

Objection to application 2024/1541/P, No.154 Royal College Street

The new edition of *Streets of Camden Town* published by Camden History Society in 2024 includes Royal College Street.

The application should be rejected on grounds of harm to the Conservation Area and the Neighbourhood Shopping Centre.

The Camden Town Broadway Conservation Area Statement (2009) identifies Nos.154 and 156 RCS as two houses that make a 'positive contribution'. 'The special character of this area is the uniformity of the standard building type' (p.19). The more recent block Nos.158-166 RCS was designated only as neutral and does not have precedence in scale or height over the original terrace.

Camden Town estate was created in the countryside north of London between 1790 and 1875 under direction of Joseph Kay, founding vice-president of the Royal Institute of British Architecture.

The terrace of Nos.154-166 was built in the 1830s by speculative developers William Line and Thomas Greenhouse. The houses have recessed windows with double gauged brickwork, identical to Nos.168-178 Royal College Street and Nos.110-128 Camden Road, also within the Conservation Area, and built at the same time by Line and Greenhouse.

No.154 had no back extension except for a privy. The basement was for goods, coal and animals, and not residential. It still has now a small front area with a grill providing air to the basement beneath, and retains a Victorian wooden multi-windowed shop front with two doors (the application frontage drawing **wrongly** shows only one door). The house has three stories, a top pediment and a valley roof.

Problematic and confusing statements about No.156

should not be used in support of changes of No.154.

In 2021 at **No.156** the Council refused change of use, of the basement and the commercial ground floor, on grounds of loss to the Conservation Area and Neighbourhood Shopping, while accepting an extension at ground floor level.

However, the Council confusingly and without reason reversed their position for a new application in 2022.

Camden Broadway CAAC – people who live locally – made strong representation to retain the shop, pointing to newly-established successful retail outlets nearby and an increasing footfall in the neighbourhood with greater use of the Canal. (They might also have noted the major impact of Camden Road Overground.) The CAAC also considered that the frontages at Nos 156 and 154 had deteriorated through neglect rather than through uncommercial siting. By contrast, Camden Council officer incorrectly reported "... this area has vastly reduced demand for retail units in recent years, the level of footfall is minimal and the frontage has declined severely over the years..." without considering why.

Again, at **No 156**, the officer's report on the application of 2022 stated there was an 'existing lightwell' – but it was a grate – and accepted 'adding metal railings', which are entirely against the character of a shop front. The officer's statement that 'other examples on the street ... have basements' with railings ignores the different forms of building from different periods.

At **No.154**, an application in 2021, for prior approval of change of use from retail to residential, was refused. The report made a very detailed explanation of the recent revision of the law, primarily on grounds of harm to the Conservation Area.

It is necessary to refute the statement in the current application that the existing ground floor unit is in lawful residential use.

On conservation grounds and for the Neighbourhood Shopping Area,

The plain front areas and grill should **not** be changed for a lightwell and railings

The shop façade with three windows and two doors should **not** be changed

The ground floor should continue in commercial use – which could be office or retail – with front door entry

New thinking is needed for the basement

A roof extension may be considered but only small small gable windows and a flat roof behind the parapet.