

3 August 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

Response to planning application consultation re Garages & land adjacent to 25-26 Wolsey Mews, London NW5 2DX

The proposed work is described as an erection of 2x2 storey plus basement dwellings following demolition of the three garages. It will have a major impact on our building as it is adjacent to it.

While our building is classified as commercial, it is in fact a women's centre run by a charity and widely used by the local community and beyond. There are people there all day every day, including in the evening, and often at the weekends. The organisations based here provide daily front-line services to survivors of rape and other violence, including torture, to women with disabilities, and other vulnerable women. The physical environment in which these services are provided can have a huge impact on women who are already traumatised. We have taken great care to develop our building so that it is safe and welcoming, and as light as possible. We take any alterations to our environment very seriously as they affect the thousands of women and their loved ones who use the centre as well as those who are employed and volunteer there.

We strongly objected to the sale of this land as we thought it should be kept as a green space. Despite our objections the sale went ahead, and the land was bought by Mr and Mrs Burd who are now proposing to build two flats on it.

We have looked at their planning application, and have met with them at their request. We are glad that they intend to live in part of the building and that their proposal is respectful of the character of our building and of the mews. They also seem keen to foster good neighbourly relations which we appreciate. This is important to us and to the mews generally. We have raised our concerns with them and they have tried to address some of them.

After consideration, our objections are as follows.

1. The proposed building will negatively affect our light, especially on the ground floor. The light assessment carried out by the applicants does confirm this though it claims that the impact will be minimal. We don't agree with this and our light surveyor has asked for the calculations to be revised. We are very worried that the large part of our downstairs which will be most affected, will become darker, dingy and dominated by a brick wall. We have requested that the back wall which would be next to us be moved forward so it is not right up against our downstairs window. The applicants have agreed to move the wall slightly so that it clears not only the window but the window sill. While we appreciate this, it is still on top of

us. It would be better if it was moved further forward. We feel that their utility room downstairs and kitchen dining upstairs would still be big enough for their stated purpose.

2. The proposed sloping roof is in line with the bottom of our windows. While a sloping roof is a good idea, we wonder if this room could be lowered further into the ground. This would enable the sloping roof to clear our windows at a lower point.
3. Alternatively the distance between our building and the proposed one could be increased to a similar width to that between us and our neighbours to the south at number 26 Wolsey. This distance is the width of our courtyard – about four meters.
4. While the two buildings would be separated at the rear, they would be very close – under a meter. Our two windows downstairs would be most affected. To minimise the impact, we would much prefer the distance between our buildings to be greater – not only for maintenance purposes but so that we are not hemmed in on the north side. See point 3 above increasing the gap to about four meters if the room cannot be lowered further into the ground.
5. The proximity to our windows may amount to overdevelopment.
6. We have asked that the apex of the proposed building not be higher than ours, to keep the line of the roofs but also to minimise the impact of the new building on our light. The applicants have agreed to this but we do not yet see it reflected in their planning application drawings.
7. The applicants have proved amenable to discussing with us what kind of balcony railing to have and how high it may be in order to respect our and their privacy.
8. Underpinning our building is not deemed necessary because they plan to use contiguous piled foundations. We are obviously concerned about the impact of any possible movement on our building as this could have detrimental very disruptive and costly implications if any subsidence occurs in years to come.

As you can see, our main concern is with the proximity of the proposed building to ours, especially as we have a number of windows on that side. We hope that our objections will be taken into consideration when assessing the planning application for the development adjacent to our building.

Sincerely,

Solveig Francis, trustee