

ARKWRIGHT MANSIONS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION (AMRA)

16 June 2015

18 Arkwright Mansions
206 Finchley Road
London NW3 6DE

Regeneration and Planning, Development Management
London Borough of Camden
Town Hall, Judd Street
London WC1H 8ND

Dear Sir/Madam,

Application No. 2015/2087/INVALID, Flat 4, 47 Arkwright Road, NW3 6BJ

I am writing on behalf of the residents of Arkwright Mansions, a late-Victorian block of 27 flats, which backs on to the side of 47 Arkwright Road, to object to the above application.

The reasons for our objection are as follows:

1. Previous attempt to create a roof garden

Our residents first became aware of the attempted construction of a roof garden at 47 Arkwright Road some 13 years ago, when people were observed sunbathing on the roof area now being described as a "roof terrace". Following our complaints a retrospective planning application was made to retain the "timber decking to roof terrace, glass screening balustrade and adapted roof housing" that was being constructed without prior planning consent (see Planning Application No. PWX0203070 and photos dated 2002 Pages 1 to 3). Drawing No. C/AR4/CAS110/AR01 submitted with this application shows that the original intention was to complete a "TILED TERRACE" with glass screening extending the full width of the roof. In the event planning consent was only given for "The retention of a **guard rail** on a section of the roof to the west" (my highlight) and confined to the roof area shown in Drawing No. C/AR4/CAS110/AR02a.

We were told by a planning officer at the time that consent was given for this application because the works were intended to provide safe access to the roof for maintenance purposes (albeit that the roof housing was fully glazed!). The term "guard rail" was expressly used in the planning decision of 12/3/2004. We were also advised that we should report any future attempts to use this roof area for recreational purposes.

2. Latest attempt to create a roof garden

While AMRA raised no objections to a recent application to install three skylights in this roof area (Application No. 2014/1065/P), we strongly objected to the reference to a 'roof terrace' in the plans submitted as this implied the acceptance of a change of use – from one of 'maintenance access' to 'recreational', contrary to the 12/3/2004 planning decision.

It is therefore totally erroneous to describe the new retrospective application for unauthorised works carried out since the granting of planning consent for the skylights as the "Erection of replacement balustrade surrounding rear roof terrace". What was witnessed by our residents, and reported by me while under construction, replacement of the metal 'guard rail' surrounding an area of rear roof access for maintenance by a wooden balustrade and fencing intended to turn this area into a roof garden.

Furthermore, the footprint of this construction now covers nearly twice the roof area that was enclosed by the original 'guard rail'. Whereas the south facing section of the latter was originally aligned with the south face of the roof housing (see Drawing No. C/AR4/CAS110/AR02a, 2002 photos, and Photo.1, 4/8/2014), the same section of the new wooden balustrade is now moved forward to align with the chimney stack on the west elevation (compare Drawings 3# and 4# - side views 'before' and 'after*', and see my Photo attached). (* No 'before' and 'after' drawings of the roof plan appear to have been provided. How convenient!) On the west elevation, the low profile and mass of the previous metal 'guard rail' has now become a highly visible and bulky wooden post and rail fence some six feet high (again, compare Drawings 3# and 4# - side views 'before' and 'after', and see my Photo attached).

It is all too clear that these recent unauthorised roof works at 47 Arkwright Road have nothing to do with providing a safe means of access to the roof for maintenance purposes but represent a complete departure from the approved purpose of the works retrospectively granted planning consent in 2004. The repeated use of the terms 'balustrade' (instead of 'guard rail') and 'roof terrace' (instead of 'flat roof') in the applicant's planning forms and drawings belies a continued intention to construct a roof garden under the guise of providing a 'safe means of access for roof maintenance'.

3. Impacts of roof garden on residents of Arkwright Mansions

For the residents of Arkwright Mansions any roof garden on the south and west elevations of 47 Arkwright Road means a complete loss of privacy. Almost all of the rooms at the rear of Arkwright Mansions are used as the main bedrooms, which would be overlooked by anyone using the proposed roof garden at 47 Arkwright Road. Residents wishing to sleep in those bedrooms, or in the small bedrooms facing the rear lightwells, would also be disturbed by any noise made by people using that roof space for recreational activities late at night, e.g., parties and BBQs. Given the levels of traffic noise experienced at the front of Arkwright Mansions, which overlooks Finchley Road, our residents do not have the option of moving their bedrooms from the rear of the building to the front.

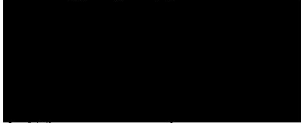
4. Detrimental effects of roof garden for Redington/Frogna Conservation Area

Both Arkwright Mansions and 47 Arkwright Road lie within the Redington/Frogna Conservation Area (RFCA) and both are listed as "buildings that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area". For this reason "the general presumption should therefore be in favour of retaining such buildings" and, by implication, of retaining those features of particular buildings which help to define that character and appearance (RFCA Statement, Pages 16 and 17). Applications for planning permission that

"involve minor alterations", such as the "Addition of roof terraces", can have a cumulative impact on elements that contribute to the character and appearance of buildings, streets and areas as a whole" (Page 18).

The guidance given in the RFCA Statement with respect to roof gardens could not be clearer: "Roof gardens are **not** a characteristic feature of the Conservation Area. The provision of outdoor space at roof level **will be resisted**" (RFCA Statement, Page 22, my highlights).

For the above reasons, I would urge the Council's Planning Committee to reject this retrospective application.


Bill Granger (Chair, Arkwright Mansions Residents Association)
