

**23/AP/3070 - 341- 345 Walworth Road London Southwark SE17 2AL**  
**Demolition of existing and erection of building containing 2 retail units plus 9 flats**

**Current building**



**Proposed development**



## Objection

The Walworth Society objects to this application and believes that significant improvement can be made to the design in order to reduce the negative impact of the development on the Walworth Road Conservation Area, the Liverpool Grove Conservation Area and the setting of the Grade 1 listed St Peter's Church. This application should not be permitted until improvements to the design outlined below have been undertaken or unless these changes are required as conditions of granting planning permission. We set out the areas of concern in detail and these include the impact of the development in terms of its height, the way that it lands as a block on the corner of Liverpool Grove and the Walworth Road, the missed opportunity to reveal more of and celebrate the historic Sutherland Chapel (now Malvern House) and the relatively unsophisticated design of the building and its detailing both at ground floor and in its upper floors and roof.

Overall the traditional approach to the building is viewed as favourable including the design approach which sets up the entrance to Liverpool Grove as a pair of buildings on the north (proposed) and to the south (existing). We support all of the comments made by the officers as part of the pre-application process and the changes to the design that have been made to date and we welcome the changes in the design that officers have managed to obtain to date.

There is still room for significant improvement to the design so that it does not impact so negatively on the townscape and Walworth Road Conservation Area, particularly at ground floor level and in terms of the impact of the design on Sutherland Chapel and on Liverpool Grove and the setting for the Grade 1 listed St Peter's Church.

We also have concerns about the quality of the materials and ensuring a good build quality as the delivery of projects passed through the planning process along the Walworth Road continues to be of extremely poor quality.

The society's objections are as follows:

1. **Consultation.** We are disappointed that the applicant has not engaged with the local community and stakeholders during the design development. This is a significant development on a substantial site on the Walworth Road and earlier engagement would have helped avoid issues that can now only be addressed in the largely binary process of deciding a planning application.
2. **Negative Impact on the Walworth Road Conservation Area (1).** Loss of chimney and roof views looking north along the Walworth Road - one of the key characteristics of the conservation area is the former Georgian terraces and their roof top chimneys. This development builds higher than adjacent rooftops blocking out the views of Georgian and Victorian rooftops; this has a detrimental impact on the conservation area.
3. **Negative Impact on the Walworth Road Conservation Area (2).** Late afternoon sun falls on the west facade of the former Sutherland Chapel (Malvern House) giving an oblique but attractive view of the front facade of this former chapel from the Walworth Road looking north. Rather than enhancing it, this development obscures this view owing to the increased height and mass of the proposal. Further design work should be undertaken to allow more of this façade to be revealed.

4. **Unnecessary destruction of historic fabric.** The ground floor plan clearly indicates the location of the former (centrally placed) alley way that was built as the main pedestrian access to front of Sutherland Chapel from the Walworth Road. An artist's impression of the period shows this alley way which was later filled in with building. We would call for the preservation of this internal structure which denotes the former alley way.
5. **Poor design (1).** The density of the scheme is objected to. The proposal to make 3 flats per floor means that the site is too densely occupied by a block which fills all of the available space and creates poor quality accommodation as a result. The flat at the rear of the site (on each floor) has a poor visual outlook with poor daylight and poor ventilation and is of a single aspect. There is little precedent for this type of accommodation in the Walworth Road Conservation Area with most accommodation (within the Georgian and Victorian residential buildings and mansion blocks) being dual aspect, facing both the Walworth Road and to the rear. We note that Policy P15 of the Southwark Plan 2022 has a presumption against single aspect properties (8. Be predominantly dual aspect and allow for natural cross ventilation). Two flats per floor with a building depth comparable to the existing building with more generous amenity spaces facing the church facade would be preferable, increasing the space between the former church and this building.
6. **Poor design (2).** This is a residential scheme with the size of the retail area reduced considerably on the ground floor with zero facilities for storage and servicing the ground floor retail units. This should not be permitted. The Walworth Road is fundamentally a high street and a shopping street. The size of the retail units on the ground floor needs to be maintained to ensure the viability of the Walworth Road as a trading and retail high street. Employability and the long-term viability of the high street needs to be prioritised over the short-term profit and benefit to the developer by maximising the number of residential units delivered.
7. **Poor design (3).** We strongly object to balconies overlooking the Walworth Road. This design sets a very poor precedent by allowing amenity space and balconies (even if they are glazed) to face directly onto the Walworth Road. This has an extremely detrimental effect in the Conservation Area as there is no historic basis for this housing type. It sets a potentially destructive precedent as other schemes (such as that for the NatWest bank) have been refused permission because they propose balconies and amenity space overlooking the high street. The quality of this proposed amenity space is poor being both noisy and polluted if opened up to the street. In addition, if used incorrectly (as is highly likely), these spaces will look unsightly if used for storage of furniture, bikes, prams etc.
8. **Poor quality design of shop fronts.** Much more design and detail work is still required about the shopfront designs so that they conform to Conservation Area and heritage standards including some three-dimensional or decorative elements to mark each of the vertical pilasters, entrance doors positioned at the sides rather than in the centre. All timber (not metal) shop fronts with stall risers and a proposal for signage boards and fascia panels which are also in timber are required. Assurances/conditions are further required that these shopfronts will be of single property width rather than one double fronted store along with conditions that mean the visual appearance will be of two shops – rather than one long signage panel spanning both stores.
9. **Poor quality design.** Ground floor elements including the doors to the flats and store doors on Liverpool Grove appear as blank metal panels. Traditional timber entrance doors to the flats are required. These should be more decorative rather than solely utilitarian metal doors in order to enhance the Liverpool Grove facade and setting for the Grade 1 listed church building.