

Andrew Dismore
Putting Barnet and Camden first



Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
National Planning Casework Unit
5 St Philips Place
Colmore Row
Birmingham
B3 2PW

19th June 2014

Dear Sir,

The London Borough of Barnet (West Hendon Regeneration Area) Compulsory Purchase Order No 1 2014

I am the London Assembly Member for Barnet & Camden, and former Member of Parliament for Hendon within which the West Hendon Regeneration area is situated.

I have been requested to provide this letter setting out my knowledge of the background and in support of their objections to the CPO by Dan Knowles of Sawyer Fielding Ltd who I understand to be the professional representative of a large number of leaseholders affected by the Compulsory Purchase Order.

My knowledge of the scheme dates back to 2002. A consultation took place and a ballot was conducted on the estate on the scheme as it was then designed and which approved the principles as then proposed, though support for the then scheme was far from unanimous.

Whilst the Council argue that everything was done by an independent polling company, in fact one of the original development partners, Metropolitan, went door to door lobbying on the scheme and encouraging the return of ballot papers.

The original development partners were Metropolitan, Lovells and Bellhouse, the latter two of which were replaced with Barratt Homes who became the main partner.

Since then, the scheme has gone through several iterations, each, from the residents' viewpoint, worse than the previous one. On each occasion I argued that

the original ballot could no longer be considered a valid endorsement of what was now proposed, but the Council refused to reballot. Accordingly, I conducted 2 ballots (returned by freepost) myself as a consequence. I also balloted the surrounding area, involving the estates' resident and business neighbours. The result was the opposite of the original ballot: people both on and off the estate did not approve of the new schemes: 79.6% oppose it on a turnout of 50%.of the estate.

The final scheme is deeply unpopular on and of the estate and has attracted objection from much further afield due to its appalling environmental impact on the Welsh Harp SSSI. See my detailed objections and most recent consultation results below

The Planning Committee which approved the scheme was a mockery in its lack of objectivity. The planning officer, instead of presenting a balanced opinion when presenting the scheme to councillors (who had clearly already made up their mind) acted as an advocate for it, along of course with the developers who addressed the committee. In effect, the Council was judge in its own cause, giving itself permission for its own scheme, despite the many very valid objections.

Before I turn to the detailed planning concerns, it is also important to emphasise that the current scheme does not meet the original promises in any shape or form, cornering the rehousing offer..

Assurances were given in 2002 that the shared equity proposals were that owner occupier leaseholders would be offered new homes on a like for like basis – choice of location, same or larger size, help with service charges, maisonettes for maisonettes – all of which has gone by the board. Other shared ownership schemes nearby in Colindale have left many leaseholders in serious financial trouble: while the mortgage element has remained roughly the same, dramatic increases in rent and service charges have left many in penury, and led to at least one eviction for arrears, to my knowledge.

Moreover, as far as tenants are concerned, since 2002 the council adopted the practice of placing only unsecured temporary tenants on the estate as properties became vacant. Many of these families have lived on the estate for well over 5 years, yet the council, refuses to recognise that they have any rights , legal or moral, to be rehoused in the new homes in the regeneration scheme. Hundreds of people face being uprooted as a result, with children forced to move school, working people at risk of losing their jobs, and families their friends. .Rehousing on other estates has led to tenants being placed well out of London: I understand as far away as Northampton.

I now turn to my detailed objections to the scheme.

1 Existing residents should be the priority, and under the Council's proposals they are clearly not.

At the planning committee meeting, the Barnet Council Cabinet member responsible, in advocating the scheme, said he would welcome Russian oligarchs and Gulf Oil Sheiks moving in to the expensive penthouse properties that are being proposed, as

they are clearly going to be priced at a level way beyond the means of local people. . this clearly does nothing to meet the local housing needs in West Hendon, or Barnet more generally.

