

PLANNING SERVICES

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING APPEALS (DETERMINATION BY
INSPECTORS) (INQUIRIES PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) RULES 2000**

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

Mortimer MacSweeney

FOR PUBLIC INQUIRY COMMENCING ON

DECEMBER 18th 2013

APPEAL SITE

No.4 St Augustine's Road, London NW1 9RN

APPELLANT

Paul Godfrey

SUBJECT OF APPEAL

Appeal against the London Borough of Camden's refusal of Planning Permission for the
'Erection of five storey building comprising 9 residential units
(2 x 2 bedroom and 7 x 3 bedroom flats) (Class C3).

COUNCIL REFERENCE: 2013/1210/P

PLANNING INSPECTORATE REFERENCE: APP/X5210/A/13/2204277/NWF

CONTENTS PAGE

	Section	Page
1	Introduction and Scope of Evidence	3
2	The Site	3
3	The Application under Appeal	4
4	Relevant Planning Policies & Guidance	4
5	Assessment of Reason for Refusal	20
6	Conclusion	29
7	Appendices	31

1.0 Introduction and Scope of Evidence

- 1.1 My name is Mortimer MacSweeney. I have a Diploma in Architecture (1979) from the Polytechnic of North London, became a corporate member of the RIBA in 1981, have an MA in Conservation Studies (1993) from the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies, University of York, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Urban Design (2002) from the University of Westminster.
- 1.2 I am employed as senior conservation officer by the London Borough of Camden since August 2013, and was previously employed by the Council as a Conservation Officer (2000 - 2005) advising on conservation and design issues in the planning process.
- 1.3 Together with my colleague Ben Le Mare, Senior Planning Officer, I will be representing the Council at this Public Inquiry. This proof, deals with the conservation and design issues raised by Reason for Refusal No.1
- 1.4 The further 8 Reasons for Refusal will be addressed by my colleague Ben Le Mare. These relate to the absence of a legal agreement to secure the provisions of a Construction Management Plan, car-free housing, open space contribution, education contribution, highway contribution, pedestrian, cycling, and environmental improvements, affordable housing contribution, and a sustainable energy strategy.

2.0. The Site

- 2.1 The application site is a triangular site at the junction of St Augustine's Road, Agar Grove and Murray Street. It is enclosed by a 2m high brick wall facing St Augustine's Road and Agar Grove and backs onto the side boundaries of 4 St Augustine's Road and 27 Agar Grove. It lies within the Camden Square Conservation Area and is identified as making a negative contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 2.2 Agar Grove, to the south and east of the site, consists of three-storey semi-detached Victorian villas raised on basements and dating from the 1850s. Both sides of the street have strong building lines and unity of design, although this rhythm is interrupted by two long 1950s blocks of flats at nos. 33-47. St Augustine's Road has a similar uniformity comprising three storey semi detached Victorian villas with stuccoed fronts, dormer windows and raised entrances.
- 2.3 The application site originally housed a pair of 19th century villas with triangular front garden, which were demolished after the widening of the railway in 1898. It is currently a

vacant site with no authorised use, although there have been some unauthorised uses in recent past such as a waste transfer and storage use, and car and caravan parking. The most recent lawful use of the site was as a builders yard on a temporary planning consent which has now expired

3.0 The Application under Appeal

Original

- 3.1 The application is for the erection of a 5 storey building to provide 9 x flats.

Revision

- 3.2 The design of the proposed building was amended during the planning application to address concerns about the design of the western elevation which although neither facing St Augustine's Road nor Agar Grove, is a prominent elevation occupying a "gateway position". The balconies on this elevation have been reduced from four floors to three floors, and their width reduced in ascension to relate to the traditional window hierarchy of Agar Road and St Augustine's Road.
- 3.3 This Appeal is against the Council's refusal of 2013/1210/P Full Planning Permission Refused for ; Erection of five storey building comprising 9 residential units (4x 2 bedroom and 5x 3 bedroom flats) (Class C3).

The Reason for Refusal No.1 :

'The proposed development, by reason of its scale, massing and detailed design, would appear as an unsympathetic addition to the street scene and would fail to achieve the necessary quality of architectural design befitting of this prominent site. As such it would neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the Camden Square Conservation Area contrary to policies CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy and policies DP24 (Securing high quality design) and DP25 (Conserving Camden's heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Development Policies'.

4.0 Relevant Planning Policies & Guidance

4.1 Core Strategy, LDF Development Policies & Planning Guidance

CS14 Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage

DP24 Securing high quality design

DP25 Conserving Camden's heritage

Camden Core Strategy Policy CS14 ; Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage.

'The Council will ensure that Camden's places and buildings are attractive, safe and easy to use by;

- Requiring development to be of a high standard that respects local context and character*
- Preserving and enhancing Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas'*

Excellence in design

Para 14.3 'Camden has many special and unique places and historic and modern buildings of the highest quality. As well as preserving this rich heritage, we should also be contributing to it by making sure that we create buildings of equally high quality that will be appreciated by future generations. The design of the places and buildings that make up our local environment affects us all and our quality of life. High quality design is visually interesting and attractive but it is not just about what things look like. Good design makes places that put people first, are welcoming, feel safe and are enjoyable and easy to use for everyone, whether they are living in, working in or just passing through the borough'.

14.4 'Development schemes should improve the quality of buildings, landscaping and the street environment and, through this, improve the experience of the borough for residents and visitors. The Council will therefore insist on high quality design throughout the borough'.

