

## **ADVICE from Primrose Hill Conservation Area Advisory Committee**

12A Manley Street, London NW1 8LT

7 August 2019

Vernon House, 5-8 St Mark's Square NW1 7TN 2019/3284/P + 2019/3726/L

### **Strong objection.**

The main issues for the Advisory Committee are the impact of the proposals on the Listed Buildings at 5-11 St Mark's Square, and their setting, and on the character and appearance of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area in general, and in particular on 2-34 Princess Road, which are recognized as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area (*Statement* (2001) p. 25).

The Advisory Committee noted that it had not been consulted on this application pre-app, as the NPPF advises applicants to do.

The application proposal is to construct a 2-storey addition substantially filling the existing gap at first and second floors between the rear of the Listed terrace at 5-11 St Mark's Square and the end of the terrace at 2-34 Princess Road.

The existing gap is of real importance to the architectural forms of both terraces. Its diminution would be substantially harmful to both terraces and the wider conservation area.

Nos 5-11 St Mark's Square is a formal, essentially freestanding terrace, symmetrical in plan, with each end of the group broken forward. The main front elevation and the two end, flank, elevations, are in stucco, with fine details including segmental pediments to windows, and Doric porticoes to original front doors. The rear elevation, in contrast, is in plain stock-brick, with the stucco quoins and entablature from the front and side elevations clearly terminating against the plain brick. This clear subordination of the rear elevation is significant in terms of the group of buildings which, when it was designed – as we can see from the 1860 map (*Statement* (2001) p. 7) – was seen in the round. The contrast of the elaborate stucco front and the plain rear points to an architectural emphasis on the status of St Mark's Square. This significant, visible, contrast survives at present from first floor to roof level, but would be very largely lost if the proposed rear addition were to be built. The visible contrast of formal stucco fronts with visible plain brick backs is characteristic of the conservation area: for example, the west range of Chalcot Square demonstrates the same contrast. The single storey rounded bay addition – constructed between 1860 and 1870 (OS map) – maintains the visibility of the contrast.

The impact of the proposal on the terrace at 2-34 Princess Road would also be significantly harmful. The terrace is one of the best conserved in the conservation area. It has a complex rhythmic pattern which complements its cohesive and consistent forms. In elevation, the terrace is at 3-storeys (above lower-ground floor) with an extra storey to nos 2, 4, and 6, which thus relate as a step to the end pavilion of no 5 St Marks Square, one storey higher than the nos 2, 4, and 6 Princess Road. This vertical step is reinforced in its visual importance by the treatment of the upper storey at both 5 St Mark's Square and 2, 4, and 6 Princess Road as an attic storey, defined by cornice mouldings. The step can be seen as a response by the builder of 2-34 Princess Road to the earlier 5-11 St Marks Square. This vertical pattern along the street is important in the history of the development of the conservation area, and in townscape of the conservation area: it would be seriously harmed by the proposed infill addition.

In plan the Princess Road terrace is 'stepped' to address the curving line of the street. So 2-6 break forward in relation to 8-12, with 14-28, and 30-34 similarly broken. This pattern demonstrates an architectural response to the topography – also informed by the line of the Regent's Canal to the rear of Princess Road. The proposed infill would undermine the plan form of the Princess Road Terrace, and its contribution to the townscape of the conservation area.

The Advisory Committee was informed in its discussion by Camden's policy-guidance in the *Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement* (2001), current SPD for the CA. We noted in particular:

PH25 Extensions and conservatories can alter the balance and harmony of a property or of a group of properties by insensitive scale, design or inappropriate materials. Some rear extensions, although not widely visible, so adversely affect the architectural integrity of the building to which they are attached that the character of the Conservation Area is prejudiced.

PH26 Rear extensions should be as unobtrusive as possible and should not adversely affect the character of the building or the Conservation Area. In most cases such extensions should be no more than one storey in height, but its general effect on neighbouring properties and Conservation Area will be the basis of its suitability.

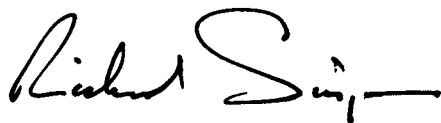
PH27 Extensions should be in harmony with the original form and character of the house and the historic pattern of extensions within the terrace or group of buildings. The acceptability of larger extensions depends on the particular site and circumstances.

PH28 Rear extensions will not be acceptable where they would spoil an uniformed rear elevation of an unspoilt terrace or group of buildings.

PH29 Side extensions will not be acceptable where they are unduly prominent, unbalance the composition of a building group, or where they compromise gaps between buildings through which views are afforded of other properties, rear gardens, mature trees, or the Regent's Canal.

The harm identified to the heritage assets would be substantial in context: it would not be outweighed by any public benefit.

The proposals would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Simpson', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Richard Simpson FSA  
Chair