



## HAMPSTEAD NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

22 January 2019

Samir Benmbarek  
Regeneration and Planning  
Development Management  
London Borough of Camden  
Town Hall  
Judd Street  
London WC1H 9JE

Re: Application ref: 2018/6320/P, Magdala Tavern, 2a South Hill Park

Dear Mr Benmbarek,

The Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum strongly objects to the proposal to convert the first-floor function room to a two-bedroom flat. This is the second application the freeholder has made to convert parts of the premises to residential. The first resulted in the loss of on-site accommodation, which arguably has made the lease less attractive to potential publicans, as we have seen with other troubled public houses in the area such as the White Horse.

The proposal is contrary to EC1 of the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan, which states that the change of use of space in Class A or B1a uses at first floor or higher above shops to residential will not be supported unless it can be shown that there is a long history of vacancy.

### Importance of the function room

The function room and its community use was an important consideration when Camden granted ACV status to the Magdala Tavern in 2014 and the Forum has included the room in a recent application to re-designate the pub as an Asset of Community Value. We attach the ACV application as evidence of the importance of the function room to the local community and understand that the group mentioned in the application as supporting the loss of the function room will be making a separate representation to Camden to correct this impression.

The proposed replacement function room is simply part of the existing ground floor sectioned off. It would be a poor substitute for the generous space above that hosted birthday parties, seasonal parties, wedding receptions, games evenings and wakes. Live bands also frequently performed in the function room to full houses.

### Loss of access and degradation of asset

The owners of the Magdala have failed to build a staircase, as shown in Application ref: 2014/6588/P, that would provide access to the function room. Permission was granted in 2015 to allow conversion of the top two floors to residential but in the members briefing note, members were assured by officers that:

*The first floor function room would be retained and a separate stairwell is proposed so access to it does not conflict with the proposed residential use.*

Since the decision to grant permission was made on the basis that a stair would be provided to the first floor, thereby assuring that the function room could continue as a community asset, the building planning requirements have not been met.

The applicant states that the first floor function room is undesirable to potential publicans. The lack of any public access might be one of the reasons.

The applicant states that revenue from the proposed first-floor flat would fund ground-floor improvements. We note that the revenue from converting the top two floors does not seem to have been sufficient to support reasonable rates for the pub. It is the high rates that the applicant admits are discouraging potential tenants.

The applicant states that the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan identifies other community facilities in the area that should be a consideration but the Magdala Tavern is the only pub in South Hill Park and has been the hub of the local community for over 100 years. We urge Camden to refuse this application.

Sincerely,

Janine Griffis  
Chair, Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum