



The Heath & Hampstead Society

P.O. BOX 38214 LONDON NW3 1XD

The Society examines all Planning Applications relating to Hampstead, and assesses them for their impact on conservation and on the local environment.

To London Borough of Camden, Development Control Team

Planning Ref: 2014/6449/P

Address: Bartrams Hostel site, Rowland Hill Street, NW3

Description: Demolition and ch of use: new building with 60 sheltered flats.

Case Officer: Charles Thuaire

Date 2 December 2014

This large new building, very close to the Royal Free Hospital and the proposed new Immunology Building, represents a considerable increase in development density in this area. We do not oppose it in principle, but a number of important issues arise:

1. Change of Use.

The existing building has C1 Hostel Use. Your Policy DP9, rightly, resists the loss of such uses, unless by replacement housing in certain defined categories, including “self-contained social rented homes”. This proposal is not in that, or any similar, category; the proposed sheltered housing is clearly private, commercial development. We are sympathetic towards the provision of homes for older people, but the applicants give no information or assurances on such issues as ownership status, security of tenancy, rental policies, or the like. Nor are there any statements regarding affordable housing (Policy DP3), linked to Camden’s needs.

If the proposal is to be quite openly a commercial property development, then we say it goes against your Policy DP9, and we must oppose it outright. This fundamental matter must be resolved before any other issue is addressed.

Our succeeding comments are made on the assumption that the developers have given cast-iron assurances on this.

2. Building form

The overall development density is high, at the upper limits of the GLA criteria for housing. The design, breaking the bulk of the building up into 4 blocks of differing heights, is reasonable, although we think the tallest element of 11 floors (NOT 10 as the applicants description indicates) is too high-not so much in relation to the adjoining RFH, but other nearby buildings. Since the top floor contains little housing content, this could be reduced by redistribution to lower blocks without much difficulty.

3. Architecture

This is boring, featureless, and gives the impression of design on-the-cheap. The choice of brickwork as the main material is natural, but its modelling and detail is depressingly ordinary. For a building as prominent as this, seen from many parts of Hampstead and Belsize Park, this is disappointing, to say the least. We do hope the brickwork colour shown on their perspective images would not be the nauseous salmon-pink indicated. Hampstead deserves better than this.

4. Overlooking

Overlooking from the upper-level roof terraces would occur, especially of the adjoining schools and their playgrounds. No screening is offered. This loss of privacy is unacceptable.

5. Garden space.

Very little garden space is provided for the residents, most of this at the high-level terraces. Older people are likely to prefer ground-level garden space; there would be 60 family groups of these.

6. Hampstead Green

The taller block would both overbear and shut light from the Green. Taken together with the new outlook from and towards the new Immunology Building, the Green's character would be compromised, surrounded by development; we object to this.

7. Car parking

The proposal to incorporate car-stacking, accessed only by lift, is unusual. We assume, although the applicants provide no information on the subject, that cars would need to be pre-ordered by residents, and delivered up to the Rowland Hill entrance. We need to see evidence that this is workable, and acceptable; also noise-free to neighbours, particularly the 2 adjoining schools. Delivery is one thing—but what about returns? Are there going to be queues of cars congesting Rowland Hill Street awaiting acceptance?

More information is needed, before this unusual proposal-unique to the area (and to Camden?) can be considered.

8. Café/restaurant

This seems to be designed for dual use: residents and public. We doubt whether much public use is likely, located away from general footfall, not helped by the uninviting approach to it, separated from the pavement by a low wall, and the residents, without privacy, are not going to find it attractive. We suspect it would fall into disuse quite quickly. Better to design it on a private residents-only basis?

9. Construction Management Plan

All the standard provisions are in place- although we would like to see the Camden Guide for Contactors Working in Camden made a condition. However, no mention is made of the likely co-incidence of work on the nearby Immunology Building. Access to this site is also designed to be from Rowland Hill Street, and coordination between the 2 sites seems sensible.

We don't ask for outright refusal, but all these issues need to be satisfactorily resolved before any decisions are considered.