

FAO DAVID GLASGOW | CASE OFFICER

Letter of Objection from SBTRA regarding 2017/0618/P

CASTLEWOOD HOUSE AND MEDIUS HOUSE
77-91 AND 63-69 NEW OXFORD STREET, LONDON WC1A 1DG

PROPOSAL: Demolition of existing office building at Castlewood House, and erection of an 11 storey office building with retail and restaurant uses at ground floor level; partial demolition of Medius House with retention of the existing façade, and erection of a two storey roof extension including private roof terrace, in connection with the change of use of the building from office and retail to provide 20 affordable housing units at upper floor levels with retained retail use at ground floor level.
Application for planning permission: 2017/0618/P

Massing/Scale

The set backs along the New Oxford Street elevation should be reconsidered prior to planning approval. The primary facade of Castlewood House should be the same height as the existing portion of Medius House. Page 60 of the D&AS shows that Castlewood House steps up and then back down to the low slung section of Centre Point and therefore does not sit comfortably within the streetscape. The proposed height of Castlewood House along this elevation is too great and along with the new incongruous dark engineering brick extension to Medius House, has a damaging impact on the local historic assets. As well as creating a disjointed streetscape, the Tony and Guy Academy, a locally listed building will be overwhelmed by the overbearing size of the proposed structure.

The impact of the increased mass of this part of the building will also have a negative effect upon the local conservation areas and listed buildings. Castlewood House is not part of the surrounding conservation areas but will have a direct effect upon them due to the proximity to their boundaries and we assume has only been omitted as it is deemed an inferior building, this was a similar case to the Sorting Office Building on New Oxford Street. The impact on the surrounding conservation areas can be seen in all of the Visual Impact Assessment images as each one of them is a view from a conservation area. This impact on listed buildings can best be seen in View 15 of the Visual Impact Assessment (overbearing nature on the lower portion of Centre Point - which was trying to address the same streetscape) and also View 1 where it will be visible from areas such as Bedford Square, one of the finest Georgian Squares in London. Nearby listed buildings are also to be negatively impacted.

The massing to the rear of the building will have a negative impact upon Bucknall Street. The increased height, which has incorrectly taken Central St Giles as a precedent will create a dark overbearing collection of buildings with a poor open space to the rear.

Even if some are convinced by the articulation of the elevations on Earnshaw Street and New Oxford Street, these must be viewed as seen on page 82 of the D&AS, where the oblique view from New Oxford Street shows the overbearing nature of how the set backs are far too shallow and climb too quickly. This is a method of creating large areas of NIA instead of creating a well judged response to the local

environment. This should be reconsidered before permission is granted.

General Points

Design Review Panel's consideration of the proposal should be made public. The general public should be able to see if the opinion of the DRP and if their advice was adhered to by the Design Team. Not publicising this makes us skeptical that the DRP approved of the overall design and just going through the process should not be deemed a positive in planning terms.

We are concerned that the development company will be asking too higher rents for all of the retail units, thus excluding any independent business. If this could be written into the conditions to have a % at below market rates, or if some of the S106 could be used to subsidise local business this would be advantageous to the local community

Route through at pavement level should not be gated. These areas should be deemed public and not a pseudo public area. Crime is reduced around building such as Central St Giles by opening up corners with obtuse angles and glazing. This model of designing out crime should be replicated here.

Roof terraces to Castlewood House and Medius House should have a condition imposed to limit their use to certain hours as this could cause significant disturbance to residential properties within the local area.

The BMU should not be allowed to be altered with a NMA/MMA. Having this in a concealed position is the best solution to a clean roofscape and should not be altered after permission has been granted.

We acknowledge and support the comments regarding noise submitted by CGCA.

The SBTRA object to the proposals in their current form and hope that the case officer will reject the current plans as they stand.

Kind Regards,

Tom Hayes

Committee Member of the South Bloomsbury Tenants & Residence Association (SBTRA)