

Ms Laura Hazelton  
Camden Council

23 August 2021

Dear Ms Hazelton

**Support letter for Emergency Structural Works at 111 Frognal**

I am currently the Head of the Department of Architecture at the University of Cambridge. I am writing in my capacity as an architectural historian and an architect specialising in the history of building construction. I am the current Chairman of the Construction History Society and I have published widely on the history of building construction, particularly the history of brickwork. I am a past Chairman of the British Brick Society.

I am writing in support of the works being carried out at 111 Frognal and the works already carried out at 111 Frognal in 2018 and being applied for at present. I understand that there is some discussion about whether the cellar under the stable block is original or is an illegal excavation. In my expert opinion it is clearly and obviously original as can clearly be seen in the attached photograph (fig.1). As you know, there is an existing and known cellar immediately adjacent to the newly rediscovered cellar and, thus, it should come as no surprise to discover that this extended over more of the site. The fact that this was a cellar and not merely foundations is obvious from the photograph. A two-storey brick stable block in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century would have had a strip foundation of no greater than two or three feet in depth (no more than 1 metre). Such foundations are found everywhere. As can clearly be seen in the photograph (fig.1), the walls in this space extend down 2.4-2.6 metres which is the depth of the foundations of St Paul's Cathedral and that makes no sense whatsoever. This can only have been a cellar.

A space like this, which had been poorly backfilled at an unknown date, and the removal of the floor, which must have been substantial to hold carriages or horses, would have severely weakened the building above. Structural reinforcement would thus seem the only sensible course of action and this would need to be carried out fast. This has, of course, covered up the brick wall, but this can clearly be seen in the photographs. The wall has however been retained. Its visibility is of no historical value: it would probably have been plastered originally – hence its rough appearance. The removal of the 20<sup>th</sup> century raised floor which was rotten and had already been

1 Scroope Terrace  
Trumpington Street  
Cambridge CB2 1PX

Tel: +44 (0) 1223 332950  
Fax: +44 (0) 1223 332960  
Email: [jwpc2@cam.ac.uk](mailto:jwpc2@cam.ac.uk)  
[www.arct.cam.ac.uk](http://www.arct.cam.ac.uk)



# UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Department of Architecture

inspected by the officers of the council is of no concern. The strategy of reinstating a floor at ground level, as would have been found in a coach-house, garage and stable, seems wholly in line with heritage policy, creating a more legible building.

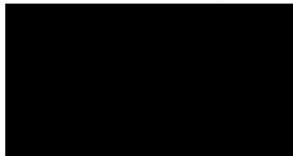
The finding of a previously unknown cellar, weakened by the removal of the original floor and the strengthening of it swiftly to avoid collapse of both the existing heritage property and possible damage to neighbouring properties, should, it seems to me, to be something the council should be praising, not punishing.

---

I am willing to volunteer to appear and act for Zoe and Merlin in any proceedings. It seems to me they have been guilty of nothing more than acting swiftly in the face of imminent danger to secure a historic building against collapse, something which is clearly allowed in the legislation. I struggle to see why the Council is pursuing this. The rest of the building is now clearly at risk as it is without a roof and delaying the works is causing damage and more damage will be caused if works are delayed and the building remains uncovered over winter. Work should be allowed to proceed as soon as possible to protect the building and complete the roof before serious damage is done. They have produced a sympathetic design which I fully support.

Please act swiftly to approve these works and allow work to continue. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the number below if you wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely



Dr James Campbell MA DipArch PhD IHBC FSA RIBA  
Head of Department of Architecture  
University of Cambridge

Chair of the Construction History Society  
Fellow of Queens' College, Cambridge  
Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries



Fig.1 Picture showing basement walls uncovered by removal of back fill. The depth of the walls is clearly far more than any 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century trench foundation indicating that this was clearly a basement.