
THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY
The champion for Victorian and Edwardian architecture

Mr Rob Tulloch
Planning Department
Camden Council
Camden Town Hall
Judd Street
London WC1H 9JE

Your reference: 2013/5607/P
Our reference: 2010/09/005

9 December 2013

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Dear Mr Tulloch

RE: Coram Community Campus, 49 Mecklenburgh Square (Unlisted, Late C19 - Early C20) - Erection of 3 storey building, following the demolition of existing Mortuary and Swimming Baths.

Thank you for consulting the Victorian Society on this application. We **object** to the demolition of the former mortuary and swimming baths, as we did when consulted on a similar scheme in 2010.

The swimming pool and mortuary date from the late nineteenth century and remain surprisingly intact both externally and internally. The swimming pool building has a charming, if simple elevation, and an attractive profile with its lantern roof. The mortuary is a poignant reminder of the high rates of childhood mortality in London. It retains its glazed tiles internally, and externally is simply dressed in stock and red brick. Both these buildings are testaments to the move towards an increased understanding about sanitation and health in the nineteenth century. The two have a low profile and form an ensemble with the listed wall to the gardens behind.

Since 2010, when the previous scheme was granted consent, the National Planning Policy Framework has come into force. This legislation, under para 135, instituted a degree of statutory protection to undesignated heritage assets such as the mortuary and swimming baths, which makes their demolition a material consideration in planning terms.

The two Victorian buildings also make a positive contribution to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and are an important physical reminder of the history of this area of London. The former mortuary and swimming baths are the only remaining buildings from the Victorian history of the Foundling Hospital. The Hospital is important to the social history of this country, established by Captain Thomas Coram as the first nationally dedicated institution to deal with the vast numbers of orphaned children in London in the eighteenth-century. The demolition of the hospital in 1926 has long been recognised as a great loss for this area of London. The demolition of the

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remaining buildings associated with the site would therefore harm the character of the Conservation Area, contrary to para 138 of the NPPF.

Both the mortuary and swimming pool are currently used largely for storage. For well-constructed buildings they are underused; the swimming pool would adapt to a range of uses easily; its internal space being well-lit and large. To demolish them would be highly wasteful and is an unsustainable approach to the historic environment. The remit for the proposed building is that it should provide for a wide-range of needs in a flexible manner. This could be achieved by retaining the nineteenth-century buildings, demolishing Gregory House and extending the swimming pool. The result would be a far more interesting, sustainable and sensitive scheme. The proposed building is bland and too tall for this part of the conservation area.

On the basis of the above, we strongly advise your council to **refuse** consent for this damaging application.

I would be grateful if you could inform me of your decision in due course.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Bridger
Conservation Adviser