



Subject: Proposal objection



Dear Ms Henry,

Reference: 2022/3635/P

I occupy a flat at the rear of 42 Belsize Park Gardens, which backs directly onto and faces Howitt Close.

I am opposed to the proposed scheme and make the following specific objections.

(i) Planning policy at all levels requires that significant weight needs to be given to the impact of development on the setting and significance of designated heritage assets. In particular, Policy D1 defines that development needs to be of a high quality that respects the local context and character, and Policy D2 sets out that with regards to development affecting the setting of conservation areas, it needs to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. In this regard, Howitt Close is located at the junction of Howitt Road and Glenilla Road, within the Belsize Park Conservation Area, and it is recognised within the associated area appraisal as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Belsize Conservation Area.

(ii) It is noted in the application's submission pack that the Heritage addendum seeks to downplay the credentials of Henry F Webb & Ash, the architects that are understood to have designed Howitt Close. However, I understand that the architects have a Grade II listed building to their name – Elm Park Court – as well as the Hendon ABC cinema. The building has been considered of merit in the area appraisal due to its appearance in many various heritage organisations. Therefore, the significance of the accusation of the eligibility of the architects should not be reduced by the freeholder, irrespective of the qualifications that the freeholder is attributing to the architects at the time.

(iii) I think that the freeholder's choice of Cotswold Archaeology is an unsuitable company for a heritage statement chosen to pass judgement on Howitt Close. They are a countryside archaeological company who are therefore not considered appropriately qualified to judge a 20th-century urban architectural development.

(iv) Whilst it is recognised that there is a need for new housing throughout London, any new development needs to accord with the development plan in its entirety. The proposed development represents the introduction of a new storey to Howitt Close which, due to its design, massing and choice of materials, will appear as a prominent, and aesthetically inappropriate, addition to the property. This will result in the building no longer being read as of a height similar to that of the neighbouring properties along Howitt Road but one of greater massing. It would therefore be considered harmful to the setting of the conservation area. Put simply, it will be detrimental to the local amenity and damage the look of this historic area.

(v) It is not considered that the public benefits of additional residential units would be sufficient to outweigh the harm caused by the proposed development on the setting of the designed heritage assets and therefore the proposals should be regarded as in conflict with Paragraph 202 of the NPPF.

(vi) Finally, the proposed development would involve the removal of water storage facilities serving the existing properties onsite. No details have been provided to confirm where these facilities will be relocated and therefore this detail should be provided prior to any consent being forthcoming so that full consideration can be given to the acceptability and deliverability of the scheme.

Having regard to the above, I contend that the proposed development is inappropriate and should be rejected.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Regards,

Evan