



REDINGTON FROGNAL ASSOCIATION  
Umbrella body for residents groups in the Redington Frogнал Conservation Area

2 June, 2022

Dear Mr. Fowler,

**2022/0528/P O2 Development – Objection**

Redington Frogнал Association wishes to object to this planning application on the grounds of non-compliance with:

- national policies and guidance
- London Plan policies and guidance
- Camden Local Plan policies
- Conservation Area character appraisals and management strategies
- the Fortune Green and West Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan.

**Harm to Heritage Assets**

Para. 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires that “great weight” is given to the harm to heritage assets when determining planning applications and Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

London Plan Policy HC1 similarly requires development to avoid harm to heritage assets, as does Policy D2 of the Camden Local Plan. This is further reinforced in Policy 2 of the Fortune Green and West Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan.

The proposal for 29 tower blocks of 8 to 16 storeys in height (page 123 of the design and access statement) fails to demonstrate,

“an understanding of the context, history and character of an area must influence the siting and design of new development. This context includes the immediate surroundings of the site, the neighbourhood in which it sits and the wider setting”

as required by the National Model Design Code.

The siting of 29 tower blocks among five Edwardian / Victorian / garden suburb conservation areas and 29 listed buildings could not be more ill thought out and is incongruent with the Arts and Crafts architecture of the surrounding Conservation Areas and garden suburbs. The tower blocks would cause substantial harm to views from and around these conservation areas, as seen from the Townscape Heritage & Visual Assessment which accompanies the application.



## Poor Design

Para. 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires that “development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design”.

To prevent such harmful and inappropriate development, the National Model Design Code sets out clear design parameters to help local authorities and communities decide what good quality design looks like in their area taking into consideration healthier, greener and more distinctive places.

However, neither Camden Council nor the Fortune Green and West Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum has produced a design code for the site. Instead, the developer has produced its own Design Code for the site.

The coding process, set out in the National Model Design Code, categorises the site as an Urban Neighbourhood, where building heights are 3-4 storeys (figure 21 on page 21) and densities of 60-120 dwellings per hectare (page 13).

This contrasts with the almost super density level of 312 dwellings per hectare drawn up for the site by the developer.

Since Camden does not yet have local design codes for the site, paragraph 16 of the MHCLG Guidance is relevant. This states that:

*16. In the absence of local design guidance, local planning authorities will be expected to defer to the National Design Guide, National Model Design Code and Manual for Streets which can be used as material considerations in planning decisions. This supports an aspiration to establish a default for local design principles and settings as part of forthcoming planning reforms that lead to well designed and beautiful places and buildings.*

Copious evidence exists that tower blocks do not create well designed and beautiful places and buildings.

In his letter to local councillors of 2.9.21, Mr. Andrew Boff, Chair of the London Assembly’s Planning and Regeneration Committee, shares the Committee’s finding that,

*“the Committee does not believe tall buildings are the answer to London’s housing needs and should not be encouraged outside of a few designated and carefully managed areas”.*

With regard to density, the view of Matthew Carmona, Professor of Planning and Urban Design at The Bartlett School of Planning at UCL notes that “up to a medium density of 56 dwellings per hectare better enables access to local facilities within a neighbourhood” and that, “... in general families are disadvantaged if they are living in tall buildings”.



Overall, the London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee Overall believes that high density housing can be achieved by “approaches that are more suitable for families, more in keeping with London’s traditional form, and are less intrusive on the skyline”.

**Loss of amenity to properties in neighbouring properties**

The 29 tower blocks will create overshadowing and rob neighbouring properties of daylight and sunlight, thereby causing unacceptable harm to amenity. Streets that will particularly experience “major negative impacts” include: Blackburn Road, Lithos Road, Rosemont Road and Broadhurst Gardens, as well as Nidos House.

This is contrary to both London Plan Policy D6 and Camden Local Plan Policy A1.

The proposals involve the felling of up to 56 category C trees plus a group of category C trees<sup>1</sup>, all for the purpose of facilitating development, including the flowering cherry trees photographed below, further adding to the loss of amenity.

**Flowering cherry trees, April 2022**



**Failure to provide adequate green space**

The West Hampstead and South Hampstead super output areas are officially a green space deprived. The Friends of the Earth Green Space Analysis 2020 found West Hampstead and South Hampstead to have the highest Green Space Deprivation score (1) and the most deprived Green Space Deprivation Rating (E).

The lack of green space will be exacerbated by the proposed provision of just 15,500 sq. metres of open space for 1,800 flats in the form of Community Gardens (3,000 sq. metres), Finchley Square (3,000 sq. metres), a Public Green (3,800 sq. metres) and a linear walkway (5,200 sq. metres).

