

**Sarah Wilson
17 Broomsleigh Street
NW61QQ**

Objection to Application 2022/5198/P

94 Mill Lane London NW6 1NF

Dear Mr Young

I write to object in the strongest possible terms to the change of use from retail to residential of this important corner building. A landmark in the area and a cornerstone of the high street.

The parade of shops this corner unit occupies is a significant part of the urban landscape, this prime corner building has been an active commercial business since it was first constructed well over a century ago.

We have already seen the terrible results of a change of use of the hire shop on this parade. The design of which is inappropriate for a significant and historical parade of shops. A change of use I believe to be universally detested by the neighbourhood.

Street front residential development creates low quality homes and reduces vital local amenity. The change of use at 104 Mill Lane is a good example of an egregious use of a prime commercial premises, eroding assets of the community and its high street

The change of use of the hire shop was slipped through under a terrible change of planning law designed to help the economy during covid. This change in law was quickly recognised for the damage it was doing to the country's high streets, as such, article 4 was invoked to stop further erosion of community assets – our high streets. This surely informs us of the feelings towards such an application, not just by the local community but by neighbourhoods and planning officers nationwide.

In addition to which the proposed change of use at 94 Mill Lane from a prominent corner retail unit to residential use, breaks several policies in the Neighbourhood Plan which was adopted by LB Camden in 2015.

Mill Lane is recognised as an important commercial centre serving local needs and this application contravenes the entirety of NDP Policy 14.

NDP Policy 14: Mill Lane Neighbourhood Centre Development (including changes of use) shall preserve or enhance the character of the Neighbourhood Centre and promote

a diverse range of shops, businesses and economic activity. This shall be achieved, where appropriate by:

- i. Support for proposals to improve and restore the original character of shopfronts, including windows, signs and external fittings.
- ii. Proposals to convert ground floor retail/business space into residential use will not be supported.
- iii. Contributions to public realm improvements to improve the character of the Neighbourhood Centre, where applicable.

It also contravenes parts of Policy 2 – Design and Character (See Below).

In particular:

- i. Conversion to residential will also destroy the architectural character of the entire parade as the shop front will be removed.
- ii. The design of the new frontage does not reflect the surrounding architecture. The open nature of the curved glass frontage is an architectural feature in the parade, blocking this for residential privacy will have a detrimental impact on the nature of access to Broomsleigh Street which has been straddled by two active and friendly neighbourhood businesses. The resulting external design looks entirely incongruous and unattractive.

The development will also result in the basement being a poor-quality living space.

This is a waste of a valuable resource in Mill Lane and an invitation to a future owner/tenant to break the law and use it for habitation.

Fortune Green and West Hampstead NDF Neighbourhood plan

POLICY 2: Design & Character All development shall be of a high quality of design, which complements and enhances the distinct local character and identity of Fortune Green and West Hampstead. This shall be achieved by:

- i. Development which positively interfaces with the street and streetscape in which it is located.
- ii. Development which maintains the positive contributions to character of existing buildings and structures.
- iii. Development which is human in scale, in order to maintain and create a positive relationship between buildings and street level activity.

iv. Development which has regard to the form, function, structure and heritage of its context - including the scale, mass, orientation, pattern and grain of surrounding buildings, streets and spaces.

v. A presumption in favour of a colour palate which reflects, or is in harmony with, the materials of its context.

vi. New buildings and extensions that respect and are sensitive to the height of existing buildings in their vicinity and setting. Tall buildings in the Growth Area will need to have regard to their impact on the setting of the two immediately adjacent conservation areas, in order to avoid any negative impact on them.

vii. Extensions - and infill development - being in character and proportion with its context and setting, including the relationship to any adjoining properties.

viii. The provision of associated high quality public realm.

ix. Having regard to the impact on local views across the Area and the streetscapes within the Area

x. Development which aims to fulfil the criteria set out in Building for Life 12

It is only since the current owner purchased the building known as 94 Mill Lane, or affectionately ‘the glass shop’ that it has not been in use. Sadly, I am aware of several businesses that would have very much liked to lease this unit; a bakery, a dentist, a gallery to name but a few. However, signs in the window advertising the retail unit as being under refurbishment and available for occupation are entirely misleading. There have been several attempts to contact the owners using the WhatsApp number – it is never delivered – the number was never registered with Whatsapp. The emails go unanswered and the other phone number goes to a call centre – again unanswered. The gentleman employed to design the sign posting has admitted it was always a ruse and that there was never any intention to offer this prime unit for retail or commercial occupation. The previous owner has also made it clear that the intention was never to make the premises available for commercial use.

This feels like an attempt to steal a vital part of our neighbourhood landscape, a high street which has made big steps forward in improving in recent years as the community endeavours to ‘shop local’ and support local business. Local business is not just an essential part of community life but also a step forward for an environmentally secure future. Removing our high streets in this way will have permanent and everlasting damage on both. Residents will have to return to their cars to access both retail and service providers, contrary to every government policy.

I assume from the signs recently posted regarding the revision from Article 4, that would have previously been brought in to play to stop the loss of such a key commercial premise, that decisions on developmental changes like this will now revert to common

sense and a change of use be refused due to inappropriate development and significant loss as a community asset.

The parade of shops is of historical architectural significance, and will put the commercial viability of the whole street in jeopardy by setting a precedent for the loss of commercial premises. These businesses provide a sense of connectivity for many residents who find themselves disconnected by the online world. Many older residents rely not just on the businesses themselves, but by the sense of community in the relationships they bring with them.

Allowing the commercial use of this prominent corner shop to be lost in exchange for poor quality housing, would not just be devastating to the community but a travesty of the use of planning law.

Yours sincerely
Sarah Wilson