

From: Swenarton, Mark
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To: planningcommittee@camdengov.cuk
Cc: Planning; [REDACTED]
Subject: Written Submission Opposing the Application ref: 2023/5338/P
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Planning Committee, London Borough of Camden, 12th December 2024
Alexandra Road estate: Application ref: 2023/5338/P
Written Submission Opposing the Application by Prof Mark Swenarton
5th December 2024

I am the author of *Cook's Camden: The Making of Modern Housing* (2017). As such I am recognised as the leading authority on the design and history of the Camden housing projects initiated under Sydney Cook, of which Alexandra Road is the most famous.

I am also Emeritus Professor of Architecture at the University of Liverpool (since 2016). I was formerly Sir James Stirling Chair of Architecture at the University of Liverpool (2010-2016), head of the Oxford School of Architecture (2005-2010) and co-editor of the monthly review *Architecture Today* (1989-2005). As such I have extensive knowledge of architectural practice, and housing, extending over more than three decades.

As the Committee is aware, Alexandra Road is a project of exceptional importance, being generally regarded as one of the most important housing projects of the past 100 years not just in the UK but anywhere in the world.

I have had sight of the letter, and the very detailed appendix, sent to you on 13th November 2024 by Sara Bell and Zoe Davenport on behalf of the Alexandra and Ainsworth Tenants and Residents Association and the Alexandra and Ainsworth Leaseholder Group. I fully concur with the statements made both in the letter and in the appendix sent with it.

In my opinion the client on this project has been led by the nose: what is in essence a plumbing problem has been allowed to escalate out of all proportion and turned into a major architectural/M&E project that will inflict **substantial and irreversible damage on the estate**, all on the basis of a proposal that lacks basic coherence and cogency – and which moreover provides merely an interim solution,

pending replacement of the gas-fired boilers by something more eco-friendly. Specifically, if it goes ahead the work will

1. **Damage the iconic elevations** of the housing blocks at Alexandra Road by adding surface-mounted trunking.
2. **Destroy the exemplary radiator-free interiors** of the dwellings created by Neave Brown by inserting radiators, trunking, HIUs etc.
3. **Replace the existing ‘warm fabric’ of the buildings** with a heating system that will be turned on, and off, as the occupant wishes, potentially introducing into the fabric of Alexandra Road the problems of damp, condensation and mould that have affected other housing estates from this period, with demolition in some cases the only solution.

I urge you therefore to **reject a proposal that will have such catastrophic and irreversible consequences**, thereby creating the time and space for a more acceptable solution to the problem to be produced.

Mark Swenarton

Mark Swenarton

Emeritus Professor of Architecture, University of Liverpool

Lately editor of *Architectural History: the Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain* (2020-23).

My most recent book, *Housing Atlas: Europe–20th Century*, was published at the end of last year.