

Northview

Northview Residents' Association's response to planning application no P101448



A natural community on a human scale: 14-43 Northview, the “back block”, is part of an enclave tucked behind Holloway Road. Below: its grounds contain mature and protected trees. Both images viewed from Northview’s front block, nos 1-12.

Northview is a unique example of small-scale 1930s domestic architecture. We know of nothing like it. It is designed as a single enclave, with its human scale and clear boundaries giving a cohesive feel and creating a community corner.

The London Plan highlights the creation of successful neighbourhoods in the interwar years, pointing out that many of them no longer exist. Northview is such a neighbourhood, and has survived reasonably intact, with original features.

Although it is between two main roads, it provides a restful setting, with green areas and mature trees. What is proposed – an additional storey on the rear, larger block – would detract from its community feel and human scale, and make it less attractive and less safe.

The planning proposal contravenes numerous Islington council policies, particularly those concerning sustainability, heritage and safety. They also contravene national and London policy.



“A modest but attractive development characteristic of its time... a quiet and pleasant pre-war development with delicacy of scale of the existing bay window and other features”

James Dunnett, Islington architect and expert on modern architecture

Why Northview needs protection

Why we are objecting to proposal no P101448

Northview Residents' Association is objecting to the proposals for several reasons, including:

- The proposed storey will extend the rear block by about one-third, and will draw attention to itself;
- It will blot out all direct sunlight and most natural light to at least one flat in the front block, with others seriously affected;
- It will cut natural light to flats in the back block – but this does not even get a mention on the application;
- There will be changes to original features – including to original Crittall windows over staircases and decorative parapets – but these are not addressed in the application;
- No affordable or accessible homes, or homes that will meet known gaps in supply, will be provided;
- Safety and security will be compromised;
- It will be detrimental to community cohesion;
- There is a woeful lack of attention to detail in the application, which shows that the proposals have not been thought through;
- The drawings are misleading, showing a layout that has not existed for years and views that are impossible, as well as containing a number of inaccuracies and omissions;
- The applicant has failed to consult everyone materially affected;
- Many council policies – such as those pertaining to security, sustainable transport and lifetime homes – have not been addressed adequately but treated merely as a box to be ticked;
- The proposals fail many measures of sustainability.

Back in 1948, an application to build a Nissen hut on one corner of Northview next to back block was rejected on the grounds that it would be “detrimental to the amenities of the adjacent buildings”. The same more than applies now and we hope the council will adopt the same position.

Paul Thurlow, chair
Christy Lawrance, secretary
Ben Porter, secretary

Northview Residents' Association

19 January 2011

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Community safety

The statement says in 3.03(iii) that “existing security arrangements will be assessed and any appropriate updating will be installed” and that the site “does not have a vulnerable public exposure”.

It appears that this matter has been treated as a box to be ticked, and that existing and future security has not even been considered.

There is, for example, no mention of criminal activity near the fire escape or the security of either gate. The site has been recorded by the police as a site of repeated attempted burglaries. There has been repeated vandalism, as well as chronic low grade nuisance such as fly tipping.

Despite the lack of a “vulnerable public exposure”, there have been problems with street drinkers causing nuisance; we have found human excrement and condoms in the grounds. As a settled community, we have been able to work with the police on this.

Policy context

The UDP Env 12 says that enhancing community safety and reducing opportunities for crime will be of the highest priority. The London Plan says it is important for London’s ongoing attractiveness that residents feel safe in their homes.

DM at paragraph 5.0.11 says that new developments should promote safety and security. The London Plan supports “safe, secure and appropriately accessible environments where crime and disorder and fear of crime do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion”.

The London Plan also says that measures to improve safety and security should be incorporated at the design stage. Yet the application makes no mention of Safer Places, Designing Out Crime or Secured by Design, or that the applicant has taken advice from the police. No mention is made of problems with break-ins or poor security between Northview and the commercial and residential premises around it.

Crime, community safety and nuisance have not been considered, for example, in relation to how increasing the number of homes sharing each stairwell increases the potential for problems.

In addition, the design of the open bike rack could act as an open invitation to thieves (see Sustainable Transport).

The position of the bike store, as shown on the 3D drawing no PL15, shows it will create a deep hidden recess. People will be able to lurk behind the rack, hidden from public view by a walls and a garage block. Such areas are



The application says that Northview does not have a vulnerable public exposure. Our photos, taken near the front gate, show otherwise; Tufnell Park Road can be seen in the background in the picture above. Both photos also show fly tipping.



against the advice in Islington’s Urban Design Guide.

Problems with antisocial behaviour caused by non-residents on the estate were alleviated after the police were supplied with photographs identifying the culprits in action. The store will create an area where natural surveillance is not possible.

Resident turnover

Flats at Northview and Tufnell Park Mansions are increasingly being let to short-term tenants and flat sharers, often students who only require accommodation for a set time. We understand that the three-bedroom flats at Tufnell Park Mansions have been let to flat-sharers. It is likely this pattern will continue.

Safety is becoming increasingly compromised by a high turnover of tenants – there are many unfamiliar faces, and this is set to increase. Islington’s figures show turnover is very high in the private rented sector – two thirds of these households have lived in their current home for less than two years.

