



Est. 1897

The Heath & Hampstead Society

President Lord Mance Chair Marc Hutchinson
Patrons Lord Bragg CH Lord Hoffmann Lady Hopkins Sir Simon Jenkins
Bill Oddie OBE Tom Oliver Sir John Tusa

27 January 2022

Dear members

Murphy's Yard Development

I am writing to you as a matter of urgency to seek your active support for the Society's opposition to the proposed construction of several residential tower blocks on the south-eastern edge of Hampstead Heath at Gospel Oak.

The Society is not opposed in principle to the development of the site, but the development proposals, if approved in their current form, will set a terrible and irremovable precedent for high-rise building on the edge of the Heath, which is why I am asking you to write to Camden Council, the local planning authority, to make your objections known. The deadline for objections to is Monday 21 February 2022. You can upload your objection via the link below; or send it by direct email to planning@camden.gov.uk; or write to: Planning Department, London Borough of Camden, 2nd Floor, 5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AG.

A map of the development site is shown below: it is the large works yard of Murphy's, the builders. The northern part of the site is on the south side of Gordon House Road opposite the entrance to the Heath at the Lido. Also enclosed are some mock-up photographs of the tower blocks, both aerial and as seen from Parliament Hill and the Lido car park. Here is the link to the voluminous planning application (look for the Design and Access Statement, June 2021): www.planningrecords.camden.gov.uk - Application Number 2021/3225/P.

The Society's first charitable object is to preserve Hampstead Heath in its wild and natural state, and its second charitable object is to promote and maintain the amenities and characteristics *of the environs of the Heath* and of the buildings and streets of Hampstead.

The second object was adopted in the 1930s when there was a real threat to the Heath from the building of tall apartment blocks around its fringes. The planning requirement that any development near the Heath ("metropolitan open land") must not harm its openness, and the views from it, is enshrined in the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan (Policy NE1), the Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Plan (Policy ES1), the Camden Local Plan (Policy A2), the Mayor's London Plan 2021 (Policies G3 and G6), and the National Policy Planning Framework (Section 13).

In pursuance of its charitable objects the Society is objecting to these aspects of the proposed development:

1. The mass, density and height of the six tower blocks, of between 11 to 19 storeys, which will have an overwhelming adverse impact on the openness of the Heath from the Lido and nearby playing fields, and entail the loss of views of a distant skyline and specific south-eastern views from Parliament Hill, including the view, from the plaque, of approximately one half of the buildings depicted on the viewing plaque on the very top of Parliament Hill.
2. The proposal is to construct on the site up to 825 residential homes (for 2,000+ new residents, with no agreed percentage for affordable housing), 48,000 sq metres of industrial floor space, and 70,000 sq metres of office and r&d space. It must be understood that nowhere on the site itself are there to be gardens or significant *green* public spaces to where residents and workers can resort. The certain consequence of this grossly excessive density is that the new *thousands* of residents and workers will

come onto the Parliament Hill area of the Heath in their reasonable search for the nearest (and only nearby) green open space.


Of course there can be no in-principle objection to the public coming onto the Heath, which is required by the 1871 Act to remain unfenced as an open public space. But our objection is that the new residents and workers will enter and congregate on this particular area of the Heath *in such numbers* that the area will be seriously and permanently degraded. We all witnessed the temporary degradation, right across the Heath, from covid-lockdown crowds.

This certain damage will be the direct result of the developer's proposal (i) to build too many new homes on the site and (ii) to provide no significant green recreational space within the development itself.

3. One mitigating proposal from the developer was to construct a "green" and ecologically enhancing "corridor" from Kentish Town Station to the entrance to the Heath at the Lido, the so-called "Heath Line". The proposal is however revealed to be a hard-paved walkway with occasional flowerbeds and isolated trees of negligible ecological value. Four adjoining Camden Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation, ("SINCS"), one of which is the Heath, will not be "joined up" be green infrastructures as the developer claims, but will be damaged by building massing and overshadowing of the corridor itself. This is an inexcusably missed opportunity to create a biodiversity corridor linking the Heath to local communities.

I hope you will feel able to lend your support to the growing volume of objections from affected residents, Heath users and the various neighbourhood forums.

Yours sincerely,


Marc Hutchinson
Chair

