

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2022/2646/P	Caroline Reed	21/08/2022 14:26:37	OBJ	Planning Permission: Householder's Application 2022/2646/P 18 Spedan Close, Branch Hill Estate

While I regret having to oppose a fellow resident's wishes for their house, I object to this application.

Branch Hill Estate (Spedan Close) is justly recognised as a fine example of late 20th century social housing planning. It was designed with great aesthetic delicacy and a respect for the peace and quality of life of its residents.

The estate is intended to be walked through as an integrated space. Its 42 houses are linked by a grid of alleyways and steps ascending the hill. These form part of the estate's public realm and are enriched by greenery that is visible at every level – mainly trees and shrubs. This planting was a significant part of the original design concept for the estate.

I walk up through the estate on a daily basis and find the symmetry of the paired houses in their rows and the still evident greenery in most yard areas joyous and uplifting.

Importantly the estate's layout deliberately reveals 3 facades of almost every house – with the informal 'rear' of each building just as important – if not more so – as the front door side. The privacy of the lower rooms with their large-windowed doors opening to the rear is protected by small walled yards – most of them still retaining their generous planting.

It is true, as pointed out in the planning application, that the architectural integrity of the estate has already been undermined by a few individual residents opting to build intrusive structures in these yards. The alley that runs behind number 18 is especially badly affected and therefore one of the least pleasing sections of the estate, but that gives no justification for doing further damage.

The external rear elevation and yard space of number 18 itself is – as the application points out – in very near pristine original condition. The proposed full height ground floor rear extension would be highly detrimental to the integrity of this well preserved Grade II listed house.

Also, contrary to what is said in the application 'it would not disrupt the rhythm of the courtyard gardens when viewed along the walkway between properties' the extension would in fact be very damaging to the passerby's view of this run of houses as seen from both the alleyway and the stairway that runs up beside the house. It will loom above the side and rear walls of the yard and completely obscure a substantial section of the rear view of number 18.

Architects' drawings always do their best to show this type of fully glazed extension as being scarcely there at all – just a couple of thin lines drawn across the façade of an existing building. This disingenuousness is compounded in this case by the romantic description of the extension as a 'winter garden'. But of course, any roofed space can, now or later, be filled with very solid content. Side and roof blinds could be added to mitigate the inevitable heat gain. Seen externally, the glass itself will be glaringly reflective – making its presence very firmly felt.

Granting permission for this invasive development would set a very dangerous precedent.

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I also object to the felling of the property's graceful sycamore tree which is a pleasure to see from the alleyway. Professional pruning and on-going management would be a solution much more sympathetic to the architects' original conception and the general ambiance of the estate.
