
From: .. [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 August 2015 13:44
To: McClue, Jonathan
Cc: Gracie, Ian
Subject: from Loretta cowen re cladding Mortimer estate ref. 2015/4030/p

Dear Jonathan,
I have decided the last objection document was a bit complicated, and wanted to simplify it for you and make it clearer, so could you scrap the last one, and use this final one instead please. PLEASE HOWEVER KEEP THE PHOTOS AS WE FEEL THE COMMITTEE REALLY OUGHT TO SEE THOSE! I WONT PUT THE ADDRESS OF THE PHOTOS AGAIN AS YOU HAVE THIS ALREADY.
Loretta.

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From Loretta Cowen re 16 Marrick House.

Objection to cladding proposal on above estate.

ARCHITECTUAL ISSUES.

1. St.John's Wood Conservation Area.

.The estate lies immediately next to the St. John's Wood Conservation Area. Marrick House is immediately next door to a grade ii listed house in the Conservation area. The blocks in Greville Road are across the road from houses in the Conservation Area.

.We understand Camden Council expects ALL buildings, including Camden's OWN, to make a positive contribution to the look of the Conservation area AND its immediate surrounds.

.The proposal breaches every aspect of this requirement- covering mature weathered bricks with unsuitable cladding, taking away the icon appearance of this estate- which had carefully been built to fit in with the surrounding houses - now in the Conservation area.

.PHOTOGRAPHS ARE PROVIDED TO SHOW HOW THIS CLADDING LOOKS AFTER JUST 4 YEARS-SUBMITTED BY THE PLANNING OFFICER ON OUR BEHALF- WHICH SHOWS A SIMILARLY CLAD BLOCK.

.MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO CONSIDER WHETHER THIS ACCORDS WITH THE REQUIREMENT OF" FITTING IN WITH AND MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE SURROUNDING CONSERVATION AREA".

2.The estate was built by an award winning renown architect.

The estate dates from the early 1950s, an early post war public housing development. It was built by the London County Council under the auspices of the then Chief Architect for the County, Sir Robert Mathew OBE, FRIBA- who was a Sloane Medalist and a Pugin Award winner- and whose many public works included the Royal Festival Hall.

3.English Heritage are currently reviewing the Estate for Grade ii Listing.

.English Heritage does give Grade ii listing to social housing- either for innovative qualities or because it is an excellent representation of architecture of its time. The estate comes under the latter heading.

.It represents a snapshot of immediate post war public housing - brick built- at its best and is a particularly good example of design in this era.

.The build is of mixed low density housing distributed amongst extensive landscaping with mature trees and shrubs - giving a country feel in the middle of the inner city- and is much loved by its residents as it stands now.

.The estate is much admired by visitors and forms a "jewel in the crown" of Camden's social housing, of which it should be rightly proud.

4.A precedent has been set in planning refusal.

Planning Committee refused a similar project due to "loss of finish on the brickwork" a short time ago. Ref. 2012/1337.

5.The Project affects the look of an iconic 1950s Estate, Historically Architecturally representative of its era.

.Loss of the original Architect's intent- the estate has been designed with great care, in yellow brick, which has mellowed with time, and harmonises well with the surrounding private housing, much of which is in the Conservation area.

.To destroy the intended Architectural look with cladding will bring it completely out of keeping with the original Architect's intent and with the surrounds.

.Cladding a building simply engulfs older brick with solid material in crude monolithic form. Buildings become crude forms of their former selves.

.All original design is lost- balconies will loose space, traditional window boxes will be removed, the original coal stores will go.

.Proportions and details in even plain builds, have been carefully designed by their architects and cladding destroys these totally, loosing any delicacy or tradition.

6.The Estate as a whole will look a monstrosity in design-2 buildings are to be left out.

.Two buildings on the estate have been deemed unnecessary to clad- to leave two properties unclad in their original form, while cladding the rest of the blocks, will make the architectural holistic appearance of the estate as a whole,an architectural nightmare- even more ludicrously out of keeping with the surrounding area.

TECHNICAL.

7.Cladding has shown itself not fit for purpose: the achievements it claims are false.

.Technical evidence from the Institute of Surveyors, and from the Technical Advisor for the Society for Older Buildings, indicates poor results from cladding in achieving its aims.

.There is no significant reduction in heating costs-(as has been frequently claimed) and as has been found in practice by tenants on other Camden estates which have had this done.

.Working out the figures, it would take over 50 years to recoup money spent on heating bills.

.Therefore claims that this reduces fuel poverty are a nonsense.

.Tenants are having extensive problems with blocks which have been clad- including internal condensation and black mould - despite contractors stating they have put ventilation to stop this- it does not work.

.Infact this INCREASES heating bills for council tenants- because the only real way to get rid of condensation is to open the windows to let damp out , and turn the heating up to dry it out- which defeats the whole object of the project of reducing bills. These flats also require more frequent redecoration - adding to tenants' costs- so much for saving them money.

8.Major long term maintenance issues.

.PLANNING OFFICERS COULD YOU KINDLY SHOW THE PHOTOGRAPHS AGAIN TO MEMBERS.

. Despite claims by contractors that maintenance will be minimal long term and low in cost for Camden, we would like members to look at the photos of a block which has had the same treatment, just 4 years ago.

