

Henry, Genna

From: Farang Customer Service <info@farangshop.co.uk>
Sent: 24 August 2015 10:50
To: Planning
Subject: Re: Comments on 2015/4001/P have been received by the council.

Please find attached a photograph which I would like to be included with my objection below...

Camden Place | Camden NW1



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On 24 Aug 2015, at 10:44, <planning@camden.gov.uk> wrote:

Objection to Planning Application 2015/4001/P

Background

I am the owner of 9 Camden Place on the top floor of this building.

The planning committee should be aware of the special circumstances of this building.

This is a highly unusual development comprising commercial office premises on the 1st 4 floors and residential flats on the top 2 floors of the building. This is a very unusual configuration in Camden that I have not encountered before. These flats are not situated above retail or restaurant premises and this was a crucial factor in the current flat owners decision to purchase their flats.

The committee should also be aware of the direct financial impact that their decision will have on residents. Flat owners have to contribute significantly to the cost of the common areas of the building and costs such as essential repairs to the exterior.

The existing plans by the applicant involve changing the exterior of the Kentish Town Road side of the building to include a brickwork façade. The brickwork façade will undoubtedly add significantly to the cost of the needed repairs, and it is the residents who will end up having to foot the bill.

Although the applicant has said that they have undertaken a consultation process with the residents they have been very selective with the information that they have agreed to provide the residents. As residents we expressed concerns about how they would distinguish between 'repairs' which we would legally have to contribute to and 'improvements' which the applicant would have to pay for.

Management agents for the freeholder, Workman, informed us on 31 July that their estimates were based on a quantity surveyor's report they had commissioned. I requested a copy of this report to see how they were able to separate 'repairs' and 'improvements', but they have not been willing to provide this to the residents

and we have received no response from them at all on this report.

There is a longstanding history of overcharging of residents in the building via service charges. To demonstrate to the committee the scale of this, my current service charge bill includes a charge of over £900 just for my personal share of the electricity used in the common parts of the building. That's over £900 per annum for the lightbulbs used in lighting my way from the outside of the building to my front door. That's just my share for flat 9 and the other 14 flats are billed similar amounts. It sounds unimaginable, but it's true. My total service charge for 2015 will be around £25,000 according to the latest figures supplied.

The applicant is proposing significant changes to the building that will affect residents and my specific objections are as follows:

Local List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest:

Residents purchased their flats knowing that their building was on this register. It would be grossly unfair on residents to remove this listing after we have made our purchases on that basis.

The applicant is proposing that our building should not be included on this list on the basis of 2 factors:

1. The Kentish Town Road façade was originally brickwork.

The applicant has gone to great lengths to try and establish the history of the building's external architecture. All they have 'proved' is that the building had a brickwork façade in 1903 and sometime before 1961 the building had a new smooth frontage.

The importance of the building is in its appearance now. Its original frontage is not a key factor in deciding any special status a building should be given.

Again residents made their purchases based on the appearance of the building now. It has a wonderful imposing façade, unique to the area and should be preserved rather than be covered in a modern brickwork façade.

The importance of the buildings appearance was fully recognised by the property developers when developing the flats. In fact it was the building frontage that featured on the entire front cover of the original marketing brochure – not the interiors or the views from the top, but the external Kentish Town Road façade (photograph attached).

I believe the desire to use a brickwork façade is to make the building more inline with other commercial buildings and thus the applicant hopes to achieve higher commercial rents.

2. The exterior is not limestone.

I do not have the expert knowledge to determine whether the façade of the building is true limestone or is a render as the applicant asserts.

I would argue that it does not matter whether it is a render or not. The building looks like limestone and that is the key factor. Look at the many protected historic buildings that surround Regents Park – which are clearly render rather than limestone blocks. The architectural style of the building must be protected.

Additional Architectural Consequences of a brickwork façade on the building:

The building is not a rectangle but is a wedge shape due to it being near an angular road intersection.

In section 3.0 of the applicants Design and Access Statement this can be clearly seen in the photograph top right.

Unusually, when viewed from Kentish Town Road both sides of the building can be seen at once. It has the appearance of a coherent architectural structure from one side of the block to the other. The applicant has already repaired the Royal College Street side of the building this year without the need for a brickwork façade.

To include a brickwork façade on the Kentish Town Road side will destroy the symmetry of the building, and the overall effect will be a reduction in architectural coherence, detrimental to the neighbourhood.

Change of Use Application for the Ground Floor to include Café or Retail Space

Residents did not purchase their flats with this in mind. We chose a building with commercial use only that provides greater security and a less noisy or smelly environment.

This is an office block and should be kept as such. We did not purchase flats above restaurants or retail premises – to allow this change of usage without residential approval is simply not fair on the residents.

The applicant's plans also allow any tenant to connect to the internal space of the building which causes a security risk for the residents as unauthorised visitors could access residential floors.

The area is amply served with more than enough food and retail premises and would not benefit from additional space for such use being made available.

Overall:

I hope the committee will see fit to reject this application. In a large commercial looking building like this it is very easy to lose sight of the fact that this building actually contains people's homes and commercial motives should not take precedence over residents wishes.

Comments made by John Stewart of 9 Camden Place, 110 Kentish Town Road, NW1 9PX

Preferred Method of Contact is Email

Comment Type is Objection