

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Consultees Addr:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2017/2931/P	Dr Michael Wilkinson	4 Mecklenburgh Street London WC1N 2AH	19/06/2017 01:22:13	COMMNT	Dear Planning Officials RE: Proposed development of 195-199 Gray"s Inn Road

Thank you for providing us with an opportunity to respond the latest submission from the Property Developer at 195-199 Gray"s Inn Road, who has been seeking to enlarge his property, which abuts on our property at 4 Mecklenburgh Street. In principle, we would welcome the re-development of the commercial property in question, to the extent that this does not disrupt the delicate balance that was achieved when these shops were originally created over 100 years ago, carved out as they were from the back gardens of properties on Mecklenburgh Street terrace.

However, as it is, the current proposal irrevocably changes that delicate balance with disproportionately detrimental impact on the historic character of this listed Mecklenburgh Street terrace, Bloomsbury conservation area and the quality of life of neighbouring residents, including ourselves, for reasons which we set out below.

1. Risk to Conservation Area

It is important to consider the historical context of the Mecklenburgh Street terrace. The Gray"s Inn commercial property essentially sits inside the original back gardens of three Georgian townhouses on the Mecklenburgh Street terrace. The commercial shops that were created were deliberately kept small and discrete so as to limit the negative impact on the houses and the residential character of this historic block.

Size.

In his application, the Property Developer seeks to virtually double the size of the Gray"s Inn Road commercial property. We are very concerned that to allow the planning application to go through on this basis, would result in a significant change to the historic character of the terrace. It is important to keep in mind that the back gardens of the terraced properties face Gray"s Inn Road. Given the close proximity of the commercial property to residential properties on Mecklenburgh Street terrace, if the commercial property were to virtually double in size, it would irrevocably alter the delicate balance achieved between the residential Mecklenburgh Street terrace and the commercial properties carved out from the terrace"s back gardens.

Asymmetrically Pitched Roof.

The proposal seeks to create a modern and asymmetrically pitched roof to create height for a

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new floor. The proposed asymmetrically pitched-roof would look very odd and not in keeping with the conservation area, where the vast majority of roofs appear flat from street level.

Digging to Create Lower-ground

The Developer sees to create additional floor space by digging into the ground, just off Gray's Inn Road. We note that NO commercial properties in the immediate Gray's Inn Road area have a lower-ground floor level. We believe that the proposed digging to create more internal space would impact negatively on the existing aesthetic quality of this conservation area.

2. Negative Impact on Quality of Life for Residence of Mecklenburgh Street

Even if there was a need for increased office space, the proposed near doubling in size would have a disproportionate impact on the quality of life for residents of Mecklenburgh Street terrace.

Loss of Daylight, Sunlight and Aspect

The light report submitted by the Developer so as to allegedly prove that the impact on light on neighbouring properties would be acceptable is in fact flawed as it is based on plans which are said to be merely provisional and subject to change.

This is wholly unsatisfactory and this fact alone should cause the proposal to be rejected. The report provides no confidence that the proposed new pitched roof would not interfere with the quality of daylight, sunlight and aspect presently enjoyed by the residents at 4 Mecklenburgh Street and elsewhere on the terrace.

Noise and light pollution from pitched-roof windows

The Developer proposes to put openable windows along the edge of the pitched-roof that faces onto our garden and property. New windows are also proposed for the roof of the rear extension. We must stress again the close proximity of the two properties. Given the greater number of people (said to be around 30) likely to work in such an enlarged commercial space, we are concerned that the additional noise and smells emanating from these new windows, as well as the light pollution in the evenings, would impact negatively on the quality of life for us and other residents on the residential Mecklenburgh Street terrace.

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3. Incomplete Submission

Under the Rear Extension

The Gray's Inn Road property includes an extension at the rear, which is used as a toilet. Under this extension - at the lower-ground floor level - we own space which we use as a utility room. The Developer's drawings do not show the lower-ground floor space which is part of our property. We are concerned that this is misleading and does not seek to address the negative impact that any digging might have on our own lower-ground space which is part of our listed house.

Window at the rear extension of commercial property

The extension presently has frosted windows which although subject to legal restrictions on their use, nonetheless face onto our private rear garden. The Developer's proposal does not provide sufficient detail regarding the proposed plan for this space.

Lack of Market Assessment.

We note that there is no market assessment supporting the application for increase of commercial space in this conservation area. Indeed, we question if there is a justification to increase the size of the Gray's Inn Road commercial property, given the large number of commercial properties already available in the area and the disproportionately negative impact that the proposed development would have on the Bloomsbury conservation area, the listed buildings which it abuts and the quality of life for the many residents who live on the Mecklenburgh Street terrace.

These are all important reasons why the proposal as it stands should not be approved.

We would welcome the Developer to propose a development that is a single floor space with a flat roof (as now), which would be in keeping with the historic context of the Bloomsbury conservation area and listed buildings to which it abuts and which would not affect negatively the quality of life for current residents or disturb the delicate balance which was achieved over a 100 years ago when the commercial properties in question were built in the back-gardens of Mecklenburgh Street terrace.

Yours Faithfully,

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4 Mecklenburgh Street

2017/2931/P Dr Michael Wilkinson
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20/06/2017 00:30:57 OBJ

Dear Planning Officials

RE: Proposed development of 195-199 Gray's Inn Road

Further to our letter of 18 June setting out the reasons for our objections to the proposed development of the above commercial property, we now write in relation to some further aspects of the Developer's application.

More specifically, we note that the Developer has submitted a revised plan that proposes the lowering of the ground floor by 0.85m.

What the proposed revised plans fail to show is that the the Developer does not have the right to lower the existing floor of his commercial property which abuts to 4 Mecklenburgh Street. The reason for this is that, as the Developer knows, his freehold does not extend to the land under the existing floor level at the rear, as his freehold constitutes a "flying freehold". The land underneath the rear extension was never transferred to the Gray's In Road freehold when that freehold was created by separating it from the Mecklenburgh Street freehold. Instead, it remains part of the freehold of 4 Mecklenburgh Street and it is being used as a utility room.

Seeking permission to develop his commercial property is seeking permission to trespass on our property to which we object in the strongest possible terms and add this to the reasons for our objections to the proposed development of the commercial property at 195-199 Gray's Inn Road

Yours Faithfully,

Dr Totis Kotsonis and Dr Michael Wilkinson

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