

2024/1934/P

31 Southampton Row, WC1B 5HJ

Sicilian Avenue Corner Building

We were impressed by the care and quality of thought that had gone into the proposals for this very important building. We understood the need to replace structural walls with columns in order to give a more open and more lettable floor plan.

However, we had a some of questions regarding the following elements of the proposed scheme:

- We thought it would be better if more of the corner 'rooms' could be preserved as such. Many of these had their own cornices etc. and would provide spaces for 'break-out' away from the general open office plans or indeed they could provide closed office or small private meeting spaces.
- We wondered why the entrance to the offices, off the pedestrian arcade, could not be more prominent even though it should undoubtedly be in the manner of the other entrances to the blocks. To make it a rather pallid and slightly awkward imitation of the shop fronts seems a missed opportunity. It is a major entrance, enlivening and enhancing the arcade and we felt that it should look the part. It could be in timber and glazing so as to be stylistically of the same family as the rest of the ground floor frontage.
- We understand that in the 80's the central lightwell was infilled, robbing the splendid half-moon plan staircase of all natural light. It seems a great pity not to take advantage of possible borrowed natural light to the staircase via the proposed office spaces. Privacy could be maintained either by the height of the windows or by obscured glazing. We understand that there were, historically, openings in the flat side of the staircase and these could be re-opened and reglazed to gain natural light.

Hugh Cullum

For

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee - 240701