

OBJECTION TO APPLICATION 2019/1646/P

Site: 53-55 Monmouth Street (2 Ching Court) London WC2H 9DG

This document replicates one submitted using the online system on 28/4/19. Because of the 1988 character limit the objection had to be split into 4 parts and so is also being submitted as an email attachment.

I am writing to object to the Planning Application to convert the 1st to 3rd floors of 53 and 55 Monmouth Street, otherwise known as 2 and 3 Ching Court, from office to residential use. I have already made an objection to the associated Listed Building Application (2019/1701/L).

The proposed site is on the West side of the Ching Court triangle and I live on the East side. In my objection to the Listed Building Application my concerns were related to the impact of the proposed development on the setting of my own listed building and the impact on their setting, namely Ching Court as a whole. In the case of the Planning Application I am objecting because I believe that the proposed development will cause unacceptable harm to my privacy and security, and will also give rise to noise and disturbance at night and at the weekend.

2 and 3 Ching Court are clearly visible from the rooms at the rear of my property, all of which are classed as habitable rooms (living rooms, kitchen and bedrooms). The distance is less than 18m. I am able to look directly into the rooms opposite and they into mine. This can be seen from the photographs provided by the applicant. In photos 1, 13, 23, 40, and 54 the building visible through the window is mine.

Of the 6 rooms in the planned flats which overlook Ching Court and hence my property 3 are kitchens which are classed as habitable rooms. The sinks are positioned so that anyone doing the washing up will look out at directly at the bedrooms of my property.

Camden's CPG on Amenity (March 2018) states that:

Interior and exterior spaces that are overlooked lack privacy, which can affect the quality of life of occupants. The Council will therefore expect[s] development to be designed to protect the privacy of the occupants of both new and existing dwellings to a reasonable degree.

My view is that the degree of overlooking which would result from the conversion of these offices to residential use is not reasonable and will affect the quality of life of myself and my family, as well as that of our neighbours. The CPG makes clear that habitable rooms are the most sensitive to overlooking. All of the rooms at the rear of my property are classed as habitable.

The CPG states that a minimum distance of 18m is required between habitable rooms in order to ensure privacy. This cannot be provided here. For my neighbours the distance is even smaller, with a minimum distance of less than 8m for some of them. Although the CPG suggests the option of mitigation measures, these are not possible within the confines of Ching Court.

As I made clear in my response to the Listed Building Application, the fact that the residential buildings are overlooked by offices, and vice-versa, is part of the ingenuity of this Terry Farrell development. It provides a much appreciated level of privacy at the rear, especially as the front of our

residential buildings face straight onto busy streets. The loss of privacy at the rear will significantly impact on our quality of life.

Other issues associated with the proposed conversion is one of noise and of security at the rear. I will take noise first.

There are 2 sources of noise, the flats themselves and from people arriving and leaving.

Noise will be generated within the flats. There are 3 flats and so 3 sets of speakers, TV's and residents. Ching Court acts as an echo chamber and any noise from the flats will be clearly audible in the surrounding residential buildings even if the windows of both buildings are closed. This already happens during the day but the background noise level is not so low. In the evening and at night the impact will be much greater. This may require us to keep windows closed which we would otherwise keep open to allow for ventilation.

The other source of noise is from people arriving and leaving the flats via Ching Court. During the day this already happens with the current office use but it does not happen very often at night, and when people are leaving the offices at night or in the early morning it does cause a noise which can wake up residents. The proposed flats have the same access from rear of the building as the offices, but are much more likely to be used at night. The noise of people entering and leaving will disturb residents. It should be pointed out that none of the existing residential properties are accessed from Ching Court, another aspect of the ingenious design by Terry Farrell.

Having access to the residential properties from Ching Court also brings with it the problem of security. If access to the flats is from the Courtyard then the occupants of the flats will need to be able to open the Courtyard gates to provide this access. This is similar to opening the door to a block of flats to allow entry for visitors. Whilst in a block of flats the flats themselves are still protected from unwanted visitors in the common parts by a front door, in Ching Court this is not the case. The whole of the rear of the residential buildings provides many possible entry points. Allowing the flats at 2 and 3 Ching Court to have night-time access from the rear would increase this risk. Currently the covenants which apply to the freehold properties around the Courtyard prevent the use of the Courtyard after 21:00 for both noise and security reasons.

It is worth noting that the gates to Ching Court had to be modified some time ago to prevent access out of hours. This was because thieves had been able to get under the gates and/or force the locks to gain entry to the courtyard at night and commit burglary. Once they were inside the courtyard it was very easy for them to break windows and get inside properties. Allowing access to Ching Court by tenants who regularly change would risk this problem recurring.

The flats in No. 3 Ching Court (55 Monmouth Street) can be accessed from Monmouth Street and the implication of the plan is that the flats at 2 Ching Court (53 Monmouth Street) could also be accessed the same way by leaving the door of 3 Ching Court and immediately entering the door of 2 Ching Court. However this will still cause a noise and hence disturbance. If the council is minded to grant permission a better solution would be to add a "false door" to the existing portico so that the area becomes an internal passage between the buildings. This would mean that access to all of the flats would be from Monmouth Street, replicating the situation for all the other residential buildings around the courtyard. The door would match those in the similar porticos at 4 and 5 Ching Court.

Overlooking, noise and security will all have a significant impact on my family and on other residents of the buildings around Ching Court and so I ask that you refuse permission for the loss of office and its conversion to residential.

