

Dear Sirs

**Planning Application Number 2021/2911/p**

We wish to set out our objections to the proposed change of use from an HMO (sui generis) to a Residential Children's Home (class C2) and the erection of a single story outbuilding in the rear garden ("Proposal") brought by Mr Harry Angelides ("Proponent") in respect of 24 Lady Margaret Road ("Property"). We understand that the Proposal relates to the operation of a home to be used for secure sheltered accommodation for vulnerable young adults where such accommodation is necessary due to family, substance or relationship issues.

We live at 22C Lady Margaret Road, two properties to the south of the Property. We have lived there since 2017, and in the northern part of the Kentish Town Conservation Area ("Area") since 2014.

Our feedback on the proposal is presented in four sections:

- Appropriateness of the Proposal to the Area;
- Appropriateness of the Property for the Proposal;
- Matters relating to the plans submitted in respect of the Property; and
- Matters relating to the process undertaken in respect of the Proposal.

Appropriateness of the Proposal to the Area

The Area is a conservation area (Camden Conservation Area Number 19) and subject to the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan. We note that the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum ("KTNF") has been engaged with, and await receiving their views on the Proposal.

The Area has a number of features which are relevant to the Proposal and on face make the Proposal unsuitable for the Area.

1. The Area has a significant presence of young children, evidenced by the exceptionally high demand for places at Eleanor Palmer Primary School, excellent early years provision through Rainbow, Montpelier and Dolphin Montessori nurseries, and the presence of high standard playgrounds in Montpelier Gardens and Falkland Gardens. These nurseries and playgrounds comprise almost the totality of the open space available for young families in the Area, and preserving the safety and amenity of these facilities is important.
2. The Area also has a high number of elderly residents in the area, often living alone, who are vulnerable and need to be taken into account in applications of this sort.
3. The Area has a large number of licensed establishments, many of which are Assets of Community Value. The Pineapple Public House is located only 150 metres from the Property and at least 6 other licensed establishments are within 0.5 miles of the Property. Given the relative ease with which alcohol can be procured in the Area, it would be preferable if any residents at the Property did not have any history with substance reliance and/or addiction.
4. The Peckwater Estate is located 0.2 miles from the Property. In recent times (2018-2020) there has been a high level of gang-related crime, including murders, on or related to the Peckwater Estate. Housing vulnerable young adults in a Property with this proximity to an estate with recent and current gang activity poses potentially significant risks to the residents of the Property and of the Area.

We would anticipate that a report from the Met Police's Kentish Town Safer Neighbourhood Team should be commissioned to confirm that there is no risk arising if the Property is used for the

Proposal before any planning application is granted. This should relate to residents of the Property, residents in the Peckwater Estate and residents in the Area as a whole.

#### Appropriateness of the Property for the Proposal

The Property is part of a semi-detached house one property north of the intersection of Lady Margaret Road and Dunollie Road. The Property is bounded on the southern side for much of its length by the other half of the semi-detached house but also partially by derelict garages forming part of 1 Dunollie Road.

We understand that the Property is currently operated as residential accommodation for mature age language students, and this is a business in which the Proponent has a level of experience and expertise. The current operation is also consistent with the character of the Area, with multilingual educational facilities being located in the Area.

We understand that the Proponent was previously involved in running a care home on Falkland Road (which caused numerous problems in the Area), but we are unable to confirm this, as searching for the Proponent on Ofsted and CQC search functions did not return any results. The Proponent should provide evidence of engagement with Ofsted and CQC sufficient to confirm that the Property is appropriate for the proposed use. In particular, the Property must meet Regulation 15 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 (the "Regulations"), i.e. that the premises must be clean, secure, suitable for the purpose for which they are being used, properly used, properly maintained and appropriately located for the purpose for which they are being used.

We do not believe that the Property would be able to meet these requirements. In particular:

1. Security – the Regulation requires that the Property be secure. Given the relative ease of access over the side return and over the garages adjacent to 1 Dunollie Road, security measures that are also consistent with the Conservation Area would need to be proposed. These were not included in the Proposal.
2. Appropriately located – as set out in the earlier section, the Property is not in an appropriate location for this type of use.

