

Dear Alec and Planning Team

I am responding on behalf of the Bloomsbury Residents Action Group (BRAG).

"Mixed change of use with extension" sounds so innocuous, but we are appalled at what is being considered "appropriate redevelopment" of the Odeon cinema site on Shaftesbury Avenue and object strongly to the proposal.

The host building is a listed building. It has an important heritage role as the Saville Theatre. To bring back the "name" of the historic theatre but gut the interior and plonk an ugly and out of scale hotel 'box' on top does not respect the integrity of the original building, nor its historic context.

The building does not exist in isolation, from either a physical or a social perspective. The proposal will seriously impact on the wellbeing of the existing local community. The Phoenix Garden is a vital community asset - for an open space to be plunged into endless shadow by so many storeys is unacceptable. This is yet another example of the perception that nobody lives in this part of central London. On the contrary, there is a long-standing community who live, work and bring up children in the surrounding streets, and have done so for centuries. The site is surrounded by people's homes and residents' matter: their views, ie what they see - both in terms of opinion and in actuality.

To revitalise a building, why is it necessary to destroy its essential character and cause harm to its setting? The extension will be visible from both Seven Dials and Denmark Street conservation areas. As to the harm caused by part demolition of the existing building: harm is harm.

The proposal includes a cabaret type theatre in the basement, but as the principal use of the building will change from one of entertainment to hotel accommodation, the user experience will change dramatically.

There are not enough 'plus points' from a heritage or community perspective. The application should be refused.

Best wishes

Debbie Radcliffe  
co-chair, Bloomsbury Residents Action Group (BRAG)