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Camden Council
Development Management
Camden Town Hall
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12-May-2024

RE: Objection to planning permission 2024/1364/P

Dear Planning Officers,

I reside on the raised ground floor of the Ziggurat Building and am writing to formally object to the referenced planning application. While we are not opposed to the principle of redeveloping the car park, my objection centres on the substantial adverse effects that this specific proposed development will have on our dwelling, which will in turn severely impact the living conditions of all residents within it.

Our apartment is likely to be one of the most severely affected by the proposed development due to its proximity to the planned noise sources and traffic pathways. Given these significant concerns—encompassing persistent noise pollution, heightened traffic, and a serious risk of injury from vehicular accidents—I respectfully request that our objections be given substantial consideration in the review of this development proposal.

The following provides an elaboration of these concerns in detail:

Loss of Daylight:

The proposed increase in height and closer proximity of the new building will cast significant shadows over my apartment, drastically reducing the natural light that is currently ample due to the open car park. This loss of light is contrary to the standards set out in the Building Research Establishment (BRE) guidelines, which recommend that developments should not adversely affect the light levels enjoyed by neighbouring properties. The reduction in daylight will not only darken my living environment but also affect my mental and physical well-being, as natural light is critical to my health conditions.

Loss of Privacy:

The current configuration with the car park ensures that my apartment enjoys a high degree of privacy. For the lower floors, the current NCP car park does not avail

onlookers towards the Ziggurat building. The proposed development plans to replace this car park with a multi-story office building, which will introduce several floors of office space directly facing my all apartments along Saffron Street, including mine. The proposed office block would typically have people present all day, every day, including weekends, leading to constant potential for overlooking into the apartments, significantly reducing privacy at all times. This will lead to a substantial loss of privacy as office occupants will be able to look directly into homes. Given my living situation on the ground floor, this oversight becomes even more invasive and distressing, directly impacting my sense of security and privacy.

Noise and Loading Bay/Traffic Concerns:

Noise Concerns:

- Bike Shed and loading bay: The proposed placement of the bike shed and loading bay directly opposite my balcony raises significant concerns about noise pollution. Given its accessibility, it could potentially be used 24/7, including weekends and nights, times during which there is currently minimal activity. This would mark a drastic change from the existing quiet environment, particularly disruptive during hours typically reserved for rest and relaxation.
- General Noise Pollution: The introduction of non-traditional hours of operation, especially early mornings, late evenings, and weekends could severely disrupt the tranquillity currently enjoyed by residents. Implementing restrictions such as limiting operational hours to socially acceptable times and possibly mandating the use of electric vehicles could mitigate some noise concerns. However, even electric vehicles contribute to noise pollution through reversing alarms, which are a significant source of disturbance.

Traffic and Injury Risk Concerns:

- Increased Traffic from Loading Bay: The plan to situate the loading bay opposite my residence is likely to lead to an increase in traffic, involving frequent deliveries that were not previously a factor with the car park. This increase in heavy vehicle traffic not only raises concerns about noise but also about the safety and structural integrity of our building.
- Safety Hazards from Goods Vehicles: Historical incidents where heavy goods vehicles have collided with the building pose a severe safety risk. Such collisions have already resulted in physical damage to the building's façade and my balcony's balustrades. The proposed increase in vehicle movements could exacerbate these dangers, potentially leading to more frequent accidents and heightened risk of serious injury to residents both inside the building and in surrounding areas. Goods vehicles routinely travel perilously close, mere centimetres from our balcony. This proximity introduces a grave risk where even minor extensions, such as a hand, or the accidental snagging of clothing on the balcony rail, could result in catastrophic consequences, potentially leading to fatal incidents by pulling an individual into a perilous interaction with the moving vehicles.

Consideration of Precedents in Neighbouring Developments:

- Camden Council has historically demonstrated a commitment to preserving the privacy and light for residents of the Ziggurat Building in its considerations of past planning applications. For instance, in previous cases such as the development at 77-79 Farringdon Road (application PSX0205254), the council responded to residents' objections by removing plans for a seventh-

floor addition and an external glass lift. These amendments were made specifically to mitigate the impact on light and privacy for the Ziggurat residents.

- Similarly, an appeal against a planning refusal for an additional floor at 67-74 Saffron Hill was upheld, reinforcing the council's stance on protecting residential outlooks and preventing enclosures that would significantly impact residents' amenity space. The decision to reject the additional storey, even after alterations to replace office windows with a blank wall, underscores the importance placed on maintaining adequate light and visual space for the existing residents.
- The consistent application of these principles in past planning decisions creates a clear precedent that should inform the assessment of the current application. The proposed development, by introducing a taller structure with less setback, directly contravenes these established community standards. It threatens to encroach significantly on both the privacy and the access to natural light for residents of the Ziggurat, akin to situations previously remedied by the council's planning decisions.

