

#### Planning application 2015/4030/P

Kilburn Liberal Democrats object to planning application 2015/4030/P – the proposal to install external cladding on most of the buildings in Mortimer Estate, Kington House and Marrick House.

#### Planning policy

We consider this application to be in breach of the Camden Core Strategy 2010 policy CS14 Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage. CS14 commits the Council to, “requiring development of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character” and “preserving and enhancing Camden’s rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings”.

In addition, this application runs completely counter to the specific requirements of Camden Planning Guidance on Design (CPG1, July 2015). The guidance states:

*Painting, rendering or cladding of brickwork will normally be resisted, as it is often unsightly and can damage the appearance of a building by obscuring the texture and original colour of the façade. Painting, rendering or cladding may also trap moisture, which can cause major damp problems in the masonry.*

The addition of cladding to Mortimer Estate would indeed be unsightly, and would spoil the texture and original colour of the façade of brickwork. It would be wholly unacceptable for the Council’s planning decision-makers to put aside its own planning policies and normal resistance to cladding of brickwork because the application relates to one of the Council’s housing estates.

#### Loss of unique design

Mortimer is an attractive estate, with a distinctive, high quality design which complements the neighbouring buildings and the nearby St John’s Wood conservation area. The 1950’s brickwork and design of Mortimer is of special historical interest and the sensitive architecture should be preserved.

The architect – Sir Robert Matthew – was Chief Architect and Planning Officer to the London County Council and is renowned for his social housing schemes. It is clear that much care was taken in the design of Mortimer e.g. the curved buildings complement the curved pavements. Camden Council should be proud and protective of this heritage. It would be a travesty if most of the buildings in the estate were covered in uniform cladding and the unique look of the estate was lost.

We understand that an application has been submitted to Historic England for Mortimer to be granted Grade II listing. The Council should not be ploughing on with these plans until this is considered.

#### Other objections

The concerns of many residents about this application are exacerbated by observing similar external insulation schemes in Camden and neighbouring boroughs (e.g. Kilburn Gate; Carlton House in Kilburn (Brent)). Other schemes have left council housing blocks looking ugly and dirty within months of the work being completed, with rust showing in some cases. In addition, if the estate is clad it would be significantly more likely to attract graffiti than the current brickwork.

There are significant reasons to have reservations about the cost/value of the project. The Council’s own (questionable) figures suggest it will take four decades before the cost of the project per home will be recovered by the predicted reduction in energy bills. There is also uncertainty about whether

the Council will receive a Government grant for these insulation works, given recent changes of policy in this area.

Furthermore, there is a risk that external cladding could cause internal condensation/damp, as is acknowledged within CPG1 quoted above. Some people have therefore suggested that the Council should pursue internal insulation initiatives, such as condensing boilers, which could be equally as effective in reducing carbon emissions, without the downsides of external cladding.

Given that the proposal is inconsistent with Camden planning policies, we believe that planning consent should not be granted, and the Council's Housing Department should instead explore alternative options for reducing carbon emissions.

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