

Objection to Lamorna development.

Sophie Watson, 2 Chetwynd Villas.

I write as a former Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Sydney and also a local resident of 2 Chetwynd Villas,

We are told by the developers that the object of the proposed development of Lamorna is to increase the number of residential units in the Borough, I do realise that there is a shortage of residential units across London and in Camden – particularly affordable ones.. However it would be hard to imagine a less suitable site in which to achieve this aim given the very small size of the site in a conservation area.

In my time I have come across many development applications and I would be hard pressed to find a more ludicrous one than this, as I argue shortly. I am not in favour of Nimbyism and I do think there is a good argument for developing brown field sites in London, but surely to produce expensive units in a huge building that is totally out of character with the area and which will lead to substantial degradation of the local environment and a very negative impact on local residences is not a good strategy.

More specifically, the main point about the Lamorna site, when considering its development potential, is its very small size- 182 square metres. Because of the proximity of neighbouring houses, the site offers only a limited opportunity to increase the number of residential units in the borough, without having a negative impact on neighbouring properties. It is vital that whatever development of this site there is it should take account of the immediate neighbours, Chetwynd Villas on Chetwynd Road and First House on Dartmouth Park Road, and the other houses on this end of Dartmouth Park Road. The applicant makes the spurious argument that the development would harmonise with the scale of the large Victorian semi-detached villas to the east on Dartmouth Park Road. This is a very limited representation of the site context. The obvious motivation in creating this large multi storey development is to make the development more profitable, rather than seeing the site in relation to the wider context of the other two sides that abut it.

From our perspective the developers have largely overlooked the effect on properties to the rear (Chetwynd Road side)—aside from a basic daylight study. The proposed flats seen from the rear of Chetwynd Villas, would block out much of the view of the sky and its bulk would be overbearing and out of keeping with the scale of its surroundings. The developers have also stated that the Chetwynd Villa gardens are northerly facing, when in reality they are North-West facing. This means the proposed building would likely reduce evening sunlight for multiple houses on Chetwynd Road

Secondly, under the proposal, the back-to-back distance between buildings would shrink from approximately 17.7m to 14.7m. Combined with a proposed height of 15m, this would create an oppressive and overbearing relationship that would severely compromise the privacy of neighbouring dwellings.

In conclusion, the proposed development for the Lamorna site would be dramatically taller than Lamorna, First House and Chetwynd Villas and would completely fail to be in harmony with the smaller scale of development at the western end of Dartmouth Park Road. The vertical emphasis of the proposed elevation is in strong contrast to all of the surrounding houses on Dartmouth Park Road, many of which are linked as semi-detached villas on order to give them more classical balance of vertical and horizontal proportions. The question

needs to be asked whether the applicant's proposal meets the requirement "to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area" . Any development of the site should take place in accordance with all relevant policies of the Local Plan and also respect the local area. That is what a Conservation area is about. This proposal is a classic example of an attempt to put more building mass onto a site than is appropriate, in an attempt to make a scheme more financially viable, with little consideration for its social or its urban architectural context. Were this to go ahead it would give the green light to many more such developments across the borough and destroy the amenity value of all the conservation areas in Camden.

Finally it is worth pointing out that we requested a meeting several times with the developers before the planning application was submitted, we received no response whatsoever. At the very least the proposal should be substantially reduced in height, ideally through the removal of multiple floors. This would significantly reduce the visual dominance and overlooking impacts, restore privacy, and better reflect the surrounding building scale.