

To whom it may concern

Site address: 1-11A Swains Lane & 109-110 Highgate West Hill London N6 6QX, application no 2013/6674/P

I have filled out the online form, but found there was not enough space in which to insert my comments and criticisms. Please find a detailed letter of objection below.

I am an architect in private practice, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The views expressed below however, are my own. I should like to be informed of the committee date.

I feel this proposal is in many ways a great improvement on previous versions, but I am still opposed to it mainly on the grounds of massing, height, bulk, detail and finishes. I also have some comments about parking, trees, retail usage and construction.

Points of criticism are as follows:

1. Three stories still feels too high and bulky along Swains Lane especially with a light coloured sheer facade. This could be somewhat alleviated if the scheme reverted to a previous incarnation with a plain-tiled mansarded roof plus dormer windows for the 2nd floor apartments. The adjacent pavement cafés will find themselves with only a view of the new bulky frontage looking westwards, and their outdoor areas will be in shadow in the late afternoons. This is conveniently glossed over in the daylight/sunlight study as presented.
2. I do not agree with the contention that the area benefits from the site being 'filled in' to match the heights of buildings around it. The site's most essential benefit to the area is its openness and the preservation of a semi-rural character allowing long vistas. The site is still being over-developed in my opinion, and the views over it and its informal character will be lost forever.
3. The 3 storeyed terrace further east along Swains Lane comprises a hipped pitched tiled roof with dormers plus a wide mock Tudor gable end facing onto the roadway. I fail to discern any valid aesthetic relationship between this adjacent roof form and the line of the proposed rendered East block's 2nd floor string-course, and set back parapetted 2nd floor, as asserted in the Design & Access Statement and elsewhere in the reports.
4. There's an awkward geometry to the design of the West block between its curved ground floor plan and rectilinear set back 1st floor. This feels clumsy and unresolved.
5. The heritage style referred to in the design is a 'stripped classical' type, which has no other local precedent as far as I am aware. The local vernacular is predominantly either Edwardian red-brick

alleviated with stone details and half-timbered gable fronts (as the four story mansion blocks opposite) or arts and crafts/mock Tudor (as the remainder of Swains Lane north side frontages). There are indeed other historic styles dotted around the area, but the aforementioned styles are the most dominant and prevalent.

6. Given that the developer is committed to reproduce bygone styles, then it would seem more in keeping to substitute the render finish for fair-faced brickwork (preferably soft reds) contrasted with stone or precast quoins and opening surrounds. The impact of a darker finish would be more subdued for the general streetscape. It is also my concern that rendered finishes often rapidly deteriorate and look dirty, stained and cracked within a very few years, even when they are non-ferrous lime.

7. Personally speaking I would prefer a straightforward modern design rather than a pastiche. It is a lost opportunity that the developer has failed to stage a limited architectural competition for this important site.

8. To covenant some proportion of community usage for the proposed commercial space could also be of wider benefit and could form a counterweight to the lack of affordable accommodation.

9. Whereas it is to be commended that small independent shops are to be accommodated, the size of some of the units seems overall to be too small. (W Hampstead traders' association advice was that the optimum viable unit size is around 100 sqm, and many of these are smaller). I cannot imagine how 8 retail units could survive and thrive in this location. It seems to me that 5 slightly larger units may be a more realistic maximum.

10. Furthermore, in the absence of 'affordable housing' perhaps instead of a community levy, it would be better for the developer to commit to 'affordable retail' and peg the rents to a level that might make all the difference between viability and retail blight. It may then be feasible for a few of the existing traders to return to this location.

11. Traffic: presently the traffic generated is mainly to and from the car wash. Much of the existing frontage is moribund. The traffic analysis presented therefore does not accurately represent the traffic that a successful shopping arcade with at least 2 more restaurants plus 13 flats over might generate.

12. Parking: the assertion that the residential development will be mainly 'car free' with only 5 spaces provided for 13 flats is not credible. Where similar new developments have been built locally (e.g. the converted Baptist Chapel on Chetwynd Road and Chester Balmore) these provisions have been covertly overturned, and resident's parking permits retrospectively granted via special agencies and appeals. The contention in the traffic report that local resident's parking spaces are not stressed is also quite unbelievable. It is a daily occurrence for me to drive around the neighbourhood looking for a space, typically only to be found at the far end of St Alban's Road or Brookfield Park, some 200m or more from my doorstep. The existing garages and informal parking spaces behind the shops are in use by local residents and shopkeepers, so there will be at least 5-10 more cars that will need to be parked on the street once the existing structures are demolished.

13. The development should have more trees. Green roofs and terraces do not sufficiently screen the buildings. This would help to preserve the semi rural character of the area.

14. The application lacks a coherent and binding Construction Management Plan. Statements related to construction processes are buried within some of the accompanying reports. They comprise the usual stock phrases about limiting noise and dust, and traffic disruption, but are not in any way convincing to this reader. Neighbours need to know more about the likely duration of works, effective control of noise and dust and construction traffic, and by what means good

construction management practices shall be effectively enforced.

Yours sincerely

