

16 / 16A Prince Arthur Road
London NW3 6AY

Camden Planning Dept.
Via E-mail attachment

16th February 2015

Dear Sirs

Planning Application 2014/7851/P
Arthur West House, 79 Fitzjohn's Avenue, NW3 6PA

This is a joint letter from the owners of the 5 properties in the building at 16 and 16A Prince Arthur Road, which is immediately adjacent to the site to which the above planning application relates, whose names appear at the foot of this letter.

We write to ask that the planning application be refused for the reasons set out in this letter.

Our principal concerns are the scale and design of the proposal. The site is within the Fitzjohns/Netherhall Conservation Area. We are surprised that any architect who has read the Conservation Area Statement (the "CAS") can believe that the proposals comply with it.

As you will be aware, the Guidelines for development proposals in the Conservation Area require that new development should be seen as an opportunity to enhance the Conservation Area. All development should respect existing features such as roof lines, elevational design, and where appropriate architectural characteristics (see F/N1 in the CAS). This is also made clear by Camden Planning Guidance CPG 1, which states that design excellence, and the impact of buildings in their context and the surrounding areas is particularly important in Conservation Areas.

The CAS does not regard Arthur West House as positively contributing to the Conservation Area. It describes it as too high, and too close to the border with Prince Arthur Road (see page 15 of the CAS). However, the new scheme not only repeats the faults of the current building, it makes them worse. The proposed building would be higher on both Fitzjohn's Avenue and Prince Arthur Road aspects, and the dramatically increased visual impact of the development can clearly be seen from the photomontages in the Application documents. The proposed design of the building is unattractive, peculiar, and does not reflect the overall design, or features, of either the current building or of any of the surrounding buildings. It is completely unsympathetic to its surroundings, and nor does it seem to us to have any architectural merit in itself. We do not therefore believe it satisfies the design excellence criteria in CPG1.

We also strongly object to the increased footprint of the proposed building. Currently, there is a good proportion of garden remaining behind Arthur West House. Although there is a low level building across the garden (which is built up from an excavated area), the main footprint of Arthur West House essentially respects the housing line along Fitzjohn's Avenue and down Prince Arthur Road. The proposed development ignores the housing line completely and treats the site as if it were a greenfield site. This should not be acceptable in a Conservation Area.

Guideline F/N32 in the CAS advises that development in rear gardens is unlikely to be acceptable. The proposed footprint of the new building significantly reduces the open space behind the development, particularly the part adjacent to our building, which is currently garden, mostly laid to lawn. The footprint would impact visually on all those in Prince Arthur Road, Ellerdale Road, and Fitzjohn's Avenue who have rear windows overlooking the development. It also increases the extent to which the rear of those properties is overlooked, by increasing the development close to the boundary with our building, and the buildings on Ellerdale Road in particular. It therefore represents a loss of amenity to all those properties and the area more generally, which the Conservation Area Guidelines are designed to prevent, and which is a matter to be taken into account under CPG1.

Finally, we are very concerned about the plans to excavate the basement to a second level (it is currently only at one level). As is clear from the report in the supporting documents, the second level basement would be 2 metres below the current water table, and the impact on water flow and the effect on nearby houses of this is completely unclear. CPG4 on Basements requires that this be addressed properly. We would not generally be in support of allowing excavation of the basement to a second level because of the uncertain impact on the water table and potential issues with landslip in Prince Arthur Road.

We believe that the Application fails the Conservation Area guidelines on planning in terms of height, scale, design, and footprint. It repeats, and worsens, the faults of the current building in Conservation Area terms, as evidence by the CAS description of Arthur West House. It therefore fails the overall consideration, which is that any new development should only be permitted where it would enhance the Conservation Area, and it therefore also fails the design excellent criteria in CPG1.

The Conservation Area Guidelines have been strictly applied in the past (for example to the redevelopment of our building in 1997), and we fail to see why a relaxed view of them should be taken in this case. The Proposal would have a significant detrimental effect on the Conservation Area, when a more sympathetic development (if development is to be allowed at all) could enhance it. We urge the developer and the architects to give more careful consideration to the Conservation Area Guidelines in any future planning application.

Yours faithfully,

Mr & Mrs A. Cave
The Lodge

Mr & Mrs A. Sciama
Garden Flat

Mrs J. Langton
Flat 1

Dr & Mrs C. Anastasi
Flat 2

J.C. Baldry Esq
Flat 3