



9th April 2021

2020/4738/P

Rose Todd
LB Camden
5 Pancras Square
King's Cross
LONDON
N1C 4AG

Strong objection to 2020/4738/P regarding alterations to rear courtyard of Grade I listed 52 Bedford Square.

The Bloomsbury CAAC would like to raise serious concerns about the application at 52 Bedford Square, including the partial demolition of the property and installation of glass rear conservatory.

52 Bedford Square is Grade I listed and therefore of exceptional significance. Harm to this heritage asset should therefore be permitted in only exceptional circumstances, and can only be justified by public benefit which outweighs that harm, once that harm has been afforded considerable importance and weight.

In our view the proposals cause a significant amount of harm to the listed property. In its current state it is remarkably well preserved, with the rear courtyard area, mews property, and link structure all contributing to the significance of the heritage asset as a whole, creating a cohesive historic character and architectural impression. For a heritage asset in a good state of preservation, even minor alterations can cause harm belied by their scale if carried out insensitively.

It is our opinion that the plans to create an all-glass conservatory space at the rear is in principle an unacceptable form of development, regardless of any further alterations to design, massing, or scale. While rear extensions to historic private properties can sometimes be acceptable if no or very little harm is caused to the heritage asset, **an all-glass extension is an entirely inappropriate design choice for a heritage asset of this character, appearance, and heritage significance.**

It is also our view that further harm is caused by the partial demolition of the link structure which in itself carries architectural significance. Further harm is caused by the demolition of the central sash window and conversion into a door, and the obscuration of the first floor windows facing onto the rear courtyard. Further harm is caused to the significance of this floor and its windows, as the architectural significance of these features would be largely eroded by becoming internal rather than external features. We would also argue that if the façade of this floor were to be obscured by this conservatory, it sets a strong precedent for further demolition on the floor once that exterior wall no longer serves its intended function, leading to further harm to this property.

It should also be noted that the pressure for development at the rear of these properties on Bedford Square is high. Allowing this application would set a precedent for further alterations of a poor design standard, leading to an erosion of historic and architectural character in this highly significant area.

Overall we believe this application to cause a high level of 'less than substantial harm' to the heritage asset. Accordingly a significant amount of public benefit must be secured in order to permit this harm. It does not appear that this application carries any such public benefit. Accordingly, we would recommend that this application is refused.

Our recommendation is for **refusal**.

Bloomsbury Conservation Areas
Advisory Committee

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