

29 Flask Walk London NW3 1HH

Tendai Mutasa,
Regeneration & Planning,
London Borough of Camden,
Town Hall, Judd Street,
WC1H 8ND

Planning Application Ref: 2015/3753/P
36 Flask Walk
NW3 1HE

19/08/15

Dear Tendai Mutasa,

I object to the planning application above, to create a basement at number 36 Flask Walk. I live opposite number 36.

Setting

Flask Walk is one of the most popular and attractive streets in Hampstead and has a large number of listed buildings. It attracts many hundreds of tourists and visitors every weekend, walking to the Heath or visiting local attractions such as Burgh House. Flask Walk also provides important pedestrian access for parents and children walking to and from several local schools, twice a day.

Numbers 35-47 opposite 36 Flask Walk are listed Grade II. Other nearby Flask Walk properties are also listed Grade II: numbers 43, 45, 47, and 53-67; Wells and Campden Baths and Wash Houses. Gardner House is Grade II*. I feel privileged to live in this a beautiful road and along with many of my neighbours, I work hard to preserve its character for present visitors and future generations.

Existing status of the property

In 1976, a new terrace of 4 houses (36-30 even) replaced the Flask Walk Salvation Army Hall. Number 34 was higher than its neighbours by virtue of being built over the communal garage serving the 4 properties. At the time the houses were praised as a good addition to the streetscape. They are set back just 115cm from the public pavement.

Overdevelopment

The applicant already has permission to extend at roof level and the addition of the basement represents an overdevelopment of the property.

Excavation

It is stated that to create the basement, approximately *200sqm* of soil and clay will be excavated, which I am assuming should read 'cubic metres.' Around 95% of soil and clay will be removed from the site by grab lorries, with an inadequate provision for bulking.

The application states, 'waste will be stored in a designated area within the identified compound away from site boundaries.' Where is the identified compound? The site has a very small footprint with no front garden.

Construction Management Plan and Lorry movements

The route for lorries servicing the site is given as New End Square, then turning right into Flask Walk at the junction with New End/Willow Road. The lorry exit is along Flask Walk, with a 90 degree right turn into Back Lane, then into Heath Street.

The lorries described in the Construction Management Plan are all too wide to enter Flask Walk or exit using Back Lane. A recent survey undertaken by Camden Council has resulted in 6 foot (1.85m) width restriction signage at the entry to Flask Walk from New End/Willow Road. This is based on the fact that a measured maximum of 2.08m is available for vehicles to pass legally parked cars/vans at the Walk's narrowest point. All quoted width lorry specifications in the application are substantially greater than 2.08m. Surprisingly, the applicant makes no mention of the narrowness of Flask Walk or the width restrictions.

The appended photos show:

Photos 1 & 2, p.5: That a lorry of the size proposed cannot enter Flask Walk from New End Square, without driving over the pavement. This is a route much used by children and parents, walking to and from the nearby primary schools of New End, Christchurch and Hampstead Parochial. The situation is made worse by the fact the pavement along the opposite side of Flask Walk at this corner is less than a foot wide.

Photo 3, p.6: The narrowest section of the Walk lies beyond number 36, towards the junction with Back Lane, where the maximum passing space is 2.08m. Before the width signage was installed, lorries regularly got stuck on this section, wedged between parked cars on one side and pavement bollards on the other.

Loading and unloading

It is proposed trucks and lorries will be unloaded/loaded at the front entrance 'to the site'. There is no site, just the frontage of a terrace house set back 115cm from the public footway and considerably shorter than the length of the lorries concerned. The applicant states concrete lorries will be parked 'kerbside' outside 36.

The applicant further suggests that general traffic will be able to pass with just one parking bay suspended (outside No 35).

Lakis Close entry and roadway

To allow traffic to pass, vehicles will have to drive over the entry to Lakis Close. It is inevitable during the building programme that vehicles will frequently block the entrance to Lakis Close, a community of 8 properties and garages. Although not mentioned in the applicant's documents, the entry to Lakis Close is double yellow lined and should not be obstructed at any time. A section of Flask Walk roadway just beyond Lakis Close is also double yellow lined. It seems likely the contractor is relying on these stretches being unobstructed at all times to help facilitate passing

traffic. However, the Flask Walk double line section provides an important amenity for disabled drivers to park and access Hampstead's facilities.

Inadequate light and the loss of planted area.

The only light to the proposed basement is via French windows leading onto a small sunken patio illuminated by a lightwell at the pavement (Flask Walk) end. This faces approx. north. The rear wall of the basement backs onto the communal garage and is solid. This proposed lightwell is unacceptable in Flask Walk where lightwells are not part of the established character and where the front gardens & associated plantings are important to soften the streetscape. This lightwell will consume the majority of the front planted area. These are at a premium on this side of Flask Walk, where most of the properties are around a metre from the pavement and lack front planting. Indeed, number 36 is unusual and invaluable in breaking up the streetscape with its planted area.

