

Stephen Marshall Architects LLP

Niall Sheehan
London Borough of Camden
Planning Services
Camden Town Hall
Argyle Street
London
WC1H 8EQ

21st July 2014

Dear Niall,

**Letter of opposition to submitted Planning Application at 26/26a
Delancey Street, NW1 7NH
Ref: 2014/3321/P+2014/291/PRE**

I am the owner of No. 24 Delancey Street and I am writing to you to record my strong opposition to the above planning application to extend No. 26/26a Delancey Street.

My reasons for the opposing the application can be summarised within the following categories.

1. Inappropriate building in the Camden Town Conservation Area.
2. Excessive of bulk and massing of the proposal at 26/26a compared with other extensions on Delancey/ Albert/ Arlington Streets.
3. The negative impact on the mature birch trees in our garden adjacent to the proposal at No. 26/26a.
The negative structural impact of underpinning on the root protection zone of the above trees.
4. The negative effect on my property in terms of daylight and increased sense of enclosure due to overdevelopment.

Partners

Stephen Marshall
March(Harv) RIBA RIAS ARB

Sam Coley
RIBA ARB

Jess Paul
ARB

Associates

Yiannis Kanakakis
RIBA ARB

Anna Seligmann
ARB

Unit B North Building
Gainsborough Studios
1 Poole Street
London N1 5EB

T 44 20 7033 3130
F 44 20 7739 0607
E enquiries@marshallarchitects.co.uk

Company No. OC3250788
Vat Registered No. 917 792485

Before going into detail on the above issues I should explain that I am an architect with over 30 years of designing buildings in London. I have been an assessor for the RIBA, American Institute of Architects and the Mansar Award for new houses in the UK. The house at 24 Delancey Street was converted to my design in 1995 and has been published and is known within the design community. I state this only to make the point that my opposition to the proposed extension to No. 26 is not only based on its direct negative impact on my property but on an understanding of how things should be done.

It perhaps also explains why I have been able to produce a set of before and after sketches (01-08) that are accurately based on the applicants drawings and to my mind show more clearly what they are actually doing as apposed to the misleading drawings that have been submitted.



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1. Townscape/Conversation Area

Delancey Street is within the Camden Town Conservation area and as such the proposal at 26/26a Delancey Street is expected to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. Because of the proposals excessive width and height I would argue that it does not 'preserve or enhance' the conservation area.

The Camden Town Area Appraisal 04/10/2007 states that:

"Although the architectural integrity of the terraces has been retained at the front, glimpses from side streets reveal an array of oversized and out-of-scale rear extensions, many of which were constructed under permitted development rights prior to the statutory listing of properties and the designation of the Conservation Area."

Delancey Street and surrounding streetscape – Arlington, Albert, Mornington Crescent were built in the period 1830-1860. The streets are laid out in a simple geometry but with subtle and interesting details. One of these details is the adoption of low rise/ open junctions when terraces combine. The northern junction of Albert Street with Delancey Street is an example where views into the back of Delancey Street can be seen together with landscape and trees.

The Camden Town Appraisal Continues...

"The trees and greenery of back gardens are only visible in occasional glimpses from the public realm but contribute to the nature of the western part of the Conservation Area. Views of back gardens are retained, especially where development has been kept single-storey or where gaps have been preserved. Gaps also occur at the end of terraces; these allow views to back gardens over high garden walls, introducing a welcome respite to an otherwise very urban environment and making a major contribution to the visual amenity and the character of the area. In an area lacking open space and street trees these views into gardens with mature trees are an important element in the character and appearance of the Conservation Area."

The proposal at No. 26/26a will undoubtedly damage the mature birch trees in our garden that contribute to the "welcome respite" as well as furthering the Townscape damage from "oversized and out-of-scale" extensions. Photographs of the birch trees in our garden are attached with views of these trees through the Albert Street gap. The point here is that not only will the trees be damaged/ killed, their green contribution will be replaced by the overly bulky proposal at No. 26/26a which in no way can be seen as preserving or enhancing the Conservation Area.

2. Comparison of massing of Proposal with existing extensions.

The applicants architects state at page 2 of their design and access statement that –

"The design of the proposed Rear Extension is a simple orthogonal scheme following the precedent of several rear extensions on Delancey Street and neighbouring Albert Street and Arlington Roads. The proposal is sympathetic to the character of the surrounding Victorian style architecture; masonry provides a strong link to the surrounding properties. The rear garden

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extension is also within the scale of the neighbouring garden extensions."

The above is simply untrue. The applicants are proposing a two-storey, full width extension. No such extensions exist on Delancey Street, Albert Street or Arlington Street.

My attached drawing (01) shows the pattern of existing extensions and drawing (02) shows the proposal in this context. There are many extensions in the area and some of these have smaller two-storey sections but none of these are full width combined with a large footprint on both floors.

The largest extension in the area is that at No. 28 Delancey Street but this is not full width (2/3 width) and was granted consent in 1983 before Conservation Area designation in 1986. Drawings (01) and (02) show that the proposal does not "follow the precedent of several rear extensions" nor is "the rear garden extension within the scale of neighbouring garden extensions."

3. Negative impact on existing trees at No. 24 due to proposal at No. 26

The proposals landscape consultant, Edward Buckton, states in his report that: "I have taken full account of the trees and their safe keeping" and "confident they will be preserved for the future."

I do not share this opinion. Mr Buckton is probably correct when he draws the modified root protection zone for these specific trees. They were planted when the brick garden wall between No. 24 and 26 was already in place. This wall has restricted the stability roots on the wall side of the trunks and the trees have probably compensated by extending the root protection zone in the garden direction. This puts substantially more importance on the 'wall side' roots for stability and well being of the tree.

