building built in 1880, now in use as residential apartments. The Academy makes a positive contribution to the setting of the Holborn Union Infirmary. The Whittington Hospital has an historic connection to the Infirmary as they became part of the same hospital in 1944. Part of the Whittington Hospital (F Block, St Mary's Wing) is Grade II listed. There is an important view of the Holborn Union Infirmary from Magdala Avenue, which runs down the south side of the Whittington Hospital site. The Whittington Stone is Grade II listed and is situated opposite the site on the other side of Highgate Hill.

### **Despard Road, Waterlow Road and Lidyard Road**

102. These modest residential streets were built in c.1880-1890 following the development of the Holborn Union Infirmary (Figure 16). Although there have been some inappropriate alterations (largely replacement of windows and alterations to boundary treatment) they retain a strong historic character. There are views into the Holborn Union site from Lidyard Road. The scale and style of the houses in these streets lead to them making a positive contribution to the setting of the Holborn Union Infirmary.



**Figure 14** Houses on Waterloo Road

## **Archway Road**

103. Whitehall Mansions, on the corner of Lidyard Road and Archway Road, was built in 1891 and makes a positive contribution to the setting of the Holborn Union Infirmary.
104. There is a bus stop directly in front of the main entrance to the Holborn Union Infirmary, which blocks this important physical and visual entry point to the original building.

## **Archway Park**

105. Archway Park is on the east side of Archway Road, located opposite the Holborn Union Infirmary and makes a positive contribution to the setting as green open space – with views through the trees of the Holborn Union Infirmary, particularly in winter.

## **Audit of heritage assets**

### **Introduction**

106. Statutory Listing protects a building by law. This protection includes both the exterior and interior of a building. It also extends to any object or structure fixed to the building, as well as to any freestanding objects or structures, which lie within the curtilage of a building and were erected before 1 July 1948.
107. Local listing is a designation made by the council. It indicates buildings of local architectural and historic significance. Local listing is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

### **Listed buildings**

108. There are no listed buildings within the Holborn Union Infirmary Conservation Area.

### **Locally listed buildings**

109. All historic buildings on the site are locally listed (shown in blue in Fig. 9).
110. Archway Campus is included in Islington's Local List of Heritage Assets (ref. 1571), under the address: Archway Wing, Whittington Hospital (referring to the blue buildings in Fig 9). It was designated as a locally listed building in September 1998. The council uses a ranking convention for their listed buildings,

grading them either A, B, or C: the Archway Campus is designated at Grade A, which is considered of highest quality. The description provided in the Register is as follows:

1869-70 designed by Saxon Snell. Purpose built hospital buildings in an imposing Gothic style, strictly formal and symmetrical. Dominates the townscape on the north side of Archway and the approaches to Highgate Hill.

111. The buildings are generally in a good condition, but have had some poor quality alterations and extensions

### **Archaeology**

112. The Holborn Union Infirmary site does not lie in or adjacent to any Archaeological Priority Areas.

### **Conservation area boundary**

113. The Holborn Union Infirmary Conservation Area boundary corresponds to the boundary wall of the site and includes the pavement surrounding the site on Highgate Hill, Archway Road and Tollhouse Way.

### **Public consultation and plan for further action**

114. There may be future potential to designate those assets identified as making a positive contribution to the setting of the conservation area either within the conservation area or the nearby Highgate Hill Conservation Area.
115. A public consultation was carried out as part of the adoption of this Conservation Area Statement as Supplementary Planning Document.
116. As part of developing the draft conservation area statement, preliminary consultation was undertaken with key interested stakeholders including the owner of the site and local amenity societies. This occurred in November 2013.
117. The statutory period of public consultation on the draft Holborn Union Infirmary Conservation Area Statement took place from 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013 to 15<sup>th</sup> January 2014. This involved consulting local residents, local businesses, local residents' groups and other statutory consultees such as English Heritage and other local amenity societies. The conservation area statement was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) by council's Executive in March 2014.