The Nag’s Head town centre strategy mentions “[encouraging] a sense of community identity and welfare” and “[reducing] crime, antisocial behaviour and the fear of crime”. This addition will do the opposite and reduce community cohesion.

Light, privacy and overdevelopment

Loss of light and privacy

The Design and Access statement in 3.02(vii) says “there will be no material loss of daylight or sunlight to the surrounding property”. This is incorrect.

A Daylight and Sunlight study accompanying the application says that urban locations do not always receive recommended levels of direct sunlight and infers that lower levels are acceptable in such areas.

However, this is not a reason to downgrade the standard of what is acceptable nor to restrict light further.

Because a window has a low level of daylight – as with window 13 – it does not mean it is acceptable to reduce it further and make someone’s home dingy. The opposite should apply – flats in built-up areas need all the natural light they can get and light should be protected.

There are no basement flats in Northview – we should not have to accept the levels of light typically found in them.

Below are our concerns in more detail, illustrated with a few examples.

In drawing up this section, we referred to UDP and DM policies, as well as the London Plan.

From old maps and photographs, it is clear that Northview’s windows have had uninterrupted light since the block was built – well over the 20 years needed for a right to light to develop. Photographs taken in the early 1970s show this.

The sun has a considerable warming effect, so cutting the sunlight has fuel costs and environmental implications.

Right to access to light is explicit within leases. Light, air and privacy should be safeguarded for future as well as existing residents.

Effect on back block

The Daylight and Sunlight study does not consider 14-43 Northview. This is a major omission and concern.

Residents in these flats fear they will lose considerable daylight; for example, additional flats above 38-43 are likely to cut natural light to flats 14-15 and overshadow the communal gardens at the front of flats.

Residents have noticed a reduction in light to flats and front gardens since an extra storey was put on Tufnell Park Mansions a few years ago.

Given that houses in Parkhurst Road will



Above: window 14 on a rainy day, showing flank wall of back block. Right: window 11 at different times of day, showing shadow from back block

lose light if this development goes ahead, it is likely that it will cut light to the rear gardens at Northview as well. This has not been considered.

Effect on front block

At least one flat in 1-12 Northview – flat 6 – will lose a substantial amount of natural light. The sunlight to the kitchen will be blocked off by a wall just a few yards away, and become dismal and depressing. It’s not a galley kitchen – it serves as a dining area. Likewise, the bathroom will become gloomy. It will be a considerable loss of visual amenity.

The picture of window 14 shows the flank wall of 14-43 that faces the back of 1-12 Northview; it is clear from this picture that an extra storey will have a considerable effect on daylight here. The second, of window 11, shows how light is cast at different times of the day; this shows how back block casts a shadow on these windows.

The study does not take into account the internal arrangement of flats in 1-12 Northview (the consultants carried out an external inspection only).

The study shows that all flats in 1-12 Northview will lose light to some extent – even

those at the top floor, furthest away from the development.

Excluding rooms used as hallways, the only room not to lose in average daylight factor is window 30; this is the top floor kitchen, to the east of 1-12 Northview, and furthest away from the development.

The report says that a reduction in the values of the no sky line test can affect diffuse daylight – in other words, it will create a “well” effect.

This is what the proposal will do at 1-12 Northview, with the flats nearest to back block on the first and second floors most affected.

The vertical sky component for window 13 will see its level fall from 5.1% to 3.5%, yet this does not appear to be a concern. Four windows fall short of the vertical sky component test, and will fall further below it to an unacceptable level should this development go ahead.

London policy conflict

The London Housing Design guide says that all homes must provide for direct sunlight to enter at least one habitable room for part of the day, and that living areas and kitchen/dining spaces should preferably receive direct sunlight.

Therefore, blocking light to the kitchens – as will happen to flats nearest the flank wall of back block – would be in conflict with the London Plan.

Balconies

The study says that the four balconies that will fall far short of the vertical sky component test as a result of the extension are set behind overhanging balconies. The consultants add that balconies restrict light.

The pictures shows light at these windows 11 and 14 – the underside of the balcony above cannot be seen, nor does it cast a shadow.

The consultants carrying out this report made detailed calculations – yet omitted to provide figures on the effect balconies have on light. Giving an opinion instead is puzzling.

Expert opinion has long been recognised as being among the least reliable in the hierarchy of evidence. Given that the consultants are easily able to calculate other figures, the lack of figures here is a curious omission.

On the other hand, the consultants were relying on drawings which may not have been accurate or detailed enough to make this feasible.

Another curious omission is that the combined effect of the balconies and the extension on daylight is not discussed. While

detailed calculations on other matters are provided, a possible combined effect is omitted from “before and after” calculations. This means that final values may give the impression that the flats will not lose as much light as they will.

