SAVE MUSEUM STREET CAMPAIGN UPDATE

April 2022: WASTED OPPORTUNITY

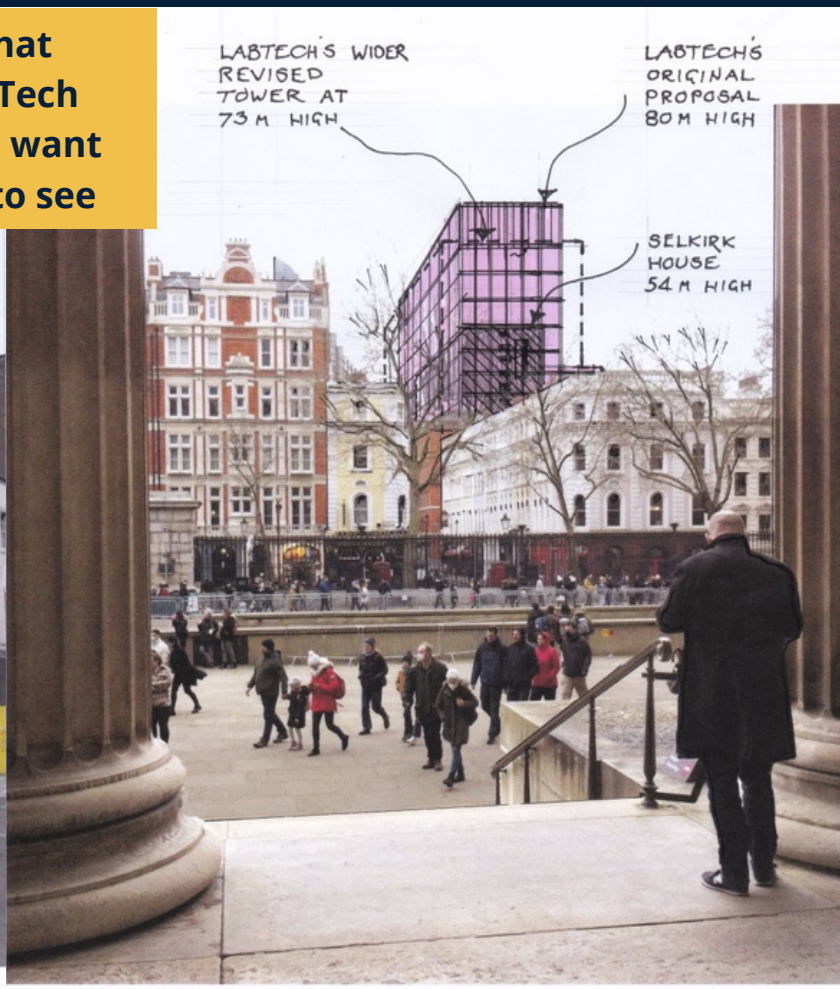
LabTech are re-submitting their scheme to Camden but very few changes have been made. The One Museum Street project requires a fundamental re-think, not a revised scheme which prioritises profits.

We say OUT with Demolition and Destruction IN with Sustainability, Sensitivity to Surrounding & Securing more Social Housing!

VIEW: ABOVE JAMES SMITH & SONS LTD*

*A GRADE 2 LISTED BUILDING.

What LabTech don't want you to see



VIEW: FROM THE STEPS OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

How have they addressed our concerns?

Height – 2 storeys have been lopped off the building BUT **it's still a 20 metre increase in height**, remaining horribly visible alongside historic buildings and Conservation Areas and an enormous increase in bulk, maximising floor space = maximising PROFITS

Housing – there's more housing BUT social housing is only up from 6 units to a paltry 9 so-called 'affordable shared ownership' units (i.e. 10-15% less than market but still is not affordable as these flats will only be available to those earning more than £65,000+ p.a.) The new plan has increased to a stonking 28 of which 22 so-called flats will be 'serviced apartments' which is a fancy word for hotel-like accommodation aka where all the PROFIT lies.

Public realm – widening of Vine Lane (prophetically mistyped as Vile Lane in the planning documents), a route from nowhere to nowhere, but **NO NEW Public Open Space, which is a planning requirement.**

Sustainability – No improvement here, as the demolition of Selkirk House, a sound and substantial building, is still planned. The most powerful argument against LabTech's proposals is Climate Change. **The most sustainable building is the one that already exists** (see inside for more detail on this)

LabTech claims:

- The car park has to be demolished because of sloping ramps – have they stopped to think that even electric cars will require car parks? **Why can't a sloping floor accommodate new uses?** Some architecturally famous buildings have sloping floors and ramps - the Guggenheim in New York or Tate Modern in London.

