

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2020/3881/P	John Chamberlain	13/10/2020 17:37:09	OBJ	<p>These comments are from Camden Cycling Campaign, the local borough group of London Cycling Campaign (LCC). We represent the interests of cyclists living or working in the Camden area as well as those travelling through.</p> <p>We object to the removal of contraflow cycling from Crestfield Street.</p> <p>As a matter of principle, Camden's policy (and ours) is that all streets in the Borough should allow two-way cycling except in very limited circumstances, and Camden has made continuous efforts to achieve this. Removal of the facility on Crestfield Street would be a retrograde step and would divert some cyclists onto much more dangerous roads.</p> <p>Generally, contraflow cycling is very safe because sight-lines are good, drivers and cyclists are facing one another. On occasion, cyclists may have to wait if a vehicle is manoeuvring to an offside parking or loading location but this is easily achievable by informal negotiation.</p> <p>Specifically, at this site, cyclists currently use the street for northbound access to the Euston Road. More significantly, the planning application makes it clear that access to some of the cycle parking will be from Crestfield Street. If northbound cycling is banned, then they will only be able to do this by using the Euston Road. This will introduce far more danger to cyclists than continuing to allow contraflow cycling. The reality is that even if banned, cyclists will continue to use Crestfield Street for access from the south, making a very logical decision that this is the safest route.</p> <p>It should be quite possible to accommodate the expected numbers of cyclists while still making the planned improvements to the streetscape.</p> <p>John Chamberlain Coordinator Camden Cycling Campaign</p>

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2020/3881/P	Debbie Radcliffe	09/10/2020 11:47:14	OBJ	<p>I would like to preface my response to the consultation with the comment that despite Kings Cross having the reputation of being an area with a transient population, this is simply not the case. This is a very diverse but stable neighbourhood that includes families, small businesses, owner occupiers, housing association, private and council tenants. In other words there are a lot of permanent residents who live here and care about their environment and their quality of life. There are many local community groups (including BRAG, the Marchmont Association, the Friends of Argyle Square). However, I am aware that many people have become weary and disillusioned by the endless consultations taking place over recent years, and it's probable that a lot of residents no longer have any enthusiasm to respond.</p> <p>Having lived in a nearby street since the early 1980s, I am also fully aware there has been a lot of change to the surrounding neighbourhood - which is as it should be, places do not stand still. The major change has of course been to the two Grade 1 listed stations, Kings Cross and St Pancras which were imaginatively and sensitively restored and prove that it is possible to retain the integrity of heritage while providing public benefits. The stations' Grade I status is reinforced by the fact their historic character has genuinely been preserved and enhanced. Both stations have useful shopping facilities and they are indispensable as travel hubs.</p> <p>The regeneration of the railway lands behind Kings Cross station has resulted in much that benefits the local area. Despite the modern office, commercial and residential blocks, there are remnants of heritage that provide a flavour of its important industrial heritage. There are also some welcome and pleasing open public spaces.</p> <p>In complete contrast to the thoughtfulness and attention to detail of the stations' restoration, on the opposite side of the road we now have a proposal to create a ten storey building that is completely ignoring its historic context. This is frankly unacceptable.</p> <p>The size and massing of the proposed building is simply out of proportion to the buildings immediately adjacent. The design itself does not reflect in any way the Cubitt curves of the important heritage station opposite. The proposed structure is all harsh angles, verticals and horizontals with large expanses of glass. There are pillars that you could perhaps say echo the Gridiron building along Kings Boulevard but that is a six minute walk away (0.3 of a mile), on the other side of the Euston Road, within a completely different milieu. There is no piazza or open space to provide a visual distance to the bulk (as with the British Library or Kings Cross station itself) either. The building will simply tower up from the pavement.</p> <p>What is so galling, is that the proposed design utterly ignores the context of the Grade II Georgian terraces to the rear of the site, within Argyle Square, which lies - as you must be aware - within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Why?</p> <p>The offer is for a new build specialised office and laboratory building for the life sciences sector. Of course this ties in with the area being branded as the Knowledge Quarter. (Perhaps railway stations have lost their allure?)</p> <p>We are told that the design and engineering processes of the proposed building have been informed by the requirements of a life sciences building eg increased floor to floor heights.</p>

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With an all-important world famous tenant ready to move in, the stage is set for approval.

The proposal is out for consultation, but having listened into the Development Management Forum some time ago, it seems as though the decision has already been made. There are too many apparent “plus points” for Camden and the owner (will Précis retain the freehold I wonder), as well as the design team - the architects, engineers and all those who will benefit from the new build. There will be profitable work for the demolition team, the construction workers, the lorries that remove the debris.

We are told there will be innovative ventilation strategies to offset carbon levels, but I’m mindful that that demolition and construction do NOT help the quality of the local environment.

The people who will not benefit are the residents who live nearby - from the actual impact of construction, and the imposition of a very large building on a site that overlooks a domestic scale historic square.

It will be interesting to see how many young people who currently live in the flats within the Kings Cross estate immediately adjacent the site will in fact benefit from “access to this incubator of ideas and exemplar of design” (to quote from the blurb written by the owner and the architect). Has a survey been carried out to ask them?

As well as improving urban design, there is an obvious benefit for Camden (with its constrained budgets) to have the protruding entrances to the underground removed: more pavement space, a better streetscape. But should this be paid for by the private sector when it is actually part of the public realm. The roles are blurring.

Oh yes, and the application is linked to the redevelopment of Acorn House, in order to provide the necessary percentage of affordable housing. But the building is not exactly 'next door' - it is a 5 minute walk away, on the other side of the Gray's Inn Road. This is a clever strategy by the Applicant and of obvious benefit to Camden Council.

The design’s apparent disregard for its heritage context does not inspire confidence in future development on this stretch south of the Euston Road. The additional two storeys of the former Council offices Annexe Building (which was at least not demolished) have inevitably provided the precedent for increased height. The new-build blocks to the rear of Kings Cross station (note the REAR) have provided a precedent for bulk.

What has been conveniently side-stepped is the fact the Belgrove House site lies immediately adjacent to TWO Conservation Areas. Kings Cross and Bloomsbury.

The proximity of heritage areas seems to be a hindrance to some architects (though it’s always a convenient selling point to marketing professionals later). In this case, Kings Cross Station, identified as a ‘restored 19th century station’ on Google maps, is the most important contextual neighbour to the proposed redevelopment of Belgrove House. The listed terraces of Argyle Square are equally signifiant.

Yet the application simply ignores the site’s actual physical context - it strides out on its own, with the owner and designer determined to initiate a whole new architectural vocabulary for the area south of the Euston Road, in this specific location. What worries me is that perhaps this is the conveniently undisclosed / suppressed intention.

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