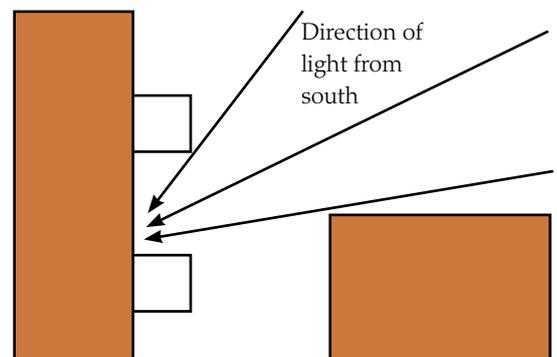
The diagram shows how the presence of the overhanging balcony will affect light to window 14. Window 14 is being used to illustrate this as it is on the middle floor; the floor above would probably be affected less and the floor below more so.

Many flats in front block have their main balconies to the rear and a “well” effect could be created, especially for lower floors, making them dingy.

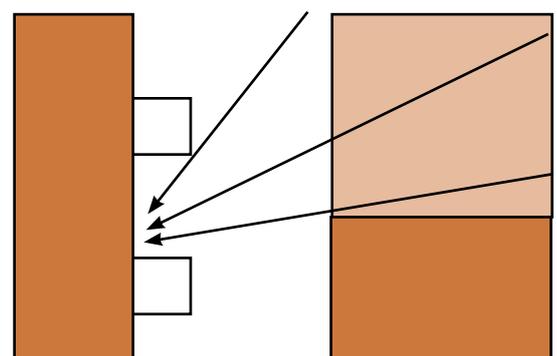
1930s architecture and single aspects
Architects in the 1930s were very concerned with matters of light and its health-giving properties, and considerable thought has gone into natural light within these flats.

While 1-12 Northview faces due north, south-facing windows and doors are aligned to maximise daylight. Sunlight floods into

Diagram to show how putting an extra storey will reduce light and create a “well” effect (scale approximate)



Above: existing: 1-12 Northview and its rear balconies are shown on the left; the northernmost part of back block; below: the additional floor will block light to window 14 and create a dark well



north-facing front rooms from windows at the rear, ensuring brightness and creating a greater sense of space.

This means, for example, that light coming in via a non-habitable room such as a bathroom may be more important here than in homes built in different styles. As a result, reductions in light via windows No 10 and No 11 for example – where the vertical sky component will fall from 8.9% to 5.1% and 11.7% to 0.69% respectively – will mean a considerable loss of light in the flats themselves.

Blocking the light will, in effect, make some flats in 1-12 Northview effectively single aspect. Council and London Plan policy is generally not in favour of single aspect housing.

Room use

A test for sunlight availability to windows is included, although all the living rooms in 1-12 Northview are at the front of the block.

The test may have been carried out because the consultants were not able to work out how each room was used. This information could have easily been provided by the applicant; on the other hand, the one-bedroom flats at 1-12 Northview have been let to flat sharers, and used as two bedsitting rooms, which may be a reason for this.

Inconsistency in chart

The ratio for winter sunlight hours in some cases is below 0.8, yet the way this is treated inconsistently. For example, windows 1, 2 and 3, which are kitchens, are all deemed to pass with a ratio of 0.8 (although one is slightly below 0.8), yet the results for windows 13 and 14, also to kitchens, at 0.38 and 0.6, are deemed non applicable. It is not explained why this is.

Windows 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29 and 30 are given the use class of “Supp Light”, although they are kitchens, bedrooms or bedsitting rooms.

Effects on other properties

A number of houses in Parkhurst Road would lose light. It looks as if whoever occupies the back addition of 89 Parkhurst Road will lose light from two aspects.

It is likely that the gardens of these houses, which are between the houses and Northview itself, will also lose daylight. This has implications for the sustainability of these houses, from both the environmental point of view and as places to live.

While the space below 71 is marked as “non habitable”, the report does not say what its

usual use is. The London Plan recommends that light to commercial premises should be at 50% of residential.

Holbrooke Court

Two new blocks of flats are to be built in Holbrooke Court. The applicant will be aware of this. Yet any effect on these proposed blocks has not been considered, even though the proposed development has implications for both light and privacy for tenants in both blocks.

Homes for Islington consulted with Northview residents about this proposal (we did not object to it, given its aims of providing affordable homes and improving safety and amenity) and were efficient in emailing information and drawings. There is therefore no reason for this omission.

Privacy

The balcony at the northernmost end of the proposed storey is about 5-6m away from 1-12 Northview and is open at its northern end.

It is far nearer than the acceptable 18m suggested by council policy or the 20m “rule of thumb” suggested by the government and CABE – so represents an unacceptable intrusion into residents’ privacy.

Anyone on the balcony will be able to see directly into people’s kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms.

Layout and quiet enjoyment

Related to privacy is the issue of being able to hear neighbours.

In contravention of Islington’s council’s policy on conversions, the living/dining/kitchen space of most flats is directly above the bedroom of the flats below, which will disturb existing residents and cause noise nuisance. This matter is covered in more detail in “Sustainability”.

There has been considerable housing development around Northview, and more is being planned.

This includes two new blocks of flats at Holbrooke Court opposite the Odeon, a major development next to the Odeon on Tufnell Park Road, several attractive terraced houses near the Odeon on Holloway Road and a new block going up on the corner of Manor Gardens – not to mention all the halls of residence going up by the tube station, and the area of intensification near the Emirates stadium.

So new homes are going up on all sides of

Northview, as well as proposals for more on top.