14.5 'The Council is working with its partners to promote and celebrate excellence in design. for example through the Camden Design Initiative, which seeks to improve public space and the built environment and encourage involvement, awareness and understanding of good design, including the bi-annual Camden Design Awards, which recognise high quality and innovative designs'.

14.7 'High quality design also takes account of its surroundings and what is distinctive and valued about the local area. Camden is made up of a diversity of areas, each with their own distinctive character, created by many elements such as architectural style and layout,

social and economic history, landscaping and mix of uses.. As Camden is a densely built-up borough where most development involves the replacement, extension or conversion of existing buildings, taking account of context and local character is particularly important. The Council will therefore expect the design of buildings and places to respond to the local area and its defining characteristics and reinforce or, if appropriate, create local distinctiveness’.

Camden’s Heritage

14.9 ‘Camden has a rich architectural heritage with many special places and buildings from throughout Camden’s history. 39 conservation areas, covering much of the Borough, are designated recognising their special architectural or historic interest and their character and appearance. The Council has prepared conservation area statements, appraisals and management strategies that provide further guidance on the character of these areas, and will take these documents into account as material considerations when assessing applications for planning permission’.

Policy DP24 – Securing high quality design

‘The Council will require all developments to be of the highest standard of design and will expect developments to consider:

- a) character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings;*
- c) the quality of materials to be used;*
- d) the provision of visually interesting frontages at street level;’*

Para 24.7 : *‘Development should consider:*

- the character and constraints of its site;*
- the prevailing pattern, density and scale of surrounding development;*
- the impact on existing rhythms, symmetries and uniformities in the townscape;*
- the compatibility of materials, their quality, texture, tone and colour;*
- the composition of elevations;*
- the suitability of the proposed design to its intended use;*
- its contribution to public realm, and its impact on views and vistas; and*
- the wider historic environment and buildings, spaces and features of local historic value.’*

'Respecting local character'

Para 24.11 'Given the highly built-up nature of Camden, careful consideration of the characteristics of a site, features of local distinctiveness, and the wider context is needed in order to achieve high quality development which integrates into its surroundings'.

Para 24.12 'In order to best preserve and enhance the positive elements of local character within the borough, we need to recognise and understand the factors that create it. Designs for new buildings, and alterations and extensions, should respect the character and appearance of the local area and neighbouring buildings. Within areas of distinctive character, development should reinforce those elements which create the character. Where townscape is particularly uniform attention should be paid to responding closely to the prevailing scale, form and proportions and materials. In areas of low quality or where no pattern prevails, development should improve the quality of an area and give a stronger identity'.

Para 24.13 'Development should not undermine any existing uniformity of a street or ignore patterns or groupings of buildings'.

Policy DP25 – Conserving Camden's heritage

Conservation areas

'In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will:

- a) take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;*
- b) only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area;'*

Para 25.2 'In order to preserve and enhance important elements of local character, we need to recognise and understand the factors that create this character. The Council has prepared a series of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans that assess and analyse the character and appearance of each of our conservation areas and set out how we consider they can be preserved and enhanced. We will take these into account when assessing planning applications for development in conservation areas. We will seek to manage change in a way that retains the distinctive characters of our

conservation areas and will expect new development to contribute positively to this. The Council will therefore only grant planning permission for development in Camden's conservation areas that preserves and enhances the special character or appearance of the area. The character of conservation areas derive from the combination of a number of factors, including scale, density, pattern of development, landscape, topography, open space, materials, architectural detailing, and uses. These elements should be identified and responded to in the design of new development.'

Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2011

The following relevant text to this case is from the Adopted Character Appraisal.

Part 1 : Appraisal

Section 2 ; Definition of Special Interest

'Camden Square Conservation Area is a primarily nineteenth century inner London suburb. It is a planned development, in a gridded street layout running parallel to and perpendicular from Camden Road, and the layout is focused around Camden Square'.

'Camden Square forms the centrepiece of the planned development; however, the special character of the area is that it is also diverse when looked at in detail. The architecture is not uniform around the Square, phased development is evident in groups of buildings, and some plots have been developed individually. This is reflected in the size of plots, layout and the elevation treatment of the houses. The building of the railway through the area, the impact of wartime damage and later infill development have all contributed to the evolution of the area'.

'The area also contains some 'gap sites'. The most poignant is the site of the lost St Paul's Church, a Victorian gothic church with prominent spire that was demolished in 1956 which was located at the north end of Camden Square at the crossing with Cantelowes Road. This has been replaced with low buildings with poor landscape surrounding them, Also, the junction of Agar Grove, St Augustine's Road and Murray Street is a vacant site that fails to define the entrance, and mars the view of the area from the south and east.'

3.2 Local Policy : Designation

'The Camden Square Conservation Area was designated in October 1974.

Camden Square Conservation Area Character Appraisal was agreed in principle by the Executive on 19th. November 2002.'

4.2 : Character and plan form

'The character of the area is centred upon Camden Square, a long green space running north east to south west parallel to Camden Road and at the heart of the grid of streets running parallel and perpendicular to Camden Road'.

'The area was laid out over fields as a planned development from the 1840s to completion around 1880. It was originally intended for the Square to be symmetrical around the church site – now at the top of Camden Square – but during construction, high density building was substituted to the north east, as Camden Terrace, North and South Villas'.

