

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2023/2510/P	Ian Sugar	08/08/2023 14:19:22	OBJ	<p>Reference Number: 2023/2510/P Objection to Selkirk House Proposal</p> <p>More in sorrow than in anger, I feel I must express my supreme distaste at the current attempt to foist onto Bloomsbury the latest incarnation of architectural violence, in the name of progress.</p> <p>There have been myriad objections by local tenants' associations as well as organisations such as Historic England, all blasting the height and overwhelming presence of the planned development – 'a loud raspberry' to the intended scheme.</p> <p>All the meetings, get togethers, public consultations and briefings seem to have arrived at roughly the same conclusion, that is the building goes ahead. Why is this? After all attempts at compromise on bulk, height and effect on a very important area of Central London. Reasoned argument on statistic availability of office space or lack of housing for local residents, light blockage, noise pollution – the sheer lack of grace and empathy for the surroundings. Nothing, it seems has had an effect on the plans.</p> <p>No-one has been listened to who could possibly affect the vision of Simten – a real estate development company, who inherited the scheme from Labtech. Why this inheritance? It seems that the previous driver of the scheme had to run for his life as he had upset the wrong people. So now we are confronted by BC Partners, to quote their blurb - 'committed to the highest standards of transparency' – 'commitment to incorporating environmental, social and governance issues into its investment process' etc, etc, ad nauseum, blah blah blah!</p> <p>No, this development is, first and foremost, about money. About who controls it, the use of it, where it settles, how safe it will be and the supposed return on it.</p> <p>Such vast amounts of money do not listen or care about the views of locals or groups intent on preserving quality of life or the look or atmosphere of an old established part of this black-hearted city – London.</p> <p>This is mammon, Moloch, on the march, unstoppable, unreasoned, heavy, dead; and ultimately this is what it will produce – dead air.</p> <p>So, there you have it, all talk of responsibility, communication, consultation is just so much pantomime posturing, there is only fiscal imperative. It's a shame. What I would like to see is some form of compromise where this obviously overbearing structure is reduced in size – that would be nice; or even some re-tread of the previous abomination that exists on the site – Selkirk House – that would be even better. But I'm afraid that the system that has been concocted by the real powers that be, with its kickbacks to the Local and Central Government, precludes any real constructive conversation about the future of this part of London – which I love dearly.</p> <p>As I say, I finish as I started, more in sorrow than in anger.</p>

Application No: 2023/2510/P
Consultees Name: Judith Torzewska
Received: 08/08/2023 14:09:35
Comment: OBJ

Response:
 2023/2510/P
 Objection to Selkirk House Proposal

Now that Simten have taken over from Labtech, I am wondering after over 250 individuals and collectives have already vehemently objected to Labtech's proposals for Selkirk House why we are having to write again to log our objections to the proposed plans. Labtech did nothing to concede over the size and bulk of the main building at Selkirk House, simply changed its shape slightly, lowering it by two floors but bulking it out to retain the original size. There are two points about this in my opinion, taking off just two floors is an insult to all who are involved in the campaign against this bulky monster of a building, making it fatter to compensate for this slightly reduced height loss is the second. There were over 250 objections lodged at the last consultation, including individuals and prominent organisations such as Historic England and various other preservation and environmental groups who are very concerned about the impact, especially the construction of the main building due to the situation we are already in regarding climate change, but there has been no further positive discussion with the local people.

Simten have inherited the original plans from Labtech along with most of their team, and all have continued to ignore the pleas and objections of the people of Bloomsbury. So, it appears we are all back to square one with this situation having to waste our time and energy being batted back and forth between soulless venture capital investment, the local authority and government policy, all due to vested interests and financial gain where the Museum Street plan is concerned.

The discovery that a substantial amount of funding in the form of CILS, The Community Infrastructure Levy that was introduced by Central Government, adds to a feeling of cynicism that Camden Council and the Greater London Authority are working hand in glove with Simten. Both Camden and the GLA will gain financially from the scheme (the GLA receiving the most funding). This works well for the government's building plans too for investment in larger building projects, the perfect collaboration for them all. While many architects blight the landscape with their visions of a 'Brave New World', how can it be right to add to this situation? In my opinion Selkirk House is an ugly building as it stands, but to replace it with an oversized towering monster seems just as awful. Worryingly, some architects don't seem to be overly concerned about how their concept will be received when it becomes a real thing, nor do they seem to be too concerned about the environmental impact.

Everyone is talking a good green policy these days. But to quote from Bill McGuire, a Professor of Geophysical and Climate Hazards at University College London in his recent book 'Hothouse Earth', he says: 'In order to limit the consequences of the climate chaos heading our way, the honest truth is that, of every decision taken, of every choice made – by individuals, local authorities, businesses big and small and governments – the question must be asked: is this good for the climate? If the answer is yes, all well and good. If the answer is no, then it cannot be allowed to proceed.'