Huge disruption to the neighbourhood.

The major work of excavation and construction is scheduled to last 4.5 months. There will be other work before and after that time, so that the total development will probably last just short of 1 year. This will result in massive disruption to pedestrian and vehicular traffic along Flask Walk and a consequential detrimental impact on amenity. The footpath outside number 36 will be closed and pedestrians will have to cross the street to use the pavement opposite. This is raised, with access to street level via two sets of steps.

Traffic survey & traffic issues

The applicant commissioned a traffic survey. However the results do not reflect normal busy usage of Flask Walk.

The survey did not record any vans, which use the Walk throughout the day to deliver to residents; to business premises on the High Street and Heath Street and/or park in the loading bay at the top of Back Lane. The Flask pub is also serviced by a small lorry.

The survey hours did not take account of the local rush hour traffic: morning (generally post 9am after school drop off), afternoon & early evening, (generally 4pm onwards). Much of this traffic is generated by the school run. There are substantial numbers of state/private schools in the area and many parents drive their children to & from school. In the afternoon/early evening, traffic can tail back from Heath Street, down Back Lane, as far as Flask Walk Green.

There's a very good reason the traffic survey recorded no HGVs using Flask Walk. At long last the request of local residents to have HGVs banned from Flask Walk was agreed with Camden Council. This resulted in Camden installing new signage at the entrance to the Walk yet the application seeks to ignore this, and make extensive use of HGVs.

In 2009 the sewer connection from Flask Walk to Lakis Close collapsed, immediately opposite numbers 34 and 36. Camden Council refused permission to close Flask Walk to facilitate a quick repair. Lakis Close residents were informed that Flask Walk was a vital through route for Hampstead and could not be shut - even temporarily. They were also denied permission to place a skip on Flask Walk outside number 35. The

Council argued that the road was too narrow at that point; that the delivery and collection of skips would result in temporary closure of Flask Walk to all traffic, which was unacceptable. The question of damage by the skip to the retaining wall on Flask Walk was also cited, as was the blocking of sight lines for vehicles leaving Lakis Close. Previous owners working on renovating number 34 were also refused permission to locate a skip at this location. Yet the applicant proposes using this space for a skip and the road will obviously have to be shut (temporarily) for collection and delivery.

Photo 4 p.7 has a skip lorry outside number 36 Flask Walk, showing there is no room for passing traffic. This is the smallest of the lorries specified in the CMP.

The traffic chaos that will result from this project is unacceptable, simply to allow a private resident to create a basement room of approximately 50 sq metres.

Fragility of local infrastructure and damage to roads.

In 2014, the water main in Flask Walk was replaced. In the opinion of the engineers involved in the project, the passage of large lorries over Flask Walk and adjacent narrow Hampstead streets, was responsible for damage to services under the road, notably the water main. They believed if all HGVs were banned from these streets, residents would suffer far fewer water leaks.

During the work, a large cavity was discovered under the road, where the subsoil had been washed away, due to a damaged water main. Such cavities are not uncommon in the neighbourhood; currently one is under investigation in Willow Road, close to the Flask Walk junction.

Damage to neighbouring properties

I have concerns about potential damage to Numbers 34 and 38 and to Flask Walk itself. The applicant suggests that the excavation would be supported by propping and beams while some piling is proposed. There would be reinforced concrete underpinning under party walls. There is the potential for differential settlement where walls/foundations move different amounts or in different directions. This could be very serious for number 34, which is already suspended over the communal garage.

The problems identified would have a deleterious effect on local amenity and on the highway network and cannot be remedied by a new CMP or by granting conditional consent.

For all these reasons I strongly urge that Camden reject this application.

Yours truly,

Dr Marianne Colloms

See 4 photographs appended below.

A lorry of the size proposed cannot enter Flask Walk from New End Square without driving over the pavement. It also shows the 6 foot width signage.

Photo 1.



Photo 2.



Photo 3. 15 March 2013. Lorry stuck between bollards and parked cars outside numbers 32 and 30. The passenger side wheels are on the street kerb. It caused considerable damage to parked cars.



Photo 4 30 September 2008.

A skip lorry across the double yellow lined entrance to Lakis Close, opposite 36 Flask Walk (green door), showing there is no room for passing traffic. It had collected from a site outside Flask Walk and was using the Walk as a through road, intending to exit via Back Lane (as proposed for all lorries in the applicant's CMP). The driver pulled in because he realised he could not get past parked cars towards Back Lane. The lorry had to reverse down Flask Walk to Willow Road, causing considerable disruption. The skip lorry is the smallest of the lorries specified in the CMP.

