



Cllr Shiva Tiwari
Crowndale Centre
218 Eversholt Street
London
NW1 1BD
2 October 2022

David Fowler
Regeneration & Planning Department
The London Borough of Camden
Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

Dear Mr Fowler,

RE: O2 Centre Planning Application (2022/0528/P)

I am writing to express my concern with (and indeed objections to) planning application 2022/05208/P, which relates to proposed development plans by Landsec in relation to the O2 site on Finchley Road in London NW3 6LU.

I want to first emphasize that I am steadfastly pro development from a first principles perspective (on the basis that I believe our West Hampstead ward and indeed our Camden Borough is in real need of a greater quantity of high quality and affordable housing for our young families, elderly citizens and vulnerable groups).

And I agree that the above-mentioned site represents an under-tapped area that has the potential to positively contribute new housing and amenities.

However, as a local resident and West Hampstead councillor for 5+ years now, I am concerned both personally and on behalf of our local residents about Landsec's plans as they stand.

I have received an extensive set of correspondence from local people over the last year or two on this proposed development and I note that tens, if not hundreds, of our residents have attended public meetings held in recent years to further understand and discuss the proposals.

West Hampstead is a community made up of lots of concerned and committed local people and groups, and many of them share a great public interest in this matter, which is quite understandable given that any approved redevelopment of the O2 site is expected to have a significant impact on the area for 10-15+ years.

I have sought to raise my key concerns (reflecting those of my residents) about the draft plans with Landsec, for example on topics such as green space, building height, quantum of affordable housing and pressure on transportation and pedestrian networks locally.

I outline these concerns in more detail in the following pages.

Affordable housing

- With – I understand – less than 35% affordable homes earmarked for construction in each development phase, residents are concerned that the new properties will largely be populated by wealthy new residents and speculative investors rather than seeking to enhance the housing conditions of our existing residents without such financial means. Over 7,000 people in substantial need currently sit on the housing waiting list in Camden, with less than 1 in 10 likely to be able to be allocated a home that is appropriate for their circumstances. Young people and young families who grow up locally are increasingly being driven out of our area by the crippling cost, low availability and poor quality of housing here, which continues to deplete the historically diverse, engaged and committed community that West Hampstead, and indeed Camden, once represented
- The West Hampstead community is I believe united in its preference for a greater proportion of said new homes to be for the purpose of improving the lives of the local people who already make up the fabric of our ward.
- Furthermore, there is dismay around the proposed division of affordable housing stock and I believe the local view is that at least 60% of this should be low-cost rent – without this even much of the new housing earmarked for residents in need will be unaffordable to them.
- I believe Landsec's plans do not adequately address the size of need for affordable homes for local families and other residents as 35% is materially below Camden Council's recommendations that new developments seek to deliver 50% affordable housing.
- Given rising concerns around the cost of living and fuel crisis, I would request that all insulation within any new developments is made up of high-performance insulation systems that are energy efficient and also help mitigate climate change concerns.

Pressure on Transport Infrastructure, Pedestrian Traffic & Other Amenities

- I again request that Landsec commit to guaranteed funding of selected community amenities to ensure that the burden of this new development does not overshadow any benefits – this would certainly include a commitment to provide £10m of funding towards a redevelopment of West Hampstead tube station to deliver wider walkways and step free access for our residents that face mobility challenges.
- Also, issues such as the noise and light impact on neighbouring sites should be fully considered and, where relevant, appropriate compensation provided to those genuinely affected – as validated by robust independent analysis.
- Once more, I request that Landsec works closely with local residents, in a truly collaborative and consultative manner to fully understand the areas of strong feeling locally and ensure these are addressed as the process continues in any definitive planning proposals.

Height and Density

- Some residents are quite concerned that the planned density of the development will put pressure on local services leading to a decline in living standards to all residents, old and new, highlighting examples such as the potential strain on GP surgeries, police resources and local schools. As such, I believe any new development plans must include Landsec's investment in enabling the provision of new health, security and schooling facilities.
- Some residents have expressed concerns that the existing proposal contemplates building heights of 15 storeys, conflicting with the existing character of a neighbourhood consisting of low-rise red-brick mansion blocks.
- In my opinion, while these concerns are understandable, I believe they may be worthy of sacrifice if we deliver higher benefits to our community in greater social housing and investment in our amenities and transport infrastructure. However, I feel the current Landsec plans fall short in all such areas rather than offering our community a genuine opportunity to accept a package that will bring real long-term benefits as well as challenges.

Green space

- Many resident have raised concerns about a lack of genuinely usable green space in existing proposals, which I agree with – in my view if you can't play a quick game of 5-a-side football in patch of land then it isn't "green space" but "green bordering". While the existing plans claim that 50% of the site will be green space, it seems to many (including myself) that the plans actually show this in the form of a matrix of narrow corridors between tower blocks, which would be of very diminished social use and value.

In summary, I share the concerns and objections of many of my local residents in West Hampstead. West Hampstead ward is also where I live with my young family and is where my wife and I have chosen to raise our children.

I want to do all I can to ensure that our community receives the maximum possible benefits from this long-term redevelopment (which will take 10+ years to construct and impact local lives for 50+ years).

And while I appreciate this local priority needs to be appropriately balanced with ensuring that the project is an economically viable and sufficiently profitable venture for the developer Landsec, I don't believe these two areas of interest are mutually exclusive.

In order to support this development, I would need verifiable reassurances from Landsec that they are committed to the below core concerns:

- A higher provision of affordable housing
- A re-design of proper green space
- Investment in a new on-site GP surgery and leisure facilities for local groups
- West Hampstead tube station improvements, including step-free access
- Retention of critical low cost facilities like an affordable supermarket as part of any new commercial premises
- Reassurances that concerns around building height and density are being adequately balanced by other interests and benefits

I hope that my objections/concerns and those of the residents of the West Hampstead ward can be fully addressed before any planning permission is granted by Camden Council.

Yours faithfully,

Shiva

Cllr Shiva Tiwari

Councillor (Labour Party) for the ward of West Hampstead, since May 2018
The London Borough of Camden