Looking ahead, the London Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Housing Capacity Study 2009 identifies sites in and around Holloway where more than 2,000 homes will be built. Schemes under construction or with consent are expected to deliver more than 7,000 homes in Islington over the next five years. Islington’s housing supply has exceeded London Plan targets since 2005-06 and is expected to do so until 2011-12.

Concerns about overdevelopment – including a fear of new slums on overcrowded sites – have been documented in local media. Concerns have also been expressed about the effect of an influx of residents on local public services and transport.

Because of their design, the proposed flats are likely to attract flat sharers, as with the “family” flats at Northview and in Tufnell Park Mansions. There are many students living here, as evidenced by voids over the summer holiday period, and Islington has already exceeded its targets for student housing.

The proposed flats will not meet any identified need. They will not be suitable for families, older people or people with mobility difficulties. Nor will a single affordable home be provided.

Given this, adding eight flats will make little difference to overall housing provision in the local area, while coming at a great cost to the small community at Northview, and damaging its unique 1930s character.

Sustainability

The Design and Access statement par 3.30(iv) says that the additional storey will meet all current criteria for sustainable development. This statement is extraordinary.

This appears to be another example of the “tick box” approach. The proposed development is unsustainable in many ways. The application does not even mention local and national guidance on sustainability, such as the Code for Sustainable Homes, or Islington’s SPG on Green Construction.

The UDP states that development is an opportunity for environmental improvement and sustainable development. Islington’s local development scheme at par 3.8 highlights the council’s statutory duty “to undertake their planning functions with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development”.

Sustainability here is considered in two main contexts: of building homes that will stand the test of time; and in “green” terms. Sustainable transport is covered in its own section

Homes that stand the test of time

The flats are designed in an unsustainable fashion regarding layout and “stacking”, which the UDP says is a vital consideration.

Most of the flats – A, B, C, D, G and H – will

Floor areas			
Proposed areas compared to averages for private developments and minimum standards stipulated by the London Plan			
Size of flat and occupation	Minimum area stipulated in London Plan (sq m)	Average private sector internal area (sq m)	Proposed (sq m)
1 bed, 2 person	50 sq m	45	47, 47, 48.7, 45.5
2 bed, 3 person	61 sq m	60	59, 61.7
3 bed, 5 person	86 sq m	85	77, 79.2

have their living areas above bedrooms, in conflict with council policy and best practice on sustainable homes. This will cause noise and disturbance, especially as the flats are likely to be let in multiple occupation.

Flat B’s entrance hall is over a main bedroom.

This could increase tenant turnover in the third floor, which will in turn affect community cohesion and safety.

Council policy, citing the Code for Sustainable Homes, notes that residents, including those with disabilities, find the combination of kitchen and sitting room is unpleasant, so is against the incorporation of the kitchen/diner with the living room. Yet flats D and G have combined living/dining areas; and flats A, B, C, E and F each have a single



combined kitchen/living/dining area.

In addition, flat G has an ensuite bathroom over a bedroom at the front of building. Any soil pipe will have to run under the floorboards.

Internal arrangement

In addition, the gross internal floor areas are generally below minimum standards stipulated in London Plan; the average for new developments (provided by Rightmove) is also included.

While areas of individual rooms are given, measurements for room widths, door turning areas and turning circles are not given.

Of the seven flats with combined living/dining/areas, in four, this area is smaller than recommended in the London Plan. In one case – flat G – this combined room is significantly smaller at 21.37m², against the London Plan standard of 29m².

In addition, the balconies appear less deep than the London Housing Design Guide stipulates. On the other hand, this is in keeping with the existing concrete balconies at Northview.

Sense of community

The UDP at 3.1.2 points out that discontent over development can stem from it appearing less “friendly” to individuals and the community. An increase in housing for short-term tenants and an increase in turnover (see above) will increase the number of unfamiliar faces and make appear Northview less of a friendly community.

In addition, there will more wear and tear on the communal spaces.

In the Community Safety section, we argue that the development will reduce community cohesion and safety. If nuisance, crime or the fear of crime rise, the whole estate will become less sustainable.

PPS1 highlights the impact of development on the social fabric of communities and on safety.

Accessibility and inclusive design

Lifetime homes and inclusive standards appear to have been blithely brushed aside. The statement says that these standards are not possible – and that’s it. It is as if the applicant has put a quick tick in the “no” box.

A two- and three-bedroom flat on the fourth floor with no lift is unlikely to attract families with small children, or anyone with mobility problems. The census showed that one household in every five in Islington includes someone with a long-term limiting illness.

Tenants of Northview are predominantly young single people or couples, often students – there are very few families, if any. The lack of accessibility will therefore also make Northview less of a mixed community.

Green building

The lack of green building suggestions is a disappointment, given the amount of advice and information freely available on the council’s website.

Despite London Plan and council policies supporting combined heat and power (CHP) and combined cooling, heat and power (CCHP), the communal hot water system at Northview is gradually being taken out of use rather than extended.

There is no mention of using of eco-friendly materials, such as low-impact forms of concrete.

Also omitted is how CO₂ emission because of increased occupancy will be tackled. DM12, although still at consultation stage, demands action to reduce CO₂ emissions in residential developments of one unit or more.

