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**Proof of Evidence  
Persephone Gardens  
Retirement Village,  
Gondar Gardens, West  
Hampstead, London NW6 1QF**

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by Amanda Reynolds B.Arch, MAUD, RIBA  
for LifeCare Residences

November 2018

Town and Country Planning Act 1990  
Appeal by LifeCare Residences

In respect of a refusal of planning permission by Camden Council  
for an application to build a retirement village on a site on  
Gondar Gardens, West Hampstead, London NW6 1QF

Proof of Evidence  
by Amanda Reynolds, Architect and Urban Designer,  
B.Arch, MA UD (Dist.), RIBA

Council Ref: PA/2017/6045/P  
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fig 1.0 Appeal Site in wider context (Google earth photo) from RPP's DAS p.8



# 1

## Introduction and Scope of Evidence

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### 1.1 Qualifications

1.1.1 My name is Amanda Reynolds. I hold a Bachelor of Architecture degree (NZ) and a Master of Arts in Urban Design (Distinction) (UK). I am registered to practise architecture in the UK and New Zealand and have worked extensively on a range of architecture and urban design projects in both countries and I have lived and worked in London for over 20 years.

1.1.2 I have more than 30 years experience as an architect and over 20 years in urban design and I recently held the position of Chair of the Urban Design Group until 2012. I am a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects, a Recognised Practitioner in Urban Design and a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Architects.

1.1.3 I am a Design Council/Cabe BEE (Built Environment Expert) and a member of various London Boroughs' (Hackney, Lewisham, Southwark, Greenwich) Design Review Panels. I also sit on panels for Design South East and Thurrock Council, and have recently been appointed to the Chair of Enfield's new DRP.

1.1.4 My current Urban Design Consultancy (AR Urbanism) was established in December 2007 and prior to that I held the position of Practice Director (Urban Design) at the planning and architecture practice Llewelyn Davies, where I led a team of 20 urban designers, architects and landscape designers.

1.1.5 My practice undertakes architecture, master planning, regeneration, urban design and public realm projects covering a broad range from strategic planning frameworks to single-site master plans and town centre regeneration schemes. Projects are within London, throughout the UK and overseas.

1.1.6 As part of my role I act as a design advisor to a range of clients in both the public and private sectors, in particular as an expert witness to public inquiries in this capacity. I am also a regular presenter to seminars and conferences on urban design fields for a number of different organisations including Design For Homes, the Architects Journal, and the Royal Town Planning Institute.

1.1.7 As well as consulting and design review work, I have lectured and taught architecture and urban design in a number of universities and continue to do this on a part time basis as a tutor and/or guest critic. Currently I am working with the University of Westminster and Southbank University.

1.1.8 I have visited the site, its immediate location and the wider area a number of times over the last three years.



fig 1.1 Existing view of the reservoir site on Gondar Gardens



fig 1.2 Existing view of properties across the road from the reservoir site on Gondar Gardens

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## 1.2 Role in this Project

1.2.1 I was appointed to this project by the commissioning client, LifeCare Residences (LCR) in October 2016 to act as a professional advisor on the design and development of this proposed retirement community, with 3 strands of input:

- **Townscape Advice:** Providing townscape and urban design analysis of the wider context of the proposal site to feed into the design process, particularly in support of the architects' (RPP, now Apt) development of a coherent and locally contextual design philosophy for the proposal. I produced the Townscape Report for the planning application;
- **'Critical Friend'/Design Review:** I regularly reviewed the ongoing design development - generally in design workshops with the client, architects and other consultants - particularly in consideration of the contextual and townscape issues. This role is designed to embed continuous peer reviewing into the design process, aiming to ensure robust outcomes which are tested as they are developed;
- **Community Engagement:** I organised and carried out community engagement events which communicated the proposals to the local community and fed back responses to these to LCR and the consultant team. I produced the Statement of Community Involvement for the Planning Application.

## 1.3 Planning History and Description of the Project

1.3.1 The planning history of the site is as set out in the Statement of Case, Section 3. The application is now subject to an appeal against refusal of the planning application and this proof provides a design response to the refusal in conjunction with other witnesses, including Robin Partington from Apt (formerly RPP) and others. The **full description** of the scheme is as follows:

'Partial demolition of the existing reservoir, including the roof and most of the internal structure, and the erection of six 4-6 storey buildings and four 2-3 storey link buildings with common base-levels within the retaining walls of the existing reservoir to include 82 self-contained extra care apartments (class C2); a 15 bedroom nursing home (Class C2); Associated communal facilities including reception area, guest suite, lounge, restaurant, café, bar, library, exercise pool, gym, therapy rooms and cinema; Associated support facilities including staff offices, welfare and training spaces, storage, laundry, kitchen, cycle storage, car parking and plant areas and; a site-wide biodiversity-led landscaping and planting scheme including external amenity space, drop off area, retention pond and slope stabilization and associated engineering works.'





fig 1.3 View of mansion block adjacent to the site on Gondar Gardens



fig 1.4 View of rear accesses/garage opposite the reservoir site on Gondar Gardens



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## 1.4 Reasons for Refusal

1.4.1 At the time of writing there are 14 Reasons for Refusal. This proof addresses the design issues inherent in a number of the reasons, with a specific focus on Reasons for Refusal nos 4 & 5. Bold text below (my emphasis) identifies the main issues within these reasons:

### Reason 4:

The proposed development, by virtue of its **failure to provide an active street frontage, disconnection from the local streetscene and the surrounding community**, results in an **inward-looking enclave** which **fails to contribute to community safety and security or to promote social cohesion**, contrary to policies D1 (Design) and C5 (Safety and Security) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017. Reason 1:

### Reason 5:

The proposed development, by virtue of its **height, mass, scale and detailed design**, would be **detrimental to the streetscene, the open space, the outlook of surrounding properties, and the character and appearance** of the wider area while **failing to preserve or enhance the character and appearance** of the local area, contrary to policies G1 (Delivery and location of growth), D1 (Design), D2 (Heritage) and A1 (Managing the impact of development) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017 and Policy 2 of the Fortune Green and West Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan 2015.

## 1.5 Scope of Evidence

1.5.1 My evidence will address the design and townscape issues, as set out in the reasons for refusal, with a particular focus on scale, massing, height and detailed design impacts on the immediate and wider context, as well as comparisons with best practice and existing developments in the immediate and wider context.

1.5.2 This proof addresses the design aspects of the appeal proposal in the context of the reasons for refusal and should be read in conjunction with my colleagues' proofs relating to design and planning, in particular those of Robin Partington, David Philips and Tim Goodwin.

1.5.3 This proof will also address the comments of the Camden Design Review Panel and although it will assess the proposal with reference to the relevant national, regional and local guidance documents, I will defer to my planning colleague's evidence on planning policy matters.



fig 2.1 View of local mansion blocks on West End Lane, a characteristic form found in the local and wider area throughout West Hampstead



fig 2.2 Nearby Fortune Green looking across to recent development on its north side.

# 2

## Context and Townscape Analysis

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### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A full description of the site and surroundings is contained within the Appellant's Statement of Case (SoC), Section 2.0, pp 5-7. This is a summary of townscape information relating to the site and the specifics of the reasons for refusal. Reference is made to the Townscape Study document prepared as part of the planning application. The appeal site (the site) is located in West Hampstead in the London Borough of Camden.

### 2.2 Broader and Historical Context

2.2.1 The reservoir was built in 1874 soon after the nearby railway line. The character of the wider area was then transformed through the development of local housing, which followed soon after the reservoir and rail connection. The housing along Gondar Gardens and adjacent streets was still under construction well into the 20th Century. This process followed the traditional unplanned manner which has resulted, among other things, in the local oddity of 'half-fronted streets' (ie: streets which have on one side, the backs of housing which fronts another street) of which the reservoir section of Gondar Gardens is one.

2.2.2 These half-fronted streets are the result of early developers adding frontage developments to sites not deep enough for back to back housing plots. This is a situation that current urban design best practice would seek to avoid for community safety, maximum land value and access efficiency. See photos throughout and Townscape Study, Sections 4.1 & 4.2 pp. 27-38.

