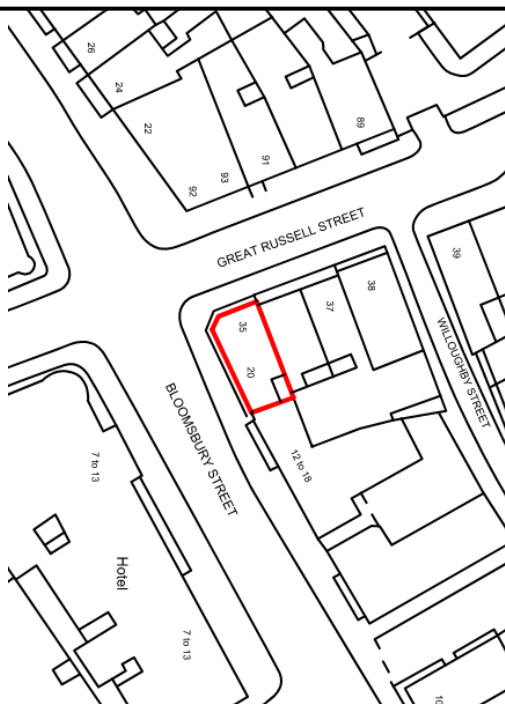


Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date		13/05/2025	
		n/a		Consultation Expiry Date		12/05/2025	
Case Officer				Application Number			
Tony Young				2025/1183/P			
Application Address:				Drawing Numbers			
Shop And Premises At Ground Floor 35 Great Russell Street London WC1B 3PP				See draft decision notice			
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature				
Proposal							
Installation of 2 x retractable awnings on Great Russell Street and Bloomsbury Street elevations (part retrospective).							
Recommendation		Refuse Planning Permission and Warning of Enforcement Action to be Taken					
Application Type		Full Planning Permission					
Responses							
Adjoining Occupiers and local groups:		No. notified	0	No. of responses	0	No. of objections	0
Summary of responses		<p>A <u>site notice</u> was displayed on 18/04/2025 (ending on 12/05/2025)</p> <p>A <u>press notice</u> was advertised in a local newspaper on 27/03/2025 (ending on 20/04/2025)</p> <p>No responses were received following statutory consultation.</p> <p>The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee were invited to comment during the consultation period; however, they did not provide a response.</p>					
Site Description							
The application site comprises a 4-storey, 19 th century building with ground floor retail frontages, located on the north-east corner junction of Great Russell Street and Bloomsbury Street (see Images 1 and 2 below).							



Images 1 & 2 – application site location & photograph of host building

The site is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The application site is recognised within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy statement (adopted April 2011) as a building which makes a positive contribution to the conservation area. It is also noted that the ground floor frontages are collectively identified within the statement as being a shopfront of merit.

Though the host building itself is not listed, many listed buildings are situated within the surrounding area of the application site. These include a group of Grade II listed buildings (nos. 89, 90 and 91 Great Russell Street) located opposite to the north-east of the site and the Grade I listed, British Museum, located a little further along Great Russell Street.

Relevant planning history

- Application site

9000473 - The replacement of existing shopfront doors with glass swing doors on the corner elevation. Planning permission granted 14/05/1991

9000260 - The change of use of the ground floor shop and ancillary basement to a restaurant (Class A3). Planning permission refused 08/08/1990

8700478 (20 Bloomsbury Street and 35 Great Russell Street) - Change of use of the first floor from offices to retail and erection of a part 2 and part 4 storey extension at the rear and installation of a new shopfront. Planning permission granted 24/06/1987

CTP/N14/26/2/25978 - Change of use of an area of 9 sq.ft. in the rear corner of the shop to a Bureau de Change. Planning permission granted 28/03/1978

TP/100390/C/JE/EVWL - The use for a further limited period, of the basement and ground floor of No. 35 Great Russell Street, Holborn, for the wholesale distribution of books. Planning permission granted 24/05/1963

TP/100390/NW - The use for a limited period of the basement and ground floor of No. 35 Great Russell Street, Holborn, for the wholesale distribution of books. Planning permission granted 30/05/1960

- Other nearby sites

38 Great Russell Street (CTP/N14/26/1/27820(R)) - Alterations to the shopfront including the provision of Dutch blinds. Planning permission granted 11/05/1979

22 Bloomsbury Street (PS9904423) - External alterations to the ground floor elevations facing Great Russell Street and Bloomsbury Street together with the formation of a new pair of doors in this

corner. Planning permission granted 28/07/1999

- Enforcement history

16-22 Great Russell Street (EN18/0942) - Awning and signage erected on the former main entrance of Lutyens' former YWCA Central Club. Breach ceased (awning and signage removed). Case closed 20/02/2019

