

From: Ahsan, Shelima
Sent: 19 January 2015 11:05
To: Planning
Cc: Thuaire, Charles
Subject: FW: OBJECTION to PLANNING APPLICATION 2014/6845/P - Royal Free Hospital

FYA

Shelima Ahsan
CSO

Telephone: [REDACTED]

From: RSCDevelopmentControl
Sent: 19 January 2015 10:23
To: Planning and Public protection; Thuaire, Charles
Subject: FW: OBJECTION to PLANNING APPLICATION 2014/6845/P - Royal Free Hospital

Hannah Hutter
Principal Committee Officer

Telephone: [REDACTED]

From: Ruth Blair [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 January 2015 18:51
To: RSCDevelopmentControl
Subject: OBJECTION to PLANNING APPLICATION 2014/6845/P - Royal Free Hospital

Charles Thuaire
Senior Planning Officer
Camden Planning Applications

Please register this on m3 as an Objection to 2014/6845/P

Dear Charles Thuaire

OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 2014/6845/P - Royal Free Hospital

I wish to object to the Royal Free Hospital's application for a number of reasons.

The size is too big

The sheer size of the building is far too big and far too high for the proposed location. At seven (7) storeys, one higher than the old Hampstead General Hospital Building, it will reach as high as St. Stephens and extend to the edge of the footpath, just a few metres from the nearest school buildings. The building will block the sight lines between Pond Street and Haverstock Hill, in effect blocking off one's view of the main approach to Hampstead Heath.

The proposed seventh storey was not even included when the original plans were submitted - the Council only received plans for a six (6) storey building. The Hospital is already 'an elephant in a shoe box' and this small

area - which includes a theatre, prayer hall etc. at the rear of Royal Free - cannot take any further expansion to the site.

Negative impact on Hampstead Green (a conservation area) and St Stephens (Grade 1 Listed)

The proposed building would completely change the character of Hampstead Green. Hampstead Green is currently a pleasant meadow and natural habitat, with the cobbled walkway beside it down past St Stephens and Hampstead Hill School shielded from the 1970s Royal Free building by a high hedge, and attractive, bee-friendly mature trees such as cherry blossom, and the greenery of the Heath Strange Garden. It is a last remaining vestige of a once-peaceful green that dates back to the 1750s, sloping down from Roslyn Hill to Pond Street and South End Green, which the proposed building will destroy forever. In place of a hedge, bushes, trees and a garden, an enormous, unsightly, 7-storey brick building will dominate the boundary and the cycline along the entire length of the Green. The proposed brick building - which even to an untrained eye appears to be of no architectural value whatsoever - will dwarf all of its surroundings.

The mass of the building will completely overpower Hampstead Green (a wildflower and wildlife meadow), and Stephens Church (a recently restored Grade One Listed building), and Hampstead Hill School. It will do irreversible damage to the character and heritage of Hampstead Green and the setting of the newly restored (thanks to many years of fundraising) St. Stephens Church which plays an increasingly important role in local community affairs (it serves as a venue for local meetings with the Council, Police, etc.) as well as playing host to popular events such as classical music concerts, art fairs, and popular vintage fairs all of which attract locals, Londoners and many other visitors - to Hampstead and its wider attractions.

In spring, the Hampstead Green is awash with snowdrops, crocuses (crocii) and daffodils, followed by swathes of scented bluebells and other wildflowers. It features specially built 'insect hotels' and insect-friendly piles of dead wood which provide food, as well as nesting and resting sites, for birdlife throughout the year (<http://www.rspb.org.uk/makeahomeforwildlife/advice/gardening/deadwood.aspx>). Woodpiles also provide homes for bats, and vegetation such as mosses, lichens and fungi. This little corner of Hampstead is an important, rare, beautiful, educational and recreational site for the millions of adults and children who live and work in, or visit, the area.

By contrast, all the 'flower beds' at the front of the Royal Free hospital are unimaginative, badly planted and sadly neglected, often strewn with litter and cigarette butts. As such the Royal Free would appear to be hard-pushed if not incapable of replacing with its own garden landscape 'design and management' team the beauty and wildlife abundant in Hampstead Green and the Strange Garden. As such, any plans to deny Hampstead and its visitors of the benefits of The Green and Strange Garden are unacceptable.

Loss of parking

The existing car park is already much too small to cater for the hospital's hundreds of thousands of visitors and cannot cope with demand. Reducing the number of spaces by almost half will have a serious impact on the many people visiting the hospital. Patients and visitors are often vulnerable, elderly or disabled and forced to rely on car travel. Blue badge holders already park in residents' bays in nearby streets and make it impossible for residents to find a parking space during the day, which the loss of parking spaces will only make worse.