2.2.3 West Hampstead is also well known for its high quality residential character, supported by the considerable range of Victorian and Edwardian terrace housing through the neighbourhood and the prevalence of large mansion block developments from several historical eras, a distinctive characteristic of the wider area. See images throughout this proof and Townscape Study, Section 5 & 6 pp. 39-60.

2.2.4 In response to the ongoing pressure for housing in London there are also a growing number of recent housing developments. These vary from small 'infill' housing projects, such as to the south on Gondar Gardens itself (see fig 2.4, following page), to blocks of flats, for instance on nearby Mill Lane (see Appendix 5.9), to comprehensive developments of several blocks, for instance adjacent to the transport hubs in West End Lane (see Heritage Lane project Appendix 5.12).

2.2.5 The wider area also benefits from being part of the northern slopes rising from the Thames Valley towards Hampstead and the site itself sits on a small promontory at a relatively high level - an obvious place to locate a reservoir which would supply its clients by gravity feed.





fig 2.3 Northern section of Gondar Gardens showing mansion blocks in foreground and terrace housing further along the street



fig 2.4 Recent infill residential to rear of existing Sarre Rd gardens on Gondar Gardens, south of the site



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2.2.6 Good access to local open green space and the amenities of the wider area is part of the attractiveness of this site for residential development, particularly for the elderly. Locally, Fortune Green and Hampstead Cemetery are substantial public green spaces within easy walking (or mobility scooter) distance from the site.

## 2.3 Local Context

2.3.1 The local context for the site is characterised by relatively dense streets of late 19th century and early 20th century housing, with building heights varying between 2 - 3.5 storeys for terrace houses and up to 4-6 storeys for mansion blocks. There is some semi-detached housing, but most streets are continuously occupied on both sides with high quality and high density terraces of housing.

2.3.2 The nearest conservation area - West End Green - is located several streets to the east of the site and the site is not visible from any of the streets in the conservation area.

2.3.3 The local urban blocks (ie: areas bounded by streets and potentially including multiple terraces, sites and buildings) are large, with typical unbroken street lengths of 150-200m with 50-70m depth. However, the streets are part of a relatively well-connected grid providing good access to local amenities. The appeal site is part of an unusually large residential urban block with high density terrace/mansion block housing wrapped around three and a half of its four sides, while the subject street, Gondar Gardens, traverses two sides of this block - the west and north.

2.3.4 The area's continuous, high density residential street edges express an attractive, busy, well-overlooked character to most of the streets in West Hampstead. However, by contrast, this is distinctly lacking in the section of Gondar Gardens on which the appeal site is located.

2.3.5 This section of Gondar Gardens is atypical of the wider area in that it is only partly built up, with sporadic housing along one side (the east side), while the west side has historically provided rear access to gardens or garages for houses on Sarre Rd, which runs parallel to this section of Gondar Gardens to the west (see map fig 2.6, following page). Some of these garages are now being converted/redeveloped as small houses and studios, as mentioned earlier.

2.3.6 Therefore, due to the historical reservoir siting, along with the 'half-fronted street' character of this section of Gondar Gardens, there is currently very little active frontage overlooking the street (see street sections in Appendices 5.3 & 5.4).



fig 2.5 The only residential (assumed) structure opposite the appeal site.

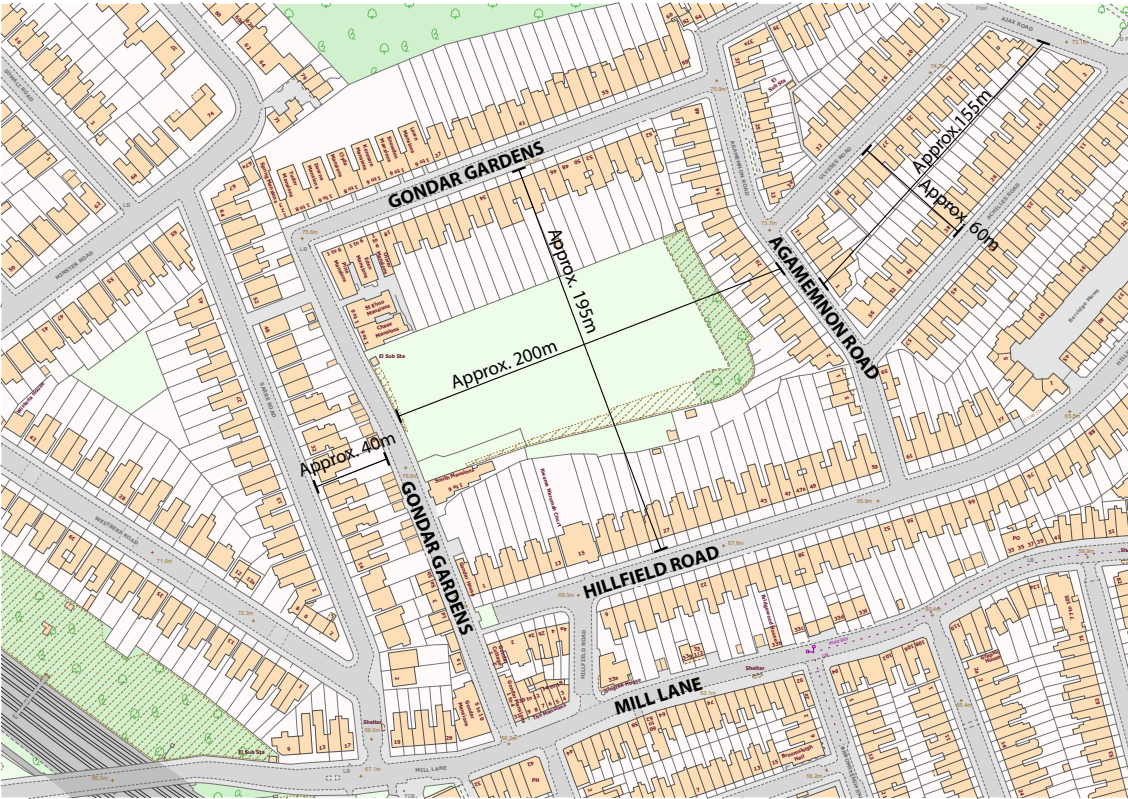


fig 2.6 Map of site and local area showing relative urban block size and 'half-streets'

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2.3.7 Gondar Gardens is not the only 'half street' in the area, see map opposite and Townscape Study pp. 36 & 37 for a more detailed description of this typology. However this part of this street is the least overlooked public route in the entire neighbourhood, thus establishing, in the vicinity of the site, an existing distinctive quality of disconnection from the local streetscene.

2.3.8 In addition to Chase Mansions and South Mansions, which are adjacent to the site, Gondar Gardens also has blocks of housing at and near the junction with Mill Lane to the south. The end-of-terrace elevations of these blocks have their major frontages to either Mill Lane or Hillfield Rd.

2.3.9 There are also several recent, small-scale infill developments to the south of Gondar Gardens, near Mill Lane, which add limited improvement to the area, as these buildings tend to have few windows, frosted glazing and/or solid gated entrances overlooking the street.

2.3.10 There is one of these minor developments along the northern section of Gondar Gardens (see fig 2.5 opposite) which is opposite the appeal site. However, while it has a front door to the street, it only has two windows facing the street direction, one with obscure glass blocks and the other quite small and at a high level.

2.3.11 Because of the street's 'half-fronted-street' characteristics, there are windows from the backs of Sarre Rd residences which look towards the site and hence towards the Gondar Gardens street itself (see fig 2.4 previous page, and cross-sections Appendix 5.3 & 5.4). However, because of the stepped topography, large trees and garages/studios in rear gardens, few of these houses would see pedestrians on Gondar Gardens' footpaths, then only when viewed from their upper levels and on the eastern footpath, a significant distance away.

## 2.4 The Site

2.4.1 The appeal site itself is very large for a brownfield inner London site, but due to the 'invisibility' of the reservoir structure (buried under its grass roof) as well as its location on a minor street, the site has been barely noticed or regarded as open space by local residents. The site has never been publicly accessible.

