

[REDACTED]

Subject:

FW: Objection to application for planning permission (Reference 2021/3839/P)

[REDACTED]

The majority of Council staff are continuing to work at home through remote, secure access to our systems. Where possible please communicate with us by telephone or email.

From: Jan Reichelt <[REDACTED]>

Sent: 02 November 2021 20:45

To: Kate Henry <Kate.Henry@camden.gov.uk>

Subject: Objection to application for planning permission (Reference 2021/3839/P)

[REDACTED]

Dear Ms Henry,

I am a leaseholder of a flat in Howitt Close in Belsize Park and have become aware that the freeholder of Howitt Close has applied to Camden Council for planning permission to build an additional seven flats on our roof. I would like to object to this planning application, as I am concerned with the significant change in appearance and visual integrity of this wonderful building as well as Howitt Road and the Belsize Park neighbourhood more generally.

When I bought my flat in Howitt Close, I was impressed and delighted with the architecture and appearance of the building. I loved the fact that Howitt Close is an Art Deco building, and that it had maintained its style both from the outside as well as the inside over the past decades. At the same time, Howitt Close fits nicely into the area, as it is selectively respecting materials and colours of the Edwardian style. I am surprised to read that the freeholder is now of the opinion that the building looks “unfinished”, whilst clearly Howitt Close as an Art Deco building was appropriately built with a flat roof (see also e.g. <http://www.howoldismyhouse.com/art-deco-1918--1935.html>) and nicely fits into the area due to some Edwardian features; but a flat roof is one strong characteristic of an Art Deco building and it distinguishes Howitt Close. I would interpret the freeholder’s opinion of Howitt Close looking “unfinished” certainly not more as an opinion – as there will be plenty of additional and alternative opinions (such as mine, from many other leaseholders, as well as neighbours) that are perfectly fine with the original Art Deco design of the building and who would like to maintain the original Art Deco style. I would have a hard time

understanding how such a (disputable) opinion about an Art Deco building could be a strong argument to obtain planning permission.

Howitt Close should also be protected from significant change, not only due to its architectural qualities and Art Deco style, but also due to its location in Camden Council's Belsize Conservation Area. In my view, Camden Council should consider Howitt Close as one of the significant historical buildings in our area, visible from many streets (e.g. Glenilla Road and Howitt Road) and making a positive contribution to the area, and adding to the variety of architectural styles (also compare to Stanbury Court and the Isokon Building, just to name two). It sits comfortably within its position. Enlarging it by adding another floor of flats on top seems to go far beyond what should be permissible and thus would harm the appearance of the Conservation Area. For example, I believe it is also not allowed to change other buildings to a similar extent, e.g. by adding additional floors on top of houses in Howitt Road or Glenloch Road or on top of Stanbury Court or the Isokon building, or by building large dormers or roof terraces, etc. Here the rules and regulations of the Belsize Conservation Area should be applied equally, and adding another floor to a building, be it Howitt Close or another building in the area, would clearly alter and harm the significance of Howitt Close and thus the character and appearance of the Conservation Area if it was allowed. It would also have an immediate practical and negative impact on the neighbours, as a new floor on top would surely reduce the amount of natural light some of the surrounding properties would get. In any case it would negatively impact the current balance between Howitt Close and the surrounding properties, likely leading to those properties losing some of their value and attractiveness, and in consequence also negatively impacting Belsize Park.

Lastly, such a major alteration to Howitt Close would incur significant noise disturbance (especially due to works on the roof, where sounds will spread into every direction) as well as parking problems due to lorries and builders on site. Parking problems, already significant, are likely to continue after the construction period, as additional housing in an already very busy area will cause further traffic (e.g. including speeding on Howitt Road) and parking problems for all residents.

For the above-mentioned reasons, I would oppose the construction of additional flats on top of Howitt Close. First and foremost I fear it would ruin the aesthetic integrity of Howitt Close as a historic Art Deco building, and thus the appeal of the Belsize Conservation area, and I would be concerned that this type of development would be proposed for similar buildings nearby as well and thus lead to a chain reaction, significantly reducing the charm and architectural characteristics of Belsize Park.

Thank you for considering my opinion.

Kind regards,
Jan Reichelt

