



**BLOOMSBURY  
ASSOCIATION**

**21 BLOOMSBURY STREET**  
LONDON WC1B 3HF

**Proposal:** Alterations to existing building comprising rear extension with new terraces at second to sixth floors; creation of office space within existing sixth floor roof with new dormers and plant enclosure; new roof terrace and pavilion with sedum roof; replacement of windows; alterations to entrances; replacement of faux chimney stacks and associated works

**Application for planning permission reference:** 2022/4361/P

8 February 2023

The Bloomsbury Association objects to this application and wishes to make the following further comments. These should be read together with our comments of 20 January 2023.

1. **Design**

Sections 4.16 - 4.18 of the Design Statement describe design proposals for the Bloomsbury Street and Bedford Avenue entrances. It explains that these are "further developed to reinstate the language of the original vernacular architecture that will complement the streetscape in the Conservation Area". If this is an attempt to be referential to the adjoining parts of Bedford Court Mansions, it fails.

21 Bloomsbury Street was originally Block A, the first phase of Bedford Court Mansions. It was developed by Bedford Estates between 1890 and 1896 to replace the mews to the south side of Bedford Square and extended westwards to finish with Block E, Fitzroy Doll's flamboyant 122-142 Bedford Court Mansions, a free-standing residential building on the west side of Adeline Place. The decorative screen wall that now comprises the Bedford Avenue frontage of the buildings facing the south side of Bedford Square was built at the same time to create a single unifying composition. It is typical of a late Victorian, red brick mansion block with Dutch gables, expressive chimney stacks and pots, Portland stone banding, projecting bays and corner towers. One thing it is not is "vernacular architecture". That is disrespectful to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and suggests a misunderstanding of urban context and architectural history by the architect that we also encountered in their proposals for 247 Tottenham Court Road.

An image from *The Building News*, April 20 1894, is included together with the text of the report that accompanied it (source: RIBA). Bedford Court Mansions was not only an early example of an apartment building but was also one of the first residential developments in London to have electric rather than gas lighting - hence the ornamental, black painted, cast-iron lamps outside each building entrance proudly celebrating the fact. There are similar expressed lamp columns outside 2 Temple Place, one of London's first purpose built office buildings to have electricity.

Although originally entirely residential, the building was functioning as the Palace Hotel in the early 20th century and was renamed Bloomsbury House in the late 1930s, providing a base for the Inter-Church Council for German Refugees which coordinated all efforts to resettle Jewish people who had fled Nazi persecution. In 1942 the Council of Christians and Jews was set up here to promote mutual understanding, moving to Doughty Street in 1950. In the 1960s Block A became 21 Bloomsbury Street and was the head office of British Insulated Callenders Cable Ltd (BICC). It was redeveloped in the mid-1980s for speculative office use behind a retained facade. The remainder of Bedford Court Mansions remains in residential use.

The ramped entrance to the basement car park from Bedford Avenue was created as part of the 1980s redevelopment by opening up a former arched window, as was what was to become the

main office entrance from Bloomsbury Street by enclosing the former gated carriageway to the courtyard within. The bronze metalwork referred to in the Design Statement was introduced to the Bloomsbury Street entrance at the time of the 1980s redevelopment and does not appear anywhere else in the Mansions. All metalwork is painted black; windows and balustrades are painted white.

Metal railings are consistent in their design, as are entrances and doors. The gate to the former carriageway to the adjacent Block B is unique in having art nouveau influences.

We would like to see some of these architectural references from Bedford Court Mansions reintroduced back into 21 Bloomsbury Street, particularly to its chimney stacks, doors and entrances. This suggests black, and definitely not bronze metalwork. It also suggests freestanding lamp columns on either side of the main entrance and a gate to the ramped access from Bedford Avenue that is referential to Bedford Court Mansions' gate in the art nouveau style.

## 2. **Street works**

We would also like to see the pavement crossover removed from the ramped access, to give pedestrians priority, in the same way as the adjoining entrance to Bedford Court Mansions.

The Association supports good quality design that complies with policy and will enhance Bloomsbury's environment. A number of significant concerns have been expressed about this proposal that prompt us to object at this stage. Hence we look to the Council to refuse this application in its current form.

We would be grateful if you would let us know of any further modification to the application; the decision, if it is to be decided under delegated powers, or the meeting date if it is to be decided by Committee.

Stephen Heath  
**On behalf of the Bloomsbury Association**

*Copies to:*  
Councillor Adam Harrison, London Borough of Camden  
Adam Greenhalgh, London Borough of Camden  
Rose Todd, London Borough of Camden  
Charlotte Street Association  
Chair, Bedford Court Mansions Limited  
Steward, Bedford Estates  
Program Director, Florida State University  
Chair, Bloomsbury Association

## Bedford Court Mansions

Extract from *The Building News*, April 20 1894

"This pile of buildings now in course of erection forms part of the scheme for the extension of Tavistock Street from Caroline-street to Charlotte-street, and runs at the rear of Bedford Square. The buildings comprise family flats each containing five to ten or twelve rooms at moderate rentals, and with the large central courtyard they are all well lighted and ventilated, great pains having been taken in this respect to endeavour to improve upon buildings of the class at present in existence in London. Bedford-court Mansions enjoy many advantages; for instance, no building can be erected opposite on the north side of Tavistock-street, as an expensive ornamental wall is now being built along the whole length to close in backs of this Bedford-square houses, and, again, when the British Museum authorities remove the existing houses in Charlotte-street, as must be the case very shortly, they will open out directly in front of these mansions what will be one of the finest squares in London. The elevation is of red brick and white stone, and is intended to be continued the length of the new street, thus forming a complete façade of about 700ft. in length. The courtyard is lined with white glazed bricks for a portion of its height, and in the first block now being erected there are two principal entrances, each with its own grand staircase and hydraulic elevator. The fittings throughout are of the most modern character, the sanitary arrangements have been carefully studied, and the electric light cables carried to the entrance door of each suite, so that tenants may have the points for light fixed to suit their own convenience. The Bedford-court Syndicate are developing this estate, Messrs. Martin and Purchase, of 11, Queen Victoria-street, and Mr. Allan Vigers, of 7, South-square, Gray's Inn, are acting for them in the capacity of joint architects, and Messrs. Colls and Sons, of Coleman-street, are the contractors."

