

Planning Application Details

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Your comments on the planning application see attached document

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<i>Received on</i>	14/08/2017
<i>Form reference</i>	21032773
<i>Status</i>	Submitted on 14/08/2017 14:01
<i>Contact method</i>	Self service
<i>Type</i>	Comments on a current Planning Application

From Elizabeth Middleton

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Recvd 14/08/17

Objection to Morrisons/Barret Homes application to develop Camden Goods Yard

Whilst having no objection to the development of the site and creation of new much needed housing in principle, I would like to object to the proposed Morrisons/Barrett development on numerous grounds.

Whilst it is stating the obvious, Barrett homes is a public limited company with a duty to maximise the return to its shareholders and no duty towards the people of Camden, or even towards the ultimate occupiers of its developments.

It is expected therefore that it will use the standard planning strategy of proffering the most ambitious plan, far in excess of what would ever be acceptable to local stakeholders, and then to appear to 'compromise' by reducing the plan somewhat and asking consultees to 'agree' that less is better than the original excessive development first offered (the leading questions in the consultation questionnaire to this effect are shocking and do not to my mind represent reasonable consultation).

Another strategy involves a 'box ticking' exercise (usually to the minimum level possible) of any planning requirements) in documents peppered with endless repetition of planning jargon and buzz words promising utopia for all. The planning statement in this case is a text-book example of this. What on earth is a 'rooftop urban farm' for example and will people's lives really be enhanced by having a right to 'pick your own' chillies? People need decent living accommodation not urban chilli farms. And just because a developer promises a 'vibrant and successful' neighbourhood doesn't make it so!

It incumbent upon Camden Council on behalf of all of the residents, business and other stakeholders (including tourists) to look through the hyperbole of this profit-led exercise and take a long-term and common sense view of the impact (both positive and negative) of the overall proposed development, especially on a development of this size. Heritage factors should be given particular weight in view of the commercial importance of visitors to the area.

My objections are as follows:-

Too few family units: There are far too many smaller sized units. 47.3% of the units are bedsits and one bed units. A mere 14.5% are 3 bedroom and 1.8% (8 homes) are 4 bedroom units. If Camden wants to create a sustainable community it needs to have a mix

of residents including families who are invested in the area over long periods of time. There is inadequate provision for family housing. Smaller units create greater profits not a better and more rooted community.

Size of units: Connected to the above point, the units look to be very small (it is actually difficult to see the square meterage) and whilst they might meet minimum standards – again, pokey homes means people are not likely to stay in the community for long periods. A transitory community will mean less community investment and engagement and a rise in the anti-social behaviours in the communal spaces which are always an issue in Camden.

Character of the area and architecture: From an aesthetic perspective new tower blocks are far too high and will loom over all the other local buildings, in an area which is characterised by its Victorian streets and wonderful industrial architecture. There is a risk of damaging the aesthetic of the whole area and the views of many of the important buildings such as the roundhouse and Interchange building. The highest new apartment block should be restricted to the height of the nearest local buildings (no more than 8 floors – ideally lower) especially if the current design is retained (see below). High buildings will cause overshadowing and overlooking as well as ruining the Victorian views from so many viewpoints. The ‘before’ and ‘after’ from Edis Street in Primrose Hill is particularly striking. The developers gush that residents should be thrilled to have a view of new and ‘historic’ buildings instead of their currently exclusively Victorian outlook – I expect they will be less than thrilled. We don’t need a mini Paddington Basin in Camden. A low build development would be much more attractive and provide much nicer homes without impacting on the general and much-loved aesthetic of North Camden.

Design of Buildings: The overall design of the buildings is unbelievably bland and the box-ticking exercise to tie in the architecture of the Barret homes into small details of some local buildings is tokenistic to say the least. The buildings look to be in part rather boring boxes and in part pastiches of the local warehouse buildings. Similar have gone up and are going up in King Cross and other parts of London but rarely in the midst of such an historic area. The charm of Camden and its attraction to tourists lies in part in its industrial heritage and the buildings that reflect it, Camden should require the developers to come up with a more interesting lower density design which doesn’t detract from the local buildings and really makes residents want to stay in and contribute to the community. If this is not possible then at least the new buildings should be less visible (i.e. much lower)

Social housing: The percentage seems reasonably acceptable, although most people would prefer a higher percentage, but what is ‘intermediate rent’ housing? Camden must prohibit the developer from reducing the amount of affordable housing as has happened on so many other developments.

Closure of Petrol Station: It would appear that the petrol station will be closed for a number of years. This is not acceptable – there are so few petrol stations in the area and it will cause a major loss in amenity to motorists. It would be better to create a smaller temporary supermarket, as there are several other supermarkets on the chalk farm road and Camden high street and keep the petrol station open.

Impact of HS2 and construction pollution: The disruption of the construction of this site will be significant. I note up to 40 lorries a day will be accessing the site. Has consideration been given to the combined effect of this and the HS2 lorries on pollution/traffic management?

Inadequate access from Oval Road: the huge number of shoppers who access Morrisons from Oval road will have to take a circuitous route through the estate and then go down a steep flight of stairs. The developers should be asked to provide a straightforward and easy access route to enable people (particularly those with mobility issues) to continue using Morrisons. There are numerous supermarkets on Chalk Farm Road but Morrisons is the closest for those coming from Primrose Hill along the canal and is used by the various elderly communities in Oldfield etc.