

NEUROLOGY & DEMENTIA RESEARCH CENTRE

SUMMARY - HOW THE HUGE BENEFIT OFFERED BY THE PROJECT CAN STILL BE DELIVERED WITHOUT LOSING THE ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL COURTYARD.

All the parties consulted recognise the huge public benefit of the project and the planning weight that it carries. I have been in contact with the relevant officers of the Victorian Society and Heritage England and this has been a factor in moderating their comments on the proposals.

However, *Historic England* have nonetheless objected to the proposal and the *Victorian Society* regrets the loss of the courtyard. This is also, alongside the excessive height and bulk, the chief objection of the BCAAC.

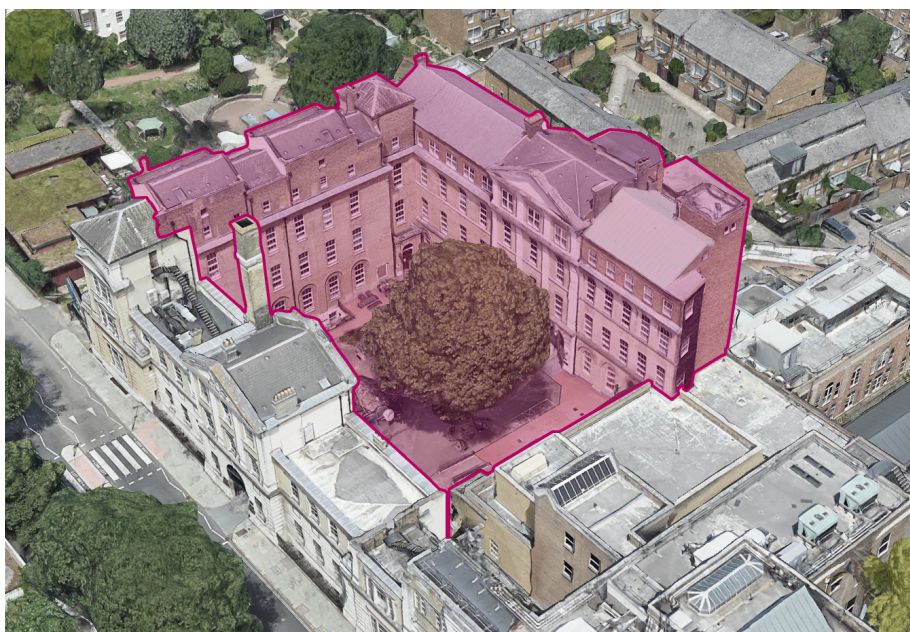
During the consultation HE were shown a number of options and unfortunately the one which was selected by the client team for development and submission was not their favoured option which would have preserved the courtyard.

We suggest that if the brief was reduced to omit the mathematics facility (which is not core to the functions on the site) this preferred option (option two) could and should be delivered. This would entail a delay of some months and the redesign of the proposals costing probably a few hundreds of thousands of pounds.

But set against the value and benefit of this huge scheme over the next decades these are relatively minor considerations. Furthermore they cannot be compared to the loss of an irreplaceable heritage asset which makes such a strong contribution (the words of Historic England) to the Conservation Area.

It should also be pointed out to councillors that, because of a critical error in Camden's Conservation Area Appraisal, the courtyard has ended up neither 'listed' by HE nor designated as a positive contributor by Camden. In fact it has no protected status at all and this unfortunate fact has been very demonstrably (see below) used by the applicants to justify its demolition.

We urge councillors to recommend that the scheme is resubmitted showing the retention of the courtyard. To allow its demolition would be something hugely regretted in the years to come. Heritage assets are irreplaceable and we owe their preservation to future generations.



Bird's eye view of the courtyard showing heritage asset loss



Current view of Courtyard Entrance

CONCLUSION

The BCAAC object strongly to this proposal because of the serious harm it would cause to the Conservation Area. It is too big, views from the CA are harmed and the loss of the

courtyard and historic inner facades of the former Royal Free Hospital is unnecessary and completely unacceptable.