2.4.2 The site's invisibility is emphasised further by its only public front being along its shortest side on a street with very little else of frontage interest.

2.4.3 In addition, the raised nature of the reservoir itself (approximately 1.6m above street level) and the land fall to the east mean that it is not possible to gain a clear appreciation of the extent of the site, nor any distant views over it, from the street.



fig 2.7 Rear view of houses fronting Sarre Rd. This view is from Gondar Gardens showing poor street edge plus garages and planting frustrating overlooking on to this street from Sarre Rd buildings.



fig 2.8 View of garage doors and fences opposite site along Gondar Gardens



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2.4.4 Any overview of the site is limited to upper levels of houses to the north which back onto and/or overlook the site. The houses to the south and east of the site have any potential view over the site restricted by topography (they sit lower than the site and reservoir itself) and dense planting. I refer to Appendices 5.16 & 5.17 showing the potential views over the site in plan and cross-section.

2.4.5 Currently the site contributes no active frontage to the local streetscene, nor do the blank doors of the multiple garages opposite the site. There are a limited number of buildings which do provide active frontage to Gondar Gardens by way of doors and windows. Apart from the mansion blocks adjacent to the site, these are mostly located at the ends of the street, away from the site (see para 2.3.6 above).

2.4.6 The mansion block buildings which 'bookend' the site's frontage are typical of smaller local blocks, with 3 storeys facing the street. The relative isolation of these blocks - a single block to the south and two blocks together to the north - sets them apart from other local mansion blocks, which are generally in terraces, groups or whole urban blocks.

2.4.7 This 'isolated building' characteristic adds to Gondar Gardens' singularity as a street and emphasises its existing disconnection from the local streetscene and surrounding community. This could only be improved by adding respectful development to this site.

## 2.5 Summary of Context and Site Analysis

2.5.1 The wider local area of West Hampstead is a high density residential area with a diverse range of housing typologies and good mix of facilities and amenities. New housing sites are being developed and are introducing further typologies, not all of which respond positively to the local context.

2.5.2 While the local area's high density traditional residential forms create attractive streets, Gondar Gardens itself, in the vicinity of the site contains only isolated examples of residential built form and largely poor quality street edges.

2.5.3 The present 'coherence of the public realm and landscape' (Council's Statement of Case, para 6.19) is expressed entirely through minimal active frontages and a range of poor quality blank garage doors, blank garden walls, solid gates and doors or obscured glazing to a few windows. This is a type of 'coherence' which is not worth retaining in its current form.



fig 3.1 More recent housing, late 20th Century, a local 'gated' development - Berridge Mews off Hillfield Rd (built 1989/90). Poor quality streetscape onto Hillfield Rd with continuous 1.8m high close boarded fence to back of pavement and no visual or physical connection into gardens or houses from the street.



fig 3.2 Part street elevation of proposal showing size and location of windows, terraces, inset balconies and main pedestrian entrance into the development. Also the existing Chase Mansions to the north (left) of the blocks.

# 3

## The Reasons for Refusal

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### 3.1 Reason for Refusal No. 4 - The Reason

'The proposed development, by virtue of its **failure to provide an active street frontage, disconnection from the local streetscene and the surrounding community**, results in an **inward-looking enclave** which **fails to contribute to community safety and security or to promote social cohesion**, contrary to policies D1 (Design) and C5 (Safety and Security) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.'

3.1.1 I shall respond to each of the elements of this reason for refusal in turn.

### 3.2 "Failure to Provide an Active Street Frontage, to Contribute to Community Safety or to Promote Social Cohesion"

3.2.1 The Camden Design Guide (p.84, boxed note headed 'Active Frontage') states that active frontages are *"building frontages which add interest and life to public spaces, through the use of doors and windows or shopfronts and lively uses."*

3.2.2 While a shopfront would probably be inappropriate in such a low footfall, residential location, the proposed design includes a considerable number of doors and windows overlooking the street, along with terraces and balconies. **These are all highly likely to be used during the daytime as the residents are by definition retired and not going out to work each day.** This is in contrast to the usual occupants of market housing, most of whom (adults) would be likely to work outside the home during the day.

3.2.3 As most of the proposed retirement village's residents will also be relatively active (as in Peter Barefoot's Alder King 'Sales and Marketing Report' pp14-18 describing typical buyers looking for 'active retirement') and there will also be visitors and staff arriving and leaving throughout the day, the development will certainly provide 'lively uses'; thus enlivening a presently very dull and inactive street.

3.2.4 The proposal includes the following residential elements overlooking the street frontage: 14 apartments with 14 terraces and balconies to promote active use; doors onto each of these outdoor spaces; plus 48 windows from habitable rooms in these apartments also overlooking the street. I refer to the proposed plan and street elevation analysis as well as the accompanying comparison with the previously consented scheme and other recent local housing projects as set out in Appendices 5.7 - 5.13.





fig 3.3 View into the development entrance showing gardens to the pavement edge and a clear view into the central pedestrian street and arrival courtyard



fig 3.4 View of the entrance gate into LCR's Battersea development



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3.2.5 The proposal's four ground floor apartments have terraces with access doors immediately overlooking the street. The terraces will be separated from the footpath by a low wall and planting in a traditional style (see fig 3.3 opposite and fig 3.2 previous page). Because the senior residents of the village are more likely to occupy these rooms and terraces during the daytime, they will add considerably to both street vitality and community safety through positive surveillance over and interaction with the street.

3.2.6 The doors onto the terraces **will not function as front doors into the apartments from the street for reasons of security for potentially vulnerable occupants**. However, these doors, the windows and terraces together provide a strong visual link between the development and the street and clearly fulfil the Council's definition of 'active frontage'.

3.2.7 I refer to Appendices 5.8 to 5.13, showing the previously approved frontage scheme street elevation, as well as comparator information on other local residential developments.

3.2.8 Increasing the number of front entrances on the frontage of the current appeal scheme would not increase the numbers of people coming and going on the street; more front doors would only serve potentially to divert the ground floor residents a few metres to a different entry point. This would not improve that project's 'active frontage' performance.

3.2.9 Also, the previous proposal included no ground floor terraces but rather, light wells to basement rooms below, thus separating the ground floor apartments further from the street and providing little opportunity for visual connection between residents and passers-by at ground floor.

3.2.10 The previous consented scheme also proposed far fewer flats than the appeal proposal (28 instead of 82), hence there would be fewer residents using any of these access points. Therefore this scheme offered much less potential for improving community safety, let alone community cohesion.

3.2.11 **Several other local recently consented and built housing schemes are also analysed** (see Appendices 5.9 - 5.13) for their ground floor active frontage characteristics. It is notable that none of these, nor any of the local traditional mansion blocks, provide direct street entrances into ground floor apartments. A communal pedestrian entrance is regarded as a sensible security approach as well as a logical and effective way to funnel mail, deliveries and enquiries to a single point.

3.2.12 This approach to new developments follows best practice urban design principles by combining street overlooking for community safety with the needs of household security though controlling access into common areas and hence into apartments.



fig 3.5 Two views of Maygrove Rd apartments showing inset communal entrances (left) and lightwells to frontage between street and building. No private front doors and no ground floor terraces



fig 3.6 Mill Lane Apartments - street view showing vehicle entrance (solid door), main communal pedestrian entrance and (to left side), a pedestrian gate leading to further residences and the communal garden. No private front doors or access to front gardens

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3.2.13 The project has been designed in accordance with Secured by Design principles and in consultation with the Met Police's Designing Out Crime Officer, who was generally satisfied with the proposal, with some suggested amendments, which were undertaken (Refer to Apt's DAS para 6.08), and on condition of further input at a detailed stage.

3.2.14 The appeal proposal is a scheme of generally higher quality than any of these comparator projects, as well as being consistent with historical and best practice urban design principles in terms of respecting the history of the area and the relationship of the development to the street.

3.2.15 The appeal proposal's two entrances into the village from the street are generous (6-7 metres), visually open and welcoming, not solid entrance doors. The central pedestrian entry (see fig3.3 previous page) to the development provides a clear opening into the entrance courtyard and reception area.

