

From: Alan Powers
Sent: 08 August 2023 10:43
To: Planning
Cc: David Fowler; save museum street
Subject: Selkirk House 2023/2510/P and 2023/2653/L

I am writing to object to these proposals on grounds of amenity and sustainability.

I have lived and voted in South Camden for over 40 years and value its mixture of older buildings with a variety of styles and but generally a consistency of scale. I have worked in conservation during this period as a caseworker for the Thirties Society / Twentieth Century Society and later its chairman. I am also a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation, the Georgian Group and the Victorian Society.

The proposed development on the Selkirk House site would cause a significant and harmful destruction of scale in the area between Great Russell Street and the northern edge of Covent Garden, where recent works are beginning to create a more coherent townscape and repair some of the damage and blight caused by obsolete traffic planning. Continuing this regeneration represents a major opportunity to further stitch back together this well-frequented part of London and recreate some of the original scale and effect of New Oxford Street while animating the long-neglected off-street spaces, as has been done so successfully in Covent Garden.

There are significant listed buildings in the area, the views from and to which will be compromised by the proposed developments. Buildings not listed but still heritage assets in the Conservation Area will be affected by the proposals, to the point of permanent loss through demolition.

Through its height and bulk, the proposal for Selkirk House would detract from this progressive trend in the area and offer very little of value to tourists or local residents.

The argument for retaining the foundations and frame of the existing Selkirk House is a strong one, made especially relevant by the Public Inquiry decision recently announced in respect of Orchard House, Oxford Street, which establishes a strong precedent for re-use of major building elements of a non-listed building to prevent the waste of embodied carbon. The structural basis

of the existing building offers opportunities for development for a variety of uses that would be beneficial to local residents and the local economy. The Save Museum Street campaign has convincingly demonstrated how both the appearance and use of a refurbished building on the site would be a sound commercial proposition with a positive effect rather than a negative one.

Dr Alan Powers, Hon. FRIBA, FSA