

## **Planning application 2022/0528/P: O2 Centre Redevelopment**

### **Comments of the Netherhall Neighbourhood Association (NNA)**

The NNA supports the detailed objections filed by the Confederation of Local Community Groups on 25 July. We have grave concerns in particular about the design and density of the proposed housing, the lack of green space, the social implications of living in high rise blocks, and the issue of affordability.

There are two aspects of the proposals on which we wish to make additional comments as they have a direct impact on our area: the demolition of the O2 Centre and the inadequate transport provision.

#### **Demolition of the O2 Centre**

The O2 Centre is located very close to our area and is highly valued by local residents. It would be a huge loss if it were destroyed. The proposals for its replacement are nowhere near equivalent to the facilities currently available. Demolition is unnecessary – the Centre was completed only 24 years ago – and contrary to current environmental policy. Good practice is now focused on retaining and refurbishing existing buildings wherever possible; it is a far more sustainable solution.

The new proposals make no provision for parking. This area has a higher proportion of elderly and disabled people than other parts of Camden. It also on a steep incline. Netherhall Gardens, the road nearest to the O2, is significantly higher than Finchley Road. Whichever way you cross Finchley Road, whether by the underpass or at one of the traffic lights, it involves a steep walk uphill. It is simply impracticable to expect people with any form of mobility impairment to do that, least of all carrying heavy shopping.

The car park is used not only for Sainsbury's and Homebase customers but cinema-goers and visitors to the other amenities at the O2. The absence of any parking space will effectively preclude those who find it difficult to walk there from using the new amenities.

#### **Transport infrastructure**

We are very concerned about the impact of the proposals on the existing transport infrastructure. It is not at all clear that either capacity or access has been properly factored into the planning. Two stations bordering the redevelopment site are particularly relevant to our neighbourhood: Finchley Road (Underground) and Finchley & Frognal (Overground).

Both present problems for elderly people, those with a mobility impairment (even a temporary one, like a sprained ankle), parents with buggies, and anyone with heavy luggage. They struggle with the stairs to access the platforms or to reach the exit. For many people it is impossible to use either station. With the widely anticipated increase in passenger numbers, it will be even more difficult. Step-free access is long overdue at both stations, and the requisite funding must be made a priority. The need is even greater now, given the reduction in bus routes along Finchley Road.

In addition, the pavement between Finchley Road underground station and the O2 Centre is already dangerously overcrowded at the stop for coaches and airport buses and near the entrance to the tube station. With many more people in the area, pedestrians will inevitably walk round the queues and may be tempted to spill into the road. It is an accident waiting to happen.