



**Summary of Proof of Evidence: Sarah Buckingham, (BA Hons), MSc, Dip TP**

Call-in by direction of the Secretary of State for  
redevelopment at Newcombe House, 45 Notting Hill Gate,  
39-41 Notting Hill Gate and 161-237 (odd) Kensington  
Church Street, London, W11 3LQ

Applicant: Notting Hill Gate KCS Limited

Planning agent: Quod of Ingeni Building, 17 Broadwick St, London W1F 0AX

Council Reference: PP/17/05782

GLA Reference: GLA/3109

PINS Reference: APP/K5600/V/19/3225884

October 2019

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 My name is Sarah Buckingham and I have over 30 years of experience working within the heritage and planning. I am the Conservation and Design team leader for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.
- 1.2 I am familiar with the Application Site and the surrounding area. I consider that the Council's position is well founded and I agree with the Council's objection to the application.
- 1.3 My evidence will focus on the first reason for objection, which relates to the height and design quality of the proposed tall building, and its consequent failure to have a wholly positive impact on the townscape, and the harm it would cause to the setting of nearby conservation areas and listed buildings. My opinion is that the development is of insufficient architectural quality and its height and design would have an adverse impact on local townscape and negative impact on the setting of designated heritage assets.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 I set out the history, character and appearance of the application site and surrounding area as they relate to this development. Part of this description includes an identification of the shortcomings of Newcombe House as it currently exists and the related mid-twentieth century development within Notting Hill Gate in relation to the adjoining townscape, although I conclude that due to its overall height, orientation and its pared-down architectural detail it can sit relatively unnoticed as background architecture within many sensitive views within the wider townscape.
- 2.2 I identify the conservation areas that would be harmed by the proposal, which are the Ladbroke Conservation Area, Kensington Conservation Area, Kensington Palace Conservation Area, Pembridge Conservation Area and Royal Parks Conservation Area, and summarise their character and appearance. I then

identify the listed buildings that would be harmed by the development and describe their heritage significance as it relates to this application.

- 2.3 My proof also sets out the relevant law, policy and guidance for design, tall buildings and for heritage assets, including drawing attention to the legal duties in relation to preserving the special interest of listed buildings, including their setting, and to the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in respect of the weight which should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

### **3. Assessment**

- 3.1 I assess the tall building, and evaluate the impact on the adjacent townscape. I begin with the specific weakness in terms of the architectural quality and, referring to specific views in the Visual Townscape Assessment I then discuss those views of the adjacent townscape that would be harmed. Notwithstanding the successful aspects of the Application Proposal, and the conclusions of the Inspector in the 2017 decision notice for the Appeal Scheme, I conclude that there are flaws in the design relating to the so-called “slipped form” which does not successfully achieve an elegant outline for the top levels of the building, which as a result has an unduly dominating effect on the adjacent townscape, particularly when viewed from the west. The outcome therefore is neither exceptional nor wholly positive in its townscape context.
- 3.2 I also set out my minor concerns about the design of block WPB3 in terms of increasing the sense of enclosure to the new public square, and in how the proposed doctor’s surgery is to be accessed by the public.
- 3.2 I go on to assess the impact on designated heritage assets, in particular identified listed buildings and conservation areas, around the site. I have evaluated each of the 42 views of Visual Impact Assessment to assess the impact on

conservation areas and listed buildings, but referring only in my proof to the views where I consider there would be an adverse impact on the significance.

3.3 In my assessment of the effects on conservation areas I follow the general approach set out in in Historic England the Setting of Heritage Assets, Good Practice Advice in Planning, which is to:-

- Set out the significance of the heritage asset within the view and how the setting contributes to the view and evaluated the importance of the view;
- Considered the impact of the proposed development on the setting in the view; and
- Conclude on the magnitude of harm to significance.

3.4 For the listed buildings, I have considered their significance of the listed building and described the existing setting and how this contributes to the significance. I have analysed the impact of the development on the setting with reference to views from the Visual Impact Assessment. From this I have identified whether there will be harm to significance and evaluated this level of harm.

3.5 From my assessment, I conclude the development would have a harmful effect on five conservation areas, several listed buildings and a registered park and garden.

#### **4. Conclusion**

4.1 My final conclusion, following the analysis, is that the tall building and its architecture would not have a wholly positive impact due to the insufficient architectural quality and would create harm to local townscape and designated heritage assets, while there are some shortcomings to the design of block WPB3. As a result the development would fail to comply with national and local policy and guidance.

4.2 This development would cause less than substantial harm overall to designed heritage assets, but as this would be not to a single asset but to many and

experienced over an extensive area, I conclude that it would still be significant overall. If this harm is to be assigned a degree within the range of less than substantial harm, I conclude that it would be more than moderate.

- 4.3 While it is not for me to conduct the planning balance, I point out that that the Council has identified that the potential benefits arising from the scheme are not to a level sufficient to outweigh the considerable weight that must be given to the less than substantial harm to heritage assets.

S J Buckingham

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