

**From:** Cam Matheson

**Sent:** 06 September 2023 12:32

**To:** Planning; David Fowler

**Cc:** Save Museum Street

**Subject:** Objection to Redevelopment of one Museum Street - planning application 2023/2510/P and Listed Building Approval 2023/2653/L

From:

Julia Matheson

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I object to this proposal. Museum Street and the Bloomsbury area as a whole has a special significance for the history of London and for the tourists and visitors who flock to the area each year, attracted by the heritage and distinctiveness of this part of London. The tourist industry generates a large amount of revenue for London's business community, both large and small-scale enterprises, which are able to capitalize upon London's historic character. As a leader of guided walks in the London area I know how important this is.

The proposed tower is too tall, being 50% higher than the current height of Selkirk House. It would be visible from a greater area of London, from historic squares to the river. The applicant's Zone of Visual Influence study clearly illustrates this. The 53metre height of Selkirk House is already out of keeping with its surroundings when viewed from Covent Garden (eg: from Shaftesbury Avenue, Seven Dials, Drury Lane) and Bloomsbury, but it does not impact upon such a large area of London as would the proposed new development and could be mitigated by sensitive changes to the existing building.

New development on this site should not be permitted any higher than Selkirk House currently stands. - The massing of the proposed main new building is too bulky, dominating local views and overshadowing its neighbours. What is proposed is out of scale in the context of pre-Georgian Seven Dials to the South and Georgian Bloomsbury to the North. It is also out of scale with the historic buildings that are part of this application on New Oxford Street. It is appreciated that the nearby Post Office Building, which has proven to be over-dominant in terms of bulk and which replaced an already over-large Post Office sorting office, was difficult to oppose in purely planning terms. But the Selkirk House proposals are a whole order of magnitude greater than this. In this case there is no issue of having to replace an existing massive building. New

development on this site should not be permitted to be any larger in bulk than Selkirk House currently occupies, and ideally less so.

It is too easy to destroy the historic character of an area such as Bloomsbury. The roof extensions to the historic buildings with frontages on New Oxford Street, West Central Street and Museum Street are an example of how unattractive and unsympathetic elements can have an adverse impact upon their host buildings, whose designed proportions they destroy. The Council should be seeking to enhance the historic streetscape of the area. But the replacement shopfronts to the historic buildings with frontages on New Oxford Street, West Central Street and Museum Street are a lost opportunity to capitalize upon the historic character of Bloomsbury, epitomised by the famous James Smith umbrella shop at neighbouring 53 New Oxford Street. What is being proposed in this planning application is of indifferent quality and should not be allowed to become the dominant feature of the area and have an adverse impact upon Bloomsbury's historic vistas.

No visitors come to London to see massive concrete slabs of indifferent quality. They come to appreciate the character of London's historic streetscapes. This is especially so in the case of a street leading to the British Museum, one of London's most important visitor attractions. The proposal will involve demolition, excavation and construction work lasting for years, and the adverse impact upon local businesses and the large number of visitors to this particular area should be a factor in the Council's decision-making.

Serious disruption would result from what is being proposed - congestion, nuisance from noise and vibration, the impact upon air quality from the dust arising from demolition and construction - all this would have an effect on the immediate environment and act to the detriment of the many visitors to the area and the businesses which cater for them. In terms of climate change mitigation, the proposals are contrary to Camden Council's Local Plan Policy CC1.

Regarding the proposals in respect of housing, these are contrary to Camden Council's own Housing Design Supplement as well as GLA standards and are not in compliance with the Council's Local Plan Policy D1(n), HI/3/4. The proposals would result in a reduction in public open space and inadequate community facilities and green space and therefore contrary to Camden Council Local Plan Policy A2.

I therefore ask that this planning application be rejected on the above grounds.

Julia Matheson