

We, Patricia Rose and Michael Rose, the owners of [REDACTED] wish to object most strongly to the plans to demolish the present building on 89-91 West End Lane, Application 2020/0928/P, for a number of reasons, among which, and one of the most important, is that the demolition of an apparently sound and well built structure could put an unacceptable strain on the foundations and physical integrity of our building, the neighbouring Smyrna Mansions, a late Victorian building, which has already suffered considerably through the construction in recent years of the adjoining flats at 12 Smyrna Road.

Structural damage caused by the construction of the much smaller 12 Smyrna Road (in comparison with the planned Frances Gardner House) resulted in considerable cracking to the northern façade of Smyrna Mansions, leading to several years of water penetration to the lounge room of our flat at 5 Smyrna Mansions, considerable expenditure on internal redecoration on a number of occasions, and eventual costly external work to the rendering of the northern side of Smyrna Mansions.

We fear that the demolition of the present building in West End Lane, and the sinking of foundations for the proposed new building, could do irreparable damage to the structure of what is a fine late Victorian mansion block. Our block as a whole suffered considerable damage from the building of 12 Smyrna, and its sinking of deep foundations, which included large cracks to walls and door frames out of alignment on all floors. The Francis Gardner plan is much more extensive and includes deep foundations which threatens a much greater degree of damage to Smyrna Mansions.

The existing building, a students' residence, sits near a busy traffic corner on West End Lane. It has no parking at the front [a drive] or at the back, and is surrounded by private houses and several Victorian buildings, one of which is Smyrna Mansions, located directly at the back of the planned Francis Gardner.

Over many years the residents of this small block of flats have suffered from the noise coming from the present building, notably the occupants' parties and gatherings taking place in a conservatory at the back of their building. The students at present are postgraduate/professional people.

The proposed new building, for undergraduate students, would replace the conservatory with a sunken garden which would result in much more noise in the open space. People would go there to relax, meet other students, have picnics, have drinks, talk on their mobile phones, smoke, etc. In general, undergraduate students are notoriously noisy.

The new building will result in 50 windows at the back, more than double the number of windows at the moment {23}. There is no plan for air conditioning, and the lack of light wells for ventilation will mean more open windows in whatever

weather, either winter or summer, resulting in added noise. The proximity of the buildings will mean noise bouncing off the tall walls of the buildings creating a noise well.

Added loss of privacy resulting from the 50 windows overlooking our bedrooms can hardly be exaggerated. Even with net curtains on flat 5's back windows, there will be a clear line of sight into our bedrooms, especially from the Francis Gardner higher floors, because the back rooms tend to be dark already, and there is often a need to put on lights during the day. If one has to close curtains during the day, so as not to be seen from Francis Gardner, it will result in a very claustrophobic atmosphere for us residents of Smyrna Mansions.

At the moment, the present building presents an older appearance that is more harmonious with the environment than the proposed new building. The many boxed windows of the new building would give residents a far uglier view of our environment than the present building.

We fear the neighbourhood will be detrimentally affected by a greater number of students – increasing to 50 - moving in and out with belongings, as there is no space in Francis Gardner for cars or vans delivering or collecting the belongings of this greater number of students.

We have set out above the problems which we in particular at 5 Smyrna Mansions will face with the construction of Francis Gardner.

But the plans also appear to fly in the face of Camden's stated policy in its local plan for providing accommodation in residential areas, where any increase in accommodation will adversely affect neighbours and the community to a greater extent than any gains achieved, as is the case with Smyrna Mansions and the surrounding area.

We fear that the destruction and rebuilding of Francis Gardner will result in absolute inconvenience to the neighbourhood in general and inhabitants of Smyrna Mansions, with huge amounts of dust for months on end, if not for years, noise from the destruction of the present building itself, from the machines, pollution and extra traffic from the lorries. Added to this is the noise from drilling, the effects of the vibration of machines, the creation and removal of rubble, the presence and movement of cranes, and the delivery and transport of materials to the site and their movement within the site. Also, the noise from workers shouting instructions or talking loudly and from the use of many different noisy machines.

We see a problem in the environmental impact for Camden and for London as a whole of knocking down a building that has not been proven to be unsafe and which could be adapted to better use with modifications, as have been many

other buildings in London. The waste of materials both old and new does not seem to reflect the environmental protection policies of Camden, of London and indeed of the country, as a whole.

I, Michael Rose, have by far the longest connection to Smyrna Mansions, having moved into [REDACTED] in 1954 with my parents, and growing up there. My recollection is that for many years, it was the residence for United States embassy and consulate personnel, who were generally well behaved and considerate neighbours.

I have personally noticed the changes and deterioration over the years in the tranquillity and quality of life of the residents of Smyrna Mansions, which has only gotten worse in recent years, with the change to the use of the present building to accommodate students. The planned increase in student numbers and any change to the status of these students, with more undergraduates who are younger and likely to be more disruptive and unruly than more mature post-graduates, will exacerbate this situation, and make life for Smyrna Mansions residents even more difficult, especially in terms of noise from parties, gatherings and the likelihood that younger undergraduates will not be as considerate as neighbours as their more mature post-graduate counterparts.

Patricia Rose
Michael Rose

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