



Subject: OBJECTION: 2022/3985/L - 23 Sicilian Avenue, Etc

Importance: High



Dear Elaine,

The Bloomsbury CAAC strongly objects to the application at Sicilian Avenue. If for whatever reason this application is recommended for approval, we shall write a more formal objection. But for now I will keep our objections in simple, understandable terms.

GROUND FLOOR

This is a Grade II listed building. The starting point should therefore be that any alterations should preserve, or enhance, the significance of the building.

The building is exceptionally well-preserved externally. It is a fairly unique example of a planned, small scale retail area, and bridges the divide between the large scale, commercial Edwardian Kingsway, and the smaller scale Georgian Bloomsbury. The preserved, small scale shops and shopfronts are of fairly exceptional significance, and universally admired by the committee and general passers-by. The only other example of this sort of street in London is Woburn Walk, Grade II* listed and Georgian, whence this development presumably drew some influences (and is also in the same CA/abuts it).

The originally proposed use of these ground floor units remains a sustainable use and one which contributes to the vitality of the conservation area. There is no reason to believe that retail of this scale is now fundamentally uneconomic, considering it functions perfectly well all throughout London, and indeed, just around the corner on the Kingsway and Southampton Row.

These units have been occupied continuously since their construction and have only recently mysteriously 'become' vacant.

The proposals are to fundamentally alter the appearance of the preserved ground floor elements, and to amalgamate separate units to create larger units. This will alter the appearance, and the character, of both the listed building and conservation area. It will contribute to an ongoing, CA-wide loss of vitality by essentially 'gentrifying' these ground floor units and making them economically unattainable for traditional sole traders and small businesses. It will also fundamentally alter the appearance and especially the character of the building. The original, preserved plan-form will be lost. A considerable amount of historic fabric will also be lost.

Such alterations would be regrettable in an unlisted building. In a listed building they are wholly unacceptable. We therefore strongly object to this application.

UPPER FLOORS ETC

The committee also notes substantial alterations to the upper floors, ducting of large amounts of plant on enclosed elevations, and unsympathetic landscaping alterations. To put it simply we are not going to bother writing out a long objection to all these points if Camden are just going to approve it anyway, as unfortunately is usually the case with applications of a certain scale.

Owen Ward



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