

10 December 2014



Mr Charles Thuaire  
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Dear Mr Thuaire

**2014/6845/P: Responses to English Heritage Comments  
The Pears Building, Royal Free London Hospital, Hampstead, NW3 2QG**

I have received a copy of English Heritage's letter dated 1st December 2014 submitted in response to our planning application. We are pleased that English Heritage recognise that the layout, height, scale and massing represent a carefully considered response to the site's setting and its historic development and that the landscaping proposed is high quality. As a point of fact where English Heritage have stated that it will be clad in aluminium, terracotta and timber; it will in fact be clad in high quality brick which is sympathetic to the character of the area and local context.

English Heritage believe that the development will cause some harm to the setting of the Grade I listed Church and the 'village' character of the church and green which mark the transition between Belsize Park and Hampstead Heath.

The Heritage Statement prepared by KM Heritage addresses the impact on heritage assets in full. The setting of St. Stephen's and other heritage assets does not rely on the Heath Strange Gardens being an open space. - for many years this site was occupied by Hampstead General Hospital, a substantial building. Please see the enclosed photograph from 1970 showing the construction of the Royal Free. This and the photos from earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century clearly show that Hampstead General Hospital was a building of substantial scale.

The new Pears Building will serve to create a new and far superior context for the listed church and conservation areas. At present this area is dominated by the scale and appearance of the Royal Free. The new building will help screen the Royal Free from views from the surrounding area.

The high quality design proposed will enhance the character of the area and the setting of St Stephens in comparison to the ugly mass of the Royal Free. It will also provide green terracing adjacent to Hampstead Green which will bring the spacious setting of Hampstead Green into the application site. The development will thus reinforce the character of the area, and certainly represents an improvement to this character over the current status of the site. We would also reiterate that the capacity of St Stephen's to accommodate change is considerable given its scale. This is not a small chapel that will be overwhelmed by a new building next door.

As such we do not agree with English Heritage's opinion that there will be 'some harm' to local heritage assets. Rather we believe that it will enhance the setting of these assets. This is inline with Section 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Notwithstanding the above, should the Council agree with English Heritage's view that there is some harm (or 'less than substantial harm') to heritage assets the test set out in paragraph 134 of the NPPF is appropriate.

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This states that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In response to this we would draw your attention to the substantial public benefits and the need for the scheme to be located on the application site, all listed in Section 5 of the Planning Statement and the Heritage Statement. These benefits are substantial and significantly outweigh any perceived harm. I would suggest that there are few developments in Camden that are delivering greater public benefits. These benefits are of national importance, cannot be delivered at an alternative site, and are unique to this site in the entire country. They clearly outweigh any perceived harm.

As set out in the Planning Statement it is essential that the facilities proposed in the Pears Building are located in close proximity to the existing Institute within the Royal Free building to ensure close interaction between scientists. English Heritage have queried whether existing services within the Royal Free Campus could be relocated to other sites within the Trust's administration; and what the funding is for the new Pears Building to establish whether the benefits to the hospital facilities could be delivered without the research centre.

In response I can confirm that paragraph 5.39 of the Planning Statement confirms that there is not sufficient space to accommodate the development within the existing hospital. Furthermore, the Trust's Clinical Strategy confirms that it is proposed to grow clinical services at the Royal Free Hospital to cater for existing local residents and the growth in local population. All space within the building is carefully managed and wholesale relocation of departments to accommodate the Pears Building uses would not provide this growing local area with an appropriate level of clinical care.

The Pears Building will be funded from a variety of sources. This includes £11.1million from the Higher Education Funding Council for England and £30million raised by the Royal Free Charity. This funding has been secured on the basis of a carefully costed new building with all client parties (Royal Free Charity, Royal Free Trust and UCL) requiring specific uses. In the event that the research building was withdrawn from the development proposals, a significant portion of the funding would fall away. It is considered unlikely that a building that only delivered a replacement car park, the patient hotel and Charity offices would receive enough funding to be taken forward.

English Heritage have identified that specific heritage benefits are important in the consideration of this application. As set out in our Heritage Statement, the scheme already results in specific heritage benefits – the enhancement of the setting of the listed buildings and the character and appearance of the conservation areas.

Notwithstanding this we have given further consideration to the potential specific heritage benefits that could be delivered. Physical changes or repairs to St Stephen's Church are beyond the scope of this proposal. It would be unreasonable to require this development (one to be constructed using public funds and charity money) to effect alterations to a Grade I listed building which has already received tens of thousands of pounds in grant aid.

We believe the most appropriate benefit would be the provision of an Interpretative Board on site detailing the history of St Stephen's. This could be sited within Heath Strange Gardens where patients, staff and residents would be able to read about this local Church whilst using this open space. It would pique the interest of members of the public raising awareness of the history and architecture of St Stephen's and encouraging people to visit the Church interior to learn more information. This interpretative board could form part of the landscaping for the site and be secured by condition.

I can confirm that we would be prepared to accept a condition being attached to the permission to protect the historic fabric of the Church.

In summary we consider that the proposed Pears Building will not cause any harm to local heritage assets but will in fact enhance them, representing and improvement to the setting of local conservation areas and St Stephens Church. The development is delivering significant public benefits that far outweigh any perceived harm in line with paragraph 134 of the NPPF.

I believe we have addressed English Heritage's comments robustly and in detail and would be pleased to discuss these matters with you at our meeting on the 15th December. In the meantime should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me as above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Savills", written in a cursive style.

Simon Myles  
Associate

c.c. E. Fasanya, Hopkins Architects  
C. Burghes, Royal Free Charity

Enc. Historic Photographs