

CRASH

Combined Residents' Associations of South Hampstead
48 Canfield Gardens
London NW6 3EB

Shane O'Donnell
Development and Regeneration Management
London Borough of Camden
Town Hall
Judd Street
London WC1 8ND

18th March, 2016

Dear Mr O'Donnell,

Planning Applications 2016/0421/P & 2016/0931/P
109 Goldhurst Terrace NW6 3HA

The Combined Residents' Associations of South Hampstead has very grave misgivings about the two planning applications shown above and wishes to put on record its strong objection to both proposals.

Immediate neighbours have, within the last twelve months, had to contend with four troublesome planning applications in connection with the proposed extensive alterations, additions and excavations to the building on this site. The first, 2915/4481/P, registered on 18th August 2015, for the "excavation of a basement to create a dental practice and ancillary habitable accommodation" was subsequently withdrawn, leaving a second application 2015/4386/P for the erection of a roof extension. Much to the dismay and concern of CRASH and the many local residents who objected, this last mentioned application was approved by Camden in December 2015 – this despite the fact that the application had to be made part retrospective since work removing the roof and some of the ground floor had been commenced illegally without planning permission. This infringement was brought to Camden's attention in August of last year, since when all work has stopped and neighbours have, for the last seven months, had to endure the unsightliness, noise and inconvenience of a partly demolished building still covered in wind-blown plastic sheeting and scaffolding.

That unfortunate approval currently permits the developer an increase in roof height as well as increased bulk due to the proposed mansard construction.

Yet despite this he is now applying, with application 2016/0931/P, to further increase the roof height and add additional dormer windows as part of more extensive proposals for refurbishment. CRASH questions why it was not possible for the applicant to have determined on these amendments before registering his original application, and why it is now necessary to make these further excessive demands. The application history of this developer, Mr Shyam Shah, leads us to suspect that, having succeeded with his original proposal, he believes he can now continue to "tinker" with such construction changes, in the expectation that he will be permitted additions and alterations which would not be allowed were they submitted as one application for all of the extensive works he proposes for the site.

Our scepticism about Mr Shah's motives is confirmed by the new basement excavation application, 2016/0421/P, which now claims to be an "excavation of basement for residential use." Interestingly the application no longer explicitly makes mention of the proposed dental surgery but instead hides away all reference to it along with its own separate entrance, in one brief reference within the 46-page text of the application's Basement Impact Assessment.

CRASH expressed serious objections to the scale and proportion of the original planned roof alterations which, unfortunately, Camden, in its wisdom, went on to approve. Our objections are now compounded by these additional alterations of increased roof height and additional dormer windows, all of which will substantially increase the overall bulk and impose a totally out of character Georgian-style building, on a conservation area of Victorian and Edwardian buildings where mansard roofs are not an established roof form. In addition it will seriously overlook neighbouring properties and inflict the overwhelming sight of an ugly, high, blank wall on the residents of houses in Fairfax Place thereby robbing them of light. It should be noted that Section 7.16 of the South Hampstead Character Appraisal and Management Strategy states that *"alterations should not result in increased visual bulk to the roof nor should they draw more attention."*

The Basement Impact Assessment prepared by Chelmer Consultancy Services on behalf of Mr Shah poses more questions than it answers. It consistently recommends that further investigation be carried out so as to resolve a number of major issues of concern such as groundwater, underground streams and local rail tunnels and the quality of the "made ground", finally advising that *"appropriate allowances be made for the eventual basement design."* Many of the conclusions and assessments contained in the BIA give CRASH cause for real concern as to the suitability of the site for any such basement excavation. Local residents will have understandable reasons for alarm about the possible resultant damage to their own properties – many of which lie within a mere 5 metres of the proposed works – when they read Chelmer Consultancy's statement that there is the possibility of *"Loss of support to the ground beneath 10d Fairhazel Gardens if basement excavations are inadequately supported"* and that there could be *"Possible long term differential movement."* Additionally they state

that "*Weathered in-situ London Clay... will undergo heave movement in response to unloading by the basement excavation*"

Furthermore, on a site known to be in an area at risk of flooding it is little comfort to learn that "*On sites such as this, where extremely high plasticity clays are present close to the surface, the groundwater may rise to ground levels unless mitigation measures such as land drainage is installed*" or that "*Trial pits dug show serious discrepancies in the perched water and groundwater seepage recorded.*" None of this makes mention of the likely effect of groundwater flows being redirected, as a result of the proposed tanked-out, waterproofed basement, into the gardens and homes of neighbouring properties!

Chelmer's BIA states that "*Ground movement is inevitable when basements are constructed*" and that "*it is considered essential that the contractor employed for these works should have completed similar schemes successfully.*" The BIA continues "*careful pre-selection of the contractors who will be invited to tender for these works is recommended*" and warns that "*London Clay is usually fissured; such fissures can cause seemingly strong, stable excavations to collapse with little or no warning.*"

Sadly, none of these disturbing statements come as any surprise to CRASH. We have almost daily reports of the damage caused by the continual digging out of basements in South Hampstead. Advice, such as Chelmer's, that only reputable builders should be employed on basement excavations, is all too often totally ignored - with often disastrous consequences for innocent neighbours. There is no indication in the above mentioned applications of the developer's intention to follow that advice, of any consideration of the well-being of neighbours or of an attempt to mitigate any likely damage to their properties. CRASH believes that the developer's management of the project at 109 Goldhurst Terrace thus far indicates only that any future basement works or further alterations to the roof allowed at the site, cannot fail but to have a serious and deleterious impact on the lives of people living nearby.

CRASH respectfully asks you to refuse permission for these two applications.

Yours truly,



Peter Symonds
Chair

The Combined Residents' Associations of South Hampstead