

## Camden Square Conservation Area Advisory Committee

Rear of 3 Camden Square  
(6 Camden Mews)  
NW1

**Date:** 16 February 2016

**Planning application Reference:** 2015/6764/P

**Proposal:** Demolition of single storey garage to the rear of 3 Camden Square's garden and the erection of a four bedroom three storey single family dwelling..

**Summary:** We strongly **object** to the proposed development. With its three storeys, excessive bulk, harmful overshadowing of buildings opposite and negative impact on the privacy of neighbouring buildings the proposed development will not enhance the Camden Square Conservation Area

### Comments:

1. We have some concerns about the technical adequacy of the drawings. Although many aspects of the proposal have been presented in great detail, some important elements are unclear.
  - 1.1. The windows are drawn schematically as holes, with no frames, no indication of how or whether they will open and no copings, window sills, etc..
  - 1.2. Section S01 incorrectly identifies a high pitched roof to the northeast as 'Roofline of no. 8', but this conflicts with the elevations and may be misrepresenting a roof some distance up the hill.
  - 1.3. View D in drawing V03 appears to be from the garden of 4 Camden Square rather than 5 Camden Square as stated.
2. Whilst the height and volume (massing or bulk) of the lower two storeys of this proposal relate to adjacent properties, the third storey does not.
  - 2.1. Despite being somewhat recessed, this top third storey floor would rise prominently above all of the two-storey flat-roofed properties in this terrace.

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- 2.2. While the application claims that the top floor would not be visible at street level opposite, it would be prominent from Murray Street/the southern part of Camden Square, particularly in the open view up the rear gardens of Camden Square. (See attached photo in Appendix 1). This would cause significant harm and visual intrusion.
3. As it stands, a three storey house would not reinforce the varied rhythm of the Mews. However, a flat-roofed two-storey house here would beneficially combine the two adjacent terraces into one with a gradually stepping roofline. The additional storey would abruptly interfere with that consistency for no apparent urban design reason
4. The choice of materials has no significant impact on the conservation area
  - 4.1. The proposal shows a restrained palette of materials (larch cladding and grey window frames), above the retained brick street wall.
5. The durability of the proposed materials is mixed.
  - 5.1. The choice of larch for all timber clad sections of the house means that the parts exposed to sunlight would turn silvery grey relatively quickly,
  - 5.2. Large parts of the development that are mainly in the shade are more likely to turn dark and would be prone to the growth of algae.
6. With the dearth of information in the supporting documents, it is difficult to judge whether the overall style of the development would have a positive impact on the Conservation Area. Given this "minimalist" approach of the design, much will depend on the level of detailing
7. The proposal would have a negative impact on the privacy of neighbouring buildings
  - 7.1. Although 3 Camden Square is currently in the same ownership as the proposed house, it cannot be assumed that this will always be the case.
  - 7.2. The rear-facing windows and terraces would harm the privacy of the Camden Square house and its garden, as well as causing light pollution.
  - 7.3. It appears that even if planting were installed and maintained as intended, people standing on the rear terraces would also overlook the back gardens of adjacent Camden Square houses.
  - 7.4. Direct views from rear-facing windows and roof terraces into private rear gardens of the houses in the main streets cannot be justified. They seriously compromise their neighbours' privacy and enjoyment of their gardens.
8. Apart from their impact on privacy, a three-storey building would harmfully overshadow the buildings on the opposite (NW) side of the narrow Mews, potentially exacerbated by large shrubs on the roof terraces.

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9. There is an issue with noise and light pollution
  - 9.1. Light and noise from rear windows which may be openable would potentially intrude on the properties in Camden Square.
10. The application states that the current car parking space would be lost. We would assume that Camden would not permit on-street parking if a future application were made for this.
11. The complexity of many aspects of this proposal gives rise to concern. Principal among these is the dependence on upper level planting for much of the aesthetic effect and screening.
  - 11.1. Numerous planted areas – particularly at first floor level – have little or no access for maintenance.
  - 11.2. Much of the top floor planting appears to show deep planters, and, to the rear, very broad ones. These would allow for the large shrubs shown, but would require significant structural support and raise the issue of safe access for maintenance since little or no up-stand above the soil surface appears to be shown.
12. We do not believe that the proposal will enhance the conservation area and therefore strongly oppose this application.
  - 12.1. For its context, the height of the development is excessive and the potential loss of privacy and overshadowing is significant
  - 12.2. Moreover, the lack of detail to the facades would allow a wide range of construction options, which could either be supportive or harmful to the Conservation Area.
  - 12.3. Although the proposal has many sensitively considered aspects and puts particular emphasis on planting to shield views and soften the design, we see some of the planting as a pleasant but inessential attempt to make contentious aspects of the application more palatable, since some areas of planting are important in screening unwanted views.
  - 12.4. Some of the planted areas would be very difficult to maintain and there is no assurance that the planting would be maintained throughout the life of the building.
13. We also note that the architects have compiled a list of what they describe as 2.5 storey buildings in Camden Mews.
  - 13.1. Although some of these houses are truly 2.5 storeys high, with split levels and construction extending into pitched roofs, others have a third storey added to a greater or lesser extent. It is essential to note that many of them, such as the 14-26 Camden Mews group following up the slope, were constructed before Conservation Area status was established in October 1974. The need to limit the further rise of the small-scale mews

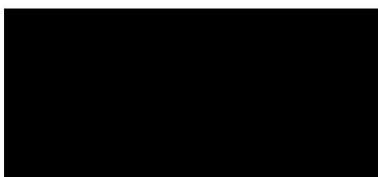
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was one of the very reasons that Camden Mews was included in the Conservation Area.

- 13.2. The presence of significant third storeys in later houses highlights the need to respect the adopted Management Statement for the Camden Square Conservation Area in considering applications for three-storey buildings in Camden Mews. Section 7.4 entitled 'New Development' states:

*The trend to intensify residential development means that building heights are under pressure to increase in the mews; care will be needed to ensure that this does not become the norm and that the original mews' scale remains dominant.*

14. Proposals which have been given planning permission on the basis of precedent which may have pre-dated or ignored this stipulation must not be allowed to set a new standard of predominantly three-storey buildings in Camden Mews.
15. These concerns have been raised by the Camden Mews Strategy Group which was recently established by residents of Camden Mews to secure its future and ensure that future developments are sensitive to both the character of the Mews and its environment. In their draft report, a unifying concern is the very justifiable fear that the unrestrained and ill conceived introduction of three storey buildings and their concomitant excessive bulk will be harmful to the character of the Mews and create a canyon like environment – a view with which we would concur.



**Signed:**  
David Blagbrough  
Chair  
Camden Square CAAC

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### Appendix 1



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