

RE: Objection to 4 BCG Planning Application [Please read the additions in sections 5 and 6 below]

I am the owner and my family currently reside at 9 Belsize Court Garages mews ("BCG") which is located on the same mews a few doors away from 4 Belsize Court garages ("4 BCG").

I strongly object to the proposed retrospective permission to split 4 BCG into two units, be it temporary or permanent, for the following reasons:

1. Previously two separate planning application 2004/0847/P and 2003/1258/P to split no 6 BCG, the dwelling next door to 4 BCG, into two self-contained units were refused. There has been no change to relevant circumstances therefore there is no reason to deviate from that precedent and reach a different decision in this instance.
2. 4 BCG is situated in Belsize Court Garages which is a quiet, pastoral family-oriented residential area located at the heart of Belsize Village, a unique area in its own right. If permitted, a split would increase residents density, increase traffic congestion (in an already highly congested area due to St Christopher's school around the corner) thereby increase air and noise pollution, put further pressure on limited parking spaces as well as public amenities and in general change the character and nature of Belsize Court Garages and Belsize Village. Something unique and very special would be lost if Camden allows family dwellings to be split left right and centre and allow more and more people to occupy this small area.
3. 4 BCG was recently renovated and split into two self-contained dwellings without seeking permission for the split, in violation of planning laws. If granted, such retrospective permission would not only reward those who acted in disregard to planning laws but would also send a dangerous message to other developers that violating planning rules carry no serious repercussions since if discovered they can always seek retrospective permission. In addition it would also set a dangerous precedent to other owners on BCG and other mews in Belsize Village who may also seek to split their dwellings based on this precedent. Ultimately splitting more and more dwellings would cause the adverse consequences described in more detail in section 2 above.
4. Last but not least there is a wider trend here which must not be over-looked. We moved to the mews some 10 years ago and we feel a deterioration in the pastoral feel, nature and atmosphere of the mews over that time. I believe this is in part caused by non-resident owners who are less concerned about the character and atmosphere of the mews since they simply do not live here. The dwelling known as 8 BCG now contains an active architect's office on the ground floor with the top two floors converted into an HMO which is let out to multiple non-family tenants. As a result, the effects described in section 2 above are sometimes felt and we are concerned that the ambiance of the mews is becoming that of a work place rather than a quiet residential, family oriented area.

I believe that a rejection of the application is necessary to restore some of the lost qualities of BCG mews.

Yours faithfully

AK
November 2022

Following the submission of the objection set out above in November 2022 I have now (4th July 2023) seen the Design & Access Statement of May 2023 ("D&A Statement") submitted in support of the application thus certain further points should be made in support the original objection:

5. Section 2.4 of the D&A Statement purports to present as if there is no local objection to the apparition:

"The applicant has made personal approaches to all immediate neighbors to invite their views prior to the submission of this application and no objection was received."

It should be pointed out that the properties no. 6 BCG (adjacent to no. 4 BCG) and no. 8 BCG are also owned by the applicant (or his spouse) so their views are self-serving and irrelevant. Further, no approach was ever made to seek input from the owner of no. 9 BCG (me), situated on the mews less than 20 steps away from no. 4 BCG so presenting the situation as if there is no objection is plain simply wrong.

6. Section 3.0 of the D&A Statement makes the claim that the proposal will have a "positive impact on the Conservation Area" relying on the following baseless arguments:

6.1 "Continued use as a residential dwelling" – this of course is an empty, irrelevant argument so far as a residential property situated in a residential mews is concerned as it is highly unlikely that change of use would ever be permitted anyway;

6.2 "Preservation of the character and appearance of the conservation area" – there is nothing in splitting a dwelling into two, changing the front of the property into two entrances and causing the negative effects detailed in sections 2 and 4 above to preserve the character of the conservation area – quite the opposite - such changes would only undermine and degrade the conservation area; and

6.3 "Providing shelter to the refugees from Ukraine" – while a noble cause in its own right, there is no need to split a single dwelling into two in order to accomplish such cause and in any event this does not have any positive impact on the Conservation Area.

In conclusion, residents have been waiting for more than seven months since the first objection was filed in November 2022 to see enforcement of planning violation. Nothing in the newly submitted documents provide any substantive support to ratify the violation or give grounds to support retrospective permission.

AK 9 BCG 4th July 2023