



Camden

Cllr Lorna Jane Russell  
Crowndale Centre  
218 Eversholt Street  
London  
NW1 1BD

Sunday 20th March 2022

Dear Sir / Madam,

**RE: O2 centre planning application**

I am writing to object to planning application 2022/0528/P, which concerns the O2 Masterplan Site on Finchley Road, NW3 6LU.

I have a number of concerns about the proposed development, including the height and density of the towers, the negative impact that the plans would have on our community, as well as the damaging implications of demolition.

I have set out my concerns in further detail below, and believe that the application should be refused as it fails to meet Camden's planning policy requirements.

However, I would be open to supporting a future application on the car park only, providing that it is much less dense and reflects the community's aspirations for the site.

**Height and density of the towers**

The planning application is for a high density development, with a series of residential towers of up to 15 storeys high to provide for up to 1,800 new homes.

These buildings are much higher than anything else in the vicinity, and their design and character is not in keeping with the neighbourhood. Even though the land is lower on the site than housing on nearby roads, at 15 storeys high the buildings will still tower over the local area and would be incredibly intrusive to residents living nearby.

I am further concerned about the mix of housing, as there is a community need for more 4 bed family homes rather than 1 and 2 bed flats.

Camden's Local Plan also sets out a target of 50% for affordable homes on large developments, however this proposal falls short of this at a proposed 35% affordable housing units.

Therefore, the application should be turned down because it fails to achieve adequate affordable housing, as well as the right balance of family homes.

**Negative impact on our community**

The construction of the development would take place over a period of approximately 15 years, which would wreak havoc in the local area for a prolonged period of time. West End Lane and Finchley Road

are very busy roads that are already congested with traffic, which will be exacerbated by the significant amount of construction traffic accessing the site each month.

I am further concerned that the existing community infrastructure is not suited to cope with the addition of an estimated 2,500-3,000 new residents moving here. Our tubes, railways, and buses are already overcrowded, and our GP practices are oversubscribed.

Any new planning applications for significant large-scale housing development in the West Hampstead area must therefore include explicit provisions to improve and upgrade existing infrastructure – including installing a new lift at West Hampstead tube station and providing for a new GP surgery on the site.

There is also little on the site currently proposed that would benefit the existing community, as the majority of the green spaces would be for private use for the new residents. At a minimum this should all be opened up to the public for wider use.

### **Damaging implications of demolition**

From an environmental perspective, I am concerned that this proposal involves complete demolition of the existing buildings on the site – in itself the O2 centre is only a mere 24 years old.

Such a demolition would result in the emission of millions more tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, which directly contravenes Camden's ambitious commitments to achieve net zero by 2030. Significantly, the Environmental Impact Assessment includes no consideration of how this could be reduced by adopting a different design strategy.

The associated construction work of demolition would also cause undue distress to residents currently living nearby, worsening their air quality and creating noise pollution.

Instead, I believe a more appropriate proposal would be to have built new housing on the car park section of the site solely, leaving the O2 centre there as a much-loved community asset.

Indeed, the demolition of the O2 Centre would lead to the loss of vital community amenities, including the much-needed large Sainsbury's supermarket there, as well as community meeting spaces, Homebase, a cinema, and a gym.

While new retail facilities will be provided on the site under this application, there are no guarantees that these will be tailored to community needs.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I urge Camden to reject the application because it fails to meet the Council's planning policy requirements.

However, I would be open to supporting a future application on the car park of the site, providing it is redesigned and is much more reflective of community interests.

Kind regards,

**Councillor Lorna Jane Russell**

*Green Party councillor, Fortune Green*