

I am writing to object to the application for Listed Building Consent to convert the 1st to 3rd floors of 53-55 Monmouth Street, otherwise known as 2 Ching Court, from office to residential use.

The proposed site is on the West side of the Ching Court triangle and I live on the East side. As this is a listed building application my concerns are related to the impact of the proposed development on the setting of my own listed building and the impact on their setting, namely Ching Court as a whole. Ching Court was, as the applicant has pointed out, an extensive mixed use redevelopment in the 1980's by Terry Farrell. Pevsner's Buildings of England: London 4 North describes it as an "ingenious and tactful scheme". As someone who has lived here for 25 years I can confirm that it is very ingenious and that a significant part of that ingenuity is the way in which the uses relate to one another. This is a significant feature which would be forever lost if this application was permitted.

Ching Court contains a mix of A1, B1 and C3 uses. Farrell's design has B1 offices at upper levels on the West side with C3 flats on the South side and C3 houses on the East. This means that the offices look over the rear of the houses and vice-versa. As the offices are occupied during the day this means that the houses and flats are not overlooked at the rear at night. This gives the occupants a sense of privacy which is not common in City Centre locations.

In addition the fact that the Courtyard is used during the day as an entrance for the offices but is not used at night means that it is effectively policed during the day by workers and those visiting the offices but can be kept unoccupied at night. This prevents it being used as a location for illegal and anti-social activity which is rife in the area. The fact of this activity is referred to by the same applicant and agent in 2018/0371/P, an application for the installation of a gate at the South entrance to the courtyard.

This combination of the absence of overlooking at the rear of the residential properties and the daytime policing of the space are both important features of the original ingenious design by Farrell. The conversion of the upper floors of 53-55 Monmouth Street will result in a significant change to this aspect of the design and so will harm the amenity of the existing residential uses and the setting of their buildings, all of which are now listed.

The applicant's letter makes reference to the approval of 2010/6158/P for a similar conversion of 57-59 Monmouth Street and seeks to use this as a reason why this application should be approved. The application for this conversion has since lapsed and the more recent renewal of the Listed Building Consent associated with it pointed out that it a new application was now required. With the recent listing of the whole of Ching Court as a "masterly exercise in placemaking" (according to Historic England in their listing documents) the fact that there is an existing permission should not influence the decision on this application. In this case two wrongs do not make a right.

