

[REDACTED]

Re: Garden Halls Development proposals – Planning Application 2013/1598/P

I would like to make a few comments of my own regarding the proposed Garden Hall development.

I have been following the proposals for the redevelopment of the Garden Halls site since it was announced.

I have attended all the public exhibitions and planning meetings that have been open to the public or residents of the area.

Before I make some brief observations I do want to state that I have lived in [REDACTED] and in the area since 1993 and so can observe and comment from the perspective of someone who has lived in the area for a considerable number of years.

I also wish to state that [REDACTED]

Firstly I am not opposed to the redevelopment of the Garden Halls site in principle, I understand that buildings have a natural life and need to be renovated and altered as the needs of the occupants of the building change.

I also accept that there is a need to provide quality, reasonably priced accommodation for students.

I do not wish to write long paragraphs on every point of concern; you will have already received the reports from both the board of SST and also the representative of the Residence Association of SST.

I agree with the arguments contained in both reports.

I wish to further comment on those areas that I have main concerns over:

- Noise
- Increased disturbance from deliveries/ collections and drop offs
- Increased antisocial behaviour
- Balance of the socio economic makeup of the Bloomsbury cohort of residence

Noise

I appreciate that when choosing to live in Central London one must accept that you will also live with a certain level of background noise that inevitably comes with a busy city. Perhaps one of the surprising things about Bloomsbury is that, for such a central London location with such a high density of residence in this corner of the ward, one can enjoy a relatively peaceful existence.

As I have stated, I have lived in the area for over 20 years and opposite the Garden Halls for over 13 of them. I have come to understand the ebb and flow of students, the noisy arrival in late summer, the quietening down as they settle to their academic year, the arrival of the summer residents on short courses.

Occupant Noise

There have been a number of occasions when noise from the halls has become unacceptable and I have spoken with either the Bursar or the front desk operator and the matter has been dealt with.

I have always appreciated that there has been a quick response to a complaint and a warden has been despatched to the offending room to investigate the noise and it has more often than not been dealt with.

From reading the proposals I worry that if the development moves forward with the proposed increase in bedrooms and decrease in wardens that noise disturbance will become both more frequent and less controllable.

Positioning of Bedrooms/ Social Areas

I am particularly concerned by the proposals for common rooms/ entertainment space/ open outdoor areas that are currently planned for the building on the Sandwich Street elevations.

I would ask why this is not carefully questioned and that the plans are perhaps amended to move these 'social/ socialising' areas to the Cartwright Gardens elevation where there is at least a buffer between the Garden Halls building and the building on Cartwright Gardens.

Roof Top Garden Space

I am also concerned about the proposals for roof top green spaces.

I would like to draw attention to recent noise issues from an event held on top of the Mccan Erickson Building on Herbrand Street, some considerable distance from Sandwich Street.

Last summer, 2012 some summer parties were held on the roof of this building and the noise disturbance was considerable and caused a number of complaints from the residents here in SST.

I believe that at present there is no planned access to the roof top however I am concerned that in the future this may be changed.

If a similar space were created for the use of residents of the Gardens Halls then the summer months might possibly become intolerable for local residents. The human voice alone, in numbers, can cause a very real noise nuisance.

I do feel that as no roof top entertainment/ social space exists currently, no new areas should be introduced.

Delivery/Collection/ Drop off noise

Again I wish to draw attention to the delivery/ collection route that is proposed for the Garden Halls.

At present there is considerable noise nuisance when early morning deliveries are made.

In one particular instance one company used, 'Chef Direct' has large delivery vehicles that have external 'chiller' units positioned over the drivers carriage. These chiller units are extremely noisy when in operation.

Over the last year, since 'Chef Direct' (a catering supplier) were given the contract, residents of SST have made repeated complaints regarding the noise of these delivery vans that will often turn up to deliver at around 6.30am.

The van, usually unable to enter the site until 8am, will sit with the chiller/refrigeration unit in operation, on Sandwich Street.

Deliveries can often take more than an hour, when the driver is delivering alone.

