

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Consultees Addr:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2015/5847/P	Susan Oldroyd	Flat D 64 Fitzjohn's Avenue London NW3 5LT	26/01/2016 16:38:22	OBJ	Planning Application 2015/5847/P 66 Fitzjohn's Avenue

OBJECTION

I wish to lodge my objection to this proposal.

BACKGROUND

This site was developed in the 1980s, turning a single storey building that had provided garaging for the residents of 64 Fitzjohn's Avenue into a two storey building. Camden Planning rejected the proposal, but their decision was overturned on appeal to the Department of the Environment.

The height of the building was raised to accommodate a second storey and the Victorian drains servicing 64 were cut into to carry water and sewage from two new homes.

What had remained of the garden of 64 was demised to these two homes and was cobbled to pro-vide hard standing for two cars bordered by some planting. The rest of the garden of 64 had been lost to a much earlier development, the building of a large family house at 12 Akenside Road.

OVERDEVELOPMENT

When compared to other Victorian villas in Fitzjohn's Avenue, this is already an overdeveloped site. There is no demonstrable need to demolish these two houses. The proposal does not represent improvement, only enlargement for its own sake.

The current houses are modest and architecturally signal a reference to the kind of mews cottages that might have serviced the large Victorian villas of Fitzjohn's Avenue. In contrast, the proposed development is oversized and of a scale and design out of keeping with its setting. It would probably sit more easily into a mixed commercial and residential environment.

CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The current two storey building can clearly be seen from both Fitzjohn's Avenue and Akenside Road. Further development will have a detrimental impact on the conservation area. Long views through mature trees to traditional pitched roofs are a significant visual amenity contributing to the character of this area.

The proposed third storey will present a visually disturbing and unwelcome intrusion, abruptly penetrating these views. It is completely inappropriate here in a conservation area and in such close proximity to its immediate neighbours at 64 Fitzjohn's Avenue and 12 Akenside Road. It will also eliminate one of the principal attractions of the upper flats of 64.

TREES

The risk to mature trees is not convincingly assessed and one mature magnolia tree in the garden of 12 Akenside, hard against the rear wall of 66 is not included in the report. These trees all pre-date the original development of 66. Their canopies and root systems are likely to suffer from the detrimental

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effects of demolition and excavation. It is hard to see how extensive root systems can avoid damage impacting on the life and health of the trees which are a major feature of this environment.

SERVICES

SEWERS AND DRAINS

It is not clear how the Victorian sewer/ main drain, already under pressure from the additional inputs from the current development, will cope with further bathrooms and heavier usage that would be anticipated from a larger development. There have been frequent instances of blockage, which impact largely on the lower ground floor of 64. The proposed development does not appear to address the issue of providing services separate from those for 64.

WASTE AND RECYCLING

The architects make no provision for waste and recycling for the proposed houses. The reference to retaining and using the area to the side of the access drive is inaccurate since this is the bin area built and paid for by the residents of 64, maintained by them and is part of the freehold. It has nothing to do with 66. If it has been used informally by residents in 66, this may explain the pressure it appears to be under. Refurbishment of this area to enable it to house the bins required by Camden is currently in the schedule of works included on our service charge. There will be no room to accommodate our neighbours' waste and recycling. This can be confirmed by reference to our Manager, appointed by the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal to act in place of the freeholder.

AFFECT UPON NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES

PROPOSED ADDITION OF A THIRD STOREY

The additional storey is, apparently, slightly set back but judging from the plans this is only because the first floor is slightly set forward. There will be a significant reduction in light and sunlight, particularly for the lower flats at 64. It will also impact upon the house and garden of 12 Akenside Road, presenting this property with a high blank wall.

The proposed windows to the west facade are significant additions to what currently exists. Whether in obscured or clear glass, these present obtrusive assaults on the privacy of neighbours they so closely overlook and would certainly represent an increase in light pollution at night.

The architects appear to suggest that the third storey is not significantly higher than the current "gable ends". But this ignores the fact that the two small "gable ends" do not represent the height of the building. They are single brick decorative features to the front facade which rise modestly at two points above the flat roof line and mitigate the effect of that flat roof.

The proposed extended height of the third storey is an unnecessary and unacceptable overdevelopment. Given its close proximity to the rear of 64, it is overbearing and out of proportion to the scale of the site.

The suggestion that the overall height of the building will be ameliorated, because the proposed depth of the basement will lower the whole building, cannot be judged from the drawings. That it necessitates

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access to the ground floor entry via downward sloping ramps is a proposal that would seem to be fraught with difficulties and issues of water penetration.

PROPOSED ADDITION OF A BASEMENT AND ACCESS TO SITE

The planning proposal includes a basement area that runs beyond the footprint of the building across the entire courtyard garden to within about a metre of the lower ground floor flat at 64. The boundary wall is unstable and currently requires attention. I believe that there are likely to be real problems with this proposal.

The BIA notes that the proposed basement will significantly increase the differential depth of foundations relative to neighbouring properties. It is also acknowledged that the proposed basement development is very close to underground water courses and that the water table is high in this area. Slope stability and subterranean (groundwater) flow are both constraints. The main impact will be to 64 and 62.

The Civil Engineer's Report states that 'ground movements as a result of basement constructions are difficult to predict accurately.' Some damage may occur and damage is expected to be minimal. This is an opinion that would only be tested in construction with unknown risks projecting into unknown future consequences.

During the early 1980s, Camden's District Surveyor oversaw major refurbishment works to 64, which involved the removal and replacement of main structural beams affected by dry rot at lower ground floor level. It was noted then that this property was, among many others on Fitzjohn's Avenue, constructed on what was effectively a raft of clays subject to changes in the water table and best left undisturbed.

A programme of major works, required by the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal, is scheduled to take place at 64 Fitzjohn's Avenue in 2016. Tenders have already been received and await selection. This work has a time frame required by the court and cannot be delayed by this proposal. Were planning permission to be granted it is essential that the outstanding work on 64 take priority. For reasons of Health and Safety, it would clearly not be possible for both projects to take place simultaneously.

The CMP demands demolition of the existing houses, deep drilling to install secant piling, dewatering and deep excavation over the entire site with the only access to the site being a narrow drive-way flanking the north side of 64 which leads onto Fitzjohn's Avenue. Where will these construction and site vehicles park? What will be the impact of their exits and entrances onto Fitzjohn's Avenue, in close proximity to St. Mary's School?

The key phases of basement construction outlined in the Civil Engineer's Report and the SLR compound the negative impact on 64, despite the mitigating measures proposed to reduce vibration from heavily laden lorries and heavy plant moving to and from the site. The scope of the construction proposed for this small site is a request for neighbours to bear risk. This is not acceptable.

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It is unreasonable to expect neighbours to accept an unquantifiable risk to their property, no matter how slight, for the sake of unnecessary overdevelopment.

The basement proposal is flawed at many levels.

PARKING

Given that the proposed development would need to house its own waste and recycling bins to-gether with parking and turning space for two cars, it is hard to see how roof lighting for the base-ment could be effectively achieved.

Given the proposed increase in the number of bedrooms, it seems highly likely that this develop-ment will result in additional cars seeking to park on the street exacerbating parking problems on Fitzjohn's Avenue.

Please refuse this development application.

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