

MM MELNYK

Re: Planning Application 2019/5835/P - 4b Hampstead Hill Gardens

Dear Ms. English,

I write to place on record my objection to the above planning application.

**Primary reasons:**

**1) Design and height**

The redevelopment proposes a futuristic building three storeys high in and amongst Grade 2 listed buildings. The height of the building and incongruous design would compete with nearby historic architecture rather than resonate with it.

The current 1960s building, whilst not handsome, presents modestly amongst neighbouring properties. If redeveloped to the proposed specification, the property would disrupt this part of the streetscape. It would lead to imbalance and would not preserve the setting of the listed buildings within close proximity, both on the same side of the street and in the arc opposite the site of 4b.

The proposed positioning of the front of the house close to the site boundary would intensify the sense of bulkiness and incompatibility.

The description in the applicant's Heritage Statement of the existing property as a "sympathetic infilling" and "fitting a new house into a vacant place without causing anybody to feel outraged" remains apt for any redevelopment of this site.

**2) Overdevelopment**

This application represents substantial overdevelopment to both the surrounding area and the existing site, referred to in the supporting Heritage Statement as "on a narrow plot".

It is, also and indisputably, an example of the type of creeping development that should be resisted. The history of the site shows development from open land to tennis court to a garage, to a two-storey house. This "was built as a connected residential development to 4a". The proposal to demolish the existing two-storey property and replace it with a four-level house which becomes dominant to 4a, is a step too far.

### **3) Roofs and skyline; loss of light**

4b is a focal point of multiple properties due to the shape of the road and its aspect.

The applicant's supporting Heritage Statement notes "the original houses on the inner curve were more widely set, with a large gap between numbers 4 and 6". This development would harm the overall roof and skyline. I urge that the remaining gaps between properties and the current roof and skyline be protected by not permitting this development.

The views and light into the living area of my first floor-apartment would be adversely impacted. The large windows in the living area overlook the communal garden, neighbouring trees and vegetation. The view includes the roofs of houses on the opposite side of the street. A three-storey house on the site of 4b will not just be intrusive but very detrimental to my personal space and the peaceful enjoyment of my home which I have owned for almost 20 years.

There would be loss of light to the garden at the rear of 4 Hampstead Hill Gardens.

### **4) Gardens and loss of amenity**

4 Hampstead Hill Gardens is not one home but four homes within one building. It includes young children who enjoy the garden space. The height and mass of the new building would significantly impose upon our garden. This development, if permitted, would substantially impact our enjoyment of our communal garden and recreational amenity.

As a group of committed owners and residents, we have invested time, money and great consideration in the planting of the garden at No4. The garden faces natural challenges - the span of neighbouring trees not least of all the copper beech at No 6, the clay soil and drainage. An additional storey overlooking the garden of 4 Hampstead Hill Gardens, impacting sunlight and, likely the drainage, will have some effect on the plants and vegetation.

Part of the original garden of No 4 was lost to the development of 4b. No 4 would suffer further loss to garden amenity if this application is passed. It is understandable we should resist further encroachment of 4b into what remains of the original space.

Photographs from first floor level are attached below to support the above statements.

### **5) Breaches of Policy**

Given the nature of the surrounding buildings, the Conservation Area and the sensitive location of 4b, the proposed redevelopment is incompatible with the Hampstead Conservation Area Statement, Camden Planning policies, the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan and the NPFF.

#### **A final concern - the copper beech tree (No 6)**

Copper beech trees are typically planted in urban areas; they are especially suited to the climate of southern England. Prone to few diseases and pest infestations, they have a life span of 150 - 200 years but can survive for up to 300 years.

They provide a natural habitat for hole nesting and garden birds, butterflies, voles and squirrels.

They require well drained soil otherwise they can fall victim to fungal disease. Whilst exposure to full sunlight is the ideal, the copper beech can handle partial shade as per the specimen at No 6.

I am concerned that the applicant's Arboriculture Impact Assessment fails to adequately address the risks to this tree specifically:

- The report notes it is "not a detailed health and safety inspection of the trees". Having seen numerous such reports, I would describe the assessment as "light touch";
- The suggestion that the life expectancy of the copper beech is some 20-40 years conflicts with the general understanding that such trees have a much longer life span (as above). I do not understand how this statement can be made when there has been no detailed review of this tree specifically.

If sunlight reduction and impact on soil drainage were to be consequences of the proposed development, then it is probable the lifespan of this "prominent" copper beech would be substantially reduced.

Camden Local Plan 2017; Policy A3 re Biodiversity, trees and vegetation, Point J notes resistance to "the loss of trees and vegetation of significant historic, cultural, ecological value including proposals which may threaten the well being

of such trees and vegetation". I believe the tree adds to the cultural and ecological value of the area.

The final photograph is of the copper beech (July 2019). The Arboriculture Impact Assessment refers to overhang and pruning. I would suggest the photograph confirms the tree is naturally growing towards the sunlight (as is the case with all trees and plants) to generate energy by photosynthesis. The branches and leaves are strongest and heaviest to the side where there is a gap in the housing and above the roofline of 4b. It is also the side of the garden to which residents of No 4 (plus tables, chairs and hammocks) naturally migrate during the summer - in order to enjoy the sunlight!

I would urge the Planning Department to further review this aspect of the application to satisfy that loss would not be incurred as a result of such a development.

For the above reasons I ask that you refuse this application.

Yours Sincerely,  
MM Melnyk  
31st January 2020

Enc.: photographic evidence



The view from first floor living room window (July 2019). Highlights the current aspect of 4b; part of the roof and skyline; part of No 4's communal garden and the significance of the copper beech tree. It enjoys the sunlight afforded by the current roof height of 4b and the gap between 4b and No 6.



The view from the same window (also July 2019) incorporating part of 4a alongside 4b. It illustrates the vegetation of Nos 4 and 4a in close proximity to 4b. It further illustrates the roof and skylines that would be lost due to the massing of the new development.



The copper beech - in full summer glory. Magnificent in the autumn too.