In addition, the loss of natural light and solar warmth to some flats will increase fuel consumption.

Water and drainage

The Design and Access statement says that waste and foul water will be carried by the existing sewerage/draining system. The application provides no evidence that the existing system will be able to cope with the extra demands on it, although drains become blocked regularly.

Water consumption and use of grey water are not mentioned.

Waste and recycling

An opportunity to provide recycling facilities has been lost.

The Design and Access statement refers to a recycling/rubbish store. The store is used for rubbish only; there is no area for recycling.

Currently, bags are left outside flats. This has led to problems with fly-tipping. In addition, there have been problems with household rubbish being fly-tipped between tenancies. This could increase with more short-term tenants moving in.

Trees and green spaces

The applicant says there are no trees or hedges on land adjacent to the proposed development site that could influence the development or might be important as part of the local landscape character.

Yet Northview has several mature trees in its grounds, a number of them protected. The application is accompanied by a tree report that describes them, and recommendations for protecting the trees during works.

This shows a rushed attitude toward the application. The fact that the applicant has not even taken the findings from their own expert's report into the Design and Access statement is a concern – they have just automatically ticked the box again.

The applicants cut down a mature tree (which was why we approached the council regarding tree preservation order). Topping of another tree was done in a shoddy way recently and, as the Tree Report says, the tree "has not responded well".

In addition, light to gardens will be reduced in and around Northview.



Overflowing drain

Sustainable transport

It appears that the applicant has again merely ticked the "sustainable transport" box in much the same way as it has ticked those for security and accessibility, and failed to think the proposals through.

The application here is very disappointing – there are quite a few cyclists living here, who could have been consulted – and an opportunity has been missed.

Parking

While the statement says that no more cars will be parked on the estate (2.03 (vii)), it accepts that more vehicles will be driving in and out of the car park and says this will not cause a material hazard (viii). However, it does not give any evidence to back this statement.

There is no indication of how parking controls will be enforced. The enforcement of residents' parking has been woeful for a long time. There is little to stop new residents from parking on the estate, which will increase demands on it, nor does the applicant say how it will prevent new residents from owning cars

and obtaining council parking permits.

The assumption that no one in the new build will be able to own, hire or borrow a car is therefore spurious.

Cycle rack

The rack is inadequate for reasons of space provision and safety.

The UDP says that "secure parking or storage space for cycles" should be provided in all new developments; cycle parking should be "secure, sheltered, integrated, conveniently located, adequately lit and accessible". The proposed rack fails on most of these counts. An uncovered rack will tempt thieves; there have been problems with burglary and intruders at Northview.

Any serious cyclist would reject this design as grossly inadequate and not leave a bike there. The store is not lockable and secure. Even if the frame and both wheels of a bike were securely locked to the frame, anything detachable could be stripped from it.

In addition, the rack will create a dark recess

that is hidden from public view, which could attract criminals and street drinkers.

The cycle store is adjacent to a door, which we understand is part of the means of escape in case of fire for commercial occupiers on Holloway Road. With the introduction of the cycle store, space here appears very tight: how this will be designed so the structure or cycles locked to it will not block this escape is not considered.

In addition, the capacity of the proposed rack is inadequate. The Design and Access statement says there will be space for eight bicycles, one per new flat, although drawings show five. The applicant has not provided any evidence or policy to support the provision of one space per flat.

Yet council policy on this is available: policy DM23 puts the standards as one space per person, based on bedroom size. The applicants anticipate that the new development of eight flats could house 23 people. There is no cycle parking space for visitors, as recommended in the London Plan.

If the flats are let along the same lines as other flats on the estate, is likely that the three-bedroom flats will be occupied by three or possibly four adults. Will the people in these three-bedroom flats have to get one of those multi-person bikes like The Goodies had?

Had the applicant wished to support sustainable transport, they would have consulted with residents and given bike/car parking figures in the context of existing and anticipated car/cycle use.

Proposal documents

Drawings

The drawings illustrate the poor level of attention given to this project or, perhaps, a lack of familiarity with the site.

The drawings are not easy to understand, use images that are long out of date and contain a number of inaccuracies.

UDP Policy D2 says: "The Council will require all planning applications for new development to include appropriate, clear and accurate drawings and a supporting design statement."

It also says at 12.1.4: "The quality of the submitted drawings will tend to reflect how well the design has been thought through."

Errors in appearance

The heavy black window frames in the drawing appear designed to make the block look heavy and uninviting. The tall windows that rise over several floors look pinched, unlike the original airy design.

The windows over the stairwell appear smaller than in real life, and the decorative feature near the top, echoed above the windows, looks much plainer than it does in reality.

The drawings of the back of the flats miss several details and make it look like a factory. It doesn't.

Sections of white rendering with columns of windows between them create visual columns

to give the block height. The drawings show the render around the bay windows rather than between them. In addition, render is shown incorrectly as being between the side and front window panes.

One of the best known characteristics of 1930s architecture is that window corners, for the first time, did not require masonry support, following the introduction of metal window frames. This drawing shows not only a lack of attention to the existing building, but also of 1930s architecture. We would expect someone proposing such a major change to architecture of this period to be aware of this.

