

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2021/0456/P	Karen	14/04/2021 14:25:49	COMMNT	These comments were submitted by e-mail to the Planning Officer on 4 April. Images 1-7 were attached to the e-mail.

'Planning Application 2021/0456/P: 152A Agar Grove - Installation of Four External Air Conditioning Units & Door Canopy

We wish to note our observations and concerns in respect of this planning application.

The background and site history provides the wider context for our concerns. Our specific observations and concerns are also set out in this note.

Background & Site History:

152 Agar Grove is a period property in the Camden Square Conservation Area. It has retained its original features at the front of the property. It is divided into two leasehold properties : 152A and 152B. In 2018, the addition of an extension to 152A Agar Grove (lower ground and ground storeys) at the rear of the property had a significant detrimental impact on the character of the property, in both design and construction; and deviations from the conditions of consent. 'Before and after' photos are attached (Images 1&2).

The Camden Square Appraisal and Management Strategy describes the area as a 'nineteenth century inner London suburb'. The strategy also sets out the 'positive actions for the particular care required to preserve or enhance the special character' of the area. 152 Agar Grove is one of the buildings that is considered to make a positive contribution in this respect.

This planning application for four air conditioning units (front and rear) – and a large, black polycarbonate door canopy - will further erode the period character of the building. We note that the applicant has not submitted photos in support of the application. They will not blend or harmonise with the existing structure and materials. The application is retrospective because the four air conditioning units were installed in the summer of 2020 without the requisite approvals, including planning permission and consent from the freeholder.

Two of the external air conditioning units are in an area that is not owned by the leaseholder and are in the shared garden at the front of the house.

Application - Specific Concerns :

The following observations and concerns are based on:

- Camden's Planning Guidance.
- A review of previous planning applications of this nature, and information submitted in support of the applications.
- Final decisions by Planning and associated conditions of consent, including enforcement action for non-compliance.

Air Conditioning Units - Observations & Concerns :

1. Energy Efficiency and Adaptation & Impact on Environment

The application does not include the justification as to why these units are needed, nor does it include information to support the spirit and intent of the sustainability agenda in the Camden Local Plan 2017.

Application No: Consultees Name: Received:

Comment: Response:

Previous applications include the context and details of why other passive cooling measures will not achieve the desired aim. Planning application 2019/2713/P provides one such example (for just one air conditioning unit).

There are four units for the flat at 152A Agar grove, which seems excessive when contrasted with the number approved for much larger residential properties in Camden, and for commercial premises with greater requirements for cooling measures. If the applicant had followed proper processes and sought approval before installing the air conditioning system (internal and external), there may have been options for reducing the number of external units, and, in turn, minimising the impact on the environment, other residents, neighbours, and the façade of the property.

2. Noise & Vibration Assessment

The noise monitoring was only carried out for the two units at the rear of the property. We observed that the microphone was in place for the timeframe specified in the Noise Impact Assessment Report.

Units at Front of Property:

There was no monitoring of the noise levels for the units at the front of the property. We, therefore, request that an 'in situ' and 'in operation' noise and vibration assessment is included as an enforceable condition of consent. The reasons are set out below.

- It is the two units at the front of the house that will have the greatest impact on the residents at 152B Agar Grove and the adjacent property, 154 Agar Grove. The predicted noise levels are based on a theoretical, abstract calculation. This is compounded by the fact that there are two units operating side by side. Camden's Planning details what should be included in a noise assessment. To quote:
'A noise, vibration and ventilation assessment should include the following information:
 - existing background noise levels measured over a 24-hour period. This includes the cumulative noise levels of all existing units.
 - proposed background noise levels. This includes the cumulative noise levels of all existing units.
- The 'partial' enclosure for the units at the front is just a makeshift surround that affords no real protection. Previous applications have provided details of proprietary enclosures (with specifications) that are designed for this purpose.
- The exposed area at the front of this partial enclosure faces a solid brick wall, which will not absorb sound and has the potential to increase noise and vibration (see attached photo – Image 3).
- The room most affected by the units at the front is the living room at 152B. There are two windows in this room, both of which will be open at precisely the same time that the air conditioning units will be used i.e. warm/hot weather. One of the leaseholders is a vulnerable, elderly resident who spends most of her days and evenings in this room. Her bedroom is also at the front of the house. One of the objectives of Camden's 'Older People Strategy' is to 'ensure that people can live at home for as long as possible'.
- The units are sited on the ground, on a concrete floor. As per the recommendation in the Noise Impact Assessment Report, 'suitable type isolators' should be installed.

3. Impact on Visual Appearance & Character of Property

Application No: **Consultees Name:** **Received:****Comment:** **Response:**

- There seems to be very little attempt to integrate the units and the enclosure with the general appearance of the property and its period façade. This adds to the cumulative erosion of the original look of the house (front and back).
- The enclosure for the units at the front of the property does not match existing materials and is visible from the street. See attached photo (Images 4 & 5).
- The view from the street is currently obscured by the building materials that are being stored in front of the area in question (and have been since the air conditioning units were installed). A fit-for-purpose enclosure would be bigger and would be visible from every aspect. The overall impacts affects the enjoyment of our property. It also conflicts with the Camden Conservation Area Management Strategy to preserve the unique characteristics of individual properties in the designated areas.

Door Canopy - Observations & Concerns:

The door canopy is not in keeping with the character of the property in design, size and material - see attached photos (images 6 & 7).

Image 7 shows what we see from the entrance to our flat. Again, this impacts on our enjoyment of our property.

More generally, both Planning and the Camden Square Conservation Area Advisory Committee may have a view on whether approving the door canopy in its current form sets a precedent that is not consistent with preserving the original and traditional appearance of the Victorian houses in Agar Grove.

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Leaseholders, 152B Agar Grove