'There is an underlying architectural hierarchy:

- the largest semi-detached houses face the major route of Camden Road, and Camden Square which pivots around two detached houses on its east side;*
- narrower plots with mostly semi detached and some terraces on the St Augustine's Road area, around Rochester Square and the streets leading from the Square;*
- the mews: Camden Mews and Murray Mews, two long, smaller scale service areas developed incrementally over a hundred and fifty years and packed with ingenuity and variety.'*

'The original houses have small front gardens, with semi-basements and steep steps to their front doors, and rear gardens of varying lengths. The grandest houses have the deepest front gardens and these complement the proportions of Camden Square'.

'The plot widths are graded: in the centre of the south east side of Camden Square are two large detached houses. Generally, the south east and south west sides of the Square have the widest plots and semi-detached properties: the plot widths then narrow at the north east end of the Square. The same progression is noted along St Augustine's Road where the plot widths narrow as one moves north east'.

4.3 : Landscape and topography

'The Topography Map shows the Camden Square Conservation Area indicated approximately between the 30 and 45 metre contours sloping from the highest point on York Way (at the Camden Road end), down to the lowest point at Rochester Place (at the Agar Grove end). The slope rises steadily, steepening at the top end of the Square'

'This contributes to the character of the area, as all streets are gently rising and falling across the contours accommodated within subtle adjustments in the gardens, steps and roofscapes. The underlying natural hill is revealed in the long landscaped Square'.

4.4 : Historic development and Archaeology

'In the later 18th century much of the Canteloves Manor lands were leased on long term agreements by the first Earl of Camden, who by Act of Parliament laid out the southern part of his estate and divided it into plots and building leases'.

'The descendants of the Earl, the Camden Estate, laid out the remainder of the streets from the 1840s, as a set piece of town planning. The Camden Estate was determined that the new Camden Square area should be a higher class development, in contrast to the earlier portions of Camden Town which were already deteriorating socially as the metropolis expanded. Their very short leases discouraged quality development.'

'Wherever possible, the Estate sold leases on a wholesale basis to avoid piecemeal development. As ground landlord it imposed rules about the size and general appearance of the houses to control the development and to attract the middle classes.

In order to be as up-market as possible there was a generous provision of green open space, and St Paul's Church, a neo-gothic structure with a prominent 156 foot spire, was built on the Green at the start of the Camden New Town development, and was consecrated in 1849'

'In Camden New Town, a more extensive wave of house-building commenced around 1845. The first examples were large houses built around Camden Square. Soon, development was to spread along Camden Road, characterised by an essentially urban growth typical of mid nineteenth century London. There was much building activity from the mid-1840s. By 1849, the following streets were laid out and named: Camden Road, Camden Square, Canteloves Road,

Maiden Lane (later known as York Way), Murray Street, Rochester Square, St Paul's Road (later known as Agar Grove), and Stratford Place (later known as Stratford Villas). The following streets were laid out but unnamed: Camden Mews, Camden Park Road, Marquis Road, Murray Mews, North Villas, St Augustine's Road, and South Villas. Most of these residential streets were built quickly from 1860s and were fully developed by the 1880s'.

'While the south west part of Camden Square and Camden Road are mostly in a stuccoed Italianate style, plainer brick houses with arched windows and projecting eaves stand at the later high-density north east end of the Square'.

5.1 : Spatial analysis

'The area has a clear pattern of wide streets with mews behind. The main streets are lined with houses, set back from the street, on raised basements with three principal floors above. The mews houses are typically of two storeys, some with set-back third storeys, and stand at the back edge of the narrow roadway or slightly set back. This pattern was established in the original plan and has been continued in the twentieth century.'

5.2 : Key views

'Views in this area have distinct characters: the formal composition of the planned street layout and ordered frontages contrast with the contained views of the varied developments within the mews'.

'The key views are up and down the Square, and the grid of roads that spread from it. Most roads are tree-lined and edged by front gardens. The overall impression of homogeneity is created by distinctive roofscapes and the ordering of the elevations in coherent groups'.

5.3 : Character zones

The following character zones are described in the Character Appraisal ;

- **Camden Square**
- **Rochester Square**
- **Boundary Roads**
- **The Grid of Streets**

- **The Mews**

Agar Grove lies within the Boundary Roads character zone.

Boundary Roads Character Zone

'Agar Grove is the southernmost street in the Camden Estate development. It links the ancient streets of York Way (Maiden Lane) to St Pancras Way, and continues to Royal College Street. The street also physically runs along the lower edge of the sloping area. This was originally lined with semi-detached houses, with the gradation from larger houses to the west leading to terraces at the York Way end.'

'This pattern is still legible; however the character of the street has been eroded progressively, particularly on the north side. It is a busy thoroughfare; the pattern of buildings was divided by the gap caused by the insertion of the railway, bomb damage and the replacement of houses with flats on the corner of York Way, 33-47 Agar Grove and Gairloch House and the surrounding Council estates. The condition of many properties is also poor - in need of investment and reinstatement of detail. There is a key development site on the corner of Agar Grove and St Augustine's Road'

St Augustine's Road lies within 'The Grid of Streets', the planned estate development.

The Grid of Streets Character Zone

'The streets run in a planned grid layout set out from Camden Road which tapers to a point at the meeting of York Way and Agar Grove. Perpendicular from Camden Road from south west to north east are Murray Street, Cantelowes Road and Camden Park Road. Parallel are Camden Square, the two mews and the streets extending from it: North and South Villas and Cliff Road to the north east, Stratford Villas to the south west, and St Augustine's Road and St Paul's Crescent further to the south east,.

