1 Cloisters Cottages

Barrington Road

Letchworth SG6 3TH

[redacted]

27th March 2018

N.H.D.C.
28 MAR 2018

FAO Anne McDonald

Planning and Control Department

North Hertfordshire District Council

Your ref: 18/00407/FPH

Dear Madam,

RE: OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSED REAR EXTENSIONS TO VENTERSDORP (BARRINGTON ROAD)

In response to your letter of 22nd March on the proposed extensions to Ventersdorp, and our phone conversation yesterday, I submit our objections to the plan, as follows:

We strongly object to the proposed construction of a rear extension including a "Hydrotherapy Pool" at Ventersdorp on several grounds relating to suitability, starting with point 9 of the Heritage Foundation's *Scheme of Management*: "An owner shall not permit or suffer to be done in or upon the enfranchised property or any part thereof anything which may be or may become **a nuisance or inconvenience** to the Corporation **or to the owners** or occupiers **of neighbouring properties or to be detrimental to the neighbourhood**". The grounds on which the objection is made are as follows:

1. **Lack of consultation**: We were never consulted by the owners of Ventersdorp about the proposed construction of a rear extension containing a "Hydrotherapy Pool" on their property, which would certainly have an impact on the enjoyment of our property. While other properties adjacent to or in proximity of Ventersdorp may also be impacted by the proposed extension, our property is the one that will be particularly adversely affected. It would, indeed, have been not only courteous on the part of the owners, but also helpful, to consult us in advance of the plan being commissioned and submitted to the Heritage Foundation, so that we could express our views.

2. **Planned size of the extension and use of the site**: We understand that the Ventersdorp household has a disabled child in need of hydrotherapy. However, the sheer size of the pool that is planned is far in excess of the standard dimensions for a hydrotherapy pool for a single child. A search on the internet is all that is needed to see that:

"The size of the pools will vary from a small hydrotherapy pool of 6m x 4m; **the minimum space required for each patient is 2.5m x 2.25m, so for example a 5m x 9m hydrotherapy pool would accommodate up to eight patients**" (via Google)".

The pool proposed by Ventersdorp is, according to an official at the Heritage Foundation, about 13.5 metres in length and about 6 metres in width; however, these dimensions are difficult to ascertain, as they are not visible on the plan (which is therefore unhelpful). While the above quotation gives an indication of the minimum spatial requirements for a single patient, it also mentions that in a smaller area than that proposed for the Ventersdorp pool as many as 8 patients could receive hydrotherapy.

IT IS THEREFORE UNCLEAR WHY THE SIZE OF THE VENTERSDORP POOL SHOULD BE SO LARGE, AND THE SHEER SIZE OF IT SUGGESTS THAT IT WILL NOT ONLY BE USED FOR THE PATIENT'S HYDROTHERAPY, BUT ALSO FOR LEISURE PURPOSES BY THE FAMILY, AS IF IT WERE AN INDOOR SWIMMING POOL.

The size of the proposed plot in the garden of Ventersdorp, a plot which is not even rectangular, but triangular, takes up a significant surface area of the garden. On this point, we note that the previous occupants of Ventersdorp, who also had a child with a disability that required hydrotherapy, for obvious reasons of plot size, sensibly decided to purchase a property with a much larger surface area, which would accommodate a pool (whether solely for hydrotherapy or also to be used as a swimming pool) without detriment to the surrounding area and neighbouring properties. Even in that case, we understand, it took a long time for permission to be granted to build the facility.

3. **Visual impact on 1 Cloisters Cottages**: The proposed pool, according to the current plan, will extend right down into the garden of Ventersdorp as far as the wall of our house. Given that the roof height will (apparently) rise to 4 metres, it will also rise well above the hedge that runs between Ventersdorp and our property, which is currently about 2.5 metres in height. Moreover, the hedge is not in shared ownership, but stands on a thin strip of land belonging to the Heritage Foundation. The part of the drive that we own (which runs from the garage to the boundary with 2 Cloisters Cottages) and our patio garden that lies between the garage and the house would be overlooked and overshadowed, due to the height of the construction. Moreover, the view from the bedroom window at the front of the house, which is currently of the hedge, Ventersdorp garden and the back gardens of some properties on Willian Way, is an open and pleasant environment. This would certainly not be the case if the extension were to be built according to the plan submitted. We live in a Conservation Area, which is an amenity, in a house built by the founder of The Cloisters, Annie Lawrence, for her own use, which is designated by the Heritage Foundation as a Home of Special Interest (see Appendix A of the Foundations' *Heritage Character Area Design Principles*). Any construction rising along the perimeter of our property of such size and height as that planned would spoil the aesthetics of our property and conflict with the very principles upon which the Garden City was planned and developed. Large buildings of concrete, which contribute to the built environment, and reduce green and open spaces, are clearly in conflict with the principles of urban conservation. As the plan stands, in fact, the area given over to buildings would be significantly increased.

4. **Environmental objections**: In addition to the visual impact that the proposed extension would have on our property, we recall that a bat and newt population was recorded in Ventersdorp garden, and that the previous owner was not permitted to cut down trees at the bottom of the garden. While the pool would not extend to that area, the construction and later, the presence, of such a construction would undoubtedly scare away any bats and newts. Moreover, the hedge between our properties is home to many species of nesting birds, and while these are not protected species, the construction would run so close to the hedge as to dissuade birds from nesting there. Given that we are losing more and more hedges and the small birds that live in them, it is important that this habitat remains undisturbed.

5. **Noise pollution**: Noise could be generated by the mechanical/electrical equipment used in the pool, e.g. pumps/treadmills. Presumably, the equipment would be in operation on an ongoing basis, and any noise issuing from it would have a direct impact not only on any wildlife in the hedge and garden, but also on our property, given the proximity. Even just a slight whirring noise would be audible when we are outside, and vibrations may well be transmitted into the house, which would cause not only an ongoing nuisance factor, but could also affect the stability of our house.

6. **Mitigation**: Any plan to build a high fence along the perimeter of the hedge may hide the construction from view (but only at ground level) from our property, but it would also be an 'eyesore' in its own right, as it would have to rise to at least 4 metres in order to conceal the construction and would block the light.

We therefore strongly recommend that the plan as it now stands is rejected. It is unclear why there should be the need for a pool of such a large size'; moreover, there is not a suitable plot at Ventersdorp in which to build a pool without creating an adverse effect on neighbouring properties, and on ours in particular.

We hope that you will take our objections into serious consideration, and we would be happy to meet with any representative of North Herts District Council at our property, so that our objections can be considered in context.

We look forward to receiving an acknowledgement that this objection has been received.

Yours sincerely,



Stella Cragie and Leslie Collins

(Signed also on behalf of Leslie Collins, who is currently on holiday)