3.2.16 The view from the street into the courtyard will provide an immediate welcoming view into the central pedestrian street of the scheme, as well as a long view towards the protected green space to the rear of the site - a view not previously available to the public due to the reservoir's height. A residential gate and identity signage will be provided to both entrances.

3.2.17 The gates will be similar to those found into local mansion blocks or other residential developments and a similar one is shown at fig 3.4 (previous page). This is located at LCR's existing successful retirement village in Battersea, South London.

3.2.18 The proposed development would create a higher level of street activity with residents, staff and visitors coming and going more frequently than would be the case typically for the other housing on the local streets. The site will be staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. Creating a strong feeling of security is at the heart of the Appellant's approach to retirement housing.

3.2.19 As set out in the previous analysis section, this part of Gondar Gardens is largely bereft of activity or lively uses at present and the proposal will add considerably to the street active frontage, creating strong connections to the local streetscene through positive street overlooking and traditional landscaped front gardens, plus often-occupied front terraces and balconies.

3.2.20 The Council's position in their SoC would appear to be that without direct front doors into ground floor apartments there is no 'active frontage'. This is not only incorrect in terms of their own definition, but also not a position followed by Camden's planning department in approving other local housing projects.





fig 3.7 Pine Mansions from Gondar Gardens - no door access, no terraces or balconies overlooking the street. Street elevation length almost identical to those proposed.



fig 3.8 CGI View along Gondar Gardens showing proposal in street context

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3.2.21 Lengths of residential facades which do not include front doors is a feature of traditional mansion blocks, particularly when turning corners. For example, Pine Mansions on the northern corner of Gondar Gardens has an exposed side elevation (see fig 3.7 opposite), with no doors at all and many windows partly hidden behind a hedge.

3.2.22 This part of the block has an elevation length of approximately 24 metres, similar to the elevation length of each frontage block of the proposed scheme (24 and 29 metres respectively). However, the proposed scheme has larger windows, ground floor doors onto terraces as well as upper level terraces and balconies, all presenting a greater potential for visual interaction with the public realm and 'activity' than this older mansion block.

3.2.23 The additional windows, doors and balconies in the appeal proposal, along with the additional 'lively uses' of residents coming and going from their homes, and staff travelling to and from their jobs, will add considerable activity to this currently dull backstreet.

3.2.24 This activity will strengthen wider community safety while the new residents' community will also contribute to social cohesion through involvement in external activities. Many of the new residents are highly likely to come from the wider local area, as shown in the sales information from LCR relating to their previous development in Battersea (see figs 3.15 & 3.16 p. 28 this proof).

### 3.3 "Disconnection from Local Streetscene and the Surrounding Community"

3.3.1 As noted above and in the streetview CGI, fig 3.8 opposite, the proposal is designed to connect strongly to the local streetscene. The design of the buildings (see DAS and Robin Partington's proof for details) is a modern interpretation of the positive characteristics of existing local mansion blocks (see Townscape Study, Section 6), conceptualised as a 'village' with various functions (residential entrances, cafe and restaurant etc) opening off a central street and associated courtyards.

3.3.2 As can be seen in the image opposite, the proposal incorporates the heights, forms and bay window rhythms of the adjacent mansion blocks, while avoiding a 'pastiche' copying of this or any other historical style. The appeal proposal improves on the existing mansion block elements in order to make strong connections to the streetscene - adding terraces and inset balconies to the street edge for greater engagement with the street - while not undermining the local importance of the historical buildings.



fig 3.9 CGI View through vehicle/pedestrian access along southern boundary towards green space



fig 3.10 Berridge Mews entrance - one of two identical gated entries - the development is otherwise surrounded with a high fence.



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3.3.3 The materials used - including brick, stone and render - are commonly found on local streets, reinforcing the relationship to the streetscene. However, the proposal uses these materials in a simple, contemporary manner, so as not to compete visually with the historical buildings.

3.3.4 While the adjacent mansion blocks sit to the back of the pavement with no transition or garden space (although some hedging is found), small front gardens are common elements of other parts of Gondar Gardens. The incorporation of a small setback to the proposed buildings for landscaping enables the design to include ground floor terraces and larger windows which provide positive connection with and improvements to the existing streetscene.

3.3.5 A further aspect of engagement and connection with the local streetscene will be provided by the two entrances into the development. Both entrances provide generous openings between the two new mansion blocks or along the southern boundary. These are similar in scale to many mews or lane access points in the local area, however are an improvement on these as they offer a visitor or passer-by a clear and welcoming view, first of all into the landscaped entry courtyards and secondly long views to the end of the site - the protected green space - and potentially beyond towards Hampstead (although tree growth may reduce this). See fig. 3.9 opposite.

3.3.6 The views into and through the site are not currently (and have never been) available and will provide a new sense of openness and connectivity of the overall development to the streetscene and wider community, considerably improving the currently poor quality 'coherence of public realm'.

3.3.7 The Council's SoC maintains that the central entry into the site '*lacks any clear definition or obvious signifier as an entrance*', leading to '*poor legibility*', however it is difficult to see how anyone could miss obvious, 6-7 metre wide entrances, particularly the main pedestrian entrance, centrally placed between the main mansion blocks. This will have a domestic-scale gate and an extensive open view east (as above) and signage identifying the retirement village.

3.3.8 By comparison with other local lanes and access points (see local case study examples Appendix 5.14), the proposal offers entrances that are both highly legible and somewhat more appealing than others locally. For example, see Berridge Mews, fig 3.10 opposite. This is an older modern development with a very poor street edge - solid fencing for 70 metres along the street with no visual connection into ground floor spaces or gardens - and clearly gated entrances which suggest 'keep away' to the visitor, not 'come in' as will this proposal.



fig 3.11 Kendal Court on Shoot-up Hill showing central vehicle and pedestrian entry into site



fig 3.12 View of proposed landscaped arrival courtyard looking back towards street and central entry

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3.3.9 The central position of the main pedestrian entry point into the proposal adds to the references to local mansion blocks, although the access is via a residential gate rather than a front door at this point. As noted, many mansion blocks (though not all) have 'central' front doors between symmetrical flats, although this becomes a moot point when a central door is one of many in a terrace of mansions (see Townscape Study, Section 6 pp. 47-60).

3.3.10 Larger and later mansion blocks include entrance doors to the side, doors located in internal corners and other approaches to entry point locations. See Appendix 5.15 and fig 3.11 opposite for local examples. Large urban block developments of multiple mansions also include other entry points for vehicles, servicing and access to communal areas (see Appendix 5.14). The proposal's secondary entry to the south for deliveries, parking and drop-off/pick-up activities as well as pedestrians, is consistent with this design approach, but an improvement on it.

3.3.11 As an example, I refer to the image in fig 3.11 opposite, of a traditional 1930s mansion block in the local area, Kendal Court on Shoot-up Hill. This block has a central pedestrian and vehicle entrance and a symmetrical plan with two identical (handed) blocks to the street. The entry lacks any obvious signage, but is clearly identified by its openness between hedges. The entry courtyard is sadly car-dominated, without any softening landscape treatment, and the two front doors into the residential blocks are partly obscured by parked vehicles. However, even though these front doors are not (to quote the Council's SoC) '***prominent and centrally-placed entrances***', once a visitor is in the courtyard it is clear that the front doors are located in the internal corners.

3.3.12 By contrast and by way of updating the mansion block approach, a visitor arriving at the front courtyard of the development will experience an attractive space where the landscape is designed to orient the visitor naturally towards the reception entrance, before the nursing home entrance and two of the residential mansion block entrances become apparent.

3.3.13 This process of revealing more detail of a place as one moves naturally through it is known as 'serial vision'. It is well-documented that this is a natural and appealingly human way-finding system (See 'The Concise Townscape' by Gordon Cullen pp.17-19 in Appendix 5.18).

