

I am writing to **OBJECT** to the planning application regarding Alford Mews

Your ref: HGY/2023/0949

### **Relevant history**

Despite the applicants talking about which Bishop owned land in the 1600s the main material facts are:

Alford House was originally a house that was bombed in the second world war. The site was purchased by the previous freeholder, Collins Trust, and two blocks of flats totalling 32 flats were built in the late 1950s. The then freeholder obtained planning consent to build penthouse flats on both blocks and sold the freehold with planning consent to the current owner/applicant.

Alford House then had four extra flats built on top of the current blocks, adding extra strain onto the current drainage systems, adding extra loading to the current foundations. Garden space at the back was permanently lost due to four new 'extra' car parking spaces being built for 'guaranteed' parking for the owners of the new penthouses.



The area of the proposed development on the front lawn taken from the main door of the front block.

### **Breach of planning regulations and needed enforcement notice:**

As part of the planning approval for the penthouse flats two stipulations were made:

That a new bin & bike store be constructed; and

“That no human inhabitation of the new penthouse flats be allowed by the applicant until the new bin shed/ bike store had been fully completed.”

The penthouse flats were sold and are all full occupied, but the bin & bike store has never been completed and has been abandoned by the applicant for the last 3 years.

It was even used as a waste dump by the applicants' contractors when they were doing work on a different nearby site, as well as for overnight parking due to the lack of parking spaces in the area.

At various stages the applicant has claimed they could not source the materials to build it/complete it; that they were in dispute with their contractor; and unbelievably even asked current flat owners to pay the applicant £16,000 (rejected by the flat owners) so the bin & bike store could be completed.

The fact the penthouse flats have been sold while the bin & bike shed remains abandoned (see photos) shows a **clear major violation of the planning application for the penthouse flats and that an enforcement notice should be served on the applicant and this planning application refused.**

I do not believe it fair nor reasonable for this application to be granted. Additionally, it cannot be right that this application be considered when there are serious breaches of the previous planning application **that need an enforcement order**. The application ignores all sensible planning rules.



Close up of abandoned bike/bins shed view from the car park. Note the weed growth the site has been untouched for so long.



Close up of abandoned bike/bins shed view from the car park. Note the weed growth the site has been untouched for so long.



Close up of abandoned bike/bins shed view from the public pavement.



Abandoned bike/bins shed view from the public pavement.



Abandoned bike/bin shed being used as a waste dump. Note blue chemical drum.



Contractor van parked overnight (note the frost on the van and plants) due to lack of local parking space before dumping more waste into the abandoned bike/bin shed. This contractor was working on a separate project some 400 meters away (Church Road).

### **Overdevelopment**

The applicant's plans are for a wholly out of character developed in a heavily developed location that has already been further developed. The applicant states there is "a gap" in the street façade of properties running along the road and this is in effect an eyesore. What the application fails to mention is that slightly set back is a block of flats so there is no actual gap in the street frontage, they are playing with semantics. They also fail to deal properly with the pre-application advice.

All residents are against this development as well as all owners.



Front block on left. Photo shows illegal contractor onsite parking but also how tight and small the space the proposed application suggests will not cause any over-development or loss of amenities. You can also see how the entire rear block faces directly onto the proposed structure. You can also see the huge scaffolding weight sitting on top of the current drains for over two years causing damage to the drains. The store for flat owners in the rear block (behind the van) had its roof destroyed by the weight of the scaffolding over such a prolonged time with no support or load spreading.

### **Light loss & Shading**

The proposed development will directly and indirectly block light to both blocks of Alford House.

The application shows some generic light calculations; however it fails to take into account the fence/wall fencing off some of the lawn and how this will reduce if further the amount of light entering the current flats. All the bedrooms and living rooms in the rear block will be completely and majorly affected.

The front block will also be overlooked, especially the ground floor flats and first floor flats.

The second flaw in the light calculations put forward is they assume full light availability during daylight hours. The attached photos show how shaded the rear block is so the proposed structure will be even more light reducing than suggested. Equally the application talks of a small amount of light being reflected from 'reflective bricks.' This is complete obfuscation. How do you reflect light when the structure is also in shade?

