



David Robinson
Principal Planning Officer
Housing, Environment and Regeneration
London Borough of Lewisham
5th Floor Laurence House
London SE6 4RU

Sent by email: planning@Lewisham.gov.uk

16 April 2020

Our ref: 99 06 06

Dear David Robinson,

DC/20/115160 LAND AT SYDENHAM HILL ESTATE, SYDENHAM HILL, LONDON SE26

The Twentieth Century Society has been alerted to the above application. The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of Mais House and garages on Otto Close and their replacement with a residential building and a terrace of houses. The Society wishes to register its objections to the above application with respect to harmful impact on the adjacent Grade II listed Lammas Green estate.

Background

Lammas Green was designed by Donald McMorran of the practice Farquarson and McMorran (later McMorran and Whitby). McMorran designed the scheme in 1955 to provide social housing for the City of London Corporation in the aftermath of the Second World War. McMorran had made a name for himself as a traditionalist architect capable of large and complex schemes, having designed Hammersmith Police Station among other buildings during the inter-war years.

The site for Lammas Green contained three Victorian detached villas, two of which were derelict. Planning regulations would have permitted up to 70 homes on the site, but the City specified a limit of 57 “so as to establish the conditions under which a community with its own life and identity might be able to grow and flourish”. The existing houses were demolished and a number of mature trees were kept on the site, which was one reason why orienting the buildings around a central communal green was chosen. The slope of the site towards the south lent itself to the picturesque composition of the estate, and two larger blocks adjacent to the road afforded a level of protection from traffic noise. These blocks of flats also provide a clear entrance point into the Estate and convey a sense of respectability and civility to visitors; the tall, exaggerated chimney stacks echoed McMorran’s design for Hammersmith Police Station.

The square was completed by terraces of two-storey rendered houses interspersed with arched passageways to gardens at the rear, creating a visual link to the arched communal entrances to the brick blocks of flats. The estate opened on 1 November 1957, and has remained remarkably unaltered since, partially thanks to an early listing designation in 1998. The project’s success forged a long-lasting relationship between McMorran and the

Corporation of London, which led to two important later commissions: Wood Street Police Station (1959-66, Grade II*) and the Central London Criminal Court Extension (1960-72, Grade II*).

Lammas Green's list description praises McMorran's ability to tackle progressive building types whilst maintaining a traditional aesthetic style, naming this as the smallest but finest of the social housing schemes he designed. HE describe the estate as idyllic, highlighting the contrast between the cottages and blocks of flats as 'particularly distinguished'.

Proposals

The application proposes a new residential development spread across two sites adjacent to Lammas Green. Mais House, a former sheltered housing block on Sydenham Hill is proposed to be demolished and replaced with a block of flats for social rent. The proposed block has a similar footprint to Mais House, and would have a range of heights reaching between 4 and 7 storeys high plus a pitched roof. Mais House currently has 3 storeys plus a pitched roof, and reaches a comparable height to the blocks of flats belonging to Lammas Green. Additional new housing is proposed in the form of a terrace of houses on the site of existing garages on Otto Close. The proposed housing is considered to affect the setting of the Grade II listed estate and the Sydenham Hill Conservation Area.

Comments

The Society's principle concern is the height of the residential block proposed to replace Mais House, and how views of this new block will intrude on the Lammas Green's idyllic atmosphere, which we consider to be a key aspect of its significance.

Visitors to Lammas Green experience an astonishing sense of seclusion and calm, with surrounding trees creating a pleasant backdrop from viewpoints around the central green. The scale, aesthetic, layout and green qualities of the estate set it apart from most other housing schemes built in this period, and it is remarkable that even after over 60 years the sense of peace remains undisturbed by insensitive alterations. Views of the proposals submitted by the applicant show that the proposed block of flats will be dominant above the roofline of the listed terraced houses and will be a substantial interruption to the tree canopy that serves as the estate's current backdrop.

The Society recognises the rarity of new housing for social rent being commissioned by a local authority. The NPPF specifies that public benefits such as this must be balanced against the impact of the proposals on the significance of the heritage asset, and in order for this to be satisfied the Society considers it appropriate that unnecessary harm to designated heritage assets is avoided. We remain unconvinced that a similar number and size of residential units could not be provided in a different arrangement that would have a lower roofline and therefore reduce the level of harm caused to Lammas Green's historic significance. Removing the pitched roof would be an obvious way to reduce the proposed block's height, reducing the visibility of the proposed development in views from within Lammas Green.

Summary

The Society wishes to object to the above application as we consider the proposals to cause unnecessary harm to a Grade II listed heritage asset. We recommend that planning permission be refused, or the scheme be amended to reduce the height of the proposed residential block, so the historic and architectural significance of Lammas Green is sustained.

I trust that these comments are of use to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,



Grace Etherington

Caseworker

Twentieth Century Society

Remit: The Twentieth Century Society was founded in 1979 and is the national amenity society concerned with the protection, appreciation, and study of post-1914 architecture, townscape and design. The Society is acknowledged in national planning guidance as the key organisation concerned with the modern period and is a constituent member of the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies. Under the procedures set out in *ODPM Circular 09/2005*, all English local planning authorities must inform the Twentieth Century Society when an application for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition is received, and they must notify us of the decisions taken on these applications.