

31 Hampstead Hill Gardens
London NW3 2PJ

For the attention of Alyce Keen

Planning and Built Environment Department

London Borough of Camden
2nd Floor, 5 Pancras Square
c/o Town Hall, Judd Street
London WC1H 9JE

21st February 2018

Dear Ms Keen

Planning Application: 2017/6907/P
13A Pond Street London NW3 2PN

I am writing to comment on and object to the above planning application.

The development constitutes a substantial enlargement of the existing property (c. 55% in floor area and significantly greater than that in volume). While it is understandable that the owner would want to add value to his property with this development, this enlargement cannot be justified in this crowded area with many neighbouring properties (including our own) in close proximity.

I refer to the and the Design and Access Statement

1. The design, size and height of new buildings or extensions

Section 1.7 in the 13A Pond Street Planning Statement dated December 2017 (the "Submission") states that "Given that the building envelope would be essentially the same as existing, it is unlikely there would be any significant impact on the amenity of neighbours in terms of loss of sunlight/daylight, or outlook". This is demonstrably a false statement.

- The development envisages a large increase of floor space of about 100 sq.m.
- The addition of a second floor substantially alters the character of the gardens and has a major visual impact on neighbours.
- The development would be substantial beyond the existing building envelope. The existing property has a double gable roof which fits in with neighbouring properties in style and has limited impact (and volume). It is proposed to replace this with a new floor of over 50 sq.m. and above that a roof area with solar panels and mesh screens.
- I attach a photo in Attachment 1 of the existing property from which it is easy to imagine the dramatic impact of the proposed development.

The building will be highly obtrusive. The design with panels – while functional for the Owner – is ugly (I am sorry there is no other way to put it). It does not blend in with the gardens or the neighbouring properties. The development does not respect the “character, setting, context, and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings” or the other requirements of Paragraph 7.2 of the Local Plan.

The claim in 5.18 that the building would be screened by neighbouring trees is incorrect. The trees only provide partial cover (not to the extent of the artist impressions in the Design and Access Statement) and with the second floor and mesh screens the development extends above most of the cover. The trees are mostly deciduous and will provide no cover for half the year. One of the trees to the North of the development is actually dead (a point missed by the Tree Report) and will provide no cover.

2. Loss of light and the privacy of neighbours

Light: The substantial increase in the building envelope and height will significantly affect the light of the neighbouring properties. I am particularly concerned about the North elevation which faces my garden. This garden already has limited light (due to the houses in Pond Street). This development – being to the South of my garden - will further reduce light to levels which will make the existing flora unsustainable. Attachment 2 shows the current view from our garden to the North elevation – from this it is clear that the addition of a second floor will have a substantial impact.

Privacy: The contention in 1.9 of the Submission that “The inclusion of mesh screen elements that extend beyond the roof [will] protect the privacy of neighbouring [properties]” is false. The mesh will protect the privacy of the occupier but will not protect the privacy of neighbour (like a lace curtain the privacy is one way).

The Submission or other documents provided do not give details of the windows in the new development. Currently there are none on the second floor (it is just a gabled roof). On the first floor there is one small window on the North elevation and none on the West elevation – and similarly on the ground floor. I expect there will be a substantial area of glass which will inevitably have a substantial impact on neighbours’ privacy.

3. The impact of noise from plant equipment

The extensive construction required for this development – particularly the digging out of the basement – will bring unacceptable levels of noise to buildings in close proximity.

4. The impact of development on traffic parking and road safety

The construction cannot be carried out with substantial disruption to the traffic on Pond Street. This already one of the busiest roads in the neighbourhood and provides essential access to the Royal Free Hospital.

The Owner has not provided any details of how the construction will be executed and this impact avoided.

Given the only access to the property is through the passageway through the pub, I am also concerned about the impact on the structure of the pub (which is a listed building). Again, there is no information on how this would be mitigated.

5. Heritage

I knew Ron Hall, the former owner of 13A (now sadly deceased). He commissioned Sir Norman Foster and Patty Hopkins re-design the existing building (it was one of their first commissions). He described to me on several occasions how the modern design of the extension was intended to contrast with the Victorian cottage. The two elements were (and are) an integral whole.

The contention of the Heritage Assessment that the extension is a separate and separable unit is laughable. No architect (let alone these two) would design the extension in isolation – it is not an “off-the-shelf” extension. If the extension is worthy of preservation, then the whole should be preserved.

I would add a further point that the construction of the basement must surely impact (given how near the basement will be to the borders of the property) the trees in adjacent properties. I do not feel this has been properly addressed.

Way Forward

I would be supportive of a more modest re-development of the site which:

- Preserves the character of the building and surroundings;
- Stays within the existing building envelope; and
- Does not involve an additional floor.

Conclusion

I can fully understand the desire of the Owner to add value to the property by substantially increasing its size. However, the Owner was aware of the constraints of the site when he recently purchased it. There were and are plenty of other properties available in the Hampstead area of the requisite size if this had been his priority.

The plain facts are that this is a very small site and the development is constrained by the Owner’s desire to preserve the extension. In order to accommodate the requirement to increase substantially the size of the property, the architects have inevitably had to go down and up. However, this makes it a clear example of over-development both in the context of the site and its location.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Wright

Attachment 1



Attachment 2

