



The Heath & Hampstead Society

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The Society examines all Planning Applications relating to Hampstead, and assesses them for their impact on conservation and on the local environment.

To London Borough of Camden, Development Control Team

Planning Ref: 2014/6845/P

Address: Royal Free Hospital, Pond Street NW3

Description: New Institute of Immunology (pears Building) 3RD COMMENT

Case Officer: Charles Thuaire

Date 22 November 2016

Our previous comments on this development were dated 24 November 2014 and 16 January 2016.

The basis of our 2nd comment on 16 January 2016 (i.e. 9 months ago) was the continued absence of an acceptable Basement Impact Assessment. This is still the case. It has been 2 years since the original application was submitted, and this essential prerequisite to an effective construction start has still not been produced. This in itself is remarkable, and a reflection of the essential need for this to be settled BEFORE a Planning Permission is granted. (see our previous comments)

The current situation is now made worse by the evidence produced by the adjoining site owners, St Stephens Church and its associated school, of cracks and similar defects caused by ground movement, some of a serious nature. You will have received reports on these from their appointed specialist engineer Dr Michael De Freitas. He has not only conducted detailed site surveys of the damage, but also inspected the extensive report commissioned by the Hospital from Johnston Consulting and Civil Construction Engineers. You will also have seen this.

Some, if not all, of the damage, both to the Grade 1 Listed Church St Stephens and to the associated school buildings, has been caused by demolition work carried out, we presume on behalf of the Hospital and the Pears Trust, of the heavy concrete structure of the linear accelerator installation. We enquire: under what Planning permission was this demolition work undertaken? It plainly has not been effectively supervised, in view of the on-going damage.

We also understand that consultations have recently taken place between the Hospital's contractors BDP, their engineers Stevenson Davenport Structures & Alan Baxter Ltd, Dr De Freitas and the owner of the Church building and school Mr Michael Taylor. Our information is that these discussions have ended without satisfactory conclusion, and that the views of your own independent consulting practice LBH Wembley were in effect agreed; that is : "...new evidence heightens the uncertainty...and the submitted design proposals do not demonstrate adequate safeguards"

Thus a most hazardous situation has developed, arising primarily because the Hospital's engineering consultants did not take the potential problems seriously. They did not explore the history of ground settlement, ground movement and underground water flows down the hill towards the hospital site adequately, and took the view that if problems arose, they could be dealt with by conventional methods.

After 2 years, they are discovering that this was not good enough, and that further specialist engineering design work is required, causing even further delay.

We don't like saying it, but; we told you so.

If the extent of the problems had been discovered initially BEFORE Planning Permission was granted, then a solution would have been found with much more urgency, and much of the delay and acrimony avoided.

Meanwhile it is even more important that you stand firm and refuse to agree to accept that the S106 terms have yet been satisfied (see our comments of 16 January 2016). We hope that you and your advisors will scrutinise the new designs when they are presented with a meticulously critical eye, and perhaps open up channels of communication with Dr De Freitas, who is the acknowledged expert in the field.

The safety of the Grade 1 listed building St Stephens must not be compromised.