

Objection to 147 Highgate Road Application 2023/1885/P

INTRODUCTION

Firstly may I reiterate my surprise that, as the owner of the house at 1a Wesleyan Place, I was not directly informed by Camden Council of this building application (2023/1885/P) at 147 Highgate Road. I live at the rear of 147 Highgate Road and share a party wall with it. My property at 1A and that at 1b and 1c Wesleyan Place are those that will be most directly affected by the proposed building. The owner of 1b and 1c Wesleyan Place, Chris Yeung, informed me of the proposal, otherwise I would not have known about it. There is a flimsy sign outside 147 Highgate Road on a lamppost, but nothing in Wesleyan Place. Perhaps the whole process should be more transparent to all those involved, not merely the developers and the Council? Is it surprising that this proposal was submitted in August, when it might have been calculated that there would be less attention paid to it than normally?

Our objection at 1a Wesleyan is above all to the erection of the rear extension on to the flat roof behind 147 Highgate Road. But the proposal also seems to violate the integrity of the shop front on the Highgate Road with its extra height, destroying the charm of the existing building.

THE PROPOSAL AS A WHOLE

Looking at the entire proposal, THERE IS NOT A SINGLE MENTION OF 1A WESLEYAN PLACE in it. It is as if my property does not exist. In the 'block plan' although Wesleyan Place is marked, the individual properties most affected by this proposal, 1a, 1b and 1c Wesleyan Place, are not identified. Ditto for the 'Site Location Plan'. In the 'Existing Ground Floor Plan' there is no mention of our property, 1a Wesleyan Place, as an 'existing neighbouring building', unlike those on the Highgate Road.

Yet we share a large party wall with the Village Café and our courtyard/garden backs on to it. We look directly from our first-floor bathroom window and our bedroom window over our courtyard onto the flat roof where the extension is proposed to be built.

At ground floor we receive light into our yard, the kitchen (via two windows and a windowed back door) and my office/study from above.

Building an extension on this flat roof at the rear of 147 Highgate Road will therefore directly affect our privacy and our light, that is our "amenity". Although 1b will be even more directly affected by light deprivation, we also will be badly affected (see below) it and by the smells from the kitchen window proposed (PW1), not to mention any noise emanating from the window of the main living room which is planned to be at a distance of just over one metre from our property perimeter (the party wall we share with 147 Highgate Road) and the yard/garden our kitchen door opens on to and which we use constantly for fresh air, light, and as a pleasurable amenity in good weather.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIONS

Existing building, as shown in the proposal

There is no mention of our property, 1A Wesleyan Place. It is not even marked as an "existing neighbourhood building (technically a backyard/garden but nonetheless our property!).

There is no window (as falsely shown in Section AA, marked EW4 rear elevation of the building). The current shack extension was built during the tenure of a previous owner of the café and concealed the existing window of the small brick-built room above the café, as witnessed by myself, the current owner of 1a Wesleyan Place, over twenty years ago: one could see through it to the window onto the Highgate Road on the other side of the room. That the shack has fallen into disrepair is no surprise and should not be regarded as a structural issue for the whole building.

The proposed building on the flat roof

No exact measurements are given for the proposed planned extension on the flat roof (although a general scale is).

Yet it would be within just over a metre from our partition wall and the window of the planned living room would not merely look directly into our large bathroom window (currently clear glazed and, we recognise, not a “habitable space”) but more significantly into our larger bedroom window at a 45 degree angle at a distance of about five-six metres, greatly impacting on our privacy.

Usage and Refuse

What will happen to the ground floor, where the café used to be? If it is to be used for cooking, where will the ventilation shaft be? If it is to be used as a dispenser of cold food, where will the waste be stored before collection? Will it be combined with that of the households above? Will the bins be out on the streets, as in Wesleyan Place? In the ‘Application for Planning Permission’ under ‘Hours of Opening’, the question ‘Are Hours of Opening relevant to this proposal?’ is marked ‘No’. If the ground floor is for commercial space the answer ‘No’ cannot be correct. Ditto to the following question on the same page ‘Industrial or Commercial Processes and Machinery’. Again, the answer is marked ‘No’; but the question enquires about commercial activities and processes: are there to be any and if so what ones? Clarity is needed here.

