



To whom it may Concern

Ref: PA 2018/3672/P - Fitzroy Park/Millfield Lane

The London and Middlesex Archaeological Society (LAMAS) promotes London's archaeology, local history and historic buildings. The LAMAS Historic Buildings and Conservation Committee reviews applications for listed building consent and seeks to ensure a sustainable future for vital aspects of London's built heritage.

This very substantial Planning Application, with many documents attached, has already generated considerable opposition from responsible local bodies such as the Heath and Hampstead Society, much on-line adverse comment and numerous letters of objection from individuals. To all these LAMAS wishes to add its own objection to the application, and register our surprise that it has been allowed to reach such an advanced stage.

As the Council must be well aware, the site concerned abuts directly onto Hampstead Heath (the Parliament Hill side) which has been conserved and maintained since the mid-19th century and is currently the responsibility of the Corporation of the City of London. Fitzroy Park, which is given as the address of the site, is a rural-style private estate of scattered and secluded houses, plus a bowling club and allotments. The only and narrow right-of-way through it runs circuitously from the end of Merton Lane, off Highgate West Hill, up to Highgate village. However, the local feature that will be most adversely affected if this PA were to be permitted is another, still more rural and unmaked lane (never tarmacked, rough gravel and stones, a small stream across it at one point) called Millfield Lane, that similarly adjoins the end of Merton Lane but runs uphill at a different angle from the Fitzroy Park route, eventually to arrive at the grounds of Kenwood House. It provides no vehicular access to Kenwood House, however, being blocked by a barrier (and another miniature stream) at the boundary of Kenwood grounds.

On the eastern side of Millfield Lane are a very few well-established houses, backing onto those in Fitzroy Park, set well back from Millfield Lane in large gardens with many large and venerable trees abutting the Lane. On the west side, which is part of Hampstead Heath, there are of course no houses at all. From the end of Merton Lane there is, first, the secluded bird-sanctuary pond and its extensive protected/...

.../grounds totally surrounded by trees, then the equally well-concealed Ladies bathing pond and its grounds. Then comes the barrier to any vehicle mentioned above, after which Millfield Lane becomes nothing but a steep and uneven footpath up to Kenwood. The entire area from the end of Merton Lane is de facto a well conserved sanctuary for birds of many kinds and small mammals such as hedgehogs, its wooded seclusion aided by additional tree cover from the few gardens on the western side and the total lack of passing 4-wheeled traffic.

The present application would, if permitted, substantially destroy this unique and till-now carefully preserved piece of surviving countryside. It seems important for the Council to grasp that, though the application is presented as if referring only to Fitzroy Park, its substantial deleterious effect would be on Millfield Lane because the five planned houses are all in the grounds of a large garden that backs onto Millfield Lane. The one existing house in this garden, which genuinely fronts onto Fitzroy Park, would be demolished for three new ones. The other two of the five, the largest, are planned to be far closer to Millfield Lane than to Fitzroy Park. It is clear from the PA that they could only be built by constant vehicular access from Millfield Lane, and we have no doubt that this would subsequently become the de facto way of reaching them.

We take the view that these two houses should be considered as a development in Millfield Lane, rather than in Fitzroy Park, and that were they to be permitted the whole aspect and nature of the Lane would be changed. It is also clear that most of the large, well-established trees in the garden that spread their branches over Millfield Lane would have to be cut down, and that the smaller replacement trees proposed in the plan are a form of suburban window-dressing.

We should also mention, without going into the technology of hydrology, that considerable concerns have been expressed about the effect that building these substantial new houses, so near to Millfield Lane and with excavated ground floors below the level of the nearest ponds, might have on the water-table and hence the ecology of the whole chain of ponds.

It follows that this extensive application should be regarded as entirely unacceptable, in that it contravenes Camden's own Local Plan Policy A2 in a number of ways. Under this Plan Camden is committed to protect designated Private Open Space from development (which both the bird-sanctuary and the Ladies pond are), and also to resist developments that would be detrimental to the setting of such Open Spaces. The Plan also gives strong priority to maintaining the openness and character of Metropolitan Open Land and in particular that of Hampstead Heath.

To summarise:

The three houses planned to replace one old one on the Fitzroy Park side of the site are crowded together and are of a type entirely different from those in the rest of Fitzroy Park: they would detract from what is a carefully maintained Conservation Area. The two houses planned to be near Millfield Lane would destroy permanently the whole character and irreplaceable quality of this unique and secluded pedestrian route and wild life refuge.

Vicki Fox (Hon. Secretary)

LAMAS – Historic Buildings & Conservation Committee

5 August 2019