



5th February 2014

FOR THE ATTENTION OF JASON TRAVES

Dear Mr. Traves

PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 2013/8192/P

Former Odeon Site and Rosenheim Building Site bounded partly by Grafton Way, TCR, Huntley Street and University Street, London WC1E 6DB.

APPLICATION PROPOSAL

Proposed Redevelopment of the former Odeon Site and Demolition of the Rosenheim Building to provide a Proton Beam Therapy Cancer Treatment Facility and Day Surgery Facilities by University College London Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

I am writing in connection with the above planning application. I am an owner/resident in Paramount Court where I have lived for approximately 24 years. My flat is situated on the 5th floor of Paramount Court at the northern end on the Tottenham Court Road side of the building and is therefore quite seriously impacted by the proposed development.

I am a semi-retired architect and urban designer and thus my comments and objections will reflect, as well as my own personal concerns, my concerns about the impact of the proposed development on the streetscape in the local area and concerns about traffic both during the construction period and after.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

My first comment is about the Consultation Process which basically constituted a small exhibition in the atrium of the UCLH main hospital on Euston Road. This was not very detailed and the few members of the development team who were present stated that there would be a further exhibition with more detailed drawing but this did not eventuate and the residents of Paramount Court were not contacted again after that time except to advise that the application had been submitted. I do not consider this a satisfactory consultation process. In addition I believe that the application drawings do not provide a sufficiently comprehensive picture of the proposed building.

IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL ON THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA AND ON PARAMOUNT COURT

The site is in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and as such requires a sensitive approach to the erection of new buildings. Although there is a mixture of building styles from various periods in the area the predominant materials of the existing buildings on the site are brickwork with concrete and/or stone details. The predominance of warm-toned brickwork extends further than the site itself, the listed Cruciform Building is a major example and the Rockefeller Building opposite adds further to that character. Thus this proposal which features extensive walls of full-height dark glass and vertical louvres

is inconsistent with the character of the area, it dominates rather than integrates. It certainly overpowers the intricately designed and expressed Cruciform Building, and I would question whether floor to ceiling glazed wall are ideal for hospital purposes.

The Rosenheim building, which is to be demolished has been recognised as a fine building of the period, but its value as a coherent building in the streetscape has been rejected by UCLH despite advice from the GLA and LPA. The Rosenheim Building has been seriously neglected over the years leaving it looking dirty and unpleasant but if cleaned could still maintain a role on the site, if not for clinical purposes, then perhaps, for residential, offices, nurses' quarters etc.

View 06 -Towards the Jeremy Bentham along Huntley Street - shows how totally unsympathetic this building is towards its neighbours. There is no concession to the presence of the much-valued, much-loved exquisite little building. The UCLH building turns the corner abruptly, dwarfing the Jeremy Bentham, and carrying on its limited vocabulary of materials and expression. a brutal juxtaposition where a more detailed consideration could have produced a fine piece of streetscape.

OVER-DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE

I consider that the site is too sensitive for the massive amount of development that is proposed by UCLH. The proposal dominates for reasons of both its height, which is carried in virtually one single mass around the three streets on which it sits, and its lack of detailed expression. The Grafton Way facade is particularly unfortunate in this respect. This is a very large, unrelenting building that concedes to neither its Paramount Court neighbours nor its role of responsibility in the streetscape.

Paramount Court, which has been recognised as a valuable contributing element to the streetscape of the area (Bloomsbury Conservation Area Plan) is also treated with disrespect. Although the proposed building is of similar height to Paramount Court, the fact that its sheer glazed and louvred facade, extends almost to the level of the projecting balconies / sections of Paramount Court, makes it appear as a large 'black stump' at the end of an existing building that was designed to create a facade of great visual interest. This effect is exacerbated by the fact that there has been no attempt made to provide a pleasing transition between the two buildings. See View 03 - Corner of Tottenham Court Road/Grafton Way looking East.

A good townscape/urban design response would have been to set the wall back at 4th floor level to line with the Paramount Court main wall, taking the setback along TCR and around the corner to the first vertical element. This could provide a continuity of sequence and rhythms with Paramount Court and create a more dynamic corner.

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

The Fitzrovia Area Action Plan calls for much-needed public open space on the site, on the corner of Grafton Way and Tottenham Court Road. There is certainly a great need for a breathing space along this section of TCR and that corner is the perfect place to provide it for use by local residents, commuters and visitors, including those visiting the hospital. Even if it were not large, it would be very welcome; an excellent new amenity in the area.

It seems quite shameful that this site has been left empty for over 40 years - some temporary open space could have been offered there years ago by UCLH. This would have endeared the hospital to the community and showed that they are part of the community, the local environment.

UCLH providing public open space elsewhere in lieu of on this site, would not resolve the problem that exists in this part of the precinct. The need is here, in this section of Tottenham Court Road.