Daylight and Sunlight Impact Report

In Appendix 1 of the ‘Daylight and Sunlight Impact Report’, our windows at 1a Wesleyan Place are finally illustrated (although not assigned to a property, eg. 1A Wesleyan Place, which is never named) as 8, 11, 12 and 13. 8 is our bedroom, 11 our bathroom, 12 and 13 our downstairs kitchen. My downstairs study underneath our bedroom is not assigned a number and is therefore not included in the light assessment. It will be noted that **the number 10 is excluded** in the sequence from 1-13 from both this diagram and the ‘Vertical sky Component Neighbouring Properties’ table in Section 3.1 under 3: ‘Results’ on p. 23. It will also be noted that the number 11 is placed over the downstairs window while the line it is attached to points to the bedroom window above to the right. The number 9 in the diagram is not actually related to a window but to the corner adjoining the three properties of 1a and 1b Wesleyan Place and 147 Highgate Road, presumably indicating where that light reading applies. Is this exclusion of reading 10 deliberate because it would almost certainly have shown an adverse result for the light levels in my study/office?

The unreadable diagram in Appendix 2 (p.27) does not appear to apply to this site but if, assuming that it somehow does, it would be a perspective schema taken from 147 Highgate Road that does not even show our windows on it, they are absent, even though directly facing this site!

Under ‘Results’ on p 23, Section 3.2 under ‘Sunlight on Windows’ it is stated that:

“The main windows to living rooms of the surrounding properties are all located to the front façade of the respective building and are not affected by the proposed development.”

THIS STATEMENT IS DEMONSTRABLY FALSE.

Our kitchen, office/study, and bedroom, not to mention open yard/garden (main source of light for our kitchen and study as well as a living space for us when weather permits), are all at the **REAR** of the house.

The unobjective bias in favour of the developer in this report is overwhelmingly obvious. Any second report commissioned by the neighbours, or indeed the Council, would clearly overturn these questionable findings, especially concerning 1A and 1b Wesleyan Place.

The building process

My contacts with the owner/developer and his/their representatives as as he/they has/have measured with the aid of his builders/architects/surveyors the flat roof we look out on have not been reassuring in his/their attitude towards me and my wife as affected neighbours, showing scant regard for our concerns, not to mention our privacy (peering down into our yard, sneering and laughing at us, refusing to answer questions). The assurance given under 'Alteration to structural system on 'local residents' that "the constructor will show proper consideration to our neighbours" rings very hollow indeed, given our experience of him/them.

The building process itself, especially if on the flat roof adjacent to us, will be considerable in extent. Camden Council, I know, do not take account of such considerations. I am a pensioner but still working on a part-time basis and, when I am not travelling for my work, I research and lecture online from my home office here at 1A Wesleyan Place. As I lecture (as an art historian) online from my study, right underneath the roof, this proposal will therefore affect my professional livelihood. Building noise and disruption will affect the well-being of my household (myself, my wife, who also works from home, and those living in neighbouring 1b, with their newborn baby). Irrelevant to the Council and the developers, I fear, but not to us and our domestic life and well-being over the coming years.

It is also noteworthy that there will be a considerable public impact of this project during construction. Permission to bring materials through the back alley flanking the Greek Orthodox church of St. Cosmas and Damian at the rear of 1 and 1a Wesleyan Place and the properties to the North of 147 Highgate Road has rightly been refused the developers by the newsagent/proprietor of 145 Highgate Road (this would further have impacted our privacy). The developers will therefore have to bring all materials through the entrance on the Highgate Road. There is no rear door as falsely shown on section AA of the proposal: that is the party wall with 145 Highgate Road. Not only would deliveries of materials have to enter from the Highgate Road but so would all discarded trash have to be removed from the same access point. Where would the skip go? Wesleyan Place?

CONCLUSION

The much-loved local 'Village Café' was bought as a speculative opportunity and closed down so as to provide "vacant possession". It does not have structural flaws that cannot easily be amended, including of the wooden extension built on to the first-floor upper room of the café in the late 1990s, as witnessed by the current owner of 1a Wesleyan Place, not to mention repairing or upgrading the flat roof. Why not keep this as a café rather than further congest an already highly-populated little residential community (four entire households already bordering 147 Highgate Road and its flat roof) that is currently working very well together, a kind of village of which this was the local café? This is not a brown-field site but a living, well-balanced community which should not be developed to bursting point, giving rise to inevitable neighbourhood disputes.

This development will deeply affect the owners and residents of neighbouring properties, especially at 1a, 1b and 1c Wesleyan Place.

Above all, if the application is accepted concerning the development of the flat roof into a living area, the impact on our personal privacy at 1a Wesleyan Place and on our natural light will be considerable and very damaging indeed.

The 'Design and Access Statement' (Conclusion) of planning application 2023/1885/3 states that "the proposed changes will not have an adverse effect on the residential amenities of nearby properties". This is manifestly untrue (see above for evidence to the contrary). This application should therefore be rejected on these grounds alone, setting aside its potential impact on the whole neighbourhood.