St Augustine's Road

'This street has an apparently consistent arrangement of set-back grander houses. On chronologically with larger plots, stucco and pediments, progressing to stucco or a mix of brick

over stuccoed ground and lower floors, to the smaller terraced houses at the northern end. This is all consistent with the overall pattern and evolution of the Estate, as it grew north east up the hill. The south west end of the road has two large vacant sites. Planning approval was granted for flats on the north west plot in 2007, but (in 2010) no construction has yet begun. The difficult and key triangular plot to the south east at the entrance of Murray St and Agar Grove has recently been the subject of numerous, as yet unsuccessful planning applications for flats’.

‘The character of these streets plays on a variation of themes established in the Square: semi-detached houses and terraces and a few single houses. All are raised on semi-basements with three upper storeys, executed in a palette of brick, stucco and slate, timber sash windows, with a mix of classical and Italianate references. Variations to the layout include plot widths, depths of front and back gardens, variations in details include parapets, cornices, window surrounds and glazing bar arrangements, pediments or eaves, decorative metalwork, and the detailing of the front steps’.

‘Street trees are integral to the character of these streets. Many are in private front gardens’.

5.5 : The quality of buildings and their contribution to the area

‘The area is essentially residential and was from the start an essay in middle class living; Booth’s Poverty Map illustrated this in the late nineteenth century and the quality of the detailing, size of houses and gardens all reinforce this hierarchy’.

‘In the post-1945 period, the infill buildings illustrate changed attitudes and procurement of housing. By this time, the strict local design codes were no longer relevant; an economic programme of reconstruction and economy of construction was necessary and greater powers were granted to the development control system. Public housing was provided on the Square that had little regard to the original New Camden Town concept’.

5.6 : Local Details

‘In the area the details tend to be within a limited range and in groups that reflect the sequence of developments. The uniformity of these groups is an important characteristic of the area, and where insensitively altered or missing this can have a negative effect on the terrace - for example, the loss of window surrounds or string courses which leaves a façade looking scraped and flattened’.

'Roofs are predominately slate, hidden behind parapets on the grandest houses, or with eaves (either clipped or wide and bracketed). Twentieth century variants include flat and metal roofs. Walls are stock brick, stucco or a combination of the two, restrained classical and Italianate in detail in nineteenth century properties, and with variations in this plus timber, metal, new and reclaimed stock brick in the twentieth century.'

'Windows in the period buildings are generally timber sashes. The development all post-dates the 1845 reduction in window tax coinciding with technical improvements easing production and making both glass and larger panes more economic. Buildings from the 1840s and 1850s commonly have wide centre panes with narrow side panes (marketed as 'picture windows'), whereas those from the 1860s have three part glazing with undivided central sashes. This historical development can easily be seen when walking up from the earlier south west end of Camden Square to the later north end of the Square and into South or North Villas. Narrow side panes are typical of the south west end of the Square.'

5.9 : Audit of heritage assets

Buildings and spaces that make a positive contribution

'These buildings relate to the core reason for the conservation area designation and significance which was the original Camden New Town Estate; also there have been significant twentieth century infill buildings particularly in the mews. They have a positive effect on the environment and could be a single building, group or landmark. The general presumption is in favour of retaining all positive buildings and any proposals involving their demolition will require specific justification'.

'Within groups of buildings, some of the buildings marked as positive are in poor condition or have lost details; it is desirable that these defects are rectified. Some may also have alterations that are now considered inappropriate (for example large dormers).'

- *'All properties are considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area unless listed as neutral or negative'*

Buildings and spaces that make a neutral contribution

'These relate to buildings which neither enhance nor detract from the character or appearance of the area. A number of interventions have disrupted the homogeneous nature of the area and have not provided any significant townscape merit. There might be potential for enhancement.,

- Agar Grove 9-11

Buildings and spaces that make a negative contribution

'These buildings, elements or spaces detract from the special character of the area and offers potential for beneficial change. In other words they 'blight' the area and improvement is expected.'

- Agar Grove 33-47 odd numbers
- St Augustine's Road and Agar Grove vacant junction site
- St Augustine's Road vacant site to east of railway cutting

6 : Problems and pressures, and capacity for change

'The Area faces a range of pressures – aims for harmful changes of use, overdevelopment, inappropriate alterations, and loss of desirable original features.'

Part 2 : Camden Square Management Strategy

7.4 : New Development

'High quality design and high quality execution will be required of all new development at all scales, and opportunities for enhancement and further revealing the significance of the conservation area should be taken. The design statements supporting such applications will be expected specifically to address the particular characteristics identified in the appraisal. Successful modern design can be of the 21st century and enhance the conservation area, by carefully assessing and responding to the form and qualities of surrounding buildings and spaces'.

4.2 National policies & guidance

National Planning Policy Framework 2011

The NPPF identifies 12 Core Planning Principles, two of which are :

- *always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;*
- *conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations;*

In NPPF Section 7 ; In 'Requiring Good Design' the following paragraphs are relevant ;

Para 58 : Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- *establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;*
- *respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;*

NPPF Para 60. Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

NPPF Para 65 'Local planning authorities should not refuse planning permission for buildings or infrastructure which promote high levels of sustainability because of concerns about incompatibility with an existing townscape, if those concerns have been mitigated by good design (unless the concern relates to a designated heritage asset and the impact would cause material harm to the asset or its setting which is not outweighed by the proposal's economic, social and environmental benefits).'