- The car park has to be demolished to accommodate the cut-through of Vine Lane – **there is no public demand for such a cut-through**. The 'cut through' is driven by Camden planning department's whim, and has no planning status. Vine Lane leads from nowhere to nowhere and will provide a dark and dingy passageway, full of the same empty retail units that we can see all around us, which will be a magnet for drug-dealers and anti-social behaviour.

- The floor to ceiling heights are too low – **WRONG they are in fact 3.1 metres which is ample for a variety of uses including offices.**

- The columns in a section of the hotel may not be ideal for current market conditions – well sometimes one has to balance priorities, and greed has to give way to the greater good. **LabTech's profit expectations are less important than the welfare of our children and grandchildren.**

CLIMATE CHANGE

LabTech's redevelopment of Selkirk House will cause massive carbon emissions with no regard to the Climate Emergency.

Wholesale demolition of Selkirk House and the buildings in the Conservation Area on West Central Street brazenly squanders all the embodied carbon in those buildings and will cause additional major emissions. See the expert report we commissioned from Targeting Zero http://camdocs.camden.gov.uk/HPRMWebDrawer/Record/9338542/file/document?inline

Its conclusion is that LabTech has grossly misrepresented the carbon costs in pushing for demolition and rebuilding rather than retrofitting and adapting the existing building.

"[Camden planners] 'will in effect be granting approval to emit approx. 64,000 tonnes of unnecessary carbon emissions over the next 60 years, plus generate a significant amount of unnecessary waste."

HUSTINGS
Camden Council Local Elections this May

Save Museum Street are organising hustings for all the prospective candidates standing for the Covent Garden/Holborn Ward as well as the Bloomsbury Ward.

It will be held within **St George's Church, Bloomsbury Way on Monday April 25 at 7.00pm**. It will give locals the opportunity to ask questions and gauge candidates' views about local issues and particularly about the latest Selkirk House development proposals.

This year the Bloomsbury Ward's boundaries have been extended to include all the residential accommodation from the British Museum down to New Oxford Street/Bloomsbury Way. The current Bloomsbury Councillors, Adam Harrison, Rishi Madlani and Sabrina Francis, all Labour party candidates in this May's elections, have been conspicuous by their lack of interest in the development of Selkirk House. Councillor Adam Harrison is the current Cabinet Member for a sustainable Camden and is also currently on the planning committee

SAVE MUSEUM STREET

Save Museum Street is a community coalition of:

- Bloomsbury Association
- Covent Garden Community Association
- Tavistock Chambers Residents' Association
- Willoughby Street Residents' Association
- Leicester Square Association
- Charlotte Street Association
- Covent Garden Area Trust
- Drury Lane Residents
- South Bloomsbury Tenants & Residents' Association
- West Central Street Residents
- Grape Street Residents
- The Bedford Estates
- Save Bloomsbury
- Climate Emergency Camden
- Soho Society

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!

New tower height

Previous tower height

Existing tower height

AND FINALLY – USE IT or possibly LOSE IT

There is a spectacular rooftop garden at the Post House next to Selkirk House. The views are wonderful and it is a perfect location to see Bloomsbury and Covent Garden.

Here's the catch - if the garden is not used regularly the developers can reduce the hours of opening, (currently 10-19.00 including weekends, 10-16.30 in winter), **so it is very important that word gets out about this wonderful publicly accessible facility!**

There is a tiny sign by a door on the New Oxford Street side of the building. Show security your ID and enjoy with your loved ones. Let's use it so we don't lose it!

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Your continued support is invaluable. You can:

Write again to Camden planning to tell them what you think of the derisory revisions to this objectionable scheme. We recommend mentioning:

- The proposal still too high and the new proposal is too bulky
- We don't need more speculative office space here. Selkirk House needs to be imaginatively repurposed: for example as units for business, rehearsal studios, workshops or editing suites for the nearby film and theatre sectors, or healthcare and community spaces.
- Only increasing socially rented accommodation by a paltry three dwellings is contemptible and the increase from 6-10 'affordable accommodation' units does not justify the demolition of almost all the buildings or the damaging effects of the proposed office tower block.
- If the current scheme is approved it will set an appalling planning precedent that will result in a cluster of tower blocks in Holborn causing massive visual damage to yet more of this unique part of London

Send your comments to Camden Planning department quoting reference 2021/2954/P planning@camden.gov.uk,
please make sure to send a copy to us:
SaveMuseumStreet@CoventGarden.org.uk
and to Sam Griffiths at LabTech email
onemuseumstreet@londoncommunications.co.uk

To keep updated with the campaign, email us your contact details

Support the campaign by making a donation, big or small, at
https://gofund.me/f55e87e6

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