

BCAAC CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The Advisory Committee referred to the **National Planning Policy Framework and to Para 132** which 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. The more important the asset, the greater weight should be.

To assist the Inquiry in carrying out the weighting or balancing exercise, referred to by the Inspector in his opening remarks to the Inquiry and to provide some objective assessment of the relative importance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, BCAAC provided a short reading list. The fact that the area has been subject to the attentions of highly respected historians like Sir Nicholas Pevsner and Sir John Summerson, is of itself a strong indicator of its great historic and architectural significance.

The Advisory Committee also referred to the statutory duties under **Section 72(1) of the Listed Building Act 1990** and the requirement to pay **special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.**

Reference was also made to Heritage England guidance and specifically

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2 Managing Change in Conservation Areas

26 It is also important that utility companies, statutory undertakers and the highway authority are engaged from designation through to drawing up and implementing management proposals, as the character and appearance of conservation areas is often related to the treatment and condition of roads, pavements and public spaces and traffic management generally.

29 Protecting the character or appearance of an area will often be more effective if a flexible approach is taken to the requirements of the Building Regulations (Historic England advice on energy efficiency and historic buildings, for instance, can be found at <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/>

publications/energy-efficiency-historicbuildings-ptl/eehb-part1.pdf/. Similar flexibility is needed in compliance with the Equalities Act 2010 and the Fire Precautions Act 1971, and highway policies where they would be in conflict with the preservation or enhancement of the area's character or appearance.

So it is evident that Camden Council is under a clear obligation or duty to take heritage matters into account, whether acting as planning or highway authority

The whole thrust of this guidance is that the context of any proposal is of great importance and should be the starting point.

It is clear that as local authority it not only failed to give the appropriate weight to heritage issues in formulating and proposing this traffic scheme, it did not take them into account all.

BCAAC regards this failure as being highly irresponsible and asks the Inquiry to take this matter very seriously indeed in producing recommendations to Camden Council.

Following a BCAAC Committee meeting last night at which the matter was discussed at some length it concluded that the Advisory Committee was neutral so far as expressing a view on cycling per se, but was not neutral in opposing harmful impacts on the area resulting from physical measures to facilitate this activity and would strongly endorse the Historic England approach as set out in its guidance **HERITAGE AT RISK CONSERVATION AREAS** specifically under the section **Identifying local distinctiveness**, which identifies three vital ingredients good design quality materials and respect for the past.

Had Camden chosen this approach then it is quite possible that BCAAC would have been in support of this scheme. But in the current circumstances and mindful of the duty to preserve or enhance it must be in opposition to it in its current form.

The matter of the change to east-west working was also discussed and it was concluded that this could well ameliorate some of the more harmful side effects of the current scheme.

BCAAC

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