

Re: Objection to **Planning Application [2024/4134/P]**

Proposed Construction of three Penthouses and Townhouses at the back of Hylda Court, 3–5 St. Albans Rd, NW5 1RE, London, UK.

We are writing to object to the planning application for the construction of three penthouses on top of Hylda Court and three townhouses at the rear of Hylda Court.

We have significant concerns about the severe negative impact that this development would have on the (approx. 100) residents at Hylda Court (including families, children, elderly people, and people with special needs) as well as the wider community. Below are the key reasons for our objection:

### **1. Noise and Dust Pollution**

The construction of penthouses and townhouses would generate excessive noise and dust over a prolonged period of time, expected to last at least one year. This disruption would particularly affect children, elderly residents, and those with special needs, who are more vulnerable to the physical and mental health effects of constant noise and dust exposure.

Flexible working arrangements have become increasingly common in the modern world. The level of noise and pollution caused by the construction work would make it impossible to work from home, causing a significant degree of disruption in life balance, childcare arrangements, and other key aspects of everyday life. In addition, it would disrupt the arrangements with many employers, since many of them no longer have the capacity to provide their employees with office space five days a week.

## **2. Negative Impact on Residents' Quality of Life**

The project would drastically affect the residents' (i.e. approx. 100 residents') quality of life, depriving them of peace and quiet throughout the lengthy and highly disruptive construction period. With residents already facing serious structural issues in an ageing building, the significant disruption caused by such a large-scale project would be unfair and unreasonable.

## **3. Decrease in Natural Light**

The construction of three penthouses would reduce natural light to many flats in Hylda Court. Furthermore, the proximity of the proposed townhouses – which would be located only six meters from the main building – would cast additional shadows, depriving numerous residents (esp. those living on the lower floors) of natural light, making their living spaces significantly darker and less habitable.

## **4. Proximity to a School**

The building is situated right next to a major school (i.e. La Sainte Union Catholic School). The proposed works raise serious issues regarding the potential disruption of the school's learning environment. The increased noise, dust, and traffic during construction would affect pupils, staff, and parents, creating safety risks and compromising the school's educational activities.

## **5. Traffic Disruption**

The proposed construction would increase traffic around Hylda Court, including heavy vehicles for material deliveries and construction equipment. This would further congest roads, disrupt bus route C11, and interfere with vital services (such as Royal Mail, delivery services, and rubbish collection).

The increased traffic would exacerbate existing issues in the area, posing safety risks for pedestrians and other road users, especially children attending the nearby school.

## **6. Fire Safety and Blocked Escape Routes**

The works would obstruct proper access to fire escape routes, posing serious safety risks for residents. Ensuring easy and unrestricted access to fire escapes is critical in a building as large (and with as many residents) as Hylde Court.

The proposed development at the back of the building comprises a no-car access to the back of the building. It is a concern that, in case of an emergency, access to the back of the building for fire services would be severely compromised.

Blocking or restricting access to these essential escape routes would pose a serious risk to residents' safety and would be particularly concerning in a building with such a large number of residents.

## **7. Scaffolding Obstructing Light and Access**

The necessary scaffolding for this construction project would obstruct parts of the building and block natural light from reaching many flats for the duration of the work (i.e. at least for one year). This would further exacerbate the loss of natural light, in addition to causing noticeable obstruction for residents seeking to access their homes. The decrease in daylight would negatively affect residents' quality of life, making flats darker and significantly less health-and-safety-compliant. This would have a serious impact on their physical and mental health as well as on their general well-being.

## **8. Lack of Consultation with Residents**

The residents of Hylde Court have not been adequately informed, consulted, or notified about this proposed development. A project of this scale, which affects a significant number of people, should involve proper communication with sincere consideration of, and unanimous agreement from residents. Unfortunately, this has not been the case.

## **9. Demolition of Currently Used Garages and Caretaker's Home**

The demolition of garages currently used by residents would eliminate essential parking and storage space, creating a significant degree of inconvenience. Moreover, the demolition of the so-called caretaker's home (one of the tenant's homes) raises serious concerns about the displacement of an existing resident. The lack of communication and information regarding this matter seems questionable.

## **10. Deteriorated State of the Building and Neglected Repairs**

The building is already in a state of disrepair, with the owner neglecting to carry out necessary maintenance and repair works. It is concerning that a large new project is being proposed, despite the fact that basic maintenance issues (which have been widely documented over the past years) have still *not* been properly addressed. The strain of additional construction on an ageing building would exacerbate existing problems.

## **11. Recent Disruption from Previous Works**

Only six years ago, Hylda Court experienced a year of major disruption from works that were relatively minor, compared to what is now being proposed. Residents suffered considerable inconvenience during that time. Repeating such a scenario, on a larger scale, would have even more damaging consequences.

## **12. Impact on Biodiversity and Nearby Trees**

The proposed development poses a threat to local biodiversity and several old trees located near the building, including those on the neighbouring properties. The loss of mature trees would negatively affect not only the character of the neighbourhood but also the natural environment (including the life of squirrels, birds, insects, between others).

### **13. Impact on Local Services and Utilities**

The construction works are likely to disrupt vital services – including gas, electricity, and water supply. The operation of the lift would also be affected, since it would require an extension. This is particularly concerning for families with young children, people with mobility issues, and elderly residents, all of whom rely on the elevator for access to their homes. Prolonged disruption of these services would severely affect residents' daily lives.

### **14. Duration of Project**

The expected (best-case scenario) one-year duration of the construction would cause severe disruption – due to the constant noise, dust, traffic issues, and limited access to the building. In our view, this is an unacceptable burden to place on residents, who already face serious challenges living in an ageing building.

### **15. Overcrowding and Proximity Issues**

The construction of new units would increase the density of the building, leading to overcrowding and reducing the space available for residents. Furthermore, the close proximity of the new construction would result in a considerable loss of privacy, with overlooking windows from the penthouses potentially compromising residents' private spaces.

### **16. Loss of Privacy**

The construction of additional penthouses would elevate the building, allowing new residents to overlook neighbouring properties, especially those in close proximity (notably the lower flats at Hylda Court and both number 7 and number 17 St. Albans Road). This increase in height and visibility would reduce privacy for these residents, as their gardens, windows, and outdoor spaces could be overlooked by the new penthouses.

## **17. Demolition of an Existing Tenant's Home**

One of the tenants would be displaced as a result of the planned demolition of their home to make way for the development. This raises serious concerns about the impact on the tenant's rights, housing security, and the stability of the building's community.

### **Summary**

Given the multiple and significant adverse effects on residents' quality of life, the safety concerns, the environmental impact, and the lack of consultation, we strongly urge the planning committee to reject this application. In our view, the proposed development does *not* provide sufficient mitigation for the negative impact it would have on Hylda Court's residents, their neighbours, the neighbourhood in general, and – more broadly – the surrounding community.

The construction of luxury apartments and expensive townhouses would not serve those members of the Camden community, who – in accordance with the government's policies – need to be provided with affordable accommodation.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these objections. We very much hope that, when reaching a decision concerning this matter, the planning authorities will prioritise the welfare and interests of the members of the Camden community.