This proposal is complete over development as well as causes a huge amount of loss of light to too many existing families. The ground floor flats are already very dark and this would plunge them into almost total darkness with no significant daylight at any time.



Photo taken from front car park towards the rear block. Note the entire block is in shade as well as the front lawn. The area/site is already very dark for most of the day.

### **Parking**

The reality on the ground is the site has 36 flats, with four guaranteed for penthouse flat owners and there are insufficient parking spaces for the other residents. The parking survey produces shows a snap shot for one 24 hour period, as in my opinion is clearly biased. The front car park photos are missing and the details are vague "photo taken around 6 am." From the look for the photo and light levels this appears to have been taken far later in the day when people have already started leaving for work, school runs etc.

Please see photos attached taken of the car park on different days and times. You can clearly see cars parked on the pavement and in difficult positions due to overcrowding.

The parking survey also mentions street parking but fails to mention that this is all restricted and requires parking permits to be paid. Should this application be granted residents/owners would be forced to pay for on street parking. During the previous penthouse development, despite another

planning stipulation being no construction vehicles/employees' vehicles parking onsite, many did causing friction with residents and causing parking tickets to be issued to residents. When the application was challenged repeatedly on this, nothing was done. The applicant ignores the additional cost of residents having to purchase annual residents parking permits when they can park for free on site.

Additionally, the bin & bike shed was placed in the front car park, permanently removing 3 car park spaces. With the abandonment of this another useable space north of the bike/bin shed was effectively confiscated.

The site has one car park space closest to Stanhope Road. There is one more on the other side of the abandoned bin/bike shed but that is closed off and incomplete.

Infront of the main lawn are six parking spaces. In the rear there are four spaces by the rear block as well as two normal parking spaces on the far side of the rear parking space. There are an addition four reserved spaces for the penthouse flats. Four reserved spaces; and 13 parking spaces for 36 flats. There are already insufficient parking spaces.

At one point parking became so contentious there was almost a fight about parking between residents. If this development is allowed the applicant reluctantly concedes one more space will be lost and that even further lawn at the back with need to be removed to create a further parking space.

The applicant also says that no parking spaces are expected to be reserved for new owners of the houses. While the penthouse flats were being sold the estate agent advised that it would not generate a quick sale, let alone a sale for £1 million per flat if there was no guaranteed parking space. I suggest that if this development happens the application will quietly "reserve" parking spaces for the new houses; even further depriving the current owners of parking spaces as well as further reducing the common areas/gardens/lawns etc.

A separate point is if this car park is "under used" as the applicant ridiculously claims, then why were new parking spaces created for the penthouse flats? The suggestion the car park is underused is patently false.



Contractor vans parking on the verge damaging the drains due to excess weight despite planning regulations that no contractor vehicle would be parked on site and showing how over-full the car park is.

### **Drains and flood risks**

The application talks about flood issues in the Highgate area but fails to deal with any relevant points.

The drains in Alford House are already strained due to the addition of the penthouse flats feeding directly into the original 1950s drains. The adjoining uphill road, Shepherds Hill, has drains on both sides (running West to east and east to west) that feeds into Stanhope Road by gravity. When it rains the street is flooded as the drains cannot cope with simple rainfall (not due to blocked rains). When there is a thunderstorm, the road is completely flooded with overwhelmed drains. At the bottom of Stanhope Road there is a natural dip that floods regularly with overflowing sewage from the drains when it rains. When there is a thunderstorm, the flooding area is large and remains for days. The road was blocked for almost 5 days last year due to rain. Equally on the bend around the corner in Hurst Avenue it also floods every time it rains. The drains are already beyond full capacity. Stanhope Road has been closed several times by Thames Water as they try to deal with this – unsuccessfully so far.

Any extra development will put further unreasonable strain on the existing over-stretched drains and cause more flooding.

Flat 3 on the ground floor has already had many sewage escape floods due to drainage problems. This was part of a complaint the tenancy brought to a rent Tribunal about damage that had not been repaired. Equally Flat 1 has also had flooding issues apparently.

