

<b>Application No:</b>	<b>Consultees Name:</b>	<b>Received:</b>	<b>Comment:</b>
2024/5138/P	Stephen Hayward	19/12/2024 14:30:10	COMMNT

**Response:**

The need to protect the principle of a protected open space.

The most troubling aspect of this proposal is the further incursion into a designated open space, i.e. the trees and the gardens behind Downshire Hill and Keats Grove, the natural 'assets' which are at least as important as the built heritage in defining the distinctive character of the conservation area. The heritage statement implies that any damage has already been done, in so far as the erection of 14A in the back garden of number 14 predates the designation of the conservation area and is thus, for better or worse, a legitimate part of its history. It even refers to a 'distinct cluster of development', though this may be to overstate the sense in which the presence of these structures is coordinated or positive. A second argument is that the enlargement of 14A does not interfere with the prospect of any of the neighbouring listed buildings, while a third is that the designated open space is only accessible to private residents, so that the greenery has 'little or no public, visual significance'.

The problem here is that biodiversity does not recognise public and private boundaries, or even the listed or non-listed status of any structure, and that an 'out of public sight, out of public mind' philosophy would sanction a planning free for all.

This might seem over-dramatic but for the fact that the proposals under consideration use the planning approval recently granted to 12A Keats Grove as a precedent. I.e One full length basement development has already attracted a similar application, even while the first scheme is awaiting completion. With this in mind it is important that the strictures on building in the protected open area are reiterated and firmly applied. The applicant's planning statement argues that the expansion will be negligible, it speaks about the footprint of the extension being less than 50% of the existing footprint, and the additional above ground volume being some 25% of the total volume. ¿However this is not just a game of percentages, but a matter of principle. The current application seeks to emphasise the difference between a private and a publicly accessible open space. However for those who have chosen to live in such a renowned conservation area- with open eyes- any element of private privilege comes with a far greater sense of public responsibility.

#### Comments on the Proposed Designs for 14A Keats Grove

In keeping with the previous comments it is insisted that any development should take place within the existing envelope. As for the design treatment, it is acknowledged that the most recent scheme represents an improvement on the initial proposal. The decision to retain as much as possible of the existing building makes sense from a sustainability perspective; while the references to a more traditional- simplified classical- 'town house idiom' is more compatible with the Neo-modernist/industrial style proposed for the garden elevation. However there are two concerns which should inform any further development: 1. The precise treatment of the Keats Grove entranceway-the area currently deemed 'detrimental to the streetscape' -should be clarified. At the moment the documentation includes contradictory proposals. In one, the Neo-Victorian railings of No 15 are simply copied and pasted, reinforcing the impression of a 1980's gated community. In the other, there is an attempt to announce the character of the remodelled facade of 14A by echoing the vertical balcony fins and larch cladding etc. Which, is it, to be?

2. The second point arises from the appropriateness of this 'contemporary' detailing. While Scandinavian style cladding and fin-like ornamentation have become the stock-in-trade of new commercial buildings and apartments around the world, to what extent do they respect and enhance the specific qualities of Downshire Hill and Keats Grove? The existing condition of 14A shows the efforts of the past to mitigate the relentless expansion of the building -upwards and outwards-by adopting features sympathetic to its original (1954) Spanish colonial revival style, ie. the horizontal weather boarding of the 1960s, and the brick vaulted, garden

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
				<p>'loggia' of the 1980's. And there is the lesson of the immediately adjacent interwar buildings (which predate the conservation area), where there is an ingenious marriage of Arts and Crafts and Georgian elements. i.e. the combination of exaggerated Voysey-like gables and Georgian style bays, windows, and pediments. In the streetscape of Keats Grove these buildings (nos 14 and 15) act as a framing for 14A and it is advised that this sense of an 'ensemble' be respected and enhanced. Not least by echoing the craftsmanship and invention seen in both the interwar neighbours and that expression of the 'town house' vernacular which is peculiar to Downshire Hill and Keats Grove. I.e. The wrought iron balconies, the railings and fanlights, etc. This heightened attention to detail would take the current proposals to a new level.</p>

---