

Dear Blythe,

This has not yet been discussed at a Bloomsbury CAAC meeting so I am submitting an objection in a personal capacity as a local resident and conservationist.

Local Plan Policy E2 establishes that the council should resist loss of viable commercial units. This is a very central location and in the absence of any other evidence submitted by the applicant and the ongoing success of a number of businesses on this street it should be assumed that this is a viable commercial unit.

I am personally very dismayed at the way that Leigh Street has gradually 'creeped' from a vibrant commercial street to mostly residential at ground floor. This has been achieved by applications slipping through the cracks and being 'accidentally' approved against council policy, and owners committing enforcement breaches by converting commercial units to residential without permission. One property (number 18) applied for part residential part commercial at ground floor and despite the Bloomsbury CAAC's objection this was approved and it has, as predicted, now become a de facto purely residential unit with no commercial presence at ground floor.

Loss of commercial units at ground floor is also contrary to the Bloomsbury CA Management Strategy although I cannot remember exactly which policy deals with this. Policy E2 carries more weight.

The applicant's submitted documentation is also inconsistent and entirely misleading - stating that the use is to be commercial when the plans show it as residential. It states extensive community consultation has been carried out but it has not. The applicant clearly has not responded to policy and has not demonstrated understanding of the significance of the heritage assets affected by the proposal.

Please refer to application 2024/3999/P which was refused on 12th November 2024 for a similar proposal, now at appeal.

I very much hope this application is refused.

Owen Ward MSc (Sustainable Heritage)