

Laura Hazelton

From: Sophia Jones <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 28 May 2021 12:43
To: Laura Hazelton; Nick Baxter; Andrew Maughan; Jennifer Watson
Subject: No. 111 Frognal

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Dear Camden Council,

I am writing concerning no. 111 Frognal, to share with you my full support of this family home and sensitive renovation.

I am a local artist and Hampstead and Highgate resident and my partner has lived in this area for almost 50 years.

Zoe and Merlin and their children Max and River are a valued local family in the neighbourhood. We are writing to support their listed building and planning applications (please attach this support letter to their art studio submission, revised minor amendment application and take into consideration for their cellar works).

Their children go to local schools and are friends with our child, they swim daily at the Hampstead Heath lido. They are not passing through. Their home at 111 Frognal is not a business project. Rather we can confirm that 111 Frognal is their cherished family home.

We have been to their house many times over the years prior to works starting, and the existing house was in very bad repair. It had a dangerous staircase, the house had mould and was very dilapidated. The rear facade was very ugly and did not match the historic front facade. Works on the house were inevitable.

We are aware that such works on loved, listed buildings need to be done sensitively. Above all, this is why we support this application. We know - and can see from the plans - that Zoe and Merlin have studied the history of the house, its various historic adaptations and thought hard about how to maintain its features and its spirit - they would never consider damaging it in any way. We think they are building an innovative, sustainable, warm family home, whilst restoring lost features. They have built their life around the community in Hampstead and intend to live in the house for many years to come.

We also appreciate that works must not inconvenience neighbours. But we do not see how the proposed works would have an impact on surrounding houses or the wider community. The proposed extensions were positioned at the altered north end of the house and were modest in size. As such they would not be visible from any public road and hardly visible, we believe, to the neighbours, being at garden level hidden behind garden walls and planting or completely subterranean. Most of the area is completely underground. Given which we do not see how it could be a cause of concern to neighbours.

Further, we understand that there are several miscomprehensions about the art shed. These misunderstandings suggest to us that there is an element of paranoia among the neighbour's complaints about Merlin and Zoe's proposed works. The reality is that Merlin and Zoe put up an

off-the-shelf shed at the end of their garden for their kids to play in. This shed has been misconstrued as a 'building' by their neighbours. We have been inside the art shed and it is a shed with no services, no insulation, no foundations. It's a shed. There is another shed already in the garden, which also has no consents but was erected by the Caros. Neither shed has been put in to deceive the council or justify the outbuilding Zoe and Merlin propose.

Their proposed art studio, which would in any case replace the sheds, is wonderful and has merit regardless of whether the shed existed or not. It is very interesting in terms of design and is also sensitive and discreet. The garden at 111 is very long and the art studio proposed is over 30m away from the original house and neighbours so it does not impact anyone.

As much as we are concerned about the ferocity of the neighbour's animosity to their proposals, we are also concerned with how the council appear to be approaching this case. As we said above, the extension is sensitive and discreet. The art studio also. The proposals respect the historical lineage of the house and will provide a family home for decades to come. However, of most concern is the fact that the council appears to be choosing to prosecute over the cellar repairs - these were necessary repairs underneath a listed house. When it became clear they required permission for the specific works, Zoe and Merlin approached the council to resolve the situation. It seems misguided and vengeful for this to lead to prosecution. Obviously it is creating both stress and cost for Zoe and Merlin and their young family, and also the council.

We fully support our neighbours in their cellar repairs, art studio and renovations. We have no doubt that the proposed works would not only celebrate the long history of this site, but become an important benchmark for how to approach building conservation sensitively both in terms of heritage and sustainability.

Yours sincerely,
Sophia Jones and Gideon Simeloff
(name and contact details to be redacted)