

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2020/2582/L	Malcolm Linforth-Jones	20/08/2020 14:34:16	OBJ	<p>Dear Camden Council Planning Committee</p> <p>(Planning Application for 24-26 West Street)</p> <p>I would like to begin by saying thank you for the opportunity for Camden residents, businesses and neighbours to comment on planning for a building that is in such an important historical part of London, and so significant for many people.</p> <p>As a keen historian and local Camden resident, I would like to please make these below comments for your consideration of the local residents about the planning application on 24-26 West St, Covent Garden.</p> <p>West St falls on the boundary between Camden and Westminster, and this area and neighbourhood has for hundreds of years been a little hidden gem and a magnet for a diversely unique blend of residents &amp; characters.</p> <p><b>HERITAGE VALUE &amp; RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE:</b>  This former Methodist (All Saints) Chapel was built around 1700, and hugely important as it was John Wesley's first Methodist Chapel &amp; Burial crypt in the West End.  For hundreds of years the building in question was created and built as a place of worship, ceremonies and burials used by the local community for generations. During its time as a Christian church, 26 West St was also a community outreach post, which acted on behalf on the church providing education, teaching and space for those underprivileged.</p> <p>Sadly this significant Wesley Methodist Chapel building was damaged extensively in the Blitz in WW2, leaving only the West street facade street but also the sacred crypt area. Over the following years, it was subsequently rebuilt and renovated, going on to become a new secular space still with benefits for the local community, becoming West St Dance Studios, where Princess Diana was a patron.</p> <p>Historic places of worship have been community spaces for generations and I believe they should continue to be so. Inevitably this former chapel building has been rearranged over its lifetime, but I believe at this unprecedented time in our country history, with such huge changes happening, this should be an opportunity for Camden Council to be able to once again provide a community space and give something back to the residents, business and visitors to this very special historical area. These significant places should be restored and managed to sustain the historic environment, its values and be benefit for all, not the only elite.</p> <p>The application to use this building for private offices, or to be eventually leased long term by a large corporation, would be taking away any offer of benefit to the public community. As well as keeping in mind this current pandemic times globally and the change in the way people are working in their local areas, it could be likely that this listed building could sit empty for years following the proposed redevelopment, benefitting no one. This would be a real waste of an opportunity for Camden council to be able to provide something like a community project, centre or space in this beautiful building. This could bring life and be extremely important and useful for the community spirit and wellbeing of the local residents, especially struggling with the aftermath of the post COVID and Brexit economy.</p> <p><b>CRYPT &amp; ACCESS FOR BICYCLE STORAGE:</b></p>

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Part of this application that I object to specifically, is the application to install a bicycle storage in the crypt below this listed chapel building. The crypt could also be considered sacred ground and religiously significant to members of the faith, and this application could cause harm to the special historic, archaeological and architectural of the building, its contents and setting. This part of the building is one of the only original surviving areas, and the idea that this will become a place for bicycle storage, with people blocking movement on the pavement with bicycles entering and exiting this original chapel door. It would become a risk for pedestrian safety especially the narrow and often busy pavement, and with such close proximity to the multiple fire exit doors from the adjacent Ambassador's theatre. At peak times in the early evening when there are usually hundreds of people walking down West St attending both theatres on the street, this could become a health and safety risk to the public, with cars driving down on a tight and narrow road with car parking opposite and a bicycle lane coming the opposite direction. All on a very narrow street, this would be impossible for the public to manage safely.

But with continued very frequent developments all around with disturbance and the noise pollution this brings to the neighbours & businesses living and working in the area, and sadly the outcome of these developments often bring little or no benefits for this community once completed.

So on behalf of the diverse community of local residents living in and around West St, we appreciate Camden Councils continued consideration of the many integral changes that are crucial to this significant historical area and its buildings, businesses that define its culture, identity, past, present and future.

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