3.3.14 The Council's SoC further claims that the proposal's entry '***is set back from the street frontage***' and of a '***muted and inconspicuous design***' which suggests that it could be in danger of being invisible.





fig 3.13 Coloured plan of the proposal showing main central entry point, shared vehicle and pedestrian entry to the south, entrance courtyard and green roofs to the link blocks



fig 3.14 View over the central street and entrance courtyard looking east towards the green space. Living room balconies face into courtyards as well as the street and to the east over the open space.

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3.3.15 As above and with reference to the plans and visuals (fig 3.3 p.16 this proof), it is clear that the only 'set back' element of the entry area is the gates themselves, which are set back from the front boundary in order to both include landscape elements outside the gates and to clearly invite people into the entry space. Setting gates back from a boundary line is also standard practice in many entry conditions to ensure that the gates do not intrude onto the public realm.

3.3.16 It is not clear whether it is the gates or the buildings which are 'muted and inconspicuous'. In either case I would argue that this is surely a positive attribute, as the design aims to respect its more flamboyant traditional neighbours. The gates are practical elements that do not need to be too strongly celebrated.

#### 3.4 "Creating an Inward-Looking Enclave"

3.4.1 The Council's SoC also refers to the proposal's 'gated access' as a negative aspect, contributing towards '*a defensive, inward looking form of development*' as also claimed in the Reason for Refusal. This implies that a 'gate' is somehow an unusual and problematic element, when in fact it is a commonly used piece of boundary architecture which almost every traditional group of mansion blocks, as well as every new block of flats in the area, employs to control access into communal spaces. I refer to examples in local case studies, Appendices 5.9- 5.18.

3.4.2 The presence of a simple entrance gate therefore does not make this a 'gated development' - this is a term usually used in a pejorative sense implying a level of forced segregation between a form of housing and the surrounding area, as well as generally separating different socio-economic groups of residents.

3.4.3 'Gated developments' generally refer to larger suburban areas with security walls and barrier-controlled vehicular access beyond a simple domestic-scale gate. The proposal does not meet this description or the implications contained therein.

3.4.4 Some intrinsic constraints have also informed the proposal design: by definition the site cannot offer permeability beyond its physical boundaries (a single public frontage boundary and protected SINC space to the east); by definition the retirement village concept must offer secure private and communal spaces for residents; in consideration of adjacent residents, the design does not promote overlooking into adjacent gardens.

3.4.5 The architects have worked with the above constraints, as well as feedback from the Design Review Panel (DRP), which in response to an earlier, more inward-looking proposal, asked that the project be '*more outward looking*' and '*of greater height*' considering the generous distances from most neighbours.

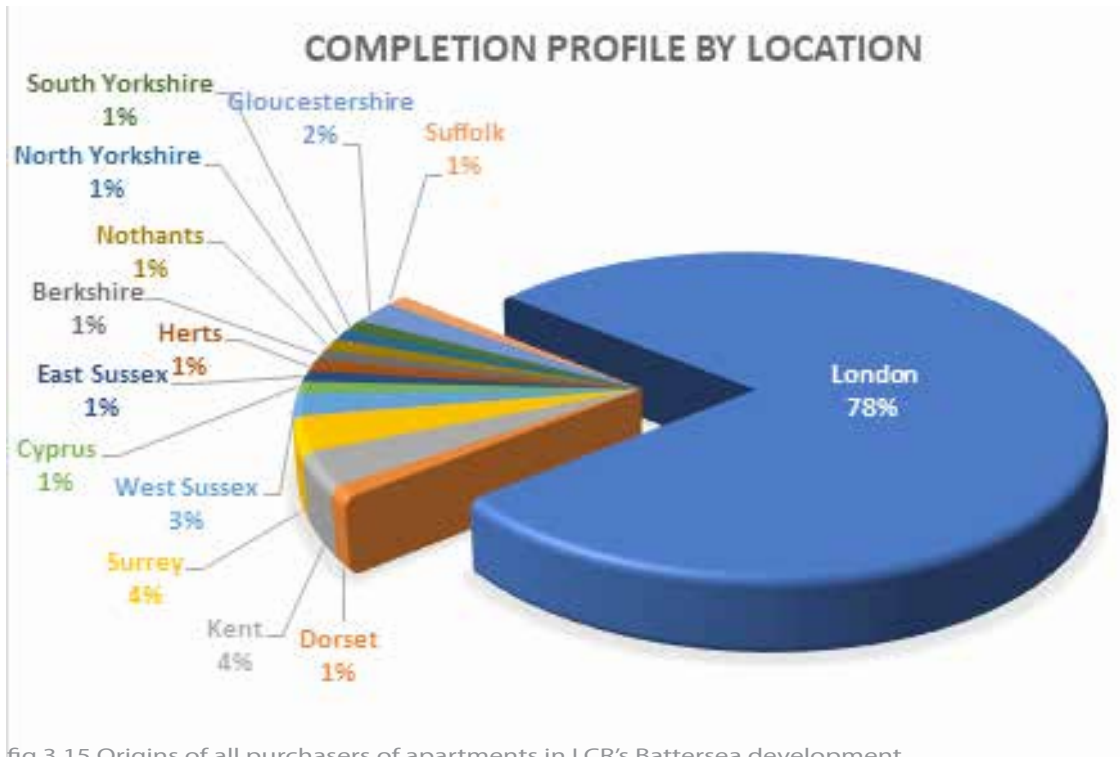


fig 3.15 Origins of all purchasers of apartments in LCR's Battersea development

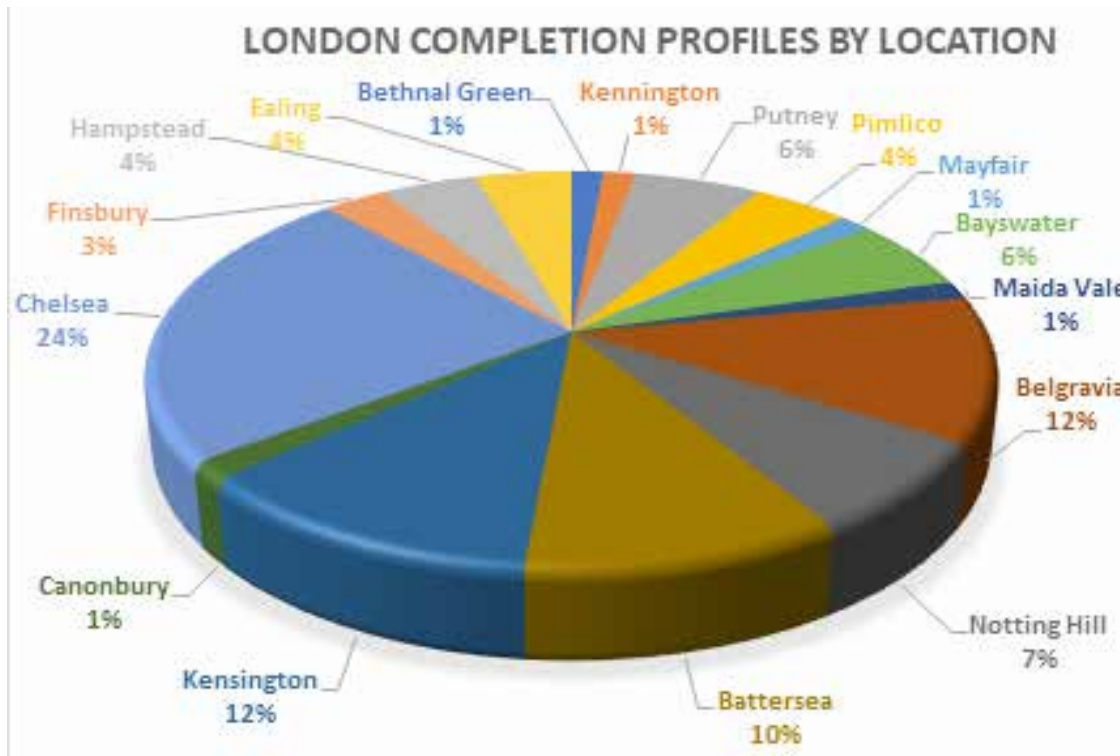


fig 3.16 Origin of London purchasers of apartments in LCR's Battersea development - 70% come from within the local or immediately adjacent boroughs



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3.4.6 In response to these points Apt have created a design which concentrates on providing views to the east and west from main living rooms, including over the Gondar Gardens itself and the protected ecological area to the east of the site. Views are also provided further beyond the site to the south-east offering views over much of London. The DRP encouraged advantage to be taken of this outlook.

