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Sent: 23 July 2023 19:48

To: Planning

Cc: David Fowler; save museum street

Subject: ONE MUSEUM STREET Selkirk house OPPOSITION 2023-2510-P 2023-2653-L

OPPOSITION

ONE MUSEUM STREET / Selkirk house

• 2023-2510-P • 2023-2653-L •

As a Housing Association resident i live in the block on Little Russell St & Coptic St. The back windows face Selkirk house, and the current Travel Lodge is something i, and a lot of other neighbours, gaze on every day and this building, at this size, affects the area since that was built, let alone how much more negatively the impact this new, wider, monolithic development will be. We get a small shaft of light which lasts not long which will be extinguished with this new block. It will impact us greatly for our remaining lives living here.

Conservation:

The proposed tower will uncompromisingly dominate the nationally - and internationally - important conservation areas of Bloomsbury and adjacent Covent Garden, Seven Dials and Soho on account of its sheer size. It will intrude upon and in many instances, completely monopolize, the views from many key points in our area - the British Museum, St George's, Bedford Square, Museum St. Drury Lane and well beyond. The longer views from the British Museum and Bedford Square will be particularly affected but it will also destroy discreet views within our specific area such as along more narrow streets such as Coptic St where the tower will appear to terminate the street like an enormous book end. The the overdevelopment and height of the tower block is totally unacceptable and destructive and shows callous disregard of the quality of the adjacent conservation areas and large number of listed buildings. If Camden grants permission for the development, it will be ignoring its own conservation policies and those in the London Plan..

The application, in addition, includes a proposal to redevelop the elegant Victorian neo-classical block on Museum St south which mirrors the scale and style of the buildings on Museum St north. Although the facades will be retained on Museum St., the fascinating interior structures, including the original horse stables complete with ramp which served the early postal

service and the remaining evidence of other commercial activities such as small-scale brewing, will be lost. The original architect of key parts of the block was the renowned Victorian architect and planner, James Pennethorne who was responsible for early Victorian metropolitan improvements such as clearing the notorious 'Rookery' slums of St Giles and laying out New Oxford St.: There has been no change in its overall bulk. The architects, DSDHA, have slightly reduced the height of the tower to 74m but are more than making up for this by making it wider and it will still uncompromisingly dominate the whole of Bloomsbury and the adjoining areas from many different viewpoints such as Drury Lane.

2. Environment: Camden has validated the current application without including their latest environment or energy reports. However, we previously commissioned an independent appraisal of the original report by the renowned specialist and advisor on carbon reduction, Simon Sturgis, who was able to challenge the carbon credentials of the scheme. He concluded,

“The potential carbon cost of the new build proposal over a retrofit of the existing building is both significant, avoidable and unnecessary.”

Since the developers are still proposing to demolish and rebuild rather than refit the existing building, our concerns remain the same, that overall, demolishing the existing tower and replacing it with another, higher structure will contribute unnecessarily to more carbon emissions. This planning submission for the demolition and replacement of 1 Museum Street is against UK National Policy, GLA Policy and intentions, and Camden's declared climate and ecological emergency.

As we are increasingly seeing the effects of climate change in our daily lives it is surely important that we seize the opportunity within our own areas of influence to insist on sound decisions being taken to prevent the situation from becoming worse. In addition to carbon emissions, local people are once again expected to put up with the pollution that will enter our homes during the 4 years it will take to complete the works, including 1 year to demolish and 3 to rebuild, with all the additional transport required to carry it out. This is on top of all the huge developments which have taken place over recent years on our doorstep such as the Post building and the former MOD offices.

3. Overshadowing: The proposal will result in an unacceptable degree of overshadowing of existing surrounding buildings, it will deprive our residents,

the local businesses and the visitors of the open sky, views and sunlight that they presently enjoy. The overshadowing of adjacent streets by this huge office tower will cause an unacceptable degree of harm to the neighbourhood's streets and will certainly not enhance the environment of the conservation areas. By blocking beneficial daylight and sunlight from falling onto the façades of existing neighbouring buildings, this alien tower then transfers these precious assets to its own building, to the detriment of the rest of the community. Is this an environmental theft? Museum St and Coptic St will experience a reduction in light, particularly at certain times of the day.

The height and bulk of the proposed office tower and the siting of the public housing units facing West Central St will result in them being exceptionally badly impacted in terms of overshadowing, aspect and light, particularly in relation to the minimal 'open space play area' for children.

4. Housing: There has only been a small increase in the number of social and "affordable" housing units since the outcry following their first submission. Over 80 % of the 48 apartments will be essentially unaffordable, since only 9 of them are allocated for social renting. This is a ludicrously small number in the midst of a severe housing crisis where people on average earnings are finding it impossible to get on the housing ladder or to pay private rents. The more 'affordable' units will be sited on the most unattractive parts of the complex.

5. Uses and amenities: We don't need more speculative office space, or run-of-the-mill commercial outlets. Now that many more people are working from home, more imaginative and relevant uses need to be considered, such as a hotel - the former Travelodge was popular with visitors to London requiring cheaper accommodation - and other uses that might even benefit the local community e.g. a GP surgery?

6. Street planning: We have been arguing against the plan for a new cut-through street (called 'Vine Lane') from West Central St to High Holborn as we cannot see how it will serve any useful link to the existing street layout or provide any additional benefit to residents, those working in central London or visitors, as it will likely be a dark narrow passage that 'comes from nowhere and goes to nowhere'. The intention seems to be to maximise commercial potential by having more shop fronts and restaurants but it is doubtful whether it will attract much passing custom as it is fairly concealed. A new, narrow passageway such as this will likely attract more drug users.

7. Public realm: the developers 'greening up' plans will be minimal in the

scheme of things. Its the development that will be taking over more of the available space, including some which is currently public space, leaving less room for pedestrians along Museum St south. The saplings that get planted around often dont see maturity due to many factors, and will not make maturity for years.

The birds which have been encouraged into the area the past 16 years who have nested locally and returned year after year have included Sparrow Hawks, Peregrin Falcons, countless Gold Finches, Green Finches, Great Tits, Coal Tits, Blue Tits, Wrens, Robins, Blackbirds, Starlings Magpies, Jays, Crows, Wood Pigeons and Wagtails.. even the occassional Mallard Duck. All these birds will be impacted greatly by the noise and polution and we will loose them from our area with such a development which will go on years.

8. Precedent. There is no doubt that if planning permission is granted for the tower, it will set a firm precedent for more and even taller structures which will ringfence and permanently destroy the architectural and environmental quality of this unique area. Our air quality here is the worse in the capital. This will increase. I had the air quality measured and it was 2/3rds above acceptable limit.

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