The penthouse development works, with heavy lorries parked on the drains in the front car park, as well as heavy scaffolding completely surrounding both blocks for more than two years has likely further damaged the local drains.

Any additional building as per the proposal with all the extra dishwashers, washing machines, bathrooms etc will only increase flooding, especially as the Alford House drains are already overloaded from the extra drainage use from the penthouse flats as well as the drains in the street being over-stretched by considerable development in the area and a further increase in living density with many old houses being converted in 4, 6 or even 8 flats. Curiously the application is totally silent about all of this.

### **Loss of amenities and building on grass**

The applicant has stated incredibly that no lawn will be built on and this is a 'brown field' development. This is simply false.

Making such false statements should have the application rejected for that reason alone.

The development will result in considerable building on the front lawn and even this fails to show the full development impact. The plans supplied show the outline of the building on the lawn but fail to show that a good part of the lawn that remains is being confiscated and a fence/wall erected around it for the exclusive use of the owners.

In a practical sense almost the entire lawn is being lost to either development or confiscation.

The light loss and shading calculation also fail to take account of these fences/walls being constructed and I believe are fundamentally flawed.

The application also shows a deceptive 'fish eye' photo of the lawn, trying to give the impression it is far larger than it actually is.



Photo taken from front block towards the rear block during penthouse development. The area near the fenced off with the wooden pallets is the area being proposed for new development. It is clearly lawn. Note the large mature tree that is likely to be killed by any major excavation and building works that helps to screen the front flats. There is no clear space for any such development on this site.



Photo facing towards Stanhope Road. Note the large amount of dead vegetation and plants that was cut/killed by the applicant during the construction of the penthouses. This became pest infested and after two years of being ignore by the applicant was cleared at the cost of the resident/flat owners. The dead vegetation took a whole day for waste contractors to clear. For scale the dead trees take up almost half the width of the entire front block.

### **Gas pipe & fire/explosion risks**

On the Northern boundary of the site between Alford House and Pastor Court, about 1 meter inside the boundary runs a gas main to the rear block. This is known to the applicant as the bin/bike shed had to be moved from its original location so it would not sit on top of the gas main. It has already had to be repaired once.

This gas main would be approximately one meter from two 2 Kw heat pumps generating 4kW of heat energy. Heat pumps generate static electricity as well as occasionally catch fire. With all the possible earth movements as well as subsidence and/or heave risks it is not impossible that the gas main could again be damaged, cause a gas leak and generate either a gas fire, or worse as gas explosion damaging or destroying Pastor Court. Nothing is mentioned about the gas main in the application. I do not think any development so close to a gas main is sensible on public safety and fire risk grounds.

### **Heat pump noise**

The applicant shows two 2Kw heat pumps being installed. Heat pumps generate noise and there is a growing issue and complaints about noise from these devices. As Pastor Court is so close, the location of the heat pumps could cause consider on-going operational noise complaints to residents from pastor Court.

### **Progressive collapse**

In the penthouse development the applicant was required to make a progressive collapse survey to prove that the proposed development would not overload the current buildings. The applicant has verbally said this has been done but never produced a copy to owners of the other flats. With the risks of further subsidence and/or heave due to the proposed development this document should be updated and released. Equally as Pastor Court is so close the applicant says nothing about any risks of collapse/progressive collapse of Pastor Court as the ground could easily be affected by any digging works as well as the risk of gas fire/gas explosion from the bordering gas main.

The risk of the rear block of Alford House and/or Pastor Court being seriously damaged let alone collapsing has not been addressed and again this is another reason for not allowing any development in this area and rejecting the application.

### **Electricity Sub-station**

During the sale from the previous freeholder to the current, an electricity sub-station that was located on the separate plots at the back was moved to the rear garden of Alford House in approximately the South West corner. I understand that emergency access is needed to this, both for the power grid utility as well as the fire brigade in case of a fire. The access from the rear is now blocked by a separate development from Stanhope Gardens. The only practical access for power grid

utility vehicles as well as fire engines is through Alford House grounds. There is already a bottle neck between the two blocks and the proposed development could further block/hinder emergency access to the sub-station at the rear by fire tenders and similar emergency vehicles. The applicant is silent on the issue of sub-station emergency access.

