

From: Simon Christmas

Sent: 11 November 2022 09:17

To: Patrick Marfleet

Subject: Great Ormond Street Hospital - proposed development (2022/2255/P)

Mr Marfleet,

The drop-in meeting organised by the GOSH team yesterday (10/11/22) has only increased my concerns about both GOSH's proposals AND their ongoing failure to engage properly with or take seriously the concerns of their neighbours.

We live in Flat 3, 31-35 Great Ormond Street. Since the pandemic I also work from home. Our main rooms face onto Great Ormond Street, with only a kitchen, bathroom and small bedroom facing south. The GOSH Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing report states that NONE of the windows facing onto GOS will meet BRE guidelines, and that all rooms will "need supplementary electric lighting to facilitate use". As we are on the first floor these issues will be particularly serious for us. However, using five carefully selected benchmarks - the darkest flats they could find in Bloomsbury - the report argues that this "can be considered reasonable for the urban area".

I raised these concerns in response to the original proposals through your portal. I was therefore surprised to read in the latest round of documents (letter from Avison Young dated 14.10.22) that Flat 8, 37-39 GOS had been visited "as a result of Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust inviting residents to allow Avison Young to collect accurate measurements of the internal layouts of their properties". Why had we not received this invitation? I have investigated and discovered that this sentence appears to be a bald lie: the visit took place because the resident of Flat 8, 37-39 pushed for it. No invitation was issued to residents.

This pattern was repeated in relation to the latest drop-in. We were at first not even notified that this was happening. I found out via other residents. When I wrote to the project team to ask why they had not contacted us, they made some standard remarks about GDPR and threw out some numbers about how many letters they had posted. I pointed out that we live in one of a very small number of buildings directly across the street from us: they can ring our doorbells or put flyers through our letterboxes; they can write the number of the flat on an envelope without knowing the name of the person who lives in it. Two days later, copies of the letter were deposited through the building's letterbox.

The meeting itself was extremely disappointing, and clearly designed to tick consultation boxes and avoid taking action. The response to concerns and issues was consistently to tell us that we needed to raise these through the Camden portal. The team itself showed no interest in taking on board resident issues or considering how they might be addressed through changes to the proposals. When pushed on difficult points, the default was to say that they could not answer questions. Oddly, given the importance of the issue for neighbours, no one was present who could talk about the impact on lighting. 'Listening' is only listening if there is some possibility that *something* might change as a result: and on this definition, there was zero evidence of genuine listening.

Of particular interest was a conversation with the architect. Asked if it had been any part of his brief from GOSH to consider the impact on the light of neighbours he confirmed that it had not. Asked what the impact of his building was going to be on neighbours, he could say only that "there will be an impact" - he did not appear to know what was in the lighting report on his own design. When the contents of that report were shared with him, he agreed that if he were the resident he would "feel bad" and "lodge a protest". However, he argued, it was the job of Camden planning to represent the needs of neighbours: addressing those needs, he pointed out, was not part of *his* brief. It is hard not to conclude that the GOSH team feel they can simply ignore the needs of neighbours in developing their plans, because 'that will all be dealt with in planning'.

This whole situation is such a shame. I have lived in the street for 22 years, and during that time there has been a lot of construction work. It's caused considerable inconvenience at times, but I personally have never complained because i) that's what happens when you live next to a hospital and ii) the aims of GOSH are obviously ones we applaud and support. There was an opportunity for GOSH to reach out to the relatively small number of people who live directly opposite from the outset and make us part of our new plans. Yes, that would have made things harder for them: they'd have had to consider our genuine concerns about the impact of their plans on our mental and financial wellbeing - but they'd have found a community willing to discuss creative ways of meeting everyone's needs. We are only just across the street. But they have chosen instead to ignore us, and in so doing have created a situation where our only option is to object and oppose. They have acted not as members of a local community, but as indifferent barons in a high castle ignoring the peasants outside the wall. It's hard to overstate the levels of ill-feeling they have created through their approach.

This latest 'drop-in' meeting has been the final straw for me. It has also made it clear - because this is what the GOSH team themselves said - is that our only

recourse now as local residents is to seek the wholesale rejection of these plans by the council officers who work for us and our representatives on the Planning Committee. The hospital needs to go back to the drawing board and start again, with a requirement to at least *consider* the impact of their actions on the health and wellbeing of those who live alongside them.

I asked people from the GOSH team last night how *they* would feel if the place they lived and worked in was suddenly made so dark that they had to use electric lights all day. What impact would this have on their mental health, their finances? Not one person had the gall to tell me that they would consider this reasonable. And yet that is exactly what the lighting report produced by Avison Young claims: that this proposal “can be considered reasonable”. Can be considered reasonable *by whom*? Not by anyone in the GOSH project team, it seems. Not by the architect himself. Not by those of us who will have to live in darkness if the building is built. And not - I hope - by the officers and councillors of Camden.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Christmas
Flat 3, 31-35 Great Ormond Street