64 Great Russell Street (EN15/0005) - Shutter and awning. Breach ceased (shutter and awning removed). Case closed 09/03/2015

37 Great Russell Street (EN12/0494) - Erection of canopy in conservation area. Breach ceased (awning removed). Case closed 03/07/2012

8 Great Russell Street (EN06/0874) - Red & white canopy on ground floor. Breach ceased (canopy removed). Case closed 20/08/2007

Relevant policies

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

London Plan 2021

Camden Local Plan 2017

- A1 - Managing the impact of development
- D1 - Design
- D2 - Heritage
- D3 - Shopfronts

Draft Camden Local Plan

The Council has published a new Draft Camden Local Plan (incorporating Site Allocations) for consultation (DCLP). The DCLP is a material consideration and can be taken into account in the determination of planning applications which has limited weight at this stage. The weight that can be given to it will increase as it progresses towards adoption (anticipated 2026).

Camden Planning Guidance

- CPG Design (January 2021) - chapters 1 (Introduction), 2 (Design excellence), 3 (Heritage) and 6 (Shopfronts)
- CPG Amenity (January 2021) - chapters 1 (Introduction), 2 (Overlooking, privacy and outlook) and (Daylight and sunlight)

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy statement (adopted April 2011)

Assessment

1. Proposal

1.1 The application proposals seek planning permission (part retrospective) for the installation of 2 x retractable awnings:

Awning 1

- 1 x existing (unauthorised) awning which has already been installed above the shopfront glazing on the Bloomsbury Street elevation is proposed to be retained.
- The awning would be a canvas fabric material, 'pure red' in colour (RAL 3028) with a plain appearance for both awning and valance. Based on the submitted drawings, the awning would measure approximately 3.9 metres in width x 1.8 metres in length.
- At its full extent when open, there would be a distance of approximately 2.9 metres between the bottom of the awning and the pavement surface, and a distance of approximately 2 metres between the awning and the kerb edge on Bloomsbury Street (see Images 3 and 4 below).



Images 3 & 4 – proposed 'Awning 1' (already in situ) on Bloomsbury Street elevation

Awning 2

- 1 x new awning is proposed to be installed above the shopfront glazing on the Great Russell Street elevation.
- The awning would be a canvas fabric material, 'pure red' in colour (RAL 3028) with a plain appearance for both awning and valance. Based on the submitted drawings, the awning would measure approximately 2.7 metres in width x 1.8 metres in length.
- At its full extent when open, there would be a distance of approximately 2.9 metres between the bottom of the awning and the pavement surface, and a distance of approximately 2 metres between the awning and the kerb edge on Great Russell Street (see Images 5 and 6 below).



Images 5 & 6 – proposed new 'Awning 2' on Great Russell Street elevation

Awning 3

- 1 x unauthorised awning (Awning 3) is proposed to be removed from a position above the corner entrance door on Great Russell Street (see Image 7 below).



Image 7 – ‘Awning 3’ above corner entrance door proposed (proposed to be removed)

1.2 The following assessment has been made based on the planning application proposals as submitted, giving due consideration to their own individual merits and taking into account the particular site context, including all relevant planning history, policies and guidance.

2. Assessment

2.1 The principal considerations material to the determination of the planning application are:

- the design and impact of the proposals on the character and appearance of the host building, streetscene and wider Bloomsbury Conservation Area
- the impact of the proposal on neighbouring amenity, and
- the impact of the proposal on biodiversity

3. Design and appearance

3.1 Local Plan Policy D1 (Design) establishes that careful consideration of the characteristics of a site, features of local distinctiveness and the wider context is needed in order to achieve high quality development in Camden which integrates into the surrounding streets and townscape.

3.2 Local Plan Policy D2 (Heritage) states that the Council will only permit development within conservation areas that preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area. This is supported by the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy statement (adopted April 2011).

3.3 Local Plan Policy D3 (Shopfronts) recognises that shopfronts contribute greatly to the character of areas and their distinctiveness, and as such, the Council will expect a high standard of design in new and altered shopfronts, canopies, blinds, awnings and other features.

3.4 This is supported by Camden Planning Guidance (CPG Design) which states in paragraph 6.33 in regard to canopies, awnings and blinds that it is important that they should not dominate a shopfront or shop parade.

3.5 The application site itself comprises a 4-storey, 19th century building with ground floor retail frontages on the Great Russell Street and Bloomsbury Street elevations. The shopfronts on these frontages have been identified in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy statement as being of merit within the conservation area.

