

To: Camden Planning Dept

From: Helen Mc Murray
Secretary, South Bloomsbury T.R.A

Date: 30th December 2014

Dear Sirs,

**Objection to retrospective application for:
La Roma Bella
62 Gt. Russell St.,
London WC1B 3BG
2014/5967/P**

We wish to object to this application in the strongest possible terms. The premises are in a prime location within the Bloomsbury Conservation area, directly opposite the British Museum. The original windows were one of a pair of Victorian shop fronts that contributed to the character of the streetscape of Great Russell St., the most well-known and highly-visited street in Bloomsbury. The new full-height, continental café-style, modern window that now replaces the original, detracts from and undermines the historic streetscape.

Any proposed changes to buildings in a conservation area need to be considered very carefully in order to

ensure they comply with planning guidance and to provide an opportunity for all the interested parties to be consulted.

However in the case of La Roma Bella, neither Camden Council, local residents or conservation bodies were given an opportunity to consider the effect of the proposals as the owner simply did not apply for planning permission before starting the works.

The first indication that substantive alterations to the shopfront had been carried out was when the screen which had been placed over the shopfront during the refurbishment works was removed. Our residents' association was initially alerted by residents of Museum Chambers, of which La Roma Bella is an integral part, who felt particularly aggrieved that they had not been consulted and we subsequently received many complaints from other local residents.

South Bloomsbury T.R.A. is extremely perturbed by the ease with which these unauthorised alterations have been carried out by the owner, and the lack of any enforcement action on the part of Camden's Planning Department, especially considering the building is owned by Camden Council. It would seem to be a straightforward case of planning enforcement. We alerted the Planning Dept. some months ago to this case and understood that an officer would be visiting the premises. It seems incredible that the owner now feels it is appropriate to apply for retrospective planning

permission when he is already in breach of planning regulations.

We are very concerned about the number of alterations that have already occurred in the area, sometimes as in this case, without first seeking planning permission; individually and cumulatively these alterations have been eroding the character of this very historic area.

Should Camden Planning decide to grant retrospective planning permission to the owner of La Bella Roma, without doubt it will give the 'green light' to other unprincipled developers to imitate his example knowing that they can do so with impunity.

This is surely not what was intended when the Bloomsbury Conservation Area was designated. The appalling lack of concern in this case for the historic environment, putting commercial interests above planning legislation process, should be of as much concern to Camden Council as it is to local residents and all those who value the importance of conserving this historic area for future generations.

Helen Mc Murray
Secretary, South Bloomsbury T.R.A.

From: Helen McMurray [REDACTED]
Sent: 30 December 2014 23:20
To: Planning
Subject: La Roma Bella - retrospective application for non-illuminated sign - 2014/6477/A

Dear Camden Planning,

I would like to make a formal objection to this application on behalf of the South Bloomsbury T.R.A. to the above application.

The first point we would like to draw attention to is the fact that this is a retrospective application; the owner apparently did not think it necessary to apply for permission before installing the signage. This should not be presented by the applicant as a justification for keeping the signage in place, it is a clear contravention of the planning process and should be treated as such, as Camden and local residents were prevented from giving our views at the outset which may have resulted in permission not being granted for the signage in the first place.

When the signage was installed, we tried speaking to the owner in an attempt to make him aware of the conservation issues in this historic area, but to no avail. The owner claims the garish orange colour is necessary in order to attract the attention of tourists by making his premises stand out from the others nearby. However, it is clearly an eyesore, more suitable for a seaside frontage, and could surely be replaced with something more subtle and tasteful on this key site.

Helen Mc Murray
Sec., Sth Bloomsbury T.R.A