.The Chair of the Residents' Association there describes living in that property as a "nightmare"- with extensive condensation internally, and the rapid deterioration of the cladding on the outside after just 4 years- leaving that authority with huge ongoing long term maintenance costs.

.The construction company for our estate states "cladding can be easily washed down and so is low maintenance to run". However RUST STAINS CANNOT BE WASHED AWAY AND WILL REAPPEAR EACH TIME AFTER THE OUTSIDE IS REPAINTED.

.Camden will be committing its council tax payers to pay out endless money for the upkeep of cladded properties, when if the original brick were kept, simple inexpensive repointing from time to time is all that is needed.

.Cladding a building requires the material to be cut around features in the blocks eg pipework - and glued down. In time these seals will rot, allowing rain water to seep between the cladding and the original wall: this will not dry out as there will be no air flow in the area and will eventually penetrate into tenants' flats.The solution will be expensive - to remove the cladding and replace it- all of which maintenance costs could be avoided by retaining the original brick and simple repointing.

9.Better and Cheaper options available - some grant funded.

.Heat loss can be reduced simply by redoing the badly done pointing on some blocks, done just a few years ago, under a major works project costing Camden approx. £11m. This should be done by the original contractors at no cost to Camden or leaseholders under the Sale of Goods and Services Act - which covers poor quality work.

.Many of the windows on the estate were also badly fitted, and simply remedying these will stop drafts

and cold air entering flats.

.Internal insulation on those parts of tenants' flats which are against an outside wall, takes up very little space in rooms, causes less disruption to tenants, is cheaper and has a long proven history of effectiveness in keeping properties warm and dry.

.There is government grant aid available for replacing tenants' boilers with condensing models- these are more energy efficient, are a cheaper option and cause fewer emissions AND ARE RECOMMENDED BY THE ENERGY TRUST INSTEAD OF CLADDING!

.IMPORTANTLY UNLIKE CLADDING WHICH IS HAVING ITS GRANT AID INCREASINGLY WITHDRAWN these grants continue.

.Cladding grant cannot be applied for until the project has been completed- by which time, grants may have ceased- and if it is granted, the maximum Camden can receive is £13k on this estate.

.It could well be that the reason government is withdrawing grants from this area, is that they are receiving increasing evidence that cladding does not achieve its claims- see The Energy Trust findings above.

10. Loss of Light.

The cladding protrudes significantly beyond the windows looking ugly and causing loss of light.

11. Difficulty and expense in replacing windows when needed.

.With cladding it is impossible to replace windows when needed as normal from the outside of the block. Access will be required from the inside of the flats, taking up expensive builder's time while this is arranged- and rearranged by tenants- making it an expensive, complex arrangement.

12. Loss of value to Camden's estate stock.

Professionals in the field are of the opinion that cladding reduces the value of properties. Camden holds a responsibility to maintain the value of its housing stock - from which cladding will detract.

13. Disputed by tenants that there is fuel poverty in the estate.

Bills on the estate are not particularly high and most tenants say their flats are warm and there is no problem paying the heating bills therefore.

Furthermore Camden Housing have not made the slightest attempt before committing the Council to over £2m on this project, to even assess the sustainability of the estate,s heating issues.

14. Failure to notify tenants and surrounding houses of intended work.

.Many tenants remain unaware of the intended work : having approached the surrounding private home owners, they have no knowledge of it at all.

.This £2m project which will significantly affect peoples' homes, was notified by a couple of notices put up on blocks-this may be technically legal, but I wonder what Members' views might be of this issue.

. The original notification Housing sent round gave absolutely no information about the detail of the project and yet people were expected to respond with objections in 21 days- not knowing what they might object to.

. The stage one consultation meeting gave tenants no information about the project either, and this was not known until the next meeting with leaseholders well into the objection period.

.Although leaseholders found out they should have been invited to the stage one meeting, the notice was not sent to them, and on the tenants' letters it specifically stated, leaseholders would be seen at the next meeting.

.The 14 day notice of both meetings required, was not given.

.The section 3 notices giving details of the work, was rushed out half way through the consultation period- when it should have been arranged by the Sustainability Unit well before the Planning Application, so that residents had full details of the project at that time.

15. Non technical considerations.

PLANNERS WOULD YOU KINDLY PUT THESE HUMAN ISSUES FORWARD FOR MEMBERS' CONSIDERATION.

.The money better spent on Social Services clients. It is felt by many on this estate, that the project is unnecessary, unsuccessful in the past, and unwanted by most of the residents. This £2m is a huge spend of Camden's funds in this area- whereas the feeling is, it would be better spent by moving it into the Social Services'budget, to go to helping the elderly, disabled and children, where there is genuine need and shortage of funds.

. Cladding takes away the quality of life for some residents- the narrowing of the balconies means that tenants will no longer be able to keep their flowers and pot plants on the public balconies. These add greatly to the appearance of the blocks, both on the balconies and from below, giving a cared, homely atmosphere.

.It has also been pointed out that some residents are housebound and elderly and that these pot plants, carefully nurtured by them, represent what remains of the quality of their restricted lives.

.WE HOPE MEMBERS WILL KINDLY TAKE THESE NON TECHNICAL HUMAN ISSUES INTO CONSIDERATION.

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