

Subject:

Comments on planning application 2021/5366/P

I am writing to you to comment on application 2021/5366/P, concerning a single storey rear extension at 4 Ploughmans Close London NW1 0XH. I am the adjoining owner, at 3 Ploughmans Close London NW1 0XH, and I have grave concerns about the proposed development. The project, as currently proposed, features a flat roof with a roof garden, which would extend right to the boundary wall with my garden. This provides a raised platform, which overlooks our garden and looks back into our property, violating our privacy. The proposed extension is also significantly higher and more visible from our side of the boundary than other similar extensions in the estate. This will reduce light to my property and will convey a sense of being enclosed, especially given the relatively small size of our garden.

I believe that the proposed plans do not conform with Camden's Planning Guidance on Home Improvements in relation to the following:

- ∞ The extension does not appear to be scaled in terms of height, as the proposed roof height is materially above the level of the first floor on a terrace of houses with low ceilings. It is materially higher than other extensions in the same estate, and with a markedly different design (flat roof vs. sloped roof).
- ∞ The proposed building does not respect and consider our amenity as adjacent occupiers with regard to daylight, sunlight and privacy. Being higher than other extension, it has a material impact on the day and sunlight that can reach our garden over the year, and on our visibility from our living room and our garden. Whilst I am not in principle opposed to my neighbours having an extension, it would be far less intrusive if it adopted a design similar to other extensions around the estate.
With respect to the privacy element, the roof garden under the proposed development provides a raised platform that can be used as a balcony, accessible from the first floor windows (easy access as the roof garden's height is between the first floor level and the windowsill level). This platform would offer a full view of my whole garden, and also a direct view into my living room and my [REDACTED] room, which has a window less than a metre away from the party wall. This is not an unfounded concern, as my neighbours have openly shared their wish to have a balcony, and in fact seem to have included this in their pre-application plans. Even if my current neighbours were not to pursue the use of the platform as a balcony, I am exposed to the risk that someone else might - such as their children or any other owners or tenants if they decide to sell or rent this house in the future. Once the raised platform is in place, I am left unprotected - if anyone uses it as a balcony my only option for trying to regain my privacy would be by engaging in a costly and lengthy legal process to prevent its use.
A flat roof is not essential for the extension, or for having a green roof to promote biodiversity - there are many examples of green sloped roofs - but does support its use as a balcony; therefore a relatively small change in the design to use a sloped roof instead of a flat roof would address my concerns about privacy, and at the same time might result in a smaller area blocking day and sunlight.
- ∞ The proposed building does not comply with the 45 degree test and 25 degree test as set out in the Amenity CPG.
- ∞ The proposed building would require a wall of up to three meters tall and extending for almost three meters right at the boundary of our garden. Our garden is relatively narrow, and such large structure will make us feel enclosed. In comparison, other extensions in the estate do not take up so much visual space from the adjoining garden.

- ∞ The flat roof would be directly accessible from the street, which creates additional risks in relation to break-ins and burglary, providing easier access both to my garden and to my first floor windows.

Unfortunately, communication from my neighbours in relation to this matter has been poor, which is disappointing given that we are generally in very good terms in other aspects. They have only shared limited information about their plans and very late in the process, only in the context of obtaining a party wall agreement and serving the corresponding notice. Since obtaining this information I have raised my concerns with them, and I have put forward alternative proposals to mitigate these concerns - clearly, a sloped roof design aligned with other developments in the estate would alleviate many of the potential problems. However, although they have agreed to marginally reduce the parapet next to my fence, my neighbours are not willing to compromise in relation to the flat roof design. They have assured me that they already have permission from Camden Planning for the current design, though I believe that this is not actually the case. Given this, I believe my only option at this point is to raise these concerns as comments to their application. I would appreciate if my comments were considered and the application to be reviewed in light of Camden's guidance for planning, with special consideration to the risk that the raised platform may be used as a balcony as initially planned in the pre-application design.