### **Subsidence/heave risks**

The front block has already had two major incidences of subsidence. The last was caused during the penthouse works which led to a serious structural problems. The applicant initially refused to act and when advised that the residents/flat owners would have no option but to make an insurance claim – to deal with the issue, the applicant reluctantly agreed to act, otherwise the first step of an insurance claim is one year's site monitoring with no building work permitted.

The site is on a slope, most of the soil type is London clay. With a large building close by – Pastor Court, as well as the two exist blocks of Alford House any excavation will have potentially a large impact on both the local water table as well as drainage/water movement as the proposed building site is the only remain 'block' of earth/soil. Any water loss due to overdevelopment of the clay would cause subsidence to surrounding buildings and any extra water having no buffer earth/clay to absorb it would cause heave, again damaging surrounding buildings or cause even more flooding.

Such movement/heave/subsidence would clearly affect Pastor Court as well as either or both Alford House blocks.

The remaining car park is proposed to be replaced with open bricks to allow some rainwater into the ground. Again as the soil is London clay and basically impervious to rain/thunderstorms this will only encourage further heave or subsidence by accelerating further clay expansion and/or drying out.

### **Comment from London Borough of Haringey Principle Engineer – Flood & Water Management**

As part of this application Mr Jason Small has added various stipulations to the application, should it be granted. Namely

*"Management and Maintenance condition*

*Prior to occupation of the development hereby approved, a detailed management maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development, which shall include arrangements for adoption by an appropriate public body or statutory undertaker, management by Residents management company or other arrangements to secure the operation of the drainage scheme throughout the lifetime of the development. The Management Maintenance Schedule shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details and thereafter retained.*

***REASON: To prevent increased risk of flooding to improve water quality and amenity to ensure future maintenance of the surface water drainage system"***

The logic is clear. However, the drainage would have to be added to the existing drains of Alford House and its management company Alford House Management Ltd. There is no reason for residents and leaseholders of Alford House Management Ltd to take on long term costs, liabilities and responsibilities for a totally separate development and its drainage. The last two votes put to all leaseholders was unanimously rejected. **Thus with a clear probability of no agreement regarding long term management/responsibility of the drains as stipulated by Jason Small, this is yet another reason to reject this flawed application.**

#### **Loss of privacy with bedrooms being directly overlooked.**

The application will directly overlook all the bedrooms and living rooms of the rear block of Alford house.

#### **Loss of privacy for Pastor Court as well as Hill Court opposite**

The application will directly overlook in the all the bedrooms of Pastor Court as also look into rooms in the block opposite (Hill Court).

#### **Diminished local environment and loss of biodiversity.**

The front lawn is used by families and children to play on. It was a priceless during the lockdown period as well as a good area for people to relax and de-stress. It also hosts many varies of local birds, that have already lost even more habitat with the separate plot at the back losing many mature trees. The local habit has been continually reduced and the front lawn area is a green oasis and steppingstone for many territorial birds and other wildlife. Local birds include barn owls, woodpeckers, goldfinches and jays.

There is a mature tree in front of the rear block at Alford House helping improve the area as well as offering a privacy screen for residents on higher floors. It is almost certain such a deep excavation as well as all the associated ground works so close to this tree will simply just kill it for one reason or another. Planting a sapling will not solve any further loss of environment or privacy screens for 30 or more years.

Car parking photos to show how busy/full the car park is; taken at different times and on different days.



Park of the rear lawn being used for extra waste dumping before the lawn was removed and replaced by four 'extra guaranteed' parking spaces for the penthouse development. Note the large mature tree just behind and to the right of the contain was damaged during the construction stages and later died.



Front car park, night time. Note the car parked by the abandoned bin/bike shed due to over crowding.



Note full car park and car park on the verge due to lack of space.



Daytime, car park full. Note another car parked on the verge due to over-crowding





Full front car park, daytime. Note the car on the right parking on the verge due to lack of any parking spaces.



Note the entire front car park being taken over by electricity utility vehicles during electrical works. The contractors said "there is nowhere to park so we're parking in your car park until the work is done."