
From: Jo Rhys Jones [REDACTED]
Sent: 04 October 2019 12:45
To: Planning
Cc: Harrison, Adam (Councillor)
Subject: Application Number: 2019/3961/P - Boston House, 36-38 Fitzroy Square

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I am writing to object to the above planning application. Although the application is in the name of the New College of Humanities, this small college was purchased earlier this year by Northeastern University, a large private US university of 26,000 students. They already have some 600 students in London each year (according to their president). So it is likely that even in the short term there will at times be 800 students operating from the proposed 'campus'. Their intention is for this to increase to at least 1200. The offices previously at this address housed about 200 workers, so there would be three or four times the number of people using this building in the short term, and six times the number of people in a year or two – an extra 1000 people. Even if they are not all there all of the time, this is a huge increase in people using this space. The statistics they have used for 'access card use' applied to the increased numbers of 1200 students and 95 staff would result in 363 access cards used daily in Boston House, but in actuality it is likely to be much more as currently most of the American students are not there in January (when they did their survey). It is worth noting that the proposal would however *reduce* the number of *jobs* at this site by about half.

Fitzroy Square is currently a real jewel in the borough of Camden, and is in a conservation area. It is largely pedestrianised and therefore quiet for a central London square, particularly at weekends when there is little office activity in the square and surrounding areas. The buildings on the square are currently occupied at approaching 50:50 by residents and relatively small-scale offices (and **not** "predominantly office use" as stated in the applicant's Planning Statement).

We are residents at no 2, one of the nearer houses to the site. Despite this, we were not aware of the 'consultation' which apparently took place for a few hours on one day in July. As residents, we are very concerned that a large number of students passing through this university will fundamentally alter the entire nature and ambience of this peaceful square. It is notable that Boston House has no access other than across the pedestrianised square, and that all deliveries would have to be made via the front entrance. They mention 5-10 deliveries a day currently – this is surely likely to multiply with the increase in numbers of students and staff. The pedestrianised nature of the square will be endangered.

They also, as they say themselves, have no outside space at Boston House for all these students – Council policy would require nearly 900 sqm of outdoor space to support a university facility of this size. They refer to the garden in the square, but this is private, maintained at the expense of the Frontagers, and opened to the public at lunchtime in summer – when it already gets very busy. Frontagers have access to the private garden at other times, but it will certainly not be possible to allow hundreds of students to have access without the garden being ruined for all the residents and office stakeholders who currently use it, and also the public who benefit from its summer opening.

They say that do not intend to provide "large internal or external areas on site for social interaction where students are likely to congregate" but the students will inevitably congregate somewhere and will need to wait for their lectures, have their breaks and lunches somewhere – and this will therefore end up being in the square. On sunny days we already have to fight our way through people sitting on our doorsteps. This would get far worse if this proposal succeeds.

The hours of operation of the university are stated to be up to 10pm on weekdays, and 10-5pm at weekends, with a social event once a month until midnight – again this is a considerable increase on previous office usage and will endanger the quiet enjoyment of the square by its many residents. There are quite a number of small children living in the square, and residents are very concerned about the social event, which has the potential to create a lot of noise and bad behaviour.

Although they say that there have been no complaints from Bedford Square in the past, that square is almost exclusively a business environment and far busier with traffic - and the college there was considerably smaller than that proposed here (only 200 students). A friend who works on Bedford Square says that although most of the time the college has not been a problem, at graduation "the entire central garden is taken over for at least a week, with tents, catering vans and droves of people". So if it is their intention to use the much smaller Fitzroy Square garden for

much larger graduation events (as they say they would like to do), this would have a large detrimental effect for all other occupiers of the square – possibly for several weeks as it is hard to see how the increased numbers would otherwise fit.

The Planning Statement in the application says that "The site is located within 500 metres of Kings Cross and is situated in an area identified by the Camden Local Plan as "The Knowledge Quarter"". In fact, Kings Cross itself is more than a mile - 1600 metres - away, and even the nearest boundary of Kings Cross ward is rather more than 500 metres. The Knowledge Quarter is centred on Kings Cross and is not generally thought to encompass our area. This is not a good argument for destroying the ambience of this beautiful square. They talk of community involvement but please note that this is a private university for largely American students. It is hard to see how it is going to be of any benefit to the community, and will certainly not benefit other occupiers of this square.

I hope that you will put the needs of local residents and businesses first, as well as the interests of the conservation area and this historic square, and reject this application.

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