

## **Application 2015/6455/P**

156 West End Lane London NW6 1SD

### **Letter of Objection**

#### Environmental and Aesthetic impact

The building which has the most impact on the visual landscape of our community is relatively modern in design and of a period which has never been acknowledged to have been the best architecturally, in fact many would go so far as to say that it was an historically poor time for architecture, so to see the new design is really quite upsetting. The replacement building proposed has little added value aesthetically; in fact it's not that different from what's there already, so what's the point in pulling down the existing? I would go as far as to say it is of poor design and quality, the materials considered look to be cheap and the overall effect will be a building which is dated before it even gets completed. It does not reflect the surrounding architecture - it absorbs it – it sucks the life out of the detailed and often refined design of surrounding buildings, save for the entirely modern designs being employed on the other side of the tracks which are a quite separate area with a very different feel. The large, fortress-like expanse of brick, unbroken by any feature or window is exceptionally poor design and, in a prominent position, dominates and overwhelms its surroundings. The scheme running down beside the railway line is not coherent and has no merit in terms of visual amenity. This could have been a landmark development and is instead an eye sore.

The architectural heritage of West Hampstead has rare opportunities to put right some of the ill considered designs of the past; this is one of those times. It would be shocking to miss such an opportunity to add good design to the area and not this cheap second rate 60's renaissance of a building.

“West Hampstead: Shaping the Future” the plan for West Hampstead issued by Camden Council

This expressly sets out that the area is “well loved for its village feel” and that the Council commits to “enhancing the distinctive village character” and to provide “support for local business”. The proposed project is in breach of these commitments. The proposed development is completely out of keeping with the character of the surrounding residential buildings. It completely disregards the environment around it and the character of other buildings. The houses in Lymington Road – for example – are three storeys high, the development in its existing form will tower over these properties blighting their light, use and enjoyment of their properties. The plans proposed by A2 Dominion proposes buildings of up to 8 floors which will be more than double the height of all nearby homes. This is in complete violation of Camden's policies. Neither are the plans are not in keeping with the existing character of the properties in the West End Green Conservation Area.

It was widely acknowledged in the recent referendum that there have been mistakes made in the choice of design and construction in the vicinity, Emmanuel school on Mill Lane for

instance and Alfred Court on Fortune Green, neither of which are considerate of their surroundings, both of which detract from the more genteel nature of the local architecture. It's simply not good enough to build now and consider later. The design of this new proposal will simply perpetuate the sadness felt by all the community at the 'money first – lives later' approach to the place we live and most of us love. Please – back to the drawing board with this one, these are not the right architects for West Hampstead.

#### “Camden Development Policies 2010-2025, Local Development Framework”

In which it says “contributes to delivering the Core Strategy by providing detailed policies that [Camden Council] will use when determining applications for planning permission”, specifically item 25.9 which refers to the existing “largely dense urban nature of Camden”: “Due to the largely dense urban nature of Camden, the character or appearance of our conservation areas can also be affected by development which is outside of conservation areas, but visible from within them. This includes high or bulky buildings, which can have an impact on areas some distance away, as well as adjacent premises. The Council will therefore not permit development in locations outside conservation areas that it considers would cause harm to the character, appearance or setting of such an area.”

#### Population density

It's deeply concerning that the council would plan more units and increase density of the neighbourhood without considering our concerns over the infrastructure in the area. Doctors already over stretched; there are not enough dentists and not enough school provision. There are limited open spaces for the community which will become more and more transient if this type of development continues.

The development proposes to house between 600 – 800 residents. There is simply insufficient infrastructure to support this number of additional residents into West Hampstead; there is already one development due to complete later this year, West Hampstead Square – the impact from this development is yet to be seen alongside other developments in Blackburn Road, Iverson Road, and Liddell Road. West end Lane is grid lock with cars and lorries every day and the pavements are at maximum capacity. With the increase in population from West Hampstead Square and the proposed 156 development the infrastructure cannot carry this safely.

Insufficient consideration has been given to the environmental impact of so many developments.

There is insufficient infrastructure to support these numbers with the Ballymore development due to complete in June 2016. Camden has all given little or no consideration to the social and environmental impact of so many developments in such a short space of time. No planning for extra healthcare services has been done. All we see is a council looking at how many brownie points and how much money they can score from the government, by building as much cheap housing as possible. There are already too many examples of poor development with no consideration to the existing community.

I also have grave concerns over who will buy these flats; my suspicion is that they will go to the buy-to-let market which has already been vastly oversubscribed in the area – to the point that the banks started to black list West Hampstead for this very reason. We have seen over the past decade the neighbouring residents from the wealthier areas of St Johns Wood and Hampstead invest in our property market, where they can spend relatively small amounts of cash (they are generally not mortgaged) compared to their neighbourhoods, in order to rent to young professionals who although may make good tenants who enjoy the transport links to the city, do not always add to the community and more and more so nowadays do not stay for long and invest long term in the community. Their jobs are less likely to be secure and more often than not they will move on within a year or two at most. The rental market is swamped already and any increase in this market will no doubt damage an already transient population. It does not benefit the community having such a high turnover of residents and I really fear this will change the character of the area even further.

