

Dear Matthew,

The Bloomsbury CAAC objects to the above application.

Railings and Flues

The installation of railings at parapet level and flues to the front elevation clearly causes harm to the special character and appearance of the CA. They are both inappropriate features for an historic building and area. The existing facade and those along this street are currently fairly clear of general clutter and a precedent should not be set for such alterations. I regret that the CAAC did not object to the referenced application (2023/1775/P) which can only be described as an oversight.

The only considerations in favour of granting permission are improved health and safety for access at roof level, and improved energy efficiency through the use of single room heat recovery systems.

In relation to the roof, railings are not necessary to reduce the risk of falling over the edge. This can be addressed by use of a mansafe system which is fairly common practice on historic buildings and would be invisible from the public realm. Nevertheless, improved health and safety for private occupiers is not a public benefit to be weighed against harm to the CA.

In relation to the flues, without internal plans it is difficult to understand/assess why so many of these are required on one building. Nevertheless, there are systems available which do not require a specialised two-way flue as seems to be proposed, and could therefore presumably run through less obtrusive airbricks. I also do not understand why these systems are being proposed when the building will still be passively ventilated through trickle vents on the windows, meaning fairly limited benefit is offered by heat recovery on the extracts only.

Similarly, I also have concerns about trickle vents being installed on the replacement PD windows. Like-for-like replacements should not include trickle vents.

Shopfront Alterations

Regarding the shopfront, while we have no objection to the installation of double glazing in principle, this is a very sensitive piece of joinery which needs to be altered carefully to maintain its special appearance. While I welcome the attempt to retain the mullions, the submitted detail is not very well-considered and I do not understand why the proposed glazing is so thick at 27mm when standard double glazed units are approximately 10mm and insulated glazing units can be obtained at around 7mm. The currently proposed detail would almost double the width of the mullion which is clearly intended to be quite a slim feature. I am primarily concerned that the execution of this detail is likely to be quite poor and change the appearance of this shopfront quite significantly.

We therefore object to this application.

Owen Ward
Bloomsbury CAAC