

Dear Sirs

Planning application for new underground hotel at 112A Great Russell Street

[Application 2015/3605/P]

I write on behalf of the Board of Directors of Bedford Court Mansions Ltd, who act on behalf of its shareholders, the 114 resident leaseholders of Bedford Court Mansions and the more than 300 residents

We have written in the past to express our concerns over the planning application to change the use of YMCA building underground areas from a car-park to an underground hotel.

While the applicant is looking to be seen to have addressed a number of our previous concerns regarding the proposal in this new and more professionally orchestrated planning strategy, they have not done so. We remain strongly opposed to this proposal and urge the Council to again reject the application.

Our principal concerns relate to the impact of the intensification of use that the proposal represents on the perimeter of the Bloomsbury Conservation area. This will inevitably lead to increased vehicular traffic associated with deliveries and refuse removal. The applicant is keen to stress that because there are no facilities such as bars, cafes or restaurants included in the proposal there will be no such impacts. This totally and intentionally ignores the inevitable increase in use of the bars, cafes and restaurants elsewhere in the same building, such as VQ and Hudson's House, and the consequent increase in service traffic. A further concern is the increase in noise emissions and decrease in air quality as a result of the very intense ventilation requirements of a densely occupied space located below ground.

Whilst the London Plan calls for additional hotel space it does not support intensification of this use class. Policy 4.5 states: "*Further intensification of provision in areas of existing concentration*

should be resisted, except where this will not compromise local amenity or the balance of local land uses." There is already a very large hotel on this site and there are at least five other hotels within 150 metres. There is a large number of neighbouring residents whose amenity would be harmed by additional hotel use. A lot of our time is spent sending comments to Camden in response to revised information submitted by the applicant's consultants seeking to show that intensification of use, within a particular use class, is not imbalanced and is not impacting on amenity. If their proposal was unquestionably sound, it would not be necessary to keep on revising their arguments. If there is any doubt - and there is - it should be refused.

No ongoing transport plan, building plan, hotel management, service and maintenance plan; sound and air quality treatment agreement and its ongoing servicing has been discussed let alone agreed with the neighbours of this application.

In fact, it is with great surprise that having caused the residents here no small expense in professional advice, the political lobbyist/PR team of Jacob Lister, now imply that we have been included in discussions. I must make very clear Bedford Court Mansions and its residents have **not** been party to any discussions, we have not been invited to any forum and our views have not been independently sought nor heeded. Any suggestion that this is the case is utterly false.

The only contact has been to arrange, at further expense to ourselves, the use of an apartment here for further sound tests, on the understanding we would have sufficient access to the data for our sound advisors to make comment...this has NOT been the case. We received their Noise Impact Assessment only yesterday, a month after access was given. I assume this was for the report to be edited sufficiently until it suited the requirements of the applicant's planning strategy rather than actually report upon the situation.

It seems that everything has been done to ensure that this application is forced through no matter what the effects that would be visited upon the local area and its residential community.

The progressive intensification of use associated with the St Giles Hotel has already led to significant disturbance to residents in all parts of Bedford Court Mansions and the current proposals are bound to result in gatherings of residents of the new hotel and their guests in Adeline Place, looking for space to drink, smoke and relax in the fresh air as a respite from the windowless world below ground. The entrance steps of our building are already popular in this respect.

These activities will surely affect the many residents of the Mansions facing Adeline Place and Bedford Avenue and the subsequent material change of the whole area in which we live is totally unacceptable to our community here. It is, as has already been acknowledged, a community under stress.

We are already suffering another major spate of drug use on the street, which is becoming more and more unmanageable. This, with the new school that we now have, École Jeannine Manuel, and intensification of vehicular servicing to the Dominion Theatre, makes further commercial intensification very unwise. How long before one of the school children is injured by a coach, articulated truck, taxi, or used syringe?

We also have very little parking in the area, the loss of the car park makes no sense to us when we are less than 200m from one of the busiest shopping streets in the world, and with the new West End Project traffic scheme due, we can only see this as adding to what will be a huge intensification of traffic in this residential enclave of the conservation area

I remind the Committee and the officers of the petition that was signed by more than 100 residents here at the Mansions. This is a large number, especially when one considers the strategic timing of the application during the summer holiday period.

