



I am writing on my behalf and that of my wife and two young children, living at 26 Sarre Road, to give comments for the consultation on the Planning Application 2013/7585/P (residential development on the Gondar Gardens reservoir site) and to object against the proposed development

The reservoir was a key factor in our decision to move into Sarre Road. The site is a valuable and unique amenity enjoyed by us and our children and by our neighbours and visitors. The benefits are diverse and numerous: the wide open views it offers, the quietness it brings to the area, the night time darkness, the habitat it offers to birds, pollinating insects and other urban wildlife. The value of the reservoir is recognised in the protections it is afforded by the designation as Open Space and a Site of Nature Conservation Area.

Two other applications have been made recently for developing the site, both of which were wisely refused by Camden Council: 2011/0395/P (the "infill scheme") and 2012/0521/P (the "frontage scheme"). The earlier of those, the infill scheme, was eventually and unfortunately approved on appeal, but it was so because of the relative low impact it would have on the amenity value described above. That was not the case with the frontage scheme which would have impacted very severely many of those living in Gondar Gardens and Sarre Road. That scheme was refused both by the Council and by the Inspectorate.

The current application is nearly undistinguishable from the most recent predecessor and should therefore be rejected on the same grounds. The bulk and height of the development is in contrast with the large majority of dwellings that characterise the area. The height, in particular, blocks light and views across the site and infringes the privacy of many nearby residents. The design and detailing of the development is not in keeping with the character of the area. The few changes that were made between the refused frontage scheme and the current application do not address the concerns of the Council or the Inspectorate. In fact, and if at all, the current design distances itself even further from the distinct local identity of the area (e.g. glass "boxes").

In addition to the developer having submitted an application that is nearly identical to the previous refused one, we ask that the Council considers also the change in circumstances and context. Primarily, that a number of other developments have recently been completed or are now ongoing in West Hampstead, the largest of which will add 198 new dwellings to the area. Several other hundreds dwellings are also planned and at various stages of consideration. Due attention must be given to the cumulative impact that the proposed development will have on the education, health, transport and utilities infrastructure of the area. If not already, these will soon be under considerable new pressures. We ask also that the Council considers the Fortune Green and West Hampstead Neighbourhood Development Forum (NDF) which recently finalised its recommendations. It mentions the reservoir explicitly, discusses areas better suited for development (much already ongoing) and makes key recommendations regarding design of new buildings for the area. Finally we ask that the Council considers that the developer has already obtained permissions for its first (and therefore one would reasonably assume, preferred) proposal. The repeated follow up applications waste public money and time and call into question the developer's motives.

For all these reasons and more we ask that the Council recommends that the application should be refused.

Kind regards,  
Pedro Tavares & Alexandra Oliveira, 26 Sarre Road