

# The Brixton Society

Understanding the Past, Looking to the Future  
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## **Cressingham Gardens – Ropers Walk SW2 2QN**

### **Objection**

**In the absence of a published Masterplan for the Cressingham Gardens Estate, this application has to be seen as a precedent for the development of the wider estate and, as such, raises serious concerns which go beyond this application for the Ropers Walk site.**

In July 2015 when Lambeth's Cabinet agreed that the Cressingham Gardens Estate should be redeveloped, this was on the basis that a Masterplan for the estate would be developed and consulted on. In the absence of a published Masterplan, the design of the new housing for this site must be treated as a precedent for the redevelopment of the Cressingham Gardens Estate.

As such, it raises serious concerns because it fails to take account of the relationship between the estate and Brockwell Park, arguably the finest of all Lambeth's green open spaces. The design of the existing estate was applauded by Historic England in 2013 because of the way the architects of the estate preserved views from the park towards its south and west boundaries, by ensuring that blocks closest to the park, at one to two storeys, would appear below the tree line.

The proposed new block replaces existing two storey buildings with ones four storeys high and, in addition, extends over green open space at the rear of the site.

If this pattern was to be repeated across Cressingham Gardens then

- One and two blocks nearest to the park boundary would be replaced by blocks four storeys high which would intrude on views across the park to the south and west
- green open spaces between the blocks which soften the boundary between the park and the estate would disappear

**In addition, the proposals for the Ropers Walk site fail to comply with three Lambeth Local Plan policies and should be rejected for this reason alone.**

### **1. The proposals fail to comply with Lambeth Local Plan 2015 policy Q5 (local distinctiveness)**

The proposals fail to respect the architecture of the Cressingham Gardens Estate, described in 2014 by Historic England as *“a strong example of the important legacy that Ted Hollamby (Lambeth’s head of architecture in the 1970s) and his department brought to Lambeth ..... it is also one of the more interesting housing schemes from this important period in the development of social housing, produced by one of the most progressive authorities”*.

It is a sad reflection on changes to Lambeth’s policies in relation to its heritage assets, that housing on the Cressingham Gardens Estate is no longer being protected and that the proposed new buildings do not in any way respect the original architecture of the estate.

Neighbouring housing on the Cressingham Gardens Estate are made up of two storey terraces arranged around pedestrian walkways with green open spaces separating the blocks of housing. The proposed new block, four storeys high and built over green open space right up to the flank wall of the neighbouring terrace, interrupts this pattern, towering over the terrace of two storey houses next door.

## **2. The proposals fail to comply with policy Q22 (conservation areas)**

The site borders the Brockwell Park Conservation Area, so it is imperative that the height, massing and landscaping of the new blocks should respect the setting of the Park’s historic landscape and the architectural integrity of residential properties within the Conservation Area. The application fails to do this.

The site is close to both to Brockwell Park itself and to properties in Trinity Rise, which were added to the Brockwell Park Conservation Area in 1999 in recognition of the importance that neighbouring residential areas have to preserving and maintaining the park’s setting. While the Cressingham Gardens Estate is not currently included within the Brockwell Park Conservation Area, Historic England recommended in 2013 that the estate should be included.

The façade facing Trinity Rise does not, as the Design and Access Statement claims, merely continue “the incremental stepping of the roofline” from the adjoining 19<sup>th</sup> century terraces. The proposed development would be built up to the flank wall of the adjoining property in the 19<sup>th</sup> century terrace, 114 Trinity Rise, and at its western end would be 4 metres higher. This is due only partly because of the increase in ground level from east to west, and mostly because of a decision to add an additional floor to the block. Changes in the footprint of the block, makes this difference more noticeable, as the footprint of the new building extends over part of the existing front garden..

At the north end of the site, facing the park, the rear of new block at four storeys is twice the height of the existing building, and is built right up to the flank wall of 24 Upgrove Manor Way (extending over an area of green open space which currently separates it from Ropers Way). In addition, a mature tree at the rear of the site, which helps to screen views of the existing buildings from the park, would be removed to make way for the new building. The new block will intrude on views towards Trinity Rise from the path in Brockwell Park which skirts the park’s south and west perimeter, heightened by the removal of the existing mature oak tree from the site.

## **3. The proposals fail to comply with Local Plan Policy Q10 which provides protection for trees**

The proposed development would involve the loss of three mature trees which predate the Cressingham Gardens Estate, surviving from the years when the site was occupied by large Victorian houses. These trees were left undisturbed by the architects of the Cressingham Gardens Estate in the 1970s and it regrettable that 50 years on this care is not shared by the architects of the current scheme.

Each of these trees contributes to the Brockwell Park Conservation area and the proposed removal is contrary to Local Plan Policy Q10 which states that “development will not be

permitted that would result in the loss of trees of significant amenity, historic or ecological/habitat value". Two trees are particularly significant.

On the Trinity Rise façade of the site there is a mature lime tree. As the Tree Report submitted by the applicants confirms, this tree is a prominent feature of Trinity Rise, as it is the largest tree in the immediate street scene and one of only two large trees on the north side of the road and as such is prominent to the local landscape. It contributes to the street scene by softening the appearance of the existing 1970s block and linking it with mature trees in the front garden of the neighbouring property.

At the rear of the site there is a turkey oak approximately 20 metres high. This tree is not visible from Trinity Rise but is visible from the path within Brockwell Park which runs parallel with the south west boundary and currently screens views of the rear of Ropers Walk from the park.

### **Failure to consult with local organisations**

We are concerned that local amenity groups involved in protecting and supporting the amenities of Brockwell Park, including particularly the Friends of Brockwell Park and the Brockwell Park Community Partners, were not consulted about this development.

This is contrary to views expressed by Lambeth's Cabinet in July 2015 that these groups should be consulted about the development of the Cressingham Gardens Estate because of the potential for a detrimental impact on the Park

Representatives from the Friends of Brockwell Park, the Brockwell Park Community Partners, the Brixton Society and the Herne Hill Society made representations to Lambeth's Cabinet in July 2015 in order to draw attention to the sensitivity of the park to development on the Cressingham Gardens Estate and requesting that local amenity groups should be consulted about future development on the estate. The then Leader of the Council responded positively to this request and made a commitment (recorded in the printed minutes of the meeting) that "officers need instruction for consideration to limit damage to the park".

A similar point was made in the officer's report to July 2015 Cabinet meeting which stated that there had been consultation "with interested parties, such as Brixton Society and Friends of Brockwell Park; factors such as the impact on the Brockwell Park Conservation Area will need to be taken into consideration as the masterplan is developed, and this engagement will continue as proposals for the future of the Estate are developed".

While the new buildings proposed for the Ropers Walk site are not immediately adjacent to the park boundary, they will be taller than the existing buildings on the site and closer to the park boundary and so are likely to impact on views from within the park towards the south and west. In view of this, we are concerned that local amenity groups, including the Friends of Brockwell Park and the Brockwell Park Community Partners have not been included in the list of consultees for this application.

Yours sincerely,

Vivienne Lewis  
For the Brixton Society