

Andrew Dismore

Putting Barnet and Camden first



LONDON ASSEMBLY LABOUR

Andrew Dismore AM
London Assembly Member for Barnet and Camden
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
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29/07/2020

Objection to planning application for 112A Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3NP, Ref: 2020/3107/P

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to object to the above application in my capacity as London Assembly Member for Barnet and Camden.

What has been built at the underground hotel is materially different to what was granted planning permission at street level and below ground by the planning inspector, who overruled the Council's refusal.

Before considering the planning grounds for objection, I note that there are 18 separate documents forming the application submission, and some of these documents are multiples, e.g. drawings. In other words, there is a substantial amount of information which in itself is a strong indication of the substantial scale and nature of the amendments made, and far from the 'minor' description that has been applied.

In my opinion a s73 application is inappropriate to deal with the wholesale changes that have been made. The procedure followed may be unlawful and it is an abuse of the planning system to use a route intended only for minor material amendments in this way. It sets an unwelcome precedent.

With regard to planning grounds for refusal, the increase in size brings a corresponding increase in impact arising from the further intensification of use that needs to be assessed, along with appropriate measures in place to mitigate against them. I am sceptical of unproven statements made in supporting documents that nothing has changed. The increase in size creates a total of nearly 1,000 hotel bedrooms on one small site with a cumulative impact on the Bloomsbury Conservation Area that is far greater than the Inspector envisaged.

An increase of this magnitude should be regarded as a 'material change of use' through intensification. These changes need to be considered through a new full planning application and determined with proper Member and public scrutiny, not decided by officers behind closed doors through the process currently envisaged.

The application is looking to remove conditions and obligations the Planning Inspector placed on the original permission to safeguard the public and adjoining occupiers from harmful impacts, which should be resisted. A number of s106 Unilateral Undertaking obligations have been amended too, and the proposals appear to suggest that large tracts of the Undertaking are subsumed into the conditions. This, alone, is contrary to the terms of the original undertaking. If they are of such importance that they were deemed unsuitable for conditions in the original proposal, it is inconceivable that they could work as conditions now.

For all of the above reasons, this planning application should be refused.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Dismore". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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