

Dear Camden Planning team,

I am writing to you with facts and background facts that you are important in relation to any planning applications submitted for Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple.

As a member of the congregation of this great church for over a quarter of a century, I have always held the actual building in high regard and made it my business to find out as much as possible about it. Because I first attended the Temple nearly three decades ago, I was privileged to befriend some of the mediums and workers in the Temple who were actually around when the building was opened in 1927. A topic often freely discussed, was how Sir Arthur Conan Doyle chose the architect very carefully and specifically, a Mr. Thomas Yorke esq. from Highgate. This is why:

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle , as we know, was a man of many talents and one of his pet obsessions was the architectural construction of this building. He actually sat down with Thomas Yorke and designed the building with him. I understand , from my discussions with the wonderful Irene, then in her 90's and a medium, sang soprano from the front front row leading the voices of the congregation as we sang hymns before the services, and Elsie, her friend, who played the organ. They always claimed that Thomas Yorke's involvement as the architect was dependent on Sir Arthur being able to sit down with him and scrutinise every detail. Basically Thomas Yorke had never orginated a Temple before, and it is the one and only such building that he ever did design. Irene and Elsie used to make jokes about the fact that working with the Great Man with his relentless eye for detail and precise requests, probably put him off such a project for life!

The Temple was built on the exact lines and proportions of Solomon's Temple. There is no other example. It is, of course, **the** most famous and celebrated of Spiritualist Temples, receiving guests from as far away as Australia, America, and Greenland. It is, in fact, the cornerstone Temple of Spiritualism in Britain.

Both the front and back facades were very specifically designed. Camden Mews, which leads down to the rear of the Temple sports an interesting view. On a sunny day, the star at the top of the rear facade shoots light down the Mews and across the horizontal. This is apparent all afternoon. This was a technical piece of minute design, calculated purposefully. Any alteration to the back of the building, or any form of extension into the Garden of Remembrance would destroy this aspect. The Temple was specifically designed to utilise the natural light and movement of the sun by its angle. I have spoken to neighbours who are well aware of the inspiration and charm of this trick of the light.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle saw to the construction of this Temple, paying substantially for the building and all in his latter years. He did not spend the rest of his life writing detective novels, but travelling the globe preaching the goodness of Spiritualism and spreading the word of eternal life. Sadly the Spiritualist National Union have no interest in the religion that they are supposed to protect - if they have their way the Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple will join the long line of spiritualist churches entrusted to them in good faith that have now become blocks of flats. They are headed, of course, by their trust property co-ordinator, the disbarred solicitor, Graham Hewitt.