BLOOMSBURY CONSERVATION AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE OBJECTION TO PROPOSALS FOR EASTMAN DENTAL HOSPITAL AND FORMER ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL. - 2019/2879/P ETC.

THE LOSS OF THE ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL COURTYARD

The chief objection of the BCAAC to the proposed scheme for the Eastman Dental Hospital site is the loss of the Royal Free Hospital courtyard facades and footprint.

This was also a major concern of Heritage England and the Victorian Society. In fact HE were consulted during the design process and, presented with a number of options,

recommended one for the designers to pursue whereupon they went ahead and developed one of the options that HE considered least acceptable. As a result EH are objecting to this application.

The courtyard makes a strong contribution to the CA and it would be tragic to lose it.



Current view of Courtyard Entrance showing heritage asset loss



Proposed view of Courtyard Entrance

THE SERIOUS ERROR AND BIASED JUDGEMENT ON WHICH THE DEMOLITION OF THE COURTYARD IS JUSTIFIED

The Design and Access statement (D&A statement) from the applicant reveals that the proposal to demolish the courtyard of the Royal Free Hospital (RFH) is justified because it is of 'limited architectural interest'. This assessment is based on a serious error in Camden's Conservation Area (CA) designation list. The courtyard is actually of such value as a heritage asset

that Camden, on their CA map of subsection 14, mistakenly show the courtyard as 'listed' along with the Burnet Tait Dental hospital next door. As a result of this error the RFH is not registered as a 'positive contributor' either on the map or in the list. In fact it has no protective status at all. This has been confirmed by the case officer.

Letter from Case Officer

Yes you are correct, neither the former Royal Free Hospital nor the Levy Wing are identified as being positive contributors in the appraisal document. [...] The fact that the former Royal Free Hospital is not identified as a positive contributor is peculiar, but officers consider that it does contribute positively to the CA. Alan Baxter's, who you have copied in, do not dispute this and also consider it to be as you say a 'positive building'. So while the document does not formally recognise the building as a positive contributor the Council, applicant and Historic England have all treated it as such. Therefore notwithstanding any error in the CA appraisal, the former Royal Free Hospital is being treated with a special status and whether or not the building is actually in the appraisal has not had any bearing on the amount of weight we've it in the planning process."

The officer has assured the BCAAC that the courtyard has been treated 'as though it was a positive contributor'. However, this is not the case as demonstrated firstly in the applicant's D&A statement, which states that the courtyard is 'not listed as a