Other issues which are relevant as to why the change of use application should not be granted are:

3. Noise – we understand that the use would require 24 hour, 7 day presence from staff and necessitate deliveries consistent with secure residential care. The Area is quiet with few through roads and currently not impacted by any meaningful out of hours traffic. In addition, the residents at the Property would also likely create a lot of noise and disturbance in the local area.
4. Parking – parking is currently tight on Lady Margaret Road generally, and especially around the location of the Property. There is no provision for further parking; also, in accordance with the Kentish Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy, removal of the crossover to enable restoration of the front garden should be implemented to enhance the Area.
5. Fire safety – in March 2021 a flat fire in a building of the same vintage occurred on Lady Margaret Road. The Proposal did not indicate any fire safety measures that had been taken (e.g. fire escapes, automatic locking doors) which would be important to ensure that the Property did not pose an unacceptable risk to safety to residents or to neighbours. We would expect a fire safety report to be provided. Any proposals would likely to be inconsistent with

the conservation of the appearance of the neighbourhood (as required by the conservation status of the Area).

6. Staffing – we understand it is proposed that only two staff in total would be employed, with one staff member on site at any one time, managing up to six residents. We note that the *Living in Children's Residential Homes Report (DFE-RR201)* commissioned for the Department of Education noted an average staffing level of 2.5:1 (range of 1.4:1 to 4.3:1) but the Report further noted, "Homes with fewer residents (three to four) tended to have higher staffing ratios, due to the need to provide 24 hour cover to a relatively small group of residents." We think that the staffing level is inappropriate to support the Proposal and the Proponent should be striving for best practice levels of staffing rather than a level at the higher end of the peer group. We would also note that this poses issues around safety and security in the event that a single staff member on site is incapacitated.

In summary the information presented contained no evidence to suggest that the Property meets, or could be reasonably expected to meet, the Regulations.

#### Matters relating to the Plan submitted for the Property

The Plan submitted fails to take into account various important matters, notably:

1. A planning approval has been granted for the demolition of the garages adjacent to 1 Dunollie Road, which is likely to bring noise and construction traffic to a contiguous site. No work should occur on the Property while the planning application relating to the adjacent site remains valid.
2. Removal of space in the garden for the proposed "Play Room" will lead to a loss of green space. In the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy, Council has undertaken to (inter alia) "resist the loss of soft landscaping". We note that the Proposal is incorrect in noting that it will not lead to a loss of garden.
3. Parking comments in the Proposal should have had regard to (a) the higher number of staff, visitors, contractors and deliveries visiting the Property relative to current use; (b) parking restrictions on the roads in the Area limiting non-resident parking due to current pressures for parking; and (c) the desirability of removing the cross-over.

#### Matters relating to process undertaken in respect of the Proposal

The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy requires, "All applications for planning permission and conservation area consent must contain sufficient information to describe the effect on character and appearance of the conservation area." The Proposal fails to do this.

There has been no engagement with residents in the Area. The Proposal was brought to our notice through a single notice attached to a parking sign, and the information provided in the Proposal has not addressed many of the salient points regarding the change of use. Only floor plans have been submitted, without the reports we would expect to see as outlined herein (i.e. from Safer Neighbourhoods Team, fire safety experts, Care Quality Commission and Ofsted).

The proposal was registered with Council on 2 August 2021 with a deadline for comments on 29 August 2021, i.e. during peak school summer holidays. This period should be extended and wider consultation should take place with residents and other local groups.

#### Conclusion

As outlined herein we feel strongly opposed to the Proposal for the following reasons:

- The Proposal is inappropriate for the Area, raising risks relating to amenity for young families, substance abuse as a result of ready access to licensed premises, and potential crime due to proximity to certain estates;
- The Property is inappropriate for the Proposal, as being neither secure nor suitable for the purpose for which it is being used, as required by legislation;
- The Plan for works on the Property does not accurately reflect the reality of the situation (i.e. says no garden space will be lost which is not correct), does not have regard to the combined impact of construction works on an adjacent site which will have impacts on noise, traffic management on security, and an ongoing impact on parking in the local area; and
- The Proposal has failed to meet requirements for engagement with local residents.

We trust Council will refuse consent to the Proposal for the reasons outlined herein.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Oates and Nick Woolfitt