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Objection to planning application 2016/2524/P: British Museum 'security building'.

From numbers 39-48 Great Russell Street, the view of the BM façade is now obscured by a large, white plastic structure totally out of place in the forecourt of the listed building. We did not buy property in this historic terrace with a view of the BM façade to have instead a view of an ugly tent-like structure more appropriate for a garden centre.

The façade of the BM is special and we have managed to retain it since the 1850s. It is important to residents and visitors alike. To allow buildings in the garden forecourt now will be a big retrograde step in preservation and caring for our heritage. The visitor experience is compromised visually too. And visitors are now made to walk double the distance unprotected from the weather (and in full view from our terrace) from the gate to the 'search facility' and from the 'search facility' to the Museum entrance.

Whilst we can appreciate the BM's desire to reduce the risks of terrorism, it is hard to see how this 'search facility' will contribute anything to achieving that. Surely, terrorists with guns or bombs are unlikely to be so obliging as to queue to be searched but will head straight for the entrance or perpetrate their acts in the forecourt outside of it. These are risks we all have to live with today. It can happen anywhere in the city. Vigilant gate and forecourt staff with emergency buttons and hidden armed guards on-site may offer more realistic ways to reduce the impact of a terrorist act but it is not clear how searching handbags will do anything to prevent it. The 'search facility' didn't even stop demonstrators climbing the columns recently – they just walked straight in with their ropes and climbing gear.

In short, the visual and cultural disadvantages of this 'search facility' far outweigh any good it can do. Moreover, it gives a false sense of security since realistically, it can do nothing to prevent a terrorist attack.

We note that the 'search facility' is called "temporary" but are aware these things have a habit of becoming permanent. We would encourage the BM to review urgently its options for security and find a solution that does not detract from the asset of the building façade. We recommend that planning consent and listed building consent be refused for this structure.

Why is there no Listed Building application too?

Roger England
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