

THE BELSIZE SOCIETY

ADVICE ON COMMENTING OR OBJECTING TO PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Most of us want to protect and conserve the locality in which we live and the **BeISoc** is frequently asked to defend our area against proposals which Belsize residents consider to be “horrendous” and where appropriate, will object as an association because we are concerned with the preservation of the architectural integrity and leafy streets and gardens which characterise our area.

First, it is necessary to establish if a proposal is of real concern, whether you object individually or wish to obtain the **BeISoc**'s support for your objection.

1. If you know the address or planning application number, you can go to the Camden website page for Planning Applications and do a search.

Remember too, that Camden no longer notifies residents of neighbouring applications and it is now necessary to check notices on lamp posts, adverts in local newspapers or better still, go to the Planning Section of the website where you can sign up to receive email alerts, choosing which area you wish to cover from a range of 100m-2000m of your postcode, or select your Ward or the whole of Camden.

2. Once you have found the application, click on “View related documents” where you will find the “Design and Access” statement which is well worth reading as it provides an insight into the reasons for the application, as well as the all-important drawings.

The drawings allow you to compare the proposed elevations against the existing ones. Try to evaluate whether:

- There is detail which offends?
- The change is likely to cause overlooking or invasion of privacy?
- There is anything which will be offensive to the street landscape?
- The roofline is too high

Drawings can be misleading so look closely at the floor plans as well:

Recent drawings were scaled at 1:50 but drawn at 1:100 but no one noticed, including Camden, so an extension requested at 20m² received permission for 80m². Fortunately, due to other errors, permission was lost.

- Has the plan been drawn to the scale as stated?
- Does an extension or new building, project out too far, changing the street landscape or impacting on neighbours by reducing daylight or sunlight?
- Does the proposal create a sense of enclosure?
- Is it just too large? Compare the size of the building with others and compare the percentage it takes of the site it occupies as well.

A recent application showed a building projecting two metres in front of its neighbour. Camden recommended approval but the Development Committee listened to our representation and refused permission. It was also refused at appeal.

3. Read the Camden Conservation Area Reports.

4. If an application appears “scary”, then engage with neighbours who are also affected. You can prepare a petition on a single A4 page, showing a photograph of the proposed building or alterations, together with bullet points which focus on potential damage to the area.

5. Local councillors are often very supportive so it is well worth contacting those representing your ward to see whether they will support your objection.

6. Camden will ignore objections that just relate to noisy or polluting work as that's just part of the system.

7. Camden will seriously consider your objections only if there is a large number of concerned residents who do object.

- If the Planning Officer recommends approval, then you must attempt to have the application discussed by the Development Committee and this requires several objectors.
- Camden permits objectors to speak at the Development Committee meeting for a maximum of five minutes in total. It is therefore best if only one person speaks as this is far more effective than two people speaking for 2½ minutes each.
- When you speak at the meeting, leave the emotion at home and concentrate on the facts, such as finding holes in the daylight and sunlight reports. The Development Committee is very concerned when residents are badly affected.
- *The consultant for one application, stated that the adjoining owner would not be affected by loss of sunlight but his report contained data showing that sunlight would drop from 100% to zero.*

9. Sometimes, permissions are granted but the resultant building doesn't reflect the permission's plans and conditions. If this happens, ask the Enforcement Officer to take a look they are very responsive!

10. Keep your eyes open for applications because once planning permission has been granted, it's just too late to change anything.

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