

13 KEMPLAY ROAD LONDON NW3 1TA

(Camden Council ref. 2015/4373/P)

1. Local residents have requested an opinion from the Architectural History Practice (AHP) on revised proposals for the above. This follows our Opinion dated 23 August 2017 and Heritage Impact Assessment dated December 2017, provided in response to earlier proposals.
2. The latter assessment concluded that 13 Kemplay Road belonged to a group of mid-twentieth century former council houses, built on part of the former garden of the Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel. The chapel is a Grade II listed building which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Hampstead Conservation Area, while 13 Kemplay Road is a neutral contributor. The proposal to demolish the house and replace it with a larger detached house would result in encroachment upon the most important public view of the listed chapel. This would result in harm to the setting of that heritage asset, and to the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area. That harm would be less than substantial, and no public benefits had been advanced to weigh against the harm. Opportunities for mitigating the harm had not been taken. National and local policy therefore advised that planning permission should be refused.
3. The revised proposals no longer envisage a detached property, but one attached to the existing row. Officers have concluded that under the revised proposals ‘views [...] *will not be impacted* on by the development due to its reduced overall width which will *preserve the existing views* of the designated heritage asset. As such, as there is considered to be *no harm* to the heritage asset, there is no public benefit requirement’ (my italics).
4. This conclusion appears to be based on a comparison with earlier proposals, rather than (as would be more appropriate) a comparison with the situation as existing. While the footprint of the proposed building has been moved, its overall width remains unchanged, and is wider than that of the existing building (as acknowledged in the officer’s report). It cannot therefore be the case that existing views will be preserved. Views will be reduced, and since these views are acknowledged to be important to the setting of the listed building and the character of the conservation area, it must follow that harm would result.
5. While the degree of harm would be less than under previous proposals, the relevant comparison is with the situation as existing. *Any* harm to heritage assets and their setting needs to be given great weight. If (as here) the harm is less than substantial, this needs to be weighed against the public benefits. No such benefits have been advanced.

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