

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Consultees Addr:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2016/5647/L	Matthew Middleweek	45 Parliament Hill Mansions Lissenden Gardens London NW5 1NA	16/11/2016 22:34:47	OBJ	<p>I write to object to this planning application, described as being for reinstatement of a defective stone balcony and associated work, which has been submitted by Camden Council as the freeholder of 50 Albert Street. I am the leaseholder of 50B Albert Street.</p> <p>The planning application has been made on the basis of a wholly flawed assessment of the condition of the balcony. It is not defective. There are two longstanding cracks in the balcony that go from front to back, but this leaves each section of the balcony effectively cantilevered, and I am advised that these cracks could even have been there since the house was first built. I have a report from a structural engineer who advises that as there is no separation gap between the balcony surface and the front wall, there is no cause for concern about the structural integrity of the balcony. The structural engineer is not merely neutral on this point, but advises leaving the balcony well alone (apart from possibly filling the cracks), as replacing the balcony unnecessarily is to interfere unnecessarily with the fabric of the building. The upper front wall of the house is built on top of the balcony and removing and replacing the balcony is a complicated procedure which carries a significant risk of damage.</p> <p>I have asked stone repair consultants to look at the balcony and quote for repairs to the cracks. They have universally agreed with my structural engineer, one pointing out that there is also no sign of movement where the balustrade fixes to the wall, which is another sign that the balcony is not subject to movement and is certainly not in need of replacement.</p> <p>Camden put up scaffolding to prop the balcony on an "emergency" basis in August 2014, a full four months after receiving a report from their contractor that the balcony was dangerous. This contractor never came in to the property to properly inspect the balcony. His report showed two low quality photographs of the underside of the balcony, a few lines of handwriting, and a tick in the "dangerous" box. The propping has been up now for over two and a quarter years, blighting the property and the street.</p> <p>The Design, Access and Heritage Statement relies on the report of a "stone consultant". I attended his inspection. He is not an independent surveyor, nor a structural engineer, but the stonemason who Camden's repairs team wanted to do the replacement work. He was effectively pitching for the job when he conducted his inspection. His assessment is clearly biased. Just to deal directly with a couple of the points in the statement:</p> <p>3.4.3 - "As will be noted from the image below, there are at least four large front-to-rear cracks". The image shows three cracks and the central one is the join between the two balcony slabs. The description is incorrect.</p> <p>3.4.4 - "Another point the stone specialist made is that the stonework to the balcony is extensively weathered, so some of the original depth of stone has crumbled away through the course of time, making it less structurally effective than when it was installed. We note that the existing balcony would have been 89mm thick, so the reduction in thickness through weathering would be significant." The edges of the balcony are still almost square, and the balcony has not moved so it cannot have lost any thickness where it meets the wall. The paint has peeled away from the underside from water going</p>

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through the cracks, and that is essentially all.

I am dismayed that Camden have gone to the expense of producing this planning application which is for unnecessary and potentially damaging interference to the fabric of the building. I would like to speak about this at committee.
