**18 Fitzroy Square**

**London W1T 6EQ**

27 July 2020

Dear Ms English,

Objection to Applications 2020/2226/P, 2020/2606/L, 2020/2319/P (Boston House 36-38 Fitzroy Square W1T 6EY and County House Conway Mews WIT 6AA).

**Summary**: This is an e-mail objecting to the planned applications referred to above. The proposed project offers no public benefits whatsoever and all stakeholders, residents, businesses and the Council itself will suffer from the imposition of a university campus on Fitzroy Square. The applicants have not addressed any of the concerns raised by businesses and residents in their 2019 application which was identical to the current one except for the proposed land use swap. In fact, the current proposal is now even larger and more inappropriate, with its addition of County House**.** I am reiterating most of the points I made last year in my letter to you dated 4th October 2020 together with additional ones arising out of the proposed increased size and deal structure.

**The proposed 3-property use swap is fundamentally flawed**: Roger Hepher (HGH Consulting), planning consultant, made the point in his letter that the applicants have no control over what happens to the Bedford Square property; and this was reinforced by the opinion from Andrew Bypass, barrister from Landmark Chambers (attached). Furthermore, the Bedford Estate, which owns the freehold, have now confirmed that they would not wish the property to return to B1, which completely sinks the swap proposition. As an aside, the changes to the Use Classes Order announced this week won't help the applicants. Educational use and B1 will remain in different Use Classes.

**A private university campus with no community use**: from information available on the internet or from gathering facts elsewhere, NCH has been in effect taken over by Northeastern University, a university with 26000 students looking for a London campus for its “study abroad” programme for its US students, i.e. an outpost for academic tourism. The claim made on behalf of the applicant that NCH was a good neighbour on Bedford Square is therefore irrelevant as well as disingenuous as it is in effect Northeastern which will be in situ, a different entity altogether. There is no community use proposed as part of this private university campus.

Please find here articles and posts relating to the culture and financial health of NCH which can explain why it needed to be taken over.

<https://twitter.com/chrisjparr/status/1245719828557631489?s=21>

<https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-he-agencies-hesa-2020-4-increasing-number-of-universities-report-deficit-before-pandemic/>

**The substantial nature of the operation is still downplayed and is out of proportion with the Square**: In terms of numbers, that probably means 800 students to start with (200 NCH students plus 600 Northeastern students sent for the “study abroad programme”) and aiming at 1200 students (but with no cap on numbers), as well as 60/90 employees. This development will dwarf any business entity already in or just around the Square and will be on a totally different scale to ARUP and WATG, the previous operating businesses. It represents a six fold increase in numbers compared to the Bedford Square operation in a Square which is approximately half the size.

**No outside space provided:** The beauty and the peace of this magnificent Square are two of the most attractive features of the Square for businesses as well as for residents. As there is no obvious outside place for students to relax in between lectures, they will congregate on the pavement in front of the building, with possibly unsocial habits such as smoking, littering, creating noise, all activities which cannot in any way, shape or form enhance the life of workers or residents. The applicant mentioned the garden: it is not available for their use and even if it were, it would not diminish the issues raised above. This is before mentioning the bicycles, e-bikes or otherwise, which will be parked across the Square, as not enough space is being provided by the applicant in light of the size of the operation envisaged. The new campus will have no restrictions on days and hours of operation, and education uses typically extend into evenings and weekends.

**36-38 Fitzroy Square should remain as offices:** The proposal results in a net loss of 521sqm (5,600sqft) of office space. This is a large amount of space and should be resisted. Fitzroy Square is a highly sought after address for businesses, as demonstrated by their diversity as well as their numbers. It is a Grade I listed magnificent building, already converted for the purpose of office life and the Council should insist that it continues as such, providing employment to many and being used in a benign manner during office hours as it has always been, for the benefit of the community. The applicants say that some of Boston House would be used for office purposes too. However, this is disingenuous, because such "ancillary" office use can be extinguished at any time, without the need for planning permission.

**The proposal is not transparent** as it would force out an accountancy college that has been operating quietly and unobtrusively for many years in County House; the applicants, however, admit that there is no office tenant in sight for County House, and the same implicitly applies to the Bedford Square premises. The applicants suggest that Fitzroy Square is part of the King’s Cross "Knowledge Quarter", in order to justify what they propose. This is wrong. The Knowledge Quarter is focussed on King’s Cross station, 500m away.

**The Conservation Area and its special qualities are threatened.** Businesses and residents happily cohabit in the Square: we all take pride in maintaining its appearance and ambiance and, with the help of the Council and some unemployed people with whom we partner, we keep the Square as clean as we can. Hence its desirability for film sets which bring revenue to the Council and other manifestations organised in the Square. This careful balance where everyone seems to have found their place will be upset with the imposition of a campus in its midst. Some businesses have already indicated that they will be rethinking their long-term plan should Fitzroy Square become a university campus.

**There will be a major increase in the number of deliveries**: it is claimed on behalf of the applicant that there will be no more deliveries than currently is the case for NCH on Bedford Square. This cannot stand scrutiny. How can an institution planning a six fold increase in use pretend that there will be no increase in supplies and therefore of deliveries as a result? In addition to what is needed for a university to run on a daily basis, there will be supplies for the likely cafeterias for the students; all entail daily replenishments and therefore a multiple increase in the number of deliveries, probably out of hours in order to minimise disruptions to staff and students during the day. Not only this is a threat to the peace and tranquillity of the Square, but it reverses the benefit of having a pedestrianised Square which took years and great expense to achieve.

**Northeastern University has failed to listen to residents’ concerns:** None of the concerns raised by residents and businesses when the applicants consulted on the first application have been addressed by Northeastern/NCH**.**

I would like therefore to ask the Council to reject the planning application for all the reasons listed above.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Bruce