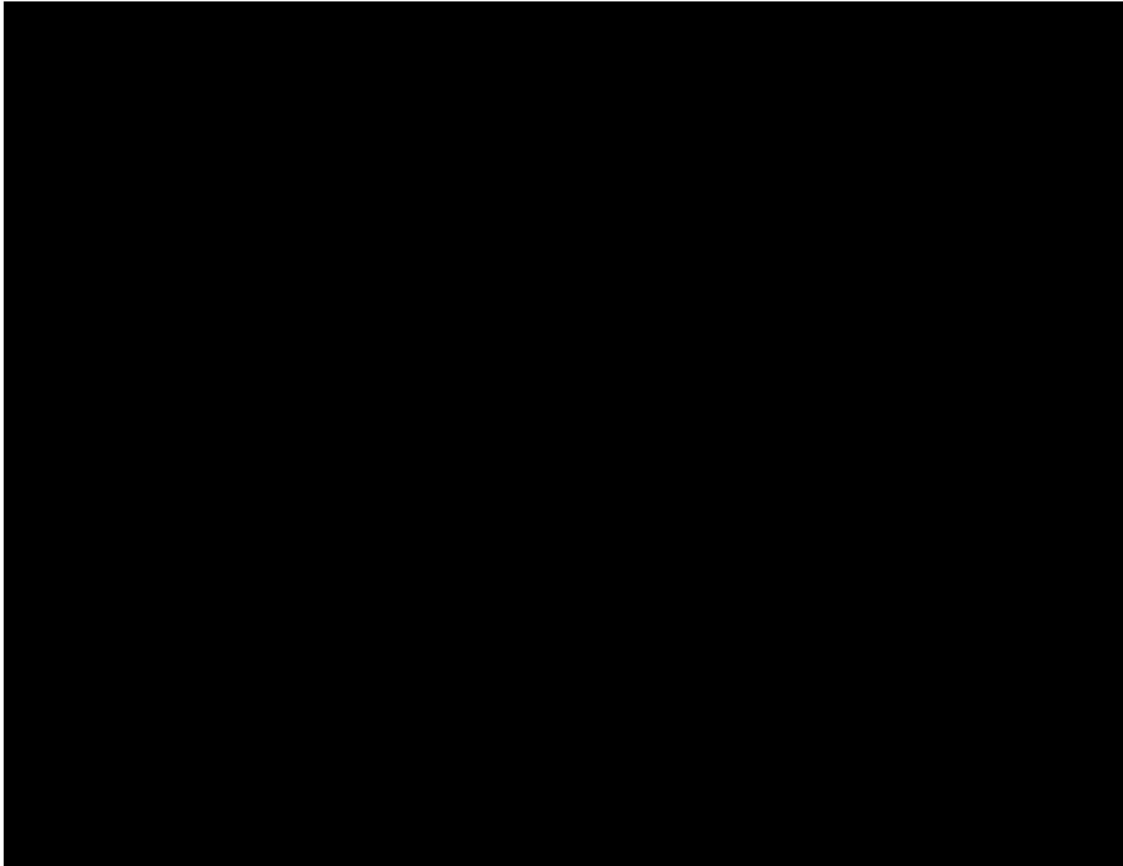
The Spiritualist National Union deliberately spread the disinformation that Rochester Square Temple had been an underpopulated, poorly attended Church. This was absolutely never true. The only reason that numbers decreased towards the end was the outrageous bullying and treatment of the congregation by the SNU. I was personally witness to this and cannot believe that this sort of behaviour could still persist in London in modern times. They have acted like the feudal lords of mediaeval times, and all in the name of Spiritualism. This amounts to no more and no less than despotic blasphemy.

Maybe, however, the worst crime on the agenda here, would be the decimation of the legacy that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle left to London and to the history of Spiritualism in Britain, the nation's third largest faith. That is why we, all of my neighbours, hundreds of Spiritualists that frequented the Temple, and indeed everybody in London that I meet and discuss this issue with, are adamant that this building and its surrounding Garden of Remembrance should never be developed or permitted a change of use – especially not by the very body entrusted to protect it and who paid not a penny for it – to try and satisfy their insatiable greed for money and power. Its purpose was to supply a service to the people of London – of all faiths and creeds.

I would also like to add that It has been suggested that by now the congregation must have found another place to practise their faith. All I am aware of is that the vice president now washes up for the homeless and has not taken a service anywhere since and none of my associates from the Temple, including myself, have set foot in a Spiritualist temple since. It is just too upsetting.

Sincerely,

Coral Temple.



Dear Mr Whittington

This objection, made on 23rd January 2018, was added to the first planning application because you have not stated that objections to the first application are not going to be carried forward to the second application.

<http://camdocs.camden.gov.uk/HPRMWebDrawer/Record/7001176/file/document?inline>

Many aspects of this objection, and a large number of other objections to 2016/7088/P apply as much to the second application as the first.

