

Objection to Planning Application 2018/2859/P

25 July 2018

I have just returned from a one-week visit to my father to find that a new planning application has been submitted and that the notice period for objections closes either today – as stated on the notice posted on a nearby lamppost- or Sunday – according to the Camden website.

I would like to object to this planning application for the following reasons:

1. It has been deliberately submitted in a manner designed to minimise feedback from local residents and parents of children at the local school.
2. It represents a very significant increase in the impact on local residents and local properties – many of which are listed – in that, for the first time, the proposal includes a large basement.
3. The Construction Management Plan disregards the very strenuous objections to the CMP for the previous planning applications with regard to the proposed siting of the offsite compound in Boades Mews.

I will address each issue in turn.

Deliberate exclusion of local residents and parents of local school children from the planning process

[REDACTED] and I have commented on every previous planning application for this site, attended a hearing at Camden Council, attended two meetings with previous developers, and given my email address to previous developers as a concerned and affected local homeowner, I received no notice of this new plan. On the contrary, when I (and other local residents) heard after the fact that a meeting had been held in early June without local resident being informed, our local Councillor Stephen Stark tried to schedule a new, properly publicised meeting on 2 July, before schools broke up. This was then cancelled at the urging of the Camden Council planning manager Alex Bushell.

As Councillor Stark wrote to me and other concerned local residents on 18 June:

Alex advised that at this time they have not seen any details of what this new planning application will involve but has promised to keep me updated. In light of this there is not an urgency to have the meeting (I was trying to do before the schools break up for the summer holiday) and indeed it may be better to delay the public meeting until we find out what any new proposals are and what the new CMP is.

I will keep you all updated and we will have a meeting with Camden Council officers and the developers once we know what is happening. I trust that this is agreeable.

To then publish a planning application without further consultation, and with a comment period of only three weeks over the summer holidays is completely inappropriate.

I do not know when a poster went up on a local lamppost announcing the application, but I only saw it yesterday because I (like no doubt many others) was away during the summer holidays.

Even if I had been informed – which I was not – the timing of this application would have guaranteed that local residents and parents of children at New End School were unlikely to be able to respond in a timely manner to register their objections. The school is now closed for the summer holidays, meaning that parents and staff who do not live in the area will be completely unaware of the application. Even those who do live in the area are likely to be on holiday, as I was last week.

The lack of notice is compounded by a false statement on the notice regarding when the comment period ends. On the Camden website the notice period is said to end on 29 July, but in the notice posted on a local lamppost, it is given as four days earlier, on 25 July. Whether this misstatement was deliberate or not, it will inevitably have the effect of discouraging some who only recently found out about the application from objecting by giving them the impression that the comment period is already nearly over, when it is not.

In light of this exclusion of the local residents and parents from the comment process, I would like to suggest that a number of statements in the CMP are deliberately misleading. These include:

We have also had informal discussions from local residents and councillors and have received useful feedback.

Prior to the current submission of the draft construction management plan there has been one informal meeting where the local residents, the school and nursery were invited to see the proposal.

The CMP then seeks to dispense with further consultation by relying on comments made on the previous proposals:

Previously, for a different planning application without the lower ground floor, three informal meetings have been held. Most comments were in relation to how the development is to be built. Council officers welcomed the principle of entering into early discussions with local residents, the school & nursery, local councillors, developers and contractors. The architects have undergone discussions with New End School and the Nursery. Local Residents and the school responded with comments on the previous application, the main points of which are also relevant to this application.

There are two serious flaws in this approach. The first is that this proposal, by including what is euphemistically called a “lower ground floor”, would create significantly more disruption to the local community than the previous one. New consultations and comments are clearly necessary.

The second is that, as set out below, those previous comments have in any case been ignored.

Proposed large basement

I object to the inclusion of a large basement in the new proposals because of the obvious risks to the structural integrity of the surrounding buildings, which cannot have been properly explored on this rushed timescale. There are also clear risks to buildings in the wider area, including ours, from any potential impact on the Fleet River or on the local water network. This area is prone to repeated water pipe bursts, many of which have resulted in floods of our property, which sits at the bottom of a hill. These floods have caused 1000s of pounds of damage. Large scale excavations such as this (and the associated truck traffic) risk damage to an already very fragile water network, causing further flooding. In addition, the Fleet River runs underground but very close to the surface in this area.

Any disturbance of the river by such a large scale excavation could have catastrophic consequences for homes (like ours) located further down the river's course.

In addition, there is the obvious increase in dirt, noise, truck traffic, storage requirements, etc. associated with such a large excavation. None of these will have been taken into account in the previous CMP or in the objections to it. Given that there is no access to the site by road, and that all dirt and other materials will need to be transported over very narrow footpaths, it is questionable whether any CMP could be devised to reduce the impact on local residents and the school to permissible levels.

Siting of the offsite compound in Boades Mews

The CMP continues to suggest that there should be an offsite compound, including a toilet, sited in Boades Mews:

Following a site walk around the immediate vicinity with both the planning & highways and transport officers it was viewed that both Boades Mews & Back Lane have good potential to be an offsite compound.

There were very strenuous objections to this proposed site in the previous CMPs. I will summarise them again here:

1. Danger to local children. Boades Mews is a narrow, steeply sloped footpath, used daily not only by the 420 children enrolled in the school but also by their parents, carers and younger infant and toddler siblings. Older pupils at the school enter the school through a door in Boades Mews, and often wait there before school opens. Younger children, parents and carers often wait in Boades Mews at the end of the day before school pick up time.

Outside of school hours, children use the footpath as a safe, traffic-free space to skateboard, play football, etc.

A large compound would:

- a. Be an attractive nuisance to children waiting in Boades Mews;
 - b. Block off half the footpath at the upper end of Boades Mews. As the footpath is already overcrowded at pick up and drop off, loss of half of the area at the top of the footpath would inevitably force parents, children, carers, pushchairs and toddlers into New End Road itself, at the very times when there is heavy school run car traffic.
 - c. Deprive local children of a safe place to play outside.
2. Danger to persons and property from truck traffic in the narrow, sloping, and sharply curved road at the top of Boades Mews.

The proposed site would have to be reached by trucks travelling on the narrow, steeply sloping, and sharply curved New End Road. Trucks would be unable to make the sharp and narrow turn into New End Road (leading to New End Square) at the top of Boades Mews. They would inevitably need to back up or down the straight portion of New End Road instead. This is steep and narrow, and large trucks backing up or down the road would create a clear risk to local pedestrians and parked cars on the road and pavements.

3. The proposed site would interfere with our quiet enjoyment of our home.

Boades Mews is a narrow footpath. Our home and the home of our neighbour stand directly on the footpath. There is no intervening pavement, as there is between homes and normal roads. The proposed compound (containing, among other things, a chemical toilet) would stand just feet from our bedroom windows. The noise, smell and dirt would significantly interfere with our right to the quiet enjoyment of our home.

It is highly significant that following two previous consultations, the developers are still unable to identify an acceptable site for an offsite compound. We would suggest that the clear implication is that they will have to site the compound on their own property.