Has anyone considered whether the area needs more public space? A playground – a park even. Something that improves lives. The inclusion of a community centre in the scheme is a bit of a red herring. We had a community centre on Dornfell Street. However several years ago as part of the redevelopment of Emmanuel school, the community centre was taken over temporarily to house the Singleton Nursery. This was a temporary arrangement. The nursery however seems to have become a permanent fixture without any public consultation whatsoever. I have personally written to the Camden councillor who is also a trustee of that community centre who as usual has ignored my correspondence. Nothing can be taken on face value when the council and its representatives are so shady in their procedures and so manipulative with their powers. Maybe this community centre will be suddenly useful elsewhere without consultation, just like Dornfell Street.

### Transport and infrastructure

The proposed development is not in line with Camden development Policy DP16 and DP17 and DP19 as it creates further traffic and transport problems in the central growth area of West Hampstead.

The development will result in a substantial increase in parking demand regardless of it being a carless scheme, it will always attract traffic – be it deliveries, visitors' and healthcare workers. There is already growing pressure on public transport and pedestrian numbers within the vicinity of the stations and significant railways connections. The footfall on the underground, trains and buses – without including additional traffic from West Hampstead Square (196 flats) – is already at dangerously high peak levels, the station was in fact closed recently due to overcrowding.

Widening of the bridge across the Thameslink would surely have to be a part of any considered development. Right now neither cars, busses, bicycles or pedestrians can safely and quickly cross that bridge during rush hour. There needs to be a full report carried out by TFL as to the affect this will have on our stretched services. I note from TFL's comments to date – "Public transport network TfL is currently considering whether the development will

exert an impact upon the surrounding mechanised public transport networks, sufficient to require any S106 mitigation. A financial contribution may be required for capacity enhancements and, in particular, bus stop improvements. An update in this regard will be provided to the Council and the GLA at Stage 1. Travel planning a travel plan will be required, to be agreed by the Council, in consultation with TfL, prior to first occupation of the development. The travel plan should be secured, enforced, monitored and reviewed as part of the S106 agreement. It should have stretching mode share targets and contain measures to meet these targets. Further information can be found on TfL's website at the following link: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/info-for/urban-planning-and-construction/travel-plans> S106 Contributions, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) within this letter, a number of elements have been identified for inclusion in the 'Heads of Terms' of the S106 agreement. In accordance with London Plan policy 8.3 the Mayor commenced CIL charging for developments on 1st April 2012. Within Camden the charge is £50 per square metre. As alluded to previously, TfL would expect a clear statement, in the form of 'Heads of Terms', showing all the transport-related contributions that the development is expected to provide in the S106 agreement, to be included in the application material."

In the case of any further development within West Hampstead a CIL is not only essential but should be topped up given the excessive pressure and risk to public safety that overcrowding on our transport system will bring. £50 per metre in this instance is not sufficient.

In addition, the traffic lights at the junction of Iverson and West End Lane are a cause for significant congestion already. With new housing due to be completed it will only get worse and now you are suggesting further units. There needs to be considerable investigation and proposals to alleviate the traffic for those who already live in the immediate area.

Considering the huge works already taking place on West End Lane opposite West Hampstead Underground, it would be an extremely insensitive time to approve this application. West End Lane is a major thoroughfare which has been blighted for years by constant building works and road works which make passing through the area for residents almost unbearable at times. Please refer to BBC radio London on the subject of the most dug up and congested roads in London – West End Lane is right up there and it is only a side street, it can hardly be called a main thoroughfare as it is only just passable by singles lanes in opposite directions when there are no deliveries, no stopping busses, no one broken down, no one moving house, doing road works etc. It is the most stressful part of most peoples' journeys already and the impact of yet another vast residential development will cripple the area further.

There is such an obsession with development. Camden's job as a borough is to protect its citizens and ensure they can live in neighbourhoods that are civilised and amenable. Not a world of HGVs, cranes, bulldozers and demolition. I found myself in absolute despair when yet another notice of a neighbour developing went up – another skip, another year of dust, disturbance and noise. Camden Planning needs to seriously reconsider the manner in which it grants permission or face the wrath of those who pay its wages. The people of Camden are unhappy because no one wants to live on a building site and, frankly, that is what this

borough is becoming. The planning department have a track record of putting money before peoples' lives

### Architects and impartiality

I query the impartiality of Camden Council's ability to decide this matter, given that the land is owned by the Council, and the developer is The Council's chosen developer.

West Hampstead as you are aware is an area characterised by Victorian and Edwardian (mostly) red-brick individual and terraced housing, with some mansion blocks. The area is home to a number of designated heritage assets. This of course is an important factor to bear in mind when considering the style and nature of any proposed developments. I refer you to paragraphs 126 and 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework which must apply to all proposed developments. Paragraph 126 for example states: "Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account: – the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; – the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring; – the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and – opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place".

Can Camden honestly say they have considered the policy in full?

The height of the proposed development will overlook other buildings and significantly impact on residents' right to light and privacy, in particular over Lymington Road where residents will be overlooked when in their gardens and main living areas of their property. A2 Dominion have stated that the majority of the windows that will be looking out onto the development are "minor" dwelling rooms – on behalf of the residents of Lymington Road who currently enjoy uninterrupted south facing views from their well lit south facing bedrooms and receptions – I am slightly insulted. It is incorrect for the developer to make such a statement. The majority of the ground floor and basements flats will almost certainly go below the minimum BRE acceptable levels with regard to light. The proposed buildings themselves will have a considerably negative impact on the conservation area which the planned development adjoins.

The concept behind this scheme can only be that of maximum capacity and box ticking statistics, it can't possibly be considered as a benefit to the existing community or its environment. It must be a priority to develop sites that add to communities and quality of life, this needs good design, sensible proportions and consideration to the surrounding neighbourhood which is not what is being proposed.