

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2020/2486/P	clare wincza	15/07/2020 21:53:14	OBJNOT	<p>I am a long term resident of the estate that these plans will impact on and am vehemently opposed to this development.</p> <p>The plans bring public access buildings onto what has always been a purely residential space and although the latest version does now make these accessible from the street, there is still a reduction in open space available to residents and a change of use that will be detrimental to our community.</p> <p>The proposal includes pedestrian access that is not directly into the residential buildings, but allows passersby to walk straight into the previously private space behind the buildings, which will enable and encourage non resident use of the space around the flats. We are already experiencing an increase in antisocial behaviour and this open access approach can only encourage more people into the space who have no inclination to keep it nice as they don't live there and will provide them with space, out of sight of the road, to indulge in activities that will adversely affect the residents.</p> <p>Additionally the car park access cuts across the front entrance of Snowman House, bringing vehicles very close to the entrance, with the increased levels of risk - particularly to children and noise and emissions that will impact residents, particularly those in the lower level residences.</p>

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2020/2486/P	Thomas Muirhead	15/07/2020 16:17:44	INT	<p>I am an architect and local resident with a personal interest in the amenity value of my local area. I was formerly a member of 4 different Design Review Panels, two in London and the others in Essex and the East Midlands. I have no pecuniary or professional interest in this application.</p> <p>From the first consultation it seemed clear that LB Camden had already made up its mind that this building was the best solution. I contend that it is not, and that within the same constraints (of time, of cost, and of site) much better architectural and landscaping solutions were possible, had deeper consideration been given to the opportunities afforded by the site and location.</p> <p>Although it seems too late now to make any meaningful comment on this application, I want the following to be on the record.</p> <p>I find a number of missed opportunities in this application as follows:</p> <p>1. MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE SETTING</p> <p>A rigidly orthogonal approach to the context, perhaps imposed by the Planning Officer, has assumed that the new building should necessarily align with the frontages and rooflines of the existing 19th. century houses on Belsize Road. There was no good reason to make that assumption - particularly because as proposed, the new building ends up having no meaningful architectural relationship with the existing houses, and indeed breaks with them completely in term of its proportions, fenestration, and materials. What may have begun as a perhaps ingenuous intention to make the new building “fit in” ends by making it clash with its surroundings, severing all relationships with the context. To my mind, the assumption that every new building must always face the street is often misplaced.</p> <p>In an alternative design strategy, the new building could have been reconfigured on its site so that the most important internal spaces directly overlooked the proposed new green space and beyond it, all the way along the length of Belsize Road towards Kilburn in the distance. The approach to the entrance of the new building would have been through the green space, rather than from the public road. As a consequence of that alternative design strategy, the other spaces in the building could have been laid out to make the most of that long view whilst still respectfully addressing the existing 19th. century houses on Belsize Road.</p> <p>Not only; this alternative design strategy, which would have turned the front of the building away from Belsize Road, would have greatly reduced the traffic noise problem, which the application adduces as partly the reason for making a sealed building that relies on mechanical air conditioning and very high energy consumption.</p> <p>2. MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO USE SOLAR ENERGY TO THE FULL</p> <p>I find it surprising that in the 21st century, at a time when by conviction as well as by law and regulation, we are expected to minimise the energy consumption of new buildings. The way in which this building relies on mechanical air conditioning looks to me like a throwback to the 1970s.</p> <p>This retrograde approach to building services appears especially evident on the roof plan, much of which is occupied by the large, noisy, energy-hungry AHUs (air handling units) required to operate the air conditioning</p>

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system. The noise of these units constantly turning on off will be a nuisance for the residents of Casterbridge, particularly in summer when they will be working hard and the residents will have their windows open. It is surprising that these considerations do not seem to have been taken into account, and I notice that these acoustic issues are raised in another comment to this application (and that is to say nothing of the ugly appearance of the roof as seen from Casterbridge).

A sealed building that relies so heavily on air conditioning carries its own risk of "sick building syndrome": if the cooling system is left off for any lengthy period of time (e.g. during the winter), bacteria can accumulate and propagate in the system, and will then be distributed throughout the building when the system is turned on again. There have been recorded cases of deaths resulting from the re-activation of a dormant air-conditioning system.

3. MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO MAXIMISE THE USE OF NATURAL LIGHT AND VENTILATION

Many internal rooms and spaces in the proposed building, including various lobbies, WCs, consulting rooms, offices etc. are completely enclosed with no natural light or ventilation. This was unnecessary. A differently planned building could have given natural daylight and ventilation to every space, large or small.

This missed opportunity is most evident at the upper floor, where there were many opportunities to design a solar roof that would have orientated PV or solar hot water panels towards the south, combined with extensive northlight glazing that would have eliminated solar gain whilst flooding the interiors with natural light. Instead, the plans and sections only show a few minimally sized flat rooflights, placed in random locations, where I believe they could overheat the spaces in hot weather (more work for the a/c to do). I find it remarkable that the opportunity has not been taken to design an uplifting, light-filled upper floor, where all the most important healthcare workspaces would enjoy optimum conditions of natural lighting and ventilation.

PROPOSED SITE PLAN, HIGHWAYS: NEW VEHICLE ACCESS POINTS AND TRAFFIC ISSUES

The position of the proposed new vehicle entrance ramp to the car park between the two tower blocks looks potentially dangerous to pedestrians, being located exactly at the point where families with children, coming and going from the bus stop, currently enter and leave Snowman tower. It would appear that residents did not have this brought to their attention during the consultation process. There should also be concern that the proposed new vehicle entrance in front of Casterbridge is much too close to the road junction, where vehicles arriving at speed from Abbey Road turn left into Belsize Road and even now are very difficult for pedestrians to see. There is also a pedestrian crossing at this location, just a few metres from the proposed new vehicle entrance. Not by coincidence, the existing vehicle access from Belsize Road is well away from the junction.

OVERALL: NOT GOOD ENOUGH

Given that for at least the next 50 years this new Health and Community Centre will be in full sight of the residents of Snowman and Casterbridge, and of their surrounding neighbours, this was the opportunity to provide a civic building of the highest quality. I find it regrettable that this application has managed to get through the planning process, and presumably past Camden's Design Review Panel, without considering the other possibilities that the location offers - and I fear it is now too late to stop and think again.