

[REDACTED]

From: Penny Liechti [REDACTED]
Sent: 30 January 2015 11:11
To: Planning
Cc: Fowler, David
Subject: Comment on Liddell Road planning applications 2014/7651/P & 2014/7649/P

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing, as a local resident whose home backs onto the development site, in support the Planning Applications for the proposed development at Liddell Road 2014/7651/P and 2014/7649/P.

The West Hampstead area has been in acute need of additional primary school places for some years now, and under current government legislation the only option for the Local Authority is to expand the Ofsted “outstanding” rated Kingsgate School. The proposed development at Liddell Road will give local families the school places they so desperately need, and provide additional community benefits for everyone in the area.

I am confident that this is the development is in the best financial interests of the community, with the comparatively small excess sum of £3m to be used to fund other much-needed school developments in the Borough. As other local West Hampstead schools such as Beckford, Emmanuel and Hampstead have benefited in recent years from many more millions of investment through Camden’s Community Investment Programme, it seems only fair that this area should contribute to the education of other children in Camden.

We are all aware of the devastating budget cuts the council is receiving, year on year, from central government, and I believe the current administration in Camden is to be applauded for continuing to invest in education and affordable housing across the Borough despite the dramatic fall in the capital funding for schools.

Camden have listened to local people’s concerns over the development, by adding in a small number of affordable housing units and reducing the height of the proposed tower block. Whilst I still have some reservations about the height of the development, I recognise that the architects have taken great pains to minimise the visual impact of the tower block from other parts of West Hampstead, and it would be inordinately petty-minded and selfish of me to deny hundreds of local children a school place in this area because I might be able to see the tower from my house.

I am persuaded that the current plan for the site makes the best use of the available space, limited though it is, whilst still ensuring that the school itself is big enough to meet the national standards. Arranging the development around a central square will provide a pleasant environment for residents and other users.

I have read the independent Financial Viability Assessment report on the development and am

confident in the analysis therein. This development will provide a completely new primary school, will refurbish the existing Kingsgate School site and will provide more than 40,000 sq feet of employment space, generating a number of jobs, as well as contributing to the Community Investment Programme schools budget.

The report states that “the benefits that the new school and the re-provided community space will bring will far outweigh the exclusion of affordable housing”, and I share this opinion. All these things add value to the local area; affordable housing, desirable as it may be, is not the be all and end all of community benefit. Camden has an excellent track record in building affordable housing, even in the current, incredibly difficult, economic climate, and no-one can reasonably deny the administration’s commitment to providing new affordable homes. The forthcoming development at 156 West End Lane will provide a good amount of such units, and in this case the priority at Liddell Road is, and should be, education.

The Council is working in extraordinarily difficult financial circumstances, and despite this has found a way of developing a scheme which will see dozens more local children educated at an outstanding community school, as well as a substantial number of jobs provided by the employment space. This development accords with Camden’s Core Strategy (Policy CS19) regarding particularly meeting the need for new school places in the North West of the Borough, as well as with the commitment in the London Plan (Policy 3.18) to encourage development which addresses the shortfall in primary school places.

I am appalled that local opposition politicians are using this development as a political football, complaining loudly about the small amount of affordable housing when these same parties showed no compunction, during their time in control of the council between 2006-10, in selling off affordable housing sites to raise funds. I would like each one of them to look into the eyes of a four-year-old who can’t go to school with their local friends because there is no place for them – as happens every year in West Hampstead – and tell them why they don’t want the new school to be built.

Yours sincerely

Penny Liechti

