

To: CAMDEN COUNCIL
Ref: EN21/0650

Re: Cover letter re retrospective planning application for air conditioning units
Town and Country Planning Acts 1990
Reply to your letter dated 16th November 2021
Planning application to be submitted by 7 December 2021 (21 days)

From: Susannah Price
12 St Ann's Gardens
London NW5 4ER

Date: 5th December 2021

PLEASE SEE ALL ATTACHED DOCUMENTS, listed here:

- 3 Drawings on A4 pdfs
- Possible AC unit covers on 1 x A4 pdf
- A Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) by Clement Acoustics Ltd., Dec 2021 on pdf
- (This cover letter A4 pdf)

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for your letter.

DEFINITION:

The fans referred to are not extractor fans: they are Daikin heating and cooling units.

RE PLANNING PERMISSION + APOLOGY:

I had no idea we needed to get planning permission, and I'm sorry for that. I had thought with all the constant and extensive building work, the many extensions, satellite dishes, sheds, constant scaffolding, a visible air conditioning unit in the house direct behind us, and the various hotch-potch additions to many of the buildings in the immediate area that it wasn't necessary. It's not a conservation area and there's no uniformity to the buildings. However, had I known, of course I would have sought permission: I apologize for that and am hereby attempting to rectify the matter.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF INSTALLATION – CONSTANT BUILDING WORK IN IMMEDIATE VICINITY, AND RESULTING BAD AIR QUALITY:

As I outlined in my reply to Sophie Bowden by email on 21.11.21:

We installed the fans because of the air quality on the street. We moved in a year ago in October 2020, and there is so much building work and resultant dust, my asthma, already an issue, became uncontrollable. I was advised to keep the windows tightly closed in the house, and install the fans. Not ideal, but there you go.

To elaborate further: within months of moving in in October 2020, significant building work began on the street. Firstly #2 directly opposite had a roof extension built, taking over 6 months and involving a huge amount of noise, dust and debris in the air. Then in November 2021 #13 next door used began the same job – erecting an entire new floor as well as replacing windows, removing fireplaces etc. The two jobs equal over a year of constant noise and significant dust. Nearby is the large redevelopment project on Maitland Park Villas / Grafton Terrace.

Almost as soon as these jobs began, my asthma deteriorated and I was forced to up my dose of inhaler to double what it normally is. I manage my asthma carefully and normally have approx. one asthma attack every 2-3 months. Since the building work I was having an attack every 2 weeks. One of my asthma doctors, a Respiratory Consultant at The NHS Royal Brompton Hospital, advised me to up my inhaler dose and not open the windows, since clearly the issue was the dust. Usually I sleep with the windows slightly open all year around. It was at this stage that we made the decision to install the air cooling and heating units, and keep the windows closed.

Furthermore, due to Covid 19, I have almost entirely worked from home. It is not possible to live in a house night and day with the windows closed for reasons of avoiding health complications due to asthma. Fresh air is necessary too.

May I refer you to this page:

www.hse.gov.uk/construction/healthrisks/hazardous-substances/construction-dust.htm

and particularly these lines:

“Regularly breathing construction dust can cause diseases like lung cancer, asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and silicosis. Construction workers have a high risk of developing these diseases because many common construction tasks can create high dust levels. These diseases cause permanent disability and early death. Over 500 construction workers are believed to die from exposure to silica dust every year.”

DAIKIN UNITS :

We chose these units by Daikin because:

- 1) they are smaller than other units
- 2) they are the most energy-efficient
- 3) they have an outdoor quiet option which lowers the noise of the outdoor fan**
- 4) we have bought a lifetime guarantee so that the units maintain acceptable noise levels throughout their lifespan.

May I refer you to this page:

www.daikin.co.uk/content/dam/document-library/operation-manuals/ac/split/ftxs-k/FTXS35-50K_3PEN377621-4B_Operation%20manuals_English.pdf

In particular, see page 19:

“OUTDOOR UNIT QUIET operation lowers the noise level of the outdoor unit. This function is useful when you need to consider the noise for your neighbourhood”

INSTALLATION AND POSITIONING OF THE EXTERNAL FANS:

We discussed with the installers where the units / fans should go. Putting the fans behind the ‘parapet’ (i.e. at the bottom of the mansard roof) at the front of the house was discussed, so as to be invisible from the street, in order to minimise pipework and overall local impact. However we decided that they should go at the back of the house so as to not disturb the aesthetics of the street. The houses opposite at the front are approximately a minimum of 17metres away, whereas at the back they are over 27.5m to 30m away, i.e. two garden lengths away . As a result, we paid extra to have them situated at the back of the house.

Moreover, unlike the front, there is little aesthetic uniformity at the back: the houses have a lot of extensions, various hotch-potch additions, as well as satellite dishes, garden sheds, balconies, pipes; as well as being overlooked by the rear of Maitland Park Road.

NOISE:

The units do not work all day and night, nor are they automatic. They are so efficient that we only use them for maximum 20-30 mins per day at night before going to sleep. This is more than sufficient to heat or cool the room in question. So far we have only used them occasionally in August and for some of November - no other months. The rest of the time they are switched off, and therefore silent.

The houses behind cannot hear anything from the fans – they are at least 28m to 30m metres away.

Our neighbours next door at #13, whose windows are closest, are the only ones who could remotely be affected by noise. They know we have had the units installed and have made no complaint. (Moreover, it was the soon-to-expire planning permission for their current building project that necessitated us installing the units in the first place.) Their current building means that the closest window to the units is their new bathroom, or the rear of their living room. All their bedrooms are either at the front of their house, or on their new top floor.

ACOUSTIC REPORT:

We commissioned an acoustic report by CLEMENT ACOUSTICS and are awaiting the report to be sent to us. We have given them 7/12 as deadline.

www.clementacoustics.co.uk/acoustic-consultancy-services/?gclid=Cj0KCQjA47GNBhDrARIsAKfZ2rBj4jqBzdAnjig0iwVZwV1gYQtMeGCTYiSBWmDRE2Pa3qKiNPOSUGMaAtmUEALw_wcB

We are waiting to see what the acoustic report says about enclosures for noise as well as aesthetics.

PRECEDENT IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY:

There is already an air conditioning unit installed on the back of the house opposite us and one house to the right - the address is 1, Baptist Gardens NW5. This unit is on a terrace / balcony and is visible from our house. [see photo]

We have now read about Craig David getting retrospective planning permission for 4 units in his flat in Camden, but the fact there is a visible unit in the house directly behind ours in an almost identical street feels like a more accurate precedent.

www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7238413/Craig-David-wins-planning-battle-Camden-north-London-neighbours-air-conditioning-units.html

We also know anecdotally of several people in NW5 who have air con units visible from their houses.

COVERS / ENCLOSURES - AESTHETICS AND/OR NOISE:

We had planned to get covers / enclosures for the two fans to make them do less 'harm to the setting of the property and surrounding area.' Please see examples of possible covers attached. Clearly, we won't pursue this until the planning issue is resolved. Any feedback, or a style guide, would be appreciated, including materials. But this is something we wanted to do anyway, for aesthetic reasons, both for our neighbours and for us.

Please let me know if you need any further information from me.

Sincerely,

Susannah Price
(owner)