
From: Griff Rhys Jones [REDACTED]
Sent: 04 October 2019 14:42
To: Planning
Cc: Harrison, Adam (Councillor)
Subject: Application Number: 2019/3961/P - Boston House, 36-38 Fitzroy Square

Application Number: 2019/3961/P

I write in relation to the application for change of use for the Boston House premises in Fitzroy Square.

There are worrying inaccuracies in the application. They do not seem to understand that there would be considerable repercussions for the other occupants of this quiet, listed square, if this essentially over-ambitious scheme were permitted to be implemented.

The commercial premises in Fitzroy Square currently keep regular standard office hours and are rarely open at weekends. They do not produce a huge footfall or presence.

For this reason, the square is now fifty per cent residential and likely to become more so. There are children and families living here, whose lives would be disrupted by this proposed intrusion.

The college would constitute a complete change of use and character for the entire square despite occupying a tiny proportion of its buildings.

This is for the following reasons.

They have changed their application, with the number of students outlined being under-accounted at first, and in actuality likely to exceed their current estimates to somewhere in the region of 1,200.

Their premises in Bedford Square, often quoted in their proposal, has a much smaller student population, a sixth of the proposed size of this busy new college.

Fitzroy Square is not a campus and will not be suitable for use by hundreds of students, sitting on the residents' steps, eating their lunch, congregating between lectures, playing ball games and other things that students inevitably and blamelessly do.

The application says itself:

41. The nature of the D1 use is as an administrative headquarters and teaching location. **The building does not have large internal or external areas on site for social interaction where students are likely to congregate** before or after teaching periods. No students are to reside on site and students/teaching staff would shortly arrive before and depart after classes.

Re-read that. They mean they do not have the areas where students *can* congregate. They give the impression that the students will seamlessly walk into the building. Of course they won't. They must arrive early and then will have nowhere to wait for lessons except in the square. Nowhere to eat, smoke or chat except in the square.

The Bedford Square premises are 700 square meters and accommodate 200 students.

Boston House is only two and a half times bigger in size, but the stated intention is to take *six times* the students. And a similar increase in teaching staff and ancillary staff. All without areas to congregate except outside in the square.

The proposal includes disruption at graduation time, with the college intending to "use the garden" for their graduation ceremonies.

But this is necessary to them, because they will not and never can have the right premises and facilities within the building for a college of this size and ambition. It must perforce burst its borders, occupy the square for congregation and traffic, and cause nuisance and annoyance to neighbours in a quiet residential area.

The offices are actually not deep. They have only frontal access, they have wholly inadequate circulation areas and no large meeting spaces, so they will not be able to function without mass comings or goings, including deliveries, using the pedestrianised square itself for these purposes. You can't have school without a playground, or an assembly hall or recreation areas or big corridors for class changes. Nor can you have a college.

It will inevitably have to take over the square itself for its day-to-day purposes. Not just graduation ceremonies, but fire drills, pre-lecture gatherings while the classrooms are occupied by other people, break times, meal times and so forth. There will be constant crowding and noise in the square because one thousand two hundred students will have nowhere else to go.

If this college were the principal occupant of the square then the excessive intrusion on this beautiful and quiet residential square might be inevitable. But they would occupy less than a thirteenth of the square's frontage and propose to dominate most of the space.

The college intends to operate until ten pm at night. No other premises in the square does this.

Most worryingly, they want to have licenced social events at least once a month - in a residential square. There has been no mention of amplified music, neither control or prevention, but in whatever form these social events take, midnight dispersal of any crowd through the square is liable to be a nuisance to those sleeping there. "Security" cannot prevent noise and disruption. It sometimes exacerbates it.

The applicants have not run a proper consultation as they claim. Giving other residents the chance to point these things out.

They are not within or even near the "King's Cross Knowledge Quarter" as they state. They would be much better placed to seek accommodation there.

Hence this need to write and object.

I would urge you to pay due consideration to the flaws in this application and reject it.

Yours sincerely,

Griff Rhys Jones OBE

President, the Victorian Society
President, Civic Voice