

# The Barnet Society

Campaigning for a better Barnet



Mr. S.M. Gerrard & Mr. S.E. Gerrard  
Directors, Abbeytown Limited  
197 Ballards Lane  
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31<sup>st</sup> July 2022

## **33 LYONSDOWN ROAD, BARNET EN5 1JG**

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Barnet Society to call on the directors of Abbeytown Ltd to listen to local opinion and to reconsider your plans to demolish 33 Lyonsdown Road. This wonderful Victorian villa is a much-loved landmark building in New Barnet and is a remarkable survival from the original development of the Lyonsdown area. It has been locally listed by Barnet Council on account of its architectural and historical importance and it is highly valued by local residents.

You will be aware from the extensive objections to the two proposals thus far rejected by Barnet Council (one of which decisions was also upheld by the national Planning Inspectorate on appeal), that there is very strong opposition which extends beyond the immediate residents, engaging the Victorian Society, SAVE Britain's Heritage and the national press, as well as people from across Barnet, Borough Councillors, the Rt. Hon. Theresa Villiers M.P and the Barnet Society. We want to explain why the proposal has raised such opposition, and ask whether you, as local developers (and, through your sister company), local estate agents, would consider revising your plans.

Firstly, 33 Lyonsdown is a rare survival from the original development of the Lyonsdown area, which adds architectural interest and distinction to New Barnet. Its Italianate design is firmly in the tradition of Victorian villas (echoing Queen Victoria's Osborne House), whilst its covered entrance bridge is a very rare feature. Sitting as it does on a through road, close to a similarly distinguished Victorian church, it is a local landmark, with historical merit, and its local listing recognizes this.

Secondly, 33 Lyonsdown occupies a very prominent location, on the apex of both Lyonsdown and Richmond Roads. The nature of the building which occupies that site is therefore of significant concern to the local residents. The current building, set back from the roads, and rising to its modest maximum height at the furthest corner from the roads, forms a soft and elegant transition between the houses on Richmond and Lyonsdown, and the small blocks of flats to the west of the site. Replacing it would cause serious damage to the streetscape and character of the area.

Thirdly, the current building encapsulates significant embodied energy, and its construction created carbon emissions. Destroying and replacing it would release embodied carbon, and

require further, and larger, emissions of carbon. The recent declaration of a climate emergency by Barnet Council underlines the urgent need to opt for re-use and retrofit of existing buildings rather than redeveloping them as our collective best hope of reducing carbon emissions.

The site itself is generous, and due to its sloping, set-back nature, offers, in our view and that of the Planning Committee, scope to sensitively extend the current property without the need to either destroy the current building, or encroach upon the sight lines from the surrounding roads. Alternatively, a separate building, discreetly placed in the grounds, would achieve the same ends. Either option would need to be subsidiary to number 33 in scale and character. It is our belief that a sensitive, skilful development is feasible, would reduce the carbon emissions involved to the minimum, and would produce properties which would command a premium.

33 Lyonsdown Road is ideally suited to sympathetic conversion. Two successful local examples of sensitive conversions are 37 Dury Road (planning application 19/5680/FUL) and Barnet Court House, High Street (Ref B/03009/12).

We note that Abbeytown's website states that the company prides itself on "sympathetically refurbishing" properties, and on design which "reflects the location and surrounding environment". The building and site at 33 Lyonsdown Road offer the potential for exactly the sort of sympathetic development and local added value on which both Abbeytown Ltd and Martyn Gerrard Ltd have established their reputation. We would therefore be grateful if you could, as Directors, take a direct interest in this proposal, and consider alternatives to the current destructive and unsympathetic approach. We stand ready to engage constructively with any proposal which recognizes the concerns above.

Yours faithfully,

Frances Wilson  
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The Barnet Society  
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