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PROPERTY WEEK

Government inspector gives go-ahead for underground fitness complex despite objections

Pool win for Klippan House owner

by DAN CARRIER

A SWIMMING pool and luxury gym complex is set to be built beneath the garden of a listed building in the heart of the Hampstead conservation area after a successful appeal by the property's owner.

Klippan House, an imposing red-brick Victorian arts and crafts pile on the corner of East Heath Road and Well Walk, has been the subject of a multi-million-pound renovation scheme.

But the Town Hall rejected proposals to dig underneath the home last year after neighbours

objected. The application came at a time when the Heath and Hampstead Society conservation group were lobbying the council to bring in stricter planning guidelines regarding basements.

The Klippan House scheme is a classic example of a huge and expensive project dreamed up to maximise space during the property boom.

Neighbours feared the scheme, which would involve hundreds of tonnes of earth being removed, would lead to

subsidence and possible flooding. Residents in adjacent properties spoke of how their homes were sitting on foundations dug into unstable bagshot sand that is riddled with underground water courses which meant downstairs rooms were already cracking.

Despite being turned down by the planning committee, owner Paul Cowan, who made his fortune in the pharmaceutical industry, persevered and took his project to the government's planning appeal inspector.

They found in his favour, concluding that although the pool would be virtually double the size of the property's footprint, it would have little effect on the exterior appearance.

The inspector said: "The spatial qualities of the house would remain visibly unaltered. Everything would be constructed underground with almost no visible presence on the site except air terminals." The inspector added that a mature cedar tree –



Klippan House, which is in a conservation area of Hampstead, is set to be extended underground

a landmark in the area – would be undamaged by the excavation.

And the fears that the new underground rooms would cause damage to neighbouring homes was also dismissed by the

inspector, who said the engineering system developed for the site would ensure there was no subsidence.

Driving massive piles into the earth to create a ring of cement and steel

New Journal that he expected work to start in the summer.

"It has taken some time – nearly three years – so I am very pleased the decision has been made," he added.

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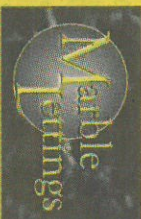
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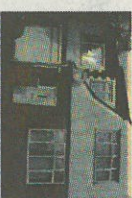
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