



Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to comment on the planning applications, 2017/2064/P, 2017/2211/L and 2017/2171/P, all of which relate to a proposed development at Jack Straws Castle on North End Way.

For information, I am (and have been since 2004) the owner-occupier of one of the residential apartments at Jack Straws Castle. I wish to oppose these planning applications.

Previous applications

The documentation accompanying the planning application acknowledges that three previous applications - all of them in a similar vein to this latest one - were rejected by the Council, with this decision also being upheld at a subsequent appeal. Indeed, the Council went as far as to state explicitly that: "You are advised that the Council is of the opinion that no further development would be possible on this open carpark site, except for minor extensions or structures ancillary to the use of Jack Straws Castle."

The Applicant seeks to argue that this project is wholly different to the previous proposals. I disagree. The Council previously cited as the primary reason for rejection that the proposed structure, "by reason of its size, height, bulk, location and detailed design, would be harmful to the setting and appearance of the adjoining building, to local views in the streetscene and from the Heath, and to the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area." But this new project is of greater size/height/bulk than the earlier rejected proposals, being three storeys rather than the original two, and the location is the same as previously. Even if it can be argued that the new design is an improvement on the previous ones, can this really outweigh the failure to address the other four characteristics (size, height, bulk, location) which are either unchanged or give added reason for objection? I would argue that it cannot. Indeed, the proposal is a world apart from "a minor extension or structure ancillary to the use of Jack Straws Castle", which represents the Council's previously stated limit of acceptability.

Given that nothing has fundamentally changed to undermine the basis for those earlier planning decisions, and taking into account the much greater scale of the current applications which can only serve to reinforce those consistent earlier decisions, I struggle to see any basis for agreeing to this latest variation on a recurring theme.

Parking implications

In addition, I wish to raise concerns about the parking implications of the new development. The proposal is to reduce the number of parking spaces from eleven to seven. At the same time, the number of residential units will increase by two. As a current resident and user of the carpark, I can confirm that the site is at full usage. I have personally received no request from the Applicant to release my current parking space, but if the Applicant somehow succeeds in the mooted plan to persuade four leaseholders to release their spaces, the existing vehicles will not simply vanish into thin air. Rather, the impact of this will simply be to displace four vehicles into the already congested on-street parking around Hampstead. More realistically, it will likely be six displaced vehicles adding to the local parking congestion, as it is simply unrealistic to imagine that the families at which the two new four-bedroom houses are targeted will be car-free. This is additional congestion from which the Council can easily protect the local community, by rejecting this planning application.

I also have two more specific objections to the proposed layout of the reduced carpark.

- First, the proposal includes no allowance for a "turning space" for drivers to reverse in/out of when entering/exiting the carpark. The current turning space is at the western end of the carpark, but this space will disappear under the new plan, which is simply impractical for providing drivers access in/out of their parking spaces. This is a fairly basic design requirement, and it is worrying that it has not been seriously considered.

- Second, there is no space for the communal bins within the proposed layout. The Applicant has previously explained to me that fire regulations prohibit the bins from being located directly adjacent to the existing structure of Jack Straws Castle. But the new proposed layout leaves no other space for the bins, once the allocated parking bays and entrance gate are taken into account. It goes without saying that, at the time of writing, the importance of fire regulations appears more significant than ever.

I note that parking was a second reason cited by the Council for the rejection of the previous applications. For the reasons set out above, these concerns continue to be pertinent, and give additional reason to reject the latest applications.

Other considerations

Last, I would like to comment on the implications of the building work itself. I live very close by, and am likely to experience severe noise disturbance. Whilst I appreciate that this will not in itself be a reason to refuse planning permission, I would ask that in the event that planning permission is granted, appropriate conditions are attached to prevent noise disturbance during weekends, evenings and early mornings.

In a similar vein, if planning permission is granted, the Council will need to consider site access for heavy vehicles, etc. I anticipate that the residual part of the Jack Straws Castle carpark will remain in use for existing leaseholders, as per the Applicant's contractual obligations under the terms of his extant leases. As such, it might be expected that there will be a concentration of heavy vehicles in Heath Brow (or even on North End Way), and this may have implications for access to the neighbouring Hampstead Heath public carpark and/or the broader traffic flow in the area.

Many thanks for considering these comments.

Yours sincerely
Steven Fisher