If this application proceeds it will inevitably lead to further complaints from residents, forcing them time and time again to try to get officers at Camden to enforce what little leverage we have. This should not be the case. Camden should be forward thinking and demanding that agreements are made and kept and that any violation is met with determined action from its officers on behalf of the hundreds of tax payers whose enjoyment of the area will surely be severely affected. All have the right to expect the Council to act in accordance with adopted policy and protect residents from over development of the site to the extent that its cumulative impacts on and off-site cannot be shown to be manageable.

So, in light of the inability of the applicant to engage with local residents and ensure that their concerns about the impact of the proposal are realistically addressed, we urge the Committee members to refuse this application without qualification once and for all.

Kind regards

Paul Spyker
Chairman
Bedford Court Mansions Ltd



112A GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3NP

CHANGE OF USE OF PART GROUND FLOOR AND BASEMENT LEVELS -4 AND -5 FROM CAR PARK (SUI GENERIS) TO 166 BEDROOM HOTEL (CLASS C1), INCLUDING ALTERATIONS TO GROUND FLOOR ELEVATIONS ON GREAT RUSSELL STREET AND ADELIN PLACE.

Application for planning permission: 2015/3605/P

8 November 2015

The Bloomsbury Association objects to this application and a summary of our concerns was contained in our representation dated 2 August 2015. We indicated that we would be elaborating on these in subsequent submissions, of which that dated 20 September 2015 focussed upon transportation issues. It included a review of the applicant's Transport Statement by the Transport Planning Practice undertaken by Peter Evans Partnership.

The applicant has since revised information submitted with the original application but has not varied the design proposal substantially. Transport Planning Practice has also responded to the transportation issues raised. They consider none to be valid or material to the application.

We stand by the points raised in our letter of 20 September and repeat them below. Peter Evans Partnership's view is included with this statement.

1. Section 2 of the Transport Statement, *Existing Conditions*, fails to acknowledge that on-street servicing is proposed by the applicant and that the service access and associated refuse storage for the hotel on Adeline Place is directly opposite Bedford Court Mansions, residential buildings of 132 homes. There is additional residential accommodation at the junction of Adeline Place and Great Russell Street.

Service vehicles making deliveries and collecting refuse may be fewer in number but have a far greater impact and are at different times of the day (and night) to the cars that currently use the underground car park.

The existing service and delivery arrangements are already inadequate for the size the existing hotel has become. To manage for its size, the hotel is presently serviced almost entirely from the street in breach of a planning condition. This occurs at night and in the early hours of the morning with the vehicles' engines left running and is a severe disturbance to local residents. See also to correspondence between Bedford Court Mansions and Lee Perella and Jenna Litherland in your department in September 2011 that includes a log of hotel refuse being collected daily by a privately contracted Volvo 8-wheeler, rear loader refuse compactor, Monday to Saturday, between 3:15 and 4:30 am. See also correspondence between Bedford Court Mansions and Jenna Litherland under EN11/143901.

2. The Statement does not address cumulative impact or when a small change takes the changes too far. Successive small changes which all go the same way can lead to an unacceptable end result. This is already being experienced in relation to current uses.
3. No consideration is given to the cumulative impact of vehicles servicing the Dominion Theatre late at night, of traffic generation from the St Giles Hotel nor from the recently established École Jeannine Manuel at 43-45 Bedford Square. The school has a fleet of five coaches and, in addition to taxis, parents use their own vehicles to pick-up and drop-off pupils during the day. Vehicle access to the school is currently from Bedford Avenue, close to its junction with Adeline Place.

4. The Transport Statement adds little to the previous shortfall in information. It is based on unsound information from the period after the 2008/09 economic crisis and gives no indication of future need. Average occupancy figures and spot checks give no information of use patterns and, for car parking in particular, the reliance on someone else's study from four years ago is unsatisfactory.
5. There is no consideration in the Statement of the loss of off-street car public parking and the effects this will have on businesses and on the demand for on-street parking. This would normally be expected.
6. Intensification of servicing and refuse collection, already severe problems, in a manner that would be in contravention of a condition of the planning permission granted for the original development, has not been adequately addressed.