<sup>1</sup> The Arboricultural Impact Assessment suggests that attempts may be made to preserve only trees in categories A and B.



By contrast, Camden's Local Plan policy A2 requires a minimum open space green provision of 9 sq. metres per occupant, implying an open space requirement of 40,000 – 45,000 sq .metres (based on 2.5 occupants per flat). The 15,500 sq. metres offered is just one quarter of Camden's own policy requirement – for an area that is officially green space deprived.

### **Inadequate Urban Greening Factor**

On 7 September 2020, Camden Council became the UK's first local authority to embed legal duties related to the climate and ecological emergency in its constitution.

Yet the planning application fails to meet the minimum Urban Greening Score of 0.4 for predominantly residential development, as required by Policy G5 of the London Plan.

Given the ecological emergency and the severity of nature depletion in this urban neighbourhood, the application should provide for a significantly greater Urban Greening Factor, substantially in excess of the minimum score.

### **Increased risk of surface water flooding**

The development site lies within an area where there are many instances of surface water flooding, at the site, upstream in West Hampstead and downstream in South Hampstead. Underground water (now culverted) flows from springs on Hampstead Heath to become the River Westbourne and Kilbourne, passing beneath the site and then flowing out into The Thames.

As a Lead Local Flood Authority, Camden Council is liable to conform with London Plan Policy SI 13 Sustainable drainage.

The development fails to incorporate a runoff rate that is close to the greenfield runoff rate. This has been noted by Thames Water, which observes that Landsec's current proposal of a surface water runoff rate of "260 litres per second must be reduced to the greenfield rate of 36 litres per second" and that the existing surface water network is unable "to accommodate the needs of this development proposal."

Thames Water further adds,

"Network reinforcement works are likely to be required to accommodate the proposed development. Any reinforcement works identified will be necessary in order to avoid sewage flooding and/or potential pollution incidents."

Section N2 of the National Model Design Code: part 2 notes that "Managing water is an important element of a site's response to nature. It can reduce flood risk and





improve water quality while providing habitats and recreational activities and dealing with flooding when it happens. ”

Compliance with the National Model Design Code and the London Plan would be improved by seizing the opportunity to separate the clean water from foul water and daylight the underground rivers. This would have the dual benefits of reducing pressure on sewers and introducing blue infrastructure to the development. Daylighting is being adopted across cities worldwide:

<https://www.timeout.com/climate-action/how-our-cities-lost-rivers-are-being-revived>

### **Demolition of a 1998 community asset**

Construction of the O2 shopping and leisure centre was completed in 1998, with the input of local residents and Ward Councillors. It fulfils a valuable purpose as a community asset, comprising a grocery superstore, bookstore, multiplex cinema, community meeting hall, gym, a 25-metre swimming pool and numerous cafés and restaurants. In particular, it is a safe space for young people to meet in an area with few facilities for teenagers, and the large superstore and swimming pool are valued by families and older people for their health and well being, as evidenced by 4,332 Google reviews, which give an average rating of 4.1 out of 5:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=O2+Centre+google+reviews&oq=O2+Centre+google+reviews&aqs=chrome..69i57j0i546l4j69i60.9258j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8- lrd=0x48761a8365589f33:0xa028536db2203b40,1...>

We would also note that the Communities Secretary did not agree to the demolition of the Marks & Spencer store at Marble Arch:

<https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/ms-oxford-st-demolition-scheme-halted-by-gove>

Instead of demolishing the O2 Centre, plans should be drawn up for retrofitting it and perhaps recladding with living walls to filter some of the particulates and NO2 from Finchley Road (the A41).

Since some of the space is apparently not providing sufficiently lucrative returns, uneconomic space could be converted for use as a medical centre, removing the need to construct a facility at some point in the future.

### **Conclusion**

Currently, the proposal does not comply with:

- the NPPF
- the Environment Act
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1970
- the National Model Design Code and Design Guide
- London Plan Policies D3, D6, D9 C, H4, HC1 C, HC4, G1, G5, G6 D and E, G7 C, SI 2, SI 5 E and F, SI 12, SI 13 and SI 17 B
- London Assembly Guidance note of 14 January 2021



- Camden Local Plan Policies A1, A2, C1, C2, D1, D2, G1, H4, H6, H7, TC1, TC2, TC 4, Supplementary Planning Document WHI 2 and Sustainability Appraisal
- Fortune Green and West Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan Policies 1, 2, 3, 4 and 10.

Yours sincerely,



Anne-Marie O'Connor  
Chair

Redington Frogna! Association

<http://www.redfrogassociation.org>