Adherence to Policy A1 of the Local Plan:

- Objective of Policy A1: This policy is fundamentally designed to protect the quality of life for occupants and neighbours by addressing several critical environmental and privacy factors. These include visual privacy, outlook, sunlight, daylight, overshadowing, artificial lighting levels, noise and vibration, as well as odour, fumes, dust, and the impacts associated with the construction phase. Importantly, this also involves ensuring that construction management plans are in place to mitigate these effects during the development phase.
- Concerns Arising from Design Changes:
- Glazing and Stepped Elevations: The revised design includes glazing on all elevations and the incorporation of stepped elevations with balconies. While these design elements are aesthetically appealing and modern, they significantly alter the interaction between the new building and its environment, particularly in a densely built area characterized by its "tight urban grain" and proximity between residential and commercial buildings.
- Impact on Privacy and Light: The increase in glazing and open balconies exacerbates potential privacy issues. The reflective surfaces and visibility from elevated positions may lead to increased overlooking into neighbouring apartments, thereby reducing the residents' sense of privacy. Moreover, the extensive use of glass can also contribute to increased light pollution and significant changes in daylight dynamics for adjacent buildings.
- Height and Massing Concerns:
- Potential Overlooking and Loss of Daylight: The proposed increase in the building's height and its massing, presents a substantial risk of affecting the outlook and increasing the sense of enclosure for nearby residential properties. This change not only impacts the direct views residents currently enjoy but also reduces the penetration of natural sunlight, essential for wellbeing and comfort. The current configuration, with the NCP car park, means there are typically no people present to look into the apartments, ensuring privacy for residents throughout the week and especially on

evenings and weekends. In contrast, the proposed office block would have people present all day, every day, including weekends, leading to constant potential for overlooking into the apartments, significantly reducing privacy at all times.

- Requirement for In-depth Testing:
- Privacy and Overlooking Tests: Given the potential impacts outlined, there is a necessity for comprehensive testing to ensure that any increase in overlooking or loss of privacy is thoroughly assessed and adequately mitigated. This includes detailed visual impact assessments from multiple vantage points around the development to understand the full extent of the impact on surrounding residences.
- Mitigation Measures: The development design should incorporate specific measures to mitigate these impacts, such as strategic placement of opaque materials or the use of screening techniques on balconies and windows that face directly onto nearby homes.
- Visual Demonstrations of Impact:
- Necessity for Transparent Communication: To ensure that the stakeholders, especially the residents affected by the development, have a clear understanding of the impact, it is imperative that the developer provides visual representations from various floors of the proposed building. This transparency will help in evaluating the actual impact on the residents' quality of life and in fostering a trustful relationship between the developer and the community.

Inconvenience to Road Users and Access Issues

Historically, there was a proposal to close Saffron Street to all traffic except cycles and pedestrians. If implemented, this would eliminate vehicular access to our building from the west, restricting entry to the car park to only Farringdon Road. This would necessitate a lengthy detour for anyone approaching from the south or west via Holborn and Clerkenwell Road. Such changes not only inconvenience residents and visitors but also contradict environmental goals by increasing travel distances and associated emissions.

Density, Design, and Impact on Historical and Community Context

- Unacceptably High Density and Over-Development: The proposed site plan indicates a significant increase in the density of the area, potentially involving the loss of open spaces which serve as communal or garden lands. This over-development compromises the open aspect of our neighbourhood, contributing to 'garden grabbing' and diminishing the community's living quality.
- Visual Impact of the Development: The architectural design and scale of the proposed building will drastically alter the visual landscape of our neighborhood. Its modern construction could starkly contrast with the surrounding buildings, particularly if it uses incongruent materials or aggressive design features.
- Effect on the Character of the Neighbourhood: The character of our neighbourhood is defined by a blend of historical significance and architectural harmony. The proposed development threatens to disrupt this

balance, introducing elements that are out of scale and character with the existing environment.

- Design Concerns (Bulk, Massing, Detailing, and Materials): The bulk and massing of the proposed development are concerns, as they appear overbearing compared to the modest scale of neighbouring properties. The detailing and materials proposed could further exacerbate this disparity, potentially clashing with the aesthetic and historical elements prevalent in the area.
- Over-Bearing, Out-of-Scale, or Out of Character Appearance: Relative to the current architectural styles and scales in the vicinity, the proposed development is likely to be over-bearing and out-of-scale. Such a structure would disrupt the visual harmony and architectural unity that characterizes our neighbourhood.
- Loss of Existing Views: The new building's height and placement could obstruct existing views from neighbouring properties, significantly diminishing the residential amenity and property values of existing owners.
- Impact on Conservation Area or Listed Building: If the development is within a Conservation Area or near a Listed Building, its modern design and increased footprint could adversely affect the historical integrity and visual appeal of the area, undermining conservation efforts.
- Adverse Effects on Highway Safety and Road User Convenience: The proposed development might also negatively impact highway safety and the convenience of road users, particularly if it leads to increased traffic, reduced visibility at junctions, or complicates access due to its layout and density.

Safety and Health Concerns:

As a registered disabled individual with several serious medical conditions, including claustrophobia, the development poses specific health risks to me. The increased building mass and resulting enclosure effect will intensify feelings of confinement and anxiety, made worse by the loss of open views and reduced light. Moreover, the potential for debris or accidents associated with the proximity of the loading bay and the history of vehicle collisions presents a continued risk to my personal safety and mental health.

Considering the aforementioned concerns, it is evident that the proposed development will significantly deteriorate our living conditions by breaching local planning policies designed to protect residential amenities in terms of daylight, privacy, noise levels and safety from injury. The development, as proposed, is not in keeping with the community's needs and fails to consider the existing residents' quality of life.

I urge the planning committee to reconsider the approval of this development, taking into account the profound impacts it would have on residents like myself. Adjustments must be made to reduce the building's height, reconsider the location of the loading bay and bike shed, and ensure adequate privacy and noise controls are in place to mitigate these impacts.

Thank you for considering my objections. I look forward to your response and am available for any further discussion or clarification needed regarding my concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Signed

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

Rakesh Patel