

# HAMPSTEAD - GARDEN - SUBURB - TRUST

---

862 Finchley Road Hampstead Garden Suburb London NW11 6AB  
Telephone: 020 8455 1066 and 020 8458 8085 - Facsimile: 020 8455 3453 - email: mail@hgstrust.org - www.hgstrust.org

John Culligan  
Assistant Director Planning Management  
Planning Management Service  
Birmingham City Council  
Alpha Tower  
Suffolk Street Queensway  
Birmingham  
B1 1TR

25 June 2009

Dear Mr Culligan

**Moor Pool Conservation Area**

**Wentworth Gate, Site Ei App Nos. S/00873/08/FUL and S/00871/08/CAC**  
**Ravenhurst Road, Site C App Nos. S/00874/08/FUL and S/00870/08/CAC**  
**Ravenhurst Road, Site A App Nos. S/00872/08/FUL and S/00869/08/CAC**

I have been asked by residents of Moor Pool if I would look at and comment on the above applications. My interest in the applications is that I am the Architectural Adviser to the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust. The Trust, in its present form, was established to maintain and preserve the present character and amenities of Hampstead Garden Suburb which it achieves with a Scheme of Management set up by the High Court. I have considerable knowledge of the history and management of garden suburbs. I was also a conservation officer with Birmingham City Council for many years and know Moor Pool well.

Moor Pool and Hampstead Garden Suburb share a great deal in common. They were founded within two years of each other and with very much the same architectural and social aims in mind. Much of the artisans housing at Hampstead was built by co-partnership companies, as at Moor Pool, where the estate was developed by Harborne Tenants Limited. The co-partnership companies at Hampstead and Moor Pool shared a number of directors – people who were at the forefront of housing reform at the turn of the twentieth century.

Hampstead Garden Suburb is internationally recognised as one of the finest examples of early twentieth century domestic architecture and town planning. The masterplan was prepared by Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker, who also produced designs for a great many houses and cottages. Edwin Lutyens was responsible for the design of Central Square at the heart of the Suburb.

The Trust exercises careful control over development in the Suburb so that today it reads as a complete planned environment and is managed as one. Great care is taken to ensure that no changes are permitted that would detract from the special character of the place or set a precedent for further incremental damage. It has survived remarkably intact and this intactness adds to its reputation as one of the most desirable residential areas in London.

Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, described it as **'the most nearly perfect example of that English invention and speciality, the garden suburb'**.

Similarly, Moor Pool is a residential area of considerable historic interest in the development of co-partnership housing, carefully designed and laid out as a unified whole. This is a planned settlement. The original plan is complete and all spaces have been allotted to their specific use. The only major intrusion into the planned landscape is the clutter of garages, built over the years to accommodate the motor car.

The clear intention of the original masterplan was that the valley site was kept free of building. In the layout of garden suburbs, the landscape was a very significant element in the design. At Moor Pool, the ponds, trees and allotments running through the site were critical to the landscape concept. To build on these allotments would be a great intrusion into that designed landscape. Such development could not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area, as the Council has a duty to do.

The proposals for Site A are clearly the most damaging. However, the plan for Site E(i) is also very poor in the way it relates to its neighbouring pair. The house is to be built right up to the boundary, unlike the original houses, where space is left between to enhance the setting of the groups enable hedges to be established on the site boundaries. This is a critical element of the grain of development and distinctive character of the area.

The design of the proposed houses on all three sites is poor, displaying arbitrary fenestration and mean chimneys. Grille garage doors are inappropriate. Bland windows without glazing bars do not respect the prevailing character of the area. Inappropriate shallow pitched roofs are plonked on top of the side garages. The proposed integral garages are not characteristic of the conservation area. The solar panels are not integrated into the designs in any way.

The proposed houses are neither an authentic modern solution nor well designed traditional architecture. They fail to respect the qualities of the original development, with none of the simple elegance of the existing architecture.

The garages that have been built throughout Moor Pool over the years have intruded into spaces originally intended for gardens or allotments. However unsightly some of these garages are, they serve a purpose – or could if they

were properly maintained. The loss of parking provision resulting from the redevelopment of these garages will put pressure on front gardens through off-street parking - unless the Council has robust policies to prevent this and a willingness to police them. Gardens are important to a garden suburb.

The development would also result in a significant loss of trees on the site, further damaging the mature landscaped setting that is such an important aspect of the original housing.

In Hampstead Garden Suburb, the Trust and Barnet Council have successfully resisted development on a number of backland garage sites - decisions that have been upheld at appeal. The setting of nearby listed buildings, significant loss of trees, the massing of the proposed development, the poor design of the houses and the resultant overlooking of neighbouring properties were all cited by the Inspector in refusing the appeals - all issues that are relevant to the present applications for Moor Pool.

English Heritage has recently produced guidance on historic suburbs in recognition that, because of their low densities, suburbs are vulnerable to damaging development. The publication, "Suburbs and the Historic Environment", acknowledges that, in many cases, change in suburbs is inevitable, but the advice goes on to observe - "There will however be some (such as the early garden suburbs and cities) where only the most limited development can be accommodated if distinctive character is to be retained" Moor Pool is surely such a case. It is the very distinctiveness of Moor Pool that would be lost if the developments were to be approved.

With careful management, Moor Pool could be a nationally significant example of early C20 garden city planning and philanthropic housing – an example for Birmingham to be proud of. The current proposals will severely damage this aspiration.

I would ask the Council to refuse the application on Site A and ensure that the applications for Sites C and Ei are modified significantly to improve their design and minimise their detrimental impact on the character of the conservation area.

Yours sincerely



David Davidson  
Architectural Adviser to the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust.