

Comments on Planning Submission 2016/6369/P

1. CLAIMED ENHANCEMENT VALUE OF THE WORKS TO THE EXISTING BUILDING

The lengthy Heritage, Design and Access Statement and drawings supporting this application give considerable emphasis to proposed improvements to the existing nineteenth and twentieth century listed building. Much is made by the applicants of the 'enhancement value' of the proposed improvement works. There appears to be no evidence, however, that the applicants have entered into a formal agreement with their neighbours to undertake the 'enhancement' works to their properties or statement about who would pay for them. Certificate B at the end of the application form simply states that the Pawlyns have served formal notice on the owners of Flats 1-5 of their intention to apply for consent for the proposed works.

The issue, therefore, is whether Camden Council can *require* these works to be completed as a *condition* of either a planning or listed building consent for Flat 6, where the work is outside the curtilage of Flat 6. The applications for both planning permission and listed building consent are submitted in the names of Mr & Mrs Pawlyn, who state that they are the owners of *only* Flat 6 (second floor) of Grove End House. Some elements of the works proposed relate to properties in Grove End House other than Flat 6, i.e. -"*Remove pipework and vents on front elevation and repair brickwork. Repair fanlight. Replace door surround with reinstated porch and new railings on front steps.... Install new central windows at first ... floor with enhanced glazing bar elevation (glazing bar profiles to match existing...Cover existing cement render [to south gable] with rendered insulation (to match white stucco finish on front cornice).*"

Even as the owners of Flat 6, the applicants may not be entitled to make changes to the external fabric of the building without the consent of the feeholder(s). There is, therefore, a real risk that the enhancement work to the existing building may not be deliverable. If this were to prove to be the case, the enticements that are being offered to Camden to grant planning permission for an additional floor of accommodation cannot be guaranteed to provide any public benefit. Should the Council not, therefore, determine the applications for the works to Flat 6 solely on their own merit, discounting as a material consideration the promised enhancement value to other properties?

2. THE PROPOSED NEW EXTENSION

The applicants have tried to ensure that the proposed new attic extension would not easily be seen from the surrounding streets if it were executed (although as they demonstrate, it would be visible from several places). They have tried to achieve this by setting the proposed additional floor back from the front of the building. The consequence of this, however, is that the new floor would be more visible from the properties behind Grove End House and from Chetwynd Road. The houses and gardens behind both Cumberland and Lynton Villa and Grove End House are already very overshadowed and overlooked and the creation of an additional floor on top of Grove End House would only make them more so. The applicants have produced a CGI of the view of the proposed additional floor from the south facing terrace of our house, First House Dartmouth Park Road. Not only would their proposed kitchen/dining room look straight into our living room, it would also cut off a considerable amount of sky from our view as the marked photo in Figure 1 shows.



Figure 1 Photographs showing, above, the view of the rear of Grove End House from the terrace of First House Dartmouth Park Road with, below, the same view with the area of sky that would be cut off by the proposed development marked up.

The applicants state that *“the main item of new work is an attic storey that is inspired by the original forms of the roofs and the work of Sir John Soane”*. However elevated the inspiration and the intention, at the end of the day the result can only be judged on the evidence of the end result. The view of the proposed attic storey in Figure 2 clearly shows that it would not enhance the listed Grove End House. The design of the proposed new extension is in a style wholly unrelated to the classical regency style of the existing building, both visually and in terms of its construction technology. With

its dark grey finishes and curving forms it would provide a dramatic and incongruous contrast to the existing building.



Figure 2. View of the rear of Grove End House as proposed.

The design of the attic storey is thoroughly twenty first century and looks as though it was inspired by contemporary transport design rather than the historical development of Grove End House. It looks, to us, as though the bridge of a superyacht has somehow found its way onto a roof in NW5. This is an alien looking intrusion and whatever the inspiration, the end result would not be Soane-like in its proportions or in its architectural forms and would bear no formal relationship at all to the existing building. This design cannot, therefore, be justified on contextual grounds.

It is notable that despite producing an encyclopaedic Design and Access Statement, the applicants have given very little clear three dimensional information to show the architectural design of the proposed attic extension. There is no CGI rendering of it either from above or from roof level. Given that the addition of this attic is the most significant change to the appearance of the listed building being proposed in the submission one would expect to see it better represented.

