

The Etons  
(name, postal and email address supplied in covering email)

31, May 2025

Planning-Development Control  
Camden Council  
Camden Town Hall  
LONDON WC1H 8ND

Dear Officials, Committee Members and Councillors,

Re: Application for planning permission for fencing and gating at the Etons (NW3) by Shellpoint under Article 13 of the T&P Order #15 – dated 15 May, 2025.

Shellpoint, the landlords of the properties generically known as the Etons, have submitted an application pursuant to retro-gating the three blocks of flats, each of them home to more than 200 residents. The landlord's plan is to install fencing and gates to flats built in the 1940s where, aside from short areas of an extensive boundary line, they have not previously existed. I knew nothing of this prior to receipt of a letter to leaseholders and tenants (dated 20 May) from Shellpoint's managing agents, Parkgate. It rationalizes the plan as one moved by a concern for our security and alludes to earlier discussions with Camden Council concerning disturbance to residents from non-residents. Parkgate has further indicated that discussions about the Shellpoint plan continue. Yet no specifics of even provisional plans have circulated.

I meet the Council's criteria for making representations to its Planning Development Control Committee. In addition, I note that the flat of which I am the owner-occupier is one of the most exposed to day-time and night-time pedestrian and car traffic.

1) Environmental aesthetics, landscape and health

- The undulating contour of the land occupied by the Etons makes installation of fencing and gating a physical problem and an aesthetic nightmare. A fence-line is incongruous with the lay of this land. Relevant are the age of the buildings; their original architectural design to accommodate the sloping areas at a variety of surface levels, and the well-nurtured treed environment.
- A Council that was of the opinion that the replacement of our wooden sash windows by vinyl ones compromised the buildings' integrity should be given pause by what this plan for retro-gating will do to spoil the site's aesthetics.
- While the two points above primarily concern the external view of a post-gated Etons, I should also refer to the sight of the fortifications that will greet residents looking out from the flats. At ground level, I have no wish to have gates, barriers, and bars in my line of vision. Such a view is deleterious to mental health.

## 2) Crime, disturbance and safety

- Substantial and significant research indicates that gating is not an answer to issues of crime and disorder. There are few returns to physical security and collective responsibility from barrier-building, particularly in blocks of this scale. Fences and gates do not assist in tackling problems of disorder. The collective fortification of the more affluent homes in this area of mixed housing is likely to follow the course observed elsewhere: the aggravation of such problems by causing increased social divisiveness.
- Subsequent to the Etons' consultation with councillors about noise and nuisance problems a few months ago the area has become markedly more peaceful. Given the critique above, an increased or more effective community policing will be more efficacious than gating.
- Over the decades I have lived at the Etons noise and anti-social behaviour by residents and visitors has been significantly more aggravating than anything I have experienced or witnessed to be perpetrated by "outsiders". Gating offers no remedy to this and may aggravate it by what zoning does to the mis-perception of safety and risk.
- Meanwhile gates and fences can become a liability to personal safety. In emergency – fire and or massive power failure – they become hazards.

## 3) Consultation and the matter of who benefits?

- Please be clear that the consultation preceding even this preliminary application has been inadequate. My first notice of intent came by the Parkgate communication of 20 May which advises against input into the Committee's deliberations at this stage. My follow-up enquiries were answered by Parkgate's observation that they had been working with the Residents' Association. I have no knowledge of this.
- There is little beyond real-estate promotional literature that finds merit in the gating of properties. Even then, it is unproven that the ring-fencing of residential blocks like the Etons results in what is vaunted there as increased property values. I am left to wonder at what it will mean to leaseholders (*and to renters*) that the installation costs of the landlord's project will be taken from reserve funds. What, too, will it do to our ability to meet service charges when the maintenance costs of the fences and gates are added to recurrent expenses?

Crucially, effectively creating a series of fortresses in the heart of a vibrant, diverse community sends the false message to local residents and visitors that Camden is an unsafe place to be.