There has been no ballot of residents, as required by law, to seek their views on the scheme. The Council cannot rely on a ballot of 12 years ago on a completely different proposal, as a fair reflection of residents' views. As the council failed to reballoon residents on the current planning proposals, I conducted my own consultation, with a turnout of 50% of properties, the results of which are set out in the appendix to this letter. It is clear that the overwhelming majority of local people - 79.6% - oppose this scheme.

In the planning consultation, 340 out of 341 individual responses opposed the scheme, together with petitions totalling 987 signatures.

Throughout the last 11 years, when we have seen one scheme after another come forward for the regeneration of the estate, I have been concerned to ensure that the residents' interests are properly protected.

There is inadequate provision for leaseholders as no leasehold flats will be built before the third phase of this plan. In the meantime they have suffered a bighted existence for years and will have to wait years more for a solution. There is no guarantee either, that they will have like for like, without having to pay extra for a new property beyond the value f their existing home.

Bearing in mind the difficulties that arose over the pilot scheme, I am concerned to ensure that secure council tenants must have the choice to remain council tenants, should they wish to do so. They must also have guarantees that their lease on the replacement property is on the same terms as their existing lease, with the same landlord.

There is no provision for temporary tenants on the estate, concerning their rehousing on the estate. Many temporary tenants who have been living on the estate for many years, are being left in limbo. They and their families have put down roots, and their children attend local schools. It is unfair that they again face an uncertain future and could be moved miles away.

There is no provision for privately renting tenants on the estate either. The consequences of right to buy now mean that the original leaseholders in a number of cases have sold up, and the leaseholds are now let out to private tenants. Consideration needs to be given to those residents' needs too.

These problems could in large part be resolved if the proportion of genuinely affordable and social housing is raised to the benchmark of 40%, to include social homes for rent. I object to any proportion which is lower than this: the public purse and locals residents will lose out as a consequence, if it is not.

2) The density is above that permitted in the London Plan and the proposed development does not meet the criteria in Barnet Council Local Plan.

Apart from the inadequate proportion of social and affordable homes in breach of the plans, the density is far too great. The proposal involves a huge increase in the density of housing and greatly exceeds the GLA recommended level for a site of this size, increasing from 7-800 housing units to over 2000. A key feature of the proposal is the construction of a number of extremely high tower blocks, up to 29 stories in height.

The unsuitability of this is already exemplified by the already built out so-called "pilot scheme", with storeys of 12 or more. The buildings are oppressive and create far too enclosed an environment already, without even contemplating the consequences of buildings almost twice as high, so close to this site of special scientific interest, which will have consequences not just for the views and human amenity around the Welsh Harp, but also for the wildlife (see below).

The impact of the density is compounded by the loss of York Park, a very important local open space which is vital to the local community both from the estate and beyond in the local neighbourhood, as it provides an informal recreational area. The proposed "open" areas are much smaller and do not compensate for the loss of this park open space.

3) Lack of parking and impact on traffic congestion.

We are already seeing the consequences of inadequate parking provision in the major developments of a similar scale in Colindale, such as "the Pulse". Residents on this partially built development are already complaining of inadequate parking provision, and are starting to use nearby residential streets which are already overcrowded through parking demand.

The area around the West Hendon estate is already subject to parking pressures, as the result of flat conversions over the years, in the Russell/Garrick/Wilberforce triangle, and Brent View Road, requiring CPZ control which will have to be extended to the detriment of current residents, as well as in the Cool Oak Lane/Woolmead Roads area. There is no scope for more on street parking caused by the inadequate provision of parking facilities in the development. Parking pressures will inevitably spread even wider, to the Algernon /Montagu/ Vicarage Rd areas and probably beyond.

The impact of a significant increase in traffic on the local road network has also not been fully considered. Because a large amount of additional traffic will be generated by over 2000 homes which translates into an extra 5000 to 6000 residents, the West Hendon Broadway/ Cool Oak Lane/ Station Road/ Park Road network, which already struggles to cope at the best of times, will be overwhelmed without a significant improvement in traffic management, such as proposed in some of the earlier schemes. The prospects of gridlock at busy times (and indeed even in quieter traffic periods) is a racing (or perhaps that should be crawling) certainty.

4) Lack of additional local services, especially primary health care.

Local GPs are already oversubscribed and the scheme must make provision for additional services, which it does not.

No consideration appears to have been given to additional demands for more public transport.

The proposed primary school is of course welcome, but it is not specified whether this will be denominational, free, academy or within the LEA structure.

Beyond primary health care and primary school provision, there is no consideration of the impact on secondary health care from the hospital service nor the need for secondary school provision.

Nor do the proposals include any improvement to the retail environment and offer in West Hendon Broadway which was included in previous schemes. Given the pressures on high streets generally, the opportunity needs to be taken radically to improve the high street area of the Broadway.

5) The threat to the SSSI and local wildlife.

The SSSI status affords a high level of protection under wildlife legislation.

Tall buildings on the very edge of the SSSI will jeopardise that important classification of the Welsh Harp because such height is detrimental to the many bird species that use the Welsh Harp as their habitat. The extreme height of the tower blocks will interfere with flight lines for birds trying to get away from sailing disturbance. There will also be an increased risk of bird strikes on the high rise towers blocks.

The construction phase, which includes pile driving, will also have an adverse effect on the Northern Marshes breeding grounds adjacent to the proposed works.

The Northern reservoir is an important refuge used by wildfowl, when there is disturbance on the main reservoir from sailing. It functions this way throughout the year, but especially during the winter months when the regular number of birds increases by several hundred displaced ducks and other wildfowl. The area most used by these birds is along the bank next to the estate. An important screen of trees currently separates the water from the estate. The marshy northern end of the water is also important for breeding wildfowl in the sheltered pools and channels. At the northern end is a quiet area of wet woodland occupied by a number of shy woodland birds breed (owls, woodpeckers, warblers).

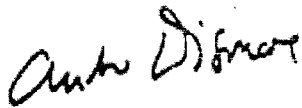
The area of the regeneration is along the whole of the edge of the waterway, marsh and woodland. The proposed bridge crossing the river further upstream will disturb and damage the wet woodland where shy woodland birds breed. This could also

disturb scarce breeding wildfowl which breed in the pools and reed-beds next to the woodland.

The plan also proposes the removal of tree screening to open up sight lines. This will make matters worse for the refuge. This will have a major impact on roosting and nesting birds. There will thus be a major increase in disturbance of the refuge both during construction and when occupied.

There will be a large increase in the amount of night-time light pollution in what is currently a dark area. This will affect not just birds but also nocturnal mammals such as bats.

Yours faithfully



Andrew Dismore AM

Labour London Assembly Member for Barnet and Camden

City Hall

London SE1 2AA

Appendix

West Hendon Survey: Results

Do you think the Council have given enough priority to estate residents?

Yes: 8.4% No: 81.3%

Should there be more affordable homes?

Yes: 84.7% No: 10.1%

Do you think a) the scheme is too dense; and b) the blocks are too high?

a) Yes: 83% No: 10.1%
b) Yes: 84.7% No: 3.4%

Do you wish the Council scheme to be approved?

Yes: 18.6% No: 79.6%

Does the plan give sufficient attention to the wider neighbourhood near the site?

Yes: 6.7% No: 89.8%

Do you want to keep York Park?

Yes: 89.8% No: 3.3%

Does there need to be more parking?

Yes: 74.5% No: 20.3%

Has enough thought been given to leaseholder needs?

Yes: 8.4% No: 77.9%

Are you a:

- A) Council tenant: 37.2%
- B) Leaseholder: 8.4%
- C) Private tenant: 10.1%
- D) Owner occupier: 44%

Comments:

<u>ESTATE RESIDENTS</u>	
<i>Barnet Metropolitan have gone back on all promises they made in 2004! Its so long ago I cannot remember!</i>	<i>Mrs Simmonds, Warner Close, NW9</i>
<i>Was it really necessary to fell 5 trees in York Park which look lovely when in bloom? How sad that has made people feel for the sake of sewage pipes.</i>	<i>Jacqueline Parsons, Tyrrel Way, NW9</i>
<i>Typical local council do not listen to residents comments.</i>	<i>Mrs J.M. Kent, Marriotts Close, NW9</i>
<i>Don't approve of the idea. The Council have it in the bag They cant see the future for all.</i>	<i>Jah Bless, Tyrrel Way, NW9</i>
<i>I have been against this from the beginning as when regeneration was first proposed it was for West Hendon Broadway – NOT the estate. Now they want to over populate the area and ruin West Hendon. Also they are playing with peoples lives as we NEVER got a clear answer to anything. And all the wild life will be lost.</i>	<i>Dyanne Balding, Marsh Drive, NW9</i>
<i>Having viewed the new scheme it looks like a concrete jungle. Far too many homes, blacks all too close together, all private flats for sale in better locations. Bird will fly into high rise blocks, wildlife will</i>	<i>Mr and Mrs Harris, Warner Close, NW9</i>

<i>eventually leave area.</i>	
<i>On the Cool Oak Lane site, Barratts regularly broke the agreement made with the Council re: Lorry deliveries and regularly broke the law by working outside the permitted hours. It treated my many complaints as a joke. Cllr Johnson knows about my problems.</i>	<i>John Cooper, Warner Close, NW9</i>
<i>Similar objection from beginning, now far worse! All resident homes are at risk – public funds and land to go with shareholders BMLLP. Privatisation, stock transfer, gentrification, unaffordable homes = homelessness.</i>	<i>Derrick Chung, Chair West Hendon Estate RA, Marsh Drive, NW9</i>
<i>More green space to go unacceptable. Will they start charging for parking spaces? (Try Hendon Village) – thousands of pounds.</i>	<i>Kenneth Read, Marsh Drive, NW9</i>
<i>Tower blocks will not work. It will create a concrete jungle, along with no apathy, just conflict. No consideration to the neighbourhood or environment.</i>	<i>John Enright, Marsh Drive, NW9</i>
<i>I do not want any of our homes pulled down. This whole thing is just so awful – destroying our homes. I am so upset and angry, the new housing will apparently have rents double of what we pay now and they again, apparently are tiny places. I could say a lot more but no more room on this form.</i>	<i>Dr Montfort. L, Marriotts Close, NW9</i>
<i>Not enough consideration is being given to long term tenants and the elderly. The need for a community centre not only for the youth of the estate but also the older people has not been thought about.</i>	<i>Mr and Mrs Peter Purfoot, Tyrrel Way, NW9</i>
<i>Not being compensated for NOT moving in new flats, two years of banging dust. VERY BAD inconvenience.</i>	<i>Mrs D Speller, Warner Close, NW9</i>
<i>I think the Conservative Party are outrageous unthoughtful, unhelpful, born with a silver spoon in their mouths and don't know poverty like on West Hendon.</i>	<i>Katrina Narman, Marriotts Close, NW9</i>
<i>I am a member of RAG and they are riding roughshod over the residents of this estate with the connivance of the council.</i>	<i>Barry Dawson, Ramsey Close, NW9</i>
<i>We do not need any more tower blocks. I was under the impression that no more tower blocks were going to be built as they encouraged ghettos.</i>	<i>Mr and Mrs C. Cooley, Marriotts Close, NW9</i>
<i>Keep Marriotts Close as it is at the moment. You have no place for leaseholders so keep what you have. York Park is great for kids to play and in safety.</i>	<i>Mr R Green, Marriotts Close, NW9</i>

