

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Consultees Addr:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2014/5946/P	Debbie Radcliffe	91 Judd Street London WC1H 9NE	30/12/2014 13:20:17	OBJ	<p>I am a long term resident of Bloomsbury and have walked or cycled past the former Sorting Office for many years. It is one of the most important sites in Central London due to its proximity to the British Museum and Covent Garden. The difficulty of redevelopment (cost / viability etc) is probably why it has stayed derelict for so many years. But this is no excuse for permitting a development that is far too large and totally out of context or sympathy with the historic context of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It will impact negatively on the nearby St George's Church and on the approach to the British Museum, arguably one of London's most visited attractions. A boring, over-sized building that looks like an office block or department store is simply not appropriate in this historic neighbourhood. The existing Sorting Office has a quirkiness that could be sensitively restored to create an imaginative building, especially one that could be a focus for the arts or creative industries, to complement the BM. It has a spectacular interior, which is particularly suitable as an exhibition space (for which it has been used during recent years). What is most concerning about the proposal is the fact that there are so few residential units. Central London needs the vibrancy that comes from the diversity of people living there, not just visiting. Bloomsbury in particular attracts those who want to live in the city, not just have occasional access to a pied a terre. The lack of affordable dwellings in this proposed development is shocking, especially as this was one of the elements required in Camden Council's SITE ALLOCATION GUIDANCE FOR SITE NO 18. To quote: "Development will be expected to: Maximise the potential of the site to provide new housing (including affordable housing)." It seems the historic significance of the site has been ignored by the developers, again contrary to the Council's brief: "To be of a scale and appearance which does not harm but enhances the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the setting of neighbouring listed buildings including the British Museum." The development should also "Take account of the key objectives of the adopted planning framework and planning brief". To quote further from the Site Allocation Guidance: "The Council will ensure that development is of suitable scale and character for the area in which it is situated, contributes to other Council aspirations including providing appropriate community and environmental benefits, and takes into account amenity and community safety (Policy CS5). A contribution to the supply of new housing would be required as part of a mixed use development (Policy CS6) and development will be required to preserve or enhance the character of the neighbouring Bloomsbury Conservation Area (Policy CS14). The proposed development goes completely against the Council's own policy for this site, and should be refused.</p>