

Hills Road Area Residents Association and
Queen Edith's Way Residents Association

Report to the Planning Committee
of Cambridge City Council

**Objections to the planning application for
291 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 8RP
(Reference 17/1372/FUL)**

3rd October 2017

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.... and many other Cambridge residents

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1) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The application to demolish the Edwardian detached house at 291 Hills Road and in its place construct a modern development with 15 flats has excited a great deal of local opposition, and Cambridge City Council has to date recorded 72 objections (including 62 public comments and 10 third party comments). In a nutshell, the view of objectors is that this proposal represents a substantial overdevelopment of a site in a most prominent corner location on Hills Road; its poor and unsympathetic design being out of keeping with its context on the City's green gateway from the south.

There follows a brief introduction and summary of each of the sections in this report.

Planning policies

In the section on planning policies, we point out that the planning application contravenes planning policies set out in the Cambridge Local Plan 2006, the Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment 2003 and the Cambridge Local Plan draft of 2014. These plans play an essential part in ensuring the future of the city. It is essential that they remain consistent and are adhered to. Developers should not be permitted to go ahead with demolition and developments which destroy not only the fabric of the houses but also the landscape and character of the city these plans were designed to safeguard.

Recent planning applications in the Hills Road area

In recent years, a number of planning applications in the Hills Road area calling for the demolition of period detached properties and their replacement with flats or other forms of over-development have been rejected by the Planning Committee. Instead properties have been refurbished, extended, or replaced with sympathetic moderately sized houses. We provide 9 examples where the Planning Committee has prevented over-development, allowing the street scene to be maintained and the character and beauty of Cambridge to be preserved.

Contemporary buildings in the surrounding area

The planning application provides 5 examples of contemporary buildings in the surrounding area, but we demonstrate that none of these examples in any way supports or justifies the proposed development at 291 Hills Road.

No justification for demolition

We see no case for the demolition of the house at 291 Hills Road, but on the contrary, many reasons why it is worthy of preservation, not only for intrinsic reasons, but also because of its relation with its surroundings, given its prominent position in the main artery linking the Biomedical campus and the city centre, and its role in the wild life corridor. We explain why there is no good reason to demolish, supported by views from David Jones; Cambridge Past, Present & Future; Urban Design; and Professor Deborah Howard.

The planning application in the local context

We outline the local context, as presented in the City Council's report on Cambridge Suburbs and Approaches: Hills Road, and describe 'Raylands', the Edwardian detached house at 291 Hills Road. We explain why the application fails to respond to or harmonise with the character and architecture of Hills Road, with detailed comments from Cambridge Past, Present & Future; Urban Design; and Professor Deborah Howard. Finally, we outline the concerns raised by City Council officers in pre-application discussions; concerns which have not been satisfied in the application.

Contribution of the site to the local landscape character

We summarise the amenity value of trees on Hills Road, as presented in the Cambridge City Council's report on Cambridge Suburbs and Approaches, Peter Studdert's description in 1994 and the Cambridge Local Plan update. We outline 4 recent cases involving tree protection and preservation on Hills Road. We review the landscape plan for 291 Hills Road, in the context of the City Council's Tree Strategy. We emphasise the value of street trees in storing carbon, absorbing pollution and improving health. We note the importance of trees and hedgerow to biodiversity, with particular reference to bats, birds and hedgehogs. We express concerns about the viability of the tree planting plan for 291 Hills Road, with specific issues reported by Urban Design. We conclude that this development is likely to have a significantly adverse impact on the protected trees, which cannot be appropriately mitigated, and on the replacement trees that the developer has chosen for replacement.