Meanwhile, local transport systems are already over-stretched and under-staffed: e.g. the 268 Arriva bus service to Golders Green and the Finchley Road O2 Centre is extremely unreliable; many patients at the Royal Free bus stops are frequently kept waiting in the cold and rain for up to 30 minutes or more. Its staff drive carelessly, braking forcefully and suddenly - and when traffic flow is lighter, often breaking the local 20mph speed limit, especially on Heath Street which they treat as though it were the Monte Carlo Rally - appearing oblivious to the fact that many of their passengers may be elderly, vulnerable, injured, or with babies and small children. What's more, according to TFL, Belsize Park Underground Station is about to lose forever its helpful, friendly staff who look after passengers at entrance hall level: such Underground staff are soon to be made redundant. Thus vulnerable and disabled patients and visitors to the Royal Free will be even less inclined to use public transport, and made ever more reliant on private cars and expensive taxis. All additional reasons why the plans should be refused.

Traffic

Pond Street, Haverstock Hill, South End Green, East Heath Road and surrounding streets are already highly congested during the day. During rush hours, traffic in Pond Street can be stationary from one end to the other,

paralysing access in and out of the hospital. So too in Haverstock Hill from Belsize Park to the Pond Street traffic lights, paralysing access in and out of the hospital's Rowland Hill entrance.

The planned increase in A&E capacity (more than doubling from 60,000 to 140,000) will add substantially to traffic congestion locally. So too will the closure of the link road to Rowland Hill Street, which will force all vehicles dropping off patients and visitors at the main entrance to use the Pond Street exit, significantly worsening congestion in Pond Street.

Currently, there are 750,000 visitors to the Royal Free each year (in-patients, visitors, and out-patients and their families). The proposed build cannot support a suitable flow of traffic around the site and so must not be allowed to go ahead.

Loss of light and safety and privacy for Hampstead Hill School

The school classrooms alongside Hampstead Green will be badly affected by loss of light. Children aged 7 years or under playing in the kindergarten playground will be overlooked first by teams of almost exclusively male construction workers, contractors, etc., and then by the building's occupants and hotel residents. That is completely unacceptable - as infants they are among the most vulnerable in our population. These little children will be forced to spend their days under electric light, whereas previously they would work under natural light. During the building works they will no longer be able to use their playground - the noise and loss of privacy would be too great. Two years - the period proposed for the build - is a long time in a small child's education; many parents may wish to take their children out of the school altogether and find alternative education; other parents may not bother to apply. After all, few parents would wish to have their child educated amidst such chaos, noise and infringement of privacy. As such, the proposed Royal Free Hospital building is likely to put the school's future at risk.

The effect of the buildings on the school, and the lack of respect by the Royal Free for the school and some of the area's youngest and most vulnerable residents, is not in keeping with its position in the community.

The Royal Free Hospital needs to curtail their plans, and relocate the proposed research centre to NHS property elsewhere, or reduce dramatically the size, scale and location of the proposed building - perhaps elsewhere on the Royal Free site. The current plans need to be refused.

Disruption and damage during construction

The deep excavations will endanger the stability of the adjoining St Stephens site and foundations. The 200 tonnes tower of St Stephens is not underpinned - the River Fleet runs underneath much of Hampstead - and is on a hill above the site of the new building. It is likely that St Stephens will move as a result of the new building, and it may even topple over. This is unacceptable: such events may even result in serious injuries or loss of life.

The Royal Free has not taken this risk into account, and has no provision for it. For this reason alone planning permission should be refused.

Construction works on a site with such restricted access and nowhere for lorries to park risk creating total gridlock for local traffic. Two years of noise, dust and general disturbance will badly affect residents living, and using, the areas nearby. For example, everyday many hundreds of locals walking from South End Green and Pond Street up to Belsize Park enjoy the few minutes' peace and quiet afforded by the unique wild flora and fauna along the cobbled path on Hampstead Green.

Such noise, dust and general disturbance is also likely to deter many millions of visitors to the area: i.e. St. Stephens, Hampstead Heath, South End Green, Hampstead Village, etc., which will have a detrimental impact on local businesses e.g. independent cafes and our many independent shops, all of which are already struggling in an area where business rates and taxes are spiralling out of control.

Overdevelopment and lack of a master plan

The Royal Free Hospital site is already grossly overdeveloped and this new proposal will make the situation even worse. Development since the 1970s has been incremental and piecemeal. It is irresponsible to propose what will be one of the largest buildings in Hampstead for many years in the absence of a master plan for the site,

or a plan for where clinical and operational services will go following the recent merger with Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals.

Impact of Bertram's and Lawn Road redevelopments

Two other major developments are taking place at the same time close to the site. Camden Council must take account of the cumulative impact of all these proposals and not look at each one in isolation.

While I am supportive of the Royal Free and a proposed research centre (I do NOT support the idea of a Royal Free Hotel - the Hospital is already very well served by several large hotels within walking distance, including the Premier Inn, Best Western, Britannia, Holiday Inn, plus numerous smaller hotels and B&Bs), it should be located in a building that is sited elsewhere - perhaps the site of Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals? Or perhaps our former Hampstead Police Station?

With kind regards

Ruth Blair.