

The British Library (Land to the North of the British Library) 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB

Jennifer.Walsh@Camden.gov.uk

Dear Jennifer Walsh

Planning reference 2022/1320/L and 2022/1041/P

I would like to echo and add my name and voice to the concerns expressed by many eminent Architects about the proposals by RSHP to develop the land to the North of the British Library at 96 Euston Road, London, NW1 2DP

Planning is in essence a consent based process where for the benefit of the wider community the power to make decisions is placed in the hands of both specialist Planning Officers, and where necessitated by issues outside the realm of Planning, our elected Politicians.

A consent based system can only operate when it is deemed fair and it is this expectation of fairness that substantiates the use of wide spread powers that affect the lives of all stakeholders ,including the ordinary populace of London, in this case.

Professional Architects actively participate in this system on the basis that despite its flaws this is the fairest and most just way to make decisions that often need to deal with very divergent interests. It is not the illusion of fairness but the actual demonstration of consistent and coherent decisions over time that garnishes the professional support that underpins the use of this power given the checks and balances, such as historic listing with the building and its curtilage being Grade 1 listed.

The current Planning system is recognized to be under great strains like all or most public services after the Covid 19 pandemic. During such times as this it is perhaps even more imperative to safe guard our democratic institutions or they will be brought into question and subject to abuse.

Rather than rewrite the same arguments I write in support of the well written statement by Mr. Peter Denney that follows in italics, and by doing so to add my name, professional standing, and complaint to the application folder. It should not fall to Architects alone to stand against the poverty that can be inflicted through poor development but as an Architect by the nature of direct involvement we perhaps recognize the disservice such overdevelopment does to our wider citizenry and thus must loudly express our voices at such outrages.

"I have now had the chance to look at the documents submitted for this application by RSHP, details of which you kindly forwarded to me with your email of 11 April 2022. I note that the scheme is substantially similar to that presented in early 2021, and reviewed at the Development Management Forum of 25 May 2021, in which I participated, however I note with concern that the earlier large imbalance between commercial space and provision for the Library, commented on at the time, has now increased by a further 3,000 sq.m., making 76.000 sq.m. commercial space with a mere 10.000 sq.m. for the Library itself,

This colossal imbalance between office/laboratory enabled space and that for the Library is at the root of the problem with the present proposal which, not only subsumes the Grade I Listed Building's entire north elevation behind a ten-storey wall of offices but also, results in the demolition of the Library's Conservation Centre as well as CSJW's iconic circular stair drum with its link to the adjoining west Reading Room.

The composition of this north elevation of the Library was considered by Colin St John Wilson and MJ Long to be a most important element in the overall design of Completion Phase of the building, while also noting that it is highly visible from St Pancras station's side exit onto Midland Road. Consequently when MJ Long and Rolfe Kentish, with Colin St John Wilson as consultant, came to design the Conservation Centre beside it in 2003 they, naturally, took great care to respect the scale and integrity of the adjoining elevation. Unfortunately the present proposals have no such compunction, they spread across the whole north face of the building, like a massive express train smashing through everything in its path.

It is not only of concern that this gigantic building results in the concealment of CSJW's carefully considered north elevation, destruction of the iconic circular stair drum and link bridge and of Long and Kentish's Conservation Centre, it also has a most profound effect on the outlook and daylight levels in every one of the important north-facing rooms and external spaces of this Grade I Listed Building. Among them the Restaurant and terrace, Readers and Friends Lounges and terrace, Board, Committee, Conference Rooms and Offices. All of them to be confronted by a massive vertical wall of offices/laboratories, completely alien to the Library, over 30 metres high and surmounted by a sloping, south-facing glazed façade of a further 12 metres. At its closest point the proposed scheme is within 20 metres of the existing elevation. And it is not only the north elevation that is impacted by this colossus. RSHP's section drawing P-1301-S-C01 shows that, as well as towering over 20 metres above the very highest point of the north elevation of the present building, it also illustrates that most of the sloping, glazed area of the proposed new extension will be visible above the carefully contoured pitched roofs of the entrance hall on the south side of the Library when viewed from Euston Road. This is surely the most irresponsible way to treat one of the very few Grade I Listed Buildings of the late twentieth century, and which was considered as "a landmark public building" when selected by Historic England in 2015.

In essence this is a gross over development of the Library's own site with commercial premises, and only a tiny portion serving the Library itself. In the process a significant Grade I Listed Building by an eminent architectural practice will be severely compromised and the Library's Conservation Centre, by the same architects, destroyed. This is in direct contravention of Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Which requires that the local planning authority "shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any other features of special architectural interest which it possesses." Furthermore paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 states "When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation." I therefore urge you to exercise your powers under the planning legislation

applicable to a Grade I Listed Building and to refuse Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission for the proposals". Mr. Peter Denney

Yours sincerely

Hugo Hardy

Hugo Hardy Architect
BA, BEDs, March, Chartered RIBA/Arb.
www.hughardychitect.com