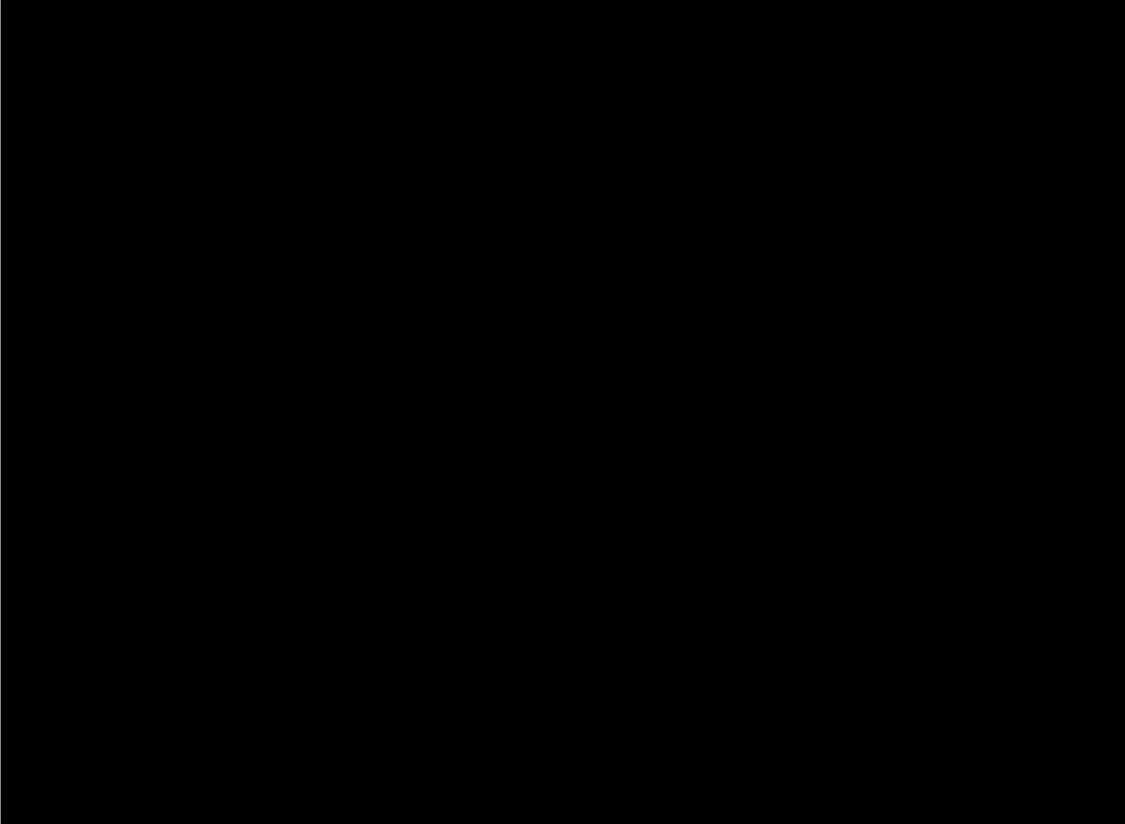
I have spoken to many locals who have told me they thought the new yellow council signs warning of a planning application were for the first application still in situ, and they knew nothing of the second application.

It is expected that the community space is a sop and that the commercial hiring rates will be prohibitive for local groups. The prestige flats will not want a community space attached to their homes. I dare say, the community space will soon be lost to another flat.

I have tried to telephone you. Perhaps you can ring me please?  
Thank you

Wendy Stokes





I am Derek O'Neil, former vice President and acting President of Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple.

Our community will suffer greatly if this Temple is disposed of forever. Up until its doors were unnecessarily closed, it served those in greatest need. It opened its arms to the sick, the bereaved, the curious and the joyous, without judgement or disclosure.

This precious building was designed by architect Thomas Yorke. All drawings, measurements and decorative aspects and fittings were requested and supervised by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The temple was built on the same measurements and proportions as Solomon's Temple. The rear view is particularly interesting. The star at the back of the building reflects light from the sun all afternoon straight down the mews approach to the garden and across the horizontal. Every angle and line of this unostentatious but perfect building has been scrutinised and minutely developed to be fit for purpose.

There is only one purpose that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle created this building for, and that is as a Spiritualist Temple, a place of spiritual and physical healing, communication with loved ones, philosophical and emotional counsel, and of course embracing all of humanity with no prejudice. All creeds, cultures and religions are, and always will be, welcome through the doors of Rochester Square Temple.

In these times of unrest amongst our youth and the increasing incidents of violence and murder in Camden and Kentish Town, our facility and our prayers at this specific location are more needed than ever.

The planned excavation, involving the intrusive addition of a basement, is a dreadful thing to inflict on this conservation area, especially since there are lovely old houses nearby that risk weakened foundations in years to come.

Already there are too many modern flats being built in this area, destroying the charm of the location. It has been run down deliberately, merely for the sake of the financial gain of those who are supposed to be acting in its best interests.

The ashes of many souls have been interred with ceremony in the garden of Rochester Square Temple. Trees and bushes were planted to commemorate them. Sadly the developers have been hacking the trees down, without the courtesy of applying for planning permission.

When Rochester Square Temple was opened in 1927, it was dedicated by the Great Man, as a Spiritualist Temple from "now until eternity and a day beyond".

This was Sir Arthur's gift to London and the Spiritual movement. It is in fact the cornerstone Temple of Spiritualism in Britain.

The preservation of this building as a Spiritual Temple is beyond argument and discussion. It is vital to the continuity and history of the movement and to London.

Yours sincerely,

Derek O'Neil,

Vice President now acting President of  
Rochester Square Temple  
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