

Dear Camden Planning Department

5th February 2023

Application 2022/5320/P

We very strongly object to the planning application for a development at the former Mansfield Bowling club.

The current proposal would stand over four storeys high, dominating the whole neighbourhood. The height of the building and the sheer mass and scale of the proposed construction, only feet away from the boundaries with the homes in Laurier Road, is totally unacceptable.

The development is wholly out of keeping with the Conservation area. It should not be permitted with its current proposed height and its positioning in the site.

The original bowling club building was primarily a low, single storey building with a pitched roof. A section of the building on the western side, nearer Regency Lawn, rose to two storeys. However, that higher section was a considerable distance from all the surrounding homes and had limited impact on the views and amenity of the area. Indeed, the original siting of the bowling club was chosen to limit the visual disturbance to the neighbours. Being low level, the "bowling green" section of the club could be tucked away in the low-lying easterly area, while the taller section was centrally placed and did not impose on the surrounding homes. The footprint of the bowling club was therefore driven by the building's heights so as to ensure that most of the building was not intrusive. If Camden consider that any future development should match the footprint of that original building, this can only be acceptable if the maximum heights of that building at each end of the footprint are also respected. If anything else is being considered, then the use of the original footprint must be abandoned. Indeed, anything outside a direct replacement of the same mass as the original Bowling Clubhouse must be completely rethought and remoulded to the new structure so as to minimise the impact on the sight lines from the neighbouring homes and to prevent the construction of an overbearing mass for Laurier Road residents.

The current proposal seeks to increase the height of the building across the footprint by at least two storeys. The addition of each and every half storey exponentially affects the impact on the neighbourhood. The result is that this proposal is a very different animal from both the original building and previous application. It cannot be contained in this site.

While open green space is to be treasured in London, to steadfastly hold to the precise location of the designated open space within this site, with the knock-on effect of positioning a huge edifice on the boundaries with the surrounding homes is not acceptable or appropriate.

The previous proposed development, which was considerably smaller and less intrusive, was refused by Camden council. Although it was approved on appeal this was not on the merits of the plan, but as a result of the generally accepted inadequate reasoning provided by the council when giving decision for its refusal. We ask you to bear in mind that the elected representatives of this borough considered that even the

more modest proposals of the last application were unduly damaging on the area and we hope they will take the same view when considering this application for a far, far larger and uglier building. It should be emphasised that in the earlier application, the planning department, the Camden planning committee and the Inspector in the appeal, all recognised that the development of the site must not include a building of any greater bulk than the original Bowling Green Clubhouse.

We also consider the proposed building will have a highly detrimental impact on the local surrounding area generally, with a substantial increase in traffic in an otherwise quiet area with narrow roads. We are particularly concerned about increased noise and light pollution. We feel that this huge building is out of proportion to those surrounding it and will have a drastically negative impact on general amenity and appearance of this local conservation area.

We are concerned that our private homes and gardens will be dominated by this unnecessarily massive, overbearing and ugly construction with little genuine benefit to the community. The previous bowling club enhanced the open space. This structure will decimate it.

While a home for elderly people in need of care might be considered a financially prudent venture, we question the community benefits of a luxury home of this kind which is likely to be unaffordable to most. If the financial viability of the home dictates the bulk size of the building and its operation, that is an improper consideration for planning purposes. We invite the council to consider whether a home of similar bulk to the original Bowling Clubhouse should be built here instead, with a clear commitment to properly affordable places for local people. Alternatively, given the desperate shortage of housing in London, a development of ordinary homes in keeping with the neighbourhood, might be a better use of the space. There has been no evidence demonstrating why a development of the size of the original Bowling Clubhouse is not financially viable which, in any event, depend entirely on what the developer paid for the land and their profit appetite.

The material contained in the application is extensive. There is also a lack of information in certain areas of the proposal. The Laurier Road residents whose homes adjoin the site will collectively be making detailed representations following technical advice. We ask that sufficient time is given to analyse and research the application to allow those further submissions to be made.

Neil O'May and Nancy Biggs
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