

**10 Bertram Street  
London N19 5DQ**

David Fowler  
Principal Planning Officer  
London Borough of Camden  
5 Pancras Square  
London N1C 4AG

23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017

Dear Mr Fowler

**Planning Application - 2016/6088/P - Highgate Newtown Community Centre Unit A, B, C, D & E - 25 Bertram Street London N19 5DQ - Planning Objection**

I am writing to you following my letter of objection dated 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016 where I indicated that I had requested further information from the council and may need, in light of that information, to present further objections to the above planning application.

**Evidence of the need for this redevelopment**

In my letter of 30th November, I challenged the basic assumption that this development is necessary and considered that an alternative refurbishment is viable and possible. I have now been provided with the Condition Report dated 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2011 which formed the basis of the council's assertion that the community centre building is beyond repair and would cost £2m - £2.5m to carry out the necessary repairs and refurbishment.

The Condition Report was based on a visual survey and set out a range of repairs required for the:

- HNCC Community Centre
- Fresh Youth Academy
- Caretaker's House.

The purpose of the report was as follows:

**“The purpose of the survey is to provide a prioritised 20 year planned maintenance programme with costs, inclusive of mechanical and electrical services and lift survey.”**

The report contained costings for any repair or renewal work to the various elements and components of the property, which might be required over the next 20 years. Each element was prioritised and timed for action over the 20-year period.

The total cost set out as of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2011 was £1.534m. Further correspondence from the council dated 18<sup>th</sup> October 2016 set out how the estimate was updated for inflation (which was added at 26%) leading to a cost of £1.993m. Further items were listed as being necessary and an estimate of £2.5m presented.

This information casts severe doubt over the council's assertions that the building is at the end of its life and of the required timing for funding the repairs and refurbishments required.

Since the 2011 Condition Report, extensive repairs and refurbishments have been undertaken at Fresh Youth Academy – some £300 - £400k provided through Section 106 funding from the Chester Balmore Development. Quite apart from the total waste of this investment should the demolition proceed, this amount should be deducted from the sums required in the 2011 Condition Report.

Any costs associated with Caretaker's House should also be excluded from this consideration (see below).

Since that date, a number of repairs and improvements have been made to the community centre – new boilers have been installed, lifts have been improved, the cafe and toilets have been refurbished and disabled access has been much improved. Some works have been carried out by the council while others, especially the kitchen and cafe area, were paid for by private grants.

An Eco-Audit Report was commissioned by HNCC in February 2011 which set out a range of proposed improvements to the energy efficiency at the centre which, if fully implemented, would make considerable improvements to its costs and sustainability. Included within this was the possibility of PUNL solar panels on a renovated south facing roof to supply vital energy.

The original cost of repairs to the community centre building is therefore nearer the £1m region as of October 2011 which, if inflation is added at 26%, comes to £1.26m. If some allowance is made for the other items identified by the council's consultants in October 2016, an estimated cost of £1.5m at 2016 prices would be more realistic.

Crucially, this £1.5m would be spread over 20 years and would be well within the reach of the community centre working in partnership with the council to raise funds from charitable sources, private companies and benefactors and non-departmental public bodies such as the Big Lottery.

The Caretaker's House has lain empty for nearly three years and an imaginative refurbishment option would see the repairs undertaken and house sold for considerable profit (est. £1m) which could be used to contribute to the overall refurbishment programme offering matched funding opportunities to lever in external resources.

This Condition Report exposes the council's unjustifiable case for demolition - that it does not have £2m - £2.5m required to refurbish the centre. This level of funding was never required at a single point in time but over 20 years and is also an over-estimate of what is needed for the community centre.

If the council were to provide HNCC with a long and affordable lease, it would open up a range of opportunities for funding the refurbishments and improvements as part of a prioritised rolling programme.

This common-sense approach would remove the need for wholesale demolition and the construction of 32 flats in a development which, for reasons set out in my previous correspondence, would have a negative impact on the local community.

I would be grateful if these points can be taken into account in the council's deliberations.

Yours sincerely

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