3.4.7 Hence the design developed to grow around a central pedestrian street, which steps down the site with clearly identifiable, contemporary, residential mansion blocks with front doors which open onto this street. The street is visually open-ended and can be viewed from the street on Gondar Gardens looking through to the green space in the east.

3.4.8 The 'mansion block' structure is highly appropriate for a residential village, providing clear and identifiable entry doors on the central street to 6 visually separate blocks, while also providing secure internal access from each apartment to the communal facilities. The mansion blocks are connected by lower link blocks which contain the communal facilities and internal access routes around the development and provide overhead 'viewing corridors' for the upper floors of existing housing to the north which currently overlook the site. See Concept Plan Appendix 5.5.

3.4.9 The concept of a street with two 'terraces' of mansion blocks providing distinctive homes clearly follows the successful local pattern of housing and would be no more of an **'inward-looking enclave'** than any of the existing blocks. In fact several local blocks have communal spaces that are less visible from the public realm than those of the appeal proposal (see 'Cholmley Gardens' and 'BAM Estate', Townscape Study, pp. 54-57). The Berridge Mews development on Hillfield Rd (see Appendix 5.11), built in 1989/90 is also a more suitable candidate for the description 'inward-looking enclave' than the proposed scheme.

3.4.10 The use of this expression may also or alternatively be a reference to the social aspects of the retirement community. Certainly the residents will have access to high quality in-house facilities which they have the choice of using. However from LCR's experience with their existing developments, including their village in Battersea, it is clear that many of the residents enjoy going out and participating in the wider life of the neighbourhood whenever possible.

3.4.11 As shown on the pie charts opposite, figs 3.15 & 3.16, LCR's research shows that their developments are attractive to residents with existing local connections. These charts, from Battersea village apartment sales, show the origins of their buyers, 78% of whom came from London and of those, 70% from the local (Wandsworth) or adjacent boroughs.



fig 3.17 View of part of street elevation showing brickwork detailing and partly screened inset balcony design



fig 3.18 View into street and lower courtyard, across to retained reservoir arches within restaurant

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3.4.12 Secondly LCR's management ensure that the residents are supported in their outside activities, with the result that LCR find that on average, **more than half of their Battersea residents venture forth on foot or other mode of transport each week - weather permitting - for activities ranging from a simple walk to local shopping, visiting friends or attending an event.**

3.4.13 It is clear from the design evidence that the proposal is not physically an 'inward looking enclave', although care has been taken not to create overlooking intrusions into adjacent neighbours' gardens. The distances of the proposal from existing houses (see section 3.7 this proof and Appendices 5.16 & 5.17) are such that there is no question of overlooking from the development into nearby windows or gardens.

3.4.14 In social terms also, the village would not be an inward looking enclave any more than say, a student housing scheme or any similar shared interest development and, considering the West Hampstead demographics, there are considerable sympathetic social connection opportunities with the existing local community.

### 3.5 Reason for Refusal No.5 - The Reason

The proposed development, by virtue of its **height, mass, scale and detailed design**, would be **detrimental to the streetscene, the open space, the outlook of surrounding properties**, and the **character and appearance of the wider area** while **failing to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the local area**, contrary to policies G1 (Delivery and location of growth), D1 (Design), D2 (Heritage) and A1 (Managing the impact of development) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017 and Policy 2 of the Fortune Green and West Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan 2015.

3.5.1 My colleague, Robin Partington from Apt (formerly RPP Architects), also responds to this reason for refusal in his proof.

### 3.6 "Height, Mass, Scale and Detailed Design in relation to the Streetscene"

3.6.1 The height of the proposal is designed to be similar in scale and form to that of the existing adjacent mansion blocks along the street: see the architectural drawings, the visual images produced for the verified views (see street view fig. 3.8, pp. 20 this proof), and the photo-montage of the wider street context in Appendix 5.2. The built form within the site will be generally lower in height than the built form fronting the street, thus responding to local height, mass and scale.





fig 3.19 Elevation view looking north from the arrival courtyard over the link block housing the nursing home, with neighbouring roof extension dormer roofs in the background

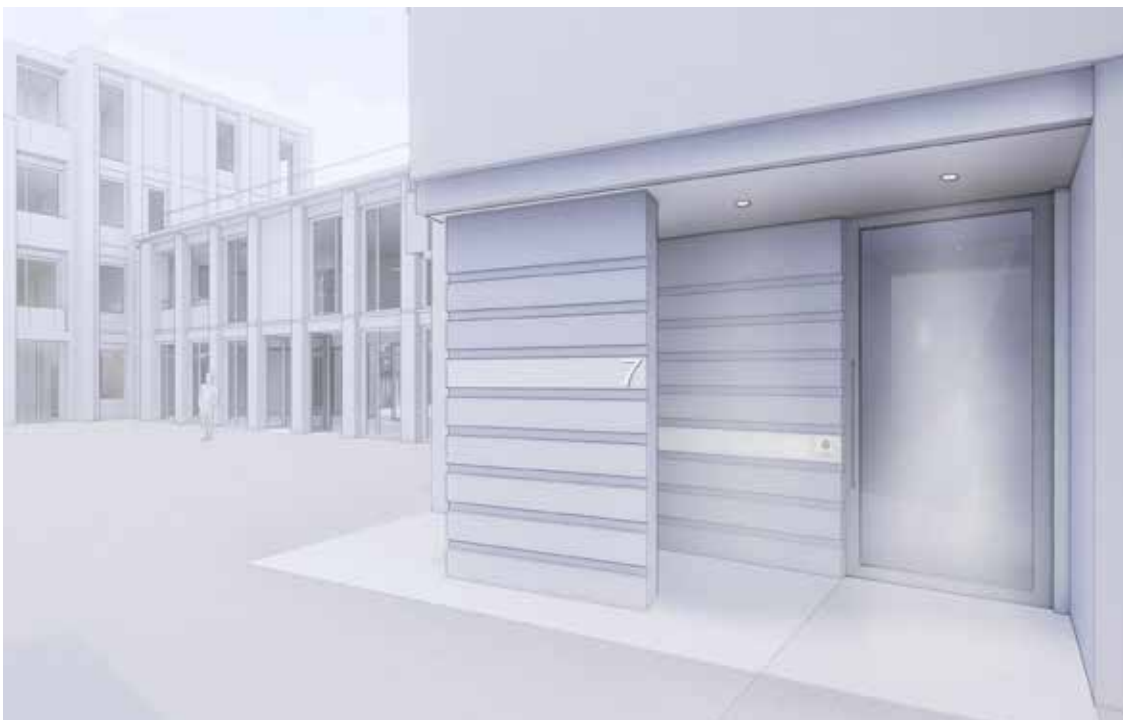


fig 3.20 Sketch view of the approach to mansion block front doors from courtyards - the front doors are inset below the blocks to provide shelter and a clear sense of entrance. The zones for signage and entry panels will be at an accessible height and a textured pattern will be used in the material adjacent to entry which is unique to each apartment entry point across the site.

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3.6.2 The primary elements of the buildings (their scale and form) and the rhythms of their secondary elements (their windows and bays) also reflect those of local mansion blocks and terrace houses. The detailed design is a contemporary response to local historical forms and detailing. **This increases the richness of the street scene while not undermining the heritage attractions of the existing mansion blocks.** I stress, nevertheless, that the site is not within a conservation area and none of the local mansion blocks are statutorily listed.

3.6.3 The proposed design also reflects the positive aspects of the previously consented frontage scheme. However, the appeal scheme is a significant improvement on the previous proposal as it is better connected to the streetscene with front gardens and terraces and no separating frontage light wells; it will have a higher number of occupants and users and its retirement village character will bring a greater level of lively activity to the neighbourhood than the smaller, market housing development previously consented.