The rendering between the windows appears heavy and straight in the drawings. Curved detailing on the rendering (see photo, opposite) has been omitted from the drawings.

These combine to make the existing building look boring and ugly, so less deserving of preservation.

Windows

The proposed drawings show "double glazed windows to match existing". It is not clear which windows these are matching. The windows over the staircase – which will have to be replaced – are the original Crittall windows (see Stairwells and Parapets). Windows have been replaced on a piecemeal basis over the years, sometimes without consent (Building Control are involved in a case at the moment).

Old layout

The location plan and the existing ground floor layout plans use an old map, showing a circular garden layout.

The location plan, the existing ground floor plan PL01 and proposed 3D view PL14B show the grounds before the car park was put in. PL01 and the location plan show pram sheds that are long gone. We have very similar drawings dated 1973 and 1957.

The use of an out of date, incorrect layout shows poor attention or laziness.

In PL14B, the windows at 1-12 Northview also appear smaller than they should.

The up-to-date layout is shown in the drawing of the proposed layout. The proposed 3D view amalgamates both, with the former green area superimposed over the parking bays. This is misleading as it gives the impression that the extent of green is considerably larger than it is, so able to take more building around it.

Missing information

The layout of existing flats is absent, making the existing section and layout drawings meaningless. It is not possible to see how rooms in the proposed floor will be stacked, which has implications for noise nuisance and sustainability.

Drawings of the new flats do not show circulation spaces, room or corridor widths or door opening spaces.

Distortion

While the 3D drawings help give an idea of how the proposed development would look, the perspective seems skewed, especially on drawings 1 and 2 on PL16A; drawing 1 "stretches" windows and the nearest door and stairwell to an unacceptable extent.

Inaccuracies

The drawings fail to show the tanks on the roof of the back block and pipework. The sections show staircases to have rotated 90°.

The drawings are not clear, with elements in drawings PL04A and PL05A difficult to recognise.

There are inaccuracies in the following drawings:

Existing Elevations PL04A: the top drawing marked "1 North"

There is nowhere you can stand that would show part of Tufnell Park Mansions and Northview's garages, as shown here.

Viewed from the north, you would see Tufnell



Detail of windows, showing frames and curves in the white rendering

Park Mansions over its shops on the left (east) and 1-12 Northview on the right (west); most of 14-43 would be obscured from the road, with the only view being down the driveway. However, this drawing shows part of Tufnell Park Mansions on the left, what must be the back of the garages in the middle, and no Northview front block.

The view of Tufnell Park Mansions here, in terms of the windows and doors, seems to be that from the back (ie looking north east, as seen from Northview car park) and not from the north (ie the view from Holloway Road). However, the "sticking out" roof at the right side of the building is roughly how you would see it from this viewpoint.

One parapet is shown above the entrance and stairway windows in this drawing, roughly in the middle, but the parapets above the two entrances and stairway windows to the right are not shown.

Existing Elevations PL05A: the lower drawing marked "2 East"

The parapet above the entrance and stairway windows in the centre of the picture is shown as lower than the level of the roof, but it is higher, as is shown above the entrance to the right.

The section immediately to the left of this central doorway is drawn as if the design of that part of the block is different, but it is not: here sections of white wall are shown going the full height of the building (wrong) and there are no entrances and stairway windows shown

The dark, horizontal strips shown on this section of the block don't exist.

At the far left of this drawing, the back of the far end of the block (ie the back of flats 38/40/42) is shown, but the blank end wall of the block, which you would see too, is missing

(however, this is shown correctly in PL05 lower drawing, which also marked "East").

Existing Elevations PL05: upper drawing marked "1 West"

None of the boundary for the whole length shown is wooden fence: the first section, from left to right, is made up of concrete sheeting, and the next section is brick wall.

Existing Elevations PL05: lower drawing marked "2 East" is inaccurate

This shows fencing on the right which does not exist: the boundary along this section is the back of the garages. There is fencing along the section where there is a gap in the drawing, until the fence meets the back extension of commercial premises on Holloway Road.

Cycle space

The drawings show space for five cycles, not eight as in the application.

Light

One 3D drawing shows sunlight coming from the north east.

Flues

While some flues have been shown, none are provided for bedroom chimneys and the living room ones are in the wrong place. It is not clear whether these flues are intended to serve existing flats or just the new ones.

Anyone familiar with 1930s architecture will know that flues were necessary. Anyone familiar with the estate will know that some of the flues are in still use.

Practicality of building

We do understand that this may be a matter for building control rather than planning.

Structural stability

While we understand that this may be a matter for Building Control rather than Planning, we are concerned that the application is not accompanied by a structural report.

It is assumed that the structure is strong enough to support an additional floor, although no evidence has been provided on this. There is a large crack in the easternmost flank wall – we have not yet had formal notification of its cause or longer term implications.

A leaseholder in the back block was recently been told by a construction professional that the block suffers from subsidence and will need underpinning to support another storey.

Underground river

An underground river, the Hackney Brook, runs below or near to Northview – we understand it caused a road collapse outside Barclays Bank some years ago.

