

Flat 10 59 Christchurch Hill 14/07/2014

Dear Camden Planning,

I sent these comments on the 3rd of July, regarding the changes to the rear of Christchurch Hill and Grove Place, ref 2014/4059/P.

I have since seen the projected budget, as outlined by the private firm consulted by Camden Council. It is really worrying me, because whereas the original budget was £20,000, they have budgeted more than three times the original budget - upwards of £65,000.

As a leaseholder, I am very concerned about the share of costs that will be levied on myself. I am an artist with a very modest income - last year, it fell below £2,000. This year, I have managed to secure intermittent teaching work, but the graphic novel I finished was for a publisher who went bankrupt, so I will not be paid for my book, which I spent two years working on. I chose an ex-council flat because I knew the charges would be reasonable. So far, since I bought this flat a few years ago, roofing repairs were done to a neighbouring block, and I was sent a bill of over £800. The scaffolding was sitting there for months, dripping with rain - I think the actual work took a day or two, but the scaffolding was there for two months. Anyway, it was a hefty bill, and a shock and surprise, and quite upsetting.

Now, with the alterations to the communal area, I am very concerned about the costs.

Examining the budget, I think there are some alterations which are completely unnecessary.

The climbing wall is incredibly ugly - this is a natural conservation area and we love Hampstead for its natural beauty. The climbing wall with its tacky multi-coloured footholds looks simply awful. It is also a health and safety issue. The communal area is unsupervised. The cushioned area and the climbing wall are totally unnecessary and not part of the original plan just to tidy up the area and have pretty planting. It would save £7,000 not to have the climbing wall. I do not want the climbing wall and do not wish to contribute to it and do not want to have to look at it.

The new washing lines are completely unnecessary. We are happy with the washing lines that are there. That would save another £4,000.

I think the Council needs to look again at the budget and simplify the plans. All we are asking for is some raised beds and pretty planting and to tidy up the area.

Also, the cost of the rails - of approximately £4000 just to have rails for two short flights of steps - is completely over the top.

I do not want to contribute to this if it is going to spiral out of control. Yes, a play area is a very nice idea, but it does not have to be a playground on par with schools. All we need is a small play area and the rest should be a tranquil and happy setting for

all the residents, including older residents who are not strong or well enough to walk very far. They are the ones who deserve at least as much care and attention.

The excessive lighting also worries us and looks very expensive. What would look handsome would be three traditional Victorian streetlights. But to have lighting as if it were an airport with lights at the base and on the ground and to the side and all the rest seems so over the top and adding to the expense of the project.

We need to focus on what it is to live in Hampstead - the beauty of the natural environment and the trees and flowers. It should be a peaceful communal area and does not have to look like an inner-city playground. The plastics and artificial materials and multi-colours are going to spoil the natural environment and will look tacky in six months' time.

I am really upset about this and how the plans have become overly elaborate, expensive, and tasteless.

Especially for leaseholders who have to pay an enormous bill for works I, for one, do not want - it is not fair.

I wanted simply a prettier environment but in keeping with Hampstead tradition.

Best wishes,

and please see earlier correspondence below, before I saw the budget and plans for a climbing wall and new washing lines, costing thousands of pounds!