



The Heath & Hampstead Society

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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: 2015/3007/P

Address: 39 Fitzjohns Avenue, NW3 Southwell House

Description: Change of Use: Hostel to single family house.

Case Officer: Obote Hope

Date 15 June 2015

On the face of it, this application should be reasonably uncontroversial. However, we must oppose it, on these grounds:

1. Loss of Hostel Use.

Camden Policy DP9 calls for the retention of uses for hostel, student and other accommodation with shared facilities. This policy is closely related to Policy DP8: accommodation for homeless people, and Policy DP4: affordable housing..

This building was built as a convent , and used as such for many years; i.e. for the accommodation of sisters, nuns and students. Its use is therefore clearly established, although the applicants do not refer to this in their application documents.

There is a clear urgent need in the Borough for housing for the homeless, and this building is ideally planned to provide this. No case is made in the application for the abandonment of this use. We appreciate that the building's use as a convent per se ceased a few months ago, but its Planning Use remains; this goes with the site, not its owners or users.

There have been other cases in Hampstead of loss of Hostel use, notably on the site of the Nurses Home at 29 New End, and at Bartrams Hostel in Rowland Hill Street. In both those cases, Hostel use was lost, in favour of luxury residential development. In both cases we raised objection, especially in the case of 28 New End. Hampstead traditionally has been an area of mixed residential use, and in each case the loss of Hostel or Affordable housing has been to the severe detriment of the community. We strongly oppose yet another loss

2. Future Development

This application is baldly for a change to single family house use. The building is very large, and its garden enormous. Its use as a large family house might therefore be viable. However, there are few other single family houses in Fitzjohns Avenue, certainly none as large as Southwell House, and it might for other reasons be seen as

less than ideal for this purpose: for example, traffic noise from Fitzjohns Avenue is high, and might be seen as a disadvantage.

We can therefore visualise a situation, in a year or two after receiving a permission, when further applications are made, for demolition and redevelopment, no doubt for “luxury” flats. This application may therefore be only a staging post, disposing of the potentially awkward matter of the Hostel use.

We would strongly oppose such moves. Not only does the garden make a massive contribution to the openness and character of this part of the Conservation Area, but the house is itself Locally Listed.

We appreciate that you have to consider an application on its own merits, and cannot normally take a future use into account, but unless you are able to add a condition limiting use to single-family use, we are determined to ensure that this house not only retains its C3 community-based use, but also its existing character and uniquely large garden.

We therefore call for refusal.