

Muthoora, Leela

Subject: FW: 187 Kentish Town Road (2013/8302/P) - Comments POWRA ON M3 LOG ONTO IDOX
Attachments: Comment on 2013-8302-P - POWRA.pdf

From: Alan Morris
Sent: 24 February 2014 17:13
To: Planning
Subject: 187 Kentish Town Road (2013/8302/P) - Comments POWRA ON M3 LOG ONTO IDOX

FAO: Gidion Whittingham
Case Officer

Please find the enclosed comments on the above application. I know that we are now passed the deadline for submission but following a conversation with Rosemary Lewin of Kelly Street, residents' association I believe that you will still be able to accept comments today.

I would also add that flat 50 is located on the east elevation of 1 Prince of Wales Road and as such is directly affected by the proposals.

Regards
Alan

Alan Morris
Flat 50
1 prince of Wales Road
London NW5 3LW

FAO:
Gideon Whittingham
Planning Services
London Borough of Camden
London WC1H 8ND

planning@camden.gov.uk

Re: 187 Kentish Town Road, NW1 8PD
Planning application ref no: **2013/8302/P**

Comments as follows, on the above application:

The four storey scheme as submitted by the architects Allies and Morrison is a much improved solution for the site. Previous schemes which have been strongly opposed in the past by our association and the wider local community, have been of poor quality and have proposed significant demolition of an existing building of special character and architectural quality. This scheme does its best in the circumstances and has handled the tricky problem of extending the massing above existing parapet level with an interestingly detailed sequence of dormer windows, which appear to be clad in lead sheet. This matches the adjoining, well detailed, roof top lead cladding on the old teaching block at 1 Prince of Wales Road.

1. Extending above parapet level:

Architectural language: The design is confident and bold and does not attempt pastiche. The taller proportion of the dormers in the five storey scheme is more successful than in this 4 storey one (even though we are looking at, more a “4.5” storey, rather than 5 storey massing). The large corner window treatment over the splayed main entrance however remains awkward and out of proportion. Ideally this should require more study and refinement. The same remains true for both applications.

Natural light: The 1.5 storey (above parapet level) height of the massing causes the existing direct east light into the windows of the habitable rooms on the east elevation of 1 Prince of Wales Road to be reduced (less so than in the 5 storey scheme) in the early morning and their outlook to be affected. However the difference between this effect in the 5 storey scheme and the 4.5 storey scheme, is not considered to be significant.

Privacy: The absence of windows in the west façade is welcomed and therefore there are no privacy issues concerned with overlooking. However it is important that the third floor flats proposed at each corner (north and south) do not have any physical access or visual connection to the open roof-space between the two adjoining buildings. An opaque glazed screen or similar dividing element at the end of the north or south facing balcony/terraces would be welcomed as a solution to this problem, as detail design progresses.

2. Courtyard light-well and acoustics:

The open courtyard/lightwell that passes through the proposed new building from ground floor to roof level may present some acoustic problems in its abutment to 1 Prince of Wales Road. A tall opaque glazed screen (above head height) could provide a solution to this problem, minimizing noise transference to 1, Prince of Wales Road residents, from any noise source within the new courtyard. This would be welcomed at detail design stage.

3. Sustainability:

Exemplary design quality and sustainability: Opposition to development on this site has never been opposed. However any new building that significantly changes the historically important, non-designated heritage asset should be of exemplary design. Allies and Morrison have responded with a high quality architectural scheme and this is greatly appreciated, particularly in view of the fine work completed in 1998 on the adjoining ex-teaching block at 1 Prince of Wales Road. Exemplary quality should however include the highest specification possible for sustainability particularly in view of the “carbon-zero” new-build deadline of 2016. For this reason it is felt that this building by award winning architects, should already be achieving as close to carbon-zero as possible (under the revised definition), and as such showing how this can be done in Kentish Town, setting a new standard for others to follow. This however, whilst recognising the limitations of the tight site and its restricted potential for on-site renewables.

Existing sub-station: The existing electrical sub-station attached to the south east corner of 187 Kentish Town Road, should be assessed to see what possibility there is for its longevity. Ideally a sub-station should not be attached to a residential building if there are alternatives for re-thinking its future on this site. Its position and massing also does not have a positive effect on Church Avenue and in this context we welcome a review of its status and an assessment of its future. A new development of this type could provide the impetus to carry out such a review where otherwise it would not happen.

4. Public realm opportunity:

The freehold company that owns and manages the shared freehold interests at 1 Prince of Wales Road, also owns in title the access lane on the south side (known as Church Avenue). In this context, it is hoped that a high quality re-development of 187 Kentish Town Road (which effectively completes the total conversion and modernization of the old North Western Polytechnic building) will also provide the catalyst to bring about improvement of the way in which the privately owned Church Avenue meets Kentish Town Road’s public realm. The new café (Doppio Cafe) which now operates from part of the old telephone exchange building has been very successful and also increased positive surveillance of the Church Avenue frontage area. A new landscaping proposal for this area would be welcomed from the architects and developer in order to engage interested parties in considering improvements to Church Avenue, in such a way that it could contribute more positively to both the new development and its residents and the way in which the existing successful café colonises external space, particularly in the summer months. All this however notwithstanding the need to allow occasional access to the Church beyond and deal with the obvious security issues. It may well be that funding under such schemes as the Pocket Parks initiative could be secured and this also should be considered pro-actively should this scheme receive planning approval.

5. Lack of cinema at ground level: Residents in our building welcome the proposal of a cinema for the ground floor in the 5 storey application but note its omission in this alternative scheme with lower massing. A new cultural facility in Kentish Town would be a huge improvement and bring back cinema to a neighbourhood that once boasted many Picture Houses. In this 4.5 storey alternative scheme the cinema is not included even though it was clearly top of the list when the results of the public consultation was published. Comments I have received have frequently asked why a cinema use could not be incorporated also in the 4.5 storey scheme, perhaps by sinking the cinema lightly below ground floor level to accommodate its section. Residents have clearly preferred the lower massing but have asked for the cinema to be included as well.

6. Construction – disruption, noise and dust: The architects have proposed to use a fast track cross laminated timber system for the structure of the new building. This is welcomed, not just in the use of low carbon materials but also for its advantages in cutting down to a minimum the time needed for construction on-site and therefore minimizing disruption. Noise should also be minimized and everything done to limit the dust produced during construction. This should be an integral part of the construction plan should the scheme gain planning.

7. Summary: Noting the few important comments above, the development as proposed is generally welcomed. After many years of battling poor proposals here we have a scheme which has taken up the challenge and that will, we hope, give the southern part of the High Street a significant modern building. Interestingly, a mixed use building, combining both old and new, with a much needed cultural contribution to boot. Kentish Town deserves more of this. Properly executed public consultation pays off and planners by themselves cannot guarantee design quality. High standards of design demanded by residents and local communities have shown that positive results can be obtained. This is an example of what can be achieved and should approval be gained for this development is should be held up as an example.

Alan Morris
Chair of: POWRA Freehold Ltd

Vice chair of:
POWRA Residents' Association
1 prince of Wales Road
London NW5 3LW

Several meetings of residents (60 flats) were held in 1 Prince of Wales Road to discuss these proposals. This letter should be considered together with any individual resident's letters that have been written independently.