In NPPF Section 12 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment' the following paragraphs are relevant ;

NPPF Para 126 in their Local Plan local planning authorities should take into account:

- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
- *opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.*

NPPF Para 131 in determining applications local planning authorities should take into account:

- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

NPPF Para 132 '*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification*'

NPPF Para 134 '*Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.*'

NPPF Para 137 '*Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.*'

English Heritage's Understanding Place : Conservation Designation, Appraisal, and Management, March 2011.

Annex 2 ; ‘Acceptable new build in conservation areas will aspire to a quality of design and execution, related to its context, which may be valued in the future. This neither implies or precludes working in traditional or new ways, but will normally involve respecting values established through assessment of the significance of the area. This will include overall mass or volume of the development, its scale (the expression of size indicated by the windows, doors, floor/ceiling heights, and other identifiable units), landscaping, and its relationship to its context – whether it sits comfortably on its site. The use of materials generally matching in appearance or complementary to those that are historically dominant in the area is likely to be important, as is ensuring that materials, detailing and finishes, and planting are all of high quality. Exceptions to this approach may include new development forming part of, or adjoining an important set piece of recognised quality, which must be taken into account, or where a high quality contemporary landmark building might be appropriate.

Regional Planning Guidance ; London Plan July 2011

Policy 7.4 ; Local Character

Planning decisions

Buildings, streets, and open spaces should provide a high quality design response that

a has regard to the pattern and grain of the existing spaces and streets in orientation, scale, proportion, and the scale, mass.

B contributes to a positive relationship between the urban structure and natural landscape features.

C allows existing buildings and structures that make a positive contribution to the character of a place to influence the future character of the area

D is informed by the surrounding historic environment

Para 7.14 The physical character of a place can help reinforce a sense of meaning and civility through the layout of buildings and streets, the natural and man-made landscape, the density of development and the mix of land uses... In some places the character is well

preserved and clear....Through characterisation studies, existing character can be identified and valued, and used to inform a strategy for improving the place.

Policy 7.6 Architecture

Strategic

A Architecture should make a positive contribution to a coherent public realm, streetscape and wider cityscape. It should incorporate the highest quality materials and design appropriate to its context.

Planning Decisions

Buildings and structures should

A be of the highest quality

B be of a proportion, composition, scale and orientation that enhances, activates and appropriately defines the public realm

C comprise details and materials that complement, not necessarily replicate, the local architectural character

Para 7.21 Architecture should contribute to the creation of a cohesive built environment that enhances the experience of living, working or visiting the city. This is often best achieved by ensuring new buildings reference, but not necessarily replicate, the scale, mass and detail of the predominant building form surrounding them, and by using the highest quality materials. Contemporary architecture is encouraged, but it should be respectful and sympathetic to the other architectural styles that have preceded it in the locality. All buildings should help create streets and places that are human in scale so that their proportion and composition enhances, activates and appropriately encloses the public realm, as well as allowing them to be easily understood, easily enjoyed and kept secured. The building form and layout should have regard to the density and character of the surrounding development.

Policy 7.8 Heritage Assets and Archaeology

D. Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.

7.29 Ensuring the identification and sensitive management of London's heritage assets, in tandem with the promotion of the highest standards of modern architecture, will be key to maintaining the blend of old and new that gives the capital its unique character.

Identification and recording heritage through, for example, character appraisals, conservation plans, and local lists.

7.31 Crucial to the preservation of this character is the careful protection and adaptive re-use of heritage buildings and their settings. Heritage assets such as conservation areas make a significant contribution to local character and should be protected from inappropriate development that is not sympathetic in terms of scale, materials, details and form. Development that affects the setting of listed buildings or conservation areas should be of the highest quality of architecture and design, and respond positively to the local character and context

5.0 Assessment of Reason for Refusal

- 5.1 Camden is a densely built up Borough where the majority of development takes place on infill sites or through the replacement or extension of existing buildings. It has a long tradition of development that has left a variety of character and style. The local and historic character can be the context from which good design derives inspiration, and be a reference for scale, height, mass & bulk together with following established street patterns and façade alignment.
- 5.2 The particular appearance and characteristics of a conservation area will place constraints of the form of new development. It is important that every new building is designed, not as a separate entity, but as part of the conservation area which has a well established character of its own.

Coherent Character & Appearance

- 5.3 In terms of character zones identified in the Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal St Augustine's Road is part of the 'Grid of Streets', planned estate development of paired villas, terrace houses and with a few individual villas. In this context the scale and character of St Augustine's Road has a high degree of uniformity. The greater the

uniformity of the conservation area the greater the risk of a contrasting new building height, mass, form and design disrupting its established scale and character. There are many conservation areas elsewhere which have a more diverse character and appearance with a wide variety of building types, stylistic periods, and scales which stand in harmony together, and where there may be an opportunity for a contrasting new larger scale building to make its mark.