3. THE SCALE OF THE GROVE END TERRACE OF HOUSES

The applicants' claim that *"the attic storey will re-establish GEH's architectural presence alongside the neighbouring building to the north, which currently dominates GEH in terms of scale."* The applicants can't have it both ways. Having gone to such lengths to make sure that it is difficult to see the attic extension from the front, they cannot at the same time claim that it would increase the scale of the building as seen from the public realm. What is clear, however, is that viewed from the

rear, the proposed vertical elevation at second floor level, plus the proposed third floor would increase the cliff like mass of the rear of the Grove End terrace of houses. As it exists, there is a pleasing variety in the skyline, see Figure 1 above, typical of the rear of old buildings, which tend to be informal when compared to front elevations. This would be lost if this proposal were to be executed.

Any increase in the scale of Grove End House would have a further detrimental effect on the neighbouring properties. The section through Grove End House and the gardens of Chetwynd Villas below shows an area, in red, from any part of which the proposed new additions would be visible, the skyline would be raised and there would therefore be some loss of light and an increased sense on enclosure. It would be mainly the view from the gardens of 1 to 5 Chetwynd Villas that would be affected, but as can be seen from the CGI showing the view from the terrace of First House, Dartmouth Park Road, the view south from First House and its garden and from Lamorna would also be seriously affected.

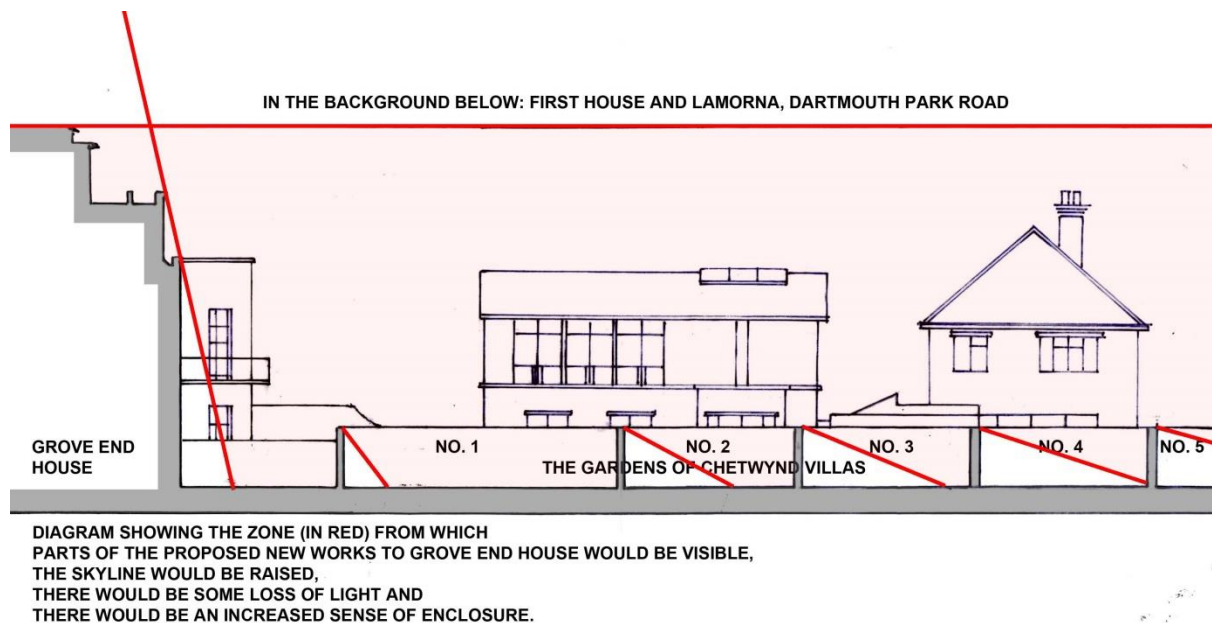


Figure 3. West East section through Grove End House and the gardens of Chetwynd Villas showing the impact of the proposed changes.

4. PROPOSAL TO REPLACE THE REAR MANSARD ROOF

The applicants claim that *“replacing the 1970s second floor rear extension will transform one of the most detrimental of the twentieth century alterations”*. They also state that *“significant improvements could be achieved by creating a set-back vertical brick wall with windows to match those on the lower levels of the rear elevation”*.

The use of a mansard roof to contain the additional rooms created at the back of Grove End House in the 1970s was an appropriate response to the host building to which this additional accommodation was added. The large bow window on the rear elevation, as the applicants

acknowledge, is a significant architectural feature of the building. In adding another floor above this bow window, the use of a mansard roof, modelled on the characteristic slate clad mansards on Georgian buildings across London, minimised the impact of the additional floor and fitted seamlessly into the character of its architectural context.

