

Tower House
29 Melbury Road
London W14 8AB
18.2.15

Planning and Borough Development Department
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Hornton Street
London W8 7NX

FAO Cheryl Saverus

Dear Madam

Proposal for works to Woodland House, 31 Melbury Road, London W14 8AB – Planning reference no PP/15/00305 & LB/15/00306

I am the owner of 29 Melbury Road, also known as The Tower House, which I have occupied as a private house since 1972. The Tower House was built in the 1870s by the eminent Victorian architect, William Burges, for his own use. Burges designed the house when he was at the height of his powers and it has been described by his biographer, J Mordaunt Crook, as *an extraordinary distillation of his artistic career*. As you will know, the Tower House is listed grade I and is thus architecturally and historically one of the most important buildings in the Borough. I believe the house was one of the first Victorian buildings in the country to be listed and was saved by John Betjeman and Evelyn Waugh who, amongst others, campaigned against the threat of its demolition in the early sixties. Having myself protected the Tower House for over forty years, I am now faced with having to fight a new threat to this precious and unique building.

Although relatively plain on the outside, the interior of The Tower House is richly decorated with a variety of finishes/techniques designed in a highly original manner. Many of these finishes and fittings are extremely delicate and, of course, irreplaceable and include stained glass, decorative plasterwork, painted ceramic tiling and painted frescoes. The interior is complete and unblemished without any significant damage or subsequent alterations. The garden to the rear of The Tower House was also laid out by Burges and, although this has evolved since his time, much of the structure and planting of his garden survives as well as the brick boundary wall dividing my property from Woodland House.

I believe during the period I have been fortunate to own the Tower House I have been a responsible custodian of Burges' masterpiece and my efforts in conserving the building have been described by English Heritage as 'exemplary'. I have recently commenced a programme of conservative repairs of external masonry but I am now worried this will be for nothing.

The latest proposal for 31 Melbury Road seeks to create a new double-floored basement below the existing garden. I understand this will be to an overall depth of over 10 metres, with much deeper excavation for the supporting pile foundations, and with an area (at over 220 square metres) not much less than the footprint of the main house. The proposal appears to be to build the excavation within 5 metres of the boundary with my garden.