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**Objections to Lincoln's Inn Planning Applications:
Library Extension – 2015/4408/P & 2015/4541/L
East Terrace Development – 2015/4404/P & 2015/4498/L**

I write to make representations in relation to the planning applications listed above.

My interest

I am a barrister member of Lincoln's Inn, and have worked in Stone Buildings for the last 10 years. I am writing this letter in my personal capacity, not in my capacity as a member of 4 Stone Buildings.

I am a regular user of the garden, New Hall and Library. My office is located around 50 metres from the proposed works.

Library Extension – 2015/4408/P & 2015/4541/L

This is a proposal to demolish the existing Under Treasurer's House and to replace it with a new building housing administrative offices and additional library reading space.

The Under-Treasurer's House is attached to the New Hall and Library complex, a Grade II* listed set of buildings in a distinctive and harmonious gothic style. The Under-Treasurer's house is a mid twentieth century addition, but in its size, shape and detailing it makes a sympathetic, unobtrusive contribution to the effect of the whole complex. Its size is modest, so that it does not detract from the magnificent scale of the New Hall and Library. Its roofline complements that of the adjacent Library. The detailing of the brickwork echoes that of the larger buildings, and the brick has mellowed with age so that it no longer looks like a new addition to the complex. In its Conservation Area Appraisal, Camden Council has rightly identified the building as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It is highly undesirable that this building should be demolished.

The proposed replacement building would gravely detract from the distinctive appearance of the New Hall and Library complex. The new building is larger than the existing one, and the proposed roofline is stark and lopsided, in a jarring contrast with the crenellation of the other building. The new designs are characterised by an emphasis on horizontal lines which does not complement the gothic vertical emphasis of the Library. The most noticeable feature of the proposed building is the heavy, blockish, and unsympathetic fenestration. It is to be

connected to the library by a two storey glazed connection, an alien element which will detract from the current harmonious appearance of the complex.

The construction of such a building, in a style totally different from the rest of the complex, will spoil the appearance of a nationally important landmark, which is at the moment distinguished by its unity of style and detail. Far from enhancing the complex, the proposed building would clash with the buildings that are already there. It will have a negative impact not just on the New Hall and Library complex: it will intrude on and detract from the garden setting and the special character of the Inn.

There are no exceptional circumstances to justify the proposals: there is no 'clear and convincing justification' (NPPF 132); and there are no 'substantial public benefits' (NPPF 133). The new building is described as a library extension, but is largely intended for administrative offices: there is no shortage of office space in the area. Nor is there any need for additional reading space for the Library. As a regular user of the library, I can confirm that the majority of reading desks are usually empty: indeed, in ten years of using the library, I have never been unable to find a space to work.

For the reasons above, I object to applications 2015/4408/P & 2015/4541/L.

East Terrace Development – 2015/4404/P & 2015/4498/L

This is a proposal to excavate under the East Terrace of the New Hall, and under a part of the adjacent garden, in order to construct an underground education facility. This facility is to be lit from above, by (i) a skylight in the middle of the East Terrace and (ii) at skylight at the back of the large flowerbed (“the Benchers’ Border”) that currently separates the East Terrace and the lawn.

At present, an important part of the visual effect of the Grade II* listed New Hall and Library complex comes from its garden setting. Seen from the East, the complex rises majestically behind a wide lawn. The lawn runs without interruption up to a broad and well established flowerbed, the Benchers’ Border. Directly behind that flowerbed rises the stone wall of the East Terrace, behind which rises the towering bulk of the New Hall. The appearance is enhanced by mature trees at the South end of the Benchers’ Boarder. This generous garden setting is of great value. It has an almost rural feel, very rare indeed in central London. No modern element is visible: the view across the lawn looks as though it has been unchanged perhaps a century and a half. The setting should be preserved with great care.

The proposed East Terrace Development will have a serious and negative impact on the setting described above, in two important respects:

1. First, the construction of the long glass skylight at the back of the Benchers’ Border will reduce the size of the border, and reduce the value of the whole view across the lawn. At the moment, much of the attraction of the border comes from the way it rises up against the stone wall behind it. The proposed skylight will break up that connection. It is likely that some part of the skylight will be visible – destroying the current impression of a view unchanged by time.

2. Secondly, the plans include a proposal a new paved path along the East side of the Benchers' Border, separating the lawn and the flowerbed. The construction of this path will involve the cutting down of two trees, a magnolia and a lime, which currently make an important contribution to the setting. Valuable green space will be lost, covering a part of the lawn with paving. More importantly, it will disrupt the broad and generous visual effect of an unbroken transition from lawn to flowerbed to building. The path is unnecessary: there is already step-free access from the North to the South of the complex along the path to the East of the lawn (c. 10 metres away from the proposed new path.)

For the reasons above, I object to applications 2015/4404/P & 2015/4498/L, unless suitable modifications can be made to the plans to accommodate these concerns.

Comments on the consultation process

The pre-application consultation process was very limited. Few efforts have been made to seek the views of those who live and work in the Inn, and there is no indication that the comments and objections made by members of the Inn who attended the presentation on 15 July 2015 have been taken into account. I spoke to many of those who attended the presentation, who indicated that they had given negative feedback; but this negative feedback is not reflected in the Statement of Community Involvement.

Further, the planning applications were submitted in early August, so that the consultation period coincided with the first part of the Long Vacation, i.e. the period in the summer during which the courts are closed, and when barristers therefore tend to take their holidays. During this period, a very large proportion (perhaps the great majority) of those who live and work in Lincoln's Inn are absent. These are the people most directly affected by the applications, who should have a proper opportunity to comment.

Accordingly, I request that the period for consultation be extended. I understand that the formal consultation period came to an end on 3 September 2015; but the applicant, Lincoln's Inn, has confirmed in an email to its members dated 17 August 2015 that "*the time for representations is not limited to this period; it is a minimum period for statutory consultation. The Council will consider representations received after this period, provided these are received prior to making their decision.*" It is undesirable that there should be any uncertainty about the period during which representations will be considered: any uncertainty runs the risk of leading to future litigation. For this reason, I request a formal extension to the consultation period.

Yours sincerely

Tom Gentleman