

9th July, 1953.

Sir,

Town and Country Planning Act, 1947  
Section 16  
Appeal by the St. Pancras Metropolitan Borough  
Council relating to the Sidmouth Mews Housing Scheme.

I am directed by the Minister of Housing and Local Government to say that he has considered the report of his Inspector, Mr. V. L. Nash, F.R.I.B.A., A.M.T. .I., following the local Inquiry into the appeal by your Council against the London County Council's refusal to permit the erection on the Sidmouth Mews site, St. Pancras, of three blocks of dwellings as shown on the layout plan submitted with the application, on the grounds that:-

- (1) the relationship of the proposed development with the existing development is unsatisfactory by reason of the repetition of the north-south orientation of the housing blocks immediately north of Harrison Street;
- (2) the conception of the street approach to Regent Square from Gray's Inn Road is considered to be disjointed as it is not seen that the end of the three blocks fronting Sidmouth Street could make a satisfactory architectural composition leading up to Regent Square from Gray's Inn Road;
- (3) the provision of shops next Gray's Inn Road is undesirable in view of the heavy traffic using this road and the failure of existing shopping in the vicinity;
- (4) the two estate entrances on Sidmouth Street (Class III) and two on Harrison Street are excessive and should be reduced by one entrance in each street preferably to a greater width than the 12 feet shown.

It appears that the London County Council granted permission in principle on 12th October, 1950, for the use of the site in question for housing purposes, subject to the submission to and approval by them of layout and detailed plans, sections and elevations of the proposed buildings. At the same time, it was suggested that discussions should be held between officers of the two Councils regarding the layout in order that the scheme should harmonize with the surrounding development.

At the Inquiry, it was contended for your Council that their proposal would form a self-contained scheme of pleasant aspect, and that in layout, elevations and sky-line, and in providing adequate light and air to the buildings, would not be incompatible with the surrounding property. Moreover, it would enable the maximum number of flats to be built quickly, with the minimum of disturbance to the existing occupied property.

As to the approach to Regent Square from Gray's Inn Road, it was admitted that your Council's proposal did not provide for a continuous line along Sidmouth Street, but it was pointed out that it would in fact include some "fair runs", the ends of the buildings having architectural recessions and fenestration and not blank walls, and that a continuous line could become monotonous.

The Town Clerk,  
Metropolitan Borough of St. Pancras,  
Town Hall,  
Kuston Road,

For the London County Council, it was pointed out that, although the area had suffered considerable war damage, the effect had been to leave isolated housing sites rather than an area of sufficient extent to warrant comprehensive redevelopment. Owing to the shallowness of these sites between Harrison Street and Cromer Street, it was agreed that a north-south orientation of the blocks of flats was the only reasonable form of development, but as the appeal site was not subject to this limitation it was considered desirable to recreate Regent Square, with its two houses, which were to be preserved, as an enclosed residential square. With this in view, it was therefore proposed to redevelop the north side of the square for housing purposes in terrace form, and it followed that the streets leading into the square should contribute to the same end.

The County Council agreed that a north-south orientation of the proposed buildings would produce an excellent open-arrangement, but as the site was large enough it was contended that a courtyard arrangement would give a greater sense of privacy; at the same time, a larger and freer open-space could be provided for the occupants of the flats, and the development along Sidmouth Street would form a more fitting approach to Regent Square.

The Minister, who has carefully considered the facts of this case, and the representations made at the Inquiry, thinks that the erection of large blocks of flats on the appeal site could not fail to exert an important influence upon the character of the surrounding area, and he agrees with the London County Council that these buildings should form part of a properly co-ordinated pattern of development. In the Minister's view the arrangement of the existing buildings and streets in relation to Regent Square calls for the alignment of blocks to Sidmouth Street and Harrison Street and possibly a courtyard type of development rather than a repetition of the neighbouring north-south block arrangement. He has therefore come to the conclusion that the London County Council were justified in their refusal of permission in this case.

Accordingly, the Minister has decided to dismiss the appeal and this letter is issued as his formal decision.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,

(Sgd.) H. P. SUMMERS

Authorised by the Minister to sign  
in that behalf.