Established Street scene

- 5.4 Both St Augustine's Road and Agar Grove may be characterised by the repeated pattern of development of stucco & brickwork paired villas, whose architectural form, layout and alignment gives a strong sense of visual unity and coherence to the appearance of these streets. There are some individual villas as well as rows of terrace houses at the north eastern end of St Augustine's Road, however the predominant building type is the paired semi-detached villa. The individual plot sizes tend to be regular in width, typically 7-8m wide per demi-detached house, with 6m deep front gardens and 10m – 15m deep rear gardens.
- 5.5 Typically the villas are symmetrical about their slab chimney stacks, and have shallow pitched hips, slated roofs, with projecting overhanging eaves, some supported on brackets. Some have rusticated quoin corners to their yellow stock brickwork facades, and typically have recessed sash windows diminishing in size on successive upper floors, with classically detailed stucco surrounds. A flight of steps leads up to ground floor entrance porticoes.
- 5.6 The closely spaced villas maintain a continuous building line and their repeated forms with narrow gaps give a uniform rhythm to the streets. The impact of the continuous built form is significantly softened by mature trees along the road and vegetation in front gardens.
- 5.7 Both St. Augustine's Road, 29m wide between opposite facades, and Agar Grove, 23m wide between opposite facades, are straight roads following a continuous alignment, with paired villas 3 storeys high on lower ground floors creating a strong sense of linear enclosure.
- 5.8 There is a strong vertical emphasis which holds the eye as the street is viewed obliquely along its length. The villas appear vertically proportioned, with the gaps between the buildings, windows, and projecting porches adding to this effect. The regular pattern of development the villas, their regular fenestration pattern, and entrance porticoes either end

all contribute to the rhythm of street. The eaves levels of the villas step down St Augustine's Road in a graduated manner following the sloping level of the road.

- 5.9 Typically there is division of the facades of the villas into 3 elements with a base, middle, and top. The lower ground floor, typically with a painted render finish is the base. The middle comprises the ground, first, and second floors, typically faced in stock brickwork, but occasionally with ground floors stucco rendered. Here the principal architectural emphasis is on entrance porticoes and the tall vertically proportioned sash windows at ground and first floor, with deep reveals & stucco moulding dressings. In the window hierarchy there is a diminishing height in the sash windows from ground, to first, to second floor, and a clear termination at the top with the distinctive projecting eaves just above the window head, which help to stop the eye in its upward travel. The shallow pitched hipped roofs have very limited attic space for conversion which has been a key factor in keeping most of the original roof forms intact from ad-hoc roof alterations and extensions.
- 5.10 The paired villas Nos.5-23 on the north side of St Augustine's Road have distinctive gable fronted elevations. The height and scale of these is smaller as they have a low eaves level and restricted 2nd floor level height compared to the typical hipped roof villas with their full height 2nd floors.
- 5.11 Regrettably the 1960s replacement housing at Nos.33-47 Agar Grove, which replaced the original pattern of paired villas, breaks the scale, rhythm, and continuity of the Grove and has a negative effect on the conservation area, and I consider it has a prejudicial effect on securing a harmonious contextual design for this Appeal site. If the original paired villas had survived the visual coherence of the north side of Agar Grove would still be complete, and this would provide a more unified townscape as an immediate context for the Appeal site.

Opportunity Site

- 5.12 The original pair of semi-detached villas on this corner site have long been lost leaving a corner gap which adversely affects the coherence of the local townscape. Redevelopment of this site represents an opportunity to re-connect a visually coherent distinctive piece of townscape.
- 5.13 An appropriate design for this corner site would need to be well related to its context and would need to be of the highest quality, displaying a thorough understanding of the architectural language of the predominant pattern of development. It should intensify the

well established local character of the conservation area, and as an addition to the townscape make a positive contribution to the ambience and visual quality of the locality.

- 5.14 Historically this corner site formed part of the townscape of the area, where each building along the street is similar to the preceding one. Whilst there are variations in the house types and plans the area was developed at the same time, to an overall plan, and with a similar architectural character.
- 5.15 The visual cohesiveness of this conservation area is reinforced by a common building type or use, built during a specific period, during the mid -1800s in a harmonious style, with streets of villas of a particular scale and facing materials, with shared architectural detailing and motifs. A sensitive design response for redeveloping this corner site in such a context of distinctive character is required. I consider that this specific site context does not present an opportunity to create an intrusive new building of significantly greater scale and presence relative to that of the semi-detached villas along St. Augustine's Road and Agar Grove.
- 5.16 What is required is a convincing new design of distinction, which has integrity and is entirely complementary to the special historic and architectural interest of the area. New building in this sensitive context will be expected to relate positively to its scale, architectural character, and the predominant external facing materials of the conservation area.
- 5.17 The Inspector's Decision, ref. APP/X5210/A/09/2110690, considered a modern style block of flats which failed to relate positively to 'these established streetscapes' with their 'strong visual cohesiveness and a distinctive pleasing character'. Whilst the current Appeal scheme is significantly different I have been informed by and have taken due regard of the Inspector's judgement and observations on scale, height, mass and architectural style, and on the effect of the proposed development in this specific context.

The Proposal

- 5.18 The triangular plot is 35m x 44m x 30m approximately. The irregular building is 17m wide to St Augustine's Road, 22m wide to Agar Grove, with 22m at its east end and 8m approx. at its west end. In design terms this wide corner site is a challenging with 3 public elevations in a very sensitive context. It raises crucial issues of scale, bulk, and mass of a larger building on the skyline.