TRANSPORT RELATED ISSUES

The proposed construction period for the UCLH development is 4 years commencing later this year, i.e. completing in 2018. This, I believe, would be the same time frame as Council's proposed plans for improving Tottenham Court Road.

From my attendance at various Council / Resident meetings and discussions with Council planners, I am aware that this very worthwhile, and in my opinion, essential project must be finished to coincide with the completion of Cross Rail in 2018. This means that the two projects would be under construction at the same time.

I am very concerned that it would be impossible from a traffic point of view for both to be occurring simultaneously. The recent, relatively simple by comparison, street improvement works at the junction of TCR and Euston Road caused incredible traffic disruption for many months. The works associated with the construction of the proposed building of the hospital would involve huge lorries, pile-driving equipment trucks, cranes, cement trucks and so-on all trying to access the site from Grafton Way along which traffic movement is already slowed by the presence of parked ambulances.

I would hope that the Tottenham Court Road improvements will go ahead providing more effective traffic management for this part of London with equal emphasis on pedestrians and cyclists and transforming it to become one of London's Great Streets and a showcase for Camden Council.

Further traffic problems would exist if the proposal is built. There is no indication of where ambulances will park despite the Fitzrovia Area Action Plan recommending on-site parking for those vehicles. The currently existing parking spaces for ambulances along Grafton Way already cause traffic movement problems and these will be reduced due to the drive-in drop off feature of the new development.

NOISE PROBLEMS, VIBRATIONS, PRIVACY AND LIGHT SPILL

The noise resulting from the construction of this massive development, with its four deep floors of basement and its five floors above ground plus plant, in such close proximity to Paramount Court is going to make life very difficult for at least half its residents over the four years during which time it is being built.

There could also be a problem with noise from the 24 hour use of the building which will particularly affect those Paramount Court residents who face north and east.

The very real possibility of the deep excavations required for the proposed building causing vibrations to Paramount Court and perhaps even damage to its foundations and structure is an issue which I think must be very seriously considered.

The drawings provided by UCLH are insufficiently detailed to determine whether the privacy of Paramount Court residents will be invaded by the presence of the two internal courtyards that will be used by patients. However privacy is a serious concern for Paramount Court residents as is light spill from the 24 hour use of the building. Paramount

Court residents do not want to be, and should not have to be, observers of the activities of UCLH, nor should they be observed.

IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED BUILDING ON MY APARTMENT, 81 PARAMOUNT COURT, 5TH FLOOR FACING TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD

As you can see from my above statements this is not my only concern but it is of major importance to me and I believe it is a design issue that must be rectified if this building is to go ahead.

The facade of the proposed new building along Tottenham Court Road projects further than the setback wall alignment of Paramount Court. Paramount Court has two major external wall alignments, one is setback balcony-width from the street boundary, the other is aligned with the street boundary. This creates the rhythm of the Paramount Court facade.

My apartment is at the northern end of the Tottenham Court Road facade. It has a very small balcony, 1.5 x 1.2 metres at that end facing north and west in line with the balconies of Paramount Court. I use this balcony often during good weather and it provides my apartment with a great, although small, amenity. The proposed building abuts all the apartments at this end of Paramount Court and compromises, but not to the same extent, not only my balcony but also of those on the 6th and 7th floors.

The proposal will turn my balcony into a dark space enclosed on three sides. The end wall of the hospital building would be hard up against the northern balcony wall. It would render my balcony very unpleasant and unusable and represents a great loss of amenity for my apartment. I very strongly object to this feature of the proposed development.

The UCLH 2004 application showed a similar condition affecting my balcony. After objections were made the proposal was changed to set back at Paramount Court levels 5,6 and 7 so that the amenity of the balcony would not be lost. I hope this fact would be considered in your assessment of this application.

CONCLUSION

I don't object in principle to the presence of a hospital building on the site; on the contrary, I would welcome a sensitively designed development that not only contributes to and enhances the streetscape of the area but respects the amenity of the residents of Paramount Court and all those people who use the surrounding streets as both pedestrians and motorists. This could only be an improvement after all the years that the site has remained empty and rather derelict and, in the last ten years or so, become adorned with huge, ugly advertising hoardings that are completely inappropriate for such an important central London street.

I feel that UCLH is imposing its own brand on this unique part of London rather than taking into account the context of its built environment. The area is very mixed in use; residential, offices, shops, restaurants, cafes, the university...and the hospital. It is a central London precinct of great character. To seek to change this into a hospital-dominated precinct, I believe, will not benefit the community as a whole, and could also have severe impacts on traffic movement along Tottenham Court Road and possibly further into Hampstead Road and Euston Road; it could produce a much wider unwanted London effect.

A reduction in the amount of development on the site would alleviate this problem and a more subtle, more carefully, more sensitively designed context-friendly approach for this

building would allow it to make a positive contribution to the character of the local area and to London as a whole. This was a great opportunity for an architect to design a building which satisfied the client's brief and also the local brief. This is not that building.

I trust my objections will be taken into consideration when you assess this planning application.

Yours sincerely

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