This is evidenced by old maps, which also show a fountain in the same area or adjacent to the southernmost part of the estate, as well as from informal discussion with a professional concerned with the redirection of watercourses for the St Pancras Station development.

Design and Access statement

While some of the errors here are minor, they illustrate the lack of attention to detail or unfamiliarity with the estate.

Paragraph 1.02 The existing flats were built in 1938. There is a bin store but no provision for recycling. The pavement crossover is not strictly shared – if anyone tried to use Northview's section of crossover to access Tufnell Park Mansions, they would drive into a brick wall.

1.03 There is a row of garages at Holbrooke Court, not a compound.

1.05 While 14-43 Northview is not part of the Nag's Head town centre, 1-12 Northview (shown on the proposals map) is. 1-12 Northview has been designated an area of special character.

1.02 There are no recycling facilities.

3.02(vii) refers to "access" balconies at 1-12 Northview. These are private balconies, one for each flat, all of which provide private outdoor space. While the balconies at the rear are outside the flat doors, those at the front are extensions of living areas, and do not give access.

It also says there will be no material loss of daylight or sunlight to the surrounding property – yet natural light will be lost (see Loss of Light and Privacy, p4).

The same paragraph states that blocks in Holbrooke court have only their end elevations, which contain no windows, facing the site. Yet the new build at Holbrooke Court will face the new floor.

There are further inaccuracies – see section on Trees.

Crack in flank wall of back block



Character



1930s group value, Holloway style

A distinctive estate

The London Plan highlights the creation of successful neighbourhoods in the inter-war years but adds that many of these are no longer there.

Islington's policies support maintaining local distinctiveness (CS10) and highlight the borough's legacy of attractive domestic architecture. The distinctiveness of Northview and its feel as an enclave will be irretrievably damaged by this extra storey. The council's policies state that "a high standard of design" includes context as a key issue.

Northview is not a well-known or high-profile scheme. Most of it is not on a street front. However, there is nothing like it in the area and it would be a disgrace if such a unique estate were damaged.

The buildings have pleasing proportions with a restful rhythm, provided by the tall windows lighting the stairwells and the detailed, curved rendering between windows. The proposals themselves acknowledge that the estate is an enclave (1.02), yet its very appeal as an enclave is being threatened.

The owner of flat 6 discovered that the front block at least had some kind of cultural designation – as an area of special character – when it changed hands in 2006.

There is an unusual consistency in 1930s architecture at this end of Tufnell Park Road, providing considerable group value. 1-12 Northview has a sharper, more extrovert design than 14-43, providing an effective bridge in design between the latter's gentle domestic architecture and the flamboyant Holloway Odeon. Continuity is provided in architectural detailing. When phone company 02 used images of the Odeon for an advertising

campaign, they kept Northview in the background – it wasn't substituted or Photoshopped out.

The estate's various features mean it provides a tangible record of social history.

The 1930s architecture in the area tends to be large blocks of flats, houses, rather grand shops (eg Marks & Spencer) or spectacular cinema buildings (the Odeon opposite and the Coronet). We know of no other small estate like this in this borough or further afield. Schemes like Northview were once common but are now rare.

One objective of Islington's Housing Strategy is safeguarding the heritage of homes and neighbourhoods.

Most people think of Islington's famous Georgian terraces when asked about the area's heritage. As a result, small, more modern schemes can be overlooked. While small scale, Northview is unique and certainly of architectural and historical interest, and deserves to be preserved.

We are not saying that Northview is a museum piece – it continues to work very well as a sustainable community, contributing to place-shaping, 70 years after it was built. Such matters are highlighted in government policy (PPS5, HE7.4).

Height

The existing block is designed and works as a complete structure – it is not several rows of flats just plonked on top of one another. The proposed storey will detract from its appearance.

Adding a storey has not been successful in this part of Holloway.

A fourth storey was recently added to Tufnell Park Mansions. The photograph below shows how its excessive size for the setting has not been relieved by pale yellow paint. The proposed works will exacerbate this and make the place look crowded and overdeveloped. As CABA points out, only a small proportion of recent schemes have been "good" or "very good".



Sources

This shows that it would not be a good idea to make Northview the same height as Tufnell Park Mansions. (Northview's four-storey front block is considerably smaller than Tufnell Park Mansions, and is in keeping with back block.)

Neighbouring houses on Tufnell Park Road and Parkhurst Road are low rise.

While the body of the additional floor is set back, the roof will come over the balconies, which will put it in line with existing elevations and negate the effect of the setback.

The extension will therefore increase the bulk of 14-43 Northview by one-third and draw attention to itself, especially with its line of glass along the front.

The roof extension will be visible from the gate and from across the road by the Odeon. As pointed out elsewhere in this document, this is a unique 1930s corner. The extension will therefore be detrimental to the appearance and character of the area (policy D25).

The UDP points out that market pressures are forcing bigger buildings that are out of character and scale. We do understand that companies are under commercial pressures at the moment, but it would be a mistake to these to overrule a unique piece of history.

Stairwells and parapets

The UDP says the extensions and alterations should respect the architectural character and detail of the original buildings. We are using the example of the stairwells.

