London Borough of Camden Planning Team

By email

26 December 2024

Dear Sirs

Re application 2024/5233/L (the Application)

232 Shaftesbury Avenue WC2

I am writing to **object** to the above Application. whose address is in Grape Street, but which is in fact immediately above the premises in Shaftesbury Avenue.

As the planning reference indicates, this is an application relating to a listed building. The building itself is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

It is also an application seeking to ratify action which has already been taken. I enclose a photograph illustrating what has been done.

I hope the Council is suitably concerned that the leaseholder has chosen to take premises in a listed building, then proceeded, without any respect for the building or the Conservation Area surroundings, to present the Council with a *fait accompli*.

The only slight value in what the leaseholder has done is that the result eloquently demonstrates that the fascia erected is wholly unsuited to the character of the building and the Conservation Area.

The specific reasons for my objection are as follows:

- The company appears to have a standard "get up" which it has installed here. Indeed, this particular example of its branding seems even more garish than other variants it has used. There is plenty of precedent for Councils requiring chains to adapt or tone down their branding to suit sensitive locations in which they choose to operate. The Council should do this here.
- It is therefore evident that the applicant has made no attempt to design a fascia which suits and blends into the building or the Conservation Area. As previously mentioned, the photo demonstrates this incontrovertibly.
- Particular aspects which are problematic are the size of the lettering and the
 excessively bright colouring; bright yellow simply does not suit the restrained
 shades of the brick and stonework of the building and facade. The use of bright
 electric illumination to light up the signage only serves to emphasize the clash
 between the style and decoration of the building and the fascia.
- The fact that the applicant has chosen to go ahead to install this signage without seeking prior listed building permission, as required, should be regarded as a reason for refusing ratification and requiring a more suitable and sympathetic fascia design to be submitted for prior approval.

In case the applicant seeks to argue that others may have also, without prior regulatory consent, installed signs with impunity, there are 3 points to make:

- That is an irrelevant factor in purely planning and listed building terms.
- Allowing such an argument would be tantamount to accepting that, once there
 has been one breach of planning or listed building rules which is not enforced,
 there follows a complete anarchic free for all in relation to subsequent non
 compliant behaviour.
- There is also a proportionate argument. What has been erected by the leaseholder is so much more conspicuous and unsuitable than anything which has been put up to date.

This application is an opportunity for the Council to demonstrate that people who ignore the requirement for prior consent and then seek to regularize the position after the event should not be allowed to bypass accepted standards and get away with it. This is also an opportunity for the Council to demonstrate its commitment to policies designed to protect the special character of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

I take this opportunity to draw the Council's attention to the bulky advertising impedimenta on the pavement outside the premises. This can be seen in the attached photograph. This obstructs the pavement and, at busy times, forces pedestrians to walk, unsafely, in what remains a vehicular roadway at this section of Shaftesbury Avenue. It was my understanding that such advertising materials placed on the pavement required

consent. I invite the Council to investigate and take any requisite action, in case the leaseholder is also in noncompliance in relation to this bulky publicity equipment.

Please confirm receipt of this submission. Please advise me if there is to be a hearing on the Applications.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Bloxham