


Subject: Objection to a planning application Reference 2021/3839/P



For the attention of Kate Henry, Planning Officer, Borough of Camden

Here is a statement of my objection to the proposal to add a storey and seven flats on top of the existing Howitt Close building on Howitt Road (NW3 4LX) - Planning Reference 2021/3839/P.

I shall be grateful if you could confirm receipt of this statement of objection. Please let me know if you would like further information 

Jeanne Golay-Evans

The proposal contravenes the very purpose of the Belsize Conservation Area because it will disfigure one of its special architectural features, namely Howitt Close, and reduce the special interest and general amenity of the area. The latest Belsize Conservation Area Statement notes the area "retains much of its architectural integrity. Generally, (...) the majority of the area retains the essence of the character and appearance that would have prevailed in the 1930s." Howitt Close is specifically named in the Statement as making a positive contribution to the special character and appearance of the Glenloch sub-area (Camden Conservation Statement (CCS), p 31).

The Statement makes clear that roof extension proposals that would change the shape and form of a roof can have a harmful impact on the Conservation Area and are unlikely to be acceptable where the change would be detrimental to the form and character of the existing building (CCS, p41). This is precisely the case with the proposal for Howitt Close: The proposed addition of a mansard roof is not in keeping with the Art Deco style of the building; it is a massive addition that is out of scale with the rest of the building. Howitt Close would lose its architectural integrity and become an unpleasant mongrel of a building. This loss of scale and balance is compounded by the fact that the footprint of the Howitt Close building occupies most of the Howitt Close plot, with very little land around the building itself. This disproportionate proposal will significantly reduce existing amenity and pleasant aspects not only of Howitt Road but also of Glenilla Road and Belsize Park Gardens.

In this context, it is worth noting that the area around Glenilla and Howitt Roads was specifically added to the Belsize Conservation Area in 1988; this deliberate, late, addition should be understood as inviting Camden Council to pay particular attention to its preservation. It is also worth noting that, in 1991, part of the nearby Haverstock Hill frontage was included in the conservation area "to give control over roof level extensions that could affect the character of the adjacent area" (CCS, p 6). Because it significantly and adversely affects the roof line of the area, the proposal should not be acceptable in Belsize Conservation Area.

The proposal will greatly add to pressure on roads in the Belsize area, where they are already particularly congested and where traffic lanes are so narrow that emergency and utility vehicles are regularly hampered in their progress. While it appears that Camden will not provide residential parking permits for the seven new flats, the existence of these flats could still result in more than a dozen additional vehicles parked in the streets after 6.30 pm and at weekends and adding to the area traffic generally, including additional delivery and contractor vans, etc.

The proposal will significantly affect the quality of life of the residents in Howitt Close and neighbouring properties as well as residents in the roads used by building traffic to and from Howitt Close. Camden's pre-application advice of December 2020 repeatedly and strongly advised the developers to consult the building's existing leaseholders and neighbours. But the developers have disregarded this advice. Their assertion in their 'Planning Statement' that the "impact of the proposed development on the amenity of existing and proposed occupiers is considered acceptable" is flatly contradicted by their lack of engagement and consultation with existing leaseholders.

A related concern is that the proposal does not appear to include the provision of lifts although the proposed new flats will be on the third floor. Such a state of affair is puzzling and may not be the developers' long term intention. The present omission might well be followed by a retrospective application to have lifts installed. This will cause further building disruption to existing residents. If it is the developers' plan to alter their submission in regard of lifts, the question is whether other modifications to the proposals are also intended once work is underway.

A similar proposal was rejected by Camden in 1961 and this proposal, perhaps for different reasons, should also be rejected.