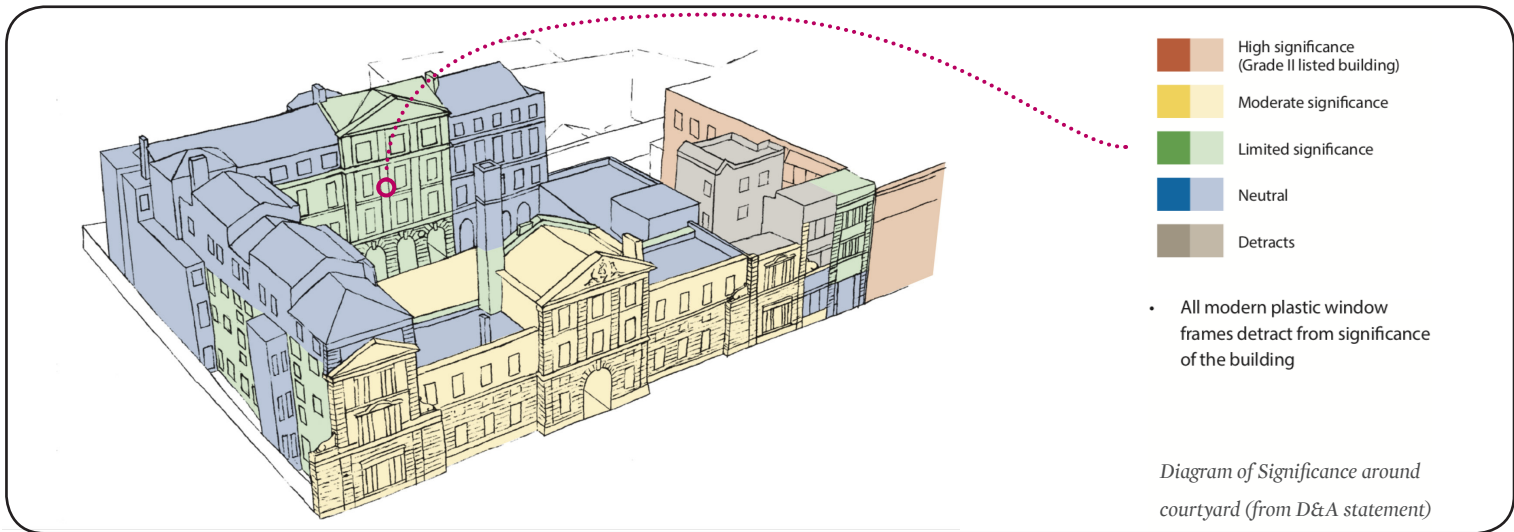
positive contributor' and secondly in the disregard with which the courtyard is proposed to be demolished. There are certain duties of care with respect to a designated positive contributor amongst which is to retain as much historic fabric as possible.

"Both the former Royal Free Hospital and Eastman Dental Clinic have a strong presence on Gray's Inn Road. The elegant composition, although marred by the loss of the former Royal Free Hospital's southern pediment wing, contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area. (However, the Conservation Area Audit's 'Built -Heritage Audit' does not list the former Royal Free Hospital as a positive contributor to sub area 14)

From D&A statement

The criteria for 'degree of heritage value' are then set out in the D&A statement and 'not listed as positive' means that the asset is of 'limited significance'. Not surprisingly the courtyard and the buildings surrounding it are, as demonstrated in the diagram below, shown shaded green because they are deemed of 'limited significance' ie. dispensable when they should, if they were genuinely being treated as positive, be of moderate significant like the main frontage (shaded yellow). That this limited significance should be proposed by the Heritage Consultant is disingenuous to say the least and that it should then be tacitly agreed by Camden's conservation team is extraordinary. The applicant should have been asked to correct this error.

The buildings of the east wing, including the pedimented block, are largely complete and original and the facades are in good condition. Most of the fabric dates from 1855 to 1879. The applicant tries to make the case that they are less valuable because they are a 'hotch-potch' but the historic alteration and addition to a heritage asset has never been a reason to downgrade it. In this case the different phases of building actually bear witness to the development of medical science during the C19 and the strength and resilience of the courtyard form.



The following more detailed assessments of significance of the buildings across the site use the following scale:

High significance: Original or historic space or area of fabric of the Grade-II listed building that is in good condition and holds high innate architectural, artistic or historic interest of its past use or demonstrates the development of hospital architectural design; principal elevations of the listed building

Moderate significance: Historic fabric that holds innate architectural, artistic or historic interest of its past use; principal elevations of unlisted buildings that positively contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area

Limited significance: Historic fabric that has been altered or is an addition but that has some architectural, artistic or historic interest when viewed in the wider context of the building and of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area

Neutral: Historic or more recent fabric that is of no architectural, artistic or historic interest value but does not obscure the significance of the building or the Bloomsbury Conservation Area

Detracts: Fabric that obscures the wider significance of the building or the Bloomsbury Conservation Area