- 3.6 The building as a whole is also recognised within the statement as making a positive contribution to the conservation area. The statement recognises that the host building, along with the adjacent buildings on Great Russell Street (nos. 36-38 (consecutive)), have a similar scale and materials with classically influenced detailing. The consistency in height, mass, materials and detailed elevational treatment is noted as providing a very distinctive and consistent mid-19th century character to this part of the street.
- 3.7 As such, both elevations of the building on Great Russell Street and Bloomsbury Street are considered to be well composed in design terms with prominent ground floor frontages that contain attractive traditional detailing and features, such as decorative cornices, console brackets, classically designed pilasters and entablature (Image 8 below). These are important features of the building, forming part of the architectural character and interest of the building, whilst also contributing to the merit of the shopfronts and frontages themselves, so contributing positively to the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.



Image 8 - host building without existing advertising & awnings (circa. 2021 from Google Street View)

- 3.8 The proposed retractable awnings (part retrospective) are considered to be unacceptable as shown on the submitted drawings (Awnings 1 and 2) and evidenced in situ (Awning 1) given their poor design, sizes and positions.
- 3.9 CPG Design states in paragraph 6.34 that amongst other characteristics, any canopy or awning should have a '*blind box integrated with the overall design, be of a width appropriate to the shopfront and flush with the fascia level*'.
- 3.10 Contrary to this guidance, the proposed awnings would be fixed directly to the outside face of the shopfront frames, above the window glazing itself, rather than say, integrated inside the existing recesses of the openings. As such, the awning boxes or housing would have a 'tacked on' appearance, protruding outwards and forwards of the shopfront surface itself on both elevations, even when the awnings are fully retracted. The bland, modern materials and finishes of the awning boxes would also appear at odds with the more traditional qualities of the shopfronts and host building as a whole.
- 3.11 Furthermore, whether the proposed awnings are either in fully open or retracted states, they would be positioned in such a way so as to obscure the architectural features of the shopfronts, particularly given that each awning and housing would cut across the top part of the shopfront, edging beyond the width of the glazing below and protrude outwards above

each opening, so blocking or disrupting views of some of the decorative features of the shopfronts. It is important to note in this regard that CPG Design also stipulates in paragraph 6.36 that retractable awnings '*should not obscure or damage the fascia and other important features of the shopfront and buildings*'.

- 3.12 As a result, the proposed alterations fail to show any consideration for the design merit or character of the existing shopfront or host building but rather would add unsuitably sized and positioned visual clutter on each frontage. As a result, the awnings would appear as incongruous and uncharacteristic features in this context, detracting from the otherwise unadorned simplicity of the building's façade at upper floor levels, as well as with the attractive detailing and features that form an important part of the ground floor frontages below.
- 3.13 It is noted that Paragraph 7.72 (Protecting existing shopfronts) of Policy D3 states that the Council seeks to '*protect existing shopfronts that make a significant contribution to the appearance and character of an area, for example through their architectural and historic merit. We will consider the need to keep the appearance of the shopfront, taking into account the quality of its design, its historic importance and its location*'. This is particularly important to note given that the shopfronts are identified as being of particular merit within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The proposals fail to respond sympathetically to this context and are unacceptable.
- 3.14 Paragraph 7.72 above is also important given the building's prominent and highly visible corner location which affords open views along both Great Russell Street and Bloomsbury Street. In this context, the proposed awnings would add noticeable and conspicuous visual clutter that would appear intrusive within the immediate streetscene and detract from the character and appearance of the building as a whole and the wider conservation area.
- 3.15 Turning to two examples of other canopies in situ within the streetscene referred to in the application submission which are considered by the applicant to be similar; one of these examples (no. 22 Bloomsbury Street) involves blinds which have been installed before 1999 at least when planning permission was granted for some replacements. The other example involves an awning (no. 91 Great Russell Street) which has been in situ since at least 2008 and which does not have any record of planning permission or consent being granted.
- 3.16 Therefore, while these and some other examples of canopies or awnings are present within the general locality of the application site, they are all longstanding or historic installations, most of which have acquired established rights over time and since become immune from enforcement action, such that planning permission would no longer be required (the exception being the existing awnings at the application (Awnings 1 and 3) which were installed around September 2022 without the necessary permission or consent).
- 3.17 It is also noted that unlike the unauthorised awnings installed at the application site, none of the existing examples in situ in the immediate area are fixed to frontages identified as being shopfronts of merit.
- 3.18 Additionally, all existing canopies, awnings or blinds pre-date current local plan policies and guidance, as well as the adoption of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and associated statement in April 2011.
- 3.19 It is further noted that the awning at no. 91 Great Russell Street appears to be a more traditional awning, integrated within the shopfront itself and that an example at no. 38 Great Russell Street are Dutch blinds permitted in 1979. Therefore, while it is recognised that there are some existing awnings or blinds in situ within the surrounding area, none appear to be of similar size, design, position and/or context as the current proposals.
- 3.20 Overall, therefore, any existing canopies, awnings or blinds installed at other sites within the immediate locality are not considered to be sufficiently similar as to provide a precedent for the current proposals, especially given the historic nature of their installations and the general absence of any formal planning assessment or approvals for the majority of the installations. Furthermore, it is the Council's view that many (if not all) of the existing historic examples located within the immediate area would unlikely receive planning permission now should they be considered under current policies and guidance.