Servicing of the building is restricted by the permission for development (dated 30 September 1975, reference P13/8/A/20545) granted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. Condition 5 of the permission states: "No loading or unloading of goods, including fuel, by vehicles arriving at or departing from the premises shall be carried out otherwise than within the curtilage of the building." The reasons for imposition of the condition are given as: "To avoid obstruction of the surrounding streets and to safeguard amenities to adjacent premises". The condition relates to the whole building and is as relevant now as it was then.
7. Servicing provision should not be dependent on the particular characteristics of budget hotels. Normal practice would be to take a typical characteristic for the permitted land use, not the specific characteristics of the first occupier.
8. There is no assessment of the effect of service vehicle parking on environmental intrusion, especially at times when local roads are otherwise quiet, indeed it is accepted in the Statement as normal by quoting out of context: *"on- street servicing of a hotel would not cause any material harm to the living conditions of local residents. It appears that on-street servicing is a common arrangement for hotels in the area and there is sufficient space to allow it"*.

Servicing of the existing hotel and its restaurants begins at 04:45 and is a well-documented intrusion against which enforcement action has and continues to be taken by the Council. There is no consideration of cumulative effect on-site. If there is no policy requirement for a cumulative assessment to be undertaken, that is no justification for not doing so when a situation suggests that it would be desirable to better understand the impacts.
9. The proposal includes no catering facilities.

The applicant points out that because there are no facilities such as bars, cafes or restaurants included in the proposal there will be no such impacts. This totally and intentionally ignores the inevitable increase in the use of the bars, cafes and restaurants existing elsewhere in the same building, such as VQ, Hudson's House and Pomme de Pain, or similar facilities nearby and the consequent increase in service traffic to support that need. There is no consideration of cumulative effect.
10. No adequate consideration is given to the effect of the Council's West End Project. Once the new West End Project road system is in place, service traffic will be mainly via Bedford Square/Avenue and Adeline Place, which will cause additional disturbance.

The details of the West End Project referred to and included in Appendix B of the Transport Statement appear to be incomplete and out of date.
11. Intensification of coach, minicab, rickshaw and taxi movements is unreasonably discounted without justification or consideration of the implications of there being some. This is unsatisfactory. The Hotel Management Plan assumes that most guests will arrive by public transport, but that may change. There is no effective control mechanism and this policy may change, so no weight can be given to this assumption.
12. With the business model proposed of low cost budget accommodation, coach bookings are a very strong possibility and cannot be discounted. The St Giles Hotel can often have six coaches arrive at one time. Minivans park all day with their engines running on Bedford Avenue and

Adeline Place to serve the existing hotel. They arrive at 05:30 and leave at 18:00. Again, there is no consideration of cumulative effect.

For example, on Saturday 19 September between 09:00 and 10:30 there were seven coaches picking up guests from the St Giles Hotel. They all arrived at the same time. None were parked outside the hotel entrance because that space was congested with minivans. All were parked on Adeline Place and on Bedford Avenue (east), all with their engines running and it sounded like a factory. While they were there an enforcement officer arrived, spoke to a couple of coach drivers who ignored him. The following morning, again there were coaches everywhere, including the residents' parking bays on Bedford Avenue. There were also four VW Transporters similarly parked, all with their engines running. Two of these vehicles always park, every day on the single yellow lines at the junction of Bedford Avenue and Adeline Place from 05:30 until 18:00. This is their dedicated parking space and enforcement officers ignore them too. They park there to maintain visual contact with the concierge of the St Giles Hotel. Black cab drivers will not allow them to park any closer.

