

Objection on behalf of current and future disabled residents of Norfolk House

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While my family and I share all the concerns highlighted on our behalf by NHRL, Thomas See, and others in respect of the above planning application, I've been asked to focus on the disability access issues.

My daughter Lucy is a wheelchair user. Unfortunately, her mother and I are divorced so Lucy is only here part-time. She has complex medical and other needs, travels with a lot of equipment, and can't be left alone while it's loaded and unloaded, which can take a long time.

We bought our flat in 2014 and, before we could move in, had to spend several hundred thousand pounds on alterations to make it appropriate for her needs, including having to move the kitchen, installing an accessible bathroom with ceiling hoist to her bedroom, etc.

My father also lives here part-time. He already needed sticks to walk, but is now recovering from a 22-day hospital stay for covid19, during which he also suffered a stroke.

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As we noted in our reply, "The Applicant's suggestion that the underground parking spaces for Norfolk House can be used for disabled access is both callous and offensive to disabled residents. The Applicant relies on its claim of step-free access via the lift, but this is absurd: there is a steep set of 5 steps from the lift to the Lobby (see photo). The only potential alternative would be the ramp leading up from the basement - but this is designed to bring cars up one level over a short distance and is too steep for wheelchairs (and 28m long, with no safe pedestrian pathway suitable for a wheelchair, and the total distance from Lobby to car park is over 100m)."

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In common with many 'wheelchair accessible vehicles', Lucy's has a long wheelbase, and the underground car park's extremely tight corners mean it's not even possible to park it there.

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The single blue badge space on High Timber Street isn't even in line-of-sight of Norfolk House, making it impossible to unload there, given it's not safe for Lucy to be left alone.

It's also nowhere near the door of Norfolk House.

Further, it's ludicrous and discriminatory to suggest that the entire area can rely on a single space.

What would we do when one of Lucy's school friends visits or when my father visits (as happens often because they're each other's best friends)?

What would we do if someone else is using it?

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This sort of lack of care, lack of thought, and lack of respect for objective truth ruins people's lives.

In contrast, there is always space on the roadway.

Unlike the difficulty turning in the car park – and contrary to Gerald Eve's claim that vehicles reverse either in or out of the roadway – we've never had a problem turning any vehicle there, and I've never reversed either in or out in any vehicle.

As our letter of objection also noted, “Access to the existing Roadway by residents of Norfolk House is not part of an informal arrangement. It is a right-of-way established under the Norfolk House lease, in which the Roadway is identified and marked.”

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