

ADVICE from Primrose Hill Conservation Area Advisory Committee
12A Manley Street, London NW1 8LT

3 December 2014

Rear of The Albert PH 11 Princess Road London NW1 8JR 2014/6935/P (house)

Strong objection.

1. Main issue: The main issue for the Committee is whether the proposals preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. The main areas of consideration are the effect of the proposals on the surviving pub garden, in terms of its use, now formally recognized as of community value, and of the impact on the significance of the character and appearance of the conservation area.

2. Process: We have advised on the impact of the proposed house and the proposed conservatory in our statement on 2014/7338/P. This advice is solely on the proposed house.

3. We note that the applications have been subject to no request for pre-application consultation with the Advisory Committee.

4. We address first the impact of the proposed house on the pub garden.

5. We note the overall guiding policy on use in the NPPF at para 70 which states 'To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should: ... guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs; ...'.

6. We note that the test here is to guard against decisions which would 'reduce' the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs.

7. The garden has been specifically recognized by the Council as part of the larger recognition of the Albert as an asset of community value (confirmed 17 November 2014). The local community character of the pub was recognized, as was its value as a meeting place for local clubs. The garden's function in this role was specifically acknowledged. The recognized value of the garden depends on its scale, and its location, which together have no equivalent in the conservation area. On its size, what is critical is that group users, whether sports groups or extended family parties, have the space to meet. The reduction to almost half the current space threatens this community value. It clearly fails the test of NPPF 70 by 'reducing' the community's ability to meet its recognized day-to-day needs.

8. The proposals also harm the character of the existing garden: that is, they reduce its function as an external space of community value by changing its character. The existing space is both enclosed, and so gives a sense of safety, but with views through to Kingstown Street, reinforcing the sense of community value – an open space visible to the larger public realm. These views would be completely destroyed in the present proposals.

9. The loss of much of the current openness of the garden to Calvert Street, for which the garden provides a degree of informal supervision, would also be a further loss to the community value of the garden.

10. These aspects of integration within the community space – neither enclosed by high walls, nor abutting busy pedestrian routes – are key aspects to its community role.

11. The openness to the south has also been important in allowing the garden to enjoy direct sunlight over extensive areas. The proposals would greatly diminish this. Reduced largely to the northern section of the open space, the surviving garden would be shaded by the house, while the existing configuration of Auden Place already shades this part of the garden from the western, afternoon, sun.

12. We note in support of the protection of the asset of community value the recognition of these issues by the Planning Inspector in the appeal decision in 2014 on the Chesham Arms, 15 Mehetabel Road, London, E9 6DU (APP/U5360/C/13/2209018, paras 30, 35-40), and references to Appeals Ref APP/25600/A/12/2172028 & 2175522, and APP/X5990/A/14/2215985 (inquiry document 17).

13. On the design and location of the house, we advise that the proposals are harmful to the character and appearance of the conservation area principally by reason of their location in immediate juxtaposition to the rear of the pub. It is characteristic of the conservation area that there is a plurality of architectural forms adopted in the way that front buildings and flank buildings are modulated. These differences are part of the variety of forms which add to the distinctive character of terraces and groups, and are part of the special character of the conservation area. In the terrace of which the Albert is a terminating building, the terrace essentially ends – as the main roofs and parapet line shows – with only service accommodation in the form of low-scale, back buildings at the rear. The terrace is thus seen as a distinctive block within the larger urban composition. This pattern allows the views of the backs of terraces, views recognized as significant in the *Primrose Hill conservation area statement*, formally adopted in 2001 with strong community support, p. 15, for example. The addition of the house at the rear would thus be disruptive of the recognized pattern of the designated conservation area, and harmful to its acknowledged significance.

14. We note the low quality accommodation proposed for the house, especially the dark, dank, rear yard, which would be in almost permanent shadow. This is not suitable external amenity space for a family house.

15. We also note that, if an acceptable proposal were to be developed for this location, including a basement, that a construction agreement would need to be made to protect the adjoining residents from the effects of excavation.

16. The proposals harm the rear garden, an asset of community value, and fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Simpson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard Simpson FSA
Chair