

Objection to proposed roof terrace: 2015/2769/P

(at Worsley Court, 45 Pilgrim's Lane, NW3 1SR)

This objection is being submitted by my husband and myself, both seeking to have this planning application rejected. We live at 12 Willow Road, NW3 1TJ, with our home and small garden being sited alongside Worsley Court.

This objection is the latest one that I have written in connection with the redevelopment of Worsley Court, over a period of at least eighteen years.

You may not already know that, some years ago, the previous, lower, Worsley Court building had a roof terrace erected, which was then deemed to impinge upon the privacy of the houses at nos 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13, both in connection with many of our rear rooms and our small gardens. After the owners of these houses protested to Camden Council about this roof terrace, the Council deemed that we had good reason to protest and ordered the owners of this roof terrace no longer to use it, also for there to be a notice placed on the roof terrace to state that access to it would only be permissible in the case of essential maintenance of its flat roof. The owners of this roof terrace then complied with both these orders.

The recent redevelopment of Worsley Court has brought about the new building, with a somewhat higher roof, so that another roof terrace now would lead to these Willow Road houses being subjected to a greater loss of privacy in their rear rooms and gardens.

Please be aware that the 8-13 Willow Road are all terraced houses, with their street numbers running contiguously, something that may easily be recognized on a street map.

This new planning application, for a roof terrace, is probably the most selfish, opportunistic and noisome one that has been submitted to Camden Council, in relation to this property.

It seems to us that a young couple, either with or intending to have some children, purchasing a flat with the intention of adding a roof terrace, so that their children might have 'outside space' is not just selfish but ridiculous, given the proximity of the playground on the far side of Willow Road, the accessibility of the open space on Preachers' Hill (also lying on the far side of Willow Road and splendid for picnics, running around, tree-climbing and playing games), plus Hampstead Heath (with its vast open space and opportunities for feeding the ducks) lying only a very short distance from 45 Pilgrim's Lane.

I would like to suggest that most of London's residents would be delighted to live somewhere that had similar access to green spaces, situated at such a short distance from their homes. In addition, I would like to suggest that within the other European capital cities, the majority of children are happily and healthily brought up in flats that lack outside space.

While I have no idea of the ages of these children, personally I would fear for the safety of any children on a roof terrace, as, from the time that they have learned to crawl, children have an innate desire to climb and a propensity to fall. The proposed planters would doubtless make it easier for a child to attempt to climb over the suggested screens or any other balustrade. Personally, I would not allow any child between the ages of 1-14 years old to play on a roof terrace without an adult being present.

Given that there would be planters on the roof terrace, there must be the possibility of these then containing bushes and small ornamental trees, all of which would add to the height of the roof terrace. It is ironic that this roof terrace would be higher than the tops of some nearby trees. as evidenced in some of the photographs that have been included in our neighbours' objection,

That these proposed screens will afford greater privacy for people on a roof terrace is an irony, given the fact that they will be lessening the privacy of the 8-13 Willow Road households.

Incidentally, the proposed full-height new door, on to the new roof terrace, which the planning application states to be necessary to allow for 'disabled access' is something of a nonsense, given that, as far as I know, there is not a lift within Worsley Court, so it is unlikely anyone with a degree of physical disability would be unable to reach this top-level flat (and its roof terrace) in the first place.

At this point, I would like to raise the matter of the roof terrace that was only recently erected on the top of the house (43 Pilgrim's Lane) next to Worsley Court. 43 Pilgrim's Lane has, for a considerable amount of time, being undergoing a major refurbishment. I cannot recall permission having been given by Camden Council for this new roof terrace; would it, please, be possible for this authorization to be verified ? If planning permission has not been granted, this roof terrace now needs to be removed permanently.

In fact, looking out of one of our second floor rear bedrooms, a couple of days ago, I was treated to the view of a woman, with a watering can, watering some of the plants on this (possibly illegal) roof terrace. Given that I had an excellent view of this woman, this means she could just as easily see into this rear bedroom, along with the others of our rear rooms and also our garden.

Presumably the 43 Pilgrim's Lane roof terrace, just as is the proposed one at 45 Pilgrim's Lane (Worsley Court), are intended to be used, to be frequented by more than just one woman watering her plants. Presumably, too, it is likely that these roof terraces may see the installation of some garden furniture, perhaps with a parasol or some awning too, maybe a barbecue as well, so that all these would lead to the likelihood of greater, higher, overlooking of the Willow Road houses' rear rooms and their small gardens, meaning a larger loss of privacy than is suggested within the dimensions of the submitted planning application for 45 Pilgrim's Lane.

There would also be not just our uncomfortable loss of privacy but the threat of increased noise, especially were children to be playing on a roof terrace. At all times, when our young grandchildren are at our home, I make every attempt to take them (literally) across the road to Preachers' Hill or over to the Heath, their mostly now having just outgrown the playground.

Along with the loss of privacy, and already finding the new Worsley Court building's height and bulk to be oppressive, we need to point out that this proposed roof terrace would add to our sense of claustrophobia in this, specific, quiet, corner of Hampstead, where the new Worsley Court already has been over-developed.

Something you will not know is that, owing to some acoustic quirk, noise coming from both the buildings at 43 and 45 Pilgrims' Lane, somehow bounces off these two properties and becomes amplified, as it hits this specific run of Willow Road houses. We are particularly aware of this phenomenon when building works are taking place at either of these two buildings.

You will see from any map that our gardens are indeed very small ones, patio gardens and nothing more. Our own home, at 12 Willow Road, has the smallest and shortest of all these gardens, due to the way the land was divided up, in both Victorian and Edwardian times. The previous Worsley Court building was at a slightly further distance away from our houses, also it had on its rear corner abutting on to our gardens, a metal, full-length, fire escape, which was less oppressive, in a 'see-through' way, than this new (now brick-built and of full height) 'corner'.

We have already lost some of our accustomed day and sun light, since the new, higher, Worsley court was built, which means this loss of light has become evident in our rear rooms and small gardens, as we had demonstrated would occur, in our (collective) objections to the planning proposal that led to the redevelopment of this block of flats. The new building has also meant the diminishment of our view of the night time sky, along with our long-accustomed view of the moon, which rankles, given my husband and I have now lived here for just over 30 years.

For all the reasons given above, in our somewhat lengthy objection, we would ask Camden Council, in its wisdom, to reject this roof terrace planning application, which may well set an unacceptable precedent. It seems to us now that, following the large number of new under builds, the next round of planning applications might well be for the installation of new roof terraces, i.e. they bought into Hampstead, while ignoring and making impossible the building of affordable housing, and, having extended below there will now be a surge in applications for roof terraces, presumably the sky will, literally, be the limit ?

From: Penelope and Vivian Martin, owners of 12 Willow Road, NW3 1TJ 08.07.2015