



Neil McDonald,
Case Officer,
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By email

26 January 2015

Dear Mr McDonald,

21-31 New Oxford Street London WC1A 1BA - Application No. 2014/5946/P

SAVE Britain's Heritage writes to **object** to this application for remodelling, refurbishment and extension of the existing former postal sorting office at 21 – 31 New Oxford Street, due to the harm these proposals will cause to the Grade I listed St George's Bloomsbury and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The site is enclosed on three sides by the boundary of the Bloomsbury Conservation area, and is visible from two others – Denmark Street and Seven Dials. It is also surrounded by several listed buildings, the most notable being St George's Bloomsbury. Any redevelopment proposal must take these heritage assets into account.

St George's Bloomsbury, Hawksmoor's masterpiece, is considered by Pevsner to be the most grandiose of all of London's 18th century churches. The eccentric spire, modelled on Pliny's description of the mausoleum of Halicarnassus, is a well known and much loved landmark, and the building befits its Grade I listed status.

These proposals would cause substantial harm to the setting of St George's, most notably the sight lines of the tower, and would have detrimental consequences for the Bloomsbury Conservation Area due to the proposed height increase.

The current sorting office building, whilst not of any particular architectural merit, defers to the spire of St George's by being set back from the corner of Museum Street and New Oxford Street, and also having its upper floors at this corner further set back. The spire is the focal point of this view, and retains something of its historical place in Hogarth's *Gin Lane*.

By contrast, the proposed redevelopment seeks to remove both set-backs, encroaching on the clear view of the spire. The balance of what is a finely tuned viewpoint will be detrimentally altered.

Such opportunities should be used to enhance the surrounding conservation areas and listed buildings, which this proposal fails to do as a result of the increased height and bulk.

I emphasise that SAVE does not object to the principle of redevelopment of 21-31 New Oxford Street, a building which does not contribute positively to the adjacent conservation area, but we do object to this current proposal for the reasons stated above.

We request that this application be **refused** so that a more appropriate and sensitive proposal can be developed.

Yours sincerely



Mike Fox
Caseworker