3.6.4 The detailed design of the proposal uses carefully chosen brickwork detailing as set out in the architect's DAS and on fig. 3.17 on the previous page. The design approach is not to create 'pastiche' forms with historicist references - which generally leads to poor design quality - but to reference the scale, the rhythms and the materials of the local housing to create a desirable contemporary project which will improve a poor quality streetscene and positively enhance local character. Robin Partington expands on this in his proof of evidence.

### 3.7 "Impact on the Open Space and the Outlook from Surrounding Properties"

3.7.1 The 'open space' referred to in the RfR is presumably the designated open space within the site as defined in the Neighbourhood Plan as the eastern end of the site and parts of the 'green wings' alongside both boundaries.

3.7.2 The existing townscape context for the surrounding neighbours of the site (ie: houses located on Gondar Gardens north side, Agamemnon Rd and Hillfield Rd) is defined, on their street side, by high density urban housing which provides a consistent and largely unbroken rhythm along both sides of active streets.

3.7.3 By contrast, their back gardens stretch a considerable distance (up to 40m on Hillfield Rd and up to 30m on Gondar Gardens) to the rear of their blocks and contain a range of landscape planting, including some significant trees and tree groupings like the TPO group along the eastern boundary of the site backing onto the Agamemnon Rd housing.



fig 3.21 View from reservoir looking north to rear of existing houses on northern section of Gondar Gardens. Some large window'd roofspace extensions overlook the site between trees and foliage, as do traditional 2nd floor windows. (NB: photograph taken above eye height looking over fence)



fig 3.22 See also Appendix 5.16. Plan showing limited numbers of houses with views over the site and distances from proposed new development NTS



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3.7.4 Abutting these gardens, the appeal site currently provides a visual continuum, at a higher level, to these suburban gardens for some neighbours. The residents who occupy the upper levels of the houses to the north of the site (along the northern section of Gondar Gardens) can see onto the level top of the reservoir. No trees have grown here because of the shallow soil and large structure beneath. However, large trees are found along the eastern and southern boundaries of the site which, along with the falling topography, effectively obscure the site from those who live in properties abutting these boundaries (see cross-section and plan Appendices 5.16 & 5.17).

3.7.5 The Camden Design Review Panel (DRP) when providing a critique of an earlier iteration of the design (with similar building heights to this proposal) stated that *‘the panel would support development of greater height given that neighbouring homes have long gardens, meaning that they are typically around 40m from the development.’* This proposal does not in fact increase the height above that shown to the DRP, however their comment about distance reinforces the argument against any height *reduction* as requested by the Council.

3.7.6 In their report the GLA noted, para 34: *‘The bulk of the scheme is obscured from the street, and the site is laid out to ensure that all but the neighbouring mansion blocks in the immediate vicinity have generous separation distances.’*

3.7.7 Also from the GLA report, para 35 *‘Subject to .... daylight/sunlight analysis, the height/massing does not raise any strategic issues.’*

3.7.8 The substantial gardens mentioned above, along with the natural topography and the raised nature of the reservoir structure mean that currently a full view of the ‘open space’ is available to only a limited number of residents - see plan and section at Appendices 5.16 & 5.17 - and then only from the upper levels of their houses or flats.

3.7.9 The Inspector for the 2012 appeal stated that a previous inspector *“referred to the extensive views into the site from the surrounding houses.”* The inspector then stated that, *“although taken individually these are private views, they amount collectively to a considerable public asset and a ‘green lung’ providing local amenity”* (para 16).

3.7.10 I disagree with this reference to private views as a ‘considerable public asset’ and suggest the inspector may have been under the impression that all the surrounding houses had views into the site, whereas in fact, overlooking views - particularly ‘extensive views’ - are very limited as above and the cross section information in Appendix 5.16 shows how restricted the actual current views over the site are.



fig 3.15 View of green wall treatment to balcony edges along north and south elevations

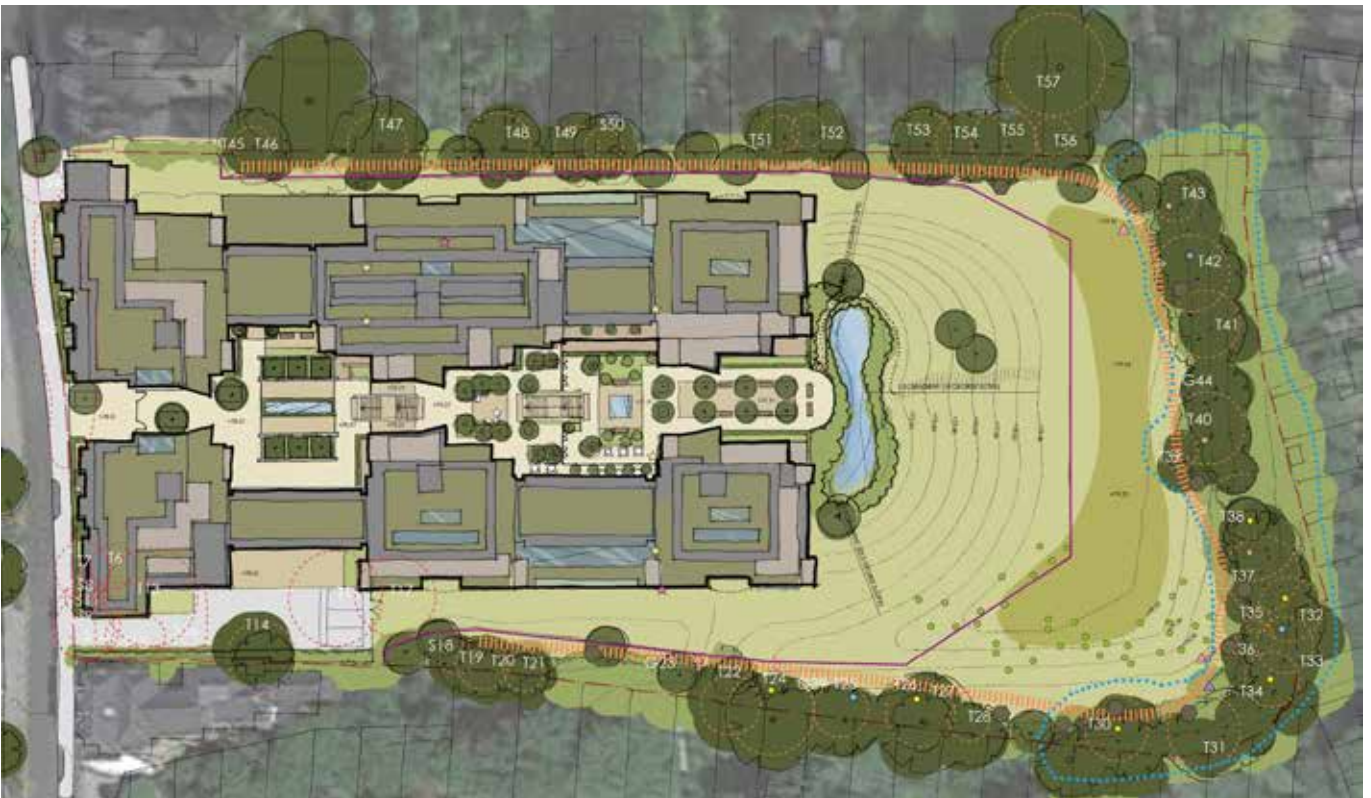


fig 3.24 Landscape Masterplan (from Andy Sturgeon Garden Design) showing extent of green edges retained and improved around the site and scale of the enhanced open space to the east.

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3.7.11 In general, private views are not protected in planning and these specific views - which are available to a very limited number of residents - are not protected by any specific Camden policy.

3.7.12 While development on this site will alter views over the site from residential buildings to the north by introducing built form, this change does not cause harm to the surrounding properties, but adds interest to those views by introducing attractive urban forms and landscaped walls and roofs. Most of the existing windows affected will also still have oblique views to the east to the protected open space at the eastern end of the site, which will be considerably enhanced to continue to be *'a green lung providing local amenity'*.