- 5.19 There are a number of constraints specific to this site restricting the form of the development, including the triangular shape of the site and its position partly above a railway bridge. The building line of the proposed development follows the established building lines of Agar Grove and St Augustine's Road. As approximately 25% of the site on its western end is above the bridge, the footprint of the building is therefore located to the centre and east of the site.
- 5.20 The proposed parapet line is similar to the height of existing villas along Agar Grove and St Augustine's Road, excepting the two paired villas adjoining the site step down in scale, however their lower height is not characteristic or typical of the street, and should not be basis of determining the height for the redevelopment of the site.
- 5.21 The proposed building would be built in London stock brick to three of its elevations, resting on a white stuccoed lower ground floor. The use of brick responds to the established building materials in the area. The windows to the main elevations would be set in projecting stucco surrounds also taking their cue from neighbouring buildings, have a hierarchy with the tallest at upper ground floor level, reducing in height by 0.4m and 0.8m upwards to the first and second floors.
- 5.22 I note from the Design and Access Statement that the design is based on the typical and atypical villas of the area however I consider that the proposed asymmetrical fenestration pattern is lop sided with windows unbalanced across the elevation, and the effect would appear seriously incongruous. The incongruity would be even more marked on St Augustine's Road. The solid to void ratio, i.e, the brickwork to window ratio, on this elevation is visually jarring. The narrow brickwork nib on the east end of the elevation contrasting with the 3.5m width of blank brickwork on the west side of the elevation, appears especially stark and incongruous.
- 5.23 Whilst I acknowledge that the proposed fenestration pattern has a hierarchy, its effect appears tentative and unconvincing. The size and proportions of the windows set in these elevations are wider and squatter, and would contrast significantly with the established fenestration pattern on the existing villas on the road. Its elevational treatment is asymmetrical and irregular. It does not have comparable floor to floor heights. Its 4 floors do not extend up to the eaves line of the building as per the typical villas, but are reduced in height to facilitate the top floor accommodation, as illustrated by the cross-section through the building. The effect of this adversely affects the fenestration pattern, the window proportions, and the solid to void ratios across the main elevations.

- 5.24 The proposed windows are to be colour coated aluminium faced timber set to the face of the projecting precast surrounds, rather than recessed with a deep reveal as in the historic examples. The effect of this will be flush surfaced windows to the facade. A significant consequence of this is that the play of light and shade on the facade will not result in the distinctive modelling to the fenestration pattern or rhythm typical of the existing villas with their deep window reveals.
- 5.25 The guidance 'Building in Context' published by CABI & English Heritage 2001 : Case Study No.8, includes a relevant example of contextual new building in a conservation area. This features the new Library & Admin Building, Central School of Speech and Drama, Swiss Cottage, London. The new build features a regular fenestration pattern with tall vertically proportioned windows, with 225mm deep reveals to recessed windows accentuating its vertical proportions. The building is 5 storeys on the street. The floor levels are aligned with those of the neighbouring houses and the window openings are of the same scale, though without any decorative detailing. The elevation is un-ornamented. The adoption of the scale and rhythm from the neighbouring domestic buildings shows a good mannered sensitivity to them. As a case study it demonstrates that it is possible to combine sensitivity and due deference to historic surroundings with confident expression of individuality and a modern identity.
- 5.26 The rendered elevation on this proposal would be the western elevation, which is particularly prominent in the street scene. This elevation features balconies from upper ground to second floor level. The scheme has been revised to reduce the width of the ascending balconies to reflect the hierarchy of the windows on the main elevations. However, it is a floor too high, and its roof form would appear too prominent and obtrusive. Its 5 storey end gable, top floor 4.5m wide archway, fenestration proportions & pattern, and cantilevered balconies would all appear visually incongruous in this context.
- 5.27 The existing 1.8 m high boundary wall fronting onto St. Augustine's Road and Agar Grove is proposed to be retained and rebuilt where necessary. This will have a detrimental effect as typically there are low level front boundary walls to the villas along the street within the conservation area, which allow views from the street over them to the front gardens and elevations of villas. Such views are an integral part of the street scene within the conservation area.

- 5.28 The Refused scheme has been considered a “gateway” or entrance to the Conservation Area, however this consideration has been used to justify the additional scale, mass and bulk of the proposals to “mark” the entrance. The sheer bulk of such a large building on this site will distort the scale and character of the street, unless from the inception it relates successfully to its neighbours. In relating it to its smaller neighbours some designers occasionally introduce breaks in the architectural language to subdivide the size, and scale of the elevations, roof form, mass and bulk of their designs.
- 5.29 The proposed Agar Grove elevation is 22m wide in comparison to the typical pair of semi detached villa 12-14m widths along the Grove. The 1.5m wide x 1.0m deep indent set into the Agar Grove elevation at upper ground, first floor and second floor levels, has partly the effect of breaking up this 22m long elevation, however it does not extend to the lower ground floor, nor does it extend to the design and roof form which extends across the full length of the elevation. The indent is therefore not effective in breaking up the scale of the building.
- 5.30 Buildings present different profiles depending upon the viewpoint. This roof form will be read as part of the wider skyline in views into and out of the conservation area. I consider that its large roof form with the 12m long horizontal run of 17 windows above parapet level will appear visually prominent and overscaled in views up and down the slope of Agar Grove when compared to the rhythm and scale of the relatively smaller hipped roofs of the historic villas.
- 5.31 The proposed St, Augustine’s Road elevation is over 17m wide in comparison to the typical pair of paired villas with 12-14m widths along the road. Also the proposed building line alignment is not parallel with the road but follows a slightly swept arc outward towards the road, the effect of which will make this main elevation more visually prominent. I consider that the large roof form on top of the building and the 8m long horizontal run of 12 windows above parapet level will appear visually prominent and overscaled in views down the slope of St Augustine’s Road when compared to the rhythm and scale of the relatively smaller hipped roofs of the historic villas.
- 5.32 The siting of the lift is significant as it has a lift overdrive above the roof. There are also concerns that the lift overdrive may need to be higher than indicated on planning drawings. In this instance a 2m square lift shaft is shown projecting through the side of the east roof and up to the ridge. There are 8 no. tall chimney pots mounted on top of the lift shaft. I consider that the projecting lift shaft with its faux chimney pots on top, surmounting the

