



Dear Zenab, Neil and Antonia

I am grateful for the presentation at the above forum which was intended to give us an early opportunity to influence the scheme. I responded with some detailed observations to the planning consultants Maddox Associates acting for the developers.

I am still awaiting their advice on the programme for bringing the scheme forward. I trust this will include a more conventional pre app presentation with drawings on display for a more informed process.

In the meantime in accordance with the intentions of the forum I will be grateful if your team will take on board the attached comments in regards to design.

Local groups will clearly wish the proposed school with an 420 pupil intake to be capable of full justification from traffic and amenity viewpoints. This in itself is extremely challenging in the light of Camden's well founded existing and emerging policies regarding further schools in Hampstead relating to the traffic and environmental pressures. I understand the school proposal is much greater in terms of intake than had been envisaged and far greater than the original requirement of Abacus, and local expectation.

Notwithstanding the ongoing and fundamental use issues, it is felt that any design should be of a high architectural standard in the context of a listed building and conservation area, and that the developers should not seek to justify substandard design where 'harm' is regarded as balanced by perceived benefit. As planning officers you are the custodians of the built environment and will wish to ensure the appropriate quality of design, not least because any drop in standards will be used as a precedent by other developers.

In regards to architectural matters to be taken on board as the design is developed I make the following comments:

Entrance

The site should be accessed from the existing main entrance where disabled access can be readily incorporated with sensitive design (see English Heritage publication on the subject). This would probably involve highway's cooperation with the granting of licence over a very small area of pavement to extend a couple of steps.

I am happy to submit concept sketches should the developers claim this is not possible.

The reasoning for retaining the primary entry for the new use follows fundamental planning logic that I trust you will support.

1. Suitable congregating area for parents and children in the wide pavement forecourt area (protected with railings if necessary at the pavements edge).
2. High level of amenity pressure on residential occupants immediately adjacent to the Downshire Hill rear entrance where large congregations of parents and pupils cannot be so readily accommodated .

There are a series of additional considerations but the above reasons are primary.

The internal configuration of the building can readily accommodate this entry point. (again I can demonstrate this with a sketch proposal if this is contended by the developers) Rear Extension
The replacement of the existing rear extension subject to a high quality proposal is sensible.

As planning officers you have I understand appropriately agreed a 2.5 storey height massing which I believe will be below the existing cornice line of the host building thus respecting its features.

The introduction at apparently a late stage ,almost as an afterthought ,a further 1.5 storey playground structure completely confounds your height stipulation and I think should be unacceptable to you on aesthetic and listed building grounds alone notwithstanding other ramifications.

If a playground has to be incorporated at high level the structure should be part of an integrated design within the 2.5 storey limit and the quality of acoustic and visual screening has to be thoroughly verified to protect the amenity of residential neighbours.

An example of a high quality integrated school and play facility design is the award winning Hampden Gurney School In W1. That scheme demonstrates a quality of design concept and detailed execution to suit its specific circumstances in a location less sensitive than this site.

Architectural Principles Regarding New Wing.

A cleanly defined concept of the new mass in relation to the original host building (without unseemly accretions)should most easily be achieved with a separating glazed atrium structure. At present there is an untidy clutter and a clash of structures the result of pragmatic decisions made while forcing in the requirements of a detailed brief.

The structure should not be closer to the boundary with the retained house than the existing in order to protect the amenity of the retained residential building. A substantial flank wall on the boundary should be regarded as unacceptable from first principles.

The clash of structure adjacent to the flank chimney on the host building visible from Rosslyn Hill is not sensitive or appropriate design and would be avoided as a consequence.

Substation

The siting of the structure is completely insensitive to the amenity of the residential building at No 52 and should be completely unacceptable to you on first principles.

Presumably this was a late introduction to the proposals and not something you have yet scrutinized or that the design team have had time to adequately consider.

Elevational Treatment

The need for the new wing to be expressed without pastiche can be achieved via the quality contemporary detailed design and should not be emphasised by inappropriate use of contrasting bricks. It is recommended that the whole complex is united with a matching palette of colours.

I trust the above design matters can all be addressed in the continuing process and we will be given the further opportunity to comment.

Now the local community has been made aware of the scale and detail of these proposals there is likely to be coordinated representations in regards to all the key matters related to this potential scheme.

As an architect and local resident I look forward to your full professional scrutiny of, and appropriate influence on the ongoing design development , to ensure an appropriately scaled scheme of high quality design.

Regards

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