

From: clive bennett [REDACTED]
Sent: 02 August 2019 20:18
To: Planning [REDACTED] Smith, Kristina [REDACTED]
Cc: Mason, Angela (Councillor) [REDACTED] Singh, Ranjit (Councillor)
[REDACTED]
Subject: Planning Application 2019/3312P - [REDACTED]

ref Camden 2019/3312/P

We object to this application on the grounds that the units have a negative and adverse visual impact and are completely out of character with the ethos of a Conservation Area.

1, Rochester Square is a significant heritage site and of great historical importance in the story of the development of the 19th century 'Camden New Town'.

A map of 1834 shows it was a market garden well before any of the surrounding area was developed in the 1850s. It seems to have been in private ownership through most of the last 175 years. The upkeep and preservation of the Square is very important for Camden Town's history.

In the three years that the units have been permitted the condition of the Square has deteriorated greatly - a fact acknowledged by the present owner. An extension for a fourth year will not prevent further degradation. We should note that the Square is attractive to potential squatters because it looks derelict. The Council's many local public squares do not have squatters precisely because they are well-maintained and clearly cared for.

The owner says that he needs the units to remain in situ to prevent illegal occupation. We understand and appreciate the owner's need to protect his property. But given the Square is a heritage addition to this Conservation Area we urge the Committee to consider whether this Application is the best way of achieving that objective.

The attached photograph of the square was taken from our living room window on 29 July. It shows the environmental impact of the living units. They need electricity and heating; the supply necessitates ugly wires and gas canisters. There is a single piece of fencing propped up against the derelict greenhouse, presumably to separate the units from the parts of the Square used for pottery and ceramics classes. It is very ugly. The units themselves are purely functional and have no aesthetic relationship to the ethos of a Conservation Area.

We submit that as the site is within a Conservation Area every effort should be made to off-set the negative impact of these units while protecting the site from intruders.

But how?

The following observations are outside the parameters of 'legitimate objection' to the proposal. But in the spirit of trying to safeguard the owner's investment and Camden's obligation to preserve the Conservation Area and the local heritage we make this suggestion:

Grant a shorter extension (4 to 6 months) during which the time the owner would be under a legally binding obligation to carry out repair works, specified by the Council, designed to improve the appearance and thus reduce its attractiveness to attempted illegal occupation. At the end of this period the units would be removed.

For example:

- were he to be required to repair/replace and make secure, the entire perimeter fence, with a lockable gated entrance on the southern side, such as Camden Council has around many of its public spaces and housing developments, the challenge to illegal occupation would be greatly increased.
- were he to be required to remove the debris from the entire site it would not look so derelict.
- were he to be required to repair/restore the unused greenhouses (the roofless state of the greenhouses in the foreground of the attached photo is replicated in the others) the appearance of the Square would be transformed.
- the cement/concrete ground cover in front of the units looks like an industrial wasteland. The owner says he will do nothing to it until he has heard from the company commissioned to remove the invasive and pervasive Japanese Knot Weed. He says this is his prime concern, but three years on it is still present, with lots of additional unkempt flora. Were he required just to weed the joins between the slabs at the southern end of the Square the air of degradation would be greatly reduced.

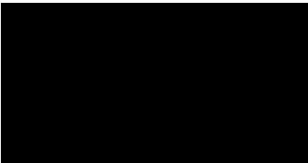
We have been in contact with the owner. He does not disagree that the Square under his ownership has a significant negative impact on the Conservation area. However, he has not made any constructive reactions to our concerns.

Our proposal would provide a more attractive aspect for local residents and visitors; the Square would look more occupied, secured and properly maintained; it would make illegal occupation less likely; the Council will have underlined its respect and concern for the area's appearance, its heritage and history - precisely the reasons for designating a conservation area.

We hope you will give this Objection and its observations due consideration.

Should this application be referred to Committee one of us would like to address the meeting.

Clive Bennett and Mike Lackersteen



Copied to our local councillors for information and because it concerns the Rochester Square Conservation Area.

