

Flat 3
Queen Alexandra Mansions
Grape Street
London WC2H 8DX

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London Borough of Camden
Town Hall
Argyle Street
London WC1H 8EQ

By email

30 June 2023

Dear Sirs

Flat 9 and roof, Queen Alexandra Mansions, Grape Street London WC2H 8DX,
application # ██████████ (the *Application*)

I refer to the Application.

I am writing to submit an objection.

I live in the small residential mansion block which includes flat 9. The application appears to relate to the use of part of the roof, which is a common part of the building.

The stated reason for the application and the works covered by the application is given as:

Installation of safety balustrade to the roof and gate to close maintenance access route.

I object for the following reasons.

I understand that the works the subject of the present application (***New Application***) were previously included in the more comprehensive application submitted by the applicant some years ago (***Original Application***). At that time, the Council apparently expressed concerns about overlooking. The applicant removed these elements of the Original Application, allowing the (reduced scope) Original Application to be granted. The New Application may therefore represent a disguised attempt to “appeal” the council’s prospective decision on the Original Application, perhaps citing new motives for the works the subject of the New Application. The Council’s concerns about overlooking remain valid and may have more force in the light of the application recently submitted for development of the adjacent plots bounded by New Oxford Street, West Central Street, Museum Street and High Holborn under the “One Museum Street” brand. These issues have been brought into stark relief by the ***Tate Modern*** case. I do not consider that eliminating any proposed decking is an adequate mitigant.

The reason given for justifying the works the subject of the New Application is to facilitate maintenance works to the roof. Following investigation, it would seem that this is most likely to consist of cleaning gutters and, possibly, repairing a television aerial. The location of the guttering appears not to be shown on the plans submitted; a hand annotated version has been supplied which suggests to me that some of the guttering may be outside the balustrade, which would make the balustrade an obstruction to clearing the gutters

I am not convinced that it is either necessary or proportionate to allow the erection of a conspicuous balustrade for this purpose. The building survived for many years without any balustrade (whether the existing balustrade should ever have been installed on the roof of this listed building remains an open question). No balustrade was apparently considered necessary when the building was extended upwards in the 1980s. Evidently the Applicant at the time of the Original Application did not consider the introduction of a balustrade was so compelling as to insist on including it in the Original Application.

It is suggested that the balustrade is a continuation of an existing balustrade. It is, however, at a higher level than the existing balustrade. It is therefore more conspicuous, despite the attempt by the Applicant to mask visual representations of it by inclusion of drawings of trees (in Shaftesbury Avenue, not Grape Street) in full leaf. This is a listed building and conspicuous modern additions should only be allowed if they are absolutely necessary, which is clearly not the case here.

The application also refers to a gate. It is not clear who would control the gate; arguably the gate could be an obstacle to the claimed objective of facilitating maintenance.

In response to a question about the gates, the applicant’s representatives informed me

In terms of the gates, they aren’t there for security, they are there to provide continuity of balustrade support whilst also allowing for the opportunity to access different parts of the roof if required, therefore they don’t need to be locked.

I am not sure what this means. If the primary purpose of the additional works the subject of the application is maintenance ("to close maintenance access route", as quoted above), the gates would appear to be unnecessary and irrelevant. Doubtless the Applicant can explain all this.

Please advise if the applicant clarifies the application and if there is a hearing to discuss the application.

Yours faithfully

Peter Bloxham