

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2023/3274/P	Rebecca Mead	24/11/2023 17:47:18	OBJ	<p>I am writing in response to the planning application lodged for the construction of a roof extension to the Highcroft houses on Croftdown Road. I live and work in a building which backs onto the rear of the block of houses. The proposed extension appears to be in violation of a number of the provisions of the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area's Appraisal and Management Statement, which states that "Additional storeys, fundamental changes to the roofline, insensitive alterations, poor materials, intrusive dormers or inappropriate windows can harm the historic character of the roofscape and will be resisted" and "Proposals for additional storeys will generally be resisted." The application misleadingly states there are no storeys being added to the building. In fact, there is an addition of a storey—the overall floor space of each dwelling is being expanded upward by more than a fifth, to provide an additional bedroom, playroom, or other living space, complete with floor-to-ceiling windows that open onto a small balcony at the rear. The proposed extension also fundamentally changes the roofline as visible from both Croftdown Road and Woodsome Road. The extension will add 3.5 metres to the height of the building—an addition of roughly a third again of its original height.</p> <p>It is misleading to characterize this as merely replacing one kind of roof with another. This cannot be considered as anything other than the construction of an additional storey over a terrace of seven homes, with the consequent blocking of light for neighboring buildings. Given the height and breadth of the proposed roof extension, the already limited light available to the north-facing aspects of the houses on Woodsome Road will be considerably diminished. In terms of the larger community, this proposed extension does not help to allay Camden's housing crisis by increasing the quantity of housing available for local residents; it merely increases the indoor space available to the dwellings in their current configuration (while diminishing the outdoor space that those dwellings currently offer, with the use of the flat roofs as roof gardens/terraces). It also compromises the indoor and outdoor spaces of the nearby houses over which it will loom.</p> <p>Furthermore, the timing of the proposed works is confounding and troubling. The Design and Access statement states that "It is intended that the work will be undertaken in blocks of 2 or 3 roofs, depending on when each house needs to undertake works to its flat roof and when each owner is in a financial position to undertake the works." From this I take it that the construction will most likely be piecemeal, possibly extending over many months or even—as seems likely from the wording—many years. While construction is a fact of life in a city, it is unreasonable to expect neighbours to endure ongoing, unpredictable, periodic construction over an extended and unlimited period.</p> <p>Were permission to be granted for the extension to be constructed as proposed, the implication is that the building would exist for some substantial periods of time with roofs of different heights in different states of renovation. Quite apart from the fact that the proposed extension is already out of keeping with the character of the current building, with its now-classic dimensions of mid-century modernism contributing to the pleasing diversity of architectural styles that can be found in this area, this proposal would result in an unsightly mixture of renovated and unrenovated roofs, marring the appearance from both front and rear of the building, in a manner incompatible with the Conservation Area's statement.</p>