The noise reverberates through the entire flat, a low level basey sort of noise that permeates walls as well as windows.

Often there are two or more vans wishing to deliver or collect (refuse/linen) and this makes early mornings both noisy and, if one is attempting to park or drive down Sandwich Street, inconvenient to traffic.

In the Garden Halls plans the current route for the deliveries is to continue, and I believe will become the single delivery point to the new central kitchen/ service areas.

At present there are at least two further delivery/ collection points on Sandwich Street, which at least spreads the load and allows say food delivery to one and laundry delivery/ collection from another at the same time.

I can only see an increase of noise nuisance and disturbance by the new arrangement.

Also with the proposed route direction going **from** Sandwich Street **to** Cartwright Gardens, I see further issues of vehicles parked up in Sandwich and Hastings Street waiting to drive through.

My Proposal – reverse the delivery route direction

If this delivery route is to be maintained I suggest reversing the direction of the delivery route so that lorries **must** enter from Cartwright Gardens and **exit** to Sandwich Street.

At least it is more likely that vehicles will sit outside the Garden Halls on Cartwright Gardens and not on the quieter Sandwich Street.

Increase in Anti Social Behaviour

Sandwich Street is quieter than its neighbouring streets both in terms of foot fall and traffic. This is a pleasure and something to be protected.

There have been periods in the past when groups of local youths have taken to congregating at certain points on the street. In the past there was a considerable problem of groups congregating in the car park area and at the base of the tower to the north end of Sandwich Street.

The developers put forward the argument that by 'Activating' the street, to which I believe they mean increasing foot fall along the street, increasing entrance ways to the Garden Halls and increasing traffic along the street, will somehow serve to reduce the congregation of groups.

The proposals to 'Activate' the street are wrong headed. The Idea that by activating the street one will naturally reduce the likelihood of Drug Dealing/ Antisocial behaviour is wrong.

Quite simply planning out the likely 'gathering' spaces is the most sensible solution, as can successfully be demonstrated by the erection, ten years ago, of the perimeter fence around the current car park and small green area at the base of the accommodation tower.

This simple device virtually eliminated groups congregating and reduced alcoves for drug dealers to operate.

I believe that introducing new doorways to the 'Town Houses' and I believe the proposal to 'open' the green area at the base of the tower is a retrograde step and will lead to a return of the old issue of groups congregating and potential spaces for drug dealers to operate.

Balance of the socio economic makeup of the Bloomsbury cohort of residence

Bloomsbury has always been a welcoming environment with a diverse mix of residents, office workers, tourists and of course students.

The last few years have seen a quite a steep rise in the number of 'student rooms' with the 'Unite' building opening on Woburn Place, 'Nedo' opening on Pentonville Road as well as various other developments in the area, the balance of Student to other members of the local population cohort is becoming uneven.

Inevitably with a rise in students numbers come a rise of local amenities catering for them. This is not in itself an issue. More cafes, more local shops, more people using the laundrettes is good however more drinking venues/ more late night street noise is not so welcome.

Overall I do understand that the Garden Halls buildings need investing in to maintain their business, however the current plans are very inward looking and seem only to address their own needs and do not adequately take into account the needs of the wider population of the area.

In Summary

I believe that the present proposed plans are extremely **inward** looking, addressing the issues and problems of the current Garden Halls but with no particular interest in how the development will permanently impact the wider local community.

The Garden Halls management claim to be concerned and responsive to the concerns of the wider community but there is very little evidence in their planning.

Two examples of how I back this claim, from reading the current development plans.

If the developers are genuinely interested in the SST residents concern over increased noise from Social/ Conference areas then why is it that the development proposes the social areas to be sited on the residential side of the complex, in quieter Sandwich Street, and not on the less residential side, Cartwright Gardens?

If the developers have genuinely taken on board the concerns regarding deliveries then why do they not consider reversing the delivery access so that waiting vehicles enter from the Cartwright Garden side of the building, thus reducing the likelihood of delivery vehicles waiting on Sandwich street to deliver/collect.