

Planning Application 2021/5750/P, 8a Hampstead Hill Gardens
Attn.: Ms. Kate Henry, Planning Officer, London Borough of Camden
9 January 2022

Letter of Objection

Dear Ms. Henry,

I write as the chair of and on behalf of the Hampstead Hill Gardens Residents' Association. We wish to object to Planning Application 2021/5750/P, 8a Hampstead Hill Gardens

The contents of this letter are based on discussions with and emails from most residents of homes surrounding the property, including residents of 2, 2a, 3, 4, 4a, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 12 and 16 Hampstead Hill Gardens.

First, there are a number of features of the planning application that we see as positive:

1. Renovating the existing townhouse and improving the building facade. The property has been neglected for some time and has become an eyesore. The redesign is for the most part a good aesthetic improvement and more in keeping with the style of other properties on our road.
2. The addition of gardens and greenery to the front and rear of the property.
3. Changes of some features from earlier plans that caused concern for neighbours (in particular replacing the swimming pool with more plantings; removal of the fourth-floor extension; the addition of more permeable surfaces; scaling back the use of glass on the fourth floor).

We appreciate the applicant's attempts to reduce the impact of this project on neighbours' privacy by, for example, stepping the proposed terrace area back from the boundary with No. 10 and using planters and greenery to provide screening between the proposed terrace and 2, 2a, 6, 8 and 10. We also view positively the applicant's willingness to share plans and discuss those plans with neighbours prior to submitting this planning application.

Despite these positive points, there are sufficient potential negative impacts on neighbours that we must object to this application. Our key areas of concern are:

1. Loss of amenity for neighbours

Overlooking: While the plans attempt to mitigate this issue it would still be the case that the proposed terrace would offer the opportunity for over-looking into all of the back gardens in this section of Hampstead Hill Gardens, as well as into back windows, many of which are bedroom windows. This is especially true for Flats 1, 2, 3 and 4 of 8 Hampstead Hill Gardens as well as for 6 and 10.

The new lightbox to the front of the building will also increase overlooking. Many neighbours also expect the abundance of glass to lead to light pollution. It also detracts from the positive elements of new façade.

Noise: No matter how courteous the new residents are, the addition of a dwelling and terrace to an area that has seen minimal use for the past 20 years will certainly add to the noise level for near neighbours, especially if the proposed dwelling at some point incorporated some form of HVAC system (although this is not part of the current application). Since the proposed terrace sits above other gardens it is also likely that any sound from this area will travel more easily than it might if it were at the same level as other gardens.

Loss of light: The application shows that there will be a slight loss of light for the lower-ground floor flats in No. 8. This may also be the case for other flats in the building as well as for other surrounding buildings, depending on the density and height of the plantings.

2. **Potential damage to surrounding properties:** the proposed basement work would take place in very close proximity to 6, 8, 10 Hampstead Hill Gardens. The application estimated that there could be “slight” structural damage to No. 8. Residents find the possibility of damage to their building unacceptable and are very seriously concerned. Assumptions of damage in planning applications are invariably optimistic. We feel the only real solution is to increase the distance between the structure and the building of No.8 and to reduce the built footprint for this and other reasons stated here.
3. **Potential damage to surrounding trees:** the placement and heights of canopies for some surrounding, as detailed in the *Arboricultural report*, aren’t quite correct. This may not make a difference in the calculations regarding likely damage but would ask Camden to visit 6 and 2a prior to issuing a decision.
4. **Streetscene:** The new lightbox is problematic. Many neighbours expect the abundance of glass to lead to light pollution. It also detracts from the positive elements of the new façade.
5. **Overbuild/scale of the proposed development/density:** We share Camden’s concerns, noted in the pre-app advice, about “the scale of the proposed replacement extension to the main building”. As Camden says, “the extension would occupy almost the entire plot, would not match the pattern of development in the wider area and would not be subservient to the host building”. We agree that the development should be smaller. The current garage building occupies almost all of the plot that was once the garden for 8 Hampstead Hill Gardens. It would be preferable to see some of the garden reinstated, with a less intrusive structure. Neighbours also fear that if Camden were to accept the argument that the garage should be considered the host building for the basement rather than the townhouse this could set a bad precedent and lead to much larger basement developments throughout the area.
6. **Potential flooding risk:** The site is in a known area of moderate surface water flood risk. During the summer of 2021 several of the homes surrounding 8 and 8A experienced flooding in their gardens or inside their properties. Although the garage has been in place for years, and there are hard surfaces surrounding it, there are concerns that a

basement level, even with the addition of more permeable surfaces elsewhere, will cause water to back up to an even greater degree that it has done with recent rainstorms.

7. **Disruption:** It should go without saying that the proposed works would be a massive disruption to residents of 2a, 6, 8 and 10 Hampstead Hill Gardens for at least a year. Since the Construction Management Plan is light on detail it's difficult to be certain how much of a disruption the works would cause for others in our road but there are likely to be times when it's significant.
8. **Lack of detail in the Draft Construction Management Plan:** While we understand that this plan would be worked out and then approved, the lack of information is a concern. This is a large project on a small footprint with no room for a site office, storage of materials and storage of spoils. The plan should be fleshed out pre-determination.
9. **Longer-term implications:** Although the applicant plans to turn the site into an extended family home, there are concerns that in the longer term, once permission has been granted for a change of use to C3 from an outbuilding that a) further development could be performed on the building; and b) the two elements of the property could be separated into two dwelling spaces. This would further increase the density of the area and potentially lead to an even greater loss of amenity for near neighbours.

Because of the large number of concerns noted above — significant loss of amenity for neighbours due to noise, loss of light, overlooking and disruption; serious over-building on the plot; flood risk; increased density; etc., we object to the proposed application. The Hampstead Hill Gardens Residents' Association does appreciate the applicant's effort to improve a building that does not currently make a positive contribution to our road, and to add more greenery and plantings to an area that is currently mainly concrete. It should be remembered, however, that the area occupied by the garages was once a garden. It would be preferable to see a plan that addresses our concerns and those of Camden Planning by reducing the scale of the works and re-instating some of the garden.

Sincerely,
Audrey Mandela
Chair, Hampstead Hill Gardens Residents' Association