

2024/3020/P at 154 Royal College Street.

Further response to revised planning submission

Rochester Conservation Area, Camden Broadway, Jeffreys and Regent's Canal Conservation Areas together seek to maintain the integrity and character of mid-Camden Town Estate.

The Estate was built between 1790 and 1870, and lies across the River Fleet valley, from Camden High Street to York Way. The classic Georgian terraces were predominantly built before Kentish Town. There are important gardens (St Martins's Gardens, College Gardens, Rochester Terrace Gardens and Rochester Square) and also an industrial history of piano manufacture and fine art production. Where the railway crossed, at Camden Road Station, Royal College Street and Camden Road became a significant shopping location. It remains a designated Neighbourhood Shopping Area.

Every Camden planning application is considered on its individual merits against general planning policies. The revised Planning D&A Statement for No.154 has inserted, 'cut-and-paste' without discussion, material from an application for No.156 Royal College Street. This appears to be in response to our June 2024 submission, demonstrating contradictions in the planning decisions for that separate property.

For No.154 Royal College Street, the criterion 'loss of employment space' is extremely relevant to conservation issues. The planning D&A Statement in April 2024 2024/3020/P failed to recognise that the property was within a Neighbourhood Shopping Area, and incorrectly claimed that the property was solely residential. These issues have not been rectified in the revised Statement, submitted in August 2024. No information is provided about No.154 itself, its commercial use over the last fifteen years, the efforts – or indeed lack of them – made to improve the property or contribute to the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, there was lack of investment and the property suffered neglect. The present application welcome seeks to reinvest in the property. Reactivation of the shop is important and would be an attractive and a positive asset for the neighbourhood.

Regrettably, shops were lost in the 1990s rebuilding of Nos. 158-174, but that was before Camden Broadway Conservation Area was created. Nos.156 and 154 are designated as shopfronts to be retained because they 'contribute to the character of the area and are of townscape merit'.

The shop front at No 154 has two doors – for the shop ground floor and for the house. The planning application documents present the façade incorrectly. There is also a metal grill to the basement at the side, not centrally as shown. Having pointed this out in correspondence, the responsible planning officer has stated that he will ask the applicant to revise these plans.

The Planning Statement describes No.154 as 'end of terrace': this is currently the case, and for the past 30 years, but the site at No.152 would eventually be the 'end of terrace'.

Independent shops in Camden Road/Royal College Street serve a different function from the major stores at Camden High Street. Nearby No 154, further down the east side of Royal College Street, are three further independent shops. Footfall should increase substantially with the office workers between the new 'St Pancras Campus' and Camden Road Station

while the Canal continues with leisure use. (The planning documentation for No.156 was mistaken about the footfall.)

Nevertheless, the primary issue is not the 'need' for commercial space, nor indeed of housing. The historic character of Camden Town is sustained through the Conservation Area. Retaining the employment and active commercial *use* of a shop within the *façade* of No.154 is important for Character. Within a conservation area, each individual neighbourhood contributes to the whole. To this end, Camden Council has designated Camden Broadway Conservation Area and Camden Road/Royal College Street Neighbourhood Shopping Area.

Renewal of the property for residential use in its upper parts is welcome and will be commercially sound, equally the refurbished ground floor will be a sound investment for commercial use. The present application, seeking to destroy the ground level shop, must be rejected.