

Objection to application DC/12/79471/X Forest Hill Hotel 41 Stanstead Road, London, SE23 1HG

I write on behalf of the Forest Hill Society to object to the above application for 'the excavation of the basement and the change of use of the lower floor & ground floor at Forest Hill Hotel 41 Stanstead Road SE23, together with the construction of new light wells to the front and side elevations, single storey extension to the existing escape staircase to provide 2 artist's studios (Use Class B1 (C)), 1 two-bedroom and 3 one-bedroom self-contained flats.'

The Forest Hill Society are the local amenity society for the area covered by SE23 and have around 400 members. The society is keen to ensure that the area develops in a positive way that supports the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the people that live and work in it. Generally we try to be positive about changes to the area and proposals for improvements, however in some cases it is necessary for us to raise concerns about proposals as part of the planning process.

We write to object to the above proposals for 2 reasons:

1) The application fails to provide affordable housing when the cumulative proposals on the curtilage of the Forest Hill Hotel site will provide 15 units in total, including this proposal. This total is made up from the 4 residential units in this application, together with the earlier applications for 8 units (DC/10/75469) and 3 units (DC/10/74349/X). This is contrary to Core Strategy Policy 1 which requires 50% affordable housing on sites that propose more than 10 residential units. There is also a question as to whether in accordance with the core strategy this proposal should provide family units, with access to private garden/terrace areas to the rear.

The failure to provide affordable housing is also contrary to the Planning Obligations SPD (January 2011), which as well as requiring up to 50% affordable housing on sites with 10 or more units states in paragraph 3.21 that "*Where development sites are subdivided or developed in phases so that the separate planning applications fall below the thresholds for which obligations may be sought, the Council will, as far as possible, consider sites in their totality.*"

2) The layout of the flats fails to protect the residential amenity of the proposed residents. The scheme locates bedrooms onto the street frontage a short distance from the pavement when it would make for a much better development if living rooms or kitchens were located on this frontage. The problem with locating bedrooms at ground floor on the street frontage is that curtains generally remain closed, there is very little opportunity for residents to overlook the street and help make it feel safe; and it maximises the potential for disturbance of residents at night time.

We are also concerned that the scheme fails to adequately and sensibly provide cycle storage, whilst at the same time including large storage areas within some of the flats that could more usefully serve this purpose. The cycle and bin storage in the scheme is provided on the side alley that is the main access to the majority of units in this building and will detract from the quality and appearance of this entrance.