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By email

23 January 2018

Dear Mr Whittingham,

**Planning Application 2016/7088/P – Spiritualist Temple, Rochester Square, London NW1 9RY – Redevelopment of site involving demolition of the building (Use Class D1) and erection of a 3-storey building, plus basement level, to accommodate an art workshop/gallery (Use Class B1) and 9 self-contained flats (Use Class C3) comprising 8 x 2 bed and 1 x 1 bed, together with landscape works.**

SAVE Britain's Heritage has been made aware of the application to demolish the Camden Spiritualist Temple, and we write to register an **objection**. We consider that the building is of historic value and deserving of retention, and we recommend that you refuse this planning application.

We note that objections have been submitted by the Twentieth Century Society, the Ancient Monuments Society, and the Camden Square Conservation Area Advisory Committee, as well as many neighbouring residents, indicating a clear opposition to this application.

### **Significance**

Built in 1926 for the spiritualist movement, the Temple is two-storey domestic style building, within the Camden Square Conservation Area. Although small in size and stature, it possesses some interesting architectural detailing, and is a modest but handsome building. The interior space retains original features of historic interest related to its function.

The building also possesses historic interest due to the association with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who laid the foundation stone and provided some of the funds for the building of the temple.

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It is identified within the 2011 conservation area appraisal as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Demolition would therefore result in harm being caused to the conservation area.

### **The proposal**

The proposal envisages demolishing the temple for replacement with a contemporary style building providing residential and commercial uses. We consider that the demolition of the building would cause substantial harm to an undesignated heritage asset, and harm to a designated heritage asset. Consequently, the application would breach national and local planning policy and guidance, with regards the protection of heritage assets.

Camden Development Management policies within the Local Plan specify that demolition applications in a conservation area will be refused where a building makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area (policy D2), unless exceptional circumstances outweigh the case for retention. It is difficult to see any such exceptional circumstances here. The building is in a reasonable condition, and has until recently been in use for residential purposes (occupied by property guardians).

The NPPF requires that harm should be weighed against public benefit. SAVE does not believe that sufficient public benefit has been demonstrated in this instance, which would outweigh either the loss of the non-designated asset or the harm caused to the conservation area, a designated heritage asset.

### **Summary**

It is SAVE's view that smaller, modest buildings of character and heritage significance deserve preservation, particularly in designated Conservation Areas. The Spiritualist Temple is worth preserving, and its loss would be to the detriment of the area's distinctiveness and the character of the streetscape.

The application to demolish the Temple is contrary to planning policy and no convincing justification is made for the loss of the building. We agree with other objectors that refurbishing and creatively re-using the building would be a more preferable approach.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at this office should you require further information.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Fox  
Deputy Director

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