

Director of Culture and Environment  
Development Control  
Planning Services  
Culture and Environment Directorate  
London Borough of Camden  
Town Hall Extension  
Argyle Street  
London WC1H 8ND

26<sup>th</sup> May 2010

Ref: 18763/4/PH

Dear Sirs,

## 22 Frognal – Retention of Existing Brickwork

I am a Structural Engineer with over 28 years practical experience of working on buildings and structures of varying size and complexity. My practice and team have been appointed to design the structural alterations to the existing house at 22 Frognal including the design of a new basement structure under and beyond the footprint of the house. We have developed a detailed solution for the permanent structure and also developed a strategy for temporary support work. Nonetheless I have grave misgivings about the logic of the solution we have developed for the permanent and temporary works. My concerns focus on two issues:

1. A great deal of effort has gone into solving the support issues but is this effort justified in terms of the quality and extent of structure being retained?
2. Does the proposed work introduce too many areas for risk with regard to health & safety?

*Quality of above ground level brickwork* - The original visible elements of brickwork are built using hand-made Stocks laid in a mix of flemish bond with snapped headers or stretcher bond backup up by solid concrete blockwork. The presence and adequacy of any cavity ties has not yet been checked and may be suspect considering the age of the house and the relative poor quality of other elements. In addition there are some doubts about the long-term frost resistance of these bricks. There is nothing particularly special or unique about this brickwork with detailing such as lintels and cills being very plain. The existing window and door openings break up the brickwork into discreet panels. Some windows are rather large and in fact leave very little brickwork in a typical panel.

*Quality of below ground level brickwork* - The recent excavations have revealed that the existing footings are at a substantial depth. In fact there is considerably more brickwork within this



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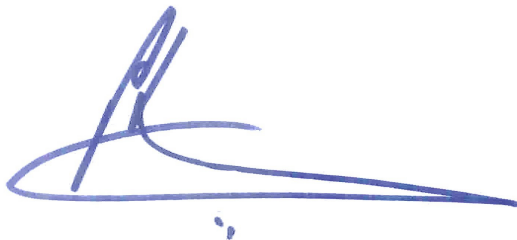


building buried below existing garden level than above it. This brickwork is of very poor quality throughout. It has been built using a fairly random mix of Stocks and Flettons without consideration of its appearance. There are numerous examples of straight joints, poor pointing and misalignment. None of this brickwork appears to be suited to below ground use. It is heavily saturated and when exposed it effloresces quite badly as the moisture is drawn to the surface. The level of saturation must also put in doubt the quality of the mortar and overall strength of the brickwork.

*Current Proposal* - Due to its appalling condition it is not proposed to keep any of the brickwork currently buried below garden level. There is no practical solution to rehabilitating this brickwork to an acceptable standard. Its removal means that the exposed brickwork above ground level has to be propped at a level considerably higher the general depth of basement excavation. A solution has been developed to do this but it does introduce a substantial risk to Health & Safety for those doing the excavation and subsequent reconstruction. The build process will need to be done slowly with great care aimed at avoiding a structural failure. This care and effort will go into supporting modest amounts of brickwork above ground level which by any reasonable assessment must be considered very ordinary in terms of quality and value. The question then has to be asked with regard to whether this care and effort is misplaced. The quality of retained structure must be balanced against the risk & costs involved in temporarily supporting it.

It is my considered view that the retained brickwork does not have sufficient quality to justify temporary support. My conclusion is that for practical and health & safety reasons it would be highly desirable to demolish the relatively modest and poor quality superstructure of the existing house and rebuild it to modern standards of construction after the new basement has been constructed.

Yours sincerely,  
for Price & Myers

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Phil Hudson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Phil Hudson  
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