

Dear Sirs,

Re: Objection to Application Reference: 2025/0316/P

I am writing to formally object to the planned build at 19 Menelik Road (Your ref: 2025/0316/P). My objections are based on the significant negative impacts this development will have on the local environment, specifically concerning the loss of a rear garden, the loss of trees and biodiversity, and the increased risk of flooding. These concerns are supported by various planning policies and guidelines, which I will outline below.

Loss of a Rear Garden

The London Plan sets out the strategic policy that London boroughs, such as Camden, may introduce a presumption against development on back gardens or other private residential gardens where this can be locally justified (Policy 3.5). The London Plan also supports development plan-led presumptions against development on back-gardens where locally justified by a sound local evidence base (para 3.34). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) emphasises the importance of protecting and enhancing the natural and local environment, including the retention of gardens which contribute to the character and quality of urban areas (NPPF, para. 174). The Camden Local Plan also highlights the importance of gardens in shaping the local area, providing a setting for buildings, and supporting natural habitats (Camden Local Plan, para. 6.37). The Fortune Green Neighbourhood Plan further supports the protection of green/open spaces, stating that the development of new dwellings in private gardens should be avoided to maintain the area's green character (Fortune Green Neighbourhood Plan, Policy 17).

The proposed development at 19 Menelik Road will result in the loss of a valuable rear garden, which currently provides visual interest, supports local wildlife, and contributes to the overall character of the neighbourhood. This loss is contrary to the principles set out in the NPPF, Camden Local Plan, and Fortune Green Neighbourhood Plan.

Loss of Trees and Biodiversity

The London Plan includes a policy concerning Biodiversity and Access to Nature (Policy 7.19). It states, among other things, that development proposals should (i) “wherever possible, make a positive contribution to the protection, enhancement, creation and management of biodiversity” (Policy 7.19(C)(a)); (ii) give sites of borough and local importance for nature conservation (such as the nearby Hampstead Cemetery, Westbere Copse and Gondar Gardens Reservoir) the level of protection commensurate with their importance (Policy 7.19(D)(c)); and (iii) that when considering proposals that would affect directly, indirectly or cumulatively a site of recognised nature conservation interest, the primary consideration should be to avoid adverse impact to the biodiversity interest, the most important consideration is to avoid the adverse impact to biodiversity. The London Plan notes that “the richness of London’s biodiversity is also dependant on private gardens” (para. 7.62).

The London Plan also prioritises the protection of trees in Policy 7.21. The proposed development acknowledges that it will involve removing part of the mature winter flowering cherry tree which occupies a prominent position in the front garden and on the corner of Menelik Road (labelled as T12 in the Arboricultural Report). The developer plans to cut the tree back and to raise the crown by 4 metres and do so in August 2025, which increases the risk that the tree will be damaged or killed by bacterial canker. The Arboricultural Report also fails to address the damage to the large ash tree at the rear of the existing house due to the footing for the proposed ground floor extension, or to the mature bay tree on the other side of the rear boundary with 34b Somali Road which will be damaged by the foundations for House 2.

The NPPF mandates that planning policies and decisions should minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains where possible (NPPF, para. 179). The Camden Local Plan reinforces this by

stating that the Council will protect and enhance sites of nature conservation and biodiversity, and resist development that results in the loss or harm to designated nature conservation sites or priority habitats and species (Camden Local Plan, Policy A3).

The Biodiversity CPG outlines the importance of incorporating biodiversity considerations into development proposals and adhering to the five-point mitigation hierarchy to protect and enhance ecological features (Biodiversity CPG, para. 2.1). The Trees CPG further emphasises the value of trees in urban environments, highlighting their role in providing amenity, supporting biodiversity, and mitigating climate change (Trees CPG, para. 1.8-1.10).

The planned build at 19 Menelik Road will involve the removal of several mature trees, which are crucial for local wildlife, including birds, bats and hedgehogs. This loss of trees and the associated biodiversity is in direct conflict with the policies and guidelines set out in the NPPF, Camden Local Plan, Biodiversity CPG, and Trees CPG.

Increased Risk of Flooding

Having lived two doors up the slope from 19 Menelik Road for over 40 years, I have personal experience of the problems with flooding in the gardens from at least 27 to 19 Menelik Road. There is an underground stream that runs through these gardens. In drought years, my lawn has remained green, and I have had puddles of standing water. My neighbours at numbers 25 and 27 Menelik Road have both had drainage systems fitted to address the problem. In wet weather, the gardens from 23 to 19 Menelik Road become sodden, with standing water, and a very large puddle accumulates in the garden of number 19, precisely where the developer plans to build House 2.

Policy 5.3 of the London Plan states that its sustainable design principles include avoiding impacts from natural hazards, including flooding, and notes that the risk of flooding is increasing due to climate change. The NPPF advises that development should avoid increasing flood risk and should incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to manage surface water (NPPF, para. 167). The Camden Local Plan also requires that developments do not increase flood risk and reduce the risk of flooding where possible (Camden Local Plan, Policy CC3). The Water and Flooding CPG provides detailed guidance on the use of SuDS to manage surface water and mitigate flood risk (Water and Flooding CPG, para. 8.37).

The area around 19 Menelik Road has a history of water drainage problems, with existing gardens and trees playing a crucial role in managing surface water. The removal of these natural features for the proposed development will exacerbate the existing drainage issues and increase the risk of flooding. This is contrary to the flood risk management policies outlined in the London Plan, NPPF, Camden Local Plan, and Water and Flooding CPG.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed development at 19 Menelik Road will have significant negative impacts on the local environment, including the loss of a valuable rear garden, the loss of trees and biodiversity, and an increased risk of flooding. These impacts are contrary to the policies and guidelines set out in the London Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework, Camden Local Plan, Biodiversity CPG, Trees CPG, Water and Flooding CPG, and Fortune Green Neighbourhood Plan. I urge the planning authorities to reject this proposal to protect the character, biodiversity, and safety of our neighbourhood.

Yours faithfully,

Judith Navey