

**From:** Kay Williams  
**Sent:** 29 June 2020 10:03  
**To:** Planning  
**Subject:** Proposed Revised Planning Application for Boston House Fitzroy Square

FAO : Rachel English

Dear Rachel English

**Proposed Change of Use : Boston House, Fitzroy Square and County Hall Revised Application**

I am writing to you once again in your role as Planning Officer for Camden following the revised application in connection with the above buildings in Fitzroy Square with the additional proposed use of County Hall behind it which, as a local serviced office provider and employer, I find alarming.

I have studied the details on the planning portal and can determine that this new application is substantially larger (circa 30%) but is essentially the same application but with the addition of County Hall . Furthermore, it appears that NCH has been taken over by Northeastern University which is a private US institution with approximately 25,000 students attending, and therefore is no longer an independent college located in Camden.

The addition of County Hall to this application gives a true understanding of what is to come. The loss of the long established accountancy school premises which has been operating for many years here and its proposed change of use to offices from education gives us a glimpse of the size of this proposed operation which will sweep aside and overwhelm the character of the Square. The applicant admits that there is no office tenant take up at this time. Such a decision will drastically reduce the number of jobs by probably half in the Square.

A large educational establishment set in a Conservation Area is a wholly inappropriate use for these buildings which should be used predominantly for office use as they have been for many years. Business users leave the Square at the end of the day and there is a perfect synergy between the business and residential use.

As things stand, it seems that eventually circa 1200 students will be roving around the Square constantly, including weekends, thus causing a great deal of noise, litter and greater wear and tear on the local environment. The Square will then become a University campus with all its attendant disruption for both the local residents and the businesses. As I understand it, there is no proposed restriction on days and hours of operation which clearly will extend into the evenings as well as the weekends thus exacerbating the nuisance level for the residents and the local businesses.

As a major business owner based in Fitzroy Square, I am extremely concerned that NCH/Northeastern's new application is demonstrably the thin end of the wedge and that Northeastern are hiding behind NCH in an effort to push this new application through. This is without a shadow of a doubt a commercial profit-making establishment in the first instance and an educational establishment in the second and its presence within the confines of this beautiful Georgian Square is a wholly inappropriate use. Fitzroy Square is part of a Conservation Area and it is my understanding that planning policy strongly seeks to enhance such areas as their character depends on how such areas are used and preserved.

As we know, the sole purpose of this University is to bring in fee paying students from the USA and therefore manifestly there is no advantage or contribution towards our own student further education and offers no benefit to the local population with no proposed community use. NCH when located in Bedford Square offered scholarships to local young students but I cannot see any proposal for this to continue under the new aegis and therefore it offers no opportunity to widen the educational opportunities for the young of Camden.

Boston House is a Grade 1 listed building and prime office space totalling 5600 sq. feet and has been so for many many years. Camden's policy has always been to resist the loss of office space and surely the policy should apply to this prime office accommodation. There is mention that some of Boston House would be used for ancillary office purposes but, of course, this use can be changed without notification and in any event what is the likelihood of a business taking office space in a building which is full of noisy students. Nowhere in this application is there a statement which makes a case that Boston House could be reoccupied solely for office purposes. Why not?

My view is that it is quite disingenuous to claim that there is no demand at Boston House for office use. As a local business operator in the Square and a big contributor to the business rates, I would strongly disagree with this statement. I am on the sharp end and I know and understand the demand for office space here. Regardless of the COVID 19 pandemic there is a soaring and strong demand for office space on Fitzroy Square and the surrounding areas with an inherent necessity to safeguard the existing office space to support businesses of all sizes, particularly SMEs.

I have no doubt that there would be ready demand for office use of the buildings and from my experience of letting serviced office space on Fitzroy Square for 15 years, I have little doubt that there will be high demand for the office space at Boston House. It is a fact that generally office space employs more people per square metre than educational establishments.

On the other hand, if the buildings become an educational "campus" not only would fewer people be employed here but the quiet/productive/professional atmosphere of the Square would be compromised and changed. I can imagine that some companies would decide to remove themselves on that basis as what they signed up for would no longer be on offer.

An educational establishment of some 1000 students milling around the Square at all hours of the day and night with the attendant noise, litter and general melee would be hugely detrimental for both the businesses and residential environment. The area would be simply overwhelmed by this fundamental change and would lead to the loss of its character and unique setting. Furthermore, I can see no mention of a proposed outdoor space to support the revised application. I believe it was considered by the applicant that the Garden in the Square could be used but this is private property and not available for such purposes. Of course should this application be granted then it is likely that the students would find their way into the Garden anyway as I cannot believe there would be any control over their activities outside of the buildings.

As I have already advised in my previous communication to you, I am a joint owner of 10 Fitzroy Limited which commenced trading in September 2004 at No 10 Fitzroy Square as a serviced office provider and now operates 4 buildings within the confines of the Square providing a total office space of approximately 20,000 square feet. Our buildings have been lovingly restored and are kept pristine and in keeping with their Georgian heritage.

As can be determined from the above, the demand for office space has grown steadily over the past 15 years. Our predominant tenants are SME's in various professional businesses, start-ups, project offices, lawyers, accountants, property developers, high end recruiters, therapists and transfers from other serviced office providers. But in every case these businesses employ between 2 and 20 employees with the majority of our tenants having been in situ for several years and some as long as 10 years or more. These businesses contribute not only to the local economy, cafes and restaurants, but more generally to the economy. For your information, all but 2 of our tenants have renewed their 12-month licences with us regardless of the current pandemic which gives a good indication that what we offer here is relevant and important to the local economy and the demand is still relevant and required.

The requirement for conventional office space in this area is high due to its central location and excellent transport links both north south east and west and the current level of interest is more than we can accommodate. **Therefore, the loss of employment space in the Square may well have a negative effect on employers and their businesses in this locality.**

The Square offers businesses a unique and tranquil environment with the benefit of a beautiful garden, operated by the Fitzroy Square Frontagers Committee that is beneficial both mentally and physically for the wellbeing of the people who work in this immediate vicinity and further afield. From May to September the Garden and the Square itself is a magnet for local workers who flock here to relax and enjoy the beautiful ambiance and setting. If it is overtaken by 1000 marauding loud students this gem will be lost forever.

I feel strongly that Northeastern University has not listened at any point to the grave concerns of the local residents and businesses that populate the Square and surrounding areas. It has ignored our objections and made no effort to redress our concerns but instead has now increased the proposal with the inclusion of County Hall.

I believe this lack of consideration for the residents and the businesses in the locale indicates that should this application be granted the commercial profit driven desire to establish a University Campus in a wholly inappropriate area will destroy Fitzroy Square's unique character and the businesses that occupy and thrive in many of the buildings will depart thus reducing further the office space availability that is vital to keep the balance between residential and commercial enterprise and support the local economy.

Yours sincerely,

Kay Williams  
Director