The indifference to listen to local voices shows the hypocrisy that is endemic within government departments, CILs money creates a huge incentive to ignore the issues that are already here. We have a mayor who is about to increase the ULEZ boundary so that we will have cleaner air in London, but it seems absolutely absurd that he is also encouraging developments all over London that are adding to the climate problem through the release of carbon emissions associated with these types of building projects, something doesn't add up here. It's a very disappointing scenario, people who are concerned are tired of the PR strategies now.

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In fact, we really don't have time anymore for this kind of political rhetoric, our planet is already in trouble.

To my mind, the climate change issue is the most important negative concerning the Simten scheme for Selkirk House at the Museum Street development, it is, as Professor Bill McGuire says, one we should say no to. But secondary to that, the proposal for Selkirk House does not fit in any other way with the surrounding historic landscape which the people of the area are attuned to. This very much resembles a form of visual vandalism, combined with a complete disregard for the voices of those who are unhappy, turning a deaf ear to their alternative suggestions. The money is fighting with the local community as usual, civilised behaviour on the surface trying to mask the real agenda with a thin veneer.

Predominantly, I oppose the new building at Selkirk House, in my opinion, a monument to negativity like so many that have come before it, for the following reasons:

- It is too tall and bulky, it will dwarf and overwhelm the surrounding area in a completely negative way, abandoning the character of this conservation area to its detriment for miles around.
- The construction of such a building in place of Selkirk House does not reflect the character of the area, and will also create a negative environment due to the dark shadows it will cast and the blocking of the skyline.
- These negative factors are not only attributed to mental health issues but will basically ruin the neighbourhood and area beyond the locality irreversibly. It doesn't take much imagination to see how people's enjoyment of where they live will be impacted by this awful plan to build upwards and outwards.
- This lack of care and consideration for the people who live and work in the area, not to mention its conservation status, is a slippery slope which should not be encouraged in any sense, morally or aesthetically. This huge bulky building will create an environment that is completely the opposite of one that is suitable for harmonious human existence, it will represent anti-life on our doorstep – I doubt very much that the developers would want to live next to it themselves....
- But the main point I feel is the environmental one. Those who believe that we are now in a climate emergency situation and are noticing the extreme weather conditions the planet is already experiencing are becoming increasingly alarmed by such short-term thinking as the plan for the demolishing of the existing Selkirk House.

If there is any concern for the people of Bloomsbury and Covent Garden, and the part we can play to help the future of the climate, then I ask that you really do look for another way of doing things.

- Don't allow Simten Investments to knock down the existing Travel Lodge building. From an environmental standpoint, to support the climate change agenda, and based on Camden Council's own green policies, knocking down and rebuilding are a complete contradiction to this. Instead, the existing building could be reused as a foundation, just like the Post Building opposite, saving valuable resources and keeping the construction work to a minimum in the process. Four years of unbearable noise and disruption for local people would be greatly reduced following this course of action and would be a much more sustainable approach.

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't allow Simten Investments to build higher than the buildings surrounding the old Travel Lodge. As previously stated, this would be extremely detrimental in many ways, not only due to the overshadowing of other buildings and surrounding streets and interrupting the view for miles around, but high-rise buildings create perpetual air currents around them, causing a constant wind in the surrounding streets, another depressing point to consider. • Don't allow Simten Investments to ruin Bloomsbury; Simten, like Labtech its predecessor is showing that it has no empathy, concern or respect for the feelings and opinions of the people here. They should not be allowed to ride roughshod over us with such a monstrous plan, just so planners, lawyers, consultants and architects can walk away with their pockets full. • Furthermore, in these uncertain times due to the pandemic and financial climate, how would Simten Investments be able to let or lease out such a massive amount of space when offices lie empty across the city? These two factors have changed the landscape of office work in city centres. We don't want another oversized monument to glass and concrete lying empty on our doorstep. <p>The plan for the new tower is in essence a violation of the people of Bloomsbury and Covent Garden, it's a monstrous idea that any local authority who cares at all about its constituents should have rejected from the start. This plan, if it goes ahead will be a monument to how humanity can impose ugliness and negativity on others in the pursuit of wealth, not what the world needs at all, especially when we must try to put a break on the damage to the climate that has already occurred through our own endeavours.</p>
2023/2510/P	A Barclay	08/08/2023 20:18:43	OBJ	<p>Please note my objection.</p> <p>This building is completely out of context with the area and site lines</p> <p>It is a big blocky oversized behemoth that does not complement or enhance the area. It does not need to be so big and its size bears no relation to the benefits it should bring to the local community. I do not think an even larger even uglier block is the right thing for the site and surrounding area</p>