3.7.13 The architects have created a design for this site which purposefully aims to maintain an overall low profile in response to the neighbouring context. The main mansion blocks are joined by low-rise link blocks, breaking up the built form, and enabling views over the development at certain points from the north. These link blocks include green roofs, reinforcing a green outlook from neighbouring windows. I refer to Appendices 5.16 & 5.17 showing the locations of views and potential view corridors over these link blocks.

3.7.14 While the outlook for some residents will change, the new buildings will be between 35m and 80m away from existing windows, across well-treed gardens. The potential for overlooking from the new apartments into the suburban gardens will be limited, hence making the actual impact on neighbouring housing generally very low.

3.7.15 Numbers 18-42 (13 houses, see fig 3.22) will experience the proposed buildings in their southerly view. In mitigation, as the view cones and arrows drawn on the plan show (see also Appendix 5.17), the houses to the east will retain oblique views over the enhanced open space, while others will have views over the lower link blocks and their green roofs. The overall numbers of residences directly affected is low in the context of the site, which is surrounded by some 65 houses and mansion block footprints.

3.7.16 The street front of the proposal will also be seen in private views (along with public street views), from the upper level rear windows of some houses on Sarre Rd because of the unusual back-to-front nature of the local street layout. These windows will be 21-32m from the proposal and across Gondar Gardens - a greater distance than if they were fronting the site across the street. The proposed development has no more impact on these residences than the previously consented (2012) 'frontage scheme'.





fig 3.25 Camera 11 - View from fortune green in winter looking in the direction of the site



fig 3.26 Close-up of Camera 11 shot looking up Achilles Rd in the direction of the site

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### 3.8 “Failing to Preserve or Enhance the Character and Appearance of the Local Area”

3.8.1 As set out in the Townscape Report, Section 8, pp. 65-73 in relation to the verified views, apart from a partial winter-only view from Fortune Green (as shown opposite, Camera 11, pp. 72 & 73), the proposal will not be seen from any public street or space, except for part of Gondar Gardens itself, close to the actual development.

3.8.2 The verified visual impact views are taken from publicly accessible locations around the local area (as agreed with the LPA), from where it was estimated that there could be a view towards the proposed development. All the views bar one demonstrate that the proposal is not visible at all throughout most of the year, with partial visibility in one winter view. The verified views are ‘worst case scenarios’ and clearly show the very low visual impact of this proposal on the local area.

3.8.3 This winter-only partial view is a significant distance away from the site in a public park (Fortune Green) which is overlooked by a large-scale recent building of contemporary design. This building occupies a similar footprint area to that of the appeal proposal and is of a similar height range (3-5 storeys), but it sits on a triangular site and is publicly open to view on all three sides - from Fortune Green, Hampstead Cemetery and Fortune Green Rd.

3.8.4 On one facade of the building are shops facing Fortune Green Rd, the other two facades (i) provide a blank wall to the cemetery and (ii) shuttered ground floor frontage to the park. There is also a well-locked gate to the communal area of the building on Fortune Green Rd. This building shares little in terms of scale and form with its 2 and 3 storey, small footprint neighbours and it is highly visible from a significant number of public viewpoints.

3.8.5 By comparison with the almost invisible appeal proposal, this building stands out boldly and has a strong impact on local views. The community may have divided opinions on whether it has a positive or negative impact on the local area, however it now forms part of the Fortune Green built form identity, updating an ordinary and undistinguished street.

3.8.6 To return to the appeal proposal, the view towards the development from Fortune Green provides an occasional and highly restricted view of the top few levels of one of the proposed blocks, which then disappears as a viewer walks west towards and along Achilles Rd, because of the natural topography and height of the existing housing.

3.8.7 Therefore, due to the low-rise nature of the proposed development and its location on an ‘internal’ site with only one street frontage, its impact on the local area - beyond its street frontage - is demonstrably negligible.



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### 3.9 Summary

3.9.1 The earlier sections of this proof establish clearly that the existing Gondar Gardens streetscene is in need of substantial improvement with long unoccupied sections of blank frontage and scattered residential edges of varying quality. The proposal would knit together a significant part of this streetscene, creating a coherent and consistent edge, with a well-designed, high quality scheme of carefully integrated height, mass, scale and detailed design which reflects and enhances the existing local character.

3.9.2 The design and layout of the proposal incorporates a commitment to the safety and security of older residents whilst at the same time enhancing community safety by the use of active residential frontages overlooking the street. This will enhance the lives of new and existing residents alike.



fig 3.28 CGI view of the proposal looking south along Gondar Gardens past Chase Mansions



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3.9.3 The design will deliver a coherent 'village' with a central street and well-defined 'mansion blocks' with their own identity, as well as safe and attractive communal facilities. This is far less an 'inward looking enclave' than some existing local groups of older mansion blocks or student housing developments.

3.9.4 The project is visually open, providing views into its courtyards and beyond to the protected open space at the eastern end of the site and potentially towards Hampstead through the trees. This sense of connection beyond the site, along with the likely social activities of the residents will promote social cohesion.

3.9.5 Due to the appeal proposal's height, mass and scale - low-rise and sensitive - the development will have no impact beyond its immediate neighbours, and cause no harm to the local area.

3.9.6 Actual views of the proposal off-site will be restricted to views from the Gondar Gardens streetscene (western section). The oblique views of the appeal proposal from north and south along this section of the street (see fig 3.28 opposite) demonstrate that the scheme will fit into and enhance its context very well, echoing current scale, form, rhythm and detail. It sits happily between the two adjacent existing mansion blocks, making a major contribution towards completion of this poorly addressed streetscene.

3.9.7 The few surrounding properties which will overlook the new proposal (some to the north and some on Sarre Rd to the west) are significant distances from the new buildings (apart from the two blocks immediately adjacent) and new landscaping, including green roofs and walls, and view corridors will mitigate the impact to the north. These views are not protected in policy, nor are views generally protected in planning.

3.9.8 The Sarre Rd houses have limited views from the backs of their houses and the proposal would have no more visual impact than the previously consented 'frontage' scheme. Any potential harm is minimal.

3.9.9 The character and appearance of the local area will be preserved and enhanced by the proposed new high quality, contemporary development which pays its respects to the local mansion blocks in scale, form and detail. The open green space to the east of the site will be remodelled, enhanced and improved to increase its capacity for ecological habitat.



fig 3.27 View looking from the protected open space west towards the proposal showing the orientation of views out from main rooms in apartments facing east.

# 4

## Conclusions

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### 4.1 Conclusions

4.1.1 Having assessed the design of the proposed development in context, in light of best practice and against local, London and national policies, I am satisfied that the scheme as proposed would provide a development of the appeal site which would enhance and improve the character and appearance of the area, particularly the immediate streetscene.

4.1.2 New active residential frontage will transform local community safety (both perceived and real), social cohesion and street design quality. The contrary suggestion in the Council's reasons for refusing permission is, in my judgment, misconceived.





# 5 Appendices

See Separate Document

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- 5.1 Frontage Character and west side frontage images
- 5.2 Photo-montage of Gondar Gardens with proposed scheme
- 5.3 Existing section through Gondar Gardens
- 5.4 Proposed section through Gondar Gardens
- 5.5 Proposal concept plan
- 5.6 Location of recent comparator case studies
- 5.7 Proposal in context - street frontage characteristics
- 5.8 2012 consented proposal - street frontage characteristics
- 5.9 Mill Lane Apartments - Street frontage characteristics
- 5.10 Maygrove Rd Apartments - Street frontage characteristics
- 5.11 Berridge Mews, Hillfield Rd - Street frontage characteristics
- 5.12 Heritage Lane - Street frontage characteristics
- 5.13 Summary schedule
- 5.14 Comparator local lane and access points
- 5.15 Local mansion block conditions
- 5.16 Cross-sections through site and potential views over
- 5.17 Potential views over development from adjacent housing
- 5.18 Pages 17-19 from 'The Concise Townscape' by Gordon



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