FAO Kristina Smith Senior Planner @ Camden Council

I have several concerns about this planning application.

The details and configuration of the neighbouring Mansards and roof terraces on the drawings submitted in support of the application are inaccurate:

There is no door to a roof terrace on no.6 in the position shown. That terrace is only located in front of the Mansard, which is set back and not in the position shown on the plans submitted - there is no terrace to the outrigger. The terrace at no.4 dog legs around the return of the Mansard with a side access. The Design Statement cites that specific reference has been taken of no.4 and no.6 Bolton Road and the proposed design will match them. This is simply not possible as both designs are i) different and ii) not as represented. There is also no roof terrace at no.7 as is claimed in the Design Statement (3.3).   
  
There are various other factual inaccuracies in the Design Statement e.g. all the amendments are not at the rear as stated in the (3.5), it also concerns windows in the front elevation; the property is nowhere near the Harrow Road; the property is not divided into flats but a single unit. Inaccuracies at this stage fail to reassure that what is being applied for will match what is intended or would be constructed if permission were granted. 

Only three of the eight properties in the terrace have rear Mansards i.e. the majority of the buildings do not. The proposed rear Mansard/windows appears to be full width. None of the existing ones are full width. The windows also appear to be full length which CPG1 discourages. The Design Statement says that the proposed works will be sympathetic to previous approvals in the street but the design in question seems to be more ambitious than any of the existing. The Design Statement says that Camden has a desire for co-ordinated rear dormer designs (4.5) but the existing designs vary (and the existing ones at nos. 4 and 6 as represented are not accurate). No. 5 Bolton Road is a single household dwelling while the three other extensions in the terrace have been done in properties that are split into flats in order to maximise living space for much smaller units.

The terrace where the building is located is important enough to be specifically mentioned in the St Johns Wood Conservation Area report (2009) and is considered a valuable heritage asset as a whole. Even if, historically, this kind of development has been allowed, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the heritage asset may be far better preserved if no further development at roof level was permitted. However, if one is going to be allowed, it should be in keeping with the existing examples, which are smaller than what is proposed. The property at no.5 has over the years already been granted permission for not insignificant extensions.

A big concern is that the proposed design including a roof terrace will invite overlooking of neighbouring living areas and cause loss of privacy.  The design statement says (3.3) terraces at nos. 4, 6 (and inaccurately no.7) give valuable amenity BUT as per CPG1 (5.23), the council recognises that balconies/terraces give valuable amenity spaces for flats that would otherwise have little or no private exterior space. This is not a flat but a single household dwelling with a large garden affording access to outside space. The same para in CP1 acknowledges the potential nuisance that new terraces can give to neighbours which would be the case here. These neighbours have no other outside access. The council should also be made aware that historically items have been thrown from windows at no.5 into neighbours’ outside space. Permitting high-level outdoor access will add further opportunity for this kind of incident to occur.

Apart from those at nos. 4 & 6, there are no other terraces. These terraces at no.6 and no.4 have been in existence since the 1983 and 2000 respectively. They are also sufficiently far apart to ensure privacy/overlooking is not an issue. If a privacy screen to both sides of the proposed terrace at no.5 were to be erected to mitigate overlooking, the open views currently enjoyed by no.4 and no.6 would be ruined. Moreover, the small size of the terrace would be dwarfed by the necessary screens resulting in an unattractive and out of balance design.

Taking everything into consideration, I would urge the council to reject the inclusion of a roof terrace in the design and - if a Mansard extension is deemed acceptable - that it truly mirrors one of the existing smaller Mansard extensions.

Sincerely