[redacted]

From: Carolyn Atkinson [redacted]
Sent: 14 July 2017 17:34
To: Gentet, Matthias; Planning
Cc: Carolyn Atkinson
Subject: Resend of objection to application 2016/7150/P, this time including pictures attached. Thank you.

Dear Matthias Gentet and Camden Council Planning Department,

RE: planning application 2016/7150/P

I am writing to strongly object to the above application for Planning Permission which seeks to destroy all boundary walls on the BAM estate and destroy all the hedges along all the walls in question.

The planning application refers to the destruction and removal of the existing boundary walls, but incorrectly states (see below) that there is no effect on hedges. This is wrong.

It would be easy to assume that the walls are being knocked down and replaced but that the hedges remain unaffected. This is NOT the case.

The personal plea:

I am appalled that they want to knock down the walls and destroy the hedges. Despite Director assurances to residents at the BAM Open Garden Meeting in June 2016, and the matter being raised at the AGM 2017, all commitments to consult with the residents have been reneged upon.

Suddenly we find that Council planning permission has been sought. This must not be granted.

The long uninterrupted stretches of mature hedges, combined with the beauty of the architecture, are what make the BAM Mansion blocks on or near Cannon Hill, the most attractive roads in West Hampstead.

They bring fantastic colour, beautiful bright greenness, sleekness, reflecting light when the sun shines on them or when the rain glistens on them.

Absolutely nothing has upset me more for a very long time than realising what appears to be happening.

The hedges take years to reach such beautiful maturity, but they are being hacked down in minutes.

I appreciate some people don't mind about the hedges one way or the other, but for those of us who do it really is appalling and very distressing.

They bring calmness and tranquility the minute you turn off West End Lane or Finchley Road into Cannon Hill.

Conversely walls with short broken-up sections of greenery in between oversized pillars and exposed black railings are not remotely the same.

The BAM Estate cites one key reason for doing this work is to reinstate the pillars and railings as they once were.

However going back is not always a good idea.

Pictures of Cannon Hill from the turn of the last century startingly illustrate the huge aesthetic difference between the lush, light, bright gardens with the beautiful cherry trees and magnolias that we enjoy today, and the dark, stark, walled road before.

Please see photos attached to illustrate.

Finally it is disingenuous for the BAM Estate to assert that the hedges are decaying and old and therefore must come out. I asked the BAM Estate Head Gardener and he said, categorically, they are not.

The facts:

The submissions by BAM estate have a number of factual mistakes which are key to their application.

Application for Planning Permission Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Section 15. Trees and Hedges.
Are there any trees or hedges on the proposed development site?
The answer they have given is NO.

This is factually incorrect.
The answer is YES.
This is key to the issue. Every part of the current wall that they want to destroy has a hedge running along it.

The three sections of wall that were destroyed and rebuilt without planning permission illustrate perfectly how the character and look of the street is dramatically altered when the new 'new' wall design is built.

Instead of being long uninterrupted swathes of green hedge with no breaks, which we enjoy now, the design of the 'new' wall results in short sections of hedge, in between oversized pillars and black railings.

Secondly only one section of the 'new' hedge has even come close to growing up to and covering the railings. That is because the land and the hedge on that section are level and the hedge can 'reach' the railings.

In all other sections, the level of the wall and the 'new' hedges are different and they do not meet.
Because Cannon Hill (Marlborough Mansions) and West End Lane (Buckingham Mansions) are on hills the problem would persist. (Only Avenue Mansions on Finchley Road is flat.)

The design of the walls replaced without planning permission are excessively big and ugly.

Even people who don't care about the wall/hedges tell me that they think the height of the walls and the top of the pillars are too high.

The people living in basement flats where walls have been built without planning permission report reduced light. Previously light would break /'dapple' through the long swathes of hedge and enter the apartments. The existing walls are much lower and not broken up by proposed tall ugly pillars, which block the light, in a way that a more 'porous' section of hedge does not.

Application for Planning Permission Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
Section 12: Assessment of Flood Risk.
Is the site within an area at risk of flooding?
They have answered NO.

This is factually incorrect, and indeed the Applicant's own Design and Access Statement contradicts this answer.

