

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2023/3870/P	francisca cooper	10/11/2023 16:10:02	OBJ	<p>I wish to object to the above proposal from top to bottom and from start to finish.</p> <p>The Brunswick Centre is a 50 year old building which has endured several periods of significant neglect as previous owners of the estate argued with Camden Council about who was responsible for what. The roof was a particular area of neglect. This has led to what seem to be intractable problems with leaks and damp. The building is, then, to a non-professional eye, past its best.</p> <p>I am therefore extremely uncomfortable with the idea of lowering over half the carpark floor, another neglected and argued-over area. The area to be lowered runs in a direct line from close to Entrance 1 in Foundling Court across to close to Entrance 5 in O'Donnell, sweeping round the Curzon cinema, and continuing up just beyond Entrance 3 [F] and entrance 7 [O'D] and demolishing a further large space for double height plant below the corner of the concourse by Waitrose and the doctors' surgery. The so-called dropping of the floor seems to me to be disruptive to the essential geometry and integrity of the building.</p> <p>BETRA members were told that the reasoning behind producing this turnkey project for Premier Inns/Whitbread was that the Brunswick Centre was losing money for Lazari Properties, which they could not afford. This was an extremely tactless remark, considering there were people in the room who are genuinely struggling with the cost of living crisis.</p> <p>Lazari Properties hope that the proposed Hub will bring more customers to the shops upstairs. I doubt it: so far as I can see, many if not most Hub customers simply want something as easy to book as an Uber, that is comfortable, clean and cheap, and the next morning they just get up and go. I doubt they will wander around the shopping centre on their way to the tube station or to look for a taxi.</p> <p>We are surrounded by hotels, large and small, at all price points. A former DCS at Holborn Police Station told me that this area has the highest ratio of temporary beds [hotels, student residences] to permanent beds [residential housing] in London, at 55:45% and that was well before airbnbs. If the guests of all these hotels don't use the Brunswick Centre shops, this is largely due to the collapse of the retail market in general and Lazaris' failure to provide interesting destinations within the Centre in particular. No Hub is going to improve that situation.</p> <p>Another problem is that these Hubs are a bit of a fad, relying on primarily on price and convenience. If that equation fails, then the Hubs will disappear. The public can be very fickle. Maybe Premier Inns/Whitbread can turn Hubs into an everyday fact of life, which would be good news for the project but the outcome is in no way foreseeable. I think this is a bit of a gamble as I cannot envisage what else those 207 rooms could be used for.</p> <p>I think this application is based on false assumptions of need, a mistaken reading of the local hotel market, a refusal to accept the way construction noise and vibrations run riot throughout the building, and a total disregard for the people who live in the Brunswick Centre. The only remark I discovered about disability access was in relation to access to the Hub, not our disabled residents' access to their cars [which was asked and not answered].</p> <p>There was no consultation with BETRA members: a leaflet through the door, an invitation to a "join the conversation" website that was identical to the leaflet, a meeting called at short notice where we were</p>

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presented with a fait accompli and had to think up questions on the spot about something we knew almost nothing about. Many of the answers we received were unsatisfactory. The exhibition was rather more helpful, but also somewhat vague. The number of people who attended compared to the numbers of people who will be affected was very small, which is not an indication of consent or lack of interest, but rather that many residents in these flats have serious health and or mobility problems. This tends to render all those lovely pie-charts meaningless. The sound survey was pretty silly too as the guests in the proposed Hub seem to be cocooned from it. Could we have some of that insulation please?
