

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Consultees Addr:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2014/1938/P	Michael Ledger-Lomas	37 South Hill Park NW3 2ST	08/04/2014 16:04:35	OBJ	<p>I wish to express my very strong objections to Planning Application 2014/1938/P, 35 South Hill Park NW3 2ST. Together with my partner, I rent a flat on the fourth floor of the adjoining property, 37 South Hill Park NW3 ST and will therefore be directly affected by these proposals.</p> <p>We have three main grounds of objection to this proposal. The first is that it directly threatens the stability of the property in which we live and therefore contravenes Camden's guidelines on the construction of basements as well as our amenity. Guidelines CPG4 stipulate that basements must not 'cause harm to the built and natural environment and local amenity; result in flooding; or lead to ground instability'. The Basement Impact Assessment commissioned by the applicants provides very little assurance on these points. The BIA reads as if it has been constructed to minimise the risks of the proposed works in what it styles stiff or very stiff clay. Yet by the report's own admission, subsidence is a problem in this area and is all too visible for instance in the cracks to the rear wall garden of 37 South Hill Park. The BIA should demonstrate that the risks of any intervention to the stability of 37 South Hill Park are minimal or non-existent. It does no such thing. Instead it merely notes that serious risks of this kind exist. 37 South Hill Park has a flank wall with 35 South Hill Park which is supported by five wall ties. The BIA makes no attempt to assess the stability of what is evidently a rather fragile wall or of the impact upon it of digging in the adjoining clay. It merely claims that 'care' will have to be taken to prevent the wall being undermined by construction work – a clear admission that the work is likely to endanger that wall. Still more alarmingly, the report notes that during construction work 'the current foundations to No.37 may need to be exposed, levelled and logged'. No guarantees are provided as to the safety of such work; no attempt is made to measure its impact on that fragile flanking wall. The best that the BIA can do is to claim that 'damage category assessments for the properties to both the north (Nos 37-41) and south (Nos 29 & 31) indicated that the potential damage is likely to fall within Burland Category 1 ('very slight') to Burland Category 0 ('negligible') provided that best working practices are followed throughout the underpinning works, and in particular for the temporary support of the excavations and the completed underpins.' What guarantee do the occupants of 37 South Hill Park have that such procedures will be followed? The BIA is similarly vague on the likely impact of the works on the drainage both of 35 South Hill Park and of adjoining properties. Once again, there has been no attempt to assess the impact of altering likely drainage patterns on the foundations and thus the stability of 37 South Hill Park. I fail to see why not just our amenity but even the viability of our flat should rest on the reliability or otherwise of the contractors undertaking the work. We therefore submit that despite making great play of conforming to the council's regulations, the submitted documents do nothing to guarantee the stability of 37 South Hill Park and thus the safety and amenity of its inhabitants. I understand that this was one of the main grounds for rejecting an earlier planning application for work of this kind: despite the parade of expertise, this ground of objection will stand. The second ground of our objection to the proposal is that it runs counter to the appearance of the Conservation Area. The aim of designating a conservation area is to safeguard its character. The applicants develop the ingenious argument that this is compatible with continuous and deleterious change. If one excepts some mid-twentieth century developments of exceptional architectural quality, South Hill Park is largely defined by mid to late Victorian properties with substantial front and rear gardens. The applicants propose to remove a large section of both front and rear garden and to alter the appearance of their property by creating an enormous basement extension and a rear extension across the whole width of the building, complete with the now obligatory glass box. The justifications for this change are two-fold. The first argument is that it will be of exceptional quality. This is an assertion</p>

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rather than a statement of fact. The applicants are proposing to comprehensively change the appearance of their property away from its original character and are disguising that proposal under talk of improving it. The second argument is that because the Council has previously permitted constructions of rear extensions, dormer windows and the like (often of low quality) in South Hill Park, including ironically at no 37, it should grant this one. The weakness of this argument is obvious. Just because the character of the Conservation Area has been diluted by the construction of ill-advised extensions, there is no reason at this point in time to grant yet another one. Indeed the damage to the Area by such constructions is an argument to draw a line and to go no further before it dies a death by a thousand cuts.

The third and by no means minor objection is to the noise, vibration and traffic which will lessen, even destroy our enjoyment of our property over the next year or so – this of course being an estimate, the applicants apparently not attempting to assess the likely duration of the works. The proposal speaks eloquently about the problems that the applicants face in their current property. It is easy in reading these complaints to forget that the applicants have a four storey property in a tranquil conservation area where they have lived despite these apparently insuperable difficulties for eighteen years. They make no attempt to describe convincingly in the document either to assess the serious and prolonged disturbance to their neighbours that their proposed works will inevitably entail. It is difficult to see how they propose to completely remake their roof, demolish and rebuild the rear of their property and excavate (together with their neighbours in 33 South Hill Park) an enormous basement room without interrupting traffic in the street and creating a huge amount of noise and disturbance to us as neighbours. I am an academic and my partner is a student: we both depend on a moderate degree of quiet for our work during daytime hours. Why should we forfeit such quiet on weekdays and presumably Saturdays to accommodate applicants who cannot make a four storey house 'work' for them and the needs of people (the parents mentioned in the proposal) who do not even live full time at the property? We also object in the same spirit to the construction of the rear dormer window and associated 'pocket garden' which will be at the level of our property, whose construction will have significant impacts on us in terms of noise and vibration and which will once complete have a substantial impact on our privacy. The documents attached to this proposal talk a lot about convenience and amenity; but the main impact will be on the living conditions of their neighbours over a protracted period of time. I therefore urge the Council in the strongest possible terms to reject this proposal.
