

Mr Ian Gracie  
London Borough of Camden  
5 Pancras Square  
London N1C 4AG

**RE: 2016/0758/P**  
**Response to Neighbours' Objections**

Dear Ian,

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to respond to the comments received from neighbours. While a large number of representations have been made these have tended to focus on the same issues. We aim here to respond to the main points raised.

Neighbour consultation

We have sought to work with the community in the preparation of this application. The proposal has already been substantially amended in response to early feedback from neighbours (the scheme was originally for a two storey house). We gave two weeks' notice for the Open House consultation event held in December and offered a further meeting to the Grove Terrace Mews Association (GTMA) which they declined on the grounds that there was nothing to discuss. Mrs Gladstone has indicated that she would be happy to discuss further amendments to the design in order to allay neighbours' concerns. It must be stressed that not only have the Gladstones lived in their house for over half a century but intend to remain within their community. As such maintaining good relations with their neighbours is of particular importance to them and this has informed the design development from the outset.

Heritage

It is noteworthy that many of the objectors make strong claims that the proposal would destroy the character of the mews but do not elaborate on this point in order to explain why this would be the case. While we respect the views of those who have troubled to comment, we feel that this objection is misplaced. The height and massing of the two components making up the house echo that of the garage buildings which line the mews. The proposed material, brick, is also a defining characteristic of the mews. We would be happy to discuss the choice of brick and would in any case expect this to be subject to a condition.

It cannot be over-emphasised that this backland area is extremely abundantly vegetated. In particular there are many large and well-established trees which screen views both towards and from Grove Terrace. A site inspection will confirm this. Views of the new house would be very limited and made more so by the adjacent garage buildings.

Many of the objections seem to be based on the false premise that conservation areas are designated in order to strictly preserve the status quo and to block development. While the designation of a conservation area aims to protect the special character of a neighbourhood this does not mean that it should be frozen in time but rather it should be allowed to adapt and evolve albeit that this should be managed so as not to jeopardise its special character.

The proposed dwelling represents a sensitive addition to the mews in contemporary architecture of the highest quality and as such would be an appropriate intervention consistent with the principle of allowing the area to evolve in a manner which would safeguard its special character. Indeed we contend that the house would have a positive impact on the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area and would in time become as much a cherished part of the townscape as the existing buildings.

Views of the proposed house from neighbouring houses or from the mews, given that it is a private road, would be private rather than public views. As such it must be emphasised that the proposal does not impact on the appearance of the public realm within the conservation area.

#### Light pollution

Around six years ago the Grove Terrace Mews Association agreed to install a security light in the mews. Mrs Gladstone was approached by the secretary of the Association requesting that this be placed on her garage. She agreed to the request and since then this light has shone brightly throughout the night. Recently someone has removed the light, but the wiring is still there to be seen. A number of residents also have security lights on their houses which flick on and off throughout the night as cats and foxes pass through the motion sensor. There is of course also light from the existing house within the backland area and the headlights of vehicles coming and going from this house and to the garages in the mews. The claim that the backland area is in darkness is therefore quite untrue.

Nevertheless if any additional light associated with the new house were to be considered problematic it would be possible through carefully designed shutters and blinds to very effectively mitigate this. These measures could be secured by condition.

#### Neighbour amenity

It has been suggested that the new house would give rise to noise and disturbance for neighbouring occupiers. As confirmed by some of the letters of objection, the mews is in constant use by neighbours driving to and from their garages. It is also used by neighbours with motorcycles as well as cyclists and pedestrians. It is further understood that children play in the mews. In short the mews is not a “forgotten space” but is in regular use. Any additional comings and goings associated with the new house are unlikely to have any

significant impact in terms of noise and disturbance. It is also noted that the residents of Grove Terrace live on a busy main road.

In terms of the impact of the building of the house is concerned, it must be stressed that at 82 square metres this would be a very small house. The disturbance associated with the building works would be commensurate with a building of this small size. It is proposed that the frame of the house would be constructed with Cross Laminated Timber (CLT) which could be erected very quickly. The duration of the entire build is unlikely to be any greater than the refurbishment/ extension of one of the surrounding terraced houses which are carried out regularly.

The objection submitted on behalf of the residents of 1 Grove Terrace Mews argued that the privacy of these neighbours would be compromised by the proposal. However, as a site visit will confirm, there is no question of this given that the view from this neighbouring property is entirely blocked by their own large garage, a fence and a high variegated hedge.

The objection from the owner of the adjacent garage states that “our garage has no electricity and we rely on daylight which comes in through the windows running down the sides of the garage”. Mrs Gladstone is puzzled by this claim as not only have the garage doors the benefit of windows, but electricity has been provided by the Gladstones, free of charge, for many years. The wire and junction box are clearly visible. The window which overlooks the Gladstone’s garden is almost completely obscured by a well-established fig tree.

### Parking

In proposing a car-free development the proposal is consistent with planning policy at national, regional and local levels which discourages the use of private car-borne transport. Mrs Gladstone currently has a Blue Badge for her car on account of Mr Gladstone’s severe mobility difficulties. Mr Gladstone does not have a driving licence. The eligibility criteria for obtaining a Blue Badge are very stringent and Mrs Gladstone is fully aware that should in the future she not be driving her husband she would lose the Blue Badge. In this event she would either take public transport or if still able to drive would use a car club.

### Precedent

We fully acknowledge the concerns of neighbours in respect of the setting of a precedent for similar developments. However, as set out in our supporting Planning Statement, there are a number of reasons why the application property affords substantially greater potential for development than do neighbouring properties.

There are many instances in development management in which the cumulative impact of otherwise acceptable development can be unacceptable. This is such an instance. It is clear that it would be entirely unacceptable for all of the garages in the mews to be redeveloped as houses as this would very substantially change the character of the mews and backland area. Accordingly, for the local planning authority to allow one house in the mews does not in any way place an obligation on them to grant planning consent for any further houses. To refuse further applications on the grounds of cumulative impact is a perfectly legitimate

approach, which is commonplace within development management. It must be stressed that no further houses could be built in the mews without express planning permission being granted.

As well as affording greater potential for development than most neighbouring properties, it is felt that the application site is the most appropriate site for a new house within the mews on account of being close to the entrance to the mews with associated ease of access. It would also provide visual interest when looking down the mews lane from Grove Terrace as well as natural surveillance which would deter burglars and others wishing to engage in antisocial behaviour.

### Trees

The neighbours at 15 Boscastle Road have raised concerns about the impact of the boundary wall on the roots of their Bramley apple tree. This could easily be dealt with by cantilevering the wall over the root protection area.

Some objectors pointed out that the house would be built close to the large London plane tree adjacent to 1 Grove Terrace Mews. It is noted that there are four garages in very close proximity to this tree, one of which has recently been rebuilt. We would be happy for the details of the foundation design of the house to be secured by condition to ensure that the tree roots were not disturbed. Any excavations could be carried out by air spade. It should be noted that the part of the site closest to the tree would not be built upon, as it is at present, but would form an open courtyard.

### Concluding remarks

It is clear that Mrs Gladstone's neighbours are passionate in their opposition to her proposal. Indeed it is notable that some of the most passionate objections have been received from those least affected. We trust that this application will be considered rationally on its planning merits and that the campaign of opposition will not unfairly bias the decision.

Kind regards,



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