

Response to the planning application
2017/0705/P at 20 Albert Terrace Mews
For the attention of Charlotte Meynell Planning Officer

We live two doors away (at 18 Albert Terrace Mews) from the proposed development at 20 Albert Terrace Mews and are most concerned for the following reasons:

Our prime concern is in relation to the basement proposal. Having already had a basement dug opposite our house recently (Number 11) we know from first hand experience the noise and dust and disruption such a project causes the remaining residents in the mews for a lengthy period. We understand, in another planning dispute involving a similar plan in Kingstown Road, the scale of the mews street, the neighbours' amenities during construction were a material consideration in the planners decision making. Digging out the floor area of Number 20 to create so much basement space will also result in tons of spoil being removed from the house which is inconveniently placed in the mews - that is not close to either exit. Apparently the spoil is going to be removed by wheelbarrow to the exit onto Regents Park Road. In the last basement excavation the removal of the spoil resulted in countless times the exit and entrances to the mews were blocked and the soil from this excavation was deposited into lorries directly from a conveyor belt construction, as it could be kept in the big garden awaiting the next lorry. This cannot happen at Number 20 as it does not have the outside space for storing large amounts of soil.

With regards to structural damage: the properties close by in Albert Terrace and those in Prince Albert Road may well suffer ground movement and clay heave both in the short and the long term. We understand buildings in close proximity have already had to have remedial structural repairs :10 Albert Terrace Mews has had to be underpinned and there are reports circulating that several properties on Prince Albert Road are already moving resulting in some cases mortgages being denied. We have heard that when 20 Albert Terrace Mews was originally built it suffered cracks from clay heave and the parking area has already had to be levelled off to try and make the ground stable. We understand there is an old well in close proximity of number 19 and 20 Albert Terrace Mews.

In addition the house is positioned next to number 21, the basement excavation of which caused major planning headaches in recent years and indeed had to be stopped by the planning office due to the impact it was having on the mews road. I understand this basement is now pumped out 24 hours a day to deal with the levels of water that enters the building.

We are one of the lowest areas in Primrose Hill, downhill from both the hill itself and from St John's Wood, so that vast amounts of surface and underground water seep down in our direction. This can only cause trouble to both buildings and road surface. This basement excavation may destabilise the mews road surface yet further, causing further movement among nearby houses. We read that basement developments can cause damaging effects on the water table and Hydro-geological. We also understand that because Camden has had so many problems with basement developments, they carried out a survey which revealed that 'Approximately one quarter of respondents suffered damage to their property, 25% windows and doors sticking; 19% internal fractures; 20% external cracking; etc'. We have learned that during the construction of Nos. 20, 19 and 21 the mews road has suffered slippage and movement and has had to be re-levelled. With regards to the maintenance of the road surface; we do not have a 'sinking fund' nor a legal agreement requiring those conducting major works to contribute a sum to pay for potential damage both short term and long term to the surface of the road for the maintenance of this road so if there were to be damage caused by this development one wonders how all the residents would get compensation to repair it.

We would consider extra living space to be overdevelopment in the mews. The Advisory Committee noted that the proposed basement would add a substantial volume to the existing house, possibly as much as 50% of the existing. The Committee also noted that Albert Terrace Mews is recognized in the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement, the current SPD, at p. 12, as contrasting with the wide roads in the area, and characterized as 'narrow mews roads originally provided servicing to the rear gardens of the villas ... these small mews buildings are generally located directly abutting or close to the highway'. What is significant about the Mews is its character as 'narrow', 'small', with a function of 'servicing', with a subservient, modest character. If the mews becomes an enclave of the mega house surely this goes against its original distinguishing feature and is something Camden Council should be keen to preserve?

We urge the planning officers to turn down this application.
Nick and Caroline Powell
18 Albert Terrace Mews
London
NW1 7TA
5 March 2017