3.21 As such, assessing the current proposals on their own merits and taking into account all relevant planning history, policies and guidance, it is considered that even in the context of various other awnings located nearby, the proposed retractable awnings at the application site would appear as discordant features and unsympathetic additions within the streetscene. This is particularly by virtue of their siting, size and design, which would result in harm to the character and appearance of the host building (which is a positive contributor and includes a shopfront of merit), the streetscene of which it forms a prominent part and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, contrary to policies D1 (Design), D2 (Heritage) and D3 (Shopfronts) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.

3.22 Finally, the Council has also had special regard to the desirability of preserving the special architectural or historic interest of any listed buildings situated within the surrounding area of the application site (as listed in the 'Site Description' section above). Although the proposals would involve alterations within some of their settings, it is noted that the proposals relate solely to the ground floor shopfront of the host building at some distance away and would not be harmful to or obscure any significant architectural or historic features of these listed buildings or their settings.

3.23 Consequently, the impact of the proposals would be limited and the alterations would not diminish the ability to understand or appreciate the significance of these listed buildings or be harmful within their settings.

4. Amenity

4.1 Policy A1 (Managing the impact of development) seeks to protect the amenity of Camden's residents by ensuring that the impact of development is fully considered and by only granting permission or consent for development or alterations that would not harm the amenity of communities, occupiers and neighbouring residents.

4.2 The proposal would not result in adverse amenity issues such as the loss of natural light, outlook or privacy. The awnings are also considered to be located and positioned in such a way that would not be hazardous to road users or pedestrians.

4.3 As such, it is considered that existing amenity at the application site would not be unduly affected by the proposals and would accord with Local Plan Policy A1 (Amenity) and all relevant guidance.

5. Biodiversity

5.1 Local Plan Policy A3 (Biodiversity), in support the London Biodiversity Strategy and the Camden Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), seeks to ensure that the Council maximises opportunities for biodiversity in and around developments in order to deliver a net gain in biodiversity and a range of wider environmental benefits. It is noted that the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement came into effect for major applications on 12/02/2024, and for small sites on 02/04/2024.

5.2 However, there are a number of statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the BNG condition does not always apply. These are summarised by way of an informative attached to this decision.

5.3 In this particular case, based on the information provided, there is no requirement for the approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan as the development falls below the de minimis threshold given it would not impact an onsite priority habitat and it would impact less than 25sqm of onsite habitat with biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat.

6. Other matters

6.1 Existing signage and other paraphernalia installed and/or being displayed at the application site on Great Russell Street and Bloomsbury Street elevations have been referred to the Council's Planning Site Inspector to investigate.

7. Recommendation

7.1 It is therefore recommended that:

7.2 Planning Permission be Refused and Warning of Enforcement Action to be Taken

7.3 That the Borough Solicitor be instructed to issue an Enforcement Notice under Section 172 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to remove 2 x existing retractable awnings (x1 installed above the corner entrance door on Great Russell Street and x1 installed on the Bloomsbury Street elevation) and make good any resulting damage to the frontages prior to the breach taking place, and officers be authorised in the event of non-compliance, to commence legal proceedings under Section 179 or other appropriate power and/or take direct action under Section 178 in order to secure the cessation of the breach of planning control.

7.4 The notice shall allege the following breaches of planning control:

Installation of 2 x existing retractable awnings (x1 located above the corner entrance door on Great Russell Street and x1 located on the Bloomsbury Street elevation)

7.5 What are you required to do:

1. Remove 2 x existing retractable awnings (x1 installed above the corner entrance door on Great Russell Street and x1 installed on the Bloomsbury Street elevation)
2. Make good any resulting damage

7.6 Period of Compliance: 1 Month

7.7 REASONS WHY THE COUNCIL CONSIDER IT EXPEDIENT TO ISSUE THE NOTICE:

7.8 The 2 x existing retractable awnings (x1 installed above the corner entrance door on Great Russell Street and x1 installed on the Bloomsbury Street elevation), by virtue of their siting, size and design, appear as incongruous and unsympathetic additions to the frontage, resulting in harm to the character and appearance of the host building (which is a positive contributor and includes a shopfront of merit), the streetscene of which it forms a prominent part and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, contrary to policies D1 (Design), D2 (Heritage) and D3 (Shopfronts) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.