

Dear Iliyan

We live at 100 Southwood Lane and write in support in principle of the above planning application for alterations at 112 Southwood Lane, which, like our home, is part of the Southwood Lodge Estate. We are both architects and between us have 90 years of immersion in architectural culture including design review and advisory roles as well as practice and education. We have great admiration for Harley Sherlock's design both of the estate and the individual houses and love this neighbourhood.

Over the years there have been extensive, generally sensitive alteration to the frontages on Southwood Lane mainly as garage doors have been replaced by walls with windows in a variety of designs. The original details of the garage doors have not been preserved, and in that respect the appearance of the houses has been altered. However, as the replacements details are developments of the original theme of the fenestration, the character of the conservation area has not been damaged. Harley Sherlock's architecture has proved robust enough to accept respectful alteration.

A special characteristic of the houses is the presence of a solid one brick wall, running in the middle of the plan parallel to the party walls. This device which splits the plan into two parallel strips, enables the stepping forward and back aspect of the design. It also requires the front door to be positioned on one side of the central wall, leading to a short corridor in the original plan that served rooms on either side.

No 112 is situated at the end of the terrace (which runs from no 86 at the south to 112 at the north) and is different from all other twelve houses in having a large single storey room added to the north. The effect of this room is to introduce a third element to the plan, a space remote from the front door. The proposal to create a new door in the flank wall, together with a corridor now to the left of the central wall instead of the right, allows much better planning, restoring the circulation to the centre of gravity of the overall plan. The question is whether these improvements come at an unacceptable cost aesthetically, harming the appearance of the terrace ensemble.

We have seen the letters of objection raised by The Twentieth Century Society, The Highgate Society and the Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee. The following sum up the substance of these objections in the context of the Planning Policies cited in the letters.

The Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee:

Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee believes very strongly indeed that moving the front door and other alterations proposed to the front elevation would result in damage to a protected heritage asset, to the detriment of the Highgate Conservation Area. These proposals should be refused.

Permitting such a change would also set a very unwelcome precedent for further detrimental alterations to heritage assets, destroying the coherence of what has, until now, been a very well managed estate, further to the detriment of Highgate CA.

The Highgate Society:

The Society objects strongly to the proposal to change the location of the front entry door, which the applicant proposes to fill with a panel and relocate the entrance by forming an opening into the adjacent brick wall.

The Twentieth Century Society:8

The insertion of a door into what elsewhere remains a blind elevation would have a disruptive and detrimental impact. We are also concerned about the proposed insertion of opaque glass, for which there does not appear to be precedent on the estate.

The key objection is to the proposed re-positioning of the entrance door and consequent compromise to the solidity of the brickwork flank at ground floor. There are secondary objections regarding the treatment of the current door and the use of opaque glazing. In supporting the application in principle we respond to the objections as follows:

1. In our opinion, a change of this small scale does not affect the character of the Conservation Area. We point to how the rather more visible and substantial alterations resulting from the ways people have converted front garages into habitable rooms have not altered the character of the Conservation Area.
2. The proposed change affects a house that is different from all the others in the terrace, and indeed is being proposed *because* the house is different, as set out above. It should not therefore set a precedent.
3. The upgrading of the fabric and the windows of the building to make the house more energy efficient is important. This carries more weight than the alterations to the door and needs to be encouraged.

We agree with the view expressed in the letters of objection that the current door should remain visually unaltered and that further details of the alteration should be submitted to the Council.

With best wishes
Sunand Prasad OBE, PPRIBA
Dr Gillian Horn, ARB