<u>RESIDENTS NEIGHBOURING THE ESTATE</u>	
<i>I think the blocks are far too high and very ugly on the skyline. Also it will cause more traffic in the surrounding areas.</i>	<i>Mrs Jean Prete, Hyde Crescent, NW9</i>
<i>No banks/building societies in West Hendon, no A & E facilities at Edgware Hospital, no police station, no doctors/dentists. Only one primary school. I can't think of one thing in favour of the scheme.</i>	<i>Sandra Church, Montagu Road, NW4</i>
<i>Too much residential accommodation without increasing school places and health facility.</i>	<i>Mrs J Eels, Derwent Rise, NW9</i>
<i>Cool Oak Lane should not be the only access to the new estate. There are five other roads off West Hendon Broadway. More health services required.</i>	<i>Wayne Boothroyd, Stuart Avenue, NW9</i>
<i>If only the Council would listen to the people who actually live here. The infrastructure will not support the density i.e. traffic, parking GPs surgeries etc... This estate together with all the other in the local area has resulted in one large ongoing building site.</i>	<i>Mrs M P Clark, Woolmead Avenue, NW9</i>
<i>The new tall high rise buildings are not in character with the housing which surrounds the area. Also concerned with additional traffic.</i>	<i>Salene Edwards, Dehar Crescent, NW9</i>
<i>They should also consider couples without children.</i>	<i>Abigail Panada, Derwent Rise, NW9</i>
<i>Whilst not actually living on Welsh Harp estate. I walk on the Harp 2-3 times a week and talk with local residents etc... Nobody is happy with this project and people have not been informed esp. leaseholders. The Welsh Harp is beautiful and should stay as it is. Please do not take our green away.</i>	<i>I Hunt, Hyde Crescent, NW9</i>
<i>Glad I am 78 and has the best fresh fields to play in as a child. I am against high rise blocks, soon London wont be able to breath lovely fresh air, its like putting children into prison with no gardens and windows where they can climb up to look out for air and fall to their death.</i>	<i>Mrs J Samworth, Colindale, NW9</i>
<i>We don't want it. It will spoil our little countryside we have and wild life we have around here. Not many places like this anymore.</i>	<i>Yan Yong, NW9</i>

<u>UNATTRIBUTED COMMENTS</u>	
<i>The development will destroy the Welsh Harp nature reserve. It is a very important part of the Welsh Harp.</i>	

<p><i>If the council has decided on the scheme on the regeneration of West Hendon then more likely it will go through planning. Developers and council go hand in hand. Local community will have no choice.</i></p>	
<p><i>I cant answer some of the questions because im not too familiar with all the issues. However, too many homes are being squeezed into this development and the tower blocks proposed are far too high. No more buildings should be higher than the existing buildings. The height of the proposed tower blocks are out of keeping with the area.</i></p>	
<p><i>Totally out of keeping with the area. Are there any buildings above 14 storeys in the borough? 14 storeys in Colindale quite tall enough.</i></p>	
<p><i>As someone who lives locally I would like to emphasize the importance of any green land being kept. Why penthouses in NW9? Must be adequate parking.</i></p>	
<p><i>At least they should help us to move out more and give us more time.</i></p>	
<p><i>There is a need to keep the Welsh Harp nature reserve as safe and pleasant area for all.</i></p>	
<p><i>My concerns are the effect on the conservation area and the vast scale of this redevelopment. West Hendon is overcrowded and an eyesore and a lot needs doing to it but within reason.</i></p>	
<p><i>I feel the proposed blocks will be too high and not in line with the current Barratt Homes development at Sheerwater Drive/Cool Oak Lane, as it would be considerably taller. If there are no further leaseholds before the 3^d phase then this is also something that needs to be addressed.</i></p>	
<p><i>We haven't been sent any revised plans to review. No choice of energy supplier we have been told we have to sign up to EON as part of our new tenancy agreement, when we move into the new accommodation.</i></p>	
<p><i>Residents are not being consulted at all. 12 years of stress and uncertainty, especially for the elderly who have been living together for over 35 years and whose needs are not considered at all.</i></p>	