

Submission:

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

**Andrew Dismore AM,
London Assembly Member for Barnet and Camden 2012-Present,
Member of Parliament for Hendon 1997-2010**

22nd December 2014

1. I have been the London Assembly Member for Barnet & Camden, within which constituency the West Hendon Regeneration area is situated, since 2012 .
2. I was previously the Member of Parliament for Hendon, in which the West Hendon estate is situated, between 1997 to 2010. I have seen this scheme evolve from its infancy.
3. I have been requested to provide my support and share my recollection of events 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. Whilst my old files are far from complete, as much had to be shredded when I left Parliament, I have found one substantial file of reports and correspondence which has assisted me in preparing this submission.
4. I have been urged to provide this submission by many residents of the West Hendon estate with whom I regularly meet, speak and correspond.

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

6. There has been no ballot of residents, as required by law, to seek their views on the scheme as it now stands. The Council cannot rely on a ballot from 11 years ago on a completely different proposal, as a fair reflection of residents' views. Residents must be rebaloted on the current planning proposals.
7. In November 2007, when I consulted residents on the then scheme, which was worse than the original plan but far better than what is now on offer from the residents' viewpoint, 95.6% said that the Council should rebalot, 93.8% said the Council was not treating residents fairly; 94.7% said the Council was not being honest about what was going on; and 99.1% said residents should be able to stay on the estate if they wanted to. Since then, things have not improved.
8. 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.
9. There is inadequate provision for leaseholders. As long ago as 2006, leaseholders were expressing concerns over the unsaleable state of their properties, when faced with the blight caused by the scheme. However the Council would not proceed with CPOs then, as they expected to lose at the Public Inquiry because of inadequate provision for electricity supply in the scheme.
10. In May 2009, the Residents Regeneration Group (officially constituted by the Council) conducted an extensive and detailed survey of leaseholders and freeholders. Even then, its key conclusions were that at least a third felt their situation had worsened; more than half felt they had little or no choice about decisions over their future; an inability to sell on the open market had left a sizeable proportion feeling they had limited or no room for manoeuvre; some

homeowners were in hardship and felt trapped, and others saw their situation getting progressively worse; and there was a clear desire for more certainty and additional help and assistance.

11. The leaseholders' position will not improve, as no leasehold flats will be built before the third phase of the current plan. In the meantime, leaseholders 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 of a similar size, more than double the value of their existing home.
12. 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 leases on any replacement properties are on the same terms as their existing leases, and with the same landlord.
13. There is no provision for rehousing on the estate the 207 unsecured tenants, placed on the estate by the Council. Many of these temporary tenants have been living on the estate for years, 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.
14. There is no provision for the many privately renting tenants on the estate either. A consequence of right to buy is that in a number of cases the original tenant purchasers sold up, and the new owners let out the flats to private tenants. No consideration is being given to these residents' needs.
15. 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. In the planning application of December 2003, there were to be 552 homes for rent and 132 for low cost ownership- even then below the 40% threshold, but sufficient to rehouse everyone on the estate

who was living there and wanted to stay there. Now, there are just 250 for rent, barely 10% of the total.

16. I object to any proportion which is lower than 40%: the public purse and local residents will lose out as a consequence, if it is not.

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

18. 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 593 housing units to over 2,000. A key feature of the proposal is the construction of a number of extremely high tower blocks, up to 29 storeys in height.

19. The unsuitability of such tall buildings is illustrated by the built out so-called "pilot scheme", of 12 storeys. The buildings are oppressive and create far too enclosed an environment already, before even contemplating the effects of buildings more than twice as high, so close to this Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which will have consequences not just for the views and public amenity around the Welsh Harp, but also for the wildlife (see below).

20. 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, living on the estate and beyond, providing as it does a valued informal recreational area. York Park was originally provided as a memorial to the large number of civilians who were killed in a World War II bombing raid on the streets that were later demolished to provide the site for the then new West Hendon estate. In the 2008/9 plan, it was to be retained with some reconfiguration, but in a similar size. Now it is to be lost, as will be the memorial to those who died as a result.

21. Lack of parking and impact on traffic congestion.

22. We are already seeing the consequences of inadequate parking provision in 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 now overcrowded with parked vehicles due to this development generated parking demand.
23. 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 for example, requiring CPZ controls which will have to be extended to the detriment of current residents there, as well as in the Cool Oak Lane/Woolmead Road 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.
24. 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 2,000 homes which translates into an extra 4,000 to 5,000 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 2008/9 scheme provided for the redevelopment of West Hendon Broadway, including a major road widening plan. The prospects of gridlock at busy times (and indeed even in quieter traffic periods) is a racing (or perhaps that should be crawling) certainty.

25. Lack of additional local services, especially primary health care.

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

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

28. 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.

29. Beyond primary health care and primary school provision, there is no consideration of the impact on secondary health care for the already overstretched hospital and maternity services; nor the need for secondary school places.

30. The proposals do not include any improvement to the shops and environment in West Hendon Broadway which was included in previous schemes, to which I refer above. Given the recognised economic pressures on high streets generally, the opportunity should be taken radically to improve the high street area of the Broadway.

31. The threat to the SSSI and local wildlife.

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

33. Tall buildings on the very edge of the SSSI will jeopardise the important SSSI classification of the Welsh Harp because the proposed 29 storey building heights 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 migratory birds and for those trying to avoid disturbance from sailing

boats. There will also be an increased risk of bird strikes on the high rise tower blocks.

34. The construction phase, which includes pile driving, will have an adverse effect on the northern marshes breeding grounds adjacent to the proposed works.

35. The northern reservoir is an important refuge used by wildfowl, when there is disturbance on the main reservoir from sailing boats. It functions as a refuge throughout the year, but especially during the winter months when the numbers of birds increase by hundreds of 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 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 bird species (for example, owls, woodpeckers and warblers).

36. 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 also breed. The bridge could also disturb scarce breeding wildfowl which breed in the pools and reed-beds next to the woodland.

37. 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 be a major increase in disturbance to the refuge both during construction and after completion.

38. 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.

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