

CM/DT/PD9317

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The Planning Inspectorate
3/19 Wing
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol BS1 6PN

For the attention of Mr Chris Ries

Dear Sir or Madam

**PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, GONDAR GARDENS, RESERVOIR SITE, WEST
HAMPSTEAD, LB OF CAMDEN, NW6 1QF
APPEAL REFERENCE NO: APP/X5210/A/14/2218052**

We are instructed by the Appellant, Linden Wates (West Hampstead Ltd) to provide townscape and visual advice in connection with the above appeal. This letter follows on from our earlier instruction to prepare the Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment accompanying the application and which is before the Inspector.

This letter sets out our observations on this topic following receipt of Camden Council's Statement of Case and third party comments dating up to 17 June 2014.

This letter should be read in conjunction with the corresponding letter prepared by Rolfe Judd that sets out the planning case for the Appellant.

Council Statement of Case

The Council's Statement refers to the scheme as being "*monolithic, harsh and orthogonal in form*". This is alarmist, emotive language.

The scheme is orthogonal, but that provides regularity and there is no site inference to suggest departing from an architectural form. The modern architectural approach is, expressed through contextual devices to introduce scale and variety. These principles manifest themselves in elements such as regular proportioned projections, articulation of the top floor, and the range of materials.

This is a flatted development. The principle is not in dispute. The language of modern architecture is best suited to deliver the sort of dense, flatted accommodation which is needed in London and in particular this Borough.

The Council's statement goes on to identify common characteristics of the townscape, comprising:

- *Projecting bays, which are generally canted [although later acknowledged the "design approach to bays differs"] break up the perceived bulk of a terrace*
- *The local roofscape use a combination of sculpted forms... [which] add character, variety, rhythm and flow to the local roofscape*
- *Rich level of architectural detailing around window openings, door openings and at eaves level... These work by breaking up the perceived bulk of a building*
- *Building facades are clad in brickwork although stucco has been used as a decorative feature around openings*
- *A weathered yellow London stock predominates although red bricks have been used as a decoration around window openings and in corners*

Rather than critique the revised proposals, we consider that the above, including projecting bays, sculpted roofscape forms, architectural detailing around openings, predominant yellow brickwork and ancillary use of red brick all provide a list of the very elements incorporated in the revised proposals. The Council's description fits the scheme before you.

Again, cross-reference to the verified views contained within the 'Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Frontage Scheme 2' (Dec 2013), we consider, reaffirms this.

This approach provides a proposal that is far from one formed from one solid 'monolithic' mass.

Winter Gardens and Balconies

We turn, therefore, to what we consider to be the main point of issue between the Appellant and third parties, the winter gardens/balconies.

The Gondar and Agamemnon Residents' Association (GARA) letter dated 14 Jan 2014 identifies this as the "*single area of greatest concern for local residents*". It is suggested that "*the glasswork should be redesigned or removed – it appears to us that deploying brickwork from floor to waist height, particularly on the 1st floor 'wintergardens', would significantly address this issue and better match the local environment*". We should bear in mind that these features provide particular amenity in the interest of making best use of land.

It is noted that there are alternatives suggested (see Fortune Green and West Hampstead Neighbourhood Development Forum, Appendix B of LPA Statement), including the use of intricate metal railings. This suggestion would not provide the necessary screening desired by the objector. It would compromise the sustainability benefits of a winter garden that would also be usable in all seasons of the British climate.

Nonetheless, without prejudice, if the Inspector felt that the glass was an inappropriate material for the proposals it is conceivable for a condition to be placed on the decision notice to obscure the glass to a certain height. Indeed, GARA cite this as a reasonable means of mitigating their concern in their subsequent letter dated 16 June 2014.

Summary

We consider the criticism made by the authority is far too specific, particularly given the absence of any sensitive land designation that might restrict or dictate the design of proposals for this site. The authority has, we suggest, moved towards matters of taste and detail.

These observations are made in the knowledge that this scheme is far from vehemently opposed by all parties.

There are several letters of support before the Inspector from a range of stakeholders, including people within the immediate area. These letters commend the design of the revised frontage scheme, as do we.

Yours truly,



**DR CHRIS MIELE IHBC MRTPI FRHS
SENIOR PARTNER
MONTAGU EVANS LLP**