In the structural design report produced by Messers Price and Myers, their basement level drawing clearly shows 450 mm wide mass concrete underpinning in 1 metre sections along the garden wall, with the underpinning projecting into the already stressed root protection zone of the mature birch trees in my garden. These tree roots will undoubtedly be substantially damaged by the imprecise structural works.

Under pinning excavation before pouring is not exact and if the underpinning is calculated at 450 mm wide, then practically speaking the excavation will be larger. There is also the strong possibility that, given that the birch trees in my garden were planted in a linear planter with gravel and light soil, there will be little London clay at the back of the excavation to 'shutter' the underpinning. I am surprised that this is being proposed by Price and Myers who I know to be good engineers.

I would also make the point that no amount of 'rebadging' floor level terms i.e. upper ground floor, lower ground floor, gets us away from the fact that the lowest level of the proposal is both practically and legally a basement. The Conservation Area appraisal document describes these buildings, as having basements as does the applicants architects own design/access statement.

A full basement impact assessment report should be carried out and until prepared the application is invalid with any determination without the report clearly subject to judicial review.

When the engineers say that they are planning "to excavate down by about 200 mm to match existing levels and latterly into the garden by an average of

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about 800 mm, I'm sure you would agree this is barely constitutes a basement..."

I would disagree and argue this is a substantial basement dig. Bear in mind that by excavating down 200 mm to tie through levels there will be further excavation for the reinforced concrete slab, blinding and 200 mm of rigid insulation for building regulations. This all has to tie through with the underpinning and produces a large hole.

The applicant is in my mind being intentionally unclear here to lessen the apparent impact on the garden wall, my trees and my courtyard.

The Conservation Area appraisal asks for "accurate" drawings, which is not the case with this application.

4. Negative impact on No. 24 Delancey Street Daylight increased sense of enclosure due to overdevelopment

It is worth pointing out that within the past five years the property at 26 has had substantial additions built. These occur at roof level and in the form of a three storey rear extension. This further two storey, full width extension substantially adds to the mass and bulk of the rear elevation and in my mind is an overdevelopment of the property.

My drawings (03-08) show this overdevelopment and compares the 26/26a proposal with the existing situation.

My drawing (04) shows the full width extension in addition to the three-storey extension recently constructed. This should be compared with, my drawing (03) showing only the three-storey extension. As already stated any extensions over one storey have a reduced footprint (drawing 01).

The existing garden wall between No. 24 and 26 is shown on drawing (05). The applicant's architects have drawn this wall 1 meter higher than it is which lessens the apparent impact of their proposal (Drawing DCY-X-301).

They have also drawn the extension to the rear of No. 28 Delancey Street in a misleading way that makes it appear to be contributing to the edge condition at the boundary between No. 24 and 26/26a. The extension at No. 28 should be dotted. The intention is obviously to somehow justify the excessive bulk of the application by implying that it somehow fits within the existing profile of No. 28. What must be remembered is No. 28 is a $\frac{2}{3}$ width not full width extension and was consented prior to 1986 when the Conservation Area was introduced.

From my own experience of designing No. 24 Delancey the senior design officer in Camden at that time, Ruth Bloom, was very clear that the pattern of buildings in this area was defined by the primary massing of the terrace with secondary extensions at the rear which were never full width but narrower. Any further new extensions to properties had to follow this pattern to preserve the appearance of main terrace with secondary extensions. This defines the appearance of these buildings when glimpsed through gaps from the streets in front. Full width extensions would dramatically alter this townscape quality.

My drawing (06) shows the impact of the proposal and is based on a corrected version of the applicants drawing DCY-P-301. The increased sense of containment is clear from this drawing.

My drawings (07) and (08) are again based on the applicants drawings but are sections drawn through their proposal that more clearly illustrates the full impact of the proposed extension. The full extent of the basement can be seen together with the very significant overshadowing effect on my house. I

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have had the proposals at No. 26 assessed by the eminent daylight expert Kaivin Wong who heads up the daylight consultancy at CBRE. I attach his letter but his conclusion is as follows;

"...the proposed extension of No. 26 Delancey Street would clearly breach the BRE recommendations. The conclusion to be drawn is that the height and 'massing' of that rear extension would create an acceptable increase in the sense of enclosure and tunnel effect to your lower rear room."

Drawing (08) shows this substantial increased sense of enclosure and negative effect on daylight. It also illustrates the underpinning issue where the stability roots of our trees are in danger of being damaged. Leading to in my view the loss of the trees.

In conclusion I am strongly opposed to the Application at 26 Delancey Street for the following reasons:

1. The proposal does not follow the pattern of extensions in the area and will not preserve or enhance the Conservation Area.
2. The proposal is not similar to other extensions in the area. No other extension is so massive and none are two-storey full width.
3. The structural implications of building off the existing garden walls with the associated underpinning and substantial excavation will damage the root protection zone of my existing mature trees as well as potentially damaging my courtyard.
4. There will be a very substantial increase to the sense of enclosure to my property (as well as others - No 28 and No 22). The excessive bulk of the proposal will adversely affect the daylight to my house as well as breaching BRE recommendations.

It should be noted that under the section specific to rear extensions, the Camden Town Conservation Area document is clear;

"...the original historic pattern of rear elevations within a street or group of buildings is an integral part of the character of the area and as such rear extensions will not be acceptable where they would be compromise the special character."

The proposal clearly would 'compromise the special character' of the area and for this reason as well as the others above, I would strongly urge Camden Planning Services to refuse this application.

Partners

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