There has been significant flooding in this area on more than one occasion. 8 flats were flooded out.

Very recently the council planted a number of extra trees on these roads to help reduce risk. It also Improved drainage.

Why would anyone consider REMOVING mature hedges that help with water control.

A very recent report in Atmospheric Journal also concludes that hedges are a ' natural filter for toxic air pollution'.

Therefore, removing all the mature hedges as required by this application, and planting with small immature plants which will take years to grow and develop, will have an immediate and detrimental impact on residents' health.

Design and Access statement:
There are a number of other inaccuracies or questionable claims in the Design and Access Statement.

5. Landscaping.
The privet hedges are not growing as intended.
'Several examples of screening are already evident behind the new boundary walls.'
No they are not. The privet hedges are not growing to' the top of the new railings'.

6. Impact Upon the Street Scene
'The new walls have been designed so they have no detrimental impact upon the street scene to the front of any of the blocks.' …..
' enhance the appearance of each block...'
Not true. And another factor which has not been taken into account is the view of the hedges and walls from the flats that are ABOVE the ground/ street level.
The view down is one of thick wide hedges. That would not be the case if they are pulled out and replanted.

All the application pictures are at street level or historic pictures. Of the 200+ flats most are raised or very raised above street level and that has not been taken into consideration.

The streets in the surrounding areas near the BAM, eg Harvard and Yale Courts on Honeybourne Road, Heath Drive and even Cumberland Mansions on West End Lane opposite the BAM estate, all have beautiful hedges, low walls.

If BAM were to erect such disproportionate walls it would make the BAM estate appear like a cordoned off fortress, ugly and out of keeping with its neighbours.

Cumberland Mansions actively planted hedges to make themselves look greener and more calm and beautiful as opposed to BAM which wants to destroy so much existing greenery in its beautiful streets.

BAM Estate's tree report, commissioned by the applicant, talks about trees in great details and the effects on them if the walls were removed. It does not assess the impact on the mature hedges of the walls being removed, and thereby ignores the crux of this application.

All of the above points conflict with the Council's own guidance:

In the Council's own West End Green Conservation area Appraisal and Management Strategy adopted 28 February 2011 as well as stating in paragraph 3. 1:

'Camden has a duty to ….and pay special attention to the preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of those areas.'

It then goes on to comment on Cannon Hill in particular:

5.2 Key views. 'The street views are framed by mansion blocks, in particular up Cannon Hill with mansion blocks on both sides of the street. The orderly and maintained hedges and entrances add greatly to the quality of the streetscape.'

And furthermore:

5.8 The contribution to the character and appearance of green spaces.
'The mansion blocks present manicured hedges and front edges to the street. They have a very positive effect on the street, especially on Cannon Hill where *Buckingham and *Avenue Mansions face each other. Private shared gardens are a concealed resource within the mansion blocks.'

(*NB: Incorrect: Marlborough Mansions are on Cannon Hill; Buckingham is on West End Lane; Avenue is on Finchley Road.)

Conclusion: Why permission should not be granted:
• Factually incorrect Planning Application form submitted by BAM estate re a) Hedges and b) Flood risk
• Proposed wall oversized, pillars too high, ugly, darkens road, reduces light to basement flats.
• Hedge removal also removes pollution protection
• Applicant's own tree methodology report does not say the hedges are damaged or dangerous
• Railings already constructed prior to planning permission prove hedges do not grow back as is claimed.
• Mature hedges being destroyed.
• Beauty of the road destroyed, in contravention of Council's own guidance.
• Aerial / non street view not taken into account.
• Area is a flood risk.
• Council has planted MORE trees on these roads to help reduce flood risk, so taking out metres and metres of hedges will increase the risk.
• does not co-exist with neighbouring roads eg Honeybourne Road
• No consultation with residents by BAM estate Board of directors despite assurances to do so.
• Council consultation very limited; posters placed on very few lamp posts and not outside the entrance doors.
• Elderly and disabled residents less /unlikely to see them.
• Online consultation not accessible to many older and disabled residents.

Thank you for reading and I strongly urge you and your colleagues to turn down this application.

Best wishes,

Carolyn Learie,
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