

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2018/2442/P	Joanna Briscoe	28/07/2018 12:41:02	OBJ	<p>I strongly object to this proposal on four principal grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The harm caused to neighbouring properties and the amenity of the immediate area by the building process.</li> <li>2. The impact of the work on the whole line of houses on the north side of Spencer Rise, which appear historically especially liable to subsidence.</li> <li>3. The application's references to flood risk seem to make no mention of the presence of the River Fleet in a culvert under York Rise - a mere 30 meters away.</li> <li>4. Approval would set a precedent for other similar developments in a street that is narrow, small in scale, and already well-provided with three storey houses.</li> </ol>

1: Harm to neighbouring properties and the amenity of the immediate area caused by the building process. Spencer Rise is a narrow, sloping, street where on-pavement parking has had to be permitted to allow access by emergency and refuse vehicles. It is also used as a rat-run on the (not-infrequent) occasions when utilities work closes neighbouring streets. This leads to angry 'Mexican stand-offs' and often damage to parked cars. The almost permanent presence of a skip and a succession of skip-lorries, cement wagons and other construction supply vehicles at the bottom of the road can only aggravate this situation. It will also, for a substantial period, knock out at least a couple of parking spaces in a street where parking is already at a premium. Estimating the process of excavation alone, it seems that more than 400 cubic meters of earth will need to be removed for the basement alone, plus stuff from the levelling of the garden area and all the other debris involved in clearing the house for refurbishment. This seems likely to mean the use of fifty or more standard-size skips.

Quite apart from the impact on traffic, the disturbance to neighbours (both immediate and further up and down the street) on both sides of the road will be horrendous in what is generally a pleasantly tranquil area.

2: The impact of the work on the whole line of houses on the north side of Spencer Rise, which appear historically especially liable to subsidence. Applicants may argue that the presence of a substantial concrete box under this house will help block downhill movement further up the street. That's a technical point I'm not competent to argue, but disturbance of the ground during construction will surely upset the status quo, and current calculations cannot take into account future possibilities of movement due to extreme climate incidents.

3: The application's references to flood risk seem to make no clear mention of the presence of the River Fleet in a culvert under York Rise.

I am concerned that a consequence of the recent work to contain flooding on the Heath could be to risk increasing the run-off of excess water into the Fleet. This passes the bottom of Spencer Rise, a mere 30 meters away and at approximately the same depth as the bottom of the proposed basement. Given the number of burst water pipes in London recently due to an aging infrastructure and unusual variations in climate and therefore ground conditions, surely this constitutes some kind of a flood risk – even without the the Heath works..

Incidentally, the use of maps in Vincent & Rymill's 'Desk Top Study' seems careless, even sloppy: it ignores the more accurate history provided in the application by Groundsure's series of maps, and cannot even be correct in its estimate of the date the house was built – certainly before 1874 when the street was renumbered. It's to be hoped that greater accuracy underlies V&W's more important assessments.

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4: Approval would set a precedent for other similar developments in a street that is narrow, small in scale, and already well-provided with three storey houses.

It is notable that an earlier pre-planning enquiry by the same applicant regarding this site (Ref: 2017/4115/PRE; 14/09/2017) referred not only to a basement extension, but also to the addition of a mansard roof and a rear extension: a two-storey house in a street of similarly modest buildings was to be turned into a dwelling more appropriate to the nearby Dartmouth Park area. Even this current application is disproportionate in its implications for the inhabitants of a mixed established community. It is more about the development of and profit from property than about the quality of existing neighbourhood life.

In summary:

In response to the 2017 pre-planning enquiry, Camden wrote amongst other things that they would require applicants to demonstrate that proposals for basements:

- do not harm the structural stability of the host building, neighbouring buildings or the water environment in the local area;
- avoid cumulative impacts;
- do not harm the amenity of neighbours;

I contend that:

1. In a street with a known history of subsidence (unforeseen when the buildings were originally constructed), even the apparently careful expert calculations backing this proposal cannot foresee and guarantee the longer term stability of surrounding buildings following such a substantial intervention; nor can they ensure the integrity of the water environment, especially with regard to the River Fleet.
2. The cumulative impact of approval – in terms of setting a precedent for basement developments in the street which it would be hard to deny – would be seriously detrimental, and would permanently change the nature of the neighbourhood.
3. The harm to the amenity of neighbours, both immediate and in the wider adjacent areas of Spencer Rise and York Rise, would be extensive and damaging during what would undoubtedly be a long construction process.

For these reasons I urge the refusal of this application. I would add that the previous proposal, for a roof extension (2018/0930/P), was refused, mostly for aesthetic reasons. How much more important for current (many long-term) residents are the issues of disturbance, quality of life, and the precedent for future upheaval?

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