

Dear Sir

Planning Application 2016/4487/P 29 Leighton Road NW5

This application to make very substantial additions to a small, ancient house is misleading in a number of ways and deficient in essential information.

No.29 Leighton Road is not 'late-Victorian' as is stated. It is one of a terrace of Georgian houses built 1828, well before Victoria came to the throne, which constitute some of the oldest buildings in Kentish Town. This terrace is an unusually well-preserved entity, in the heart of a Conservation Area, and is regarded by English heritage as being 'of special interest'. No.27 (joined to 29) is Listed grade 2 inside and out, and so is number 37 at the other end of the terrace.

None of the houses has ever had a mansarded upper storey, and such an addition to one house would be totally objectionable on heritage and conservation grounds. The addition proposed by the applicant would, in effect, be a whole third storey on the main house and would, I suspect, be far more obtrusive than it is made to appear on the architect's fanciful drawing. The claim that other houses in Leighton Road have mansards appearing above their parapet walls has no merit. Leighton Road is a long one, built at various stages through the 19<sup>th</sup> century; some of the later Victorian houses were designed with dormers above their parapet walls. In any case the photograph of houses with mansards supplied in the application has been taken far up the road, out of the Conservation Area.

The plans as presented, while they have an appearance of clarity, are in practice remarkably deficient in actual measurements. They also do not show how the proposed new back to the house would relate visually, and even architecturally, to the backs of the adjacent properties. There are, for instance, several somewhat grandiose views of how the proposed new glass-roof area might look internally, but no picture or plan of how it would sit in relation to the overall site or to the rest of the proposals.

It is not even clear exactly where the rear of the rebuilt tall back-addition would be located. It *might* be where it stands at present (with the original wash-house back-extra removed) but conjectural comparison of one plan with another suggested that it is probably intended to be pushed further out to align with the end of the flank wall of no. 27. This would involve a total rebuild, from the foundations up, of the back of the house, which would potentially jeopardise the stability of both adjoining houses, might well compromise the sunlight reaching the garden of No.27 and would certainly have that effect on the garden of No.31.

While it is understandable that the applicant should wish to extend over the present back-yard, with a glass roof to permit continuing light to the existing ground floor rooms of the house, what is planned is something far more extensive with an extra room balanced awkwardly at first-floor level alongside the glass roof. The intention overall seems to be to cram as many living units as possible into a small house without regard for architectural coherence. I should add that for the last dozen or

so years the house has not been `a family home` as is incorrectly stated in the application, but has been rented out to a series of up to five lodgers at a time on short-term leases.

The plans are so defective that you would not understand from them that house No.31, on the east side, even exists. It does, of course; it is owned by the Council, ie yourselves, and is occupied by very long-term, careful tenants. Yet the plan, as drawn, even seems to suggest that the side wall of No.29 would in some measure be extended into the yard-space of 31.

Where No.27, on the west side, is concerned, the proposed application would be a party-wall matter. The building works would therefore, of course, be required to be monitored by an independent surveyor, approved by us, the occupants of 27, but paid for by the applicant, a Mr Vas Demasthenas.

At rare intervals over the years, my wife and I have encountered Mr Demasthenas.

On one occasion he remarked to one of us that he “did not believe in involving the Council in things”. In neighbourly conversations with his succession of unfortunate tenants, we have inevitably learnt what difficulties they have had in getting him to do repairs, and how badly the work has been done when it has finally been undertaken. It is our own observation that both the main roof and the back roofs were left inadequately mended, or simply unmended for many years. At one time an abandoned shovel and a bag of cement were left dangerously on top of a chimney stack for many months, and at another time the main back roof was simply covered in the sort of material that is normally used for garden sheds.

We are also aware that a new and quite out of keeping front path was recently installed in no 29, without any regard for the Conservation Area and without, to the best of my knowledge and belief, any planning permission.

As you will realise from the forgoing, we have grave and realistic doubts as to whether, if permission is given for *any* sort of works, this work will be carried out a) according to agreed plans, and b) by competent workmen.

Yours faithfully