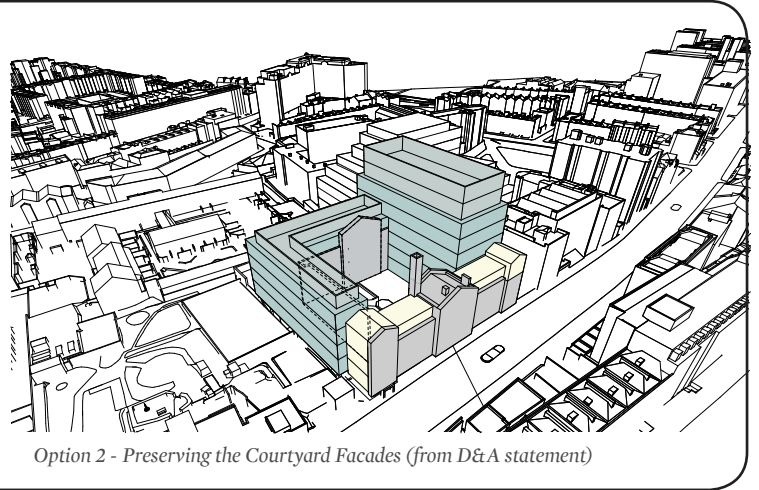
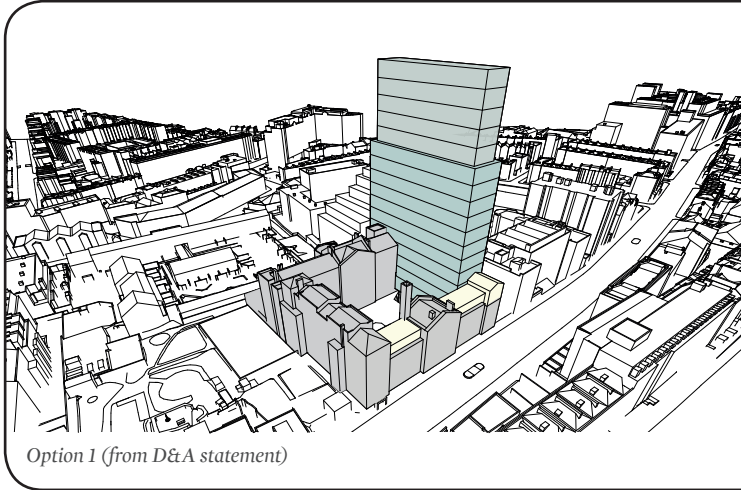
Chart showing how significance is derived (from D&A statement)

THE OPTIONS APPRAISALS PRESENTED BY THE APPLICANT

The options appraisals are all based on the erroneous assumption that the site can accommodate the excessive square-footage that the applicant deems necessary for the 'critical mass' of the scheme. In fact all these option studies do is to vividly demonstrate that the site is too limited. As a result most of the options are not real options at all just rather fatuous cartoons showing totally unacceptable proposals.

Furthermore, we do not accept that the flexible academic

space (plot 3), whose end occupant is not even specified with certainty in the D&A statement, really needs to be on this particular site. Its inclusion increases the total area required in the brief by roughly 4,800 SqM or around 16%. If this were left out of the brief and the remaining functions distributed sensibly over the site the building could be less high and bulky and the RFH courtyard could be preserved. In effect we would have a slimmed down version of option two which preserves the RFH courtyard.



THE STYLE OF THE PROPOSALS

The style of the proposals is geared to presenting the new buildings as new and modern in form and materials, reflecting the state-of-the-art world-class facilities within. The proposed new entrance visible through the arch from Gray's Inn Road, for example, will replace the current early Victorian stone and brick with a see-through plate glass entrance.

We do not want a pastiche building but we see no reason why the new buildings should not show greater sensitivity towards the historic setting of the listed assets at least in terms of materials and solid to void ratio. Instead the proposals are a rather ordinary take on the style of current office developments.



View from Gray's Inn Road showing excessive bulk of the current proposal (from D&A statement)



View of the proposed Courtyard showing excessive height (from D&A statement)