109 Gloucester Avenue
Primrose Hill
NW1 8LB

23 April 2016

Dear neighbour,

Re Refurbishment of 109 Gloucester Avenue

Earlier this week we finalised and submitted a planning application with Camden Council for alterations connected to the refurbishment of our home, 109 Gloucester Avenue. In a few weeks Camden will send local residents a notice about these planning proposals. We thought it would be helpful for you to find about these as much in advance as possible.

**Background**

Dana and I bought 109 Gloucester Avenue in the November 2004, eleven years and what seems like a lifetime ago. We were engaged to be married in the March of the following year. We bought a 5 bedroom house that we could hardly afford to give us space to have a family as opposed to the two separate flats that we were living in at the time.

I carried Dana across the threshold of 109 Gloucester Avenue when we returned from honeymoon in April 2005 and it was to 109 Gloucester Avenue that we returned from hospital with each of our new born babies in September 2005, July 2008 and June 2010. Our “captive breeding programme” is complete. Our three children are growing up fast (10, 7 and 5 years old), and need more space as their interests and hobbies multiply, as does all the equipment and paraphernalia that come with them.

The demands of two careers and three pregnancies meant that we deferred making the changes to the house that we had planned when we first bought it. We have had the house externally repainted once and redecorated some rooms. However the passage of time means that we now have to deal with the “need-to-do” projects rather than continue to postpone the “nice-to-do” projects. The felt on the roof has passed the end of its useful life and has started to leak, some window frames are rotting, the façade is suffering from water damage etc. Beyond an external restoration, many internal fixtures and fittings are failing and in urgent need of replacement. The central heating system has long since stopped working effectively, one of the showers leaks, the water pressure on the top floor is miserable, the kitchen has seen better days etc.

In short, we need to renovate the whole property. Whilst undertaking such major work, it makes sense to change some things about the house that would give us more space and better suit the changing needs of our family. These are the alterations that you might like to know about.

**Ground floor terrace at rear of the property**

We would like to glaze our ground floor terrace at the rear of the property. This is the space immediately above our kitchen on the lower ground floor. This is intended to be a music room – we have two pianists, a clarinettist and a cellist and the volume of instruments and music is fast exceeding our scope to store them.

**Vaults on lower ground floor at the front of the property**

We would like to excavate the vaults on the lower ground floor at the front of the property. The additional space this would create is intended to be a utility space for boiler, hot water tank and downstairs toilet. The wisdom of having the boiler and hot water tank on the second floor directly above the master bedroom has been comprehensively disproved by two catastrophic leaks. At the moment our downstairs toilet is immediately adjacent to our dining area which is inconvenient and uncomfortable for our guests. Similar work has been undertaken on several other properties in the terrace (Nos 81, 91, 99, 101 etc.). The excavation is largely by hand, which means it is quiet, but rather slow.

**Front garden**

We would like to make the front garden a little more presentable. This will mean removing the overgrown privet hedge and replacing it with less massive shrubbery in a permanent planter forming a front wall, and installing a gate at the entrance. Behind it we would also like to build a timber store that would be a more attractive place to keep bicycles and rubbish bins.

**What this means for you**

Inevitably the renovation will cause noise, dust and inconvenience. For this we are sorry. We have lived through these as neighbours ourselves, and we are determined to try to minimise them for you. We will have a hoarding erected at ground floor level to keep as much noise and dust on site as possible. This will be attractively painted and well secured. We will insist on work being carried out only in normal working hours – never before 8am and never after 6pm.

We will have to move out of the house during the renovation but we plan to rent alternative accommodation in the neighbourhood (our children attend schools in Belsize Park and Hampstead) and to be onsite frequently to monitor progress. We will always be available to address any concerns or issues you might have about the renovation process. All the usual protections will be place – we will instruct party wall surveyors to ensure that any damage to your property caused directly by the renovation of ours will recorded and be paid for.

We have attached our planning submission in A4 format. If you would like to see the plans with greater resolution we can provide this to you, either electronically or printed out in A3 format. You’re welcome to direct any queries to our architect, Aaron Fletcher at MANICA. Some issues about construction processes and timetables we don’t have answers to yet – we have not put any construction projects out to tender yet, it will only be when we have contractors appointed that we will have answers to some of the big questions that you might have (expected start, duration etc.).

We are looking forward to 109 Gloucester Avenue being a more attractive building, inside and out, and one that won’t need any major work doing to it for at least another decade, and hopefully not until after our children have grown-up.

Camden will seek your comments as part of the planning application. We appreciate that works of this kind can be inconvenient, but we hope we will have your support for proposals for which there are many precedents amongst houses along the terrace, and which are driven by the needs of a growing family rather than a property developer seeking short-term commercial gain.

Yours sincerely,

Nathan Cockrell and Dana Haimoff