The applicants' proposal is to replace the mansard with a set-back brick façade, which would be considerably higher, and therefore more prominent, than the existing mansard slope. The photograph, in Figure 4, of the rear elevation of Grove End House before the addition of the mansard roof shows that originally the scale of buildings stepped down from Cumberland Villa to the right to Grove End House in the centre to 1 Chetwynd Villas on the left. This progression has already been modified by the addition of the second floor on Grove End House. The replacement of the existing mansard roof with a much higher vertical set-back brick façade plus an additional third floor attic would create an even more sudden change in scale between Grove End House and Chetwynd Villas.



Figure 4. Rear view from the east, Grove End House 1965

As can be seen from the photograph in Figure 5, the rear of Grove End House in its existing state is already overbearing when viewed from the gardens of Chetwynd Villas and the occupants have gone to some lengths to try to establish privacy using planting. Raising the height of the second floor elevation and adding a third floor and would significantly increase the overlooking, light pollution and overshadowing of the Chetwynd Villa gardens.



Figure 5. Rear view from the east, Grove End House, 2016.

The problem here is not the existing second floor mansard roof which is entirely appropriate architecturally. The addition of a new third floor on top of the building would be a problem, however, because as the applicants' drawings demonstrate, this would create a top heavy elevation in which the stepping back second and third floors would compete in scale with the original ground and first floors.

5. THE SOUTH ELEVATION OF GROVE END HOUSE

One of the characteristics of classical architecture is the use of parapets to hide the diagonal lines of pitched roofs in favour of a horizontal emphasis. The decision to emphasise the profile of the lost M form roof on the south elevation of Grove end House therefore seems contradictory. This proposed changes would transform an authentic piece of architectural history into something that is neither historically accurate nor a convincing recreation of a classical regency elevation.



Figure 6. South elevation of Grove End House as existing



Figure 7. Proposed View of Grove End House from Chetwynd Road.

6. PLANNING AND DESIGN GUIDANCE

The applicants quote extensively, in their Heritage, Design and Access Statement, from planning and conservation guidance in support of the approach they have taken in developing their proposals.

The quotations we have extracted below should, we suggest, be interpreted as reasons for rejecting rather than supporting the applicants' proposals when read in the context of our comments above.

Camden Unitary Development Plan,

Section B1, which states that development should:-

- *"Respect its site and setting"*

Section B3, which states that

- *"The Council will not grant planning permission for alterations and extensions that it considers cause harm to the **architectural quality of the existing building** or to the surrounding area," (our bold), and that the Council will consider whether:-*
 - a) *"the form, proportions and character of the building...are respected."*
 - f) *"the architectural integrity of the existing building is preserved,"*

Item 3.31, (see para 8.2.3 of the applicant's HDAS), which states that:-

- *"alterations and extensions should **follow the form, proportions and character** of the building to which they relate," (our bold).*

Item 3.32, (see para 8.2.4 of the applicant's HDAS), which states that:-

- *"extensions should be carefully proportioned to respect the historic form of the area, the **integrity and proportions of the original building** and the amenities of adjoining occupiers," (our bold).*

Item 3.34, (see para 8.2.5 of the applicant's HDAS), which states that:-

- *"Roof alterations and extensions, including terraces, can often have a significant effect on the appearance of the existing building and its surroundings. Special care is needed in their siting, design, size, proportions and materials, particularly in areas where roofs are plainly visible over a wide area.... Where street retain the original roofline of their buildings, it is important that these are retained in an unaltered form."*

Section B7, Item A, (see para 8.2.7 of the applicant's HDAS), **Character and Appearance**, which states that:-

- *"The Council will only grant consent for development in a conservation area that **preserves or enhances the special character and appearance of the area**," (our bold).*

Section B9, Item B, (see para 8.2.8 of the applicant's HDAS), **Important Local Views**, which states that:-

- *"The Council will not grant planning permission for development that it considers causes harm to important local views." It is noted that the proposed additions to Grove End House would be clearly visible from Chetwynd Road and to the houses behind Grove End House.*

Camden Development Policies (adopted version 2010)

Section 3. DP24, (see para 8.3.2 of the applicant's HDAS), **Securing High Quality Design**, which states:-

- *"The Council will require all developments, including alterations and extensions to buildings, to be of the highest standard of design and will expect developments to consider :*