The existing stairwells boast original deco steel balusters with a papyrus motif – very fashionable at the time – turned wooden banister rails and full-length original Crittall windows.

The staircases are to be extended for a further storey, as are the windows that light them. Where window replacement is mentioned, it refers to double-glazing to match "existing".

Islington's urban design guide says that window replacement "should normally be done in the original style and materials, for example ... Crittall windows on interwar buildings."

It also says that: "Replacing timber or Crittall windows with modern alternatives such as uPVC windows, and to a lesser extent, powder coated aluminium windows are usually unacceptable not only because they are an unsympathetic material but also because glazing bar profiles are usually substantially bigger."

Stepped features on the parapets above the stairwells – a typical feature of 1930s housing – will be lost.



In making our comments, we have drawn on a number of documents and sources. Some are referenced within the main text.

Islington Council

UDP 2002

Islington Urban Design Guide
Local Housing Needs

Assessment 2008

Islington's Local Development
Scheme, October 2010

Housing strategy 2009-2014

Planning – Statement of

Community Involvement

Accessible Housing in Islington

Islington's Core Strategy

Proposed Submission

Nag's Head Town Centre

Strategy

Development Management

Policies Direction of Travel Draft,

November 2010 (part of local

development framework) –

while this is a consultation, it

gives a useful guide to the

standards the council wishes to achieve



Department for Communities and Local Government (and its predecessors)

Better Places to Live

Code for Sustainable Homes

Houses in Multiple Occupation in the Private
Rented Sector,

Tree Preservation Orders: A Guide to the Law
and Good Practice

Planning Policy Statement 1: Planning for the
Historic Environment

Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the
Historic Environment

London Mayor's office

The London Plan

Housing Design Standards

London Housing Design Guide, Interim

Academic

Davies H, Nutley S (2002) Evidence-based
policy and practice: moving from rhetoric to
reality. Research Unit for Research Utilisation,
University of St Andrews

Consultation

Consultation on this application has been inadequate.

Applicants

In the application form, the applicant says it has consulted with residents of five flats on the estate. At the time of the application was made, there were 18 flats owned by independent leaseholders with at least seven years to run on the estate.

In addition, the Daylight and Sunlight study accompanying the application shows there would be a considerable loss of light to some neighbouring premises, particularly in Parkhurst Road. However, there is no indication that the occupiers of these properties have been consulted.

Likewise, the extension could have implications for the proposed blocks of flats and garden at Holbrooke Court. It does not appear that Homes for Islington has been consulted over this.

Council consultation

The consultation letter was dated 21 December, postmarked 23 December, and did not arrive at two leaseholders' homes until 30 December. While this gave 21 days' notice, the documents were not posted online until 5 January.

As a result, we have had only two rather than three weeks to draw up our response – it is not possible to comment on something when no information is available.

In addition, at least one leaseholder did not receive a letter from the council. This problem has happened before.

The Planning – Statement of Community Involvement says the council will “give 21 days for people to submit written comments on an application”.

A shorter time than this puts particular pressure on residents' associations and other community groups, as it involves coordinating a response and taking the views of different people on board.



These delays also have equalities implications. Anyone wishing to comment who does not have internet access and would find it difficult to visit the planning office due to mobility difficulties – we know of elderly people living in Tufnell Park Road in this position – would be at an additional disadvantage.

No list of consultees was provided with the application online, so we do not know whether people in neighbouring properties were consulted.

People wishing to comment on developments are already at a disadvantage, not having the day-to-day professional knowledge of the applicants, nor having the resources to pay for such knowledge; they also have to collate their information in the own time, usually at weekends and in the evenings. Poorly managed timescales can only add to this.

Writing in the Islington Tribune last summer, the chair of the planning committee said that he was going to “look into how we can ensure that planning proposals and the detailed papers are available in good time”.

However, the administration systems to support planning officers and ensure fairness to those affected by proposals are still inadequate.

Summary

The proposed floor will be seriously detrimental to Northview, both socially and architecturally.

- Northview is a distinctive enclave of 1930s domestic architecture – there is nothing similar in the area. Council policies support maintaining local distinctiveness but the proposed changes will irretrievably damage this.

- Northview is designed as an entity, its architectural design and layout acting physically to provide a natural community. This, along with its restful, welcoming feel, could be seriously disrupted.

- The proposals will compromise residents' safety and security.

- The development fails to meet sustainability standards, in terms of both environmental concerns as well as in providing homes that will last.

- The new storey will cut natural light, blocking all direct sunlight to at least one flat.

- The proposed layout, with a kitchen/living/dining areas over bedrooms, will result in noise nuisance.

- The drawings are misleading and inaccurate, making our homes look unattractive and unwelcoming.

- The application is badly thought out, shows an appalling lack of attention and contains multiple errors. Some structures have been omitted, and a plan showing a layout that has not existed for years has been used.

- Sustainable homes, transport and security are hardly addressed – a “tick box” attitude has been adopted. Proposed flats do not meet lifetime homes standards. National, London and council planning policies are contravened.

- The area is already heavily developed, with new or proposed housing on all sides of Northview. Adding this extra storey will add little to Islington's housing stock while coming at great cost to the existing community.

