I have lived in Queen Alexandra Mansions since 1985. I strongly oppose this application on for the reasons set out below.

*1.Prevention of public nuisance*

These proposals have the effect of making local residents’ quiet enjoyment of their homes even more problematic than previously.

Bidborough Street and the grid that runs from Bidborough Street via Tonbridge Street to Cromer Street and via Hastings Street back into Judd Street are full of dense hard-surfaced housing plus a primary school (which the Council has go to some expense to turn into a low traffic school street). At present the area is very quiet at night with few pedestrians and little car traffic.

The proposed party use of the Centre and Town Hall will without doubt increase noise levels and echoes at street level from the potentially large number of pedestrians 24/7 plus noise escaping from the Centre (we have had assurances about noise containment but no evidence). It will also increase traffic around the grid, as we know from previous experience of the Council-run Centre when there were lots of motorcycles and cars circuiting the building, revving and blowing their horns.

These proposals introduce the nuisance of high-level noise via use of the terraces for plays, films, live and recorded music, dance and late-night refreshments (according to the boxes ticked ‘both’). This is really outrageous and irresponsible and, I believe, it was removed from earlier proposals due to vociferous opposition. We have for years fought to reduce outside noise levels that interfere with work, sleep and even watching television - from football crowds at the Dolphin and O’Neil’s and from (initially) parties on the Standard Hotel’s terraces.

*2. Prevention of crime and disorder*

This is an inner city neighbourhood with all the benefits and disbenefits of its location. Crime, particularly drug-dealing has been increasing. Bringing a large number of party-types (unlike the proposed business people and conference-goers) simply rolls out the welcome mat for badly-behaved people, especially the drug dealers who are cruising the stretch of pavement on the south side of the street by the Town Hall. This proposal - at such a scale and in night-time hours - presents a real threat to those who live here. I have lived here for forty years and for the first time I avoid going out at night. These proposals simply provide the opportunity for the quality of life in our neighbourhood to decline. We cannot rely on complaining after bad things have happened (as seems to be the thrust of the Centre’s management proposals - CCTV, taking down complaints, hope). We simply do not want bad things to happen - particularly in order to enable the Council to act like ‘entrepreneurs’.

*3. Lack of democratic openness*:

This application for radical change was filed on Sunday 12th March and the deadline is tomorrow, Tuesday 9th April. This allows only sixteen days for stakeholders to respond.

So far as I know, no efforts were made to alert local residents who might be interested. I made a submission to the licensing hearing in November and indeed gave evidence. I might have expected to be contacted about this application, but I was not and my neighbours were not. I did not see any advertisements on the premises (indeed I walked up to blue notices on the doors of the Camden Centre yesterday and these referred to previous matters). When I located the application on your website Plans 2 and 3 were so tiny that I could not see the content and indeed Plan 3 would not download, so again information about the proposals was insufficient.

On these grounds alone - failure properly and meaningfully to consult - I ask you to reject this application.

*4. Conflict of interest*

The Council is in the position of profiting in monetary terms from the decisions it makes about itself. It is transferring the use of space which was originally for local businesses and small enterprise startups (a worthwhile social purpose and appropriate for a Labour-controlled council) for a greater monetary return. I have no doubt that providing office space is less lucrative than providing space for a 24-hour party palace with dancing on the roof and drinking almost round the clock. When I and other residents were taking a tour of the Camden Centre back in the autumn we were assured by one of Camden’s officers and a director of Eventhia that there was no financial benefit to the Council of raising the number of users and going for very late-night opening hours (that is, the Council would not receive more money for more users and 4.30AM closing). I do not believe this assertion because otherwise there would be no benefit in pursuing such an anti-social policy.

The Council has not made available any information about its rationale for changing the use of the Centre and parts of the Town Hall, the planning status of these changes, or the terms of its commercial agreements with Eventhia and its new subsidiaries (why 3?). Has the Council carried out a fresh tender for the spaces now under consideration and if not, why not? Why has the Council not provided relevant information which would support this change of use and consultees’ ability to make informed comments (information on soundproofing; arrangements for 24-hour management of the whole building, etc)? It would seem that the Council has chosen to make money (perhaps, appropriately, in bitcoin) and tear up the provisions of its own guidelines to the detriment of its residents and voters. This really is shameful.

*5. Management of the Town Hall and Centre*

These proposals have occurred late in the day for reasons not adequately explained and are, in effect, tacked on to the flawed arrangements already in place. This seems an inefficient and ineffective way to manage a complex project. Arrangements agreed for the Centre do not necessarily apply to the extended use of the building, and no information has been provided on which to make an informed choice as opposed to a short of hole-and-corner quickie. How will the building be managed as a whole - sound proofing, on-site management and security 24/7, etc?

*In conclusion*

These proposals are not fit for purpose. They should be rejected, a proper evidence-based consultation should take place, and then the proposals should be resubmitted with a view to achieving something better than the sum of two poor-quality and incompatible parts.