13. The hotel management would have no control over how visitors travel and a binding legal agreement on car or coach free development is impractical and unenforceable in practice. If car or coach free development is essential, then the application should be refused.
14. If the impact of a development is unacceptable without a legally enforceable Hotel Management Plan, consideration is needed of the extent to which enforcement is not only legally possible but is likely in practice. If there are doubts over this, the value of the Plan is also doubtful and the decision on the application should reflect this.
15. We accept that cycle parking is shown on revised drawing 2897/P/11F that accompanies the application. Some are indicated on Sheffield stands on the footway of Adeline Place and some on the 'in' and 'out' ramps. The status of this part of the footway on Adeline Place is in question. Whilst we are of the view that it is public highway, the Council has determined that it is 'private forecourt'. Furthermore we understand that it is land that is not within the applicant's control.
16. Lack of capacity on the public footpath at the point of entry would harm pedestrian movement, especially as Council refuse storage currently exists and a terminating bus stand is also proposed at this location as part of the West End Project.

The details of the West End Project referred to and included in Appendix B of the Transport Statement are out of date.
17. As currently proposed, we feel that the development could be over-heavily reliant on conditions to regulate and control its severe impact on residential uses on Adeline Place, the effect of which will extend to 24/7 - an impact that has not been satisfactorily resolved in information submitted with the application. Planning control mechanisms are a poor substitute for certainty and this would place an impossible burden on both local residents to monitor and report incidents of malfunction and on the Council to enforce such conditions. It is contrary to paragraph 206 of the NPPF to rely on planning conditions and obligations to make the unacceptable acceptable, especially over environmental and intrusion matters.

For the reasons outlined above, we are concerned that the proposal represents an over development of the site for a single use - hotel - to the extent that its cumulative impacts on and off-site cannot be shown to be manageable. It is our and our advisors' view that the supplementary information accompanying the application, including the Transport Statement, are unsound and not sufficiently robust to demonstrate that the proposal is achievable without unmanageable, harmful environmental impact.

The grant of planning permission on this basis would be unsafe and inconsistent with the Council's and national planning policies. We therefore urge the Council to refuse the application.

Jim Murray
Chairman
Bloomsbury Association

Copies to:

Keir Starmer, MP

Andrew Dismore, GLA

Councillor Adam Harrison, London Borough of Camden

Councillor Sabrina Francis, London Borough of Camden

Councillor Rishi Madhani, London Borough of Camden

Councillor Sue Vincent, London Borough of Camden

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Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee

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Peter Evans Partnership

Transport Planning and
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29th October 2015

Bloomsbury Association
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Dear Sirs

PROPOSED HOTEL

Thank you for providing the response by TPP to our previous comments. Our views on this response are summarised below.

View of Highway Authority

The view of the highway authority is pertinent but not sufficient. An applicant should demonstrate through independent assessment that a proposal is acceptable. The highway authority view should be a confirmation of this, not the view on which reliance is placed.

Cumulative Impact

The fundamental principle for transport statements and assessments is that the scoping for these should be decided on merit. If cumulative impact is an issue, then this should be addressed. The fact that there is no specific policy requirement for a cumulative impact does not affect this.

Car Parking

The comments again rely on the views of the highway authority and are not based on any independent assessment by the applicant. The effect of removing all the existing spaces has not been addressed by assessment by the applicant.

Servicing and Coaches

Further reliance is placed on the views of officers. While the level of servicing may be limited, there should be an avoidance of amenity effect on nearby residents. A planning condition or obligation precluding servicing at unsocial hours is a reasonable expectation, subject to confidence over enforceability.

A suggested hotel booking policy does not resolve the coach booking issue as such policies can change. There appears to be no suggested wording for a condition for residents to consider. Also, a planning condition can be varied by application, and local residents need to have confidence that their interests will be taken fully into account in this event.

cont/....

Peter Evans Partnership Limited
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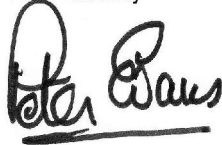
The potential for intensification within an approved use class should be addressed. I understand from residents that this is an issue which has given rise to existing local concerns. Assessments should not rely on the characteristics of a specific user where the permission is for a use class which could give rise to a material change in transport characteristics without further permissions.

TPP Conclusions

TPP have not address the basic concern over the loss of local parking. Continuing reliance on past studies and officer views does not overcome this.

I trust these comments set out my views clearly. If there are any comments or queries, I will be pleased to discuss them.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Evans', with a horizontal line underneath.

PETER EVANS

Peter Evans BEng MSc CEng MICE FCIHT MCLIT
Consultant
Peter Evans Partnership