**Comments from Bloomsbury CAAC on the application for 41 Russell Square 2018/3864/P**

We apologise for the delayed submission of these comments.

We have found the application difficult to process principally because the individual drawings are not labelled – we don’t have time to open successively a long list of drawings hoping to find the particular one sought.

We have not succeeded in finding drawings relevant to the alterations at basement level.

The Heritage Statement is lightweight considering the size and importance of the building – we could have done with less general bumf about the area and more information specific to the building. For example it does not say when the building in the garden marked as Kitchen in the 1926 drawing was added.

**While we have no objection in principle to the application, we have one major objection, the glazing over of the rear lightwell and the opening up of the original rear wall here and the incorporation into one continuous space of the additional structure in the garden**.

The British Museum’s new building on Montague Place was justified in planning terms on the basis that the Georgian buildings on the east and west side of the main building, acquired by the Museum in the early 20th century, were unsuitable for modern museum use. If this is the case, there is no excuse for further altering no 41 Russell Square to make it more convenient for office use. (We are also surprised that the Museum expects to be allowed by the Government to retain the rent on 41 Russell Square if the building is surplus to its own requirements; this is not the case for example with the houses on the east side of Bedford Square, where the rent, we understand, goes directly to the Treasury.)

To go into a little more detail about the basement planning, the largest room in the original basement, with a wide chimney breast at the back of the original house, is the original kitchen. To cut this room off from open air and light by turning it into part of an open walk-through office will prejudice the possibility of its ever being returned to its original use.

The large room in the garden, labelled in the 1926 plan as Kitchen and evidently a later addition, appears currently to be an airy and pleasant space. It also should be allowed to keep its character and integrity.

In general more effort needs to be put into restoring the character of the garden area, and adding to its environmental value. For example, the surviving flower bed could be used for a tree which could be allowed grow to full-size, like the delightful limes along the surviving original garden perimeter at the back of the houses on the west side of Montague Street.

Although the steps and railings up to the roof of the additional Kitchen appear to be original, the current railings around the roof of this building are ugly and should be improved.

In general, however, particularly at ground floor and above, we find the proposal sympathetic to the original building.  We welcome the renewal of the services and the plan to accommodate them much more discreetly.  Ad hoc ugly services are a feature of all buildings which the British Museum itself has been using.

Hero Granger-Taylor, committee member, Bloomsbury CAAC, bcaac@hughcullum.com, 13th November 2018.