- a) *Character, setting, context and the form of neighbouring buildings;*
- b) *The **character and proportions of the existing building**, where alterations and extensions are proposed,” (our bold).*

Camden's Planning Guidance – Design (CPG1) July 2015,

Section 2, (see para 8.4.1 of the applicant's HDAS), **Design Excellence**, which states:-

- *“in order to achieve high quality design in the borough we require applicants to consider buildings in terms of context, accessibility, orientation, siting, detailing and materials.*

Item 2.9, bullet 1, which states that good design should:-

- *“positively enhance the character, history, archaeology and nature of existing buildings. **This is particularly important in conservation areas**,” (our bold).*

Item 2.10, bullet 2, (para 8.4.2 of the applicant's HDAS) which states that good design should:-

- *“consider the extent to which developments may **overlook the windows or private garden areas of another dwelling**,” (our bold).*

Dartmouth Park CA Appraisal and Management Statement (2009),

Roof Alterations and Extensions, (para 8.5.2 of the applicant's HDAS), which states:-

- *“**The conservation area retains its clear historic rooflines, which it is important to preserve,**” (our bold). “Additional storeys, fundamental changes to the roofline, insensitive alterations, ... or inappropriate windows can harm the historic character of the roofscape and will be resisted. ... **Proposals for additional storeys will generally be resisted,**” (our bold).*
- *“**Roof alterations or additions are likely to be unacceptable where a building forms part of a complete terrace or group of buildings which have a roof line that is largely unimpaired by alterations and extensions or where its architectural style would be undermined by and addition. The rear roof is in some cases as important as the front where these are visible in views from other streets,**” (our bold).*

Camden Local Development Framework (LDF), Camden Core strategy 2010-2025

Camden Development Policy DP25 – Conserving Camden's Heritage

Item 25.2, (para 8.6.1 of the applicant's HDAS), which states that:-

- *“**The Council will therefore only grant planning permission for development in Camden's conservation areas that preserves and enhances the special character or appearance of the area,**” (our bold). “The charter of the conservation areas derive from the combination of a number of factors, including scale, density, pattern of development, landscape, topography, open space, materials. Architectural detailing and uses. These elements should be identified and responded to in the design of new development.*

Item 25.3, which states that:-

- *“The character and appearance of a conservation area can be eroded through the loss of traditional architectural details such as ... **characteristic rooftops...**” (our bold).*

Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee Policy

Design and Character DC2, (para 8.8.2 of the applicant's HDAS), which states

- *“protect and preserve historic buildings of architectural merit and their settings by:*

- a) *In the case of Listed Buildings, only permitting development where the design of the development is demonstrated to be of a high standard **led by the character, appearance and scale of the Listed Buildings themselves**, (our bold).*
- b)

7. THE ARCHITECTURAL POTENTIAL OF THE EXISTING FLAT

The fundamental issue that is raised by this planning application is whether there is a convincing justification for granting permission to increasing the size of Flat 6. The Council will be aware that the proposed improvements to the existing building and to Flat 6 (including improvements to the thermal performance of the fabric), could be achieved without adding an additional floor. Such improvements would bring a benefit to all the owners of Grove End House in terms of an enhancement of the value of the property and savings in energy consumption and costs. It is incumbent on the owners of the Grove End House to act as custodians of the 'heritage asset' as it stands. There is, therefore, no justification for the potential harm that the applicants acknowledge may result from the addition of an attic storey (final paragraph of 8.9 Conclusions of the Heritage, Design and Access Statement) on the basis that this would deliver "*the much more visible enhancements that can be seen from within the heritage asset's ...setting...*"

As the applicants point out, Flat 6 is itself an addition to the original Grove End House. It has a floor area of about 113 sq. m. This is deemed to be sufficient, using Camden's residential minimum housing space standards, for an 8 person dwelling (see CPG 4.14 and 4.15). There is, of course, no prohibition against a dwelling being larger than the recommended minimum space standards but, in this instance, a case cannot be made that more space is needed in Flat 6, Grove End House to meet minimum housing space standards. Nor does the additional floor space for which planning consent is sought increase the number of residential units or provide any other public benefit.

As the applicants have demonstrated, however, the interior of Flat 6 could be remodelled to create a more rational layout. There seems, therefore, to be no reason why improvements to the layout of the flat could not be achieved by working within the existing envelope. Adding a third floor to this building is not necessary to the achievement of an improved Flat 6 but would detract from the character of the existing listed historic building.

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