
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 13 February 2021 14:56
To: McClue, Jonathan
Cc: Planning
Subject: Objection to planning application 2021/0025/P - 100 Avenue Road

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Dear Mr McClue and Councillors on the Planning Committee,

100 Avenue Road: Objection to Planning Applications 2021/0025/P and 2021/0022/P

I am writing to object in the strongest possible terms to the proposals from Essential Living that they should now be allowed to renege on the binding Section 106 legal commitments they gave as part of the original, and protracted, planning consent process, to provide an already low number of 36 units of affordable housing out of a total development size of 184 flats (only some 20% against a presumption by Camden that there should normally be up to 50% of affordable housing in new private developments).

During that planning process the seeking of consent was referred to a Planning Inspector and the Secretary of State, and both their assessments made clear that the consent was, to a very great extent, dependent on the S106 agreement, regarding the provision of the (already inappropriately) small proportion of affordable housing to local key workers and other deserving residents, and on the other material qualities of the proposed development, including the high quality of the originally-proposed Portland stone cladding that went at least a small way towards mitigating the colossal adverse environmental and aesthetic impact of a monstrous 24-storey tower.

In this respect, I fully support the detailed objections already submitted by the Belsize Society that the arguments made in the letter from Savills trying to justify this proposed total abrogation of EL's earlier commitments, are wholly disingenuous and have no legal merit. I also support the comments and objections already submitted by CRASH (Community Residents Active in S. Hampstead) that developers enter into proposed developments fully aware of the risks, and potential rewards, and it is not incumbent on the Council Tax Payers of Camden to help 'bail them out' when their over-optimistic assumptions turn out to be wrong.

It is sadly often the case that developers sign-up to over-ambitious Section 106 commitments in regard to affordable housing provision simply to obtain planning consent, and then subsequently and cynically plead changed, and adverse, financial circumstances to the local authority as a reason for being allowed to wriggle out of them and to ditch the affordable housing element, and degrade the high-quality, aesthetically desirable, building finishes. This must not be allowed to happen here.

If EL cannot now afford to develop the site in line with their original proposals and provide the 36 units of affordable housing, and cannot afford to at least clad the monstrous tower in high-quality and visually-attractive Portland stone cladding, whilst still making their desired original level of financial return on the project for their overseas backers, then they have 3 simple choices. None of these choices should be allowed by Camden Council to adversely impact their own interests or those of the local community, which has objected for so long, and so vehemently, to this whole development. A development that had almost no other community or aesthetic merits. EL can either:

1) Reduce the scope and size of the development to reduce its capital cost (eg. perhaps a substantial reduction in height of the tower to a more tolerable 10 stories) in the face of likely reduced demand for luxury rented flats for relatively 'transient' professional renters, or,

2) Accept a lower financial return in these unprecedentedly difficult times for many people and businesses, including many property companies and their pension-fund backers. Noting also that EL's original business case assumptions on demand for luxury short-term rented flats in the area may by now be significantly and adversely affected by the reduced numbers of 'transient' professional workers in the City/Canary Wharf financial sector, as a result of both Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic. Neither of these factors existed when EL conceived the original design and planning proposal in 2014. Or,

3) EL can sell-on the site 'as is' to a more socially-aware British developer that truly has the interests of the local community at its heart, as well as seeking to make a reasonable but not excessive return for itself. The excellent example of Barratt Developments in building the very nearby replacement Swiss Cottage swimming pool and Sports Centre, as well as the Visage flats and GP surgery in the early 'Noughties', comes to mind as to how developers and Camden can work to their genuine mutual benefit.

Camden and its Councillors must reject this self-interested application that shows a total disregard for the interests of local Camden residents and the Council itself, both socially and aesthetically.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Peel
Goldhurst Terrace
NW6 3HN

PS. Please upload this to your planning website as a .pdf file not a picture (.tiff) file.