15m long roof form on the east side of the building will be particularly visually prominent in views down St. Augustine's Road over the lower shallow hipped roofs of the smaller pairs of villas, Nos 6 & 8 and 10 & 12. This visually intrusive effect will appear overscaled and incongruous, detrimental to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Conflicts with Planning Policy & Guidance

On the basis of the above assessment I consider that:

- a) The proposed development does not sufficiently respond to the conservation area and its defining characteristics, reinforcing its local distinctiveness in accordance with Para 14.7 of Camden's Core Strategy.
- b) It does not sufficiently consider the character, setting, context, and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings in accordance with Policy DP24.
- c) Neither does it sufficiently consider the impact of existing rhythms, symmetries, and uniformities in the townscape, the composition of elevations, and the wider historic environment and buildings of local historic value in accordance with Para 24.7 of Policy DP24.
- d) It fails to achieve a high quality development which integrates with its surroundings in accordance with Para 24.11 of Policy DP 24.
- e) Within this area of distinctive character it fails to reinforce those elements which create the character. Where townscape is particularly uniform it fails to pay sufficient attention to responding closely to the prevailing scale, form, and proportions in accordance with Para 24.12 of Policy DP24.
- f) The proposed development would undermine any existing uniformity of St Augustines Road and Agar Grove contrary to Para 24.13 of Policy DP24.
- g) It would therefore fail to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area in accordance with Policy DP25.
- h) It fails to respond to the form and qualities of the surrounding buildings and to the opportunities for enhancement and further revealing the significance of the conservation area

in accordance with Para 7.4 New Development ; Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal.

- i) It fails to conserve the designated heritage asset, Camden Square Conservation Area, in a manner appropriate to its significance, so that it can be enjoyed for its contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations, a requirement which is one of the Core Planning Principles of the NPPF.
- j) It fails to respond sufficiently to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings as required by Para 58 of the NPPF.
- k) It fails to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness consistent with Para 60 of NPPF.
- l) I consider that harm is caused to the significance of the designated asset although the harm is not substantial and therefore NPPF Para 134 applies in this case.
- m) With reference to NPPF Paras 65 and 134, I consider that the harm caused to this designated heritage asset, Camden Square Conservation Area, would not be outweighed by this particular design proposal's economic, social and environmental benefits. The site was originally in residential use and the principle of a residential development of appropriate scale, mass and design on this site, which harmonises with the conservation area is acknowledged and agreed. It seems to me that it is possible to have a proposal which preserves and enhances the conservation area on this site and which does not conflict with Development Plan Policies.
- n) With reference to NPPF Para 137 this is acknowledged as an opportunity site for development within the conservation area to enhance and better reveal its significance. If a design proposal came forward that preserved those elements that make a positive contribution to the conservation area, or better reveal its significance, it would be favourably considered.
- o) With reference to NPPF Para 138 the existing site is identified as detracting from the conservation area, however as an important prominent corner it is very significant to the conservation area. It has the potential to accommodate a new development on site which would harmonise and integrate well to enhance the historic townscape.

- p) With reference Para 7.21 of the London Plan the proposed development does not sufficient reference the scale, mass, and detail of the predominant building form surrounding them. Contemporary architecture is encouraged, but it should be respectful and sympathetic to the other architectural styles that have preceded it in the locality.
- q) With reference Para 7.31 of the London Plan conservation areas should be protected from inappropriate development that is not sympathetic in terms of scale, materials, details, and form. This design proposal does not respond positively to the local character and context.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The refused scheme is of significantly contrasting massing and design to the historic villas of its immediate context and its effect would be significantly harmful to the local character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 6.2 The established rhythm of St Augustines Road and Agar Grove would be broken by this intrusive design. Overall the design appears as an overscaled, disparate separate entity. Its overall height bulk and mass as a 5 storey building appears overdominant and out of scale with the historic villas along both St Augustine's Road and Agar Grove. The effect would appear visually jarring in this sensitive corner site, and be obtrusive in local views.
- 6.3 Whilst it is understandable that the architect may wish to enhance its visual prominence, a new building in this sensitive context should reinforce the particular sense of place of the conservation area, rather than diluting and diminishing it. The effect in this instance is an overdominant, out of scale design which disturbs the harmony and settled character and appearance of this part of Camden Square Conservation Area, and is harmful to its special historic and architectural interest.
- 6.4 Having due regard to the Council's adopted policies and the particular circumstances of the proposed development, I consider that the approval of the proposal would conflict with the Development Plan and Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal as described. I have considered other material considerations. I have taken into account the statutory duty to pay regard to preserving or enhancing the conservation area and I consider this development will do neither. I have considered the policies of the NPPF. I consider that this development will cause more harm than the site currently does as a detractor to the conservation area. Any public benefits in providing new housing in this development, in my

opinion, do not outweigh the harm caused to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

- 6.5 For these reasons, it is my opinion that the first Reason for Refusal was sound and respectfully invite the Planning Inspector to dismiss the Appeal.

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1	Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal
Appendix 2	Camden Square Conservation Area Maps
Appendix 3	Understanding Place: 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal & Management' published by English Heritage March 2011
Appendix 4	'Building in Context' published by English Heritage & CABI 2001